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Her subject's voice: Articulating the "I" in the novels of Jane Austen

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HER SUBJECT'S VOICE:
ARTICULATING THE "I" IN THE NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN

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By

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DEDICATIONS

to my family
for their support

to Alan
for his spirit

to the M.G. core
for their esprit de corps
ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on Jane Austen’s representations of women in her five principal novels. I associate Austen’s delineations of women as subjects with her own changing sense of identity as she became an author of a certain popularity and confidence, although unidentified throughout her career. I begin with Austen’s attempts to work within eighteenth-century aesthetics and genres which were for the most part founded on sentimental representations of women that privileged the visible, or specular, dimensions of their subjectivity. Following Austen’s movement through the discursive fields determined by the various traditional genres--the history or \textit{bildungsroman}, the gothic, the romance, and the novel of psychological realism--I approach each novel as a fairly fresh negotiation of a given generic form. I suggest a "progress," though not necessarily a teleology, in her aesthetic innovations and strategies of women’s representation. My critique traces narrative patterns and motifs that refer the reader back to a notion of the woman writer emerging from anonymity into authority. Austen’s movement away from positing women’s subjectivity based on specular and social identity in her novels, toward a more mutable, fluid paradigm of "self," was coincident with her personal sense of "authority" as a writer. The increasing sureness of her own writerly "I" coincided with her renovation of an aesthetic based on the "eye," and her discovery of generic fields more friendly to the representation of the many dimensions of women’s identities, including "body" as more than a specular icon, and "voice" as a phenomenon incorporated in the text as "body."
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INTRODUCTION

Eye to "I": Articulating the Terms

A critique of how an author works through her fictions to articulate a subjectivity may seem an outdated project, or at least a nostalgic one, in a period when the integrity of the subject is being actively contested. Such projects are usually forgiven however, when the "subject" or author in question is, like Jane Austen, writing at a historical distance from the modern (or post-modern) crises of identity. Most canonical Austen criticism comfortably addresses her technique in representing coherently articulated subjects, and even praises or takes her to task for her various efforts. Thus, Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot receive general applause, though Elizabeth Bennet is typically the favorite. By critical consensus, Catherine Morland is too early and parodic a sketch of a heroine; Elinor and Marianne Dashwood appear to be a strangely fractured version of one. And Fanny Price, almost without fail, is condemned as a thoroughgoing disappointment, hardly believable as being Austen's creation. Updating these classical critiques alters these judgments somewhat--most notably those concerning Fanny, which have become more favorable as critics have become more liberal about what is acceptably "Austenian." What underlies all of these critical responses, however, is an unstated concept of Austen herself.

My own examination of Jane Austen as a woman writer who answers the challenge of self-articulation in representing all of her heroines leans heavily on a
notion of Austen as well. I would like however to distinguish my work from biographical criticism, per se, in both its Freudian forms--although I do at times deploy Freudian analysis--and the current materialist and historicist agendas. Austen's life, her social, economic and family circumstances, are of interest; but even now details on her efforts to write and be published are almost inaccessible. The early drafts of her novels, her writing habits, or correspondence about her notions of fiction-writing are virtually nonexistent. I am therefore concentrating on the skeletal records of her publishing activities, consisting mostly of a few of her own or her family's letters, and the relevant speculations of biographers, supported somewhat with recent historical research on women's authorship during Austen's time. I will argue that Austen's sporadically successful, and disappointing, forays into print do seem to correspond to the varied character of each novel's articulation.

As Austen struggled to get herself published and read, the novels themselves seem to shift slowly in their aesthetics, but also in the nature of the "solutions" provided for each heroine at novel's end. These shifts are of course not purely personal. While describing Austen's move from eighteenth-century mimesis, primarily specular, to nineteenth-century psychological realism, inflected by Romanticism and representations of interiority, I am obviously echoing a number of time-honored accounts of this period of literary history. However, it is a commonplace that Austen negotiated these movements in a highly specific manner, with some critics celebrating her "individuality" or "genius" so adamantly, that they paradoxically depersonalize her as they seem to free her from the contingencies of
historical/social context or contemporary constructs of gender. Contemporary criticism has often countered this "modernist" Austen, with a degree of "contextualizing," or grounding that eclipses any account of the specific aesthetic innovations that cannot be explained through appeals to the techniques of other contemporary women novelists, or as mere parodic responses to masculine texts. In Austen's case, the famous feminist byline, "the personal is the political" can be further qualified by saying that "the personal is the aesthetic."

Though the sketchy dating of the "originals" and "revisions" of her three earliest novels is unsettling, it is possible I believe to explore the changing "fields" of Austen's experiments in women's representation without insisting on a teleology of her artistic growth. When working in a predominantly 18th-century mimetic vein, Austen struggles to "ground" her heroines in something distinct from their specular identity. In Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice, she plays off the specular in a way that betrays her consciousness of how inadequate that mode is for the representation of woman's subjectivity. In this light, Elizabeth Bennet is perhaps the quintessential Austen heroine because she seems to avoid being defined by her appearance or specular identity, to master the talent of the specular herself, and to make it her vehicle for "apprehending" and "appropriating" the beautifully ordered universe of Pemberley and its specularly-impressive master. Elizabeth's specular contest is, however, not quite this self-evident. Even at this early stage, Austen in her way notably juxtaposes beauty and wit, the visible and the vocal, and the ground of the body and the ground of property, but further complicates matters
by considering these oppositions in con-text--the literal "text" which represents the limits of a writer's representation.

The ultimate "field" for Austen's experimentation is mapped out in her manipulations of genre. Commonly discussed as parodic gestures, these shapings are also part of Austen's explorations of different "grounds" or "fields" for the articulation of women's subjectivity. Many critics see Northanger Abbey, for instance, as an early "comedy of manners" invaded or flawed by the alien form of the Gothic. My analysis of Northanger draws on recent feminist criticism which discusses the long-maligned Gothic as a politically-relevant genre with special connections to the themes of victimage and the repression of women.

My consideration of genre as a field of discursive experimentation for Austen includes not only the obvious example of Northanger, but all of her subsequent novels. Many previous critics have discussed Austen's fondness for thematic allusion. I am not so much concerned with borrowed plots and themes, as with Austen's more ambitious attempts to construct a "form"--hybrid or radically fresh--more friendly to the representation of women than the Fielding-esque "history," the Quixotic "romance," or even the Richardsonian novel of sentiment and sensibility. These novelistic genres have remarkably different architecture; the one Austen found most "natural" was perhaps the epistolary, a genre that still lingers in the earliest novels, Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice. The feigned letter proved an excellent vehicle for Austen's talents at drawing witty character sketches and exploring intricate turns of mind and judgment. Because it made both conventional
mimesis and the representation of the psychology of interiority possible, this genre's potential for articulating women's subjectivity seemed greatest, and abandoning the form was probably one of Austen's most difficult aesthetic decisions. In any case, Austen’s epistolary texts are her first efforts at representing her heroine's subjectivity as consciousness with dimension.

Though Austen discarded the form of exchanged letters, that genre's greatest advantages survive this decision in that well-recognized convention of a sister-pair, whose interactions create the same space for consciousness. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, and Elizabeth and Jane Bennet are, among other things, phantom forms for the structural duality originally created in epistolary narratives advanced through "correspondence" or "exchange." Though these sister dynamics soon give way to further experiment, pseudo-sisters drift in and out of Fanny Price's, Emma Woodhouse's and Anne Elliot's spheres. Even before finishing *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's focus had shifted from preserving a conscious "space" within conventional strategies of specular representation. The tyranny of the text itself now concerned her most, and in her later novels, Austen devotes her time to testing an "independent" heroine's resiliency against the recalcitrance of a given generic text. Though Austen always mixes her genres, the form most engaged in *Mansfield Park* is the "history"; in *Emma*, the romance with all its ideological implications; and in *Persuasion*--an interesting case--the emerging discourse of 19th-century psychology and Romantic models of the "self." Each novel has its own treatment of allusion, ground, and self-articulation. Answering the challenge of self-articulation in these
novels produces different "solutions" from an Austen no longer as preoccupied with 18th-century mimetics and specularity.

Only *Northanger Abbey*, for example, makes greater use of the narrative "I" than the underrated *Mansfield Park*. But while many critics consider the reiterated "I" as a symptom of Austen's distance from her heroine, I see it as a sign of her personal stake in Fanny's achievement. By surveying the generic field of the "history" through Fanny's progressive articulation of self through time, Austen also interrogates that privileged space of landed gentry and aristocracy so often considered the conservative "reward" for an Austen heroine. And yet, the triumph of Fanny Price is not achieved through a form of transcendence valued within the Romantic ethos and cult of the "self" that recent criticism has increasingly disclosed as a masculinist construct. In fact, Fanny's self achievement within the field of articulation known as "history" goes beyond 19th-century Romantic notions of historical subjectivity as well. Fanny's "incestuous" marriage with Edmund has been referred to in one critique as an "alter-cultural" innovation on conventional marital and family affiliations of the era (Handler and Segal 134). I expand on this concept to suggest that "alter-subjectivities," not transcendental selves, emerge in these alter-cultural relationships.

These subjectivities occupy alternative spaces of their own in *Emma* and *Persuasion*. In *Emma*, for instance, though the heroine moves comfortably within what may be considered a beautiful and "orderly" world, much like Elizabeth Bennet's Pemberley (Monaghan 145), Emma also occupies the *utopic* space of
Hartfield, the site for a fantastic variety of modes of self-authorization deployed by one of Austen’s most difficult, yet admired heroines. Optimistically self-determined, and author of her future in a way that many critics, while complaining of its lack of realism, involuntarily enjoy, Emma emerges from Austen’s complete yet self-conscious self-indulgence in the romance genre. Recent criticism of this narrative form has revealed it as an ideologically significant tool of patriarchy in the shaping of women’s subjectivity. Through her representation of Emma’s “happy ending” with Knightley and Mr. Woodhouse in a self-selected romantic space, Hartfield, Austen subsumes the novel’s amazing “realism” and the seriousness of its moral climax to its fantasy factor, which celebrates a quintessence of a certain kind of heroinism. But in the process, Austen also exposes the mystifying and manipulative elements of the romance genre. *Emma* teaches women readers about self-realization in a sophisticatedly seductive way *Pride and Prejudice* doesn’t, because the more skillful writer of *Emma* was less complacent about a woman’s chances of achieving a selfhood which escapes the constructs of patriarchy and its literary forms.

All of Austen’s novels display a certain flaw in the heroine/author articulation. Some critics praise this incomplete articulation as consistent with Austen’s famous “indirect discourse.” Others deride it as an evasiveness, produced either by a supersensitive discretion, or a reluctance to write about intimate interludes that Austen herself had presumably not experienced, which led to the withholding of certain moments, and to the hasty wrap-ups of what might be richly
romanticized endings to her "marriage" plots. Drawing on Austen's final, complete "experiment," *Persuasion*, I see these indirections as evidence of her effort to risk a form of self-articulation she drew back from in the earlier novels.

*Persuasion*'s famous two endings illustrate how Austen recast a characteristically indirect conclusion into something else. Anne Elliot remains outside those "fields" for grounding identity which Austen's previous heroines either gained or in Emma's case, struggled to retain. In *Persuasion*, the realms of land and money seem to have become no longer worthy of pursuit (Monaghan 143). Sir Walter, his mirrors, his Baronetage--the world of appearances, including the "mirroring" text, are devices for the reflection of a kind of self-worth Anne chooses not to seek. With this heroine, Austen demonstrates her distance from an aesthetic of 18th-century specularity and from the mimetic text it yielded. But Anne's distance from these conventions of self-achievement is as nervous as it is, paradoxically, noble. She ends the novel as much a nobody, by certain measures, as she had been at its start; and heads toward the oceanic limbo of a future with a fortunate sailor as her mate, but without land or title, or the guarantee of steady capital. *Persuasion*'s "ground" of identity is thus minimal. Anne locates herself by negotiating between the ground of body and the text of voice. Though maintaining a certain indirection--Anne must be *overheard* when she so boldly speaks--through a speech which both identifies her self and draws the proposal which leads to the heroine's traditional self-"establishment" in marriage. Anne quite literally moves away from fixed "ground" toward a mutable, fluid future and selfhood.
And even without the intrusion of her own "I," so does Jane Austen, whose own self as a woman writer is articulated through a different history, a different heart and a different field of subjectivity than the masculine authors she had read and admired. Different, but not distinct. Not naive in its success, *Persuasion* acknowledges the inevitable dominance of patriarchal discourse and textual and specular power over the subjectivities of women. Anne’s grounding in body and voice however suggests the possibility of *detente*, of feminine and masculine discursive cooperation, because *Persuasion* not only reaffirms the dialogic power of narrative, but more resonantly, articulates a new presence in narrative that defies both the specular and the textual "I."
CHAPTER ONE

The Anxious Aesthetic of *Northanger Abbey*:

Catherine Morland’s "Unpractised I"¹

"Write laundry lists," not poems."²

The alliance of self-knowledge and specular representation, as suggested in the Introduction, is an important configuration for Jane Austen. In *Northanger Abbey*, this alliance is inflected by a third element: that of anxiety. But this triad is hardly atypical for women writers of Austen's era. As Ellen Moers has remarked, "to give visual form to the fear of the self, . . . [is] more common in the writings of women than of men. . . . Nothing separates female experience more sharply, and more early in life, than the compulsion to visualise the self" (107). It is impossible to establish how "early in life" Austen wrote what we know as *Northanger Abbey*,³ but its seemingly parodic characters and events have the earmarks of her Juvenilia. Amateurism may produce authorial anxiety, but as Moers' quote suggests, being a woman in itself was source enough for fear of the self, and the genre particularly suited to articulating this fear was the Gothic. To "hold anxiety up to the Gothic mirror of the imagination" was a strangely enabling gesture for many women writers (107). Elaine Showalter has pointed out how the Gothic, when misread, "loses its capacity to mediate between the uncanny and the unjust" (129). In focusing on the self-explorative use of the Gothic by Austen in *Northanger*, I will argue that its "intrusion" into what might have been a characteristic comedy of manners was not an accidental, merely allusive or irrelevant impulse, and that this novel and its
heroine comprise a legitimate stage in Austen’s movement towards authorial enunciation. *Northanger Abbey’s* elements of anxiety might be compared to those in *Persuasion*, with which it was published. But there are major gaps between the complexity of the heroines. Catherine’s anxieties, in contrast to those of the sensitive Anne, seem broadly drawn. But Catherine’s Gothic is revealed as something more complex than generic parody when we take into account how the novel’s unfortunate history influenced Austen’s sense of identity as an author.

Such an examination involves scrutinizing that character most often associated with the "voice" of authority--Austen’s voice--in the novel: Henry Tilney. The critical consensus on Henry Tilney’s identification with Austen is nearly as great as that on the equation of Austen and Mr. Knightley in *Emma*, suggesting a relationship between the two heroines, at least in terms of our resistance to their authority and our opinions on the degree of education each stands to gain. Certainly Catherine Morland pales beside Emma when it comes to age, sophistication and personal wealth. They do resemble each other, however, in being compulsively imaginative. But Emma is relatively original in her fancies; Catherine, as in the comparison with Anne Elliot, is not nearly as fine in her delineation. Her portrait, whatever Austen’s age when she finalized it, is of a young woman striving to authorize herself, but still very anxious about the effort.

Anxiety may be one reason so many readers focus on the ironic Henry as the novel’s guiding voice. Henry is the traditional de-mystifier of Catherine’s Gothic fantasies and the agent of her "awakening." In his famous reprimand of Catherine,
delivered in the Abbey hallway where his dead mother’s room is located, and where Catherine has been prying, Henry corrects her with insinuations about crimes much more serious than those of the imagination. He tells her that her fears disclose a mind that is not only irrationally overactive, but ignorant of the social checks on the excesses she is imagining:

Remember the country and age in which you live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observations of what is passing around you—Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? . . . Could they be perpetrated without being known, . . . where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay every thing open? (199-200)

D.W. Harding, reading less ironic protectiveness in Henry’s speech than anti-social sentiments, was one of the first to equate Henry’s attitude with what Harding called Austen’s "regulated hatred." Though this now seems an excessive phrase, it is difficult not to sense a jaded cynicism in Henry’s "voluntary spies" reference. Even when backed up with historical evidence that Henry’s speech is not empty paranoia,7 there remains a tone of wry protest, of almost cynical resignation to privacy violated at every turn, but especially in the press and at the hands of one’s neighbors. Henry’s reprimand is paradoxically both a consolation and a
threat. Its sketch of relentless surveillance and documentation is in some ways more frightening than Catherine's Gothic plot.

Evidence of Henry's contribution to anxiety-generation in *Northanger* is also noted in an earlier incident, when he offers up a Gothic narrative to Catherine, riding by his side on the box of his carriage on their journey from Bath to the Abbey. His delight in his fiction, at the expense of Catherine's peace of mind, is in sharp contrast to the near sarcasm of the "voluntary spies" scolding. Henry's obvious enjoyment of fiction was established early in his acquaintance with Catherine, and infuses his carriage ride narrative with a verve that makes his later corrective seem even more grim and out of character. The voluntary spies reprimand is not that of a man speaking calmly to alleviate anxiety. It is a displacement of imaginative anxieties with real ones. However "therapeutic" we might consider the later reality-check for Catherine, Henry is clearly not happy about the reality he reminds Catherine to bear in mind.

Many recent critics, again equating Henry and Austen, have seized the occasion of the "voluntary spies" exhortation to show that the author was both conversant with and had opinions about contemporary politics. Marilyn Butler was among the first to advocate such a rethinking of Austen's work in general, as "a conscious exercise in historicism, into seeing [the] novels may be about general and ethical rather than personal and emotional truths" (167). However, this requires a certain critical myopia, since personal and emotional truths are decidedly part of Austen's subject matter in every novel. But *Northanger Abbey* seems readymade for
the political critique. As Nancy Armstrong has remarked, this is "the only one of Austen's novels to refer to the kind of [political] violence that a reader of the 1790s was supposed to fear" ("A Turning Point," 235). Armstrong's reference in this comment is not to the "voluntary spies" speech, but to the other excerpt cited frequently in historical critiques: the conversation Henry, Catherine and Eleanor have while visiting Beechen Cliff outside of Bath.

The scene is for the most part devoted to a discussion of the picturesque between Henry and his sister, who survey "the country with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing." Henry, in particular, dazzles Catherine with his talk of "fore-ground, distances, and second distances--side-scenes and perspectives--lights and shades." But Henry's lecture digresses "from a piece of rocky fragment and the withered oak which he had placed near its summit, to oaks in general, to forests, the inclosure of them, waste lands, crown lands and government," when "he shortly found himself arrived at politics; and from politics, it was an easy step to silence" (125-6). We assume Henry's lapse into silence is a concession to his female companions, but this is another moment in the narrative where Austen's intentions are ambiguous, and her allegiance even moreso. One may gather from the ridiculous conversation that follows, in which Eleanor and Catherine misunderstand each other about "something very shocking indeed" which "will soon come out in London," that Eleanor, having followed Henry's transitions and carried their implications through his silence, interprets Catherine's announcement politically.
Eleanor assumes that a "'dreadful riot'" is expected, and it takes Henry to quell her fears with, "'My dear Eleanor, the riot is only in your brain'" (126-7).

The resemblance of this sibling interchange to the later "voluntary spies" speech is rarely noted, possibly because Eleanor's errors don't strike us as Catherine's do, and because Eleanor comes back at Henry assertively, correcting his manners as firmly as he corrected her imagination. It is another instance of Henry's disengaging irony prompting a rude awakening: but Eleanor's "awakening" to Catherine's real topic—a new book due out from a circulating library—is minor, and much less "rude" than Henry is when he advises Catherine, "'Forgive her [Eleanor's] stupidity. The fears of the sister have added to the weakness of the woman, but she is by no means a simpleton in general.'" His chastisement of Eleanor is different from his later correction of Catherine's overactive imagination, and yet the stakes of each young woman's misunderstanding are not in proportion to his response. In fact, Catherine is penalized for conjuring fantasies of a much smaller scale than Eleanor's.

In both instances, though, what is especially curious is that Henry does not wait for Eleanor or Catherine to fully articulate the substance of her imaginings. For each of them, he deduces a narrative based on their fragmentary exclamations (in Eleanor's case) or excuses (in Catherine's case). In the Beechen Cliff scene, he supplies the narrative that he supposes had been flashing across Eleanor's mind, of "'a mob of three thousand men assembling in St. George's fields; the Bank attacked, the Tower threatened, the streets of London flowing with blood'" (127). Here is
another occasion critics often pounce upon to display Austen’s historical currency, for a near insurrection of this sort had in fact occurred. Judith Wilt goes so far as to wonder if Austen really had "thought these memories unavailable to rational creatures" of the era, as Henry's incredulity implies; "the late 1790s," Wilt continues, were "years not only of the Terror across the Channel but of the Combination Acts and the riots" connected with the terror (149). But again, to focus on this reference, and Austen's possible political commentary, insists troublesomely on Austen's conscious foregrounding of "masculine" concerns like politics and history, in keeping with the conventional identification of Henry and the author. Her investment in the character of Catherine—who speaks of books not politics—should not be ignored, especially when the juxtaposition of Henry's Beechen Cliff and "voluntary spies" speeches exposes him as somewhat two-faced. This unreliability of Henry's response is perhaps as great a source of alarm as any Gothic or political occurrence in *Northanger Abbey*.

In justifying this argument about the relation of Henry's narrative unreliability to the anxious aesthetic that runs through *Northanger*, some biographical background is necessary about the circumstances when "Susan" was first written and marketed, and later when it was repurchased, renamed, and to whatever extent, "revised." The Austen responsible for selling "Susan" to Crosby & Co. was Henry, Jane's second eldest brother. The year was 1803 and Henry had taken control of furthering his sister's career, partly because her original "literary agent," Reverend Austen, was ill and—in fact—dying. To defer that eventuality, the
family had made a move from Steventon to Bath, where Jane Austen would commence work on a piece called "The Watsons," aborted and never resumed after her father's death. The move to Bath so dismayed Austen, that she is recorded as having fainted—for the one and only time in her life—after the announcement (Halperin 123). And as Marvin Mudrick has remarked, inspired by a resonant passage in the Juvenilia, "Jane Austen has never cared for women who faint" (238).11

The dissatisfaction with Bath is a narrative link between *Northanger* and its companion publication, *Persuasion*. Austen's own dislike for Bath enters her heroine's consciousness late in *Northanger*, when Isabella Thorpe's duplicities strike Catherine as part of the town's superficialities. However, even in her first weeks there, Catherine is not completely blind to what she will later seriously dislike about Bath. She notices, for instance, upon meeting Eleanor Tilney in the Pump Room that she is a young woman of quality and character immediately more admirable than Isabella. The first conversation they exchange has "the merit of . . . being spoken with simplicity and truth, and without personal conceit," which the narrative notes is "something uncommon" in Bath (91). Catherine detects an authenticity in Eleanor that is somewhat different from what she is first attracted to in Eleanor's brother. In fact the meeting with Henry is glossed by a coy narrative as parodic as most of the romantic fantasy Catherine indulges in at Bath: "Whether she thought of him so much, while she drank her warm wine and water, and prepared herself for bed, as to dream of him there, cannot be ascertained; but . . . it must be very
improper that a young lady should dream of a gentleman before the gentleman is first known to have dreamt of her" (51). Naturally, the heterosexual rituals of the age could have much to do with the parodic treatment of Catherine's interest in Henry as compared to her sincere liking of Eleanor. But there is something else happening here, related to a convention of 18th-century novel-writing that Austen reverted to frequently in her early works.

This convention is that of the sister-pair, a narrative strategy explored in greater depth in my next chapter. In Northanger, we can trace the beginnings of how Austen will go about constructing the more complex subjectivities of her later heroines. Catherine, one of the least complex of Austen heroines, is so because her author refrained from utilizing Eleanor as a counterbalance for Catherine's subjective evolution in the way--in the novel immediately following this, Sense and Sensibility--Elinor would be used to influence Marianne's subjectivity, and vice versa. The soundest sisterly bonding between Eleanor and Catherine will finally occur as a function of Catherine's legal bonding with Henry. But we can see the initial gestures toward that movement in the intrigue surrounding the dead Mrs. Tilney. Eleanor, at least from Catherine's point of view, is repeatedly thwarted in her attempts to show her dead mother's bedroom to Catherine during her visit to the Abbey. Catherine becomes convinced that Eleanor has been traumatized by her mother's death, and attempts to solve the mystery. General Tilney and Henry, however, as the masculine custodians of the Northanger property and its dead mistress's history, repeatedly interrupt Catherine's investigations, and consequently
delay the sisterly bonding which Catherine imagines would follow upon her having a better knowledge of Eleanor's mother. These women are hindered in their understanding of each other, and in the progress of their relationship, by the necessity of negotiating through a masculine authority.

This is dramatized in the Beechen Cliff scene when Henry places himself between the two young women, implying that they are discursively crippled without him. Henry functions here in the same way as he mediates as the masculine modifier of female relations. Unlike the vulgar John Thorpe, who kept his distance from or snuffed any talk between Isabella and Catherine, Henry does not seem indifferent to communications between women. As on the occasion when he talked with ease to Mrs. Allen about her muslin (50), Henry participates in such discussions with a kind of flexible, ungendered helpfulness. Several critics have responded to this by calling Henry too much a chameleon to be a hero. I suggest that Austen, though transitionally disturbed by Henry's characterization, finally found it useful. Henry's representation discloses much about Austen's earliest fictional dilemmas in finding a voice.

The biographical dimensions are relevant here. Austen's brother Henry, as I have explained, was a surrogate for her father-agent; and I suspect Austen considered her brother both a detriment and a figure associated with pivotal opportunities in her career as an author. While his unsuccessful dealings with Crosby & Co. thwarted Austen for nearly a decade, it was a deferral during which she learned much. The lessons and emotions it generated made her the writer who
managed to revise the earlier-rejected "First Impressions" into *Pride and Prejudice*, and also yielded the mature risks of *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. In each of these works linger some traces of the complaint that is rarely read other than parodically in *Northanger*, the complaint summed up in the "only a novel" passage. But it is possible to read *Northanger Abbey*--aside from the "only a novel" passage, which seems to have earned a certain respect--other than parodically. Such a re-reading involves a critical reconsideration and reassessment of the "Gothic" as a respectable genre, something Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and others have suggested is long overdue. Their re-evaluation of the Gothic involves recognizing its roots in a women's tradition of novel writing, and comprehending the shadow narrative that the majority of women-authored Gothics share.

On the surface however, *Northanger Abbey* seems to imply that the Gothic is not a framework conducive to the communication of women. Again, the Beechen Cliff scene gives us a prime example of this, and Henry is very much an agent of its dramatization. His face-saving maneuver in Catherine's naive interest--when he condemns Eleanor's "obscurism"--is a narrative red herring that leads the reader toward two responses: an admiration for the "chivalry" that Henry exercises toward Catherine (even if it entails insulting women's powers of reason in general); and a supposition that Henry has "enabled" this discourse between women with his masculine powers of translation. Of course the upshot to this skirmish is Eleanor's taming of her brother's officiousness, and her subsequent drawing nearer to Catherine, anyway, in sisterly confidence: "We shall get nothing serious from him
now, Miss Morland. He is not in a sober mood. But I do assure you that he must
be entirely misunderstood, if he can ever appear to say an unjust thing of any
woman at all, or an unkind one of me” (128). In the final event—here at least—
Eleanor is the one who mediates between Catherine and Henry, and between Henry
and us.

The specifically-gendered terms of the misunderstanding and clarification
between the three friends must be read carefully in this scene. Henry teases Eleanor
and Catherine with precise reference to gender: "'shall I leave you to puzzle out an
explanation as you can? No--I will be noble. I will prove myself a man, no less by
the generosity of my soul than the clearness of my head. I have no patience with
such of my sex as disdain to let themselves down to the comprehension of yours’"
(126). Here we see the qualities identified earlier with Henry’s gesture toward
Catherine: his "nobility" or chivalry in assisting the transaction. But when he tells
his sister, "'My dear Eleanor, the riot is in your brain’" (122), we realize his
nobility is afflicted by certain assumptions about the communicants, for instance,
that their sphere of discourse should decorously be directed as Catherine has
assumed, toward fiction, rather than as Eleanor has, toward history. What is truly
telling about this episode is not that Eleanor and Catherine manage an affectionate
understanding anyway, but that Henry emerges unscathed in Catherine’s eyes: "It
was no effort to Catherine to believe that Henry Tilney could never be wrong. His
manner might sometimes surprize, but his meaning must always be just:--and what
she did not understand, she was almost as ready to admire, as what she did" (128).
Catherine is just as ready to "see" Henry with admiring eyes as he is pleased to have her admiration. It is no coincidence that she has responded with undiscriminating enthusiasm to the lesson on the picturesque that just precedes this conversation: "Catherine was so hopeful a scholar, that when they reached the top of Beechen Cliff, she voluntarily rejected the whole city of Bath, as unworthy to make part of a landscape" (126). She now turns her tutored gaze on the tutor and finds him faultless, though she cannot claim complete understanding. The later mishaps at Northanger are a factor of both Henry's self-assurance in his role as mentor and mediator for Catherine, and of Catherine's questionless validation of him. When she is invited to Northanger Abbey her reaction belies her vulnerability: "Her passion for ancient edifices was next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney--and castles and abbies made usually the charm of those reveries which his image did not fill. To see and explore either the ramparts and keep of the one, or the cloisters of the other, had been for many weeks a darling wish" (149-50). The syntax here creates an interesting slippage of meaning with erotic nuances, as one critic has pointed out. But along with the erotic, there are hermeneutic nuances, for Catherine is conflating Henry and his aristocratic home. Her passion for exploring the latter will, unknown to her, founder when confronted by Henry's authority. The Abbey's history, which Catherine will attempt to read in cloisters, ramparts and keep, will be allowed to keep its secrets when Catherine is forced to choose between her Gothic and romantic passions.
A second conflation of the syntax above is that between Henry and "ancient-ness," which adds dimension to his role as masculine authority in the novel. Henry stands as a benevolent "second" to the nominative authority in the *Northanger* plot: the patriarch, General Tilney. Though Henry's status at Northanger is third to his brother's and father's--and in fact he does not stand to inherit the property--when Catherine fantasizes about him in connection with "ancient edifices," she inadvertently engages General Tilney in the Gothic complex of her imaginings. As is true with most of Austen's work, the second reading of *Northanger Abbey* discloses that as Catherine is assessing her surroundings and weaving her fictions about the General and his past, she is very immediately a part of his plot--one that will unravel when she is feeling most secure of her "reasonability," after she has dropped her Gothic fancies for Henry's commonsense outlook. Catherine irresistably re-inscribes the General's character at first, though feigning unquestioning respect for him. His guidance of her on a tour of the house and grounds of the Abbey skims, she thinks, on all the Gothically-charged details, stressing the renovated and opulent instead. Unlike her behavior during Henry's lesson in the picturesque at Beechen Cliff, Catherine will not allow her eye to be acquiescent to the General's directives in observing the Abbey. While Henry's word on exterior scenery was accepted, "correcting" Catherine's eye, Catherine herself is from the first moments at the Abbey correcting in her mind's eye what the General is so proud to display to her. Her comments on the windows are particularly interesting, since they are devices by which the inside accesses the outside, and
Catherine is disappointed that the Abbey's windows make that access so efficient:

"To be sure, the pointed arch was preserved--the form of them was Gothic—they might even be casements--but every pane was so large, so clear, so light! To an imagination which had hoped for the smallest divisions, and the heaviest stone-work, for painted glass, dirt and cobwebs, the difference was very distressing" (168).

Of course we are invited here to be amused by Catherine's craving for what the very language of this description makes unsavory. Again, the gap between narrator and heroine opens, and we might almost be tempted to imagine the General's point of view as the more sympathetic. But Catherine remains our "window" on the scene, not only because she has been our heroine so far, but because the General's behavior (reported without irony in the narrative) distances us from him. His insistence on punctuality, his arrogance as master of the house (he "pulled the bell with violence, ordered 'Dinner to be on table directly!'" (171)), and his effect on Eleanor and Henry ("though so charming a man, [he] seemed always a check upon his children's spirits" (163)) alienate him from us, though we don't necessarily accept Catherine's conclusions.

What does seem trustworthy and significant is Catherine's disapproval of the General's treatment of Eleanor. When they tour the Abbey grounds, the General declines to take a walk in the "thick grove of old Scotch firs" so beloved to Eleanor's mother, and consequently to Eleanor herself. Catherine, perhaps precipitously, takes this as a sign that the General wishes to avoid any spot that has memories of his former wife. Her suspicions blossom as Eleanor reminisces during
the walk (which she and Eleanor take without the General), telling Catherine of her father's demurral to keep his dead wife's portrait in his bedroom. Eleanor remarks that, "my father was dissatisfied with the painting, and for some time it had no place," and explains how she managed to obtain it for her own bedroom (184).

Armed with such information, Catherine takes her final steps toward imagining a Gothic plot, though she is momentarily checked as she remembers Mr. Allen telling her how such characteristics are "unnatural and overdrawn" (185). The evidence against the General, she decides, is definitive enough to deserve her extreme representation.

Some aesthetic and generic interpretations on a larger scale can be hazarded here, after the discussion of a scene where representation is so central: the General's dislike of his wife's portrait, Catherine's subsequent possible "unnatural" and "overdrawn" representations of the General, and the more subtle portrait Catherine (and possibly Austen) is rendering of Eleanor as the isolated daughter whose loyalty to her mother is enacted in rituals like frequenting her old walks, and who would like to show her friend the room her mother died in, but is mysteriously forbidden from doing so without her father to chaperone the visit (189). Catherine's "discovery" of the possibility of wrongdoing in the case of Mrs. Tilney performs the transformation of her experience into the Gothic adventure she craved. "The Gothic castle is, after all, the house of the dead mother," Elaine Showalter has written (128). Locating the "dead mother" in the history of the Tilneys and the Abbey alleviates any of the disappointments Catherine may have felt with the architectural
renovations the General had shown her. The buried event of Mrs. Tilney’s death, which Eleanor admits she did not observe, gives Catherine—and Austen—the Gothic seed for the *Northanger* plot.

As critical consensus on the novel has suggested, the Gothic impulse in *Northanger* is indulged in a strangely sporadic manner. There is a tension with the social theme that implies the Gothic functioned as either an imperative or a lure on Austen that she could not balance with the "novel of manners" design. Though Austen herself, of course, invented the specific Gothic trappings I suggested lured her into this novel, I would like to propose that they function not only as plot apparatus, but as analogs for a generic imperative "working" on Austen: one she felt as answerable to as surely as Catherine did to the dead Mrs. Tilney. As I’ve suggested before, Catherine is a modified Emma, a rampant fictionizer—but derivative: loaded down not only with imagination as Emma was, but with literary precedents her amateurism did not equip her to resist. One of these, the first part of *Northanger* establishes without question, is Mrs. Radcliffe’s Gothic mode.

Of the Gothic genre overall, Judith Wilt has remarked that it had a literary predominance in the era when Jane Austen began writing. But Austen was the novelist who made a "decisive break" with the Gothic, specifically the Radcliff-ian which peaked in popularity during the 1790s, roughly the time of *Northanger*’s first version, "Susan." Judging from the novel’s final form, Wilt proclaims Austen’s achievement as "not a subversion, nor a conversion," but "a real transformation, . . . a true and original grasping of her inheritance" (124). The key concept is
one of "inheritance," an idea that marks the intersection of Austen's larger project in writing Northanger and Catherine's experiences as its heroine. The tension alluded to earlier in the novel arises from the fact that the "inheritance" of literary forms and modes is not unaccompanied by a certain anxiety and rebellion. Finding one's authorial voice, especially for a woman, is a dubious enterprise, and "the conventions"—even those inherited from another woman writer—"insist on retaining some of the undead life of the past" (Wilt 123).

That the Gothic imperative was both a spur and a constraint for Austen is something the tensions and irresolutions of Northanger's narrative make clear. Perhaps the most obvious statement that a literary "inheritance" is part of the novel's baggage, though, is the passage cited most frequently in traditional criticism of the novel. It occurs as a narrative outburst following the admission that Catherine and Isabella, early in their acquaintance, when they were not frequenting the social diversions at Bath, "shut themselves up, to read novels together" (57). The narrator insists that she will not dishonestly or disloyally conceal the fact that her heroine relishes a good novel. Let the reviewers deride them as they may,18 this "authoress" (and that term does seem like the proper one in this context, as my discussion shall make clear) will stand up for her sisters: "Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body," she declares. But the "injury" is modified by the awareness that "our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation of the world. . . . From pride, ignorance or fashion, our
foes are almost as many as our readers" (58). This "defense," thus, takes the shape of a baldfaced statement of marketing facts in the face of literary elitism."

This passage is, of course, best known for its "only a novel" refrain, although by the time it utilizes that rhetoric, the statement of literary market "facts" has begun to yield to what critics find more difficult to accept as Jane Austen's "opinion" than the earlier parts of the passage. At this point, some bending of the tone seems to take place--as if to a voice more suited to Catherine Morland than Austen--and novels such as Cecilia, Camilla, and Belinda end up being touted as displaying "the greatest powers of mind," "the most thorough knowledge of human nature," "the liveliest effusions of wit and humor," and "the best chosen language" (58). By contrast, a volume of the Spectator is condemned for its "improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and types of conversation, which no longer concern anyone living" (59). The narrator bemoans the fact that a young woman reading this antiquated publication, however, would confess it without restraint, while her much more habitual reading material would be apologized for as "only a novel."

The tension I spoke of in Northanger, if this passage is any evidence, is not between the Gothic and the alternative novel of manners or sentiment, but between the latter form (surely Cecilia, Camilla and Belinda must be considered as examples of these) and more scholarly, serious belles lettres. The absence of any specific mention of the Gothic from this defense must give any reader of Northanger pause. Why are the Gothic writer and heroine not among the "injured bodies" of the
sisterhood invoked here, but strangely excluded from the literary women enjoined not to "desert" each other? Is the omission in the same mood as Henry's later chastening of Catherine for her morbid fancies? And if this is so, does the "only a novel" passage become another version of the critical elitism it condemns? I will argue, rather, that Austen's seeming erasure of the Gothic from the defense was precisely to preserve its integrity and identity as a genre--as the most vulnerable of "injured bodies"--from critical surveillance or distortion, even in the context of a radical defense.

Evidence for this argument is provided much later in the novel, after Catherine has absorbed the impact of Henry's "voluntary spies" reprimand, and is reflecting upon those fictions that so influenced her: "She remembered with what feelings she had prepared for a knowledge of Northanger. She saw that the infatuation had been created, the mischief settled long before her quitting Bath, and it seemed as if the whole might be traced to the influence of that sort of reading which she had there indulged" (201-2). The causality in Catherine's logic is evidence that Henry's reprimand has taken effect. But completely repressed is his function in contributing to the "mischief" with his Gothic narrative on the way to the Abbey. While Henry's culpability remains unspoken, Catherine takes Mrs. Radcliffe to task for her representational faults:

Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, . . . it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the midland countries of England, was to be looked for. Of the Alps and Pyrenees, with their
pine forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation; and Italy, Switzerland, and the South of France, might be as fruitful in horrors as they were represented. . . . But in the central part of England there was surely some security for the existence of even a wife not beloved, in the laws of the land, and the manners of the age.

(202)

In doubting Mrs. Radcliffe's aesthetic, Catherine joins a significant portion of her readership, who enjoyed but mistrusted the novels for their second-hand mimesis, and the fact that their author had never been out of England, but took her scenery from paintings (Moers 128). The representational protest is an important one because it relates to Austen's own authorial process. She would hand down as one of her formal strategies, later in her career, the prerequisite that one keep one's fictional world realistic and controllable. That the "real" is certainly not "controllable" is however an awareness Austen surely had as early as *Northanger*. She would handle the slippages between subjective notions of social and psychological "reality" in a mode other than the Gothic in her subsequent novels. But though she may protest about the Gothic's "overdrawn" fictions in *Northanger*, she is not automatically invalidating what Mrs. Radcliffe and other Gothic women writers strove to articulate in their novels--for these were related to the "slippages" she herself was concerned with. In the Gothic genre they come under the category of the "uncanny."
That even Henry has an apprehension of "the uncanny" is obvious from the way he ends his "voluntary spies" reprimand to Catherine, not by detailing what he suspects her of fancying, but with the open-ended: "'Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?'" (200) Henry's question has enough rhetorical power to evoke fantasies far more improbable and indecent than Catherine's, and consequently, her "tears of shame" (200), and her subsequent ruminations seem parodic, in keeping with the novel's general tone. Meanwhile, though, Henry's question has opened a door that will stand significantly ajar. For soon to follow after his "awakening" of Catherine, is her enmeshment in the plot Henry never suspected, and one that can be credited to Austen's talents for arranging and narratively managing those plot elements that are not unrelated themselves to the "uncanny."

Judith Wilt has construed what Austen is doing with the Gothic in *Northanger* as "the candid facing and managing" of "dread"--an emotion integral to the uncanny. She sees Austen's parodic moves as calculated not to make the genre "ridiculous," but "to make common anxiety 'serious' or 'high'" (126). But this construction still undermines, even while it integrates to a certain extent, the Gothic theme in *Northanger Abbey*, and privileges the narrative strand concerned with social relations and manners as more reflective of Austen's overall oeuvre. Though analyzing *Northanger Abbey* teleologically is always a temptation, there is a risk in ignoring its unique deployment of the Gothic, aside from the recoding of "common anxiety"; also, the Gothic strain in *Northanger* was not entirely discarded
subsequently by Austen, and a deconstructive critique of it deprives us of a vital 
route of access to the novel it was published with, *Persuasion*. There, "common 
anxiety" is again a theme, and an alternative discourse of the "uncanny"--the case 
history--is anticipated in its psychologically focused narrative. The Gothic discourse 
of *Northanger* anticipates elements that will appear in *Persuasion*, but are not as 
frequent in Austen's other novels, or at least not as obvious.

One of the motifs concerned is that of the "unutterable." Returning to 
Henry's climactic question of Catherine, what makes it so effective is that the 
"fancies" Catherine is supposed of "admitting" to her imagination are not "admitted" 
by Henry (or Austen) to the subsequent narrative. We do have Catherine's previous 
notions of Mrs. Tilney's imprisonment and starvation, but they seem tame when 
contrasted with the tone of Henry's unanswered question. What he projects as her 
"fancies" seem much more severe. It is important, too, that the consciousness 
connected with the prohibition of these projections is absent when the General's plot 
has its effect. Structurally, Henry becomes connected with a chivalric protective 
force consistent with the Gothic form: Catherine and Eleanor are vulnerable in his 
absence; and though we can't be certain Catherine wouldn't have been ejected from 
the Abbey even if Henry had been on the spot, his not being part of the incident 
enshrouds it in an uncanny cloud. Henry's role as the custodian of logical and 
permissible "utterances"--especially after the "voluntary spies" speech--and his 
conflation, overall, with the Austenian "voice" of the novel, earmark what the 
General does to Catherine, unobserved by Henry, as even more "unspeakable."
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has written about several components of the Gothic, among which the "unspeakable" is central: "The unspeakable . . . is an intrapersonal barrier where no barrier ought to be--language is properly just the medium that should flow between people, mitigating their . . . separateness" (Coherence 17).

What is most remarkable about the initial phases of Catherine’s exile from the Abbey, next to the General’s "invisibility" as he performs the machinations that banish her, is Catherine’s inability to get a straight explanation from Eleanor. Following an anxious interlude spent waiting upstairs for Eleanor after the General’s arrival, an interlude which parallels remarkably the earlier Gothic moments of dread during Catherine’s first night in the Abbey (221), Catherine finally admits her friend, but finds her close to inarticulate. "‘I must not trust myself with words,’" and "‘Explanation and apology are equally impossible,’" are among Eleanor’s expressions (222). When the two part the next morning, for the reason that remains unspoken, "each found her greatest safety in silence" (225). Finally, "a long and affectionate embrace supplied the place of language in bidding each other adieu," and Catherine "with quivering lips just made it intelligible that she left her kind remembrance for her absent friend" (226).

Among the stresses impinging on Catherine as she returns in a "hack post-chaise" to her parents’ door at Fullerton are the separation (discursive and physical) from her near sister-double, Eleanor; Henry’s absence with the related lack of "chivalrous" defense from uncanny happenings; and a degree of self-doubt in Catherine that corresponds to a new kind of Gothic dread. In the concluding
chapters of *Northanger*, Catherine does not move toward any degree of self-knowledge comparable with the epiphanies of Austen's later heroines. She remains in a relative limbo of traumatized sensibilities bordering on a "Marianne Dashwood"-hysteria: "She could neither sit still, nor employ herself for ten minutes together . . . . Her loss of spirits was yet a greater alteration. In her rambling and her idleness she might only be a caricature of herself; but in her silence and sadness she was the very reverse of all that she had been before" (237).

A synthesis of what several critics have said about Gothic conventions is now necessary. Sedgwick talks about how the Gothic "self" is "blocked off from something to which it ought normally to have access" (13). She describes the blockage in spatial terms, but its discursive variant is clearly alluded to in her above-quoted comment about language's inability in the Gothic to bridge the interpersonal gap. Wilt refers a little differently to the blockage or the separation of the self from that to which it needs access, as a "hollowness" related to the architecture of the Abbey itself: "There is something ominous in the Northanger setting--a hollow at the inward prospect that draws out all the poisons of the imagination" (141). Wilt links this imaginative poison, again, to "dread," which she calls the "trace of the imagination" (5). The Gothic is an aesthetic, she explains, woven from how dread-inspired subjects "invent the coverings and uncoverings, the gestures, the imagined regard, the palpitating approach itself" to correspond with the experienced emotion (6). Of course, the suggestion of "invention" re-emphasizes
the notion of an emptiness, absence or "hollowness." Dread becomes a muse of sorts, conjuring representations.

That Austen's Gothic muse was other than parodic, whether Northanger's conclusion was the same as "Susan's" or an updated version, is revealed not only by the hollowness at the center of the Abbey, but by the hollow caricature Catherine has become: a hollowness alternating with silence, with the unutterable. This "emptying out" of Catherine's personality compels Mrs. Morland to hope she is "not getting out of humour with home because it is not so grand as Northanger. That would be turning your visit into an evil indeed"—thus striking a Gothic note for us and possibly for Catherine, though she herself is unaware of it. Her mother's proposed remedy for Catherine's mood is a moral tract in "The Mirror" (237-8)—one not unlike the Spectator essays hypocritical young female readers were condemned for saying they preferred over novels in the "only a novel" passage. Before the application of this moral therapy, though, Henry Tilney makes his appearance, and Northanger commences its rapid and romantic ending. In the final chapter, Austen's narrative presence displaces both Henry and Catherine as possible vehicles of the author's voice. She renders a broad version of her much-criticized omniscient, undramatized closure of the novel's events.

Among these gestures of closure is the remark that "Catherine, at any rate, heard enough [from Henry] to feel that in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character or magnified his cruelty" (243). The report has a strange effect that refers to several
of the issues central to this discussion. First of all, the Gothic is indirectly validated; though the particulars of the plot Catherine imagined are not verified, her "vision" of the General's tyrannical profile is, at least in scale, corroborated. Here, Austen dramatizes the substance of our opening citation of Elaine Showalter, which stressed the legitimacy of the Gothic both politically and aesthetically for women writers seeking self-articulation. For Catherine, self-articulation finally entails escaping the imperative of seeing herself in Mrs. Morland's "Mirror." She is not only spared the rote self-image captioned by her mother's domesticating anodyne, "Wherever you are you should always be contented, but especially at home, because there you must spend the most of your time" (237), but is "rescued" by marriage with the hero, à la the sentimental narrative overtly celebrated in the "only a novel" passage.

But the summary of General Tilney contorts that romantic ending strangely by somewhat weakening the "rightness" of the hero, who turned out to be a faulty authority on an issue of great peril to the heroine. And the heroine was, in her way, right. Their union, thus is somewhat unconventional, especially since it is also the occasion when the dead Mrs. Tilney becomes a phantom of the biological maternal to Catherine. As Henry Tilney's wife, Catherine re-approaches the Gothic space with its uncanny center—not the natural mother with the "Mirror," but the "dead Mother," Mrs. Tilney. In re-approaching, on different terms, this invisible "center," Catherine only begins, at the end of Northanger, to articulate her sense of a self, by confronting a "hollowness" of self connected with the subjectivities of
women in general. Though we have been reassured, in her reading of the General, and in Henry's partial subversion, that Catherine's "eye" is not as unpracticed as we had been given to believe, what it lacks is signified in the prolific "I" of the author, Austen herself, at the novel's end.

The slow movement from acute perceivers, heroines with "fine eyes" like Elizabeth Bennet, to effective enunciaters of their selfhood, was a struggle that spanned Austen's oeuvre. Its beginning is sketched in Northanger, where Austen's intuition of what was unspeakable, especially for women, and her respect for the genre that dealt with it was most thoroughly canvassed. Whether a revision or not, its efficacy as meta-narrative, and its relevance to more than Austen's juvenile fictions and heroines, will be disclosed in the examination of her movement from the celebration of perception and mimesis in Pride and Prejudice, to an eventual confrontation with the uncanny and the unspeakable, and the resulting emergence of the articulate and self-articulating heroine of Persuasion.
CHAPTER TWO

"Pictures of Perfection":

The Specular Dialectic in *Pride and Prejudice*

*We laugh every time someone gives us the impression of being a thing... something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart... brought on by looking at life as a disinterested spectator.*

Henry Bergson

The peak moments of the specular dialectic between the heroine and hero in *Pride and Prejudice* occur in a scene when only the heroine is actually present: when Elizabeth stands looking at Darcy's portrait at Pemberley. While touring his estate with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner, she discovers among Darcy's many possessions the prime object of her "quest"—his likeness in the family picture gallery. With the housekeeper's reports of Darcy's benevolent patronage as accompanying commentary, Elizabeth finds herself feeling "a more gentle sensation towards the original." Her changed attitude leads her to reconstruct the portrait's gaze. Fixing Darcy's painted "eyes upon herself," she rehearses and improves upon those feelings remembered from his last, more immediate "regard" of herself: "[W]ith a deeper sentiment of gratitude... [she] remembered its warmth and softened its impropriety of expression" (220). These moments of specular "power" are validated when Elizabeth meets Darcy shortly afterwards on his estate grounds. "Amazed by the alteration in his manner since they last parted," Elizabeth wonders
about her instrumentality in the improvement. Could her "reproofs at Hunsford [the parsonage at Rosings] . . . work such a change as this"? (225)

What Elizabeth has not yet recognized are the changes in her own subjectivity. After this intense specular interlude with Darcy’s portrait, she proves strangely unobservant of the Pemberley scenery she and the Gardiners are passing through: "Her thoughts were all fixed on that one spot of Pemberley house, whichever it might be, where Mr. Darcy then was" (222). This attempt at focused intimacy contrasts significantly with the Gardiners’ concept of Darcy as "infinitely superior to any thing they had expected" [my emphasis] (227). Given the newness of their acquaintance, Darcy is understandably another of Pemberley’s "things" to admire. But Elizabeth’s admiration is different. Her session with the portrait, backed by her experience of the man, prevents her from reducing Darcy to a sight, and lets her recognize the subjectivity behind the aristocratic mask. This insight is in keeping with Austen’s negotiation of the visual and psychological interface, a key strategy in her effort to "represent" subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and interiority.

Austen’s oft-cited opinion of *Pride and Prejudice*—"rather too light, and bright, and sparkling"—disparages the novel’s traditionally most praised qualities; "it wants shade," she announced only slightly ironically.¹ One possible way to read Austen’s remarks as a protest against specular mimesis and conventional 18th-century aesthetics. Both dazzled and dismayed by her prose transformation of the epistolary "First Impressions," Austen seemed to miss some "shade"—whether moral or picturesque—in her revision. Something bothered her about what is a "picture of
perfection" for most readers.\textsuperscript{2} I will argue that it bothered her enough to render \textit{Pride and Prejudice} an interrogation of the moral and mimetic neoclassical aesthetic she was working within.

In order to understand just what constituted the "shade" Austen missed in \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, we need to look at the other epistolary-to-narrative revision she undertook during roughly the same period: the transformation of "Elinor and Marianne" into \textit{Sense and Sensibility} (1811). Like "First Impressions," "Elinor and Marianne" was written during Austen's productive post-Juvenilia years, before the move to Bath and Reverend Austen's death. Austen returned to revise these works a decade later--years marked not only by historical and cultural (and personal, for Austen) upheavals, but also by the emergence of a 19th-century aesthetic which had been taking shape from at least the mid-18th century. From a historical perspective, thus, Austen's "light, bright, sparkling" complaint about \textit{Pride and Prejudice} could be expressing a disappointment that the novel corresponds too closely to an aesthetic that was disappearing. And, in fact, \textit{Pride and Prejudice} does tell the story of chastened specularity in a style so specularly dazzling that it proliferates precisely those aesthetic impressions its narrative professes to reform.

Austen's ambivalence could only have been heightened by the fact that it was \textit{Pride and Prejudice}'s early incarnation, and not \textit{Sense and Sensibility}'s, that Reverend Austen took around to the publishers.\textsuperscript{3} The work Austen called her "'own darling child'" was also the work her father favored among those \textit{his} darling child had written.\textsuperscript{4} For this reason though, the less paternally-approved "Elinor and
Marianne" may have offered Austen an opportunity for experimentation, as well as offering us an alternative means of approach to the more famous, polished work of the prodigy--her father's daughter--apparently written under the authority of an 18th-century aesthetic.

*Sense and Sensibility*’s actions and characters do seem to make it a "shadier novel." In her radical critique of the work, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick comments on the strangely anxious attention Elinor directs toward her distracted, absent-minded sister, Marianne, whose sensibility and narcissism are "afflictions" with links to early 19th-century delineations of Romantic subjectivity. According to Sedgwick, Elinor’s own subjectivity is a by-product of "surveillance, epistemological demand, and remediation" *vis à vis* Marianne. A combination of "desire and ‘responsibility’" rivets Elinor’s attention to her sister, creating a "co-dependent" subjectivity that becomes the "consciousness and privacy of the novel" (830).

It is easy to see why such a formulation of subjectivity would pose problems for the 18th-century writer and reader. While Elinor represents our literal "point of view," her own consciousness is constituted primarily by a "visual attention flow." What she--and we--must watch is Marianne. An assumption of homosexual nuances in Austen’s frequent fictional use of the sister-pair leads Sedgwick to suggest in this case that Marianne’s "absence of mind" is a moral erasure of the homoerotic current between herself and Elinor, necessitating a "routing away" of Marianne’s attention. As a result, Elinor’s awareness can never fully resolve itself in the conventional
18th-century narrative style, since the defining object of her attention is the "absence" of Marianne's subjectivity.

This dynamic has generic as well as psychological and moral dimensions. When Austen turned her two epistolary novels into prose narratives, finding herself inconveniently poised between the heroines' subjectivities, she yielded to the 18th-century literary impulse to mark the dominant heroine as the one with "sense."

Perhaps in response to the original dialectic of the letters, however, Austen refrained in Sense and Sensibility from overloading Elinor with full authority. Instead of a confident narrator, Austen gives us a lucid confidante, a window onto another consciousness—but one turned away from her, and us, for a significant portion of the novel. The consequence is a frustrated specular process: the stasis of an author stranded between an 18th-century aesthetic of mimetic and moral representation, and a narrative of interiority and psychological realism.

When set against the project of subjectivity in Sense and Sensibility, the achievement of Pride and Prejudice becomes especially interesting. Austen again deploys the sister-pair in Elizabeth and Jane Bennet, but she does not forge the same degree of co-dependency as between Elinor and Marianne. The narrative is much more conventionally omniscient (although the novel's notorious first sentence gives the lie to any kind of universal "authority" being seriously attempted). But Pride and Prejudice is, as many have noticed, strikingly dramatic in the tradition of comedies of manners. When revising "First Impressions," Austen apparently decided to transform epistolary correspondence into conversation and repartee.
Through this process, she created a highly "scenic" novel—in the dramatic sense—which is nevertheless a masterpiece of expository prose.

A look at how Austen handles the sister-pair in her first two novels reveals the implications of her strategy in *Pride and Prejudice*. Like Elinor, Elizabeth initially grounds her identity in her sister's. A demonstrative instance of this is when Jane takes ill at Netherfield, and Elizabeth risks dirty weather and a muddy trek to "watch" her there. As Eve Sedgwick notes of *Sense and Sensibility*, the "always-newly-summoned-up-delicacy" of Elinor's refusal to press Marianne toward confession makes an "internal space . . . hovering somewhere behind her eyes--from which there is no escape but silent watching" (830). In *Pride and Prejudice*, though, even at this early stage, Elizabeth's and Jane's ties are far more socially dramatized. Her hosts' treatment of Elizabeth as not much more than an appendage of Jane seems to confirm the kind of co-dependent subjectivity in Elizabeth that limited Elinor. Elizabeth, however, when not actually "watching" Jane, freely surveys her hosts as they watch her. This mutual, public surveillance in *Pride and Prejudice* draws Elizabeth's subjectivity out from that "internal space . . . behind her eyes" into a far more dynamic and mobile arena. Austen thus employs the fictional convention of a heroine's passive receptivity to disclose the opportunities for self-construction in that heroine's practice of active observation.

The Netherfield drawing room is the scene for several episodes of independent, bold specularity on Elizabeth's part. Since her only authorized "watching" is of her sister Jane, Elizabeth is understandably a marginal figure in her
hosts' eyes when she descends to the drawing room. She is there accidentally, which makes her forays into adventurous vision seem alternately audacious and anti-social. One important anti-social behavior is the indecorously solitary act of reading. During her first uncomfortable evening at Netherfield, when Elizabeth retreats from the company's coldness into a book, Miss Bingley nevertheless pursues her by calling her "a great reader . . . [with] no pleasure in anything else."

Bingley graciously disagrees; but by claiming that Elizabeth must surely also take pleasure in nursing Jane, he joins his sister in restricting the imagined range of Elizabeth's specular "pleasures." Events almost instantly prove the Bingleys wrong. Insipid as the Netherfield drawing room might be, conversation steals Elizabeth's "attention for her book; and soon laying it wholly aside, she drew near the card table . . . to observe the game" (32-3). By putting down her book, Elizabeth goes another step beyond Elinor Dashwood's tunnel vision, and widens her gaze to the drawing room scene. A heavily ironic skirmish with Darcy almost instantly ensues, as the bookless Elizabeth finds herself defending a woman's right to be considered accomplished without being well-read, against Darcy's claim that a young woman must pursue "the improvement of her mind by extensive reading."

Though not notably literate themselves, the Bingley sisters take Darcy's side, until Mr. Hurst, "with bitter complaints of their inattention to what was going forward," ends all conversation and "Elizabeth soon afterwards left the room" (34).

This scene displays Elizabeth's talent for disrupting, if unintentionally and briefly, the attention-flow in a scene where she had initially been a reader, aloof, on
the fringes. Her entry into the conversation also gives the lie to Darcy's implicit assumption that reading, and therefore silence and passivity, are the attributes of the accomplished young woman. Even more significantly, Elizabeth's challenge to Darcy actually disturbs the ritual tedium of the evening to the point that Mr. Hurst's call to order becomes necessary. Of course, Mr. Hurst's orderly card game is only a minor casualty. It is Darcy's "order," the predominance of his opinions in this social circle, that is Elizabeth's prime disruption. Because silence is the imperative necessary for both Mr. Hurst's and Darcy's orders, and because Elizabeth's observations lead almost invariably to "conversation" which she finds diverting, she registers her lack of acquiescence to her assigned position in the Netherfield drawing room "order" not by taking her book up again and retreating to the margins, but leaving the scene completely.

Though reading also plays a crucial role on a subsequent evening, the drama of "watching" becomes even more central, as the social pressure upon Elizabeth to enact a co-dependent subjectivity increases somewhat because of the presence of Jane in the drawing room. She and Bingley are sitting by the fireplace, and at first Elizabeth fulfills her role by "watching" Jane "with great delight" (47). But since Bingley is watching Jane himself with great delight and constancy, Elizabeth finds her vision ambiguously liberated. She is able to attend to the other dramas of "watching" taking place in the drawing room. The most significant of these is Miss Bingley's charade, for Darcy's sake, of appearing to read the second volume of a book he is preoccupied with. When she abandons this farce to "take a turn" about
the room, though her "figure was elegant and she walked well," Darcy's attention is not drawn to her until she invites Elizabeth to walk by her side. Miss Bingley's maneuver is startling enough to render Darcy "as much awake to the novelty of attention in that quarter as Elizabeth herself could be." Novelty thus draws Darcy from his book, as it did Elizabeth in the earlier drawing room scene, and into a clash of observations and speculations.

But Miss Bingley recoils from the novelty Elizabeth and Darcy enjoy. When Elizabeth suggests that the two of them "laugh" and "teaze" Darcy for his silent scrutiny, Miss Bingley primly replies, "we will not expose ourselves if you please, by attempting to laugh without a subject" (49-50). At this moment, one of Austen's less sympathetic characters is found directing the "light, bright, sparkling" objection against the novel's protagonist. Though initially confusing, there is kind of logic to this coincidence, since Miss Bingley reacts with the same practical motives that moralistic criticism demands, ones we suspect coincide with Darcy's generally conservative opinions. Thus, Miss Bingley's transparent "interest" in the second volume of Darcy's book, her remarks on the "enjoyment" of reading, and her abandonment of the volume when she fails to tap this source of his masculine approval, together comprise a strategy of presentation which shows that she is dedicated to impressing Darcy as "accomplished" in his terms. "When I have a house of my own," she says, "I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library" (48)—and of course the excellence of Darcy's library at Pemberley has already been established. Furthermore, when Miss Bingley stops reading to take her
turn in the drawing room, she is varying her strategy to impress Darcy with her
accomplishments; she shifts from an "accomplished" literate young woman to an
accomplished object of specularity.

Small wonder, then, that the last thing Miss Bingley wants to do is cooperate
with Elizabeth's suggestions that they return Darcy's scrutiny, and tease him. The
ensuing clash confirms that Darcy finds Elizabeth's "examination" unsettling. His
response to her "novel" remarks reveal that he does indeed ascribe to the moralistic
critical mode Miss Bingley has professed to follow: "I have faults enough, but they
are not, I hope, of understanding," he answers Elizabeth, adding more ominously,
"My good opinion once lost is lost forever" (50-1). Elizabeth admits that these
qualities shade Darcy from her further observation or laughter. She does not,
however, surrender like Miss Bingley in coy awe of the masculine gaze. Though a
woman's social existence is undeniably a stroll before the mirror of masculine
reflection, by returning this gaze, Elizabeth experiences both its powers and its
limits. And those limits introduce a shade that is curiously enabling, preventing
Elizabeth from having to disclose to Darcy her further reflections on him, but only
after he has been made to confront the difference between his self-image and what
others think of him. In this way, Austen's exploration of subjectivity reveals a
double and gendered agenda. Traditional notions of masculine identity inevitably get
called into question once a woman resists passively suffering the masculine gaze.
Darcy's notions of Elizabeth, disrupted by her non-compliance, affect his notions of
himself, and he ends this scene acknowledging "the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention" (51).

Elizabeth's later trip to Rosings continues her own speculative education. To begin with, the drawing room Charlotte Lucas--now Mrs. Collins--has set up for herself at Hunsford Parsonage, silently suggests how necessary a refuge from the social and masculine gaze can be. Mr. Collins' "book room" has a window that "front[s] the road," allowing him to watch the comings and goings of the patroness whose regard he depends on. Charlotte, however, in Elizabeth's first impressions of the parsonage, has perversely passed over the "better sized" dining room, with its "pleasanter aspect," in favor of a drawing room from which "they could distinguish nothing in the lane" (150). Only when Elizabeth forgoes her engrained specular prejudices--she had after all first responded to Charlotte's engagement with Mr. Collins as "a most humiliating picture" (114)--does she recognize that by forfeiting the rooms with the best views, Charlotte had modified her prospects, but obtained a security and distance from the surveillance of a marriage partner Elizabeth fully agrees should be avoided. Some arrangements she learns have definite, if non-specular, benefits.

Despite this evidence of Charlotte's success, Elizabeth's chief lesson at Hunsford is that specular side-effects are not so easily escaped. She finds herself exposed again without warning to Darcy, visiting his aunt Lady Catherine deBurgh at Rosings, and to Darcy's reflections upon the "accomplishments" of a young woman. But this time the reflections come to her indirectly, through Darcy's
cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, and concern not Elizabeth herself, but her sister Jane. Given the still-existing co-dependency between the sisters, Elizabeth's self-concept is also shaken by the news the Colonel confides about a near marriage between Bingley and a lady "'with some very strong objections'" against her (166). Again, reading provides a buttressing activity for specular anxiety, and Elizabeth turns to Jane's letters to reinforce her notion of her sister over Darcy's. But her reading discloses unexpected discoveries: "in almost every line . . . there was a want of that cheerfulness which had been used to characterize her style. . . . Elizabeth noticed every sentence conveying the idea of uneasiness, with an attention which it had barely received on the first perusal" (167). This re-reading is also a revision for Elizabeth that deprives her of her specular faith in Jane's nature as stable and transparent. Altered by Darcy's reflections, Elizabeth's revision of Jane also unsettles her previously stable sense of self. Now Darcy's insistence that the "truly accomplished young woman" be a skillful reader takes on a new significance, especially when the follow-up letter to his refused marriage proposal reaches Elizabeth and elaborates upon his earlier reflections. Once Elizabeth "reads" Jane in the text of Darcy's insights, she must revise the terms of her co-dependency, and the self-image it has supported. "'Till this moment, I never knew myself" (185), Elizabeth concludes, but she might as well have said "'Till this moment I never knew that I never knew myself.'"

The moment of Darcy's letter is crucial both for the heroine's evolving subjectivity, and for Austen's generic concerns. The specularly-based
co-dependency of the sister-doubles that she had been slowly stretching and testing
snaps, and the rupture determines a formal break from the epistolary dialectic
which, though superficially revised, had grounded the previous narrative. Margaret
Kirkham has noted that this "fracture" represents a significant turning point in
Austen's representation of Elizabeth. The result is a suspension of Elizabeth's
grounds for identification during a dangerous interlude that Austen does not seem to
evade, but to exploit, by conducting her heroine to the hero's impressive grounds at
Pemberley, and taking some generic risks along the way. Elizabeth's "Northern
tour" with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner take her toward familiar territory for
Austen: the setting of much of her Juvenilia. This is also the country near which
Lydia and Wickham will eventually settle in semi-exile. Of all the Bennet girls,
Lydia is most like Austen's parodic heroines in the Juvenilia. Mary Poovey has
remarked that Lydia, though banished regionally, is "never really dismissed." Nor
is her "unruly energy" ever contained in Pride and Prejudice (205); Lydia simply
does not recognize the reality of her disgrace. Her persistent frivolity recalls
Austen's "light, bright, sparkling" protest, and suggests that when Elizabeth moves
through this passage in the novel, Austen may have been struggling most strenuously
against her previous fictional techniques and against sentimental convention to
sustain the integrity and originality of her heroine with a narrative suited to that
challenge.

Thus the Pemberley section of Pride and Prejudice constitutes a crucial stage
in both Austen's narrative inventiveness and Elizabeth's self-growth. At
Netherfield, the crude sketch of Darcy that Elizabeth dashed off in naive confidence was challenged in the climactic drawing room scene by the subject himself. When Darcy claimed that Elizabeth’s speculations were in error, he added support to the convention that the portrait of a man as seen through a woman’s “fine eyes” is less worth attention than those “fine eyes” themselves—not as agents of a woman’s vision, but as an aspect of her appearance: the “I” her physical image inevitably constitutes. But Darcy’s intervention is of course ultimately Austen’s, and functions as a wry hint that her heroine’s vision, though initially limited, will be gradually enlightened. The Rosings interlude began this enlightenment by paradoxically calling into question the authority of that “knowing” gaze Elizabeth had experimented with and been subject to at Netherfield. Because her understanding of Jane was challenged, Elizabeth’s own identity was jeopardized. Darcy’s text, as the agent of that change, became the new focal point of that “private space” Sedgwick posits as the consciousness of the novel.

As the Pemberley section starts, Darcy’s text is functioning as a kind of center of that consciousness, for Elizabeth and the reader both. Yet Darcy is not present as a character in this phase of the novel. We have come a long way from *Sense and Sensibility*, when Elinor’s constant attention to and visual surveillance of Marianne was the subjectivity we were locked into. In *Pride and Prejudice*, not only does Austen deprive her heroine of a confident co-dependency on an ever-watched sister, but she also leaves the heroine’s identity grounded on the traumatizing text of a man who has shaken her faith in her self-knowledge. Austen
further tests her heroine (and herself as author) by leading her through the tempting
and familiar landscape of her Juvenilia toward what would seem her inevitable
novelistic fate—an identity grounded on that convention so common to late 18th
century fiction: the seductive hero.

Amazingly, though, this hero is even more "absent," at least during the first
Pemberley scenes, than Marianne is for most of Sense and Sensibility. Elizabeth
views Darcy's grounds at Pemberley without knowing he is near. Though the
makings of a "romantically"-structured interiority are all here, Austen nevertheless
navigates Elizabeth through this tempting field of self-articulation without causing
her to become either emotionally infatuated, or overawed by the masculine logic of
Darcy's stated opinions in his letter to her. The visit to Pemberley proves to be
both a specular feast and test. Having digested the substance of Darcy's letter,
Elizabeth now personally gazes at his image—but without the correction he offered in
the Netherfield drawing room scenes. At Pemberley only the servant Mrs Reynolds,
who speaks with "the authority" of someone "who had known him since he was four
years old" (233), influences Elizabeth's representation of Darcy. And yet, to
Elizabeth's surprise, her modifications of what she sees only reflect what she already
knows.

Take for instance Mrs. Reynolds' remarks when showing the guests the small
portraits of Darcy and Wickham in the former Mr. Darcy's "favorite" room,
where the "miniatures are just as they used to be then" (217). These portraits,
"drawn at the same time—about eight years ago," assert in their juxtaposition and
simultaneous production an order of aristocratic and patriarchal privilege associated with the dead master, and preserved by the custodians of his estate. Elizabeth, however, with Darcy's information in mind, can resist the assertion of the portraits' arrangement. In this way, Austen takes a step outside that "space of silent affirmation and believable representationality" identified with the neoclassical aesthetic. The patriarch’s juxtaposition of the miniatures is a specular statement which Elizabeth’s knowledge, supplemented by Darcy’s letter, contradicts.

Despite Pemberley’s pristine surface, Elizabeth’s specular complacency has been disrupted, compelling her to interrogate its images, and thus modifying the seeming immutability of Darcy’s paternal legacy, and of Darcy’s nature itself. When Elizabeth eventually decides that it would be "something" to be mistress of Pemberley (213), we must therefore interpret the remark as ambivalently positive. This private exclamation has tempted many critics to conclude that the Pemberley scene represents Elizabeth’s capitulation to a selfhood grounded in romantic attachment. Mary Poovey argues that Elizabeth indulges here in the "dream of what she might have been" (199). Over a century earlier, Sir Walter Scott claimed that after seeing Darcy’s estate, Elizabeth’s "prudence' begins to subdue her 'prejudice.' Nor is there any way to deny that Scott’s "prudence" has a materially-grounded pragmatism to it. Pemberley’s specular feast makes joining the "things" there an attractive possibility for Elizabeth. But they also represent a threat to her self-possession. When she contemplates being the "mistress of Pemberley," Elizabeth knows not only that she has already rejected its master’s marriage
proposal, but also that his subsequent letter has shaken her self-certainty and
threatened her grounds for so emphatically rejecting him. This strange suspension
of identity, and its consequent vulnerability, understandably prevent any sudden
moves in Darcy's direction for Elizabeth--the critics cited above to the contrary.

Before she rejected his proposal, Elizabeth's vision of Darcy was
unavoidably shaped by his reputation as a marital "prospect." She had previously
held Darcy's reported great wealth against him--a prejudice which only strengthened
when she heard about his interference in Bingley's courtship of Jane. When viewing
Pemberley, however, Elizabeth finds that her own refusal of Darcy's proposal and
his subsequent letter explaining himself have opened a space for not only a sharper
understanding of what she sees at Pemberley, but also for some hard thoughts on
what being mistress of Pemberley might have allowed her to promote. Such
thoughts may seem to carry Elizabeth toward the fantastic atopia of "romance." In
fact, her thoughts display a new independence of judgment. Touring Pemberley
allows Elizabeth to frame its material enticements freely, if we understand such a
frame to be the "meaning which I can give to this representation . . . not on any
factor which makes me dependent on the real existence of the object."12

Such logic also seems to be at work in Elizabeth's selective interest in
Pemberley's art. Though Darcy's image arrests her, she finds the other "family
portraits" in the gallery have "little to fix the attention of a stranger." Instead, she
prefers the "drawings of Miss Darcy's, in crayons" because their "subjects were
usually more interesting, and also more intelligible" (220). The appearance on the
scene of the novel of the subject who produced these drawings will also interest
Elizabeth. In the Netherfield drawing room, Miss Darcy had figured in the
conversation as a paradigm of feminine accomplishment. Elizabeth's other source
on Georgiana, Wickham, had represented her as "too much like her brother--very,
very proud" (73). Elizabeth's attention to Georgiana's drawings thus begins a
process that forces her to reassess both Darcy's sister, and those who had reported
on her. The young woman Elizabeth eventually meets in the drawing room at
Pemberley strikes her as neither haughty nor "exceedingly proud," but "exceedingly
shy." Though not the "acute and unembarassed observer" her brother is, she
exhibits obvious "sense and good humor," if not enough to overcome her timidity
(229-30). This shyness reduces that impression of "accomplishment" Elizabeth
expected to see; during one Pemberley occasion, for instance, a more experienced
guest has to "remind . . . [Georgiana] of her post" as hostess (236). What Elizabeth
notes most crucially, however, is the effect Miss Darcy has on her brother. When
with Georgiana, Darcy seems to become "free from self-consequence." Elizabeth
can't help but notice the change: "now, when no importance could result from the
success of his endeavours," Darcy seems more gracious than she has ever seen him
before (232).

Given Austen's fondness for exploring co-dependent subjectivities, it should
not be surprising that Darcy's and Georgiana's relationship hints at a dynamic that
parallels Elizabeth's own attachment to Jane. In both relationships the presence of
the more subdued personality paradoxically frees up the more assertive sibling--a
pre-existing pattern of the novel that the "plot" ultimately redirects. As *Pride and Prejudice* emphatically demonstrates, however, the naturally withdrawing sibling can still be the source of much of the novel's incident. In Georgiana's case, Wickham's actions place her squarely in the mold of what Susan Morgan has described as the conventional sentimental heroine, imperilled by plot (42). Only by drawing on the agency of her brother could Georgiana escape her fate. "She was then fifteen, which must be her excuse," Darcy had written, "unable to support the idea of grieving and offending a brother, whom she looked up to as a father, [she] acknowledged the whole to me." (180). For Georgiana, then, it is sense and an identity grounded in a trusted (masculine) sibling that allow her to escape her "fate," which is virtually synonymous to defloration in the 18th-century sentimental narrative. At this moment, a character living a life almost without incident reacts to the turmoil of her own emotions by using her innate sense and acting, if only by calling for help. Even more importantly, though, the one she calls upon is the sibling whose identity grounds her own. Such a co-dependency is not available to Lydia Bennet, who leaps into the future Darcy pulled Georgiana back from. Lydia does not call for help, which indicates something about the co-dependencies which the novel seems dedicated to amend, and also about the vulnerability of active, "independent" rather than co-dependent characters. Georgiana's early escape and Lydia's entrapment (though eventually legalized) create a tension in *Pride and Prejudice* that hearkens back to one of the most baffling portions of *Sense and Sensibility*: the story of the two Elizas. These characters reside at the center of the
novel like a mysterious nexus. Obliquely related to Colonel Brandon, this mother and daughter were both "ruined" by rakes--one of them, Willoughby. Brandon himself romanced the older Eliza; then he played surrogate (though he was not the biological) father to the younger Eliza, secreted in her disgrace at a country retreat.\textsuperscript{15} Though neither Eliza appears on the scene, they provide a telling example of the dangers unprotected women are exposed to. Since their stories are among "the most passionate episodes" in Sense and Sensibility, Mary Poovey argues that Austen buries the Elizas' narrative among "less emotionally volatile stories."

Further distancing the women is the source of their stories, Colonel Brandon, "whose relationship to the tale immediately activates our judgment" (188). And finally, Colonel Brandon's manner of telling these stories creates another barrier still: "both the hesitations with which he interrupts his narrative and the fact that he focuses not on the second Eliza [Willoughby's victim--and the focus of the object lesson for Marianne] but on her mother ('his' Eliza) suggest that Brandon does not fully recognize his own motives for telling the story." Despite his didactic intentions, he is also narrating his own "sexual anxiety" (Poovey 191) and Austen's aesthetic anxiety.

Critics have tended to point to the labored handling of the Elizas' narrative as another of Sense and Sensibility's awkwardnesses. The identically-named heroines seems a heavy-handed strategy unworthy of even an amateur Austen. But the Colonel's seemingly natural slippages in reference while talking about the similarly disgraced women can also be read as part of a large parodic gesture which mocks
the 18th-century novel of sentiment, with its frequent paired, ethically-distinct characters whose different fates tell a moral. As the Elizas in *Sense and Sensibility* are confused in Colonel Brandon’s signification, so are the conventional categories of "virtuous" and "corrupted" heroines. Thus Austen’s assumed awkwardness may be intended to question whether the fates of women in such novels are ever different. The Elizas are a disruptive presence in *Sense and Sensibility* because they serve as a small scale reflection of the dilemma Elinor and Marianne are in. The two Elizas epitomize the *mise en abyme* of identity that so often follows from the manner of women’s fictional representation. Daughters reflect mothers in names and fates; mimetic mirroring is figured and reinforced in biological duplication, and identical narratives swallow distinct identities in the phenomenon of the *mise en abyme*.

Though the parallel between the two Elizas and the Georgiana-Lydia pairing is not so perniciously organic, it also depends on the fact of past and present disgrace. Buried deep in the background, the disgrace that serves as Marianne’s object lesson in *Sense and Sensibility* seems baffling even as we uncover the "oscillation" of Elizas. Likewise, Georgiana’s deeply buried disgrace emerges in Darcy’s important letter, making him a kind of Colonel Brandon, who provides a judgmental "frame" for the long-past episode, as well as a masculine narrative for a woman’s disgrace. Of course, Darcy constitutes a far more stabilizing frame for the fluctuation of women’s virtue. Though he gives Georgiana the benefit of the doubt in her adventure with Wickham, the novel’s surface plot presents us with a
chastened, highly-controlled Georgiana. Only later do the characters—and the readers—learn that another female "victim" is repeating, and completing, Georgiana's old aborted plot with Wickham, and functioning without any desire for a masculine-engendered frame of judgment or narrative to dictate her actions. Had Georgiana fallen, she would have been to Lydia what the first Eliza was to the second. Austen, however, adds several new twists to the paradigm in Pride and Prejudice. Though the Elizas fall prey to different seducers, Georgiana and Lydia have Wickham in common, thus allowing Austen to pair the "victims" without duplicating their fates. This strategy even influences the inflexibility of the masculine moral "frame." Unlike Colonel Brandon, for instance, Darcy cannot generalize about women’s inherent vulnerability to corruption. Nor for that matter can he totally divorce himself from the seducer in this case: the figure whose portrait hangs next to his in his father's library, who will eventually become through another Austenian twist, his brother-in-law.

Darcy’s involvement in Lydia’s story is in itself a kind of mise en abyme, since he offers up different excuses for his response to various lookers-on. To the Gardiners, he confesses to a sense of moral responsibility, since family pride had kept him from revealing Wickham's bad character to those threatened by it. When writing to Elizabeth, however, her Aunt Gardiner voices her own suspicions that "'another interest in the affair'" seems to be motivating Darcy’s gesture. Confirmation of this suspicion occurs later when Darcy tells Elizabeth, "'your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe, I thought only of you'" (325).
For Elizabeth, the link between Georgiana and Lydia is forged through a substitution. The news from Jane about Lydia’s elopement forces a movement from the "common ground" Darcy and Elizabeth had found at Pemberley, and preempts a visit to Darcy’s sister. In Elizabeth’s mind, "every idea was superseded by Lydia’s situation" (243), which also has the effect of forcing Elizabeth back into a dependency on her own sister-double. She "was wild to be home . . . to share with Jane in the cares that must fall wholly upon her, in a family so deranged; a father absent, a mother incapable of exertion" (247).17

The co-dependency on Jane regenerated here is partially a response to incompetent parenting. Since neither Mr. nor Mrs. Bennet provided a grounding of "self" for their daughters, the intensity of Jane and Elizabeth’s bond is not only a survival instinct, but also justification for Darcy’s longstanding conviction that Jane and Elizabeth are distinguished among the Bennets. But as Darcy discovers, these distinguished sisters are not so easily separated from their inferior family. To begin with, the disgrace of the catastrophe forces all the relatives to rally. Though Lydia "had never been a favorite with them," even the Gardiners--that less objectionable, for Darcy, branch of the family--are caught up in her calamity (247). Elizabeth herself registers this struggle between family-defined self and that "subjectivity" which has slowly evolved under Darcy’s influence when she observes his first response to the news about Lydia. His gravity suggests to Elizabeth that her "power was sinking; everything must sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of deepest disgrace." Nevertheless, "self, though it would intrude, could
not engross her," as "the humiliation, the misery" of Lydia's actions "soon swallowed up every private care" (244-45).

Simultaneously "swallowed up" are the critical claims that Darcy only responds helpfully to Lydia's "gross immorality" because of his desire to purge himself of the culpability of secrecy. Lydia's significance to her sister tempers any charge of "gross immorality," as through Elizabeth's perceptions—which Darcy's love allows him to share—he sees gross immorality mitigated by the imperatives of loyalty. Though in his first marriage proposal, Darcy had tried "to isolate Elizabeth from her background" (Monaghan 66) in order to rationalize his love for her, now he must respect Elizabeth's distress over Lydia, and recognize that she is inextricably interwoven with her past and family. Love is the "rationalization" that draws Darcy into the family's concerns. Though a principle may be at work here, it is one forged in feeling. Lydia takes substance in Darcy's regard because she is part of Elizabeth's matrix of alliances. And so too, paradoxically, is Wickham. Darcy's "brotherly" charity only seems wonderfully disinterested. It in fact arises from the most intense "interest," and carries matters forward to the point where—invoking the Pemberley tour once more—those two miniatures in the Master's library are ironically rejuxtaposed by a fresh history.

Yet this same "history," Lydia and Wickham's, when considered by generic standards, seems remarkably stale. Marvin Mudrick is only one of many Austen critics puzzled by her recourse to a melodramatic, "black-and-white seduction" plot in what is an otherwise so complex, ironic and imaginative a novel (111-12). It is
however precisely through irony and imagination that Austen deals with what in *Sense and Sensibility* remained a baffling melodramatic vortex. Austen brilliantly sets up this opposition within *Pride and Prejudice* itself by creating a parallel between its two "Elizas," Lydia and Georgiana, only to direct Lydia's story in a different way. To begin with, Lydia and Wickham's "happy ending" defies one of the cardinal rules for the conventional seduction plot. Even more importantly, though, the actions and adaptations this conclusion extorts from the other characters sharply distinguishes *Pride and Prejudice*’s mise en abyme from the vertiginous tale of the two Elizas.

Darcy's pivotal letter narrates Georgiana's disgrace and near disaster with what Mudrick calls the manner of a "Richardsonian correspondent" (118). For all its rigidity, though, Darcy's epistolary control over Georgiana's narrative makes the chaos and emotional excesses which accompany Lydia's story seem even more extreme. Spread through letters circulating between Jane, Elizabeth, her aunt and uncle, Mr. Bennet, and of course Lydia herself, the disjointed, incoherent and inconceivable sequence of events scrambles the wits of the correspondents. "I hardly know what I have written," Jane confesses (241). Mr. Bennet has a letter from Uncle Gardiner read aloud because, "I hardly know myself what it is about" (266). And Mrs. Bennet has to dictate her response to Lydia's engagement, because "I am sure I can't write" (271). These admissions of uncertainty and inadequacy not only point to that fracture in the novel which Kirkham has identified, but also echo Elizabeth's own response to Darcy's important letter (the same one in which
Georgiana's disgrace is so dignified by his discourse): "'Til this moment, I never knew myself.'"

Compounding the entire Bennet family's sense of disintegration is Lydia's complete disappearance for a time into "unplotted" territory. Events must be evaluated later and from a distance. When for instance the Bennets hear about Lydia's transfer from a carriage to a "hackney-coach," her degradation seems assured. It is not, of course: Georgiana, according to Darcy's testimony, had successfully arrested her own progress on the same road to disgrace. But Lydia proceeds, forcing Mr. Bennet and Uncle Gardiner to hunt for her, while the whole family watches and waits for word. Mr. Bennet proves to be a "negligent and dilatory correspondent" (259). Precisely because this form of information alone "holds together" Lydia's story and keeps her from being completely "lost," the family is deeply frustrated when Mr. Bennet leaves Uncle Gardiner in charge of the rescue attempt and joins the watchers and waiters at home. Lydia's letters, meanwhile, document her happy incomprehensibility of the situation.

This is the novel's ultimate drama of "watching," as the family's collective gaze follows that stream of letters, all written in the service of fishing Lydia out of the mise en abyme that swallows women who like the two Elizas, have made her misstep and of drawing her back into a respectable social and fictional role. And yet, though this project is successful, and Lydia is "rescued," this "happy" ending doesn't change anything about Lydia herself except her name. In this way, Austen sardonically comments not simply on the conventions of the seduction plot, but upon
that Richardsonian association of virtue and identity which Darcy's letter epitomizes in its polished affirmation of his sister's integrity. Austen does not mock this integrity's moral dimensions, but rather its inadequacy as a determinant of women's subjectivity. For Austen, virtue is only corollary to the achievement of subjectivity she desires for her heroines—the reason why Georgiana is neither the paragon that rumor presented her as, nor, though she had a certain role in her near escape from Wickham, a self-determining agent. Having been a pawn in a plot of virtue, she still wears those conventional laurels of rescued chastity far more than she should be to serve as an unproblematic Austen "heroine." Arising from the confusion of subjectivity and sexual continence for women, this lack of self-awareness is the dilemma which both the Elizas and Georgiana face, and which Austen satirizes in Lydia's "happy ending." Though not the fate Austen would desire for any heroine she valued, Lydia's "resolution" undermines the social foundation unquestioned in the "tragedy" of the Elizas and the exemplary Georgiana. More importantly, this same resolution indirectly makes Elizabeth's own achievement of subjectivity possible—a "happy ending" many critics neglect when focusing on the more obvious one of marriage to Darcy.

Darcy's letter is the medium which links Elizabeth's achievement of subjectivity to Lydia's calamities and Georgiana's virtue. This letter is a kind of corrective "mirror": an enframed narrative that comments on the larger one. Elizabeth glimpses in this mirror revisions of Jane, Georgiana, Wickham, Darcy and herself, all set within a classically-controlled narrative space ruled by logos. This
perspective enhances for a while her self-possession and independence from her family; it is certainly more freeing and enabling than her specular co-dependence on Jane. But Elizabeth’s retreat to her earlier bond with Jane when Lydia’s crisis strikes strangely confirms that she still lacks a stable sense of self. As a result, her earlier reaction after reading Darcy’s letter that “’Till this moment, I never knew myself,’” now stands revealed as a surrender to a slightly more sophisticated version of “woman’s virtue equals her self.” In fact, the supposed integrity reading Darcy’s letter lends to her subjectivity is actually proof of Elizabeth’s own seduction into *logos*, a *mise en abyme* itself of the literate woman’s endlessly repeated action of taking her definition by virtue of masculine representation. A kind of elitism of subjectivity is hinted at here, one that will contribute to Darcy’s “allowing” Bingley to marry Jane, and himself to marry Elizabeth.

Though Elizabeth does not recognize the power her perceptiveness lends her in her ensuing struggle toward a subjectivity that is neither family- nor Darcy-dependent, she gets evidence of it after discovering how Darcy has intervened for Lydia. Elizabeth realizes how “proud of him” she is: “that in a cause of compassion and honour, he had been able to get the better of himself.” By overcoming “a sentiment so natural as abhorrence against a relationship with Wickham” when “[e]very kind of pride must revolt from the connection” (289), Darcy put forward a self which compromises the one put forward in the pivotal letter, thus allowing Elizabeth to congratulate Darcy on having exceeded the “letter” of his personal law. While Darcy is modifying himself, Elizabeth is also exceeding her family-defined,
even her Jane-defined, self. In this vein, it is no coincidence that Elizabeth’s
harshest silent judgment of her father comes after the Lydia escapade. Like Darcy,
Mr. Bennet, perenially retreating to his library, is associated with logos and the
authority of word and text. When Elizabeth recognizes his inadequacy in actively
retrieving Lydia, or even in corresponding with his wife and other daughters, she
begins to see that the sway her father has maintained from his library is a sham—a
weak wielding of patriarchal authority which skimped on the concommitent
responsibilities of the patriarch. The "folly" of a celebration (primarily Mrs.
Bennet’s idea) of Lydia’s nuptials further loosens Elizabeth ties with her parents.
Faced with her mother’s happiness, Elizabeth takes "refuge in her own room, that
she might think with freedom" (271). Neither her father’s indulgence in his library,
nor Lydia’s variety of license, Elizabeth’s freedom implies in this otherwise densely
social novel a new atmosphere of open space, the dimensions of a new
consciousness.

The novel’s last few triumphs, and especially the engagement of Jane and
Bingley and Darcy’s proposal scene all display Elizabeth acting with a self-
expansiveness that arises from this "freedom to think." Her "divorce" from Jane is
all the more interesting because Elizabeth seems to be the family member least
willing to give Bingley and Jane the privacy to declare their love. Though she is
understandably trying to prevent her mother from indecorously leaving the couple
alone, Elizabeth’s actions still seem over-careful in someone who realizes how
authentically Jane and Bingley feel for each other—an inconsistency which may
indicate the strength of Elizabeth’s co-dependency with her sister, even at this stage. But finally, Elizabeth does release Jane, and with a comment that shows her awareness of a fundamental difference between the two. When Jane wishes her sister could have had a fiancé like Bingley, Elizabeth replies, “‘Till I have your disposition, your goodness, I never can have your happiness’” (310).

The most “disengaging” circumstance from her family that Elizabeth must survive, however, is her engagement to Darcy. She finds her father’s amused reaction particularly unsettling: “Never had his wit been directed in a manner so little agreeable to her” (322). So confident is his satire that Elizabeth begins to worry, not that her father was “seeing too little,” but that she “fancied too much” (323). It is a moment akin to the self-doubting interlude prompted by Darcy’s letter, but this is only a moment, as Elizabeth acknowledges but quickly steps away from this masculine authorization of her subjectivity. Jane’s pleas to “‘do anything rather than marry without affection’” are harder to answer, and Elizabeth modifies her expectation of having her love for Darcy understood. She consequently teases Jane by dating the start of her affection for Darcy “‘from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley’” (332). Elizabeth does, in fact, recognize the importance of a spacious new “grounding” for her identity, although the landscape—not Pemberley—is a lot closer to home.

"Longbourne," the site of Darcy’s proposal, is fittingly the place where Elizabeth actually comes into “possession” of herself. That the couple walks through this natural and (presumably for Elizabeth) natal setting during this scene
suggests strongly that Austen desires her novel’s conclusion to be not artful, but probable and natural. Removed from the drawing room, Longbourne’s lawns and gardens provide an alternative ground for specularly and textually-determined subjectivity. The name, "Longbourne," in itself raises both specular and textual issues, including those problems of women’s representation epitomized in the mise en abyme. In addition to the more obvious conflations of artistic and biological creativity ("bearing," "burden," "birth") found in the suffix "bourne," there is also its archaic meaning as "border." And yet what might seem a limiting signification is modified by the prefix "long-" suggesting an extendable, flexible border which comments on all of Elizabeth’s earlier activity at Pemberley, when with textual assistance, she reframed both her idea of Darcy and herself.

When however we reintroduce the organic connection to the term, the border or frame becomes even more productive a trope. For an explication, we can return to Sedgwick’s comments on Sense and Sensibility. When describing Elinor’s specular vigilance of Marianne, Sedgwick calls the "pupils" of the eye, "sphincters of the soul." These "sphincters," Sedgwick claims, in Elinor’s case, "won’t close against the hapless hemorrhaging of her visual attention-flow toward Marianne; it is this, indeed, that renders her consciousness, in turn habitable, inviting, and formative to readers as ‘point of view’" (832). This "sphincter" metaphor is closely related to the 19th-century "hypostatization of the notion of ‘will.’" In contrast to the compulsive Marianne, "Elinor’s well-exercised muscle guarantees that what expands" is the "private space" that "constitutes . . . the space of narrative self-
reflection" ("Masturbating" 831). Because of the sisters' co-dependency, Elinor can compensate for Marianne's loose "will" by disciplined use of her own pupil-sphincters.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, where watching is a dramatized process, the "spaces" associated with consciousness are external: drawing rooms, texts and property. All have their limits, reflective of imposed constructs on women's identity, vision, and representation. Elizabeth's halting epiphany at Longbourne, however, saves her from cultivating an alternative interior space of "escape." Her desire for "freedom to think" ultimately moves her out of the drawing room's anxious aesthetics, but by walking out with Darcy, she is not necessarily selecting a less restricted venue. Elizabeth does not come into her "will" as Elinor comes into hers--through a tenacious retention of that inviolate space within, where what is "seen" is suspended. Elizabeth's eye (and "I") is generous in its parameters and durability: it encompasses the changing perspectives of time and space. She thus can tell Wickham, speaking privately with him for the first time as his sister-in-law, how things are "misrepresented" at a distance (291).

But Elizabeth's eye, unlike Jane's, is not overtly optimistic. It comprehends limits--among others, the fact that Darcy "had yet to learn to be laught at" (330). Insights like these suggest that in *Pride and Prejudice*, the conventional romantic heroine's conventional romantic reward is secondary to the self-discovery she has gained in working toward it: a perspective that allows her to see marriage to Darcy not as a "picture of perfection," but as an ongoing challenge to her eye and "I"--and
most especially when Pemberley will replace Longbourne as the grounds of that "I."

As if to register a vote of confidence in Elizabeth's new self-authorizing power, though, Austen herself places in this final chapter the only narrative "I" that appears in *Pride and Prejudice* (342).²²

At Longbourne, then, the limits of specular mimesis which burdened Austen are expanded through a paradigm notably more friendly to a heroine's subjectivity, and to a woman writer's creativity as well. Downplaying the eye's creativity, and stresses the "I's" grants the text flexibility which allows artistic will to have its say. Putting the specular and organic paradigms into a dialectic, Austen constructs a model of the eye/"I" which is both reflective and projective. This model does not set strict limits to the self, but acknowledges the flexibility of subjective boundaries. In this way, a woman writer like Austen can push the envelope of specular representation, and shape a heroine who is more than what meets the eye.
CHAPTER THREE

Mansfield Park: The Heroine in History

. . . the recital of any Events (except those I make myself) is uninteresting to me.

Jane Austen

Fanny Price is the only Austen heroine introduced to us as a child, with a description ambivalent enough to qualify as one Lady Bertram might have offered: "small of her age, with no glow of complexion, nor any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy . . . her air, though awkward, was not vulgar, her voice was sweet, and when she spoke, her countenance was pretty" (12). This first impression of Fanny illustrates how much the child is subject to the constructs of adult authority, and how Fanny Price's history is grounded by her author in a narrative field where her agency is a negligible force.

The first revelation of Fanny's victimization in a larger historical frame is the means of her removal from her poor but natural parents at Portsmouth to the more distant, affluent kin of Mansfield Park. Engineered by an exchange of letters between her mother and her Aunt Norris—a bluntly pragmatic deployment of a genre usually devoted to pleasure and social intercourse in Austen’s novels—this epistolary contract effects Fanny’s barter, initiating the slavery-theme prominent in the novel, and presenting a paradoxically negative use of the strategy by which subjectivity was generated in the earlier novels. Fanny’s transportation from her close ties to distant, aristocratic kin threatens the family order at Mansfield—but also the less apparent
"order" at Portsmouth. Sir Thomas Bertram, Baronet of Mansfield and Fanny's uncle, "debated and hesitated" before approving her adoption, mindful of the social imperatives that would compel him to assure Fanny a provision to match an upbringing at Mansfield. But Sir Thomas is above all concerned about the dis-ordering of desire in his family: "He thought of his own four children--of his two sons--of cousins in love, etc." Mrs. Norris dismisses this risk as "morally impossible" if Fanny is raised with her male cousins as a sister. In fact, her introduction promises to forestall the "mischief" which would be inevitable should Fanny be a "pretty girl, and seen by Tom or Edmund for the first time seven years hence" (7-8).

Fanny's indifferent looks and reserved temperament seem to guarantee that "mischief" will indeed never threaten. It is however one of the Bertram sons Mrs. Norris guarantees will not notice Fanny who provides her first legitimate recognition at Mansfield. Discerning her "interior" gifts, "quick apprehension . . . good sense, and a fondness for reading" (20), Edmund encourages Fanny to share her feelings with him during her first truly open discourse at Mansfield, when she and he "'walk out in the park.'" He assists her in re-establishing affective relations with Portsmouth by providing stationary for her to write her brother William; Edmund "rule[s] her lines" for her, as William had, but "with somewhat more exactness" (14-15). That Edmund's "lines" resemble William's hints at how Edmund will serve as the object for the affection Fanny had channeled toward William. Very soon, Fanny finds her "heart divided between" William and Edmund (20). The danger of
"cousins in love" that worried Sir Thomas has proved valid, but it has originated in an unexpected source. The sentiments Mrs. Norris anticipated breeding in adolescent, masculine hearts actually first appear in Fanny’s "innocent," pre-adolescent heart. Fanny’s erotic "imprinting" of Edmund at this impressionable age, however, never seems to modify critical estimations of her "virtue." It is rarely remarked that Fanny’s enduring, illicit love of Edmund violates one of Sir Thomas’s staunchest strictures about the "order" of Mansfield Park.³ This may be because Fanny’s girlish infatuation hardly seems dangerous, or even in the category of "mischief" Mrs. Norris worried over. As Claudia Johnson has remarked, the disruptive significance of such Austenian nuances "still remains unacknowledged because it focuses on subjects we define as essentially private and apolitical . . . female experience, and the conventions structuring it" ("Sixes and Sevens" 51).

Fanny’s unspoken violation of Sir Thomas’s prohibition is thus never considered incompatible with her reputation as a morally righteous, loyal custodian of patriarchal imperatives. And there is evidence that Austen may have intended this paradox.

Fanny’s righteous “image” is reinforced by her stigmatization by her Mansfield cousins for her virtuous displays; for instance, when Sir Thomas leaves for Antigua and Fanny shows evidence of having wept, the Bertram girls condemn her as a "hypocrite" (28). This departure is crucially timed, so that Sir Thomas is absent at the very interval when his surveillance of the order of family relations is most crucial. Fanny, just turned seventeen, is at the age for which Mrs. Norris
predicted "mischief," had she been pretty and newly arrived at Mansfield. Mrs. Norris had assured Sir Thomas however that even "the beauty of an angel" would not tempt a brother who had grown up knowing a young woman as a sister.

The "angel" who does appear on the scene at this dangerous juncture is a sister not to the Bertram sons, but to the parson's wife, Mrs. Grant. Mary Crawford, with her brother Henry, comes to take refuge from what Claudia Johnson has termed, the "rank indecency" of Admiral Crawford, the uncle they had been living with (Politics 109). Like Fanny, Mary is escaping an environment with a corrupted patriarch, for Mr. Price—a Navy man though no Admiral—was "disabled for active service, but not the less equal to company and good liquor" (6). Both Fanny and Mary therefore have been deported to Mansfield for corrective parenting. Mrs. Grant's maternal solicitude for Mary is expressed in therapeutic terms: "Mansfield shall cure you." But the "disease" Mary suffers from is less of the body than of the sentiments. Concerning her sister's seeming inability to wax romantic about marriage, Mrs. Grant says: "'You have been in a bad school for matrimony'" (38-9). She little expects, though, that Mary will process the matrimonial therapy offered at Mansfield to grow perversely fonder, despite the less promising material prospects, of the younger rather than the older Bertram son.

The accident of Dr. Grant's precedence at Mansfield parsonage suggests another unexpected parallel between Fanny and Mary. A financial crisis occasioned by Tom's overspending compelled the sale of a living meant for Edmund, but if all had been in order regarding "ordination," Edmund instead of Dr. Grant would have
been installed at the parsonage. Since Mary is Dr. Grant's sister-in-law, this sets up a latent sibling connection between Edmund and Mary that refers again to the forbidden alliances Sir Thomas had worried about prior to Fanny's arrival. It also resonates with Mrs. Norris' early warning about introducing an "angel" of a young woman at Mansfield when the Bertram sons were of an age to be tempted. Mary's infamous harp, and Edmund's visits to the parsonage "every day to be indulged with his favorite instrument" (53) add to the irony of Mary's "angelic" identity. The "angelic" Mary's needs begin to compete with those of the less physically, more spiritually angelic Fanny, and Edmund has to face some difficult decisions dividing his attentions between the young women.

The first instance of Edmund's vacillation is when he loans Mary the mare he had originally procured for Fanny to ride for her health. Inspired by observing the liberating equestrian skills of the Bertram daughters, Mary has requested riding lessons. Seemingly "gifted by nature with strength and courage," Mary inspires the Miss Bertrams to declare "her excellence" in riding "like their own," and to take "great pleasure in praising it." As for Edmund, his pleasure is accommodating Mary's pleasure with Fanny's mare, and he loses track of Fanny's claims on the animal. Mary's "enjoyment of riding was such, that she did not know how to leave off." Fanny, watching her indulgence from a distance, "wondered that Edmund should forget her" and feels a "pang." It is Fanny's first "pang" of lovesick jealousy. Not surprisingly, she displaces her self-pity to the admittedly overtaxed
mount: "She began to think it rather hard upon the mare to have such double duty; if she [Fanny] were forgotten the poor mare should be remembered" (56-7).

While Fanny exercises a self-denying rationale to emotionally negotiate the incident, Mary boldly claims "selfishness" as her only alibi: "'Selfishness must always be forgiven you know, because there is no hope of a cure'" (56). Though she uses the language of "cures" Mrs. Grant had earlier, Mary's commitment is against being cured of her own pleasure-seeking. Aside from the pleasure of riding itself, Mary is gratified by what it can provide her: "'She has a great desire to get as far as Mansfield common . . . [for] its fine views'" (57). When Fanny sacrifices the mare for a four-day period, Mary consumes what are properly Fanny's hours (and more) on the mare. As she also consumes Mansfield's views and traverses its parkland with Edmund, Mary proves herself anything but parsimonious in terms of time and space—abstractions which now become obviously significant to the novel's thematic economy.

It takes Edmund some time to acknowledge his unconscious participation in the greedy consumption of time and space with Mary. On the fourth evening of Fanny's neglect, though, after hearing how his mother and aunt have had Fanny cutting roses in the heat for an hour, and trekking twice to and from the White House, Edmund accuses Mrs. Norris of a "'very ill-managed business.'" She counters by mentioning Fanny's need for exercise, due to how she had "'not been out on horseback now this long while.'" Edmund admits his complicity in Fanny's modified enslavement: "for four days together she had not the power of riding"
because he had been unwilling to "check a pleasure of Miss Crawford's." The association of the missed rides with reduced "power" gives a new rhetorical twist to Fanny's significance in this scene. Though she has "retreated" to a corner sofa to avoid notice, Edmund notices her as he had first noticed her in their early years, and endows her with a "power," if only in language. Fanny's romantic feelings enhance Edmund's gesture for her, reinforcing her sense of self, but dangerously so, in terms of Mansfield's prescribed domestic order. And Edmund's attitude toward Fanny is also subtly altered in a way that defies Sir Thomas's injunctions, for Edmund recognizes as he restores Fanny's mare to her the following day, that "her losses both of health and pleasure would be soon made good" (60-61). Fanny's "pleasure," as well as her health, has entered his inventory now. She is fleshing out for him emotionally.

The next major demonstration that Edmund has progressed from merely considering Fanny's health to acknowledging her pleasure occurs during the plans for the Sotherton trip. Fanny has been omitted from the projected excursion to Mr. Rushworth's country estate, until Edmund volunteers to replace her as companion to Lady Bertram for the day, because "'Fanny has a great desire to see Sotherton.'" Fanny feels "Edmund's kindness with all, and more than all, the sensibility which he, unsuspicious of her fond attachment, could be aware of" (64-65). This guilty narrative disclosure presages the atypical indulgence the trip to Sotherton represents for Fanny, especially when Edmund is able to accompany them after all. Though Fanny suffers and is neglected there, much of this suffering arises from her anxiety
at what for her is an unusual allowance of self-indulgence, or as Edmund would put it, "pleasure."

Since Fanny's dislocation from Portsmouth, her territory has been restricted: her "rides had never been extensive," and almost immediately on the way to Sotherton, she finds herself "beyond her knowledge." The upcoming events will give this novelty a daring inflection that Fanny will reject. But on the drive at least, she takes pleasure in "new-ness," and spectatorship. The latent dangers in this first innocent pleasure are hinted at in Julia's exclamation, from the box seat beside Henry on the carriage: "'Here is a fine burst of country.'" Such orgasmic specularity, especially after they have just "gained the summit of a long hill," cannot be ignored. Like Julia--though perhaps not so vocally--Fanny will also be involved in lustful specularity by the time they reach Sotherton: her "eye . . . eagerly taking in everything within her reach" (67).

Sotherton's two principal incidents, the mock wedding tableau in the old chapel, and the "wilderness" escapade, are both instances of Fanny's pleasure in spectatorship being subsumed to a cognizance of limitation and a loyalty (if not an "enslavement") to the proprieties of time and space that other characters violate or lose touch with. In the Sotherton chapel, where Fanny's "imagination had prepared her for something grander than a mere, spacious, oblong room, fitted up for the purpose of devotion," she is motivated at first by a desire to "connect" what she sees with a "history already known," and "warm her imagination with scenes of the past." Correction comes from Edmund's historically-informed comments, and Mrs.
Rushworth's anecdotes about prayers being read in the chapel "within the memory of many" (69-70). Fanny's obedient imagination accommodates their histories—both the masculine, textually-authorized history and the more "feminine" oral history "within the memory of many." Once she is able to appreciate the "use" the chapel once served, she properly laments the cessation of that ritual of worship rather than the lack of Gothic architecture.

Mary Crawford also has an imaginative correlative for the chapel, though not a static Gothic picture. In what Edmund calls an "amusing sketch," Mary conjures up the chapel's past "worshippers": "Cannot you imagine with what unwilling feelings the former belles of the house of Rushworth did many a time repair to this chapel . . . starched up into seeming piety, but with heads full of something different." Mary's fantasies are harder for Edmund to "renovate" than Fanny's archaic romantic vision. He counters Mary's dangerous imaginations with more preaching than teaching, addressing its moral failings as well as its specific invention: "'The mind which does not struggle against itself . . . [will] find objects to distract it . . . and the influence of the place and of example may often rouse better feelings than are begun with.'" Meanwhile, Maria and Mr. Rushworth are accidentally posed at the altar in a wedding tableau, "'exactly as if the ceremony were going to be performed,'" Julia remarks. "'If Edmund were but in orders!'" she adds, implicating him—though he had just been preaching the "influence of place" to Mary—in the proposed comedy of impostures. When the group departs, the chapel is left in the "stillness which reigned in it with few interruptions throughout
the year. . . . [A]ll seemed to feel they had been there long enough" (71-2). The "influence of the place," though felt by Fanny and Edmund, is ignored or distorted by the rest of the young people. In keeping with the spirit of improvement guiding them, they create their own narratives for the sites they visit, their imaginations unstructured by the architecture, the authorized or oral histories.

This radical spirit becomes even more disruptive once they leave the realm of Sotherton house, and move out into the surrounding grounds where structures suggestive of discipline (gates, hedges) are few, and interpreted for the most part as barriers to be dared. The mindfulness of time that kept the visitors relatively on schedule with the house tour disintegrates once they leave its confines; except for Fanny's time sense, that is, which becomes comparatively obsessive. She, Edmund and Mary are the first to venture into that portion of the grounds called the "wilderness." Actually, it is "laid out with too much regularity" to be considered as anything but wilderness modified, tastefully arranged in "darkness and shade, and natural beauty." Mary and Edmund's conversation here is a play of semantic "darkness and shade," as they discuss the pro's and con's of Edmund's chosen vocation. Mary claims that the church is "'never chosen,'" and that "'A clergyman is nothing.'" Edmund counters: "'The nothing of conversation has its gradations, I hope, as well as the never. . . . I cannot call that situation nothing, which has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind, . . . temporally and eternally--which has the guardianship of religion and morals. . . . No one here can call the office nothing'" (74). Fanny interrupts, confessing fatigue. Mary worsens
the effect of Edmund's neglect by empathizing with Fanny, and asserting that they
had "'walked at least a mile.'" Though Edmund tends properly to Fanny's
weariness, he rejects Mary's "feminine lawlessness" by bringing in time to support
his gauge of distance. Mary answers by refusing to be "'dictated to by a watch'"
(76-7). What these two only quibble about intellectually impinges very materially
on Fanny. Just as she suffered from the loss of her riding time on the mare, she
must now recuperate from the walk in the wilderness. It is not a watch that dictates
to Fanny, though, but her body which registers time and distance. Though Edmund
has announced his vocational claim of having "'charge of all that is of first
importance . . . temporally and eternally,'" he neglects this charge when he wanders
off with Mary to prove his point about the wilderness's dimensions, leaving Fanny
on the lonely bench--without a watch--but acutely, almost biologically, aware of the
"quarter of an hour, [the] twenty minutes" as they pass.

Maria, Henry and Mr. Rushworth, joining Fanny subsequently, affirm
Edmund and Mary's lapse of decorum; "'how ill you have been used by them,'"
Maria exclaims, though she herself will within "some minutes" use Fanny similarly,
for she is pining to get through the locked iron gate they are sitting near (77-8). Mr.
Rushworth hastens to the house to get the key, but Maria, despite Fanny's
discouragement, escapes around the iron gate with Henry, and Fanny soon finds
them "beyond her eye" (81). Though echoing the earlier "beyond her knowledge"
of her first moments in the coach, this excursion outside of Fanny's experience is
quite different from the first innocent spectatorship. The greater transgression is
suggested by Julia, who next arrives at Fanny's bench and responds to her concern that Mr. Rushworth's return to the house for the key will be "'trouble for nothing'" with, "'That is Miss Maria's concern. I am not obliged to punish myself for her sins'" (81). This rhetoric should not necessarily be identified with Austen's estimation of the wilderness *faux pas*--which is the critical error in over-readings of the wilderness episode as a Miltonic allegory of risked and lost paradise. Rather, Julia provides a restless, excessive contrast to Fanny, who by remaining fixed, is given a slight perceptual advantage as to the relativity of space and time. When Mr. Rushworth returns, she is thus able to counsel him that "'when people are waiting, they are bad judges of time, and every half-minute seems like five'" (82-3). This is not censorious but meditative counsel, meant to restore Mr. Rushworth's harmony of mind and bring his temper back into proportion, so he will agree to follow Crawford and Maria.

Fanny's "good judgment" of time and space notwithstanding, she misses what--as abstractions--they cannot constitute: "history." Like Sotherton's abandoned chapel, Fanny, fixed on her bench, is for the most part isolated in the "wilderness." Edmund and Mary meanwhile "had been across . . . the park into the very avenue which Fanny had been hoping the whole morning to reach. . . . This was their history." Fanny, time's economist in this scene, knows they have been gone "a whole hour," and feels a "curiosity" about "what they had been conversing about all that time" (83). She craves the substance of experience that gives abstract time its historical dimension. Just as her lesson in the chapel reshaped Fanny's expectations
of its architecture and formal history, her lesson in the wilderness has altered her notions of personal history. Her mindfulness of spatial and temporal boundaries, seemingly "responsible" in contrast to the other young people's, is also a compulsive timekeeping. Her "history" has been purely abstract, without substance, even though--indeed because--it is acutely monitored.

Fanny's obsessive habits of surveillance are usually assumed to be part and parcel of Austen's devotion in Mansfield Park to the theme of "ordination," a structural impulse Stuart Tave interprets as both moral and linguistic: "There is a continuum of words in which the passage from one to another is a passage from one moral state to another; a notation is available to name the steps and the critical moment the misstep is made" (28). When Fanny urges Maria not to pass the iron gate or she "...will be in danger of slipping into the ha-ha," a perilous consequence of misjudged visual prospect is being evoked. The scene is a linguistic rehearsal for a later narrative play on an eighteenth-century landscaping term as popular as "ha-ha," though not specifically mentioned in the Sotherton episode: "folly." Of French derivation (folie), follies were mock, miniature structures (Greek temples, ruined columns, etc.) which, like ha-ha's, added delight to the prospect by "fooling" the eye. Aesthetically, they manipulate appearances, satisfying the gratuitous pleasure in artifice and illusion. The suggestion of Fanny's warning to Maria is that such aesthetic "tricks" put the spectator at risk, because "truth" is no longer in view. "Folly" becomes an extremely important rhetorical landmark for Maria eventually. The ha-ha episode begins to set up the correspondence between Maria's material
expectations vis a vis Mr. Rushworth, her complacency in those prospects, and her impatience with more closely scrutinizing the alternative prospects she rushes toward--whether of the property that will be hers in an advantageous marriage, or the folly of a mock love scene with Henry Crawford.

The moral-linguistic dangers of "ha-ha's" and "folly" that obsess Fanny make her rare among Austen's heroines. She is too busy with surveillance to be playful or witty. Her anxiety in this scene, for instance, inflects the drama of comings and goings, duplicities, tricks and peevishnesses, so that its comic possibilities pale. As readers, we become engaged in monitoring time and space with Fanny, "watching" without laughing at the comic spectacle. Yet the urgency of Fanny's "watching" in the scene seems to be fueled by something more than moral alertness. Austen is behind Fanny's "watching," and ours, and her concerns seem predominantly aesthetic: with the mapping of a linguistic landscape, with the risk of folly and ha-ha's, the boundaries of wit, and where its risks begin to undercut its felicitous effects.

Fanny's habit of sustained and anxious self-surveillance is analogous, I suggest, to Austen's aesthetic stance throughout *Mansfield Park*, which entails intense scrutiny of her own rhetorical strategies. The hyper-concern with semantic gradations (the "nothing"/"never" debate), with the biasing influences of "darkness and shade," and with the gaps (ha-ha's) in the linguistic landscape that are often wellsprings of wit--but sometimes, unpredictably, occasions of social faux pas (Tave's moral "missteps")--reveals an Austen interrogating without mercy her habits
of wit. In mapping her artistic territory, her "property," she enlisted the scrupulously alert Fanny, who as a consequence of this alertness, cannot be witty herself. In this quality she resembles neither the standard Austen heroine, nor the standard conception of Austen herself as an author. Lionel Trilling's remark that "Mansfield Park represents an unusual state of the author's mind" (132) is a comment typical of the critical construct of Fanny as an alternative Austenian persona, unpredictably priggish about what we expect her to find amusing. The central episode cited in this critical paradigm is that of the theatricals--the staging by the young people at Mansfield of Mrs. Inchbald's Lover's Vows (1798). Without identifying Fanny with a closeted version of Jane Austen, I will evaluate this episode as a continuation of the aesthetic interrogation I have suggested is part of this novel's (and Fanny's) task.

The designated site for the "theater" at Mansfield is Sir Thomas's billiard room, adjacent to the library. The fact that a tradition of masculine "play" associated with economic privilege is to be displaced by a "play" connected with the vulgarity of popular theater is as ironic as that of a room dedicated to play being next to a "study." Edmund argues with Tom about "'taking liberties with my father's house in his absence which could not be justified.'" The debate resembles the earlier one about Sotherton improvements, and Edmund's economic reservations about those become outright protests here, since it is not Mr. Rushworth's property but Mansfield itself that is being considered: "'The innovation, if not wrong as innovation, will be wrong as expense'" (102). This invocation of economy on
Edmund's part recalls that before Sir Thomas's leavetaking, Tom's spendthrift ways were the cause of economic losses for his brother.

The brothers' rivalry also points to a third dramatic allusion in the novel, less overt than Inchbald or Kotzebue: the *King Lear* subtext.\(^{10}\) We hear this subtext when Edmund remarks to Fanny: ""Family squabbling is the greatest evil of all, ... and we had better do anything than be altogether by the ears"" (103). Later, Maria evokes a similar rationale against Edmund, when he asks her to retract her promise to take part in the theatricals: ""to harangue all the rest upon a subject of this kind.--*There* would be the greatest indecorum, I think,"" she says (112). Jane Nardin has suggested that principled characters in *Mansfield Park* differ from the non-principled because ""decorous behavior is an integral part of ... [the principled ones'] moral ideals"" (86). Maria, invoking a flimsy standard of ""decorum,"" opts for acting. Edmund, torn between the principle--not merely ""decorous"" in his case, but bound up with ""good and evil""--of preserving family peace, and the hierarchical claims of his less principled but elder brother, eventually acts as well, though against his better judgment. The irony created when ""principle"" is put to the test in the theatrical episode is best appreciated in the light of what Sir Thomas will eventually discover: that ""principle, active principle, had been wanting"" in the upbringing of most of his children (361). By Sir Thomas's definition, ""active principle"" would have dictated, paradoxically, that Maria not act in this particular circumstance, nor Edmund either.
Only Fanny, who persistently declines to act, is thus paradoxically the character most guided by "active principle." The association of such invisible virtue with Cordelia's "nothing" in Lear is obvious (though not as much as it will be when Sir Thomas confronts Fanny over Henry Crawford's proposal). Fanny's non-action signifies a "something" the willing actors lack. Even when Tom tries to persuade her into representing Cottager's wife, by saying "'it is a nothing of a part, a mere nothing'" (116), Fanny pits her elusive "something" against his "nothing." One critic locates the insult to Fanny in the request that she "play an unfilled part," much in the same way that her first ball invitation came because she is needed "to make up the requisite number" (Schneider 229), which also suggests her "benchmark" (non)status at Sotherton—as stationary timekeeper in the wilderness. But in the Sotherton scene, when denied recognition of her "selfhood," Fanny exercised a compensatory hyperconsciousness of time and space, as if aspiring to locate an individuality for herself in those dimensions.

In the theatrical episode, Fanny seems to have come into enough selfhood to disprove, however undervalued she is by her cousins, that she is a mere cipher. By resisting the acting contagion, at least its immediate circle of impostures, she asserts a kind of counter-identity. But she does pleasurably anticipate spectatorship: for "her own gratification she could have wished that something be acted, for she had never seen even half a play" (105). As at Sotherton, Fanny at first assumes that the "gratification" of "seeing" can be safely contained, the spectator remaining aloof from the scene. In fact, her "insistence on being the audience, auditor and spectator
inscribes her in theatrical relations" (Marshall 88), and especially since Mansfield's version of Lover's Vows is never "even half a play." The scenes Fanny witnesses are even less than "half-plays," since, as Claudia Johnson has noted, the Mansfield theatricals are not the "ludic engagement of impulses or energies," but "a more strategic production of obfuscating displays" (100-1). The actors are appropriating roles to gain a gratification that is less "ludic" than personal.11 In fact, the dramatic integrity of the play is so compromised that superfluous artifice, or "obfuscating displays" must be generated all around it. Some implicate Fanny. She helps Mr. Rushworth with his part by "trying to make an artificial memory for him" (131)--a project that provides a satirical echo of his attempts to enhance his property at Sotherton artificially, as well as reinforcing the idea that only a memory-less man, without a sense of history, would contemplate defacing what time has so gradually fashioned.

Other supportive fictions logically come from the actors. Edmund for example constructs and passes on to Fanny the comforting fiction of how wrong it would be to "'expose'' Mary Crawford to the immodesty of "'acting with a stranger.'" He declares himself the "'means of restraining the publicity of the business, of limiting the exhibition, of concentrating our folly'" (123). Coming to the East Room, Fanny's domain at Mansfield, to rehearse his role in privacy, with Fanny's prompting, he finds Mary there on a similar pilgrimage.12 David Marshall has noted that when Edmund "makes his entrance in the rehearsal scene he is trying to get Fanny to stand in for Mary" (93), a dangerous--however temporary--
substitution considering Sir Thomas' prohibitions about "cousins in love." The situation is complicated by the fact that Mary has been trying to get Fanny to stand in for Edmund, because "'You have a look of his sometimes.'" But when Edmund arrives to play his part, the threatened double-inscription of his and Mary's parts on Fanny is cancelled. She feels "herself becoming nearly nothing. . . . To prompt them must be enough for her; and it was sometimes more than enough. . . . In watching them, she forgot herself . . . [and] closed the book and turned away exactly as . . . [Edmund] wanted help" (133-35).

The "something" of self that Fanny had pitted against playacting is on the brink of dissolving, but it is summoned into service again because of her function as prompter. Her intense knowledge of the script is like her hyper-awareness of space and time at Sotherton. But there she was bench-bound; here she is text-bound. Though metaphorically, Mary and Edmund again reach the "avenue" Fanny had aspired toward, the one where in the Sotherton episode their history had escaped Fanny's surveillance. The rehearsal is conducted before her eyes, and its "history" is technically predetermined, scripted, and available to Fanny. Yet a dimension of it still escapes her, this one beyond the merely literal--the grey area of performative "improvisation." Again, we find Austen interrogating aesthetics with recourse to a strategy of linguistic mapping. The script Fanny holds is the map of the play's linguistic surface. But that map is far from fully representative of the "play"; the lines are merely the matrix of signification, replete with gaps, from which the actors must extrapolate their parts. Edmund's forgetting his line, for instance, seems to be
a moment when he is "feeling his part," giving it the "spirit" it deserves. This
should be dramatically admirable—even if his precise line is lost to him. But
Edmund's forgetfulness, in one sense a sign of a spirited performance, of teasing out
an elusive emotion between the lines of the text, might also indicate he has fallen
through those lines, slipped through the scriptural matrix that determines the
clergyman-character, Anhalt, into an unscripted indulgence of the would-be
clergyman, Edmund's, private desires. Despite Fanny's role as prompter, it is
impossible for her to monitor such slippage. She may be watching and reading, but
the actor still might "forget" to follow his lines, and generate a supplemental
signification: a "history" the script implies but does not literally denotate.

Figuratively analogous to the ha-ha's at Sotherton, these gaps for actor
improvisation are designed to optimize the aesthetic potential of a scene, but can be
hazardous to the individual, whether actor or spectator, not alert to aesthetic
machinery. Thus, Fanny slips out of her objective position as prompter to find
Mary and Edmund's performance a "very suffering exhibition." Watching them,
"Fanny forgot herself," bringing her very close to capitulating that stance of
resistance she had taken to the theatricals throughout. The next day finds her on the
verge of agreeing to stand in for Mrs. Grant in the "nothing" part of Cottager's
Wife (135-36). But Sir Thomas's arrival prevents Fanny's surrender to the
theatricals. As one critic put it, Sir Thomas's deus ex machina arrival (Marshall 96)
is not at all inconsistent with the theatricals he has disrupted. The "absolute horror"
felt upon his arrival is sheer melodrama (137), but he seems oblivious to how the
rest of the "players" see him. For him, the arrival is, at first, a nostalgic rendition of "life at Mansfield" as he fondly remembered it ("all at home . . . collected together exactly as he would have wished, but dared not depend on"); "it seemed enough to be looking joyfully around him, now at one, now at another, of the beloved circle." Lady Bertram almost breaks the illusion with her revelation about the play. But Tom deftly, if temporarily, detracts from "play" talk with talk of the abundant game in Mansfield's wood--which he knows will interest his father. Sir Thomas soon craves, however, a more immediate acquaintance with his property: "he could not be any longer in the house without looking into his own dear room" (140-42).

What happens at this point is the farcical follow-up to the first act in the drawing-room. When Sir Thomas enters his study he undergoes a disorientation at the rearrangement of the furniture, especially the "removal of the bookcase from before the billiard-room door." Considering what waits beyond the door, the bookcase and its contents may be construed as serving as a kind of generic barrier against degraded dramas like Lovers' Vows. The barricade removed, Sir Thomas walks onto the stage of the Theatre, facing Yates' ranting impersonation of Baron Wildenheim. Although Yates is briefly embarrassed, his ready metamorphosis into a "well-bred" young man suggests that as he sheds the character of the Baron, and Sir Thomas assumes the "real" authority of that title, he also seems to absorb the characteristics of Yates' representation. Sir Thomas seems to feel the influence of dramatic mimesis: though he doesn't rant, he feels "anger" at "making part of a
ridiculous exhibition" (143). Tom, who has followed his father to mediate with Yates, provides casual narration: "the house would close with eclat." His remark is metaphorically resonant when we consider that such disregard for patriarchal authority will lead to the crisis of his possible non-survival to enjoy his legacy. That Austen nevertheless intends irony at Sir Thomas's expense is supported by the fact that Yates, whose "easy indifference and volubility" make Sir Thomas loathe "to admit . . . [this] acquaintance," will eventually be incorporated into the Mansfield family circle as Julia's husband.

There is more to this episode of impromptu mimesis than comedy; Austen exploits dramatic effects here to effect a tricky narrative maneuver. Sir Thomas begins to undergo a process of gradual edification, but slowly, for the edification must take place without seriously risking the patriarchal edifice. This is because, tyrant though he may be thought by his children, Sir Thomas is something quite different to Fanny, who reveres and fears him, but, necessarily grounds her "self" on his property, status and authority. Everything she has become since Portsmouth, though emotionally inspired by Edmund, has been materially effected by Sir Thomas. Thus it is perfectly fitting that his arrival prevents, in the nick of time, her abdication of "self" to the theatricals. He walks onto the stage of the Theatre almost as a stand-in for Fanny, with the consequence that his "self" instead of hers is put in jeopardy. His function as Fanny's "rescuer" must be taken into account as Austen subjects Sir Thomas to a series of shocks to his complacent patriarchal posture.
The Fanny/Sir Thomas parallel is part of why Fanny has been labelled as "ideologically and emotionally identified with the benighted figures who coerce and mislead her," making her story seem a "bitter parody of conservative fiction" (Johnson, *Politics* 96). But Fanny's complicity is mistakenly seen as moral commitment. Those moments when she is seemingly most "passive aggressi[ve]" (Johnson 114) are, in fact—to risk another oxymoron—tentatively subversive. Her observation of Sir Thomas when he first returns from Antigua, for instance—"he was grown thinner and had the burnt, fagged, worn look of fatigue and a hot climate" (139)—though empathetic, is still bold, since it shows her daring to scrutinize the patriarchal "edifice." It is more specularly intrusive than Sir Thomas' children (except, perhaps, Edmund) venture to be. Fanny, with her brief experience outside the Mansfield system, cannot lull herself into its complacencies or resist "seeing" through its masks. It is far from "ideologically" reassuring that she can see past Sir Thomas's tyrannical edifice to the "burnt, fagged, worn" face beneath it. It compels her curiosity about his experience in the West Indies, and she ventures questions about it that one critic has ominously noted go "unrecorded." But the rationale Fanny gives for the suppression of her questions indicates they are probably without a suspicious subtext: "'While my cousins were sitting by without speaking a word, . . . I thought it would appear as if I wanted to set myself off at their expense.'" (155). Insinuating questions would not have signaled that Fanny was currying her uncle's favor.
What perhaps is more suggestive than the substantive censoring of Fanny's questions about the slave trade is the fact that even she, the member of the "family circle" most empathetic to Sir Thomas, feels constrained to speak in his presence. Family evenings pass in "dead silence." The expected contraction of spirits after the expansiveness of the theatricals sets in, and questions about the slave-trade are only a few among many which are suppressed in Sir Thomas's presence. Ironically, it is Sir Thomas's need for familial closeness and bonding, "the repose of his own family circle" (153), that has created this deadening restrictiveness. Thus, when Maria's "hatred of home" makes her reject her father's offer to cancel her engagement, she cannot see the significance of his dawning emotional insight. She only sees the need for "escape." Sir Thomas, not fully evolved in his emotional insights yet, consoles himself: "A well-disposed young woman, who did not marry for love, was in general the more attached to her own family, and the nearness of Sotherton to Mansfield must naturally hold out the greatest temptation..." (157-58). That he lets his daughter marry without love prepares us for his future error with Fanny, who slips into the role of daughter-surrogate when Julia leaves the nest. Because Julia departs with Maria's wedding party to London, Fanny becomes "the only young woman in the drawing room" (160).

Remembering the tropes of *Pride and Prejudice*, we can assume the terms of Fanny's new status signal a re-focus of Austen's representational challenge regarding this heroine. Indeed Fanny undergoes an "improvement" in this phase of the novel, seeming to evolve into a proper Austen heroine, pretty enough to lure Henry
Crawford. But though pretty, Fanny never becomes witty. She never loses the anxiety of her origins, her pre-history at Mansfield (and if she did, Mrs. Norris would remind her soon enough). Though she moves into specular focus once the other young women are gone, she doesn’t lose her habit of surveillance. As we learned in *Pride and Prejudice*, the "young woman in the drawing room" can choose to "see" as well as "be seen"--she can be the author as well as the object of representation. Though Elizabeth Bennet exercised her authority as a witty strategy, Fanny employs it nervously, burdened as she is with something Elizabeth wasn’t: memory.  

Memory is the internal advantage that assists Fanny’s struggle for subjectivity when her external advantages threaten to render her an object in the eyes and plots of others. Memory gives her leverage with history:

> How wonderful, how very wonderful the operations of time, and the changes of the human mind! . . . If any one faculty of our nature may be called more wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. . . . We are to be sure a miracle every way--but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem particularly past finding out." Fanny’s praise, though, is modified by bafflement that this miracle of "mind" is so emotionally recalcitrant: "sometimes so . . . serviceable, so obedient--at others, so bewildered and weak--and at others again, so tyrannical, so beyond control! (163)
Appropriately, Fanny uses master-slave rhetoric even when describing an intra-subjective phenomenon. But it is more than her characteristic passivity that causes her to suffer the ambiguous tyranny of memory. She speaks about a struggle to which every consciousness within time is subject. And despite her master-slave construct of memory, Fanny exercises her subjectivity in time in a way that makes its perversities serve her.

Fanny's encomium on memory takes place in a scene that parallels her vigil on the bench in the Sotherton wilderness, except that now Mary Crawford, who in the earlier scene would not be "dictated to by a watch," is fixed on the bench with Fanny. Mary wonders at finding herself dictated to—not by a watch—but by more intimidating temporal imperatives: "'If anybody had told me a year ago that . . . I should be spending month after month here, . . . I certainly should not have believed them,'" she says, "'I have now been here nearly five months!'" The restlessness she displayed in the Sotherton wilderness is still in play, though it is no longer playful. The watch whose tyranny she eluded before is less easily evaded in its monumental form: in the cycles of nature. Susan Morgan describes nineteenth-century romanticism as linking nature with the feminine, in opposition to the ravages of "man-made" or linear history. The conflicts of clock-time and Nature, of time and the feminine, also inform the standard eighteenth-century sentimental narrative, where the heroine is literally imperilled by that epitome of linear time, or "plot." The association of plot with change, experience and rape for the heroine is a phallus-y of traditional mimesis, the "fiction of nature." With the movement away
from classical imitative mimesis, "the possibilities of character and event" in fiction are "de-naturalized," and recognized as a "narrative construct rather than an imitation of nature" (Morgan 40).

Fanny’s challenge in this phase of her experience at Mansfield is resisting the classically mimetic (specular) delineation of her subjectivity, while resisting as well the thrall of the romantic sublime, of the "laicized transcendence" her rhapsodies in the shrubbery resemble. To avoid complete seduction by the natural sublime she keeps more or less steady contact with the quirks of memory, and the difference between time’s register in the mind and in the landscape. Though the organic manifestation of time in the shrubbery enchants her, she credits human memory for lending her perspective on that enchanting scene. Fanny is always conscious of what has been, including what she has been. Her mind does not merely mirror nature; it lends it a temporality that goes beyond simple imitation. When the specular or the imitative entices her, as it does frequently in this phase of the novel, memory intervenes to temper and temporize her judgment. It is primarily through the discipline of memory that Fanny exhausts Henry Crawford’s seduction. Being attracted by Fanny’s changed appearance, Henry represents the central enticement of the specular for her. His assessment of her is at first based entirely on appearances. That he rhapsodizes about her to Mary in a way that resembles Fanny’s raptures over the shrubbery, shows the romantic equation of "Nature=Woman" at work. But Fanny escapes his simplistic vision of the feminine. There is an element in the observed subject, as opposed to the observed object, that resists specular mastery.
In Fanny's case, it is the fact that she "had by no means forgotten the past"; of Henry she thought "as ill . . . as ever" (181).

At this point in the narrative, the first of three overt authorial intrusions takes place. Regarding Fanny's vulnerability to Henry, this cautionary remark suddenly appears: "I have no inclination to believe . . . that with so much tenderness of disposition, and so much taste . . . she could have escaped heart-whole from the courtship . . . of such a man . . . had not her affection been engaged elsewhere" (180-1). The intrusion is significant to the issue of a heroine potentially imperilled by "plot," but who gains a narrative advantage (well-dramatized by the abrupt appearance of the author's "I") by defying imitative fictional expectations. Fanny is more than she appears to be on the textual surface, and the "I" of the author alerts us that Fanny will emerge as more than the mere subject of a history plotted by other characters for her. While not so utopian as to suggest that Fanny can independently construct her future, the "I" does suggest that this heroine has a fuller consciousness than most others in her circumstances.

The "plot" which imperils Fanny as the newly centralized "heroine" at Mansfield is a conventional "Cinderella" plot (Hudson 97). The pivotal Cinderella events--a ball, a proposal of marriage--are nakedly seductive in *Mansfield Park*, as the very enhancements to Fanny's selfhood necessary to raise her in the eyes the Bertrams, and in her own estimation. But as the theatricals indicated, Fanny has a puzzlingly "unseduceable selfhood" (McDonnell 214), so intangible as to seem an absence, but mobilized by challenges to it. While not the saintly chastity of
Richardson's Clarissa, it is a resistance informed by a personal history distinct from both the "Clarissa" and the Cinderella plots. Fanny cannot let herself be enfolded into the sequence of her "triumph" at the ball, Henry's proposal and Sir Thomas' "persuasion," because she is sensitive to their inconsistencies and their incompatibility with her past. She responds to the glitter, but knows it is not gold.

The appropriate emblems of Fanny's struggle over competing subjective determinations at the ball are William's cross, Edmund's chain, and Mary's necklace. Fanny's final arrangement of the three ornaments is a figure of her ethical conundrum. Edmund's chain and William's cross are, naturally, the most gracefully combined, but Fanny, remembering that "Miss Crawford had a claim" (212) finds a way to incorporate the necklace. Mary's "claim," of course, is Fanny's word that she would wear the necklace. But Mary's "claim" is invalidated, because the history she offered to back it was false. Thus, Fanny's valuable word is metonymically associated with the necklace, which itself "becomes a floating signifier that seems to change meaning and cast Fanny in a[n] . . . act she didn't mean to perform" (Marshall 98). This subversion of her word further convinces Fanny of the Crawfords' threat to her self-determination. She is unknowingly, if briefly, scripted into their plot for her when she wears Henry's necklace--that is, if a heroine's intentions can be read on the purely specular level--and the Cinderella context of a ball makes any other "reading" of a heroine difficult.

The ball serves as the site for additional "readings" that seemingly assist the Cinderella plot (in which Fanny is "destined" to marry Henry), including Sir
Thomas’s approval of the evidence given to the neighborhood, from the calmness with which Edmund and Fanny execute their dances together, that he “had been bringing up no wife for his younger son” (218). This reading however is an example of how much of Fanny’s “true” history escapes the specular. Fanny will defy the plot expectations created by the ball. The Cinderella motif, of which she is the center, is a narrative red herring in Austen’s scheme for her atypical heroine. Obviously the ball does have its initiatory elements. It is a significant rite of passage for Fanny, especially since she passes through it to revelations that will allow her to renovate the “Cinderella” history to suit her purposes rather than the expectations of the Crawfords, Sir Thomas, or the sentimental novel reader. The most crucial phase of her rite of passage comes when Fanny, no longer assisted by the memory-aide of William’s presence, is subjected to what should be the Cinderella-heroine’s shining moment: the proposal of marriage. It is fitting that this event climaxes not in Henry Crawford’s, but in Sir Thomas’s presence. Fanny’s “disobedience,” per se, cannot be Sir Thomas’s chief complaint, as he himself explains; she is not a daughter, and does not “‘owe . . . [him] the duty of a child,’” So he must revert to an evocation of Fanny’s distant childhood, pressing upon her what her real parents would feel, how “they might be benefited, . . . [and] rejoice” in an alliance with Henry Crawford (247).

During this discussion the pivotal themes of time and memory are evoked, especially as Sir Thomas questions Fanny why there is no fire “‘today’” in the East Room hearth, revealing his ignorance of the daily living conditions she has been
subject to, and her consequent qualities of endurance. The immediacy of Sir Thomas's time-sense contrasts much as Mary Crawford's did with Fanny's monumental patience. For Sir Thomas, to be without a fire, "'be it only half an hour a day,'" is "'highly unfit.'" Fanny's answer, in its use of vague interludes and seasonal references, dramatizes the different chronologies: "'I never sit here long at this time of the year.'" In smoothing the impression of her extended deprivation, though, Sir Thomas paradoxically calls upon Fanny's memory: "'You have an understanding, which will prevent you from receiving things only in part . . . . You will take in the whole of the past.'" He is thus stranded in a self-contradiction. In asking Fanny to excuse Mrs. Norris's stinginess by reminding her that "'they were not least your friends who were . . . preparing you for that mediocrity of condition which seemed to be your lot'" (243-43), he is referencing a future which "seemed" to be hers. But while appealing to her sense of probability, he simultaneously violates it in urging Henry Crawford's proposal. He is asking Fanny to trust his reading of what her history "seemed" to promise, yet to accept his re-authorization of what her future will be.

The struggle that follows pits Fanny's self-knowledge and processing of the past (including Henry Crawford's past) against Sir Thomas' readings of her destiny. His projections are seductive, and Fanny feels "almost ashamed of herself, after such a picture as he had drawn." She has somewhat less trouble resisting his emotional attributions and denies that she does "'not quite know . . . [her] feelings.'" This assertion of the authority of her own feelings against Sir Thomas--
who has hitherto founded the material grounds of her sense of self—threatens Fanny’s intellectual and emotional grounding as well: "Her mind was all disorder. The past, present, future, everything was terrible" (249). Sir Thomas is putting pressure on precisely that area of Fanny’s psyche where she has been secretly defying his injunction. Questioning her about a previous alliance, he is quickly convinced of her "innocence." But Fanny knowingly lies to him, perhaps realizing for the first time how costly her secret is: "She would rather die than own the truth, and she hoped by a little reflection to fortify herself beyond betraying it" (245). Her interior reflection is opposed to Sir Thomas’s reflection of her. But while he only sees her stubbornness in refusing a promising future he is authorizing for her, he does not see what keeps her from complying with that authorization: her concealed desire for her cousin, one which will empower her to authorize, however passively, a future for Mansfield based on a "disordering" Sir Thomas had prohibited.

This reauthorization of a future for Mansfield is part of Fanny’s "oracular" function in the novel. In her possession of a secret that will rewrite Mansfield’s future, Fanny’s oracular role as an enigmatically-operating historical agent begins to unfold. The Miss Bertrams’ childhood protests about Fanny’s ignorance of history, and the succession of the Roman emperors (17), seem particularly ironic in this light; for that exemplary patriarchal lineage parallels the aristocratic legacy of the English nobility that Fanny’s marriage to Edmund would defy. Yet the Roman analogy inevitably recalls that Empire’s decline, and we must also note that however initially subversive the spark in Fanny’s heart is, it is not anarchic. In
fact, its authorization of a new order and future for the Mansfield lineage actually intercepts rather than implements its decline. If Fanny is an oracle, she is also the sybil of a future in jeopardy: one that can only be saved by a radical re-grounding of the past. This regrounding begins however with Sir Thomas’s own maneuver: his exile of Fanny to Portsmouth. This "medicinal project upon his niece’s understanding"—"at present diseased" (287)—finds a correspondence, despite Fanny’s certainty about her feelings for Henry Crawford, in her habit of self-abasement: "'I must be a brute indeed, if I can be really ungrateful!' said she in soliloquy; 'Heaven defend me from being ungrateful''" (250).

The Portsmouth visit is an inversion of Fanny’s earlier removal to Mansfield, which had been ostensibly a charitable contribution to her bodily health. With this visit, however, Sir Thomas is concerned with treating the health of her Reason, her "powers of comparing and judging." She is to be persuaded into a "juster estimate of the value of that home" at Mansfield, which will presumably teach her the value of what Henry Crawford is offering her (287). Sir Thomas’s strategy to further Henry Crawford’s case is a logical one, but it indirectly supports the very resource that has helped Fanny resist Henry: her memory of "home," her origins and who she is. When Edmund arrives on the scene and perversely presses Henry’s suit as well, similar contradictions arise. Edmund’s speeches *for* Henry are offset by how his presence provides a constant contrast which inevitably fortifies Fanny’s negative memory of Henry as he was. She answers Edmund’s pleas in ways that emphasize *her* authorization of her own future: "'I think, I never shall, as far as the future can
be answered for . . . never return his regard." Edmund accuses her of not being her "rational self," and proceeds to suggest that the "irrational self" is the part of her dominated by the past: "all your early attachments, and habits in battle array."

He will not allow the past, even that of fairly recent memory, into the case against Henry. Regarding the theatricals, for instance, he excuses Henry by classing himself among the offenders in that episode. But Fanny suggests, with words that recall Austen's experiment with aesthetic stance in the novel, that his perspective was less than neutral: "As a by-stander . . . perhaps I saw more than you did" (270-72).

Here is further evidence that Fanny's "self"-defense is not a defense of the image of the romantic hero at the center of her heart. Fanny's agency is not conventional romantic loyalty to a previous "lover." For when the previous lover has joined the Crawford campaign, she still persists in her convictions. It becomes obvious that what guides her, though love for Edmund is its firmest affective ground, is something different from romantic love. She is questioning Edmund's judgment, which is hardly compatible with romantic idolatry. What is consistent with conventional romance, however, is the way Fanny becomes aware that her opposition of Edmund is potentially dangerous. As the struggle with Sir Thomas had put Fanny's mind and memory in temporary disorder, her struggle against Edmund renders her "feelings . . . in revolt. She feared she had been . . . saying too much, . . . in guarding against one evil, laying herself open to another" (275). This "other evil" is, on one level, Edmund's praise of Mary Crawford, couched in
his support of her brother’s suit. But, less obviously, the "other evil" is Fanny’s realization of Edmund’s deficiencies in judgment.

That Edmund and Fanny end their discourse in his leading her back to the house "with the authority of a privileged guardian" (276) suggests a parallel between him and Sir Thomas, and a very real danger in terms of Mansfield’s future—that Fanny might become disenchanted with Edmund.26 This scene, which recalls and reverses the one early in the book when Edmund takes Fanny out to the park to have their first "open" talk, threatens that surrogate attachment Fanny had first formed for Edmund in the absence of her brother William. That initial substitution and the subversive "cousin"-love that blossomed subsequent to it, threaten now to become as formal an affection as Fanny’s for Sir Thomas. This threat at such a juncture is reinforced by Fanny’s willingness to part with Edmund and return to Portsmouth. Having William along as her companion makes Edmund’s replacement with real "incestuous infatuation" almost a faire accompli. Fanny welcomes the chance to be "unassailed by [Edmund’s] . . . looks or his kindness, and safe from the perpetual irritation of knowing his heart" (288). Edmund, in parting from her, gives her the "affectionate farewell of a brother," but Fanny’s sadness at leaving is soon relieved by the "novelty of travelling, and the happiness of being with William" (291).27

Despite the threat to Mansfield, and though it violates the expected linear narrative, it appears promising at first for Fanny to go back home. Logic tells us that contact with her "beginnings" should assist her search for self. But in fact, when the nominally intimate familial relationships Fanny has had with the Bertrams
are replaced by the biological ones she shares with the Portsmouth clan, her attempts at self-delineation are put to their severest trial. The suggestion is that recourse to one's "natural" history is not necessarily clarifying for the evolved self. And the narrative seems at this point to respond to the challenge of self-authorization in terms that will override the "natural," by upgrading its own "authorial" markings with an infusion of texts. Texts of various genres, connoting a variety of family configurations, are a consistent aspect of Fanny's experience at her original home; but they are also the site of changes in those configurations. The manipulation of texts becomes a mode of self-authorization that Fanny turns to at Portsmouth with a fresh vigor. Q.D. Leavis has suggested that the generic genealogy of *Mansfield Park* might account for the strangely epistolary trend of the novel's Portsmouth section. Austen may have intended this section to serve as the most generically primitive layer of the novel. For Fanny has in this relocation regressed to the earliest stages of her history, the pre-Mansfield phase of her identity, which is tantamount, for her, to no identity at all.

The psychologically archaic (for Fanny) locale of Portsmouth is for Fanny a disorderly space; and the organic "history" of her biological connections offer little guidance. This is particularly true of Mrs. Price. As her mother's namesake, Fanny has been her surrogate sufferer of sorts in the Mansfield household, treated by her aunts as a de-privileged ward, as if doing penance for the original "Fanny's" (her mother's) sin of "marrying to disoblige her family" (5). In fact, Fanny's exile is partly because she would not marry to oblige her (Mansfield) family. But if
Fanny seeks as she joins her mother in symbolic disgrace at Portsmouth to prove the Bertrams and Mrs. Norris unjust in their early disapproval of Mrs. Price, she fails. Her mother's regard hardly encourages Fanny's affection: "Mrs. Price's heart and her time were already quite full; she had neither leisure nor affection to bestow on Fanny" (303). Contrasted with the "leisurely" Lady Bertram, who was merely an aunt, Fanny's mother is relatively negligent; yet Fanny discovers it is Lady Bertram who her mother most resembles of the two sisters. Though seemingly harried, Mrs. Price has no idea of the value of time and so loses it in an ineffectual "slow bustle without getting on"; she is "always behindhand and lamenting it, without altering her ways" (304). In fact, sufficient exposure to this lack of an economy of time causes Fanny's own monumental patience to begin to shift, with several results.

One of the first is a compensation for maternal lassitude by asserting her authority with her sister Susan. Taking charge is "new as anything like an office of authority . . . of guiding or informing any one." Fanny, the creature of habit and devotee of the past, begins to admit the "new" as a virtue, and shows she can deploy it efficiently in her first significant intervention in the family community, when she buys a new silver knife for little sister Betsey, who has been squabbling for two years over the knife willed to Susan by their dead sister Mary. The gesture makes Susan the "mistress of property," and restores to her a family legacy that is rightfully hers. It also severs Susan from her involvement in a repetitive cycle of sibling rivalry, liberating her somewhat from the family community and into Fanny's jurisdiction. Fanny regularly segregates Susan from the family by
removing with her to their shared upstairs room where they "avoided a great deal of the disturbance of the house." As she did in the East Room at Mansfield, Fanny maintains her privacy, at least with Susan. Speaking from the authority of books she has borrowed in propria persona,39 she both edifies Susan, and distracts herself from the anticipated trauma of a different text: the letter she expects from Mansfield, which will authorize Edmund's and Mary's engagement (310-11).

While Fanny's patient suspension of belief in Edmund's endurance is beginning to ebb under the effect of "Portsmouth time," Henry Crawford makes a timely entrance. The alteration of Fanny's time sense makes her vulnerable to Henry in two ways. After several weeks' subjection to the tedious repetitiveness of Portsmouth, Fanny is no longer consoled by a "sameness" that might have appealed to her previous timid self; instead, the sameness functions as a cautionary signal, a phantom of historical inevitability. Associated with Mrs. Price's ineffectual "activity," Portsmouth is more like a place where time is "served" rather than used or enjoyed.30 Exile there is akin to punishment--one easily linked for Fanny with her mother's matrimonial misstep, and consequently with the possibility that she herself might err similarly. Henry Crawford, signifying Fanny's duty to oblige her Mansfield family, is never more of a threat to her resistance than he is at Portsmouth. Thus, it is perfectly understandable that this should be the point when the narrative "I" intrudes, as it did only once before, to announce Fanny's inevitable susceptibility as a heroine to the fictional risks of that role. During an unexpected encounter Fanny and Henry have with Mr. Price in the Portsmouth streets, the
narrative "I" interposes: "I believe, there is scarcely a young lady in the united kingdoms, who would rather not put up with the misfortune of being sought by a clever, agreeable man, than have him driven away by the vulgarity of her nearest relations" (313-14). David Marshall regards these first-person intrusions as slips in the restrained, indirect narrative: brief, "flaunted" signals of an authorial presence that prefers otherwise to mystify its control of the heroine's history. He correlates the "I" of these comments with that of the last chapter who "suddenly appears to clean up the plot and lower the curtain on the characters" with a "Fieldingesque" flourish. In these "I's," Marshall maintains, Austen momentarily interrupts her commitment to "write and be silent," as if she were unsure whether silence were the "true, womanly style," or a "persona . . . mask[ing] the true womanly style." 31

Such speculations posit an identity between Austen and the silent Fanny that I would concur with, but modify. Though the "I's" encode a "watcher behind the watcher," an agent of surveillance monitoring the history of Fanny's self-surveillance, this shadow "auditor of the whole" is less anxious on the whole than Fanny, and more ironic. When it invokes the above dilemma, for instance, the "I" speaks with Austenian irony, but a bit of added apprehension, as if puzzled by her heroine, and wondering how she will fare in the face of a heroine's challenges. Like a watchful, concerned parent, the "I" seems to announce the conventional plot danger as if uttering a charm against its occurrence. This "I" intervened earlier when Henry was telling Mary how he would make a "small hole in Fanny's heart." Mary had only briefly defended Fanny then, "without attempting any further
remonstrance, she left Fanny to her fate--a fate which, had not Fanny’s heart been
guarded in a way unsuspected by Miss Crawford, might have been a little harder
than she deserved" (186).

The implication, of course, was that Fanny’s love for Edmund was the
unsuspected guard on her heart. But as I suggested above, this was not a
simplistically romantic case of pre-engaged affections, but an acknowledgement of a
dimension of Fanny’s mind which was able to question even the lover’s perfection,
while her heart remained loyal. The "I" signals Austen’s involvement in the
narrative. For some critics, this is a negative, a symptom that "Austen nodded";
others suggest that she was in fact waking her readers up to her narrative control
(Marshall 104). I propose a variant on this latter viewpoint, and decode the "I" as
prompting not merely the consciousness of narrative control, but of authorial
surveillance. As Austen overtly monitors her heroine’s fictional options, she is
compelling us to become conscious of her consciousness. The hyper-consciousness
encoded in the narrative "I" is the unsuspected guard on Fanny’s heart so often
confused with her allegiance to Edmund. This "I"s" glibness in recounting the
dangers to the heroine is an audacious assertion of the power of consciousness to
counter historical inevitability.

The generic correlative to this dynamic is, as suggested above, in the
proliferation of texts, especially letters, at Portsmouth. These function as alternative
authorial sites, like the books Fanny reads to Susan: counter-texts to the Portsmouth
scene that provide temporary escapes from its time-frame as well. But when Fanny
is undefended from the Portsmouth environment by a book or a letter, her consciousness of the "home" scene is acute. This is the case in the much-commented upon Portsmouth parlor interlude, which many critics have written of with mixed admiration and confusion, since it is stylistically so unlike Austen. The scene follows close upon the reception of a letter from Mary Crawford, which contains a whisper of the distant scandal between Maria and Henry. Fanny is surprisingly disappointed by the news that Henry is, after all, inconstant: "She had begun to think he really loved her, and to fancy his affection for her something more than common" (342). In fancying Henry's affection for her as more than common, Fanny had been briefly able to indulge in a sense of social importance to challenge the evidence of her Portsmouth roots. At this point in the scene, she is not quite anxious for Maria's reputation, but rather for her own loss of a hope she had started to entertain of accepting Henry—if only to have a "home to invite . . . [Susan] to" (327).\(^{32}\)

As the fourth important scene in the novel where Fanny is seemingly fixed in time and space, seated and watchful, this one draws the issues of the others to a crisis. Though this is the scene where Fanny occupies, finally, her "natural" space in terms of family, it is far from "natural" compared with the Sotherton wilderness or the parsonage shrubbery. And though, as in the East Room, she will be enlightened here, it is hardly a benign elucidation. Contrasted with Sir Thomas's charitable fire in the East Room hearth, the Portsmouth parlor illumination is barely endurable to Fanny. She describes "the sun's rays falling strongly into the parlor,"
"a stifling, sickly glare. serving but to bring forward stains and dirt that might otherwise have slept." Her surveillance style, usually systematic, now takes the character of a listless "wander[ing]"--from the "walls marked by her father's head, ... the table cut and notched by her brothers," to the unclean cups and saucers where "the milk [was] a mixture of motes floating in thin blue." The scene is an imagistic treatment of the themes of violated boundaries and blurred borders, and a semiotic treatment of transgression. The aesthetic light and shade of the Sotherton scene is travestied by the vulgar intrusion of glare and heat at Portsmouth. The dust permeating the air, the motespolluting the milk and the grease seeping into the bread are all metaphors of contamination, property violation is designated by the notches in the table Fanny's brothers have made, and the mark her father's head has left on the wall is a symptom of his corrupted sensibilities, which he soon displays in his coarse response to Maria's disgrace. At Portsmouth, unlike Sotherton or the parsonage, Fanny is unable to take consolation in nature: "for sunshine appeared to her a totally different thing in a town and in the country" (342-43). Her reflections that she "felt. . . . she had, indeed, been three months there" are like Mary Crawford's amazed contemplation of the abnormally quiet months she had remained at Mansfield.

In the Portsmouth parlor, as Mrs. Price laments over a tattered rug she blames the maid for failing to reweave, Fanny's father, according to habit, reads the newspaper. Both rug and newspaper are figurative and literal matrices analogous to Fanny's moral-linguistic mappings of the Sotherton scene, when Maria was
imperilled with falling into the ha-ha. The history of Maria's actual fall is now a
matter of public documentation. The newspaper, here, is a type of text associated
with the circulation of what should properly be private material, of personal letters
perhaps—if not of complete silence. So Fanny must speak, but to reconstitute
silence, to suppress the story, even though Mary's letter to her is evidence of its
validity. Here Fanny must use her authority as a former tenant of Mansfield to
refute public history, and she does so with assertiveness, though—as in the East
Room scene with Sir Thomas—she is consciously lying. Fanny's energetic "rescue"
of Maria, if only temporarily, from the infamy of public slander is contrasted with
Mrs. Price's lack of concern about her niece, who she barely mentions before
resuming her lament over the tattered rug. If the newspaper can be identified with
the public, circulated word, the rug is surely a text of another character: one whose
function is to insulate, to mute, to guard. The tatters in Mrs. Price's text bespeak
an incapacity to ensure these defenses, and suggest the maternal lassitude that is
Mrs. Price's fault, as well as her sister's, Lady Bertram's. A recent letter,
however, from Lady Bertram, indicates she is undergoing a change through crisis
that distinguishes her from her sister, and that will finally provide Fanny with an
alternate for her natural mother, at a home more "natural" than Portsmouth.

Susan Robbins has commented how Austen, in making a shift from the
epistolary to the narrative form, redefined the function of the letter: "No longer a
document, it is a private, often hopeless gesture. Such a letter of private gesture
needs the support of the 'environment' of narration which offers what has been lost:
the authority of effective language" (222). At Portsmouth, the Bertrams are reduced to epistolary presences, interpreted and "supported" in the "environment" of Fanny's consciousness. In fact, the consciousness that Fanny will be their reader, strongly influences how her writers construct their letters. This is especially so with Edmund, who consistently apologizes for imposing upon Fanny's tolerance for his "nonsense" (329). Lady Bertram, less self-aware, makes a shift in a significant letter about Tom that is nevertheless stylistically striking to Fanny. Accustomed to her "diffuse style . . . [her] sort of playing at being frightened," Fanny has concluded that Lady Bertram writes "very comfortably about agitation and anxiety." But the letter that records Tom's arrival at Mansfield in his illness breaks suddenly into "the language of real feeling and alarm." Lady Bertram is spurred to write "as she might have spoken." Fanny interprets the move from polished style to vital "voice" as evidence of "real solicitude now awakened in the maternal bosom." It compels her to consume Lady Bertram's letters now with urgency, to "live upon letters" (333). This de-stabilization of the "finish" on a letter is, as Robbins suggests, how Austen indicates progress in the letter-writer. It also works, on a larger scale, to shift the textual emphasis onto the surrounding narration, and the "authority of effective language." But this authority, also, seems to take its power from the force of "voice" versus the written word.

 Appropriately, at this point, Fanny shifts from her ritual of reading aloud to Susan, replacing it with talking extempore, of "history, "morals," and of course, Mansfield. Fanny becomes an "oracle" to her sister, who pays her the "compliment
of preferring her style to that of any printed author" (326). Fanny is now Mansfield's historian for Susan, and for us as well. As the recipient of the "hopeless gestures" of the Bertrams' letters, Fanny weaves a supporting narration around them; even more astoundingly, she provides in absentia the motivation for the Bertrams' letters. Her authority with them is that of a listening (reading) silence. History as "silence" has its enigmatic, degenerate symbol in Mrs. Price's tattered rug, which we might consider a paradigm for Austen's narrative challenge in *Mansfield Park*. Because this narrative structure competes with the linear imperatives of traditional texts, like the newspaper, it is not foolproof--hence the tatters. Maria and Mary, for instance, fall through the narrative matrix, not so much because of their loose morals, but because of its loose weave. They are linguistically careless, almost promiscuous, and lack a consciousness of the loopholes the supporting narrative cannot defend them from--those latent in the word "folly," for instance--which causes both these characters trouble. These are danger zones in the matrix of language which, after all, is the text of the novel itself. What Austen seems interested in displaying is how potential heroines fall through the matrix into the ruthlessly linear texts of history. In such contexts, these characters sacrifice their chance for self-authorization to a consensual historical operation, a public narrative like the newspaper.

The operation of the narrative guard that keeps Fanny from such a fall is elusive, but is best represented by attentive "auditing." When the auditor does speak, though, it is not with conventional historical certainty, but always in the
interrogative (except in the last chapter which we shall discuss below)--and always subjectively. This is the "I" we hear with surprise. It is not a directive voice, but a prompting, protective one. It is the evidence of Austen's attempt to keep "open" the heroine's historical options. This is why "voice" is closer to how it works, assisting as it does the escape from, rather than the fall into, linear history. However, in the final chapter of the novel, this "I" is deployed less earnestly, which is perhaps why critics consider it a sell-out. In fact, though, Austen retains many of the gains she has insisted upon in her "history." For instance, there is the documentation of Edmund's eventual "fall" for Fanny: "I purposely abstain from dates on this occasion, ... the transfer of attachments, must vary much as to time in different people--I only entreat everybody to believe that exactly at the time when it was quite natural ... and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny, as Fanny could desire" (367). This is, of course, the ultimate authorization of the secret Fanny has held in her heart for years. But her success comes about without the slightest need for her to "voice" that secret.

Fanny's mode in listening to Edmund's confession about Mary Crawford is, in fact, insistent silence. But by then her silence has become eminently valuable, in that it convinces even Edmund of her innocence of disguised agency. When he asks her if his talk about Mary and Henry gives her pain, she gives "[n]o look or word," and he interprets this as "the merciful appointment of Providence that the heart which knew no guile, should not suffer" (355-6). That Edmund should believe this and be allowed to keep believing it defies the romantic imperative that nothing
should be withheld from the beloved. And it draws a telling parallel between the "timid" Fanny and the "assertive" Emma, whom we shall discuss next. Both are said to have "guards" on their hearts during the assaults by spurious romantic rakes; but both, interestingly, keep their guards up even when they have the man of their heart's desire. This displaces the emphasis in their respective histories from romance and the reward of marriage to the narrative of claimed selfhood.

Thus the last chapter of *Mansfield Park*, redolent with "I," may not be "Fieldingesque" closure but Fanny's real unromantic reward: a stylistic gift from her author to the "I"--Fanny--that has been held in check for so long, though well-guarded. It tells of Fanny's fate in a manner that, if read closely, is revealed as not the conventional ending of a history, but one that continues to protect its heroine, to keep her from falling into the imperatives of "dates" and linear time necessary to the conventional novel. This last chapter opposes, with its insistent "I," the conventional disappearance of the romantic heroine into the "he" at the culmination of the novel generically determined as his/story. And it anticipates the generic variant on the novel as "history" Austen will offer up next.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Subject of Desire: Emma

The first line of Emma celebrates its heroine as "handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and a happy disposition" (5). This introduction and the novel's title have cued many of Emma's readers to expect a focus on a central character rather than a theme. Much of the critical objection to Emma may be due to the assumption that she should be somehow exemplary, considering her author rarely used her heroines' personal names as titles.\(^1\) Austen seemed to anticipate this general disapproval: "I am taking a heroine," she wrote to Cassandra, "that no one but myself will much like."\(^2\) Perhaps the most famous instance of this critical disapproval is Wayne Booth's, whose claim that Emma, if viewed "from the outside, . . . would be an unpleasant person," motivated his theory of a "sustained inside view," a controlled ironic distance Austen uses to engage our empathy for Emma, despite her flaws (246).

Most critics join Booth in naming Mr. Knightley as Emma's moral monitor, qualifying his corrective function as a "natural expression of his love." Thus, readers are said to empathize with Emma so fully because the narrative takes the point of view of someone who uncharacteristically loves in Emma qualities others--
including Emma herself—may be unconscious of, especially early in the novel.

Booth proposes further that in Knightley's reprimands we have "Jane Austen's judgement[s] on Emma, rendered dramatically" (253).

Lately, critics like Wendy Moffat have attempted less moralizing readings of the novel, alluding to the narrative as "wry, elliptical" and "inclusive of the reader" (56) rather than citing Booth's "inside view." Views, tropes of surveillance (even though this surveillance may be internal) imply objectivity and a truth claim. The "inclusive" narrative mode, on the other hand, while assuring that the reader shares what the narrator knows, does not guarantee absolute truth. The "validity" of the narrative for the reader doesn't rest in its truth value, but in its trust value. Our attitude toward Emma is influenced by the fact that she too is included in the elliptical embrace of the narrative, and thus we trust its testimony on her character. But the simplistic identification of that narrative embrace with Knightley's judgment, which A. Walton Litz suggests is accomplished by Chapter Five,4 ignores who else is present and vocal in that chapter.

It is a conversation between Mrs. Weston and Knightley—he worrying about Emma's relationship with Harriet, Mrs. Weston defending Emma's basic good instincts. Knightley rationalizes: "'In her mother she lost the only person able to cope with her. She inherits her mother's talents and must have been under subjection to her.'" He implies, more chivalrously than critically, that rather than subduing Emma into getting an education, Mrs. Weston in fact got a "'good education from her, on the very matrimonial point of submitting your own will and
doing as you were bid . . . " (31). But Mrs. Weston, not entirely submissive, mentions at one point that "I consider myself, you know, as having somewhat the privilege of speech that Emma's mother might have had" (33). Indeed, the opening descriptions of Emma's personal history vouch that Mrs. Weston "had fallen little short of a mother in affection." However, any "shadow of authority" rapidly evaporating, the women had "been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached" (5). The narrator, thus, delineates two dimensions of mothering: affection and a "shadow" of authority.

These two dimensions comprise a far more equivocal maternal mode than Knightley's rigorous notion of "subjection." Emma's resistance to "subjection," to stabilization as a "subject," are as problematic for the reader as for Knightley, and critical theories that invoke Booth's "ironic distance" aim to fix Emma as a character by putting her acts in ethical perspective. In my reading of the novel, however, I am less concerned with the "control of distance" than with the negotiation of "closeness," or intimacy between author, character and reader. I suggest the notorious authorial "distance" in Emma is a symptom of Austen's suspicion that she was "taking a heroine" that no one else but she would much like. This anticipated disapproval enters the representational scene of the novel. Yet Emma, though frequently disapproved of by readers and critics, is still fairly consistently "liked." As Austen rendered the subject, Emma, she also succeeded in rendering Emma as the subject of desire: the reader's, the author's, Knightley's, and even Emma's own desire.
The focus of Emma’s desire is what is being ostensibly discussed by Knightley and Mrs. Weston in the pivotal Chapter Five. We discover that, at twenty-one, though perfectly marriageable, Emma is not concerned with getting married. Indeed, among her many gifts, Emma is gifted with minimal concern about her single status. She does not share Mrs. Weston’s or Knightley’s "anxiety" about "what will become of her" (34); and she appears to have foreclosed on curiosity in that area as well. We therefore start *Emma* with an interesting conundrum, for the heroine the title celebrates, the one it directs us to focus on, is not focused on herself. By her own declaration a closed system, she has shifted her focus from self to other—that other being, at first, Harriet Smith.

Harriet’s arrival at Hartfield is neatly coordinated with Mrs. Weston’s departure. Knightley regards Harriet as "‘the very worst sort of companion Emma could possibly have. She knows nothing herself and looks upon Emma as knowing everything. She is a flatterer in all her ways, and so much the worse because undesigned. Her ignorance is hourly flattery’" (32). The construction of Harriet’s ignorance as flattery elucidates a crucial point about Emma, at least in Knightley’s eyes—one he touched on earlier when he responded to Mrs. Weston’s comments about her blooming good looks: "‘I will add this praise, that I do not think her personally vain. . . . [H]er vanity lies another way’" (33). It is not her physical beauty Emma is in danger of over-valuing, but her wit and cleverness. Knightley sees Harriet as a kind of mirror Emma may regularly consult for evidence of her own superior intelligence—which is far from sufficiently cultivated, in Knightley’s
estimation. His concern directs ours to that aspect of the romantic heroine’s character which is usually secondary: her interior qualities of intellect and judgment.

The interactions between Harriet and Emma at Hartfield hardly address these subtler levels of character. They remain on a superficial level that elides interiority, although even the champions of interiority become engaged in them. When Emma does Harriet’s portrait, for instance, Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston both offer their critiques, reflecting their respective attitudes toward Emma’s relationship with Harriet. Mrs. Weston sees Emma’s rendering as appropriately corrective, granting Harriet features (“those eye-brows and eye-lashes”) that would complete her beauty. Emma’s artistic gesture is admirable in Mrs. Weston’s view because affectionate generosity has motivated the remedy of the model’s deficits (“it is the fault of her face that she has them not”) in the representation. In the retouched portrait Mrs. Weston is able to read both Emma’s talent, and her friendship for Harriet. And it is the latter—the feeling—that especially reassures her. “[P]erhaps no man can be a good judge of the comfort a woman feels in the society of one of her own sex after being used to it all her life,” Mrs. Weston tells Knightley (30).

Being a man, and not a “good judge” (in Mrs. Weston’s terms) of female companionate dynamics, Knightley bluntly tells Emma that she has made Harriet “too tall.” Emma suppresses her awareness of this; but the third critic in this party, Mr. Elton, defends Emma’s method of “foreshortening,” which “gives one exactly the idea of such a height as Miss Smith’s” (39). Both Mrs. Weston’s and Elton’s approval rest on intangibles, but at least she does not affect aesthetic
sophistication. She sees the discrepancies, but trusts to the artist's generosity of vision and praises its affective achievement. Mr. Elton and Knightley quibble about proportion, which calls upon the artist's sense of perspective. And though Mr. Knightley may be showing his masculine "misjudgment" in underestimating the effects of friendship between woman artist and woman subject, Mr. Elton shows himself a doubly bad judge in his attempts to approve of the painting on strict aesthetic terms. Even Emma "could not respect his eye, but his love and complaisance were unexceptionable" (39).

Emma manages to strike a balance between Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley's reviews in her appraisal of Mr. Elton's, but she does it from the artist's vantage point. This is one of the first examples of how Emma will gather information about herself during the course of the novel. Her lessons are strangely indirect, their relevance to herself deflected in a way that seems to belie the centrality of Emma to *Emma*. This has led to some distorted readings of Harriet's significance in Emma's self-growth. If Knightley becomes our moral guide in the novel by Chapter Five, then the portrait scene in Chapter Six and the episodes with Harriet that follow should strike us according to Knightley's construct; Harriet should present a "'delightful inferiority,'" encourage Emma's complacency, and challenge our empathy no more. But Knightley's censure somehow does not sway us completely. We are still puzzled about "placing" Harriet. Not unlike the competing critiques about her portrait, we wonder what to think about her. This is because Austen was deviating in *Emma* from the dialectical plotting that shaped her
earlier novels, including the technique of positing two close but importantly
distinguished heroines: a "sister-double" pair. Though Harriet cannot qualify in
this mode, we are tempted to see her in it because Austen was using the
Emma/Harriet relationship to allude to the sister-double technique. Harriet
occupies, thus, the place of the "sister-double" (at least in this section of Emma)
who might have appeared in an earlier Austen novel, but she is a diminished version
of that type. Her reduced representation reveals Austen suspecting a fictive
weakness in her previous methods. The clue to this weakness lies in a remark of
Mrs. Weston's. Though supportive of empathy between the young women, Mrs.
Weston refers to Harriet as "'a new object of interest'" (30), disclosing the
limitations of Harriet's achieved subjectivity. Harriet is stranded between caricature
and "character," and stranded there on purpose by Austen, to make the point that
sentiment, like that of Mrs. Weston's general regard for Harriet, could not infuse
life into an "object." And sentiment was still the motivating impulse of the novels
most influencing Austen during Emma's composition.

The appeal of Austen's first three novels, though commenting on the
sentimental trend, was geared more to eighteenth-century didactic formulas, such as
the employment of an "umbrella" of philosophical dualism in plot and
characterization. But Emma, from its title forward, defies quite self-consciously
Austen's previously preferred dualistic pattern. Central to this difference is the
parody of the "sister-double" formula. The disappointment of some edifying
symmetry in the pairing of Harriet and Emma is articulated by Knightley: "'I think
they will neither of them do the other any good" (30). Though we may not be as
severe as Knightley, we also sense that these two will not assist each other in mutual
realizations as Elinor and Marianne, or Elizabeth and Jane Bennet do. The
symmetry Knightley seeks corresponds to the "novel-as-morally-edifying" paradigm
that Austen encoded in titles like Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice. By
contrast, Mrs. Weston's approval of the relationship between Harriet and Emma
because of the feeling between the young women is in keeping with the conventions
of the sentimental novel. Emma, as a fictional experiment, seems at first to vacillate
between these two norms: philosophical, moralistic fiction and the popular
sentimental novel. Within Emma, Emma is a kind of novelist herself. She is a
persistent fictionalizer, and her domain of Hartfield is a fictional arena that will alter
as the novel progresses, and as Emma hones her craft of matchmaking, for which
Harriet is her first client. And indeed Emma's "match" of Harriet and Mr. Elton is
approached as if it were a kind of employment; Emma claims she wants to perform
"the same kind office" for Mr. Elton as he did when he presided over the
Westons' marriage (12). Unfortunately, her attempt to facilitate the projected match
is crippled by her fascination with fictions. She scripts Harriet and Elton into a
match that does not work because one of the actors can, at will, remove himself
from the field of play--and does. The disaster of Harriet's disappointment not only
mocks the notion of "personal autonomy" for women without means; it mocks the
autonomy of women as imaginative agents as well.
It is in this shadow failure--Emma as failed "author" of the match--that Austen parodies her own past fictional mismachinations. But the mismatch has another dimension that actually signifies the novelist's progress. While Emma has botched the "match" of Harriet with Mr. Elton, Austen has let Emma and Harriet remain mismatched as a "sister-double" pair. Several critics, evidently sensing this resisted impulse in the narrative and misreading the fact that it has not been predictably achieved, respond to the unresolved tension in the Emma/Harriet combination with surprisingly excessive assumptions: from Edmund Wilson's notorious mention of Emma's "infatuation with women" (39) to Camille Paglia's recent venture that Emma has a "double-sexed charm," a "hermaphroditic hierarchism which the social novel cannot tolerate" (441). This "doubleness," though, is not the tried and true "sister-double" strategy; it is a mutation of that phenomenon, unavoidable as Austen attempts to make the transit to a new strategy of representing women and their relations.

A more challenging sister-double is presented in the character of Jane Fairfax. Significantly, in her dealings with Jane, Emma is drawn from the confines of her fictional arena at Hartfield. And she is supported by Knightley in this relationship, though not in its specifics. As mentioned above, Knightley's expectations correspond to the format of the respectable, edifying fictions of the eighteenth century. His selected candidate for Emma's mutually beneficial sister-double is Jane, because he has always seen her as "the really accomplished young woman . . . [Emma] wanted to be thought herself" (132). The remark is telling:
one of Jane’s advantages over Harriet for Knightley is the fact that her
"accomplishments" will make it profitable for Emma to know her. However, there
are drawbacks to the alliance, and this time Knightley articulates them (though
Emma has voiced them earlier). These drawbacks are hinted at in Jane’s last name:
_Fair-fax_, or "fair copy," which parodies the identification Knightley wishes to see
and satirizes the conceit of the "sister-double" schematic.

That Jane’s "fair copy" character is, in itself, problematic is suggested by the
commentary of Emma, Knightley and (though we must be suspicious of his
testimony) Frank Churchill. Emma protests that Jane is difficult to get to know
because of "a coldness and reserve . . . [an] apparent indifference whether she
pleased or not" (132). Knightley, a bit later, acknowledges that though Jane’s
"sensibilities . . . are strong, and her temper excellent . . . it wants openness. She
is reserved" (228-9). But Frank Churchill’s commentary introduces the metaphor
that brings these observations together: Emma has been praising Jane’s "‘delicacy in
. . . skin’" which lends a "‘peculiar elegance to the character of her face,’" but
Frank thinks it conveys an "‘appearance of ill health.’" Emma, amused, retorts "‘At
least you admire her except her complexion.’" Frank’s answer: "‘I cannot separate
Miss Fairfax and her complexion’" (158). Considering subsequent relevations, we
can take this as a decoy criticism, actually signifying that Frank cannot honestly
dissect his beloved’s beauties. But it is also an insight his closeness with her has
yielded him, and one he exploits: Jane cannot be separated from her complexion.
Jane’s complexion is metonymic with the "accomplishment," the elegance both
Emma and Knightley have noted. Her polish is a discernible element of her beauty, a "finishing school" poise--though Jane, of course, has never been to a finishing school. Stuart Tave remarks that Jane’s elegance is defeated by its observability: true elegance, which is "natural and habitual . . . vanishes from observation" (228). This seems at odds with the text, which grants Jane "natural" ownership of this quality; obviously, Jane’s elegance is not merely "artificial," but the visibility of its "artifice" is unusual. Aesthetically, Jane’s fine polish is perfectly consistent with the name "Fairfax." Her perfection as "copy" is a challenge on several textual levels.9

For Emma, fresh from her botched attempt to remake Harriet, Jane is both seductive and threatening, as a possible companion, and as an example of the kind of "polished" young woman she had hoped to fashion of Harriet. Thus, Emma admires Jane, and yet Jane reminds her of her faulty attempts to author an elegant identity for Harriet. Also, Emma becomes obsessed with discovering if Jane’s "perfection" is self-authored or the product of some mysterious history. While Harriet had been a tabula rasa with no "known" history, and "no visible friends" apart from "what had been acquired at Highbury" (19), with Jane, Emma must engage not primarily as a creator, but as a "reader." Jane’s history is less amenable to improvisation, to the gratuitous fictionalizing Emma got by with (for a while) in Harriet’s case. From that fiasco, she learned how imagination alone could fail bleakly in "officiating" over the fates of others. An "author" must read as well as write. It is interesting that one of Mr. Knightley’s main complaints about Emma is her endless procrastination when it comes to reading for the cultivation of her
intellect. Her exemplary "reading lists" never dictate a subsequent mastery of the admirable texts (31). Emma's reading skills do evolve during the course of the narrative, but her texts are not the ones on her "lists," but rather more difficult reading material. This is one way in which Austen signals her deviation from the canonical tradition that no doubt determines the titles in Emma's lists—and thus, their approval by the conservative Knightley. Though Emma's capacity to "read" the hearts and minds she aimed to match at Hartfield was woefully inadequate, by the end of the novel she will have significantly improved, and the proof will be her ability to read her own heart and inscribe its match.

Claudia Johnson grounds Emma's developing reading habits in Austen's history of novel-consumption. Positing Emma as a sophisticated Catherine Morland, sated with a far more interesting variety of fiction than Catherine had absorbed, and thus capable of imaginings more socially complex than Catherine's Gothic romance plots, Johnson describes Emma's authorial function as "imaginism," but an intensely allusive one. Thus, Jane "emerges from a matrix of several 'interesting' sentimental histories" and Harriet "inhabits a story about the failures of a responsible paternity" (133-4). But Johnson neglects to mention another type of allusiveness underway in *Emma*: to other characters and fictional strategies within the Austen corpus.¹⁰ Though Catherine Morland is quite understandably interpreted as a naïf—with not much else to invoke but the fictions of other authors, it would be to underestimate—even to misread—*Emma* to see it as extratextually dependent to the same degree. Emma is more than merely quixotic, and her "imaginism" gains much of its power
from Austen's self-citation as she parodies, varies, and moves beyond the incidents, strategies and characters of her previous novels.\textsuperscript{11}

Johnson also defines Emma's "authorization" as attempts to "exert morally corrective authority" (135). But, though I risk holding imaginism "at fault," as Johnson accuses most critics of doing (132), I would suggest that Emma's is not wholly "morally corrective," especially in Jane Fairfax's case. It takes Emma quite a while to regret her malicious projection of adulterous misbehavior on Jane and proceed to "read" her actual difficulties, finally condoning a transcendence of societal norms for her with the extravagantly romantic allusion from *Romeo and Juliet*: "'The world is not their friend, nor the world's law'" (318). The only other Shakespearean allusion significantly placed in the text is from *Midsummer's Night Dream*: "'The course of true love never did run smooth,'" which Emma cites in her description of Hartfield as escaping this maxim (62).\textsuperscript{12} The movement from the first reference to the second may signify to some, at least in terms of genre (from fantastic romance to romantic tragedy) that Emma has made progress in her apprehension of love's seriousness and injuries. But though Jane's "story" has been decidedly upgraded by the Shakespearean overlay, it is still a distortion that answers Emma's imaginist demands, but hardly corresponds to "morally corrective authority."

Emma's authority in the case of Harriet's and Jane's stories is as much "imaginatively intoxicating" as it is "morally corrective." This combination is what complicates and enriches Emma's style of authorship. Without the recognition that
authorship is a stimulating enterprise, the long "charade" of Frank and Emma and Jane (and, to a certain extent, Mr. Knightley), as they hover around the "secret" of the hidden engagement would have to be argued away as the mistaken preface to the gesture Emma "truly" intended--the one that redeems Jane from the dismal story she was doomed by. However, while the solemn citation exonerating Jane from the "world's law" seems to draw a veil of privacy over her affairs, which Emma appears now willing to respect, the denouement of the larger narrative will be to insinuate that such "privacy" is a self-indulgence: a species of hedonism that most readers would be unwilling to connect with the ascetic Jane Fairfax.

To see Jane as nothing but a victim is to miss her role in the drama Emma on one occasion calls "a system of hypocrisy and deceit,--espionage and treachery" (317). Johnson has noted how Jane's secrecy is "illicit" (138), and this is doubly descriptive since the secrecy masks an illicit act, and secrecy itself is an affront to the workings of a society like Highbury. Jane apologizes to Emma for this specific self-misrepresentation: "I had always a part to act. It was a life of deceit! I know that I have disgusted you" (366). Her humiliation at "acting a part" might be compared to the ambivalence toward theatricals in Mansfield Park; but Jane's playacting is even more problematic because her theatre is so much wider than Sir Thomas's revamped billiard room. Jane's concealed "story" is usually given enough importance to qualify it as a "shadow-novel-within-the-novel." This rating of Jane's significance is aligned with the (Knightley-influenced) conviction that Jane is the preferred sister-double for Emma, and her narrative that of a displaced heroine.
Some critics go so far as to suggest that Jane is a character Austen felt she was not yet able to "write," and that her story was put on hold at the end of *Emma*, to be taken up again in *Persuasion* as Anne Elliot’s.⁴ Such speculations are of a piece with the frustration Emma herself experiences, given the marginal *direct* knowledge she gets of the Fairfax-Churchill affair. Even after the key disclosures have taken place, the resolving moments between the couple are distanced from us by means Austen’s notorious “indirect discourse.”¹⁵ Neither Emma nor we get any "scenic" (to use Halperin’s word, *passim*) treatment of the reunion or the subsequent wedding. Such an omission may be rationalized as Austen’s unwillingness to detract from Emma and Knightley’s "happy ending"—were not its rendering also sparse in romantic detail.

Alistair Duckworth has suggested that the narrative restraint in *Emma* is distinctly "modern," that Austen "wished to suggest the individual’s inability to know another [thus, our inability to know even a novel’s main character] in a problematic world" (162).¹⁶ A key citation in the novel is: "Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised or mistaken" (343). Tony Tanner interprets this to mean that "'[c]losure' is not to be equated with full 'disclosure' . . . the novel *Emma* makes many discoveries about Emma and her community; but we are generally warned to be alert to those little 'disguises' and 'mistakes' which are inseparable from any narrative" (270). Tanner’s point, a bit different from Duckworth’s, is not merely that truth is inaccessible, but that it does not "belong" to
any arbitrary "human disclosure." The caution is both epistemological and one of propriety—in the etymological sense of *propre*, meaning "to own." The truth is not the property of its potential "teller"; disclosure itself is an ethically-informed act.

The novelist’s task of truth-in-representation is thus balanced by her wariness about that "truth," and its appropriation. One of Emma’s important steps in approaching this authorial sensitivity is revealed in her comment to Mrs. Weston about the deceit perpetrated upon the Highbury community regarding Jane’s secret engagement: "'If a woman can ever be excused for thinking only of herself, it is in a situation like Jane Fairfax’s'" (318). Emma grants to Jane the privilege of "owning" her truth, as she owns a self who happens to be immersed in very specific circumstances—different from Emma’s. By this indirect gesture, Emma authorizes a subjectivity for Jane that does not arise from the culmination of any sister-double identity. One phase of this authorization involves the admission of ignorance, when Emma tells Mrs. Weston that she has "been the whole winter and spring completely duped." She quickly projects her embarassment at her denseness by suggesting that the fraud exposed the deceitful couple to "'sentiments and words that were never meant for both to hear. They must take the consequence if they have heard each other spoken of in a way not perfectly agreeable.'" Mrs. Weston replies without anxiety: "'I never said anything of either to the other which both might not have heard'" (317-18). Her reply exposes the actual import of Emma’s protest: it is the *speaker* of the "not perfectly agreeable" words and sentiments overheard who must "take the consequence." For while Jane and Frank have the alibi of their drama to
excuse their utterances, Emma has no such alibi. It is a struggle for Emma to own up to the slips of decorum she has committed while being "duped," but it is necessary to her recognition of Jane's motivation. For she must, while she is coming to grips with being an unknowing audience to an illegitimately-staged "drama," admit her many recourses to dramatics and staging.

As *Mansfield Park* has been connected with the "central opposition" of house versus theatre, *Emma* has been said to treat the polarization of culture and games (Duckworth 147). But the thematics of the novels are not so simply sorted, and theatricals are certainly rampant in *Emma* as well. The games and charades which dominate the early phases of the novel disperse into a wider sense of "play" that includes the Churchill-Fairfax drama. And though Jane always has ""a part to act,"" it is Frank who seems to relish the "play" in the procedure. Referring to Frank's personality as "ludic," Duckworth expands on how he poses a "threat to the structures of society"; play "sets up a world of freedom from the ordinary patterns of existence," and the player is "absolved from the rules and requirements of ordinary social intercourse" (165-6). But "play," though it may defy "ordinary patterns of existence," need not follow society's "rules" to be nevertheless, "rule-driven." The play of drama, for instance, is a scripted activity. Play, then, has an "order," but its alternative quality gives it an aura of disorder, of frivolity.

In the play of Jane and Frank, frivolity and disorder are his prerogatives. His identity, after all--both personal and financial--is grounded in his assumption of a name that is not his own (Churchill rather than Weston), making "role-playing"
integral to his nature. But play is not natural to Jane, though it may well earn her immediate and future freedom. This deferred reward is emblematized in the gift of the pianoforte. Joel Weinsheimer compares it to the charade "To Miss_________," noting how the pianoforte "loses its unequivocal giver in a plethora of possible givers and meanings" (203-4). But the charade functions not according to a "plethora of possible givers and meanings," but in a plethora of possible recipients, signified--or rather de-signified--by the blank after "Miss" in its title. The pianoforte's recipient is not in question, but its giver is. Guessing this giver is the way Emma (and other Highbury spectators) become participants in the drama, of which the pianoforte is the central prop. Frank composes his charade around it; hence it is part of the fabric and texture of a farce. Frank uses the pianoforte as a play-thing, a prop in his drama, the fetish around which an intrigue which Emma contributes to crystallizes. But for Jane, it is the token of Frank's "troth," a pledge of sorts, one that comes close to exposing her, because of the necessity it puts her under of explaining it to her family and friends, and because it tempts her into the aesthetic, non-ludic "play" she cannot resist. In a second sense, the pianoforte is again a "prop" in a play of selfhood that is not merely gratuitous, but more "play" in the sense of rehearsal for a reality-to-be. It is a temporary signifier of the independence Jane will, should Frank fulfill his rescue of her from the " governess-trade," enjoy. It corresponds to her identity as a young woman with accomplishments beyond her economic station. It is the "property" of her emergent self.
Another difference is that the addressee of the charade versus the pianoforte intentionally escapes specificity. The anonymous address is a formal requirement Emma makes before she lets the charade be entered in Harriet’s quarto book. It must be pruned of any evidence of romantic "appropriation," which Emma manages by removing the couplet: "Thy ready wit the word will soon supply, / May its approval beam in that soft eye!" This deleted, the poem is pronounced by Emma, "'a very pretty gallant charade . . . fit for any collection'" (64). The couplet, she tells Harriet, is for "'private enjoyment’"; it personalizes the charade, making it the courted lady’s (Harriet, Emma believes) own property. That lady, of course, is permitted to assume as self-reference, and "privately enjoy" the "woman, lovely woman" celebrated anonymously in the first eight lines of the charade. When Emma declares herself "mistress of the lines" of the charade, however, this is not precisely her private enjoyment. For her the term implies conquest of the charade’s meaning, including identification of the intended recipient. Emma’s "mistress of the lines" thus turns out to be ironically self-descriptive on two levels, since it assumes both too much and too little of her role in the charade’s decoding. Having predetermined the "public," formal limits of the riddle as "literature," Emma dismisses its equivocal private dimension, and inadvertently acquiesces to being appropriated by it on that dimension as well as in her declaration.

Jane’s pianoforte is a puzzle even more vexing than the charade. As Frank Churchill describes the challenge: "’One might guess twenty things without guessing exactly the right’" (172). Since Frank’s playfulness is similar to the manner in
which Emma and Harriet quibbled over their riddles, we are prompted into guessing along with him. The "reality" dimension of this guessing game, and the consequent suspense generated, make us tolerant of Frank's meddling speculation and Emma's engagement in the game. But the "reality" dimension should also disqualify this "riddle" from being treated merely as a game, especially as the guesses become more scandalous and harmful to Jane's reputation. The "reality" dimension is part of what makes this game quite different from Harriet's charade. Not that the latter had no real repercussions for Harriet; but they were more in the character of a reality that did not materialize (or materialized otherwise). And Harriet, though confused by the role she had to play in decoding the moves and strategies of her "improvement" under Emma's guidance, was agreeable to that guidance. She and Emma deciphered Mr. Elton's charade in a collaborative effort, Emma exercising her taste in excising the portion of the charade where issues of private selves and the vows they might exchange contaminated the signification of an otherwise "pretty, gallant" composition. Being apprised of what was "personal" in the games concerning Harriet, Emma could draw such a line. But she can't with Jane, who is opaque, who "cannot be separated from her complexion," and whose personal history--because unknown to Emma--becomes "fair game" to her guessing.

By the time Emma is "obliged to think of the pianoforte" not as a provocative riddle, a prop in her plot-spinning with Frank, but as a material "property" that Jane's sacrifice of has serious consequences on a "real life" dimension, she has advanced quite a bit from her editing of Mr. Elton's charade. If
censoring "appropriative" language was her aesthetic gesture then, acknowledging "appropriation," and insisting upon it become her new strategies. The charade had to be purged of the personal, to seem to belong to no one before it could belong in Harriet's *quarto* book. In Emma's games with Frank (who knew, after all, who the pianoforte came from), she seems at first to treat the instrument like a pruned charade, a de-personalized text wide open to public speculation. When she is chastened in this intrusion, and attempts to modify it to a softer, but still "authorial" "musing on the difference of woman's destiny," the pianoforte enters her material field of vision with new meaning, a very material one.

Miss Bates, who is present at the time, assumes Emma's brooding has been provoked by the sight of the instrument: "'Aye, I see what you are thinking of--the pianoforte. What is to become of that?"' Emma, whose considerations had been abstract, is then "obliged to think of the pianoforte." The property which will no longer be Jane's becomes tangible, as does Jane herself, and the improprieties of Emma's fictions with Frank--"fanciful and unfair conjectures"--strike her as "so little pleasing that she soon allowed herself to believe her visit had been long enough." She leaves "with a repetition of everything that she could venture to say of the good wishes which she really felt" (305). The "real" and the "feeling" are indicative of Emma's discoveries at this point, as is the timely decision to end her visit. With such gestures, she demonstrates more and more in the novel's last sequences that she has the capacity for social consciousness and sensitivity that her conspiracy with Frank Churchill might have made the reader doubt.
As the discrepancies between Frank's and Emma's instincts of decorum become gradually obvious, Knightley's suddenly more "active" agency in Emma's edification seems to provide fresh support for the theory that his is the judgment we shift to when Emma's proves undependable. His suspicions of Frank, which are acute, seem to verify our own; but the narrative cues us of a not completely reasonable motivation for Knightley's attitude: "Mr. Knightley . . . for some reason best known to himself had certainly taken an early dislike to Frank Churchill, [and] was only growing to dislike him more. He began to suspect him of some double-dealing in his pursuit of Emma" (272). This is the preface to an episode (the impromptu word game at Hartfield) where Knightley allegedly demonstrates the "permissible use of the imagination," as contrasted with Emma's "undisciplined" mode (Duckworth 173). Provoked by odd behavior he has observed between Frank and Jane, Knightley scrutinizes the maneuvers of the game, attempting to "escape any of Emma's errors of imagination" (Duckworth 272), but whether he succeeds in this or not is uncertain.

Prior to the game, Frank has let slip a bit of information from his private correspondence with Jane, forgetting that it was in a letter of Mrs. Weston's that the communication had occurred. He attempts to cover the "blunder" by saying he had dreamed the anecdote; but Knightley sees "confusion suppressed or laughed away" in Frank's face, and "the determination of catching . . . [Jane's] eye." Because they are crossing the threshold of Hartfield where they are to take tea, there "was no time for further remark or explanation. The dream must be borne with" (275).
(Fittingly, it is upon entering Hartfield—the imaginist’s arena—that a "dream must be borne with."18) Knightley is forced to concentrate on a children’s game for elucidation, an irony considering his obsession with Emma’s cultivation of sophisticated reading habits. The word puzzle, and the faces around the game table, are his reading material as he tries to decode the "symptoms of intelligence . . . private liking, . . . private understanding" between Frank and Jane (272-3).

Frank’s assembly of the word "blunder," Jane’s "blush . . . which gave it meaning," and so on, are thus given from Knightley’s point of view, which is arranged to let him "see as much as he could with as little apparent observation" (276).

Knightley is an amazingly intricate voyeur, but unused to such empirical procedures, he is frustrated. He makes impressive intuitive associations ("The word was 'blunder' . . . Knightley connected it with the dream"); but he cannot bridge the gap between intuition and understanding ("how it could all be was beyond his comprehension"). The arousal of emotion precedes understanding. He feels "great indignation" and "great alarm and distrust" before he has really made sense of the scenario. The "child’s play," he feels certain, was "chosen to conceal a deeper game," but he is as hard put to articulate that game as Harriet had been to decipher "courtship" in Mr. Elton’s charade. And since it is courtship that Knightley is bemusedly witnessing, the parallel between his lack of comprehension and Harriet’s naïvité is intensified. The charade episode is being complexly parodied here—with Emma in the same position of linguistic-wit-concealing-delusion as she had been in that first incident, and Frank playing a significantly more canny—and dangerous--
Mr. Elton. When he spells out "Dixon" (an apt name considering the theme of "double-dealing" in progress), Knightley's "perception" of the word is simultaneous with Jane's, but "her comprehension was certainly more equal to the correct meaning, the superior intelligence, of those five letters so arranged." It is Jane who calls a halt to the word game with, "I did not know that proper names were allowed" (276-7).

Several things come to light in this perversely complex scene. One, as mentioned before, is the contrast in Emma's social transgressiveness and Frank's. Emma is certainly less than perfectly courteous when she lets herself be amused at Frank's spelling of "Dixon," and does not seriously interfere in his showing it to Jane. However, her behavior is otherwise fairly unexceptionable, as it usually is when she entertains at Hartfield. In this particular scene, she seems more than usually preoccupied with hospitality, and it distracts her from the witty subtleties she usually doesn't miss (e.g., Mr. Weston's "hint" about her being a "great dreamer" like Frank, which escapes her because she "had hurried on before her guests to prepare her father for their appearance" (274)). Her curiosity is strangely unaroused by Frank's unexplained knowledge of Mr. Perry's carriage plans. And when Mr. Knightley confronts her with his observations of "certain expressive looks, [not] meant to be public" between Frank and Jane, Emma denies their significance with a "confidence which staggered," and a "satisfaction which silenced" him (278).

Emma seems to be exhibiting here (excepting the "Dixon" discourtesy) a proper "blindness" to any indiscretions that might have been taking place.
Knightley, in fact, refers to her as "blinded" (276). He himself, though perceptually flooded, is strapped for conclusions, because the images remain images—unprocessed and unexplained: "his thoughts [were] full of what he had seen." The irony of candles arriving to "assist his observations" emphasizes how "seeing" better is beside the point (277), as well as suggesting that this specifically romantic type of illumination will hardly help Knightley rectify those romantic distortions in perception he is struggling with. What complicates things is the fact that Knightley has been invaded by a delusion; he is not merely a spectator of deluded others. He assumes that Emma's "affection [is] engaged" by Frank Churchill, and this presumption prevents him from pushing his interrogation of Emma. "Interference—fruitless interference," he terms what such a gesture might be (278). As Jane stopped the word game because the prohibition against proper names had been violated, Knightley stops short of violating the propriety of a dalliance he can only infer is in progress, and with regret, grants Emma the privacy of her heart.

It has been said that "imagination" runs the range in *Emma* from "passive spectating to active meddling" (Harris 169-70). "Meddling" is most often linked with Emma's intrusions into the affairs of others. But we can see from the word game episode, that "passive spectating" also has its drawbacks. In this scene, imagination needs empowerment. "Meddling" is occasionally called for; but from this point on in the novel, it is called "interference." When Knightley invokes it as an undesirable activity in the word-game postlude, it should have special resonance for the reader: Emma has used it just a few scenes earlier, when Frank rescued
Harriet from her escapade with the gipsies. Cautious after her earlier errors with Harriet, Emma hesitated in articulating the promise she saw in Frank's act of chivalry. She decided not to "stir a step nor drop a hint. No she had had enough of interference" (266). Later, when Harriet is sentimentalizing about Mr. Knightley's gallantry, Emma--thinking her subject to be Frank, and pleased with the thought--nevertheless alerts her: "I am determined against all interference. . . . Let no name ever pass our lips" (271). This self-censorship, this refusal to "interfere," though a perfectly logical consequence of the Elton catastrophe, will result in a near catastrophe soon. Emma declares, "There could be no harm in a . . . merely passive scheme" (266), but there will be. Imagination needs a ground between "passive spectating" and "active meddling." Imagination-driven interference is crucial to the last stages of Emma.

In the novel's first phase, the improprieties of faulty authorship are reviewed, principally through the incidents of Emma's manipulation of Harriet, followed by her speculations about Jane. The tenuous identities of these women both resist the heroine's delineation through imaginism, which results in the emergence of "selves" in the narrative who challenge its representational modes. Not the least of these selves is Emma's, whose emergence--as we've said before--is the novel's central disclosure. Its peak moment is traditionally associated with the crisis at Box Hill. This is the novel's logistic, climactic, and emotional summit. At midsummer, on one of the hottest days of the year, under a bright sun at Highbury's most elevated site, it is the novel's specular center. Emma's emotions are at a peak of giddiness.
She and Frank Churchill are trying to divert the company with, again, a game. This time though the game is free-form, entirely determined by Emma’s whim, communicated by Frank to the group, for "‘something very entertaining’" from each of them (294).

Neither Mrs. Weston nor Mr. Woodhouse is present at Box Hill, and Emma’s atypical bluntness to Miss Bates may have something to do with their absence, for they generally have a tempering effect on her wit. The physical exposure of the scene (on a summit in full sunlight) gains emotional significance for Emma by her parent’s and pseudo-parent’s absences. She occupies a site of ambiguous power and vulnerability: her perceptual vista is at its symbolic greatest, but she is also undefended from observation. Perhaps a consciousness of this motivates her desire to hear amusing instead of honest thoughts (she has declined to know "‘exactly what . . . [they] may all be thinking of’" (294)). Thus she engages the group to participate in her imposed blindness on herself. However, Emma is the very one to violate her own guideline with her unnecessary honesty to Miss Bates, with the consequence that Mr. Knightley eventually lets her know, despite the rules of the game, "exactly what he is thinking."

It is tempting to consider Knightley as the "voice of Emma’s conscience" in this scene (Litz 141). But he is more like the voice of her unconscious; and his reminder of her slip is, for her, the return of the repressed. Emma must concentrate to recollect the moment, after which she blushes, feels sorry and tries to make a joke of it, a sequence suggesting the moment has really been suppressed, and once
retrieved, demands ready rationalization: "how could I help saying what I did?"
Emma protests, "Nobody could have helped it" (297). Once this process is
accurately tracked, the scene emerges even more powerfully as a transitional one in
the novel itself. Emma is performing a new negotiation of the public and private
dimensions of her freshly emergent self, and Austen is juxtaposing the social mores
of the eighteenth-century novel with the nineteenth-century psychological realism
that was the province of Romantic poetry of the time, though not yet of the novel.

It is a poet (Cowper) who Knightley cites during his baffled observation of
the word game at Hartfield, and his function as the agent of Emma’s revelation in
this scene is, surprisingly, not as the rational moralizer most critics consider him,
but as the spokesperson of empathic sensitivity. When Emma rationalizes that Miss
Bates "did not understand" her, Knightley responds "she felt your full meaning."
Later, Emma will admit "The truth of his representation," because she "felt it at her
heart" (297-9). For Hartfield’s mistress, this is the acid test, and she passes it. Box
Hill is Emma’s rite of passage in empathically reading the hearts of others, which
entails reading the heart she has hitherto misinterpreted in herself. Taking for
granted her property of Hartfield, Emma yet has no experience of her proper heart;
as a woman of means with no intention of marrying, she has never seriously had to
consult her heart. That this luxury does not belong to everyone is the gist of
Knightley’s reprimand to Emma: "Were she [Miss Bates] a woman of fortune, I
would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance; I would not quarrel with
you for any liberties of manner." But Miss Bates’ poverty, the fact that "she has
sunk from the comforts she was born to, and if she live to old age, must probably sink more," should, Knightley tells Emma, "secure your compassion." Knightley further alludes to Miss Bates' previous capacity to command Emma's respect: "'You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour'" (298). This framing of Miss Bates as an almost "maternal" figure reminds us that Emma's early propertied condition as mistress of Hartfield—the predicament that influenced her faulty reading of hearts—was a consequence of her mother's death, regretted before by Knightley: "'[Emma] inherits her mother's talents, and must have been under subjection to her'" (31).

Given this subtext, Emma's revelatory tears (termed "extraordinary" for her, in the narrative (299)) suggest an even fuller emotional experience than regret at hurting Miss Bates. The self-examination it induces in Emma begins with a justification of her slip by attempting to make Knightley acknowledge the social riddle Miss Bates represents: "'You must allow that what is good and what is ridiculous are most unfortunately blended in her'" (298).²⁰ It is the alibi of a puzzled gamester who mistook her opponent and the sting of her own wit. In her later meditations, Emma confesses to herself that Knightley had rendered Miss Bates' ordeal accurately. As Harriet's inadequate portraitist, and the confused reader of Jane's history, Emma is unlikely to gloss the achievement of a "true" representation, one that surpasses specular fidelity, and can actually be "felt" at the heart.
But what has Knightley’s representation consisted of? What is the "authority" Emma recognizes in his gesture, and how does it compare to the mimetic products of the portrait (the Harriet effort) and the personal "history" (Jane’s narrative)? Knightley admits outright that Emma’s apprehension of "blended" traits in Miss Bates is just. There is no indication that he has "read" Miss Bates more astutely than she has. But he insists upon an ethos founded not upon such "readings," but upon a less superficial assessment. He has not bothered to tease apart the "ridiculous" and the "good" in Miss Bates because these traces are displaced for him by the grosser pattern of "lack" that Miss Bates represents. Her "situation" of negligible significance should "secure" Emma’s compassion; thus, he gives Emma’s compassion a value, providing her with a new property to consider, aside from Hartfield. And he suggests that she might, by extending that compassion, have shared this property with the property-less Miss Bates.

Emma and Miss Bates are placed in an interesting metaphorical gestalt by Joel Weinsheimer, who says they "differ as the positive and negative of a photographic image" (206). While Emma is introduced as "handsome, clever, and rich," Miss Bates is first described as "neither young, handsome, rich, nor married" (18). Weinsheimer’s use of the rhetoric of photography to describe Austen’s representation of this relationship is high praise of the "truth of representation" she manages in this episode. But even a photographic metaphor understates what is accomplished evocatively in this scene. In apprehending Knightley’s meaning, Emma virtually mimes the steps Miss Bates moved through in responding to her
original insult. The narrative has informed us that Miss Bates did "not immediately catch [Emma's] ... meaning; but when it burst on her, it could not anger, though a slight blush showed that it could pain her"; she then tries to rationalize away the brunt of Emma's remark (294). Emma's response to Knightley parallels the phases of Miss Bates' response: when Knightley re-presents the scene for her, Emma "recollected, blushed, was sorry, but tried to laugh it off." The younger woman mirrors the older with amazing fidelity: it is, as it were, Emma's best representation yet, this miming of Miss Bates, and quite spontaneous (with Knightley as a rather severe muse).

The shift in Emma's self-consciousness at Box Hill is one of both tone and emphasis, and signals the onset of what critics usually designate the voice of Emma's new "conscience"--identified, as indicated above, most frequently with Knightley. Indeed, his name or some remark of his seems to be invoked every time Emma practices her new self-scrutiny. For instance, the evening after Box Hill, when Emma spends several hours at backgammon with Mr. Woodhouse, she muses defensively, "As a daughter, she hoped she was not without a heart. She hoped no one could have said to her, 'How could you be so unfeeling to your father?'" (299) The next morning, during a conciliatory visit to the Bates', she wonders if Knightley "might come in while she were paying her visit. . . . She would not be ashamed of the appearance of penitence so truly and justly hers" (300). Later, when Jane Fairfax has been almost rude in rejecting her gestures of empathy, she consoles
herself with "could [Mr. Knightley] . . . have seen into her heart, he would not on this occasion have found anything to reprove" (311).  

Another shift is impending, one this period of hyper-consciousness of Knightley’s good opinion is merely the introduction to: the second phase of Emma’s, as it were, crisis of "self." What Box Hill effected was a redirection of Emma’s consciousness, but at first she links this redirection strictly with Knightley’s reprimand. The assessment practiced was predicated on his "view" of her, and she carries his gaze at her "heart’s intentions" around with her like a burdensome monitor. The moment when "appropriation" takes place, when Emma no longer deploys this self-examination as if it were an alien organ of consciousness within her, is when she is made privy to Harriet’s deluded infatuation with Knightley. Since he is the object of speculation in this interlude, Emma’s access to Knightley’s subjectivity as her internal monitor is made suddenly awkward.

Even more awkward for Emma is how Harriet’s recounting of her role in persuading her to "hope" about Knightley parodies the reliance Emma has been exercising on Knightley’s moral authority in the interval since Box Hill; "‘You . . . who can see into everybody’s heart,’" Harriet flatters Emma’s insight, forcing her to take responsibility for her words (321). Emma counters by bringing, finally, into their conversation, what she had banned from it before: the proper name, "Knightley," as if to convert a game she had played with Harriet to reality by the importation of proper names into the dialogue. But Emma has created a stronger impression than she expected: "‘You know they were your own words, that more
wonderful things had happened" (323). Despite this stress on her words, Emma
does not even get the compensation, as in the Elton episode, of being the author of
the mischief. She can only claim, paradoxically, the culpability of passivity: she
had not interfered to prevent the growth of Harriet's sentiments. Mistaking their
object, suppressing his name in their conversations, she had settled into the position
of complacent spectator, and Harriet had consequently let the "idea of Mr.
Knightley's returning . . . [her] affection" expand (324). Harriet has generated a
"history of her hopes," a "narration" which--though marred by "feebleness" and
"tautology"--has "substance" enough to awaken in Emma's memory "corroborating
circumstances . . . of Mr. Knightley's most improved opinion" of the girl (325).
Thus challenged, Emma attempts to retrieve an analogous history of her own, one in
which she examines for the first time her feelings for Knightley: "How long had
. . . [he] been so dear to her, as every feeling declared him now to be? When had
his influence, such influence, began?" (327). She slowly begins to acknowledge that
the "new" voice of her conscience, seemingly originating with Box Hill, had long
been a feature of her psychological landscape. It is simultaneous self-scrutiny and
scrutiny of Knightley as the "object" of her affection that puts Emma back in charge
of her own heightened speculative processes. Paradoxically, the young woman
Emma had attempted to "authorize" now inspires her author to take action.
Harriet's very logical attempt to slip into place as an "Emma-simulacra" reminds
Emma that "[i]f Harriet, from being humble, were grown vain, it was her doing"
Harriet’s ambitions about Knightley are what spur Emma to lay fuller claim to the territory which his rebukes had brought to life: her own heart.

One indication that this is a project evolved from the affairs of the heart earlier in *Emma* is the sudden banishment of game-playing from the plot, and the increased premium put on that regular feature of the earlier games—the word. As indicated above, Emma is forced to "own" the words that seemingly condoned Harriet’s "thinking" of Mr. Knightley. A bit earlier, when the Jane-Frank scandal is on the verge of being revealed, Mr. Weston leads Emma mysteriously to Randalls, refusing "'as good as . . . [his] word'" to tell her the news himself (313). Emma is alarmed by this collateral of secrecy: "'Your word! Why not your honour!'" (312).

Though a certain caution was exercised with proper names in the early games, "words" were freely and playfully exchanged. After Box Hill, though, when Emma experienced the triple trauma of her name being reified in a conundrum (Mr. Weston’s "M" and "A" = Emma), of having censored with words too witty Miss Bates’ perenially witless flood of words, and of having felt the brunt of Knightley’s words, Emma is understandably word-wary. She reflects on her behavior with Frank toward Jane, and imagines her words as "having stabbed Jane Fairfax’s peace in a thousand instances" (335).

Few are trusted with articulation in this last sequence of the novel. Only Mrs. Weston is allowed to verbalize Jane and Frank’s secret. Jane’s "history," otherwise, is "conveyed" by the "morning’s post" to Knightley (344), and Frank’s alibis come as a text to Emma, in a letter loaned by Mrs. Weston (347-52). Several
critics have seen this as a typically Austenian excess of indirection in hurrying her plots and her heroines toward their happy endings. Others give this "flaw," when it occurs in *Emma*, more credit for being a rather modern fictional move: Neill, for instance, calls "Emma" a "label" for "a marginal, insecure, threatened zone of awareness, in relation to which even the happy ending is ambivalent" (43). But both responses gloss over the larger parody of *Emma*: the intense consciousness and commentary on the project of authorship. The switch from dramatic dialogue ("word") to text as a phobic flight, something we traced in the chapter on *Pride and Prejudice*, is prepared for in *Emma* in a way it is not in the earlier novel. Darcy’s text propelled Elizabeth toward self-discovery; but Knightley does this for Emma with spoken words. It is Frank Churchill who chooses a text for his most critical communication. And it is a sorry text, without nearly the impact Darcy’s had.

Whereas the younger Austen employed the epistolary mode nimbly in *Pride and Prejudice*, in *Emma* the recourse to letters is clearly parodic, to make a generic point as much as to nudge the plot along. Austen enlists the parodied mode in reflecting on the character (Frank) who resorts to it for his confession.

While indulging the phobic flight to text, Austen was implementing the devices she had used to "resolve" her previous fictions, alluding to past strategies as I indicated earlier, in a way that suggests she was dissatisfied with them, not quite certain she could achieve something different--but emboldened to try. Thus, seemingly surrounded with the wreckage of her authorial attempts, Harriet’s disproportionate "self-consequence," and Jane’s impending fragmentation (Mr. Perry
diagnoses "a nervous fever" and "spirits . . . overcome" (309)), Emma experiences a breakdown in her confidence that words will be able to assist either young woman. Jane will not deign to receive her visits (as mentioned above), and Emma, herself, writes a letter to forestall the chance of a tete-a-tete with Harriet (331). Emma is rendered simultaneously culpable for her authorizations, yet blocked from revision. Again, there is a resemblance in her plight to Catherine Morland's, tyrannized by her own fictions in Northanger Abbey. In fact, Emma's fatalistic figuring of her future strangely echoes Northanger's generic scenery: "Hartfield must be comparatively deserted; and she left to cheer her father with the spirits only of ruined happiness" (335). This atypically Gothic moment in Emma's "imaginism" is an example of intratextual allusiveness, Austen touching bases with a past heroine and plot as part of the preparatory inventory Emma's complex resolution will demand.

Part of that resolution is achieved in the proposal scene, which is not quite the narrative letdown most critics seem to consider it. In fact, Austen seems to be testing herself in this particular depiction, appropriate to the tension on "the word" induced by the Box Hill crisis. Indeed, Emma's fear of what Knightley might say ("'Oh then, don't speak it, don't speak it, . . . consider, do not commit yourself'" (340)) almost prevents her from hearing his proposal. One must think of Mr. Elton's charade, with its request for "the word" to be supplied by the lady being addressed, and Emma's eagerness to censor that request. In the scene with Knightley, she reconsiders her caution and permits his words, though they threaten
her. Once she gives permission for speech, though, Knightley chooses to "look the question," and "the expression of his eyes overpower[s] her" (341). This seems like romantic convention, but the Box Hill prelude packs it with more significance: it is the follow-up gaze to that scrutiny of the heart. The "overpowering" reference would be mistakenly read as mere romantic rhetoric, for Knightley's words end up confirming that Emma, unlike the conventional romance heroine, is not conquered, but celebrated for her strength: "'I have blamed you and lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it . . . . I have been a very indifferent lover. But you understand me. Yes, you see, you understand my feelings . . .'" (341-2). This self-description, with Knightley classing himself as "indifferent," evokes the adjective applied to Mr. Weston's riddle at Box Hill ("an indifferent piece of wit"). Though Knightley is presenting himself, like the conundrum, as somewhat difficult to read, he trusts Emma will construe him, "see" and "understand" his "feelings." It is a logical expectation from one who had so recently introduced her to the fact that certain instances of "understanding" can be "felt at her heart."

The most difficult part of this epiphany to justify is the manipulation of Harriet as a lever of Emma's subjectivity ("Harriet was nothing; . . . she was everything herself" (342)). But Emma's euphoria at the discovery that Knightley loves her needs to be considered for its capacity to prompt the triumphant remark. The romantic distortion is brief, however, for Emma's internal monologue is otherwise incredibly pragmatic: "as to any of that heroism of sentiment which might
have prompted her to entreat . . . [Knightley] to transfer his affection from herself to Harriet . . . or even the more simple sublimity of resolving to refuse him . . . without vouchsafing any motive . . . Emma had it not." The conventions of sentiment and romance are thus banished from this "love" scene, and both friendship and love are put into proportion. Emma recognizes that Harriet deserves a degree of loyalty, but it is not the gushing affection she lavished on her in earlier Hartfield days: "there was time also to rejoice that Harriet’s secret had not escaped her, and to resolve that it need not and should not. It was all the service she could now render her poor friend" (342). In keeping Harriet’s secret, Emma acknowledges what is due the young woman whose discrete and separate self she now—-as she did Jane’s—also recognizes. This may explain her reference to Harriet as "nothing"; she now realizes that Harriet has a selfhood that Emma can know "nothing" of—a privacy of self. Emma’s decision to keep Harriet’s secret from Knightley also indicates that she has put romance into perspective. It is in one sense a most unromantic "reserve" between a woman and her future husband. But, as one critic suggested, this makes Knightley rather more appealing, since he is a self-sufficient heroine’s "fantasy," not the rapaciously domineering hero of most romantic fiction.

The resiliency of Emma’s new self-concept is revealed in how she at last becomes capable of admitting likenesses between herself and others, which suggests Austen’s relaxation of the guard on her old "doubling" strategy of heroine-edification. This is especially the case with Jane Fairfax, who receives Emma’s
visits once the secret of the engagement emerges. The young women find "the resemblance of their present situations increasing every other motive of goodwill.

... [T]he consciousness of a similarity of prospect would certainly add to the interest with which . . . [Emma] would attend to anything Jane might communicate" (360). Emma is even able to admit to Frank--her partner in crime--"I think there is a little likeness between us" (381). But these likenesses are asymmetrical, lacking in design, and seemingly gratuitously offered the reader. For Frank and Jane are leaving the scene, heading for Richmond ("rich-world"). Jane, though rescued from the "governess-trade," has taken the path of most women in Highbury: away.

Snatched from Hartfield's immediate circle by a husband, as Isabella and Mrs. Weston were, Jane will leave her home and her "roots." Harriet, curiously enough, the most "rootless" of all the Highbury females, will end up settled most similarly to Emma. The "natural" daughter will put down roots at Abbey Mill Farm, on Knightley's land, for Robert Martin has "thoroughly supplanted" Mr. Knightley in her heart.

But Emma, who is supposed to be settled at Donwell Abbey by Emma's conclusion, is not. Her destiny as "Mrs. Knightley" is not properly, in terms of property, consummated: she is Mrs. Knightley, but still at Miss Woodhouse's Hartfield. The ostensible reason is Mr. Woodhouse's reluctance at removal, and his unwillingness to lose Emma's undivided regard, which makes Knightley's proposition of moving into Hartfield at first unsatisfactory. A spate of fortuitous poultry-pilfering in the neighborhood provides a counter-phobic motive for the
appropriateness of Emma's marriage: "Pilfering was *housebreaking* to Mr. Woodhouse's fears" (385). We have come full circle to his paternal injunction that Emma not "break up" the family circle, and to the evidence that a conundrum continues in play. The prevention of Hartfield's being "broken up" depends on Mr. Knightley's presence there. But once he and Emma are married, the "break up" of the "Wood-house" circle has nominally occurred.

This is the "ambivalent" happy ending that Neill alluded to, though he was more concerned with how *Emma*’s conclusion is "ambiguously poised between" radical and reactionary readings. Since I have selected to look at the novel as a parody of authorship, my attention is toward the generic implications of this ambivalence. Hartfield is the original site of Emma’s authorship, and as the site of her arrival at the novel’s end, it affirms in a way the project of authority she experimented with. But Emma, seemingly self-authored, possesses Knightley and her Hartfield quite tenuously. The "housebreaking" myth must be maintained to secure the rationale of Knightley’s tenancy at Hartfield, yet Emma must retain her latent identification as a Woodhouse to lay her father’s fears about "family circle" breakage. Though Austen had achieved much with *Emma*, there is every indication that she still worried over the stability of her generic innovations, and the viability and originality of its heroine.

In conclusion, we might glance at the conundrum offered by Mr. Weston on Box Hill, just prior to Emma’s crisis. Because of the adjacency of Emma's blunder and the conundrum, it has a traumatic aura unlike the other riddles in the novel.
The shadow of the rift between those letters "M" and "A" ("Em-ma") can still be said to hover over Emma’s name, even after she has done penance for what succeeded it. This inflection, though playful, is enough to weaken the import of a unified subjectivity for the heroine it designates, and the title of her narrative. Mark Loveridge has suggested that this makes Emma’s "title more like most of Jane Austen’s other titles—Persuasion, Sense and Sensibility, and Pride and Prejudice—in being centered on the abstract moral qualities which are to be dramatized and made real in the action of the novel" ("Francis Hutcheson" 216). The evanescent fissure in "Em-ma," and the suggestive acrostic produced by simply suturing Mr. Weston’s "M" and "A"—"MA"—encodes Austen’s authorial anxiety at attempting to create a new kind of heroine instead of playing it safe with eighteenth-century fictional formulas. Her turf in Emma is a fractured heart-field, bespeaking her dissatisfaction with the romance novel as it had been popularized with less and less aesthetic and ethical discrimination. But it also attests to her continued commitment to the genre itself, and the heroines it could, at its best, engender.
CHAPTER FIVE

Her Subject's Voice?

The Case of Anne E.

On the outskirts of every agony
sits some observant fellow who points;
who whispers as he whispered to me . . .
Thus he directed me to that
which is outside our predicament.

Virginia Woolf 1

Elizabeth Bennet struggles with the challenge of specular determination in her efforts at self-authorization. Emma Woodhouse must negotiate her way between social responsibilities and self-definition before earning the imaginative space of Hartfield. Persuasion's heroine faces a different challenge, and gains a very different reward. But she also starts out with a very different power than any Austen heroine. Like Elinor Dashwood, Anne Elliot has a privacy of mind, though not one based on a co-dependent specular vigilance of a sister-double. Anne's privacy of mind is autonomous—a fact that also distinguishes her from Fanny Price, that "silent auditor of the whole" (MP 109), whose subjectivity rested on monitoring time, space, and the histories of those around her. Anne's is not simply a nervous presence among other objectively-drawn presences; the realization of her subjectivity displaces the "realism" of mimesis, thus allowing psychological interiority to challenge the privileges of mimetic "objectivity."

This shift forces us to reassess that consistent focus of Austen's novels since Northanger Abbey: the lively, imaginative heroine whose very imagination threatens
to cause her downfall. Though parodied in *Northanger*, and to a lesser degree in *Emma*, the project of "curing" the imagination as a symptom of licentiousness or "disease" receives as serious a treatment in *Persuasion* as it does in *Mansfield Park* and *Sense and Sensibility*. "'We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us,'" is how Anne Elliot describes the restrictions and hypersensitivities of her specific, gendered circumstances (219). Though she may seem to be describing a peculiarly neurosis-inducing situation, Anne is not simply speaking for herself, but for generic "woman." It is the penultimate articulation of *Persuasion*—overheard by the hero, Frederick Wentworth—but overtly directed to his friend Captain Harville, in defense of the tenacious affections of women as contrasted with those of men. The generality of Anne’s representation of woman’s romantic psyche compels us to glance back at Austen’s previous heroines. Surely we recognize Fanny Price and Elinor Dashwood in this portrait of quiet, confined, oppressed types. But Austen is also implicating her excessively imaginative and witty heroines in this paradigm of women’s loyalty as part of their emotional intensity, and consequent emotional enslavement. Even Emma, with material advantages which might be interpreted as liberating, still finally opted for the confinement of Hartfield. And though we have argued that she enjoys a special authority in that private universe she could not enjoy outside it, many critics diagnose Emma as a "compulsive daydreamer," with "a mind deprived of appropriate activity" (Hillard 287-8). As we established, Hartfield is not a romantic utopia, but a romancer’s *atopia*: an imaginative territory Emma
inherited after several errors, and one kind of "cure" (escapism and containment) for the disease of the female imagination.

The "great and poetic imaginative gifts" of young women were also the provenance of a generic "field" not yet formalized in Austen's era: the case study. Emergent in the century's last decade, and predominantly masculine—at the time, at least—in its authorship, the case study was a genre concerned with the delineation of subjectivity (especially women's subjectivity) in a manner that categorized and "clinicalized" many of those issues also treated in the nineteenth-century novel, including narratives by women writers like Austen. As I have indicated, all of Austen's heroines in some way refract her own identity as a woman of much imagination and compulsive fictionalizings, but without acknowledged authority. These issues of women's imagination, identity and tenuous authority were "scientized" in the case study, with recourse to the rhetoric of empiricism. The empirical subject replaced the specular subject, and the aesthetic shift created an interesting division, especially when the subject in question was a woman. As with the specularly-defined subject of the end of the eighteenth-century, the body was still a crucial signifying field in empiricism; and that signification took on a newly gendered and "medicalized" character, documented in the case study under the label of "hysteria."

The first "case study," though its author did not label it as such when he wrote it, was Josef Breuer's analysis of "Fraulein Anna O." Breuer's text, which greatly influenced Sigmund Freud who was working with him at the time (though he
never 'consulted with this particular patient), is a founding discourse on the subject of the female hysterical from the masculinist empiricist viewpoint, that 19th-century variant on the 18th-century specular representation of woman. Breuer's description of Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim) closely resembles not only the character of Anne Elliot, but also what we know, or what we have conventionally accepted, about Austen herself. Eve Sedgwick clarifies this identity, noting the "chains of reader-relations constructed by the punishing, girl-centered moral pedagogy" of Austen's novels. The general "timidity" and "banality" of Austen criticism, Sedgwick comments, exerts a conservative "vengefulness . . . on the heroines whom it purports to love." These seemingly repressive readings are re-deciphered by Sedgwick as actually "anti-repressive," since they reconstitute "the spectacle of the Girl Being Taught A Lesson": "The sight to be relished here is, as in psychoanalysis, the forcible exaction from her [Austen's] manifest text of what can only be the seeping out at the edges of a political conservatism always presumed and always therefore available for violation." Finally, says Sedgwick, those "truths" we exact "from a reading of Austen . . . can no more be credited [to her] than can, for their lessons, the figures 'Marianne,' 'Emma,' or, shall we say, 'Dora' or 'Anna O.'" (833-34).

The spectacle of the "Girl Being Taught a Lesson," though, is not an obvious manifestation of the case study as genre. In fact, the subject of the case study usually assumes the role of victim rather than transgressor. So it is with Anna O. in Breuer's narrative: her intellectual and imaginative gifts are acknowledged and her
"disease" attributed to the fact that these talents were not adequately cultivated through schooling. Like Anne Elliot, Anna O. lived "at home, quiet, confined," her feelings, consequently, "preyed upon her." It was while caring for her sick father, of whom Breuer noted she was "passionately fond" (22), that Anna O. in fact began to experience hysterical symptoms. The basis for a comparison with the predicament of the Austen heroine, Emma Woodhouse is clear--although Emma did not succumb to hysteria. Her imaginative energy led instead to a series of social and ethical errors, consistent with the generic context Austen had set her in. Nor is Anne Elliot herself a classical hysteric. Rather, the hysteria in *Persuasion* is conveyed otherwise: in Mrs. Smith's useless limbs, for example; or even more dramatically, in the insensible paralysis of Louisa Musgrove after her accident at Lyme. In Louisa’s case, death is virtually mimed (the "miming" of symptoms being integral to hysteria), yet her "limbs had escaped. There was no injury but to the head" (109). Whereas a hysteric's limbs are typically affected, Louisa’s aren’t. But the important attribution of all harm having been to the head makes her condition metaphorically expressive of hysterical etiology.

Though Mary Musgrove might seem to be a candidate for *Persuasion's* clutch of hysterics, her afflictions, like Lady Bertram’s in *Mansfield Park* or Mr. Woodhouse’s, are more in the character of the eighteenth-century hypochondriac’s. The presence of both the hysterical and the hypochondriacal types is one of those elements pointing to the transitional nature of *Persuasion*. The "affliction" of little Charles Musgrove, another temporarily disabled character, is relevant here, because
it reveals the difference between *Emma*, where accidents are generally social, and *Persuasion*, where they are physical. And Emma and Anne function in sharp contrast where these accidents occur: Emma is complicit with the damage which she later tries to remedy; Anne is unambiguously a "nurse," tending the afflicted—whether it be Charles Musgrove in the first physical "fall" of *Persuasion*’s narrative, or Louisa, whose accident brings out the calmly capable "nurse" in Anne again.\(^5\)

This also distinguishes Anne, again, from Fanny Price, who suffered "sick" headaches on the drawing room sofa, and Marianne Dashwood who swooned when she was jilted by Willoughby. Anne’s complaints, and specifically the engagement of language and the body both in the hysterical syndrome are much less of the sentimental mode, and much more Victorian.

Anne’s frailty, paleness, and lack of "bloom" are akin to Fanny Price’s and Jane Fairfax’s, which hearken back to models of feminine beauty of the eighteenth-century, as outlined by masculine "authorities" like Edmund Burke.\(^6\) Austen subverted such historically-prized delicacy in both *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* by associating it with unattractive reserve and detrimental class-limitations. A further subversion occurs in *Persuasion*, when these traits are linked, in Anne’s representation, with the tropes of "nothingness" and "nobody." Because she is judged "nobody with either father or sister; her word had no weight" (12), Anne must acquire the "art" necessary to understand her "own nothingness" (44). Unlike Sir Walter, whose full-length mirrors are scattered throughout Kellynch Hall, or Anne’s sister Elizabeth, cursed with a thwarted sense of self-importance, Anne’s
principal "object was not to be in the way of anybody" (82). As a result, the eighteenth-century ideal of frail beauty is reinterpreted as a nineteenth-century neurasthenic profile. Physically dissociated from herself, an "object," among other "bodies"--Anne lacks even Fanny Price's youth and social insignificance to rationalize her "nobodiness." Though not as well-off as Emma, Anne certainly shares the social standing of an Elizabeth Bennet. But instead of struggling toward a specular identity, Anne seems content to be reified, to be a thing rather than somebody. The severance of "self" and "body" do not seem to be of great concern to her. Or rather, it is a severance to be vigilantly maintained, which I suggest is directly connected with gender and its connections to hysteria.

This is where the physical descriptions of Frederick Wentworth become relevant. As the relative of a curate from Monkford whom Sir Walter recalls as "'quite unconnected,'" Wentworth is early dismissed as "'nobody'" (28). Even the more reliable Lady Russell, Anne's surrogate mother, is pessimistic about Wentworth, who has "no fortune" and "nothing but himself to recommend him." She does, however, notice (pejoratively) his physical "persuasiveness," and condemns him as impetuously vital, "dangerous," "full of life and ardour," and of "sanguine temper" (31). Thus, though both Anne and Wentworth are described as "nobody" and "nothing," Wentworth is not, like Anne, physically "invisible." When Anne first sees him, she muses, "the years which had destroyed her youth and bloom had only given him a more glowing manly, open look, in no respect lessening his personal advantages" (61). In Anne's acknowledgement of Wentworth's
physicality she begins to admit the body into her sphere of consciousness. And this is the first suggestion that Anne may be persuaded to bridge that hysterical dissociation between body and self. To cite the analogous situation in Austen's previous novel, if Hartfield serves as the "liminal" space of imaginative discourse which Emma occupies in her "happy ending," for Anne the gestalt of imagination (mind) and discourse emerges in *Persuasion* through an emphasis on the body as a sanctioned participant in the imaginative process. In fact, the body's immanence is what makes imagination possible, and indeed necessary.

Two incidents featuring Anne and Wentworth dramatize how the body and imagination begin establishing a dialectic. These are unusual moments for Austen, and for her readers, because they are vaguely sexual. The notion of something as alien to Austen as sex "seeping"--to paraphrase Sedgwick--from beneath the corners of the conservative, would be refuted by most critics who prefer to read Austen as devoted to a certain *ethos* of stylistic discretion. Even feminist critic Susan Morgan has praised what she calls the "absence of sex" in Jane Austen's novels as "neither a moral absolutism nor an historical conservatism nor a psychological limitation," but "a political innovation." I will only point out the similarity of pronouncements on Austen's "sexlessness" with the case study of our "comparison" subject, Anna O.: "The element of sexuality was astonishingly undeveloped in her," Breuer wrote, she "had never been in love; and in all the enormous number of hallucinations which occurred during her illness that element of mental life never emerged" (22). The irony of the emergence of just that element of "mental life" in Anna O. at the climax
of her therapy with Breuer could shed light on the emergence in *Persuasion* of an erotic atmosphere between heroine and hero that was new for Austen. The comparison with Anna O.'s case, though, suggests that this alteration has less to do with a stylistic choice than as a consequence of some other change in Austen's narrative process.

The first of the two relevant incidents between Anne and Wentworth in *Persuasion* takes place when Anne is tending her recovering nephew Charles Musgrove, and his younger brother has "fastened himself upon her," not to be "shaken off." That this child is named Walter, like Anne's father, is a detail worth noting considering Wentworth's subsequent action. Wentworth and Charles Hayter are present on the scene, and the latter has fruitlessly reprimanded the boy, but Wentworth wordlessly, "resolutely" steps forward to take the child from Anne's back. Anne is as silent as her rescuer: "Her sensations on the discovery made her perfectly speechless . . . with most disordered feelings." But it hardly matters, for Wentworth acts as if "he meant to avoid having her thanks" (79). The second incident takes place soon afterward, during the lengthy autumnal walk Charles Musgrove, his wife and sisters organize. Admiral Croft and his wife happen to drive up at a fortuitous moment and offer to transport any of the tired women to Uppercross. Though Mary has been peevish, she will not consent to be driven because the Crofts' failure to privilege her in the invitation offends her, and "the Elliot pride could not endure to make a third in a one horse chaise" (88). But Anne, who is *nobody*, is slight enough to fit in the space on the seat, and has no pride to
make her refuse. Mrs. Croft singles her out, prompted by Wentworth, who "quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage." This takes place, as Walter's unfastening had, in a strangely intimate way. Anne, sitting in the carriage, "felt that he [Wentworth] had placed her there, that his will and his hands had done it" (89). The moment of contact is eclipsed as it occurs, then recollected by Anne with emphasis on the decisiveness of the physical gesture, and her surprise at her sensations.

The gap between the doing and the feeling are symptoms of the dissociation that still exists for Anne between the body and the self. This dissociation determines a narrative style somewhat distinctive to *Persuasion*: an inflected representation in an emotionally intricate prose that many critics have frequently called "modern." It is impressionistic, fragmented, but most importantly—as in the narrative moments discussed above—it eclipses certain key dramatic intervals to indicate the narrator's emotional reception, and possible repression. There is, for instance, Anne's first meeting with Wentworth, in the Musgroves' drawing room, in a small flurry of company before Charles Musgrove and Wentworth leave to go hunting. The recounting of the episode is in a highly subjective rather than mimetic register: when Wentworth enters the room, "a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over. And it was soon over. . . a few minutes ended it." Any actual record of social interchange is reduced to less than a sentence: "Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's; a bow, a curtsey passed; she
heard his voice—he talked to Mary, said all that was right; said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing" (60).

This modern, subjective narrative style, which contrasts with the detailed accounts of conversation in the average Austenian drawing room scene, suggests a "containment" that is characteristic of Anne's discursive defenses in *Persuasion*. And it is both containment and control, a power Anne speaks for when she alludes to "our nothingness beyond our own circle" (44). This seemingly pessimistic judgment actually indicates the "somethingness" one must seize as her own. In Anne's case, the "circle" in which she is something is significantly contracted. As we showed, she is nobody to even that most intimate circle, her family—she "was only Anne" (12). Thus, her circle is her self, but to the paradoxical exclusion of her body. And Anne, early in the novel, seems to be satisfied with such limits, and other socially correlative containments: for instance, that "every little social commonwealth should dictate its own matters of discourse" (44). But such containment (evocative of Emma's ending actually) is subverted in *Persuasion*, where, as Tony Tanner suggests, "people within the same language can very often not really hear each other because they are operating within different discourses"; when someone "is in the grip of a discourse, then we say that the discourse speaks them . . . they are really—being spoken" (193). In *Persuasion*, Austen explores the self-authorizing efforts of the marginalized woman watcher, and the pernicious consequences of complacency about the stability of discursive definition, especially when confronted by physical contingencies: not social accidents, as in *Emma*, but
accidents that involve the body and directly impinge upon discursive strategies of
self-maintenance.

Louisa is a prime example. She stands for a while at the center of a
romantic narrative, as the transient object of Wentworth’s affections, until her fall
from the Cobb at Lyme challenges her centralization by muting her discursive
involvement in the narrative. Now she is more "lying" than standing at the novel’s
romantic center--its action still revolving around her though she is an immobile,
virtually "dead" center. Even Wentworth continues for a time trapped in this orbit.
The mute and motionless feminine presence of Louisa reinvokes Austen’s *mise en
abyme*, typified by the two Elizas in *Sense and Sensibility*, but also present, as I
have shown, in other of the novels. The active Louisa is an updated version of the
eighteenth-century romantic heroine, imperilled by plot. When her accident first
renders her corpse-like, and later, vaguely conscious, she is both the reincarnation
of that Burkeian notion of eighteenth-century beauty--delicate, hypersensitive and
ethereal--*and* the nineteenth-century Romantic heroine, precursor to the immobilized
Victorian hysteric. Small wonder that Captain Benwick sees her as the perfect
replacement for his dead fiancée. As Benwick nurses Louisa, she is a captive
audience to his Romantic recitations. These readings interpolate the consciousness
she recovers--one not the same as hers preceding the fall. Her new subjectivity
mirrors Benwick’s. Captain Harville’s description of her as a "young dab chick,"
afraid of water (206), is an example of the convenient change in Louisa, suiting her
perfectly for Benwick, whose previous sweetheart was taken by the sea. And since
Anne herself will be persuaded to risk the sea at novel's end, Louisa's newborn fear resonates even more significantly.

Louisa, as a perpetual hysteric, is also distinguished from Anna O., who, though not completely "cured" at Breuer's hands, was partially helped by a process she coined herself, the "talking cure." In this she also resembles Anne, who will eventually be cured by talking. But Louisa is condemned to "listening." Nor is she alone in this among Austen's heroines: from Catherine Morland to Emma Woodhouse, each one was "cured" by being "talked to," usually by the hero. Anne is unique not only in being "cured" into talking, but in having that talk cure the hero as well. What makes Anne's "talking cure" even more striking is that she speaks from a subject position which includes Louisa's experience. The key scene, cited earlier, is when Anne speaks to Captain Harville--Benwick's advocate--in defense of the generic "immobilized woman." In the process, they refer to the types of "fiction" Benwick has been drenching Louisa in. (In Anne's early acquaintance with Benwick, it will be remembered, she had tried to modify his addiction to the lyrical discourse of Romanticism by recommending alternative texts to him.) At the same moment Anne is addressing Harville, their auditor, Wentworth is writing to Benwick, but soon shifts his addresses to Anne. Anne's subject is the crippling of women in the discursive exchange. The issues here are fundamental for Austen. How much control do women speaking actually have over the inscription of their bodies? And how effectively can a woman's own articulated subjectivity resist the inscription of female subjectivity within masculinist discourse?
Nor are the answers to such questions self-evident. The famous assertion that men have monopolized the description of women in literature--"'the pen has been in your hands'"--may seem like Anne (or Austen) is advocating a simple transfer of that pen to a female hand. But this point is already moot. Though not for as long a time, many women--including Austen--were currently holding and wielding the pen. Of far greater interest is Anne's suggestion that women are fully aware of, and have their own time-honored strategies for avoiding male definition. The results of such strategies appear in high relief within Breuer's account of Anna O.'s "treatment," which can serve as a schema for exploring these feminine-masculine dynamics. Though obviously a masculine text, Breuer's case history frequently blurs gender roles in intriguing ways. For example, Breuer marks his progress in analysis with tropes that cast him in the role of a nurturing, even maternal, parent rather than as the patriarchal physician who compels the child/patient to speak, or perform other "healthy" behaviors. A telling instance of this is his observation that though Anna had initially "refused nourishment altogether," she soon "allowed me to feed her" (26). Even more striking for my purposes, however, is Breuer's own conviction that Anna's recovery depended on her ability to speak, consistent with her coinage of the "talking cure."

Breuer framed this causality in his own terms, recording how Anna O.'s hallucinatory accumulations, when transformed into "stories" or "narratives" which "she gave utterance to . . . in her hypnosis," caused her symptoms of hysteria to subside for a while (29). For this reason, Breuer scheduled his visits "in the
evening . . . when I know I should find her in her hypnosis." (Note that Breuer did not induce Anna's hypnotic states: another sign of his relative "passivity" in the situation.) What occurred during those visits is most significant of all. By listening to Anna, Breuer noted, he "relieved her of the whole stock of imaginative products which she had accumulated since my last visit." The sexual suggestiveness here, and Breuer's own strangely "feminine" position, are reinforced by Anna O.'s remarks on this "unburdening." Breuer claims that the talking rendered her "calm, . . . agreeable, easy to manage, industrious, and even cheerful"; Anna O. herself at times resisted her listener, reporting that "after she had given utterance to her hallucinations she would lose all her obstinacy and what she described as her 'energy'" (30). Though Breuer tended to see this stubbornness as arising from a characteristic neurotic clinging to delusions, Anna O. describes a hoarding impulse: a refusal to be "relieved" of her "imaginative products" and "energy." Within this framing metaphor, post-talk quiescence becomes post-ejaculatory flaccidity. Breuer saw himself as "relieving" Anna by figuratively removing a load of contaminating imaginings from her, but Anna viewed it in one way as a domestication of her mental fertility and a taming of her imaginative energies. In Anne Elliot's case, when Frederick Wentworth "relieves" her of physical burdens--when he removes little Walter from her back or assists her into the Crofts' carriage--his unburdening is taken as oddly reassuring evidence that "he could not see her suffer, without the desire of giving her relief. It was a remainder of former sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship" (89). The last sentence
points to the difference between Anna O.'s and Anne E.'s cases. Anna O. sensed a masculine agenda behind the "disinterestedness" of the clinical exchange. For all the relief it gave her, Breuer's collection of her "narrations" left her less than she had been. In less serious terms, Anna O. also referred to her "talking cure" as "chimney sweeping" (30), as if it were a domestic ritual which left her clean but empty. Furthermore, although possible misperceptions must be allotted for, Anna O. also sensed that Breuer's relieving of her was not completely selfless. Though Anna may have shaped and named her own "cure," the patent was automatically Breuer's--since his authority dominated the context of their exchange--and it was his success when she "talked."

In *Persuasion*, Austen rules out such possible interpretations long before the "talking" takes place. When for example Wentworth helps Anne, in the two scenes already mentioned, his supposed interest in Louisa assures Anne that any "desire" he has for *her* is "pure," the impulse of a friend to relieve her "suffering." This more "friendly," less romantic dynamic between Anne and Wentworth has been credited in making their "second time around" work: their "second engagement" superior to their "accidental" first meeting. "The second engagement represents an ethical understanding of the communal nature of the self and the role of passion and discourse in communal life" (Kastely 86). Anne's oft-remarked movement from "prudence" to "romance" may therefore be only one side of a necessarily two-sided coin. Wentworth begins the novel as an enemy of "prudence," since it broke up his first engagement with Anne. Yet Anne approvingly notes Wentworth's discursive
prudence at their first few meetings: he neither wastes words nor demands them from her, and because he is so physically self-sufficient, and she is so "bloomless," Anne sees in Wentworth's physical gestures no desire beyond a generous one.

These actions are also "prudent" in the sense that they allow Anne to trust and respect Wentworth for wanting nothing of her, and thus letting her be "nothing" should she wish to be. The "wishing," itself--even "to be nothing," however stems from Anne's own emerging sense of "romance"--that bodily desire and imaginative pleasure which Breuer identifies, and in Anna O.'s occasional opinion, seeks to extract. By presenting Anna O.'s "talking cure" as an example of the negative constructions often placed upon woman's "narrative pleasure," Tania Modleski reassesses Anna O.'s "narratives" as samples not only of the "healthy" narratives of imaginative women, but also as akin to that dynamic "pleasure" which arises when body and discourse move closer together--another reason why Anna O. might have found her "talking cure" physically demanding. At least at first, both Persuasion's author and its heroine display a kind of retentiveness or taciturnity which seems to emerge from a dissatisfaction with earlier narrative pleasures or even an exhaustion with all imaginative effort. Overtaxed without recompense in a way that made them overly prudent, Austen and Anne in Persuasion are looking for a new way to "talk." In this sense a hysterical text like Anna O.'s, Persuasion both censors and protests the censorship of bodies in need of encouragement. As a successful romance narrative, however, Persuasion achieves this discourse to compensate the censored body, which Anna O. as far as we can tell never fully articulated.
Both this compensatory discourse and the censored body are "feminine," and find their primary model in Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith and her informant Nurse Rooke are characters who might, themselves, have been censored in earlier Austen novels, and their favored form of discourse, "gossip," would surely seem indecorous to some of her most admirable heroines. Claudia Johnson lists Mrs. Smith as one of those characters unusual according to "the standards set by Austen's fiction," and certainly by conservative fiction in general, which would find Mrs. Smith far too "original" to be the "model" she is in *Persuasion* (162). And yet it is by watching the dyad of Mrs. Smith and Nurse Rooke, and modelling such conversation, that Anne once more learns the pleasures of discourse. "'Call it gossip if you will,'" Mrs. Smith remarks to Anne about her discussions with Nurse Rooke, "'she is sure to have something to relate that is entertaining and profitable . . . her conversation I assure you is a treat" (147). As someone who has not truly been listened to since her mother's death (48), Anne finds a second "mother" in this slightly older girlhood friend (144) who improves upon Lady Russell's suitability for the role by sharing Anne's metaphorical "nobodiness." This "nobodiness" excuses in part the gossip usually deplored in Austen's novels. As an alternative to privileged discourse, and a discourse indulged in by an admirable character (Anne), gossip takes on qualities which undercut its previously pejorative connotation.

James Forrester's study of gossip's role in modes of discourse where we least expect it--psychoanalysis for instance--helps to explain how Mrs. Smith's and Anne's gossip has some of the nuances commonly associated with the "talking
cure." Forrester notes how gossip leads to "epistemic and moral" impasses, both of which would have serious implications in the worlds of the ethically-challenged, empirical subject of Austen's earlier novels. As a "transgression of the rules of discourse" (244), gossip shares with psychoanalysis the "fiction of the real, alongside the . . . absence of the real"; in other words, gossip and analysis involve stories about "real" individuals told in their absence, and by the grace of the listener's assumption of their reality. Though censored on the "official level," gossip is thus an integral part of psychoanalytic discourse, because it "replaces the family structure, the structure of blood and lineage, which is the norm assumed by psychoanalysis" (258). Since Anne lacks a family that grants her any significance, Forrester's comments already relate tellingly to *Persuasion*. His review of the etymology of "gossip" clarifies this relevance. Originally "'God-sib'--siblings in the sight of God," a "gossip" could be a "godparent" who "oversees the future moral development of a newborn babe." The third, more familiar meaning, "light-hearted and idle talk . . . (by implication, of women gathered at a lying-in)," is expanded by Forrester's explanation that in the seventeenth-century a gossip's function was to bear witness in church that the baby being christened with a name was in fact the one born at a given lying-in. Thus, Forrester concludes, "the gossip mediated between the all-female mystery of birth and the patrilineal world of the church" (259).

Forrester contends that gossip's feminine connotation had a profound influence on the eventual direction taken by psychoanalysis. In the famous "Dora"
case, Freud refused," Forrester reports, "to take up the position of woman in his sessions with the young hysterical girl, precisely because it would have meant that his precious psychoanalysis might turn out to be just a version of gossip, women chattering among themselves" (245). The links between midwifery and gossip also lead to an understanding of psychoanalysis as a discursive midwifery. As we've already seen in the earliest "case study," Breuer describes himself as Anna O.'s narrative recipient. The alternative to the gender-reversal sexual metaphor we mentioned in this connection is one that recognizes Breuer's role as a kind of masculine midwife.

In *Persuasion*, Anne's entry into the circuit of Mrs. Smith's and Nurse Rooke's network of information exchange grants her membership within a covert, feminine discursive community whose modes of disclosure Anne must disobey her aristocratic instincts to accept. What leads Anne to hear as much as she does, and eventually to refrain from hearing more, is her slow development of that quality of mind she most admires in Mrs. Smith: "elasticity." Austen contrasts this "elasticity" to the commonplace "patience" of a "submissive spirit" and the "resolution" prompted by "strong understanding" (146). While many see a similar contrast in Anne's submissive patience versus Louisa's resolute will, the more telling one occurs between Anne and Lady Russell, whose "strong understanding" imposed "submissive patience" upon Anne regarding Wentworth.

Mrs. Smith is Lady Russell's counter-example as a maternal advisor. Her "elasticity of mind" allows her to work her "talking cure" on Anne. Years before,
Lady Russell had urged "rationality" and "reason" upon Anne when considering young Wentworth and his lack of background. To absorb Mrs. Smith’s message, Anne must temper this past "prudence" and not only admit the discourse of "gossip," but several other infractions of decorous communication as well. She does not follow this path easily. When reading Mr. Elliot's letter to the late Mr. Smith, Anne was "obliged to recollect her seeing the letter was a violation of the laws of honour" (192). Nor does Mrs. Smith’s "authentic oral testimony" pass unchallenged: "we must not expect to get real information in such a line. Facts or opinions which are to pass through the hands of so many . . . can hardly have much truth left." Mrs. Smith’s disregards Anne’s desire for unadulterated "facts." Though the information "does not come to me in so direct a line . . . [and] takes a bend or two," Mrs. Smith says, it is "nothing of consequence. The stream is as good as at first; the little rubbish it collects in the turnings, is easily moved away" (193). This mocking attitude toward an unsullied line implicitly ridicules Sir Walter’s beloved purity of lineage; and paradoxically, it is precisely the "little rubbish" which pollutes Mrs. Smith’s gossip--the information about Mr. Elliot--which has already blighted Sir Walter’s family tree, and might have blighted Anne’s own future, if she had not happily set "prudence" aside.

Mrs. Smith’s "elasticity of mind" not only saves her from character fixedness, despite her personal hardships at the hands of Mr. Elliot, but also from imposing her wishes upon Anne. Though lacking Lady Russell’s familial authority to wield, Mrs. Smith does feel a strong friendship for Anne. And yet, Mrs. Smith
refrains from intruding into Anne's activities until quite late in the progress of the misunderstanding about Mr. Elliot. After an evening alone that Anne had promised to spend with her, knowing her friend has been socializing with Mr. Elliot, Mrs. Smith subsequently quizzes her teasingly about the affair. Only when Anne has absolutely denied an alliance does Mrs. Smith reveal her information. Though hardly a model of devotion, Mrs. Smith does go beyond Lady Russell in her trust of Anne's social apprehensions. Her "elasticity" of mind permits Mrs. Smith to grant Anne "elasticity" of movement, and even, temporarily, to allow that Mr. Elliot himself may have shown "elasticity"--changing for the better since she had known him, and consequently coming into a sincere admiration of Anne (194). Finally, though disappointed in "the new-formed hope" of profiting from an alliance with Mr. Elliot, Mrs. Smith also settles for "the comfort of telling the story her own way" (198). Though a small consolation for Mrs. Smith, telling this story is the very thing Anne talks about in her "talking cure" scene. Because Anne knows Mr. Elliot is not for her before she hears Mrs. Smith's revelations, their conversation has little plot-value, except perhaps for the information about Mrs. Clay. Instead, Mrs. Smith's narrative proves to be therapeutic because it not only validates what Anne already knows, but also the mode of discourse Mrs. Smith deployed to collect and deliver her/story.

This validation confers a power on the confined, immobile woman that we must return to the word "gossip" to appreciate fully. Though Forrester stresses the gossip's duty to testify in church, a gossip could also be one of those women who
attended the lying-in as neither mother nor midwife. As the one who presents her relevatory narrative—her "creation" so to speak—Mrs. Smith merges two roles: the "confined" woman, and the speaking gossip. Austen's own ambivalence about women's creative function closely parallels Mrs. Smith's dual nature. The scene of Mrs. Smith's discursive "delivery" seems an ironic paradigm of the woman author's predicament: the bringing to light in cramped quarters (think of Austen's "ivory miniature" trope) of a new narrative, which has in fact really been buried. Mrs. Smith's degenerative illness adds death to childbirth; adding writing forms an unexpectedly fertile triad. Like Anne's untimely bloom, gossip's revisionary "history" defies traditional chronologies, resurrecting what has often been given up as lost to time.

Such an antidote for hopelessness in women's discursive arsenal is exactly what Anne lays claim to during her final discursive risk: the scene of her own "talking cure." During their crucial dialogue, Captain Harville tells Anne, "'I believe in a true analogy between our bodily frames and our mental; and that as our [men's] bodies are the strongest, so are our feelings; capable of bearing most rough usage, and riding out the heaviest weather'" (219). Anne grants man's "robustness," but argues for women's "tenderer" feelings, and even suggests that given the other pressures in men's lives, they would never survive if also equipped with strong feelings. Women's feelings are therefore analogous to the "heaviest weather" men must endure in the world at large; but women's turbulence is an interior one. This confession finds its appropriate listener. As Wentworth
overhears Anne’s "faltering voice" in its description of the "interior turbulence" women endure, he "falters" in his writing task: "his pen had fallen down." This pause is crucial, because it suggests a break on Wentworth’s part from the robust male assurance that Harville continues to praise, and that infuses his own rhetoric. If the issue is women’s constancy, Harville declares, "all histories are against you, all stories, prose and verse. If I had such a memory as Benwick, I could bring you fifty quotations in a moment on my side the argument . . . ." Here Harville invokes those official written histories found in literature and other forms of narrative, even though he himself anticipates Anne’s objection: "perhaps you will say, these were all written by men" (220).

Anne herself lets pass Harville’s appeal to Benwick as an authority on constancy, even though Benwick’s ability to substitute Louisa for his beloved dead fiancée so quickly has surprised Harville himself. She does, however, insist that men "have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands" (221). As already noted though, Wentworth has dropped his pen, and while this could be interpreted as his temporary unmanning, the progress of Anne and Harville’s discussion suggests another meaning for Wentworth’s gesture in terms of masculine and feminine narratives. Wentworth’s masculine inscription has been influenced by Anne’s voice in a manner that changes its narrative course and its intended destination. When he picks up his pen once more, his subject and his audience is Anne. This shift is not a surrender or inversion. Unlike Emma, Anne does not
draw the hero into the sphere of her authority, and thus on some level, seize the pen. Instead, *Persuasion* points toward an intermingling of gender-influenced styles and discourse. Just as Mrs. Smith's "telling her story her own way" makes a certain difference in Anne's life, so too does Anne's own voice disrupt and redirect the textual discourse of a man. Though the writing hand is still masculine, Anne has changed the way it wields the pen. Even more significantly, the form this writing assumes is another kind of "talking cure." "I can hardly write," Wentworth confesses, "I am every instant hearing something which overpowers me. You sink your voice, but I can distinguish the tones... when they would be lost on another" (223). The steady influence of Anne's voice is clearly therapeutic, for it persuades Wentworth to release feelings he has kept hidden from her, if not from himself, even as Anne herself indirectly releases the same information.

*Persuasion's* "talking cure" differs therefore from Breuer's case study because Austen acknowledges the presence of two "patients." Anna O. was never believed: her narratives were fictions to be "talked off." But Anne Elliot's faltering voice irresistably engages Wentworth's credulity, even as she wins her verbal point with Harville. Though she does not seize a pen, her voice claims authority, and what she says repeats, with all the fervor but none of the parody, the claims the narrator makes in *Northanger Abbey*’s "only a novel" passage. Having the heroine rather than the authorial "I" make such claims for a woman's narrative suggests that Austen has integrated her aesthetic insights into her shaping of her heroine's narrative consciousness. Furthermore, though this heroine's discourse is *direct*, her
hero listens indirectly—a state of affairs which not only comments on the 
"indirectness" of masculine audition in general, but also may suggest that Austen's 
famous reticence or "indirect discourse" may be less a conservative fault than a 
conscious strategy. The withholding of final romantic scenes may actually serve as 
an ironic reminder that any story a woman tells is only half-attended to, anyway.22

As an engagement of discourses, *Persuasion*'s achievement is two-fold. In 
terms of the Austen novels preceding it, *Persuasion* offers an appropriate "cure" for 
evasive happy endings in Anne's "outspokenness." But in terms of the heroine, 
"talking" also cures Anne of the fate which self-restraint and reticence had 
apparently condemned her to. As is often the case in Austen, however, the apparent 
narrative course still has a concluding twist or two. When Anne actually reads 
Wentworth's letter, her "cure" seems to go into temporary remission: the letter is 
pronounced, "not soon to be recovered from." This seems to reinstate that familiar 
silence of women through the assertions of a masculine text—an example, perhaps, 
of Gilbert and Gubar's claim that even writing women inevitably found "infection in 
the sentence."23 In Anne's case, however, her response arises from a shock of 
recognition, because Wentworth has faithfully collected and represented the feeling 
that she had articulated. Wentworth's letter is a masculine text which does not 
sanitize and censor woman, but reproduces the spirit of her discourse. Or put 
another way, reading the letter causes Anne to experience what she has felt.

That Wentworth's letter is "not soon to be recovered from" also invokes the 
notion of "recover," as in the paradigm of burial and retrieval mentioned earlier as
an aspect of women's narrative hermeneutics. Once she has experienced her spoken words in Wentworth's text, Anne's distress cannot be re-covered, or buried beneath her old stoicism. Nor can she disguise it from the others in the room: "Would they only have gone away," she thinks of those still lingering in that crucial room at the White Hart Inn,24 "it would have been her cure . . . ." Anne tries but fails to reassemble her protective "circle of self": "The absolute necessity of seeming like herself produced then an immediate struggle; but after a while she could do no more." Nor does Anne's discovery that Wentworth loves her after all pacify her: "Every moment rather brought fresh agitation. It was an overpowering happiness" (224). Here those "turbulent" feelings Anne had described as women's special, intense, interior phenomena, are recognized by Anne as having an external correlative that, though embarassing to her at the moment, is one of the novel's "miracles": her unseasonal "bloom." Unlike Anna O.'s case, Anne Elliot's talking cure is effective because her "talk" is not dismissed as the detritus of disease, not subsumed as "story" to "history," but accepted and faithfully recorded as of value. And its final results are both psychologically and physically fruitful.

Nor does Anne's "talking cure," as Breuer might have expected from Anna O.'s, immunize the subject from anxiety. Because of "the dread of a future war," Anne immediately begins paying the tax of a "quick alarm" that comes with marrying a sailor (237). If, as Nina Auerbach has remarked, Austen writes perenially of "a world of waiting women,"25 then the historical moment has charged the waiting with an added fear. *Persuasion*’s general effect, however, suggests that
the historical moment is not what we should be paying most attention to. In fact, I would further suggest that "waiting" may not be the "activity" we should focus on in Austen's other heroines and narratives. By concluding that the navy itself should be more highly praised for its "domestic virtues" and its "national importance" (237), Austen suggests that "dread" and "quick alarms" are hardly the exclusive province of "confined" and inactive women.

Finally, Anne E.'s "talking" should cure us of any delusion that a woman's narrative must necessarily be an incurable hysterical space. In Austen's last completed struggle with the challenge of women and authorship, she confronted both envy of the pen, and the body's fertile destructability. She concludes her recognized written oeuvre riskily persuaded that "voice," though commonly buried under the condemnation heaped on the body, can have a discursive role of its own.

Conversely, by daring to affirm voice, she gave the body its due in the dialogue every text reproduces. Through this recovery of the body, Austen posits a possible discursive locus for women outside the confined environments of her heroines: the Gothic corridor, the drawing room, the attic bedquarters, the privileged daughter's Hartfield parlor, or the White Hart Inn. And for other writing women, Austen set the example for slyly risking a field of exploration dangerously beyond what, a century later, was deemed the minimal requirement for any woman author (but which Jane Austen herself never actually enjoyed): a "room of one's own."
Introduction

1 Most of Austen's comments about writing are included in her later correspondence to her two favorite nieces, Fanny and Anna, and to her nephew, Edward. In these letters, most strikingly in those to Anna who was an aspiring novelist, she advises a circumscribed and cautious approach to setting up one's fictional communities: "3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on" (9 September, 1814) Selected Letters, 1786-1817 (170). Her letter to nephew Edward, also trying his hand at fiction, contains the "the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work" line (16 December, 1816), so often-cited and yet, when considered with Austen's remarks in the same letter praising Edward's "strong, manly, spirited Sketches, full of Variety and Glow" make us wonder about Austen's tone in her self-deprecation (188-9). The same can be said for her letter of demurral to James Stanier Clarke, the Prince Regent's Librarian (11 December, 1815), who recommended she write a novel about a learned clergyman, not unlike himself: "The comic part of the character I might be equal to, but not the good, the enthusiastic, the literary" (185).

2 My use of the term "specular" invokes both the classical Aristotelian and Neoclassical paradigms of imitative mimesis, the latter of which draws upon the figure of art as a "mirror" held up to nature. That this trope remains latent in modern aesthetics and notions of subjective representation has been demonstrated by
feminist critics like Patricia Waugh, who traces the Freudian and Lacanian notions of self and their "privileging of the visible" (39). The complications of women employing this aesthetic were as relevant in Austen's day as in our own. Waugh has commented on the double-edged seduction of the imitative, "mirroring" text: "Mirrors offer an illusory image of wholeness and completeness, the promise of security of possession . . . enticing us with their spurious identifications."
However, "here the woman recognizes her cultural identification as an image and experiences herself as nothing" (12).

3 The most famous modernist yet feminist statement on Austen's "originality" and consequent depersonalized "anonymity" is Virginia Woolf's, which valorizes these qualities. It is ambivalently received by contemporary feminists (myself included) since it equates Austen's achievement with the faceless, genderless (or androgynous, rather) "incandescence" of a Shakespeare, writing without consciousness of sex. A Room (77-80).

4 Both of these novels were epistolary in their original form. Pride and Prejudice, first titled "First Impressions," was sent to the publisher, Cadell, by Reverend Austen, who compared the work to Fanny Burney's Evelina; but "FI" was, nevertheless, instantly rejected (see Chapter Two, note 4). "Elinor and Marianne," the first incarnation of Sense and Sensibility was less of a family favorite. According to Austen's sister, Cassandra's, notes about her sister's compositional history--compiled after Austen's death--"Elinor and Marianne" was indeed the earlier work, c. 1795, followed by "First Impressions," c. 1796-97. Of
the two novels, *Sense and Sensibility* was more "organically" epistolary, since even in revision (started very early, in November 1797) it remained epistolary up to a certain point. *Pride and Prejudice*, in revised form, was never epistolary. Litz, "Chronology of Composition" (47-51).

5 Recently a controversial term in feminist criticism, "interiority" as a narrative construct more tyrannical than enabling to the fictional representation of women, is discussed by Nancy Armstrong, who connects it with the rise of bourgeois ideology. Armstrong credits Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* with the first major narrative representations of women's "interiority." She notes how Mr. B___ in *Pamela* shifts his attention from her body to her writing, "changing the very nature of the [masculine] gaze from voyeurism to supervision . . . from semi-scandalous tale-telling to demonstrations of exemplary behavior." *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (277-78n).

6 "History" as an alternative term for the novel had its most traditional British examples in masculine writers like Defoe and Fielding. "History" coded a kind of narrative tracing the frequently picaresque, but eventually morally-edifying adventures that marked a hero's rite of passage. This was akin to the *Bildungsroman* genre, which did not usually take a woman as its subject because her life was not typically eventful enough, or her moral character so complexly challenged to require an extended narrative. As Jane McDonnell has noted, most eighteenth-century novels were focused on woman as erotic subject. McDonnell cites Nancy K. Miller on such "feminocentric" texts, in which "there was little room
Chapter One

1 This term, obviously useful for the critique of the specularly-determined subject, is from the text of *Northanger*, specifically that scene when Catherine Morland first enters the Tilneys' magnificent dining room at the Abbey: "a noble room, suitable in its dimensions to a much larger drawing-room than the one in common use [which had disappointed Catherine during her first moments of arrival], and fitted up in a style of luxury and expense which was almost lost on the unpractised eye of Catherine," observant of "little more than its spaciousness and the number of their attendants" (171).

2 Elaine Showalter, in her discussion of recent American writers and artists in the "Gothic" tradition, includes Sylvia Plath and Diane Arbus as prime examples of "fifties" women who were obsessed with the "good girl/bad girl split," and the connection of that split with self-image and madness--all elements which I will include in my treatment of the Gothic genre as a specific narrative of women's confused subjectivity and anxiety over self-representation. The epigraph is a paraphrased excerpt from Adlai Stevenson's address to the graduating class of Smith College in 1953--Plath's graduating class; Showalter notes its applicability to "the Gothic debunking in *Northanger Abbey*" (136).

3 The composition and publication history of *Northanger Abbey* is itself tangled enough to require a chapter to trace it adequately. Suffice it to say, at this
point, that the first draft, titled "Susan" was written, according to the biographical sources, in 1798-9, revised in 1803, and sold for publication to Crosby & Co. by Austen's brother, Henry. The firm never issued the book, for reasons that puzzled and eventually motivated Austen to write to them about it. But she was not successful in her mission to recover "Susan" until Emma's success provided her with the £10 Crosby & Co. demanded (what it had paid for the manuscript originally). Whether she did much work on "Susan" to transform it into Northanger Abbey is, again, completely speculative. It was not published in its current form until 1818, in a 4-volume text with Persuasion, one year after Austen's death.

Halperin (101-3).

4 The detail about Knightley and Emma will be discussed in the chapter treating that work. John Halperin succinctly offers the critical opinion on Henry Tilney that has been forwarded by most of the canonical Austen critics: "for once, there is more of Jane in her hero than her heroine" (103). Marvin Mudrick, while agreeing with this premise, also points out that it flaws the novel: "The effect of Henry's resemblance to the author is, finally, to make us wonder just how present the author is; or rather, to strengthen our impression that she is present intrusively, in the need to assert her own non-commitment, and at the expense of the personal depth and independence of her characters" (51).

5 The text of NA itself documents Henry as the agent of Catherine's "awakening" at the start of Chapter 25: "Catherine was completely awakened. Henry's address, short as it had been, had more thoroughly opened her eyes to the
extravagance of her late fancies than all their several disappointments had done" (201). Judith Wilt notes that like other revelations that "Austen's heroes force upon the heroines" this is--in its first phase--not "a useful awakening to a more real life but rather to a profound self-loathing, a dislocation, almost a disintegration of personality" (155-56).

6 On the voluntary spies speech (which he calls a "eulogy of the age"), Harding maintains that it "must always have been slightly misread" to not seriously disrupt the average Austen reader's notion of the author; its "touch of paranoia," he adds, is "badly out of tune both with 'Henry's astonishing generosity and nobleness of conduct' and with the accepted idea of Jane Austen" (347-48).

7 The voluntary spy system Henry refers to was a common and controversial aspect of British life in the three decades between 1790 and 1820. To quell the threat of political and economic disaffection found in both the attempts of various working force factions to stage protests, and in "pro-Bonapartist" conspiracies, the British government recruited "spies and informers on a scale unknown in any other period." E.P. Thompson (485).

8 Most critics regard this "silence" as the conversation turns to politics as an authorial acknowledgement of Catherine's inability to discuss the subject, and Henry's consequent politeness in avoiding it. Marilyn Butler, however, has suggested that the silence is one example of Northanger's clever "virtuosity" at avoiding the "clichés" of the anti-Jacobin novel: "Most anti-jacobin novels include characters who profess the new ideology, and are never tired of canvassing it in
conversation. In *Northanger Abbey* there is no overtly partisan talk at all." Rather, Butler suggests, Austen works through "character," creating individuals like Isabella Thorpe, who "by acting on a system of selfishness, . . . threatens human happiness at a very fundamental level." This is the "version of the revolutionary character" associated with the Jacobin creed that Austen critiques not through polemics, but plot (180).

9 The Combination Acts, legislating against the "combination" of groups of workers, were a phenomenon of the late 1790's in Britain: "It was Pitt who, by passing the Combination Acts, unwittingly brought the Jacobin tradition into association with the illegal unions." E.P. Thompson notes, "Moreover, the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 had forced the trade unions into an illegal world in which secrecy and hostility to the authorities were intrinsic to their very existence" (500-3).

10 "The Watsons" exists as an incomplete narrative (approximately 16,000 words), which has been read with interest by several critics as a possible precursor to *Emma*. (The main character is named "Emma," who has an ailing father, but the plot trajectory and tone of "The Watsons" discourages much further comparison.) John Halperin speculates that "The Watsons" was abandoned not only because of Austen's grief at her father's death, but because of an enigmatic romantic disappointment over a clergyman she had fallen in love with at Devon during an earlier (1801) summer visit there, but who had died before Austen was able to reunite with him and solidify any marriage plans. Since Austen stopped writing
"The Watsons" in 1804, it seems more likely that Halperin is more accurate in his speculations that Austen, in addition to mourning her father, was discouraged by the non-appearance of "Susan," which had been sold to Crosby & Co. the previous year (136-7).

Mudrick no doubt drew support for this rather broad statement in the memorable lines from Austen's juvenile piece, "Love and Freindship" (1790), in which she satirizes the sentimental excesses of young women friends, Laura and Sophia: "Beware of swoons Dear Laura. . . . A frenzy fit is not one quarter so pernicious; it is an exercise to the Body and if not too violent, is I dare say conducive to Health in its consequences--Run mad as often as you chuse; but do not faint--." *Minor Works* (102).

Marvin Mudrick has previously been cited on the Henry/Jane Austen resemblance, but his comments on Henry's consequent overuse of irony make the "chameleon" point as well. Mudrick notes that behind Henry's kaleidoscope of behaviors--"his defense of novel-reading, his delight in spinning out a worldly judgment or a circumstantial burlesque"--is "the unrelaxing wariness against a personal involvement." Whenever Henry speaks, he "speaks from the outside, to amuse, to parry, to lead on, to instruct, to humble; never plainly and straightforwardly, . . . to reveal or engage himself" (48-9).

See Introduction, note 4.

The classical critique of the Gothic as a form for women articulating a gender-specific subjective experience is not Sedgwick's but Ellen Moers', in *Literary*
Women, and especially Chapter Five, "Female Gothic." For an interpretation of the Gothic as "pulp" fiction, an alternative to the "romance" in ideological role-determination for contemporary women, see Tania Modleski, whose theories shed interesting light on the Northanger plot: "the [Gothic] heroine has the uncanny sensation that the past is repeating itself through her. Usually she feels a strong identification with a woman from either the remote or the very recent past, a woman who in almost every case has died a mysterious and perhaps violent or gruesome death" (69).

15 Mark Loveridge has said of the last two cited sentences in Catherine's musings, "the process of sublimation is allowed to reach out from Catherine's mind into the writing. After having seemed to place 'Henry Tilney' and 'ancient edifices' in opposition," the "passage has discreetly edited Henry out of itself, drawing a syntactical veil over those parts of him that Catherine might have wanted to explore. At the same time, the word 'desire' ends a highly mannered phrase with a reminder of Catherine's natural impulses." "NA; or, Nature and Probability" (28).

16 How faithfully Catherine "mimes" Henry after his "voluntary spies" reprimand can be seen by comparing the style of Henry's speech to Catherine's later passage of self-mockery and correction, beginning "Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works..."--to be cited later in this chapter. Most typical of Catherine's Henry-mimicry, yet ironically pointing to Catherine's vulnerability in the General's plot is the end of that same passage:
But in the central part of England there was surely some security for the existence even of a wife not beloved, in the laws of the land, and the manners of the age. Murder was not tolerated, servants were not slaves, and neither poison nor sleeping potions to be procured, like rhubarb from every druggist. . . . In England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad. (202)

17 Wilt cites Andrew Hook’s introduction to an edition of Scott’s Waverley (1972) in which he hails Scott as "the rescuer of the novel from traditions squalidly Gothic"--and "female": "... After Scott the novel was no longer in danger of becoming the preserve of the woman writer and the woman reader. Instead it became the appropriate form for writers’ richest and deepest imaginative explorations of human experience." Introduction, Waverley (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972) 10, cit. in Wilt (121n).

18 Mary Poovey refers to the appeal in the Northanger "only a novel" passage as one to a necessary "sisterhood," to oppose the critical "condescension" and "indulgence male reviewers accorded women . . . to keep them in their proper place." Such patronization, Poovey claims, worked "more effectively than even the most hostile criticism would have" (39). In relevance to the Spectator mentioned in the "only a novel passage," Margaret Kirkham accuses its founders, Addison and Steele for publishing "frequent papers in which women as authors or readers were mocked"; but it was hardly a practice confined to these commentators alone (70).

19 The institutionalization of "literary criticism" is discussed by Bradford Mudge as a result of the historical transition from a system of literary patronage to the "interpersonal discourse of coffee-house literati" which spawned the professional critic. With this professionalization, there was a "strategic retreat from popular readers" and "the aggrandizement of high literature . . . recognized by taste" (94).

20 Anne Ehrenpreis explains the import of Mrs. Morland’s recommended essay, "The Mirror" in a note: Published originally by Henry Mackenzie in Edinburgh (Sat. 6 March 1779), the moralistic tale concerns a father’s regret over "the effects on his two daughters of a week’s stay with a great lady. They have learned to keep late hours, ape extreme fashion, spend extravagantly, use French phrases--even to condone card-playing on Sunday and to doubt the immortality of the soul." NA (252n). The pertinence of the essay to Catherine’s ills, at least in Mrs. Morland’s eyes, is clear.

21 On the disappointing and sudden "closures" of Austen’s novels, Richard Handler and Daniel Segal have the most interesting answer to even the most contemporary protests--Mary Poovey’s criticism of their lack of "realism," for instance, which they cite. Handler and Segal suggest that Austen’s seemingly awkward wrap-ups are in fact, intentional: "these endings instantiate a fresh comment on the provisional--indeed, fictional--status of any and all human
judgments, even those of the heroines, and any and all accounts of social realities, even those of the narrators." Relating to that important "I" intrusion that usually marks Austen's attempts to achieve closure, Handler and Segal comment, "The sudden appearance of the narrative voicing as a personified agent with incomplete knowledge (represented by the subject pronoun I) calls attention to the rupture in the fixity and predictability of human events (130-32).
Chapter Two

1 From a letter to Cassandra (4 February 1813), also containing the "light, and bright, and sparkling" comment, comes the following: "... it wants shade; ... to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had; if not, of solemn specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story; an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparte, or anything that would form a contrast, and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and epigrammatism of the general style." *Letters, 1796 - 1817* (134). The comments on "solemn specious nonsense" echo the irony of *Northanger Abbey*'s "only a novel" passage.

2 In a letter to her niece, Fanny Price (23 March 1817), Austen recorded another oft-cited critical opinion on "Novels & Heroines"; responding to a "Mr. Wildman's" comments on those subjects she replied, "He & I should not in the least agree of course, ... pictures of perfection as you know make me sick and wicked--but ... I particularly respect him for wishing to think well of all young Ladies; it shews an amiable & a delicate Mind." *Letters, 1796 - 1817* (198).

3 Reverend Austen attempted to market "First Impressions" to Cadell & Davies, a leading London publisher, but his letter of appeal was "promptly endorsed in a bold hand, declined by Return of Post." Honan (122-23).

4 In a letter to Cassandra, Austen reports receiving "one copy" of "my own darling child"--the newly-published *Pride and Prejudice* (29 January 1813), *Letters,*
1796-1817 (131). She had used a similar metaphor in an earlier letter (25 April 1811) referring to *Sense and Sensibility*: "I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her sucking child" (114). But her subsequent novels are not, as far as the existing correspondence reveals, considered in the same vein. Instead, Austen, begins referring to her heroines specifically, and commenting on their characters. This heightened identification with the heroine rather than the novel as a production may support the important shift, suggested in my Introduction, that occured in Austen's aesthetic focus after *Pride and Prejudice*.

Sedgwick's notorious essay takes its cue from Foucault's analysis of sexual categorizations in the 19th-century, and her discovery of an even earlier "anti-onanist discourse" (1758) which connected autoeroticism with "disorders of attention" or absent-mindedness. "The vision of a certain autoerotic closure, absention, and self-sufficiency in Marianne is radiantly attractive," Sedgwick notes, yet as was "typical until the end of the nineteenth century, Marianne's autoeroticism . . . signifies an excess of sexuality altogether, an excess dangerous to others but chiefly to herself." "The Masturbating Girl" (829-31).

Patricia Waugh cites a particularly appropriate passage from John Berger on this: "A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself . . . Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. . . . The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object--and most particularly an object of vision: a sight." *Ways of Seeing*
Although Berger's comments about the specular predicament of women are quite consistent with my own critique, I would disagree with his bi-gendering of an interior "surveyor" and "surveyed." It perpetuates rather than dismantling the very duality he is remarking upon.

Though Charlotte may seem, post-marriage, to have successfully escaped the specular, the earlier rhetoric about her decision to marry Mr. Collins betrays that specularity influenced her decision to a certain degree. Charlotte had referred to herself as "tolerably composed" as Mr. Collins' fiancée. Marriage "was the only honourable provision for well-educated women of small income," and "must be their pleasantest preservative from want. This preservative she had now obtained at the age of twenty-seven, without ever having been handsome" (110-11). The overall effect is one of a premature still-life for Charlotte; the "rationality" of her decision is disclosed in its specular subtext where *logos* and image are interestingly conflated.

Kirkham sees this discontinuity as symptomatic of revision, of Austen's dissatisfactions with projecting conventional "happy endings" for heroines like Elizabeth, who were no longer emerging as conventional, but rather too "real" for formulaic romantic prospects (92).

Though the territory of Elizabeth's "Northern tour" with the Gardiners does not literally coincide with the parodically-invoked romantic terrain ("Walter Scott" country) of most of Austen's Juvenilia, her approach to the area is significant, especially since Lydia does eventually end up immured in this far northern area.
That Pemberley (where Elizabeth will eventually settle) is not in this region supports my argument that *Pride and Prejudice*'s "romantic" ending is intended to be an alternative "romance" to Scott's variety or the sort parodied in the Juvenilia.

10 I draw here upon the epistemic categories of Michel Foucault, generally introduced in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Vintage (New York: Random House, 1973), 46-50. More relevant to the visual/textual gestalt is *This is Not a Pipe*, in which Foucault describes the Neoclassical period in art as introducing an "affirmative" quality into visual representation. "Discourse" became an element in painting, which--"while constituting itself entirely outside of language"--resided "silently in a discursive space" (32).


12 Here, Derrida updates the Kantian aesthetic, with its emphasis on "disinterest" (also a quality emphasized in Austenian aesthetics), and figures "disinterest" in the visual metaphor of the frame (49).

13 Though it would be outside the bounds of this argument to explore it, the sibling co-dependent pattern suggests that there might be something similar at work among the Bingley siblings which would modify Darcy's culpability in persuading Bingley not to marry Jane, and bring Caroline forward as a possible influence on her brother's decision--aside from her conscious snobbish interference.

14 Susan Morgan has described the "virgin figures in sentimental fiction" as "essentially passive," with "character as fixed and plot as potential violation."
"Many eighteenth-century novels," Morgan notes, "implicitly affirm rape through forcing a choice between death and rape, because rape equals experience, ... which equals life and plot development" (42). Morgan extends this theory about rape in these narratives to marriage, which "is just a less dramatic form ... of terminating a heroine's original identity" (35).

For a capsulization of the Elizas' narrative, see Sense and Sensibility (164-69).

The concept of *mise en abyme* has Derridean connotations of the instability of the signifier, and the consequent free play of language. I would also like to point out the specular character of the phrase, especially when considered with its "antonym," *mise en scène*, which also brings up dramatic ramifications--important to a critique of Pride and Prejudice. The anti-specular project of the novel may seem to be well-served by the *mise en abyme*, and its defiance of the gaze. But it would seem, especially with Susan Morgan's suggestions in mind, that the Elizas and other similarly fated heroines are not being presented as having successfully escaped the gaze, but as disappearing into an abyss, a labyrinth of representation, a literal hall of mirrors, precisely because there was no representational means relieving their specular, masculinist definition.

The situation this sentence summarizes, though of course not precisely descriptive of Jane Austen's circumstances when she was writing Pride and Prejudice, may suggest somewhat the pattern her life had taken since Reverend Austen's retirement, and the move to Bath--both of which have been attributed by
Halperin to Mrs. Austen’s worsening hypochondria, social reticence and desire to be close to her Bath relatives, the Leigh-Perrots. Of course, by the time she was writing this novel, her father had died and was absent, and her mother was still compulsively hypochondriacal, or "incapable of exertion" (124).

18 The labelling of Lydia’s behavior as "gross immorality" is David Monaghan’s, who also notes that Lydia (and most of the other Bennets) had earlier evoked Darcy’s judgment of “impropriety.” (Note, Elizabeth’s specular dialectic with Darcy’s portrait, when she corrects the “impropriety” of his remembered expression.) Monaghan asserts that Lydia’s error "puts an intense strain" on Darcy’s "revised opinion of the middle class." It is only his feeling of culpability about Wickham that prevents Darcy, in Monaghan’s view, from "drawing general social conclusions about Lydia’s behavior" (90-91).

19 Mudrick, like Kirkham, sees Darcy’s letter as a turning point in the novel, but for him it is not a promising one. He criticizes the letter’s Richardsonian stiffness and blames it for a "flattening of tone" that worsens as the narrative spirals down to the convention of Lydia’s elopement (111-12). Mudrick is clearly an admirer of the "light, bright, sparkling" mode and the earlier Elizabeth, while Kirkham suggests Austen spent Volumes II and III of Pride and Prejudice trying to make Elizabeth more than a heroine headed only for a "happy ending" marriage (see this Chapter, note 8).

20 Compare Catherine Morland’s "disgrace" as analogized in her return home in a "hack post-chaise." NA (230).
21 Sedgwick's "sphincter" trope is hardly inappropriate or ahistorical, nor are her suggestions that specular "sphincter-control" was associated with a certain will power. Edmund Burke writes of the action of the eye in response to light and dark, and the corresponding degrees of sublime feeling they may induce in the perceiving subject as follows: "although the circular ring of the iris be in some sense a sphincter, which may possibly be dilated by a simple relaxation, yet in one respect it differs from most of the other sphincters of the body, that it is furnished with antagonist muscles" (146). Burke's latent notion of perception itself as an agon supports the seriousness of the woman writer's effort to interrogate this arena of representation.

22 The "I" intrudes. actually, to make a comment on Mrs. Bennet, not on Elizabeth: "I wish I could say, for the sake of her family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children, produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable, well-informed woman for the rest of her life; though perhaps it was lucky for her husband, who might not have relished domestic felicity in so unusual a form, that she still was occasionally nervous and invariably silly." In effect, this "I" comments not on the heroine, then, but on that opening voice of the novel, the "It is a truth universally acknowledged . . ." voice--whose declaration seems to identify it most closely with Mrs. Bennet's character. Handler and Segal's comments on how the intruding "I" functions (see Chapter One, note 21) are appropriate here, since this "I" enters, again, to speak not "universally," but specifically, for the outcome that defies usual fictional closure.
Chapter Three

1 An excerpt from the Juvenilia, "The History of England" (1791), in which the sixteen year-old Austen designates herself a "partial, prejudiced, and ignorant Historian." Minor Works (149). Her epigraph is the disclaimer, "N.B. There will be very few Dates in this History" (139).

2 Jane McDonnell notes that Mansfield is "unique to Austen's fiction . . . in that it deals extensively and realistically with childhood experience" (199). She also documents the novel's appeal to "a clinical interest in the pathology of the abused child" (201).

3 The standard critical commentary on Fanny's moral stature is exemplified in Alistair Duckworth's comment that Fanny's ethical behavior is "consistent from the beginning" (72). Lionel Trilling reports the usual reader response to this uprightness: "Nobody . . . has ever found it possible to like Fanny because she is 'overtly virtuous'" (129).

4 This is Duckworth's main thesis regarding the Sotherton episode. Mr. Rushworth's and Henry Crawford's great zeal to "improve and renovate" violates Mansfield's guiding ethos that what "has been acquired progressively should not be radically changed" (48). Duckworth is echoing Edmund here, whose sentiments show a time-tolerance aligned with Fanny's, as well as prophesy his ultimate choice of Fanny as a mate: "'I would rather have an inferior degree of beauty of my own choice, and acquired progressively.'" MP (47).
According to Jane Nardin, Maria’s words, "that iron gate, that ha-ha, give me a feeling of restraint and hardship. I cannot get out, as the starling said," allude to Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1767). The echo weakens our serious reception of the "expression" allegedly accompanying Maria’s words (96). The allusion is re-deployed, with less satirical shading, though, when Sir Thomas later attempts to interrogate Maria on her real feelings about being imprisoned in a marriage with Rushworth: "He [Sir Thomas] would act for her and release her. Maria had a moment’s struggle as she listened, and only a moment’s . . . " (157). Sterne’s mock sentiment is invoked less playfully here, especially in Maria’s starling-like moment of struggle, which she abruptly constrains.

The oft-cited letter presumably alluding to *Mansfield Park*'s theme was one Austen wrote to her niece, Cassandra, containing the famous line, "Now I will try to write of something else, and it shall be a complete change of subject—ordination." *Letters*, Vol. II (298). But as David Musselwhite has explained, a fuller citation of the line, in context, reveals that the "change of topic" refers to "something in the letter itself," specifically Henry Austen’s "ordination . . . which was to take place only a couple of years later" (18-20). The second frequently-cited evidence of *Mansfield*'s subject matter is a letter to another niece of Austen’s, Fanny, concerning a contemplated engagement, and purportedly written in support of Evangelicism and "the risks in committing oneself to a relationship based on any values other than love." *Letters*, Vol. II (410).
The missteps in the Sotherton wilderness, for instance, are expressed in the rhetoric of eighteenth-century landscaping. Henry and Maria sit with Fanny "looking over a ha-ha into the park" (77). A "ha-ha" had a distinctly specular function: a "boundary to a garden," a trench, or "sunk fence," it was constructed "as not to interrupt the view," and "not to be seen until closely approached" (OED).

Henry James articulated this in a notorious passage: "The key to Jane Austen's fortune with posterity has been in part the extraordinary grace of her facility, in part her unconsciousness." "The Lesson of Balzac" (reprinted 1905), The House of Fiction 62-3, cit. in Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage 1870-1940 (230-1). James' denial of intentionality to Austen is an oddly romantic creative paradigm for a writer not usually considered romantic, but not surprising in terms of the left-handed tradition of granting woman writers "genius." As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have put it, Austen's "artistic creation" is not acclaimed as the "exacting craft" of the male author by James, but rather "a fortuitous forgetfulness on the part of the lady." They add that the passage nevertheless reflects James's "anxiety at his own indebtedness to this 'little' female precursor" (110).

Mrs. Inchbald based her Lover's Vows on August von Kotzebue's Das Kind der Liebe (in English, The Natural Son). Margaret Kirkham (among others) focuses on Kotzebue's plays as Austen's source drama. See "Kotzebue and Theatrical Allusion in Mansfield Park and Emma" in Kirkham (93-98). But the title in the novel points to Inchbald's revision as closer to Austen's thoughts. This still allows considerations of the scandal of German romanticism to enter a critique, since these
elements were not entirely deleted in revision. Although Inchbald altered several
details (especially in the character of Amelia, whose "'forward and unequivocal
manner'" of lovemaking, she claimed, would be "'revolting to an English
audience'"), she maintained the generally daring theme of the original, rationalizing
"'because the pulpit has not had the eloquence to eradicate the crime of seduction,'"
the stage "'may be allowed an humble endeavour to prevent its most fatal effects.'"
*Lovers' Vows*, trans. Mrs. Inchbald (London, 1808) 9, 5, cit. in Musselwhite (29).
Overall, the play's quasi-ambiguous authorship may be more important to note and
interrogate than to attempt to resolve; its equivocal feminine/masculine source make
it a site of mutable invention and indefinite property, themes not unrelated to those
significant in *Mansfield Park*.

10 In January 1803, at Bath's Orchard Street Theatre Royal, both *Lovers' Vows* and *King Lear* were performed and very possibly attended by Austen, who
was living in the city at the time. At the same theatre in March 1803, *Henry VIII*, a
play Henry Crawford recites from later (261-2) was also staged. Kirkham (112-13).

11 See Chapter Four, note 18.

12 I use the word "pilgrimage" with intentional religious resonance, amplified
later in my discussion of Fanny's oracular function. A fuller argument along these
lines, though marred by the critic's condescending attitude toward Fanny, is
Schneider's, where the East Room, once a literal schoolroom but subsequently
Fanny's and thus associated with her prophetic function, is termed "'the little oracle
of the orient'" (229).
In a subplot in *Lovers' Vows*, the clergyman Anhalt is encouraged by Amelia, the Baron's daughter, to "overlook the fact that she is a woman--by convention passive--and a noble--by convention barred from marrying a bourgeois," and to, "in defiance of convention," follow their "impulses." Butler (134).

Musselwhite has pointed out "the precise irony that at the very moment of Sir Thomas' return it is likely that what would have been heard from the stage would have been the Cottager's line, "We regretted his absence much, and his arrival has caused great joy,"" *Lovers' Vows* 5, cit. in Musselwhite (28).

Again, Musselwhite informs us: "There is much, too, of the [character of the] Baron in Sir Thomas himself: the remorse at his mistakes, the regret at his education, not having been all that it might have been, his coming to the conclusion that wealth and status might be less valuable than a good heart and strong principle" (28).

We should remember at this point the architectural metaphors that dominate in that other work so concerned with patriarchal tyranny, *Northanger Abbey*, in which Catherine Morland's "passion for ancient edifices" is ranked as "next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney" (149). Although the hierarchy has shifted in *Mansfield*, "ancient edifices" (and the authority of patriarchs) are still something formidable in the scheme of the heroine's passions.

Joseph Lew suggests a connection between Fanny's "odd status at Mansfield" and the condition of the slaves at Sir Thomas's Antiguan properties. He interprets her curiosity about her uncle's activities there as an attempt to get a better
sense of her analogous oppression at the estate (28). [Citation from unpublished manuscript. Publication forthcoming.]

18 Nina Auerbach has remarked of *Pride and Prejudice*'s heroine, "for her the house [Longbourne] has none of the density and texture which a childhood in it would bring. Though she scrupulously watches and analyzes and talks, Elizabeth is beyond a certain point devoid of memory" (43). Auerbach specifies later that Elizabeth has a "selective memory" when it comes to Darcy's virtues and deficits, but as far as the site of her past is concerned, Longbourne remains "vapor[ous] . . . as a narrative center and as an empty reflection in memory"--an intense contrast with the density of Fanny's Portsmouth perceptions (54).

19 Morgan describes Austen's secondary "heroines" such as Mary Crawford and Charlotte Lucas as regarding "character as fixed and plot as potential violation," attitudes that support a stance of "wordly realism." These characters associate their "fixity" with mental rather than physical chastity; thus, Austen reformulates the 18th-century "plot" in these secondary fates, displacing the threat of rape by "experience, which equals character change, which equals life and plot development" (42).

20 The phrase is Julia Kristeva's, in her critique of historical or linear time as opposed to the cyclical time traditionally associated with women. She describes as regressive the attempt to escape from linear time into a "counter-society[, a] . . . 'female society,' in which all real or fantasized possibilities for *jouissance* take refuge" (202). It may seem anachronistic to apply such terms to Austen's work or
heroines; but Kristeva provides a more appropriate term, when she refers to the aesthetic productions of such counter-societies as "a reiteration of a more or less euphoric or depressed romanticism" (200).

Marshall mistakenly and dramatically reduces them to two in his essay (130). He calls the first "I" the "only time before the epilogue-like conclusion... [when] an 'I' speaks out of nowhere" (103). The "I" Marshall misses occurs later in Vol. III, and is discussed in this chapter.

As Marshall notes of this first narrative intrusion, it foregrounds plot because this is "the chapter in which the Crawfords plan the plot to make Fanny fall in love with Henry" (103-4).

Hudson points to Pamela as the prototypical novel-cum-Cinderella-story, and traces its influence on the many others that followed, "rooted in a middle-class ideology, obsessed with rising up the social ladder." She includes Charlotte Smith, Frances Burney and Austen among women novelists who "both conformed to and subverted the pattern." Austen's subversiveness, Hudson remarks, has its limits in her novels' conclusions, however, where "she appears to reimpose a fantasy-like finale" (97).

Schneider has noted that Fanny serves an oracular function in the East Room, she also documents how "Edmund, Mary and Sir Thomas assume, in turn, the role of learner" there--though Fanny herself also receives her lessons during each visit (229).
Ruth Bernard Yeazell makes the connection between Sir Thomas’s gift of fire and the ancient Roman ritual whereby a bride-to-be went through a rite of passage, "a ceremony in which her father formally separated her from the paternal hearth" (143). Since Fanny’s fate will subvert this sequence by having her return to Sir Thomas’s "paternal" hearth precisely to find her husband-to-be there, the sense of her re-ordering an established hierarchy is further supported.

Critics who have stated that Henry’s love is a threat to Fanny which she barely escapes are approaching it from the wrong perspective. Rather, Fanny is Mansfield’s rescue device. The loyalty of her heart is what is critical to its survival. Thus, her value.

Their conversation during the journey consists of planning "the little cottage" in which Fanny and William "were to pass their middle and latter life together" (292). The idyllic project, however, is perversely inflected by the mention shortly afterward of the sibling pair, Mary and Henry Crawford, and how Mary has coerced Fanny into a correspondence that has her involuntarily reading intimacies from Henry. The unhealthiness of too-tight incestuous connections, thus, is presented in both the lurid and sentimental versions as somehow disruptive of ordinary "relations."

Citing Lady Susan (1799) as Austen’s first version of the novel, Leavis speculates that Austen produced a second draft, an "ur-epistolary" version of Mansfield in 1809. (For Leavis’ argument, see "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen’s Writings, Scrutiny X, 1-2, June and October 1941 (61-87, 114-42)). The "residual
traces" of this version, Musselwhite comments, at Leavis' cue, "might be the letters that figure so prominently in the last phase of the novel" (26-7). Though it's true that those works which passed through an epistolary draft (for instance, Sense and Sensibility) may seem disjointed in their final form--long prosaic passages alternating with vivid correspondence--Mansfield's stylistic contrasts seem less an accident of revision than a conscious generic experiment by Austen.

29 in propria persona: [L.], in one's own person (or character)

Lew has interpreted this in a particularly severe way: "Exiling a young woman in already dubious health to a city [like Portsmouth] becomes a judicial murder or a domestic equivalent. . . . It duplicates the contemporary process of transportation, which deported those convicted . . . to unhealthy climates--[e.g., to Botany Bay]" (24).


32 As a biographical subtext, note that Austen had sold "Susan," the manuscript, to Crosby & Co. two years before writing Mansfield. The trip to Portsmouth, and Fanny's subsequent interest to rescue Susan from home may be an unconscious suggestion of Austen's earnest concern with reclaiming her early authorial efforts from undeserved oblivion. The analogy is enhanced by the connection of Susan's edification in Mansfield with Fanny's achievement of a
membership in a circulating library, making her "in propria persona, . . . a renter, a chooser of books" (310). A selfhood grounded in economic power and literary choice is highly telling considering Austen's need to establish her authorial reputation.

Maria's history is an example of what Nancy K. Miller has called the "feminocentric" plots which were the 19th-century woman writer's legacy: masculine-authored "'erotic texts'" where "'women enact a sexual destiny'" (see Introduction, note 6). Similar to the 18th-century narratives Susan Morgan discusses, those critiqued by Miller center on the "'drama of the preservation of virtue'" or "'the tragedy of the single misstep.'" The Heroine's Text 153, cit. in McDonnell (200). Gilbert and Gubar have suggested that this crisis of the single misstep is "embedded in the form of an interpolated tale," functioning as "a monitor image of" the heroine's [Fanny's] "more problematic story" (119). I would go farther, though, and suggest that Fanny exerts an authorial function in this scene when she attempts to "rescue" Maria from the conventional "feminocentric" history with her disclaimer, which works as a counter-narrative. Whether she is successful is less significant than the fact that she is more than merely another passive heroine with a "more problematic story" than Maria's.
Chapter Four

1 From The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina (1813), a burlesque of the sentimental novel, especially of the Radcliffe trend. The heroine rejects her patrimony for the "romance" of feigned illegitimacy, "supposing herself to be the natural child of an Italian Count." Cherubina is eventually talked out of her quixotic fantasies by a masculine sage, much as the heroine is at the end of Fanny Burney's Cecilia. Margaret Kirkham cites Cherubina's influence on the Harriet sub-plot in Emma (129-30).

2 Claudia Johnson notes that Austen's "[a]uthorial solicitude" for Emma has been regarded "more as an invitation to search out what is objectionable" about her; thus, the criticism of this heroine is "freighted with alarming animosities." Johnson also remarks how, more than any novel of Austen's, Emma criticism seems to be motivated by something other than the "ideologically neutral historical, aesthetic or commonsensical criteria" of "disinterested professionals." Politics (122).


4 Litz claims that it is in Chapter Five that Knightley becomes the "moral commentator" of the novel, while the author recedes to the position of "impersonal historian" (148).

5 Marvin Mudrick calls Harriet a "psychic extension of Emma's self" (181-206). A more daring significance, less kind to Emma's intentions, is offered by
Tony Tanner, who considers Harriet as "put forward--indeed, one might say, exhibited" as "sexual bait" (198).

6 Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar trace an evolution from Austen's Juvenilia, specifically *Lady Susan*, where mother and daughter are the polarized feminine characters, to "the mature novels," where such characters have become sisters "embody[ing] available options . . . in some ways equally attractive yet mutually exclusive, . . . to illustrate how divided aspects of the self can be integrated" (156). Glenda Hudson situates this strategy in an 18th-century "sentimental and didactic" tradition, which "employed the double sister motif to moralize on the courses of action available to and the ultimate fates of their female protagonists" (62).

7 However, this is not the first time Austen has paired heroines who were not mutually-edifying. Her Juvenilia is rampant with depictions of female friendship that are excessively (satirically) sentimental. For example, Laura and Marianne's relationship in "Love and Freindship" has been mentioned as an early satire of sisterly-bonds. (See Chapter One, note 11.) Christine St. Peter sees *Northanger Abbey* as a transitional work from the juvenile parodies to the more mature transmutation of sister-pairs. She sees its two-volume structure as organized to present a parodic sister-relationship (Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe) followed by a mutually-edifying one (Catherine and Eleanor Tilney), but concludes that the novel "has more affinities with the juvenilia" than the later works (476-8).

8 James Thompson observes that matchmaking (usually their own) was a form of more or less mandatory "self-employment" for young women of the late
eighteenth-century; "affective individualism and the rise of personal autonomy" resulted in these women doing "work" that "in their mothers' time, would have been done for them" (143). But Claudia Johnson asserts that the usually feminine-monitored, "frivolous" business of matchmaking had quite a different complexion in Austen's time: "the whos, whys, and why-nots of matchmaking were not the idle concerns of meddlesome women with nothing better to do." Rather, "the arenas of family and neighborhood" were the sites of "ideological battles" fought by "[p]rogessives and reactionaries," both male and female. Politics (131).

9 Gilbert and Gubar associate Jane Fairfax with "decorous form," and Emma with "rebellious vision." But they cite Mansfield Park, not Emma, as Austen's first attempt to escape from the sister-pair dialectic. Suitable to their paradigm of psychological crisis as integral to the 19th-century woman novelist's experience, they see Fanny Price as the character Austen used to address women's "psychic split" as a crisis, instead of a didactically-edifying representation. Fanny's deprivation of a sister-double in this critique is "schizophrenically"-threatening, bringing her to the edge of "full-scale fragmentation" (159-63).

10 I suggest that Austen's self-citation is foregrounded in Emma in a way that makes the texts she had read less significant than the ones she had written. Even Claudia Johnson, who argues, as cited in the text, for a Bakhtinian dialogical interplay of narratives in Austen's work, notes that "the texture of Emma is remarkably spare," without the "political allusions, themes and plots of the other novels." Politics (126). But Emma is alternatively intertextual, in a manner more

11 If we consider the Juvenilia, Austen was equipped for self-citation as early as *Northanger Abbey*. This is especially so if, as the novel's strange publication history makes possible, Austen was revising *Northanger after* she wrote *Emma*. Halperin voices the conventional opinion of *Northanger*, though, when he suggests that the changes Austen made in the original "Susan" were slight, making the work truer to the "early" than the "late" Austen (294).

12 The *Romeo and Juliet* allusion is to Act V, i, 72. The *Midsummer* reference is from Act I, i, 132-4: "For aught that I could ever read, / Could ever hear by tale or history, / The course of true love never did run smooth." J.M.Q. Davies remarks, especially of the *Midsummer* reference, since it is "itself a play involving courtship," that the connections to Emma's plot, start "the active reader speculating as to possible relationships between charade, play and novel" (234).

13 A secret correspondence was socially prohibited at the time, and considered analogous to a concealed engagement. Compare Marianne's and Willoughby's letter-writing in *Sense and Sensibility*, which Elinor, though she empathizes with her broken-hearted sister, considered an "impropriety" and "imprudence," because hidden. *Sense and Sensibility* (151).

Jane's character and role remain in the memory after the novel ends, and if it is true that another novel 'shadows' the novel we read, it also true that other possible outcomes shadow the resolution we have. It may be that Jane Austen sensed this herself. At any rate, in *Persuasion*, she wrote a novel about a heroine whose predicament is closer to that of Jane Fairfax. (178)

Austen's ambivalently critically-received deployment of "indirect discourse" will be addressed at greater length in the next chapter.

Contrast Litz's comment on "Austen's sure control over the axioms of her created world," which contributes to the "confident" narrative stance, "so different from the obliquity of the modern novel" (148).

Duckworth takes his definition of "ludic" from sociology, in which "the ethical neutrality of play . . . 'lies outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly.'" J. Huizinga, *Homo-Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon P, 1955), cit. in Duckworth (165n). More contemporary denotations of "ludic" stress its subversive possibilities, especially in linguistic contexts.

Note the pertinence of the "dream" reference to Emma's earlier allusion to *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the designation of Hartfield as a site of love's felicitous progress.
Knightley, in hoping to avoid spurious assumptions about Jane and Frank, worries that he might be, like "Cowper and his fire at twilight, 'Myself creating what I saw'" (272-73). *The Task* (1785) is also invoked by Fanny Price when she regretted Sotherton's "fallen avenues." *MP* (46).

It is helpful to recall Elizabeth Bennet's "'I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good,'" *P and P* (50). Miss Bates may not be "wise," but she is "good"; so Emma is violating Elizabeth's--as well as Knightley's--ethics on wit with her remark.

Irvin Ehrenpreis also utilizes a reverse-image metaphor to critique Miss Bates, though his analogy is with Mr. Woodhouse. Emma's impatience with Miss Bates, Ehrenpreis remarks, may be "the underside of her patience with her father" (129). This interpretation corresponds with other theories that Mr. Woodhouse is not modeled after Austen's father but on her mother, whose hypochondria was lifelong and who avoided social occasions because of health complaints. (See Chapter Two, note 17.) Since this is the reason Mr. Woodhouse is not at Box Hill, we may conceivably read some displaced aggressiveness or overtaxed patience in Emma's sudden bluntness with Miss Bates.

Edward Neill suggests that Austen's rhetoric here "deliberately 'remembers'" the Collect of the Anglican Communion: "'O God, to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid'" (44). Of course, this sanctimonious allusion might be seen as heightening the irony of Emma's intense self-surveillance during this period.
25 The crisis in this instance is coded in Mr. Weston's conundrum. Given the lure of wordplay in *Emma*--and since we are actually "reading" and only imaginatively "auditing" the conversation on Box Hill--when we read the answer to Mr. Weston's question, "'What two letters of the alphabet . . . express perfection?'" as "MA," we may well agree that, as the narrative says, this is "a very indifferent piece of wit." Our necessary translation of "MA" to the phonetically-articulated "em-ah" is not a reading reflex, and I suggest we are given a moment's pause during which (whether Austen consciously intended it or not) we see the word, "Ma," and make the natural association of "mother," before we have decoded the joke. If one accepts this, then an equation between "mother" and "Emma" is latently suggested, and the refutation Knightley offers of the conundrum has new meaning. "*Perfection* should not have come quite so soon," he says of the "MA"/"em-ah" riddle (295). Given the equivocal signification, we should remember Knightley's suggestion to Mrs. Weston that Emma's mother should not have died so soon. Her mother's death forced Emma into a premature assumption of the role a mother might have played. And on Box Hill, she definitely is not behaving maternally or nurturantly when she slights Mrs. Bates. Knightley's comment both reminds her of the responsibilities of her social role (which he will spell out more fully to her subsequently) *and* implies that Emma has not had sufficient time or experience to prepare for this role. (Also, see note 27, below.)
24 Halperin derides the rushed ending as "a mistake" Austen makes "in all of her books." She is "too impatient," he claims, and the consequence is "something unsubtle, undramatic and ineffective" (78).

25 Emma accordingly revises her earlier gloss on Shakespeare's *Midsummer* from implying that "the course of true love" runs smoothly, to acknowledging that, with Knightley, "Her way was clear, though not quite smooth" (342).

26 Claudia Johnson praises Austen's "determination to establish a discrepancy between what . . . [Knightley] knows and what we know about Emma." This renders Knightley a "fantastically wishful creation of benign [because not absolute] authority." *Politics* (141).

27 For an obscure and erudite source of the "M-A" conundrum, supporting its moral relevance, and suggesting that readers of Austen's own time might have had less trouble deciphering it, see Loveridge on Francis Hutcheson's *Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). Loveridge explicates Hutcheson's formula as: "M . . . represent[s] the 'Moment of Good,' or 'the Good to be produc'd in the whole,' and A . . . represent[s] Ability or Agent." In Hutcheson's formula, "the Perfection of Virtue in this case, or M/A, is as Unity." "Francis Hutcheson" (215).
Chapter Five

1 The "unifying" articulation that paradoxically defers articulation is made by Bernard, the character most identified with the authorial "voice" in Virginia Woolf's polyphonic *The Waves* (349).

2 Patricia Waugh identifies the "epistemic" subject as one defined in terms of "historical experience, interiority and consciousness" (7). This concept of subjectivity apparently involves less "privileging of the visible" than does the specular model. But as I will argue in this chapter, the alternative specularity encoded in the empiricist "case study" perpetuated some of the drawbacks of the earlier aesthetic, particularly in the representation of women.

3 By "hysterical" I do not mean "histrionic" or emotionally excessive, but follow a definition more akin to the Freudian and that employed in recent feminist criticism. Hysteria, in these contexts, suggests a disassociation between body and mind, such that the body's symptomology—for instance, paralysis of the limbs—though induced by a wish or fear of the hysteric's, is a wish or fear to which s/he has no ready access: thus, the techniques of psychoanalysis and hypnosis.

4 In this jointly-authored volume, *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), Breuer wrote Anna O.'s case history, but Freud made several references to it in his later scholarly work and correspondence. "Freud reports that Breuer repeatedly read to him pieces of the case history during 1882 and 1883, but objected vehemently to publishing the
story of the treatment. . . . Ten years later Breuer agreed to a joint publication because Freud convinced him that Pierre Janet's work in French anticipated some of his results, such as the tracing back of hysterical symptoms to events in the patient's life and their removal by means of hypnotic reproduction." Dianne Hunter, "Hysteria, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism," The (M)Other Tongue (98).

5 I suggest that Anne's "nurse" roles in the early phases of Persuasion prepare us for a more amiable reception of the potentially unsavory Nurse Rooke, who cares for Mrs. Smith in Bath. Surely much of Nurse Rooke's suspicious character is a function of the fact the narrative never records her direct speech, a detail that we should be alert to in this narrative where direct and indirect discourse are so thematically significant. Nurse Rooke's circumspect nature has made critics mistrust her. Alistair Duckworth, for instance, calls her Mrs. Smith's "nurse-accomplice," who "knows the exact psychological moment to apply for money" (192). Since the caregiver-patient relationship is significant to my critique, I would not underestimate Nurse Rooke's role, and though it may be equivocally "selfless," I argue that Anne's assumption of nursing duties early in the novel encourages us to judge Nurse Rooke more fairly than critics like Duckworth.

6 In his description of the sublime and beautiful, Burke remarks: "An air of robustness and strength is very prejudicial to beauty. An appearance of delicacy, and even of fragility, is almost essential to it . . . . The beauty of women is considerably owing to their weakness, or delicacy, and is even enhanced by their timidity, a quality of mind analogous to it." Burke qualifies his judgment with the
denial that "weakness betraying very bad health has any share in beauty" (116).

These criteria are particularly relevant to Anne Elliot's lack of "bloom" when Burke notes, "the parts in such a case [of bad health] collapse" and "the bright colour, the lumen perpureum juventae [the Latin is from Virgil, and translates roughly as "the purple light of youth," or "the radiant bloom of youth"] is gone" (116). Of course, Anne's late bloom, which rises when she finds her strength of self, suggests the possibility that youth and delicacy are not the only factors productive of feminine beauty and radiance. (See the note on the carpe diem motif, below.)

7 Of course, the difference between Anne's looks and Wentworth's is not only a factor in their contrasting functions regarding the text's "hysterical" dissociations. The fading spinster versus the distinguished bachelor is a commonplace polarity clearly of relevance here. After all, the "autumnal" tone usually ascribed to the novel is precisely because of Anne's lost, seemingly irretrievable "bloom." The sense of disappointed love, vanished youth and a woman's diminished attractiveness comprise the carpe diem "lesson" Anne is presumably learning; and the unfairness of this gender-linked inhibition was no doubt something Austen was conscious of conveying in scenes like the drawing room re-union. (I thank Nell Altizer for bringing this to my attention.)

8 Morgan continues, "The change from previous [eighteenth-century] fiction is more accurately a matter of replacement than of loss. It redefines the nature of power and the power of nature in British fiction, by turning away from their physical, and therefore masculine-dominated, base. It is an original narrative
response to the meaning of sex in eighteenth-century novels, a liberating absence relative to what had become a limiting presence" (50-51).

9 The suppressed portion of Anna O.'s case history, alluded to later by Freud in his "History of the Psychoanalytic Movement" (1914), concerned how Anna O. "suddenly manifested to Breuer the presence of a strong, unanalyzed positive transference of an unmistakably sexual nature" Studies (41n). Breuer ended his case study by declaring Anna O. "free from the innumerable disturbances which she had previously exhibited" (40). However, Freud reports (in a letter dated 2 June 1932): "On the evening of the day when all her symptoms had been disposed of, . . . [Breuer] was summoned to the patient again, found her confused and writhing in abdominal cramps. Asked what was wrong with her, she replied: 'Now Dr. B.'s child is coming!'" Letters of Sigmund Freud, 1873-1939, ed. Ernst L. Freud, trans. Tania Stern and James Stern (London: Hogarth P, 1970) 409-10, cit. in Forrester (17). Considering this history, his remark about Anna O.'s lack of a sexual element to her personality seems less like an observation than a compensatory disclaimer.

10 A more complete discussion of the "talking cure" follows in the text. The extent to which Breuer credited "verbalization" and symptomatic relief for Anna O. was remarkable. He even mobilized a certain critical, literary estimation of Anna O.'s "talk" as an indication of her psychic health or lack of it. When he returned from a several-week holiday, he noted that Anna was in a "wretched state, inert, . . . ill-tempered, even malicious. It became plain from her evening stories that her imaginative and poetic vein was drying up." Yet even those "imaginative" and
"poetic" products, if un-verbalized, were harmful, according to Burke; and it was necessary that they be "narrated in her hypnosis, after which . . . [they] completely ceased to operate" (31-2).

11 Again, to correct any conflations of Fanny and Anne, the former's penultimate scene with Edmund is emphatically marked by her silence as he reviews his misconceptions about Mary Crawford. *MP* (354-58).

12 Benwick's reading when he first meets Anne (and we have no reason to consider it much different later) is "principally in poetry," and among the those he holds forth on are *Marmion, The Lady of the Lake, Giaour,* and *The Bride of Abydos.* Anne "ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry; and to say, that she thought it was the misfortune of poetry, to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly, were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly."

Acting again as a kind of nurse, though this time a "nurse of discourse," Anne "ventured to recommend a larger allowance of prose in his daily study" (98).

13 In fact eighteenth-century literary reviewers, confronted with the numbers of women writing and publishing novels, became concerned that "unchecked by the monitors of taste," the novel might overwhelm the market" and as a "feminized" genre, might mark a "departure from the masculinized norms of high culture."

Mudge (95). This critical elitism survives in the not-so-dated comment of Ian Watt, who, noting that "'the majority of eighteenth-century novels were written by women,'" added that this was "'a purely quantitative assertion of dominance.'" *The*
Dianne Hunter notes that Anna O.'s desire to take food only from Breuer was part of an orchestration of exclusive orality she arranged with him, including "signs, mutterings, and made-up jargon" as an attempt to "recreate the special semiotic babble that exists between an infant and its mother." By turning Breuer into a "surrogate oral mother," Hunter claims, Anna O. "turned him into an identity-giver as well. Her final birth fantasy (see note 9, above) can be read as a "wish to bring a new identity and perhaps a new reality into the world" (100).

The narrative tone in this scene suggests the invocation of a mood of Christian charity and resolution that many critics have focused on as Persuasion's dominant theme. Irvin Ehrenpreis notes that several "touches" in the novel "evolve a framework of Christian doctrine, though not very audibly." There may be "a Christian aura" to the contrast "between Louisa's fall and Anne's exaltation, . . . for Anne preferred conscience to self-indulgence and so was rewarded." But, as Ehrenpreis emphasizes, "[r]eligion and morality join in Austen's broadest method of suggesting ethical principles," and relate to the "choice of traditions in literature" she had grown up with (Richardson, Burney, Johnson and Cowper on one side, "lighting up an ideal of lowly Christian heroism," while "the Gothic novel, the poems of Byron, and Scott's Lord Marmion" on the other side, offered a "semipagan ideal of physical courage and chivalric honor"). These influences had
always affected the "appointment of her characters and the shape of her plots," and
do so in *Persuasion* as well, but not with any particularly enhanced religiosity
(142-43).

16 Dianne Hunter discusses Anna O.'s linguistic skills and her fondness for
wordplay: "She called . . . [her treatment] 'chimney sweeping' when she was joking
and "the talking cure' when she was being serious" (93). Hunter also notes Freud's
comment (in a letter to Carl Jung, 21 November 1909) that Anna O.'s "image of the
treatment as 'chimney sweeping' was a metaphor for sexual intercourse" (96-7).
Freud's association is apt, of course, and important in his paradigm of sexual
transference. But there remains a more materially-grounded, obviously domestic
association that is not without foundation. Anna's first, pre-hysteric fantasizing
activities, as Breuer reports them, were conducted "almost continuously while she
was engaged in her domestic duties" (22). This considered, there is a certain logic--
and humor--in her reference to the articulation of fantasies with Breuer by means of
a domestic metaphor.

17 Modleski is concerned with explaining why the romance narrative has a
formulaic fantasy function for the woman reader, dependent on the fact that "the
reader . . . already knows the story." The "'double-conscience'" which Modleski
quotes Breuer as positing in Anna O. is something she also designates as a
precondition for the romance-reader in accessing a transitory naiveté that allows her
to experience as fresh what is frankly a frequently rehashed formula (32).
18 As Forrester writes, "in order to be a successful gossip, or a non-resisting patient in analysis, you must be seen to name names, you must tell stories earmarked as true, about real, live people." He also draws an interesting analogy between gossip and joking: though the latter may be "fictional," it also exploits the identity of real, usually absent individuals. Both gossip and joking thus "inhabit a sharply contoured space of the forbidden and enticing. The discursivity of gossip in particular also helps to define the margins of the licit, whereas the punctuality of joking celebrates the existence of the cut-off" (248). The linkage of gossip and joking suggests that Austen’s trademark wit in the bulk of her novels and her use of gossip in *Persuasion* may be related discursive forays.

19 Forrester denotes gossip as a "traditionally female art--or vice, as the moral opprobrium . . . testifies." This vice is dependent upon "the absent man" or the man "rendered structurally absent." These structural givens, Forrester claims, elucidate Freud’s "fright at catching himself gossiping with Dora" when she reproduced--as was her habit--"the seemingly inconsequential chat" with Frau K. or her grandmother in her sessions with him (246-48).

20 Considering Anna O.’s incident of hysterical childbirth, suppressed in the case study, and Dianne Hunter’s notion of this as a "birth fantasy" or "a wish to bring a new identity, and perhaps a new reality into the world" (see note 14, above), Mrs. Smith’s narrative delivery seems to be another way that Anne E.’s and Anna O.’s stories resemble each other. Of course, Mrs. Smith is more successful with her "metaphorical" delivery than Anna O. was with hers.
"Interior" vs. "exterior" turbulence suggests the detail that many critics find most unexplainable in *Persuasion*: the coarseness with which the narrative treats Mrs. Musgrove's emotional outburst, her "large fat sighings" over her dead son, Dick (68). Marvin Mudrick attributes this to an emergence, at last, of "a sharp personal edge" to Austen's tone in *Persuasion* (207), unrelieved by any "claim of aesthetic or social propriety," and not unlike the tone of much of her correspondence (213). David Monaghan rationalizes the slur on Mrs. Musgrove's size and demonstrativeness as one more maneuver Austen utilizes to prevent Anne from having to express her feelings (151). Certainly, considering Anne's "nobody-ness," Mrs. Musgrove's physicality is noticeably pronounced. But the follow-up paragraph to the "large fat sighings" commentary illustrates the pertinence of this scene to Austen's theme of mind/body dissociation. Mrs. Musgrove, while violating the paradigm of women's suffering "internally," also evokes the ludicrous expectations generated by "rational" attempts to suture the mind/body split.

James Kastely alludes to Anne's (Austen's) strategies of indirection in terms of rhetorical communities: "As any good rhetor must, Anne seizes the occasion of her discussion with Captain Harville and transforms it into an opening toward Wentworth. She knows that a discourse is not only heard but overheard. . . . No speaker possesses a simple or exclusive control over his or her own words. The best one can do is to exploit those moments that accident throws one's way" (85).

Gilbert and Gubar, taking their cue from Emily Dickinson's "Infection in the sentence breeds / We may inhale Despair / At distances of Centuries," explain
women writers do not fit even into the Bloom-ian paradigm of "anxiety of authorship," but occupy a space of even greater insecurity: "the fierce power struggles in which they engage in their efforts of self-creation," for woman writers, "directly . . . contradict the terms of . . . [their] own gender definition." The "anxiety of influence" is for a woman, "a radical fear that she cannot create" because "the act of writing will isolate or destroy her" (48-49).

24 The White Hart Inn is an appropriate "field" of discourse to follow Emma's "Hartfield." While lacking the atopian expansiveness of Emma's final turf of self-articulation, Anne's validates romance, while yet suggesting that the heart is a vulnerable space. The "white" signature of innocence, and defended "Interiority" emphasize the riskiness and bravery of Anne's eventual articulation.

25 Though Auerbach extends her commentary to Austen's novels in general, she focuses on Pride and Prejudice. What she says about Darcy in that work is particularly interesting for our discussion of the dynamics of gossip. Describing the Pemberley drawing room scene with Georgiana, Miss Bingley and Elizabeth, she calls Darcy's "absent presence . . . the only emotional point of reference for the three women." Women in the absence of men are in a "limbo of suspension and suspense," Auerbach continues: a limbo "which cannot take shape until it is given one by the opening of the door" (38). Considering, however, the triadic structure that enables gossip (see note 19, above), we may not be as pessimistic as Auerbach about the suspense of "masculine absence"--since this is the prerequisite for the kind of discourse Mrs. Smith and Anne have, and the revelations that arise thereof.
In keeping with the opening epigraph to this chapter, it is interesting that Virginia Woolf, in writing specifically of *Persuasion*, diverges somewhat from the unstinting praise of Jane Austen in *A Room of One's Own*, and speculates that Austen, had she lived, might have become quite a different writer after *Persuasion*, for its "peculiar beauty" and "dullness is that which marks the transition stage between two different periods." Woolf attributes this to "the biographical fact that Jane Austen had loved," and "the aesthetic fact that she was no longer afraid to say so." But more interesting is what Woolf suggests about where Austen might have gone with her fiction after *Persuasion*: "She would have devised a method, clear and composed as ever, but deeper and more suggestive, for conveying not only what people say but what they leave unsaid." *The Common Reader* (143-5). The "modernist" bias is clear, but the notion of an Austen articulating the "unsaid," whether because she "had loved," and "was no longer afraid to say so"--or for other reasons--is summarizes neatly the outcome of the "talking cure."
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