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Jane Austen and the Critical Novel of Manners

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JANE AUSTEN
AND
THE CRITICAL NOVEL OF MANNERS.

BY

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VITA AUCTORIS

Anthony Joseph Peterman, S.J., was born in St. Louis, Mo., July 12, 1910. He received his elementary education at St. Luke's, St. Pius', St. Anthony's Schools (St. Louis), at St. James' School (San Francisco, Calif.) and St. Michael's School (Los Angeles, Calif.). He attended Loyola High School in Los Angeles, and the University of Detroit High School in Detroit, graduating from the latter in 1929. In September, 1933, he entered the Jesuit Novitiate of the Sacred Heart, Milford, Ohio, and began his college studies as an undergraduate of Xavier University, Cincinnati. He transferred to West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana, in 1937, receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree from Loyola University, Chicago, in June of the same year.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

During the latter half of the eighteenth century there developed side by side two of the greatest factors of English literature: the romantic movement and the novel form. Perhaps this parallel development had a great deal to do with the remarkably strong influence that Romanticism had upon the novel even in its earliest years. For among the first "big-four" novelists are evident traces of this movement; and after their passing, the novel drank deep, stimulating draughts of Romanticism for several decades.

The novel, which from Richardson downward had been a faithful record of this dilation of heart and imagination, became in the closing years of the eighteenth century the literature of crime, insanity, and the nightmare. Romanticism had drunk immoderately of new emotions, and needed sharp castigation from good sense.¹

But just when the century was swinging to a close, just when Wordsworth and Coleridge were putting, as it were, the stamp of approval upon Romanticism, the novel took a new line of development: the development of the critical novel of manners.

The next most important artistic change was made, for English readers, by Jane Austen, who was the first critical novelist of manners.²
Jane Austen perceived the strange excesses of novelists preceding and contemporary with her own times: their almost unanimous stress upon incidents that were exceptional, emotional, and frequently unreal. She saw that the true novel must be based on real life; for even romance must be founded on real life, if it hopes to be true art. Her reaction to these excesses is critical,

... criticism lies at the root of her intention as a novelist, and ultimately expressed itself in what is now called the critical novel of manners. This form of the novel, which is the result of Jane Austen's artistic genius, may be described as a work in prose fiction based on a critical and satirical attitude toward the conventions of society and resulting in an exhibition of incongruous traits of character and their consequences.

This thesis, then, will attempt to trace the development of the critical novel of manners. It will follow Jane Austen's critical reaction to romantic and sentimental novelists, and to society itself indulging in emotional experiences and flights of imagination. Consequently, many aspects of Miss Austen's art must be passed over in order to trace precisely the progress of this development, which began by satirizing the excesses of her predecessors in the field of fiction, and ended by using her satirical spirit on the follies and foibles of
contemporary society. In other words, she began by demonstrat­ing what the novel should not be, and then gradually developed her idea of what the novel should be.

In a treatment of this kind it is of great importance to follow the progress of Jane Austen's mind as she conceived one novel after another. What makes this doubly important is the fact that much confusion is apt to arise, if the publication dates of her novels are regarded as definite steps in the progress of her critical spirit. In fact, Jane Austen's satire was hardly appreciated by the publishers of her day, who probably looked upon such novels as a very poor financial risk when the public was demanding more novels of the very type that she criticized. Some of her earliest work was published long after its conception, Northanger Abbey only after her death. It will be necessary, then, to distinguish between those novels first conceived, those first written, and those first published. This will be done when each novel is taken up individually; then it will be seen that, in the order of conception, Jane Austen's first three novels are as follows: Sense and Sensibility, Northanger Abbey, and Pride and Prejudice. The first two indicate her early tendency to criticize other novel­ists and their works; the third marks her turning the critical spirit upon society itself. Finally, a fourth novel, Emma, will be taken as representative of her later and more mature work.

The remainder of the thesis opens with a brief sketch of
the trend of the novel before Miss Austen (Ch. II). This will consist principally of an account of the non-realistic excesses of her predecessors and some of the possible causes. Of less prominence are a few faint traces of realism. These will be noted at the end of this same chapter. The next step will be to trace Jane Austen's reaction. In Sense and Sensibility (Ch. III) and Northanger Abbey (Ch. IV) this reaction takes the form of direct satire of her predecessors; here she depicts what the novel should not be. Then, in Pride and Prejudice (Ch. V) and Emma (Ch. VI) will be seen the shift to the satire of human nature itself; here Jane Austen demonstrates what the novel, to her way of thinking, should be. Finally, a brief summation will conclude the thesis.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


3. Lascelles, Mary, Jane Austen and Her Art, p. 49.
CHAPTER II

THE NOVEL PREVIOUS TO MISS AUSTEN

In 1740 Samuel Richardson gave a story, Pamela, to English readers and an impetus to novel writing which is still all powerful. Had he foreseen the sentimental and romantic capers that the novel would cut before the end of his own century, he undoubtedly would have continued to collect letters instead of publishing them. For

Richardson declared over and over again, in his novels, his prefaces, and his postscripts, that the underlying motive of all his work was moral and religious instruction.¹

He sought an entrance into the hearts of his readers through Puritan sentiment, in order to work a moral reform. In the words of Edith Birkhead:

He saw that The Tatler and The Spectator were experiments in the right direction. Addison, and more particularly the man of sentiment, Steele, had touched the hearts while improving the morals of their readers. Richardson hoped in Pamela to introduce a new species of writing, that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and, dismissing the improbable and the marvelous with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue.²

Richardson's popularity depends very much upon this same direct appeal to the emotions of a bourgeois, Puritan
middle-class that was steadily gaining power. Although his goal was their moral reform, along the way of his psychological realism he was forever stirring the reader's delicate emotions and unconsciously satisfying a thirst for sentimentality. It should be recalled that Richardson always considered sentimentality as a means; in fact, his cautious prudence won him the favor of the moralists, who saw a danger in emotions running wild, uncontrolled by will or judgment. But neither his own good intention nor the approval of Puritan moralists and readers could remove from his novels the germ which later developed into the excesses of the Gothic and Sentimental novels. In fact, the balance in favor of the good wrought by his novels even upon his first readers is dubious when compared with their evil effects.

The light which Richardson throws upon the deep secrets of consciousness, the working of the passions, the struggle of instincts, which his settled belief classes unhesitatingly into categories of good and evil, has its value for our knowledge of the human heart, in that it reaches the obscure regions, and lends a singular relief to the slightest detail. And it happens that this light becomes more audacious, more revealing, than Richardson himself, according to all appearance, would have desired.

Moralists such as Wesley were no doubt blinded into their approval because their own beliefs had an emotional basis. They did not realize that to intensely excite the bodily appetites by presenting a picture of good or evil to the imagination may actually be the arousing of the passions. Not
everyone missed this distinction, as Saintsbury notes:

Even at that time, libertine as it was in some ways, and sentimental as it was in others, people had not failed to notice that Pamela's virtue is not quite what was then called "neat" wine--the pure and unadulterated juice of the grape.5

Nevertheless, Richardson always had many friends, admirers, and successors, who, as Wilbur Cross says:

... called him a 'divine man' and felt that he was teaching his generation 'how to live and how to die' more effectively and more eloquently than Wesley and Whitfield.5

As to Richardson's successors, it should be remembered that it is not the purpose of this chapter to give a detailed account of the ardent vagaries of every novelist who preceded Miss Austen, but rather to indicate the pronounced sentimental and romantic trend of the period.

First, Fielding's reaction against Pamela calls for some explanation. It seems sufficient to point out that his reaction was not against sentimentalism, nor did it retard its crazy course in the least. Legouis and Cazamian, who consider Fielding as a type of mind complementary to Richardson, mention that

Fielding, in fact, scoffed at Richardson, but knew also how to do him justice; he did not want to stand over against him as an antithesis, but rather to improve upon him; he has certain essential instincts in common with him; and the course of his life, together with his work, drew the two writers together.
Only a few years later, Sterne, a clergyman, first turned sentimentality into an end in itself. In his works emotion is sought for its own sake; sentiment is used to gratify, rather than to bring about a reform, and the reader is fascinated by "flowery pages of sublime distress."  

It was Sterne who taught men and women of the Eighteenth Century what an exquisite pleasure might be derived from feeling the pulse of their emotions.

In both *Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey* Sterne openly espouses the cult of the emotions, throws aside the barriers of Puritan repression, and no longer has any use for moral instruction or dramatic effect. Instead, there is a savoring of delicate sensations, an indulgence in feeling, a pleasant philandering with emotion. It is a disproportion that indicates decadence and crudeness.

The indecency, which was found out at once, and which drew a creditable and not in the least Tartuffian protest from Warburton, is a far more serious matter—not so much because of the licence in subject as because of the unwholesome and sniggering tone. The sentimentality is very often simply maudlin, . . . and in very, very few cases justified by brilliant success even in its own very doubtful kind.

None of Sterne's disciples rose to any prominence. To be sure, in this period Sterne alone ranks as a novelist of first-rate importance. While his contemporaries and followers were less successful, their fascination with his methods led them to use a far greater amount of emotion and sentiment
than any novelist before Sterne would have thought possible.11

Consequently, the link had been established, the stage set; for, even though Sterne himself was far from being a romanticist, his work helped clear the way and made possible many of the innovations that were to follow.

The sentimental novel, with Sterne, escapes the control of the particular needs of the middle class spirit; it proclaims that sentiment, which has become a source of enjoyment, and an end in itself, will henceforth be liberated from ethics. It thus constitutes a stage on the road now opened up, and leading to Romanticism.12

The period from Sterne to Miss Austen had numerous minor writers. They turned out countless novels in response to public demand. But, with hardly an exception, they dared not write realism. The reading public wanted excesses in sentimentality and romance. Consequently, instead of giving an imaginative and realistic picture of actual life, the novelists continued to emphasize exceptional interests and incidents. Instead of idealizing real life in a reasonable fashion, they went to excess in an effort to turn out stories that dripped with pathos and melancholy; noble and benevolent creatures are tortured by distress to make sport for the tender-hearted; superstitious terror and all the tricks that made the Gothic novel an inflammatory art, became a drug for harassed minds, a refuge for imaginations in flight from menacing reality.13
Undoubtedly many causes cooperated to bring about this flight from realism which retarded the development of the novel. Life and society itself had long remained subject to mere exceptional interests and incidents. Imagination and feeling had been awakened, and man reveled in the newly discovered pleasures; from the cultivation of ardent and sensitive imaginations it is but a short and easy step to the cult of the emotions. Moreover, the exigencies of Puritanism introduced a narrow and morbid view of human nature. There was also a tension, a stress of thought and feeling that permeated the whole revolutionary era. There rose up a renewal of fondness for the past, a sort of neo-chivalry, a desire for change, and surely a change of manners and language. Finally, what is of no little importance, there was a lack of classical patterns for the novel, and an obvious absence of great masters.

The minor writers who exhibit the disintegration of the novel during this period can be conveniently divided into two schools: the Gothic and Sentimental. A few examples will serve to mark the general trend.

The Gothic novel has been called a pseudo-romance and a romance of terror, and justly so;

... it subordinates character delineation to the manufacture of incidents, which are meant to curdle the blood, screw the nerves, and shake the heart... in short, the Gothic romance was imagination in revolt against common sense.
It was Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto that initiated the feverish search after the superstitious, the preternatural, the terrifying aspects of a picturesque and mysterious past. To the modern reader his novels are absurd, but his great success in his own day proves that he had hit upon an untouched vein of feeling.

As shown in the term "Gothic Novel," the strangeness and mystery of a distant age, itself a prey to superstition, and wonderfully fitted to recreate the atmosphere of emotional belief, served as a model and encouragement to an instinct in quest of new and more potent means of self-satisfaction.

George Saintsbury's closing words on Walpole can be quoted with profit here:

Apres coup, the author talked about "Shakespeare" (of whom, by the way, he was anything but a fervent or thorough admirer) and the like. Shakespeare had, as Sir Walter Raleigh has well pointed out, uncommonly little to do with it. But Shakespeare at least supplies us with an appropriate phrase for the occasion. The Castle of Otranto "lay in" Horace's "way, and he found it." And with it, though hardly in it, he found the New Romance.

Another representative of the Gothic novel, Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, turned out, between the years 1790-1797, four popular novels. One of these is the famous Mysteries of Udolpho. Her endeavor was to change the idea of terror into something nobler and higher. Can her widespread and continued popularity be an indication that she had succeeded in producing a type acceptable to the feelings and moral scruples of everyone? Perhaps; but
even so her work is not wholly devoid of the characteristic paraphernalia of the Gothic school. Among its trappings is a new "thrill", a feeling that we are not limited by a material existence, a feeling that everything definite is now a flowing, floating symbol of uncertainty. Her search for terror and probing of the mysterious makes use of dark intrigues, underground passages, secret doors, rusty daggers, ethereal music. These are all emotional urges that are merged with sentimentalism and fancy. It was a more refined indulgence of the feelings; sentiment is dressed up in all the trappings of the Gothic school.

In the novels of this period sensibility is often blended with some other motive. The tale of terror, which arouses pity as well as fear, was a formidable rival of the pathetic story. Mrs. Radcliffe's romances retained the heroine with an 'expression of pensive melancholy' or a 'smile softly clouded with sorrow' and wrought on her nerves by superstitious horror.17

A last example of the Gothic school, Matthew Lewis, in his The Monk, reached the climax of emotionalism begun only a few decades before by Richardson. In retrospect, the rise of emotionalism certainly appears dramatic; its exciting force is latent in Richardson, its psychological development in Walpole, its climax of sheer unrelieved morbidity in Lewis.18 Imaginations had been unleashed and gradually urged on to demand such an atrocity.

Without the slightest restraint he proceeds to exploit the thrill of conscious and pleasing terror, compounding
it with others of a kindred nature, such as that prompted by sensual desire or by the loathsome sight of some physical horror.19

Saintsbury's comment is noteworthy:

... he made The Monk (1796), as a whole, a mere mess and blotch of murder, outrage, diablerie and indecency.20

Thus the morality of Richardson had developed into a destitution of all moral depth in Lewis. Pamela was a tender appeal to the Puritan heart; The Monk a satanic stimulus for imaginations long set loose of all restraint. From Richardson the novel derived its initial stimulus; from Lewis were derived some elements of the darkest aspect of Romanticism.

Now for an example of the purely Sentimental School. Among the disciples of Sterne is one striking representative of the Sentimental novel, namely, Henry Mackensie. His The Man of Feeling (1771) is a deliberate imitation of Sterne's The Sentimental Journey. The hero, Harley is led through one heart-breaking scene after another until he actually dies with joy on hearing that his love for Miss Walton is returned. Saintsbury considers that in Mackenzie the "sensibility" novel was reduced to the absolutely absurd.21

What could be more absurd than his picture of a whole press-gang bursting into tears at the pathetic action and words of an old man who offers himself as substitute for his son?
But this absurdity was not so evident to those first avid readers so eager to indulge their feelings. In this lies its real danger, as is noted by Legouis and Cazamian:

... it is a cultivation of feeling for its own sake that in turn leads to the search for the semi-morbid forms of emotion. The systematic enjoyment of intense feeling brings about a complete moral inversion.22

Finally, some mention should be made of two slight traces of realism in the novel previous to Miss Austen, namely, the work of Frances Burney, and Maria Edgeworth. Miss Burney's Evelina, (1778), proves that the author had a marvelous faculty of taking impressions of actual speech, manners, and character.23 But she soon lost the ability to express or even report these impressions realistically. Her best work slips into sentimentalism to the detriment of realism. She was no doubt a daughter of her times. Very likely, as Saintsbury observes, she had stumbled upon the real essence of the novel, but she did not clearly perceive her gift and soon lost her grip upon it.24

When Maria Edgeworth finally followed up this accidental discovery of Miss Burney, Jane Austen had already written three of her most famous novels. Consequently, Miss Edgeworth is rather a contemporary than a predecessor of Miss Austen. However, Miss Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent (1800) and Belinda (1801) did find the publisher's favor sooner than the work of Miss Austen. Perhaps the publisher and the public swallowed the bait of sentimentality from which her work is not entirely free.
Miss Edgeworth had a taste for romantic fiction; she was a reader of Richardson and of Mrs. Radcliffe and was so deeply moved by the heroine of Mrs. Inchbald's "Simple Story," that she made her impatient with the "coldness of that stick or stone Belinda." 25

It is sufficient to note that

... her work ... represents the imperfect stage of development—the stage when the novel is trying for the right methods and struggling to get into the right ways, but has not wholly mastered the one or reached the others. 26

With this summary of the novel's early excesses in sentimentalism and superstitious terror, of its few and weak reforms in realism, the scene is set for the appearance of a true artist. The novel had long needed a master of the comic spirit, whose work would be based on real life, who was not content with the luxury of pathos and terror, but insisted on aesthetic pleasure. The master appeared in the person of Jane Austen, whose reaction against her predecessors forced the novel into its true and natural mode of life.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II


3. Ibid., p. 104.


9. Ibid., p. 106.


18. Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, op. cit., p. 971.


24. Ibid., pp. 154, 155.


CHAPTER III

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Even in her earliest efforts Jane Austen reacted critically to the fainting, sentimental heroine of her day; her early, sketchy pieces, such as Love and Friendship, are intended as satires. It is not surprising, then, to discover that the first full length novel she conceived is a direct attack on the prevalent mode of fiction: imagination in revolt against common sense. Though not published until years later, Sense and Sensibility was undoubtedly the first among her novels to be conceived and written in first draft form. Cornish mentions that Pride and Prejudice was begun some time after the first draft of Sense and Sensibility (entitled Elinor and Marianne). From Wilbur Cross, too, we gather that Sense and Sensibility is the completion of an early work antedating Northanger Abbey and Pride and Prejudice. Mary Lascelles aptly summarizes the point:

It is vexatious that Elinor and Marianne should be lost, and that we must be content with what we are told about it: that it was written before 1796; that it was cast in the form which Richardson had made popular--a fictitious correspondence--and was to be recast in direct narrative as Sense and Sensibility. This first novel of Miss Austen was certainly an innovation, for the literary revolt of imagination against common sense was extremely popular and thus an indication of public taste. The reading public delighted in sentimentality, delicate sensations
and emotions, horrific flights of the imagination, and in pathos to madden one. Miss Austen was extremely familiar with these excesses and distrusted them. In Sense and Sensibility she conceived her first major reaction to these excesses. It is a reaction that marks the beginning of her development of the critical novel of manners. But it is the negative side of that development. Miss Austen sees the follies and foibles of human nature as expressed by her predecessors and contemporaries; sentimentality and sensibility used as ends in themselves. She endeavors to show that the novel should not be based on these exceptional interests, but upon real life. And rightly so, for among the first duties of the realist is the correction of romance that has distorted vision and spoiled the perspective of homely things.

Her tool for this is a humorous attack upon excessive indulgence in delicate sensations and imagination run wild; a satirical contrast between Marianne, the extreme emotionalist, sensist, and romanticist, and Elinor, who stands for reason and self-control. Miss Austen censures and ridicules the emotional Marianne by making her look foolish beside the rational, self-controlled Elinor.

This negative side, i.e., the jolting of sentimentalism back to real life, is predominant in Sense and Sensibility; but the fact that she uses ridicule of Marianne to show what the novel should not be does not prevent her from also laughing at
the foibles of the other characters of the story. In this she does not attack any previous work, but merely satirizes human nature in general, and thus begins in a minor way the positive part of her development of the critical novel of manners.

In the negative development as seen in *Sense and Sensibility* Jane Austen shows what the novel should not be by a burlesque of Sensibility. The pattern of her story is a deliberately contrived antithesis between the worlds of actuality and illusion, the worlds of Elinor and Marianne.7

This clever antithesis between the imaginative world of Marianne and the rational one of Elinor is carried through the entire story. At the very beginning Jane Austen describes the love affair of Elinor and Edward Ferrars. As will be seen, it is a sane and rational relationship, devoid of excessive emotion that would make separation unbearable. So, when the separation is really brought on by her family's condition, Elinor reacts in a sane manner, endeavoring to overcome emotion and begin life anew. The family is hardly located in its new home when the violent love affair of Marianne is begun by the arrival of Willoughby on the scene. It is then that Miss Austen builds up the sentimental, emotional, imaginative world customary to her predecessors. Marianne exhibits all the traits of the popular heroine of the day, and this to the dismay of the rational Elinor. Elinor's fears are confirmed when Willoughby deserts Marianne. Here Miss Austen succeeds in portraying all the
violent reactions of the distressed heroine of the sentimental novel. Marianne runs the gamut of depressing emotions. Thus her separation is directly opposed to that of Elinor from Ferrars.

Thereupon follows what might be called the second phase of the story; the two girls visit friends in London where each meets her lover. Of course, each reacts accordingly: Elinor in her usual common sense way, and Marianne with great emotional distress.

To multiply Elinor's trials, Lucy Steele is introduced as the secret fiancee of Ferrars; Elinor manages to overcome her feelings and actually consoles Lucy in her imagined difficulties. On the other hand, Marianne's reaction to Willoughby's new fiancee is in proportion to her unchecked emotions. In this phase of the antithesis Elinor's selflessness and cheerfulness during suffering and disappointment have a good rational basis that contrasts perfectly with Marianne's foolish delight in melancholy. Marianne's indulgence in feeling soon brings on serious illness.

The final phase sees Elinor achieve happiness with Edward Ferrars while Marianne loses Willoughby entirely, though she does win Colonel Brandon and some happiness. But even here Jane Austen uses her satire for one last thrust; Marianne's happiness with Brandon is really due to Elinor. Worst of all, Marianne marries the man whom she had despised through a great part of the story.
From this brief of the story it is evident that Jane Austen's plot is on a very small scale. Moreover, the detailed treatment that follows will show that her main interest is in character, and, as she wrote Mr. Clarke, who requested an historical romance:

... if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter.8

As mentioned already, her laughter in *Sense and Sensibility* is at the incongruities of Marianne's character. Her method is a psychological analysis, and dialogue is the instrument that unfolds each character. Following her psychological analysis through the crisis of the heroine's life, it is natural to affirm that the absurdities of the sentimental novelists have no place in life, and consequently none in fiction. For Jane Austen happiness in life is the result of a rule of reason and not of emotion. So, too, much indulgence in emotional literature must lead to, or at least indicates, the presence of a rule of emotion. Van Meter Ames comments:

We have to learn by experience what the true measure and balance is; we must check fiction by life, and recognize that it is good only as it helps toward a good life.9

... if novels do interest us it must be because they help us to live by giving us cues and suggestions which we need.10
At the very opening of the story Jane Austen contrasts the characters of Marianne and Elinor and comments critically upon their mother's lack of good sense:

Elinor . . . possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgement, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counselor of her mother . . . She had an excellent heart; her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong: but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.\(^1\)

On the other hand:

Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever, but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent.\(^1\)

The death of Mr. John Dashwood, father of Elinor and of Marianne, is the occasion of grief and indulgence in melancholy on the part of Mrs. John Dashwood and Marianne, but of joy on the part of Mr. Henry Dashwood, son of the elder Dashwood by a former marriage and the legal inheritor of the estate. It is that Jane Austen introduces a bit of satire on the selfishness of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood. She drops for the moment her attack upon the sentimental novelists to laugh at human nature in general. In so doing she has produced what has been called one of the most perfect chapters in literature and lightly touched upon the positive side of the development of the critical novel of manners.
The second chapter of *Sense and Sensibility* is, indeed, a small drama in itself. Before its opening we are told that the elder Mr. Dashwood had made his son and heir, Henry, promise to give £1000 to each of his three daughters by his second marriage. Henry Dashwood was not excessively selfish and readily promised to fulfill his dying father's request. But immediately Mrs. Henry Dashwood, his wife, installed herself as mistress of the Norland estate. Thereupon follows the delightfully satirized dialogue between Henry and his wife. Mrs. Henry Dashwood proceeds by clever suggestions to work Henry out of his generous frame of mind. What laughable statements her selfishness leads to! Within a short space she actually convinces Henry that he ought to expect help from his sisters Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret, instead of giving them £1000 each. So, from a promise of considerable material assistance Henry is won over to the idea of helping them find a new home and assisting in the transfer of their belongings. The excessive and clever selfishness of his wife has succeeded in arousing what little selfishness there is in Henry's nature.

A growing attachment between Elinor and Edward Ferrars was one of the reasons for Mrs. John Dashwood's grief at having to leave Norland. Yet Jane Austen describes in Edward a hero very unlike the heroes of the sentimental and horror novels. Edward Ferrars had no "peculiar graces of person or address." He was not handsome. There was a diffidence, a shyness that had to be overcome before his open and affectionate heart was known. In
spite of his mother's wishes, Edward did not want to be distinguished, he "had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life." 12

One day, while the two sisters were discussing Edward, Marianne severely criticises his lack of spirit and feeling; she concludes:

"... if he is not animated by Cowper! Elinor has not my feelings, and therefore she may overlook it, and be happy with him. But it would have broke my heart had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility. Mama, the more I know of the world, the more am I convinced that I shall never see a man whom I really love. I require so much! He must have all Edward's virtues, and his person and manners must ornament his goodness with every possible charm." 13

But Elinor's sane judgement is a welcome contrast:

"I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments, and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and upon the whole I venture to pronounce that his mind is well informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure." 14

Of course, Marianne and her mother consider Elinor deeply in love; in fact, Marianne chides her sister for not rushing headlong ahead, calls her cold-hearted, and threatens to leave the room if she ever again says that she merely esteems Edward. But Elinor's good sense foresees serious obstacles to their marriage: their removal from Norland, their now very limited income. With
this in mind she refrains from beginning a serious attachment that might later need to be dropped with heart-breaking consequences.

When the three girls and their mother leave Norland, Elinor's sane regard for Edward has its own reward. For she is able to control her emotions and thus make their separation bearable. Marianne's emotional nature was jolted by their cold adieus:

"... How cold, how composed were their last adieus. How languid their conversation the last evening of their being together. In Edward's farewell there was no distinction between Elinor and me: it was the good wishes of an affectionate brother to both ... and Elinor, in quitting Norland and Edward, cried not as I did. Even now her self-command is invariable. When does she try to avoid society, or appear restless and dissatisfied in it?" 15

Shortly after they had been settled at Barton Cottage, Marianne sprained her ankle and was carried home by Mr. Willoughby. Marianne is infatuated at once with this young man of quick imagination, lively spirits, and frank, open, affectionate manners. He is exactly the man to engage Marianne's heart. She is extremely frank and open with him from the very beginning. Elinor reprimanded her sister's incautious familiarity that had led her, in one morning, to ascertain Willoughby's opinion on every matter of importance. Jane Austen is now gradually building up Marianne's world of illusion:

His society became gradually her most exquisite enjoyment. They read, they talked, they sang together; his
musical talents were considerable; and he read with all the sensibility and spirit which Edward had unfortunately wanted.16

Through Elinor's comment to Colonel Brandon, a mild, middle-aged admirer of Marianne, Jane Austen speaks her mind regarding Marianne's romance with Willoughby:

"There are inconveniences attending such feelings as Marianne's which all the charms of enthusiasm and ignorance of the world cannot atone for. Her systems have all the unfortunate tendency of setting propriety at nought; [sic] and a better acquaintance with the world is what I look forward to as her greatest possible advantage." 17

To Elinor, Marianne's actions indicate nothing but the most serious of intentions towards Willoughby. Several incidents lead her to believe that they are secretly engaged. The facts later prove that Marianne did foolishly consider herself bound to Willoughby, but that he had no such intention. Willoughby was attracted very much by Marianne, even attached to her, but the family's lack of money ultimately forced him abruptly to end the little romance. His explanation to Marianne is brief and leaves her in a terrible state of nerves. Thus his departure is the occasion for all the effects of the sentimental novelist; Marianne has no desire to control her weeping, her melancholy thoughts, and her melting sighs; on the contrary, she delights in these sensations. It is especially noteworthy that Elinor sees through Willoughby's insincerity, while Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne are blinded by sentiment and seek to excuse him.
Marianne's emotional nature led by an unruly imagination has built up a world of illusion only to see it topple down, and now her depression is as uncontrolled as her former elation:

This violent oppression of spirits continued the whole evening. She was without any power, because she was without any desire of command over herself. 18

Having shown the bad effects of Marianne's lack of common sense, Jane Austen now brings forward Edward Ferrars as a contrast to Willoughby. At least part of the conversation between the realist Ferrars and sentimental Marianne is worth quoting:

"Now, Edward," said she, calling his attention to the prospect, "there is Barton valley. Look up it, and be tranquil if you can. Look at those hills! Did you ever see their equals? To the left is Barton Park, amongst those woods and plantations . . . And there, beneath that farthest hill which rises with such grandeur, is our cottage."

"It is beautiful country," he replied; "but these bottoms must be dirty in winter."

"How can you think of dirt, with such objects before you?"

"Because," replied he, smiling, "amongst the rest of the objects before me, I see a very dirty lane." 19

After a week at the cottage, Edward resolved to leave. This gives Jane Austen an opportunity to give Marianne an example in behaviour. For Elinor's reaction to their separation is directly opposed to her sister's sentimental and emotional reaction to Willoughby's absence:

Their means were as different as their objects, and equally suited to the advancement of each. Elinor
sat down to her drawing-table as soon as he was out of the house, busily employed herself the whole day, neither sought nor avoided the mention of his name, appeared to interest herself almost as much as ever in the general concerns of the family.20

Though such action might not lessen her grief, it controlled her feelings and spared her mother and sister much worry on her account. To be sure, Marianne failed to see the merit in such action, just as she was not able to see the fault in her own excessive indulgence in sensibility.

Moreover, Elinor is called upon to bear even more, for Lucy Steele maliciously confides her long and secret engagement to Edward Ferrars. In this psychological crisis of Elinor's life Jane Austen spreads all her thoughts before us: her doubts as to Edward's sincerity, her own chances of happiness, her future course of action with Lucy, her desire to avoid giving pain to her mother and sisters; all are weighed in the same, reasonable manner of Elinor, so that she soon becomes reconciled to the separation, while Marianne expects Willoughby at the arrival of every carriage.

Their trip to London with Mrs. Jennings only serves to increase Marianne's hopes of seeing Willoughby. Imagination running riot, emotions at their highest pitch, Marianne believes a gentleman visitor to be her lover; consequently, those same feverish spirits drop the girl to the lowest possible ebb when the visitor turns out to be Colonel Brandon. Marianne writes several frantic letters to Willoughby, and then for days she
derives pleasure in the anxiety of expectation and pain of
disappointment. She works herself into such a state of agitation
over expectation of Willoughby's arrival that she is "fit for
nothing." 21

Though Willoughby fails to reply to Marianne's repeated
letters, they meet at a dance. As usual, Marianne fails to
control her feelings, and this is the more humiliating since
Willoughby acts as though they had never met before. Marianne's
reaction is terrific; Jane Austen raises the floodgates of the
old sentimental novel whose heroine, like Marianne, is always
heir to the most distressing situations imaginable.

Elinor discovers that there had never been a real engagement;
Marianne's affectionate and frank nature had, it was true,
always considered herself bound to Willoughby and believed that
he felt the same way. Strange, though, Marianne does not blame
 Willoughby, but "all the world, rather than his own heart." 22

Elinor attempts to arouse Marianne's pride as a means of counter-
acting her overwhelming grief, but Marianne would have none of
this:

"Elinor, Elinor, they who suffer little may be proud
and independent as they like--may resist insult, or
return mortification--but I cannot. I must feel--I must
be wretched--and they are welcome to enjoy the conscious-
ness of it that can." 23

Having brought Marianne to the climax of sentimentality,
Jane Austen does not take up a new strain, but plays up to the
full this opportunity for contrast. Marianne becomes the help­less victim of her own unruly imagination and uncontrolled emotions; there are enough tears, self-pity, melancholy, and pathos to madden one. Illness soon follows, and throughout this phase Jane Austen clearly indicates that Marianne has only herself to blame and that it would be far better for her own sake and for those around her, if she could even now control her sorrow. Besides, Elinor is obviously suffering far more in the secret of her heart from the clever inuendos of Lucy Steele regarding her relations with Edward Ferrars; and this through no fault of her own.

In her treatment of this crisis in Marianne's life Jane Austen proves her ability as a judge of character and a sound philosopher of life.

Elinor had not needed this to be assured of the injustice to which her sister was often led in her opinion of others, by the irritable refinement of her own mind, and the too great importance placed by her on the delicacies of a strong sensibility, and the graces of a polished manner. Like half the rest of the world, . . . Marianne, with excellent abilities and an excellent disposition, was neither reasonable nor candid. 24

This insistence upon reason as the guide of life shows Jane Austen's conviction that the intellect and will must rule the inferior faculties in man. For Miss Austen, there is no hierarchy of values, no true peace and happiness, where the lower faculties are allowed to rule the higher. Throughout this antithesis it is clear that Elinor's selflessness and
cheerfulness during the suffering and disappointment at losing Edward to Lucy are ultimately due to her rational mode of procedure. In contrast, Marianne's life in the land of illusion and imagination, her delight in emotional experiences lead to serious illness, unhappiness, and worry for those around her.

Moreover, it is the example of Elinor that ultimately gives Marianne courage and strength. For Elinor, led by Lucy's insistence that Edward marry her, finally tells her sister the story of Edward's unfortunate engagement to Lucy. The realization of what Elinor has suffered for four months quite subdues Marianne:

"Oh! Elinor," she cried, "you have made me hate myself for ever. How barbarous have I been to you! --you, who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me! --Is this my gratitude? Is this the only return I can make you? Because your merit cries out upon myself, I have been trying to do it away." 25

But Marianne is not so easily reformed. Their visit to Cleveland gives her splendid opportunities to brood over the happy days spent with Willoughby; a foolish indulgence in melancholy leads her to ramble in the woods on a wet day; she catches a serious cold and fever. This brings Willoughby to Cleveland, where he explains his actions to Elinor, proving that he is not entirely without honor and that his marriage to Miss Grey was brought on by his need of money. Then Marianne realizes that his object never was her happiness.
"... I have nothing to regret--nothing but my own folly." 26

Her mother also shows signs of a chastened spirit:

"Rather say your mother's imprudence, my child," said Mrs. Dashwood; "she must be answerable." 27

The final happiness of Elinor is achieved through a clever piece of satire on the part of Jane Austen. The early romance of Elinor and Edward had always been opposed by his mother's pride. The vain Mrs. Ferrars, who saw little in poor Elinor, saw still less in Lucy Steele. When Lucy's engagement to Edward became known, Mrs. Ferrars disinherited Edward, at once giving the estate over to her younger son, Robert. Of course, Lucy's eyes had always been fixed on Edward's money, and it does not take her long to switch to Robert. Jane Austen's comment here proceeds from Elinor to Edward:

"... And your mother has brought on herself a most appropriate punishment. The independence she settled on Robert, through resentment against you, has put it in his power to make his own choice; and she has actually been bribing one son with a thousand a-year, to do the very deed which she disinherited the other for intending to do." 28

Edward Ferrars had never loved Lucy; it was his sense of honor that made him feel obliged to fulfill an obligation foolishly incurred at nineteen. Now free, he and Elinor marry.

Meanwhile, Marianne has learned to esteem Colonel Brandon; they are married, and her naturally affectionate nature soon
becomes devoted to him. This conclusion provides Miss Austen with another quip at the sentimental Marianne, for she had always dreaded second affections:

Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favorite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another! --and that other, a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event of a former attachment, --whom, two years before, she had considered too old to be married, --and who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat! 29

Thus does Jane Austen deliberately mock the world of illusion built up by the sentimental novelists. Marianne's troubles are a direct consequence of her surrender to this imaginary world:

... and mockery of the illusionary world is inextricably involved with the action. 30

Mary Lascelles' clear analysis of Marianne's actions indicates Jane Austen's attack upon the sentimentalists:

For the misjudgement of people which causes Marianne so much suffering springs directly from her romantic vision of the world, as this from her reading. She has 'abandoned her mind' to it with the generous enthusiasm once admired and recommended. 31

Nor does Lord David Cecil think otherwise; he considers Sense and Sensibility
'an attack on the fundamentals of the Romantic position.' It is a protest against the high value that the romanticists set on 'passion and sensibility and a heart responsive to the beauties of nature,' especially as 'guides to conduct.' It is an assertion that 'Emotion uncontrolled by reason leads you into ludicrous mistakes, involves you in trouble that brings misery both to yourself and any one you have to do with; and in the end, it does not last.'

Undoubtedly, Jane Austen, familiar as she was with the literature and people of the last half of the eighteenth century, conceived this story of conflict between reason and emotion as a direct attack on the absurdities of her predecessors. As such it is an important step in the development of the novel, an effort to jolt the readers and writers of fiction back to reality. And, as an attack on the absurd sentimentalists, it demonstrates what Jane Austen considered the novel should not be.

Moreover, her laughter at the other characters, at human nature in general, is an effort toward the positive part of the development of the critical novel of manners. In addition to the excellent satire of the selfish Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood, Miss Austen capably handles the proud Mrs. Ferrars, the busybody Mrs. Jennings, the silly Mrs. Palmer, and the jealous, scheming Lucy Steele. Following her vivid portrayal of these characters, the reader cannot but admit the justice of her criticism and the truth of her painting. For these types really exist to stir up similar troubles today.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

10. Ibid., p. 133.
12. Ibid., pp. 16, 17.
13. Ibid., pp. 19, 20.
15. Ibid., p. 43.
16. Ibid., p. 53.
17. Ibid., p. 61.
18. Ibid., p. 89.
19. Ibid., p. 95.
20. Ibid., pp. 111, 112.
21. Ibid., p. 78.
22. Ibid., p. 200.
24. Ibid., p. 213.
25. Ibid., p. 280.
27. Idem.
28. Ibid., p. 392.
29. Ibid., p. 407.
30. Lascelles, Mary, op. cit., p. 66.
31. Ibid., pp. 64, 65.
32. Cecil, Lord David, Introduction to Sense and Sensibility, Oxford, 1931, p. xiii, (quoted by Lascelles, Mary, Jane Austen and Her Art, p. 120)
CHAPTER IV

NORTHANGER ABBEY

Sense and Sensibility, the first conception of Miss Austen's mind, was a direct attack upon the excesses of her predecessors in the field of fiction. Her second, Northanger Abbey, is a similar attack, this time more directly aimed at the horrific flights of the Gothic romance.

Northanger Abbey, not printed until 1818, after the author's death, is known to have been written in 1798-99 because of its identity with Susan;

The identity of Susan and Northanger Abbey is proven by the notice prefixed to the first edition of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion.¹

Moreover, that Northanger Abbey was conceived before Pride and Prejudice is admitted by various critics,² and can be gathered from the words of Jane Austen herself in the "Advertisement by the Authoress" which prefaced the book on its publication (it was sold to the publisher in 1803); she writes:

... the public are entreated to bear in mind that thirteen years have passed since it was finished, many more since it was begun ... 

So we can justly conclude that Northanger Abbey was the second conception of her mind, if not an earlier still.

Here, as in Sense and Sensibility, we find a negative
development of the critical novel of manners; Miss Austen is showing us what the novel should not be by satirizing the excesses of the Gothic romance. We cannot doubt this deliberate satirical attack, but we are aware that it is not so strong, perhaps not so ironical as the laugh had at the expense of Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*. F. Warre Cornish considers that Miss Austen gradually found Catherine Morland more and more attractive, so that she partially dropped the mock-romantic trend and replaced false sentiment with true. Whether this be so or not, her satire of Gothic romancers remains certain and predominant; this attack upon previous and contemporary excesses, being a phase in Miss Austen's development of the novel of manners, claims attention here.

M. Sadleir, in his essay "Northanger Novels," states that Miss Austen is particular in her quarry; she is out after the Gothic Romance, and sets her snares with care and ingenuity. But his essay is restricted to a consideration of the seven horror novels recommended to Catherine by Isabella Thorpe very early in the story. This chapter, however, will trace throughout the novel Miss Austen's attempts to ridicule the follies of the early romancers. In passing, it might be well to note that Sadleir considers horror novels such as *Clermont* really "tales of the day, with characters of recognizable humanity," and consequently indicative of the emotionalism of those times.

Romanticism had drunk immoderately of new emotions, and needed sharp castigation from good sense.
What, then, is her method of satire in *Northanger Abbey*? Again Miss Austen's tool is contrast, but this time a subtle and intricate one with several inter-woven threads. On the one hand is Catherine Morland, a young, inexperienced girl, deficient in many respects because of a neglectful mother, yet not a foolish girl. At the critical transition period between girlhood and womanhood she enters the little world of Bath for the first time. Her simple nature is naturally open to the various snares of emotionalism placed before her. As the story opens, the opposite pole of the contrast is swung into position by Jane Austen herself, later by Henry Tilney, and by Isabella Thorpe, who suggest to Catherine the characteristics of the true Gothic heroine. As a result Catherine develops a romantic imagination that looks for melancholy horrors, but finds only the common realities of life. It is Henry Tilney who eventually leads her sound, but inexperienced judgment into saner ways of procedure.

Jane Austen's opening sentence challenges the Gothic romance whose heroine was always delicately reared, of unearthly beauty, and persecuted by some villain.

No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Catherine had none of the qualifications of the Gothic heroine; her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition: all contrary to the usual 'lovely weather of romance.'
... Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any. She had a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without color, dark lank hair, and strong features;\(^9\)

As Catherine grew up "she read all such works as heroines must read." She improved somewhat: "she could not write sonnets, but she read them" ... she did not throw "a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the piano-forte of her own composition," but, she could listen to others "with very little fatigue." "She had no notion of drawing," and reached seventeen "without having inspired one real passion."\(^{10}\)

How different Catherine Morland is from the usual Gothic heroine can be seen from the actual description of Madeline Clermont, the heroine of Clermont, one of the seven horror novels mentioned in Northanger Abbey; Madeline Clermont was
tall and delicately made, nor was the symmetry of her features inferior to that of her bodily form. Her eyes, large and of the darkest hazel, ever true to the varying emotions of her soul, languished beneath their long silken lashes with all the softness of sensibility and sparkled with all the fire of animation; her hair, a rich auburn, added luxuriance to her beauty, and by a natural curl, gave an expression of the greatest innocence to her face; the palest flush of health just tinted her dimpled cheek and her mouth, adorned by smiles, appeared like a half-blown rose when moistened with the dews of early morn.\(^{11}\)

The heroine of the Gothic romance is far removed from the character of Catherine, who is affectionate, cheerful and open, just removed from the awkwardness and shyness of a girl, and when in good looks, merely pretty; certainly Jane Austen is at
pains to contrast Catherine's qualities with those usual to the heroine of the horror novel.

Moreover, Catherine's journey from her home at Fullerton to Bath lacks all the thrills that accompany journeys in the horror novel:

It was performed with suitable quietness and uneventful safety. Neither robbers nor tempests befriended them nor one lucky overturn to introduce them to the hero.

So, too, her first night among the dancers in the ball-room; no one asked her to dance, no one noticed her until the dancing was over and the crowd began to disperse; and even then

Not one . . . started with rapturous wonder on beholding her, no whisper of eager inquiry ran round the room, nor was she once called a divinity by anybody.

Very soon Catherine is introduced to the hero, Mr. Henry Tilney, whose task is to remind her of the duties of a heroine and point out to her the differences between her situation as developed in Gothic romance and as it is really developing. At their first meeting his queer remarks indicate that he believes Catherine is like most young ladies, sophisticated and very gay. Catherine's reaction shows her simplicity and naivete.

Then, for the moment, Jane Austen, puts Catherine into the hands of Isabella Thorpe, who enchants her, introduces her to the thrilling horror novels, and furnishes an example that helps rouse her romantic imagination. From the following conversation it is evident how soon Catherine develops a taste for Gothic
romance; Isabella addresses Catherine:

"Have you gone on with Udolpho?"
"Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil... Oh! I am delighted with the book."
"... when you have finished Udolpho, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you... Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries."
"... are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?"

Catherine's friendship with Isabella Thorpe progressed rapidly; in a short time they were calling one another the most endearing names and spending all their time together. But Isabella's company was such as to encourage the well-known "prattle of young ladies to their confidantes about their beaux and sprigged muslin robes." Isabella's brother, John, also has a share in firing Catherine's imagination, though she is not in the least attracted toward him.

After a week's absence Henry Tilney again meets Catherine; they dance, have a long chat, and Henry becomes aware of her simplicity and intellectual inexperience.

Their later meeting at the theater serves to reveal still further Catherine's simplicity and offers in Henry's severity an unromantic, unimaginative hero. She makes an open, frank avowal that indirectly betrays her love for Henry; yet Miss Austen insists that

Feelings rather natural than heroic possessed her.
Noteworthy, too, is the fact that Jane Austen does not hurry her Catherine into the follies of an unruly romantic imagination. From the beginning she has insisted that the heroine is basically sound in her judgments, but too simple, too inexperienced and trustful; as Lascelles mentions, Catherine's perceptions are

... merely clouded for a while by the perplexities of the passage from child to woman.16

Moreover, Henry observes good taste in Catherine in spite of the fact that her imagination and emotions are beginning to get control of her reason. Catherine accompanies Henry and his sister, Eleanor, on a walk; he perceives good taste in Catherine's interest and aptitude in picking up his scattered remarks concerning the art of drawing. Among other things they discuss the horror novels and all confess a liking for them; Catherine praises Udolpho:

"But now, really, do not you think Udolpho the nicest book in the world?" 17

This gives Jane Austen an opportunity to satirize the incorrectness of language; it is Henry that instructs Catherine:

"The nicest; by which I suppose you mean the neatest. That must depend upon the binding." 17

Miss Tilney reprimands her brother's impertinence, while Catherine's reply shows her simplicity:
"I did not mean to say anything wrong; but it is a nice book, and why should not I call it so?"

"Very true," said Henry, "and this is a very nice day; and we are taking a very nice walk; and you are two very nice young ladies. Oh! it is a very nice word, indeed! it does for everything. Originally, perhaps, it was applied only to express neatness, propriety, delicacy, or refinement; people were nice in their dress, in their sentiments, or their choice. But now every commendation on every subject is comprised in that one word." 17

During this same walk Catherine's remarks concerning a forthcoming horror novel serve to indicate the state of her mind after only a few week's acquaintance with such literature:

"I have heard that something very shocking indeed will soon come out in London."

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"... it is to be more horrible than anything we have met with yet."

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"... It is to be uncommonly dreadful. I shall expect murder and everything of the kind." 18

Catherine's imagination, her emotions, and her simplicity are now sufficiently misled. So Miss Austen has her invited to spend a few weeks at Northanger Abbey, the Gloucestershire home of General Tilney, where her romance-fed imagination will reach its climax of folly. Here Miss Austen finally allows Catherine to give in to all the delusions furnished by various friends and by her own reading of the horror novels. A premonition is seen in her reaction to the invitation to visit Northanger Abbey:
Northanger Abbey! These were thrilling words, and wound up Catherine's feelings to the highest pitch of ecstasy.

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... and she was to be for weeks under the same roof with the person whose society she mostly prized; and in addition ... this roof was to be the roof of an abbey! Her passion for ancient edifices was next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney, and castles and abbeys made usually the charm of those reveries which his image did not fill.

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Its long, damp passages, its narrow cells and ruined chapel, were to be within her daily reach, and she could not entirely subdue the hope of some traditional legends, some awful memorials of an injured and ill-fated nun.19

It is Henry Tilney that Jane Austen uses to set on fire Catherine's already smoldering imagination. During the trip from London to the Abbey Henry jokingly builds up in true Radcliffe style the romantic possibilities of the Abbey for the all too serious Catherine:

He smiled and said, "You have formed a very favorable idea of the abbey."

"To be sure I have. Is not it a fine old place, just like what one reads about?"

"... Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?"

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"... you must be aware that when a young lady is introduced into a dwelling of this kind, she is always lodged apart from the rest of the family ... she is formally conducted by Dorothy, the ancient housekeeper, up a different staircase, and along many gloomy passages, into an apartment never used since some cousin of kin died in it about twenty years before. Can you stand
such a ceremony as this! Will not your mind misgive you, when you find yourself in this gloomy chamber, too lofty and extensive for you, . . . ?" 20

So Henry Tilney proceeds at some length to describe a room with all the trappings of the Gothic novel: a single feeble lamp, a funereal appearance, queer furniture, a lifesize portrait of some warrior, echoing footsteps, hints of a haunting spirit, no lock on the door, an unquiet slumber, a violent storm, frightful gusts of wind, the hidden secret passageway leading to a chapel of St. Anthony two miles away, the dagger stained with blood, the instruments of torture, the precious hidden manuscript memoirs of wretched Matilda, and so on. All during this lengthy description Catherine fails to perceive that Henry is joking; her book-fed imagination can no longer discriminate between fact and fiction.

But Henry was too much amused by the interest he had raised to be able to carry it further; he could no longer command solemnity either of subject or voice and was obliged to entreat her to use her own fancy in the perusal of Matilda's woes. 21

The first few details of the Abbey are rather disappointing to one in Catherine's frame of mind; Jane Austen's bright laughter begins:

To pass between lodges of modern appearance, to find herself with such ease in the very precincts of the abbey, and driven so rapidly along a smooth, level road of fine gravel, without obstacle, alarm, or solemnity of any kind, struck her as odd and inconsistent. 22
Her first impression of the inside of the abbey also fails to measure up to the anticipations of her imagination. Yet she does not suspect that Henry had been joking, and, on finding an immense heavy chest in her room, she conjures up curiosity, fear, trembling, and alarm at what it might contain. Here Miss Austen uses suspense and delay so that Catherine is almost frantic when she finally opens the chest; we laugh at her discovery that

... gave to her astonished eyes the view of a white cotton counterpane, properly folded, reposing at one end of the chest in undisputed possession. 23

Catherine is surprised and ashamed at her absurd expectations, especially since Miss Tilney enters the room just as she is gazing at the harmless contents of the chest.

That same night occurs the famous manuscript episode that serves to humble Catherine, but fails to cure her unruly imagination now eager for the thrill of emotional experiences. Miss Austen describes a stormy night, perfect for the recollection of all the horrible things Catherine had read, and of Henry's description of Northanger Abbey. Just as the fire dies down, she discovers an old-fashioned black cabinet that recalls Henry's words about an ebony cabinet. Tremulous, alarmed, and expectant, she succeeds after much effort in opening its various doors to discover a roll of paper.

Her heart fluttered, her knees trembled, and her cheeks grew pale. She seized, with an unsteady hand, the precious manuscript, for half a glance sufficed to
ascertain written characters; and while she acknowledged with awful sensations this striking exemplification of what Henry had foretold, resolved instantly to peruse every line before she attempted to rest.24

Not so quickly Jane Austen seems to say, for Catherine's candle is snuffed, she is seized with horror, there is a violent gust of wind, the darkness, distant footsteps, and a slamming door prove too much for her; Catherine, in a cold sweat, jumps into bed to remain there for hours a prey of her foolish fears until weariness drives her to sleep. Again Jane Austen has set the stage with all the well-known paraphernalia of the horror novels, and she is ready for her laugh at such foolish indulgence of the emotions. As soon as she wakes Catherine remembers the manuscript and hurries to examine it. It would be difficult to find a more incongruous situation, for, after a night spent in horror, fear, and expectation, she discovers:

An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters ... she held a washing-bill in her hand. ... Shirts, stockings, cravats and waistcoats, faced her in each sheet ... Such was the collection of papers ... which had filled her with expectation and alarm, and robbed her of half her night's rest! She felt humbled to the dust. Could not the adventure of the chest have taught her wisdom? ... Nothing could now be clearer than the absurdity of her recent fancies.25

Catherine's thoughts on this occasion clearly indicate Jane Austen's intention of satirizing the excesses of her predecessors. Led by the hand of Miss Austen, she had followed the path beaten by so many Gothic heroines; a path beset with hysterical sentiment, false romance, the thrilling sensation of horror sought
for its own sake, a subordination of character to the manufacture of incidents intended to bring about terror. But, unlike the Gothic heroine, Catherine is being jolted back to reason and reality by a humiliating awareness of the absurdity and laughableness of her actions while in this land of illusion created by her imagination.

But Jane Austen realizes that there are still further possibilities in Catherine's state of mind. For, in spite of her previous mistakes, Catherine now allows her imagination to conjure up many suspicions about General Tilney; this is the more blameworthy in that he is her host and Henry's father. Her suspicions center around the absence of Mrs. Tilney and in her reluctance to believe she died a natural death. Such small incidents as General Tilney's refusal to show her through the entire abbey, his avoidance of the garden path used by Mrs. Tilney, his dislike of viewing her portrait, his gruffness to Eleanor regarding the one section of the abbey not to be shown to the guest, his own late hour of retiring; all these at first lead Catherine to believe that the elder Tilney is bothered by a guilty conscience that reproaches him for tormenting his wife to death, and later to suspect that Mrs. Tilney is still alive, a prisoner in that section of the abbey forbidden to her. In all this Jane Austen makes clear Catherine's foolish avoidance of the fact that she has been told that Mrs. Tilney died a natural death; imagination blinds reason to create a world of illusion where she can indulge in sensations of horror.
Catherine compares General Tilney to the notorious villain of the Gothic novel:

It was the air and attitude of a Montini! What could more plainly speak the gloomy working of a mind not wholly dead to every sense of humanity, in its fearful review of past scenes of guilt? Unhappy man! 26

It is Henry who ultimately leads Catherine back to a common sense way of acting; both he and his sister help to remove the clouds of inexperience from Catherine's judgment. But she also needs the added remedy of humiliation. She discovers that there is nothing unusual about Mrs. Tilney's room; Jane Austen has Henry meet Catherine as she sneaks from his dead mother's room; he realizes her foolish suspicions and reasons with her:

"If I understand you rightly, you have formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to--

Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English: that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. . . . what ideas have you been admitting?

*****)

The visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened. Henry's address, short as it had been, had more thoroughly opened her eyes to the extravagance of her late fancies than all their several disappointments had done. 27

Moreover, Catherine at last realizes her foolishness and she forms a resolution
Of always judging and acting in the future with the greatest good sense, 29

That her reform is permanent is obvious from the control she has over her emotions at the loss of Isabella's friendship and later when General Tilney orders her home upon discovering that Catherine is not of a wealthy family. For once the heroine is in real trouble, but she succeeds in controlling her imagination, her fears, and makes the trip home safely. It is obvious, too, that Jane Austen dwells upon the ignominy of Catherine's return home, so contrary to that of the true Gothic heroine:

But my affair is widely different; I bring back my heroine to her home in solitude and disgrace, and no sweet elation of spirits can lead me into minuteness. A heroine in a hack post-chaise is such a blow upon sentiment as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand. 30

Even Henry's proposal to Catherine, though a source of happiness to both, is markedly unheroic:

I must confess that his affection originated in nothing better than gratitude; or in other words, that a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought. It is a new circumstance in romance, . . . and dreadfully derogatory of an heroine's dignity; 31

So Catherine Morland, led by Henry Tilney, leaves her world of illusion to enjoy the real world of true happiness with a good heart and disciplined judgment.

Thus, Northanger Abbey, like Sense and Sensibility, can be taken as Jane Austen's demonstration of what the novel should
not be. Its object was to make fun of the literature of horror and sentimentality, to satirize the folly of a romantic imagination wandering about its hysterical world to be violently confronted with the realities of life. As her best effort at mocking false romance, Northanger Abbey marks another step in the development of the critical novel of manners.

Like Sense and Sensibility, this novel also contains much satire that is not a direct attack upon the work of other novelists. Her laughter has plenty of scope in General Tilney, a proud, money-grabbing aristocrat, in John Thorpe, a noisy, flashy, insincere young man, and in Isabella Thorpe, a young lady with agreeable manners, but who seeks only personal advantage.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


9. *Idem.*


16. Lascelles, Mary, *Jane Austen and Her Art*, p. 64.


21. Ibid., p. 162.
22. Ibid., p. 163.
23. Ibid., p. 167.
24. Ibid., pp. 172, 173.
25. Ibid., p. 175.
26. Ibid., pp. 191, 192.
27. Ibid., pp. 213, 204.
28. Ibid., p. 205.
29. Ibid., p. 206.
30. Ibid., p. 241.
CHAPTER V

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

The next conception of Jane Austen's mind, Pride and Prejudice, is not an attack upon the ridiculous sentimentality and false romance of other novelists, "... nobody strays from Longbourn into the world of illusion;" it is rather an application of her satirical spirit to the manners of contemporary society. Thus it constitutes the first complete positive contribution toward her development of the critical novel of manners and represents her idea of what the novel should be. In this chapter, then, the emphasis shifts from the negative to the positive development, from her attacks upon the foolish excesses of emotional novels to her attack upon foolish people; in Pride and Prejudice it is the follies and foibles of contemporary society that arouse Jane Austen's laughter. In the two novels so far considered there is a mockery of the illusionary world that is inextricably involved in the action. "Pride and Prejudice is not bookish in this sense." 2

The principal target of her attack in Pride and Prejudice is the pride of Mr. Darcy and the prejudice of Elizabeth Bennett, but the minor characters of the story are also singled out for barrages of laughter. The stupid and pompous Mr. Collins, the morally indolent Mr. Bennett, the silly Mrs. Bennett, and the proud Lady Catherine; all are characters true to the social
relations of the nineteenth century; all are portrayed with a subtle irony as seen through the eyes of Elizabeth. Much could be said about Miss Austen's realistic treatment of and her laughter at the expense of these minor characters, but the chief concern is centered in Darcy and Elizabeth.

Early in the story Miss Austen brings about a clash between Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's prejudice; she then uses the follies and foibles of the various minor characters to increase and intensify this pride and prejudice until the climactic and haughty proposal of Darcy at Hunsford. From then on Elizabeth's prejudice weakens and Darcy's pride is humbled into a strong love. The pattern of Pride and Prejudice

... is formed by diverging and converging lines by the movement of two people who are impelled apart until they reach a climax of mutual hostility, and thereafter bend their courses towards mutual understanding and amity.3

This pattern has given Pride and Prejudice exceptionally good dramatic qualities that make it easy to study Jane Austen's bright and good-natured laughter at the foibles of society, according as the plot rises, reaches its climax, falls, and concludes.

The following brief summary of the action will indicate the trend of Miss Austen's development and serve as a starting point for further treatment of her critical laughter at the mistakes of Elizabeth and Darcy.
I. Preliminary
- She begins with a satire on Mr. and Mrs. Bennett.
- Darcy's character is briefly described.
- Exciting Force: Darcy rejects Elizabeth as a possible dancing partner; his remarks are overheard by Elizabeth.

II. Rising Action
- Elizabeth reacts to Darcy's proud criticism, and later she refuses to dance with him though he is now not unwilling.
- Mrs. Bennett's silly actions keep Jane at Netherfield with a cold; Elizabeth nurses her; Darcy weakens, but Elizabeth is prejudiced still more by the Bingley sisters; Jane and Bingley fall in love.
- Elizabeth's prejudice increases.
- Darcy and Wickham meet; Wickham prejudices Elizabeth more with his story of how Darcy had wronged him.
- Elizabeth and Darcy dance; Darcy worries about Jane and Bingley.
- Miss Bingley's attempt to clear Darcy of blame in the Wickham affair only angers Elizabeth the more.
- Her family mortify Elizabeth, and Darcy becomes more wary of them.
- Collins proposes to Elizabeth.
- Bingley's departure from Netherfield adds to her prejudice.
- Mrs. Gardiner advises Elizabeth about Wickham; he changes his affections.
- Lady Catherine and Elizabeth have their first conflict.
- Elizabeth and Darcy meet again only to increase her prejudice.
- Fitzwilliam increases her prejudice.
- CLIMAX: Darcy proposes, and Elizabeth refuses him.

III. Falling Action
- Darcy's letter of explanation causes Elizabeth to react in his favor.
- Elizabeth's prejudice changes to affection.
- Elizabeth and Darcy meet at Pemberley, and at the Inn; she notes that he is trying to overcome his pride.
- Lydia elopes with Wickham to drive Elizabeth and Darcy apart again.
- Elizabeth at last realizes her affection for Darcy.
- Mrs. Gardiner relates Darcy's kindness toward Lydia and Wickham.
- Darcy and Bingley again visit Longbourn; Bingley proposes to Jane.
- Elizabeth's second conflict with Lady Catherine.
- Darcy again proposes to Elizabeth who accepts.
IV. Conclusion
- Each acknowledges having undergone a great change.
- Darcy points out that Lacy Catherine's efforts to keep them apart really effected their ultimate happiness.

The length of this novel and the very frequent instances of Miss Austen's satire prevent a detailed examination of her criticism of the manners of Elizabeth and Darcy. A few of the more important points in the development will serve to indicate her method.

Jane Austen describes Mr. Darcy:

- a fine figure of a man... he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration... till his manners gave a disgust...; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance; and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.

The conflict begins when Mr. Bingley points out Elizabeth to Darcy as a possible dancing partner; Darcy's rejection serves as the exciting force:

... turning round he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humor at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men."... Mr. Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings toward him. She told the story, however, with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.

Elizabeth, who is not one to be blind to the follies and nonsense of others, cannot easily forgive the pride of Darcy because he
had mortified her own pride. Blinded by this first prejudice against Darcy she in unaware of Darcy's interest in her later on; she continues to interpret all his actions in the light of their first meeting. One instance of this is seen in her attitude toward Darcy as she notices that his eyes are frequently fixed on her:

She hardly knew how to suppose that she could be an object of admiration to so great a man; . . . She could only imagine however at last, that she drew his notice because there was a something about her more wrong and reprehensible according to his ideas of right, than any person present. This supposition did not pain her. She liked him too little to care for his approbation.6

Elizabeth's intelligence really attracts Darcy, who now and again engages in a battle of wits with her. On one such occasion Elizabeth speaks to Darcy:

"And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody."

"And yours," he replied, with a smile, "is willfully to misunderstand them." 7

The summary mentions Mr. Wickham's story as increasing Elizabeth's prejudice; and some of its great influence on her feelings is traceable to the fact that she has been attracted by this handsome officer. But it would be a mistake to suppose that anyone could see through the insincerity of Wickham. For, as G. K. Chesterton remarks,8 Jane Austen was a shrewd and solid psychologist. She did not create Elizabeth to be a person easily deceived, nor did she create her deceiver a vulgar
imposter. For Wickham was one of those very formidable men who can tell lies by telling the truth. This is exactly what does occur, for Wickham tells Elizabeth only part of the affair between himself and Darcy, the true part, but mentions nothing of his own offenses.

Another indication of Darcy's growing interest in Elizabeth and of her own growing prejudice is seen when she unwittingly accepts his offer to dance; Charlotte Lucas speaks first:

"I dare say you will find him very agreeable."

"Heaven forbid! --That would be the greatest misfortune of all! --To find a man agreeable, whom one is determined to hate! --Do not wish me such an evil." 9

Meanwhile Jane Austen has been cleverly marshalling incidents and characters to feed and increase Darcy's pride until his haughtiness will in turn irritate Elizabeth the more. He is forever confronted with the silliness of Mrs. Bennett and of Elizabeth's younger sisters; and there is the growing affection between Jane, her elder sister, and Mr. Bingley that alarms Darcy. In fact, when he realizes that there is danger of real affection between these two, he urges Bingley to leave the neighborhood for London. This action was well conceived by Miss Austen, for it increases Elizabeth's antipathy for Darcy, for she unwillingly guesses that he is the cause of Bingley's removal from Netherfield.

About this time Mr. Collins, the minister, makes his famous proposal to Elizabeth; she refuses him. His words, so very
laughable, so well conceived as satire, are quoted by every critic, but his second proposal (to Miss Lucas), following almost immediately, is often overlooked. There is bitter irony in the fact that he is accepted by Miss Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend. Moreover, Jane Austen goes to some length to note Miss Lucas' reasons for accepting, and between the lines one feels the ironic stab of satire:

Her reflections were, in general, satisfactory. Mr. Collins, to be sure, was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband. Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honorable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want.

Subsequent to Bingley's departure for London, Jane Austen brings Elizabeth's aunt, Mrs. Gardiner on the scene. She warns Elizabeth not to become attached to such a poor man as Wickham. Elizabeth's promise to try to avoid this at once prepares us for what follows shortly after. For Elizabeth is not the bothered when Wickham becomes attentive to a rich girl; this would indicate Jane Austen's intention that Elizabeth be attracted to Wickham merely because he few her prejudice against Darcy.

In the Gardiners Jane Austen conceived the means of taking care of Jane Bennett who had become sick over the departure of Mr. Bingley. The elder Miss Bennett goes to London with her aunt and uncle and thus leaves Elizabeth free to visit her friend.
Mrs. Collins, at Hunsford. Thus the scene of the story's climax is prepared. For it is at Hunsford that Elizabeth meets Darcy again. But Miss Austen does not make the blunder of having Darcy quickly propose. Rather the more natural thing occurs; Darcy has a terrible battle with his pride. He returns again and again to the cottage of Mr. Collins; he meets Elizabeth frequently in the parks nearby, but succeeds in doing little more than to widen the breach between them. Here again the little incidents are gathered for an overwhelming effect; Darcy's frequent watchfulness of Elizabeth, his failure to develop the social graces, the admission by Darcy's friend, Fitzwilliam, telling Elizabeth that Darcy had saved Bingley from Jane, and even the lack of cheerfulness in Jane's letters. All these serve to increase Elizabeth's dislike for Darcy, and strengthen her first estimate of his character.

Finally, Darcy summons up sufficient courage to propose to Elizabeth. This is the climax that Jane Austen has been summoning all her forces to attain; now she has one supreme laugh at the incongruity of the whole situation. Darcy, who had once haughtily avowed that Elizabeth could not even entice him to dance, now proposes marriage with an overweening pride that never thought of a refusal! But he gets an angry refusal. From Elizabeth's viewpoint the incongruity is equally strong, for she has received a proposal from the man she has forced herself to hate because of prejudice. On the one hand, Darcy had no doubt that he would receive a favorable answer; on the other hand,
Elizabeth had never dreamed Darcy's pride would condescend.
From this magnificent climax Darcy emerges deeply humiliated and
Elizabeth considerably enlightened.

As a matter of fact, Darcy's proposal reflects Jane Austen's conception of his character, as Elizabeth notes:

"I might as well inquire," replied she, "why with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character?" 11

But Elizabeth does not leave him with the impression that his ungracious manner in proposing is all that bothers her; she reminds him of his treatment of Jane and Bingley, and of his wrongs to Wickham, and finally concludes:

"... from the first moment, I may almost say—of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry." 12

Jane Austen's laugh continues, for Elizabeth is soon drifting toward love of the man whom she has so harshly refused. Her attitude begins to change with her perusal of Darcy's letter of explanation of his conduct toward herself, toward Jane and Bingley, and toward Wickham. Miss Austen proves herself an accomplished psychologist in her detailed description of the metamorphosis of Elizabeth's attitude toward Darcy. Slowly,
painstakingly, and with true insight, she reveals all the ruminations of Elizabeth's mind in clearing Darcy of blame. Her first inclination is to regard his explanation as false; then follows a slow realization that the account is probable; then comes the conclusion that Wickham had acted improperly by blaming Darcy in his absence; moreover,

She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.13

She understands, too, Darcy's feelings concerning Jane, whose complacency has hidden her true love for Bingley; and his explanation regarding the manners of her family strikes her as just, though very mortifying. Finally, Elizabeth realizes her prejudice and its bad effects.

It would take Jane Austen to conceive that Wickham, who had served to drive Elizabeth and Darcy apart, should be the incongruous means of again bringing them together. And incongruous in more ways than one, for Wickham elopes with Lydia, a younger sister of Elizabeth and Jane. Their foolish elopement causes much consternation in the Bennett family. Elizabeth, ready to leave Hunsford for home, tells Darcy of her younger sister's folly; here she first realizes her love for Darcy when the thought occurs that now she has lost her power over him because of her family's shocking conduct.

Her power was sinking; everything must sink under such
a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace.

***

... and never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain. 14

In this episode Miss Austen had conceived the crowning humiliation for Darcy's pride; a humiliation that would convince Elizabeth of Darcy's love for her and make possible their future happiness. For Darcy secretly goes to London; he discovers Lydia and Wickham, arranges a respectable marriage, gives them a generous allowance, pays Wickham's debts, and sees them off for Wickham's new army post in the North. All this information comes to Elizabeth by means of a letter from her aunt, Mrs. Gardiner; she at once understands what a humiliation this entire affair must have been for Darcy; in a flutter of spirits

Her heart did whisper that he had done it for her. 15

Her rising hopes soar still higher when Bingley and his sisters again occupy Netherfield. The quick renewal of friendship between Jane and Mr. Bingley augurs well for Elizabeth. Darcy visits Elizabeth several times and a proposal seems imminent. But Jane Austen avoids a commonplace ending by inserting here the second spat between Elizabeth and Lady de Bourgh, who has heard of the impending match. It is an excellent instance of Jane Austen's development by dialogue. Full of silent laughter at the vanity of Lady de Bourgh, who is defeated
by the intelligent repartee on the part of Elizabeth, it holds 
attention throughout and raises a cheer for the victorious 
Elizabeth as the Lady is hustled off in her carriage.

Now it is evident that Elizabeth's regard for Darcy has 
changed from hatred to love, even though she tries to protect her 
self-respect by failing to note how rapidly the change has taken 
place. All along this change has been only half-admitted. And 
now, when she says that she will soon cease to regret Darcy, if 
he should be prevented from seeking her hand by the arguments of 
Lady Catherine, it is clear that she is only trying to hide her 
own anxiety and that her affection is really steadfast. For it 
is Elizabeth herself who prepares the way for Darcy's second 
proposal; her thanks for his kindness toward Lydia and Wickham 
breaks down his habitual reserve and he proposes at the risk of 
another refusal. Affection for Elizabeth has again conquered a 
pride now sufficiently chastened. And Jane Austen with her 
customary avoidance of emotional indulgence has Elizabeth 

... immediately, though not very fluently give him to 
understand that her sentiments had undergone so material 
a change since the period to which he alluded, as to make 
her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present 
assurances.16

It is in accord with Miss Austen's critical attitude that both 
do acknowledge their faults and accept their share of the blame 
since Darcy's first proposal. Even the closing sentences drive 
home a satiric thrust at the snobbish Lady de Bourgh:
she condescended to wait on them at Pemberley, in spite of that pollution which its woods had received, not merely from the presence of such a mistress, but the visits of her uncle and aunt from the city. 17

Other characters who merit Miss Austen's satire are the stupid, pompous prig Mr. Collins, the morally indolent Mr. Bennett, the silly, irresponsible Mrs. Bennett, and the haughty, jealous Bingley sisters.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Lascelles, Mary, *Jane Austen and Her Art*, p. 66.
2. *Idem*.
CHAPTER VI

EMMA

Emma, written in 1814-1815, is an especially representative work of the mature Jane Austen. Written toward the close of her life, most carefully revised, it proposes a heroine beloved by the author herself,¹ and the most general favorite with the reading public.² Consequently, it will surely represent Miss Austen's idea of what the novel should be; in fact, her own words lead us to this same conclusion: "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like." ³ Moreover, an analysis of Emma will place it as an undoubted factor in the positive side of Miss Austen's development of the critical novel of manners: an attack upon the follies and foibles of human society. "Emma—being of a subtler symmetry than Northanger Abbey, more complex than Sense and Sensibility—transcends our notion of burlesque-writing."⁴ Emma, therefore, is not a direct attack upon the work of other novelists previous or contemporary to Miss Austen: "... I think Jane Austen had no particular novel or comedy of intrigue in mind;"⁵ but rather a bit of happy laughter at the incongruities seen in the lives of three or four families in a country village.

Miss Austen again singles out the heroine as the principal target of her laughter, but at the same time the minor characters contribute plentiful material for her satirical spirit. Around
the heroine, Emma, Miss Austen has constructed a "little psychological drama;" it pictures for us a struggle in which "reason and common sense engage with the lures of vanity and self-sufficiency." Miss Austen would have us laugh at the drastic effects of Emma's pride and fancy acting contrary to the better judgment of Mr. Knightley. From Emma's own mind we have the clue to her weakness:

With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of everybody's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange everybody's destiny.

Her pride and fancy lead her into frequent mistakes and humiliations as the story nears its close. But the mortification thus imposed by her own foolish actions brings about a complete change in Emma and ultimately her happiness with Knightley. The beautiful Emma is not proud of her personal appearance, but rather of accomplishments of intellect and manner. It is really a vanity, a delight in being thought wise, prophetic, and self-sufficient; but taking pride in the self-sufficiency of her own powers of judgment, she becomes the dupe of her own fancy. She will have none of the advice of Mr. Knightley, but proceeds in her folly of match-making, of fancying this or that person in love, and of interpreting the feelings and actions of others to suit her own fanciful arrogance. The very name of her home, Hartfield, seems fitted to her propensity for match-making; her own words give us her mind upon the matter;
There does seem to be something in the air of Hartfield which gives love exactly the right direction, and sends it into the very channel where it ought to flow.9

Jane Austen opens the story with a few preliminary remarks about the character and position of her heroine, Emma Woodhouse; she is handsome, clever, rich, twenty-one, of comfortable home and happy disposition, but too used to doing what she liked and disposed to think well of herself. The earliest indication of her propensity for match-making is seen in her efforts to console herself over the loss of her companion, Miss Taylor, with the thought of having promoted the match. Her future antagonist is Mr. Knightley, who alone criticises and opposes her actions.

Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them;10

Certainly Mr. Knightley is not backward about speaking his mind to Emma:

"... but if, which I rather imagine, your making the match, as you call it, means only your planing it, your saying to yourself one idle day, 'I think it would be a very good thing for Miss Taylor if Mr. Weston were to marry her, and saying it again to yourself every now and then afterwards!'--why do you talk of success? where is your merit? What are you proud of? You made a lucky guess; and that is all that can be said."11

But Emma, undaunted by Knightley's criticism, proposes to find a wife for their new clergyman, Mr. Elton. Mr. Knightley laughs at her and advises:
"Invite him to dinner, Emma, and help him to the best of the fish and chicken, but leave him to choose his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven-and-twenty can take care of himself." 12

In spite of his warning, Emma decides that Harriet Smith shall be the wife of Mr. Elton. She frequently invites this young lady to Hartfield and with no little vanity plans the improvement of Harriet's mind. Even the reason for her affection for Harriet is given: "Harriet would be loved as one to whom she could be useful." 13 On questioning Harriet she discovers an affection for Mr. Martin, a farmer. Then Jane Austen satirizes the fastidiousness and pride of Emma, too snobbish to permit Harriet's affection for a farmer. Foolishly blinding herself to the uncertainty of Harriet's descent, she invents her own wishful status to assure herself and Harriet that the latter is the daughter of a gentleman; this prevents her from marrying a farmer, says the ironic Miss Austen. Then, against reason, common sense, and the evident affection of Harriet for Mr. Martin, she depreciates Martin in Harriet's eyes and continually recommends Mr. Elton. Soon the intention of Miss Austen begins to clarify, for Mr. Elton's praise of Harriet is sensed as really flattery of Emma; but the latter insists on interpreting it as admiration of Harriet. Once Emma actually guesses that Elton is becoming too gallant to be in love, but again she is blinded by her determination to match him with Harriet. When Mr. Martin proposes to Harriet, Emma indirectly suggests a refusal. Knightley is furious with Emma, for he reasons that it
would have been a good match for a girl in Harriet's position. When Emma avoids the issue, Knightley retorts:

"Upon my word, Emma, to hear you abusing the reason you have, is almost enough to make me think so too. Better be without sense than misapply it as you do." 14

Jane Austen carries forward the affair of Mr. Elton for considerable space. Throughout this episode Emma's actions are consistent with her character and the intention of the author; it is evident that Emma with self-sufficiency judges everyone's character and frame of mind from his or her look and manner. This mere partial criterion will lead her into many errors, since it is led astray still further by a lively fancy ready to sway her judgment of appearances. Knightley's warnings are offered from time to time, but Emma is too eager and too busy in her own previous conceptions to hear impartially or see with a clear vision either Knightley or Elton. In fact, Knightley even suggests that Elton's attentions are for Emma, but she obstinately insists that she is right.

Now comes the ironic humiliation prepared by Miss Austen; Mr. Elton proposes marriage to Emma. Even then her obstinacy at first leads her to consider Elton an unsteady character rather than suppose her own judgments awry. Finally, realizing her error she is mortified and angry; she is humiliated, too, with the knowledge of her own inferiority of judgment compared with Mr. Knightley, and provoked to think that Elton proposed to one far above himself.
Here, again, Miss Austen proves her ability as a psychologist by accurately laying open all the workings of Emma's mind until the final recognition that

The first error, and the worst, lay at her door. It was foolish, it was wrong, to take so active a part in bringing any two people together. It was adventuring too far, assuming too much, making light of what ought to be serious—a trick of what ought to be simple. She was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more.15

But Emma is by no means cured of her foolish propensity. Before long she has not only built up a fanciful intrigue between Jane Fairfax and Mr. Dixon, but actually fancies herself and Frank Churchill in love. She does not like Jane Fairfax, since Knightley considers her an accomplished woman, and thus somewhat on a par with herself. She allows her fancy to magnify every imputed fault of Jane and meanwhile does some dangerous flirting with Churchill. Knightley's jealousy, only later discovered and understood, opposes her affair with Churchill. That it is only her imagination that gives Churchill the honor of being in love with her is evident from her indifference during his frequent absences.

More foolish surmises really complicate things. Emma now fancies Harriet in love with Churchill, when, in fact, she loves Knightley; Mrs. Weston warns Emma that Jane Fairfax loves Mr. Knightley; and Emma blindly continues her flirtation with Churchill, who is merely using her as a means of distracting the attention of the others from his real preference for Jane. The
whole complication is very neatly conceived; and always in the foreground is Jane Austen's principal intention of pointing out the incongruity of Emma's judgments and actions, a veritable comedy of errors. The satiric thrust is finally driven home until we are aware of its telling effect after the climax of Emma's flirtation with Churchill at the famous strawberry party. While there she insults the garrulous Miss Bates and thereby draws a just reproof from Knightley; Emma is thoroughly humiliated and sorry.

How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates! How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued! And how suffer him to leave her without saying one word of gratitude, of concurrence, of common kindness!16

Meanwhile, though Knightley warns her that Churchill really loves Jane Fairfax, Emma obstinately accuses Knightley of fancying this affair. Such perversity certainly calls down satire on itself; Emma, who has fancifully conceived an affair between Jane and Mr. Dixon and another between herself and Churchill, now accuses Knightley of lacking judgment:

"Oh! you amuse me excessively. I am delighted to find that you can vouchsafe to let your imagination wander; but it will not do—very sorry to check you in your first essay, but indeed it will not do." 17

Angered, Knightley leaves Emma to the satirical laughter she has so justly deserved; she is staggered with the news of the engagement of Churchill and Jane Fairfax. The woman whom she disliked
has won the gentleman with whom she had carried on a serious flirtation, and with whom she had even tried to match Harriet. Emma at last realizes the truth of Knightley's assertion that she would be no friend of Harriet's. Finally, the admission of her lack of common sense again indicates the critical attitude of Miss Austen:

Common sense would have directed her to tell Harriet that she must not allow herself to think of him, and that there were five hundred chances to one against his ever caring for her. "But with common sense," she added, "I am afraid I have had little to do." 18

But Jane Austen does not allow Emma to emerge so easily from the complexity of intrigues she has arranged. The most humiliating laugh of all is yet to come. Emma discovers that Harriet has never cared for Churchill, but is deeply in love with Knightley; this discovery jolts Emma back to reality all along sensed by the reader as the intention of the author, but blurred to the proud, obstinate, fanciful vision of Emma.

A few minutes were sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart. A mind like hers, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress; she touched, she admitted, she acknowledged the whole truth. Why was it so much worse that Harriet would be in love with Mr. Knightley than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet's having some hope of return? It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself! 19

Now Emma must suffer the effects of her foolishness; Jane Austen is merciless:
The rest of the day, the following night, were hardly enough for her thoughts. She was bewildered ... Every moment brought a fresh surprise; and every surprise must be a matter of humiliation to her. ... How to understand the deceptions she had been thus practicing on herself, and living under! The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart.

There follows a lengthy, but excellent psychological analysis of this crisis of Emma's life. Her reflections bring about a complete realization of all her mistakes; she is mortified, melancholic, and irritated by turns. Finally, Miss Austen uses Emma's humiliating confession that she had never cared for Churchill, that it had merely flattered her vanity to receive his attentions, to bring out Knightley's confession of his love for Emma:

"I have blamed you, and lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it. Bear with the truths I would tell you now, dearest Emma, as well as you have borne with them." 21

For a few days Emma's happiness is somewhat checked by the thought of the pain Harriet will feel, but even this is removed by the surprising engagement of Harriet to Mr. Martin. Emma admits that her opinion about farmers and Mr. Martin are changed for the better, that she has been a fool;

Serious she was, very serious, in her thankfulness and in her resolutions; and yet there was no preventing a laugh, sometimes in the midst of them. She must laugh at such a close--such an end of the doleful disappointment of five weeks back--such a heart--such a Harriet! 22

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Harriet was a little distressed—did look a little foolish at first: but having once owned that she had been presumptuous and silly, and self-deceived before, her pain and confusion seemed to die away with the words.23

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The fact was, as Emma could now acknowledge, that Harriet had always liked Robert Martin; and that his continuing to love her had been irresistible. Beyond this, it must ever be unintelligible to Emma.24

Jane Austen has her humorous turn at the end: Emma's father, an old, fussy hypochondriac, puts off the wedding-day in an effort to keep his daughter. But Emma was able to fix the wedding-day because

Mrs. Weston's poultry-house was robbed one night of all her turkeys—evidently by the ingenuity of man. Other poultry-yards in the neighborhood also suffered. Pilfering was house-breaking to Mr. Woodhouse's fears. He was very uneasy; and but for the sense of his son-in-law's protection, would have been under wretched alarm every night of his life.25

In this chapter it has only been possible to treat Miss Austen's criticism of Emma's insufferable vanity; a vanity that led her to consider herself in the secret of all and the arranger of everyone's destiny. Even this limited treatment proves that Emma is a masterful step in the development of the critical novel of manners. But Emma, like Pride and Prejudice, contains much humorous criticism of other human foibles and faults; in addition to the disapproval of Emma's self-sufficient vanity there is the criticism of the garrulous Miss Bates, of the fussy, hypochondriacal Mr. Woodhouse, of the presuming, ill-bred, ignorant Mrs.
Elton; all lead the reader to acknowledge the foolishness, the incongruity of these faults. Moreover, through the artistic eyes of Miss Austen

The reader, being in the secret, looks on at the mistaken and mistaking actors, seeing men and women, variously obtuse, moving into shadows and halflights. This is a delicate psychological humor akin to the higher comedy of Shakespeare.26

Indeed, Emma, as Leonie Villard asserts, 27 can well be called a "Comedy of Errors."
NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

4. Lascelles, Mary, Jane Austen and Her Art, p. 68.
5. Ibid., pp. 68, 69.
9. Ibid., p. 82.
10. Ibid., pp. 9, 10.
11. Ibid., p. 12.
12. Ibid., p. 13.
13. Ibid., p. 27.
15. Ibid., p. 150.
16. Ibid., p. 415.
17. Ibid., p. 386.
18. Ibid., pp. 444, 445.
20. Ibid., p. 455.
21. Ibid., p. 476.
22. Ibid., p. 527.
23. Ibid., p. 533.
24. Ibid., p. 534.
25. Ibid., p. 536.
27. Villard, Leonie, op. cit., p. 118.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It is evident from Chapter II that the novel previous to Miss Austen had fallen into evil ways and needed the castigation of good sense. The foolish sentimentality and sham romance of the early novel had inverted the moral order of things; the indecency of such as "Monk" Lewis was the inevitable result of too much indulgence in emotional literature. Novelists stressed the imaginative, emotional, sense life of man to the detriment of his intellect and will. They were no longer in conformity with reality. This failure to fulfill the obligation to depict life truthfully, to represent it honestly, merits just condemnation. For it would be wrong to overlook a violation of the fundamental truths of human nature.

The final test of the fineness of fiction lies in its veracity.¹

Cleverness, sophistication, and even appeal to the passions will not save the author whose story is not in harmony with the laws of actual life, with reality. Any thoughtful reader will pierce through the sham, will refuse to believe the story, and the whole purpose of the novel will have failed utterly! This is especially true of the Sentimental and Gothic novelists. They are obviously at odds with the moral law, with reality, when they disregard the supremacy of man's intellect and will over his
inferior faculties.

Seeking to stir the imagination and emotions, to indulge the sensations of the reader, the early novelists become ridiculous, tedious, and laughable. Their plots are mainly a string of wild incidents, any of which might be omitted without detriment to the story. The hero and heroine are tossed helpless from one hair-raising escapade to another. Character is always subordinate to the manufacture of incidents that are supposed to bring on terror, horror, and hysterical sentiment. The setting, like the plot, is a mass of unrelated detail. Frequently set in the picturesque past, the Gothic novel strives for a mysterious coloring, the strangeness of a distant age. Page after page of descriptive details of dark forests, gloomy countrysides, weird castles, vaulted and shadowy halls, all to excite the reader's emotions. But the absence of all sense of proportion, of truth and real life, the piling up of queer effects ultimately leads to absurdity.

While the modern reader quickly realizes such falsity and absurdity, it took several decades before a Jane Austen forced the novel into its true and natural mode of life. Even she does not condemn the errors and failings of men. Rather, she states them and indicates the manner in which they are removed from truth and reason. Her efforts to depict life as it really is we have already seen. But it will help to sum up briefly the evidence of the foregoing chapters from the viewpoint of her handling of plot characters, and setting.
Unlike the rambling, disconnected plots of her predecessors, Miss Austen works on a small scale.

Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne had a large way of doing things that resulted in luxuriant but disorderly growth.3

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Jane Austen has purity of form, harmony of arrangement, nibleness of style.3

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The short artistic novel . . . is a largely modern thing . . . Jane Austen is an exception, achieving without models almost impeccable form.4

Plotting with symmetry and parallelism, Miss Austen always keeps a definite objective in mind and tosses out all details that fail to advance this purpose. As we have seen, the parallelism of Sense and Sensibility takes the form of an antithesis between the worlds of imaginative, emotional Marianne and sensible, rational Elinor. We laugh at Marianne's mistakes, we remonstrate with her, we resolve to avoid her absurd conduct. Thus Jane Austen has led the reader to criticize the very essence of the sentimental novel. Her entire plot is built around the fundamental truth that man's intellect and will must rule the emotions and imagination. Miss Austen's ridicule of the opposite in Marianne leads the reader to assent to the correctness of this fundamental truth and to realize that Miss Austen is in harmony with reality.

In Northanger Abbey Miss Austen's purpose is similar, though here the Gothic novel is the target of her ridicule. Chapter IV clearly indicates the plot; this time a more subtle contrast
between the imaginative world of Catherine Morland and the real world so clearly different to the reader. Jane Austen's purpose is attained when it becomes evident that Catherine's judgments are not true to life, but are vitiated by the unwholesome influence of the Gothic novel and the other characters of the story who have taken on emotional traits similar to the characters of the Gothic novel.

In both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* the plot revolves around a young lady who considers herself in love with one man and then finds that without realizing it she has loved another all along. There is symmetry, ease, simplicity, and naturalness in each of these stories that marks the perfection of the critical novel of manners at the hands of Miss Austen. There is a briskness of movement, a quiet but not sluggish action, an articulation of trivial incidents into real progress. Suspense is so well achieved that the reader hangs upon the momentous consequences of a ball or a tea.5

Much of her success in making these trivial incidents and simple plots so vital and interesting Miss Austen owes to her treatment of character. With her predecessors character was subordinate to incident; with her the most important place is given to the direct revelation of character. Her characters are perfectly discriminated from each other, yet all are such as we meet every day. Here lies the secret of her lasting popularity as against the short-lived success of her predecessors.
For in drawing her heroines Jane Austen was able to look at life and reality unhampered by passing conventions of fashion and taste. Instead of adapting them to a preconceived ideal, an artificial conception of woman, she desired to attain to the eternal verities in things human. For the first time, a young girl appeared in a novel exactly what she was in real life. She is in no way idealized, nothing in her character or actions is sacrificed to truth or is commanded by a desire to embellish or modify reality.

Her Elinor, Catherine, Elizabeth, and Emma are representative women. They are simple, and though they are not overpowering in their beauty, the uprightness and nobleness of their characters, the force of their personalities make them worth while knowing for all time.

All of these heroines are what Clayton Hamilton calls kinetic characters. They do not remain unchanged but grow under the influence of circumstances, of their wills, and the wills of those around them. Miss Austen's method of revealing this growth of character has already been seen to be psychological analysis aided by dialogue. Moreover, instead of always using her own assumed omniscience to depict character, she advantageously uses the comment of other characters. This expedient of Jane Austen is apparent in many admirable passages.

The inevitable conclusion to the foregoing chapters is that Jane Austen's treatment of character did a great deal toward forcing the novel back to reality while remaining in the realm of art.

In spite of the sincerity of her realism this art is more than reproduction; it is creation.
There is also an optimistic view of life revealing itself through her characters. It is a philosophy of peace and joy based on an unshakable confidence in One who governs the world and desires order and well-being in all things. It might well be summed up in her own acknowledgement of the necessity of laughing at herself and at others, a healthy laughter that dispells all the melancholy gloom, the thrilling terror, the torn emotions, and indulged passions of the Sentimental and Gothic novels.

Finally, a word about the setting of her novels. Of course, the emotionalists made the setting serve their false purposes. On the other hand, Miss Austen is especially plain in this respect. Sacrificing setting for analysis of character, she treats nature with the same reserve as she treats love, and disdains the rash description of scene found in the Gothic novel. In fact, through one of her characters, Edward Ferrars, she maintains that it is a good thing to admire and love nature, but that the pursuit of the picturesque only is an affectation.

Besides

The nonessential but decorative description was and is of a piece with bad architecture, with functionless battlements and all gingerbread work whatsoever. Happily the soundest writers have instinctively avoided its excesses. 10

Her setting is narrowed still further by the fact that she writes only of the gentry of England. But her careful and exact picture of this class is true to the art of fiction. For this
was the cross-section of society that she knew intimately; about these people she was able to express the truth with admirable fidelity and charm.

A lesser thing done perfectly is often more significant than a bigger thing done badly. Jane Austen is likely to live longer than George Eliot, because she conveyed her message, less momentous though it were, with a finer and a firmer art. Jane Austen's subjects seem, at first glance, to be of very small account. From English middle-class society she selects a group of people who are in no regard remarkable, and thereafter concerns herself chiefly with the simple question of who will ultimately marry whom. But by sedulously dwelling on the non-essentials of life, she contrives to remind the reader of its vast essentials. By talking to us skilfully about many things that do not matter, she suggests to us, inversely and with unobtrusive irony, the few things that really do.

Undoubtedly the success of Jane Austen in representing the truths of human life, not with the repulsive detail of Zola, but with vivacious contrast, with subtle irony, and the use of comic situation, caused the overthrow of sentimentality and pseudo-romance. And her increasing popularity is just another proof that she was justified in her criticism of what the novel should not be, as well as correct in her conception of what the novel should be.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

2. Villard, Leonie, Jane Austen, p. 179.
3. Ibid., pp. 148, 149.
5. Ibid., pp. 54, 55.
7. Hamilton, Clayton, op. cit., p. 82.
8. Ibid., p. 90.
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The thesis, "Jane Austen and the Critical Novels of Manners", written by A. J. Peterman, S.J., has been accepted by the Graduate School with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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