THE CONCEPT AND PRESENTATION OF LOVE IN JANE AUSTEN

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ABSTRACT

THE CONCEPT AND PRESENTATION OF LOVE IN JANE AUSTEN

Critics of Jane Austen can be divided into three groups. The first group, which includes W. H. Helm, Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern regards Marianne Dashwood as Jane Austen's only passionate heroine. Her other heroines are condemned for their common sense by these critics, who contend that love is an irrational phenomenon. Love and reason, they believe, are mutually exclusive. Jane Austen saw love as a marriage of these two facets of man's being. Aware of its duality, at once both emotional and rational, she saw the inadequacies (and dangers) of "love" which based itself solely on passion. Mr. Bennet is one of Austen's examples of a man who has failed to assess his chosen mate intelligently, and his subsequent life with her demonstrates the deficiency of a concept of love which does not involve use of the mind as well as of the heart. For Jane Austen, "to feel" was not enough. Marianne Dashwood, her so-called "passionate" heroine, is not meant to be admired, but is a satiric target, for Marianne despises any use of reason in the process of falling in love. For Jane Austen, she represents the antithesis of genuine love.

The second group, among them Charlotte Brontë, Virginia Woolf, and Marjory Bald, sees no passion at all in Jane Austen's novels. They are considered to be "dry", "dusty", and superficial, and are said to ignore "[v]ice, adventure, passion." It is undoubtedly the subtlety

of their presentation which has misled the critics. Jane Austen's sensitive artistry precluded a lengthy exposition of feeling. She provides us with the material necessary to complete the picture by suggesting and leading up to the direct expression of emotion, rather than expressing the emotion itself. The presentation is in fact an extension of her concept, for the truly passionate have not the capacity for facile articulation. Intense emotions cannot be easily expressed. The interplay of surface tensions conveys the strong undercurrents of emotion. Jane Austen's evocative technique reveals their existence, but neither she nor her best characters will wallow in the sensational slough which is thought by many to be the proper resting place for the passionate.

The third group, whose first spokesman was Sir Walter Scott, and whose current advocate is Marvin Mudrick, views the marriages of Jane Austen's heroes and heroines as financial mergers, and not as unions of love. Her recognition of the economic pressures operating on her characters is misinterpreted, and seen as endorsement. Jane Austen was, in fact, extremely concerned with the fate of women in her society. Her concern involved a reconsideration of that society's basic values. Jane Fairfax, Miss Bates, and the Watson sisters are some of her sympathetically-treated symbols of the economic and social vulnerability of women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Jane Austen does not believe that personal happiness should be subjected to financial considerations. She does show some of her characters succumbing to economic pressures. But they are censured within the novels, and her most admirable people never capitulate.

Common to all of these groups is a misinterpretation of, or failure to understand, Jane Austen's concept and presentation of love. Using Jane Austen's novels and letters, this paper will attempt to correct the misinterpretations.

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INTRODUCTION

The majority of Austen critics can be divided into three groups. The first group, which includes W.H. Helm, Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern, sees Marianne Dashwood as Jane Austen's only passionate heroine. Jane Austen's other heroines, claims Somerset Maugham, have "no passion in their love. Their inclinations are tempered with prudence and controlled by common sense. Real love has no truck with these estimable qualities."[1] This group severely limits passion by insisting that no rational process can contribute to intensity of emotion.[2] They set off passion and reason against each other, refusing to recognize any possible combination of the two, and propound an all-too prevalent theory that love is an entirely irrational phenomenon. Love and reason, such critics believe, are mutually exclusive.

The second group of critics, among them Charlotte Brontë, Virginia Woolf and Marjory Bald, sees no passion at all in Jane

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1 W. S. Maugham, Ten Novels and Their Authors, London, W. Heinemann Ltd., 1954, p. 59.

2 Sheila Kaye-Smith, in comparing Sense and Sensibility with Persuasion, sees the emotions of the latter as "differently pitched [i.e. much less intense]--they are the emotions of maturity, of intelligence. . . . Comparing the two novels is like comparing the mists of autumn [Persuasion] with an April storm [Sense and Sensibility]. . . ." (from Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern, Talking of Jane Austen, London, Cassell & Co., 1943, p. 197)

Austen's novels. Miss Brontë, incensed by her publisher's suggestion that if she wanted to write well, she should take Jane Austen as her model, peevishly condemned Jane Austen's work.

> She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with the stormy sisterhood. Even to the feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition--too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, . . .--this Miss Austen ignores.[3]

And Virginia Woolf, reiterating Charlotte Brontë's contention, wrote:

> Humbly and gaily she collected the twigs and straws out of which the nest was to be made and placed them neatly together. The twigs and straws were a little dry and a little dusty in themselves . . . . Vice, adventure, passion were left outside. . . . She had all sorts of devices for evading scenes of passion.[4]

The third group, fathered by Sir Walter Scott and currently spearheaded by Marvin Mudrick, with support from Richard Whateley and H.W. Garrod, sees the marriages of Jane Austen's heroes and heroines as financial mergers, and not as unions of love. Mammon, and not Cupid, they believe, is Jane Austen's favourite deity. Jane Austen recognizes economics as a governing force in her society. But recognition does not mean endorsement. These critics, far more snobbish than Jane Austen, chafe at a novel which depicts a marriage

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[3] Charlotte Brontë in a letter to W. S. Williams, included in Discussions of Jane Austen, Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1961, p. 18.

[4] Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader, London, L. & V. Woolf, 1929, p. 175 ff.

between a rich man and a comparatively poor woman. They find it hard to believe that Darcy could be loved because he is Darcy, and not because he has"ten thousand a year." They accept at face value Elizabeth's joking reply to the question as to when she had first begun to love Darcy.

> ". . . I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley." [5]

These critics have overlooked Jane Austen's satiric presentation of those of her characters who seek to marry for pecuniary advantage, among them Tom Musgrove, Isabella and John Thorpe, and the Steele sisters.

Common to all of these groups is a misinterpretation of, or failure to understand, Jane Austen's concept and presentation of love. Using Jane Austen's novels and letters, this paper will attempt to correct the misinterpretations.

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[5] Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1956, p. 279. Page references for Jane Austen's other novels--Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Emma, Mansfield Park, Persuasion--will be to the Early Editions by R. W. Chapman, In Five Volumes, Third Edition, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1933.

CHAPTER I

"WHO EVER LOVED THAT LOVED NOT AT FIRST SIGHT?" (Christopher Marlowe, Hero and Leander)

In order to understand Jane Austen's concept of love, the reader must dispossess himself of any notion that falling in love cannot be a rational process. Love does not preclude reason. Jane Austen, a product of the eighteenth century and living in the nineteenth century, provided a bridge between these worlds. The eighteenth century established the supremacy of reason; the nineteenth century insisted upon the power of passion in its literature. To Jane Austen, no single force assumed ascendancy. Man is not composed only of passion or reason. He is an admixture of both parts. Jane Austen does not propound a divorce between feelings and intellect.[1] To her, love is the product of the marriage of these two facets of man's being. Through use of his intellect, man can enjoy and intensify his feelings. His initial feelings, the result of "first impressions," are replaced by emotions grounded in a knowledge of the beloved. Passion alone is an insufficient basis for love as Elizabeth realizes:

> How Wickham and Lydia were to be supported in tolerable independence, she could not imagine. But how little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue, she could easily conjecture.
> (Pride and Prejudice, p. 232)

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[1] She writes of Edward Ferrars that when his proposal to Elinor is accepted, and sanctioned by Mrs. Dashwood, he "was not only in the rapturous profession of the lover, but in the reality of reason and truth, one of the happiest of men." (Sense and Sensibility, p. 361)

What of the most romantic union in Jane Austen's novels? We find that the participants are "gradually acquainted, and when acquainted, rapidly and deeply in love." (Persuasion, Chapter 4) Their love is based on mutual knowledge. But knowledge does not automatically preclude passion. Love, by definition is

> . . . that disposition or state of feeling with regard to a person which (arising from recognition of attractive qualities) manifests itself in solicitude for the welfare of the object, and usually also in delight in his presence and desire for his approval.[2]

Such a feeling demands some knowledge of its "object."[3] This definition accords perfectly with Elinor Dashwood's love for Edward Ferrars, Knightley's for Emma Woodhouse, and Elizabeth Bennet's feeling for Darcy:

> She became jealous of his esteem, when she could no longer hope to be benefitted by it. She wanted to hear of him, when there seemed the least chance of gaining intelligence. (p. 231f)

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[2] New Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. VI, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, p. 463, 1933.

[3] Laurence Lerner takes exception to this word in the following passage.

> If gratitude and esteem are good foundations of affection, Elizabeth's change of sentiment will be neither improbable nor faulty. But if otherwise, if the regard springing from such sources is unreasonable or unnatural, in comparison of what is so often described as arising on a first interview with its object. . . . (Pride and Prejudice, p. 207)

He queries ". . . why did Jane Austen feel it necessary to call the beloved an object? It's a mild joke to be sure--but why did she feel it necessary to joke?" (from The Truthtellers: Jane Austen, George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, London, Chatto & Windus, 1967, p. 155.)

To my knowledge, the New Oxford Dictionary has never been accused of jocosity.

There are many who believe that a young man, at a vulnerable age,[4] who becomes enamoured of a pretty face without knowing its possessor, is "in love." Love of this sort is nothing more than infatuation. True love does not come so readily: it is found when heart and mind move in tandem. When Jane Austen described the slow, almost imperceptible growth of Emma's love for Knightley, and of Darcy's for Elizabeth, she drew wisely. Jane Austen does not depict her ideal marriage as a consummation of friendship; she admits the necessity of personal attraction, but recognizes that personal attraction is an additional factor, and not the sole essential. All too often, and we have the example of Mr. Bennet before us, personal appearance is of major consequence, and the character behind it is idealized. The subsequent disillusionment is always painful.

Jane Austen shows the reader several unions based on nothing stronger than physical attraction. These are the "imprudent" marriages, according to Jane Austen's use of the word. Mr. Bennet, we are told,

> captivated by youth and beauty and that appearance of good humour which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. (Pride and Prejudice, p. 176)

This is a disappointment "which his own imprudence had brought on. . . ." (p. 177) Mr. Palmer's temper is recognized by Elinor as

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[4]"Three and twenty--a period when, if a man chooses a wife, he generally chooses ill." (Jane Austen, in a letter to Cassandra.)

> a little soured by finding, like many others of his sex, that through some unaccountable bias in favour of beauty, he was the husband of a very silly woman. . . .
> (Sense and Sensibility, p. 112)

Mr. Knightley disagrees with Emma in her insistence that Harriet's "marketable" commodity--her beauty--is what men seek in a wife. Emma asserts:

> . . . till it appears that men are much more philosophic on the subject of beauty than they are generally supposed, till they do fall in love with well-informed minds instead of handsome faces, a girl, with such loveliness as Harriet, has a certainty of being admired and sought after, of having the power of choosing from among many. . . . (p. 63)

Jane Austen was decidedly not of the love-at-first-sight school of sentimentalists. Deriving from no appreciation of the spiritual or mental characteristics of the "beloved," it is based on physical attraction and, as Jane Austen has shown, such a foundation is shaky indeed, for Willoughby is "really handsome," and Wickham has "all the best parts of beauty, a fine countenance." Marianne "disapprove[s]" of Edward Ferrars, contending "there is a something wanting--his figure is not striking; it has none of that grace which I should expect. . . . His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue[5] and intelligence." (Sense and Sensibility, p. 17) Mistakes are possible, even probable, when man chooses a mate according to what his eyes reveal to him.

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[5]If there's one quality Edward has in abundance, it's virtue. Am almost inclined to agree with those critics (among them Mudrick and Ten Harmsel) who find him unbearably good, especially in his honourable insistence on continuing his engagement to Lucy Steele when his heart is engaged elsewhere.

Mr. Bennet discovers this fact--unluckily for him, too late. His daughter Elizabeth is more fortunate. An initial dislike for Darcy is supplanted by a love based on knowledge of his true character, which had been hidden behind a mask of shyness and pride.

> If gratitude and esteem are good foundations of affection, Elizabeth's change of sentiment will be neither improbable nor faulty. But if otherwise, if the regard springing from such sources is unreasonable or unnatural, in comparison of what is so often described as arising on a first interview with its object, and even before two words have been exchanged, nothing can be said in her defense, except that she had given somewhat of a trial to the latter method, in her partiality for Wickham, and that its ill-success might perhaps authorise her to seek the other less interesting mode of attachment.[6]
>
> (Pride and Prejudice, p. 207)

This is not to say that Jane Austen denies the part physical attractiveness plays in the growth of love. Granted, Jane's "sweet face" does much to capture Bingley's heart, but it is interesting to note that the romance in Pride and Prejudice which is of the greatest intensity is marked by Darcy's being singularly unimpressed initially with Elizabeth Bennet, finding her looks only "tolerable." (p. 7) It is only later, when he has come to know her, that he notices her "fine eyes." (p. 19)

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[6] Lerner finds "a resistance to emotion underlying this paragraph." (from Laurence Lerner, The Truthtellers: Jane Austen, George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, London, Chatto & Windus, 1967, p. 155) I find an amusing thrust at those who believe in love at first sight.

To me, there is proof of far greater love in Darcy's feeling for Elizabeth, held despite an awareness of her "inferior connections," than is ever to be found in a relationship such as that which exists between Marianne and Willoughby, who examine each other for nothing more than a mutual "passionate fondness for music and dancing." (Sense and Sensibility, p. 46) In R. Liddell's eyes, Marianne is the only "character in English prose fiction [who] may be said to be convincingly in love. . . ."[7] Lerner is more reasonable, and does not expand his perimeters to embrace all of "English prose fiction", but confines himself to the conviction that Marianne is the only heroine in Jane Austen's novels who is "convincingly in love." He believes "Jane Austen can ridicule the excesses of feeling because she is not greatly attracted by the real thing."[8]

Marianne's love for Willoughby is the most histrionically emotional found anywhere in Jane Austen's novels, but Marianne lacks the depth of character which true passion demands. She is a girl whose heart can be broken merely upon hearing Cowper read "with so little sensibility." (p. 18) This extreme emotional reaction was believed by the romanticists to demonstrate the depth of a hearer's sensitivity, but the same depths are plumbed by "landscapes, music, books, and dancing." (p. 46f) There is no gradation of feeling. Each stimulus produces a stereotyped reaction. We are reminded of

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[7]Robert Liddell, The Novels of Jane Austen, London, Longmans, 1963, p. 19.

[8]Op. cit., p. 151.

Pavlov's dogs. They do not stop to reason, either. They have been conditioned to respond in a prescribed way, and at the sound of the bell they are off and running, salivary glands functioning furiously. Marianne displays the same basic reaction to stimuli. For drawing she feels "rapturous delight" (p. 19), for music "extatic [sic] delight," (p. 35) for her favourite authors a "rapturious delight." (p. 47)

Jane Austen's best characters are seen as a commingling of both reason and passion. She treats some figures as largely governed by reason or passion, but such persons are always censured within the context of her novels. Miss Austen does not recommend the coldly rational approach to life. She shares Anne Elliot's reaction to it.

> She felt that she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped. (Persuasion, p.161)

And Mr. Bennet, an early victim of passion in choosing a wife, is condemned for his subsequent misuse of reason in attempting to adjust to his initial mistake.

Jane Austen does feel, however, that the passionate characters offer more of a threat to society, since they recognize no limits to behaviour. Self is advanced, and at the expense of others if necessary. The harm done is, in almost every instance, unconsciously inflicted. Thus the ambiguity of the "sensitive" people is revealed.

The "sensitivity" rarely extends beyond the perimeter of self.[9]

Marianne's insistence on freedom of expression, which involves flaunting of social courtesies, is frequently a source of pain and embarrassment for Elinor. On one occasion, when Mrs. Jennings is inquiring as to the identity of Elinor's "particular favourite," Marianne "[does] more harm than good to the cause, by turning very red, and saying in an angry manner to Margaret,

> 'Remember that whatever your conjectures may be, you have no right to repeat them.'
> 'I never had any conjectures about it,' replies Margaret; 'it was you who told me of it yourself.'"
> (Sense and Sensibility, p. 61)

And on another, when Mrs. Ferrars commends Miss Morton's landscape, Marianne again indulges her emotions at her sister's expense.

> Marianne could not bear this.--She was already greatly displeased with Mrs. Ferrars; and . . . [said] with warmth,
>
> "This is admiration of a very particular kind!--what is Miss Morton to us?--who knows, or who cares, for her?--it is Elinor of whom we think and speak." . . .
>
> Elinor was much more hurt by Marianne's warmth, than she had been by what produced it; but Colonel Brandon's eyes, as they were fixed on Marianne, declared that he noticed only what was amiable in it. . . .

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[9] Laura refuses to visit and succour her "beloved Augustus" in prison because "[her] feelings are sufficiently shocked by the recital of his Distress, but to behold it [would] overpower [her] Sensibility." (from Love and Freindship and Other Early Works [Printed from the Original Ms. by Jane Austen], London, Chatto & Windus, 1922, p. 20)

But, we are told,

> Marianne's feelings did not stop here. . . . She moved, after a moment, to her sister's chair, and . . . said
>
> "Dear, dear Elinor, don't mind them. Don't let them make you unhappy."
>
> She could say no more; her spirits were quite overcome, and hiding her face on Elinor's shoulder, she burst into tears. (pp. 235-6)

This brief incident also subtly reveals Marianne's unswerving first concern--that which she feels for herself,--for her consolation of Elinor is truncated when her mind returns to her own problems (i.e. "you"--as well as me). Only then is she moved to tears. And, with the most delightfully ironic master-stroke, we are shown Marianne and Willoughby, proponents of passion, living by a code completely cold-blooded, ensuring their comfort by exploiting the "reasonable" folk, who are blinded by the sparks which fly from them. Jane Austen is too honest not to concede their appeal, for her "passionate" characters (among them Mary Crawford, Marianne, Willoughby, Wickham) are shown to dazzle their less flamboyant peers. This honesty has been misinterpreted by some critics. Mudrick's conclusion from Elinor's reaction to Willoughby after his confession, when we are told that

> She felt that his influence over her mind was heightened by circumstances which ought not in reason to have weight; by that person of uncommon attraction, that open, affectionate, and lively manner. . . . But she felt that it was so long, long before she could feel his influence less. (p. 333)

is that we are witnessing "Elinor--and presumably the author--almost in love, and quite amorally in love, with him. . . . Through the flagrant inconsistency of her heroine Jane Austen is herself revealed

in a posture of yearning for the impossible and lost, the passionate and beautiful hero, the absolute lover."[10] One presumes he would impute the same "posture" to Elizabeth Bennet, since she states, while commenting on Wickham's appalling behaviour,

> ". . . we all know that Wickham has every charm of person and address that can captivate a woman."
> (Pride and Prejudice, p. 210)

W. H. Helm sees Elinor in this scene as "a pioneer of that school of sociology which whitewashes the individual at the expense of his early invironment and education."[11] I doubt whether Jane Austen intended this interpretation; as when she describes Edmund's account of his final meeting with Mary Crawford, she meant to suggest the magnetic attraction of her "villains."

> "I resisted--it was the impulse of the moment to resist--and still walked on. I have since, sometimes, for a moment, regretted that I did not go back; but I know I was right."
> (Mansfield Park, p. 461)

Edward "did not go back," but for Mary there will be many other "Edwards." Her possibilities for exploitation are almost limitless.

To ensure personal comfort and continued self-indulgence, the passionate will employ any means, from "gracefully purloining money from an unworthy father's escritoire" (p. 18) to marrying a man "who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waitcoat!" (Sense and Sensibility, p. 378) Elizabeth Jenkins notes the alacrity

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[10] Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1952, p. 85.

[11] W. H. Helm, Jane Austen and her Country-House Comedy, London, Fawside House, 1909, p. 147.

with which Marianne accepts Mrs. Jennings' invitation to stay with her in London. Marianne, "thoroughly acquainted with Mrs. Jennings' manners, and thoroughly disgusted by them, [can] overlook every inconvenience of that kind. . . ." (p. 155)

> "If Elinor is frightened away by her dislike of Mrs. Jennings," said Marianne, "at least it need not prevent my accepting her invitation. I have no such scruples, and I am sure, I could put up with every unpleasantness of that kind with very little effort."

Elinor (and Jane Austen)

> [can] not help smiling at this display of indifference towards the manners of a person, to whom she had often had difficulty in persuading Marianne to behave with tolerable politeness. (p. 156)

Since she does "not think it proper that . . . Mrs. Jennings should be abandoned to the mercy of Marianne for all the comfort of her domestic hours," (p. 157) Elinor agrees to accompany her sister. Marianne will use Mrs. Jennings as a means of seeing Willoughby, but will not accord her even "civility." (p. 160)

It is for this reason that sensibility receives

the treatment it does at the hands of Jane Austen. For sensibility entails self-expression. The word to note here is "self." It involves the assertion of "I am" at the expense of "thou art." "The world" is only recognized when its forces react against the impenetrable, largely impervious "self." This attitude is treated satirically in Jane Austen's "Juvenilia," and specifically in Love and Freindship. The four passionate lovers live in an idyllic state on funds "gracefully purloined from an unworthy [i.e. insensitive] father's escritoire." (p. 18) They have informed all neighbours that "as their Happiness center[s] wholly in themselves, they [wish] for no other Society." (p. 17) In their search for self-gratification, the passionate cannot--or will not--recognize social forms, since these represent in some instances a limitation of the pleasure which can accrue to self.

In Jane Austen's novels we are made aware of the social setting: the couple must correlate their social responsibilities with their personal desires. They cannot dash off to London when they are attracted to each other, but must come to know one another through social intercourse, and must proceed through prescribed channels. Failure to do so results in chaos,--witness the Lydia-Wickham, Henry Crawford-Julia Bertram episodes. Such affairs, based on fleeting emotions, are shown to be short-lived. The Lydia-Wickham union is cemented by money, not by love between its members.

Of Anne Elliot Miss Austen says, "she had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older. . . . (Persuasion, p. 30) Love has more significance when it is seen

as an expanding process, a process which involves self-discovery in its progression. All of Jane Austen's heroines are seen to reach self-awareness through an increasing awareness of others. They must question themselves in order to ascertain their ability to stand the scrutiny of the beloved. Her best characters are too honest not to admit where they fall short; this includes even the supremely assured Miss Emma Woodhouse. To Jane Austen, the ultimate command was "Know thyself," for only then could one hope to understand others. It is a code which admits no artifice, no partial truths, a rigid code. One might call it "a perpendicular, precise, . . . unbending"[12] code.

According to Mr. Southam, in the last of the "Juvenilia" (1792-3) Jane Austen was concerned "in particular . . . with the testing situations of love and marriage."[13] His use of the word "testing" is good, as it conveys Jane Austen's conviction that love does involve an evaluation, both internal and external, of an individual's merits. Elizabeth Bennet speaks of love as "that pure and elevating passion." (Pride and Prejudice, p. 114) The adjective "elevating" is significant. When Jane Austen's heroines fall in love, they are indeed "elevated"; it is then that they submit themselves to a thorough self-scrutiny, and determine to correct their faults in order to be worthy of the men they love.

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[12]Adjectives applied to Jane Austen by an anonymous friend of Miss Mitford, cited in the latter's Recollections of a Literary Life and quoted by Elizabeth Jenkins in Jane Austen, New York, Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1949, p. 366.

[13]B. C. Southam, Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 30.

Self-love was one form of love which Jane Austen despised. It is interesting to note that Marianne's attitude to love is diametrically opposed to the belief in the need for self-improvement of Jane Austen's heroines. When she thinks that Elinor will soon marry Edward, she remarks that in the interim prior to the nuptials

> ". . . Edward will have greater opportunity of improving that natural taste for your favourite pursuit which must be so indispensably necessary for your future felicity. Oh! if he should be so far stimulated by your genius as to learn to draw himself, how delightful it would be!" (Sense and Sensibility, p. 22)

That is, Edward must alter himself to suit Elinor. This is of a piece with Marianne's insistence that

> "I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings; the same books, the same music must charm us both." (p. 17)

Marianne, looking out from the unassailable fortress of "self," will judge others. It never occurs to her that there should be a reciprocal arrangement. She does not question her own worthiness as an object of love, but instead examines the worthiness of others, which to her is ascertained only by their sensitivity, or lack of it.

> For Marianne, sensitivity--or, in the idiom of her time, sensibility--is a large quality. . . . She is sure that she has it; and her mother, and Elinor (probably, though Marianne has occasional sharp doubts), and Willoughby. She will settle for nothing less, she regards anything less with impatience and contempt.[14]

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[14]Mudrick, p. 75.

Mudrick concurs with her judgment. Willoughby, he states, "represents feeling . . . Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon represent the antidote to feeling, the proposition that the only cure for a passionate heart is to remove it."[15] And what, we may ask, constitutes "a passionate heart"? Is the man who speaks most loudly of his love to be taken at his word as feeling most? Has Willoughby given any tangible proof of love for Marianne? His "dog in the manger" reaction to the news of Marianne's forthcoming marriage will hardly suffice as a cry for lost love: it is not the loss of Marianne he is deploring, but the fact that "she will be gained by someone else." (p. 332) Is a passionate heart one which speaks with "expression"? Is inarticulateness to be taken as proof of lack of feeling? Surely it is an indication of more intense feeling, so intense that it has not the power of facile speech. As to the strength of Colonel Brandon's attachment for Marianne, that of a man who "has read, and has a thinking mind, . . . a sensible man," (p. 51) it must be very great indeed, for reason would never lead him to choose such a partner, in view of their respective "ages, characters, or feelings." (p. 336) He remains faithfully in love with Marianne through two years, years in which he sees her love for another man, a man whom he knows to be a gross knave, and is himself looked upon

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15 Loc. cit. He further contends that Jane Austen believes "not merely false feeling, but feeling itself is bad. . . . because it is a personal commitment" (p. 90-91) Are we to assume then that Jane Austen disapproved of Darcy for his very great "personal commitment" to Elizabeth, which led him to involve himself in her family's problems?

"occasionally" with a "pitying eye." (p. 216) He sees her jilted and her subsequent deterioration--and still he loves Marianne. Now let us turn to an examination of the "man of feeling" in Sense and Sensibility.

Confronted by Mrs. Smith with his despicable past behaviour and disinherited, the "passionate" Willoughby requires but a single night in which to decide upon abandoning Marianne in favour of a wealthy young woman of whom he later says, "I had no regard for her when we married." (p. 329) And why does he further torment Marianne by going himself to announce his sudden departure, as Elinor asks reproachfully, adding "a note would have answered every purpose.--Why was it necessary to call?" Willoughby replies "It was necessary to my own pride. I could not bear to leave the country in a manner that might lead you, or the rest of the neighbourhood, to suspect any part of what had really passed between Mrs. Smith and myself. . . ." (p. 324) Mudrick calls Willoughby a "sensitive young person."[16] Sensitive to what? Only to his own feelings, we realize.

And Marianne says, "I could not be happy with a man whose tastes did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings. . . ." (p. 17) for Marianne

> expected from other people the same opinions and feelings has her own, and she judged of their motives by the immediate effect of their actions on herself. (p. 202)

Willoughby is therefore the man for Marianne. From the first meeting

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[16]Mudrick, p. 79.

> . . . their taste was strikingly alike. The same books, the same passages were idolized by each--or if any difference appeared, any objection arose, it lasted no longer than till the force of her arguments and the brightness of her eyes could be displayed. He acquiesced in all her decisions, caught all her enthusiasm; and long before his visit concluded, they conversed with the familiarity of a long-established acquaintance. (p. 47)

"With the familiarity of a long-established acquaintance"--for the simple reason that Marianne has found an echo for her own theories, and an echo may be relied upon to say only what its originator says. Marianne does not know Willoughby any better; she has merely had herself reaffirmed. Willoughby serves as the medium for self-idolatry. Marianne is able to worship at the altar of her own sensibility; she has found a willing novitiate. She cannot understand Willoughby's subsequent defection. Nor can she conceive of any flaw in her own godhead to account for his withdrawal, and asks herself,

> "Whom did I ever hear him talk of as young and attractive among his female acquaintance?--Oh! no one, no one--he talked to me only of myself." (p. 190)

Loss of such a loyal acolyte must be painful indeed for Marianne!

There has been much critical comment on Marianne's "conversion" and correction. Its climax is said to come in the scene involving Elinor's revelation to her sister of her months of unhappiness. Marianne is amazed when Elinor openly reveals the anguish she has endured. So might the reader be, for should not a creature of such quivering sensibility as Marianne have been able to discern Elinor's torment? We are even told that Elinor "once or twice [has] attempted" (p. 262)

to discuss it, but such efforts went unnoticed. Marianne, incapable of either fathoming or recognizing her sister's intensity of emotion, chooses to disbelieve that Elinor "ever felt much." (p. 263) When Elinor is able to disabuse her of this misconception, Marianne offers a "confession," replete, one notes, with her favourite personal pronoun.

> "Oh! Elinor," she cried, "you have made me hate myself for ever.--How barbarous have I been to you!--you, who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me!--Is this my gratitude!--Is this the only return I can make you?--Because your merit cries out upon myself, I have been trying to do it away." (p. 264)[17]

Ten Harmsel feels that Marianne has "come of age" in this passage.

> The climax in her changing attitude comes, however, when she has heard of her sister's great sorrow. . . .[18]

She "perform[s] her promise of being discreet" and we are told

> She listened to [Mrs. Jennings'] praise of Lucy with only moving from one chair to another, and when Mrs. Jennings talked of Edward's affection, it cost her only a spasm in her throat.--Such advances towards heroism in her sister made Elinor feel equal to any thing herself. (p. 265)

The wryness of the last statement interferes with the theory that Jane Austen intended to show the successful conversion of Marianne. She is seen to mellow somewhat, and comes to feel "earnestly grateful" (p. 341) to Mrs. Jennings, but Elinor observes that Marianne continues

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[17] My italics.

[18] Henrietta Ten Harmsel, Jane Austen: A Study in Fictional Conventions, The Hague, Mouton & Co., 1964, p. 46.

"introducing excess" (p. 343), albeit into her resolutions for self-improvement. Jane Austen brings this characteristic to our attention at the end of the book in observing

> . . . instead of remaining even for ever with her mother, and finding her only pleasures in retirement and study, as afterwards in her more calm and sober judgment she had determined on,--she found herself at nineteen submitting to new attachments, . . . a wife, the mistress of a family. . . . (p. 379)

Marianne's resolve to be forever secluded and celibate, the result of her "more calm and sober judgement," reveals the same excessive nature she showed at the outset of the novel. In the midst of Marianne's "transition," Jane Austen again reminds us, through Mrs. Dashwood, that Elinor has been "suffering almost as much, certainly with less self-provocation, and greater fortitude."[19] (p. 356) The italicized words are a reminder of Marianne's attempts to keep her emotions at a high pitch.

When Marianne receives Willoughby's letter, Lerner concedes that

> here for once Elinor's grief seems the more genuine of the two: it is Marianne who uses rhetoric, Elinor who is presented in the physical immediacy of her sorrow.

But he undercuts this admission.

> . . . even this probably does her less good than it should in our eyes: for it is not her own grief that is in question, but her sharing of Marianne's. . . .[20]

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[19] My italics.

[20] Op. cit., p. 166.

I cannot fathom this logic, for surely if Elinor's "once-removed" grief is more deeply felt than Marianne's, then it is Marianne's capacity for intense emotion which is "in question." Indeed, her "rhetoric" is reminiscent of Laura's speeches in Love and Freindship.

> ". . . leave me, leave me, if I distress you; leave me, hate me, forget me! but do not torture me so."
> (Sense and Sensibility, p. 185)

Continuing to parse her sentences correctly, Marianne claims, "But I cannot talk." (p. 186) Miraculously restored to the power of speech by the time Elinor has read her sister's three notes to Willoughby, Marianne goes on to give an admirably coherent account of her relationship with him. (pp. 188-9)

There are some critics (Mudrick, Ten Harmsel among them) who assert that Jane Austen, despite herself,[21] made Marianne a delightful creature. Lerner contends that the character of Marianne Dashwood "threaten[s] to escape from [her] creator's rein."[22] I suggest that Jane Austen's favourable descriptions of her--i.e. "Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. . . . She was generous, amiable, interesting. . . ." (p. 6)--were at attempt to avoid the overt satire of an earlier work,

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[21] Lascelles' account of Jane Austen's painstaking revisions and reworkings of her novels surely disproves any chance of "accident" in Austen's presentation of her characters.

[22] Op. cit., p. 157.

Love and Freindship, which also zeroed in on sensibility as a target. We know that Elinor and Marianne, an earlier version of Sense and Sensibility, was the first novel Jane Austen wrote after Love and Freindship. The difference in satiric technique in these novels shows the transition from blatant to latent irony.

Sense and Sensibility concludes with the author's statement,

> Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen,[23] and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another!--and that other, a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event of a former attachment, whom, two years before, she had considered too old to be married,--and who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat! (Sense and Sensibility, p. 378)

Lerner objects:

> The tone of this, surely, is not quite right: the tone, or its content. "No sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship": does Jane Austen then not believe in love? . . . And that last old-maidish joke about the flannel waistcoat: can we not hear too audibly the relief that marriage is not going to contain anything excessive, anything violent, anything common?[24]

He goes on:

> Yet on its own the paragraph is not likely to jar; and it would not jar if we turned straight to it after reading the first eight chapters.[25]

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[23]My italics. The intensity of her love--"affection"--and her capacity for it--her age--are challenged.

[24]Op. cit., p. 161. This is not Lerner's first description of Jane Austen as "old-maidish." He appears to be so steeped in "D. H. Lawrencism" that he is convinced that an unmarried woman must either be frigid or a veritable cauldron of bubbling repressions.

[25]Loc. cit.

I would attach the adverb "closely" to the end of the above quotation. Marianne, not Jane Austen, spoke of "flannel waistcoats" in Chapter VIII. Colonel Brandon's capacity for potency (I assume this is what is implied by the Lawrencian adjectives "excessive", "violent") is not at issue: Jane Austen is reminding the reader of Marianne's assessment of Colonel Brandon as "old enough to be [her] father" (p. 37) and incapable of inspiring love. She insists

> ". . . thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony."

Elinor's reply is noteworthy.

> "Perhaps thirty-five and seventeen had better not have any thing to do with matrimony together. But if there should by any chance happen to be a woman who is single at seven and twenty, I should not think Colonel Brandon's being thirty-five any objection to his marrying her." (pp. 37-8)

Marianne's opinion of such a union is contemptuous. The reader of Sense and Sensibility is inclined to be more moderate in response to the marriage which, as described by Marianne at the beginning of the book, is her "fate" at the end of it.

> ". . . if her home be uncomfortable, or her fortune small, I can suppose that she might bring herself to submit to the offices of a nurse, for the sake of the provision and security of a wife. In his marrying such a woman therefore there would be nothing unsuitable. It would be a compact of convenience, and the world would be satisfied. In my eyes it would be no marriage at all, but that would be nothing. To me it would seem only a commercial exchange, in which each wished to be benefitted at the expense of the other." (p. 38)

The verb "submit" is crucial, for it connotes passivity. In turning to the account of Marianne's marriage we read:

> Mrs. Dashwood was acting on motives of policy . . . for her wish of bringing Marianne and Colonel Brandon together was hardly less earnest, though rather more liberal than what John had expressed. . . . and to see Marianne settled at the mansion-house was equally the wish of Edward and Elinor. They each felt his sorrows, and their own obligations, and Marianne, by general consent, was to be the reward of all. . . .
>
> Instead of falling a sacrifice to an irresistible passion . . . she found herself at nineteen submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, . . . and the patroness of a village. (pp. 378-9)[26]

Ten Harmsel agrees with Mudrick that "Marianne, the life and center of the novel, has been betrayed; and not by Willoughby."[27] Ten Harmsel also notes, without understanding its significance, that Jane Austen "subjects none of her other heroines to such an ending--each one finally wins her first and only true love. . . ."[28] The fact that Marianne recants her love for Willoughby, and embarks on a loveless (on her part) marriage, is overlooked. The reader, in assessing the character of Marianne, must ask himself--"Could Elizabeth Bennet, or Fanny Price, or Anne Elliot (I omit Emma Woodhouse, since she has no economic pressures) have been prevailed upon to marry without love?" They could not.

Mudrick has said of the central character in Love and Freindship,

> The only difference between Laura before and Laura after conversion [supposedly from sensibility] . . . is the quality of discretion. . . .[29]

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[26] My italics.

[27] Mudrick, op. cit., p. 93.

[28] Ten Harmsel, op. cit., p. 47.

[29] Mudrick, op. cit., p. 17.

In view of the conclusion of Sense and Sensibility, I suggest that the same could be said of Marianne.

The recognition of social responsibilities by Jane Austen's heroes and heroines has often been misconstrued. Because their love is not immediate, but is a result of frequent social intercourse, because their encounters are not trysts, but take place in drawing rooms with others present, it is assumed that there can be no intensity of emotion in their feelings for each other. The "isolation policy" practiced by Marianne and Willoughby (and by the principal couples in Love and Freindship) is assumed to be proof of this intensity. Elinor wishes "their attachment . . . were less openly shewn", but for Marianne, "to aim at the restraint of sentiments . . . appeared to her . . . an unnecessary effort. . . ." (p. 53) And so

> [illegible] when [Willoughby] was present she had no eyes for any one else. . . . If dancing formed the amusement of the night, they were partners for half the time; and when obliged to separate for a couple of dances, were careful to stand together and scarcely spoke a word to any one else. (pp. 53-4)

For Jane Austen's opinion of this disinclination to observe the amenities as proof of passion we can turn to Pride and Prejudice, for Mrs. Bennet's assessment of the "violence" of Bingley's love for Jane.

> "He was growing quite inattentive to other people, and wholly engrossed by her. . . . At his own ball he offended two or three young ladies, by not asking them to dance, and I spoke to him twice myself, without receiving an answer. Could there be finer symptoms? Is not general incivility the very essence of love?" (p. 107)

Maugham appears to agree with her, for he comments in Ten Novels and Their Authors[30],

> I do not believe that Miss Austen was capable of being very much in love. If she had been, she would surely have attributed to her heroines a greater warmth of emotion than in fact she did. There is no passion in their love. Their inclinations are tempered with prudence and controlled by common sense. Real love has no truck with these estimable qualities.

It would appear that Mr. Maugham will not allow any cerebral considerations into the process of "falling in love." One may not choose wisely and well:[31] one must simply choose.

In Persuasion Jane Austen treats the conflict between two sets of values--those of prudence and those of love--more intensively than in any of her other novels. Anne's reconciliation with Wentworth does not arise from a resolution of these opposites, but from a series of fortuitous occurrences which make their union possible after all. Not even at the end of the book does Anne abandon her commitment to the prudential values, for, as she and Jane Austen realize, they cannot be ignored. Maugham feels that "one may wish that Anne were a little less matter-of-fact, . . . a little more impulsive. . . ."[32] Helm concurs, and faults Anne for having "kept her feelings under the most perfect control. . . ."[33]

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[30] London, W. Heinemann Ltd., 1954, p. 59.

[31] Maugham would have preferred "to see [Anne Elliot] marry [Mr. Elliot] rather than the stodgy Captain Wentworth." (Ibid., p. 67)

[32] Ibid., p. 63.

[33] Helm, op. cit., p. 163.

Marianne, who certainly can not be accused by Mr. Maugham as are Jane Austen's other heroines, of "prudence," is fully prepared to enter the marriage state having, as Elinor puts it,

> ". . . already ascertained Mr. Willoughby's opinion in almost every matter of importance. You know what he thinks of Cowper and Scott; you are certain of his estimating their beauties as he ought, and you have received every assurance of his admiring Pope no more than is proper. . . . Another meeting will suffice to explain his sentiments on picturesque beauty, and second marriages, and then you can have nothing further to ask." (Sense and Sensibility, p. 47)

G. B. Stern endorses this ironical remark in stating that she "would rather have seen Marianne married to Willoughby (a rejoicing widower) than mistress of Delaford and wife of Colonel Wet-Blanket."[34]

I submit that much of the unhappiness in contemporary marriages arises from a refusal to view love as Jane Austen viewed it, a union of mind and heart. The necessity for mutual knowledge between marriage partners is denied by Charlotte Lucas.

> "I wish Jane success with all my heart; and if she were married to him tomorrow, I should think she had as good a chance of happiness, as if she were to be studying his character for a twelvemonth. Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other, or ever so similar before-hand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. . . . It is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life."

Elizabeth (and Jane Austen) reply:

> "You make me laugh, Charlotte; but it is not sound. You know it is not sound. . . ." (Pride and Prejudice, p. 16)

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[34]Kaye-Smith and Stern, Talking of Jane Austen, p. 122.

CHAPTER II

"I DO NOT WRITE FOR SUCH DULL ELVES
AS HAVE NOT A GREAT DEAL OF INGENUITY THEMSELVES."
(Jane Austen, from a letter to Cassandra)

In discussing Jane Austen's attitude to love, it becomes necessary to prove that there are accounts of love in her novels. Several critics can see no "passion" in her books. Lionel Stevenson asserts:

> The absence of passion is a . . . limitation, since the dominant theme of all her novels is love. She is so suspicious of emotion that when a scene of strong feeling is imperative she tries to avoid narrating it.[1]

Jane Austen's finesse in describing her heroines' love for the men of their choice perhaps accounts for many readers' failure to recognize that love is being described. In Emma, the heroine suddenly realizes "that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!" (p. 408) The punctuation suggests Emma's intensity of emotion, as it does again in her miserable outburst, "Oh God! that I had never seen her" (p. 411), when she believes that she has lost Knightley to Harriet.

Another subtle method of indicating emotion employed by Jane Austen is the description of weather. When Emma fears that she can never have Knightley, Jane Austen comments,

> The evening of this day was very long, and melancholy, at Hartfield. The weather added what it could of gloom. A cold stormy rain set in, and nothing of July appeared but in the trees and shrubs, which the wind was despoiling,

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[1] Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel: A Panorama, London, Constable & Co. Ltd., 1960, p. 189.

> and the length of the day, which only made such cruel sights the longer visible. (p. 421)

It is unlikely that the realistic Miss Austen endorsed the "pathetic fallacy," as Reginald Farrer suggests. Her description of weather here has a function. And that function is to mirror the heroine's state of mind.

The subtle growth of Darcy's love for Elizabeth is handled magnificently. The progress of his attachment is revealed in such passages as these:

> No sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes.
> (Pride and Prejudice, p. 16)

We note that even this early in the book Darcy must work to "make it clear to himself": already he is fighting an attraction he feels toward Elizabeth.

> . . . Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger. (p. 38)

> . . . they went down the other dance and parted in silence; on each side dissatisfied, though not to an equal degree, for in Darcy's breast there was a tolerable powerful feeling towards her, which soon procured her pardon, and directed all his anger against another. (p. 71)

At times, Darcy is even less conscious of his feelings for Elizabeth. When Elizabeth is at Netherfield, Caroline Bingley, more aware of Darcy's interest than either Darcy or Elizabeth is, and "desperate" (p. 41) to obtain the former's attention, asks Elizabeth to join her and "take a turn about the room."

> Elizabeth was surprised, but agreed to it immediately. Miss Bingley succeeded no less in the real object of her civility; Mr. Darcy looked up . . . and unconsciously closed his book. (p. 41)

In the ensuing conversation he speaks only to Elizabeth, and appears unaware of Miss Bingley's intrusions. It is only "after a few moments recollection" that he "begins to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention." (p. 43)

The signs of his growing love are clear. He and Elizabeth are unaware of them, but the omniscient reader can see them all. They are implicit rather than explicit; unfortunately, the subtlety of their presentation has all too often been lost upon Austen critics.

The sensitive artistry of Jane Austen forbade a lengthy exposition of feeling. Aware of the subjectivity of feeling, she conveyed, rather than crucified, the emotions which moved her characters. Not for Jane Austen the merciless dissection of innermost thoughts. Analysis meant annihilation. For Jane Austen expected of her readers what Charlotte Brontë could never dare. She expected them to see beneath her words to the soul beneath.

> I do not write for such dull elves [2]
> As have not a great deal of ingenuity themselves.
> (Chawton: Friday [January 29, 1813])

Jane Austen suggests and leads up to the direct expression of emotion rather than express the emotion itself. The climax, the moment in which the lovers make a mutual profession of love, is not protracted, but rather, concentrated into "one brief flash of speech

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[2] William and Richard A. Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen--Her Life and Letters, a Family Record. London, Smith Elder, 1913, p. 261.

or writing."[3] The participants feel deeply, but proffer no extensive articulation of emotion. Intensity of feeling, Jane Austen realizes, precludes glibness. Frank Churchill is a great talker: Mr. Knightley, when proposing, tells Emma,

> "I cannot make speeches, Emma. If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more." (Emma, p. 430)

The absence of lengthy love scenes, condemned as a fault in Jane Austen's novels, is justified by Knightley's statement. As Jane Austen knew, the capacity for facile articulation of love all too often betokened a lack of intensity of emotion. Willoughby, Isabella Thorpe, Tom Musgrove, Mr. Collins--all of these characters "talk up a storm." But as Jane Austen reveals, their speeches are all

> Full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing.

Willoughby tells Elinor that in London, "with [his] head and heart full of [Marianne, he] was forced to play the happy lover to another woman!" (Sense and Sensibility, p. 327) In all seriousness, he seeks sympathy on the grounds of an overwhelming passion--a passion which in the next breath he shows himself to have supplanted with his supreme passion, self-love. Willoughby parades one of the characteristics of the sentimental lover in a further attempt to mitigate his scurrilous rejection of Marianne.

> "Her three notes--unluckily they were all in my pocketbook or I should have denied their existence and hoarded them forever.--I was forced to put them up, and could not even kiss them. And the lock of hair--that too I had always carried about me in the same pocketbook, . . . the dear lock--all, every memento was torn from me." (Sense and Sensibility, p. 329)

The self-pitying tone in which Willoughby recounts the loss of the

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[3] F. W. Bradbrook, Jane Austen: Emma, London, Edward Arnold, 1961, p.15.

mementos whose possession is supposed to establish the depth of the love he feels for Marianne grates painfully on the reader's ear. So this is love--a two-faced Janus, with one hand loath to part with relics while the other pens a note which will cut to the heart the source of these same relics.

Willoughby has won over several critics with his confession to Elinor. Here he is believed to be expressing real torment and love for Marianne. For purposes of emphasis, the words referring to himself are underlined. It will be clear that Willoughby's thoughts, even in retrospect, center on Willoughby.

> "What a sweet figure I cut!--what an evening of agony it was! --Marianne, beautiful as an angel on one side, calling me Willoughby in such a tone!--Oh! God! holding out her hand to me, asking me for an explanation with those bewitching eyes fixed in such speaking solicitude on my face!--and Sophia, jealous as the devil on the other hand, looking all that was--. . . Such an evening!--I ran away from you all as soon as I could; but not before I had seen Marianne's sweet face as white as death." (p. 327)

The recognition of Marianne's "sweet face as white as death," we note, does not summon an exclamation mark. Only Willoughby's account of the evening's unpleasantness for him is crowned with superlative punctuation.

Most readers appreciate a physical description of the main character placed near the beginning of a novel. We like to "see" the figure before us. But to similarly limit by description the boundaries of a character's emotions is to limit his scope. The suspense which sustains the plot in Persuasion acts as a medium through which we share the emotional experiences of Anne Elliot. We have been given an account of the attachment between Anne and

Captain Wentworth.

> They were gradually acquainted, and when acquainted, rapidly and deeply in love. It would be difficult to say which had seen highest perfection in the other, or which had been the happiest,--she, in receiving his declarations and proposals, or he in having them accepted.
>
> A short period of exquisite felicity followed, and but a short one. (p. 26)

In these brief words we can feel all the poignancy and tenderness of their mutual love. We know the pain which the termination of their "short period of exquisite felicity" brought to both. We already are aware that Anne still loves Wentworth, for upon hearing a casual allusion to him, Anne

> left the room, to seek the comfort of cool air for her flushed cheeks; and as she walked along a favourite grove, said, with a gentle sigh, "A few months more, and he, perhaps, may be walking here." (p. 25)

"A favourite grove"--it is easy to imagine that it might well have been the scene of former happy rendezvous between the young lovers. Now all that remains to be known is the state of Captain Wentworth's present feelings. But we, and Anne, must wait until the end of the book for conclusive proof of his love. We live with her, and share the agonies of enduring his "cold politeness, his ceremonious grace." (p. 72) When she is in the same room with him, Anne suffers "agitation, pain, pleasure, a something between delight and misery." (p. 175) When we are told that "she felt a hundred things in a moment," we do not require an itemized account of each one to understand the wealth of emotion welling up in her heart. Anne is deeply, completely in love. Holding no prejudice against "second attachments," her love is nevertheless "his for ever." (p. 192)

Anne's impassioned conversation with Captain Harville (in

Chapter 33), conducted rationally and in a low voice, is deeply emotional. There are none of the hyper-exclamatory phrases of a Marianne Dashwood, but no one could deny the intensity behind the words

> "All the privilege I claim for my own sex . . . is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone." (p. 235)

For those who require a resumé of what "the human heart in its heaving breast" is doing in order to understand what Anne Elliot is feeling, Miss Austen gives us the statement

> She could not immediately have uttered another sentence; her heart was too full, her breath too much oppressed. (p. 235)

Here is the "stormy Sisterhood" surely. And when Anne, upon termination of the conversation, sees Wentworth leave the room "without a word or a look" and then return almost immediately to place in her hands a letter, and fix upon her "eyes of glowing entreaty," we do not need to be told more than that

> the revolution which one instant had made in Anne, was <u>almost beyond expression</u>. (p. 237) (my italics)

It does not require expression. We <u>feel</u> it, as Anne feels it. To subject such sensitive gradations of emotion to analysis would be to destroy their essence. We have been given the materials necessary to complete the pattern of feeling.

When Anne and Wentworth meet in the street in Bath and are suddenly aware that their love is still mutual, they keep their "smiles reined in and spirits dancing in private rapture." (p. 240) They do not catapult into each other's arms and shriek in ecstasy, but their failure to do so does not diminish the passion which they feel. When Elinor learns that Edward Ferrars is, after all, free to

marry her, we are told that she "almost ran out of the room, and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy." (p. 360) Ian Watt makes the appropriate comment.

> The joy was not less intense because Elinor remembered that ladies do not run, and that they always shut the door. But Elinor's sense involves much more than prudent reticence and a regard for the forms of social decorum; these may be its surface expression, but its essence is fidelity to the inward discriminations of both the head and the heart.[4]

And the "exquisite happiness" shared by Anne and Wentworth is greater, not less, for being "more fixed in a knowledge of each other's character, truth, and attachment. . . ." (p. 241)

With Jane Austen, each reader can feel for himself (and thus feel with more awareness) the nature of emotion, not emotion sedulously delineated by the obtrusive, omniscient author, but emotion conveyed, suggested, frequently by a single word. Examples of this evocative technique are legion. In Persuasion, Anne Elliot is confronted for the first time by the man she had been persuaded to give up eight years previously. She does not pour forth a passionate soliloquy after rushing distractedly from the room. And yet we see her suffering, we understand the fulness which wells up inside her, the sense of almost dizzy awareness of everything around her, in the statement "The room seemed full--full of persons and voices." (p. 59) Short--and deceptively simple. But we can imagine, particularly after Miss Lascelles' book, the thought which went into the composition of this particular sentence. For with nine words, Jane Austen has placed Anne before us, and made us feel the

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[4] Ian Watt, "On Sense and Sensibility," Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Ian Watt, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1963, p. 49.

commingling of emotions, emotions which must be concealed from the rest of the room "full of persons and voices." And, somehow, we feel more poignantly the strength of these emotions by dint of their concealment. For Anne, like Elinor Dashwood and Jane Fairfax, must suffer in silence. Not for her the simple expedient of release by expression. Feelings which "[throb] fast and full, though hidden"[5] must be suppressed, in order that others might not suffer. The natural confidante for Anne would seem to be Lady Russell. But she cannot be confided in, for she was inadvertantly the source of Anne's unhappiness, and would be deeply pained by a realization of what she had done. So the floodgates of Anne's heart must remain locked. But the force of the torrents they stem is not assuaged by containment.

> "I LOVE NOT LESS, THOUGH LESS THE SHOW APPEAR.
> THAT LOVE IS MERCHANDISED, WHOSE RICH ESTEEMING
> THE OWNER'S TONGUE DOTH PUBLISH EVERYWHERE."
> (from Sonnet 102, William Shakespeare)

> It is the fate of the romantic heroine to suffer and endure; it is Emma's destiny to lose her complacency and suffer slightly, as she learns the truth about herself and others.[6]

Mr. Bradbrook appears to be accepting the popular misconception that only the heroine who endures "the sleepless couch, . . . a pillow strewed with thorns and wet with tears" is "the true heroine." (Northanger Abbey, p. 90) But if we examine Emma's, or Elizabeth's, or Anne's, or Elinor's, anguish, it is seen that their suffering is very real, although not vociferously manifested in the "romantic" form Bradbrook accepts as sole proof of true suffering.

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[5] Charlotte Bronte asserted that Jane Austen ignored the feelings which "[throb] fast and full, though hidden."

[6] Bradbrook, op. cit., p. 8.

One wonders if Bradbrook would realize how deeply in love Admiral and Mrs. Croft are, since they are not a "romantic" couple. Their intensity of devotion to each other, one surmises, has entirely escaped him, since they do not profess undying love for each other verbally, and there is not a single scene in which we see Mrs. Croft sobbing her heart out. Her love is evinced in a very different way. In explaining to Mrs. Musgrove why she spent so much time on her husband's man-of-war, and in negating the suggestion that she must have been uncomfortable and unhappy in such alien surroundings, Mrs. Croft says:

> ". . . the happiest part of my life has been spent on board a ship. While we were together, you know, there was nothing to be feared."(Persuasion, p. 70)[7]

Admiral and Mrs. Croft remind one of Thackeray's couple in Vanity Fair, Major and Mrs. O'Dowd. The Crofts do not articulate their love: they live it, as do Major and Mrs. O'Dowd. Thackeray makes the relevant comment on Mrs. O'Dowd's preparation of her husband's equipment just prior to his marching off to battle.

> And who is there will deny that this worthy lady's preparations betokened affection as much as the fits of tears and hysterics by which more sensitive females exhibited their love, and that their partaking of this coffee, which they drank together while the bugles were sounding the turnout . . . was not more useful and to the purpose than the outpouring of any mere sentiment could be? [8]

This is love which is directed entirely to its object, and is not taken up with proud vaunting of itself. The word "exhibited" in the above

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[7] My italics.

[8] W.M. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1955, pp. 299-300.

quotation is noteworthy. Captain Wentworth does not verbalize his growing feeling for Anne, but we can see in his thoughtful removal of young Charles from her back a motive beyond mere courtesy. He does not speak of his love; even at the end of the book he finds it difficult to do so. He, like Darcy, acts it out. For love of Elizabeth, Darcy performs the unsavoury task of searching for Lydia and Wickham in London, and "persuading" them to marry.

> He had followed them purposely to town, he had taken on himself all the trouble and mortification attendant on such a research; in which supplication had been necessary to a woman whom he must abominate and despise, and where he was reduced to meet, frequently meet, reason with, persuade, and finally bribe, the man whom he always most wished to avoid, and whose very name it was punishment for him to pronounce.
>
> (Pride and Prejudice, p. 243)

Such lovers do not display the "romantic" manifestations of emotion, unlike "lovers" such as Marianne Dashwood, who, on the night following Willoughby's departure from Barton (to which he was expected to return almost immediately),

> . . . would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting with Willoughby. She would have been ashamed[9] to look her family in the face the next morning, had she not risen from her bed in more need of repose than when she lay down in it. (Sense and Sensibility, p. 83)

And so Marianne

> . . . got up with a headache, . . . giving pain every moment to her mother and sisters, and forbidding all attempt at consolation from either.[10]
>
> When breakfast was over she . . . wandered about the village of Allenham, indulging the recollection of past enjoyment. . . .

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[9] My italics.

[10] Jane Austen remarks, "Her sensibility was potent enough!"

> The evening passed off in the equal indulgence of feeling. She played over every favourite song that she had been used to play to Willoughby, . . . till her heart was so heavy that no farther [sic] sadness could be gained: and this nourishment of grief was every day applied. . . . In books too, . . . she courted the misery which a contrast between the past and present was certain of giving. (Sense and Sensibility, p. 83)

For Marianne believes in the importance of visible manifestations of emotion. No one, she fears, will believe she is in love unless he/she can see the emotion anatomized. Such preoccupation with proving emotion suggests a corresponding lessening in intensity of the emotion itself.

A.Walton Litz paraphrases Mudrick's statement that in Sense and Sensibility Jane Austen "turned from her youthful attacks on false sensibility to an attack on all feeling."[11] What Mudrick and Litz miss is that Jane Austen admires feeling, and only despises feeling which admires itself. She does not condemn emotion per se, but decries self-congratulatory emotion.

B.C. Southam writes:

> In "Love and Freindship" the motives for sentimental conduct are examined, and it is debunked as nothing more than an expedient code permitting self-indulgence, and a form of egotistical snobbery.[12]

He recognizes that sentimental behaviour is "a form of egotistical snobbery," yet fails to see Marianne Dashwood's self-indulgence as anything but "genuine temperamental sensibility."[13] Such a failure

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[11] A. Walton Litz, Jane Austen: A Study of her Artistic Development, New York, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 82.

[12] B.C. Southam, Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 26.

[13] Loc.cit.

indicates a very scanty perusal of Sense and Sensibility, in which we we frequently encounter Marianne uttering smugly self-admiring lines such as:

> "Happy, happy Elinor, you cannot have an idea of what I suffer." (p. 185)

> "Elinor has not my feelings, and therefore she may overlook it. . . . But it would have broke my heart had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility . . . I require so much!" (p. 18)

> "Dear, dear Norland! . . . Oh! happy house, could you know what I suffer in now viewing you from this spot, from whence perhaps I may view you no more!--And you, ye well-known trees!--but you will continue the same . . . insensible of any change in those who walk under your shade!--But who will remain to enjoy you?" (p. 27)[14]

> His pleasure in music, though it amounted not to that extatic [sic] delight which alone could sympathize with her own, was estimable when contrasted against the horrible insensitivity of the others; and she was reasonable enough to allow that a man of five and thirty might well have outlived all acuteness of feeling. . . . (p. 35)[15]

Jane Austen describes Marianne and her mother flogging their feelings to keep them at fever pitch when they find they must leave Norland.

> They encouraged each other now in the violence of their affliction. The agony of grief which overpowered them at first was voluntarily renewed, was sought for, was created again and again. They gave themselves up wholly to their sorrow, seeking increase of wretchedness in every reflection that could afford it, and resolved against ever admitting consolation in future. (p. 7)

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[14] Now that sensitive "I" am gone!

[15] It is interesting to note that Jane Austen makes Anne Elliot 27 years old--exactly the age at which Marianne Dashwood is certain no woman ". . . can [ever] hope to feel or inspire affection again. . . ." (p. 38)

Clearly, the enforced maintenance of feeling at a high pitch outran the genuine emotion. The mania for sensibility was criticized by Hannah More in her Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education with a view of the principles and conduct among women of rank and fortune. In one chapter she wrote:

> Of this extreme irritability . . . the uneducated learn to boast, as if it were a decided indication of superiority of soul, instead of labouring to restrain it . . . it is too much to nourish the evil by unrestrained indulgence, it is still worse to be proud of so misleading a quality.[16]

It is impossible to overlook the connection between Marianne's and Sophia's ailments, both brought on by their overindulgence of sensibility. At Cleveland, Marianne walks

> . . . where the trees were the oldest, and the grass was the longest and wettest,

and then commits

> the still greater imprudence of sitting in her wet shoes and stockings. (p. 306)

much like Sophia, whose cold is contracted due to her

> continued faintings in the open air as the Dew was falling. (Love and Fréindship, p. 33)

The rapidly languishing Sophia advises:

> ". . . take warning from my unhappy End and avoid the imprudent conduct which had [sic] occasioned it. . . . Beware of fainting fits. . . . Though at the time they may be refreshing and agreeable yet believe me they will in the end, if too often repeated and at improper seasons prove destructive to your Constitution. . . . My fate will teach you this. . . . I die a Martyr to my grief for the loss of Augustus. . . . One fatal swoon has cost me my life. . . ."(p. 34)

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16 Cited in Elizabeth Jenkins, Jane Austen, New York, Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1949, p. 69.

As is apparent from the core of this speech, Sophia's "fit" was not actually occasioned by the "loss of Augustus," but was revelled in for its own sake; as was that of Laura, who, in recounting her past life, describes a fit in which she was, as she puts it, "raving in a frantic, incoherent manner," and yet miraculously is able to recount everything she uttered while "wildly exclaiming on [her] Edward's Death." Laura adds proudly,

> For two Hours did I rave thus madly and should not then have left off, as I was not in the least fatigued, had not Sophia . . . intreated [sic] me to consider that Night was now approaching and that the Damps began to fall. (p. 32)

Similarly, Marianne wilfully indulges her grief, glorying in it. Her illness, like Sophia's, is not the result of lost love, but of self-gratification.[17]

In Love and Freindship Laura confesses to

> "a sensibility too tremblingly alive to every affliction of Friends, acquaintance and particularly to every affliction of my own, . . . my only fault, if a fault it could be called." (p. 6)

But Marianne would not question, even hypocritically, the categorization of such sensibility as "a fault." To her, it is the cardinal virtue. Each new misfortune which arises offers fresh possibilities for the display of feelings. It is a point of pride to suffer excessively--and in public! As Marianne understands it, "those who suffer little may be proud and independent as they like--may resist insult, . . ." but, she says, "I cannot. I must feel--I must be wretched--and they are welcome to enjoy the consciousness of it that can." (Sense and Sensibility, p. 190)

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[17] Marianne does come to admit,

> "My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself." (Sense and Sensibility, p. 345)

Indeed, those who care for her, although they do not enjoy it, are forced to an awareness of her wretchedness at every instant. Marianne is "unable to talk, and unwilling to take any nourishment; giving pain every moment to her mother and sisters, and forbidding all attempt at consolation from either." (p. 83) We are reminded strongly of Sophia and her insistence upon being miserable. All events and topics of discussion are twisted that they might be brought within the scope of self-mortification. Cries Sophia,

> "Oh! do not I beseech you ever let me again hear you repeat his [Augustus'] beloved name--It affects me too deeply--I cannot bear to hear him mentioned it wounds my feelings."

Laura attempts to comply with this request.

> ". . . changing the conversation, I desired her to admire the noble Grandeur of the Elms which sheltered us. . . ." "'Alas! my Laura (returned she) avoid so melancholy a subject, I intreat you. Do not again wound my Sensibility by observation on those elms. They remind me of Augustus. He was like them, tall, majestic--' "I was silent, fearful lest I might any more unwillingly distress her by fixing on any other subject of conversation which might again remind her of Augustus. "'Why do you not speak my Laura? (said she after a short pause) I cannot support this silence you must not leave me to my own reflections; they ever recur to Augustus.'
> "What could I do? . . . I had not power to start any other topic, justly fearing that it might . . . awaken all her sensibility. . . . yet to be silent would be cruel; she had intreated me to talk."
>
> (Love and Freindship, p. 29f)

Similarly, for Marianne,

> . . . the slightest mention of any thing relative to Willoughby overpowered her in an instant; and though her family were most anxiously attentive to her comfort, it was impossible for them, if they spoke at all, to keep clear of every subject which her feelings connected with him. . . . She played over every favourite song that she had been used to play to Willoughby, . . . till her heart was so heavy that no further sadness could be gained; and this nourishment of grief was every day applied. . . . In books too, as well as in music, she courted the misery which a contrast between the past and present was certain of giving.
>
> (Sense and Sensibility, pp. 82-3)

But are we to suppose that "such violence of affliction," whose flagging strength must be bolstered by "solitary walks and silent meditations" is of a greater intensity than that of the less flamboyantly suffering Miss Dashwood? Elinor is pained more deeply through her very reticence, which springs from the wish to spare her dearest friends the realization that she is "very unhappy." Her silence is not the result of not having "ever felt much,"--the source to which Marianne attributes it--but is "the effect of constant and painful exertion." (p. 264) We can imagine the difficulty with which Elinor controlled her emotions. Her situation results in far more pain for Elinor than Marianne, shielded on all sides by commiserating friends, is ever forced to bear. Elinor describes it:

> "I have known myself to be divided from Edward forever, without having one circumstance that could make me less desire the connection.--Nothing has proved him unworthy. . . . I have had to contend against the unkindness of his sister, and the insolence of his mother; and have suffered the punishment of an attachment, without enjoying its advantages.--And all this has been going on at a time, when as you too well know, it has not been my only unhappiness." (p. 264)

There has been much critical comment on Jane Austen's account of Mrs. Musgrove's attitude of maternal bereavement upon hearing of the death of her son, who became "poor Richard" once he died, but who had never been anything but "a thick-headed, unfeeling, unprofitable Dick Musgrove" (Persuasion, p. 51) when he was alive. Her grief upon being reminded of his demise was greater "than what she had known on first hearing of his death." (p. 51) Jane Austen describes "the self-command with which [Captain Wentworth] listened to her large fat sighings over the destiny of a son, whom alive nobody had cared for." (p. 68) What reaction is Captain Wentworth suppressing? Jane Austen has vested him

with her own abhorrence for the affectation of an emotion which one did not genuinely feel. She despised hypocrisy and deceit, and although Mrs. Musgrove is not being charged with either, she is being arraigned for indulging in sentimentality disguised as a sacred feeling which she has never had for her son. She is, in fact, enjoying feeling "luxuriously low." Mrs. Musgrove is truly upset over Louisa's accident, and Jane Austen gives her credit for being so, but she will not allow a character to assert feelings of love which he/she does not really feel without providing omniscient comment. To Jane Austen, it is a sin, a prostitution of the beautiful, and should be condemned. Mrs. Musgrove is supposed to feel grief-stricken over the death of her son--and so she pretends to. Marianne Dashwood believes she is supposed to spend a sleepless night after Willoughby's initial departure from Barton--and so she does. Jane Austen's attitude to mawkish sentimentality is made clear in the scene in which Harriet brings the mementoes of Mr. Elton to Emma to dispose of them. Emma is surprised and amused.

> "My dearest Harriet!" cried Emma, putting her hands before her face,[18] and jumping up. . . . "And so you actually put this piece of court-plaister by for her sake, . . ." and secretly she added to herself, "Lord bless me! when should I ever have thought of putting by in cotton a piece of court-plaister that Frank Churchill had been pulling about! I never was equal to this." (Emma, pp. 338-9)

Emma's "inequality to this" is what makes her a heroine, and Harriet an object of amusement.

> ". . . ROMANTIC PLAYS LIVE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF INGENUITY AND MAKE-BELIEVE."
> (Gilbert Murray, from the Preface to Iphigenia in Tauris.)

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18 Undoubtedly to hide a smile.

Fanny Burney's preface to Evelina could equally well have stood at the beginning of Jane Austen's novels.[19] She exhorts:

> Let me . . . prepare for disappointment those who, in the perusal of these sheets, entertain the gentle expectation of being transported to the fantastic regions of Romance, where Fiction is coloured by all the gay tints of luxurious Imagination, where Reason is an outcast, and where the sublimity of the Marvellous rejects all aid from sober Probability.[20]

Jane Austen's "Juvenilia" was written to expose the falsity in the popular sentimental novels of the late eighteenth century, among them Richardson's Pamela, Laurence Sterne's A Sentimental Journey, and Charlotte Smith's Emmeline. Even at fourteen Jane Austen displayed the exquisite subtlety which was to mark her later ironic presentation of pretense and artifice. There is no direct denunciation of the sentimental novel or its component parts, which include "sentiment, morality, manners, instruction, sensibility, and adventure."[21] Instead, Miss Austen works with these conventions, creates her own "sentimental" novel. As Richard Simpson puts it, Jane Austen

> began by being an ironical critic; she manifested her judgment of them [Romances] not by direct censure, but

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19 Perhaps if it had much of the irrelevant cavilling of some Austen critics might have been truncated.

20 Fanny Burney, Preface to Evelina, New York, W. W. Norton & Co. Ltd., 1965 (no page number given in book).

21 Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1952, p. 5.

> by the indirect method of imitating and exaggerating the faults of her models, thus clearing the fountain by first stirring up the mud.[22]

Perhaps we can trace the popular misuse of the word "romance"[23] back to the Gothic romances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These novels of extravagant emotions, with their gloomy castles, exquisitely beautiful heroines and sublimely spirited heroes, are not woven from the fabric of everyday life: they present the unusual and, supposedly, exalted aspects of life. But the characters of such novels, in their "other-worldliness," become bloodless figures. The Emily of The Mysteries of Udolpho is the same Emily at the end of the book that she was at the beginning. She is, we are told, a girl of "uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, ready benevolence, and a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace."[24] This degree of susceptibility is held by Emily magna cum laude. She faints with elegance, screams with decorum, "indulges in melancholy reverie" (p. 381), adores sunsets. We may count upon any one or more of these reactions no matter what the situation Emily is forced into. There is no variety in such a character, and no interest. Emily is still fainting at the end of the book. Her degree of susceptibility is unimpaired. She is unchanged, a lump of clay which has passed through

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22 Richard Simpson viewed Jane Austen primarily as a critic of her society whose works were an expression of her ironic sense. His comment cited in Ian Watt's Introduction to Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Ian Watt, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963, pp. 5-6.

23 Whereby "romantic" = idyllic.

24 Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, New York, Juniper Press (n.d.), p. 10.

a blast furnace and come out unfired.

The emotions in the Gothic novels never stem from within, but are jolted into activity by some external force, either human or supernatural. Emily is immediately convinced that she must abandon her suitor, Valancourt, when informed of his supposed activities in Paris. She does not know Valancourt and therefore does not question the interpretation of his character, one which has to that moment appeared to her as above suspicion. There had been an immediate bond between them when they met, but the bond is snapped with only a breath, a word. Perhaps the story of Emily and Valancourt is a "romance," but it is not a romance of any depth.

Jane Austen's attitude to love is not romantic, but realistic. We are told that Henry Tilney's love for Catherine grew out of "gratitude," that

> a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought.[25]

Jane Austen comments

> It is a new circumstance in romance, I acknowledge, and dreadfully derogatory of an heroine's dignity; but if it be as new in common life, the credit of a wild imagination will at least be all my own.
> (Northanger Abbey, p. 243)

The circumstance is not, however, new in common life. Charlotte Lucas is cognizant of its frequent occurrence.

> There is so much of gratitude or vanity in almost every attachment, that it is not safe to leave any to itself. We can all begin freely; a slight preference is natural enough; but there are very few of us who have heart enough to be really in love without encouragement.
> (Pride and Prejudice, p. 15)

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25 Marcel Proust makes a similar statement in Swann's Way, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff, New York, Modern Library, 1928, p. 281.

> In his younger days a man dreams of possessing the heart of the woman whom he loves; later, the feeling that he possesses the heart of a woman may be enough to make him fall in love with her.

Nor did Jane Austen accept the wildly romantic theory that one could only fall in love once, that for each person there was only one soulmate, for she suggests in regard to Anne Elliot that a second attachment, after her break with Wentworth, would have been a "thoroughly natural, happy and sufficient cure." (Persuasion, p. 28) This cure was not effected only due to circumstances, to the fact that the limited society in which Anne moved did not contain anybody whom she could love. Jane Austen agreed with Elizabeth Watson's pragmatic attitude.

> I have lost Purvis, it is true but very few people marry their first love. I should not refuse a man because he was not Purvis.[26]

She had patience with, but saw little point in, hopelessly unrequited love. Anne Elliot's cautionary advice to Benwick, encouraging "patience and resignation" (Persuasion, p. 101), is, we may be sure, Jane's own. As Jane remarked at one point in her correspondence with her niece Fanny, whom she was encouraging to end a romance in which Fanny had little emotional involvement, when Fanny feared hurting the suitor:

> It is no creed of mind, as you must be well aware, that such sorts of disappointment kill anybody.[27]
> (Chawton: Friday [November 18, 1814])

Because of Jane Austen's refusal to recommend a hopeless love, or to insist that every man can only love once, it has been said of her that she did not seem to believe much in intensity of feeling.[28] This

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[26] Jane Austen, "The Watsons," Shorter Works, London, The Folio Society, 1963, p. 91.

[27] Austen-Leigh, Life and Letters, p. 345.

[28] Marjory Bald, Women-Writers of the Eighteenth Century, Cambridge at the University Press, 1923, p. 16.

criticism is levelled because "most of her people could change their affections without any severe strain." We are not told who these fickle people are; in fact, Dr. Bald can offer only a single example, Edmund Bertram, who,she objects, "did not pay heavily for his disillusions"[29] about Miss Crawford. The critic fails to see that it is the very attitude which she holds that is being mocked by Jane Austen, who writes:

> I purposely abstain from dates on this occasion, that everyone may be at liberty to fix their own, aware that the cure of unconquerable passions, the transfer of unchanging attachments, must vary as to time in different people. I only entreat everybody to believe that exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny herself could desire.
>
> (Mansfield Park, p. 470)

Jane Austen does not appear, complains Dr. Bald, "to have recognized the existence of incurable grief."[30] Such a statement seems to insist that although a man discovers that the woman he loves is not as she appeared to be--that is, does not really have the qualities he admired--he should love what she is revealed to be, no matter how unpleasant that actuality is.

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29 Loc. cit.

30 Loc. cit.

But Jane Austen was too much of a realist to recommend such stupidity.[31] Edmund's initial infatuation with Miss Crawford was not based on a firm knowledge of her character. As he comes to admit,

> ". . . I had never understood her before . . . it had been the creature of my own imagination, not Miss Crawford, that I had been too apt to dwell on for many months past."

When he learned of her true nature, he realized that his affections were misplaced. To have continued to worship Mary Crawford would have been idiocy, not love.

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[31] So was Mary Wollstonecraft. As she stated in her Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, (1787) cited in H.R.Steeves' Before Jane Austen: The Shaping of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century, New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965, p. 380

> It is too universal a maxim with novelists that love is felt but once; though it appears to me that the heart which is capable of receiving an impression at all, and can distinguish, will turn to a new object when the first is found unworthy. . . . When any sudden stroke of fate deprives us of those we love, we may not readily get the better of the blow, but when we find that we have been led astray by our passions, and that it was our own imaginations which gave the high coloring to the picture, we may be certain time will drive it out of our minds.

CHAPTER III

CUPID DETHRONED BY MAMMON?

In discussing Jane Austen's concept of love, it is necessary to clear away the glaring misconception that the marriages between her main characters are financial mergers and not unions of love. Far too many critics, from Sir Walter Scott to Marvin Mudrick, have seen her novels as marking the "dethronement of the once powerful God of Love."[1] Jane Austen, they complain, is guilty of "exclusively patronizing what are called prudent matches," prudence being defined as "regard for pecuniary advantage."[2]

There is a conversation in Love and Freindship between Edward and his sister Augusta in which the latter mentions that "Victuals and Drink" are necessary "supports" for lovers. This assertion is hotly denied by Edward, who asks,

> "And did you then never feel the pleasing Pangs of Love, Augusta? Does it appear impossible to your vile and corrupted Palate, to exist on Love? Can you not conceive the Luxury of living in every distress that Poverty can inflict, with the object of your tenderest affection?"

Augusta's (and Jane Austen's) reply is succinct:

> "You are too ridiculous to argue with. . . ." (p. 13)

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[1] Richard Whately, "Modern Novels," Quarterly Review, XXIV (1821), pp. 352-76. Cited in Discussions of Jane Austen, ed. William Heath, Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1961, p. 15.

[2] Loc. cit.

A similar conversation takes place between Elinor and Marianne. Marianne inquires,

> "What have wealth or grandeur to do with happiness?"
> "Grandeur has but little," said Elinor, "but wealth has much to do with it."
> "Elinor, for shame!" said Marianne, "money can only give happiness where there is nothing else to give it. Beyond a competence, it can afford no real satisfaction, as far as mere self is concerned."
> "Perhaps," said Elinor, smiling, "we may come to the same point. Your competence and my wealth are very much alike, I dare say; . . . Come, what is your competence?"
> "About eighteen hundred or two thousand a year; not more than that."
> Elinor laughed. "Two thousand a year! One is my wealth! I guessed how it would end." (Sense and Sensibility, p. 91)

And the book ends, we recall, with Marianne allied to a man who has "upwards of 2000 pounds a year," a "very moderate income" says Marianne, who is sure she is "not extravagant in [her] demands. A proper establishment of servants, a carriage, perhaps two, and hunters, cannot be supported on less." (p. 91)

From this conversation it becomes clear that Marianne, like Willoughby and Augustus and Laura and Sophia and Edward and Henrietta Halton and Tom Musgrove, who are ostensibly out of touch with reality due to their "sensibility," is far more of a materialist than her realistic sister Elinor. Elinor marries on rather less than her ideal wealth; it is she and not Marianne who makes the "romantic" marriage, if the stipulation for romance is, as Sir Walter Scott, Richard Whately, and so many others insist, that the man one marries be poor as a churchmouse.

Jane Austen's favourite couples accept the material conditions which their society imposes upon marriage, but realize, as so many

Jane Austen critics do not, that these conditions do not limit or invalidate the emotion which marriage formalizes. Unlike such hypocrites as those treated in "A Collection of Letters," they admit the close connection between love and economics in bourgeois society, but they never confuse one for the other.

Henrietta Halton and Thomas Musgrove profess an emotional set of values while acting under an economic set. Anne and Wentworth neither ignore nor rebel against the economic base of their society. They recognize the ultimate "social fact"--

> The economic compulsion to which they must reconcile their feeling in order to secure the advantages of nutrition and social acceptance.[3]

Mudrick states,

> Their problem--and they are both wholly aware of it--is to determine just how far the claim of feeling can yield, without effacing itself altogether, to the claim of economics. . . .[4]

In "The Three Sisters," part of Jane Austen's Juvenilia, the theme is marriage for financial security, involving the conflict between expediency and idealism. The eldest daughter, Mary Stanhope, is fatherless and has no dowry. For her, marriage is a negotiation, a bargaining for settlements. She determines to make a "prudential" marriage. In a conversation between two sisters, in which one remarks that the potential husband cannot make Mary happy, the other astutely points out,

> "He cannot it is true but his fortune, his name, his house, his carriage will and I have no doubt but that Mary will marry him. . . ." (Shorter Works, p. 296)

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[3]Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1952, p. 231.

[4]Loc. cit.

Jane Austen recognizes Mary Stanhope's position. As she remarked to her niece, Fanny Knight, "single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor, which is one very strong argument in favour of matrimony."[5] But she also warned the girl that "Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection."[6] In "Catharine", Mrs. Percival, chaperone to a young charge, is plagued by a "jealous Caution," the "constant apprehension" that her ward might marry "imprudently." Jane Austen mocks the woman, and, by extension, we may assert that she mocks Mrs. Percival's mercenary attitude to marriage. From Jane Austen's letters and from her novels we learn her strong reaction to marriage without love. Her aunt Philadelphia had been forced into a situation very like that described in the account of Cecilia Wynne's marriage.

> The eldest daughter had been obliged to accept the offer of one of her cousins to equip her for the East Indies, and though infinitely against her inclinations had been necessitated to embrace the only possibility that was offered to her, of a maintenance; yet it was one, so opposite to all her ideas of Propriety, so contrary to her wishes, so repugnant to her feelings, that she would almost have preferred Servitude to it, had choice been allowed her--. Her personal attractions had gained her a husband as soon as she had arrived at Bengal, and she had now been married nearly a twelve-month. Splendidly, yet unhappily married. United to a man of double her own age, whose disposition was not amiable, and whose manners were unpleasing, though his character was respectable. Kitty had heard twice from her friend since her marriage, . . . and though she did not openly avow her feelings, yet every line proved her to be unhappy. (Shorter Works, p. 179)

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[5] Austen-Leigh, Life and Letters, p. 351.

[6] Ibid., p. 344.

Elizabeth Jenkins notes the practicality of most single women of the period.

> The people whom Jane Austen approved of: women like Emma Watson and Elizabeth Bennet, did not regard eligible marriage as the first object of existence, though a very desirable one; but quite pleasant, respectable girls of a less disinterested and exacting nature were prepared to command their affections to a very considerable extent. The overbearing desire for romance, or sexual satisfaction, or marriage, . . . irrespective of a genuine attraction, is shown constantly in her less important female characters: in the Steele sisters, in Isabella Thorpe and Charlotte Lucas, . . . and Louisa Musgrove and Penelope and Margaret Watson. . . .[7]

The overbearing preoccupation of the women cited (and we might add Jane Fairfax to the list) was not with "romance, or sexual satisfaction," it was with marriage. As Elizabeth Jenkins goes on to admit,

> [at that time] . . . women of the upper middle class who were single and unprovided for had no refuge open to them but a post as governess or companion, or lingering out an existence in genteel distress.[8]

Fanny Burney's understanding of the pressures exerted on her peers was voiced through Dr. Marchmont in Camilla,

> ". . . the influence of friends, the prevalence of example, the early notion which every female imbibes, that a good establishment must be her first object in life---these are motives of marriage commonly sufficient for the whole sex."[9]

One would perhaps expect Jane Austen to be more charitable in her treatment of the women cited in Elizabeth Jenkins' passage. She sympathizes with their position, but seems to side with Emma Watson in the exchange with her sister Elizabeth.

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[7] Elizabeth Jenkins, Jane Austen, New York, Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1949, p. 159.

[8] Loc. cit.

[9] Fanny Burney, Camilla, Vol. I, London, printed for T. Payne, at the Mews-Gate; and T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies in the Strand, 1796, p.388.

> "To be so bent on marriage--to pursue a man merely for the sake of situation--is a sort of thing that shocks me. . . . Poverty is a great evil, but to a woman of education and feeling it ought not, it cannot be the greatest. I would rather be a teacher at a School (and I can think of nothing worse)[10] than marry a man I did not like."

The pragmatic Miss Watson replies:

> "I would rather do any thing than be teacher at a school. I have been at school, Emma, and know what a life they lead; you never have. I should not like marry a disagreeable man any more than yourself,--but I do not think there are many very disagreeable men; I think I could like any good humoured man with a comfortable income." (Shorter Works, pp. 91-2)

It is possible to view Elizabeth Watson as a younger version of Miss Bates; in fact, she describes a future, should she not marry, which is identical to Miss Bates' existence in Emma.

> " . . . you know we must marry. I could do very well single for my own part--A little company, and a pleasant ball now and then, would be enough for me, if one could be young for ever, but my father cannot provide for us, and it is very bad to grow old and be poor and laughed at." (p. 91)

In The Watsons Jane Austen tells of four sisters, of limited means, who each regard marriage differently. Emma's point of view is the most idealistic (therefore she is Jane Austen's heroine) and Penelope's the most feverish. But one cannot help thinking--and did Jane Austen mean us to think it?--that it is easier for Emma to insist upon love as a prerequisite for marriage, and despise all mercenary motives, since she has been brought up apart from her sisters, in luxurious surroundings, and has not yet felt the indignities

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[10] Neither could Jane Fairfax.

and privations of limited means.[11]

Jane Austen introduces the story of the aunt who has married for love: this action is censured by the other characters in the novel, even, we note with some surprise, by Emma. And why is it censured? Because the lady has been improvident enough to marry a penniless army captain (and an Irish one, to boot!) Indeed, all of the fragmentary Watsons is concerned with the dilemma of choice which faced genteel ladies of dependent means. In their choosing, they were often between Scylla and Charybdis. Penelope Watson is angling for "rich old Dr. Harding."[12] Margaret is desperately trying to "hook" the rakish Tom Musgrove. The men of the Watson sisters' "choice" do not have much to recommend them as love-objects, but they are considered to be better than the alternative to marriage with them--i.e., "to grow old and be poor and laughed at."

In advising her niece Fanny about marrying a man, who was eligible in all respects and yet with whom Fanny was not sure that she was in love, Jane Austen cautioned her

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[11]Mrs. Arlbey, in discussing a potential suitor for Camilla with Sir Sedley, wishes to protect her charge from these sordid realities, and asserts,

> "I hate him heartily; yet he rolls in wealth, and she has nothing. I must bring them, therefore, together, positively: for though a husband---such a fastidious one especially---is not what I would recommend to her for happiness, 'tis better than poverty." (Camilla, Vol. III, p. 321)

[12]Also asthmatic old Dr. Harding.

> . . . not to think of accepting him unless you really do like him. Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection.[13]
>
> (Chawton: Friday [November 18, 1814])

and added,

> . . . nothing can be compared to the misery of being bound without love--bound to one, and preferring another.[14]
>
> (23 Hans Place: Wednesday [November 30, 1814])

Jane Fairfax could not agree. Her engagement to the unpleasant Frank Churchill is, in my opinion, an "escape" on her part from the alternative to marriage, an alternative she describes with such vividness that we may be sure it has haunted her.

> "There are places in town . . . offices for the sale--not quite of human flesh--but of human intellect . . . not . . . the slave-trade . . . [but the] governess-trade . . . widely different certainly as to the guilt of those who carry it on; but as to the greater misery of the victims, I do not know where it lies."
>
> (Emma, pp. 300-301)

Jane Austen admitted to her niece that "Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor--which is one very strong argument in favor of matrimony," but urged,

> I shall say as I have often said before, do not be in a hurry, the right man will come at last; you will in the course of the next two or three years meet with somebody more generally unexceptionable than anyone you have yet known, . . . who will so completely attract you that you will feel you never really loved before.[15]
>
> (Chawton: Thursday [March 13, 1817])

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[13] Austen-Leigh, Life and Letters, p. 344.

[14] Ibid., p. 346.

[15] Ibid., p. 351.

But Jane Fairfax, with the frightening example of her aunt, Miss Bates, before her, did not dare wait. Should she remain unmarried the only profession for an educated woman was that of a governess. Mrs. Weston's (née Taylor) history was an exception to the general lot of governesses. The majority, anomalies in another woman's home, existing in a no man's land between the drawing room and the servants' hall, were at the mercy alike of their superiors and their inferiors. The degradation of their position is alluded to in Mansfield Park. When the parts for "Lovers' Vows" are being assigned, and it is suggested that Julia should be the cottager's wife, Mr. Yates exclaims:

> "Cottager's wife! what are you talking of? The most trivial, paltry, insignificant part; the merest commonplace; not a tolerable speech in the whole. Your sister do that! It is an insult to propose it. At Ecclesford the governess was to have done it. We all agreed that it could not be offered to anybody else."
>
> (Mansfield Park, p. 134)

Chapman says that "romantic convention demanded that a novel should end on a prospect of lifelong felicity. . . ."[16] but adds in a footnote, "She [Jane Austen] was not prepared to take this for granted. Jane Fairfax was too good for Frank Churchill; and Jane Austen told her intimates that Mrs. Frank Churchill died young."

We (and Mr. Knightley) admire Jane Fairfax and censure Frank Churchill. Charlotte Lucas is a close friend of Elizabeth Bennet's (which is a strong point in her favour), and we sympathize

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[16]R. W. Chapman, Jane Austen: Facts and Problems, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1948, p. 186.

with Elizabeth Watson. Why does Jane Austen show these admirable and sensible women succumbing to (or willing to succumb to) economic considerations in deciding to marry without love? She does it in order to show the extent of the pressures which society imposed on women. Garrod writes that

> She knew, and was interested in, not her own sex, . . . But the average feminine triviality interests her immensely and entertains her adequately.[17]

Jane Austen had, in fact, an extremely critical concern for the fate of women in her society, a concern which involved a reconsideration of that society's basic values. Jane Fairfax is a sympathetically-treated symbol of the economic and social vulnerability of women in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Elizabeth's joking comment that she began to fall in love with Darcy upon seeing Pemberley is her oblique allusion to the economic tensions which were constantly intruding into the area of personal desire.

D. W. Harding speaks of the scene in which Mr. Collins sues for Elizabeth's hand as

> not only comic fantasy, but . . . for Elizabeth, a taste of the fantastic nightmare in which economic and social institutions have such power over the values of personal relationships that the comic monster is nearly able to get her.[18]

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[17]H. W. Garrod, "Jane Austen: A Depreciation," Essays by Divers Hands: Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, VIII, (1928), pp. 21-40. Reprinted in Discussions of Jane Austen, ed. William Heath, Boston, D.C. Heath & Co., 1961, p. 36.

[18]D. W. Harding, "Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen," Scrutiny, VIII (1940), pp. 346-62. Cited in Discussions of Jane Austen, ed. William Heath, Boston, D.C.Heath & Co., 1961, p. 45.

The opening sentences in Pride and Prejudice reveal, in adumbrated form, the problem which beset young people of Jane Austen's era.

> It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.
> However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. (p. 1)

Immediately, the intrusion of financial and material matters in personal affairs is apparent. Colonel Fitzwilliam is explicit on this point.

> ". . . in matters of greater weight, I may suffer from the want of money. Younger sons cannot marry where they like."

Elizabeth teases him,

> "Unless where they like women of fortune, which I think they very often do."

and goes on to inquire

> "And pray, what is the usual price of an Earl's younger son? Unless the elder brother is very sickly, I suppose you would not ask above fifty thousand pounds." (p. 138)

The theory that personal happiness should be subjected to financial considerations is not held by Jane Austen's favourite characters, but by those of whom she does not approve. Elizabeth, believing that Bingley's sisters have persuaded him to forget Jane, conjectures:

> They may wish many things besides his happiness; they may wish his increase of wealth and consequence; they may wish him to marry a girl who has all the importance of money, great connections, and pride. (p. 104)

This is the "prudence" that is attributed to Elizabeth on the strength of her teasing reply to Jane as to how long she had been

in love with Darcy.

> "It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley."

That it was spoken in jest is clear from the lines following.

> Another intreaty that she would be serious, however, produced the desired effect, and she soon satisfied Jane by her solemn assurances of attachment. (p. 279)

It is impossible to equate Elizabeth Bennet with a Mr. Elton, who

> . . . wanted to marry well, and having the arrogance to raise his eyes to her [Emma], pretended to be in love; . . . He only wanted to aggrandize and enrich himself; and if Miss Woodhouse of Hartfield, the heiress of thirty thousand pounds, were not quite so easily obtained as he had fancied, he would soon try for Miss Somebody else with twenty, or with ten. (Emma, p. 135)

Elizabeth does not set out with a plan in mind to "marry well," she does not "pretend to be in love," and from her disapproval of Charlotte's marriage we see that she disapproves of those who seek to "aggrandize and enrich themselves" through marriage.

> She had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage. (Pride and Prejudice, p. 95)

Mr. Chapman speaks of the "quite common" interpretation of Pride and Prejudice's Elizabeth Bennet as being "first brought round by the sight of the wealth and grandeur of Pemberley."[19] Sir Walter Scott's statement is the one most often cited.

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[19]Chapman, op. cit., p. 192.

> She accidently visits a very handsome seat and grounds belonging to her admirer. They chance to meet exactly as her prudence had begun to subdue her prejudice.[20]

The line which has caused such widespread condemnation of Elizabeth--

> At that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (p. 181)

is one which only a Jane Austen would dare include in her portrait of a woman. It is psychologically true, a perfectly understandable reaction. Who would not have a moment[21] of chagrin upon discovering that he/she had rejected something quite extraordinary? But I would pose the question, "Can anyone really believe that Elizabeth Bennet's refusal of Darcy would have been couched in terms any less angry had she seen Pemberley prior to Darcy's proposal?" It would not. Elizabeth is unimpressed by Darcy's having "ten thousand [pounds] a year,"[22] and had already learned that Pemberley was a splendid estate.

Further proof of the genuine quality of her feelings for him can be found when Elizabeth misinterprets Darcy's "gloomy air" following her revelation of Lydia's elopement. The conviction that Darcy's regard for her must now be shattered due to her family's disgrace is

> exactly calculated to make her understand her own wishes; and never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain. (p. 206)

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[20]Sir Walter Scott, "Emma," Quarterly Review, XIV (1815), pp. 188-201. Reprinted in Discussions of Jane Austen, ed. William Heath, Boston, D. C. Heath & Co., 1961, p. 8.

[21]And note that Jane Austen says only, "at that moment."

[22]It is amusing to note that upon Darcy's arrival in the village, after the news of his having ten thousand a year is circulated, it is decided that he is "much handsomer than Mr. Bingley" (who has four thousand a year). Mr. Darcy is, I suggest, 6000 pounds a year handsomer.

H. W. Garrod contends that Jane Austen "accept[s] as not only good, but natural, . . . the marriage of convenience."[23] When Elizabeth is leaving after a visit to the now-married Charlotte Collins she muses:

> It was melancholy to leave her to such society; but she had chosen it with her eyes open; and though evidently regretting that her visitors were to go, she did not seem to ask for compassion. Her home and her housekeeping, her parish and her poultry, and all their dependent concerns, had not yet lost their charms.[24] (p. 162)

The underlined words indicate Jane Austen's opinion of the chances for continued marital "bliss" in a loveless marriage.

Jane Austen condemns those of her characters who demand nothing more of marriage partners than economic compatibility. When Charles and Mary Musgrove discuss Henrietta Musgrove's potential suitors, neither makes reference to any personal qualities; they are never an issue for the materially-oriented minds.

Any assurance that may be wanting as to Jane Austen's reaction to mariages de convenance may be found in the conversation she describes between Elinor Dashwood and her brother. John Dashwood begins:

> "Who is Colonel Brandon? Is he a man of fortune?"
> "Yes, he has very good property in Dorsetshire."
> "I am glad of it . . . I think, Elinor, I may congratulate you on the prospect of a very respectable establishment in life."
> "Me, brother! what do you mean? . . . I am very sure that Colonel Brandon has not the smallest wish of marrying me."
> "You are mistaken, Elinor. . . . A very little trouble on your side secures him. Perhaps just at present he may be undecided; the smallness of your fortune may make him hang back; his friends may all advise him against it. But

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[23] Garrod, op. cit., p. 35.

[24] My italics.

> some of those little attentions and encouragements which ladies can so easily give will fix him in spite of himself. And there can be no reason why you should not try for him. It is not to be supposed that any prior attachment on your side--in short you know, as to an attachment of that kind it is quite out of the question, the objections are insurmountable--Colonel Brandon must be the man. . . ." (Sense and Sensibility, pp. 223-24)

The "prior attachment," love for Edward Ferrars, was not to be allowed to interfere with an advantageous economic union. His sister Marianne's beauty was also considered in terms of its worth as a bartering factor. Her illness, he fears, has "destroy[ed] the bloom for ever!" He calculates,

> "I question whether Marianne now will marry a man worth more than five or six hundred a year at the utmost, and I am very much deceived if you do not do better." (p. 227)

Jane Austen's own views of marriage were more radical in her own age than they are today. The concept of women as objects for barter was widespread, and considered to be perfectly acceptable. The blatant eagerness with which an heiress was pursued carried on well into the nineteenth century. Thackeray alludes to it with his account of the wealthy mulatto graduate of St. Kitt's marriage. Today's heiress hunters haven't the "decency" as G. E. Mitton[25] describes it, but the hypocrisy, as they are at least ashamed of their motives, to pretend to be in love. It is often Jane Austen's "villains," if such we may call them, who are willing to marry for money, without love--Wickham, Willoughby, Isabella and John Thorpe,

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[25]G. E. Mitton, Jane Austen and Her Times, London, Methuen & Co., 1905, p. 144.

Mr. William Elliot.

"Her women were obsessed by the game of matrimony. . . ."[26]

This sweeping generalization surely cannot be meant to include Elizabeth Bennet, or Catherine Morland, or Emma Watson, or Fanny Price, or Emma Woodhouse (who was only concerned with helping others to play the "game"). Jane Austen's heroines are heroines for her because they are not obsessed by the game of matrimony.

Dr. Bald goes on,

> Their apparent artlessness was often the result of a carefully studied pose: (and produces the quotation)
>
> > Where people wish to attract they should always be ignorant. To come with a well-informed mind is to come with an inability of ministering to the vanity of others. . . . A woman, especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can.[27] (Northanger Abbey, pp. 110-111)

Of the heroines just mentioned, only Catherine Morland "administers to the vanity" of her lover, and does so because she truly is ingenuous.

Garrod states:

> [The] husband-hunt . . . is conducted with almost equal unreserve by two contrasted feminine characters (who are very often sisters): the Girl of Spirit and the Tame Girl, Elizabeth and Jane, Marianne and Elinor. . . .[28]

But Elizabeth does not "hunt" Darcy, nor Elinor hunt Edward, and Jane could not hunt even if she wanted to, for she would not know how. Only Jane Austen's unpleasant characters "stalk their prey": Mr. Elton, Willoughby, Miss Bingley, Margaret and Penelope Watson,

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[26]Marjory Bald, Women-Writers of the Eighteenth Century, Cambridge at the University Press, 1923, p. 24.

[27]Loc. cit.

[28]Garrod, op. cit., p. 38.

Tom Musgrove. Theirs is the attitude to marriage that is described by Thomas Gisborne, a prominent divine of the late eighteenth century.

> If a union about to take place, or recently contracted, between two young persons, is mentioned in conversation, the first question which we hear asked concerning it is, whether it be a good match. The very countenance and voice of the inquirer, and of the answerer, the terms of the answer returned, and the observations, whether expressive of satisfaction or of regret, which fall from the lips of the company present in the circle, all concur to shew what, in common estimation, is meant by being well married. If a young woman be described as thus married, the terms imply, that she is united to a man whose rank and fortune is such, when compared with her own or those of her parents, that in point of precedence, in point of command of finery and of money, she is, more or less, a gainer by the bargain. They imply, that she will now possess the enviable advantages of taking [the] place of other ladies in the neighbourhood; of decking herself out with jewels and lace; of inhabiting splendid apartments; rolling in handsome carriages; gazing on numerous servants in gaudy liveries; and of going to London, and other fashionable scenes of resort, in a degree somewhat higher than that in which a calculating broker, after poring on her pedigree, summing up her property in hand, and computing, at the market price, what is contingent or in reversion, would have pronouced her entitled to them. But what do the terms imply as to the character of the man selected to be her husband? Probably nothing. His character is a matter which seldom enters into the consideration of the persons who use them, unless it, at length, appears in the shape of an afterthought, or is awkwardly hitched onto their remarks for the sake of decorum. If the terms imply any thing, they mean no more than that he is not scandalously and notoriously addicted to vice. He may be proud, he may be ambitious, he may be malignant, he may be devoid of Christian principles, practice, and belief; or, to say the very least, it may be totally unknown whether he does not fall, in every particular, under this description; and yet, in the language and in the opinion of the generality of both sexes, the match is excellent. In like manner a small diminution of the supposed advantages already enumerated, though counterpoised by the acquisition of a companion eminent for his virtues, is supposed to constitute a bad match; and is universally lamented in polite meetings with real or affected concern.[29]

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[29]Thomas Gisborne, "Considerations Antecedent to Marriage," An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex, (1797). This essay appears in Pride and Prejudice: Text, Backgrounds, Criticism, ed. B. A. Booth, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963, p. 173.

Elizabeth Bennet's exchange with Charlotte Lucas exonerates Elizabeth and Jane from Garrod's charge of "husband-hunting." Charlotte advises that Jane should

> "shew more affection than she feels . . . . When she is secure of [Bingley], there will be leisure for falling in love as much as she chooses." (Pride and Prejudice, p. 15)

Elizabeth replies,

> "Your plan is a good one, where nothing is in question but the desire of being well married; and if I were determined to get a rich husband, or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it. But these are not Jane's feelings; she is not acting by design." (p. 15)

And if Elinor viewed Edward as nothing more than her "prey," his "want of spirits," his apparent "indifference" which made her feel

> the longer they were together the more doubtful seemed the nature of his regard (Sense and Sensibility, p. 22)

would not have caused her "pain." (p. 22) "Painful," too, is Elizabeth's reaction upon hearing Darcy criticized. Her unhappiness is very real when her father, after hearing of her betrothal, continues to speak of Darcy as "a proud, unpleasant sort of man." (Pride and Prejudice, p. 281)

> "I do, I do like him," she replied, with tears in her eyes. "I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms." (p. 281)

This is hardly the behaviour of a woman who is marrying for money. If Garrod's contention were correct, Elizabeth, having "bagged her game," would not be upset by hearing Darcy maligned.

Dorothy Van Ghent describes the marriage rite in Jane Austen's world as

> an 'ordeal' in that traditional sense of a moral testing . . . what will be tested will be . . . integrity of 'feeling'

under the crudely threatening social pressures.[30]

Elizabeth is shocked and disappointed to see Charlotte Lucas succumb to these "social pressures,"

> She had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage. Charlotte the wife of Mr. Collins, was a most humiliating picture! (Pride and Prejudice, pp. 95-96)

Like Thomas Gisborne, who writes in "Consideration Antecedent to Marriage":

> [considering] those who contract marriages, either chiefly, or in a considerable degree, through motives of interest or of ambition, it would be folly . . . to expect that such marriages, however they may answer the purposes of interest or of ambition, should terminate otherwise than in wretchedness. Wealth may be secured, rank may be obtained; but if wealth and rank are to be the main ingredients in the cup of matrimonial felicity, the sweetness of wine will be exhausted at once, and nothing remain but bitter and corrosive dregs.[31]

Elizabeth has

> the distressing conviction that it [will be] impossible for [Charlotte] to be tolerably happy in the lot she [has] chosen. (p. 96)

Garrod accuses Jane Austen of accepting "as not only good, but natural, . . . the marriage of convenience."[32] He gives no proof for his assertion, and I can find none in Jane Austen's novels or

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[30]Dorothy Van Ghent, "On Pride and Prejudice" (1953), from Pride and Prejudice: Text, Backgrounds, Criticism, ed. B. A. Booth, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963, pp. 215-16.

[31]Gisborne, op. cit., p. 173.

[32]Garrod, op. cit., p. 35.

letters. Perhaps Garrod is thinking of the Lydia-Wickham ménage. Here is Elizabeth's comment on the legal cementing of Lydia and Wickham's relationship:

> "And for this we are to be thankful. That they should marry, small as is their chance of happiness, and wretched as is his character, we are forced to rejoice!"
> (Pride and Prejudice, p. 226)

It is rather incredible that Jane Austen did not accept "as not only good, but natural, . . . the marriage of convenience," for she paints the alternative to marriage, at least for impoverished women, vividly and sympathetically. Elizabeth Drew speaks of the world Jane Austen describes as "a haven of peace . . . and simple values."[33] But it was not a haven for the Misses Bates and Jane Fairfaxes of the period. Miss Bates is too simple to recognize fully the precariousness of her position. Jane Fairfax, more astute, marries Frank Churchill--a choice, one feels, that would never have been made if Jane had had Emma's social advantages. But we recall that Jane Austen remarked privately that Jane Fairfax died soon after her marriage to Frank Churchill--a very odd conclusion to what Garrod would have us believe Jane Austen views as "not only good, but natural."

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[33]Elizabeth Drew, The Novel: A Modern Guide to Fifteen English Masterpieces, New York, W.W. Norton & Co.Ltd., 1963, p. 95.

CONCLUSION

Jane Austen's attitude toward the passion of love, most maturely expressed in Persuasion, is clearly adumbrated in her less subtle treatment of the same subject in Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice. Aware of its duality, at one moment both emotional and rational, she saw the inadequacies (and dangers) of "love" which based itself solely on passion. Thomas Gisborne, in his essay "Considerations Antecedent to Marriage", poses a question about two people who may consider being "bound during their joint lives to the society of each other" to which Mr. Bennet stands as a symbolic answer.

> Unless the dispositions, the temper, the habits, the genuine character and inmost principles were mutually known; what rational hope, what tolerable chance of happiness could subsist?[1]

Mr. Bennet's daughter, whose attitude to love is that of Jane Austen, came to realize that Darcy

> was exactly the man, who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. It was a union that must have been to the advantage of both; by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved, and from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance. (Pride and Prejudice, p. 232)

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[1]Gisborne, op. cit., p. 171.

Elizabeth, certain that Darcy would "shrink" from any connection with her newly-disgraced family, as yet unaware of his voluntary involvement in Lydia and Wickham's sordid affair, laments the fact that

> no such happy marriage [as the one she envisions above] could now teach the admiring multitude what connubial felicity really was. (p. 232)

Fortunately, Darcy, having also ascertained Elizabeth's "disposition, temper, [and] genuine character," renews his address despite her "inferior connections."

When Elizabeth expresses her gratitude for "that generous compassion which induced [him] to take so much trouble, and bear so many mortifications," he replies,

> "If you <u>will</u> thank me, let it be for yourself alone. That the wish of giving happiness to you, might add force to the other inducements which led me on, I shall not attempt to deny. But your <u>family</u> owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe, I thought only of <u>you</u>." (p. 273)

We may contrast Darcy with Willoughby, a character considered by many critics to be far superior to Darcy as a "lover." He is summed up accurately by Elinor.

> "The whole of his behaviour . . . has been grounded on selfishness. It was selfishness which first made him sport with your affections; which afterwards, when his own were engaged, made him delay the confession of it, and which finally carried him from Barton. His own enjoyment, or his own ease, was, in every particular, his ruling principle." (<u>Sense and Sensibility</u>, p. 351)

Marianne concurs.

> "It is very true. <u>My</u> happiness never was his object." (p. 351)

And yet G. B. Stern still insists,

> "I would sooner have sanctioned [Marianne's] marriage to Willoughby . . . Marianne's soul would at least not have been damped and stifled." [2]

Elinor describes the "ideal" marriage which Stern longed to see.

> "Had you [Marianne and Willoughby] married, you must have been always poor. His expensiveness is acknowledged even by himself, and his whole conduct declares that self-denial is a word hardly understood by him . . . how little could the utmost of your single management do to stop the ruin which had begun before your marriage?--Beyond that, had you endeavoured, however reasonably, to abridge his enjoyments, is it not to be feared, that instead of prevailing on feelings so selfish to consent to it, you would have lessened your own influence on his heart, and made him regret the connection which had involved him in such difficulties?" (p. 351)

As Gisborne warns, and as Marianne cannot see early in the book, when she is utterly captivated by Willoughby, despite knowing nothing of him except that "of music and dancing he [is] passionately fond,"

> [a] woman who receives for her husband a person of whose moral character she knows no more than that it is outwardly decent, stakes her welfare upon a very hazardous experiment.[3]

Ernest Baker, not sharing, and apparently failing to understand, Jane Austen's concept of love as a rational as well as emotional process, complains:

> . . . Jane Austen was always coy over love scenes, and so failed to make good . . . the personal fascination of Willoughby . . . Marianne's transports seem to be mere infatuation for a worthless object.[4]

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2 Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern, Talking of Jane Austen, London, Cassell & Co., 1943, p. 126.

3 Gisborne, op. cit., p. 174.

4 Ernest Baker, The History of the English Novel, Vol. VI, New York, Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1929, p. 76.

Mr. Baker seems to think that Jane Austen was attempting to establish the validity of the love-relationship between Marianne and Willoughby. The fact that "Marianne's transports seem to be mere infatuation" is to him a fault in the novel. Jane Austen is entirely capable of presenting love well; she is not endeavouring to present love between Marianne and Willoughby, but is demonstrating that what they feel for each other is not love. As Jane Austen realizes, the "passionate" never really love at all. They can verbalize their emotions, unlike Elizabeth Bennet, who "not very fluently"[5] (Pride and Prejudice, p. 273) assures Darcy of her love, but their emotions are seen to lack substance. They can be summoned in a moment. A "particularly picturesque" view is sufficient to activate them. For Jane Austen, "to feel" was not enough. Her concept of love is far more "passionate" than that of the sentimental novelists. The mind, as well as the heart, must be engaged.

Perhaps much of the failure to understand, or to recognize, Jane Austen's concept of love, is the result of her presentation of love. The presentation is an extension of part of her concept: that is, Jane Austen saw love as being manifested not by words, but by deeds. The "passionate," loquacious Willoughby makes no sacrifice

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[5]Subsequently, in teasing Darcy, she remarks,

"You might have talked to me more when you came to dinner."

He defends himself.

"A man who had felt less, might." (p. 285)

for Marianne's happiness. The "rational," laconic Darcy "bears . . . many mortifications" for Elizabeth's sake. Jane Austen's true "lovers" maintain a surface of composure, but "what throbs fast and full, though hidden" lies just beneath this surface. It is revealed in flashes by the exquisitely sure touch of Austen's pen. Are we to recognize only those passions which are vociferously expressed? "Vice, adventure, passion"--these are all to be found in Jane Austen's novels. It requires only "ingenuity" to discover them. The subtlety of their delineation does not invalidate their existence. The measure of perfection lies not in profusion, but in profundity.

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