

**A Critical Examination of Three Jane  
Austen Fragments and their Bearing on  
Her Completed Novels.**

Submitted by Anthony Stott in fulfilment of the  
requirements of the degree of Master of Arts, on  
2nd March, 1987.

Supervised by Dr Rodney Edgecombe, in the  
Department of English at the University of Cape  
Town.

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## ABSTRACT

Whereas the novels have been exhaustively treated, Jane Austen's fragments have suffered neglect. My thesis aims to help remedy this lack of critical emphasis. I examine three pieces from the early, middle and late periods of her life -- Catherine or the Bower (1792), The Watsons (1804) and Sanditon (1817). By showing that Northanger Abbey was neither her first attempt at fiction nor Persuasion her last, I argue that a study of these fragments deepens our insight into her creative processes, showing some unexpected shifts of tone and emphasis not immediately apparent in the completed novels.

Chapter I discusses the importance of Catherine or the Bower as an early essay in serious fiction, revealing an interest in certain themes, narrative devices and moral imperatives more subtly developed in her mature works. As the most accomplished of the juvenilia, it shows a move away from the epistolary mode and simple parody of Sentimental excesses towards an exploration of realistic social and economic conditions. I have examined this evolution of form and moral stance in her work, along with her use of spatial detail, and her thematic emphasis on meditation, the abuse of power and the efficacy of proper education.

Chapter II considers The Watsons as another

decisive point in her development as an artist. Grave in tone, the piece locates the heroine in circumstances harsher than those presented in the fiction hitherto. To stress the pain of poverty, loneliness and the prospect of spinsterhood, Jane Austen had to develop new techniques for conveying the thoughts and feelings of a heroine returning to uncongenial home life. Comedy is underplayed to give scope to a celebration of tranquillity and modesty that looks ahead to Mansfield Park, as does the concern with clerical duty.

Chapter III focuses upon Sanditon. Coming after the tenderness of Persuasion, this fragment is disconcertingly robust. In its use of caricature, the device of mistaken identity and mockery of unchecked imagination, it seems like a return to the juvenilia, but new artistic directions are clearly evident. Playing with motifs of speculation, novelty, hypochondria and uncontrolled energy (mental, physical and verbal), Jane Austen condemns the powerful forces of change that threaten traditional life and values. She is less concerned with tracing complex sentiment than with giving prominence to topographical details that stress the impact of change.

The study has been conducted in terms of close analysis of passages stressing various thematic and technical concerns, with cross reference to the complete novels where this has seemed pertinent.

## CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	
Introduction	i - vi
I. <u>Catherine or the Bower</u>	1 - 75
II. <u>The Watsons</u>	76 - 198
III. <u>Sanditon</u>	199 - 301
Bibliography	

To my parents.

I am indebted to Dr Edgecombe for his guidance and encouragement in the preparation of this thesis. I also wish to thank my typist, Mrs Booth, for her thoroughness and patience.

Page references inserted in the text are to:

The Novels of Jane Austen, ed. R.W. Chapman.

5 vols. Third Edition. London: Oxford  
University Press, 1933.

The Works of Jane Austen, ed. R.W. Chapman.

Vol. VI. Minor Works. Third Edition. rev. by  
B.C. Southam. London: Oxford University Press,  
1969.

## INTRODUCTION

This study examines three fragments dating from the early, middle, and late periods of Jane Austen's life and relates them to her finished works. The first piece, Catherine or the Bower, was written in 1792, when she was only seventeen years old. It is remarkably accomplished for so young a writer, and shows clearly her appreciation that fiction has a purpose beyond that of simple entertainment. In many ways this early piece is a precursor of the mature novels, as I hope to show. The fragment is significant because it gives access to Jane Austen's moral intentions as a novelist. Many themes and techniques which later occupied her critical attention are seen here in embryo, and studying them in a relatively simple form enables us to note shifts of emphasis as well as consistencies in the subsequent six novels. Further, examining unfamiliar fragments expands our understanding of Jane Austen's artistic development, and helps correct the impression that Northanger Abbey was her first attempt at writing fiction.

In her youthful compositions, Jane Austen evolved her own style by testing the absurdities of Sentimental novels then in vogue against her own sense of probability. With wit, incisiveness and originality, she compels us to share her heroine's manifold experiences, exercising a deft management of form and a sensitive handling of

character. We are highly fortunate, then, to possess the prentice-work of so eminent a novelist. In it we witness how early, and with what confidence, she formed her own coherent and responsible views of life, and of the power of fiction in relation to it. Because ridicule of contemporary romances depended upon a level-headed attitude towards everyday events, Jane Austen's mockery of Sentimental literature may be seen as the natural prelude to the uncompromising moral standards evinced in her mature works. Moreover, as Halperin says:

Since we have no letters written by her before 1796, the Juvenilia are the surest guide to things she thought about and interested herself in during her adolescence. Above all, they are the surest guide to her — to Jane Austen herself.<sup>1</sup>

Examining the juvenilia is therefore a logical point of departure in appreciating the consistency of Jane Austen's art, between the youthful skits she wrote for family entertainment and the more seriously considered works intended for publication. It is upon the early enunciation of many perennial themes that the first chapter below is focused.

The second fragment I will consider is entitled The Watsons. Written in 1804, it is the only extant work from an apparently unproductive and gloomy period of her

<sup>1</sup> John Halperin, The Life of Jane Austen (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), p.36.

life. Whether by chance or design, this air of melancholy has infected the mood of the piece. The biographical similarities between author and heroine are close, and at least one critic has pursued some of these parallels. My emphasis, however, both here and in my treatment of the other fragments, falls upon the literary bearing that these pieces have upon Jane Austen's completed works, and what a comparison between them reveals about her creative process. To see her work in an unfinished or experimental state helps show the pains she took to achieve apparent spontaneity, ease and grace.

The Watsons is as different in tone from Catherine or the Bower as it is from Sanditon — the third fragment to be discussed — and certainly presents a more straitened picture of "the dreadful mortifications of unequal Society" (MW, p.361) than is generally offered in any of the novels. There is strong censure of familiar <sup>vices</sup> ~~themes~~ -- condescension and predatoriness, social pretension and mercenary values — but the fragment has little of Jane Austen's accustomed sprightliness to relieve it. The accent is more upon exposure than entertainment. If this relative starkness is intentional, The Watsons may reveal how "Jane Austen started with a bare factual ground plan and then set to work to give it life and individuality by a careful process of refining and revising."<sup>2</sup> That some refining

<sup>2</sup> David Cecil, "Jane Austen's Lesser Works," in Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society 1949-1965 (rpt. London: Dawson, 1967), pp.277-78.

has already been done, is suggested by arresting turns of phrase or by especially well-contrived exchanges. Given the heroine's rich and resourceful character, and given the intended storyline supplied by Cassandra Austen, I contend that The Watsons had the potential to equal in moral and intellectual power the six completed novels.

The final chapter of the thesis looks at Sanditon upon which Jane Austen was engaged shortly before her death. Of all her writings it is the most enigmatic, not only because incomplete but on account of effects she was trying to achieve. It has provoked widely diverging interpretations as a result — whether the fragment is a rough draft for a seventh novel; whether it is in fact revised as far as she intended; or even whether, to take a biographical line, it was written "as a defense against illness and depression"<sup>3</sup> (she herself was ill), as the mockery of hypochondria may suggest. Whatever its nature Sanditon is strikingly enthusiastic in tone, execution and subject matter. The mood of the piece, especially in its caricatures, its ridicule of affected emotion, and exaggerated confusion of appearance for reality, might seem like an unexpected return to the parodic spirit of the juvenilia, but these themes are given different emphases that stamp the piece as a sequel to the mature novels. In particular, with

<sup>3</sup> A. Walton Litz, Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p.165.

regard to the irresponsible attitude of the gentry towards their landed heritage and in Jane Austen's thrust against speculation, novelty and unnecessary change are embodied in Sanditon itself. This partly explains the topographical importance of the village of Sanditon and its abjuration of its traditional function as a fishing village. Unlike The Watsons, however, Sanditon's intended course of development is difficult to determine. I wish in this final chapter to show that the ~~intrigue~~<sup>mystification</sup> it provokes is a deliberate ruse on Jane Austen's part, and to demonstrate that this fragment bears witness to her unflagging creative genius.

Each chapter has been subdivided to explore various aspects of the fragments which I consider to hold most interest and relevance for a full appreciation of Jane Austen's novels. Chapter one deals with the setting of Catherine; the legitimate exercise of power in social relationships; the heroine's<sup>!</sup> need for solitary reflection; and the dual modes of education, both moral and academic. Commenting then on The Watsons I examine some of the techniques Jane Austen employs to win our sympathy, admiration and support for the heroine, and the way we are induced to share in her mental ordeals. This leads to a discussion of economic pressures and the consequent rivalry engendered between sisters, before moving on to scrutinize the importance of clergymen in her works. Finally, my chapter on Sanditon explores the correlation between the social role of the gentry and Jane Austen's treatment of it in her fiction. Subsequent sections deal with her methods of

characterization; the dangers of unchecked imagination and enthusiasm; and the way prolixity and excessive movement feature as destabilizing forces threatening moral values that have proved their merit over time and many generations.

Catherine or the Bower

I. Virginia Woolf remarked that "the second rate works of a great writer are worth reading because they offer the best criticism of his masterpieces."<sup>1</sup> Although she was referring specifically to The Watsons, I believe this quotation applies with equal justice to Catherine or the Bower.<sup>2</sup>

It has been well said that Jane Austen defined herself by what she rejected.<sup>3</sup> The burlesque mode she at first adopted to ridicule the implausibility and disproportions of contemporary sentimental literature involved a process of keen analytical reflection and judgement. I wish to show that the acuity of moral insight into the complexities of human relationships and the psychological realism she achieved in her novels is first set forth most clearly in Catherine.

Other novelists, it is true, had also mocked sentimental excesses, but few if any had pursued this direction beyond simple anti-romance.<sup>4</sup> As F.R. Leavis has pointed out, "Jane Austen, in her indebtedness to

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader (London: Hogarth, 1925), p.172.

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter referred to simply as Catherine.

<sup>3</sup> Julia Prewitt Brown, Jane Austen's Novels: Social Change and Literary Form (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), p.50.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939), p.55.

others, provides an exceptionally illuminating study of the nature of originality, and she exemplifies beautifully the relationship of 'the individual talent' to tradition."<sup>5</sup> This examination of Catherine ~~is~~ intended<sup>s</sup> to show some of the ways in which she modified her inherited conventions in a more realistic, entertaining and morally sensitive fiction than her contemporaries had achieved.

All too often however, Catherine has been gathered together with Jane Austen's earlier and cruder burlesques in the convenient catch-all of 'juvenilia'. To do so is to ignore important signs of an increased seriousness in her aims as a writer. Marvin Mudrick observes that in Catherine (as well as in The Three Sisters and Lesley Castle) Jane Austen "begins to sacrifice parody for self-sustaining characterization and plot [and] ... moves out to claim and occupy a world already recognizable as the world of the novels."<sup>6</sup> But he then complains of "characterization in a vacuum", characters "having no relations with each other, or even with themselves from situation to situation", perfunctorily dismissing the piece as:

a kind of grab-bag of attractive bits and pieces, of characters like the heroine and her aunt, of very tentative approaches to

<sup>5</sup> F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955), p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952), p.25.

the perennial situations of the novels, the spirited middle-class girl in search of honorable [sic] marriage; a collection of fragments which Jane Austen will have time and skill to sort and organize later.<sup>7</sup>

Julia Prewitt Brown, placing her critical emphasis somewhat differently and doing justice to neither to Northanger Abbey nor the juvenilia, asserts that:

Northanger Abbey, the prototype of Austen's ironic comedy, is generally agreed to be her earliest major novel, although the precise order of composition is uncertain. Because of its similarity to the Juvenilia and its intention of burlesque, Northanger Abbey provides the likely beginning of a discussion of Austen's first mature intentions.<sup>8</sup>

This comfortably ignores what Mrs Leavis has pointed out, that in the juvenilia, "literary criticism has,....., a uniquely documented case of the origin and development of [Jane Austen's] artistic expression, and an enquiry into the nature of her genius and the process by which it developed can go very far indeed on sure ground."<sup>9</sup> This expresses more nearly the tenor of my thesis.

<sup>7</sup> Mudrick, p.27.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, Social Change, p.50.

<sup>9</sup> Q.D. Leavis, "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings," Scrutiny, 10 (1941), 61.

Like Mudrick and Brown, Henrietta Ten Harmsel looks to the novels for signs of Jane Austen's development:

although burlesque still plays a large role in [Jane Austen's] first two novels Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility, [she] is there already beginning to use the popular fictional conventions seriously. In her later novels ... she no longer emphasizes a burlesque of the conventions, but instead attempts to transform them and adapt them to her own use.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst this is substantially true, it misplaces its emphasis in by-passing the juvenilia. Brian Southam's interpretation of Jane Austen's work corrects this imbalance. He bases his examination upon the premise that since "literary satire was to remain an important source of entertainment and a considerable element of meaning in the mature novels, a study of her juvenilia is indispensable to a full appreciation of her achievement."<sup>11</sup>

The first part of this chapter attempts to show how Jane Austen solved "the timeless problem of uniting

<sup>10</sup> Henrietta Ten Harmsel, Jane Austen: A Study in Fictional Conventions (London: Mouton, 1964), p.12.

<sup>11</sup> B.C. Southam, Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts: A Study of the Novelist's Development through the Surviving Papers (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p.14.

convention, imagination, and reality in literary works of art,"<sup>12</sup> and accords Catherine the integrity I believe it deserves.

I shall first deal with the nature and function of setting in the fragment, the way it is embodied in physical characteristics and in human relationships. As early as Catherine, "the slightness of the matter and the authority of the manner"<sup>13</sup> are firmly enough reconciled to make Jane Austen's fictional world immediate, plausible, consistent and entertaining. She develops here the ability to rely upon a careful selection of details, thereby reflecting the emotional responses and moral values of her characters. Special attention is then given in the next section of the chapter to the structural and thematic functions of the bower and to the heroines' recurring need for solitary reflection.

This will lead to an examination of the ways that social influence is exerted in the world of the fragment, the various motives and consequences, the rights one person may have to sway the judgement of another, the duties incumbent on some to bring authority to bear on others, and the justice of interference in either case. Whilst this power is exercised most crucially on the question of marriage, it finds expression also in the discipline of children, in selfish meddling, and in wilful deception.

<sup>12</sup> Harmsel, Fictional Conventions, p.197.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Watt, ed., Introd., Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p.15.

Finally I examine education in the fragments. Both academic and moral education through lived experience are closely scrutinized in all Jane Austen's works, and Catherine is the first lucid expression of the correlation between the two forms. Superficial "accomplishments" of extrinsic social value are set beside the deeper inculcation of firm principles and the habit of reflection which form the moral character and act as aids to clear judgement, generate prosperity and bring happiness.

Remarking on the perennial issue of Jane Austen's limited scale, Dorothy Van Ghent says that "what is relevant [in the novels] is the way minds operate in certain social circumstances, and the physical particular has only a derived and subordinate relevance, as it serves to stimulate attitudes between persons."<sup>14</sup> In Catherine the details of setting are specifically designed to generate a distinctive social and moral atmosphere in which the heroine's powers of evaluation and judgement are to function. Jane Austen selects her material carefully, and through narrative commentary and dialogue, centres the action of the piece in a quiet country village, its malcontents, and the moral challenge posed for the heroine by the arrival of the modish Stanleys from London. This ordering of her material is repeated with variation in her later works, each

<sup>14</sup> Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p.100.

exploiting in different ways the potential for satirical domestic comedy and social criticism. Concentrating in Catherine less upon "literary criticism" per se, and more upon "genuine fiction", she dispenses with much physical detail extraneous to her preoccupation with the minds and moral nature of her characters.<sup>15</sup>

Jane Austen examines the tensions which exist in Chetwynde, the town in which Kitty is resident, with sympathy, tolerance and common sense.<sup>16</sup> As we see in the novels, the generation of a moral climate from which the heroine stands morally apart, is a central feature of Jane Austen's art. Logan Pearsall Smith, referring specifically to her last three novels, says that Jane Austen renders "the moral atmosphere of places, the tones, that is, of collective feeling, the moral climates which are produced by, and surround, different groups of people, as with a body of dense and saturated air, the places where they live."<sup>17</sup> But even in the earlier novels, different places possess a distinctive ethos which reflects the values and tastes of the owner. Part of the irony in Pride and Prejudice stems from the fact that whilst Elizabeth's first impressions of Mr Darcy are wrong, her first impressions of Hunsford parsonage,

<sup>15</sup> Halperin, Life, p.45.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine is hereafter referred to as Kitty, following Jane Austen's textual emendation.

<sup>17</sup> Logan Pearsall Smith, Reperusals and Re-collections (London: Constable, 1936), pp.368-69.

Rosings and Pemberley are correct, "outside and inside are at times, "then," appropriately matched."<sup>18</sup> Mr Collins' pedantry and pretension, and the lack of intimacy between himself and Charlotte are clearly evident in the disposition and management of their household. Rosings is ostentatious but vulgar, a poor match in Elizabeth's eyes <sup>for</sup> ~~to~~ the genuine taste and responsible use of wealth bodied forth in Pemberley. It is the spacious variety, no less than the well-stocked library, the furnishings "neither gaudy nor uselessly fine", (PP, p.246), the grounds enhancing rather than contorting nature, that appeal to her.<sup>19</sup> Sight of the house brings her to a clearer understanding of her own heart and of Mr Darcy's qualities. These effects, both physical and psychological, yield a fully realized social world in the novel, and this technique of generating a sense of the real from sparse material is evident in Catherine.

But the term realism is notoriously protean, and difficult to define. Attempts to do so usually beg a host of questions. I do not intend to rehearse the critical debates for and against use of the term, but to state what values I attribute to it in this discussion of Catherine, viz. Jane Austen's ability to make us believe in, evaluate, and care about what happens to her

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Hardy, A Reading of Jane Austen (London: Peter Owen, 1975), p.151.

<sup>19</sup> Hardy, p.153.

characters, primarily the heroine, to make us feel that their speech, thoughts and actions credibly approximate a just representation of ordinary life in the society of the author's own times. What is more, the moral values which obtain in this society are shown to be universal and thus applicable in large measure to our own times as well. We are led to accept her evaluations because, as Archbishop Whately has remarked, she keeps "the design of teaching out of sight," and so "the moral lessons spring incidentally from the circumstances of the story."<sup>20</sup> In Catherine, as in the major novels, she avoids didacticism, preferring to ridicule overt moralizing in the censorious harangues of Mrs Percival.<sup>21</sup> For the more plausible her characters, the more credible their responses will appear to us, and the more easily we may be persuaded to share in their experiences and learn about ourselves through their mistakes.

"Imitations," wrote Johnson, "produce pain or pleasure not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind" (Preface to Shakespeare).

And Jane Austen proffers in Catherine a convincing illusion that what she presents is an experience common in life for girls of Kitty's age and circumstances, that the narrator's judgement is reliable and experienced in the ways of human nature, and with which we should have little trouble in concurring. The basis, moreover, of

<sup>20</sup> B.C. Southam, ed., Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p.95.

<sup>21</sup> Substituted in the text for Peterson.

Jane Austen's irony in Catherine and the novels alike relies upon this concurrence. As Lionel Trilling aptly put it, "when we respond to Jane Austen with pleasure, we are likely to do so in part because we recognize in her work an analogue with the malice of the experienced universe, with the irony of circumstance, which is always disclosing more than we bargained for."<sup>22</sup>

This decisive attempt in Catherine to create a faithful representation of everyday life has been noted by several critics. A. Walton Litz considers that "Catherine is Jane Austen's first full-scale attempt to place a heroine in a completely realistic social setting and probe her reactions to the complex (and often contradictory) demands of conventional morality and social custom."<sup>23</sup> A comparison between this piece and the earlier burlesques will show how true this statement is. To some degree she "stimulates us to supply what is not there," and gives enduring freshness to scenes which at first seem slight.<sup>24</sup> In Catherine Jane Austen uses common-place situations -- social visits, intimate conversations, walks in the shrubbery -- to reveal the

<sup>22</sup> Lionel Trilling, "Jane Austen and Mansfield Park," in From Blake to Byron, Vol. V of The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, ed. Boris Ford, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p.155.

<sup>23</sup> Litz, Artistic Development, p.37.

<sup>24</sup> Woolf, pp.173-74.

mind and values of her characters, keeping their responses consistent and cumulative between the different scenes. She rejects the outrageous displays of feeling common in popular literature and does not attempt to elicit them from her own readers, preferring to engage our own sympathetic imagination controlled by a sure sense of moral values. Exaggerated passions favoured by many of her contemporaries lie not only outside the sphere of most ordinary people, but are "outside any meaningful response of careful observation, judgements of probability, moral choice."<sup>25</sup> Catherine shows more clearly than any earlier piece her imaginative grasp of the heroine's inner life, and the ways this intimacy can involve the reader in the heroine's emotional experiences. The fragment further demonstrates that in life, if not in literature, love is not instantaneous, that if it is to last and act as the basis for a sound marriage, the heroine must know why she loves a man. Hence the emphasis in Catherine upon Kitty's delayed judgements of Edward's character even as she feels increasingly attracted to him.

The society in which honest and meaningful observations can be made and which engages our critical faculties is not, as Charlotte Brontë called it, an "accurate daguerrotyped portrait" of genteel English life.<sup>26</sup> Rather it is a highly selective ordering of

<sup>25</sup> Stuart M. Tave, Some Words of Jane Austen (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973), p.51.

<sup>26</sup> Southam, Critical Heritage, pp.126-28.

events, meetings and conversations which sustains Jane Austen's moral argument, and guides our responses without lapsing into didacticism. Kitty sees through her aunt's groundless fears, as well as through Camilla's ridiculous vanity and Lady Halifax's officiousness that masquerades as kindness. But whilst she fails crucially to perceive how she herself is taken in by Edward's ease and vivacity, we should recognize that only with Edward does Kitty's "natural Unreserve" (MW, p. 216) express itself. With increasing oppressiveness in the novels, various of the heroines are forced into silence by the coarseness and lack of understanding they meet in the world. Only the heroines feel authentically deep emotions, and so where the selfishness of others prevents the reciprocal expression of honest feelings, the heroines are forced into being reserved. When the opportunity for release arises, the expression of sentiment is usually intense and vividly realized in the dialogue.

That Jane Austen engages our powers of judgement to assess Kitty's conduct, and that we are persuaded to believe in this fictive society as a faithful representation of real conditions, stems largely from two factors: the rigorous exclusion, as I have said, of material extraneous to a sensitive exploration of moral character; and secondly, to an unerring consistency in the moral frame of reference which unites our values with those of the narrator. The illusion of reality is conjured by holding characters morally accountable for their actions within a social environment which, like ours, limits individual freedom with certain agreed

constraints. In Catherine and in the novels, actions have moral consequences in the same proportions that obtain in life.

II. In comparing Catherine with Jane Austen's mature works there is a danger of introducing too reductive a development from one to the other. Too much may be read into the former, whilst the latter may suffer from critical schematization. Some similarities however may be discerned.

An examination of the setting in Catherine, where her methods are most likely to appear in their simplest and most recognizable form, allows us to appreciate how skilfully Jane Austen adapted physical detail to the revelation of character and values. As Jane Austen was later to remark somewhat reflexively on Elizabeth Bennet's excursion with the Gardiners:

It is not the object of this work [Pride and Prejudice] to give a description of Derbyshire, nor of any of the remarkable places through which their route thither lay: Oxford, Blenheim, Warwick, Kenelworth, Birmingham, etc. are sufficiently known. (PP, p.240).

Rather than indulge in gratuitous picturesque description, our attention is focused upon Elizabeth's emotions upon seeing Pemberley.

Similarly, the topographical boundaries of Chetwynde are as circumscribed and as typical as those that we find in later works. All the action occurs during social occasions -- conversations, visits, walks, balls.

Physical detail is functional: it gives solidity to the characters and their interaction. Camilla, for example, is obsessed with fashion and sees herself and others purely in terms of exteriors; Mr Dudley is "tenacious of his Dignity, and jealous of his rights" (MW,p.195) and his pride is embodied in "the small vestibule which he had raised to the Dignity of a Hall" (MW,p.220); Mrs Percival's strict code of propriety is seen in the "complete Order" of her household arrangements, "the exact propriety and Neatness with which everything in her Family was conducted..." (MW,p.197). House and owner are identified.

Besides objects, a network of characters more or less closely associated with the heroine serve to give an impression of solidity to her world. The narrator casually alludes to the "Steward and Tenants" as well as the "principal Neighbours" with whom Mr Dudley has frequent altercations. This suggests both a number of surrounding families and designates their respective social rank. These are some of the anonymous neighbours who constitute the Dudleys' guest-list at the ball, and whose daughters join Camilla in resenting Kitty (whose "Father was only a tradesman" MW,p.224)--- emphasis added) when she leads the dancing. Their reaction throws Kitty's objective good sense into relief, as well as suggesting the ubiquity of petty squabbles and rivalries with which Jane Austen, herself living in a small rural community, was fully cognizant.<sup>1</sup> In Catherine we see how she downgrades

<sup>1</sup> See pp.158-79 below for a fuller examination of Jane Austen's development of this theme of rivalry.

the violent passions of Sentimental and Gothic novels to more realistic levels of intensity. Energy is more likely to be expressed in the spitefulness of Miss Bingley and Lucy Steele, or in the domestic tyranny of Mrs Norris and Mrs Percival than in the convulsive passions of Horace Walpole's Manfred or Mrs Radcliffe's Montoni. The gloomy castles these two latter characters inhabit provide the terrifying atmosphere in which the heroine proves her strength of character by defying evil. Physical setting for both Walpole and Radcliffe is, in other words, "an essential part of their theme," whereas Jane Austen's "satirical comedy of home and social life" and her interest in the state and change of moral character does not rely upon sensational symbolic effects.<sup>2</sup> This is not to deny, however, that she does achieve symbolic resonance through certain features of setting precisely because they are used sparingly, and are fully integrated into the development of plot, themes and character.

The emotional climate of Kitty's environment is expressed through the romantic symbolism of her bower.<sup>3</sup> It represents the strain of warm sensibility which threatens constantly to overpower her common-sense. The bower affords "an enclave of self-protective fantasy"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Lord David Cecil, The Fine Art of Reading (London: Constable, 1957), p.126.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Bush, Jane Austen (London: Macmillan, 1975), p.53.

<sup>4</sup> Leland S. Person, Jr., "Playing House: Jane Austen's Fabulous Space," Philological Quarterly, 59 (1980), 64.

17

which recalls "those days of happy Childhood" (MW, p.194). It becomes "an integral extension of her personality"<sup>5</sup> through the power of her imagination. She projects an image of the bower as an embodiment of her feelings in a ~~similar~~ way that <sup>parallels</sup> Northanger Abbey, becoming "an architectural representation of Catherine Morland's fantasies."<sup>6</sup>

I think that David Paul over-estimates Jane Austen's intention in her use of the bower. The arbour, he believes, "becomes the magnetic centre of the story because it is the Virgin's bower, the symbol of Catherine's sense of her sexual maturity, of her wish for independence, for secrecy even, from her intrusive aunt."<sup>7</sup> Given the tone of the fragment, this seems a perverse reading. Surely, as the opening sentence of the piece makes clear, the narrator is speaking ironically, and surely Jane Austen expects and even relies upon her readers' recognizing that she is exploiting a fund of stock material here. Although gardens have often been associated with scenes of introspection,<sup>8</sup> Jane Austen

<sup>5</sup> Person, p.64.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd W. Brown, Bits of Ivory: Narrative Techniques in Jane Austen's Fiction, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1973), p.80.

<sup>7</sup> David Paul, "The Gay Apprentice," The Twentieth Century, 156 (December 1954), 547.

<sup>8</sup> Cowper's The Task, or Marvell's The Mower Against Gardens, for example.

uses them as symbols of "the woods where destinies are found and lost."<sup>9</sup> Hence the comic irony of the mock-seduction Edward arranges in the bower. The tone of Catherine relies upon this undercurrent of literary allusion to discredit unrealistic conventions and to rework them into occasions of moral value, rather than to reflect Kitty's own recognition of "sexual maturity."

*In a similar way*  
Analogous to this process, we see in Sense and Sensibility not only how Marianne Dashwood withdraws from society into closer intimacy with nature, but also how her rain-soaked reverie in the garden at Cleveland precipitates a near-fatal illness. In Mansfield Park the gardens of Sotherton are highly symbolic of temptation and amorality, with their "serpentine" (MP, p.94) walks, slippery ha-ha and spiked gates. In a different key, though still greatly significant for the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet refuses to be browbeaten by Lady Catherine de Bough as the two walk in "a prettyish kind of little wilderness" (PP, pp.312-3) at Longbourn. Whilst in Emma, the final obstacles between the heroine and Mr Knightley are cleared away as the pair take a walk in the shrubbery at Hartfield. In each case the heroines experience intense emotion in a garden setting.

David Paul further asserts that Mrs Percival's determination to have the bower pulled down "exposes the fact that her wish to protect her niece's virtue is in reality a destructive impulse."<sup>10</sup> It is potentially

<sup>9</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.137.

<sup>10</sup> Paul, p.547.

destructive of Kitty's real happiness, but not for the over-subtle, Freud-and-watery reason that he adduces. In any case, when Mrs Percival announces her likely intention of destroying the bower she is thoroughly engrossed with its threat to her own health. She, like Mr Woodhouse, is a fearful hypochondriac. But where his fears are at least motivated by a concern for everybody's health, Mrs Percival is thoroughly inward-looking. Hence the ease with which Kitty adroitly turns the conversation from a charge of her own "Impudence" to the dangers evening damp holds for Mrs Percival's health (MW, p.233). Jane Austen's irony shows the conflict in Mrs Percival's mind between officiousness and selfishness, and does so indirectly through this reference to Kitty's bower.

Finally, David Paul contends that, "in the case of Catherine [an ambiguity in the bower's significance] is a symptom of the young writer contending with the unmanageable, with forces which have broken out beyond her purpose and threaten to disrupt her powers as a conscious craftsman."<sup>11</sup> These sentiments, it seems, apply rather to the critic than to Jane Austen.

<sup>11</sup> Paul, p.547.

III. The heroine's need for solitary reflection is a recurring motif in Jane Austen's novels, and first appears most clearly in Catherine. "It is typical of Jane Austen," writes Barbara Hardy, "to show the call from society to solitude, where oppression is relieved, space made for reflection and decision."<sup>1</sup> Kitty is lucky to have a retreat where her aunt fears to tread. But the novels show that Jane Austen's heroines need, yet often lack, the opportunities for solitude during emotional stress. Elizabeth Bennet "took refuge in her own room that she might think with freedom" (PP, p.307), disgusted with her mother's elation at Lydia's marriage. Fanny Price seeks the comforting atmosphere of the discarded classroom at Mansfield Park "to try its influence upon an agitated doubting spirit" (MP, p.152). Emma Woodhouse is forced to make "a very strong effort to appear attentive and cheerful," in public, "till the usual hour of separating allowed her the relief of quiet reflection" (E, p.133) after Mr Elton's proposal. Similarly, it is in the bower that Kitty "always wandered whenever anything disturbed her, and it possessed such a charm over her senses, as constantly to tranquillize her mind and quiet her spirits" (MW, p.193). She is "firmly persuaded that her Bower alone could restore her to herself" (MW, p.193). This is stated in

<sup>1</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.30.

the narrator's exposition of Kitty and her circumstances, and is later demonstrated when Kitty, exasperated at Camilla's callous attitude towards the unfortunate Wynnes, escapes to relieve her anger, "running out of the House [she] was soon in her dear Bower," which had "its usual effects over her Spirits" (MW, p.207). ~~That she~~ <sup>Running</sup> is a barely acceptable expression of personal emotion in Jane Austen's fictional world, which introduces us to the need for self-control (axiomatic in the moral scheme of the novels and juvenilia alike).

To seek solitude allows emotions to decompress which, if expressed openly, (as in Marianne's defense of Elinor against Mrs Ferrars'; rudeness; or Mr Elton's violent proposal; or Louisa Musgrove's jumping off the Cobb at Lyme) threaten to disrupt the orderly flow of social life. As D.W. Harding observes, "The control that Jane Austen respected was not to be exercised in favour of some abstract standard of 'reason', but in consideration for one's immediate companions. It fulfilled a social obligation...."<sup>2</sup> Where Kitty assuages grief and anger in the bower, Camilla does not possess the same degree of self-command and is unable to tolerate disappointment. When Kitty's toothache threatens to keep the girls from attending the ball, Jane Austen shows Camilla "very violent in her sorrow" (MW, p.209), whilst affectionately mocking Kitty's ratiocination: "she was not so totally void of philosophy as many Girls of her age, might have been in her situation. She considered

<sup>2</sup> D.W. Harding in From Blake to Byron, p.58.

that there were misfortunes of a far greater magnitude than the loss of a Ball, experienced everyday by some part of Mortality..." (MW, p.208). Upon Anne's surprise at being released from the infantile aggression of Walter Musgrove, we are told that:

neither Charles Hayter's feelings, nor any body's feelings, could interest her, till she had a little better arranged her own. She was ashamed of herself, quite ashamed of herself of being so nervous, so overcome by such a trifle; but so it was; and it required a long application of solitude and reflection to recover her. (P, p.81)

But at least Kitty, like Elinor, Fanny and Anne, can overcome passion by seeking solitude, and is condoned for doing so, because it is centrally important in Jane Austen's novels, for the heroine to understand and come to terms with private emotions, and only then to return to her usual role in social life.<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of the fragment Kitty's introspection becomes irrational and solipsistic. With greater comedy and melodrama than Marianne's languishing for her departed Willoughby, she laments for Edward: "he is gone -- Gone perhaps for Years -- Obligated to tear himself from what he most loves, his happiness is sacrificed to the vanity of his Father! In what anguish he must have left the house!" (MW, p.238).

<sup>3</sup> Harding, From Blake to Byron, p.59.

We know the irrationality of this by its tone and textual punctuation, and from the fact that his father could not enforce Edward's departure; that Edward had no intention of loving Kitty; that Edward's happiness will be well catered for on his continental tour; and that he had time and inclination for breakfast before leaving the house (MW,p.237).

In the novels Jane Austen places particular emphasis upon the role of memory in character formation and the maintenance of principled conduct. Kitty's use of memory is ambivalent, however. She is credited for her fond remembrance of the Wynne sisters, but she is wittily censured for pining over the unworthy Edward Stanley. Marianne Dashwood is censured for her reveries because they are selfishly motivated and bring pain to others. Conversely, Anne Elliot's constant remembrance of Wentworth steels her spirits in adversity and helps her see through the artifice of Mr Elliot's blandishments. Her real firmness is contrasted with Louisa Musgrove's volatility, and contributes substantially to Frederick's reformation. In the case of Fanny Price, Jane Austen uses the "nest of comforts" in the East room to afford the heroine solitude, sanctuary and solace. But even here, Fanny sees objects that insistently remind her of the obedience and gratitude she owes the family that has brought her up, and that exhort her acceptance of an uncongenial marriage to Henry Crawford.

A. Walton Litz sees a clear indication of similar isolation and individualism in Kitty's retreat to her bower,

"a symbol of those values which her aunt despises."<sup>4</sup> It is ironic, however, that Kitty's own evaluation of the harbour undergoes a subconscious shift in significance. Cherished at first for its intimate association with the Wynnes, it gradually becomes more closely identified with Kitty's attraction to Edward Stanley. As one critic has pointed out, "Even though he seems the prototype of faithless lovers like Willoughby and Henry Crawford, he is readily metamorphosed in Kitty's imagination into a 'Charming Young Man' whose suffering constancy to her has obliged him [so Kitty believes], for fear of 'trusting himself in her presence,' to depart without notice."<sup>5</sup> Kitty thus betrays both herself and the friends she loved "best on Earth" (MW, p.195) for what she imagines to be his love for her. As Fanny Price observes, "there seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory than in any of our other intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient —at others, so bewildered and so weak" (MP, pp.208-09).

Apart from the importance attaching to the bower, Jane Austen gives attention through allusion to places farther afield than Chetwynde, so creating an expansive context for the fictional world of Catherine. These places are left even more to the reader's imagination than the details of Chetwynde itself, and are used both to

<sup>4</sup> Litz, Artistic Development, p.36.

<sup>5</sup> Person, p.65.

10

delineate character and to advance the action of the plot. Edward's arrival from Lyon, for example, is appropriate for various reasons. Young men in Jane Austen's period took in the Grand Tour as part of their cultural education. And besides this historical consistency, a continental setting is a suitably exotic location for a putative romantic villain in the burlesque mode of the fragment. Mrs Percival shows her assertiveness, Mr Stanley his weakness and Kitty her romanticism in their various reactions to Edward's arrival from, and departure for, France.

Jane Austen develops this allusive method in greater depth where she has room for more searching moral analysis and thematic developments. In Mansfield Park, Sir Thomas Bertram's Antigua estate cannot furnish adequate returns to pay off Tom's gambling debts and thus Edmund loses the Mansfield living. Sir Thomas's visit abroad exposes Fanny and Mansfield Park to the destructive combination of the Crawfords and Mrs Norris. The Sotherton visit and the theatricals are related directly to the greater freedom of spirits occasioned by Sir Thomas's voyage. His welcome departure and equally unwelcome return are keenly felt by his children, but only Fanny feels them correctly and sincerely.

Another method of allusion in Catherine which Jane Austen also uses in the major novels is the casual reference (though with particular significance) to real places. Chetwynde, like Meryton, Highbury and Uppercross is fictitious. Chapman says that "It should seem that her creative imagination worked most fully within a

framework fixed for her by small points of contact with reality."<sup>6</sup> Thus while creating a fictive world she refers to familiar places like London, Scotland, Lyon, Matlock, Scarborough, Cheltenham, as well as Yorkshire and Derbyshire to give solidity to society in the fragment. Edward remarks to Kitty that he was "unwilling to leave England without paying his respects to the Family in Devonshire..." (MW, p.215). This locates Chetwynde regionally, before it is pinpointed more exactly when we hear that the Percivals live "w<sup>h</sup>in five miles from Exeter" (NW, p.240), a detail linked with the narrator's early remark that Mr Stanley is "a distant relation" (MW, p.196) of the Percivals. The novels also show this meticulous attention to the choice of locale. Like Catherine, they are set in the south of England: Bath and Fullerton in Northanger Abbey, Barton Park and Cleveland in Sense and Sensibility, Longbourn and Meryton in Pride and Prejudice are some examples in the early novels. The choice of Northamptonshire for Mansfield Park suits Henry Crawford's taste for hunting,<sup>7</sup> whilst in Emma the Churchills leave inclement Yorkshire for Richmond, both more congenial to Mrs Churchill's ill-health and conveniently close for Frank to Highbury. In Persuasion Anne's movement between Kellynch, Uppercross, Bath and Lyme dramatizes with greater force than hitherto

<sup>6</sup> R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen: Facts and Problems (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948), p.122.

<sup>7</sup> See Mansfield Park, p.240.

"the relation of place to consciousness." But whereas the influence of place may be used to express collective values among different groups of people, an individual's attitude towards his or her clothes is also an effective, because individual, means of characterization. Yet as Barbara Hardy points out, Jane Austen's use of clothes as an index of moral values is not straightforward. In Northanger Abbey, for example, Mrs Allen's synecdochic passion for dress contrasts with Mrs Morland's motherly advice to Catherine to wrap up warmly at night; and Isabella's conscious parade contrasts with Catherine's "acceptable and natural vanities,"<sup>9</sup> natural that is, for a diffident young lady like Catherine or Kitty, unused to making public appearances. Where Camilla is obsessed with the state of her attire, we are shown that Kitty's concern for her appearance indicates self-respect, not vanity, and so on the night of the ball she aims rather at being "very well-dressed and in high Beauty" (MW, p.213) than at attracting attention to herself.

Another more fixed and solid feature of setting which Jane Austen uses for characterization is residence in specific towns, cities and even streets. The exactitude of Jane Austen's placing of addresses in Bath and London has been carefully scrutinized by Nikolaus

<sup>8</sup> Ann Banfield, "The Influence of Place: Jane Austen and the Novel of Social Consciousness," in Jane Austen in a Social Context, ed. David Monaghan (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.35.

<sup>9</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.147.

Pevsner.<sup>10</sup> Address matches income and status closely. Camilla tells Kitty that Lady Halifax lives in fashionable Brook Street (MW, p.202), which suits that lady's social pretensions as much as it does Camilla's mention of her name. Specific location, then, is valuable for its power of suggestion.

This device appears frequently in the novels. Mr Gardiner's house in Gracechurch Street is conveniently central for a man of business, since it is practical for him to live "within sight of his own warehouses" (PP, p.139). The Hursts and Admiral Crawford, like Lady Halifax, choose elegant residences in Grosvenor Street and Berkeley Square respectively. The Steele girls on the other hand are lodged insalubriously in Holborn. The Bath address of the Allens may have suggested to General Tilney that Catherine's fortune equalled John Thorpe's false reports. Whilst the Elliots' establishment in Camden-place reflects Anne's shame that Elizabeth "who had been mistress of Kellynch Hall," yet found "extent to be proud of between two walls perhaps thirty-feet asunder" (P, p.138).

If Jane Austen uses this means to give the feel of reality and to reflect the disposition and values of her characters in the novels, how does this relate to the heroine of Catherine in whom we are interested here? The opening sentence of the fragment, like that of Northanger Abbey and Emma, introduces us directly to the

<sup>10</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, "The Architectural Setting of Jane Austen's Novels," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 31 (1968), 404-22.

heroine, her nature, powers and circumstances.

"Catherine had the misfortune, as many heroines have had before her, of losing her Parents when she was very young, and of being brought up under the care of a Maiden Aunt..." (MW, p.192). Relying upon allusion, Jane Austen with mock-solemnity quickly establishes Kitty's social and domestic position, defines the narrator's attitude to her material, and elicits her desired response in the reader. The irony lies in the alignment of Kitty, a common-place girl like Catherine Morland, with an illustrious heritage of beautiful and extraordinary, talented heroines. <sup>In</sup> <sup>location of this</sup> ~~To~~ ~~amplify this opening~~ declaration, we are shortly told that Kitty has a strong romantic susceptibility which is to play a crucial part in the story as it unfolds. Jane Austen is less concerned with Kitty's economic and social position than with the quality of her mind and her reactions to people and situations. In the novels the economic plight of single unmarried women is a major facet of Jane Austen's critical observation, as Alistair Duckworth has shown.<sup>11</sup> But here attention is focused upon Kitty's powers of judgement and so her intellectual and emotional capacity are clearly outlined at the start.

The assured and intelligent assessment of the heroine establishes the tone of the work and secures our

<sup>11</sup> Alistair M. Duckworth, The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels (London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1971), pp.3-5.

confidence that the narrator is reliable and experienced: "Catherine had the misfortune, as many heroines have had before her..." (MW, p.193), for there is implied a deep acquaintance both with life and literature, which is important if we are to endorse her moral judgements and appreciate the irony with which they are conveyed.

After proffering Kitty as a typical romance heroine, Jane Austen reverses our expectations. The tyrannical guardians of popular novels are replaced by Mrs Percival who insists upon choosing Kitty's dancing partners, and strictly regulating the heroine's social engagements. A.E. Dyson comments that "against extravagantly romantic ideas of a heroine, Jane Austen is suggesting that a quite ordinary person might deserve the deepest imaginative attention we have to give."<sup>12</sup> This is what makes Kitty significant in the Austen canon, as an attempt to create a realistic heroine through whom the problems of living in difficult circumstances could be explored. Jane Austen successfully, in my view, grafts genuine sympathy and credible human responses on to a heroine who at the opening of the fragment is presented as thoroughly conventional. If we discount for the moment Kitty's final exaggerated languishings, we can clearly see Jane Austen's intention in undermining the Sentimentalists' belief that a heroine should exhibit a formulaic set of responses.

<sup>12</sup> A.E. Dyson, The Crazy Fabric: Essays in Irony (London: Macmillan, 1965), p.75.

32

Northanger Abbey's opening makes a similarly oblique criticism of romance readers and their excessive expectations. Through a tone at once ironic and faintly ridiculous we learn that "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine" (NA, p.13). As Andrew Wright remarks, the narrative purports to be an "objective account," but in fact "there is a double pretense here, the pretense that the author is another in the long line of sentimental novelists, and the calculated illusion that the audience will be composed of readers of this genre."<sup>13</sup> Our curiosity is instantly engaged and sustained thereafter by the unfolding of Catherine's unusual character and background, the way that such an ~~inauspicious~~ heroine can emerge ~~as a true heroine to type~~ despite herself.

The setting both of Catherine and Northanger Abbey establishes the necessary ironic distance between reader and heroine. What is significant in Kitty's case is Jane Austen's early approximation to interior monologue to comment critically on the heroine's judgements. For example, upon the introduction of Camilla Stanley, "Catherine, who was prejudiced by her appearance, and who from her solitary Situation was ready to like anyone, tho' her Understanding and Judgement would not otherwise have been easily satisfied, felt almost convinced when she saw her, that Miss Stanley would be the very

<sup>13</sup> Andrew H. Wright, Jane Austen's Novels: A Study in Structure (London: Chatto and Windus, 1953), p.49.

companion She wanted,..." (MW, p.198 --emphasis added).

Later, Kitty's expectations of securing a confidante are quickly shattered. Camilla is no more a confidante for Kitty than Isabella is for Catherine, or Lucy Steele for Elinor Dashwood. She is ignorant, vain and self-opinionated, and as such overturns the role of confidante that Kitty has attributed to her. And throughout the remainder of the fragment, nobody fulfils his or her stereotyped function: Kitty is an ordinary, common-sensical girl, Camilla fashionable and silly, Edward a joker, his father unassertive, and Mrs Percival a hypochondriac. What Northanger Abbey achieves through broad strokes, I believe Catherine attains in a manner closer to that of the novels where conventional materials are subtly reworked and camouflaged beneath the psychological realism and social criticism of Jane Austen's art.

Through all these means, Jane Austen gradually adds to the verisimilitude of the fictional setting, turning conventional material to realistic ends, relating objects to owners and people to places. In each case, attention is focused upon her characters' disposition, values and feelings, and how these generate the moral climate in which the heroine is tested and develops mentally. But as Catherine, and later the novels, clearly show, this process of emotional education is not easy, for the heroines face much opposition. It is to this range of forces that I shall now turn.

IV. A major theme in Jane Austen's novels is the responsible use of power. This emerges in various ways.<sup>1</sup> The closed environment of domestic and narrow social contact is a tractable setting in which to examine the moral values of her characters and human nature they represent. Written when Jane Austen was only seventeen years old, Catherine shows an almost disconcertingly mature insight into emotional dishonesty and social pretence. <sup>The author</sup> ~~She~~ shows the difference between dutiful action and irresponsible meddling and the far-reaching effects of negligence. Significantly, parents are not always the best source of moral advice. In fact they are often unfit to act as mentors, since parental over-assertion can be as detrimental as indifference. This represents the source of the deprivation which comes, or threatens to come, upon the heroines of the novels.<sup>2</sup> Although these ideas are less finely developed in Catherine than in her later works for obvious reasons, Jane Austen none the less shows an intimate concern for the intricacy <sup>of</sup> ~~in~~ human, and particularly family, relationships. Neither parents nor guardians in Jane Austen fulfil their duties adequately, and she is quick to point out their failings either in the course of the novel, as in the case of Mr Bennet, or immediately, as

<sup>1</sup> See p.5 above.

<sup>2</sup> Duckworth, Improvement of the Estate, p.5.

with Sir Walter Elliot for whom "vanity of person and of situation" (P,p.4) are presiding faults. The Morlands and the Gardiners, however, are exceptions to this general attitude of the author. In Catherine, Jane Austen suggests the value of a sound family environment in the individual's moral development by showing us various manifestations of parental failure in the Stanleys, Dudleys and Lady Halifax. They initiate a long line of domineering, self-interested or fatuous parents, and show that for Jane Austen in Catherine, satire of literary conventions was yielding <sup>in</sup> importance to the exposure of underlying ethical issues. In each successive novel we see her treating parental failure with increasing severity. Sense and Sensibility examines the essentially well-intentioned advice of Mrs Dashwood, of whom we hear that "it was contrary to every doctrine of hers that difference of fortune should keep any couple asunder who were attracted by resemblance of disposition" (SS,p.15). But this apparently laudable sentiment is undermined by Jane Austen's suggestion that Mrs Dashwood, like Marianne, regulates her responses according to a predetermined code. In this she is unlike Elinor, whose objectivity and discretion allow for flexibility, and tolerance, and greater self-command. Mrs Dashwood is imperceptive of Willoughby's faults, and, sharing Marianne's romantic delicacy to some extent, refuses Elinor's plea to insist upon an open avowal or negation of Marianne's possible engagement. Mrs Dashwood is partly responsible, therefore, for Marianne's agonized response to Willoughby's betrayal.

Pride and Prejudice treats parental neglect more severely. Mrs Bennet is obsessed simply "to get her daughters married" (PP, p.5) whether by cajoling, persuading or tricking. Mr Bennet's detachment, as Lionel Trilling suggests, is "the cause of his becoming a moral nonentity."<sup>3</sup> Both parents are held responsible for Lydia's wildness and for the way it jeopardizes Elizabeth's relations with Mr Darcy. But where the mother is stupid rather than actively cruel, Mr Bennet is guilty of occluding his better self. Clearly aware of Lydia's and her mother's giddiness he corrects neither, and becomes what Donald Greene has called one of Jane Austen's "monsters."<sup>4</sup> Regretting the folly of his own overhasty marriage, he relinquishes his duties as husband and father to seek the cushioned sanctuary of his library.

A glance to Emma shows a different result of parental neglect. Emma's taste for power has been encouraged by her father's invalidism and by the pliancy of her governess. Having been allowed to usurp the parental role, she herself becomes a parent figure, attempting to arrange the marriages of several of her acquaintance.

Anne Elliot suffers the worst parental neglect from being pointedly devalued by her father. Only her moral integrity protects her from Lady Russell's <sup>ambition to secure</sup> bids toward rank <sup>for Anne's</sup> Mr Elliot's assiduous attentions and Mrs Smith's

<sup>3</sup> Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park," in From Blake to Byron, p.112.

<sup>4</sup> Donald Greene, "Jane Austen's Monsters," in Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays, ed. John Halperin (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), pp.262-78.

fake representation of his character. The decay in the Elliot household is more deep-seated than it is among the Bertrams -- Mansfield Park can be morally regenerated through Fanny, but Anne leaves Kellynch permanently and it stagnates.

The question each novel poses then, is "Upon whom may the heroine rely for guidance?" Although Fanny believes that "We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be" (MP, p.412), not all Jane Austen's heroines possess her moral stamina, nor her depth of insight and judgement. Kitty, like Elizabeth and Emma, is a flawed character and thus her need for guidance is greater than Fanny or Anne's. But Mrs Percival, acting as Kitty's guardian, is unfit to give moral counsel. This lack underlies the action in Catherine as Kitty falls prey to Edward's charms, her aunt's jealous caution being too narrowly and selfishly exercised.

M.A. Austen-Leigh, commenting on the relations between aunt and niece in Catherine, remarked that:

even when the maternal parent has been disposed of by death or by distance, the daughter must, none the less, be brought up by someone who may contrive to go as far wrong in the process as any mother herself could do.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> M.A. Austen-Leigh, Personal Aspects of Jane Austen (London: Murray, 1920), p.119.

Mrs Percival, over-zealous to prevent Kitty from marrying imprudently, shields her from the attentions of all but a few carefully selected young men. Using the aunt's idiom and the sentiments she openly avows (MW, p.232), the narrator tells us that she "tenderly loved" her niece. This excessive vigilance is unnecessary because Kitty is sensible at least. Furthermore, since she does have strong romantic feelings, she must be chastened by her own mistakes. Because Mrs Percival shows little tact or understanding of the problem itself or of Kitty's real nature, her conduct is offensive because it is high-handed and censorious.

Like Mrs Bennet or Mrs Dashwood, she may mean well, being "excessively fond of her, and miserable if she saw her for a moment out of spirits" (MW, p.196). But Mrs Percival avoids the danger of neglect to fall, like Mrs Bennet especially, into the mistake of meddling, since "she lived in such constant apprehension of [Kitty's] marrying imprudently if she were allowed the opportunity of choosing, and was ... dissatisfied with her behaviour when she saw her with Young Men" (MW, p.196). Her concern, like Sir Thomas Bertram's for his children (though expressed with far greater gusto), leads to confusion and makes it "very doubtful to many people, and to Catherine amongst the rest, whether she loved [her] or not" (MW, p.192). Mortified at Edward's attentions to her niece, Mrs Percival attempts to separate what she mistakenly supposes are secret lovers. Like Mrs Ferrars vis-à-vis her sons and Lady Catherine de Bourgh vis-à-vis Mr Darcy, she fears losing her control over Kitty's destiny, and

resorts to subterfuge, purposely blackening Kitty's reputation and exaggerating to his father the moral danger of Edward's continued visit in Chetwynde: "[h]er behaviour is indeed scandalous," she affirms, "and therefore I beg you will send your Son away immediately, or everything will be at sixes & sevens" (MW, p.228).

Jane Austen invites the contrast between this outrageous slander and what we have already been shown of Kitty's tact and delicacy towards the newly-arrived Edward Stanley (MW, pp.218,219,220,222). Mrs Percival's vision is distorted by the equation she makes between youthful buoyancy and morally dangerous over-familiarity, and lives in dread that "all order will soon be at an end throughout the Kingdom" (MW, p.232). Clearly her fears are groundless, but this does not mitigate the need to quell the selfish and greedy impulses which can make life so uncomfortable for Kitty. Donald Greene says that "a lack of capacity for feeling" lies behind all Jane Austen's "unpleasant people."<sup>6</sup> More than this is needed to account for Mrs Percival's behaviour. She is a hypocrite who pays lip-service to her responsibilities as Kitty's guardian, arrogating to herself the power effectively to determine her niece's husband. In her selfish ambition and abuse of her social role towards a minor, Mrs Percival looks ahead to Mrs Norris of Mansfield Park and Mrs Ferrars in Sense and Sensibility. Her restlessness proves as self-defeating as theirs, since Edward delights in provoking her fears. Upon being asked

<sup>6</sup> Greene, "Monsters", p.217.

when he intends leaving Chetwynde he casually remarks: "Oh! Ma'am ... if I am off by twelve at night, you may think yourself lucky; and if I am not, you can only blame yourself for having left so much as the hour of my departure to my own disposal" (MW, p.230).

The discomfiture of Mrs Percival initiates a pattern of ironic reversals in the novels. Jane Austen never allows selfish schemes to triumph without qualification. In Sense and Sensibility, Robert Ferrars marries Lucy Steele because of whom Edward had been disinherited by his mother, and a "decree of consent" (SS, p.374) finally sanctions Edward's marriage to Elinor. The irony here lies in the rather grandiloquent language to describe what is really a face-saving device of measured delay and self-exalting authority on Mrs Ferrars's part. In Pride and Prejudice, we see Lady Catherine's bringing about the very match between Elizabeth and Darcy which she had been at such pains to thwart. But whereas these two cases in the earlier novels are treated as relatively light-hearted reversals, Jane Austen's scrutiny of Mrs Norris is more searching, her verdict more severe. Mrs Norris, having nearly brought about the ruin of the household she professes openly to venerate, and having in particular promoted Maria's marriage, deserves to be ostracized together with the girl whose moral character she so skilfully warped. In Emma, interference is seen through the eyes of the meddler herself, and this constant access to Emma's mind is allowed to give convincing proof that she is ~~not~~ motivated neither by malice nor greed. Moreover, her contrition is felt to be sincere and

40

permanent, and she is thus allowed to triumph and marry Mr Knightley.

In the same novel we are shown Mrs Elton who has no right beyond that of self-appointment to interfere in Jane Fairfax's affairs, and wants the credit, like Mrs Norris, for acting the benefactor without incurring either the trouble or the expense. Mrs Percival is similarly blind to the futility of her schemes and unaware of the absurdity of the figure she cuts. Affecting nostalgia for better times past, she launches into an attack upon "the shocking behaviour of modern young Men & the wonderful Alteration that had taken place in them, since her time"... (MW, p.230)

On this issue of the abuse of memory, Barbara Hardy notes that Jane Austen frequently adverts to "the controls which we exercise over our nostalgia and regret."<sup>7</sup> Mrs Percival's insincerity is criticized because it is self-serving, misconceived and threatens to jeopardize the whole future of Kitty's married life. In contrast, Kitty's regret for the Wymmes is safely contained by frequent recourse to the amenity of the bower. Her emotions are thereby dissipated without danger, inconvenience or discomfort to anyone but herself.

The tensions between Mrs Percival and Kitty are further demonstrated in the aftermath of Edward's mock-seduction in the bower (MW, p.231). Vehement asseveration, self-pity and exaggeration characterize the nature of Mrs Percival's mind, the turmoil and lack of proportion in

<sup>7</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.98.

her thoughts, factors which greatly hamper her evaluation of people and situations. Disguising an irresistible urge to interfere beneath an outward show of genuine warmth and concern, she reminds Kitty that "[a]ll I wished for, was to breed you up virtuously" (MW, p. 232). She makes her past intentions seem on the surface reasonable and praiseworthy: "I never wanted you to play upon the Harpsichord, or draw better than anyone else." Then, changing tactics (like Sir Thomas when he suggests that Fanny shows "ingratitude" in refusing Henry Crawford (MP, p. 319)), Mrs Percival tries emotional blackmail upon Kitty: "And this is the reward for all the cares I have taken in your Education; for all my troubles & anxieties; and Heaven knows how many they have been!" Her exclamatory tone and oath underline the forced emotion she packs into this self-aggrandizement, calculated to make Kitty feel guilty and so open her to manipulation.

Unlike Mrs Gardiner in Pride and Prejudice (PP, pp. 144-45) who tactfully cautions her niece Elizabeth Bennet to beware an overhasty familiarity with Wickham, Mrs Percival is as obtuse, as ruthless and as insensitive as Mrs Bennet. Blind to the delicacies of human relationships and patently unaware that every case must be judged individually according to its merits, she bull-headedly disregards Kitty's emotional needs. Like Lady Catherine vis-à-vis all her acquaintance, Mrs Percival expects Kitty to be pliant, and is irked by her resistance. Her sense and good humour tactfully overcome her aunt's powers. Edward's ~~mischievous wit~~, by contrast, delights in antagonizing her.

Whilst it is obviously ~~a~~<sup>the</sup> guardian's function to exercise certain powers to protect Kitty from fortune seekers (she is an heiress - - MW,p.223), and from irresponsible flirts, Mrs Percival misjudges the line where responsible control ends and imperious self-assertion begins. She lacks Mrs Gardiner's delicacy of judgement and humble assessment of her own powers of insight and right to interfere.

Whereas Kitty is able to manipulate her aunt's fears of damp (MW,p.233) and contest the logic of her arguments intelligently and politely, and whereas Elizabeth Bennet is allowed to defeat Lady Catherine's overbearing presumption, Fanny Price is disadvantaged by her timidity from opposing the continual injustices of Mrs Norris who observes: "I shall think her a very obstinate girl if she does not do what her aunt and cousins wish her - - very ungrateful indeed, considering who and what she is" (MP,p.147). Mrs Percival is depicted as an absurdity and an incumbrance rather than a serious threat to Kitty's social standing. Moreover, the narrative tone in Catherine does not suggest the depth of moral seriousness that appears in Fanny's predicament. The odds facing Kitty are much less awesome than those facing Fanny, her aunt less malicious.

Mrs Norris, as Yasmine Gooneratne rightly points out, is far from being mere "comic relief in an otherwise sombre novel." Whilst Mrs Percival's harangues and greatly exaggerated fears are blatant and amusing distortions of character, Mrs Norris insinuates her way into the very heart of Mansfield Park, beguiling

its owners and corrupting their children, as such becoming "directly responsible for the principal events of the novel."<sup>8</sup> Fanny's condition resembles that of Mary Wynne, forced to live in a family where "tho' all were her relations she had no freind" (MW, p.195). Kitty on the other hand is an heiress,<sup>9</sup> and therefore enjoys greater potential freedom in her marriage choice than Mrs Percival would like to think, and greater freedom than all Jane Austen's other heroines except Emma.

In Catherine, the curbs that Kitty's aunt tries to impose upon the heroine's freedom are painted in bold strokes. In the mature novels, Jane Austen has the opportunity to expand, explore and qualify these early essays in social observation. Mansfield Park contrasts the nature of three sisters - - Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris and Mrs Price. The mistress of Mansfield Park personifies indolence, quietly vegetating upon the sofa, making yards of useless fringe; Mrs Price suffers from a rash and impecunious marriage as "a dawdle, a slattern, who neither taught nor restrained her children" (MP, p.390); Mrs Norris despite her manifold weaknesses is at least given credit for excelling her sister Price in economic management. In each case Jane Austen links the character's attitude towards Fanny with her attitude towards marriage and her own economic status, giving much greater depth to the novel than is possible in

<sup>8</sup> Yasmine Gooneratne, Jane Austen (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p.113.

<sup>9</sup> See p.42 above.

Catherine. This depth is manifest in the marriage that each sister makes, and how this leads either to neglect of parental responsibilities or an ill-conceived love of meddling. Although it may be unfair to compare Catherine with Jane Austen's later accomplishment in Mansfield Park, I believe that an alignment of this nature serves to show that she does not abandon moral themes half-answered, but intensifies the power of implication in her later works, introducing a pattern of subtle developments upon characters and attitudes partially explored in her earlier writings.

One example is Mrs Allen in Northanger Abbey who, because "dress was her passion," (NA,p.20) sees all social and moral questions in terms of clothes and fashion. This obsession leaves Catherine Morland vulnerable to the predations of John and Isabella Thorpe. Although Mrs Allen's indifference towards Catherine is a deliberate ploy in keeping with the overt burlesque intentions of the novel, her neglect of Catherine's conduct ("Just as you please, my dear" [NA,p.86], apropos of the propriety of accepting the Thorpe's invitation whilst still beholden to the Tilneys) is a serious breach of duty. She vehemently agrees with her husband on the impropriety of unchaperoned carriage-rides: "Yes, very much indeed: Open carriages are nasty things. A clean gown is not five minutes wear in them ... I hate an open carriage myself" (NA,p.104). To underline her failing Jane Austen has Mr Allen reply: "I know you do; but that is not the question," and has Catherine assert that

"this was something of real consequence."

In contrast, then, to the more serious and urgent nature of Jane Austen's moral argument for responsible parents and guardians in the novels after Northanger Abbey, Mrs Allen's shortcoming is "a most harmless delight in being fine" (NA,p.20). Her important function is to force Catherine to rely upon her own mental resources, an important and necessary step in the heroine's education. In this regard the positions of Catherine and Mrs Allen are anticipated by Kitty and Mrs Percival. Kitty is forced to evaluate people and situations herself because Mrs Percival is inept. Although Kitty manages quickly to see through the shallow minds of her aunt and Camilla, she is completely taken in by Edward's attractive appearance and charming manner.

Although Jane Austen concentrates upon Kitty's self-delusions over the nature of Edward's regard, we are shown briefly the predicament of other girls in her society. Miss Dudley, like a crude version of Emma Woodhouse, has been encouraged to think 'rather too well of herself,' and consequently she has inherited "the ignorance, the insolence, & pride of her parents" (MW,p.195). In Persuasion we see how the Elliot pride sours the disposition both of Mary and Elizabeth, and discounts Anne's "elegance of mind and sweetness of character" (P,p.5) in favour of display and social prestige. The Dudleys similarly are "more famed for their Pride than their opulence" (MW,p.195), and actively cultivate their daughter's social grace for the glamour it ~~throws upon~~<sup>gives</sup> themselves. Both parents and

daughter view marriage as an efficient means to restore the faded dignity of their family name. Jane Austen varies the traditional theme of familial antagonism over marriage, and creates instead a sinister compact between parents and daughter.

Mr Darcy in Pride and Prejudice is a victim of similar parental pride, and the effects of early parental interference upon his moral character are central to the tensions which structure the novel. He was "given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit" (PP, p.369). His father, though "benevolent and amiable, ... allowed, encouraged, almost taught [him] to be selfish and overbearing." The effervescently comic spirit of Pride and Prejudice allows Elizabeth's frankness and vivacity to chasten Darcy and reverse the damage of early life. In Mansfield Park, however, Jane Austen is less tolerant. The fate of Julia and Maria Bertram cannot be mitigated by the strength of Fanny's moral example. Maria is banished from Mansfield Park along with her evil mentor as a result.

The shortcomings of the Stanleys as parents lie rather in weakness than pride. Like the Thorpes, Steeles, Ferrars and Bertrams, early training has been neglected or misdirected. Mary Crawford's want of principle is ascribed to ~~the~~ deficient education from her aunt and the bad example set by her uncle. Lady Middleton's children (SS, pp.120-22) and those of Mary Musgrove (P, pp.78-80) run wild without restraint. In contrast, the "variety of capers and frisks" (PP, p.286) that greets Elizabeth's return from Pemberley shows

natural buoyancy in the Gardiner children rather than ill-discipline.

Camilla's assertiveness and constant demand for attention show she has been over-indulged during childhood. Mrs Stanley interprets her daughter's lack of restraint merely as a lively disposition: "Oh! dear Mrs Percival ... you must not beleive everything that my lively Camilla says, for her spirits are prodigiously high sometimes, and she frequently speaks without thinking" (MW,p.226). She is clearly well suited to be the mother of such a daughter. The tone of her speech suggests amusement at Camilla's folly rather than shame or vexation. Her careless and affected use of "prodigiously," her exclamatory tone and obvious impercipiently adequately explain the cause of Camilla's selfishness and similarly affected speech. Mrs Stanley in failing to correct her daughter, even though clearly aware of her faults, is held responsible for Camilla's silliness, idleness and a mind "devoid of Taste and Information" (MW,p.200).

Mr Stanley repeats the pattern of failure in relation to Edward. His son's open breech of decorum in attending the Dudley's ball goes unnoticed, and he feels piqued himself because Edward's visit has been totally unexpected. He "fondly doats" (MW,p.221) upon Edward and overlooks behaviour which "had [Edward] been awkward & inelegant would have been very serious" (MW,p.235). His son's appealing manner excuses faults which have probably contributed to his high degree of self-consequence (MW,pp.217,220,225,230), and his

irresponsible urge to arouse Mrs Percival's fears for Kitty's virtue.

Jane Austen alludes to Edward's earlier indiscretions and uses them to make his attitude towards Kitty psychologically plausible. Willoughby's seduction of Eliza, or Frank Churchill's secret engagement with Jane Fairfax, are again not directly presented, but what we are shown of their behaviour towards Marianne and Emma, respectively, seems in character.

But Edward is not heavily censured for his attitude towards Kitty. His "seduction" is only a practical joke. Later villains however, do not escape punishment for irresponsible interference in the heroine's affections. Although Catherine is incomplete and we are unable to witness the chastening of Edward Stanley, we can compare his initial motivation. Henry Crawford initially sought to make Fanny in love with him (MP, p.229) as an exercise in testing his powers to charm. Mr Elliot in Persuasion is also guilty of a serious offence by seeking a rapprochement with Sir Walter, in order to stand in direct line of succession to Kellynch-hall. In Catherine, Jane Austen shows how even an intelligent girl can be overcome by personable manners. Kitty, in this respect, looks ahead to Elizabeth and Emma. Anne Elliot also looks favourably upon Mr Elliot but is never wholly taken in by her suitor in the way the heroines of previous novels tend to be.

The contrast then between Edward Stanley, almost a burlesque anti-villain, and the poignant dissipation of

Henry Crawford's wasted life, shows how Jane Austen recast the stock-figures of popular fiction as movingly realistic creations.

She explores the ramifications of power as an essential component of a civilized society and of family life. But she also shows that power is too often abused, that duty is neglected, that reasons for interference may be well-meant but misjudged, or that reasons may be invented to justify meddling in another person's affairs. In the above discussion I have selected examples from Catherine and from the novels to demonstrate these concepts. This fragment is not then just a piece of discarded scribbling, but contains much of thematic value that Jane Austen took up again and again to develop and refine in her later works. In common with them, the wit and easy style constantly lead the reader of Catherine to miss the underlying depths of meaning which are embodied in the action and especially in <sup>the</sup> <sub>A</sub> conversations. In such scenes, one recurring theme is the education of Jane Austen's heroines, their academic learning and its bearing upon their quality of mind. I wish now to examine this aspect in its embryonic form in Catherine, with reference to future developments in the novels.

V. It has been said that "all Jane Austen's novels, and many of her minor, unfinished pieces and juvenilia, are about education."<sup>1</sup> In one form or another, of course, most novels function to show the hero's life as an educative process. Tony Tanner points out that "in every case we can generally say that we are watching the initially undefined and uncommitted self having to take on definition through what happens to it in society."<sup>2</sup> But in Jane Austen's work this education through experience is consistently underlined by formal education in the schoolroom, the acquisition of clever accomplishments is set beside the more permanent and worthwhile character-building pursuits of wide reading, intelligent discussion and rational reflection. The difference between mere instruction and genuine education is thus clearly marked, ~~but one which Emma, for example,~~ <sup>ignores it</sup> ~~misinterprets~~ in her plan to "educate" her protégée Harriet Smith. Edmund Bertram, on the other hand, "recommended the books which charmed [Fanny's] leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgement; he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise" (MP, p.22 - - emphasis added). This is

<sup>1</sup> D.D. Devlin, Jane Austen and Education (London: Macmillan, 1975), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Tanner, Introd., Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p.1.

the "attainment of useful knowledge and Mental Improvement" (MW, p.198) that the Stanleys have neglected in Camilla. The ill-effects are consequently reflected in all she says and does in the same way that the instruction Maria and Julia Bertram receive denies them the ability to think and act judiciously. Concentration upon social training denies a person the knowledge of his <sup>or her</sup> own real needs, and as Jane Austen repeatedly shows <sup>^</sup> in her novels:

education is not the acquisition of information nor a matter of native talent but the cultivation of the mind, and reading books, like reading people and situations, like conversation and manners, is something one must cultivate and improve, in oneself and others, whatever one's natural 'temper' may be.<sup>3</sup>

Camilla, like the Bertram sisters, assumes that education stops when one leaves the classroom at seventeen (MP, p.19). Kitty and Fanny on the contrary appreciate that knowledge is not paraded to excite admiration but "personally shaped and assimilated,"<sup>4</sup> an asset for life that refines the emotions, perceptions and moral sense. Kitty draws and reads privately, and when in company enjoys historical and literary

<sup>3</sup> Gary Kelly, "Reading Aloud in Mansfield Park," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 37 (1982-3), 29.

<sup>4</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.91.

discussions with no intention of making an impression upon anybody, least of all a prospective suitor.

The conversations in Catherine are designed to indicate these qualities, and to suggest that Camilla's deficiency in "the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility" (MP, p.19) is the natural consequence of her superficial education. But as we later come to expect in Jane Austen's work, her treatment of such issues is never simple. She shows in Catherine that although a sound education makes the critical faculties more sensitive to absurdity and affectation, better able to endure the pain of discomfiture and disappointment than those whose minds have not been tempered, an intelligent mind like Kitty's (she is capable, like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma, of seeing vanity in some people) can still be led astray by false appearances.

Jane Austen arranges her plots to bring the two categories of educated people into conflict, usually introducing sophisticated strangers like the Stanleys or the Crawfords from London, Bath or one of the fashionable sea-side resorts like Brighton or Weymouth, into the relatively sedate world of the heroine. Moral values clash and threaten to subvert order, the narrow social confines lending themselves to a minute exploration of the tensions involved between characters.

In this competitive climate, "accomplishments and mercenary marriages tended to be coupled together."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Butler, War of Ideas, p.220.

An education devoted purely to social graces reveals itself through Catherine's bold strokes as vain, selfish and predatory, as much as through the subtler ones of her mature work. Just as Maria Bertram's training leads naturally from a girlish love of display to a belief that mercenary marriage is her "duty" (MP,p.38), the values of Camilla, Miss Dudley and the Misses Halifax become distorted in a similar way. Thus Camilla's thoughts, like those of Isabella Thorpe, the Steeles and Miss Bingley later, constantly refer to appearances "and the Admiration she wished them to excite" (MW,p.198). She spends a month planning the wardrobe for her autumn trip to the Lakes when she hears Sir Henry Devereux is to attend their visit (MW,p.199). The heroines meanwhile do not consciously solicit attention in devious ways. "They attract naturally, and without effort, by their beauty, wit, liveliness, ardour, modesty, sincerity and intelligence."<sup>6</sup> Against the modest delicacy therefore of Anne Elliot, Jane Austen shows us the Musgrove girls who "like thousands of other young ladies, [grow up] to be fashionable, happy and merry" (P,p.40), implying through this collocation of social values and private disposition the way they equate social appearances with personal well-being.

Jane Austen gives us as clear and concise an exposition of Camilla's education as she ~~was~~<sup>will</sup> later to give to that of the Bertram girls in Mansfield Park. She "had been attended by the most capital Masters," and

<sup>6</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.112.

twelve years have been "dedicated to the acquirement of Accomplishments which were now to be displayed and in a few Years entirely neglected" (MW,pp.197-98): All her thoughts, as I have pointed out, are contained within the narrow compass of clothes and fashionable acquaintance, severely restricting her capacity for sympathetic judgements and rational observation. Asked about Miss Wynne, she instantly replies, "I know who you mean perfectly - - she wears a blue hat" (MW,p.202). Though couched in terms of burlesque, this response typifies her lack of perspective, neatly bracketing person and object on her own frivolous scale of values. Her education has withered the capacity to appreciate people for their intrinsic merits, so that she sees others either as the source of something she wants, or an audience whom she can impress. Whereas Kitty shows something of that reservation of personal judgement that we see in Elinor Dashwood, Fanny Price and Anne Elliot, Camilla is totally confident in her own self-sufficiency. The accomplishments she values are the product of vanity, "an unduly high opinion of oneself, and a pursuit of worldly goals, 'vanities.'"<sup>7</sup>

Edward Stanley's character is similarly distorted by a love of attention. The inordinately long time he takes to dress, and his subsequent attitude towards the unchaperoned carriage ride (MW,p.219) or the impropriety of attending a ball uninvited (MW,p.218) suggest to us (though not to Kitty) that excessive attention to outward finery leaves inner moral values naked and

<sup>7</sup> Butler, War of Ideas, p.222.

shivering. Kitty learns this lesson only in relation to Camilla's less appealingly attractive dress and manner.

I think that John Halperin, however, speaks too strongly of the spirit behind Jane Austen's treatment of education in Catherine. He says that she is "bitterly" critical of the standard of education open to women.<sup>8</sup> Although she possessed a keen penetration of literary absurdity it is surely unlikely that a seventeen-year-old girl would have either the necessary experience in life or even the inclination to be bitter. What Jane Austen does with her educational theme is to dramatize clashes of personality and values, and reveal the connection between education and morals.

It is convenient at this point to remark how the word 'accomplishments' recurs almost leitmotivally in Jane Austen's work to signify intellectual shallowness, lack of principles, and vanity. This theme was a literary commonplace, as Kenneth Moler amongst others, has pointed out: "the Bertram girls' education," he says, "is an epitome of the errors Hannah More and others were attacking."<sup>9</sup> Edmund Bertram speaks for Jane Austen where he corrects Mary Crawford's notion of 'manners' as "refinement and courtesy ... the ceremonies of life" (MP, p.93). "Manners," he asserts, "might rather be called conduct, ... the result of good

<sup>8</sup> Halperin, Life, p.46.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Moler, Jane Austen's Art of Allusion (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1968), p.122.

principles." Avoiding didacticism in her work, Jane Austen dramatizes the relative modes of education in her characters. None of those who have received training in the social graces is particularly pleasant: Camilla, Isabella, Lucy, Miss Bingley, the Bertrams. Whilst those of modest talents like Elizabeth or Emma, or who play music solely for the pleasure of others, like Anne Elliot at the Musgroves, command our admiration.

But if, as we have seen, accomplishments were primarily aimed at securing an eligible husband, Muriel Bradbrook also points out that after marriage "a woman was commonly expected to fall back on her 'accomplishments' for her own amusement <sup>Domesticity</sup> for she could not seek any employment outside the home."<sup>10</sup> However, in the case of Lady Middleton, once the primary aim of marriage has been achieved, her attractive talents fall into desuetude, "for her ladyship had celebrated that event by giving up music, although by her mother's account she had played extremely well, and by her own was very fond of it" (SS, p.35). Where Lady Middleton's artistic performance "is not important, interesting, and valuable for its own sake,"<sup>11</sup> Elinor uses her modest talent at drawing to occupy her abundant leisure time, and especially to ward off pangs of sorrow when Edward leaves Barton cottage, and

<sup>10</sup> Muriel Bradbrook, Women and Literature 1779-1982, Vol.II of The Collected Papers of Muriel Bradbrook (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), p.26.

<sup>11</sup> Merike Tamm, "Performing Heroicism in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility and Emma", Papers on Language and Literature, 15 (1979), 399.

sitting down "to her drawing-table as soon as he was out of the house, . . . busily employed herself the whole day . . ." (SS,p.104).

In Pride and Prejudice the term 'accomplishments', which Jane Austen first effectively defines through dramatization in Catherine, becomes itself a topic of conversation, rather as books, for example, become the subject for discourse between Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe or Henry Tilney, between Marianne Dashwood and her mother and Elinor, or between Anne Elliot and the romantically indulgent Captain Benwick. On both issues, accomplishments and fiction, the various conversations reveal as much about Jane Austen's attitudes as they do about the quality of each speaker's mind.

Mr Bingley announces that he "never heard a young lady spoken of for the first time, without being informed that she was very accomplished" (PP,p.39 -- emphasis added). It is a shallow epithet, automatically credited, and made insipid by indiscriminate application. Mr Darcy, partly to voice his own exacting standards and partly to deflate Miss Bingley's flattery, asserts that "the word is applied to many a woman who deserves it no otherwise than by netting a purse, or covering a skreen . . . I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen, in the whole range of my acquaintance, that are really accomplished." Miss Bingley again tries, unsuccessfully, to give a definitive résumé of what constitutes the accomplished woman, but omits the vital component which Darcy then emphasizes: "the improvement of the mind by

extensive reading" (emphasis added).

Camilla, like Miss Bingley, values the elegant and the superficial, and like her, "professed a love of Books without Reading" (MW, p.198). Miss Stanley reveres the talents of Maria Halifax, "one of the cleverest Girls that ever were known - - Draws in Oils, and plays anything by sight" (MW, p.206). Miss Bingley's criteria are just as deficient where she lauds Miss Darcy for "such a countenance, such manners! and so extremely accomplished for her age! Her performance on the pianoforté is exquisite" (PP, p.39).

Howard Babb shows that "performance is a central motif in Pride and Prejudice, and "ranges from a show, an exhibit, to a total act, a deed integrated with one's entire nature."<sup>12</sup> This dichotomy between outward parade and sterling quality is an integral part of education in the novels. In Jane Fairfax we see a combination of true elegance (against Mrs Elton's "ease") and the ability to think clearly and feel strongly. What constitutes the sum of Camilla's education, superficial talents, formed only a part of Jane's training.

However, Jane Austen's treatment of Camilla is not ~~cavalier~~ <sup>perfunctory</sup>. Miss Stanley is "not inelegant in her appearance, rather handsome, and naturally not deficient in Abilities" (MW, p.198). Then, having secured our confidence in the narrator's impartial judgement, Jane

<sup>12</sup> Howard Babb, Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1962), p.132.

Austen goes on to point out the origin of Camilla's flighty nature: "those Years which ought to have been spent in the attainment of useful knowledge and Mental Improvement, had been all bestowed in learning Drawing, Italian and Music" (MW, p.198 - - emphasis added). The result is "an Understanding unimproved by reading and a Mind totally devoid either of Taste or Judgement." Like Mary Musgrove in Persuasion, Camilla cannot tolerate disappointment, or any alteration in her own comfort. The sentence quoted above looks two ways: at the negligence of Camilla's parents, and at the consequences of her education. Twelve years have effectively been wasted since she is narrow-minded, superficial and ignorant. But whilst she resembles Isabella Thorpe and Lucy Steele in the nature of her education, she lacks their sharpness and guile. Kitty can easily outwit Camilla, but Catherine Morland is naïve and so falls prey to Isabella's experience, just as Elinor, more steadfastly prudent than Kitty, finds herself in polite combat with Lucy over Edward Ferrars. Elizabeth Bennet is more akin to Kitty in easily penetrating Miss Bingley's artifice (which Jane cannot see), whilst in Mansfield Park, Mary Crawford's vivacity and the Bertrams' accomplishments are powerful threats to Fanny and are heavily censured. In Persuasion, Anne knows her superiority to the Musgroves, but never becomes smug. She uses her education to steel her mind against the loss of Wentworth, and to provide consolation for Captain Benwick. Her quick reaction on the Cobb is further proof that a sound education, which neither of

her sisters has received, forms the mind, is assimilated as a life-time's asset.

Camilla in contrast acquires ~~the~~ tinselled trappings like the Bertram girls who feel proud to recite lists of banalities. Although moral judgement has been cultivated in neither case, Jane Austen's mood in Mansfield Park is far less compromising than in Catherine. Camilla's poor education gives her volatile spirits and a peevish temper, amusing in itself, and which poses little threat to the heroine. The Bertrams, however, are spiteful, jealous, selfish and vain, "and in the absence of any other mental resources, spend their lives in a restless search of amusement."<sup>13</sup>

Fanny, like Kitty, is a great reader and this is reflected in the judgement and sympathy both girls can exercise, their relish for stimulating conversation, and the way in which learning for its own sake <sup>brings</sup> ~~exercises~~ the mind <sup>to an</sup> ~~in~~ understanding human values.

From the contrast between Kitty and Camilla in Catherine (1792) to that between Charlotte Heywood and the Misses Beaufort in Sanditon (1817), girls "very accomplished and very ignorant" (MW, p.421), Jane Austen shows that "education, religious and moral, is omnipotent over character."<sup>14</sup>

But education is often hampered when parents or guardians know little about the mind and temperament of minors in their charge. It takes the near dissolution

<sup>13</sup> Moler, p.122. =

<sup>14</sup> Chapman, p.194.

of Mansfield Park before Sir Thomas comes to see that "principle, active principle, had been wanting" in his daughters' education (MP, p.463). As one critic observes, "Sir Thomas is a firm disciplinarian, punctual in his habits and decorous in his manners, but he has blindly allowed a vicious inconsistency to creep into his plan for the education of his daughters." The cultivation of their dispositions has been ignored. "But disposition may be taught," Donoghue continues, for "although the tendency may be markedly toward evil, it may be corrected if arrested before it has become irretrievably vicious."<sup>15</sup> The fate of Henry Crawford stands as confirmation of this view, and Edward Stanley is following closely in his tracks. At least, however, Sir Thomas diagnoses his own painful error vis-à-vis his two daughters, something Mrs Percival is too obtuse to do: "To be distinguished for elegance and accomplishments ... the authorised object of their youth ... could have had no useful influence ... no moral effect on the mind" (MP, p.463). But whereas as Sir Thomas will later delegate responsibility to the zeal of Mrs Norris, in Catherine, Mrs Percival is personally to blame for Kitty's education. In a long and prosy speech she admonishes her niece:

I had hoped to see you respectable and good; to see you able & -willing to give an example of Modesty and Virtue

<sup>15</sup> Joseph W. Donoghue, Jr., "Ordination and the Divided House at Mansfield Park," ELH, 32 (1965), 173.

to the Young people here abouts. I bought you Blair's Sermons and Coelebs in Search of a Wife, I gave you the key to my own Library, and borrowed a great many books of my Neighbours for you, all to this purpose..." (MW, p.232)

Speaking and thinking in terms of the lifeless and generalizing rhetoric of the conduct books, she wants to make Kitty into a valuable possession, and her system of education has been specifically designed to achieve this end. Mrs Percival sees virtue not as an individual commitment of heart and mind, but a paste-board assembly of platitudes set up for popular admiration.

Kenneth Moler speaks generously of Mrs Percival, saying that "although [Kitty] has not had the instruction in the fine arts and the modern languages that Camilla has had, her aunt's rigorous moral training and her own habit of extensive reading have made Catherine a virtuous and well-informed girl."<sup>16</sup> It seems more likely that we are intended to see Mrs Percival's "moral training" as redundant and misconceived. Effectively, her system of education aims to produce an external display of virtue, just as Camilla's accomplishments are purely cosmetic. Kitty's reading has had a moral effect upon her mind and formed her disposition.

Kitty, unlike Camilla, Miss Dudley and the Misses Halifax, can distinguish the incidental from the

<sup>16</sup> Moler, p.118.

essential in people and situations. Even though she is thoroughly taken in by Edward, unlike Marianne Dashwood, and more like Fanny or Anne, she refuses to make immediate judgements. Reflecting upon their conversation, Kitty "could not exactly recollect any speech on his side expressive of ... partiality, she was still however nearly certain of it's being so; But fearful of being vain enough to suppose such a thing without sufficient reason, she resolved to suspend her final determination on it, till the next day..."

(MW, p.235). Her attitude shows an open-mindedness, an awareness that first impressions may be wrong, that fresh evidence can alter the appearance of other peoples' character and motives. She acknowledges the distinction between immediate expression and potential truth. Though more bluntly expressed than we would expect in the novels, her action is creditable and differentiates her character from the volatility of Camilla Stanley whose opinion of the Dudleys, for example, fluctuates wildly and without warning between disgust ("So abominably proud of their Family!" MW, p.204) and delighted approval when an invitation to the ball arrives ("What Charming People they are! I had no idea of there being so much sense in the whole Family -- I declare I quite doat upon them --" MW, p.207). Both in these responses and in her callous attitude towards the fate of the Wynnes, Camilla's "only standard of right and wrong is the behaviour of fashionable society,"<sup>17</sup> which her education has bought her to venerate.

<sup>17</sup> Moler, p.116.

Where Camilla's judgements are made impulsively, Kitty's more considered verdicts of others in the early part of the fragment shows that "a discriminating sympathy is never instantaneous."<sup>18</sup> Kitty deliberately suspends judging the character of both the Stanleys, pending a fair acquaintance with their actions, values and opinions.

Narrowly preoccupied with a life of gaiety, Camilla relates to other people only as they serve to enhance her own social brilliance, and is thus imprisoned within herself. Kitty exercises "emotional intelligence,"<sup>19</sup> an important quality which all Jane Austen's heroines either possess or gradually attain, the ability to enter imaginatively into the predicament of someone else. D.D. Devlin notes that "imagination in Jane Austen's novels often leads the heroine astray and can be the very opposite of that clear-sightedness which they must achieve," and that like Dr Johnson, "she is aware of [imagination's] capacity for good and evil, and follows him in finding it both a source of danger and a means of moral improvement and true education."<sup>20</sup> Kitty shows both aspects: sympathy for her unfortunate friends, and self-delusion over Edward's love.

A pairing of characters analogous to that between Kitty and Camilla occurs in Mansfield Park, and

<sup>18</sup> Susan Morgan, "Polite Lies in Sense and Sensibility," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 31 (1976),

200.

<sup>19</sup> Van Ghent, p.103.

<sup>20</sup> Devlin, p.27.

represents the conflict of values between London and Mansfield. Fanny, admiring Mrs Grant's shrubbery, cries: "one cannot fix one's eyes on the commonest natural production without finding food for a rambling fancy" (MP, p.209). Her education has made her mind susceptible to the simplest emotional responses, genuine, powerful and disinterested. Mary Crawford identifies her own feelings with society's expectations, which in the moral universe of the novels embodies selfishness, vanity and greed. Hence she remarks "I...may declare that I see no wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing myself in it" (MP, pp.209-10). Like Camilla, Mary sees other people and places only as they exalt the self. Abuse of her imagination is a mental confinement. Both here and in Catherine, Jane Austen uses the same technique of allowing her characters to debate and to dramatize moral issues simultaneously without lapsing in didacticism.

Kitty shares Fanny's ability to look beyond herself into the meaning of human experience. For instance she is the only person in Catherine with feeling enough to pity the Wynnes whom she warmly defends:

do you call it lucky, for a Girl of  
Genius & Feeling to be sent in quest of  
a Husband to Bengal, to be married there  
to a Man of whose Disposition she has no  
opportunity of judging till her Judgement  
is of no use to her, who may be a Tyrant,  
or a Fool or both for what she knows to  
the Contrary. Do you call that fortunate?  
(MW, p.205)

Like Jane Austen's other exemplary heroines, Elinor, Fanny and Anne, Kitty, though flawed herself, sees "how wretched, and how unpardonable, how hopeless and how wicked it was, to marry without affection" (MP, p.324). The speech quoted above shows how early Jane Austen developed the linguistic technique of emphasizing the positive moral values which are to obtain in any given piece of writing. She discriminates finely between moral and social values, and at the same time clearly expresses the thoughts and feelings of her characters.

As indicated above in the contrast between Fanny and Mary's reactions to the shrubbery, the heroine shows an honest appraisal of her surroundings. All Jane Austen's heroines either possess, or come to possess, this power, either in direct appreciation of nature and landscape, or more abstractly in human relationships. Frequently, this sensitivity is registered in responses to literature. These responses may either be objective and discriminating (Fanny Price's or Anne Elliot's), or emotionally indulgent (Marianne Dashwood's or Captain Benwick's). In Catherine this contrast is brought about in a discussion between the heroine and her confidante about Mrs Smith's fiction.

Kitty admires the evocative descriptions of Grasmere in Ethelinde. Camilla however, short-circuits the aesthetic pleasure of reading and misses all such passages "because [she] was in such a hurry to know the end of [the story]" (MW, p.199). Kitty's evaluative criteria blend an appreciation of the Picturesque

beauties of landscape, perception of moral values informing fiction, and a satisfaction in the quality craftsmanship of "well-written" English. Camilla's impulsive, superficial and self-contradictory exclamations display her muddled values. She uses the Lakeland reference as an excuse for boasting about her next social engagement, and is "quite Mad with Joy" (MW, p.199) at the prospect of an autumnal excursion to the Lake District, not to admire the scenery, but only because "Sir Henry Devereux [had] promised to go with [them]" (MW, p.199). We must applaud Kitty's dry rejoinder: "it is a pity that Sir Henry's powers of pleasing were not reserved for an occasion where they might be more wanted." Jane Austen developed the art of understatement early in her career.

Because this conversation appears early in the text, Jane Austen is able to establish a "moral frame of reference" for the remainder of the fragment by contrasting what her characters think and say.<sup>21</sup> It is possible that this scene <sup>has been</sup> ~~is~~ reworked in Northanger Abbey where a similar discussion takes place between antithetical heroine and confidante on their favourite Gothick novels:

"my dearest Catherine [exclaims Isabella],  
 what have you been doing with yourself  
 all this morning? ... Have you gone on  
 with Udolpho?"

"Yes, I have been reading it ever since I  
 woke; and I am got to the black veil."

<sup>21</sup> Butler, War of Ideas, p.170

"Are you, indeed? How delightful!

Oh! I would not tell you what is behind  
the black veil for the world! Are you  
not wild to know?" (NA, pp.39-40)

Again, the heroine's honest response is contrasted with the fashionable enthusiasm of her interlocutor. Where Catherine's frisson is genuinely felt, Isabella's exclamations are all affectedly intense. What is also significant is that both pairs of characters discuss current novels and then enact a plot which closely follows the books they admire.<sup>22</sup> Of perennial importance here also, is the correlation drawn between misreading fiction, unsound judgement, and irresponsible conduct, a theme which features prominently in Sanditon as I will show in due course. Donald Stone gives a cogent reason for Jane Austen's attraction towards this theme. "The abuse of language," he remarks, "can be psychologically, as well as socially, dangerous.... language, rather than reflecting reality, can create its own reality: what we see becomes defined for us by our manner of seeing, by the kind of language we draw upon to make our definitions."<sup>23</sup>

William Magee, remarking on Charlotte Smith's contribution to Jane Austen's art, says that "as always... literary reference reveals more about the character

<sup>22</sup> Anne Henry Ehrenpreis, "Northanger Abbey: Jane Austen and Charlotte Smith," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 25 (December 1970), 346.

<sup>23</sup> Donald D. Stone, "Sense and Semantics in Jane Austen," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 25 (December 1970), 31.

making it than about the author [of the works cited]."<sup>24</sup>  
 The reference in Catherine to the cult of the Picturesque shows how she exploits the very fiction she parodies to reveal the mind of her characters. This is achieved in Catherine through Kitty's "contact with the heartless or thoughtless,"<sup>25</sup> which induces her to examine her own heart and mind, to reconsider first impressions like Elizabeth Bennet, and to correct hasty opinions or expectations. Lonely after the departure of the friends "she loved best on Earth" (MW, p.195), bored by "the dullness of a constant tete a tete [sic] with her Aunt," her "enthusiastic [sic]" turn of mind unstimulated by the young men round about, Kitty's eagerness to befriend Camilla Stanley is made to seem psychologically plausible, and Jane Austen here makes imaginative use of the heroine/confidante relationship common in popular fiction. Because the cast in Catherine contains fewer major characters than appear in the novels, the contrast between Kitty and Camilla, and between heroine and putative hero, emerges in higher relief, and lacks both the fine differentiations and the "emotional and moral resonance"<sup>26</sup> we observe in Jane Austen's later works. Kitty's world is thus less dense, less fully realized, but is significant because it shows

<sup>24</sup> William H. Magee, "The Happy Marriage: the Influence of Charlotte Smith on Jane Austen, "Studies in the Novel, 7 (1975), 122.

<sup>25</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.51

<sup>26</sup> Jan. Fergus, Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.15.

us how early Jane Austen sifted her themes and how firm was her imaginative and creative grasp of them.

The discussion of Mrs Smith's novels exploits both the comic and the moral possibilities of the scene. Although Kitty is disinclined to judge Camilla rashly for her abuse of books, further discussion on history (MW,p.201) and letters (MW,p.210) confirms Kitty's fears that Camilla can in no way "make amends for the loss of Cecilia & Mary Wynne" (MW,p.198). Kitty, who at first in her "solitary Situation was ready to like anyone" (MW,p.198), is made to exercise her powers of judgement and examine why Camilla is an unsatisfactory friend. In doing so, Jane Austen establishes the pattern for her later heroines who come to understand through experience how they have been led by misconceptions into errors of judgement. Elizabeth Bennet's reactions are representative. In Wickham, she had "learnt to detect, in the very gentleness which had first delighted her, an affectation and a sameness to disgust and weary" (PP, p.233). Like Edward, Wickham's "countenance, voice, and manner, had established him at once in the possession of every virtue" (PP,p.206), whereas towards Darcy, through being "blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (PP,p.208), she has "courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away" (PP,p.208). Kitty comes gradually to see the stupidity and frivolity in Camilla, in whom "she found no variety in...conversation...no information but in fashions, and no Amusement but in her performance on the Harpsichord" (MW,p.201). This judgement implies the qualities which will later prejudice Kitty in favour

of Edward — good conversation, a well-informed mind, and the ability to amuse.

Camilla's vehemence, vanity and ill-considered chatter, then, can only bore Kitty, who finds Edward both more appealing and more challenging. But it is a focal point in Catherine to show how he makes a fool out of the heroine by exposing her self-delusion.

Like Marianne, Kitty is beguiled by Edwards's "air of the most perfect Ease & Vivacity" (MW, p.215). But what complicates the issue, adds interest to Kitty's character and injects suspense into the plot is the fact that she, like Elizabeth Bennet, is otherwise intelligent and perceptive, not a predominantly deep-feeling romantic like Marianne. The warring impulses of, crudely speaking, reason and passion, force Kitty to observe <sup>Edwards's</sup> his speech and behaviour closely. This delay in her assessment of his character shows her erratic powers of judgement and his ability to deceive, and intensifies the comic ratiocination at the close of the fragment. Although Kitty castigates herself for "insufferable vanity" like similarly deluded heroines Elizabeth and Emma, she is not fully chastened of her folly, and remains subconsciously smitten by Edward's charms:

After the departure of the Stanleys  
Kitty returned to her usual occupations,  
but Alas! they had lost their power of  
pleasing. Her bower alone retained  
its interest in her feelings, &  
perhaps that was owing to the  
particular remembrance it brought to her  
mind of Ed<sup>wd</sup> Stanley. (MW, p.239)

In Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen contrasts the different reactions of Elinor and Marianne when the men they love leave Barton Cottage: the former, as we have seen,<sup>27</sup> overcomes stress through active employment, whereas Marianne purposely cultivates her melancholy. Catherine, however, differs from the novels in that the heroine does not have to choose between an outwardly attractive suitor and a truly worthy alternative. Granted that the work is incomplete, a comparison of the early stages of her novels shows how Jane Austen usually introduces both worthy and unworthy rivals early in the story. Genuine love and esteem can thus be tested against temptations and false appearances. Colonel Brandon's self-effacing merits contrast with Willoughby's outspoken eagerness; Henry Tilney's sprightly wit puts John Thorpe's conceited vanity at a marked disadvantage; whilst the deviousness of Frank Churchill is made to appear mean and petty beside Mr Knightley's solid moral virtues. As Andrew Wright remarks, "the miracle of her genius is that [Jane Austen] is able to exhibit so many variations within a relatively narrow and even repeated framework."<sup>28</sup>

But in Catherine she does not yet engage the reader's powers of judgement, as she does in the novels, by concealing from us the nature of Edward's designs on Kitty and his past conduct before they meet. We are explicitly informed by the narrator that Edward is no

<sup>27</sup> See p.43 above.

<sup>28</sup> Wright, p.91.

philanderer, but merely wishes to arouse Mrs Percival's fears. We thus know much more about his character and motives than Kitty does, and our interest in the action is to see, from a superior vantage point, how easily Edward's charms conquer the heroine's better judgement. In Pride and Prejudice when Elizabeth first meets Darcy and Wickham, we are as ignorant of their respective characters as Elizabeth herself, and our growing awareness of the truth about them is kept in step with that of the heroine. Her doubts and anxieties, pain and confusion, are made more vivid by our intimacy with the heroine's mind and imperciience, and increase our appreciation of how her character develops. Because Kitty has no rival suitor, she does not face the same moral choices as Jane Austen's later heroines; discrimination is easier and brings little pain. Instead, her humiliation is comically melodramatic. We are distanced from her and are less absorbed into her experiences than we are into those of Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse.

This melodramatic reaction causes one critic to see Kitty as an inconsistent "failure." At the opening and the close of the story, "Catherine is gently mocked as a sentimental figure, whereas in contact with Camilla she is drawn as a lively young woman of keen intelligence and wit, while in many of her dealings with Edward Stanley she is an ingénue of foolish simplicity."<sup>29</sup> I disagree because this <sup>reading</sup> fails to emphasize that Kitty is

<sup>29</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.39

pointedly shown to possess both rationality and romance, the conflict between the two impulses giving richness to her character and generating comic irony. None of Jane Austen's heroines, moreover, is devoid either of sense or sensibility: it is the excess of feeling, or personal judgement that fancies itself objective, that must be corrected. Thus Marianne Dashwood, for instance, is not a complete romantic idiot, but is less endowed with common-sense than her sister Elinor; whilst Emma can clearly perceive Mrs Elton's vulgarity but is several times guilty of reliance upon her own faulty judgement.

Although speculation about what an author might have done may be an unsound critical procedure or indeed a fruitless endeavour, I believe that Catherine is sufficiently akin to the novels in the ways I have shown in manner and subject to allow for comment.

Jane Austen might have intended to introduce a rival woman (resembling for example, Lucy Steele, who cruelly provokes Elinor Dashwood over her own engagement to Edward Ferrars). None of the girls in Catherine as it stands fulfil this purpose. Camilla is the anti-hero's sister and so cannot challenge Kitty for Edward's love. The Wynne sisters are sent far away from Chetwynde, and even though Cecilia returns, she does so as a married woman. Miss Dudley who has been groomed to attract a wealthy man (Edward's family are people of "Large Fortune & high Fashion" MW, p.197 -- emphasis added) is not developed as a character in the main action.

Or, as I have already suggested, Jane Austen might have introduced a worthy contestant for Kitty's affection. As Devlin points out, the heroines are saved from final unhappiness "not because they learn the truth, but because of the steadying power, the sharpening of perception which love for someone else gives them."<sup>31</sup> London may hold a worthy suitor for Kitty, if Mrs Percival can be persuaded to let her accept the Stanleys' invitation, and by making a true entrance into the world, fulfil her destiny there like many heroines before her.

<sup>30</sup> See p.49 above.

<sup>31</sup> Devlin, p.33.

The Watsons

One of the most striking features of The Watsons is the way that Jane Austen makes us feel Emma Watson's loneliness in an unfamiliar world. This is achieved partly through a heavy reliance upon dramatic presentation, and also by confining much of the narrative perspective to Emma's point of view, particularly in the way that time is perceived. The periods of stress and lull in her experiences are indicated by fluctuations in the pace of the text and the density of the prose. I shall illustrate these points by showing how Jane Austen employs the mind of her heroine as a moral frame of reference, and combines Emma's personal reflections and observation of others to explore the structure of her society, the dynamics of social life, and the experiences of an individual living within it.

This will involve a scrutiny of Emma herself, one which will note similarities and differences regarding the other six heroines, and the way she develops or anticipates their attributes. This combination gives her a unique and distinctive character in the Austen canon.

Because the novels are centrally concerned with the problems young women face in obtaining a suitable husband, I shall proceed to consider economic pressures facing unmarried young women without fortune. I will look also at the rivalry this causes among sisters and the consequent <sup>disruption</sup> desiccation of family life it brings in its wake.

Finally I examine developments in Jane Austen's conception of the clergy. In particular, the professional commitment of a clergyman is given a special significance because it fixes the identity of a man in much the same way as the appellation of "gentleman". In the fragment and the novels that follow it, this becomes increasingly important in societies where insincerity and role-playing become serious threats to the survival of tradition.

These, then, are aspects of the fragment that are significant as they amplify themes either latent or only partially developed in Jane Austen's first three novels, and provide much of the ground for the three that follow.

I. Criticism of Jane Austen's fiction, and especially that of linguists, has shown that it is only through an "unremitting alertness"<sup>1</sup> to her language that her achievement as a novelist can be appreciated. As one critic explains, an examination of the "local meaning" of the text provides an indispensable point of entry into "the wider meaning of the novels as statements of human experience."<sup>2</sup> This might with justice be applied to the work of almost any artist who uses the written word as a medium of communication, but in Jane Austen's case it has been a vital step in clearing her reputation of invidious notions of triviality, quaintness, provinciality that preceded her present eminence in English fiction.

This "local meaning" alluded to above includes the way that Jane Austen manipulates the reader to accept her evaluations through a deft handling of point of view -- the angle from which the action is seen, presented objectively by the narrator or through characters' thoughts and feelings, benefitting from authorial omniscience, or subject to the limitations of individual insight. The expression of her themes and the creation of a distinctive timbre in each novel partly determine and are in part determined by the

<sup>1</sup> Norman Page, The Language of Jane Austen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Page, p.2.

narrative stance adopted to achieve the desired effects in each work.

By examining representative passages in The Watsons I shall try to show how (in the ways just outlined) point of view is adapted to the issues and kinds of effect that I believe Jane Austen was trying to achieve by choosing a heroine in Emma's position and possessed of her qualities -- the way a sensitive person of superior intellect and moral scruple copes with an unpleasant environment that constantly impinges upon her privacy, circumstances that grant the opportunity and necessity for reflection but which also threaten her principles and so deny her a meaningful place in society.<sup>3</sup>

By way of preface to my discussion I had better say I shall consider Jane Austen's irony only incidentally, for much critical energy has already been expended in this field. And I shall be less concerned with point of view vis-à-vis the author's Christian moral ethic, or "the emotional stance of the writer as it is reflected in the tone of [the] work,"<sup>4</sup> than with the mechanics of her technique, specifically the way that meaning is communicated through the interweaving "patterns of

<sup>3</sup> Here and subsequently 'Emma' signifies Emma Watson: Emma Woodhouse will be specifically designated.

<sup>4</sup> The Theory of the Novel, ed. Philip Stevick, (New York: Free Press, 1967), p.85.

conjunction and separation" that blend with varying degrees the viewpoints of narrator and character.<sup>5</sup>

Of especial interest in The Watsons is the way Jane Austen locates point of view largely in the perceptions of Emma as an effective, economical and subtle device to convey the sense of her isolation. As Walton Litz points out, "in The Watsons Jane Austen attempted for the first time to present her subject not through paired characters (as with Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney) but through the mind of her central figure....and -- in so far as we can tell from the fragment -- it was part of Jane Austen's purpose to present her without confidante or counterpart" (emphasis added).<sup>6</sup> Presumably he anticipates the period after the death of Mr Watson when Emma is forced "to become dependent for a home on her narrow-minded sister-in-law and brother" (MW, p.363).

Apart from the heavy reliance upon dialogue, perhaps approaching in importance the role it plays in Pride and Prejudice, at least in quantity if not in intention, another interesting aspect of point of view of particular importance to the fragment is the way Jane Austen exploits the freshness of Emma's reactions to an unfamiliar environment to serve the thematic ends outlined in my introduction. She aims to establish in Emma a trustworthy point of moral reference, maintaining

<sup>5</sup> Karl Kroeber, Styles in Fictional Structure: The Art of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p.18.

<sup>6</sup> Litz, Artistic Development, p.87.

adequate distance to allow our critical faculties to operate freely, and to afford us varying degrees of intimacy with her characters' thoughts for intellectual or emotional involvement -- especially with Emma, whose fate must move the reader sufficiently to appreciate Jane Austen's "conscious formulation of style and structure as parts of the moral or psychological process"<sup>7</sup> in the work.

On this question of aesthetic distance Professor Booth remarks that "distance is never an end in itself; distance along one axis is sought for the sake of increasing the reader's involvement on some other axis."<sup>8</sup> This control of distance in The Watsons is aimed at isolating the heroine within her own mind to prove her integrity and, by comparison, to expose the moral deviation of the other characters. By letting us see Emma's world as she experiences it, <sup>Jane Austen</sup> ~~we are allowed~~ <sup>s us</sup> to share the pain of loneliness, insults and condescension in an alien world. "We see minds through other minds, and in the encounters of intelligence, always marked in Jane Austen's social groups, we learn about the mind observing and the mind being observed."<sup>9</sup> An examination of Jane Austen's manner of narration, the different angles of vision, will suggest how she envisioned her subject.

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd Brown, Bits of Ivory, p.9.

<sup>8</sup> Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p.123.

<sup>9</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.185.

It is largely her particular use of the narrator in The Watsons that lends it a distinctively interiorized quality in those parts of the text not given over to dialogue. A consideration first of the way she uses the narrator in her other novels will provide a helpful context for our inquiry.

Jane Austen experimented early with unreliable narrators who are themselves objects of mockery, their values constantly undermined through implicit irony. A work like Love and Freindship, for example, depends for its effect upon the deliberate overstatement of sensibility by Laura, its major correspondent and virtual heroine. In Lady Susan Jane Austen's technique is more subtle, relying less upon Laura's reductio ad absurdum than dramatic irony in the heroine's duplicity. The reader is involved more intimately with the text, invited to see the discrepancies between Lady Susan's letters to her various correspondents. I think that Jane Austen gained valuable experience in these early works ~~for the way that the narrator unifies~~ <sup>of</sup> a piece of writing <sup>by means of a narrator.</sup> Thus only careful reading of each of Lady Susan's letters and an equally careful comparison of each with the other will reveal the pattern of deceit that operates in her dealings with others.

In the major novels the narrators are all non-agent, and control the information we receive with a reliability that upholds the author's own values. I find no valid reason <sup>for</sup> ~~to~~ distinguish <sup>ing</sup> between Jane Austen's views and those that purport to be the narrator's own. The narrator does not participate in

the action so there is no need to satirize her in the way that Swift, for instance, sets up Gulliver as narrator only to show up his deficiencies.

If the narrator in Jane Austen, then, is reliable, unreliability is transferred to the judgement of certain heroines and characters in each novel whose views we are allowed, though not constrained, to accept, this freedom being a major part of Jane Austen's strategy to involve the reader actively in a difficult process of cognition. In all the novels apart from Northanger Abbey the reader is granted increasingly generous access to the mind of the heroine. To see much of the action from her point of view whilst retaining the narrator as a reliable guiding medium allows Jane Austen to render a precise analysis of successive states of feeling in her heroines -- a feature she admired in Richardson's work. Where he exploited the potential for immediacy in epistolary narrative, she preferred to use third person narrative "as a sensitive register of her characters' mind, feeling and personality"<sup>10</sup> because it allowed her an elasticity to observe them incidentally in commentary embedded in the flow of narrative, in transcriptions of their thoughts coloured by their individual idiom, and in occasional ironic asides to the reader.

The parodic intention of Northanger Abbey entails ~~a~~ the voluble, self-conscious presence of the narrator who functions to point the paradox that Catherine, though an atypical heroine by conventional standards, is a heroine

<sup>10</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.174.

nonetheless. We are openly invited to observe her with the narrator from a superior position of experience, rather than to observe events through her consciousness -- not entirely so, however, as I will show later in her experiences at the Abbey. We identify more with the narrator because of this constantly sympathetic patronizing of the heroine, and because the narrator's geniality acts as a guarantee of veracity. Our assessment of Catherine is firmly guided to ensure that we appreciate why and how Jane Austen inverts the unrealistic standardizations of many contemporary novelists. For example, we are told that "for the reader's more certain information, lest the following pages should fail of giving any idea of what [Catherine's] character is meant to be; that her heart was affectionate" (NA, p.18). The parodic intention works less towards our identification with Catherine than towards a sympathetic understanding of her horror, shame or bewilderment.

After Northanger Abbey, closer identification with the heroine's mind is a vital element in the presentation of Jane Austen's themes. We are either invited to accept the views of Elinor or Anne, appreciating the mild irony directed at displays of excessive feeling or doubt: or we are allowed to follow in the mistaken footsteps of Elizabeth and Emma, observing the ways that preconceptions warp judgement. As Booth points out, "the deeper our plunge, the more unreliability we will accept without loss of sympathy."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Booth, p.164.

This is particularly relevant in Emma's case, for her <sup>5</sup> midjudgements are grosser than Elizabeth's, and also because Pride and Prejudice relies more heavily upon dramatic irony through a dialogue that in Emma is often transposed into the heroine's own thoughts. In Persuasion we come even closer to direct experience of Anne's conscious thoughts and emotions. We feel her acute loneliness and uncertainty over Wentworth's regard for her and the torment she experiences at seeing him tentatively court Louisa Musgrove. And we are shown in a fleeting glimpse of his mind (naturally denied the heroine) in the notion of his avenging himself for her original capitulation to Lady Russell. Access to Emma's mind shows midjudgement wilfully undertaken; access to Anne's, the pain of love unjustly unrequited. This "double perspective"<sup>12</sup> -- detachment with the narrator, intimacy with the character, and the oratio obliqua that results from a combination of their viewpoints -- is an essential feature of Jane Austen's irony, and central to her technique of persuading the reader to accept the correcting implications of the narrator's tone without being forced to do so.

Often this involves an imperceptible switch from the narrator's viewpoint to a transcript of one character's thoughts. Consider the following example from Emma:

<sup>12</sup> W.J. Harvey, Character and the Novel (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p.97.

With Tuesday came the agreeable prospect of seeing him again, and for a longer time than hitherto, of judging of his general manners, and by inference, of the meaning of his manners towards herself, and of guessing how soon it might be necessary to throw coldness into her air...." (E,p.212)

Obviously Emma would not say to herself "with Tuesday comes the agreeable prospect...." This is the narrator's organisation of her thoughts and feelings using the language she would have employed. Emma finds the prospect "agreeable" because it flatters her vanity to consider Frank Churchill in love with her even though she is not seriously in love with him. It is also significant that Jane Austen has used a reflexive without an antecedent to create the illusion that we are closely tracing Emma's thoughts.<sup>13</sup>

An example of this method is used in The Watsons to create a similar illusion of experiencing Emma Watson's thoughts but without the same degree of immediacy. Yet to keep criticism in perspective we should remember that Jane Austen might well have revised much of the fragment at a later date had it been completed. Only when viewed in this light can my observations seem tenable. The passage to which I allude is the surprise visit that

<sup>13</sup> Helen Dry, "Syntax and Point of View in Emma," Studies in Romanticism, 16 (1977), 91.

Tom Musgrove and Lord Osborne pay Emma and her sister:

The surprise of the young Ladies may be imagined. No visitors would have been welcome at such a moment; but such visitors as these -- such a one as L<sup>d</sup> Osborne at least, a nobleman & a stranger, was really distressing. He looked a little embarrassed himself, -- as, on being introduced by his easy, voluble friend, he muttered something of doing himself the honour of waiting on Mr Watson. -- Tho' Emma could not but take the compliment of the visit to herself, she was very far from enjoying it. She felt all the inconsistency of such an acquaintance with the very humble stile in which they were obliged to live; & having in her Aunt's family been used to the many Elegancies of Life, was fully sensible of all that must be open to the ridicule of Richer people in her present home. -- Of the pain of such feelings, Eliz: knew very little; -- her simpler Mind, or juster reason saved her from such mortification -- & tho' shrinking under a general sense of Inferiority, she felt no particular Shame. -  
(MW, pp. 344-45 -- emphasis added)

This passage must be quoted at length to show how the narrator's distanced, generalizing remarks in the first two clauses shift into a summary of Emma's thoughts in

the wake of the visit, then back again into the narrator's viewpoint to juxtapose the disparate reactions of the two sisters.

Repetition, broken syntax and clauses in apposition tend to accelerate the pace of the text here to suggest the state of Emma's mind. The idiom also indicates that the heroine's reactions rather than Elizabeth's are being scrutinized -- that Lord Osborne should be regarded as being "a little embarrassed" is not characteristic of her bluntness, nor is the view that Tom is "easy, voluble". Despite these stylistic idiosyncrasies, we can see from the relative allotments of textual space that Emma's thoughts are deeper and so require finer examination. And her feelings are likely to be more interesting than her sister's because she has the greater mental refinement to evaluate the behaviour of others.

But the mixture of gratitude, vanity and pique that here characterize Emma's feelings is not presented as directly as those of Emma Woodhouse. The pronoun "herself", for instance, now has an antecedent. I shall discuss the ironic implications of this passage in a later section, but it is enough to notice here that Jane Austen favours a ~~point of view~~ narration that, for the sake of irony, combines narrative summary with a certain character's idiom.<sup>14</sup>

Although mediation through a narrator may dilute the impression of contact with Emma's mind, Jane Austen

<sup>14</sup> See below pp.105-7.

compensates by seeing events as if from the heroine's point of view to emphasize that ~~Emma~~<sup>she</sup> is a stranger in Stanton, an effect enhanced by the full exploitation of dialogue in which Emma can ask <sup>the</sup> simple, direct questions that befit someone unfamiliar with a certain environment.

Catherine Morland also enters strange surroundings at Bath and Northanger. The embarrassments she suffers are specifically designed to mature her character through close encounters with an unpleasant reality that debunks her Gothic expectations. Emma's confrontation with harsh reality on the other hand also betrays her fond expectations, but her experience is of a totally different calibre. This is partly because in The Watsons the heroine faces a more uncompromising society fraught with selfish, calculating and pretentious people. In this respect, the fragment anticipates the bleakness that tests the moral stamina of Fanny Price and Anne Elliot. And if Emma's society is harsher than Catherine's, she herself is also more intelligent and perceptive, qualities that emerge as Jane Austen relates much of the narrative commentary as if through Emma's eyes, and complements this with long stretches of dialogue that exposes the obtuseness and hostility facing her. What is more, where Catherine, the Dashwoods and the Bennets have reasonably stable though by no means perfect families for support, Emma has returned home, has been shocked, and is shortly to be dispossessed of a home when her father dies.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See Cassandra Austen's note on her sister's intentions for developing the work (MW, p.363).

As noted before, Emma functions as the central consciousness in the fragment and, as such, she is never absent. In some of the other novels the heroine is absent for short periods -- the opening chapter of Pride and Prejudice, for example, where the Bennet parents at cross purposes discuss daughters and marriage prospects; or chapter V in Emma, where Mr Knightley and Mrs Weston discuss the merits and drawbacks of Emma's friendship with Harriet Smith; or again, chapter I of Mansfield Park where Mrs Norris' hypocrisy and Sir Thomas Bertram's ponderous deliberation are displayed in discussions over Fanny's temporary adoption.

But before Emma is used as a central consciousness, the long introductory dialogue with Elizabeth is used to demonstrate the heroine's values. This gives us a solid <sup>information</sup> ~~foundation~~ <sup>by</sup> upon which to <sup>grade</sup> ~~erect a hierarchy~~ of the characters who are gradually introduced, <sup>even</sup> ~~and~~ before the narrator has given any indication of Emma's disposition. The refinement of her attitudes and the sound judgement she possesses are thrown into relief by the obtuseness of the other characters. She is thus made an attractive figure whom we are induced to trust and whose values are coincident with those of the narrator.

It is odd therefore that one critic should remark how "All the characters whom we hear either busily desire a private, and therefore false, decorum or otherwise deviate from valid norms: thus the fragment seems constantly to shift its grounds, arbitrarily mooring its standards of behaviour first in one character and then in

another."<sup>16</sup>

At no time surely does Jane Austen leave any doubt that Emma's standard of conduct is to be preferred. She is the fixed centre against whom all others are compared. Emma is presented in a series of scenes designed to show the superficial elegance of the Edwards (MW, p. 324-25), Lord Osborne's complacent lack of tact (MW, pp. 345-46), Tom's idle boasts (MW, pp. 339-40), the Robert Watsons' devotion to moneyed acquaintance and social prestige (MW, p. 350), and even to show up Elizabeth's coarsened ideas on matrimony (MW, p. 318), and over-simple criteria for assessing people (MW, p. 343).

To look at Emma's relations with Tom shows how Jane Austen uses him almost as a parody of Emma's function as moral norm: posing as an arbiter of correct social procedure at the ball, whereas Emma embodies the narrator's values in her unimpeachable conduct:

My little friend Charles Blake, he cried, must not expect to engross you the whole evening. We can never suffer this — It is against the rules of the Assembly — & I am sure it will never be patronised by our good friend here Mrs E[dwards]; She is by much too nice a judge of Decorum to give her license to such a dangerous Particularity.

(MW, p. 334 -- emphasis added)

<sup>16</sup> Babb, p. 38.

He manipulates conventional procedure by drawing upon a putative community of opinion ("must"; "we"; "rules"; "Decorum") and by invoking with veiled contempt the support of Emma's chaperone to get his own way. *Like As with* Isabella Thorpe's retort to Catherine, though in a reverse situation, that James Morland's request for a second dance is "a most improper thing, and entirely against the rules" (NA, p.57), Tom makes up his own rules to suit the occasion. Through Emma's polite but firm reply, he is made foolish whilst her civility shows true good-breeding.

That her supposed intention of dancing with Charles Blake is neither "particularity" on her part (her initial offer was a purely ad hoc measure), nor especially "dangerous" (he is ten years old and more interested in stuffed animals than flirting) show, apart from the absurdity, that Tom is an untrustworthy manipulator of conventional proprieties for his own ends. He fails to see that careless use of words blunts their precision when they are required to specify particular ideals of conduct. And he is equally unaware that genuine good manners possess a moral dimension, outward conduct expressing a person's inward spirit. He is all externals, however. Remove the ostentatious mannerisms and very little remains of his identity.

To show positively how conduct can embody one's guiding principles, Emma is made to act impulsively at the Edwards' ball, saving Charles Blake from disappointment: she "did not think, or reflect; --she felt & acted" (MW, p.330). Morality and impulse here

are coincident, the intensity of feeling concentrated in the economy of gesture.

The occasion is a key moment in the fragment because although otherwise hemmed in by hardship, Emma instigates an action to help someone momentarily less fortunate than herself. What she does is a natural and consistent extension of her character, like Mr Knightley's dancing with Harriet when Mr Elton snubs her. By extending herself sympathetically "we have been made to see", as Virginia Woolf remarked, "that if Emma acted so in a ball-room, how considerate, how tender, inspired by what sincerity of feeling she would have shown in those graver crises of life which, as we watch her, come inevitably before our eyes."<sup>17</sup> She draws attention to herself, and the adverse criticism amongst some of those assembled shows that for them magnanimity is something novel. Most importantly, her action brings about her introduction to Mr Howard through the effusive gratitude of Mrs Blake. The whole scene in this way lights up a path for future developments, and yet looks back upon what we have been shown of Emma's character in dialogue, demonstrating how her act of kindness escapes seeming like a novelist's contrivance. Emma's generosity is a natural part of her character; Tom, on the other hand, is of a predatory nature, acting only by calculation for his own advantage.

Howard Babb points out that in Tom's characterization, as in Frank Churchill's later, Jane Austen successfully

<sup>17</sup> Woolf, p.174.

tackles the problem of how to make "a clever fop's speech dramatize his cleverness and his foppishness at the same time."<sup>18</sup> Like John Thorpe, and John Dashwood, Tom's "conversation, or rather talk, began and ended with himself and his own concerns" (NA, p.66). But apart from the constant self-revelation of his conceit, the narrator intervenes on many occasions to denigrate him. Such frequent prompting seems ~~un~~<sup>un</sup>balanced when we consider the relative mildness with which the other characters are treated. Tom is the only one singled out as an especial target for the narrator's animus. The narrator's criticism of him is closer in tone to the treatment accorded Mrs Norris and Sir Walter Elliot in the later novels than the silliness of a Mrs Bennet or a Sir John Middleton in the earlier works.

But in defence of the narrator's attitude towards Tom we are at least given evidence of his selfish poise. ~~Recognizing,~~ <sup>He recognizes</sup> for example, that Margaret is fishing for compliments: "He hesitated; Margaret was fair herself, & he did not particularly want to compliment her; but Miss Osborne & Miss Carr were likewise fair, & his devotion to them carried the day" (MW, p.357). The premeditation here contrasts nicely with Emma's spontaneous candour, and the slightly exaggerated use of "devotion" exposes his sycophancy towards the Osbornes and the implied contrast of his fickleness in flirting successively with the Watson girls. On another occasion we are told that "Tom had nothing to say for himself, he

<sup>18</sup> Babb, p.40.

knew it very well, & such honest simplicity [in Elizabeth's speech], such shameless Truth rather bewildered him" (MW, pp. 346-47). The viewpoints of three people are blended here: Emma's ~~noting~~<sup>noting</sup> his uncharacteristic silence; Tom's ~~in~~ the knowledge of having overstayed his welcome; and finally the narrator, ~~who alone is~~ responsible for the Olympian note of condemnation in "honest simplicity" and "shameless Truth."

Through these means of representation -- direct speech, reported thoughts, and narrative coloured by distinctive idiom -- Jane Austen interrelates her themes with technique. As Mark Schorer has shown, point of view may become "the positive definition of theme," which not only "contains intellectual and moral implications, but...discovers them."<sup>19</sup> To imprison Emma's active mind in a stiflingly selfish environment gives Jane Austen wide scope to exploit Emma's rich mental life, forced inwards upon herself for lack of intellectual equals. The heroine does not possess the self-assured acceptance that distinguishes Emma Woodhouse, nor the sprightly wit that effectively screens Elizabeth Bennet from slights and stupidity.

Jane Austen gives us access to the private world of a heroine who feels as exposed as Fanny Price and Anne Elliot -- more confident than the one, less often febrile than the other -- and possessing no moral or intellectual equal in whom she can (as yet) confide, cannot escape

<sup>19</sup> Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery", Hudson Review, 1 (1948-9), 74.

from an oppressively materialistic society whose values are the very antithesis of her own on marriage and family relations.

Because Emma is new to Stanton, it is important that we feel the full impact of this strangeness upon an alert and sensitive mind. We are shown, therefore, the vividness of her impressions when in some degree of agitation she first arrives at the Edwards' house. Circumstantial detail, never introduced into the novels unless to suggest character, motivation or response, is used here to differentiate the respective outlook of Elizabeth and Emma. Elizabeth remarks that "The Edwards' have a noble house you see, & they live quite in stile. The door will be opened by a Man in Livery with a powder'd head..." (MW, p.322). She is gauche in all her responses to wealth and ostentation, good at heart but easily awed like Miss Bates by those superior in status if not in true gentility. There is a child-like thrill of expectation in her voice that contrasts on the other hand with Emma's more mature and articulate pattern of thoughts, suggested by her analytical survey in the following passage:

Mr E/dward/s House was higher than most of its neighbours with two windows on each side the door, the windows guarded by posts and chain, the door approached by a flight of stone steps.

(MW, p. 322)

Where Elizabeth is literal-minded, Emma's discriminating

mind can, at a glance, recognize fashionable neatness here and what this suggests about the character of its occupants. Jane Austen wants us to feel, then, the different quality of their responses to the house. Notice also how thoughts and the language in which they are couched are kept consistent with character. Elizabeth notices quotidian domestic details and speaks frankly: Emma, more tactful in observing her surroundings, notices details in silence.

The use of a man's house in this way as a metaphorical embodiment of his character is a familiar literary topos. But more important for Jane Austen is how the appearance of a house can be made to reflect the heroine's state of mind. Northanger Abbey's gardens, furniture and kitchen gadgetry tell us much about the General, but more about Catherine's disappointment at not finding trap-doors and tapestries in a crumbling ruin. Fanny's silent inventory of the squalid parlour at Portsmouth is significant because it shows the painfully claustrophobic sensations of a delicate mind trapped without any fixed date for departure in an environment that offends against all her principles of order, tranquillity and consideration of others. Anne Elliot, in a different mood, admires an adaptability in the Harvilles that allows them to make of limited space and straitened means a cosy household with room for guests. She feels in contrast the selfish inflexibility of her own father and the favourable comparison that the Harvilles' house <sup>provides</sup> ~~makes~~ with the faded elegance of Uppercross cottage and the mirror-lined emptiness of

Kellynch Hall.

The heightened state of Emma's expectations is suggested further by what she feels towards the occupants of the house themselves:

She felt a little uncomfortable in the thought of all that was to precede [the expected joys of the Evening']. Her conversation with Eliz: too giving her some very unpleasant feelings, with respect to her own family, had made her more open to disagreeable impressions from any other cause, & increased her sense of the awkwardness of rushing into Intimacy on so slight an acquaintance.  
(MW, p. 322 -- emphasis added)

A mood of anxious anticipation is established here in a transcript of Emma's thoughts. To focus attention upon what Emma feels, Jane Austen qualifies narrative statement with sentiments appropriate to the heroine's refinement and apprehension in present circumstances -- "a little uncomfortable"...."Her conversation with Elizabeth too...."rushing into intimacy on so slight an acquaintance" -- and creates a sense of immediacy by using participial phrases.

What is more, Emma's mind flickers between past, present and future indicating the flux in an alert mind: she anticipates the future pleasure of the ball, but feels awkwardness in the present moment, partly because of her recent conversation with Elizabeth. This

establishes a causal relationship between different time phases that witnesses the expansion and contraction of Emma's imaginative horizons. Her mind oscillates between the particular causes of her anxiety, general consideration of "any other cause" of discomfort, and back to her particular wish not to seem impertinent in forcing the pace of an acquaintance with the Edwards family.

Emma's acute self-consciousness is a vital asset to Jane Austen because the heroine's sensitivity enables us to receive information that Elizabeth's mind is too limited or too coarsened to register. Moreover, a constant focus upon what Emma feels, and the strength of these feelings, are effective means to indicate her loneliness and disappointment upon returning home, and her repugnance at her sisters' attitudes towards marriage. This finesse is clearly portrayed in the development of her thoughts and utterances that contrast so glaringly with Elizabeth's simple-minded affinity for household management, the Robert Watsons' vacuous elegance, and Tom's unflinching attempts to create an impressive public image for himself.

While Jane Austen does not, and never does, employ an esoteric Joycean mode of rendering psychological experience, we are given in The Watsons a constant appraisal of character and action from Emma's point of view. There is little of that narratorial character sketching that we find, for example in Sense and Sensibility:

Mrs Ferrars was a little, thin woman, upright, even to formality. Her complexion was sallow; and her features small without beauty, and naturally without expression; but a lucky contraction of the brow had rescued her countenance from insipidity, by giving it the strong characters of pride and ill-nature. (SS,p.232)

The first half of this quotation ("Mrs Ferrars... expression...") could of course be Elinor's first impressions of Edward's mother, and we are indeed told that "her curiosity to know what [Mrs Ferrars] was like, was as lively as ever" (SS,p.230). But the remainder of the sentence is clearly distinguished as the narrator's irony, indicated by "lucky", "rescued", and the preference of one quality over another equally unpleasant. Because the narrator is omniscient, we are inclined to accept this judgement of Mrs Ferrars as incontrovertible, and are shown its validity in what follows of her treatment of Robert and Edward.

In The Watsons Jane Austen prefers to render this kind of information implicitly through dialogue or through the impressions, realistically limited at first, that people make upon Emma -- for example, the Edwards family:

-- the Mother tho' a very freindly woman, had a reserved air, & a great deal of formal Civility -- & the daughter, a

genteel looking girl of 22, with her hair in papers, seemed very naturally to have caught something of the stile of the Mother who had brought her up. — Emma was soon left to know what they could be, by Eliz.'s being obliged to hurry away — & some very, very languid remarks the probabable Brilliancy of the Ball, were all that broke at intervals a silence of half an hour before they were joined by the Master of the house. — Mr Edwards had a much easier, & more communicative air than the Ladies of the Family... (MW,pp.322-23)

All three characters are characterized either by physical appearance or manner ("air") because only thus far could Emma's impressions extend at this early stage in their acquaintance. That Miss Edwards is a genteel "looking" girl indicates that Emma is speculating candidly because she lacks any alternative source of information other than her own impressions. On the other hand, Elizabeth gives her sufficient evidence of Tom's conduct towards her sisters to enable her to "dislike and despise him" (MW,p.319), an opinion that is amply vindicated when she meets him at the ball. In contrast to both characters, Emma is teasingly prevented on two occasions from learning Mr Howard's opinion of herself (MW,pp.332;359), and either cannot or dare not seek further enlightenment. Like Anne Elliot in this respect

she runs the risk of vanity in presuming regard for herself from a certain quarter without adequate justification. She is therefore content to accredit him high standards based upon his conduct towards herself and upon favourable character references from Charles Blake (MW, p.331) and her father (MW, pp.343-44). Time and observation must do the rest.

Emma's impressions of Miss Edwards, then, are left deliberately uncommitted to allow for future readjustments of her opinion. Her caution is repaid, for "Emma found in Miss E. -- the shew of good sense, a modest unpretending mind, & a great wish of obliging" (MW, p.323). She knows that, because we see only the externals, there is a constant danger of oversimplifying our responses by categorizing without sufficient proof. Emma therefore can be said to know herself because she knows her limitations.

The implications of this for Emma's choice of a husband are important. As Tave remarks, "the perception of true amiability requires time,"<sup>20</sup> and if she refuses to make rash judgements, she will marry only a man whom she can esteem and whose integrity has been adequately proved. She is as aware as the narrator that love at first sight and marriage based on expediency are both impractical, the former being shortlived, the latter being based on insincerity and selfishness. Jane Austen demonstrates through Emma's attitude that because romance plays only a very small part in a relationship,

<sup>20</sup> Tave, p.122.

the matching of compatible minds is an essential safeguard against the periods of monotony in married life. If love based on esteem and gratitude is "a new circumstance in romance" (NA,p.243), Emma joins the six other Austen heroines in showing that it makes sound sense. And her candour is a natural adjunct to this quality, saved as she is from the excesses of Jane Bennet's attitude by the ability to recognize hypocrisy.

She rightly supposes that Jane Watson "despised her immediately" (MW,p.350) when told that Emma was fond of the country. The narrator goes on to support the validity of this conjecture: "Mrs R.W. Robert Watson was indeed wondering what sort of a home Emma c<sup>d</sup> possibly have been used to in Shropshire, & setting it down as certain that the Aunt could never have had six thousand pounds" (MW,p.350 --emphasis added). The archness in the narrator's tone ("indeed") quickly yields to the intolerantly affected tone of Jane Watson ("c<sup>d</sup> possibly"), the dogmatism of her judgements that have not one iota of proof ("setting it down as certain"), and the impertinence in regarding herself as a model for others.

Emma's charitable assessments are thrown into further relief by the defective judgements of the other characters, ranging from Elizabeth's innocuous opinion that Mr Howard is always "playing cards with Ly Osborne, & looking proud" (MW,p.343), to Robert Watson's callous remarks upon Aunt Turner's handling of Emma's inheritance. To emphasize his coldness Jane Austen presents a conversation between Emma and himself in

which he unashamedly avers that "A woman should never be trusted with money" (MW, p.351), basing this specious generalization upon the very limited evidence of Emma's aunt. He then reminds Emma of her misfortune, which she refutes, denigrates her aunt, whom she defends, then loses himself and proportion in talk of 'superior stiles' and 'sixpences'. Their dialogue is a good example of "non-communication", a dramatization of "all the psychological and moral barriers to meaningful human relationships."<sup>21</sup>

We respond to the conflicting tensions here and appreciate the virtual inevitability of the fact that amidst such intellectual poverty Emma is forced in upon her own thoughts. Because we sympathise, a sense of credibility attaches to the complexity of her thoughts and feelings, predisposing the reader to experience events as she does. Jane Austen has taken care to ensure, however, that imaginative participation in Emma's plight does not submerge the necessary pattern that is structuring the work -- the gradual deterioration of the heroine's circumstances and the inversely proportionate need to develop ever-increasing moral toughness.

Here is an  
~~As an~~ example of Emma as our central intelligence in the fragment. We can see how Jane Austen uses her as an observing eye at the ball:

Among the increasing numbers of Military Men, one now made his way to Miss Edwards, with an air of Empressément,

<sup>21</sup> Lloyd Brown, Bits of Ivory, p.169.

which decidedly said to her Companion  
[Emma] 'I am Capt. Hunter' — & Emma,  
 who could not but watch her at such a  
 moment, saw her looking rather distressed,  
 but by no means displeased, & heard an  
 engagement formed for the first two  
 dances, which made her think her Brother  
Sam's a hopeless case. (MW, p.328 —  
 emphasis added)

All the responses of seeing, hearing, surmising,  
 remembering belong to Emma. Again, Jane Austen gives us  
 a précis of Emma's perceptions using language  
 appropriate to her level of intelligence and warmth, the  
 latter quality clearly evident in the sudden rush of  
 feeling couched in more colloquial language where her  
 brother is concerned ("a hopeless case"). Because the  
 omniscient narrator presumably knows all the facts <sup>about,</sup> and  
 feelings <sup>of,</sup> the participants, locutions such as "an air  
 of...which decidedly said...looking rather..." are  
 deliberately used to create the illusion that we are  
 sharing Emma's limited viewpoint. Presenting events in  
 this way, Jane Austen renders the ball as a tableau  
 acted out before the heroine's eyes, and to confirm the  
 validity of Emma as an observer, we are given the  
 corroborating facts in preceding dialogues.

As with Emma Woodhouse, so too with Emma Watson: "A  
 mind lively and at ease, can do with seeing nothing, and  
 can see nothing that does not answer" (E, p.233). But  
 where imaginative energy plagues the one, it is an  
 important asset to the other, and one that supports

rather than undermines her moral stance.

During the ball scene Emma continues as observer even in narrative which may seem like narrative commentary: "Mrs E's sattin gown swept along the clean floor of the Ball-room, to the fireplace at the upper end,..." (MW,p.327). Emma, we recall, has already seen Mrs Edwards in her parlour before the ball, "sitting respectably attired in one of the two Sattin gowns which went thro' the winter" (MW,p.323). And would Jane Austen have mentioned that the floor was clean (surely an obvious, even superfluous point) unless Emma had been looking at it while watching the gown sweep along the floor and probably hearing the fabric rustle on polished wood? Emma is similarly held responsible for noticing the dramatic contrast in temperature and levels of activity between "the quiet warmth of a snug parlour" and the "cold & empty appearance of the [Ball] Room" (MW,p.328). And she notices the way that some of the gentlemen, ill-at-ease, "seemed glad to escape into the Card-room." We feel in the likely speculation and choice of idiom Emma's intuitive sympathy for social awkwardness. The narrator mediates Emma's thoughts and feelings for us, bringing reader and character closer together, helping us to merge imaginatively into the "fictive present and fictional time" of the fragment.<sup>22</sup>

When the Osbornes arrive the narrator tells us that "Emma looked at them all as they passed" (MW,p.329) and

<sup>22</sup> A.A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), p.111.

so prepares the reader to accept the external impressions as being features that Emma would notice. Lady Osborne, for example, has "by much the finest person," is "very handsome," and has "all the Dignity of Rank" -- Emma guesses her age at "nearly 50." Lord Osborne, on the other hand, has "an air of Coldness, of Carelessness, even of Awkwardness about him, which seemed to speak him out of his element in a Ball room" (all emphases added). Because Emma does not yet know him, the narrator must tell us the reason for Lord Osborne's reluctance to attend. The narrator otherwise pretends to share Emma's limited insight, refusing to grant her any ~~priviledged~~ insights into character. Even her impression of Lord Osborne is revised twice as she makes progressively more candid interpretations of his character and ends in sympathy with his unease.

Emma's capacity for observation, inference and moral judgements is complemented by the way she perceives time. Mary Lascelles points out that "The constant characteristic, . . . , of Jane Austen's representation of time is this: that it is rooted in her (generally mastered) technique for using the consciousness of her characters as a means of communicating with the reader."<sup>23</sup> One aspect of this connection between character-consciousness and time we have already seen in the importance of memory in the novels.<sup>24</sup> In The Watsons Jane Austen uses attitude to time with particular

<sup>23</sup> Lascelles, Art, p.194.

<sup>24</sup> See Catherine chapter p.14 above.

emphasis, using the distortions of time by characters in dialogue as an index to character and values.

Robert Watson, speaking invidiously of Aunt Turner observes to Emma that "After keeping you at a distance from your family for such a length of time as must do away all natural affection among us & breeding you up (I suppose) in a superior stile, you are returned upon their hands without a sixpence" (MW, p.352 -- emphasis added). He implies that physical and emotional estrangement are naturally concomitant, and by referring to his own family as "their" not "our" hands, places another barrier between Emma and himself. Elizabeth, on the other hand, has maintained a link (albeit erratic) with Emma during her long absence (MW, p.321) and cherishes their moments of intimacy: "It is so delightful to me, said she, to have Things going on in peace & goodhumour" (MW, p.343); and we are pointedly told by the narrator of the "tranquil & affectionate intercourse of the two Sisters, whose mutual regard was increasing with the intimate knowledge of each other which such intercourse produced" (MW, p.348). Jane Watson shows a nature as indifferent to simple, honest pleasures as her husband's. She remarks with scarcely concealed allusions to marriage prospects: "how glad we are to have any of you with us --if it be for months together. -- & I am sorry, (with a witty smile) we have not been able to make Croydon agreeable [For Margaret] this autumn," and proudly goes on to inform Emma that she "had seven Tables last week" (MW, p.350) in her drawing room, apparently with intentions like Mrs

Elton's of impressing Emma with the vigour of her social life. The opinions that both husband and wife hold regarding the influence of time work consistently to debase human relationships because they view time as an opportunity for gain, not for self-improvement and the strengthening of family bonds.

Unusually for Jane Austen, we are given a child's-eye view of the world specifically as it relates to the experience of time. At the ball Charles Blake asks Emma the time and exclaims "Eleven! -- And I am not at all sleepy. Mama said I should be asleep before ten" (MW, p.332). In contrast with the Robert Watsons, he does not see time in a selfish light, but like Elizabeth and Emma, relates himself to it to say simply what he feels. His child<sup>'s</sup>-like honesty and warmth are welcome in the world of Stanton, where straightforwardness has been replaced by conceit, compassion inverted and fossilized into self-regard. This is pre-eminently shown in the character of Tom Musgrave.

He is constantly seeking ways to enhance his social prestige. One way is to copy the Osbornes' late dining hours:

...he had the pleasure of observing to Mr Watson that he should leave him at supper, while he went home to dinner himself. -- ...he well knew, that if he staid he must sit down to supper in less than ten minutes -- which to a Man whose heart had been long fixed on calling his next meal a Dinner, was

quite insupportable. (MW,p.359)

I think that Jane Austen deliberately expands his thoughts upon a trivial matter here to indicate his equally trivial cast of mind. He carefully times his entry at the ball to coincide with that of the Osbornes and through a professed insouciance attempts to disengage himself from an awkward situation into which he has been led by his silly habit of paying surprise visits: "I could not be here earlier, he replied. I was detained chatting at the Bedford, by a friend. -- All hours are alike to me" (MW,p.356). Then further aiming to turn the subject, he succeeds only in introducing the indelicate matter of Margaret's absence. From this situation also he extricates himself by an affected surprise that saves his face at the same time as it thwarts Margaret's hopes to intrigue him: "A month! have you really been gone a month! 'tis amazing how Time flies" (MW,p.356). Repetition, exclamation, cliché all bespeak his insincerity here and we may compare the way he abuses time to suit his own selfish ends to the way he twists the rules of decorum to secure Emma's arm in the dance (MW,p.334).

It is in relation to Tom that Margaret's abuse of time is most clearly seen. As Elizabeth tells Emma, "This is the second time within this twelvemonth that she has gone to spend a month with Robert and Jane on purpose to egg him on, by her absence--" (MW,p.319). She wastes her time pursuing an unworthy man just as her other sister Penelope misuses hers in seeking the favour of "rich old Dr Harding" (MW,p.317).

The novels contain many examples of those who show a wilfulness and impatience with the authority imposed by clock time. They arrogantly fix their own time scale. John Thorpe, for example, executes mathematical contortions to try and prove the superiority of his own horses: and Mary Crawford, like Isabella, adamantly disclaims the laws of time: "Oh! do not attack me with your watch. A watch is always too fast or too slow. I cannot be dictated to by a watch" (MP,p.95). It is interesting also to recall Camilla Stanley who ignores storyline and descriptions in the novels she reads because she is "always in such a hurry to know the end" (MW,p.199). Like Jane Austen's other characters who arrogate to themselves the impossible privilege of refashioning fixed time, she forfeits real pleasure and benefit in self-defeating wilfulness.

Whether we look in the juvenilia, the fragments, or in the novels, what all these examples have in common is an integration of time, character and moral values that operate to advance the plot in their respective works. In The Watsons Emma shares Fanny's retentive memory. She relates past, present and future to see the bearing they have upon herself. Only she is capable of abstracting her thoughts from the material preoccupations that absorb the interests of those around her, to see the wider implications of time and change in human endeavour.

The way, then, that we are made conscious of Jane Austen's major themes is accomplished largely through developments in the heroine's outlook, and made

available to us by seeing events from her point of view.

And because each experience has "a temporal index attached to it,"<sup>25</sup> there is great potential for the novelist who wishes to exploit the discrepancy between steady chronological time and the subjective flux of an individual's pace of thought, response and association. Deliberate distortions in the sequential flow of time can be used to indicate differing states of mind in the perceiver. An examination of Jane Austen's use of time in The Watsons shows that she has paid considerable attention to the control of the time scheme as a key element in the characterization of the heroine. And that the temporal framework is so highly developed even at this early stage in the fragment's evolution confirms my belief that time and the individual's perception of it are central to Jane Austen's conceptualization of the plot.

The pace of the work is controlled by using a series of major scenes in which the heroine is prominent, and where the interplay of dialogue, narrative comment and transcription of thoughts regulate the density of the text. The opening dialogue between Elizabeth and Emma, Emma's offer to dance with Charles Blake, and Emma's introspection at the conclusion of the fragment are instances of these differing textures. It is significant that even though the chapter divisions are not indicated, this alternation of mood and hence of pace

<sup>25</sup> Hans Meyerhoff, Time in Literature (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1955), p.1.

suggests that Jane Austen had some idea for the final disposition of her material into contrasting chapters.<sup>26</sup>

The control of pace functions as an oblique comment upon Emma's state of mind, the quality of her life, and the changes she feels that it has undergone. She is fully aware that returning home has led to a decline in her standard of living and this is communicated to us by the access granted us to her thoughts and feelings. In an overall perspective we see the pace of the text gradually decrease as the opening dialogue and eager anticipation of the ball, with their blended moments of tension and relaxation, give place to distressing confrontations between Emma and the various other characters (Tom, Lord Osborne, the Robert Watsons and Margaret especially), and the final anguished introspection. Within these three arbitrary distinctions Jane Austen fixes upon two moments that we are to regard as particularly significant: "the present" (MW, p. 315), when Emma joins the Edwards to attend the ball: and the time at the end of the fragment, when escaping the mortification of shallowness and hypocrisy: "for the moment... [S]he was at leisure, she could read & think" (MW, p. 361).

By varying the textual space she allots to a

<sup>26</sup> There are two clearly marked breaks in the text (MW, p. 344; 360) but these are nowhere near sufficient to account for the many equally clear though unmarked changes in setting, pace and subject (e.g: MW, p. 322 — "Emma had seen the Edwardses...": p. 348 — "A week or ten days rolled quietly away...").

carefully selected number of moments in Emma's life, ranging in specificity from the highly particular ("Tuesday Oct<sup>r</sup> ye 13<sup>th</sup>," MW, p.3147), to the comparatively diffuse ("A week or ten days rolled quietly away," MW, p.3487), Jane Austen orders the importance of her material for the reader, underlining central thematic concerns. But this process of selection poses a problem for any novelist to preserve a sense of continuity, for as one critic rightly points out, "between dramatic scenes,...the equivalent of the curtain can be used only sparingly in fiction."<sup>27</sup> A good example of how Jane Austen bridges the gap in The Watsons without distracting our attention occurs at the opening of the piece. A leap in time from family history to Emma's part in that generational cycle is used to enhance the significance that will attach to her visit both in the eyes of local society and in her own estimation. This makes for an unobtrusively swift transfer between past and present.

The narrator gives a short introduction inversely proportional in length to the span of fictional time it covers, extending from the longstanding amity between the Edwards and the Watsons to the forthcoming ball. These prefatory remarks occupy a dozen lines to establish the narrative stance, "asserting [the narrator's] bona fides as a presenter and, in the process, defining the desired reader,"<sup>28</sup> but telling us nothing

<sup>27</sup> Mendilow, p.72.

<sup>28</sup> Douglas Hewitt, The Approach to Fiction: Good and Bad Reading of Novels (London: Longman, 1972), p.49.

specifically about either Elizabeth or Emma.

Although Jane Austen chose to avoid the constant narratorial intrusions that characterizes Fielding's work, for example, or Sterne's, she can control our attitude towards character and action by the use of language. Some aspects of this we have already seen in the way idiom colours narrative to convey different points of view. Another aspect is that of tonal emphasis. In the opening paragraph of The Watsons our critical faculties are alerted:

The first winter assembly in the Town of D. in Surry was to be held on Tuesday Oct<sup>r</sup> ye 13<sup>th</sup>, & it was generally expected to be a very good one; a long list of Country Families was confidently run over as sure of attending, & sanguine hopes were entertained that the Osbornes themselves would be there. -- The Edwardes' invitation to the Watsons followed of course. (MW, p.314 -- emphasis added)

As Brian Southam succinctly remarks, "Our attention is confined (as it is in the episodes which follow) not so much because wider concerns are excluded, as because the present context is projected so firmly."<sup>29</sup> Jane Austen gives us precise details and focuses upon facts of

<sup>29</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.67

immediate relevance, so unlike <sup>her procedure in</sup> the opening of Sanditon where we learn more about the coachman's attitude than facts of family history or the character of the protagonists. The expressive power Southam attributes to the paragraph above is that of indicating a society "alive to the assembly and responding to it with anticipation." I favour a more cynical interpretation that is borne out in what we are shown of Stanton attitudes. The passage surely aims to suggest the Edwardses' good opinion of themselves. Elizabeth tells Emma as much in relating Sam's forlorn aspirations towards Miss Edwards; and the Edwardses themselves hold no very high opinion of Sam, as Emma in turn observes to Elizabeth later: "The Father is decidedly against him, the Mother shews him no favour, & I doubt his having any interest with Mary" (MW, p.341). To connect themselves with a surgeon, a lowly profession in Jane Austen's day, would not flatter the self-esteem that is suggested in their hopes that the Osbornes "themselves" would attend.

The intention, then, in these opening narrative remarks is to establish a setting at once realistic and imaginatively stimulating. The competitive Stanton ethos is suggested and focused upon the Edwards as representative because it is with them that Emma first encounters it.

The exposition of Mansfield Park also covers a broad time span: "About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon..." (MP, p.3). We are presented with three sisters' variously unsatisfactory marriages as a

foil to Maria's equally infelicitous match; and we are shown through several chapters how education and an oppressively formal environment prepares Fanny and the Bertrams for adulthood. This is crucial background for the conflict between principle and wilfulness that determines the shape of the plot.

Following the narrator's introduction in The Watsons we are given six pages of dialogue between Elizabeth and the heroine. Here, a lengthy stretch of text is necessary to follow in every nuance of meaning a conversation that lasts only "five and thirty minutes." This reads naturally because Jane Austen has underpinned the conversation with factual accuracy: an "old chair" probably would take about this long to cover "about three miles" (MW, p.315). A similar ratio between time and the spatial extent of its representation occurs in Willoughby's repentance which takes "only half an hour" to cover fifteen pages (SS, p.333).

Because we know nothing about the nature of the speakers, space is generously given over the dramatic revelation of temperament, attitudes and themes to allow the reader opportunity to form his or her own impressions, especially of Emma. In its method of presentation The Watsons resembles Pride and Prejudice most nearly of all the novels, where the Bennet parents speak first and are remarked upon afterwards. Northanger Abbey devotes several pages to a portrait of what Catherine is not, whilst Sense and Sensibility sketches the parallels between Elinor and Marianne Dashwood in their differences and likenesses. Mansfield Park, as we

have seen, begins with Fanny as a child; Emma presents the heroine in full face and profile; whilst in Persuasion the understatement of Anne's presentation echoes the fact that to her own family: "she was only Anne" (P,p.5).

By the end of the fragment what strikes us most in the opening dialogue between Emma and Elizabeth is their sincerity. Where the language of Tom, Margaret and the Robert Watsons is rich in double entendre and aimed usually at projecting a false image of themselves, the two sisters are plain-spoken because, neither needing nor inclined to hide anything about themselves, they have no occasion for trickery.

Another interesting feature about this conversation is the way Jane Austen combines an insider's view of home life and local conditions through Elizabeth's domesticity and wider experience, with an outsider's more fastidious tastes and fresher responses. A duality of viewpoints dovetails to give a unified impression of Emma's predicament and to seize our immediate attention for the ensuing action.

Emma's high standards predict future conflict between the sisters in the tense arena of Stanton where, as Elizabeth can personally testify, deceit and selfishness are rife.. And because Emma has been absent for fourteen years her request for information is what one might expect if her sister's "scanty communication" (MW,p.321) has, it seems, told Emma little of use. An awkward contrivance of plot is avoided in disguising narrative exposition as the heroine's natural response

to her unavoidable ignorance.

Because we concur with Emma's feelings about Tom and Penelope, Elizabeth and Sam, we are induced to accept her as our moral norm: just as the delicacy, intelligence and discretion that these feelings indicate induce us to trust her as a reliable observer and judge. This opening conversation is an excellent example of how Jane Austen makes the reader extend him or herself imaginatively into fictive situations and exercise moral discrimination with little or no help from the narrator. We must decide how and to what degree, for example, Elizabeth's views on marriage are distorted, and conversely, how far this distortion is redeemed by her simplicity, common sense and warm-heartedness. We must examine Emma's credentials before we accept her as our guide, and appreciate how she, more than any of the other characters, aspires to a higher ideal of conduct. Her preservation of this ideal constitutes the dynamic of the work, and that her task will be a difficult one is clear where Elizabeth remarks, "I can see in a great many things that you are very refined. I have observed it ever since you came home, & I am afraid it will not be for your happiness..." (MW, p. 318).

But Jane Austen's ironic vision as an artist could not sustain itself through dialogue alone, else she might as well have written plays rather than novels. Because Emma has been presented as a woman of delicacy and fine discrimination, these qualities can be used to create a sub-stratum to the surface action of the

fragment. Since Emma is keenly aware of the relation between herself and time, the way she experiences it may be used to control the pace and texture of the prose.

Significance can therefore accrue to any moment seen from Emma's point of view. In the hours leading up to the ball, for example, ~~we are compelled to~~ <sup>she</sup> experiences ~~her~~ anxiety as a stranger accompanying people she hardly knows to a public function. The narrator quietly tells us that "the early hour itself [for departure] was watched for with some eagerness" (MW, p. 326), and it is through Emma's perceptions that this anxiety is communicated. An appeal to the reader's own experience upon similar occasions gives credibility to the way that anticipation seems to retard the progress of time. In the following passage the conflict is mimetic between perceptual and conceptual time, a tension that suggests Emma's mood of anxious expectation by clustered incidence of precise references to time and movement:

The entrance of the Tea things at 7  
o'clock was some relief -- & luckily.  
Mr & Mrs Edwards always drank a dish  
extraordinary, & ate an additional  
muffin when they were going to sit up  
late, which lengthened the ceremony  
almost to the wished for moment. At a  
little before 8, the Tomlinsons  
carriage was heard to go by, which was  
the constant signal for Mrs Edwards to  
order hers to the door ... (MW, pp. 326-27 --  
emphasis added)

Taking tea and the entrance or clearance of the tea things are always significant moments in Jane Austen's works.<sup>30</sup> Because on the present occasion the air is tense with expectation, Emma notices the time with clock-watching accuracy. The exact notations of time are thus an important element in the meaning of the text. We are given not a direct experience of her thoughts but strong suggestions as to her state of mind. The Edwards' extra cup of tea is seen as "lucky" because ~~to lengthen~~ the time taken over refreshments shortens the tedium of waiting to leave. The same value is implied in feeling "some relief", "almost to the wished for moment", "At a little before 8...." Feeling, wishing and watching here all belong to the heroine who, because this is her first ball in the neighbourhood, can naturally be expected to feel greater anxiety than the others.

I have already made some observations upon the ball itself, pausing only to note how Jane Austen gives full coverage through dialogue to Emma's meeting with Tom and her kindness to Charles Blake. Also important is the way suspense is achieved by shielding Emma, and the reader who sees through her eyes, from learning much about Mr Howard with whom, it transpires, she is greatly

<sup>30</sup> In this same fragment we see later Miss Watson "sitting at the best Pembroke table with the best tea things before her" (MW, p. 355) when Tom Musgrave bursts in as much to his own surprise as to that of the assembled.

impressed. Because he has been given no direct speech, we can only form a character sketch of him here from Charles Blake's remarks and from her own favourable impressions. This is gradually supplemented later by what we learn from Mr Watson and Tom Musgrave.

In the aftermath of the ball Jane Austen keeps the time-scheme scrupulously coherent. That she was consciously aware of this need for plausible management of time is demonstrated by the many absurdities in the juvenilia. One gentleman, for example, travelled, "for three days & six nights without Stopping" (MW,p.177), and we learn that a certain Elfrida's wedding clothes grew out of fashion in a matter of weeks! (MW,p.11). And in Northanger Abbey Jane Austen mocks the painstaking analysis of time that absorbed Richardson<sup>31</sup>: "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday have now passed in review before the reader; the events of each day, its hopes and fears, mortifications and pleasures have been separately stated, and the pangs of Sunday only now remain to be described, and close the week" (NA,p.97). Yet even beneath the banter, as Chapman has shown, "the dates are consistent not only with each other, but also with the facts of Bath [social life]" (P,p.277). The remaining novels evince a similar scrupulosity regarding the internal coherence of the

<sup>31</sup> Alan D. McKillop, "Critical Realism in Northanger Abbey," in From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, eds. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1958), p.41.

temporal framework,

In The Watsons Emma: "went to bed in charming Spirits" (MW, p. 337) after the ball. "Tuesday Oct<sup>r</sup> ye 13<sup>th</sup>," as an important day in Emma's life, is over, and our attention is drawn onwards by events that develop from the introduction she has made. "The next morning" is stressed because it is significant in bringing Emma more into the public eye, both as a curiosity and as a rival to Stanton's other young ladies:

It was the way of the place to call on Mrs E. on the morn<sup>g</sup> after a Ball, & this neighbourly inclination was increased in the present instance by a general spirit of curiosity on Emma's account, as Everybody wanted to look again at the girl who had been admired the night before by L<sup>d</sup> Osborne. (MW, p. 337)

And this day is important because Emma resists Tom's attempt to charm her into his carriage. A remark by quick-witted Mrs Edwards both saves Emma from embarrassment and indirectly ushers in the second day after the ball: "We shall be extremely happy Miss Emma, if you can give us the pleasure of your company till tomorrow" (MW, p. 339). Returning home on the second day after the ball at the "Dinner hour" -- the timing is significant -- gives Emma time to relate her experiences to an eagerly expectant Elizabeth.

All these events since the ball act as a prelude

to the "3<sup>d</sup> day after the Ball, as Nanny at five minutes before three, was beginning to bustle into the parlour with the Tray & the Knife-case" (MW,p.344). Tom and Lord Osborne pay an unexpected call at an inconvenient hour. Mary Edwards we recall had also arrived at the "Dinner hour" (MW,p.341) but had tactfully left at once after dropping Emma back home. This third day after the ball is even more significant than the previous day because it dramatizes Emma's confrontation with Lord Osborne, her rebuke, and its effect upon him. Their conversation forms the main event of the day. It contrasts Emma's true good-breeding (which, like Fanny's and Anne's, imbues the outward forms of propriety with a depth of inward sincerity) with the stilted refinement of a Lord (all form and little feeling), with Tom's blustering "in high spirits at his own importance" (MW,p.345) (all pretence at form and little pretence at feeling), and finally with Elizabeth's characteristic bashfulness before "the great & Grand ones" (MW,p.342) (no pretence at form, though much honest feeling). Consistent with Jane Austen's preference for showing rather than telling in her work, she tinctures the narrative report of Emma's and Lord Osborne's mutual impressions with their respective points of view. After Emma's rebuke:

L<sup>d</sup> Osborne was silenced. Her manner had been neither sententious nor sarcastic, but there was a something in it's mild seriousness, as well as

in the words themselves which made his Lordship think; -- and when he addressed her again, it was with a degree of considerate propriety, totally unlike the half-awkward, half-fearless stile of his former remarks. --

It was a new thing with him to wish to please a woman; it was the first time that he had ever felt what was due to a woman, in Emma's situation.

(MW, p. 346)

Interesting potentialities arrest the attention of either character. The pace has been decelerated considerably by this concentration upon their thoughts. Emma perceives that his speech suddenly assumes "the tone of a Gentle<sup>n</sup>" (a peculiar honour in Jane Austen's novels and reserved only for men like Mr Knightley, the corrected Mr Darcy, and Mr Gardiner), whilst Lord Osborne "was rewarded by a gracious answer, & a more liberal full veiw of her face than she had yet bestowed." Emma has already suffered insensitive remarks from Robert Watson, but where politeness and family loyalty had prevented her from remonstrating with a brother, her more strongly-worded protest to a virtual stranger indicates the more clearly her growing exasperation with current attitudes towards young women who lack fortune and opportunities. She resents being valued simply for a pretty face and graceful tread, and insists implicitly upon a recognition of how an intelligent and sensitive mind can suffer from callousness

and condescension.

What I have tried to show in the aftermath of the ball is that by meticulously documenting three consecutive days and concentrating upon certain important moments in them, Jane Austen shows how Emma's position in Stanton has undergone a dramatic shift-- from being virtually a nobody, she has suddenly become the focus of everybody's interest. This transition has been accomplished unobtrusively and with an ease that has only been possible, I maintain, through careful attention to time and the consistent use of Emma's point of view, since she is our reliable observer and judge.

A daily record of events, however, is not new to Jane Austen's technique. In Sense and Sensibility, for instance, it is used to give a sense of urgency to Marianne's psychosomatic illness at Cleveland and an equally intense level of anguish to Elinor who is forced to watch and endure her sister's torment. Marianne's condition is specifically correlated with the lapse of time as is made clear by such locutions as: "Marianne got up the next morning..."; "a very restless and feverish night"; "The next day produced little or no alteration"; "Two days passed away with little variation"; "On the morning of the third day however, the gloomy anticipations...were almost done away...But the day did not close so auspiciously as it had begun..." (SS, pp. 307-10). The novel continues in this fashion for several pages. Because Marianne is delirious, events in time are perforce interpreted from Elinor's point of view, and so the documentary tone of the narrative that

reads in some respects like a medical progress report is an effective index to the strained state of Elinor's mind.

In Mansfield Park, similar effect is achieved as the time fixed for the theatrical performance draws near. We again experience a compression of the text, a retarding of the pace, that betoken Fanny's growing consternation, particularly when persuaded despite herself to stand in for Mrs Grant. Events and feelings are recorded almost hourly as an intensifying prelude to Sir Thomas' return at the end of volume one, with the subsequent slackening of pace that results as order is restored reflecting the oppressiveness of his ponderous manner. This deceleration more significantly suggests the force of Fanny's relief, for in her eyes Sir Thomas appears as something of a deus ex machina at this critical moment. Later in the same novel, Fanny's sensations are again held explicitly responsible for slowing the pace of the prose. Neglected at Portsmouth, she is impatient to return to Mansfield Park where she knows she is needed. Jane Austen conveys this anxiety by making her heroine irritably sensitive to heat, light, noise and disorder, a state of mind which leads her to scrutinize the Prices' parlour with almost Balzacian minuteness.

It is clear from these examples how Jane Austen indicates her heroines' state of mind, and develops thematic issues by presenting perception of time to control the texture and pace of the text. Between the ball and Emma's final introspection that closes the

fragment, we are shown how the quality of Emma's life can be communicated by an indirect use of time:

A week or ten days rolled quietly away after [Lord Osborne's] visit, before any new bustle arose to interrupt even for half a day, the tranquil & affectionate intercourse of the two Sisters, whose mutual regard was increasing with the intimate knowledge of each other which such intercourse produced. (MW, p. 348 -- emphasis added)

Note how the casual measurement of time and the elision of several days <sup>conveys</sup> ~~suggests~~ an expansive lull in Emma's life. This suggests the soothing effect that a quiet period with a warm-hearted sister produces. There occur no events to shatter her peace of mind, nor to make her anxiously aware of the passage of time -- in contrast with her exhilarated condition just before the ball. This method of dealing with time is more complex than the manner in which Jane Austen traverses similar periods of time in Northanger Abbey, where the narrator can exercise liberties with time which make no apology for themselves, and are in any case not intended to suggest the heroine's state of mind in the intervening period: "The following conversation, which took place between the two friends in the Pump-room one morning, after an acquaintance of eight or nine days, is given as a specimen of their very warm attachment..." (NA, p. 39). As Craik observes here, "This makes the conversation more than a single incident, it represents eight or nine

days passed over."<sup>32</sup> Attention is focused upon the dialogue itself, not upon any bearing the preceding days may have upon it.

When Emma learns of Margaret's imminent return she is instantly recalled to an acute awareness of time and her position because "she had heard things [from Elizabeth] that made her dread "seeing her sister, and she fears that this signals" the probable conclusion of almost all that had been comfortable in the house" (MW, p. 348). To accentuate the acceleration in pace Jane Austen presents a clash between tranquillity and disturbance in a series of antitheses: "rolled quietly", "tranquil and affectionate intercourse", "mutual regard", and "serenity", are pitted against "new bustle", "interrupt", "break in", and "speedy return." The threat of disorder makes Emma highly conscious of an impending disruption in her life, and, in anticipating this, she naturally becomes conscious of how long her peace of mind can last. Hereafter the pace is decelerated as she is forced to endure the pushing vulgarity of the Robert Watsons and Margaret's peevish conceit, and can find no relief except by sitting upstairs with her father, "a Man of Sense and Education" (MW, p. 361).

In the following passage we see how Jane Austen uses one such period of relief in Emma's increasingly oppressed existence to serve thematic and structural

<sup>32</sup> W.A. Craik, Jane Austen: The Six Novels (London: Methuen, 1965), p.24.

ends — thematic, in rendering the heroine's unsentimental recollection of the past (in contrast with Marianne Dashwood's, [SS, pp.83-87]), her accurate appraisal of the present and realistic speculation upon the future; structural, in regulating the texture and pace of the text, where concentration of Emma's analytical thoughts produces a sudden deceleration (as in Elizabeth Bennet's indignant perusal of Darcy's letter and subsequent recantation [FP, pp.204-97], or Fanny's realization that she cannot call Portsmouth her real home [MP, pp.429-337]). The lengthy subordinated sentences and parallel constructions in the extract below cannot be a facsimile of Emma's thoughts. There is none of the extreme agitation which characterizes much of Anne Elliot's feelings, but rather a surging rhythm that indicates a culmination in Emma's gradual disillusionment with home life, an intensifying sense of enclosure that accompanies her insight into the nature of her plight:

From being the first object of Hope & Solicitude of an Uncle who had formed her mind with the care of a Parent, & of Tenderness to an Aunt whose amiable temper had delighted to give her every indulgence, from being the Life & Spirit of a House, where all had been comfort & Elegance, & the expected Heiress of an easy Independance, she was of importance to no one, a burden on those, whose affection she c<sup>d</sup> not expect, an

addition in an House, already  
 overstocked, surrounded by inferior  
 minds with little chance of domestic  
 comfort, & as little hope of future  
 support. (MW, pp.362-63)

The internal coherence of this sentence dictates its length and so we must quote it in full to realize its logical patterning and lugubrious tone and way that an emotionally charged reflection gives compactness to the text. Emma's ordered sequence of thoughts is intended to set before the reader her understanding of the cause and effect relationship of her past experiences and to bring into critical focus the long span of time which bears so heavily upon the moment. She is so fondly attached to the past because so ill-accommodated in the present, and even if mild irony is intended in her belief that she matters to nobody (Elizabeth and her father love her) the tenor of her sentiments is corroborated by all we have witnessed so far of her other relations and friends. Honest reflection takes on the complexion of deep feeling. Emma's response is a vital blend of intelligence and feeling which proves once more in Jane Austen's fiction that sense is compatible with sensibility, showing the travails of "a consciousness...subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement."<sup>33</sup> This richness is evident in the way she can look objectively at the sardonic irony in her

<sup>33</sup> The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces, ed.

R.P. Blackmur (1934; New York: Scribner, 1967), p.67.

situation (an inversion of the 'rags-to-riches' pattern), viewing it from a position of psychological strength, and so escaping from sensations that "might have plunged weak spirits in Despondence" (MLW, p.362).

Finally I wish to suggest three categories by which time is invoked in Emma's concluding introspection, and through which we may assess her progress in the foregoing narrative. Time may be seen as "iterative"-- organizing events on a pattern of recurrence; "durative"-- organizing events on a pattern of persistence; and "mutative"-- which recounts changes effected over a period.<sup>34</sup> Emma finds relief "each" evening, giving a sense of recurrence to her vigils. And despite the comforts of her father's room, she "still" suffers in contemplating those around her. We feel the stress of persistence here. Her thoughts range over a considerable number of years that antedate the temporal bounds of the fragment itself: from being an "expected Heiress" she has become "of importance to no one"-- time operating in a mutative capacity.

What I have tried to show in this selection of passages in The Watsons is how the density and pace of the text are regulated by the interweaving of dialogue, reflection and narrative, and are largely oriented by the heroine's perceptions-- visual and audial, emotional and intellectual. Further we have seen how an

<sup>34</sup> Dorrit Cohn, Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), pp.34-5.

individual's awareness of time is made an index to his *other* moral values, and as much a means to structure the fragment as to explore its thematic issues.

II. The Watsons, as one critic has remarked, is "anything but sunny."<sup>1</sup> In contrast to Northanger Abbey or Pride and Prejudice the contrast in pace, mood, texture and thematic emphasis is indeed striking. The fragment more nearly resembles Mansfield Park and Persuasion in <sup>presenting</sup> the oppressiveness of domestic life, the isolation of the heroine, and the exposure of a debased society.

Halperin, revealing an inclination toward biography, attributes this lack-lustre quality of the fragment to the author's own lack of "security and contentment", the conditions he believes she required for writing her novels. The danger of distortion in this approach may be seen in Mrs Leavis' somewhat Procrustean transformations of The Watsons into Emma, and Lady Susan in Mansfield Park, where she too invokes biographical ~~stimulus~~, but without much cogency. In a just riposte, Brian Southam says that "The major critical questions of interpretation and judgement are to be answered from the texts. There is no need for a theory of composition to tell us why they are so and not otherwise."<sup>2</sup> I favour his attitude because the texts provide tangible material for critical discussion of Jane Austen's artistic resources, their development, and

<sup>1</sup> Halperin, Life, p.136.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Southam, "Mrs Leavis and Miss Austen: the 'Critical Theory Reconsidered,'" Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 17 (1962-3), 30.

the apparent direction of her thought in an otherwise silent period when The Watsons was conceived. While I do not deny that an author's personal circumstances must to some extent determine the nature and quality of his work, I do not believe that in the creation of Emma Watson we see Jane Austen engaged in a cathartic exploration of her own problems upon her removal to Bath in 1801, as Halperin appears to suggest. If his hypothesis is accurate, how then did Sanditon, in many ways a keen-edged, vigorous and innovative fragment, come to be written through grave ill-health on the eve of her death? Or approaching the question differently, how does he reconcile the fact that she was revising Pride and Prejudice while working simultaneously upon Mansfield Park without detriment to the tone of either? An examination of Emma Watson is important because it shows that the novels alone do not "adequately represent her artistic accomplishment", as one critic suggests.<sup>3</sup> The nature and setting of the fragment are valuable evidence of developments in Jane Austen's narrative technique, as I have partly shown, and also in her characterization, as I hope to show.

For as Chapman with a becoming degree of critical tact observes, "She is unlikely to have embarked upon the story without seeing where it would lead her."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Mary Poovey, The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), p.xvi.

<sup>4</sup> Chapman, p.51.

Jane Austen chose her themes and setting for the aesthetic opportunities they offered. But in examining special features of The Watsons we must take two factors into account: that the fragment has not had the benefit of thorough revision and refinement that gives the completed novels their finesse; that although it seems to rework many of the themes of her first three novels, one can discern some new emphases that place the fragment closer in conception and complexity to the later works. Mrs Leavis comments on the later novels (with special reference to Mansfield Park) that:

We see her foregoing the immediate effect of witty rejoinder and humorous character to analyse motive and to build up total effects; in this new manner the human heart is investigated in a new way, every impulse noted and considered with respect, instead of inspiring the easy comments of the earlier automatic and rather unfeeling sprightliness.<sup>5</sup> (emphasis added)

In The Watsons Jane Austen's using a heroine with Emma's characteristics allows her to achieve a "total effect" not only through Emma's quality of life but the quality of living. The climate of oppression and loneliness that is sustained in the fragment marks it as a transitional work of more penetrating inquiry than Jane Austen's earlier works. In Emma we feel that "there

<sup>5</sup> Q.D. Leavis, p.287.

comes a moment when spirit looks at the social world and is repelled by it, is overcome by fatigue and disgust."<sup>6</sup> To those around her, decorum has become a convenient excuse for selfishness; principle, a code of conduct debased to the dictates of fashionable society. Hence what Elizabeth Watson dubs "refinement", is to the reader a manifestation of prudence and courtesy, taste and judgement, that identify Emma as a singular anomaly in a society activated by stupidity and greed.

In Emma Watson, Jane Austen synthesizes various aspects of earlier heroines (Catherine's innocence and generosity, Elinor's resilience and rationality, Elizabeth's archness and warmth) and develops as distinctive and original a heroine as any of her others, moving away from the dichotomous heroine/confidante model of Catherine and Isabella in Northanger Abbey, and away from the symmetrically contrasted sisters in Sense and Sensibility and still perceptible in Pride and Prejudice. Emma is to be a solitary centre of consciousness whom the dialogues and contrasting attitudes show cannot relate even to her own family upon an equal footing of intelligence and sensitivity.

Her status prior to returning home in some respects resembles that of her namesake in Emma who, "handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in

<sup>6</sup> Lionel Trilling, "A Portrait of Western Man", The Listener, 11 June 1953, p.971.

the world with very little to distress or vex her" (E,p.5). But seeing more objectively, feeling more keenly, and judging more candidly than Emma Woodhouse, Emma Watson is a vital narrative asset. The access we have to her thoughts and feelings allows us to experience with something of an outsider's fresh perspective the problems that beset her family. Because Emma's values coincide with those of the narrator, and because we can sympathize with her predicament, Jane Austen has succeeded in creating an heroine through whom to "harness the imaginative energy of her readers to a moral design."<sup>7</sup>

To conceive of this moral design it is important to see how Jane Austen contrives her heroines' estrangement from immediate society. "A conflict of values," Harding explains, "between the heroine and her close associates, a conflict muted and generally known only to the heroine herself, is an intrinsic part of most of the novels, and because the heroine is also genuinely attached to those around her the tension is an inner one"<sup>8</sup> (emphasis added). Emma feels imprisoned, "surrounded by inferior minds with little chance of domestic comfort, & as little hope of future support" (MW,p.362), comes to dread the return of sisters of whom she had at first wished to make "an immediate friend" (MW,p.318) and even comes to welcome the addition of Tom Musgrave, "for she was beginning to feel that a family party might be the

<sup>7</sup> Poovey, p.182.

<sup>8</sup> Harding, From Blake to Byron, p.56.

worst of all parties" (MW, p.358). As Bradbrook points out, in each novel it is the "common test" for the heroine to accept and make the best of the world "as she finds it", and by not compromising whatever admirable qualities she may possess, triumph over "the strain involved in living in inferior company."<sup>9</sup>

This strain may be genuine -- the impertinence of Lucy Steele and John Dashwood, for example, is as irksome to Elinor and Marianne, as the attentions of Henry Crawford embarrass and anger Fanny Price. In Marianne's case however, she is too much of a stock figure in the first half of the novel for us to feel the sincerity of the tensions she feels: only in the second half of the book after Willoughby's betrayal and her illness do we feel the impact more convincingly.

Or the strain of living in inferior society may be illusory. Emma Woodhouse finds the proximity of the Coles and the Martins, and even Miss Bates, distasteful because they either neglect to do her homage or fail to attain the level she sets for gentility. As Jane Nardin remarks, "She has overvalued elegant manners precisely because she herself possesses them and so by overvaluing them she can increase her sense of self-esteem,"<sup>10</sup> -- and the sense of strain in associating with apparent inferiors.

<sup>9</sup> Frank W. Bradbrook, "Style and Judgement in Jane Austen's Novels", Cambridge Journal, 4 (1951), 520.

<sup>10</sup> Jane Nardin, Those Elegant Decorums: The Concept of Propriety in Jane Austen's Novels (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1973), p.114.

Emma Watson, much like Fanny Price and Anne Elliot, is forced by an uncongenial society to renounce its standards of behaviour. These are now seen to be more threatening than in the earlier novels, and the heroine must disengage herself spiritually, often physically from it. At the same time as we admire Emma's moral toughness we are shown by the extent of the odds facing her that a delicate mind rarely comes off best in confrontations with moral coarseness. The company of Tom Musgrave and Lord Osborne, Margaret and the Robert Watsons constitute a formidable array of "Hard-hearted prosperity, low-minded Conceit, & wrong-headed folly, engrafted on an untoward Disposition" (MW, p.361). At the end of the fragment, as we have seen, Emma sequesters herself from her relations. Physical separation acts as a metaphor for intellectual and emotional loneliness: "Eager to be as little among them as possible, Emma was delighted with the alternative of sitting above, with her father, & warmly entreated to be his constant Comp.[anion] each Even[ing]....In his chamber, Emma was at peace from the dreadful mortifications of unequal Society, & family Discord" (MW, p.361).

Emma Woodhouse, like Marianne Dashwood, makes the breach artificially, isolating herself from reality by cherishing mistaken notions. The narrator suggests as much by stressing the physical seclusion of Hartfield itself, and the fact that "in spite of its separate lawn and shrubberies and name, [it] did really belong" (E, p.7) to Highbury. Only in Emma's imagination is it disjunct.

What partially redeems Emma Watson's plight is the comfort she derives from the company of Elizabeth and her father. She, like Elinor Dashwood and Elizabeth Bennet, is at least not as totally alone as Anne Elliot who though intelligent and sweet-tempered is "only Anne" (P,p.5), and makes little impression upon her father and sisters. To some extent Admiral Croft and the Musgrove girls act as surrogates for these and provide partial relief, but she is still very much alone.

The rhetorical, even <sup>pious,</sup> ~~pietistic~~ intonation that often pervades Emma's speech and the narrative summary of her thoughts are an effective means to erect a barrier between the heroine and those around her. Both her sentiments and her tone indicate the superiority of a mind that has benefitted by sound education and good example: "If my opinions are wrong, I must correct them --if they are above my situation, I must endeavour to conceal them" (MW,p.318). This differs radically from Elizabeth's: "Dance with Mr H[oward]". --Good Heavens! You don't say so! Why --he is one of the great & Grand ones; --Did not you fine him very high?" (MW,p.342) where the exclamation marks denote the pitch of her genuine surprise and her characteristically frank speech; and from Jane Watson's: "I assure you we have very good society at Croydon. --I do not much attend the Balls, they are rather too mixed, --but our parties are very select & good" (MW,p.350); and from Tom's affected gallicisms: "Fanny Carr is a most interesting little creature. You can imagine nothing more naive or piquante..." (MW,p.340). This is not to suggest that

Emma is priggish, however. She can be sprightly (MW,p.343), witty (MW,p.342), tender (MW,p.316) and arch (MW,p.340). But moments of important moral issue or personal affliction induce a warm sincerity: for example, in her attitudes towards mercenary marriage and self-control (MW,p.318); women's<sup>y</sup> poverty (MW,p.346); in defending the honour of her uncle and aunt (MW,p.352); or censuring greed and vanity (MW,p.361). Comparison between Emma's attitudes propounded on these occasions and those of the other characters demonstrates that Emma has little in common with any of them.

Fanny Price has often been criticized for sententious speech. But here again the effect is a deliberate device to differentiate her from the other characters, to emphasize the cloistered nature of her existence, and a certain "sentimental piety"<sup>11</sup> that gives her an ideal of conduct to pursue amidst depravity.

"Like any novelist," Bradbury explains, "Jane Austen does not simply mirror a society but subtly composes it into existence," and she relies upon peoples' "capacity to generate standards of life worthy enough to measure lives by." The fictional society she constructs is necessary "not simply for its social substance but for the way in which, from such substance, moral judgements and force may be elicited."<sup>12</sup> One of the ways to activate our moral judgement and that of the heroine we have already seen in Catherine, <sup>Here</sup> where the

<sup>11</sup> Lloyd Brown, Bits of Ivory, p.128.

<sup>12</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, "Jane Austen: Emma," in From Blake to Byron, p.173.

introduction of strangers into the heroine's society initiates a series of clashes where underlying principles are at issue. In The Watsons the case is interestingly reversed - - the heroine becomes the stranger entering an equally strange society, her relation to which, even though she is returning home, is uncertain. She must therefore justify her position and right to remain. Emma's arrival is the catalyst for a number of confrontations in which her moral values are tested against those of her associates and found superior.

When Fanny Price returns to her nominal home at Portsmouth, she fondly imagines being "in the centre of such a circle, loved by so many, and more loved by all than she had ever been before, to feel affection without fear or restraint, to feel herself the equal of those who surrounded her..." (MP,p.370). Emma cherishes equally reasonable expectations "to find all [her] sisters at home; to be able to make an immediate friend of each" (MW,p.318). But Fanny finally "could not conceal it from herself" that her familial home is "in almost every respect the reverse of what she could have wished" (MP,p.388), whilst her adoptive home at Mansfield Park answers her emotional needs. Emma, similarly, suffers disenchantment, believing that she has sunk from "the expected Heiress of an easy Independance," to being "of importance to no one, a burden..." (MW,p.362). Both girls try to come to terms with their situation but give up the endeavour as futile. Emma tries to be candid towards those whom she is aware have not shared the advantages that she herself has enjoyed. She attempts,

for instance, to excuse Penelope's conduct by suggesting that Elizabeth's judgement might have been obscured by her own disappointed anger at the time. But she is given proof to change her views, finding her two sisters' principles more repugnant than their poverty.

When her father dies, as Cassandra's memorandum indicates, this poverty will become even more oppressive. She is forced into humiliating dependence upon Jane and Robert Watson. She will then truly be "on the threshold, existing in that limbo space between the house of her father which has to be left and the house of the husband which has yet to be found."<sup>13</sup>

But this is to anticipate. At the opening of the fragment Emma enters an unfamiliar society as Catherine Morland does in Northanger Abbey. But where Catherine may return to a stable and loving home, Emma suffers the severe sense of displacement that afflicts Fanny Price and Anne Elliot. The need is therefore to "redefine"<sup>14</sup> her social position. Aware that as a stranger time and space are not hers to command, she will not allow herself to be bullied into compromising her principles. Thus she speaks out adamantly against convenient marriages, despite Elizabeth's advice that she and her sisters have little option else, and she refuses to

<sup>13</sup> Tony Tanner, "In Between -- Anne Elliot Marries a Sailor and Charlotte Heywood Goes to the Seaside," in Jane Austen in a Social Context, ed. David Monaghan (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.180.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Gillie, Character in English Literature (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p.117.

acquiesce in Lord Osborne's patronizing attitude towards women (MW, pp. 345-46). She refuses likewise to flatter Tom's vanity either by dancing with him (MW, p. 334) or by allowing him to escort her home (MW, p. 339), and she will neither be unfaithful to the honour of her aunt's name, despite pressure from Mr Edwards (MW, p. 326) and Robert Watson (MW, pp. 351-52), nor join Margaret in discussing Tom Musgrave's activities and character, "a subject that was odious to her feelings" (MW, p. 360 -- emphasis added). As this statement affirms, Emma's judgement is linked with rational feeling.

The way to reconcile the divergent scales of value becomes then the key issue in the fragment. Aware that she faces penury, loneliness, antagonism and possibly a degrading occupation, she refuses a wealthy lord for a man of lesser wealth though higher principles.<sup>15</sup>

Her own principles are so soundly based partly because loneliness gives her much opportunity for reflection, and partly because as an astute observer she benefits by example. She, like several of Jane Austen's heroines, is in the frustrating position of seeing her sisters' folly without having the power to warn them or divert the misery that must follow. Elinor tries valiantly to convince Marianne of the need to exert self-control, but she is heedless, falls ill from emotional distress, and causes great anguish to her mother, sister, relations and friends. Elizabeth Bennet sees that Lydia's excitability will lead her into

<sup>15</sup> see Cassandra Austen's note (MW, p. 363).

trouble if it remains unchecked -- but failing to <sup>prompt</sup> stimulate her father into asserting his authority, Lydia elopes and, Elizabeth fears, dooms her own prospects with Mr Darcy. Anne Elliot, fearing the danger that Mrs Clay's assiduous "art of pleasing" (P, p.15) poses for Elizabeth (and her father) she endeavours to warn her but is curtly rebuffed. But if in returning home Emma is unable to reform her sisters' attitudes, Fanny's return to Portsmouth is fruitful in showing her that there exists in Susan greater potential for a better life than can be said either for her other sisters or for the Miss Bertrams.

That both Fanny and Emma return home after a number of years is a parallel worth pursuing. Fanny's return and rejection occurs only after thirty-seven chapters have detailed the moral formation of her character and fully explored the environment that will act as a foil to Portsmouth in her crucial decision that only Mansfield Park can be considered home. Because we have seen why order and tranquillity are valuable, we are in a favourable position to appreciate Fanny's consternation at the collapse of her sentimental illusions that home would be a haven. In Emma's homecoming, on the other hand, we can only infer the high standard of living to which she has been accustomed by what she herself says, by her speech, attitudes and good education, and the shame she feels at the shabbiness of the Watson ménage. We can gain an impression of these formative years only on trust and by inference.

To note this difference between the two works is

not to cavil but rather to recognise two separate ways Jane Austen sought to explore a similar issue: the heroine's discovery of her genuine feelings and her rightful place in society. Mansfield Park, as a Bildungsroman, shows us the formation of Fanny's attitudes in great detail over a number of years to give a sense of continuity and inevitability to her self-effacing adult behaviour, her firm refusal of Mr Crawford, and her rational choice to live at Mansfield Park. In Emma's case, we are told rather than shown that "The change in her home society, & stile of Life in consequence of the death of one friend and the imprudence of another had indeed been striking" (MW, p.361). Jane Austen's purpose is to focus all our attention upon Emma's present shock. The length of her absence is only briefly alluded to and the details of her early life are withheld to stimulate emotional and intellectual sympathy in the reader. We must ~~interpret~~<sup>infer</sup> from her speech and actions the way in which life with her aunt has formed her character.

Fanny enters the stiff propriety and elegance of Mansfield Park while still a child but returns home as an adult with a highly developed sense of moral discrimination. Much of the pathos and power in the novel stems from the minute particularity with which Jane Austen follows the changes in Fanny's outlook from child to woman: from homesickness ("...her consciousness of misery was...increased by the idea of its being a wicked thing for her not to be happy" MP, p.137), to revulsion from immorality and insincerity. When the

novel closes she is just nineteen, with bright prospects for the future.

Emma is already nineteen when the fragment begins, and as an adult she is in a better position than Fanny was to understand and cope with a new environment. The Watsons reverses Fanny's Cinderella progress from poverty and insignificance to wealth and status. Emma sinks, as we have seen, from being an expectant heiress to genteel poverty and dependence upon conceited relatives. She leaves home as a child many years before the fragment opens and her return signals the start of the action. Fanny on the other hand leaves home as a child at the opening of Mansfield Park, returning home and rejecting it for her adoptive family as an adult near the close of the novel.

The two works, ~~written chronologically~~, seem therefore to operate in counterpoint, with the later piece offering a more comprehensive trajectory. In Emma Jane Austen again experiments with the destiny of her heroine, giving her preeminence and pride, wealth, elegance and an aggressive wit. Her world is pointedly circumscribed as that of Highbury and its environs which become the crucible of her match-making. She is almost the antithesis of Fanny Price. In Persuasion also, the heroine's experiences are reversed. Anne has once already met and apparently lost a man she deeply loved and still does love. The novel is focused upon recovery rather than discovery.

The Watsons, then, possesses its own distinctive psychological shape, and the intensification of our

participation in Emma's difficulties aligns the fragment more closely in conception and execution with the later three novels than the earlier. I mean by this grouping not the dates of revision and publication but the less profound exploration in Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, and Pride and Prejudice, where human problems are more easily answered. To compare The Watsons with these three works will immediately suggest the increased urgency in Emma's need to adhere tenaciously to an ideal standard of conduct. External demands impinge almost intolerably upon her, and this is communicated to the reader in a sort of "spiritual geography" that correlates physical journeys with emotional experience.<sup>16</sup> The impact of moving from her aunt's house to Stanton has involved a reorientation of Emma's expectations, outlook and responses. These are destined to undergo further tests when Mr Watson dies and she must leave home to join the Robert Watsons and the social ethos of Croydon.

Catherine Morland, of course, visits new worlds of Bath and Northanger Abbey in a move from innocence to experience. She abjures mistaken ideas about human depravity by tasting something like the genuine article, and so grows up; Sense and Sensibility ~~enacts a~~ *adjusts* ~~purgative process in~~ Marianne's expectations ~~through~~ <sup>by</sup> her journey to London, where Willoughby defects, and Cleveland, where she sees herself in a clearer light after a near-fatal illness; and in Pride and Prejudice

<sup>16</sup> Lionel Trilling, "Emma," Encounter, 8 (1957), 57.

Elizabeth's attitude to Darcy is seen to develop between the Netherfield Ball, her trip to Hunsford and Rosings, and finally to his seat at Pemberley where he appears a different man.

All this is obvious, but important to seeing The Watsons in perspective. As Mudrick explains, "In Jane Austen's early novels...[t/he] problem of action is personal; choice, or the illusion of choice, is personal. It is not Longbourn and Rosings, but Elizabeth and Lady Catherine, who stand opposed: the individual makes his own climate, and does not have to locate himself in any other." And what he says of Mansfield Park, I believe, applies with equal force to The Watsons: "The individual can no longer act without locating himself. Place and group have indeed become central: the individual faces not a choice of action, but a choice of allegiance; and the action of the novel is a collision of worlds" (emphasis added).<sup>17</sup>

In what we have of The Watsons, Emma is already contrasting the values that inhere in the different societies she has inhabited. Stanton seems decidedly inferior to living with her aunt, and the world ~~alluded to~~ <sup>of</sup> in Osborne Castle is little more attractive than that of Croydon. Against this new environment Emma sets herself in unequivocal opposition. The situations "constructed around Emma," as Brian Southam remarks, "are like a narrowing tunnel, along which she moves through fields of successively more intense

<sup>17</sup> Mudrick, p.155.

experience."<sup>18</sup> If the ball is an unnerving experience, Lord Osborne's visit and the arrival of Margaret with the Robert Watsons impresses upon Emma the need for protective measures against the insincerity that prevails. This is figured dramatically when Margaret introduces the subject of Tom Musgrave. Emma, "jumping up, ran away from a subject that was odious to her feelings" (MW, p.360 -- emphasis added). Such vigour in the world of the novels, especially in a lady, is highly significant in indicating depth of feeling, and important here for suggesting Emma's paradoxical sense of entrapment in, and estrangement from, her society. We remember Kitty Percival in the early Catherine who also ran from the house in disgust at Camilla's cold-heartedness, and in the novels we see Jane Fairfax leave Donwell distraught and alone to escape Frank Churchill's humiliation of herself.

What enhances the moral beauty of Emma's resilience to selfishness and vanity is her engaging personality. She, like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, "will not sit back and be quizzed by the men, but gives as good as she gets."<sup>19</sup> She shows herself an independent, active thinker: vindicating the memory of her aunt and uncle with tearful warmth (MW, p.352); spiritedly deflating the image of Tom Musgrave in a tête-à-tête with Elizabeth -- "There is a ridiculousness about him that entertains me --

<sup>18</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.67.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Aiken Hodge, The Double Life of Jane Austen (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), p.136.

but his company gives me no other agreeable emotion" (MW,p.342); and without hesitation states her honest opinion of Lord Osborne (MW,p.340). Most memorable perhaps is her personal rebuke regarding half-boots and horseriding: "Female Economy will do a great deal my Lord, but it cannot turn a small income into a large one" (MW,p.346). Courageous and sincere, she resembles Fanny Price when she asserts a woman's right to accept and refuse a man: "Let him have all the perfections in the world, I think it ought not to be set down as certain, that a man must be acceptable to every woman he may happen to like himself" (MP,p.353); or Anne Elliot defending women's constancy: "We certainly do not forget you [men], so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit" (P,p.232); and Elizabeth Bennet, like Emma, Fanny and Anne, refuses to be undervalued: "Do not consider me now," she tells Mr Collins, "as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart" (PP,p.109). Her lack of striking beauty or accomplishments, like theirs, is no detraction from Emma's merits, and like Harriet Byron in Jane Austen's Sir Charles Grandison, "Her understanding more than makes up for want of fortune" (V, i --emphasis added).<sup>20</sup>

Barbara Hardy points out that "The exceptional woman proves nothing. So it is in the unexceptional woman that [Jane Austen] finds a representative image."<sup>21</sup> Emma

<sup>20</sup> Jane Austen's Sir Charles Grandison, ed. Brian Southam (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), p.55.

<sup>21</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.184.

Watson therefore is physically "not more than of the middle height -- well made & plump, with an air of healthy vigour. -- Her skin was very brown, but clear, smooth and glowing --, which with a lively Eye, and an open Countenance, gave beauty to attract, & expression to make that beauty improve on acquaintance" (MW, pp. 328-29). But what really interests Jane Austen is the mind of her heroines and their strength of character to reach rational decisions with equal conviction of sense and feeling. Emma is made at once exemplary and likeable, more engaging than Elinor, less straight-laced than Fanny.

Emma, unlike her sister Elizabeth, refuses to be overawed merely by Lord Osborne's aristocratic rank. She respects a warm heart and position based on individual merit, unwilling to accede to the automatic reverence for rank displayed openly by Tom Musgrave and suggested more obliquely in the opening sentence of the fragment ("the Osbornes themselves would be there..."). The polarities of worth <sup>conceived as</sup> by individual merit and distinction by rank is clarified when Emma steps forward courageously to dance with young Charles Blake. But we should beware of introducing polarities for I do not intend to suggest that Jane Austen is calling the social hierarchy into question or that she had democratic propensities. Her respect for tradition and ideal gentry values in the novels refutes any such inference. Rather, Jane Austen firmly fixes her heroine in a broader social context than hitherto to re-examine the rival claims of rank and merit.

Brian Southam believes that Emma's lack of perceptible faults is "an overriding difficulty" in making

her "a sufficient heroine." She comes to Stanton "armed with ideals; the vulgarity of her family can cause grief and pain, but her principles are not endangered."<sup>22</sup> But surely Jane Austen does create a "sufficient" heroine. By endowing Emma with many likeable qualities (wit, humour, generosity, spontaneity), she wins our support for Emma by allowing us to empathize so fully and consistently with her point of view.

Apart from these factors, to have "ideals" does not automatically make Emma "ideal" herself, and herein lies an important dimension of Jane Austen's ability to make Emma, like any of the other exemplary heroines, our fictive norm while still subject to mild human weaknesses. Fanny Price, often held as meek, dull and priggish, is human enough to feel subconscious jealousy of Mary Crawford. Watching Edmund and Mary on horseback, Fanny sees from a distance that: "he was evidently directing her management of the bridle, he had hold of her hand; she saw it, or the imagination supplied what the eye could not reach" (MP, p.67 -- emphasis added). This nuance of jealousy suggests as much about Fanny as it does about Jane Austen's own outlook. She is "one of the few [authors]," remarks one critic, "who insist that jealousy is not necessarily grand or terrible, nor a contemptible meanness affecting other people, but an emotion to which decent people are liable."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.68.

<sup>23</sup> A.O.J. Cockshut, Man and Woman: A Study of Love and the Novel 1740-1940 (London: Collins, 1973), p.54.

In Emma we find a delicate suggestion of shame at the reduced circumstances in which she is constrained to live. When wealthy Lord Osborne visits the Watsons with Tom, Emma: "having in her Aunt's family been used to many Elegancies of Life, was fully sensible of all that must be open to the ridicule of Richer people in her present home. -- Of the pain of such feelings, Eliz: knew very little;-- her simpler Mind, or juster reason saved her from such mortification" (MW,p.345). Clearly these sentiments apply to nobody but to Emma herself because Jane Austen intends to show how deeply Emma's responses have been shaped by fourteen years residence in comfort and high expectations. The consequences of early training are also an important theme in Mansfield Park, where a sound education effectively saves the heroine by preparing her well for life; a deficient education jeopardizes the Bertrams by exposing them, morally immature and thus vulnerable, to the Crawfords.

Emma's sense of occasion and taste for decorous surroundings cannot be erased in a trice because these are attitudes which are elemental to her delicate mind. Jane Austen here examines the difficulty in distinguishing between pretentiousness and justifiable self-respect by probing Emma's social embarrassment. What is of little significance to Elizabeth swells out of proportion in Emma's imagination, whose momentary shame in her guests seeing "the Tray & the Knife-case" (MW,p.344) is accountable though not wholly excusable. But if we cannot excuse her we can sympathize readily because Jane Austen has openly admitted a failing in her heroine whose other

good qualities -- generosity, candour, loyalty -- have disposed us in her favour.

In these remarks on the nature and qualities of Emma Watson I have shown that Jane Austen sees the heroine's predicament from Emma's point of view to create a dense atmosphere of social pressure that aligns the fragment more closely in its depth and range with the last three novels Mansfield Park, Emma and Persuasion. Emma is more isolated than the three earlier heroines because her society is more predatory, intimidating and uncompromising than theirs. She combats adverse circumstances pragmatically with a combined force of intelligence and propriety, humour and tact, generosity and earnestness. By equipping her heroine with these qualities, Jane Austen probes many themes which have already been broached in the first three novels, and emphasizes certain other issues that are scrutinized more exhaustively in the works that follow.

III. In Jane Austen's novels marriage is "the seal set upon maturity, the social recognition of merit, the accurate placing of the individual" (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup> Accurate, that is, because the choice of a marriage partner is determined by an uncompromising spirit of poetic justice that accords each party the husband or wife each deserves. This is all well known, and underpins much criticism of the novels. But critics have tended to dwell only indirectly upon the jealousy that is generated in the marriage market. They have virtually ignored the treacherously competitive atmosphere that obtains in the world of The Watsons where rivalry, particularly between sisters, has been accentuated. It is hardly clearer in this fragment than in the novels themselves that "the mercenary view of marriage is proclaimed by many of her people and practised by even more."<sup>2</sup> Chapman adds a point which has important implications for an examination of The Watsons and a sensitive understanding of the tensions that inform its sense of urgency, calculation and ruthlessness. "It is to be remembered, in extenuation," he says, "that the alternative to marriage for the penniless woman, was being a governess."

As Lady Denham remarks in Sanditon, "young Ladies that have no money are very much to be pitied"

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Lenta, "Jane Fairfax and Jane Eyre: Educating Women," Ariel, 12 (October 1981), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Chapman, p.191.

(MW,p.401). To understand the desperate attempts of Penelope and Margaret, the unwilling resignation of Elizabeth, and the obdurate opposition of Emma to expedient marriage as the only answer to the problems of single women of little fortune, we must appreciate the shame attached to growing old and being a spinster "poor & laughed at" (MW,p.317), and the equally shameful prospect of daily drudgery as a governess.

In the novels this occupation is only alluded to, and in Mrs Weston, Jane Fairfax and Mrs Elton we have three different interpretations. Mrs Weston, erstwhile governess to Emma herself, has apparently lived as part of the Woodhouse family; and despite Mrs Elton's irresistible assurances that at least some of her friends permit wax candles in the schoolroom, governessing to Jane Fairfax remains a mortifying prospect. In The Watsons Jane Austen acknowledges the fears that Elizabeth holds towards a future of poverty, ridicule and probable hardship, but through Emma we are shown that expedient marriage can and must be resisted to preserve one's self-respect. Emma refuses to be coerced into unprincipled conduct, and where her sense of duty and feeling reject mercenary marriage (a spontaneous reaction), Penelope, Margaret, and even Elizabeth in a small way, are prepared to sacrifice "every better feeling to worldly advantage" (PP,p.125)-- an act of calculation.

The opening dialogue between Elizabeth and Emma is designed to establish this climate of tension, and to show how economic factors have been allowed to undermine

family solidarity. Relationships are established both between the individual and society in their respective and sometimes differing attitudes to marriage as a social institution entailing private choices, and between the four sisters in their mutual antagonism over the role played by Tom Musgrave:

Penelope however has had her Troubles-- continued Miss W[atson].-- she was sadly disappointed in Tom Musgrave, who afterwards transferred his attentions from me to her, & whom she was very fond of; but he never means anything serious, & when he had trifled with her long enough, he began to slight her for Margaret, & poor Penelope was very wretched. (MW, p. 317)

Subsequently Penelope, jealous of Elizabeth's success with Purvis, deceived Elizabeth in winning his notice, but was again disappointed when he dropped her for another.

By contrasting the ways that each of four Watson sisters responds to the exigencies of penury and spinsterhood, and the effects their choices have upon a narrow domestic circle, Jane Austen unifies the action of the fragment. Pride and Prejudice contrasts the attitudes of Charlotte Lucas and three of the Bennet sisters, from Lydia's shameless flirtation, Jane's excessive candour to Elizabeth's subconscious resolution to marry only the

man for whom she can feel gratitude and esteem.<sup>3</sup> Charlotte's marriage is a clear instance of the mercenary choice. She attaches little importance to compatibility between partners, sees marriage entirely as a matter of "chance" and as "the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune" (PP,p.122). Like Lucy Steele and the Watson girls (excluding Emma and Elizabeth), she gets what she wants through "an earnest and unceasing attention to self-interest" (SS,p.376). But in what we have of The Watsons, both the sisters are frustrated in their attempts to trap eligible husbands through elaborate strategies. And another difference between these two and Charlotte Lucas is that she is the daughter of a fairly wealthy Knight, and so is under less pressure to marry. "Without thinking highly either of men or matrimony," we are told coolly, "marriage had always been her object" (PP,p.122). Penelope and Margaret, on the other hand, feel acutely pressurized (by penury, advancing age, spinsterhood and the imminent death of Mr Watson) to secure a wealthy husband each. Their impatience is easier to understand when we remember that in Jane Austen's time courtship on the woman's side was largely passive, a question of waiting to be chosen. Actively to pursue a man is therefore at once against the

<sup>3</sup> Although there are five sisters I have omitted Kitty because she closely resembles Lydia, and Mary, because her views on marriage are proffered rather for light ridicule than serious consideration.

rules of decorum that are intended to regulate the expression of emotion, and against moral principles that are intended to ensure that marriage does not become a mutual torment of incompatible minds. Emma, however, finds any form of acting by design repugnant.

But where Pride and Prejudice does not explore Charlotte's insincerity beyond contrasting her own views explicitly with Elizabeth's and less overtly with the constellation of other marriages that appear in the novel, The Watsons reconsiders the issue of mercenary marriage and its effects through the eyes of Emma, who has come from an easy life of high expectations to a penurious existence where life has become a scramble of self-interest at the expense of family loyalties. Only she has the moral conscience to guide her in deciding the crucial question: "where does discretion end, and avarice begin?" (PP, p.153).

To appreciate the importance of this question in the social context of the novels where marriage is constantly seen simply as a security measure, heedless of love, esteem and compatibility, a brief look at the procedure of property transference would be helpful here.

There is no direct reference in The Watsons to an entail on the estate such as the one that afflicts Mrs Bennet's nerves; that forces the Dashwoods to retire to a cottage; and that causes Anne to muse fleetingly upon assuming her mother's place as Lady Elliot. But the imminent death of Mr Watson is a cause of anxiety to all the daughters. As one historian observes, "On his father's death, [a man's] eldest son was secure; but the

system of entails posed a problem with regard to providing for the widow, the younger sons and daughters, all of whom, for various reasons, imposed a considerable financial burden on the family estate."<sup>4</sup> The estate will therefore pass to Robert Watson whom, we are shown in due course, is as likely to make his sisters comfortable (with Jane to advise him), as John Dashwood is with Fanny's interference in Sense and Sensibility. Hence the attraction of Tom Musgrave, "A Young Man of very good fortune, quite independent, & remarkably agreeable, an universal favourite wherever he goes" (MW, p.315), according to Elizabeth, and thus, in fact, the attraction of any financial security whatever. But because Mr Watson is an invalid, and because his wife is no longer alive, there is little parental guidance to curb the exploits of Penelope and Margaret, nor to enforce a more honourable code of conduct in the sister's dealings with each other. This is not to say, however, that parental advice or example would have countered their misconduct. Pride and Prejudice exploits the manifold comic possibilities of such a reverse, with marital zeal in Mrs Bennet and an equally irresponsible indifference in her husband, neither of whom promote harmony amongst their five daughters. But in The Watsons the social climate has changed, there is little scope for the giddiness of Mrs Bennet and the foolish flutterings of Miss Bingley in a world where ruthless

<sup>4</sup> J.F.G. Gornall, "Marriage and Property in Jane Austen's Novels," History Today, 17 (1967), 806.

calculation and mean-mindedness <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ far from <sup>being</sup> comic material, and which affects the heroine so much more deeply than Elizabeth Bennet. Mr Darcy's observation that "there is meanness in all the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation.

"Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable" (PP, p.40), is given as a personal opinion applicable in the localized context of Miss Bingley's tactless efforts to attract attention. In The Watsons this opinion is felt as Emma's censure of the whole social ethos of Stanton. <sup>Since</sup> ~~Nobody~~ appears to share her views, she is more isolated than Elizabeth Bennet, <sup>and</sup> the need consequently <sup>is</sup> greater to uphold the necessity of principle.

Walton Litz claims that society in the fragment is "more 'modern' than that of Pride and Prejudice," which novel, although revised before publication, is still based upon a "scaffolding of characters and situations [which] hark back to the 1790s." The Watsons, he believes, "belongs to the nineteenth century," and as such is determined less by an ideological frame like Sense and Sensibility's antithetical patterning, or Northanger Abbey's parody of the quixotic heroine, or the accommodation of opposites that gives symmetry to Pride and Prejudice, than by a "dramatic rendering of contemporary manners."<sup>5</sup> By this he appears to mean that changes in the economic ordering of society have made it necessary to review the way that an individual can relate to new conditions. Where Marianne Dashwood

<sup>5</sup> Litz, Artistic Development, pp.87-8.

rejected conventional values by adhering to a purely personal code of romantic aspirations, Emma must protect the ideals of conventional behaviour that are in danger of disappearing altogether, as a matter of personal survival. "To be so bent on Marriage," she remarks of Penelope, " --to pursue a Man merely for the sake of situation --is a sort of thing that shocks me; I cannot understand it. Poverty is a great Evil, but to a woman of Education & feeling it ought not, it cannot be the greatest" (MW, p. 318). In Emma's repugnance at the rivalry of her sisters, The Watsons examines those circumstances in which the heroine is justified in living at variance with the values that prevail in her society, and shows how by adhering scrupulously to the ideals from which current social values have lapsed she can realize her best moral potentialities. Such a set of ideals will protect her from the dangers of destructive personal feeling as much as from the dangers of living among people whose own conduct is governed by no ideals of any kind but those of arbitrary self-interest.

The moral ideals that Emma refuses to compromise sharply differentiate her from her sisters. It is likely that Tom's, Lord Osborne's and Mr Howard's attentions to Emma will provoke the rivalry of Penelope and Margaret in particular, and will give Jane Austen an opportunity to develop a tension that is evident in the juvenile The Three Sisters. There, a certain Mary Stanhope writes to a friend about an acquaintance, Mr Watts:

He is extremely disagreeable & I  
hate him more than anybody else in  
the world. He has a large fortune &  
will make great Settlements on me....

I would refuse him at once if I were  
certain that neither of my Sisters  
would accept him, & if they did not,  
he would not offer to the Duttons.

I cannot run such a risk ...(MW,pp.58-9).

Mary is fearful that her younger sisters will marry before her and is prepared to attach herself to a man merely to forestall them. In this piece the character of Mr Watts is conveyed to us as a composite product of the prejudiced opinions of various correspondents. In The Watsons, as in Mansfield Park that follows it, sisterly jealousy is seriously dramatized, its destructive effects upon family life explored to show how character is defined and personal decisions reached by attention to social considerations as much a matter of opportunism as of shameless calculation.

Elizabeth, the eldest, has lost the man she loved to the scheming of a younger sister: "Penelope was at the bottom of it all," she tells Emma emphatically, "It has been the ruin of my happiness. I shall never love any Man as I loved Purvis" (MW,p.316). But necessity and, to a lesser extent, pride override romantic delicacy as she bravely rationalizes her position and narrowly escapes self-contradiction: "I have lost Purvis, it is true but very few people marry their first Loves. I should not refuse a man because he was not Purvis,"

conceding that she could "like any goodhumoured Man with a comfortable Income" (MW, pp. 317-18). Less rapacious than either Penelope or Margaret, she invites less moral censure and consequently can relate upon a more equitable footing with Emma. Because Elizabeth is inelegant, somewhat awkward in the presence of visitors, and usually preoccupied with household duties like the "great wash" (MW, p. 321), it has been as easy a task for Penelope to take advantage of these social deficiencies to steal her sister's fiancé as it is for Margaret to relieve her own disappointed hopes in Tom Musgrave by "querelous attacks" (MW, p. 360) upon Elizabeth and by ignoring Emma altogether. What emerges is the value of moral conscience and the role that duty plays in guiding one in difficult situations. The prospect of penury and hardship causes Penelope and Margaret to panic, they abjure family loyalties and seek security in any form of marriage however uncongenial. Elizabeth sees the danger ahead, and though reluctant to marry a man she does not care for, is not exacting in her preferences. Emma, in contrast to all her sisters, is guided by firm principles which dictate that mercenary marriage can never be condoned and that a sense of family loyalty should be felt as conferring mutual comfort in time of distress.

What hurts Emma most deeply is less the reduction of her expected fortune than the fact that neither Penelope nor Margaret has bothered to welcome her home after an absence of fourteen years. When William Price visits Fanny at Mansfield Park the narrator celebrates the value of a love and trust in their relationship, one

that contrasts with the deceitful complicity existing between the two Crawfords and the constant antagonism between the Bertrams:

Children of the same family, the same blood, with the same associations and habits, have some means of enjoyment in their power, which no subsequent connections can supply; and it must be by a long and unnatural estrangement, by a divorce which no subsequent connection can justify, if such precious remains of the earliest attachments are ever entirely outlived. Too often alas! it is so ...(MP,p.235).

As we have seen, Robert Watson is of the opinion that long absence weakens rather than strengthens family feeling (MW,p.352), but in Elizabeth there is a more positive response: "It is so delightful to me," she says to Emma, "...to have Things going on in peace and good humour. Nobody can tell how much I hate quarrelling.... -- I wish everybody were as satisfied as you-- but poor Margaret is very snappish, & Penelope owns she had rather have Quarrelling going on, than nothing at all" (MW,p.343). An overt preference for the wors<sup>e</sup> of two alternatives indicates the extent to which family feeling has withered between the sisters and is a major constituent in this "most severe and pessimistic view of society to be found in all Jane Austen's works."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.70.

Skilfully avoiding sentimentality, Jane Austen shows the change in Emma's attitude towards her sisters from confident hope to disgust at reports of their behaviour and even fear of meeting them.

A further element that divides the sisters is secrecy. "§he tells me nothing," Elizabeth remarks of Penelope, "She professes to keep her own counsel; she says, & truly enough, that 'too many Cooks spoil the Broth'" (MW,p.318). To treat a serious issue with the flippancy of a culinary metaphor proves that "Penelope makes light of her conduct" (MW,p.316), and cannot dispose Elizabeth to generous feelings towards any settlement Penelope may happen to engineer: "I wish with all my heart she was well married. I declare I had rather have her well-married than myself" (MW,p.317). To have Penelope married would be an occasion less of joy than of relief at the containment of a potential troublemaker. Through the depiction of such feelings in The Watsons, we feel with particular poignancy the truth that marriage has become "a brutal economic fact in an essentially materialistic society."<sup>7</sup>

Penelope, then, is the most unpleasant of the sisters, because she "has great spirits, & never cares what she says" (MW,p.318), is secretive, ruthless and, Elizabeth warns Emma, "will laugh at you very much" (MW,p.318) for holding unconventional views on marriage. Margaret on the other hand is deceitful in a less overt

<sup>7</sup> Mark Schorer, "Pride Unprejudiced," Kenyon Review, 8 (Winter 1956), 83.

manner. Her "artificial Sensibility" (MW,p.351) is a disguise for less laudable features in her personality, since she hopes by a self-conscious show of elegance to attract Tom Musgrave. Her concern at seeing Emma after so long an absence is affected. "∫he is all gentleness & mildness when anybody is by.-- But she is a little fretful and perverse among ourselves" (MW,p.319), Elizabeth remarks. This is clearly demonstrated in the text:

"How charming Emma is!--" whispered Marg<sup>t</sup> to Mrs Robert ∫Watson<sup>∫</sup> in her most languishing tone. - - Emma was quite distress'd by such behaviour; - & she did not like it better when she heard Marg<sup>t</sup> 5 minutes afterwards say to Eliz: in a sharp quick accent, totally unlike the first - - "Have you heard from Pen. since she went to Chichester? - - I had a letter the other day. - - I don't find she is likely to make anything of it. I fancy she'll come back 'Miss Penelope' as she went.

(MW,pp.350-51)

Margaret shows as much insensitivity to Emma's feelings as she does towards the delicacy of marriage ("I don't find she is likely to make anything of it."). And the undertone of glee here suggests that her similarity to Penelope in the business-like pursuit of a husband is reinforced by a deeper current of spite. Emma sees that

Margaret can feel for nobody but herself as her fits of jealousy and despair indicate. Attention to her own affairs in competition with Penelope to marry first leads her to neglect the care of her ailing father, to despise Elizabeth's less assertive character, and to see Emma as an insignificant addition to the Watson household.

This contrast that Jane Austen draws between four sisters' views towards marriage in the fragment is typical of her methods of contrasting varying attitudes towards a certain theme. We are given the views of all parties to perceive the subtle gradations by which they differ from the heroine. In this respect I believe that Mudrick has reached the right conclusions about Jane Austen's technique almost by default:

The fact remains that close observation without sympathy, common sense without tenderness, densely imagined representation without passion may not limit the comic novelist at all, may indeed be the ideal instruments for penetrating the polished surface of the bourgeois world to its unyielding material base.<sup>8</sup>

The Watsons certainly exposes the adamant base of social materialism, but through Elizabeth's pathetic situation, Emma's shock, and the coldhearted rivalry between Penelope and Margaret, surely we have ample evidence that Jane Austen appreciated the tensions of

<sup>8</sup> Mudrick, p.36.

domestic life with an acuity and freshness that only "sympathy," "tenderness," and "passion" could give?

Another manifestation of domestic tension is the centrifugal effect that husband-hunting occasions. When Emma returns home she feels a pang at finding only Elizabeth there to welcome her. Penelope has gone to Chichester, Margaret to Croydon. Jane Austen embodies the breakdown in family relations by this vacuum on the Watson hearth, and unnecessary movement of Penelope and Margaret that indicates an impatience with restraint and a willing sacrifice of tranquillity and steadiness for bustle and excitement.

In the novels a distaste for quietness and moderation is frequently viewed as a negative attribute. Marianne Dashwood's exhilaration at running down a hillside is a sign of her inclination for vehement expression of her feelings in all matters. From a contrasting positive perspective, Elizabeth Bennet's dash to Netherfield to visit her sick sister evinces a spontaneous affection and concern for Jane that Miss Bingley can only interpret smugly as an "abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country town indifference to decorum" (PP, p.36). Mrs Norris's managerial self-consequence is figured in a constant zeal to be active and interfering, whilst the theatricals are a good example of the way that youthful energies may become perverted through lack of constructive outlets. And, finally, we see in Persuasion how Captain Wentworth must learn the lesson of experience before he can differentiate Louisa Musgrove's wilfulness from Anne Elliot's genuine constancy and steady principles.

In The Watsons, as we have seen, the restlessness of Penelope and Margaret carries similar negative connotations. They are active only for their own benefit whereas Elizabeth is usefully employed and reasonably contented with a sedentary life of domestic pursuits, and Emma seeks the quietness of her father's room for the opportunity it affords for silent reading and reflection: "when Thought had been freely indulged, in contrasting the past & the present, the employment of mind, the dissipation of unpleasant ideas which only reading could produce, made her thankfully turn to a book" (MW,p.361). In Emma's patience, intelligence and fortitude in deciding between the right option on the one hand, and the easy choice on the other, we see how the hardship of penury may be alleviated and finally overcome.

The shame of poverty and the insulting condescension with which it is often accompanied are made clear in Emma's poignant rebuke to Lord Osborne: "there are some circumstances which even Women cannot controul -- Female Economy will do a great deal..., but it cannot turn a small income into a large one" (MW,p.346). She speaks from her heart with an honesty and simple logic totally foreign to the duplicitous nature of Penelope and Margaret. Barbara Hardy observes that "heroines are surrounded by characters whose life of feeling is hardened, perverted, or affected, but the effect is not simply that of psychological contrast. The opposition of characters sets surface against depth; it also attempts to define and display enough cases to create a sense of social

typicality."<sup>9</sup> Emma's depth is set against the overriding superficiality of the other characters, who by their uniformly materialistic views represent the accepted values of their society. Marriage for them is institutionalized selfishness. "When human beings love," remarks E.M. Forster, "they try to get something. They also try to give something...."<sup>10</sup> But it is clear that in The Watsons only Emma respects this duality without reservation.

I have already shown how the education which the Bertram girls receive systematically warps their minds and give them an unrealistically high estimation of themselves.<sup>11</sup> In consequence they are "morally and emotionally immature when Henry Crawford arrives to flatter them and Sir Thomas leaves and unwittingly allows him to do so."<sup>12</sup> Because there has been inadequate intimacy between parents and children, and because whatever contact that has taken place has been devoted to the inculcation of false values, Maria and Julia have effectively been conditioned to seek prestigious marriage as a "duty" (MP, p.38). It is partly to satisfy personal vanity and partly to fulfil these subconscious expectations that they turn upon one

<sup>9</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.41.

<sup>10</sup> E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (London: Arnold, 1927), p.72.

<sup>11</sup> See chapter on Catherine pp.60-1.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Wiesenfarth, The Errand of Form (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1967), p.92.

another to vie for the attentions of Henry Crawford.

The influence of Crawford is as much a catalyst in provoking rivalry between the Bertram girls as Tom Musgrave is between the Watsons. The unequivocal exception is Emma who, with enough forewarning from Elizabeth to give her "very little inclination for his acquaintance" (MW, p.319), sees and hears enough to make her genuinely "Dislike & Despise" him. In the other novels the villain does not always produce dissension between sisters. In Northanger Abbey Catherine is away from home for most of the book, and her only potential rival, Isabella Thorpe, is more interested in James Morland and Frederick Tilney than Henry. In Sense and Sensibility the ideological matrix of the novel makes rivalry between the sisters virtually impossible. Both like Edward Ferrars, though for different reasons, just as Willoughby's entrance makes a powerful impact upon both sisters, the more so upon Marianne. This is designed to show that Edward's qualities and Elinor's ability to value them are an indication of their superiority over Willoughby's external graces and Marianne's belief that strong feeling signifies real virtue. When Edward seems all but lost to Elinor in his secret engagement to Lucy, there is no attempt to steal Willoughby, just as once Willoughby's perfidy has been exposed, Marianne does not consider winning Edward for herself through jealousy. Her love for Elinor and her own romantic belief that shuns second attachments would forbid such action. Something of the same case may be made for Pride and Prejudice. The initial spell that

Wickham's address and appearance casts over Elizabeth does not invite Jane's jealousy, because she is already attracted to Bingley. And Lydia's elopement with Wickham only takes place after Elizabeth has discarded him as a cad. Lydia's urge to be married before her elder sisters so that she may chaperone them is motivated less by calculating ambition or economic exigency than a silly "rage for admiration" (PP, p.231). "From the world around her," one critic remarks, "Lydia has imbibed the idea of marriage as a sort of race; without inquiring what the usual rewards of this race are, she is determined to win it in record time."<sup>13</sup> From what we see of her hoydenish vanity and giddiness she would present no real threat to Elizabeth and Jane's superior qualities in open competition. Wickham elopes with her merely for companionship in folly.

Mansfield Park is the only novel which expands the issue of sisterly rivalry that is broached in The Watsons. The corrosive effects of jealousy are explored and traced to their causes in a defective education that encouraged vanity and fails to provide a principled bulwark against sensuality. Just as we are shown how Fanny's attitudes change as she grows into womanhood, we see how Julia and Maria outgrow their inclination for "wasting gold paper" (MP, p.14) and taunting their lowly

<sup>13</sup> A.N. Kaul, The Action of English Comedy: Studies in the Encounter of Abstraction and Experience from Shakespeare to Shaw (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), p.218.

cousin for more exciting possibilities when Henry Crawford appears. Their rivalry implicitly begins where their impressions of his plainness gradually changes into <sup>that of</sup> his being "the most agreeable young man the sisters had ever known, and they were equally delighted with him" (MP, p.44). Julia believes she has a right to preference because Maria is engaged to Mr Rushworth; Maria, on the other hand, convinces herself that "There could be no harm in her liking an agreeable man -- everybody knew her situation -- Mr Crawford must take care of himself." Mr Crawford is no less disposed to flirt, and a little rivalry between sisters gratifies the sense of his own irresistible charms. Fanny, like Emma, is the sensitive observer whose delicacy makes her a highly discriminating critic. Her passive existence offers little "to distract her from observing the sword-dance of other peoples' loves and jealousies."<sup>14</sup>

Like Penelope and Margaret, the Bertram sisters "had not affection or principle enough to make them merciful or just, to give them honour or compassion" (MP, p.163). Grudges are borne and triumphs are flaunted without compunction as part of what one critic sees as a concerted effort by most of the characters "to establish influence over the minds and lives of others."<sup>15</sup> The Crawfords over the Bertrams, the Bertram sisters over each other, most of the Bertrams and even Edmund (in a

<sup>14</sup> Nina Auerbach, "O Brave New World: Evolution and Revolution in Persuasion," ELH, 39 (March 1972), 118-19.

<sup>15</sup> Tave, p.173.

persuasive capacity) over Fanny, Mrs Norris over everybody— the list is not exhaustive.

Henry tires of women as rapidly as Tom Musgrave. He begins by seeing that "The Miss Bertrams were worth pleasing, and were ready to be pleased; and he began with no object but of making them like him" (MP, p.45). There is therefore as much an external stimulus for rivalry as there is internal jealousy to prompt it. Tom is similarly placed as the saboteur of sisterly affection, as he transfers his attention from Elizabeth to Penelope, then to Margaret, and finally (though unsuccessfully) to Emma.

In Persuasion all trace of acrimony between sisters for the attention of one man has disappeared. Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove enjoy a "seemingly perfect good understanding and agreement together, that good-humoured affection, of which [Anne] had known so little herself with either of her sisters" (P, p.41), and which has formed no large part of the Watsons' experience either. We see Wentworth's gallantry towards the two girls through Anne's eyes, and that she feels no jealousy implicitly proves the depth of her love and his genuine though suppressed attachment to herself: "nothing but the continued appearance of the most perfect goodwill between themselves could have made it credible that they were not decided rivals" (P, p.71). For us to appreciate that Wentworth is not flirting irresponsibly but vengefully overcompensating for his disappointment in Anne's rupture of the engagement is important if we are to approve of her initial attachment

to him. He must be shown as temporarily misled by passion, not permanently flawed by lack of principle. Hence Anne believes that he "was not in love with either. They were more in love with him; yet there it was not love [Anne can recognize it from personal experience]. It was a little fever of admiration" (P, p.82). Unlike the Bertrams or Penelope and Margaret Watson, the Musgroves are untainted by deceit, avarice or promiscuity.

What this section has shown is that in The Watsons Jane Austen depicts rivalry between sisters caused by personal vanity and economic exigency at a level of intensity unprecedented in her work. Where Penelope and Margaret are concerned only with what they can get out of marriage, we are led to infer that Emma could feel as much esteem and love for a man as she might receive from him. These issues are explored further in Mansfield Park where adultery and elopement show the cancerous nature of jealousy. What remains peculiar to The Watsons, however, is Emma's sense of loss at the wilful destruction of family loyalties for purely personal and selfish reasons; the value of strong ties between sisters to combat afflictions that affect them all and which solidarity would alleviate; and the need to resist the easy alternative of expedient marriage in a bid to escape the hardship and shame of poverty and the shameful likelihood of paid employment.

IV. In novels by many of Jane Austen's contemporaries clergymen appear "in the gallery of minor characters either as a cruel and revolting tool of the villain, called upon to force the heroine into marriage," or "the unbelievably perfect moral guide that a Dr. Bartlett had been for Sir Charles Grandison."<sup>1</sup> That Jane Austen found these prototypes amusingly incredible is plain in her mocking Plan of a Novel (1816) in which the heroine's father, a clergyman, is "the most excellent Man that can be imagined, perfect in Character, Temper & Manners -- without the smallest drawback or peculiarity to prevent his being the most delightful companion to his Daughter..." (MW, p.428). In the novels, however, she humanizes her clergymen into thematically relevant and convincing characters in their own right, not "a separate clerical sub-species"<sup>2</sup> to coerce a heroine or point a moral. This is achieved by presenting them in a daily, social dimension rather than officiating in any professional capacity. Religion is seen operating on a domestic scale as it influences conduct and as it involves "the duty of particular clergymen to reside in their parishes,...their frequent and pompous assumption of authority and their temptation

<sup>1</sup> Harmsel, p.19.

<sup>2</sup> Sheila Kaye-Smith and G.B. Stern, Talking of Jane Austen (London: Cassell, 1943) p.110.

to sloth,"<sup>3</sup> seen respectively in Edmund Bertram, Mr Collins and Dr Grant. In short, Jane Austen eschews the "polemical and doctrinal" aspects of her clergymen to show, as G.H. Lewes noted, how they deal with the "humours, sorrows and troubles" they share with other men."<sup>4</sup>

Practical religion and proselytizing are avoided, then, precisely because they lie outside her scope as a domestic satirist. She manifests her ideological premises not in the anguished conscience of her characters, but in "concrete human situations,"<sup>5</sup> usually trivial events, because they touch us often and closely represent universal aspects of common life. Mrs Elton, for example, "was first seen at church: but though devotion might be interrupted, curiosity could not be satisfied by a bride in a pew, and it must be left for the visits in form which were then to be paid, to settle whether she were very pretty, or only rather pretty, or not pretty at all" (E, p.270).

It has been remarked, however, that "The indictment of Jane Austen against the clergy of her day is all the more formidable when we consider the argument from

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Lenta, "Jane Austen's Feminism: An Original Response to Convention," Critical Quarterly 23 (July 1981), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Lee Wolff, Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England (New York: Garland, 1977) p.225.

<sup>5</sup> John Odmark, An Understanding of Jane Austen's Novels (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), p.125.

silence; not what is said of them but what is omitted."<sup>6</sup> She does not satirize the clergy as a whole, which would be a tactless enterprise for the daughter and sister of clergymen herself, and if she "indicts" anybody it is for personal arrogance or folly, not professional shortcomings. As Edmund Bertram exclaims to Mary Crawford, "No one can call the office nothing. If the man who holds it is so, it is by the neglect of his duty, by foregoing its just importance, and stepping out of his place to appear what he ought not to appear" (MP, p. 92). The office is to be revered, even if its occupant is not because, as her works demonstrate, each society has its own hierarchy, and each person has certain duties to perform. Society organizes itself upon this ~~matrix~~<sup>basis</sup>, and upon its gradations and against its ideal values based upon social interdependence Jane Austen assessed<sup>s</sup> her characters. Dogma is unobtrusive because religion and the clergyman's function inhere in social rituals (manners) that ideally find their sanction in Christian moral principle, for "where there is no true norm, nothing can be ridiculous."<sup>7</sup> And without a norm or deviations from it Jane Austen's irony could not operate.

How, then, does this bear upon The Watsons? Mr Howard, the clergyman, is of critical interest because

<sup>6</sup> H. Tucker, "Religion in Jane Austen's Novels," Unisa English Studies, 10 (1972), 8.

<sup>7</sup> C.S. Lewis, "A Note on Jane Austen," Essays in Criticism, 4 (1954), 370.

aspects of his character, his relation to the heroine, and certain scenes in which he acts are unprecedented in Jane Austen's work, and are explored more fully in Mansfield Park. The purpose of this section is to re-examine the place she accords her clergyman, the values they represent in the moral universe of each work, and the way she reconciled the religious and secular dimensions of life in the moral principles of her art. She dramatizes the conflict of values that deviate from the ideal, and in such conflicts she denies her heroine's recourse to spiritual advisors whose counsel would leave little room for individual perception, judgement and choice. To give a moralizing clergyman all the answers would spoil the comedy, muffle the impact of the irony, and leave the heroines redundant.

It is remarkable that in what little attention has been given to The Watsons how few critics have commented upon the emphasis given to Mr Howard's "professional commitment"<sup>8</sup> as a clergyman. And as one critic avers, "We can always see where Miss Austen's interests lie in any novel by observing where the stress falls and where the deepest current of feeling flows."<sup>9</sup> I believe that the importance of the clergy is one such current and therefore merits discussion. A brief review first of Jane Austen's clergymen will off-set the stress laid upon Mr Howard in The Watsons and show the similarities

<sup>8</sup> Jane Nardin, "Jane Austen and the Problem of Leisure," in Social Context, p.132.

<sup>9</sup> Leavis, The Great Tradition, p.12.

between the fragment and Mansfield Park which do not exist between the piece and any of Jane Austen's other novels.

In the parodic design of Northanger Abbey Henry Tilney's role specifically as an ecclesiastic is insignificant. "One feels that Jane Austen made him a clergyman," one critic remarks, "for the same reason that she made his brother a soldier -- just to give him some sort of a profession out of the few at her disposal."<sup>10</sup> And General Tilney's apparently judicious remark to Catherine: "I am sure your father, Miss Morland, would agree with me in thinking it expedient to give every young man some employment. The money is nothing, it is not an object, but employment is the thing" (NA, p.176), is made both to flatter the heroine and to reveal his hypocrisy ("The money is nothing..."). Compare the greater sincerity and solemn judgement of Sir Thomas Bertram:

a parish has wants and claims which can be known only by a clergyman constantly resident, and which no proxy can be capable of satisfying to the same extent. Edmund might, in the common phrase, do the duty of Thornton...if that would content him. But it will not. (MP, p.248)

Henry's clerical calling is subsumed beneath his

<sup>10</sup> Kaye-Smith and Stern, p.110.

function in leading Catherine to a clearer understanding of herself. That he is non-resident and employs a curate to conduct much of his business is less important in this novel than his role as Catherine's witty mentor and ironic sub-narrator within the text. To introduce serious satire upon the clergy would jar with Jane Austen's intention to present Henry as a prodigy in Catherine's eyes, and would negate his normative role in exposing folly. His profession is however useful for structural purposes. Parish business takes him from the Abbey at a critical stage for the heroine, for she must be left alone, with imagination unchecked, to discover the grossness of her suspicions about the General and Mrs Tilney. And his vocation is significant as an indirect means to comment upon the General's character. He describes as "a mere Parsonage, small and confined, we allow, but decent perhaps, and habitable; and altogether not inferior to the generality; -- or, in other words, I believe there are few country parsonages in England half so good" (NA,p.213). His attitude to Henry's abode is consistent with love for novelty, display and comfort, his understatement and prolixity here projecting "an image of unctuous insinuation, in the best tradition of the villainous role to which Catherine's fancy has already assigned him." <sup>11</sup>

It is only in The Watsons and Mansfield Park that the church is valued for its intrinsic merits "both as

<sup>11</sup> Lloyd Brown, Bits of Ivory, p.113.

an institution and as a profession."<sup>12</sup> In between Northanger Abbey and these two works are two different types of clergymen, Edward Ferrars and Mr Collins.

In Sense and Sensibility Edward's "ready discharge of his duties in every particular" (SS,p.377) is less important in itself, than for the implications of his preference for the clerical profession in development of the plot. His strength of conviction and limited ambition for "domestic comfort and the quiet of a private life" (SS,p.16) bring him into conflict with his family for whom the church is "not smart enough," and particularly regarding his mother upon whom he depends for an allowance. He must be made to seem a principled man to reflect favourably upon Elinor's admiration of his mind, taste and manners; and to keep him bound by honour, if not in heart, to his engagement with Lucy Steele. And this show of strength of character is consistent with what the clerical vocation demands. The novel, then, shows how Jane Austen realizes the importance of a profession as much to an individual as to his acquaintance.

Mr Collins is more identifiable than Edward as a caricature of the moralizing clergyman. He displays his conceited character in a letter to Mr Bennet:

having received ordination at Easter,  
I have been so fortunate as to be  
distinguished by the patronage of the  
Right Honourable Lady Catherine de Bourgh,

<sup>12</sup> Halperin, Life, p.244.

widow of Sir Lewis de Bourgh, whose bounty and beneficence has preferred me to the valuable rectory of this parish, where it shall be my earnest endeavour to demean myself with grateful respect towards her Ladyship, and be ever ready to perform those rites and ceremonies which are instituted by the Church of England. (PP, pp.62-63)

His reverence for Lady Catherine eclipses the true purpose of his profession, to which he nonetheless refers with a deference that ill-conceals his selfish motivation. "As a clergyman," he continues, "...I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace in all families within reach of my influence." Stressing his own importance rather than the dignity of the church, he still draws upon its prestige to sanction his claims to a wife and estate at Longbourn. His is a life of contradictions, as the narrator points out:

the respect which he felt for Lady Catherine's high rank, and his veneration for her as his patroness, mingling with a very good opinion of himself, of his authority as a clergyman, and as a rector, made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility. (PP, p.70)

His ideas on clerical example are similarly muddled and

firmly grounded in self-interest: "My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish ..." (PP, p.105). He is a travesty of the ideals propounded by Edmund Bertram and that are implicit in Mr Howard -- sincerity, devotion, honesty and generosity. In his attitude to both marriage and vocation, material interests are primary, and in both roles he is the more absurd for believing his own rhetoric. Jane Austen's characters receive the partner in marriage they deserve; Mr Collins marries Charlotte in compliance with Lady Catherine's wishes and in accordance with the ideal image of the clergyman he presents to himself. "His whole character has been absorbed by his social mask, and so he relates only his social self to other social surfaces"<sup>13</sup> -- namely the decorous obedience that Charlotte offers simply for the security of married life.

If Mr Collins is a buffoon, Mr Elton is no fool. As Mr Knightley says, he is "a very good sort of man, and a very respectable vicar of Highbury, but not at all likely to make an imprudent match. He knows the value of a good income as well as anybody. Elton may talk sentimentally, but he will act rationally" (E, p.66).

<sup>13</sup> Mordecai Marcus, "A Major Thematic Pattern in Pride and Prejudice," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Pride and Prejudice, ed. E. Rubinstein (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p.84.

His materialism is more insidious because less overt than that of Mr Collins, and where the vicar of Hunsford seeks a wife with bombast, Mr Elton is a schemer. Aware of his charms he sought an alliance with the principal family of Highbury, but when denied, he marries the monied but vulgar Augusta Hawkins.

His main function is to provide amenable material upon which Emma's mind may work and to expose, consequently, the absurdity of her imagination. And by refusing to dance with Harriet at the ball, he allows Mr Knightley to rescue her, and thus sets in motion a fresh wave of misunderstanding.

In Persuasion there are two clergymen, the hopeful curate Charles Hayter, and the ageing rector Dr Shirley. The younger man functions to show the attraction of Captain Wentworth for Henrietta Musgrove; to connect the two worlds of Uppercross and Winthrop; to characterize Mary Elliot's antipathy towards her lowly cousins; and finally by marrying Henrietta he leaves Louisa free to consort with Captain Wentworth.

Beyond these structural aspects, the replacement of Dr Shirley by Charles Hayter is one manifestation of the lapse of time and the effects of change that are so central to Anne's experience over the past eight years. There is a climate of change abroad in the novel, as we see for example amongst the Musgroves who "like their houses, were in a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement. The father and mother were in the old English style, and the young people in the new" (P, p.40). But if the younger Musgroves' advancement is only

propositional, Charles Hayter, like Captain Wentworth, has improved himself by his own efforts, he "had chosen to be a scholar and a gentleman" (P,p.74 -- emphasis added), just as Frederick had won fame and fortune in the Navy abroad. They stand in clear contrast to the moribund estate of the Elliots under Sir Walter who "likes the blessings of rank and good looks because they confer privileges that come with birth and need not be merited....Kellynch Hall represents what life asks of the baronet and his eldest daughter,...., but neither can measure up to life's demands."<sup>14</sup> Although the two young men are rivals for a time, I think that they should rather be seen jointly as an expression of the value of individual commitment to a profession, a fresh breeze to infuse new vigour into the society that Sir Walter neglects.

Mr Howard is also granted the attributes of a gentleman, like Charles Hayter, and he too is devoted to a profession. He is characterized by Emma as "quietly - chearful, gentlemanlike" (MW,p.333), and even Tom Musgrave, speaking more truth than he probably knows or even intends, condescendingly refers to Mr Howard as "a very gentlemanlike good sort of fellow" (MW,p.358). But where Tom's attitude gives off more light than heat, Emma has identified certain distinctive qualities in Mr Howard even on a short acquaintance, manifestations of principle and good-breeding that express themselves naturally in his daily conduct. "In himself, she thought

<sup>14</sup> Wiesenfarth, p.145.

him as agreeable as he looked; tho' chatting on the commonest topics he had a sensible, unaffected, way of expressing himself, which made them all worth hearing, & she only regretted that he had not been able to make Lord Osborne's Manners as unexceptionable as his own (MW, p. 335).

It is interesting in contrast to see a negative example of the versatile conversationalist in Wickham. Ironically just before <sup>ha</sup> <sup>S</sup>slandering Mr Darcy, his suavity causes Elizabeth to reflect that "the commonest, dullest, most threadbare topic might be rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker" (PP, p. 76 -- emphasis added). In retrospect, however, she acknowledges "the impropriety of such communications to a stranger" (PP, p. 207). Mr Howard shares Mr Knightley's "plain, unaffected, gentlemanlike English" (E, p. 448) as a reliable index to character. Tom is greatly more self-assertive, possessing "a lively way of retailing a commonplace, or saying a mere nothing, that had great effect at a Card Table" (MW, p. 359). The distinction between Mr Howard and Tom is thus underlined by a contrast of interests -- one cultivates bona fide rhetorical skills, the other prefers cards, the difference between the two men prefiguring the sobriety of Edmund Bertram and the sporting nature of Henry Crawford in Mansfield Park.

Tom Musgrave, like Henry Crawford, is a conscious role-player, arrogating to himself familiarity with the Osbornes, assuming general esteem, and acting the part of a lover to several women with no intention of

accepting responsibility for his actions. Mr Howard, on the other hand, closely resembling Edmund Bertram, accepts the consequences of a fixed identity.<sup>15</sup> And if Jane Austen intends, as one critic suggests, to show the effects of a breakdown in the old economic relationships,<sup>16</sup> not only the clergy, "but all professions, including marriage, parenthood and mentorship require 'ordination', the full and formal acceptance of responsibility, if the pattern of society is to cohere."<sup>17</sup> These issues are examined thoroughly in Mansfield Park, Emma and Persuasion, but it is to do the importance of Mr Howard's role as a clergyman and the significance of the fragment itself an injustice not to recognize that ~~such~~ *the* crucial themes upon which the last novels were built are embryonic in The Watsons. For it is here that Jane Austen tasks herself with "the problem of a disordered society and the possibility of its being restored to order."<sup>18</sup>

It is significant and surely no coincidence that Jane Austen links the designation of gentleman with a responsible use of time and a willingness for personal commitment. Mr Knightley and Mr Darcy are both responsible landholders, and by their respect for

<sup>15</sup> Janet Burroway, "The Irony of the Insufferable Prig", Critical Quarterly, 9 (1967), 134.

<sup>16</sup> Litz, Artistic Development, p.87.

<sup>17</sup> Burroway, p.134.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph W. Donoghue, Jr., "Ordination and the Divided House at Mansfield Park", ELH, 32 (1965), 170.

property and tenants deserve the appellation of gentleman. Mr Howard is also classed as a gentleman because he has an honest and purposeful direction to his life, and so earns Emma's respect. This normative role for a clergyman is a new development in Jane Austen's conception of the role the clergy might be led to play in her work and looks ahead to Mansfield Park, where Edmund must justify his position before a sceptical audience.

But where developments in the plot of that novel stem to a large degree from Edmund's choice of profession and forthcoming ordination, Mr Howard is already ordained at the opening of The Watsons. Because Emma is new to Stanton, it is important that she has a superior model of gentlemanliness against whom the deficiencies of Tom and Lord Osborne (whom she is also meeting for the first time) may be contrasted.

To show the reader why Mr Howard is the right choice for Emma, Jane Austen uses the matter of pulpit-delivery as a means to determine the springs of his character. This adumbrates a similar theme in Mansfield Park, but confines the issue to a report by Emma's father. In the novel, the dramatic possibilities are fully exploited in open debate between Edmund (who like Mr Howard has sincere convictions) and Henry Crawford (a role-player like Tom Musgrave, though more adept). Despite the difference in presentation, both clergymen insist upon being accepted for what they are essentially: Tom and Henry for what they can make themselves appear to be to others. Emma's father says

of Mr Howard:

I do not know when I have heard a Discourse more to my mind -- continued Mr W[atson] or one better delivered. -- He reads extremely well, with great propriety & in a very impressive manner; & at the same time without any Theatrical grimace or violence. -- I own, I do not like much action in the pulpit -- I do not like the studied air & artificial inflexions of voice, which your very popular & most admired Preachers generally have. -- A simple delivery is much better calculated to inspire Devotion, & shews a much better Taste. -- Mr H[oward] read like a scholar & a gentleman. (MW, pp. 343-44)

This gives a clearer definition than hitherto in the novels of how Jane Austen conceived of proper conduct in a clergyman, and, coming from a retired clergyman, this is a just appraisal of the ideals of the <sup>vocation</sup> profession. The value he accords sincerity and plain-speaking is consonant with the universal moral values which govern Jane Austen's works and it is possible that she had Cowper in mind here. He, like Mr Watson and Edmund Bertram later, also deplored histrionics in the pulpit:

things that mount the rostrum with a skip,  
And then skip down again, pronounce a text,  
Cry, hem; and reading, what they never wrote,

Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,  
 And with a well-bred whisper close the scene!  
The Task, BK. II, ll. 409-13.

If a preacher is to set an example by his own conduct it is obviously vital that it be a sincere expression of his innermost convictions. Religion governs morals and morals govern <sup>behaviour</sup> ~~conduct~~ just as manners guide conduct. Social behaviour is made an index of spiritual worth. Mr Howard's conduct is as true to character in the pulpit as out of it, and what Emma hears about his performance from her father reinforces her belief that he is "as agreeable as he looked" (MW, p.335), that there is no disparity between reality and appearance.

His acts of kindness -- dancing with Emma (MW, p.333), supporting his sister and family (MW, p.331), and assisting Emma's invalid father up the steps (MW, p.344) -- show a consideration for others that she can esteem in a society where most people are wholly pre-occupied with themselves. One best serves God in Jane Austen's view by rationally observing social responsibilities in family and public life -- rationally, because the power of reason is what distinguishes men from beasts. His generosity here speaks a gentleness that is also a feature of Edward Ferrars and Edmund Bertram. Mr Howard, like these other two clergymen, resides in his parish because he makes his vocation a way of life, not a fiscal expedient. And if he is to benefit his parishioners most fully, they require constant attention and example. As Edmund tells Mary Crawford, it is not through "fine preaching" that a clergyman will be

"useful" to his community, but only through the revelation of his "private character" (MP,p.93) can he win their confidence. She, taking Dr Grant as representative, fails to appreciate the value of country life and the clergyman's role in it as a moral example. Like the Robert Watsons, she is convinced that smart city life holds all the benefits. It is:

Indolence and love of ease —a want of all laudable ambition, of taste for good company, or of inclination to take the trouble of being agreeable, which make men clergymen. A clergyman has nothing to do but to be slovenly and selfish -- read the newspaper, watch the weather, and quarrel with his wife. His curate does all the work, and the business of his own life is to dine. (MP,p.110)

Mary appeals to public opinion to support her case since, she claims, "where an opinion is general, it is generally correct" (MP,p.110). But as Corwin points out, Mary's negative attitude towards the clergy is typical of her "use of fashionable opinion as a script to relieve her of the burden of making moral discriminations and personal judgements."<sup>19</sup> The danger, however, lies less in Mary's slackness, than in the fact that the amoral opinions upon which she may rely can

<sup>19</sup> L.J. Corwin, "Character and Morality in the Novels of Jane Austen", Revue des Langues Vivantes, 38: 4 (1972), 367.

achieve general currency. Monaghan is right to point to the logical extension of this argument in seeing that "once enough people accept the manners of John Dashwood or Frank Churchill then the selfish and acquisitive morality which they reflect will also be accepted"<sup>20</sup> (emphasis added). This is why Emma's moral intransigence in rejecting the fashionable assumptions of society and the insulting condescension of Lord Osborne in particular is highly significant. In regretting that Mr Howard "had not been able to make [Lord Osborne's] Manners as unexceptionable as his own" (MW, p.335 — emphasis added), Emma uses the term "manners" not, in Edmund's words, to denote superadded "refinement and courtesy" but "conduct...the result of good principles" (MP, p.93), an expression of the inner self. The effect of this lack is made plain in Emma's rebuke when she says to Tom of Lord Osborne that:

he would be handsome even, tho' he were not a Lord — & perhaps — better bred; More desirous of pleasing, & shewing himself pleased in a right place. (MW, p.340)

Rank is no guarantee of that true good breeding manifest in Mr Howard, who has diligently earned esteem.

Threats posed by insincere role-playing and indiscriminating acquiescence in current, often dubious if not immoral attitudes are recurrent features in all

<sup>20</sup> David Monaghan, Jane Austen: Structure and Social Vision, (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp.9-10.

the novels. But where <sup>the</sup> ~~these~~ people guilty of these vices in the earlier works --the two Thorpes and General Tilney; Willoughby and the Middletons, Lucy Steele and the John Dashwoods; Mr Wickham, Charlotte Lucas, or Mr Collins --though numerous, do not add up to the cumulative ethos of greed and vanity that pervades The Watsons. Now even more than hitherto, Jane Austen examines the claims of individual merit against inherited rank. As Rubinstein points out, although Jane Austen is certainly not "wholly on the side of the spirited individuals and wholly opposed to the very idea of privileged class," Emma respectfully but firmly "is quite unwilling to adjust her feelings to standards determined by birth."<sup>21</sup> What makes this opposition important in The Watsons is that we see Emma calling into question the automatic assumptions of respect due to rank where a moral issue is at stake.

Elizabeth Bennet's fracas with Lady Catherine in the shrubbery at Longbourn is an earlier, more well-known and more entertaining manifestation of this conflict. Even if their respective viewpoints are a microcosm of larger social forces, their meeting is contained as a private discussion between two ladies. In Emma's case, on the other hand, we see Jane Austen exploring more openly a similar conflict spoken in public and directly to a man, circumstances which are altogether much more urgent than hitherto. We see, in

<sup>21</sup> E. Rubinstein, Jane Austen's Novels: The Metaphor of Rank, in Literary Monographs, 2, eds Eric Rothstein and Richard N. Ringler (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp.119-20.

short, that:

a rigid and redoubtable aristocracy  
 can be confronted, indeed challenged,  
 by someone who will overcome all the  
 limitations of birth by excellences  
 of personal character.<sup>22</sup>

This final section has shown that in The Watsons Jane Austen vests new significance in the clergy. More stringent social conditions and suggestions of a weakening in traditional social orderings enhance the value of a "commitment to a particular form of lifework"<sup>23</sup> that fixes the identity of the individual. And where insincerity is no longer simply a "manipulative disguise" as it was for Isabella Thorpe but a "valid approach to all aspects of life and conduct",<sup>24</sup> the values that Mr Howard embodies, his outward conduct consonant with inner principle, become a vital link in perpetuating those Christian moral values that inform our culture.

<sup>22</sup> Rubinstein, p.120.

<sup>23</sup> Trilling, "Jane Austen: Mansfield Park," p.160.

<sup>24</sup> Corwin, p.368.

Sanditon

The importance of Sanditon to Jane Austen's maturation as an artist and to a full appreciation of her novels has seldom been examined in detail. Her attitude in it towards the gentry and its decline is the focus of my first section. My aim here is also to consider the relation of Jane Austen's fiction to changes in her society, and their joint bearing upon Sanditon.

The next section looks at the gentry and its responsibility towards the land. In the novels estate improvements are viewed essentially as leisure pursuits. In Sanditon, Mr Parker has willingly cast off his estate to seek profits in developing a health resort commercially, and here I trace a pattern of continuity ~~in decline~~ between Mansfield Park and the fragment. Where Sanditon, once a fishing village, has been denatured by business exploitation, Willingden's inhabitants by contrast cultivate the land and live in harmony with it.

This leads to a discussion of the kind of people who live in the resort, how Jane Austen presents them, and the efficacy of caricature in their characterization. I examine how the deluding power of imagination is endemic in Sanditon, affecting the heroine in various ways, and determining the character and conduct of many of her acquaintance.

Following this I will then compare an important moment in the fragment with several similar occasions in the novels. Charlotte's gaze away from the

artificial developments of Sanditon towards the natural freshness and vigour of the sea underlines the moral contrast between Sanditon and Willingden.

The next two sections deal with the especial significance of enthusiasm in the fragment. The dangers of impulsiveness as demonstrated in the novels are shown here as they jeopardize a whole community by promoting hypochondria and idealism, self-indulgence and, in one case, an absurd libertinism. Constant misunderstandings and reversals of expectation express the disorientation of a society that has willingly abandoned its traditional links with the past.

My concluding section deals with the extraordinary prolixity of Sir Edward Denham and the Parkers as symptomatic of minds held in the grip of various obsessions. I will then look at the significance of activity and passivity as a major theme in Sanditon. ~~In~~ <sup>ing the</sup> ~~this~~ The fragment, shows ~~that~~ uncontrolled pursuit of unworthy goals, is Jane Austen's most overt expression of changes in the structure of English society after the Napoleonic Wars.

I. Sanditon marks a further stage of development in Jane Austen's art as a novelist. Yet the sudden qualitative shift in tone from her last novels to the energetic force of the fragment has led to widely diverging views on the nature of her intentions, the degree of intellectual engagement, and the extent to which biographical influences may be held to account for some of her emphases. For Lord David Cecil, "Jane Austen the comedian is more in evidence than Jane Austen the moralist"<sup>1</sup>; and according to Walton Litz, "Sanditon must be classed with the Juvenilia," describing the fragment as "an experiment or a private amusement"<sup>2</sup>; whilst E.M. Forster dismissed the piece for its effect of weakness, if only because it is "reminiscent from first to last."<sup>3</sup> There is of course an element of truth in all these statements -- the fragment is brilliantly entertaining; Jane Austen is clearly experimenting with new ideas and techniques; and the robust characterization does seem a reprise of her early artistic methods, most particularly those of the juvenilia. But Sanditon's lively virtuosity should not be allowed to obscure its depth of insight, the trenchancy of its criticism, the

<sup>1</sup> David Cecil, Collected Reports, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> Litz, Artistic Development, pp.164-65.

<sup>3</sup> E.M. Forster, Abinger Harvest (1936; New York: Meridian, 1955), p.152.

originality of its techniques, and its place in the Austen canon as a logical development of her fictional and social purview.

This can be illustrated by looking at an early heroine like Marianne Dashwood. Although she is finally <sup>cured</sup> chastened of her romantic delusions and reintegrated into ordinary, prosaic social life, "submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village" (SS, p.379), she does not anticipate, as Duckworth believes, "the tragically Quixotic heroines of the nineteenth-century novel whose visions of existence can find no fulfilment within the limitations of their societies."<sup>4</sup>

Her estrangement and capitulation to pressures which urge conformity is a well-worn theme of pre-eighteenth-century provenance which Jane Austen took up and exploited for her own diversifying purposes. As Cassandra's note reveals, although Sense and Sensibility was subsequently revised, the work was conceived in epistolary form as early as 1797.<sup>5</sup> In subsequent heroines, Jane Austen shows a more original and richer reworking of her literary heritage, adapting it to meet the needs of increasingly urgent though never propagandist (or carping) social criticism. Fundamentally each novel examines the circumstances in which the heroine may feel, whether actually or suppositiously, her

<sup>4</sup> Duckworth, Improvement, p.104.

<sup>5</sup> See facsimile facing MW, p.242.

isolation.

We see in Charlotte Heywood, Jane Austen's last heroine, none of Anne Elliot's pain and very little of Emma's wilful self-delusion — quite the reverse — but Jane Austen isolates her more subtly. Visiting a modern seaside resort from a quiet country village, she can relate to nobody she meets except as an amused, intelligent and curious observer. In short, she encounters an wholly unfamiliar Zeitgeist. Her alienation as I will show in more detail later, is heightened by the way she can classify various people as characters in a typical sentimental novel without losing her equanimity.<sup>6</sup> Her circumspection allows her to see the absurdity rampant in this self-consciously modern society. Yet it seems that Jane Austen does not intend the reader should empathize with Charlotte. She is disengaged almost as much from Sanditon society as she is from our own active sympathies. She no more participates in the feelings of others than we do in hers except via the narrator's constant mediation of Charlotte's thoughts.

Coming after the tenderness of Persuasion and our deep involvement in Anne's consciousness, Sanditon thus calls into question such assessments of the last complete novel as valedictory "mellow pencillings" of the author's maturity.<sup>7</sup> The fragment's solidly conservative allegiances further devalue the notion that Persuasion is somehow apocalyptic, that "Jane Austen

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 248-57 below.

<sup>7</sup> Chapman, Facts and Problems, p. 208.

comes out against caution, and for risk-taking,"<sup>8</sup> or that as her final novel, Persuasion exalts the navy simply as a meritocracy whose frankness, openness and esprit de corps displace the values of a declining gentry. Nor, in view of Sanditon, is Anne Elliot Jane Austen's last word on Romanticism. That freedom through flexibility and change apparently advocated in Persuasion is compromised when we look to the straightforwardness of Charlotte Heywood and the mockery of Sir Edward Denham's Byronic rhapsodies. These are some of the reasons why Sanditon is so important to a fully appreciative reading of the novels and of Persuasion in particular.

Romantic traits in Anne and Fanny are, I believe, experiments in literary technique, a shift of emphasis rather than values. Jane Austen uses Romantic diction and sentiment with discretion in these two heroines for irony and as a means to enrich her themes and vary her plots, plot being determined largely by character. For example, she images the development of Fanny's growth towards greater self-confidence by the quality of her responses to nature -- moving from stylized raptures in the Grants' shrubbery, to an appreciation of April in Portsmouth with its "mild air, brisk soft wind, and bright sun" (MP, p.409), to a final awareness of natural phenomena when she sees familiar plantations, where "much is actually given to the sight, [and] more yet remains to the imagination" (MP, pp.446-47). These

<sup>8</sup> Robert Garis, "Learning Experience and Change," in Critical Essays, ed. Southam, p.80.

Wordsworthian sentiments reach into the depths of Fanny's responses without upsetting the unequivocally conservative tenor of the novel.

Whatever role we wish to ascribe the navy in Persuasion in forming a new, more worthy and responsible society, Bradbury is surely right where he sees Jane Austen's purpose in juxtaposing gentry with navy as important less for its socio-historical accuracy than for its enabling her to formulate a moral design, the merits and faults of each party providing the necessary tensions in a moral dialectic. "She is interested," he claims :

in the ways in which the co-existence of two carefully defined social groupings -- the world of the inherited aristocracy, the world of the seafarers -- extends our notion of what the moral life is, and sets up, in society, contrasting areas of value.<sup>9</sup>

This overtly dichotomous treatment, as we shall see, is also a major feature of her technique in Sanditon, where different societies -- Willingden and Sanditon -- are brought forward for contrast. But Jane Austen no more intends us to see England's hope as lying with the farmers (Mr Heywood is an active estate owner), than she expects us to see the navy as the hub of English society

<sup>9</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p.71.

in Persuasion. For in the fragment, as in the novels, we must beware the tendency to equate exactly Jane Austen's fictional construct with the world she personally inhabited. The past "inevitably tends to contract and homogenize itself in our minds," particularly for twentieth-century readers for whom the concept of class is largely moribund.<sup>10</sup> We know from well-informed sources that she was well-read in history, and her juvenile skit, The History of England, reveals an early inclination for studying people in different periods.<sup>11</sup> Granted this, as well as her extraordinary aptitude for observation and deduction regarding character and motives, there are limits to the objectivity to be expected from a person's scrutinizing the times in which he or she lives. Rather than seeing Jane Austen's work, therefore, as a document specifically relevant to her own times, we should be aware how she inculcates timeless values through fictional situations only tangential to reality as she knew it. "What she gives us," observes one critic:

is a kind of construct or myth which includes a strong infusion of the real.... In the same way her various and varying country estates are at the same time real and also notions, hypotheses,

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Kent, "'Real Solemn History' and Social History," in Jane Austen in a Social Context, p.91.

<sup>11</sup> Henry Austen, A Biographical Notice of the Author, prefixed to The Novels of Jane Austen, V, p.7.

possibilities in the mind.<sup>12</sup>

This approach gives her credit as a novelist of both local and universal significance, an artist able to see in particular contemporary material those values of a more general significance.

Jane Austen has often been viewed as something of a prophet. But because extensive historical backgrounding lies beyond the province of the literary critic, I think it is more worthwhile to examine the way Jane Austen employs, yet transcends, her socio-historical awareness to create entertaining and intellectually engaging fiction. For as one critic points out, literature "interprets" society, "evokes and values" the qualities of experience, especially when "styles, manners and social structures change under pressure."<sup>13</sup>

This is not, of course, to deny that shifts in English society of some description were taking place early in the nineteenth century, but to guard against oversimplifications such as:

A case might be made out for saying that the unifying thesis of Jane Austen's novels is the rise of the middle class, a process of which the middle class itself became acutely conscious when Pitt, in effect, overthrew the entrenched political

<sup>12</sup> T.B. Tomlinson, The English Middle-Class Novel (London: Macmillan, 1976), pp.25-26.

<sup>13</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, Preface, The Social Context of Modern English Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p.xxii.

power of the Whig aristocracy in  
1784.<sup>14</sup>

Although Greene acknowledges the probable anachronism of "middle class," this schematism is more useful in potted histories than as an aid to appreciating Jane Austen's fiction. Because she was not a sociologist, critical tact surely demands that we look at her work on her own terms, and not overlay it as might Sir Edward Denham, with "hard words & involved sentences from the style of our most approved Writers" (MW, p.45). More apropos than Greene is Marilyn Butler's view that:

Had times been less prosperous for the gentry, Jane Austen might have written less sanguinely about the role of the individual within society. Had they been more prosperous for her, she might not have seen so clearly the effect on her class of its increasing wealth.  
(emphasis added)<sup>15</sup>

In other words, Jane Austen uses an highly selective depiction of recognizable contemporary life to explore various fictional problems and possibilities. Her works are not by intention mirrors held up to reality but

<sup>14</sup> Donald J. Greene, "Jane Austen and the Peerage," PMLA, 68 (December 1953), 1028.

<sup>15</sup> Marilyn Butler, Rebels, Romantics and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p.99.

vehicles for ideas. She can therefore develop similar themes using either the deft and delicate techniques of individual characterization in the novels or the more robust forms of hyperbole and caricature in Sanditon, where she focuses more emphatically upon contrasting societies and their very distinctive ways of life.

II. Land speculation in Sanditon has moved considerably beyond the concept of estate management as it functions most clearly in Mansfield Park. There the improvement motif is used to explore:

how diverse, how contradictory, the interpretation of 'improvement' could be, not just between the old generation and the new but also between the different moral and cultural worlds that are represented by the Crawfords, the Bertrams and Fanny Price.<sup>1</sup>

Henry Crawford's plan to convert Thornton Lacey into a proper gentleman's residence, Mr Rushworth's zest for modernizing the aged precincts of Sotherton Court, and his friend Smith's already improved estate of Compton reveal a common recklessness towards the past in some of the younger generation, oblivious to the potential loss they are inflicting upon future society. "[I]t is the most complete thing!" exults Mr Rushworth over Repton's work at Compton:

I never saw a place so altered in my

<sup>1</sup> B.C. Southam, "Sanditon: the Seventh Novel," in Jane Austen's Achievement, Papers delivered at the Jane Austen Bicentennial Conference at the University of Alberta (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.6.

life. I told Smith I did not know where I was. The approach now is one of the finest things in the country....I declare when I got back to Sotherton yesterday it looked like a prison -- quite a dismal old prison. (MP,p.53)

There is a strong defensiveness about Mansfield Park, in view of Jane Austen's distaste for innovation in that novel. A pervading tension between antithetical cultures is felt as strongly, though expressed more bluntly, in Sanditon -- a sense of threat to an established, fulfilling and worthwhile mode of living by modern trends of no proven superiority. As Burke <sup>observed</sup> ~~apologized~~:

it is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice which has answered in any tolerable degree for ages the common purposes of society, or on building it up again, without having models and patterns of approved utility before his eyes.<sup>2</sup>

Thornton Lacey is "a retired little village" (MP,p.241) as Sanditon once was before Mr Parker, as a projector, "planned & built, & praised & puffed, & raised" a "quiet Village of no pretensions into "a Something of young

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, in Burke: Select Works 2 vols, new ed. rev. E.J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon, 1898), II, p.72.

Renown" (MW,p.371). It has now become "a place" (MP,p.244), in Henry Crawford's parlance, a site given a very distinctive character by representing its maker's ideals. Edmund's assurance to Henry that "a very little of your plan for Thornton Lacey will ever be put into practice" (MP,p.242) rings hollow in our ears when we see the fate of Sanditon village, even though Willingden can stand as a token of a better past surviving in the present.

One of the central themes that give continuity to Jane Austen's novels is a progressively less flattering portrait of the gentry's sense of its social duties. This trend becomes most noticeable between Mansfield Park and Sanditon. Although she has never assumed that correct behaviour is the automatic concomitant of rank (witness Lady Catherine), their relationship is of especial significance in the last three novels and the fragment.<sup>3</sup> Where most critics see depression in the fortunes of the gentry, David Spring's interpretation of the period is remarkably sanguine. "Oblivious to landowners' political power and progressive economics," he claims:

some interpreters of Jane Austen have seen weakness and crisis and change in landed fortunes, where they should

<sup>3</sup> A case might be made to include Pride and Prejudice here since it deals with the mutual antagonisms of Elizabeth and Darcy who, amongst others, must correct their misconceptions about rank's relation to moral conduct.

instead have seen strength and stability and continuity. Major turning points have been found in what in fact was the same old story.<sup>4</sup>

As ever, terms such as "landed fortunes" fail to distinguish between age, location, particular circumstances and individual aptitude in the case of each specific landowner. Of especial interest to Sanditon, however, are his findings that:

Well before Jane Austen's lifetime, [the gentry] had ingeniously turned a variety of landed resources into money. Not only wheat and turnips but also coal and town-building sites.<sup>5</sup>

This relieves the notional gloom of gentry decay and helps to put Sanditon's major emphasis on land speculation in historical perspective. Such speculation is clearly not only a nineteenth-century development. But however much Spring's views can be verified by fact, they are not entirely consonant with what Jane Austen herself presents in Sanditon. Where he sees a long history to land development, the force behind the novel

<sup>4</sup> David Spring, "Interpreters of Jane Austen's Social World: Literary Critics and Historians," in Jane Austen: New Perspectives, Women and Literature, ed. Janet Todd, New Series, III. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), 65.

<sup>5</sup> Spring, p.67.

fragment is strongly contemporary.<sup>6</sup> She makes the immaturity of the resort manifest by stressing its modernity: Mr Parker praises "modern Sanditon" (MW, p.380), whilst the narrator expressly calls attention to a definite division of architecture in the place, distinguishing between the buildings of "former Days" and the point where "the Modern began" (MW, p.384). Remembering Jane Austen's highly selective use of detail, these points are surely of great thematic significance. I think that Southam is right to see in Mr Parker "a new social phenomenon" rather than a continuation or resurgence of a long-acknowledged threat.<sup>7</sup> Mr Parker, his ideas, habits, language and associates, in such concentration are unprecedented in Jane Austen's mature fiction. He is a member of the landed gentry:

who capitalizes his property and goes into business with the kind of rash enthusiasm and innocent lack of principle that the amateur in commerce so often shows.<sup>8</sup>

Sanditon shows a landed gentleman's ignoring tradition to make town development and the generation of profit ends in themselves. These changes in the village's way of life, and in his conception of his own role within

<sup>6</sup> See p.229 below.

<sup>7</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.114.

<sup>8</sup> Southam, p.114.

it, are used to examine the nature and consequences of a pervading individualism. With no sense of paternal hierarchy of the kind exemplified by Highbury in Emma, with no sense of a collective heritage or any wealth of experience upon which to draw for guidance, Sanditon is literally eccentric. The result is a "manic disorder" that bears comparison with the confusions, jealousies and conflicts that arise when discipline is infringed: by the Thorpes in Northanger Abbey; by all except Fanny on the Sotherton excursion in Mansfield Park; or by Frank Churchill and the heroine in Emma.<sup>9</sup> Jane Austen would not depict the changes in Sanditon society with such meticulous detail unless she regarded the creation of an impersonal and amorphous society as wholly undesirable, unpleasant, and potentially dangerous.

Her doubts are partly expressed through the commercial zeal of Mr Parker, an "Enthusiast" (MW, p.371) or "Projector" (MW, p.412), and his coadjutor Lady Denham. Business efficiency of course was essential to running any estate successfully, as the involved affairs of Sir Thomas Bertram or Mrs Smith both testify. But in the fragment, capitalism itself is Sanditon's raison d'être because the resort is made to rely wholly upon revenue from wealthy visitors. Life in the resort has few of the pleasures and none of the ties of organic

<sup>9</sup> Tony Tanner, "Jane Austen and 'the Quiet Thing': A Study of Mansfield Park," in Critical Essays, ed. Southam, p.159.

dependency which life on a country estate affords.<sup>10</sup> The network of local obligations has been broken up and self-deception, as the plot's main dynamic in one form or another, is shown to be the corollary of a society that lacks roots and relies upon seasonal prosperity. Its visitors have no interests but self-indulgence; its developers no aims but exploitation. Mr Parker talks of human relations in terms of rents, wages and price rises (MW, p. 392), Lady Denham is more basely motivated by money, and even Sir Edward's comic plans for seduction hinge ultimately upon economics (MW, pp. 405-06).

In the novels which most nearly precede Sanditon, Sir Thomas Bertram and Emma are both in their different ways irresponsible leaders of the gentry: he by overrating formality and wealthy connections; she by her disordered and interfering notions of rank and self-consequence. If Jane Austen's attitude in Mansfield Park appears "almost unduly moralistic and condemnatory," it unequivocally reflects:

a desire to reestablish social well-being by ostracizing the vicious elements in society and reintegrating the virtuous. Her concern is ultimately not with exposure of disorder but with the restoration of order — not with

<sup>10</sup> Some of its pleasures are undeniable: panoramic seascapes and equally fine views of hills and downs on the landward side.

disapprobation but with ordination.<sup>11</sup>

But although Sir Thomas's estate is associated with Mansfield, we see little, if anything, of the village itself and the effects of his attitudes upon it. Our interest is focused instead almost exclusively upon the interior of Mansfield Park and Sir Thomas's mistakes as the head of his family.

In Emma Jane Austen involves the local community more closely by examining the way Highbury is bound together with ties of mutual obligation. Hartfield and the other houses are therefore seen as part of a network which vitalizes village life. We sense little comparative organicism in earlier villages like Fullerton, Meryton, or the parish around Barton Park. But as E.M. Forster remarked:

Miss Bates is bound by a hundred threads to Highbury. We cannot tear her away without bringing her mother too, and Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, and the whole of Box Hill.<sup>12</sup>

In this context the "Dangers of individualism" become highly significant as Emma's match-making and abuse of Miss Bates demonstrate.<sup>13</sup> Duckworth cogently explains the shift in emphasis between the two novels, in one

<sup>11</sup> Donoghue, "Ordination", p.170.

<sup>12</sup> E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, Pocket edit. (London: Arnold, 1949), p.63.

<sup>13</sup> Duckworth, Improvement, p.147.

where a thriving village is ignored, and in the other where it becomes the centre of attention:

If Mansfield Park addresses itself to the subject of a culture endangered by excessive individualism [largely in the Crawfords] as it becomes a threat to culture, Emma focuses on the individual self as it becomes a conceivable threat to culture, the titles of the two novels thus being accurate predictions of their thematic directions.<sup>14</sup>

Marianne Dashwood's beliefs had also embodied the threat of a counter-culture, but she did not have the social power that makes Emma's attitudes so pernicious; and joined with Frank Churchill's more daring deceit, their wilfulness is more destructive than Marianne's and Willoughby's. Basically idle and conscious that her family is "first in consequence" (E,p.7), Emma's outlook is centrifugal in promoting Harriet, "the natural daughter of nobody knows whom" (E,p.61), and denying the genuine qualities of the yeoman Robert Martin, "a respectable, intelligent gentleman-farmer!" (E,p.62).

As a social leader, Emma's energy can also be seen as a necessary counterweight to her father's timidity. She is the only person who can introduce changes into his way of life:

<sup>14</sup> Duckworth, Improvement, p.147.

There was no time for farther remark or explanation....and Mr Knightley must take his seat with the rest round the large modern circular table which Emma had introduced at Hartfield, and which none but Emma could have had the power to place there and persuade her father to use, instead of the small-sized Pembroke, on which two of his daily meals had, for forty years, been crowded. (E,p.347)

This slight infusion of modernity is tacitly welcomed by the narrator because it helps reintegrate Mr Woodhouse in a living, sharing community, indicated symbolically in the increased seating capacity of the new and larger dining table.

In both novels the errant members of the gentry acknowledge their errors: Emma and Sir Thomas therefore keep their estates, and society is reintegrated. In Persuasion, the situation appears irredeemable. Sir Walter Elliot is an object of ridicule, his rank of Baronet possessing none of Sir Thomas Bertram's formality and prestige. The list of Sir Walter's illustrious predecessors given at the opening of the novel makes the present incumbent of Kellynch seem woefully inadequate in his duties. "The Kellynch property was good," we are told, "but not equal to Sir Walter's apprehension of the state required in its possessor" (P,p.9). Where the two earlier novels examine the role of the gentry on or around their estates, Sir Walter leaves Kellynch shortly after the

opening of Persuasion. He is forced to leave by insolvency brought on through self-indulgence. His position has been valued only for the glory it confers upon Elizabeth and himself, not for any benefits it may bestow upon others. Anne's feelings upon the abandonment of the family estate are damning and incontrovertible:

however sorry and ashamed for the necessity of the removal,....[she] could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-hall had passed into better hands than its owners. (P,p.125)

Anne's wishes are ignored, and she must rely for support upon the kindness of relatives and friends.

In Sense and Sensibility the two heroines had also been turned out of their home, but there the cause lay in an entail on the estate. In Persuasion "the degeneration of the Elliot family is derived entirely from within itself....,"<sup>15</sup> and, unlike in Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park and Emma, the family estate cannot be preserved. Careless of contingencies, Sir Walter has lived only for himself and must leave his property.

<sup>15</sup> David Monaghan, "The Decline of the Gentry: A Study of Jane Austen's Attitude to Formality in Persuasion," Studies in the Novel, 7 (Spring 1975), 73.

This cursory outline of the three novels preceding Sanditon enables us to appreciate how far Jane Austen was prepared to develop the issue of negligent land ownership. Mr Parker is not titled, but is "of a respectable Family, & easy though not large fortune" (MW, p.371), and "by no means the first of [his] Family, holding Landed Property" (MW, p.368) in Sanditon. The fragment looks at the abuse of landed inheritance which stems from the energetic and single-minded pursuit of an illusory progressive ethic. "Glorious indeed!" he marvels to Charlotte as they enter Sanditon; and with all the self-esteem of a self-made man he congratulates himself: "Well, I think I have done something in my Day" (MW, p.383).

Where Sir Walter was at least proud of his position (even if for the wrong reasons), he had only leased his estate and moved into temporary lodgings in Bath until such time as his financial position might improve. Mr Parker, on the other hand, has permanently removed from his lands, installed a new occupant, and built himself a modern house in a wholly inappropriate place. This, he informs Charlotte, took place two years ago, and we see that his choice is cognate with the high ideals and profit schemes he envisages for Sanditon. He is consumed by a zeal for investment and return unlike anything previously depicted in the novels. To emphasize the reorientation of his life, his values and the nature of Sanditon, Jane Austen gives him a speech that makes quite clear the extent of his delusion. There is an unmistakable contrast between what he says and thinks

of himself, and what the language of his speeches tells us about him. He speaks with indifference about his inheritance, once to the Heywoods (MW, p.371), then again to Charlotte herself on the way to Sanditon. "And whose very snug-looking Place is this?" she enquires, seeing in its unspoiled natural abundance certain similarities to Willingden:

This is my old House — the house of my Forefathers — the house where I & all my Brothers & Sisters were born & bred — & where my own 3 eldest Children were born....It is an honest old Place — and Hillier keeps it in very good order. I have given it up you know to the Man who occupies the cheif of my land. (MW, pp.379-80 — emphasis added)

As the party drives away his wife remarks disconsolately: "There — now the old House is quite left behind" (MW, p.382), indicating to the reader that Mr Parker's feelings for his roots are well-nigh dead.

If as has been suggested Jane Austen idealizes the navy in Persuasion less to make the point that "the gentry are no longer fit to rule," than that "the old system absolutely depended upon its belief in the gentleman as leader," Sanditon shows plainly in Mr Parker and Lady Denham the gentry "openly pursuing their own material interests," promoting a fashionable fad,... a resort for the idle rich."<sup>16</sup> Lady Denham both wishes

<sup>16</sup> Butler, Rebels, p.108.

to attract wealthy visitors, yet resents their largesse:

because they have full Purses, [~~they~~]  
 fancy themselves equal, may be, to your  
 old Country Families. But then, they  
 who scatter their Money so freely, never  
 think of whether they may not be doing  
 mischief by raising the price of Things.  
 (MW, p. 392)

Her greed and selfishness thus lead her into  
 contradictions from which Mr Parker does his best to  
 extricate her (MW, pp. 392-93). Meanwhile her maintenance  
 of a large servants' hall seems creditable until she  
 gives her dishonourable reasons for its continuation:

I do believe those are best off, that  
 have fewest Servants. — I am not a  
 Woman of Parade, as all the World knows,  
 & if it was not for what I owe to poor  
 Mr Hollis's memory, I should never keep  
 up Sanditon House as I do; — it is not  
 for my own pleasure. (MW, p. 393)

Unlike Mr Darcy or Mr Knightley, who seem genuinely  
 concerned about the welfare of their tenants, Lady  
 Denham offers only grudging assistance. If Lady Russell  
 in Persuasion can be faulted for "prejudices on the side  
 of ancestry;... a value for rank and consequence, which  
 blinded her a little to the faults of those who  
 possessed them" (P, p. 11), Lady Denham's flaw is a "Love  
 of Money," which is sometimes (according to Mr Parker),

though almost always (from what Charlotte and the reader can see) "carried greatly too far" (MW,p.376). Avarice determines her interest in speculation as much as it does her interest in human relations:

I am not the Woman to help any body blindfold. -- I always take care to know what I am about & who I have to deal with, before I stir a finger. -- I do not think I was ever over-reached in my Life; & That is a good deal for a Woman to say that has been married twice. (MW,p.399)

For Mr Parker the country estate is no longer a localized centre of social and economic interest. Parochialism gives place to aggressive commercialism. Care for the poor had long been a duty incumbent on the gentry. In Emma the heroine shows how well she thinks of herself by her remarks to Harriet on the sobering effects of witnessing poverty: "If we feel for the wretched, enough to do all we can for them," she says with a smile, "the rest is empty sympathy, only distressing to ourselves" (E,p.87). Anne in contrast strikes a genuine rapport with those unfortunates whom her father was content to ignore. By the time we reach Sanditon, there are signs of the poor and the tradesmen having become a force to be reckoned with. Mr Heywood views seaside resorts as "sure to raise the price of Provisions & make the Poor good for nothing" (MW,p.368), whilst Mr Parker and Lady Denham in particular discuss

the issue more openly than is customary in the novels. Quieting her fears of inflation caused by free-spending visitors, he is fluent in text-book jargon:

My dear Madam, They can only raise the price of consumeable Articles, by such an extraordinary Demand for them & such a diffusion of Money among us, as must do us more Good than harm. -- Our Butchers & Bakers & Traders in general cannot get rich without bringing Prosperity to us. -- If they do not gain, our rents must be insecure. -- & in proportion to their profit must be ours eventually in the increased value of our Houses. (MW, p.392-93)

The content and manner of this speech tell us as much about Mr Parker's character as they do about a new source of interest in Jane Austen's outlook. Hitherto, prices have featured largely as the net value of estates, or on a less exalted plane, in the cost of fashionable frippery that engrosses Mrs Allen and Nancy Steele.

Jane Austen expresses through Mr Parker's careless remarks about his home how many generations have occupied the same site. These are the traditional associations which he unhesitatingly shrugs off. As a counter-image, Mr Parker's new home, in a more exclusively modern hill-top part of Sanditon, is "a light elegant Building, standing in a small Lawn with a very young plantation round it" (MW, p.384). There is a strong sense of nakedness because there are no thick plantations,

shrubberies or extensive parklands. These are the distinctive assets of earlier, more exemplary estates like Pemberley, Delaford and Mansfield Park. Mr Parker's new residence is the antithesis of Donwell Abbey which:

with all its old neglect of prospect,...  
its abundance of timber in rows and  
avenues, which neither fashion nor  
extravagance had rooted up.... was just  
what it ought to be, and looked what it  
was. (E,p.358)

Donwell, like its adjoining Abbey-Mill Farm, is an expression of "English verdure, English culture, English comfort" (E,p.360).

As early as Sense and Sensibility Jane Austen shows the symptoms of an "abusive utilitarianism."<sup>17</sup> John Dashwood is the antithesis of Colonel Brandon's cautious conservatism as reflected in the well-timbered abundance of Delaford. Far from being a picturesque improver, "John Dashwood is more concerned to accumulate land for social prestige and the chance of reselling at a profit than preserving his heritage."<sup>18</sup> He felt it "a duty" he boasts to Elinor (affecting sincerity), to buy East Kingham Farm: "I could not have answered to it to my

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Kestner, "Sanditon or The Brothers: Nature into Art," Papers on Language and Literature, 12 (1976), 162.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Price, "The Picturesque Moment," in From Sensibility to Romanticism, ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p.267.

conscience to let it fall into other hands" (SS,p.225). Here landownership is viewed more as a "convenience" than as a responsibility. Similarly, to satisfy the whims of his wife, "The old walnut trees," and "all the old thorns" have been "cleared away" to make room for the flower-beds and greenhouse which promise to be "exceedingly pretty" (SS,p.226).<sup>19</sup> Elinor, who respects the past as strongly though more rationally than Marianne, sees the danger in his attitudes but tactfully "kept her concern and her censure to herself" (SS,pp.225-26). Sir Walter Elliot is as insensitive to the intrinsic value of tradition as John Dashwood. Anne reflects in Bath how:

She must sigh that her father should feel no degradation in his change; should see nothing to regret in the duties and dignity of the resident land-holder; should find so much to be vain of in the littleness of a town. (P,p.138)

Mr Parker is even more culpable than Sir Walter for he has not been forced to leave his estate but has left of his own accord, not to pursue idleness in "the elegant stupidity of private parties" (P,p.180) but to pursue profits ("He anticipated an amazing Season" MW,p.383) far in excess of John Dashwood's mean-minded manoeuvrings.)

Admiral Croft deserves to replace Sir Walter

<sup>19</sup> The radical dismissiveness of his terms here looks ahead to Henry Crawford's plans for the farmyard at Thornton Lacey (MP,pp.242-44).

through his service to the King, just as Hillier is a deserving replacement for Mr Parker through his conscientious and modest attachment to the land. Mr Parker is content to buy the fresh produce he once grew himself and is glad to disencumber himself of the need to bother about his estate:

we have in fact all the comfort of an excellent Kitchen Garden, without the constant Eyesore of its formalities; or the yearly nuisance of its decaying vegetation. — Who can endure a Cabbage Bed in October? (MW, p.380)

Beneath the diverting extravagance of his rhetoric, Mr Parker embodies the neglect of tradition, and he is Jane Austen's clearest expression of the break-up in "proper 'communication' between a cultural heritage and individual performance...."<sup>20</sup> In Emma it is interesting to see that besides Mr Knightley's consistent concern for his tenants and acquaintance in general, even Mr John Knightley, though resident normally in London, retains a strong interest in parochial affairs.

If "Failure to understand either the history of his family or the history of his time has driven the narcissistic [Sir Walter] from the country to the city,"

<sup>20</sup> Alistair M. Duckworth, "'Spillikins, paper ships, riddles, conundrums, and cards': Games in Jane Austen's life and fiction," in Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays, ed. John Halperin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), p.286.

uncontrolled enthusiasm and a passion for innovation has driven Mr Parker from "down in [The] Gutter" (MW,p.381) to a hill-top residence with a splendid view where "the Wind meeting with nothing to oppose or confine it... simply rages & passes on" (MW,p.381).<sup>21</sup>

Petrification of the gentry in Sir Walter has yielded to the bounding optimism of Mr Parker who pursues profits under the aegis of progress: "one other Hill brings us to Sanditon — modern Sanditon — a beautiful Spot.... In a good Season we sh<sup>d</sup> have more applications than we could attend to" (MW,p.380). And on the journey to his new home, he remarks to Charlotte, "I almost wish I had not named [it] Trafalgar — for Waterloo is more the thing now" (MW,p.380).<sup>22</sup> He values a home simply for its "situation" (MW,p.380), and looks on English naval glory only as it can minister to his self-esteem, cater for fashionable tastes and bring handsome returns:

However, Waterloo is in reserve — & if we have encouragement enough this year for a little Crescent to be ventured on [aping the elegance of Bath] — (as I trust we shall) then, we shall be able to call it Waterloo Crescent — & the name joined to the form of the Building, which always takes, will give us the

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Wiesenfarth, "Persuasion: History and Myth," The Wordsworth Circle, 2 (1971), 163.

<sup>22</sup> See p.214 above for a note on the emphatic contemporaneity of Sanditon.

command of Lodgers. (MW,p.380)

Further evidence of his conceit is seen in his dealings with the Stringers. Mr Parker violates the code of obligation by establishing the old man and his son as market-gardeners: "I encouraged him to set up -- & am afraid he does not do very well," he admits, then immediately vindicates the sagacity of his action: "that is, there has not been time enough yet. -- He will do very well beyond a doubt -- but at first it is Uphill work" (MW,p.382). Where Mr Knightley, as his name suggests, is chivalrous and diligent in his parochial duties, Mr Parker has placed a man's income and family welfare at the mercy of economic vicissitudes determined by the fortunes of a seaside resort.

III. As one critic has shown, Jane Austen frequently uses proficiency at card games as an adverse comment on character.<sup>1</sup> Jane Watson's acquisitiveness is suggested in her announcement that "Speculation is the only round game at Croydon now" (MW, p.354), just as Mary Crawford's impatience with restraint and taste for sensation are signalled by her asserting:

There, I will stake my last [card] like a woman of spirit. No cold prudence for me. I am not born to sit still and do nothing. If I lose the game it will not be for want of not striving for it.

(MP, p.243)

But Mary's speculation is more disruptive than Jane's because what she says is literally true of herself -- she can and will act with decisiveness to secure what she wants. Thus when it seems that Edmund, backed by Sir Thomas, means to live permanently at Thornton Lacey, we learn that "all the agreeable of her speculation was over for that hour. It was time to have done with cards if sermons prevailed" (MP, p.248). Her ability ever to think seriously on important matters is rendered suspect with such an easy transfer of her thoughts from the solemn to the trivial. In Sanditon Jane Austen adopts the speculation motif at its most literal:

<sup>1</sup> Duckworth, "Games", pp.279-98.

The card game... has left the drawing-room to become the expressive emblem of a fervently speculative world in which inherited estates are exploited in the form of bathing places for 'projectors' and 'enthusiasts.'<sup>2</sup>

Despite Mr Parker's enthusiasm, the success of Sanditon is still a gamble and it seems unlikely that his venture will be profitable.

It is possible to see that by the time of Persuasion, "for all the socially positive attitudes of the heroine, society never really recovers from the disintegration evident at the beginning."<sup>3</sup> Apart from Sir Walter, the state of the Musgroves has an important bearing upon Sanditon, for their explicit juxtaposition of "the old English style" of the parents with the "more modern minds and manners" (P, p.40) of the younger generation — the elder Musgroves and the Hayters resembling the Heywoods, as Louisa and Henrietta anticipate the fashionable and rather brittle Misses Beaufort. The domestic disorder of the drawing-room at Uppercross is identified with modernity and change in microcosm. But in Sanditon the Musgrove's domestic muddle has engulfed an entire village with moral disarray. Modernity as a force of change is out of control. Wilfulness in Louisa, and to a lesser extent in Captain

<sup>2</sup> Duckworth, "Games," p.289.

<sup>3</sup> Duckworth, Improvement, p.180.

Wentworth, has infected many more people.

It is also possible to see how Sanditon deals with Anne's situation. She, we are told at the close of Persuasion, can expect "no Uppercross-hall..., no landed estate, no headship of a family" (P,p.250). She has no "geographical destination" which has been the portion of her antecedents.<sup>4</sup> The disappearance of traditional values is paralleled by a disintegration of family life. Sanditon reconsiders this position. The heroine rejoins her family and is relocated ~~to~~<sup>on</sup> a prosperous estate. The counterposition of agricultural Willingden (with which she is associated) and the restless humbug of Sanditon is established early in the narrative as our moral frame of reference. The two cultures are literally worlds apart and it is noteworthy that Jane Austen connects her heroine with a sound patrimony. The apparent disinheritance of Anne Elliot has been reversed, and her father's improvidence has been replaced by Mr Heywood's modesty. Mr Heywood's shrewd economies are travestied in Mr Parker's concept of "business," announced with disconcerting frankness and foreboding in the opening sentence:

A Gentleman & Lady travelling from  
Tunbridge towards that part of the Sussex  
Coast which lies between Hastings &  
E.Bourne, being induced by Business

<sup>4</sup> Gene W. Ruoff, "Anne Elliot's Dowry: Reflections on the Ending of Persuasion," The Wordsworth Circle, 7 (1976), 345.

to quit the high road, & attempt a very rough Lane, were overturned in toiling up its' long ascent half rock, half sand. (MW,pp.363-64)

Subsequently the word recurs in Mr Parker's talk of "the dissolution of a Partnership in the Medical Line... extensive Business...." (MW,p.366), and in his blasé admission that "One is never able to complete anything in the way of Business you know till the Carriage is at the door" (MW,p.367). The term is even applied mirthfully by the narrator to Sir Edward's plan for seducing Clara Brereton: "Such Poverty & Dependance joined to such Beauty & Merit, seemed to leave no choice in the business" (MW,p.391), and Sir Edward believes that "If she could not be won by affection, he must carry her off. He knew his Business" (MW,p.405). But Jane Austen is more concerned with the serious applications of business in its rôle as Sanditon's leading motivation:

It was evident that Lady Denham had more anxiety, more fears of loss, than her Coadjutor. She wanted to have the Place fill faster, & seemed to have many harassing apprehensions of the Lodgings being in some instances underlet. (MW,p.392)

The estate improvements proposed or realized in Mansfield Park were exposed by Jane Austen as pursuits of idleness. In Sanditon the reconstruction of an entire village has become an entrepreneurial venture, and signals a radical reorientation of the village's original function.

As a health resort, Sanditon is a distinctively "artificial creation,"<sup>5</sup> typical of many similar schemes as Mr Heywood tersely makes plain:

Yes -- I have heard of Sanditon....  
 -- Every five years, one hears of some new place or other starting up by the Sea, & growing the fashion. -- How they can half of them be filled, is the wonder! (MW, p.368)

We have already seen how Jane Austen stresses the modernity of Sanditon with reference to its setting and architecture.<sup>6</sup> This is reinforced by the position of Trafalgar House. "Our Ancestors, you know," Mr Parker remarks to Charlotte, "always built in a hole" (MW, p.380). His move to a hill-top site recalls several instances in the novels where the position of a house may bear an implicit moral comment on its owner. In Mansfield Park the low-lying situation of Sotherton Court is implied as a redeeming feature by the narrator precisely because the improvers find it distasteful:

The house was built in Elizabeth's time, and is a large, regular brick building -- heavy, but respectable looking, and has many good rooms. It is ill-placed. It stands in one of the lowest spots of the park; in that respect, unfavourable for improvement. (MP, p.56)

<sup>5</sup> Tony Tanner in Social Context, p.188.

<sup>6</sup> See above pp.214-16 and pp.221-30.

Its low position is closely linked with its historical roots stretching back to a time when a spectacular view for a house was not a fashionable prerequisite. The point is confirmed in Emma where the heroine notices how the Abbey-Mill Farm is "favourably placed and sheltered" (E,p.360) and how Donwell Abbey itself is "low and sheltered... with all the old neglect of prospect" (E,p.358). In contrast the developers of Sanditon strive to secure panoramic views — the resort already boasts a "Prospect House" and a "Bellevue Cottage" (MW,p.384) to underscore this. Such a radical spirit has extended beyond an isolated significance:

'Our Coast too full' — repeated Mr P. —  
On that point perhaps we may not totally disagree; — at least there are enough  
[resorts]. Our Coast is abundant enough;  
it demands no more. (MW,p.369)

And as one critic has pointed out, Sanditon is in fact typical of many actual resorts which were growing in popularity in Jane Austen's day.<sup>7</sup>

In the village of Sanditon itself:

two or three of the best [cottages]  
were smartened up with a white Curtain  
& 'Lodgings to let' —, and farther on,

<sup>7</sup> Lindsay Fleming, "Sanditon and Bognor," in Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society 1949 - 1965 (London: Dawson, 1967), pp.173-77.

in the little Green Court of an old Farm House, two Females in elegant white were actually to be seen with their books & camp stools. (MW,p.383)

These are gratifying signs to Mr Parker of "the increasing fashion of the place", and "If the Village could attract, the Hill might be nearly full" (MW,p.383). In the fragment as it stands Sanditon is to Willingden what Bath is to Lyme.

Jane Austen introduces the contrast between Mr Heywood and Mr Parker by showing the former "who happened to be among his Haymakers" (MW,p.365) when Mr Parker, foolishly deviating from the high-road in a carriage ill-suited to the purpose, is overturned close by. We are intended to take the Heywoods as the positive moral force in the narrative because their participation in the harvest identifies them with local attachments. Significantly Mr Heywood meets his tenants face to face, whilst Mr Parker is travelling far from home in a hired carriage (MW,p.364). And where a farmer's activities are determined by a regular discipline according to the seasons, Mr Parker's resort must rely upon chance visits and an uneven distribution of busy and slack periods. Moreover, unlike most parents in the novels, Mr Heywood sets a creditable example for his children. He is also characterized by an efficient practicality: "With all my Heart Sir", he replies to Mr Parker's inapposite quotation from Cowper:

Apply any Verses you like... -- But I

want to see something applied to your Leg — & I am sure by your Lady's countenance that she is quite of my opinion & thinks it a pity to lose any more time... (MW,p.370)

He shows a homely turn of mind and a plain-spokenness of the kind that endears us to Mrs Jennings. Profiting by his sound country sense, Charlotte is well equipped to observe and diagnose the manifold eccentricities in Sanditon. And in retrospect we can see with added proof why Mary Crawford's expecting to secure a cart for her harp in mid-harvest should be so unreasonable and narrow-minded: she condescendingly admits to feeling "a little embarrassed at first by the sturdy independence of... country customs" (MP,p.58).

Against Mr Heywood we see Mr Parker led on a "wild goose-chace" (MW,p.368) in a mistaken quest for a surgeon. His is a rootless, acquisitive ethic which has denatured much of Sanditon, and there are signs that his project is destined soon to collapse. Sanditon is not yet as prosperous as he had hoped, and he condemns the rise of new resorts to the number of which he is himself adding. In remarking that:

those good people who are trying to add to the number, are in my opinion excessively absurd, & must soon find themselves the Dupes of their own fallacious Calculations (MW,p.369)

he may ironically be predicting his own downfall. There

is, moreover, a hint of foreboding in the narrator's description of Mrs Parker, a woman who, whether her husband "were risking his Fortune or spraining his Ankle,... remained equally useless" (MW,p.372). The collocation of the two can hardly be accidental, especially since an actual carriage accident occurs at the opening of the fragment as an inauspicious event. According to J.M.S. Tompkins the sprained ankle was vieux jeu in the popular novels of the circulating libraries and Jane Austen had exploited this convention to indicate Marianne Dashwood's recklessness.<sup>8</sup> But in Sanditon the device plays a more ominous role, leading Mr Parker into a "Scrape" (MW,p.367) as a probable prelude to the confounding of his project. "I am very sorry you met with your accident," as Lady Denham remarks, "but upon my word you deserved it" (MW,p.393).

Possibly like "the foolish man, which built his house upon sand" (Matthew 7.26), Mr Parker, his hill-top house and his seaside speculation would have been ruined by that "Grandeur of the Storm" (MW,p.381) he finds so appealing.<sup>9</sup>

Mr Parker, Sidney and his two sisters are gregarious, constantly on the move, while

<sup>8</sup> J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (London: Methuen, 1932), p.58.

<sup>9</sup> John Lauber, "Sanditon: The Kingdom of Folly, Studies in the Novel, 4 (1972), 354. The quotation continues: "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Mr and Mrs H[eywood] never left home. Marrying early & having a very numerous Family, their movements had been long limited to one small circle; & they were older in Habits than in Age. (MW,p.373)

Mr Parker's old house manifests many of the same virtues of stasis and tranquil prosperity: "a moderate-sized house, well fenced & planted, & rich in the Garden, Orchard & Meadows" which, the narrator affirms with the voice of authority, "are the best embellishments of such a Dwelling" (MW,p.379).

Meanwhile Sanditon House, Lady Denham's residence, has definite affinities with the past, as "the last Building of former Days in that line of the Parish" (MW,p.384), endowed outside with "an abundance of very fine Timber" (MW,p.426), and fitted up inside with "Furniture rather originally good & extremely well kept, than new or shewey" (MW,p.427). Situated midway between "the Church & real village of Sanditon", with its "small cluster of Fisherman's Houses" and modern developments further up the hillside "where the new Buildg<sup>s</sup> might... be looked for" (MW,pp.382-83), Sanditon House, like Uppercross Great House, has an ambivalent moral value. It possesses many redeeming features that link it with tradition, "qualities and values", one critic observes, "that its owner's activities bid fair to destroy."<sup>10</sup> Her links with the past are at odds with her promotion

<sup>10</sup> W.R. Martin, "The Subject of Jane Austen's Sanditon," English Studies in Africa, 10 (March 1967), 91.

of Sanditon as a health resort. One of the most surprising and ironical features of her allegiance to tradition is her distaste for doctors that she shares with the Heywoods:

Going after a Doctor! -- Why, what sh<sup>d</sup>  
we do with a Doctor here? It w<sup>d</sup> only be  
encouraging our Servants & the Poor to fancy  
themselves ill, if there was a D<sup>r</sup> at hand.  
-- Oh! pray, let us have none of the Tribe  
at Sanditon. We go on very well as we  
are.... -- Here have I lived 70 good years  
in the world & never took Physic above  
twice -- and never saw the face of a  
Doctor in all my Life, on my own account.  
(MW, pp. 393-94)

We are told that Mr Heywood never travels "[e]xcepting two Journeys to London in the year, to receive his Dividends" (MW, p. 373). This is important because it shows that the Heywoods are not stagnating in a quiet backwater, but involved to a moderate degree in current national prosperity without forfeiting their rural connections.<sup>11</sup> I think that Duckworth overstates the case by seeing Willingden as a kind of "prelapsarian setting."<sup>12</sup> Jane Austen consistently avoids sentimentalizing the value of tradition because she has

<sup>11</sup> Warren Roberts, Jane Austen and the French Revolution (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> Duckworth, Improvement, p. 213.

valid reasons for venerating it. She tells us the Heywoods:

never left home, & they had a gratification in saying so. -- But very far from wishing their Children to do the same, they were glad to promote their getting out into the world, as much as possible. They staid at home, that their Children might get out; -- and while making that home extremely comfortable, welcomed every change from it which could give useful connections or respectable acquaintance to Sons or Daughters. (MW, p.374)

Far from being hermits and refusing to recognize inevitable change, they accept the need for their children to form "useful" and "respectable" connections (the qualifiers are important conditions). Charlotte's removal from home is not "a plight"<sup>13</sup> but a pleasure trip that suits her parents' aims as much as it gratifies Mr Parker's desire to introduce as many newcomers to Sanditon as possible. Though the Parkers are rather eccentric, there is a chance that Charlotte will mix with a more normal circle of acquaintance.

Having presented Willingden at the start of the fragment as an image of steadiness, repose and honesty, Jane Austen then introduces us to Sanditon with a strongly visual presentation that

<sup>13</sup> Tony Tanner in Social Context, p.187.

indicates its contrastingly progressive social values. We are made to feel at once the rawness of change, its abrasive modernity and its lack of intimacy. "Blue Shoes, & nankin Boots!" announces Mr Parker proudly, "Who w<sup>d</sup> have expected such a sight at a Shoemaker's in old Sanditon! -- This is new within the Month" (MW,p.383), shows both the speed of change and a limited mind soon satisfied with trivialities. Sanditon's location is more minutely described than is customary in the novels because we must be made to feel it as an imposing man-made creation, a symbol, like Mr Parker's preposterous hill-top villa, of misdirected energy. E.M. Forster was surely right to emphasize the strong physical presence of Sanditon. "Topography comes to the fore," he observed, "and is screwed much deeper than usual into the story," with Sanditon existing "as a geographic and economic force."<sup>14</sup> Mr Parker's resort is at once "a realistic locale and a symbol of human illusion."<sup>15</sup> The narrator shows that present developments are either incomplete (MW,p.384) or that future schemes are envisaged (MW,p.380). Where earlier novels <sup>such as</sup> ~~like~~ Mansfield Park focus upon alterations to existing structures like Thornton Lacey or Sotherton, Sanditon's level of commercialized town-planning is unprecedented. And because the resort has been "planned" (MW,p.371) rather than allowed to develop of its own accord over a long period of time, the narrator gives a precise pictorial rendering to ensure both that we

<sup>14</sup> E.M. Forster, Abinger Harvest, p.146.

<sup>15</sup> Litz, Artistic Development, p.167.

appreciate the strangeness of the place, and imagine its very deliberate and thoroughly functional arrangement.

Trafalgar House, for example, is:

about an hundred yards from the brow of a steep, but not very lofty Cliff — and the nearest to it, of every Building, excepting one short row of smart-looking Houses, called the Terrace, with a broad walk in front, aspiring to be the Mall of the Place. In this row were the best Milliner's shop & the Library — a little detached from it, the Hotel & Billiard Room — Here began the Descent to the Beach, & to the Bathing Machines — & this was therefore the favourite spot for Beauty & Fashion. — At Trafalgar House, rising at a little distance behind the Terrace, the Travellers [Charlotte and the Parkers] were safely set down....(MW, p.384)

Alluring and shameless in its novelty, this is an appropriate venue for the convergence of fools and for a study of human delusion on a formidable scale.

IV. The place of burlesque and caricature in Jane Austen's art needs no introduction. Her novels show the gradual refinement of these techniques which endure, ~~in her novels~~, however vestigially, as valuable and flexible means of expression. One aspect of the dichotomy between art and life manifest in these two approaches, as E.M. White points out, is helpful to an understanding of their role in Sanditon. If literature is not life, he says, "one way to portray characters who misunderstand reality is to have them confuse literature with life."<sup>1</sup> This is standard equipment for the parodist, and applies most especially to Jane Austen's handling of Sir Edward Denham. Of more general significance consonant with the conservative and traditional tenor of her work is the view that in parody:

Whatever fashionable enthusiasms fervid imaginations have engendered, they are referred back to an unchanging order of things, to the heavy liturgies of family observance and neighbourhood friendships.<sup>2</sup>

In Sanditon, as we have seen, Jane Austen criticizes several potentially destructive tendencies in Regency

<sup>1</sup> Edward M. White, "Emma and the Parodic Point of View," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 18 (June 1963), 55.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Hampshire, "Natural Law and Order," Times Literary Supplement, Jan. 16 1976, p.54.

society. She faced therefore a new social situation and a new set of artistic problems. To articulate her impressions she presents some of her characters through caricature showing how, for various reasons, they lack any sense of proportion or probability in their conduct and expectations respectively. <sup>Inspired</sup> ~~Induced~~ by unchecked enthusiasm and wayward imagination they misread themselves, their society and their obligations to it. Discussing character and caricature in Jane Austen's art, D.W. Harding asserts that:

we are not intended to take all the figures in the same way. Some are offered as full and natural portraits of imaginable people; others, while certainly referring to types of people we might easily have come across, are yet presented with such exaggeration and simplification that our response to them is expected to be rather different.<sup>3</sup>

He further points out that we are supposed to interpret these exaggerations as conventional devices of characterization, such that we intentionally ignore "the greater part of any real personality in which the exaggerated features are embedded." Heavily accentuating the delusive potential of the imagination

<sup>3</sup> D.W. Harding, "Character and Caricature in Jane Austen," in Critical Essays, p.83.

in Sanditon, Jane Austen exposes various social distortions by inflating them to absurd dimensions. She simplifies some of her characters through caricature as an economical means to expressing their obsessions — Mr Parker's idealism; Diana Parker's bogus philanthropy and self-doctoring; Sir Edward's anarchic Romanticism. What they share is an inner vacuity and narrow-mindedness. These people are all abnormal in some respect, and in their collective impulsiveness are representative of the erratic spirit abroad which is responsible for shaping, developing and promoting Sanditon as a health resort. Moreover, because Sanditon is a very recent phenomenon, we may say that Mr Parker and his associates have not so much been formed by their society, than have formed a society in their own image. Their abnormalities, in short, represent a cultural anomie: Mr Parker putting profits before responsibilities, Diana frenetically intent on keeping active and "occupied in promoting the Good of others!" (MW, p.388), Sir Edward wallowing in factitious emotion — the self-indulgence of all three acting to dissolve the bonds of society.

In Sanditon, then, we see a more generous use of characters who, like Sir Walter Elliot, are identified with an *idée fixe* ("Vanity was the beginning and end of Sir Walter's character; vanity of person and of situation" [P, p.47]) The appearance of this type of character in Sanditon shows how Jane Austen has perceived the current temper of society — vigorous, heedless and innovative — and how plain fact has been

interpreted and transformed by an intelligent imagination into entertaining fiction.

Against the waywardness of these characters is set the gentle and dispirited Mrs Parker caught up in the bounding optimism of her husband:

the properest wife in the World for a Man of strong Understanding, but not of capacity to supply the cooler reflection which her own Husband sometimes needed, & so entirely waiting to be guided on every occasion, that whether he were risking his Fortune or spraining his Ankle she remained equally useless. (MW, p.372)

Optimism and apathy in husband and wife consort, therefore, in comic incongruity.

Between these two poles of overheated or inert imagination, Jane Austen places the heroine who can use her fancy intelligently for amusement; Sidney Parker, who laughs at his brothers' and sisters' ridiculous notions and practices ("He has always said what he chose of & to us, all" MW, p.3827); and Clara Brereton, who appears level-headed and tolerant enough to perceive the folly around her. However, Jane Austen shows that even though Charlotte is capable of critical detachment from Sanditon society, this does not absolve her from exercising constant vigilance against deception in a world where people either practice<sup>s</sup> deception or are merely deceptive in appearance through some shortcoming in the beholder. As the narrator of Northanger Abbey

admits: "there are some situations of the human mind in which good sense has very little power" (NA,p.239).

I would like to concentrate on the way Jane Austen uses the delusive power of the imagination on two levels. The first is that of the effects of this delusion as it affects society at large. The second, which complements the first, shows how even a clear-sighted heroine may find the correct perception of character elusive in the enigmatic world of Sanditon.

Charlotte begins by musing upon Clara Brereton as a typically novelistic heroine. This gives an ironic perspective on Miss Brereton's character and her relations with Lady Denham. Mary Lascelles has already called attention to this "double vision — of life interpreted according to books, and life observed."<sup>4</sup> By placing characters in this nebulous world of Sanditon, Austen employs this dichotomy to show what people see and how they see it. Clara, as Joseph Kestner points out, "brings together the two categories of nature and art."<sup>5</sup> Being "Elegantly tall, regularly handsome, with great delicacy of complexion & soft Blue eyes, a sweetly modest & yet naturally graceful Address" (MW,p.391), she seems to Charlotte to be:

the most perfect representation of  
whatever Heroine might be most  
beautiful & bewitching, in all the

<sup>4</sup> Mary Lascelles, "Jane Austen and the Novel," in Bicentenary Essays, p.243.

<sup>5</sup> Kestner, "Nature into Art," p.164.

numerous vol:<sup>s</sup> they had left behind  
 them on Mrs Whitby's shelves. (MW, p.391)

And to reinforce the comedy of burlesque Charlotte, like Henry Tilney for Catherine's amusement, consciously fabricates a playful Sentimental/Gothick tableau:

Her situation with Lady Denham so very  
 much in favour of it! — She seemed  
 placed with her on purpose to be ill-  
 used. Such Poverty & Dependance joined  
 to such Beauty & Merit, seemed to leave no  
 choice in the business. (MW, p.391)

We may recall that Emma is similarly prone to locate people in dramatic situations that minister to her fancies and give an illusive validity to her match-making skills. "Such an adventure as this," she observes upon Harriet's rescue from the gypsies by Frank Churchill, "a fine young man and a lovely young woman thrown together in such a way, could hardly fail of suggesting certain ideas to the coldest heart and the steadiest brain" (E, p.335). But unlike Emma, Charlotte does not wilfully substitute her fictional musings for essentially realistic situations. Nor does she wholly misread herself and those around her like Sir Edward Denham, whose fanciful absurdities travesty Charlotte's mild and playful allusions. Charlotte can therefore imagine simultaneously "the Persecutions which ought to be the Lot of the interesting Clara, especially in the form of the most barbarous conduct on Lady Denham's side," and "from subsequent observation" to see that

"they appeared to be on very comfortable Terms" (MW, p. 392).<sup>6</sup> She has the elasticity of mind to see relationships in different perspectives at the same time. The narrator, indeed, seems quick to defend Charlotte from imputations of possessing an unguarded fancy:

These feelings were not the result of any spirit of Romance in Charlotte herself. No, she was a very sober-minded young Lady, sufficiently well-read in Novels [again, like Henry Tilney] to supply her Imagination with amusement, but not at all unreasonably influenced by them. (MW, pp. 391-92)

But the narrator's defense of Charlotte seems a little too eager to be taken at face value. Charlotte may not mean to identify some of her acquaintance with stereotypes, but the closing lines of the fragment demonstrate that she can be led subconsciously to confuse art with reality. Thus when she spies "something White & Womanish" in the park at Sanditon House:

it was something which immediately brought Miss B/ereton into her head — & stepping to the pales, she saw

<sup>6</sup> The comedy is underlined here and later (MW, p. 404) where Jane Austen uses "interesting" in the manner of many eighteenth-century Sentimentalists to mean that which appeals to the emotions and thereby exalts sensibility.

indeed — & very decidedly, in spite of the Mist;... Miss Brereton seated, apparently very composedly — & Sir E.D. by her side.— They were sitting ... near each other & appeared ... closely engaged in gentle conversation ...  
 (MW,p.426 — emphasis added)

That Charlotte may be misinterpreting appearance for reality is suggested to the reader (even if she denies it to herself) by the presence of that same mist which had only minutes before obscured the nature of Sidney Parker's "very neat Carriage" (MW,p.425). It had appeared:

at different moments to be everything from the Gig to the Pheaton, — from one horse to 4; and just as they  
 [Charlotte, Mrs Parker and little Mary] were concluding in favour of a Tandem, little Mary's young eyes distinguished the Coachman & she eagerly called out, 'T'is Uncle Sidney Mama, it is indeed.'  
 And so it proved (MW,p.425).

This tension between certainty and confusion created by the mist is expanded into a play between the explicitly concrete delineation of Sanditon Park (MW,p.426) and the subconscious literary associations in Charlotte's mind. The ambiguity of her response to the situation before her seems a deliberate device to show

the difficulties of assessing character and motives. Charlotte's reaction implicates Clara and Sir Edward in a secret meeting: "Privacy was certainly their object.... hers was a situation which must not be judged with severity" (MW, p. 426 -- emphasis added). Upon what evidence beyond surmise can Charlotte be so sure of herself here? And upon what other precedent than literary example can she base her surmises? She appears to interpret reality more seriously in terms of fictional romance:

Charlotte c<sup>d</sup> not but think of the extreme difficulty which secret Lovers must have in finding a proper spot for their stolen Interviews. -- Here perhaps they had thought themselves so perfectly secure from observation! -- the whole field open before them -- a steep bank & Pales never crossed by the foot of Man at their back -- and a great thickness of air, in aid --. Yet here, she had seen them. They were really ill-used.  
(MW, p. 427)

She jumps spontaneously to conclusions that are based subconsciously upon literary precedent ("c<sup>d</sup> not but think") and which gradually become the genuine conviction that she is viewing the scene aright ("here, she had seen them"). If this were not the case then why is Charlotte so willing to safeguard their privacy as if she genuinely believes that Sir Edward and Clara are

close ("Charlotte" instantly felt that she had nothing to do but to step back again, & say not a word [MW, p.426]). Mary Lascelles and others are certainly right in accrediting Charlotte a "shrewd, clear head," but I believe that this view needs the qualification which I have outlined -- that Charlotte can be fooled by appearances, and that this is part of Jane Austen's intention to express the disorientation of Sanditon society.<sup>7</sup>

Whether Charlotte was to find herself duped by appearances in ironic contrast to her early complacent fictionalizing of Clara's position, cannot be ascertained. Nor can we be certain whether ~~Charlotte's~~<sup>her</sup> good sense and clear-sightedness, elsewhere made apparent to us, would soon have reasserted itself and exposed Clara as a schemer in the way that Lady Denham has gradually emerged a mean-minded skinflint as much in wedlock as out; or whether Clara, like Jane Fairfax, hides a guilty secret. What is curious however, is that Charlotte should conceive of Clara and Sir Edward as "secret Lovers". The pair seem wholly incongruous given the revelation of character and motives thus far. That Charlotte interprets this "stolen interview" as a mixture of "intimate freedom and furtive guilt," makes her a victim of narrative irony.<sup>8</sup> This seems so because the narrator has already made the reader (though not Charlotte) privy to Clara's attitude towards Sir Edward:

Clara saw through him, & had not the

<sup>8</sup> Gooneratne, Jane Austen, p.46.

least intention of being seduced — but she bore with him patiently enough to confirm the sort of attachment which her personal Charms had raised. (MW, p.405)

And earlier (MW, pp.395,398) Charlotte had personally seen both Sir Edward's desire to attract Miss Brereton and Clara's cool reception of his attentions with an air at once "calm & grave" (MW, p.396). It seems that Jane Austen intends us to see the heroine as a temporarily unconscious victim of her own imagination and, ironically, in view of Clara's name, that Miss Brereton should possess hidden depths both that Charlotte cannot immediately fathom, and that would become evident later in the narrative.

This inscrutability in Clara's character — she may be much more than an elegant stereotyped heroine or a sweet and innocent relative — recalls Emma's misplaced resentment of Jane Fairfax. The latter stands in relation to Emma as anti-heroine ~~in a similar way that~~ as Clara appears to <sup>do</sup> vis-à-vis Charlotte. But whilst Emma wilfully deceives herself over most of her acquaintance, and is presented as an individual anomaly who must be corrected, Sanditon places its emphasis differently. After a number of earlier encounters have tested Charlotte's critical responses regarding Mr Parker and Lady Denham, Arthur and Susan, we see that despite her common<sup>^</sup>-sense, exercising her own empirical judgements cannot guarantee accurate assessments in the dislocated world of Sanditon. Charlotte's judgement is usually sound, then, but not foolproof, and like Jane Austen's

other "reliable" heroines, ~~Charlotte~~<sup>she</sup> is not wholly perfect. As one critic observes:

Although [Jane Austen] accepts the eighteenth-century doctrine that literature should educate the emotions and the judgement, she rejects most of the literary conventions associated with the doctrine, and particularly the exemplary character. Her criticism of this convention is implicit in her choice of imperfect heroes or heroines for her novels....<sup>9</sup>

These are features that we see mocked in the character and attitudes of Sir Edward, as I will demonstrate later.

Mudrick's view that "the peril and the irony depend on no patent defect in the protagonist -- Charlotte Heywood is very nearly the neutral observer," is valid only if we appreciate that Jane Austen conceals her heroine's shortcomings and reveals them only gradually in ways that are increasingly deft and subtle.<sup>10</sup> Like Elizabeth Bennet, Charlotte might say "Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can" (PP, p.57). And Sanditon offers more rampant folly for ready wits than Longbourn. But Charlotte does not pride herself upon her capacity to judge as Elizabeth does, and so Jane

<sup>9</sup> Jan Fergus, The Didactic Novel, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> Mudrick, p.242.

Austen handles her character and presentation differently. By allowing Charlotte to diagnose the absurdity of her first acquaintance in Sanditon, Jane Austen initially induces us to accept her as a trustworthy judge not long deceived by appearances. Although soon disabused of Sir Edward's insincerity, she is at first taken in by his gallantry:

he had a fine Countenance, a most pleasing gentleness of voice, & a great deal of Conversation. She liked him.— Sober-minded as she was, she thought him agreeable, & did not quarrel with the suspicion of his finding her equally so... (MW,p.395)

We remember how easily Marianne Dashwood had likened Willoughby to "what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story" (SS,p.43), and how easily Elizabeth had been betrayed into believing Wickham's woeful tale of ill-usage at Darcy's hands. Charlotte, however, perceives Sir Edward's duplicity long before he can pose any serious threat, recognizing his infatuation with Clara:

which altogether gave an hasty turn to Charlotte's fancy, cured her of her halfhour's fever, & placed her in a more capable state of judging, when Sir Edw: was gone, of how agreeable he had actually been. (MW,p.395)

If Persuasion seems to give greater validity to Anne's

intuitions by showing how difficult it is for her to relate to an hostile world, Sanditon shows the difficulty Charlotte has relating to others in a society where the old dispensation of an interdependent village hierarchy based largely upon agriculture has been disturbed, and where many people are single-mindedly pursuing their own ends with no sense of corporate values, save profits. The fallibility of Charlotte's judgement, or rather others' false appearances, is one way of imaging her isolation. Not only Charlotte, but the reader also, is given no firm indication (as he or she was in The Watsons) about future developments. As Southam has shown, Jane Austen is being purposely enigmatic, challenging us to fathom the importance of the characters and the direction of the plot.<sup>11</sup> And Charlotte's own thoughts about Miss Denham are important in emphasizing a plurality of viewpoints that can read a single situation with varying degrees of wit or censure:

Miss Denham sitting in cold Grandeur  
in Mrs Parker's Draw<sup>g</sup>-room ... [compared  
with] Miss D. at Lady D.<sup>s</sup> Elbow,  
listening & talking with smiling  
attention or solicitous eagerness, was  
very striking — and very amusing — or  
very melancholy, just as Satire or  
Morality might prevail. (MW, p. 396)

<sup>11</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.121.

The novels do not allow such moral latitude as Charlotte's opinion here indicates. This implies a disruption in the scale of values that ought to control conduct and public opinion in Sanditon society. The result is a comic vertigo: "I will not tell you how many People I have employed in the business," Diana announces proudly, "Wheel within wheel" (MW, p.387), an image of revolving dizziness that is made more emphatic by the narrator's regarding the fashionable:

Miss Beauforts, [who] were soon satisfied with 'the Circle in which they moved in Sanditon' to use a proper phrase, for every body must now 'move in a Circle', -- to the prevalence of which rotatory Motion, is perhaps to be attributed the Giddiness & false steps of many. (MW, p.422)

And in respect of Sir Edward's literary turn of mind it is surely not unlikely that Jane Austen intends a pun in identifying him so closely with a circulating library.

Misconstruction of many kinds are naturally essential to the epistemological core of Jane Austen's fiction. Elizabeth Bennet's arrival all muddled at Netherfield, for instance, is variously interpreted. Mrs Hurst and Miss Bingley find her conduct "almost incredible"; Mr Bingley is "all good humour and Kindness"; Mr Darcy is divided between admiration of the brilliancy which exercise had given to her complexion, and doubt as to the occasion's justifying her coming so

far alone." Mr Hurst "was thinking only of his breakfast" (PP, pp. 32-3). Society in Pride and Prejudice, as well as in the other novels, is basically ordered. But in Sanditon, misunderstandings and misconstructions bear thematic weight in signifying social dislocation when order is removed, when individual concerns wholly usurp the place of community values.

At its most extreme level we see the quasi-Byronic Sir Edward who confuses art with life, deriving "false Principles from Lessons of Morality, & incentives to Vice from the History of it's Overthrow..." (MW, pp. 404-5) In consequence the seduction of Miss Brereton "was quite determined on," convincing himself that "Her Situation in every way called for it," but he discovers himself to be too poor to execute his plan in such an exotic locale as Timbuctoo. Distorted vision is also to blame for the ignominious collapse of Diana's plans to bring wealthy visitors to Sanditon:

Her intimate friends must be officious like herself, & the subject had supplied Letters & Extracts & Messages enough to make everything appear what it was not. (MW, p. 420)

Her self-assurance is momentarily shaken by "the sort of sensation of being less clear-sighted & infallible than she had beleived herself" (MW, p. 420). And after a bewildering account of her affairs and acquaintance, she hopes that her speech has been "anything rather than not clear" (MW, p. 409). Regarding her brother, we see at the opening of the fragment that Mr Parker expects to find a

surgeon in a cottage "which was seen romantically situated among wood on a high Eminence" (MW,p.364), but discovers from Mr Heywood that it is "as indifferent a double Tenement as any in the Parish,... my Shepherd lives at one end, & three old women at the other" (MW,p.366). Mr Parker, himself often "in the dark" (MW,p.371), remarks upon the occasional intractability of Lady Denham which results from their failure to reach agreement:

She cannot look forward quite as I would have her — & takes alarm at a trifling present expence, without considering what returns it will make her in a year or two. That is — we think differently, we now & then, see things differently, Miss H/eywood. — Those who tell their own Story you know must be listened to with Caution. — When you see us in contact, you will judge for yourself. (MW,p.376)

As Southam remarks, "Coming from him, this is warning indeed."<sup>12</sup> Mr Parker in his final words above speaks the truth which is usually implied at the level of axiom in Jane Austen's work. Charlotte tries to judge for herself and finds it, as I have said, increasingly difficult after the relatively easy exposure of Mr Parker, Lady Denham and Sir Edward — thereafter Clara

<sup>12</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.119.

and possibly Sidney are less easy to categorize accurately. However, like Elinor, Fanny and Anne, all subdued compared to Elizabeth and Emma, Charlotte is "a quiet auditor of the whole" (MP,p.136). On several occasions even in the relatively short length of the fragment, her watchfulness is noticed: "Aye — that young Lady smiles I see," remarks Lady Denham, "I dare say she thinks me an odd sort of a Creature" (MW,p.393). And during Mr Parker's discussion with his sister about suitable lodgings for Mrs Griffiths and her entourage, Diana suddenly exclaims:

Miss Heywood, I astonish you. — You hardly know what to make of me. — I see by your Looks, that you are not used to such quick measures. (MW,p.410)

As Elinor says to Colonel Brandon on a similar theme, if "one is guided by what [others] say of themselves," or by "what other people say of them, without giving oneself time to deliberate and judge," one is open to "a total misapprehension of character" (SS,p.93). This is one lesson that Charlotte learns when she realizes the discrepancy between Mr Parker's assessment of his relatives and friends and her own more accurate appraisals (MW,p.402).

In comparison to Charlotte's temporary lapses of judgement, the imaginative distortion in the Parker family images a more general social phenomenon. "It is a striking fact," remarks one critic, "that the majority of the principal characters are fools, and it is a fact

that Jane Austen shows through the obsessions that have shaped their characters, warped their minds, and confused their lives."<sup>13</sup> As <sup>I</sup>we have already mentioned in passing, this widespread foolishness appears in the optimistic enthusiasm of Mr Parker, Diana's affected hypochondria, and Sir Edward's exaggerated passion for Romantic literature.

Mr Parker, "of a sanguine turn of mind, with more Imagination than Judgement," (MW, p.372) has splendidly specious visions for his health resort:

Such a place as Sanditon Sir, I may say was wanted, was called for. -- Nature had marked it out -- had spoken in most intelligible Characters -- The finest, purest, Sea Breeze on the Coast -- acknowledged to be so -- Excellent Bathing -- fine hard Sand -- Deep Water 10 yards from the Shore -- no Mud -- no Weeds -- no slimy rocks -- Never was there a place more palpably designed by Nature for the resort of the Invalid. (MW, p.369)

It is with a view to exploiting the current fashion for sea-bathing and its allegedly beneficial properties that he develops his resort with unquenchable zeal: "it was his Mine, his Lottery, his Speculation & his Hobby Horse; his Occupation his Hope & his Futurity" (MW, p.372), and "the success of Sanditon as a small, fashionable

<sup>13</sup> Lauber, Kingdom of Folly, p.360.

Bathing Place was the object, for which he seemed to live" (MW, p.371). The fashionable craze for sea-bathing as a health fad was not entirely new, for, as J.H. Plumb has remarked, "Brighton first grew to fame and fortune" in the 1780s, "through the salesmanship of a successful doctor....Its virtues, said Dr Russell, whether applied externally or internally, were boundless."<sup>14</sup> Nor did the preoccupation with health and hygiene dissipate in era that followed Jane Austen's own lifetime. "In the name of Health," writes one commentator:

Victorians flocked to the seaside, tramped about in the Alps or Cotswolds, dieted, took pills, sweated themselves in Turkish baths, adopted this 'system' of medicine or that.<sup>15</sup>

Jane Austen concentrates upon a resort because it symbolizes the convergence of those with imaginary complaints, those with dubious motives, like Mr Parker, and others with baser ones like Lady Denham, both of whom are anxious in their own way to make quick profits. In contrast to this knot of selfishness, greed and pretense, Charlotte looks from a newly contrived and fashionable world to a distant source of natural beauty and honest spontaneity, finding:

<sup>14</sup> J.H. Plumb, Men and Places (1950; Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1966), pp.94-5.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Haley, The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard, 1978), p.3.

amusement enough in standing at her  
ample Venetian window, & looking over  
the miscellaneous foreground of unfinished  
Buildings, waving Linen, & tops of Houses,  
to the Sea, dancing & sparkling in  
Sunshine & Freshness. (MW,p.384)

V. Charlotte's gaze through the window of Trafalgar House provides a contemplative interlude in the action that is matched by several similar occasions in the novels. On Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley in Pride and Prejudice she enjoys a multi-perspectival view of the park from the house:

Elizabeth, after slightly surveying  
 [the dining parlour], went to a window  
 to enjoy its prospect. The hill,  
 crowned with wood, . . . , was a beautiful  
 object. Every disposition of the ground  
 was good; and she looked on the whole  
 scene, the river, the trees scattered  
 on its banks, and the winding of the  
 valley as far as she could trace it with  
 delight. As they passed into other  
 rooms, these objects were taking  
 different positions; but from every  
 window there were beauties to be seen.

- (PP, p.246)

This accumulation of impressive views employing "conventional picturesque terminology" is part of the "general strategy of piling up positive impressions."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rosemarie Bodenheimer, "Looking at Landscape in Jane Austen, Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 21 (1981), 610-11.

Elizabeth's experience at the window helps to reorder earlier mistaken impressions of Darcy's character. The park itself is "visualized" by Elizabeth (seen personally, that is, through her eyes), whilst the values it embodies in its disposition "provide visualization" of its owner's taste and quality.<sup>2</sup> Her moving from window to window reinforces her conviction that it is she who has changed, and this complements some of the novel's main themes based on false impressions, visual perception, and their role in self-knowledge.

In Mansfield Park Fanny's "star-gazing" (MP, p.113) at the window with Edmund from the Mansfield drawing-room is given an additional significance separate from the scene's place within the novel as a whole. For unlike the other heroines in similar circumstances, she feels moved enough to speak her emotions aloud. The scene is enriched by "a triangle of forces in which Edmund is pulled towards Fanny by respect for her moral seriousness before yielding up to the charms of Mary Crawford."<sup>3</sup> The physical setting, with Edmund standing's between Fanny and outdoor freshness on the one hand, and Mary (with her sparkling social graces) indoors on the other, reflects his moral dilemma and allows us to feel Fanny's desperation as the man she loves gradually slips away. Her sententious rapture over the stars may be a

<sup>2</sup> Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., "Pride and Prejudice: The Eyes Have It," in Jane Austen: Women and Literature, p.193.

<sup>3</sup> Monaghan, Social Vision, p.99.

deliberate indication of her lack of experience in the social sphere, "a naïve idealism" that over-reacts to stimulus, whether on natural beauty (MP, p.113) or human aberrations (MP, p.441),<sup>4</sup> but a more important aspect of this rhapsodizing is its expression of feelings for Edmund to which she cannot openly give vent, and of emotions which the other Bertrams and Mrs Norris ignore or deride. Her feelings are relieved by an outburst that reveals her frustration, anxiety and inexperience as she sees Edmund falling <sup>under</sup> ~~beneath~~ Mary's sway. The placing of the characters, moreover, contrasts "a closed and an open mind, both warm, but Fanny's [rather than Mary's] is the movement of imagination into a larger world" beyond contrived social accomplishments and gay conviviality.<sup>5</sup>

In Emma the heroine looks out from the doorway of Ford's shop upon the daily functioning of village life, and in what she sees:

she knew she had no reason to complain,  
and was amused enough; quite enough still  
to stand at the door. A mind lively and  
at ease, can do with seeing nothing, and  
can see nothing that does not answer.

(E, p.233)

Behind this charming vignette, Jane Austen implies the potential dangers of a mind that can make much out of

<sup>4</sup> Moler, Art of Allusion, p.149.

<sup>5</sup> Hardy, A Reading, p.61.

nothing, that can read meaning into situations that may or may not exist. In Barbara Hardy's estimation, the scene shows:

Jane Austen's feeling for the easy strength of Emma's mind [which is shown] the more plainly in a rare disengagement from its materials. The absence of action lays bare the mind's delight in its own powers.<sup>6</sup>

This suspension of action at the door as the heroine observes is as firmly integrated into the thematic matrix of the novel as Elizabeth's view of Pemberley park and Fanny's virtual apostrophe to Nature. No less thematically coherent are Persuasion and Sanditon. Anne leaves Uppercross for Bath with a mind still disturbed by thoughts of Lyme. Her physical loneliness in being "left to the solitary range of the house," and her mental desolation in fearing the recovery of Louisa and Wentworth's probable infatuation are identified with the dark and dreary November day and its "small thick rain almost blotting out the very few objects ever to be discerned from the windows... (P, p.123). Jane Austen here aligns human emotions with natural processes (witness elsewhere the significance of Anne's faded bloom and the onset of autumn). Anne's gaze through the veranda windows "internalizes" her response to nature

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Hardy, Tellers and Listeners (London: Athlone Press, 1975), p.9.

more completely than Fanny's.<sup>7</sup>

In Sanditon, Charlotte looks instinctively to the sea for contact with that honesty, simplicity and harmony that characterizes the environment in which she has lived hitherto. Although Sanditon society is in no way hostile towards her, its aggressiveness, artificiality and self-indulgence are alien to the tenor of her mind. She responds to the sea because it brings her close to a Nature that is harnessed in Willingden, but abused in Sanditon. As the narrator in Persuasion observes: "all must linger and gaze on a first return to the sea, who ever deserve to look on it at all" (P,p.96). Charlotte, like Fanny, is truly carried beyond herself through recourse to Nature, in contrast to the Misses Beaufort who "look at nothing through a telescope" (MW,p.422) to gratify their love for novelty and to stave off boredom.

Charlotte's gaze through the window shows a free spirit to contrast with the Parkers, Lady Denham and Sir Edward who are imprisoned within their own selfishness. Her respect for Nature enables her to benefit by its sobering, harmonizing effect and its example of constancy. The other characters, on the contrary, are highly volatile, at the mercy of their own instability and an unpredictable force of fate that continually reverses their expectations and confounds judgement.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Charlotte's physical elevation at this moment

<sup>7</sup> Walton Litz, "Persuasion: Forms of Estrangement," in Bicentenary Essays, p.227.

<sup>8</sup> See pp.286-88 below.

may be read as symbolic of her ethical superiority. She looks beyond the town and its self-preoccupation to wider horizons and richer possibilities in life than pampering imaginary ailments and making quick profits.

VI. That Mr Parker is oblivious to the absurdity of the figure he cuts is suggested in a witty understatement which conveys more to the Heywoods and ourselves about his character than he is aware:

Mr Parker's Character & History were soon unfolded. All that he understood of himself, he readily told, for he was very openhearted; -- & where he might be himself in the dark, his conversation was still giving information, to such of the Heywoods as could observe. (MW,p.371)

And they perceive with little difficulty that he is "an Enthusiast; -- on the subject of Sanditon, a complete Enthusiast." This impetuosity has already been demonstrated in the mode of his arrival. Heedless of warning he has insisted upon using a track on which "no wheels but cart wheels could safely proceed" (MW,p.364), and when the party bringing Charlotte arrives in Sanditon, his consuming vigour is unmistakeable as he "longed to be on the Sands, the Cliffs, at his own House, & everywhere out of his House at once" (MW,p.384). He represents a state of restiveness that grips Sanditon and which, in Diana (and to a lesser extent Sidney), is seen to be the pervasive mood.

Diana is no less enthusiastic than Mr Parker, and equally the victim of a deranged imagination, "the principal Mover & Actor" (MW,p.414) in the family.

Ironically she is just the type of hypochondriac upon whose imaginary ailments Mr Parker intends to capitalize. An extract from the letter that regales Mr Parker with an account of her ailments shows to Charlotte and the reader that she is highly excitable, and prone to extraordinary exaggeration:

your Letter ... found me suffering under a more severe attack than usual of my old greivance, Spasmodic Bile & hardly able to crawl from my Bed to the Sofa.-- But how were you treated? -- Send me more Particulars in your next. (MW,p.386)

As Charlotte comments wryly, "I am astonished at the chearful style of the Letter, considering the state in which both Sisters appear to be," and adding politely, "Your sisters know what they are about, I dare say," before touching on the truth of the matter -- "but their Measures seem to touch on Extremes" (MW,p.388). Jane Austen exposes Diana's sham invalidism by revealing her aggressiveness in planning and executing, and in the pleasure she derives from making a martyr of herself. Like Mrs Norris, "As far as walking, talking and contriving reached, she was thoroughly benevolent" (MP,p.8). Though less grasping than Mrs Norris, Diana shares her irrepressible zeal for interfering and liking for a sense of power. After arranging all the necessary details before the arrival of Mrs Griffiths, Diana:

had been too successful however for much fatigue; for not only had she by

walking & talking down a thousand difficulties at last secured a proper House at 8g p<sup>r</sup> week for Mrs G.—; she had also opened so many Treaties with Cooks, Housemaids, Washer-women & Bathing Women, that Mrs G. would have little more to do on her arrival, than to wave her hand & collect them around her for choice. (MW,p.414)

We hear at first that she doesn't know "what a day's health is" (MW,p.385), and she soon reveals a total absorption in her own health and that of anybody else who will suffer her "Zeal for being useful" (MW,p.412). Rationalizing her officiousness and eliciting admiration for contradictory attributes of feebleness and stamina, she utters her credo to Charlotte:

The World is pretty much divided between the Weak of Mind & the Strong — between those who can act & those who can not, & it is the bounden Duty of the Capable to let no opportunity of being useful escape them. (MW,p.410)

The ways of being genuinely useful are shown in many different guises in the novels, usually executed unobtrusively in a truly Christian spirit of sincerity, and with no expectations of reward or gratitude. One less frequently cited example is Colonel Brandon's donation of Delaford Parsonage to Edward Ferrars. "It is truly astonishing!" exclaims John Dashwood on the

occasion, "what could be the Colonel's motive?" To which Elinor replies: "A very simple one — to be of use to Mr Ferrars" (SS,p.295), the more surprising for <sup>his</sup> being a man with whom the Colonel is only slightly acquainted.

In the passage above we see how Diana categorizes people to make her own meddling seem more just, and invests the categorisation with biblical overtones in sanction of her conduct. Sidney's opinion that "there is a good deal of Imagination" (MW,p.385) in his sisters' complaints is quickly confirmed by Charlotte's own observations. She diagnoses the real nature of sickness and hyperactivity in Sanditon:

Disorder and Recoveries so very much out of the common way, seemed more like the amusement of eager Minds in want of employment than of actual afflictions & releif. The Parkers, were no doubt a family of Imagination & quick feelings — and while the eldest Brother found vent for his superfluity of sensation as a Projector, the Sisters were perhaps driven to dissipate theirs in the invention of odd complaints. (MW,p.412)

It is no co-incidence that none of the Parker brothers, Tom, Sidney or Arthur, has a steady occupation. Mr Parker, no longer involved in the daily administration of his estate, openly admits to having "no Profession" (MW,p.371), while Arthur, "lacking completely the heroic initiative associated with his name," fancies himself

"too sickly for any Profession," Mr Parker frankly admits to Charlotte, and feels it "bad that he should... sit down at 1 & 20, on the interest of his own little Fortune, without any idea of attempting to improve it, or of engaging in any occupation that may be of use to himself or others" (MW, pp.388-89).<sup>1</sup> Where Diana in her delusiveness is full of excessive energy, Arthur is the reverse, caring only for comfort, shunning physical activity, and ~~is~~ "determined on having no Disorders but such as called for warm rooms & good Nourishment" (MW, p.418).

Kirkham further points out that Arthur's "style of life ... [almost] parodies that of Mary Musgrove," whose "real disease is indolence and lack of purpose in life." Jane Austen reminds the reader that self-indulgence incapacitates a person for any beneficial social role because the needs of others are ignored. Such people are liabilities rather than assets to their acquaintance and the community at large.

Finally, we learn, regarding the third brother, that Sidney shares none of his siblings' imaginary complaints, but, having no profession, shows disquieting signs, like Henry Crawford and Frank Churchill, of restless energy, living: "too much in the World to be settled....He is here & there & every where" (MW, p.382). Although his penetration of the Parker foibles is creditable, his constant movement and lack of steady application to any worthwhile end speak strongly in his disfavour. In

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Kirkham, Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983), p.157.

Mansfield Park, Fanny's return to Portsmouth collocates "noise, [and] disorder" with "impropriety" (MP, p.388), whilst the immoral London society from which the Crawfords come is shown to be inimical to the "elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony" (MP, p.391) enshrined ideally in Mansfield Park: "resting fatigues me" Mary remarks (MP, p.96), and Henry's neglect of Everingham for social excitement is moral comment enough.

If Mr Parker has few really intimate local attachments, Diana has none at all. As an officious busybody she has charitable commitments as far afield as Worcestershire, York and Burton on Trent (MW, p.424), and a keen interest in Sanditon itself, its residents and visitors. She invokes "conscience" (MW, p.409) and "Duty" (MW, p.410) as her motivating forces, but the hollowness of these claims is readily made apparent in all she says and does.

VII. This health motif is stressed in the fragment with a force wholly new in Jane Austen's fiction. In the novels, isolated cases of hypochondria are treated as idiosyncrasies: "When [Mrs Bennet] was discontented she fancied herself nervous" (PP, p.5), and Marianne mocks Colonel Brandon's wearing flannel waistcoats to combat rheumatism (SS, pp.37-8). These are minor issues in the two novels and do not affect their plots directly. In Emma the extreme timidity and valetudinarianism of Mr Woodhouse is thematically contrasted with the robust good health of his daughter. This novel gives greater prominence to hypochondria and the effects upon Mr Woodhouse of a "self-indulgent sensibility," a "somewhat factitious melancholy" that allows Emma "rather too much [of] her own way" and so encourages her disposition "to think a little too well of herself" (E, p.5).<sup>1</sup> Because "the landed property of Hartfield was inconsiderable, being a sort of notch in the Donwell Abbey estate" (E, p.136), Mr Woodhouse has no daily duties, such as those of his vigorous neighbour, Mr Knightley, to occupy his mind. He therefore turns inward upon his own imaginary ailments just as Emma, a woman of leisure, looks outwards for material that her mind may work upon. The John Knightleys' visit introduces the contentious issue of sea-bathing. Mr Woodhouse "never had much opinion of sea air," (Emma has never seen the sea), but

<sup>1</sup> Page, Language, p.142.

Mr Wingfield:

most strongly recommended it.... for all the children, but particularly for the weakness in little Bella's throat, — both sea air and bathing.

(E,p.101)

The ensuing conflict of opinion shows how Jane Austen alludes to contemporary issues by making them the centre of domestic debate. The mention of various theories, doctors, and resorts tells us about the Regency vogue for health cures at the same time as we learn about the characters themselves: Isabella's maternal tenderness and easy discomposure; John Knightley's plain and hearty frankness; and Mr Woodhouse's tiresome timidity.

In a different quarter we hear about Mrs Churchill, also a professed invalid like Diana, and equally fond of imposing her own wishes upon other people. And again like Diana, she constantly solicits attention, forcing a domestic upheaval by her insistence upon removing from Enscombe to Richmond ("about 190 miles" [E,p.306]) on account of her ailments. Both women share an energy inconsistent with ill-health. "Mrs Churchill, as we understand," remarks Mr Weston, "has not been able to leave the sofa for a week together," and yet "she is so impatient to be in town, that she means to sleep only two nights on the road," then he slyly adds, "Certainly, delicate ladies must have extraordinary constitutions" (E,p.306). He confides his suspicions to Mrs Elton that such ailments are all make-believe: "I have not much

faith in Mrs Churchill's illness " he says, and continues an indictment that applies with equal justice to Diana Parker:

She has taken it into her head that Enscombe is too cold for her. The fact is, I suppose, that she is tired of Enscombe. She has now been a longer time stationary there, than she ever was before, and she begins to want change. (E,p.307)

In Persuasion the question of health is linked even more closely to central themes, particularly to emphasize the vicissitudes in Anne's fortunes through a loss and return of "bloom" (P,p.28). Against the resourcefulness and endurance of Anne we see Mary Musgrove's peevishness that stems from a lack of anything interesting or useful to do. "[S]he had no resources for solitude," the narrator affirms:

and inheriting a considerable share of the Elliot self-importance, was very prone to add to every other distress that of fancying herself neglected and ill-used. (P,p.37)

This is soon confirmed when Anne arrives at Uppercross and encounters Mary's exclamative exaggerations of self-pity:

So, you are come at last! I began to think I should never see you. I am so

ill I can hardly speak. I have not  
seen a creature the whole morning! (P,p.37)

Mrs Croft's remarks to Anne later in the narrative make the necessary connection between a vacant mind and illusory ailments:

The only time that I really suffered in body or mind, the only time that I ever fancied myself unwell, or had any ideas of danger, was the winter that I passed by myself at Deal, when the Admiral ... was in the North Seas. I lived in perpetual fright at the time, and had all manner of imaginary complaints from not knowing what to do with myself, or when I should hear from him next. (P,p.71)

In these two novels that precede Sanditon we see how Jane Austen places increasing emphasis upon the value of useful occupations to harness energies that otherwise induce self-obsession. In Sanditon itself, imaginary ill-health is used as a means to image a collective malady — the unhealthy, self-absorbed condition of those in Sanditon and those for whom this resort has been developed. Illusory ailments pose a serious threat to order, and Jane Austen combats them through mockery. The scope for comedy is broad:

[Susan] has accordingly had 3 Teeth drawn, & is decidedly better, but her Nerves are a good deal deranged. She

can only speak in a whisper -- and  
fainted away twice this morning on  
poor Arthur's trying to suppress a  
cough. (MW,p.387)

Hypochondria, then, is not confined to isolated cases as we have seen in earlier novels, but is an expression of the way a whole society sees its function and purpose: to exploit self-indulgence for profit. Images of ill-health even pervade the language of the fragment, colouring many of the narrator's comments to underline these morbid developments in English society: Charlotte is "cured of her halfhour's fever"; Sir Edward is "addicted" to literary jargon, and has read "more sentimental Novels than agreed with him"; and Mr Parker "found vent for his superfluity of sensation as a Projector" (MW,pp.395,398,404,412 -- all emphases added).<sup>2</sup>

Apart from Lady Denham who is too shrewd to be fooled, and the Heywoods who, in sowing and reaping, have no time to believe themselves ill, the Parkers and Sir Edward are moved purely by "Fancy, the love of Distinction & the love of the Wonderful" (MW,p.412). Charlotte is therefore justified in believing that:

· They had Charitable hearts & many  
amiable feelings -- but a spirit of  
restless activity, & the glory of doing  
more than anybody else, had their share

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd Brown, Bits of Ivory, p.68.

in every exertion of Benevolence —  
 and there was Vanity in all they did,  
 as well as in all they endured. (MW, pp.412-13)

The Heywoods have always been "so healthy a family" (MW, p.388), and "always well stocked ... with all the common remedies for Sprains & Bruises" (MW, p.367). Charlotte shows as little tolerance for stubbornness and invalidism as her father, when upon seeing Susan Parker ostentatiously taking medicines, she:

could perceive no symptoms of illness  
 which she, in the boldness of her own  
 good health, w<sup>d</sup> not have undertaken to  
 cure, by putting out the fire, opening  
 the Window, & disposing of the Drops &  
 the salts by means of one or the other.  
 (MW, p.413)

The crisp rhythm of the syntax here expresses a therapeutic practicality and efficiency that Jane Austen values. On another occasion Charlotte gives further evidence that Willingden has equipped her well for life, bestowing upon her common-sense, toughness, and no inclination for idealistic expectations:

As far as I can understand what nervous complaints are, I have a great idea of the efficacy of air & exercise for them; — daily, regular Exercise; — and I should recommend rather more of it to you [Arthur] than I suspect you are in the habit of taking (MW, p.416).

Regular, purposeful exercise and equally purposeful and constant occupation are the positive values by which we measure the shortcomings of Diana's hyperactivity and Arthur's indolence. There is an archness in the narrator's remark that "Charlotte was to go to Sanditon -- with excellent health, to bathe & be better if she could" (MW,p.374).

In her depiction of Sanditon, Jane Austen criticizes people like the Parkers who commercialize "quack Medicine" (MW,p.412), and she is equally critical of those who, with no less self-respect, are as vulnerable to their own vanity and feeble-mindedness as they are to Mr Parker's eloquent rhetoric; and who are induced both to pay for treatment that is unnecessary and to support a project that is at best a fad, at worst a fraud. Significantly, Mr Parker "could not prevail" (MW,p.373) upon the Heywoods to visit Sanditon. They prefer to remain (and the collocation is highly significant) "stationary and healthy at Willingden" (MW,p.374).

When the Parkers' carriage is overturned, the Heywoods' hospitality is spontaneous, honest and generous. In Sanditon the reverse obtains, as we see in ~~at~~ the entrance of the tea-things. The novels usually portray such occasions as the focal point for those assembled, a symbol of warmth and hospitality in which all share. In the Parker household this community spirit has atrophied, despite Mr Parker's gregariousness:

Charlotte veiwed the entrance of the  
 Servant with the Tea things, as a very  
 fortunate Interruption. -- It produced

a great & immediate change. The young Man's [Arthur's] attentions were instantly lost. He took his own Cocoa from the Tray, — which seemed provided with almost as many Teapots &c as there were persons in company, Miss P. drinking one sort of Herb-Tea & Miss Diana another, & turning completely to the Fire, sat coddling and cooking it to his own satisfaction ... (MW, p.416)

The mistress of the house neglects her duties as hostess. The decorum of such an occasion is destroyed as each looks after his or her own refreshments, and do~~s~~ not even share a common beverage. Such is the extent to which the centrifugal forces of individualism have sapped the original communal ties of old Sanditon.

The entrance of the tea-things at Pemberley, for example, shows how manners ought to function at such a time, reconciling even Elizabeth and Miss Bingley in a common task:

The next variation which [the] visit afforded was produced by the entrance of servants with cold meat, cake, and a variety of all the finest fruits in season.... There was now employment for the whole party; for though they could not all talk, they could all eat; and the beautiful pyramids of grapes, nectarines, and peaches soon collected

them round the table. (PP, p.268)

Pemberley, however, represents an ordered and stable world, with none of the vulgarity of Longbourn nor the ostentation of Rosings. If something approaching an ideal society is achieved in Willingden, Sanditon shows the anarchy that results when order and stability are removed and impulse is allowed free reign. But Jane Austen does not view the situation with obvious dismay. Rather she laughs it out of countenance. Hence the confidence with which the Heywoods are presented as our norm, and in ridiculous counterpoise the odd assortment of characters in Sanditon and the heterogeneous nature of its visitors from London: Mrs Griffiths, whose talent is universal in providing for girls who "wanted either Masters for finishing their Education, or a home for beginning their Displays" (MW, pp.420-21); the exotic "half Mulatto" heiress Miss Lambe, "chilly & tender ... sickly & rich ... under the constant care of an experienced Physician" (MW, pp.421-22); and the thoroughly common-place, vulgar and superficial Misses Beaufort who, like the Musgrove girls (P, p.40) are "just such young Ladies as may be met with, in at least one family out of three, throughout the Kingdom" (MW, p.421). The arrival of this party, moreover, signifies a widening of the confusion that has been established early in the fragment.

Frequent misunderstandings and ironic reversals of expectation have a cumulative force in affirming, inversely, those values enshrined in the Heywoods and Willingden: tranquillity, self-control, moderation. Such reversals further contribute to our view of

Sanditon as a world where confusion is endemic. Mr Parker, as we have noted, makes a fool of himself looking for a surgeon where none exists, and searching for one of two villages that (a fact unknown to him) bear the same name; the two wealthy parties that Diana had intended to bring to Sanditon materialize as one and the same group; Sir Edward Denham has the "ill-luck" in his reading to derive "only false Principles from Lessons of Morality, & incentives to Vice from the History of its Overthrow" (MW, pp.404-05), and his Byronic plan to snatch irresistible Clara bathetically comes to nothing since:

the Expense alas! of Measures in that masterly style was ill-suited to his Purse, & Prudence obliged him to prefer the quietest sort of ruin & disgrace for the object of his Affections, to the more renowned. (MW, p.406)

Jane Austen shows in Sir Edward that excessive sensibility discredits itself by "its parade, and complete lack of logic."<sup>3</sup> Pertinent here is Tony Tanner's observation that in exposing exaggerated emotions, Jane Austen reveals how those that claim "to be impatient of forms [are] in some ways [the] most reliant on them."<sup>4</sup> A final instance of reversed

<sup>3</sup> Tompkins, The Popular Novel, p.370.

<sup>4</sup> Tanner, Introd. Sense and Sensibility, p.16.

expectations is to be seen in Lady Denham, who has hoped by supplying asses' milk to Miss Lambe to secure her as a possible wife for Sir Edward. But:

she soon found that all her calculations of Profit w<sup>d</sup> be vain. Mrs G<sup>r</sup>iffiths<sup>r</sup> would not allow Miss L<sup>a</sup>mbe<sup>r</sup> to have the smallest symptom of a Decline, or any complaint which Asses milk c<sup>d</sup> possibly relieve. (MW, p. 422)

What is inexcusable in all these victims of their own selfish schemes is that they do not learn by their mistakes. Among such characters, accidents and mistakes can seem inevitable without appearing mechanical, the natural outcome of character, not the arbitrary manipulation of plot.

VIII. Although delusive imagination is manifest differently in the Parkers and Sir Edward, they all share a common prolixity. Long, uninterrupted passages of speech are convincing proof that Mr Parker could talk about Sanditon "for ever" (MW,p.372); that Sir Edward talks largely "by rote" (MW,p.398); and that Diana could quite easily spin out her stories "to an endless length" (MW,p.408). Intelligent, reciprocal conversation is impossible against the torrential monologue as these characters become in Harding's words, "literally egregious."<sup>1</sup> Prosiness and dogmatism invariably signify a narrow mind. Mrs Percival's "harangues" in Catherine, and in the novels, the pompous speechifying of Mr Collins or the didactic and self-glorifying effusions of Mrs Norris are symptomatic of self-satisfaction and an insensitive unwillingness or even ignorance to entertain the ideas and claims of others. Miss Bates releases whatever comes into her head: "I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan't I" (E,p.370), she admits good-humouredly to the Box Hill party. And yet she is not censured by the narrator because Miss Bates is kind, harmless, generous and endearing, with no intention of deceiving anybody.

If Miss Bates speaks a miscellaneous jumble, the Parkers and Sir Edward are voluble only about the single

<sup>1</sup> Harding, "Character and Caricature," p.88.

obsession that engages their minds and distorts their vision. Their garrulity functions to show an impoverishing self-sufficiency that shuts them off from thinking about or even hearing other people. Hence they tend to dominate conversations, loudly asserting their own thoughts, unaware that it is good manners to temper what they say to what may either interest their interlocutors or draw them out into fruitful discussion. Collectively, Sanditon is a proverbial Babel, its representatives more disposed to speak than listen, in contrast to Charlotte who says very little, and Clara who as yet has said nothing at all.

The constant emphases in Mr Parker's speech are an efficient means to hint of the smugness and condescension of his bearing: "What in the name of Common Sense is to recommend Brinshore?" (MW, p.369), he asks of Mr Heywood with affected incredulity; and commenting on Lady Denham's avarice he warns Charlotte that "now & then, a Littleness will appear" (MW, p.376), as if he were conferring the benefits of his shrewd observation upon her. And as we have seen, he is eager to throw off his old house in exchange for a new one: "He gets a better House by it -- & I, a rather better situation!" (MW, p.380). Rather pleased with his own commercial adroitness, he confides to Lady Denham with a wordiness usually indicating emptiness in Jane Austen, that the traders in Sanditon "cannot get rich without bringing Prosperity to us -- If they do not gain, our rents must be insecure," and then goes on in pseudo-technical strain: "& in proportion to their profit must be ours

eventually in the increased value of our Houses" (MW, p.393).

Susan shares the Parker logorrhoea, talking "the whole Evening" to Charlotte, "as incessantly as Diana" (MW, p.413) despite having recently had three teeth drawn and suffering nervous shock. Diana herself resembles Mrs Norris in some respects, continuously encouraging admiration for her zeal and pity for her ailments. Her noisy linguistic irregularity is matched and reinforced by a verbose epistolary style. In both cases she is fulsome in self-praise and equally generous in unsolicited advice. Mrs Norris seeks out praise in self-congratulatory anecdotes:

poor old coachman would attend us, out of his great love and kindness, though he was hardly able to sit on the box on account of the rheumatism which I had been doctoring him for ever since Michaelmas. I cured him at last ...  
(MP, p.189).

In the following, Diana is similarly engaged in stage-managing her self-glorification. Commenting on Mr Parker's sprained ankle:

nothing w<sup>d</sup> have been so judicious as Friction, Friction by the hand alone, supposing it could be applied instantly.  
-- Two years ago I happened to be calling on Mrs Sheldon when her Coachman sprained his foot ... & c<sup>d</sup> hardly limp into the House -- but by the immediate use of

Friction alone steadily persevered in,  
 (& I rubbed his Ankle with my own hand  
 for six Hours without Intermission) --  
 he was well in three days. (MW,p.386)

Sir Edward's volubility, like that of the Parkers, is closely connected with a fantasy world, in his case a secondhand world gleaned from books. Jane Austen examines the moral value of literature, the need to read in the right way, and the tensions between art and nature in all her works, either explicitly in literary discussions (Catherine and Henry; Anne and Captain Benwick; Charlotte and Sir Edward), or indirectly in plots and situations that rework familiar topoi (Willoughby's dissipation; Fanny's "coming-out ball"; Frank Churchill's rescue of Harriet from the gypsies). Both categories are strongly in evidence in Sanditon. Sir Edward is an indefatigable reader of Richardson, Scott, Burns, Montgomery, Byron, Campbell and Wordsworth. Not having "by Nature a very strong head," Sir Edward has misread widely, and by confusing reality with a hybrid of Richardson's novels and Romantic verse he has concocted a perverse image of himself as an irresistible seducer, and has imbibed the notion that "the pursuit of extreme self-gratification can be glamorous."<sup>2</sup> He sees Miss Brereton and himself as figures of a novel and seems unlikely in his extremism to learn Catherine Morland's lesson, that:

Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps,

<sup>2</sup> Butler, War of Ideas, p.287.

there were no mixed characters. There, such as were not as spotless as an angel, might have the dispositions of a fiend. But in England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad.

(NA, p.200)

He speaks an idiom cobbled together from reading "all the Essays, Letters, Tours & Criticisms of the day," and "more sentimental Novels than agreed with him" (MW, p.404). From these various sources he garners a specialized vocabulary and a generous supply of clichés.

Charlotte's verdict is incontrovertible:

why he sh<sup>d</sup> talk so much Nonsense, unless he could do no better, was unintelligible. — He seemed very sentimental, very full of some Feelings or other, & very much addicted to all the newest-fashioned hard words — had not a very clear Brain she presumed ...

(MW, p.398)

Doctrines of the Picturesque and the rhapsodizing of Sentimentalists were early targets for Jane Austen's ridicule. Consistently in her writing she mocks the improper usage of words, the gratuitous introduction of foreign idiom or fashionable language into English. Language deficiencies in her characters are therefore usually signs of moral irregularity. From the

flamboyant Sir Edward we hear a self-conscious display of "all the newest-fashioned hard words" (MW, p. 398), gibberish such as the following on poetic genius:

It were Hyper-criticism, it were Pseudo-philosophy to expect from the soul of high toned Genius, the grovellings of a common mind. — The Coruscations of Talent, elicited by impassioned feeling in the breast of Man, are perhaps incompatible with some of the prosaic Decencies of Life. (MW, p. 398)

Charlotte rightly thinks this unintelligible and "downright silly," being in a position like Anne Elliot's towards the poetical raptures of Captain Benwick:

she thought it was the misfortune of poetry, to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly, were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly. (P, pp. 100-01)

Ironically he has read more sobering prose than Captain Benwick but this has only replenished his already specialized vocabulary. Jane Austen shows that his grandiloquent clichés possess none of Marianne's sincerity, but approach the comically anarchic abandon of Love and Freindship. And through her comic treatment of Sir Edward, Jane Austen is making valid remarks on

Romantic poetry. The "dangers of creativity and impressionability"<sup>3</sup> are clearly evidenced in his convoluted self-justification:

The mere Trash of the common Circulating Library, I hold in the highest contempt. You will never hear me advocating those puerile Emanations which detail nothing but discordant Principles incapable of Amalgamation, or those vapid tissues of ordinary Occurrences from which no useful Deductions can be drawn. -- In vain may we put them into a literary Alembic. (MW, p.403)

As one critic points out, through Sir Edward's bombast Jane Austen mocks contemporary critic-moralists who called for exemplary characters as a preventive against vice.<sup>4</sup> Sir Edward claims to espouse the cause of didactic fiction, as the passage above illustrates, but ironically he exalts the type of character and sentiments most inimical to the aims of that type of literature:

T'were Pseudo-Philosophy to assert that we do not feel more enwrapped by the

<sup>3</sup> Hardy, Preface, Tellers and Listers, p.viii.

<sup>4</sup> Gerard A. Barker, "Ironic Implications in the Characterization of Sir Edward Denham," Papers on Language and Literature, 12 (1976), 150-60.

brilliancy of [the hero's] Career, than by the tranquil & morbid Virtues of any opposing Character. Our approbation of the Latter is but Eleemosynary. (MW,p.404)

He is one of Jane Austen's fools who are "fond of contemplating their own psyches and marveling at the purity and grandeur of their own emotions."<sup>5</sup> She shows that only a reader "not having by Nature a very strong head" (MW,p.404) like Sir Edward can be corrupted by literature, and mocks moral and critical pedantry, as Barker observes, "by taking ... abstract speculations literally and therefore reducing them to absurdity."<sup>6</sup> We see how Jane Austen conceived of herself as a novelist, how she developed and tested existing theories, and how she communicates her values responsibly through fiction. By implication, to mistake novels in the way Sir Edward does is to be identified with him — exposed by Charlotte as an idiot, and tolerated by Clara as a bore. That he should ultimately be disillusioned is only a matter of time, but "Enthusiasm," as Miss Mitford remarked, "is very catching, especially when it is eloquent."<sup>7</sup> Mr Parker's

<sup>5</sup> Robert Alan Donovan, "The Mind of Jane Austen," in Jane Austen Today, ed. Joel Weinsheimer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), p.124.

<sup>6</sup> Barker, "Sir Edward Denham," p.158.

<sup>7</sup> The Life of Mary Russell Mitford, 3 vols, ed. rev. A.G. L'Estrange, Vol 2 (London: Bentley, 1870), p.11.

enthusiasm is expressed in an inexhaustible panegyric upon the virtues of Sanditon being "the sure resort of the very best Company" (MW,p.368) and something of a panacea: "The Sea air & Sea Bathing together were nearly infallible, one or the other of them being a match for every Disorder" (MW,p.373). Sir Edward's floridity is a mixture of mental feebleness and conscious display. Mr Parker's exaggerations, on the other hand, are in no way affected and are thus more dangerous to the fabric of Sanditon.

IX. The respective moral values of activity and passivity receive differing weight in Jane Austen's varying fictional circumstances. What is more, there are different kinds of passivity -- Fanny as against Lady Bertram -- just as there are various types of activity -- Edmund as a clergyman versus Henry Crawford as an itinerant socializer. In either category, personal distinction through what one does rather than simply through what one is is the important issue, and becomes increasingly prominent in Jane Austen's last three novels and Sanditon.

This dichotomy is most clearly worked out in Persuasion where the fresh naval vigour of Captain Wentworth and his associates is seen as a preferable alternative to the moribund values of Sir Walter Elliot. To what extent this contrast represents an accurate account of fluctuations in the English social system is for historians to determine. But on the basis of Jane Austen's fiction we can see a regular pattern that presents in various ways a growing conviction in the value of self-definition through a useful occupation. Rubinstein is unequivocal: "Jane Austen is ... wholly and impatiently committed to a society in which recognition and reward stem from merit and activity in some profession."<sup>1</sup> But the optimism and individual

<sup>1</sup> E. Rubinstein, "Jane Austen's Novels: The Metaphor of Rank," in Literary Monographs, 2, eds. Eric Rothstein and Richard N. Ringler (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p.181.

effort that has brought glory to Captain Wentworth is for Mr Parker the root of all his troubles. Wentworth's zeal has issued only in a temporary misconception of, and estrangement from Anne, partly through the intervention of Lady Russell: Mr Parker's optimism and energetic activity seem a permanent disability, one that consistently creates confusion, and of which it seems unlikely that he might readily be disabused. A further contrast with Persuasion may be drawn. Where Sir Walter fears time and change for the new navy men that will rise in society and the human looks that will deteriorate, Mr Parker is keen to force the pace of change for equally selfish and misguided reasons, and not even pretending, like Sir Walter, to value the past, is wholly intent on the present as a prelude to a glorious future. Sir Walter stagnates, whilst Mr Parker blunders onward.

In Persuasion Jane Austen looks at the ill-effects and variants of personal impetuosity in Louisa and Wentworth, but in Sanditon she presents the heedlessness of a whole community. Similarly Anne's moderating influence in the novel may be compared with the stabilizing values of Willingden in the fragment. Because Sanditon does not elicit our emotional engagement with particular characters to anything like the same extent demanded by the novels, Jane Austen invites us to evaluate two different ways of life, each governed by a distinct set of values and expectations. The fragment therefore requires a different kind of reading. The personal dilemmas of the heroine, her pain,

frustration and confusion take second place in Sanditon to the construction of settings and the values they embody.

A first reading of the fragment indicates that the fragment is organized upon principles that differ from the novels. We are not presented with the particularities of an individual, nor is the history of a family revealed. We identify with Charlotte more on an intellectual, than an emotional level. She functions, rather like Fanny Price, as a non-participating judge of character, but without Fanny's mental trauma.

A further point of difference we note in coming to Sanditon is a broader social range. Mudrick has shown that Jane Austen opens the fragment by focusing upon the coachman's feelings through the narrator's rather than through the heroine's eyes.<sup>2</sup> Though minor, he and the other menial characters who appear subsequently are used more abundantly to offer implicit commentary upon the conduct of the protagonists. The greater presence of these low characters makes for a fictional society that is more recognizably akin to our own. Evidence of nineteenth-century economic anxieties may be found in Jane Austen's mature novels, but in Sanditon, as Southam points out, "We are made aware of a working neighbourhood (a foil to the leisurely and moneyed visitors), and of relations between the classes."<sup>3</sup> It may be argued that Emma is largely about correcting the heroine's inability

<sup>2</sup> Mudrick, pp.242-43.

<sup>3</sup> Southam, Literary Manuscripts, p.111.

to see that many people have claims to respect and dignity beyond the differentiations of class. In Sanditon, though Jane Austen still in no way endorses a classless society, she examines the workings of class relationships more explicitly than hitherto. Mr Parker, for instance, is concerned that "poor old Andrew [the gardener] may not lose his daily Job" (MW, p.382). And Lady Denham's apprehension about the price of "Butcher's meat" (MW, p.393) whilst admittedly something we might expect from her avaricious nature, is far removed from the revealed inclinations or interests of a Lady Catherine, Lady Bertram or Lady Russell. I contend that in Sanditon Jane Austen comes nearest to expressing her doubts and fears for some aspects of an increasingly commercial and industrial England. But I also believe that given what we have seen of ironic reversals of fortune, and given also that Jane Austen wrote in a comic mode, her thoughts on the future were not as bleak as a reading of Persuasion might otherwise lead us to believe.

## Bibliography

- Auerbach, Nina. "O Brave New World: Evolution and Revolution in Persuasion." ELH, 39 (1972), 112-28.
- Austen-Leigh, Mary Augusta. Personal Aspects of Jane Austen. London: Murray, 1920.
- Babb, Howard S. Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue. Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1962.
- Banfield, Ann. "The Influence of Place: Jane Austen and the Novel of Social Consciousness." In Jane Austen in a Social Context. Ed. David Monaghan. London: Macmillan, 1984, pp.28-48.
- Barker, Gerard A. "Ironic Implications in the Characterization of Sir Edward Denham." Papers on Language and Literature, 12 (1976), 150-60.
- Blackmur, R.P., ed. The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces. 1934; rpt. New York: Scribner, 1967.
- Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. "Looking at Landscape in Jane Austen." Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 21 (1981), 605-23.
- Booth, Wayne C. The Rhetoric of Fiction. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Bradbrook, Frank W. "Style and Judgement in Jane Austen's Novels." Cambridge Journal, 4 (1951), 515-37.
- Bradbrook, Muriel. Women and Literature 1779-1982: The Collected Papers of Muriel Bradbrook Vol. II. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982.

- Bradbury, Malcolm. Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973.
- . The Social Context of Modern English Literature. Oxford: Blackwell, 1971.
- . "Jane Austen: Emma." In From Blake to Byron. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature. Ed. Boris Ford. Vol. V. rev. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982, pp.172-86.
- Brown, Julia Prewitt. Jane Austen's Novels: Social Change and Literary Form. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979.
- Brown, Lloyd W. Bits of Ivory: Narrative Techniques in Jane Austen's Fiction. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1973.
- Burke, Edmund. Reflections on the Revolution in France. In Burke: Select Works. Ed. E.J. Payne. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1898.
- Burroway, Janet. "The Irony of the Insufferable Prig." Critical Quarterly, 9 (1967), 127-38.
- Bush, Douglas. Jane Austen. London: Macmillan, 1975.
- Butler, Marilyn. Jane Austen and the War of Ideas. Oxford: Clarendon, 1975.
- . Rebels, Romantics and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981.
- Cecil, David. "A Note on Jane Austen's Scenery." In The Fine Art of Reading and other Literary Studies. London: Constable & Co., 1957, pp.125-34.
- . "Jane Austen's Lesser Works." In Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society 1949-1965. Rpt. London: Dawson, 1967, pp.273-81.

- Chapman, R.W. Jane Austen: Facts and Problems. Oxford: Clarendon, 1948.
- Cockshut, A.O.J. Man and Woman: A Study of Love and the Novel 1740-1940. London: Collins, 1973.
- Cohn, Dorrit. Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978.
- Corwin, L.J. "Character and Morality in the Novels of Jane Austen." Revue des Langues Vivantes, 38 (1972), 363-79.
- Craik, W.A. Jane Austen: the Six Novels. London: Methuen, 1965.
- Devlin, D.D. Jane Austen and Education. London: Macmillan, 1975.
- Donoghue, Joseph W., Jr. "Ordination and the Divided House at Mansfield Park." ELH, 32 (1965), 169-78.
- Donovan, Robert A. "The Mind of Jane Austen." In Jane Austen Today. Ed. Joel Weinsheimer. Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1975.
- Duckworth, Alistair M. The Improvement of the Estate. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1971.
- , "'Spillikins, paper ships, riddles, conundrums, and cards': games in Jane Austen's life and fiction." In Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays. Ed. John Halperin. London: Cambridge Univ. Press, (1975), pp.279-97.
- Dry, Helen. "Syntax and Point of View in Emma." Studies in Romanticism, 16 (1977), 87-99.
- Dyson, A.E. The Crazy Fabric: Essays in Irony. London: Macmillan, 1965.

- Ehrenpreis, Anne Henry. "Northanger Abbey: Jane Austen and Charlotte Smith." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 25 (1970), 343-48.
- Fergus, Jan. Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel. London: Macmillan, 1983.
- Fleming, Lindsay. "Sanditon and Bognor." In Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society 1949-1965. London: Dawson, 1967.
- Forster, E.M. "Jane Austen." In Abinger Harvest. London: Arnold, 1936; New York: Meridian, 1955, pp.140-56.
- . Aspects of the Novel. London: Arnold, 1927; Pocket edition, 1949.
- Garis, Robert. "Learning Experience and Change." In Critical Essays on Jane Austen. Ed. B.C. Southam. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, pp.60-82.
- Gillie, Christopher. Character in English Literature. London: Chatto and Windus, 1965.
- Gooneratne, Yasmine. Jane Austen. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970.
- Gornall, J.F.G. "Marriage and Property in Jane Austen's Novels." History Today, 17 (1967), 805-11.
- Greene, Donald. "Jane Austen's Monsters." In Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays. Ed. John Halperin. London: Cambridge Univ. Press. 1975, pp.262-78.
- . "Jane Austen and the Peerage." PMLA, 68 (1953), 1017-31.
- Haley, Bruce. The Healthy Body in Victorian Culture. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978.

- Halperin, John. The Life of Jane Austen. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984.
- Hampshire, Stuart. "Natural Law and Order." Times Literary Supplement, Jan 16 1976, p.54.
- Harding, D.W. "Character and Caricature in Jane Austen." In Critical Essays on Jane Austen. Ed. B.C. Southam. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, pp.83-105.
- Hardy, Barbara. A Reading of Jane Austen. London: Peter Owen, 1975.
- . Tellers and Listeners. London: Athlone Press, 1975.
- Harmsel, Henrietta Ten. Jane Austen: A Study in Fictional Conventions. London: Mouton, 1964.
- Harvey, W.J. Character and the Novel. London: Chatto and Windus, 1965.
- Hennelly, Mark M, Jr. "Pride and Prejudice: The Eyes Have It." In Jane Austen: New Perspectives. Women and Literature. NS. Ed. Janet Todd. Vol. III. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983, 187-207.
- Hewitt, Douglas. The Approach to Fiction: Good and Bad Reading of Novels. London: Longman, 1972.
- Hodge, Jane Aiken. The Double Life of Jane Austen. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972.
- Kaul, A.N. The Action of English Comedy: Studies in the Encounter of Abstraction and Experience from Shakespeare to Shaw. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970.
- Kaye-Smith, Sheila, and G.B. Stern. Talking of Jane Austen. London: Cassell, 1943.

- Kelly, Gary. "Reading Aloud in Mansfield Park." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 37 (1982), 29-49.
- Kent, Christopher. "'Real Solemn History' and Social History." In Jane Austen in a Social Context. Ed. David Monaghan. Macmillan, 1984, pp.86-104.
- Kestner, Joseph. "Sanditon or The Brothers: Nature into Art." Papers on Language and Literature, 12 (1976), 161-66.
- Kirkham, Margaret. Jane Austen: Feminism and Fiction. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983.
- Kroeber, Karl. Styles in Fictional Structure: The Art of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971.
- Lascelles, Mary. Jane Austen and her Art. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939.
- . "Jane Austen and the novel." In Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays. Ed. John Halperin. London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975, pp.235-46.
- Lauber, John. "Sanditon: The Kingdom of Folly." Studies in the Novel, 4 (1972), 353-63.
- Leavis, F.R. The Great Tradition. London: Chatto and Windus, 1948.
- Leavis, Q.D. "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings." Scrutiny, 10 (1941-42), 61-87; 114-42; 272-94.
- Lenta, Margaret. "Jane Fairfax and Jane Eyre: Educating Women." ARIEL, 12 (October 1981), 27-41.
- . "Jane Austen's Feminism: An Original Response to Convention." Critical Quarterly, 3:23 (1981), 27-36.

- Lewis, C.S. "A Note on Jane Austen." Essays in Criticism, 4 (1954), 359-71.
- Litz, A. Walton. Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development. London: Chatto and Windus, 1965.
- . "Persuasion: Forms of Estrangement." In Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays. Ed. John Halperin. London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975, pp.221-32.
- Magee, William. "The Happy Marriage: The Influence of Charlotte Smith on Jane Austen." Studies in the Novel, 7 (1975), 120-32.
- Marcus, Mordecai. "A Major Thematic Pattern in Pride and Prejudice." In Twentieth Century Interpretations of Pride and Prejudice. A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. E. Rubinstein. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1967, pp.83-7.
- Martin, W.R. The Subject of Jane Austen's Sanditon." English Studies in Africa, 10 (March 1967), 87-93.
- McKillop, Alan D. "Critical Realism in Northanger Abbey." In From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad. Ed. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1958, pp.35-45.
- Mendilow, A.A. Time and the Novel. New York: Humanities Press, 1972.
- Meyerhoff, Hans. Time in Literature. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1955.

- Mitford, Mary Russell. The Life of Mary Russell Mitford.  
Related in a Selection from her Letters to her  
Friends. Ed. Rev. A.G. L'Estrange. London:  
Richard Bentley, 1870, Vol. II.
- Moler, Kenneth L. Jane Austen's Art of Allusion.  
Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1968.
- Monaghan, David. Jane Austen: Structure and Social  
Vision. London: Macmillan, 1980.
- . "The Decline of the Gentry: A Study of Jane  
Austen's Attitude to Formality in Persuasion."  
Studies in the Novel, 7 (1975), 73-87.
- Mudrick, Marvin. Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and  
Discovery. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952.
- Nardin, Jane. Those Elegant Decorums: The Concept of  
Propriety in Jane Austen's Novels. Albany: State  
Univ. of New York Press, 1973.
- . "Jane Austen and the Problem of Leisure."  
In Jane Austen in a Social Context. Ed. David  
Monaghan. London: Macmillan, 1984, pp.122-42.
- Odmark, John. An Understanding of Jane Austen's Novels.  
Oxford: Blackwell, 1981.
- Page, Norman. The Language of Jane Austen. Oxford:  
Blackwell, 1972.
- Paul, David. "The Gay Apprentice." The Twentieth  
Century, 156 (1954), 539-50.
- Person, Leland S., Jr. "Playing House: Jane Austen's  
Fabulous Space." Philological Quarterly, 59  
(1980), 62-75.

- Pevsner, Nikolaus. "The Architectural Setting of Jane Austen's Novels." Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 31 (1968), 404-22.
- Plumb, J.H. Men and Places. 1950; rpt. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1966.
- Poovey, Mary. The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Price, Martin. "The Picturesque Moment." In From Sensibility to Romanticism. Ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965.
- Roberts, Warren. Jane Austen and the French Revolution. London: Macmillan, 1979.
- Rubinstein, E. "Jane Austen's Novels: The Metaphor of Rank." In Literary Monographs. Ed. Eric Rothstein and Richard N. Ringler. 2 (1969), 101-93.
- Ruoff, Gene W. "Anne Elliot's Dowry: Reflections on the Ending of Persuasion." The Wordsworth Circle, 7 (Autumn 1976), 342-51.
- Schorer, Mark. "Pride Unprejudiced." Kenyon Review, 18 (Winter 1956), 72-91.
- . "Technique as Discovery." Hudson Review, 1 (1948-49), 67-87.
- Southam, B.C., ed. Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.
- . "Mrs Leavis and Miss Austen: the 'Critical Theory' Reconsidered." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 17 (1962), 21-32.

- . Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts: A Study of the Novelist's Development through the Surviving Papers. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964.
- . "Sanditon: the Seventh Novel." In Jane Austen's Achievement: Papers delivered at the Jane Austen Bicentennial Conference at the University of Alberta. London: Macmillan, 1976, pp.1-25.
- , ed. Jane Austen's 'Sir Charles Grandison.' Foreword by David Cecil. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980.
- Smith, Logan Pearsall. Reperusals and re-collections. London: Constable and Co., 1936.
- Spring, David. "Interpreters of Jane Austen's Social World: Literary Critics and Historians." In Jane Austen: New Perspectives. Women and Literature. NS. Ed. Janet Todd. Vol. III. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983, pp.53-72.
- Stevick, Philip, ed. The Theory of the Novel. New York: Free Press, 1967.
- Stone, Donald. "Sense and Semantics in Jane Austen." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 25 (1970-71), 31-50.
- Tamm, Merike. "Performing Heroicism in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility and Emma." Papers on Language and Literature, 15 (1979), 396-407.
- Tanner, Tony, introd. Sense and Sensibility. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, pp.7-34.
- . "Jane Austen and 'the Quiet Thing': A Study of Mansfield Park." In Critical Essays on Jane Austen. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.

- . "In Between: Anne Elliot Marries a Sailor and Charlotte Heywood Goes to the Seaside." In Jane Austen in a Social Context. Ed. David Monaghan. London: Macmillan, 1984, pp.180-94.
- Tave, Stuart M. Some Words of Jane Austen. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973.
- Trilling, Lionel. "Emma." Encounter, 8 (June 1957), 49-59.
- . "Jane Austen: Mansfield Park." In From Blake to Byron. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature. Ed. Boris Ford. Vol. V. rev. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982, pp.154-71.
- . "A Portrait of Western Man." The Listener 11 June 1953, pp.969-74.
- Tomlinson, T.B. The English Middle-Class Novel. London: Macmillan, 1976.
- Tompkins, J.M.S. The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800. London: Methuen, 1932.
- Tucker, H. "Religion in Jane Austen's Novels." Unisa English Studies, 10 (1972), 7-11.
- Van Ghent, Dorothy. The English Novel: Form and Function. 1953; Harper and Row: New York, 1961.
- Watt, Ian, ed. Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays. Twentieth Century Views. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1963.
- White, Edward M. "Emma and the Parodic Point of View." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 18 (1963), 55-63.
- Wiesenfarth, Joseph. "Persuasion: History and Myth." The Wordsworth Circle, 2 (Autumn 1971), 160-68.

----- . The Errand of Form. New York: Fordham  
Univ. Press, 1967.

Wolff, Robert Lee. Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith  
and Doubt in Victorian England. New York: Garland,  
1977.

Woolf, Virginia. "Jane Austen." In The Common Reader:  
First Series. London: Hogarth Press, 1948, pp.168-83.

Wright, Andrew H. Jane Austen's Novels: A Study in  
Structure. London: Chatto and Windus, 1953.