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Introduction: Jane Austen and the Language of Real Feeling

We have found the only true substance within ourselves: that is why we have to place an unbridgeable chasm between cognition and action, between soul and created structure, between self and world, why all substantiality has to be dispersed in reflexivity on the far side of that chasm; that is why our essence had to become a postulate for ourselves and thus create a still deeper, still more menacing abyss between us and our own selves.

—Georg Lukács¹

The title of this introduction comes from a passage in *Emma*. After Frank Churchill has come to Highbury for the first time and gone away again, Emma reads his letter, which is ostensibly addressed to Mrs. Weston but is plainly intended for Emma as well:

It was a long, well written letter, giving the particulars of his journey, and of his feelings, expressing all the affection, gratitude, and respect which was natural and honourable, and describing everything exterior and local that could be supposed attractive, with spirit and precision. No suspicious flourishes now of apology or concern; it was the language of real feelings towards Mrs. Weston. (E 265)²

The phrase "the language of real feelings" must strike any reader of this novel as odd, since Frank Churchill is the last character we would associate with real or sincere feelings. Rather, he is, to use Mr. Knightley's term, a manipulative "politician" (E 150), a master, not of genuine emotion, but rather of civility and address. That Emma should take his flattering letter of conventional pleasantries for genuine emotion is not very surprising at this point in the novel, for the letter arrives shortly after

her conclusion that "he is undoubtedly very much in love" with Emma herself (E 265). And so her desire to find real feeling is entangled in her response to her own name in the letter supposedly addressed to another:

Miss Woodhouse appeared more than once, and never without a something of pleasing connection, either a compliment to her taste, or a remembrance of what she had said; and in the very last time of its meeting her eye, unadorned as it was by any such broad wreath of gallantry, she yet could discern the effect of her influence and acknowledge the greatest compliment perhaps of all conveyed. (E 266)

A close reader, Emma can find the greatest compliment in the absence of her name. The highlighted passage refers to Harriet, but in her interpretation, so she thinks, of Churchill's complex code of admiration, real feelings are deciphered in the faintest trace. Readers of Jane Austen's *Emma*, presumably the last in line to look over this letter, will no doubt assume that Churchill's extravagant language of complimentary innuendo is but part of his disguise to divert attention from Jane Fairfax. In this letter, then, we seem to be as far removed as is possible from some original source of the language of real feelings.

Emma herself comes to understand something of the difficulty of using the language of real feelings when later in the novel she offers her carriage to Jane Fairfax, writing "in the most feeling language she could command" (E 390), only to be rebuffed. And finally in the proposal scene itself, such language goes astray once again when Emma sees "that what she had been saying relative to Harriet had been all taken [by Mr. Knightley] as the language of her own feelings" (E 430); that is, when Emma had interrupted him because she was afraid that he would reveal his love for Harriet: "'Oh! then, don't speak it, don't speak it,' she eagerly cried" (E 429). Shortly thereafter, when Emma and Mr. Knightley have come to their understanding, the narrator nonetheless concludes: "Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken; but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken, the feelings are not, it may not be very material" (E 431). Though the examination of the language of feeling throughout *Emma* is gently ironic and comic, the implications are not: Austen's writing as a whole suggests that language and feeling are of two different orders, and what can be conveyed in language is rarely, if ever, real feelings. The subject of Jane Austen's fiction to a large degree is feelings, and so we are all left in the position of Emma, reading and rereading Frank Churchill's

letter, searching for traces of feelings that were not there in the first place, or, worse, are fraudulent and deceptive. For readers of the novel, and of novels in general, Emma's interpretation of Churchill's letter projects a kind of narrative dread, suggesting the author's fear that her language will be entirely misconstrued, that it will be perceived as false, or as "novel slang," as Austen puts it in a letter (L 404), rather than as real, true, authentic, or genuine.³

Austen used the phrase "language of real feeling" once before, in *Mansfield Park*, in connection with the interpretation of another letter, but in a quite different sense. Here, Fanny Price in Portsmouth reads a letter from Lady Bertram that recounts Tom Bertram's illness:

The sufferings which Lady Bertram did not see, had little power over her fancy; and she wrote very comfortably about agitation and anxiety, and poor invalids, till Tom was actually conveyed to Mansfield, and her own eyes had beheld his altered appearance. Then, a letter which she had been previously preparing for Fanny, was finished in a different style, in the language of real feeling and alarm; then, she wrote as she might have spoken. "He is just come, my dear Fanny, and is taken up stairs; and I am so shocked to see him, that I do not know what to do." (MP 427)

Austen does not credit Lady Bertram with the possession of particularly expressive powers or eloquence, but in this instance genuine emotion in the form of distress is conveyed in the actual process of breaking through the placid facade that makes up her accustomed language of unreal feeling. Lady Bertram, who is unused to distress, let alone to the labor of having to convey it to another, is capable of doing so only because she is unused to it, and her language thus momentarily becomes unexpectedly ordinary and therefore persuasive. As is the case in *Emma*, Austen does not suggest that there is no language of real feeling, but that feelings are exceedingly difficult to convey. This difficulty of expression holds for the best of circumstances, for the best of writers, and for the best of readers. In an entirely different reading situation, in a letter of Austen's to her favorite niece, Fanny Knight, we find an analogous desire to convey strong emotion and something of the same sense of dread, that the language will fail to convey the sincerity of the writer, that it fails to become, in the reading, genuine: "It is very, very gratifying to me to know you so intimately. You can hardly think what a pleasure it is to me, to have such thorough pictures of your Heart.—Oh! what a loss it will be when you are married" (L 478–79).

To explore more fully the implications of some of this dread, we should

consider one more reading situation, for all of our examples so far involve one writer to one known reader. If Fanny Knight represents perhaps Austen's idea of the very best reader, that vast, unknown mass of buyers or renters and readers of novels, the anonymous reading public, must appear to Austen as the most treacherous and unpredictable audience—with them, there is always the possibility that even the language of real feeling may be mistaken for novel slang (or novel slang for the language of real feeling). The dangers of their misreading are explored in Austen's last work, *Sanditon*, where Sir Edward Denham is presented as the archetypal imbecile reader of novels, a voracious but indiscriminate consumer of the worst novels, but what is perhaps even more annoying, a consumer as well of the best novels, from commercial lending libraries:

The novels which I approve are such as display Human Nature with Grandeur—such as shew her in the Sublimities of intense Feeling—such as exhibit the progress of strong Passion from the first Germ of incipient Susceptibility to the utmost Energies of Reason half-dethroned,—where we see the strong spark of Woman's Captivations elicit such Fire in the Soul of Man as leads him—(though at the risk of some Aberration from the strict line of Primitive Obligations)—to hazard all, dare all, atcheive all, to obtain her. (MW 403)

As the narrator bluntly summarizes at the end of this passage, "The truth was that Sir Edw: whom circumstances had confined very much to one spot had read more sentimental Novels than agreed with him" (MW 404). Novels, in short, may be purchased, read, and appropriated by the most foolish of readers.

How self-conscious was Jane Austen about these matters? We know from her letters how anxious she was to collect and preserve the responses of all of those in her immediate family and beyond who read her books, especially the opinions of those readers who were known to her but who did not know she was the author.⁴ As an increasingly successful commercial author, Austen probably became ever more aware of and curious about her reading public and how they consumed her products. That she was delighted that the public bought her novels is clear, but how happy she was over the way her products were used is not so clear. Although home consumption is no doubt more or less a concern for all authors—see, for example, William Warner's suggestive exploration of this subject in Richardson and *Clarissa*—it must have been a peculiar irritant for novelists at the turn of the century.⁵ Austen writes for a generation of readers trained on gothic novels and the novels of sen-

sibility, readers whose expectations in fiction had been circumscribed by thirty years of novels crammed with both fine and excessive sentiment, in which that fine sentiment had been so drawn out, so mediated and repetitious, in short, so commercialized, that it is not surprising that a writer might worry about finding or creating or commanding the "language of real feeling." In *Sanditon*, Charlotte Heywood concludes that Sir Edward Denham has purchased his feelings from novels: "He seemed very sentimental, very full of some Feelings or other, & very much addicted to all the newest-fashioned hard words—had not a very clear Brain she presumed, & talked a good deal by rote" (MW 398). It is not simply that Austen is reluctant to cast her pearls before such swine. But more, her novels are about the careful discrimination of feeling, novels in which it takes a character such as Emma a year and four hundred pages of narrative to discover that Mr. Knightley should marry none but her, because she finally realizes that her respect and admiration and proprietary concern for him are also signs of love.

If Austen writes novels of feeling in a noticeably careful and even guarded fashion, we need to see that this guardedness is a historical phenomenon, not something that is peculiar to Austen's fiction or to her distanced or defensive nature, as Marvin Mudrick and, more recently, John Halperin have argued.⁶ Rather, as Marilyn Butler has amply demonstrated, self-conscious care and precision in emotional matters are lessons taught by a great many novels of Austen's time.⁷ Of these many novels from the 1790s, Austen's are the best remembered and perhaps even the best, but however appealing Austen's work is, and however skilled a writer she is, individual genius is not an adequate explanation of her work: Her subject and her language must also be understood in terms of larger social and historical forces. In this book, I argue that the expression of the language of real feeling in the late eighteenth century is historically determined, and by expression I mean not only the form of expression, that is, the view of language that is implied, but also feeling and the view of character that are implied. It is my object here to historicize Austen's language, as well as the feeling expressed in it, by examining emotion in Austen's fiction in the light of a wide range of historical circumstances, social and economic as well as literary.

In the last fifty years, criticism of Austen's novels, as Joel Weinsheimer has recently observed, has been remarkably traditional and conservative.⁸ Unlike many earlier writers we read and study, Austen has been continually in print and continually read since 1811. Because Austen is part of the Great Tradition, we have never had to rediscover or recuperate her work, nor has there been any systematic reassessment of it. All the

same, these novels have undergone a subtle but thorough transformation in their reading, in the ways they are appropriated, and in the needs they are asked to satisfy. To put this another way, the major difficulty we have with Austen is that her novels are simply too familiar: Her work is not supposed to present problems for us because we understand it so thoroughly. But far too often, what has passed for criticism of Austen's fiction is really appreciation, one form or another of explaining how well she writes. If we approach Austen's novels with the aim of showing how good they are, there is little chance that we will ever begin to understand them, because we begin by sharing their assumptions. As an example of such nostalgic criticism, Fredric Jameson examines Wayne Booth's celebration of Austen's narrative: In the *Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth holds up the narrator of *Emma* as a model of human perfection, but Jameson observes of such celebration:

The fact is that the implied or reliable narrator described by Booth is possible only in a situation of relative class homogeneity, and indeed reflects a basic community of values shared by a fairly restricted class of readers: and such a situation is not brought back into the world by fiat. . . . Thus the ultimate value of Booth's work is that of the conservative position in general: useful as diagnosis, and as a means of disengaging everything that is problematical in the existing state of things, its practical recommendations turn out to be nothing but regression and sterile nostalgia for the past.⁹

Michael McKeon argues in his study of Dryden's political poetry that no criticism can proceed adequately until it stands outside the unexamined, unrecognized, a priori assumptions within which the work was first conceived.¹⁰ We will never see Austen's work clearly if we accept her fiction as right or correct or natural: Rather, we need to see it as explicitly time-bound and historical, not the product of right or truth or nature or even a powerful morality. The task of criticism here is not to celebrate Austen's vision, however brilliant that vision may be, but rather to estrange her novels so that we can read them anew, or, at the very least, recognize their differences from our own world rather than actively seek to minimize or deny that difference.

In a recent study, *Jane Austen and the Drama of Woman*, LeRoy W. Smith observes, "By virtually unanimous agreement Austen is a social novelist, focusing on the interaction of individuals and groups within a clearly defined community and hoping to reconcile the demands of self and society."¹¹ This is an unexceptional statement, one that it is difficult to disagree with, and as such it is typical of our unexamined consensus about

Austen's novels. Austen's narrators do, in point of fact, spend a good deal of time and emphasis asserting moral virtue and social responsibility. Having agreed to this reasonable proposition, Austen scholars then fail to go on to observe that, although social values are celebrated, at the same time characters are represented or envisioned in opposite terms—of separateness, privacy, intimacy, and interiority.¹² Examination of the language of real feeling (and therefore the disjunction between public, social language and private, interior feeling) reveals a central contradiction at the heart of Austen's fiction, between the gentry's nostalgic code of paternalism, their rhetoric of social obligation, on the one hand, and on the other a remarkable representation of the solipsistic experience of interiority and a concurrent celebration of the individual subject.¹³

This argument for a contradiction between the interiority and intimacy of the courtship plot and the moral of social responsibility runs counter to more traditional readings. More conventionally, in her studies of the political context of literature at the turn of the nineteenth century, Marilyn Butler aligns Jane Austen with other conservative writers or anti-Jacobins, who include such reactionaries as Jane West:

Like other conservative moralists, Mrs. West denigrates the individual's reliance on himself. She shows for example how dangerous it is to trust private intuition or passion in forming judgments of others. Far better in her view to go to the external evidence. . . . The same discovery—that objective evidence should be preferred to private intuition—is made by a succession of Jane Austen heroines, Catherine Morland, Marianne Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse. And if feeling is an unreliable aid in choosing a husband, it is equally wayward as a general guide to conduct. Instead of the doctrine of cultivation of self, Mrs. West [and Austen too, by association] recommends humble, selfless service of others.¹⁴

In other words, the heroine must examine, study, and know her suitor rather than trust to her own feelings or, worse, give in to her (or his) passion. Butler attributes this rejection of feeling to a consciously moral, if not explicitly political, identification with the conservative, anti-Jacobin cause in a generation of novelists, such as Austen, who "consciously rejected emotional experience as a proper field of interest."¹⁵ The sides line up as follows: Along the right side is the anti-Jacobin Austen, a "conservative Christian moralist of the 1790's," who, following Edmund Burke, celebrates the greater claims of society over the individual; along

the left side are the radical Jacobins, supporters of the French Revolution and followers of Thomas Paine and William Godwin, who celebrate the rights of man over a repressive society.¹⁶ This conservative/radical dichotomy boils down to an objective/subjective opposition, with Austen on the former side: "The tendency of her fiction is to rebuke individual self-assertion. . . . [and so it is] inclined on the contrary to idealize 'feminine' traits in female characters, such as humility, contentment with a domestic role, and absence of sexuality."¹⁷ The problem with this implicitly political and explicitly moral explanation of the proper method of courtship is that, although it fits Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennet and Maria Edgeworth's Belinda Portman, the same formula fits far too many earlier works and characters, from Angelica in Congreve's *Love for Love* or Millamant in *The Way of the World*; and on through Fielding's Sophia Western, Richardson's Harriet Byron, and Burney's Evelina, Cecilia, and Camilla; along with countless other pre-1790 eighteenth-century heroines from fiction and drama, each of whom is counseled to accept a proposal of marriage only with extreme caution and prudence, and not on the basis of evanescent and easily mistaken passion, lest she throw herself away on a Sir John Brute or a Lovelace. Thus, to ascribe the advice of prudence in courtship to the politically repressive atmosphere of the 1790s will not do. Nor will it do to divide culture and politics in this period into clear and nonintersecting halves: On the contrary, conservative Austen, as much as moderate Edgeworth or radical Godwin and Bage, enacts in her novels the dominant bourgeois ideology of a thoroughly individualistic society. Austen's implicit references to politics may be as conservative as Butler suggests, and her novels may be as explicitly moral as Butler suggests, but Austen's representation of character cannot be attributed wholly to a conscious moral design: Rather, her representation of character enacts bourgeois ideology of the individual subject within a high capitalist, consumer society, an ideology that conservative, radical, and moderate novelists alike embody at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Rather than simply divide England into Jacobin and anti-Jacobin camps, Raymond Williams offers a more complicated and contradictory but I think more accurate view of Austen's society:

no single, settled society, it is an active, complicated, sharply speculative process. It is indeed that most difficult world to describe, in English social history: an acquisitive, high bourgeois society at the point of its most evident interlocking with an agrarian capitalism that is itself mediated by inherited titles and by the making of family names. Into the long and complicated inter-

action of landed and trading capital, the process that Cobbett observed—the arrival of "the nabobs, negro-drivers, admirals, generals" and so on—is directly inserted, and is even taken for granted. The social confusions and contradictions of this complicated process are then the true source of many of the problems of human conduct and valuation, which the personal actions dramatize. An openly acquisitive society, which is concerned also with the transmission of wealth, is trying to judge itself at once by an inherited code and by the morality of improvement.¹⁸

Austen embodies this backward-looking "inherited code" of noblesse oblige and social obligation in estate management and genealogical as well as social continuity in figures such as Darcy and Knightley, but also in the more rigidly moral heroines such as Elinor and Fanny, with their dependence upon and vigorous approbation of traditional social form and obedience to external authority. More mobile figures such as Captain Wentworth, however, bespeak a "morality of improvement," which, in Wentworth's accumulation of personal fortune, is pictured as something quite different from the voracious acquisition of the likes of John Dashwood, and so in *Persuasion*, as many have noted, Austen is far less certain and insistent about the value of traditional, fixed social hierarchy. And with someone such as Emma ("whom no one but myself will much like"), Austen is decidedly ambivalent, at once rebuking and celebrating Emma's wayward but nonetheless attractive individualism.

Following Butler, David Monaghan makes a similar case for a socially conservative Austen: "Jane Austen's . . . thesis [is] that the fate of society depends on the ability of the landed classes to live up to their ideal of concern for others, and on the willingness of the other groups to accept this ideal."¹⁹ No one would argue that Austen is unconcerned with social or moral responsibility. Nevertheless, traditionally moral and social readings of Austen's novels fail to account for how individualized and privatized they have become, how much more fragmented and incoherent the society imaged in *Persuasion* is compared with that of *Sense and Sensibility*. In *Emma*, the heroine must endure the burden and encumbrance of community, with little of its reward. Several commentators observe how much Anne Elliot is alienated from her society, that in fact there is little sense of traditional community in *Persuasion*.²⁰ Austen's novels pass from objective to subjective, becoming increasingly private, personal, and domestic, or, as Julia Brown puts it, they pass from a "tradition-directed to an inner-directed society."²¹ With *Pride and Prejudice*, the old saws have it that Elizabeth represents the private or personal or subjective view of things, whereas Darcy represents the public or

social or objective view of things, and that Darcy's view ultimately dominates. But Elizabeth's view is not repudiated, for the narrative narrows down to her increasingly subjective perspective, and it is this view that prevails at the end. Darcy's patriarchal and feudal perspective is never really shown, except by inference through his housekeeper at Pemberley. However noisily introduced, the public or social or objective side of Darcy is confined to the political lesson of Pemberley and its spokesperson, the housekeeper, and as such it remains but a trace, a vestige of the old social order, embedded within the personal story of Elizabeth.

My point here is not that the novels become more bourgeois, but rather that by the time of *Persuasion*, and even more obviously in the grossly fragmented, uprooted, commercialized, and exploitative world of *Sanditon*, there is much less of a gap or contradiction between the implicit (or unconscious) ideological dimensions of character and social relations on the one hand, and the explicit (or conscious) moral and social dimensions of the novels on the other hand. That is to say, the fragmentation and subjectivity of the seaside resort in *Sanditon* or Bath and the estate in *Persuasion* are produced by an ideology of the individual subject and interiority that runs from Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility* through Charlotte and Clara in *Sanditon*.

Thus, I would like to argue that this central relation between self and society (to return to the traditional terms of Austen criticism) is not, as Smith would have it, a universal or eternal or natural opposition, nor, as Butler would have it, is this dynamic determined solely by the political struggles of the 1790s. Rather—and this is my central argument—the problematic status of the individual subject in Austen's six novels is a particular one that is determined by large-scale historical developments of eighteenth-century Europe, that is, the development of the "antinomies of bourgeois thought: subject/object; freedom/necessity; individual/society; form/content."²² To use the terms of classic, nineteenth-century German sociology, the transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* or from genuine human community to a legally defined and impersonal society is a demonstrably and specifically historical matter and should be analyzed as such.²³ To that end, the work of Georg Lukács, the first great theorist of the novel, is indispensable. That is to say, to analyze the problematic of the individual subject and her narrative at this historical juncture, we need to turn to Lukács. Paul de Man summarizes Lukács's program in *The Theory of the Novel*: "The emergence of the novel as the major modern genre is seen as the result of a change in the structure of human consciousness; the development of the novel reflects modifications in man's way of defining himself in relation to all categories of

existence."²⁴ The novel according to Lukács is determined by the characteristic dualisms of modern society, for "the hero of the novel . . . is the product of estrangement from the outside world."²⁵ The novel develops in an age in which the subject expects but can no longer find adequate definition within larger social structures, and so she experiences a disturbing disjunction between her individual nature and the larger expectation of social order or meaning: "The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality."²⁶ In his study of Lukács and his theory of the novel, J. M. Bernstein sums up this dynamic: "the novel is necessarily an interpretation as well as repetition of reality"; that is, "for Lukács the novel is a dialectic of form-giving and mimesis, a dialectic of interpretation and representation. These two aspects or moments of the novel correspond to the Kantian worlds of freedom and causality, ought and is; the dialectic of the novel is the attempt to write the world as it is in terms of how it ought to be."²⁷

In effect, Bernstein "completes" *The Theory of the Novel* in the light of Lukács's later masterwork, *History and Class Consciousness*, by demonstrating that the central premise of *The Theory of the Novel* is "that the dualisms which permeate the bourgeois world are the result of the reification and rationalization of the social world caused by commodity production."²⁸ The form of the novel embodies the alienation or objectification inevitable under capitalism: "the antinomic relation between subject and structure, between form-giving subjectivity with its premised freedom and reified structural complexes which leave no room for freedom or (authentic) subjectivity. . . . the dualisms which permeate the bourgeois world are the result of the reification and rationalization of the social world caused by commodity production."²⁹ As Lukács puts it, the central dualism is experienced as a fundamental disjunction between the individual feeling subject and the inexplicable objective world:

man in capitalist society confronts a reality "made" by himself (as a class) which appears to him to be a natural phenomenon alien to himself; he is wholly at the mercy of its "laws," his activity is confined to the exploitation of the inexorable fulfillment of certain individual laws for his own (egoistic) interests. But even while "acting" he remains, in the nature of the case, the object and not the subject of events. The field of his activity thus becomes wholly internalized: it consists on the one hand of the awareness of the laws which he uses and, on the other, of his awareness of his inner reactions to the course taken by events.³⁰

Under a fully developed market capitalism and its consequent "fetish of the commodity," exchange value comes to dominate over use value, and so products and their producers become dissociated from both intrinsic and traditional values. Exchange value in precapitalist modes of production had been "episodic," but under capitalism, commodity has become "the universal structuring principle."³¹ As the principal event of exchange, wage labor is rationalized or quantified, while, through industrial mechanization and specialization, the worker is separated or alienated from the overall process of production: "We can see a continuous trend towards greater rationalization, the progressive elimination of the qualitative, human and individual attributes of the worker."³² In this way, she is alienated from the product of labor, as well as from the means of production: "the personality can do no more than look on helplessly while its own existence is reduced to an isolated particle and fed into an alien system."³³ Thus, not just the behemoth factory, or, what is closer to Austen's own experience, the improvements of agrarian capitalism, but the whole mechanized and rationalized system of production comes to seem separate, external, preexisting, self-sufficient, and "natural." It is this universal, distanced, externalized world of commodity relations that produces the sense of objectification of the external world; in this objectified world, each individual is stripped of any genuine sense of community or participation in social relations and is left instead with a contemplative stance toward the world, a stance that in a precapitalist society may have been the characteristic and privilege of the leisure class but under capital becomes universal.

The correlative to objectification and the contemplative stance is the heightened interiority or subjectivity of individualism, or, as Bernstein writes, "the world where freedom is exiled into subjectivity."³⁴ Here is Lukács's explanation of the "fetish of the commodity":

a man's own activity, his own labour becomes something objective and independent of him, something that controls him by virtue of an autonomy alien to man. There is both an objective and a subjective side to this phenomenon. *Objectively* a world of objects and relations between things springs into being (the world of commodities and their movements on the market). The laws governing these objects are indeed gradually discovered by man, but even so they confront him as invisible forces that generate their own power. The individual can use his knowledge of these laws to his own advantage, but he is not able to modify the process by his own activity. *Subjectively*—where the market economy has been fully developed—a man's activity becomes estranged from

himself, it turns into a commodity which, subject to the non-human objectivity of the natural laws of society, must go its own way independently of man just like any consumer article.³⁵

The ideological consequences of the objectification of social relations under capital are effectively summarized by Bernstein:

It is not difficult to see in this description of a causally determined world resulting from human activity, and a "world" of freedom exiled into interiority a metaphysical statement of the Marxist theory that in the historically conditioned exercise of our freedom and rationality we have created the "alienating" world of capital which leaves no objective, social space where our freedom and reason may express itself. . . . Freedom and value must hence retreat into subjectivity.³⁶

In short, the mystification of commodity centers on the ways in which social relations, between capitalist and laborer, or, it might be argued, between husband and wife, assume "the fantastic form of a relation between things."³⁷

It may be objected that this radical subjectivity is just what Austen so vigorously writes against, but nevertheless her novels engender or reproduce just this sense of subjectivity, even while they appear to celebrate the gentry's code of nostalgic paternalism. Her novels re-create the essential ideological contradiction between the rhetoric of social obligation and the solipsistic experience of individuality and interiority, for, inevitably, "true authenticity" is only found within, experienced as interiority: As Lukács puts it in his "Reification" essay, "Ideologically, we see the same contradiction in the fact that the bourgeoisie endowed the individual with an unprecedented importance, but at the same time that same individuality was annihilated by the economic conditions to which it was subjected, by the reification created by commodity production."³⁸

Despite Austen's self-conscious political, moral, and religious conservatism, and despite her class identification with the gentry, and their sentiments of noblesse oblige, the way in which Austen's heroine defines herself in relation to all categories of existence is inevitably determined by the alienating effects of capital, under which social relations and practices are externalized and objectified and from which, consequently, the individual is alienated. Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, Austen's most obviously subjective, interiorized characters, embody that characteristic stance of distance that Marvin Mudrick attributes to Jane Austen's personality, but that for Lukács typifies the essence of modern subject-

tivity: "We have found the only true substance within ourselves: that is why we have to place an unbridgeable chasm between cognition and action, between soul and created structure, between self and world."³⁹

What have such apparently distant matters to do with our understanding of Jane Austen's novels? After all, Emma Woodhouse, heiress to £35,000 and a modest paternal estate, is not an exploited or alienated factory laborer, nor was her creator. But Lukács's argument is not confined to one class, but rather it embraces all categories of experience under capitalism. Objectification, Lukács insists, is not so much a kind of deceptive mythology or a false consciousness as it is consciousness itself: Under capital, "economic factors are not concealed 'behind' consciousness but are present *in* consciousness itself (albeit unconsciously or repressed)."⁴⁰ Furthermore, the nature of commodity production and exchange is not something Austen is unfamiliar with (Mary Crawford quotes that "true London maxim, that every thing is to be got with money" [MP 58]), nor, as we shall see, is she unfamiliar with the transformative effects of agrarian capitalism and the morality of improvement, though it is true that such matters have traditionally received scant attention in her fiction. The conditions of objectification—of isolation, fragmentation, and atomization—are represented by Austen in mystified and confusing or contradictory fashion, but still these conditions are seen as a real human problem.⁴¹ As Lukács remarks in an interview, "the art of any time—and this is the essential thing—relates the immediate problems of its age to the general development of mankind and links them with it, a connection which may of course be quite hidden from the writer himself."⁴² In *The Historical Novel*, Lukács praises Austen's contemporary Sir Walter Scott for his sense of "historical necessity": "it is a complex interaction of concrete historical circumstances in their process of transformation, in their interaction with concrete human beings."⁴³ In examining Austen's representation of the objectification of social relations, we are observing a similar instance of historical necessity, though her chosen realm is self-consciously not large-scale political history, as in *Waverley*, but rather domestic, private experience. Nevertheless, domestic, private experience is as much subject to the determinations of history as national politics, and so we should look for the same interaction of concrete historical circumstances and concrete individuals in Austen's novels as we do in Scott's.

In order to historicize the fictional representation of private experience, we can begin by exploring the sense of disparity between subject and object, between internal feeling and external event. In Austen's novels

this disjunction is most evident in the interrelation between feeling and expression or character and language, what may be termed the ideology of the language of real feeling. Our first order of business, therefore, is an examination of Austen's conception of language, and in particular what Austen suggests cannot be said, her narrative dread: Her heroines are regularly described by the narrator as experiencing emotions which cannot be clothed in words.⁴⁴ This phrase is not casual or formulaic, but rather a part of a consistent effort in the novels to indicate what they cannot name, an area of experience and emotion that lies outside language. To explore what lies within and without language, this study is organized into two halves, the first of which traces the transformation of a central semantic metaphor, the language-as-clothing metaphor, which undergoes substantial change during the eighteenth century. Austen's use of the language-as-clothing metaphor is quite close to Wordsworth's, and, further, I argue that her conception of, or theory of, language, as well as her use, is essentially Romantic. Unlike earlier eighteenth-century conceptions of language, this Romantic or Wordsworthian notion of language acknowledges limits past which language cannot go, insisting that thought and feeling are infinite, but language is finite. Austen's use of clothing is the subject of the first three chapters: literal clothing, the clothing of emotion, and language as clothing. The first chapter concerns her portrayal of material dress in the novels; the second examines the emotions characteristic of her marriage proposal scenes as compared with such scenes from earlier eighteenth-century novels; and the third deals directly with the transformation of the metaphor of language clothing thought in words. The second half consists of three chapters that examine Austen's conception and portrayal of character, her representation of marriage, and, finally, her celebration of intimacy. In other words, the two halves of this study are made up of a description of a Romantic ideology that Austen shares and, second, an analysis or critique of that ideology.⁴⁵

In Austen's language and in her descriptive technique, we can discern a recurrent pattern in which the fundamental elements of her fictional world, material things as well as ideal sentiments, are indicated but not described—they are briefly exposed and then withdrawn from view again. The "inner life" of characters in general is both presented and protected by a pattern of privacy. Austen's representational technique, her form of narrative, then, needs to be related to the social history of privacy. And, when this relation is combined with the later discussions of changing concepts of language, of character, and of marriage, we will be able to trace the development of some modern notions of individuality,

interiority, intimacy, and romance. It is not just that the novel is the best record of these changes concerning the fundamental conception of the relationship between the individual subject and others around her—that is, ideology—but rather it is the unique cultural work of the novel to mediate what we think we are.⁴⁶ If “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,” in Louis Althusser’s famous phrase, the novel is both the expression of and site for the development of that imaginary relationship.⁴⁷ In literary history, Austen’s work has come to be valued as a significant moment in the technological development of fictional representation; what I want to do here is to locate these developments within social and economic history. To put this another way, what I am particularly interested in tracing in this book is the novel as a record of the interrelation between exterior and interior events, between economic, political, and social changes and their private or domestic consequences. That is to say, I am interested in the relation between history and the individual subject, and, moreover, the ways in which we have come to think in terms of just this sort of opposition. If “history is what hurts,” as Fredric Jameson puts it,⁴⁸ in Austen’s novels, and indeed throughout the nineteenth-century novel, love is what soothes, for private or domestic romance comes to function as the ideological negation of history, a refuge into a “natural” and “timeless” world of privacy and intimacy. Intimacy functions to efface the ideological contradiction between social responsibility and private withdrawal, for intimacy serves as the private “solution” to alienation and the objectification of social relations—romance and reification are two sides to the same coin or two sides of an ideological contradiction. Austen’s achievement is to integrate the privatization of human relations into the appropriate vehicle, the courtship narrative or domestic love story.

Again, it is my argument that Austen’s notions of private experience and public performance are neither natural nor eternal but peculiar to this period and that these notions are best understood in Lukács’s terms of the objectification of social relations under capital. Lukács’s Marxist analysis brings to the study of Austen a totalizing explanation. As commentators have observed regularly for several decades now, formerly the study of Austen was stunted by her gender and her domestic subject, limitations that were conveniently condensed in Austen’s own trivializing remark “on the little bit (two inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush” (L 469). Contemporary Austen scholars make substantially greater claims for her work and worth: In Janet Todd’s words, “Jane Austen is the first indubitably great woman writer in English.”⁴⁹

But despite such great claims, since 1970 work on Austen has given in to the specialization and fragmentation evident everywhere in literary studies.⁵⁰ Whatever its other weaknesses, the Hegelian wing of Marxism, and Lukács remains its most powerful theorist, aspires to totalizing explanation—in his defense of Lukács, Jameson quotes “Hegel’s great dictum, ‘the true is the whole.’”⁵¹ It is of course crucial to understand and allow for the political topicality and historical specificity of Lukács’s argument, and, furthermore, because of his precarious situations in exile, he is often difficult to pin down, especially when revising and reevaluating his own work from the past. Nonetheless, his is the most expansive, and I believe the most compelling, explanation of social changes in response to the advent of market capitalism and commodity exchange.⁵² That his model underwent various modifications and changes in vocabulary over time in no way undermines its or his insight. As will be clear later, in using Lukács’s theory here, I am also heavily indebted to the work of his most able contemporary proponent, Fredric Jameson. In short, this study is based primarily on Lukács’s Marxist theory and its contemporary revision in Jameson on the one hand, and balanced on the other hand with the historical analysis of Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson and the sense of eighteenth-century culture that they have so painstakingly recovered and reconstructed.

This theoretical alliance will allow us to place and to understand Austen within the largest historical framework, within the frame advocated by Jameson: Interpretation

of a particular text must take place within three concentric frameworks, which mark a widening out of the sense of the social ground of a text through the notions, first, of a political history, in the narrow sense of punctual event and a chroniclelike sequence of happenings in time; then of society, in the now already less diachronic and time-bound sense of a constitutive tension and struggle between social classes; and, ultimately, of history now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and the succession and destiny of the various human social formations.⁵³

Furthermore, if traditional Austen criticism is governed by a moral vision that celebrates her dialectic of self and society, Lukács and Jameson are able to situate historically this very dialectic: “Marxism subsumes other interpretive modes or systems; . . . the limits of the latter can always be overcome, and their more positive findings retained, by a radical histor-

icizing of their mental operations, such that not only the content of the analysis, but the very method itself, along with the analyst, then comes to be reckoned into the 'text' or phenomenon to be explained."⁵⁴

From the work of social and family historians such as Lawrence Stone, we have begun to see the degree to which Austen's fiction embodies late-eighteenth-century views of courtship and marriage: No longer primarily financial transactions or transfers of property, arranged by parents for the benefit of large kinship systems, marriage for Austen's class was coming to be idealized as an individual compact of love and affection. Feminist criticism has particularly invigorated Austen studies by enabling us to see that Austen's novels are situated at the beginning of the formation of this view of courtship and marriage, a view from which we are only now, two hundred years later, beginning to extricate ourselves.⁵⁵ Austen's appeal, in large part, lies in the fact that her novels are among the first in English to codify the values of love and affection in marriage, marriage envisioned as private intimacy, set against the threat of loneliness and solipsism. It is the task of dialectical analysis to correlate Austen's moment in history with our own, the two of which are situated on opposite ends of a distinct and definable era that celebrates individual emotion. As a consequence of two decades of feminist revision, we are finally in a position to begin to make visible the ideology of this period that lies between Austen and ourselves.

I Clothing

We are still faced with an abyss; a gulf yawns before us; on the other side are the working classes. The writer of perfect judgement and taste, like Jane Austen, does no more than glance across the gulf.

—Virginia Woolf, *Essays*¹

In a letter to Cassandra written during a visit to London in 1813, Jane Austen sent her sister a little fantasy about the heroines of *Pride and Prejudice*:

Henry & I went to the Exhibition in Spring Gardens. It was not thought a good collection, but I was very well pleased—particularly (pray tell Fanny) with a small portrait of Mrs. Bingley, excessively like her. I went in hopes of seeing one of her Sister, but there was no Mrs. Darcy;—perhaps however, I may find her in the Great Exhibition which we shall go to if we have time. . . . Mrs. Bingley's is exactly herself, size, shaped face, features & sweetness; there never was a greater likeness. She is dressed in a white gown with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed, that green was a favorite colour with her. I dare say Mrs. D. will be in Yellow. (L 309–10)²

That none of these details of appearance, taste, and dress appears in *Pride and Prejudice* properly supports what R. W. Chapman observed of Austen long ago: "Miss Austen knows all the details, and gives us very few of them."³ We need to inquire why Austen would have envisioned these details if she was not going to disclose them in her novel. In the

famous opposition of the epic and the novel, wherein the epic tells the history of a community while the novel tells the history of a problematic individual, Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* represents in some ways the last epic, for its story concerns Squire Allworthy's estate more than the titular hero.³⁶ The ending sentence of *Tom Jones*, with its emphasis on the estate and its dependents, need only be compared with *Persuasion*, in which the paternal estate is all but ruined: "And such is their Condescension, their Indulgence, and their Beneficence to those below them, that there is not a Neighbour, a Tenant, or a Servant, who doth not most gratefully bless the Day when Mr. Jones was married to his Sophia."³⁷ If Fielding's novel is a type of backward-looking epic, Austen's innovation in closure is just that, a kind of closing in of the two protagonists into a hidden privacy of true intimacy. It is no accident that in *Pamela* and in *Sir Charles Grandison* Richardson feels obligated to track the newlyweds much longer, bringing them back to the paternal estate, before the family history can be safely and sensibly concluded. At the close of the *Paradiso* (Lukács's idea of the true epic), Dante can envision closure or climactic union as an absorption by ultimate authority of the individual soul, but by Austen's time, and in Austen's form, climactic union has been reconceived within the ideology of the subject; the narrator describes Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot at their reunion, lost amid the public crowd in Bath, as two individual "souls dancing in private rapture."

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (1971, rpt. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), p. 34.
2. Austen's fiction is quoted from *The Novels of Jane Austen*, 5 vols., ed. R. W. Chapman (1923, rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), and *Minor Works*, ed. R. W. Chapman (1954, rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1975); page numbers are included in the text.
3. Austen's letters are quoted from *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. R. W. Chapman (1932, rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Numbers in the text refer to page numbers.
4. Austen evidently kept a record of the responses of others to her novels; see, for example, where she notes that "Mrs. Creed's opinion is gone down on my list" (L 422).
5. William Beatty Warner, *Reading Clarissa, The Struggles of Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 123–42.
6. Marvin Mudrick argues that Austen consistently substitutes irony and distance for emotional engagement. *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (1952, rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); John Halperin similarly writes that Austen was cold and distant, "a woman deficient in feeling." *The Life of Jane Austen* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 305.
7. Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), *passim*.
8. "Emma and its Critics, The Value of Tact," in *Jane Austen, New Perspectives*, ed. Janet Todd, *Women & Literature*, NS 3 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), pp.

257–72; Adena Rosmarin makes much the same point in “‘Misreading’ *Emma*: The Powers and Perfidies of Interpretive History,” *ELH* 51 (1984), pp. 315–42.

9. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 357–58; the passage from Wayne Booth referred to is in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 264–65.

10. Michael McKeon, *Politics and Poetry in Restoration England, the Case of Dryden's Annus Mirabilis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 267–81.

11. LeRoy W. Smith, *Jane Austen and the Drama of Woman* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 19–20.

12. Francis R. Hart's suggestive study, “The Spaces of Privacy: Jane Austen,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30 (1975), pp. 305–33, is a notable exception, as he demonstrates the importance of privacy as well as the sharp division between private and public in Austen's fiction, but even here these issues need to be much more fully historicized.

13. Though I use the term *middle class*, or more commonly, *gentry* to describe Austen's class, David Spring makes a persuasive case for the term *pseudo-gentry*, which includes professionals such as clergy who were dependent upon but still aspired to or emulated the land-owning gentry. “Interpreters of Jane Austen's Social World,” in *Jane Austen, New Perspectives*, ed. Todd, pp. 53–72.

14. Butler, *War of Ideas*, p. 101.

15. Butler, *War of Ideas*, p. 97.

16. Butler, *War of Ideas*, p. 164.

17. Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 97 and 98.

18. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 115.

19. David Monaghan, *Jane Austen Structure and Social Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 7.

20. See, for example, Walton Litz, “*Persuasion*: Forms of Estrangement” in *Jane Austen Bicentenary Essays*, ed. John Halperin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 221–32; Nina Auerbach, “O Brave New World: Evolution and Revolution in *Persuasion*,” *ELH* 39 (1972), pp. 112–28.

21. Julia Prewitt Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels: Social Change and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 19.

22. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (1968, rpt. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), p. 156.

23. Lee Gordon, *The Young Lukács* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), pp. 98–100.

24. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 53.

25. Lukács, *Theory*, p. 66.

26. Lukács, *Theory*, p. 56.

27. J. M. Bernstein, *The Philosophy of the Novel: Lukács, Marxism and the Dialectics of Form* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. xviii and 215.

28. Bernstein, *Philosophy of the Novel*, p. 197. For a lucid discussion of the historical and political context of Lukács's work, see George Lichtheim, *Lukács* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1970).

29. Bernstein, *Philosophy of the Novel*, pp. 186 and 197. In his 1967 preface to

History and Class Consciousness, Lukács acknowledges his tendency to collapse “reification,” “objectification,” and “alienation,” p. xxiv.

30. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 135.

31. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 85.

32. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 88.

33. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 90.

34. Bernstein, p. xix.

35. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 87.

36. Bernstein, pp. xvii–xviii.

37. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 86, quoting Karl Marx, *Capital*, 3 vols., ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), I, 72.

38. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 62.

39. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 34.

40. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 59.

41. *Isolation, fragmentation, and atomization* are Lukács's terms, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 91.

42. *Conversations with Lukács*, ed. Theo Pinkus (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975), p. 37. Lukács's remarks on Balzac from the same interview are relevant to this issue: “As a great historian of the Restoration period, Balzac showed precisely how the aristocracy came to be the leading force in public life. He showed at the same time, however, how this aristocracy became completely capitalized, how the typical representatives of the aristocracy at this time were essential agrarian capitalists, who drew the greatest possible profit from the Restoration. . . . In this respect I find Balzac a quite great historian, who didn't need a single intellectual contact with Marx to see this duality, i.e., how economic development was irresistible even in opposition to the desires, wishes and thought of the men responsible for it” (p. 128).

43. Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962), p. 58. In some ways, *The Historical Novel* can be read as an extreme revision of *The Theory of the Novel*, purged of its idealism.

44. Among previous studies of Austen's language, most notable are K. C. Phillipps, *Jane Austen's English* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970) and Norman Page, *The Language of Jane Austen* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1972). For a less descriptive and more conceptual or thematic study of Austen's language, see Howard S. Babb, *Jane Austen's Novels, The Fabric of Dialogue* (1962, rpt. Hamden: Archon Books, 1967).

45. Jerome McGann argues that romanticism and criticism of it are characterized by an assumption of the transcendence of history: “In the Romantic Age these and similar ideas [e.g. the creativity of the Imagination, the centrality of the Self, etc.] are represented as trans-historical-eternal truths which wake to perish never. The very belief that transcendental categories can provide a permanent ground for culture becomes, in the Romantic Age, an ideological formation—another illusion raised up to hold back an awareness of the contradictions inherent in contemporary social structures and the relations they support.” *The Romantic Ideology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 134. As helpful as this corrective is, McGann's unwillingness to ground this Romantic ideology in particular history and politics undermines his effort.

46. See Lennard David, *Resisting Novels, Ideology and Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987), for a very suggestive and thorough discussion of these matters.

47. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 162.
48. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 102.
49. "Who's Afraid of Jane Austen," in *Jane Austen: New Perspectives*, p. 112.
50. For a more thorough discussion of this trend, see James Thompson, "Jane Austen and History," *Review 8* (1986), pp. 21–32.
51. *The Political Unconscious*, p. 53.
52. In "Traveling Theory," Edward Said warns against the ahistorical appropriation of theory, using explicitly the example of *History and Class Consciousness. The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 226–47. For Lukács's own remarks on the moment of *History and Class Consciousness*, see his autobiographical writings, *Georg Lukács, Record of a Life*, ed. István Eörsi, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 75–78.
53. *The Political Unconscious*, p. 75.
54. *The Political Unconscious*, p. 47.
55. For an insightful review of feminist discussions of marriage in Austen, see Karen Newman, "Can This Marriage Be Saved: Jane Austen Makes Sense of an Ending," *ELH* 50 (1983), pp. 693–710.

CHAPTER 1

1. Virginia Woolf, *Collected Essays I* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), p. 220.
2. Austen was disappointed at the Great Exhibition as well, as she reveals at the end of this letter: "there was nothing like Mrs. D. at either. I can only imagine that Mr. D. prizes any Picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the public eye.—I can imagine he wd have that sort of feeling—that mixture of Love, Pride & Delicacy" (L 312): It is clear that Austen shared with Darcy some of this proprietary dislike of displaying her creations.
3. "Jane Austen's Methods," *Times Literary Supplement* (9 February 1922), 82a.
4. Robert Alan Donovan, "The Mind of Jane Austen," in *Jane Austen Today*, ed. Joel Weinsheimer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), p. 110.
5. The dialectic of interpretation and representation comes from J. M. Bernstein's interpretation of Lukács: "For Lukács the novel is a dialectic of form-giving and mimesis, a dialectic of interpretation and representation. . . . The novel is premised by the gap between is and ought; the practice of novel writing both recognizes the gap and through the instrumentality of form attempts to bridge it." *The Philosophy of the Novel*, p. xviii.
6. "Jane Austen's Anthropocentrism," in *Jane Austen Today*, p. 133.
7. Although Miss Steele is clearly presented as foolish and vulgar, we should note that her interest in clothing and its cost is not dissimilar to the interest Austen exhibits throughout her letters. Furthermore, Miss Steele's fascination with detail parallels the imagination of the novelist: Nothing escaped *her* minute observation and general curiosity either.
8. Graham Hough's observation about clothing in Austen represents a typically and traditionally half-true confusion of morality and materiality in these novels: "Concern with clothes, objects, and material details is always the sign of

inferiority in the novels. Anyone in Jane Austen who talks about sprigged muslin or boiled eggs is either bad or in some degree ridiculous. If we need any demonstration that her novels are not mere transcripts of her daily experience, that the narrator in charge of her fiction is an ideal construct different from her daily self, we have only to compare her novels with her letters." "Narrative and Dialogue in Jane Austen," in Graham Hough, *Selected Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 67.

9. For a consideration of these issues in a somewhat later period, see Helene E. Robert, "The Exquisite Slave": The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman," *Signs* 2 (1977), 554–69, as well as David Kunzle, "Dress Reform as Antifeminism," *Signs* 2 (1977), pp. 570–79.

10. Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, 2 vols. (London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1833), I, 3.

11. Accurate generalizations about the change of fashion are difficult to make, but the period from 1790 to 1820 marks a shift in taste from the relative simplicity of Neoclassicism to more elaborate Romantic styles. Accordingly, evening dress becomes increasingly more expensive through the gradual transition from muslins to silk and the addition of expensive trimmings of lace, pearls, and gold and silver embroidery. The basic gown may have not varied all that much in price, but the expense could be dramatically increased by the trimmings. See Geoffrey Squire, *Dress and Society, 1560–1970* (New York: Viking Press, 1974).

12. See Neil McKendrick, "The Commercialization of Fashion," in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society, The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 71–81.

13. Christopher Kent observes that the price of muslin varied so much because of the increasing competition between Indian and domestic producers; further, the price may be mentioned because the higher price of imported muslin added to its exclusivity and exchange value. "'Real Solemn History' and Social History," in *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, ed. David Monaghan (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1981), pp. 96–98.

14. Neil McKendrick, "The Commercialization of Fashion," pp. 34–99. See also Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life 1400–1800*, trans. Miriam Kochan (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 226–43. Braudel observes, "In fact the sovereign authority of fashion was barely enforced in its full rigour before 1700" (p. 231). McKendrick, in turn, traces the rate of change across the eighteenth century: "The accelerating pace of fashion change can only be accommodated by referring to the styles of George I, George II, the 1760s, the 1770s, the 1780s and 1790s and with many fashion goods even that is insufficient and anyone with scholarship worthy of the name would have to refer to individual years" (p. 42).

15. McKendrick describes in detail the ways in which these patterns of fashion were disseminated to the provinces: "By the end of the eighteenth century the competitive, socially emulative aspect of fashion was being consciously manipulated by commerce in pursuit of increased consumption. This new fashion world was one in which entrepreneurs were trying deliberately to induce fashionable change, to make it rapidly available to as many as possible and yet to keep it so firmly under their control that the consuming public could be sufficiently influenced to buy at the dictate of *their* fashion decisions, at the convenience of *their* production lines. Those fashion decisions were increasingly based on economic

Chapter Five

“Another World Must Be Unfurled”

Jane Austen and America

It is not a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen's most celebrated novels, with their polite representations of English life, were written at a time when Britain was at war with the United States. Tension between the two nations had been rumbling on since the American War of Independence in the 1780s, and conflict broke out again in earnest in June 1812, one year after the publication of *Sense and Sensibility* and one year before the appearance of *Pride and Prejudice*. *Mansfield Park* came out in 1814, at the height of these transatlantic hostilities, which were officially concluded in December of that year by the Treaty of Ghent. The purpose of this chapter is to consider how Austen's texts refract the turbulence of British relations with America in the early nineteenth century and how the problematic status of familial and pedagogical authority in her narratives can be related to the insurrectionary temper abroad in the English-speaking world of this time.

The apparent invisibility of the American Revolution in the annals of English literature is something of a curiosity, but, as I suggested in the introduction, one reason for the impact and aftermath of this event remaining largely obscure is that it was a war the English lost. By contrast, there have been many considerations of how the development of Anglo-Saxon Romanticism in the early nineteenth century ran in parallel with the Napoleonic wars, where, of course, the country's military forces emerged triumphant. The common denominator in British politics and literature of this period was a growth in the idea of patriotism and an increasingly idealized notion of the national soil, qualities which informed the representation of nature in Wordsworth's poetry as much as the popular response to Wellington's exploits. It was at this time, says David Simpson, that characterizations of a “national personality” were promoted in Britain, partly in an attempt to forestall the threat of radical revolutions; as a race, the British were held to

cherish common sense and solid particulars rather than those abstract generalizations deemed to be more typical of the French. By 1816, Coleridge was rejecting the whole notion of reason as excessively abstruse and theoretical, preferring instead to luxuriate in an “organic” poetic consciousness that worked in comfortably with his view of the organic state of British cultural tradition.¹

In this sense, the British declaration of war against France in February 1793 can be seen to have unified and galvanized a nation that had been disturbed during the previous twenty years by conflicts with American opponents whom it had been less easy to demonize. The American War of Independence, argues Linda Colley, was in fact a civil war, not only because both sides had much in common, but also because each side was split within itself. Many people in Britain preserved strong family links with emigrants to America, just as most Americans up until the mid-1770s prided themselves on being loyal subjects of the king.² After the Declaration of Independence, however, the idea of America came to be generally associated in Britain with an idea of insubordination, an insidious resistance to authority. Thomas Paine, whose pamphlets circulated in huge numbers among English workers, was a crucial figure in promoting America within these circles as a beacon of liberty, an example of how agreeably society might function without the malign powers of hereditary monarchy or aristocracy. The extent to which William Pitt’s government was perturbed by the general dissemination of antiestablishment ideas at this time can be gauged from their determination to prosecute Paine at the Guildhall show trial in 1792, where he was convicted in his absence for the “seditious libels” contained in *The Rights of Man*.³

Paine’s Quaker iconoclasm can be seen as a bridge between lower-class discontent in Britain and what Isaac Kramnick has called the “bourgeois radicalism” of this era.⁴ This more intellectual style of dissent, which took its liberal ideas from Locke and its emphasis upon individual freedom of spirit from the Nonconformist churches, protested particularly against the institutionalized religious discrimination which prohibited non-Anglicans from holding public office. These radical “Commonwealthmen” looked back consciously to the Civil War of the 1640s, seeking there a justification not only for greater religious tolerance but also for other kinds of freedom: for instance, the Society for Constitutional Information, a political association with which many of them were associated, campaigned actively for the unhindered circulation of knowledge.⁵ By the early nineteenth century, the radical focus in Britain had moved more toward the issue of equality, but in the late eighteenth century it was still concerned primarily with questions of liberty. Within that framework, America, not France, appeared as Britain’s alter ego, the kind of society it might be, but wasn’t. Consequently, many British intellectuals in the 1790s remained sympathetic to the American cause:

the prominent scientist and Unitarian clergyman, Joseph Priestley, emigrated from Birmingham to Pennsylvania in 1794, while in the same year the younger Coleridge planned with Robert Southey to establish a utopian community in America, an idea that in the end came to nothing. James Chandler, echoing the title of a pamphlet by Charles Ingersoll in 1824, speaks of “the influence of America on the mind” around this time, and it is clear that the New World manifested itself within the consciousness of British writers at the turn of the nineteenth century more as an abstract conception than a material place.⁶ Just as Paine declared his native “country” to be “where liberty is not,” so British radicals projected an image of America as an externalization of their own ideologies of emancipation, a utopian image of alterity and virtual fulfillment.⁷

This reflexive understanding of America circulated on both sides of the Atlantic. One of its clearest manifestations is in the writings of a native of New Jersey, Gilbert Imlay, who left America for Europe in 1786 and subsequently formed a close friendship with Mary Wollstonecraft, with whom he had a daughter in 1794. Through Wollstonecraft, Imlay’s work became influential in British radical circles, and in *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (1792) he lays out his vision of the American West as a vista relatively untouched by corrupt European values. In *The Emigrants*, a novel published in 1793, he specifically invokes the metaphor of a mirror to describe how America holds up a glass to the British tradition of civic freedom: “it is perhaps time to place a mirror to their view, that they may behold the decay of those features, which once were so lovely.”⁸ This novel is suffused with images of reflection, whereby light is seen to be refracted from its natural source and to become, through “the element in which we live, deviable.” The idea of perversion, similarly, comprises a significant thread within Imlay’s text, and again it signifies a deviation or displacement, a swerve away from original virtue: “Every thing has been perverted,” laments the narrator, “and while the tyranny of custom has substituted duplicity for candour, the crude sentiments of cunning have destroyed that genuine felicity which flows from the genial currents of the human heart.”⁹ What is interesting here is how Imlay’s trope of perversion implies a clash within his text between very different constructions of “nature.” Whereas nature in the conservative or Burkeian version involved organic continuity and traditional hierarchy, nature in the radical or dissenting interpretation was based around the doctrine of natural human rights. Imlay, as a close associate of Wollstonecraft, clearly favored the latter view; just as she advocated divorce as a natural right for woman, so he advocates emigration—itself a kind of volitional “divorce” from one’s native heritage—as a natural right for all mankind.

Sharp conflicts between Britain and America over competing interpretations

of natural rights continued well into the nineteenth century. Indeed, the renewal of hostilities in the War of 1812 came about partly because of this kind of dispute. One of the chief complaints of the Americans was that the British fleet were insisting upon a right to search their merchant ships in order to track down “British” men who could be impressed into the Royal Navy. Underlying this quarrel were two distinct conceptions of national identity: for the Americans, citizenship was an affiliation which could be chosen and bestowed voluntarily, so that in their eyes British sailors had every right to renounce their fatherland and join the well-paid American ranks; but for the British, then as now, no subject of the king could ever “alienate his duty.” In the eyes of the British government, citizenship embodied a native, not an elective, affinity. Indeed, as Patrick C. T. White has noted, the controversy over impressment “was difficult to resolve because it touched deeply the sovereignty of both nations,” including their respective understandings of the equation between the natural and the national.¹⁰ The practice of impressment was discontinued after the Treaty of Ghent in 1814, even though it was not addressed directly in the peace agreement, and the way in which the issue was silently dropped shows Britain reluctantly coming to terms with the idea of America as a separate country in this post-Revolutionary era. While the 1812 conflict revolved mainly around arguments over trade, it did help to unite America against the specter of British domination—it was popularly referred to in the United States as the “Second War of American Independence”—and this in turn helped to emphasize to the British how the world of North America was finally spinning out of their control.¹¹

In this sense, the sudden emergence of the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century not only gave Britain a new political rival, but also provided a disturbing alternative vision of how nature and society might be organized. There were many English writers at this time whose perspectives were informed to some degree by transatlantic horizons, prominent among them William Cobbett. Cobbett was stationed during the Revolutionary War in New Brunswick, from where he came to admire American society, thinking “that men enjoyed here a greater degree of liberty than in England”; accordingly, he returned to the fledgling United States in 1792 as a follower of Paine and an advocate of the rights of man.¹² Soon, however, he became irritated with the anti-British sentiment widespread in the 1790s, and, as “Peter Porcupine,” he published from Philadelphia *Porcupine’s Gazette*, which attacked what it proclaimed to be the complacent nature of American republican ideals. Cobbett sought to expose hypocritical proclamations of freedom by juxtaposing them with advertisements offering slaves for sale; he also savaged what he saw as the literary and political pretensions of writers inspired by the American national cause.¹³ The enormous

popularity of *Porcupine's Gazette* during this decade as "the voice of British Loyalty in America" suggests that Cobbett was not alone in these opinions, but his intemperate handling of local politicians and institutions caused him to be convicted of criminal libel in 1799, after which he returned to England.¹⁴ Here, though, he found himself equally uncomfortable amidst the growing commercialization of his native country and the financial exploitation of traditional rural communities which he remembered nostalgically from his youth. He consequently realigned himself with the radical reformers, backing the United States in the War of 1812, when he asserted that Britain's belligerent policy was motivated less by competition with an imperial rival than by the desire to destroy the American source of inspiration for the British reform movement. In 1817, Cobbett crossed the Atlantic again to reside temporarily in Long Island, publishing an account of this sojourn, *A Year's Residence in the United States of America*, two years later.

While Cobbett has often been accused of extraordinary inconsistencies in his attitude toward America, there is actually a paradoxical consistency throughout his career in the way he plays Britain and America off against each other so as to highlight what he sees as the limits and limitations of both.¹⁵ Cobbett was one of the first in Britain to recognize that the American Revolution was an epochal event, and his concern is always with ways in which the Old World and the New might relate to, and mutually influence, each other.¹⁶ In Philadelphia he reacted against the embryonic version of American exceptionalism promulgated by early republicans, who self-righteously pursued a separatist agenda of simply sloughing off corrupt European customs, just as later on he had no patience with the English landed gentry who failed to countenance the social and political lessons of the wars with America. Cobbett was always concerned primarily with how American values might reflect back upon British culture, and in *A Year's Residence* he deliberately plays off his Long Island environment against the benighted condition of England. Americans, says Cobbett, enjoy a better climate, cheaper prices, fewer taxes, and less interference from the dreaded "boroughmongers." He also comments on how the absence of a traditional class system helps to ensure laborers in America are civil rather than surly, never rude but, equally, never cringing: "This, too, arises from the free institution of government. A man has a voice because he is a man, and not because he is the possessor of money. And shall I never see our English labourers in this happy state?"¹⁷ As that last sentence indicates, Cobbett always seeks to use America so as to reflect back upon his native situation; he speaks in the book's preface about being "bound to England for life" and of his "anxious desire to assist in the restoration of her freedom and happiness," a project he hoped to advance by ceremonially carrying with him across the Atlantic the bones of Thomas Paine on his return to England

in 1819.¹⁸ Many of his subsequent projects, including the campaign for parliamentary reform and the observations on England in *Rural Rides* (1830), are informed at some level by his internalization of these American experiences. In *Rural Rides*, for example, he suggests that the introduction of American apple trees “would be a great improvement” within the English countryside, showing a taste for horticultural hybridity that also implies his aspiration to integrate an American spirit into the English landscape more generally. Again, when visiting Tutbury, in Gloucestershire, he sympathizes with a poor man accused of stealing cabbages by remarking upon the very different attitudes toward neighborliness in America: “it is impossible for me to behold such a scene, without calling to mind the practice in the *United States of America*, where if a man were even *to talk* of prosecuting another (especially if that other were *poor*, or *old*) for taking from *the land*, or from *the trees*, any part of a growing crop, for his own personal and immediate use . . . such *talker* would be held in universal abhorrence.”¹⁹

There has, of course, been little direct consideration of the American Revolution itself within conventional narratives of English literature. Various conservative versifiers in Britain during the late eighteenth century approached the conflict in a simplistically authoritarian manner: thus, in “The Rights of Sovereignty Asserted” (1777), Thomas Warwick punningly attributes the current state of “civil gore” to the “unfilial hand” of the American “Monster,” and goes on loyally to assert that the British forces will emerge triumphant.²⁰ More radical sympathies were expressed in William Blake’s long poem, *America: A Prophecy* (1793), which mythically envisions the Revolution as both creative and destructive, with the “fierce flames” of Orc destroying the “bolts and hinges” of Albion’s “law-built heaven.” Rebellious Orc aspires to evade the “mental chains” of “the thirteen Governors that England sent”; but “Albions Angel” responds by vengefully casting red Orc in the role of satanist:

Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities
 Lover of wild rebellion, and transgressor of God’s Law.²¹

Early in the nineteenth century, this metaphorical notion of Albion and Orc, Britain and America, forming disorienting mirror images of each other became a more common idea within the Romantic field of vision. For instance, in canto 14 of *Don Juan*, published in 1823, Byron represents America figuratively in terms of alterity and exchange:

How oft would vice and virtue places change!
 The new world would be nothing to the old,
 If some Columbus of the moral seas
 Would show mankind their soul’s antipodes.

Byron's image of a new Columbus redescribing the map of the globe is commensurate with the style of inversion that runs through *Don Juan*, where orthodox genres and morals are stood on their head, as the poem self-consciously "Turns what was once romantic to burlesque."²²

Such imaginative projections of America in terms of a reversal of British traditions reinforce J. G. A. Pocock's point about how the wars with America created a lasting fissure within the body politic of Great Britain, with the "American Revolution" being "a British revolution before it became something else."²³ The intellectual and military threat from France at this time was relatively easy for Britain to deal with, since France, with its radically different language and culture, its alleged infatuation with sophistry and system, could be smothered by a "common-sense" reaction underlining the native genius of free-born Englishmen.²⁴ America, from this transatlantic perspective, represented a more disconcerting and uncomfortable prospect: as in Imlay's tropes of mirroring and perversion, it embodied the same, yet other. Cultural theorist Jonathan Dollimore has traced the connotations of "perversion" back through its various theological etymologies, concluding that the most sinister manifestations of this phenomenon occur when the "perverse dynamic" is concerned to transgress, invert, and displace "the true and authentic" from within, thereby constituting a discourse that is "at once utterly alien to what it threatens, and yet, mysteriously inherent within it."²⁵ To extend this logic into a social and historical realm would be to suggest that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Britain and America came to be positioned as heretical alternatives to each other, uneasy mirrors wherein the assumptions of each culture were both reflected and refracted. There was enough of a shared heritage within this Anglo-Atlantic world for the discordances and discontinuities to appear especially threatening to both parties.²⁶

This is why British writers like Edmund Burke found the most appropriate way metaphorically to describe the conflict with America was not as a revolution but as a "Civil War"—a phrase he used in a 1777 letter on American affairs to his constituents in Bristol.²⁷ In 1800, Poet Laureate Henry James Pye, who had been a Tory member of parliament during the 1780s, picked up on this theme of internal strife by incorporating the metaphor of patricide into his rueful retrospect on the war with America. Pye sought to combine his political and artistic functions in excoriating those Whig opposition parties which had encouraged the seditious and ungrateful Americans, who

Rear'd, like the pelican, with parent blood,
Turn their wild vengeance 'gainst Britannia's heart,
And aim with fatal rage, the parricidal dart.

Such a matrix of interfamilial conflict was much in evidence within British discourse of this era.²⁸ Its symptomatic significance should be understood in broadly cultural rather than political or economic terms: that is to say, while the loss of rebellious scions may not have seriously threatened the British system of government itself, nevertheless the sharp challenge to patriarchal authority which this conflict represented led British writers in the nineteenth century to reimagine “family values” in noticeably different ways. Linda Colley has argued that “the humiliation of defeat at the hands of a former colony was profound for a ruling élite possessed of strict notions of hierarchy and massive pride,” so that “a sense of embattled identity” became widespread over the next generation, as the British rulers sought urgently “to shore up the fabric of the state.” Attributing their unexpected reverse to an excessive leniency toward the colonies, the British government introduced a series of measures to strengthen their apparatus of centralized control over India, Canada, and Ireland, so as to impress upon their (willing or unwilling) subjects the virtues of monarchy, empire, and “strong, stable government.”²⁹

In the aftermath of the American Revolution, then, fragmentation and reconstruction of the body politic took place in Britain as well as North America. It is, of course, a commonplace to note how the political world of the United States in the 1790s was haunted by division and confusion, with the Federalists remaining more sympathetic to traditional versions of hierarchical authority than the Anglophobic Republicans.³⁰ In his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Marx looked back at this revolutionary era of the late eighteenth century as an occasion for the renewal of spirit, a rare opportunity for the dispossessed to aspire toward an ideal of pure liberation through the rejection of dead traditions. Yet Marx also spends a good part of this essay describing the forces that tend to circumscribe such radical ambitions, the ways in which quests for freedom find themselves haunted by ghosts from an unwillingly inherited past. As he puts it: “the beginner who has learned a new language always retranslates it into his mother tongue: he can only be said to have appropriated the spirit of the new language and to be able to express himself in it freely when he can manipulate it without reference to the old, and when he forgets his original language while using the new one.” In this way, as Marx famously went on to say, the “tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living.”³¹ These Gothic specters in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* echo the intuitions of Sade at the time of the French Revolution, who was also concerned to unpack the grotesque paradoxes lurking on the margins of this rationalist enterprise. The crucial point about Sade’s writings within this context is how they appear poised on the cusp between virtue and self-interest, between idealism and corruption; his philoso-

phy paradoxically dissolves didactic imperatives into libidinal drives, thereby redefining ethical positions as aesthetic desires. In this sense, as Philippe Roger puts it, "Sade holds up the bloody mirror to the French Revolution," reflecting its violence, but inverting its moral perspectives.³²

Such paradoxes were no less pertinent to the climate of the American Revolution than to the French Revolution. John Quincy Adams, who in 1800 had found it imperative to "rescue" the American Revolution "from the disgraceful imputation of having proceeded from the same principles as that of France," was by 1837 claiming the "highest transcendent glory of the American Revolution" to be the way "it connected, in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity."³³ This, though, is a typical nineteenth-century piece of revisionism, which attempts to gloss over the disorder of the late eighteenth century by assimilating it within the "transcendent" consciousness more characteristic of Victorian America. Indeed, in the very urgency of these attempts by Adams to dissociate his compatriots from the bloody affair of the French Revolution, we may detect a hint of insecurity about the purity of their own insurrectionary actions. There lurks an uneasy sense here of how the American Revolution, like all revolutions, was shadowed by the discourses of blasphemy, transgression, and perversion. This was certainly how it appeared to the conservatives in England, in whose eyes the natural order had been usurped and overturned.

One implication of this transatlantic division between Britain and America was to relativize the power structure of each country, to suggest how its system of authority might be construed as an arbitrary and performative rather than integrated or naturalized phenomenon. Cathy N. Davidson has noted how many early American novels are concerned in some way with the theme of education, and the same thing is true of English writing during this post-revolutionary period, as we shall see in the works of Jane Austen.³⁴ What I would suggest, however, is that this style of pedagogy does not always involve education in the substantive, ethical sense but rather education as a ritualistic exercise, a mask of authority. It is the form, rather than the content, of education which is at stake here. Both British and American writers of this time are impelled to seek, and to negotiate with, emblems of power, structures that appear to promise social legitimation and thus to reinforce an insecure cultural identity. Consequently, the novel of education frequently involves a forced process of internalization, where characters become initiated into a psychological acceptance of authorities that may to them initially seem specious. It is the status of such authorities that novels of education turn upon, since, within this turbulent and relativistic world of revolutionary uprisings, authority is always in danger of finding itself demystified

and exposed to the indignities of irony. Hence, the nostalgic search for validating mechanisms of power swerves away into a more affective relationship with authority; in typically Sadeian fashion, authority turns into an aesthetic rather than ethical imperative. In the case of British and American writers in the two generations after the War of Independence, it is the hybrid interplay between different transatlantic perspectives that threatens to cut the art of governance adrift from its traditional juristic moorings. This process of mutual mirroring and intertwining serves radically to destabilize authority, casting a disorienting shadow over British and American attempts to map out their territory, to circumscribe the boundaries of their national jurisdictions.

* * *

Critical associations between Jane Austen and a historical context of any kind are of relatively recent vintage. The English conservative approach, which for a long time successfully appropriated the writer as one of their own, found in her novels an agreeable retreat from the modern world. Deirdre Lynch has written of how, between the world wars, hagiographies of Austen formed part of an ideological mission to repackage “Englishness” by shifting national identity away from Victorian imperialism toward a more inward-looking, domestic agenda, based upon the supposed stability of rural life and the maintenance of naturalized class hierarchies.³⁵ Even in the middle of the twentieth century, her editor, R. W. Chapman, was still insisting Austen’s novels had nothing to say about history.³⁶ That view of her fiction as an escapist idyll has been challenged more recently by well-known critics like Marilyn Butler and Raymond Williams, even though the contextual frameworks they chose to introduce were quite different, Butler stressing Austen’s reactionary outlook and her rejection of fashionable Jacobin ideologies, Williams concentrating on the social and economic determinants brought to light in microscopic detail within her fiction, along with all the class issues negotiated therein.³⁷ Nevertheless, there still remains considerable resistance to such demystifications of Austen’s texts in Britain, where any theoretical attempt to disentangle the various aesthetic paradoxes within her work is frequently alleged to spoil the unadulterated pleasure of appreciating her masterpieces.

The furor that followed upon American critic Terry Castle’s suggestion in the *London Review of Books* that Jane Austen may have “acted out unconscious narcissistic or homoerotic imperatives” in the company of her sister, Cassandra, exemplifies the protectiveness felt by the British cultural establishment toward their cherished icon. Castle’s line of argument was not that Austen could be considered a lesbian in the modern sense, but that the closeness of her relationship with Cassandra implied “unconscious homoerotic dimensions” which are reflected in

her writings, notably in the way she comments in detail on women's bodies and clothing while allowing the figures of men to remain relatively blank.³⁸ Among the predictable cries of outrage, the most thoughtful response came from Claudia Johnson, another American critic, who pointed out how there have been "two contending traditions of Austenian reception" since the mid-nineteenth century, one British, the other American. The British critical heritage is essentially "elegiac," situating Austen in a pastoral world before the onset of social and psychological modernism; the American tradition, by contrast, tends to be "anti-normative," probing beneath the decorous surfaces of Austen's fictions so as to elucidate some of their implicit lacunae and disjunctions.³⁹ The intractability of this debate reveals something significant about the relationship between British and American intellectual traditions: if American analysis tends sometimes toward the extravagant or abstruse, the empiricism and, at times, insularity of British critical consciousness makes it frequently hostile to American versions of alterity. This has led to an odd kind of schism in the interpretation of Austen, where iconoclastic transatlantic readings are frequently accused of distorting the moral and artistic sanctity of the British author.

In a famous feminist argument from 1979, for example, American scholars Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar described what they saw as Austen's "discomfort with her cultural inheritance," especially "the culturally induced idiocy and impotence that domestic confinement and female socialization seem to breed."⁴⁰ Gilbert and Gubar argue that the author's covert dissatisfactions with her social milieu manifest themselves in the way her heroines tend to operate by a mode of "double-talk," whose conventional finesse belies a sardonic recognition of ways in which these conversations actually signify something like the opposite of what they appear. Gilbert and Gubar take as their point of departure the long-established recognition of Austen's ironic style, seen for example in the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)—"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife"—where the comic point lies in the reader's recognition of how this is, in fact, very far from "a truth universally acknowledged." From this basis of linguistic irony and reversal, Gilbert and Gubar move on to talk more widely about the "self-division" in Austen's fiction, where the embryonic feminist consciousness can only fight subversively, if intermittently, against the stultifying forces of social conformity.⁴¹ Five years later, Mary Poovey developed from this a wider thesis about ideological contradictions in Austen's works, arguing that the "complex relationship between a woman's desires and the imperatives of propriety" tends to produce expressions of indirection or "doubling," through which these conventional narratives would veer off into "the tonal uncertainties of parody."⁴²

More recently still, other American critics like D. A. Miller, Eve Kosofsky

Sedgwick, and Joseph Litvak have engaged with “queer” theory to write about the ambivalent crosscurrents between ideology and desire in Austen’s fiction. Both Miller and Sedgwick have been alert to darker subtexts that seem on occasions to cut across the polite facades of Austen’s cultural world. Miller contrasts an explicit “ideology . . . of settlement” in Austen’s world, involving marriage, stability, and a moral vision where the designs of characters appear transparent to each other, with a more irregular aesthetic delight in “unsettled states of deferral and ambiguity.”⁴³ Such teasing denials of closure, he argues, are predicated upon the desire for what is excessive or transgressive, a desire Austen’s fiction simultaneously admits and disavows, as, for example, with the equivocal representation of the urbane and immodest Crawfords who disturb the serenity of provincial life in *Mansfield Park* (1814). Sedgwick, who more brazenly chastises “Austen criticism” for “its timidity and banality,” chooses to focus upon Marianne Dashwood’s propensity for “autoeroticism” in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), examining how the scene when Marianne is writing to Willoughby from the privacy of her bedroom encompasses more uncomfortable psychological and erotic undercurrents than conventional critics of the novel have liked to acknowledge.⁴⁴ Litvak, meanwhile, discovers in Austen’s novels a world of “perverse privilege,” a site of sophistication and pleasure which he associates with the oppositional consciousness of gay politics. For Litvak, the mood of luxury and excess projected by Austen’s verbal mastery betokens an implicit resistance to the coercive claims of “normality,” and so he perceives a contradiction between the author’s inclination toward stylistic deviance and the “heterosexist teleology” that underwrites her “master plot.”⁴⁵

All these American revisionist readings express a sense of dissatisfaction with the explicit directions of Austen’s work. Gilbert and Gubar, Miller and Sedgwick each probe to recover instead a more challenging, disquieting mentality that seems to lurk around the margins of her fictions. Litvak, similarly, defamiliarizes Austen’s representation of social customs, reinterpreting these rituals of privilege, which to many English eyes have seemed entirely natural, as scenes of a mordant, iconoclastic wit. In general, American critics have been remarkably perceptive in alerting readers to these elements of disturbance and paradox in Austen’s narratives, and they have certainly provided a necessary counterbalance to readings from English traditionalists. Still, such American interpretations would seem to run up against the critical problem of tautology: do readers like Gilbert and Gubar simply see mirrored in Austen what they themselves want to find, a cultural schizophrenia between female autonomy and “feminine gentility” that speaks more plausibly to the conditions of late twentieth-century American feminism than early nineteenth-century life in rural England?⁴⁶ Admittedly, all interpretations must be tautological to some extent, since they can never achieve indepen-

dence from the vantage point of their observer. But the issue of tautology is made more obvious here by the way these responses seem to correlate so clearly with that moral disapprobation of Austen voiced by nineteenth-century American intellectuals. In 1861, for instance, Emerson deplored Austen's novels as "vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention, imprisoned in the wretched conventions of English society"; a few years later, Henry James damned with faint praise the "light felicity" of Austen's work, lamenting how popular magazines had woven sentimental legends around "their 'dear,' our dear, everybody's dear, Jane."⁴⁷ The point here is that American critics have tended to perceive the literal world presented by Austen as not serious enough, not sufficiently concerned (overtly, at least) with scrutinizing the assumptions of what appears to them an ethically bankrupt and claustrophobic society. Hence the frequent drive to deconstruct or allegorize her work, to expose its alleged contradictions, or to project a tone of didactic purpose through the mechanism of characters who come figuratively to embody particular forms of virtue or vice.

In a 1968 essay entitled "The 'Irresponsibility' of Jane Austen," Oxford critic John Bayley took issue with these more abstract and distant conceptualizations of Austen's world. Bayley preferred to stress instead the "plastic" qualities of her characters, their freedom to interact with each other in a fully realized society, a freedom he recognized as "a peculiar kind of liberation from morality." Rather than being burdened with heavy allegorical duties, Bayley argued, Austen's characters are empowered by the author's "creative joy," a joy that permits them to live inside these communities without becoming forced to act out morality plays about the justness or unjustness of their situation.⁴⁸ Reacting against the ethical imperatives of New York intellectuals like Lionel Trilling, who had called Emma Woodhouse "a dreadful snob," Bayley attributed the idiosyncratic genius of Austen's novels to their being "so like life," and he went on: "Although some of the most perceptive discussion of Jane Austen's world has come from America, it may be that the American mind does have difficulty in taking for granted the reality of Jane Austen's social units. Nothing in America is quite real in this way—perhaps because there is always an *alternative* to it."⁴⁹

The ideological implications of Bayley's quietist position are obvious enough, and I do not wish to belabor that point here. At the same time, Bayley's treatment of Austen in terms of an aesthetic excess, a ludic "irresponsibility" that evades the stricter patterns of allegory, interestingly anticipates the more overtly theoretical direction of D. A. Miller's 1981 post-structuralist reading, where Miller describes the "fascinated delight with unsettled states of deferral and ambiguity" that permeates Austen's novels, despite their simultaneous commitment to an ideology of "settlement" and moral closure: "The work of closure," writes Miller, "would seem

to consist in an ideologically inspired *passage* between two orders of discourse, two separable textual styles. One of them (polyvalent, flirtatious, quintessentially poetic) keeps meaning and desire in a state of suspense; the other (univocal, earnest, basically cognitive) fixes meaning and lodges desire in a safe haven."⁵⁰ It is, then, this "passage" between morality and aesthetics, between sense and sensibility, that constitutes the perverse "irresponsibility" of Austen's fiction. To reformulate Bayley's argument, it is not the pure freedom of Austen's characters that guarantees their authenticity so much as their perpetual transgression against the various categories that are trying to box them in. Too many critics, struggling to get some firm handle on Austen's elusive world, have opted to find her texts finally "conservative" or "subversive." But in fact they are neither, for their brilliance lies in the way Austen exploits each side of the equation to ironize the other, thereby describing a world of parallel narratives where nothing is ever quite what it seems, or all that it seems.

This self-perpetuating oscillation between the law and its infraction indicates the way in which her novels are motivated by the dualistic pattern of transgression. In this way, Austen's fictions, like those of Sade, structurally require the motivations of laws against which they can transgress. In *Northanger Abbey* (1818), this transgression manifests itself in the interplay between Gothicism and realism, the thrills of aesthetic terror through which the placid domestic life of Catherine Morland is disturbed. In *Sense and Sensibility*, it appears in the interaction between the rationalist mind of Elinor and the more irrationalist sensations of Marianne Dashwood. In *Mansfield Park*, it emerges in the way the Crawfords' fast style of urban manners is played off against the Christian, evangelical virtues of Edmund Bertram and Fanny Price. Mary Crawford's famous linguistic dexterity with "*Rears, and Vices,*" where the meaning slides between naval admirals and sexual deviance, comprises the most obvious example of the double movement between parallel narratives in this novel. "'Now, do not be suspecting me of a pun, I entreat,'" declares Mary, ironically of course implying just the opposite; whereupon, so we are told, Edmund "felt grave."⁵¹

The specific link I want to make here is between this pattern of perverse, parallel narratives and an aesthetic reconstruction of authority than can be related to the historical circumstances of this post-Revolutionary era. Park Honan has demonstrated the likely extent of Austen's knowledge of American affairs in the late eighteenth century, information she would have acquired partly through her geographical proximity to the naval base at Portsmouth—a center of operations during the American War of Independence—partly through her own relatives' service in the navy, partly through the extensive reporting of the war in the Winchester-based *Hampshire Chronicle*, and partly through a more general con-

cern with the way certain British “Whigs had weakened the national resolve by sympathizing with American political ideals.” This last issue was addressed by Austen’s brothers, James and Henry, in a 1789 piece on the American war in their Oxford journal, *The Loiterer*.⁵² Austen’s awareness of the war is emphasized by a specific reference in her own juvenilia, in the story “A Collection of Letters,” where Miss Jane tells of the death of her “dear Captain Dashwood,” who fell “while fighting for his Country in America.”⁵³ We know, moreover, that Austen’s father was a “principal trustee” of a valuable plantation in Antigua, a fact which brings to mind Edward Said’s well-known analysis of *Mansfield Park*, where he describes how the familial authority which Sir Thomas Bertram exercises in the domestic sphere was underwritten by a system of slave labor maintained in West Indian sugar plantations until the 1830s.⁵⁴ Sir Thomas’s little empire at Mansfield Park would not have been possible without his stake in the larger colonial empire, and, as Moira Ferguson has observed, the word “plantation” is used frequently in this novel to denote Sir Thomas’s property on either side of the Atlantic.⁵⁵

The crucial point to emphasize in this regard is how the Bertrams’ transatlantic business is not contrasted with the serenity of their country seat at Mansfield, but rather seen as analogous to it. We know that Austen herself was an admirer of contemporary antislavery campaigners, notably Thomas Clarkson, and that her novel, whose time frame spans a period from 1810 to 1813, was published only seven years after the successful passage of the Abolition Bill by the British Parliament in 1807.⁵⁶ While Katie Trumpener may be right to suggest that Sir Thomas Bertram seems more aware of slavery as a political issue after his return from Antigua—he is even willing to discuss it with Fanny at the dinner table—it would also be true to say that Sir Thomas’s manners are so attached to the old patriarchal ways that he cannot recognize the dramatic irony whereby a charge of oppression might also be applicable to his own domestic situation.⁵⁷ Austen, however, disconcertingly expands the circumference of her narrative, juxtaposing the much-vaunted “harmony” of Mansfield Park (139) with the sense of “noise, disorder, and impropriety” (381) shadowing both Fanny’s family home in Portsmouth and the unseen world of the Caribbean; and, through this formal structure of dislocation and parallelism, she implies how these different geographical locations contribute to the formation of each other’s cultural meaning. Austen had probably read *Caleb Williams*—she refers to William Godwin in a letter of 1801—and in that novel Squire Falkland is also described as owning a “very valuable plantation in the West Indies,” as if to emphasize how these oppressive systems of North Atlantic commerce were a familiar instrument within the English gentry’s armory around this time.⁵⁸ There is a similar reference in

Emma (1816), where Jane Fairfax compares the American slave trade to the exploitation and exchange of governesses in England: “the sale—not quite of human flesh—but of human intellect.’”⁵⁹ Again, Austen here represents American practices as a brutal literalization and magnification of parallel customs that operate in a more genteel, understated way in England.

In one of the poems she composed just a few days before her death in 1817, Austen likened the spirit of her niece, Anna Lefroy, to the undomesticated landscape of the American West:

In measured verse I'll now rehearse
 The charms of lovely Anna:
 And, first, her mind is unconfined
 Like any vast savannah.

Ontario's lake may fitly speak
 Her fancy's ample bound:
 Its circuit may, on strict survey
 Five hundred miles be found.

Her wit descends on foes and friends
 Like famed Niagara's Fall,
 And travellers gaze in wild amaze
 And listen, one and all.

Her judgment sound, thick, black, profound,
 Like transatlantic groves,
 Dispenses aid, and friendly shade
 To all that in it roves.

If thus her mind to be defined
 America exhausts,
 And all that's grand in that great land
 In similes it costs—

Oh how can I her person try
 To image and portray?
 How paint the face, the form how trace
 In which those virtues lay?

Another world must be unfurled,
 Another language known,
 Ere tongue or sound can publish round
 Her charms of flesh and bone.

Clearly this is a light and occasional poem, and many of its angles on America would have derived from standard accounts of the New World environment that

were familiar enough to British readers from Oliver Goldsmith's "The Traveller" and other sources.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, what is particularly interesting here is the way Austen oxymoronically plays off her own "measured verse" against the "unconfined" mind of Anna, figuratively represented in this work by the "vast" world of America. All through the poem, we see her delight in stylistic and metaphorical contradiction: in the second stanza, the conservative connotations of "fitly" and "strict" are juxtaposed with the "ample bound" of Lake Ontario's circumference; in stanza three, her subject's "wit," normally considered a polite and genteel commodity, becomes a thing of "wild amaze," to be compared only with Niagara Falls. The suggestion of this poem, that even the "similes" of America are insufficient to describe the original qualities of her niece's mind, indicates ways in which Austen understood the "transatlantic" dimension represented here to stand as a corrective to the customary standards of British society. As she puts it in the last stanza, "Another world must be unfurled" in order to assist with this process of representation. Once again, the image of America serves to illuminate and externalize what in Britain remains latent and suppressed.

Within the more established landscapes of Austen's fiction, the shadow of America similarly comes to hint at a mode of estrangement, a mirror of alterity, that threatens to redefine the weighty tradition of English patriarchy as merely a performative structure. At one point in *Mansfield Park*, Tom Bertram remarks to Dr. Grant on what a "'strange business this in America'" (145), probably referring to the American declaration of war against Great Britain in June 1812. This draws our attention to the fact that *Mansfield Park* was written at precisely the time Britain and America were once again engaged in military conflict; the novel, published in the same year as the Treaty of Ghent was concluded, emerged from a political context in which British authority was being belligerently challenged. Austen displaces such historical contumacy into one of the most comically effective scenes in her novel, when Sir Thomas, returning unexpectedly from Antigua to find his house caught up in amateur theatricals, opens the door of his billiard room to find himself "on the stage of a theatre," an occasion which the narrative describes dryly as the paterfamilias's "first appearance on any stage" (198). John Bayley would see this as a moment of delicious, irresponsible anarchy, and so indeed it is; but the anarchy depends specifically upon transgression against established social conventions, a point not lost upon Sir Thomas himself, who is said to be full of "anger on finding himself thus bewildered in his own house, making part of a ridiculous exhibition in the midst of theatrical nonsense" (199). One reason Sir Thomas Bertram is so furious is that his authority appears to have been subverted; it is not just the misuse of the billiard room in itself that is so threatening, but the way in which he has found himself "framed" within an aesthetic artifice, his power of "government" (211) suddenly transposed into a

dramatic performance. Recent work on both the French and American Revolutions has shown how an emphasis on “specularity” and theatricalization became a tool of insurrection, as the radical leaders skillfully choreographed pageants or produced other kinds of indecorous art in order to dramatize the follies of the old regime; and something of that demystifying impulse to represent power as performance also pervades *Mansfield Park*.⁶¹

Sir Thomas, of course, promptly ensures “the destruction of every theatrical preparation at Mansfield” (209) and reestablishes himself as “master of the house” (206), at the center of his family hearth. Yet this attempt to restore a reactionary tone of hierarchical sobriety has been fatally compromised by those ludic, ironic elements that lurk around the margins of Austen’s texts, rendering their narratives contingent, paradoxical, and seemingly reversible. Homi K. Bhabha has commented on what he calls “Sade’s scandalous theatricalization of language,” its tendency to disrupt those established customs associated with more prosaic modes of representation by dramatizing philosophical positions so as to make them appear mere externalizations of subjective desire; and it is a similar fear that his authority might be exposed as a mere artifice, a mask or projection, that provokes Sir Thomas Bertram’s violent attempt to erase every trace of theatrical artifice from *Mansfield Park*.⁶² Sir Thomas, we are told, intends “to wipe away every outward memento of what had been, even to the destruction of every unbound copy of ‘Lovers’ Vows’ in the house, for he was burning all that met his eye” (206). For the English aristocracy, according to Linda Colley, the most “immediate way in which defeat in America proved devastating was that it called into question the competence of the British governing élite,” subjecting their authority, which had previously been more or less unquestioned, to more uncomfortable kinds of scrutiny.⁶³ The exercise of power, once opaque and diffuse, becomes increasingly transparent and self-manifesting. In this light, it is not surprising Sir Thomas would feel so disconcerted by the prospect of finding his gubernatorial capacities metamorphosed into the form of a charade.

Sir Thomas’s efforts to restore a naturalized authority after his return to *Mansfield Park* turn out to be less than entirely successful. The father figure can never quite detach himself from the trappings of his stage role; indeed, as Litvak notes, a “subtler and more comprehensive theatricality . . . persists long after Sir Thomas has reclaimed his study.”⁶⁴ This more subtle atmosphere of theatricality emerges through the narrator’s stylistic parallelisms, the double-edged discourse that ensures Sir Thomas’s paternalistic directives come to be revealed in a wry, defamiliarized light. Claudia Johnson has written of how the patriarch’s treatment of Fanny Price after her rejection of Henry Crawford’s proposal of marriage brings to mind his professional occupation as a slaveowner, since he manifests a violent

hostility toward any notion that Fanny should be free to choose her partner for herself. Blaming her reluctance on “that independence of spirit, which prevails so much in modern days,” Sir Thomas chastises Fanny as “wilful and perverse” (318); again, as with the amateur dramatics, it is not this particular event which infuriates Sir Thomas so much as what it implies about the larger patterns of what he would see as creeping anarchy within the social world. Slightly earlier, Sir Thomas had cut short Fanny’s participation at the ball “by advising her to go immediately to bed. ‘Advise’ was his word,” continues Austen’s narrator sardonically, “but it was the advice of absolute power” (285). Johnson suggests this kind of irony testifies to the way *Mansfield Park* engages in a “bitter parody of conservative fiction,” but that is not the dominant impression a reader takes from this novel.⁶⁵ Authority here is not so much parodied but demystified. Austen’s texts privilege neither conservatism nor radicalism, but play these styles off against each other through a system of parallel narratives, narratives which modulate between conventionalism and irony, decorum and transgression.

In this respect, the formal parallelism of Austen’s narratives can be related to the fissuring effect of the American Revolution, the “Civil War” as Burke called it, since in both cases it is a structural fracturing and fragmentation from within that appears to threaten the viability of a naturalized order. By contrast, the Jacobin theories associated with the French Revolution—those of Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, Godwin, and so on—remained relatively untroubling to Austen. As Marilyn Butler has shown, her narratives display little compunction in dialectically expelling conceptions or characters linked explicitly to the “radical inheritance” of “sentimentalism”: the elopement of Lydia and Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* is treated dismissively within the framework of that novel, for example.⁶⁶ Much more disturbing and problematic is the status of authority in general: her narratives may give short shrift to the open defiance or subversion of established order, but they are far more ambiguous when it comes to the perversion of authority, that more duplicitous situation where the legitimacy of government can neither be wholly invalidated nor simply taken for granted. Pierre Klossowski has described how Sade’s texts refract a similar aestheticization of authority within the context of revolutionary France: “The libertine great lord . . . is on the eve of the Revolution a master who knows he is the legal wielder of power but who also knows that he can lose it at any moment and that he is already virtually a slave . . . in his own eyes he no longer has an uncontested authority, but still has the instincts of such authority.”⁶⁷ Though of course they are not libertines in the same way, Austen’s wealthy landowners—Sir Thomas Bertram, Darcy, Knightley—possess exactly this combination of authority and insecurity. Their manners and instincts are attached to the past, but their minds are forced to recognize the

changing circumstances of the present. What the French Revolution was to Sade, the American Revolution was to Austen: a civil war, an internecine uprising, that served to problematize and subtly undermine the nature of authority from within. The double structure of Austen's parallel narratives can be seen as analogous, both formally and historically, to the internal divisions of this British civil war, which involved an uprising against the constraints of familial government.

Nevertheless, such styles of transgression which involve a disestablishment of "natural" authority also prove to be the discursive basis for Austen's versions of romance. Her novels recapitulate the issues of power and subjugation in formal terms, structurally displacing them from a political to an aesthetic and psychological level. While this kind of power play is comically visible within the "light, and bright, and sparkling" world of *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's most profound exploration of the psychology of authority occurs in *Emma* (1816), which raises uncomfortable questions about circumferences of dominion in the public as well as the private sphere.⁶⁸ The dynamics of the relationship between George Knightley and Emma Woodhouse are not dissimilar to those of the romance between Darcy and Elizabeth: Emma enjoys the power of interference and manipulation, a transgressive trait that Knightley also takes pleasure in, since he, true to his vocation as a magistrate, can then correct her when she errs.⁶⁹ Emma's very first words to Knightley in the book are spoken "playfully" (41), and she reassures her father about how "Mr. Knightley loves to find fault with me," though she says it is only "in a joke—it is all a joke"(42). Later, Knightley insists on the natural advantage of his being sixteen years her senior, so he can restrain her "sauciness" (121) with his tutelary authority. Toward the end of the narrative, Emma admits she has often been "negligent or perverse," and she thanks Knightley for trying to "improve" her (404). After their engagement, Emma says she can never call him anything but "Mr. Knightley," whereupon George solemnly avows that he has been in love with her "saucy looks" since she was thirteen (445). It is true, as Trilling said, that for Austen love tends to be linked closely with pedagogy, but in *Emma*, as in *Pride and Prejudice*, this pedagogy is eroticized rather than moralized, with authority becoming an aesthetic rather than an innocent or didactic phenomenon.⁷⁰ Hence, the relationship between Knightley and Emma involves structures of authority and desire than run in parallel with, but cannot simply be reduced to or explained in terms of, the traditional British class system. To put this another way: the patriarchal and hierarchical framework informing *Emma* provides the impetus for the various power plays in the novel, but Austen's characterizations then swerve away into an alternate psychological zone of their own, where power finds itself refracted through a glass darkly rather than being expressed in a self-evident, social light.

This is why throughout *Emma* the ironic narrative works to problematize the clarity of its apparently classical representations. We are told, for instance, that Knightley's residence, Donwell Abbey, "was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was" (353); and some residual sense of this ideal of transparency—the ideology of "settlement," as D. A. Miller terms it—still lingers in the novel.⁷¹ But *Emma* is also a text of disguise, deceit, and deferral, attributes which appear, most obviously, in connection with the concealed romance between Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. Frank's false surname—he had decided to "assume the name of Churchill" (48)—anticipates a sequence of riddles where the inhabitants of Highbury are forced to try to decipher handwriting on letters and to unravel the significance attached to verbal games of acrostics, in situations where Frank is communicating secretly with Jane. Frank, of course, is a master of masks and artifice: when he goes across the room to speak with his fiancée, he places himself strategically between Jane and Emma so the latter will not be able to "distinguish" Jane's reaction (231). Knightley, who smells a rat early on, abhors this "Disingenuousness and double-dealing" that "seemed to meet him at every turn" (344); he complains to Emma of how "Mystery" and "Finesse . . . pervert the understanding" (430); and he expresses his decided preference for "plain, unaffected, gentleman-like English" (432). But the construction of the novel, through its pattern of parallel narratives, denies Knightley such an unequivocal resolution. In the "confusion" at dusk after the acrostics game, Knightley detects between Frank and Jane "certain expressive looks, which I did not believe meant to be public" (345–46). This is why W. J. Harvey acutely observed of *Emma* that the "written novel contains its unwritten twin whose shape is known only by the shadow it casts": the novel's world of polite conversation runs in parallel with a more sinister underworld of jealousy, passion and resentment.⁷²

What Harvey did not go on fully to acknowledge is how the liaison of Knightley and Emma also participates in this secretive subtext. Despite his agenda of gentlemanly plain dealing, Knightley is, as Harvey recognized, "not entirely lucid to himself about his dislike of Frank Churchill." Knightley believes he disapproves of Frank purely on moral grounds, whereas, as we are told toward the end of the book: "He had been in love with Emma, and jealous of Frank Churchill, from about the same period, one sentiment having probably enlightened him as to the other" (419). (Note how the stylistic parallelisms here, the clauses balanced off against each other through formal paradoxes and reversals, mirror the mutually self-reflecting narratives that Austen inscribes.) But Harvey, like so many other critics, also went on to talk about the "perversion of imagination" as "Emma's most radical failure," a "lesson hammered home" by the various humiliating "punishments" inflicted on her throughout the narrative.⁷³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has

written of how a “lot of Austen criticism sounds hilariously like the leering school-prospectuses or governess-manifestoes brandished like so many birch rods in Victorian sadomasochistic pornography”; and though Sedgwick makes her suggestion with a typically hyperbolic flourish, it is hard not to agree with her assessment that because of these moral presuppositions “the sense of an alternative, passionate sexual ecology” in Austen’s work has not been touched upon in most critical readings.⁷⁴ Emma Woodhouse, like Elizabeth Bennet, works her way toward a successful marriage because of her “perversion of imagination,” not in spite of it. Rather than austere disapproving of Emma for her deficient sense of ethical purpose, “Mr. Knightley” takes delight in his young charge’s insouciance, just as she herself is attracted to his paternalistic manners. It is significant, of course, that after their marriage Knightley has to move into Hartfield because Emma will not abandon her father. In that sense, Knightley appears only too obviously for Emma as a surrogate father figure, an eroticized version of the immovable Mr. Woodhouse, a fixed point of reference to which the wayward heroine can return.

Austen’s texts, then, refract ethical issues into aesthetic styles. This is why to interpret Austen through a framework of moral preconceptions of whatever kind is to risk missing the crucial element of disturbance within her work, the way her texts carve out for themselves psychological recesses behind the masks of social conformity.⁷⁵ To speak of a civil war in Austen’s narratives is not just to indicate internal division, but also to suggest how such divisions are themselves masked by a form of civility which is sometimes misconstrued as a more straightforward impulse toward epistemological closure. In a recent rereading of *Emma*, Nicola J. Watson acknowledges “perversions of proper application” of language in the various conundrums and riddles scattered throughout the book, but then she asserts, in traditional British style, that “Austen’s didactic programme” is ultimately “to ensure a world of near-perfect, institutionalized intelligibility.”⁷⁶ But more useful for understanding the peculiar kind of cerebral eroticism that permeates *Emma* is Maurice Blanchot’s remark about how Sade’s texts intermingle neoclassical “clarity” with an “obscurity, which troubles and complicates our reading, renders it internally violent.”⁷⁷ This is precisely what we find in Austen’s work, where the drive for enlightenment and elucidation is held in check by irregularities and deviations which ultimately provide the most powerful motivation for the libidinal drive of the fictional characters as well as for the hermeneutic drive of the narrative.

Austen’s fictions, then, revolve crucially around questions of authority: the violent impulses of authoritarianism, the power of control associated with authorship. As R. F. Brissenden has argued, such issues manifest themselves most

clearly in her juvenilia, where Austen's contextual links with Sade become more apparent.⁷⁸ *Love and Friendship*, which was written in 1790—one year before *Justine*—exposes the weakness of sensibility and the fundamental selfishness of human behavior, while the letters “From A Young Lady,” written in 1791 or 1792, extol crime and murder as panaceas for disappointment in love. Again, the fragment entitled “Henry and Eliza: A Novel,” drafted at the end of the 1780s, has an odd opening sentence that implies the more atavistic aspects of domination and submission lurking beneath the surface of the civilized social order: “As Sir George and Lady Harcourt were superintending the Labours of their Haymakers, rewarding the industry of some by smiles of approbation, and punishing the idleness of others, by a cudgel.”⁷⁹ This bizarre beginning has been analyzed perceptively by Claudia Johnson:

Who would dare imagine Knightley, Darcy, or Mr. Bennet beating their negligent farmers? The shock here derives not from simple incongruity—i.e., a belief that such people do not do such things. It derives rather from an unexpected disclosure—i.e., a discovery that such people may indeed beat their farmers, but that certain novelistic forms do not permit us to imagine, much less to represent, realities of this sort. . . . The central enterprise of the juvenilia . . . is demystification: making customary forms subject to doubt by flaunting their conventionality.⁸⁰

Johnson's reading is excellent, but I would demur from her on one point. It is not a question of whether or not the landed gentry actually attack their farmers with cudgels but, more importantly, the symbolic aspects of domination that such an image represents. Austen thus satirically exposes a darker desire for mastery that runs in parallel with the more established conception of social hierarchy, a desire normally smothered by all the accouterments of morality and gentility that make up the civilized English world. It is noticeable in “Henry and Eliza” that Sir George Harcourt is said to have returned quite recently from the New World—“when you sailed for America,” complains his wife, “you left me breeding”—and, as in *Mansfield Park*, this transatlantic dimension serves to make explicit those forces of oppression that remain latent within the home country.⁸¹

It is this dialectic between subjective and objective definitions of authority, the pleasures of self-gratification against the burdens of social responsibility, that provides some of the central tensions in Austen's major novels. Such a recognition of the limitations of subjective consciousness and of the problematical affiliation between private desire and public power can be traced right back to her “History of England,” written in 1791. Here the sixteen-year-old author plays around with the representation of chronological sequence, beheading monarchs at an alarming rate and turning the idea of history itself into a form of subjectivist

farce. In the subtitle to her work, Austen describes it as written by “a Partial, Prejudiced, and Ignorant Historian”; yet the tone here is not merely one of polite self-deprecation, for the purpose of this metahistorical comedy is to scrutinize skeptically the rational sequences of cause and effect through which narratives of history seek to reconstruct the past.⁸² “Just as history is about the exercise of power,” observes Christopher Kent in an essay on Austen’s juvenilia, “so history writing is the exercise of power”; the author insouciantly introduces her own private friends and relatives into this narrative, thereby annihilating the more customary processes of historical cause and effect.⁸³ Instead, she substitutes what Ellen E. Martin has called a series of textual “fetishes”—trivial, irregular details—which effectively undermine any basis for linear sequence and so expose the idea of rational order as a chimera. Austen’s sense of history here, again like that of Sade, involves “a flat repetition of the same, deprived of any significance or dramatic interest,” as ideas of Enlightenment rationalism and progression fall back into cycles of compulsive irrationalism and absurdity.⁸⁴ As an experienced novelist, Austen is not so self-indulgent as this, of course; in her longer works, the vengeful impulses of the self are balanced more firmly against the responsibilities and disappointments of society. As Brigid Brophy noted in a fine essay, Austen’s mature writing seems to punish her own desire for infantile mastery, playing off the delights of fantasy against the more complex, inconsistent world of adult consciousness.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, traces of this aggressive, iconoclastic wit always remain. “The History of England” reveals notions of national identity and tradition to be arbitrary, subjective constructions; similarly, *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* are shadowed by parallel narratives that never cease to imply how the social customs on display here remain provisional fictions, contingencies of value.

In this way, Austen critiques the various forms of idealism that were becoming associated with national identity around the turn of the nineteenth century. Austen’s “History of England” dissociates linear chronology from any immanent teleology or meaning by transferring history into the realm of burlesque, an idiom that becomes suppressed, though never entirely muted, in her subsequent, more famous works. In these later narratives, we witness a series of displacements, both geographical and gubernatorial, as the turbulence of this post-Revolutionary era works its way surreptitiously into the interstices of her fiction. Her novels recapitulate Anglo-American battles around questions of political domination and representation in formal ways, investigating the problems of who should control who, and why. I would also suggest it has tended to be the subsequent American tradition in Austen criticism, as Johnson defines it, that has highlighted these more destabilizing elements in her writings, unfurling that alternative transatlantic perspective which Austen herself adumbrated in her

poem for Anna Lefroy. Just as the French Revolution (or civil war) liberated Sade's divided imagination, underwriting his rationalistic scorn for emblems of tyranny to which he was still affectively attached, so the American Revolution, the British civil war, provokes in Austen a split allegiance, as her narratives ironically disestablish powers with which her characters retain instinctive and emotional affinities. In the "war of ideas" with Jacobin France, Austen's novels may indeed, as Marilyn Butler argues, be seen dialectically to reject that alien style of radicalism; but it is equally important to consider her texts in the light of an interplay with America, Britain's own shadow self, the offspring that had recently revoked its allegiance to natural, familial authority. In relation to such consanguinity, Austen's family romances may come to seem more equivocal than they appear at first sight.

89. Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1968), 477.
90. Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, 86–87.
91. Ellis, *American Sphinx*, 329, 269.
92. John P. Diggins, “Slavery, Race, and Equality: Jefferson and the Pathos of the Enlightenment,” *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 212, 217.
93. David Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 225; Philippe Sollers, *Writing and the Experience of Limits*, ed. David Hayman, trans. Philip Barnard and David Hayman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 191–92.
94. On Sade and d’Holbach, see Jean Leduc, “Les Sources de l’athéisme et de l’immoralisme du marquis de Sade,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 68 (1969): 11–19.
95. Malcolm Kelsall, *Jefferson and the Iconography of Romanticism: Folk, Land, Culture and the Romantic Nation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

Chapter Five. “Another World Must Be Unfurled”: Jane Austen and America

1. David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 57–63.
2. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 137; Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Revolutionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 31.
3. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 144–45, 197.
4. Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 66.
5. Colin Bonwick, *English Radicals and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 248, 135.
6. James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 441–80.
7. John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), xiii. On support for America within Britain from public figures like Richard Price and Thomas Pownall, see Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity from 1492 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 138–39.
8. Gilbert Imlay, *The Emigrants*, ed. W. M. Verhoeven and Amanda Gilroy (New York: Penguin, 1998), 2–3. Despite its appearance in England in 1793 and Ireland in 1794, *The Emigrants* was not published in America until 1964. For an attribution of this exclusion to the novel’s “radical ideology,” see John Seelye, “The Jacobin Mode in Early American Fiction: Gilbert Imlay’s *The Emigrants*,” *Early American Literature* 22 (1987): 204–5.
9. Imlay, *The Emigrants*, 79, 108.
10. Patrick C. T. White, *A Nation on Trial: America and the War of 1812* (New York: John

Wiley, 1965), 2–3. On different political interpretations of the “natural,” see Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s: Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.

11. Michael T. Gilmore, “The Literature of the Revolutionary and Early National Periods,” in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, vol. 1, 1590–1820, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 681.

12. William Cobbett, “The Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine” (1796), in *Peter Porcupine in America: Pamphlets on Republicanism and Revolution*, ed. David A. Wilson (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 171.

13. In 1795, for example, Cobbett wrote a savage critical essay on Susanna Rowson’s play, *Slaves in Algiers; or, a Struggle for Freedom*. “A Kick for a Bite,” in *Peter Porcupine in America*, 121–36.

14. David A. Wilson, *Paine and Cobbett: The Transatlantic Connection* (Kingston, Ont. and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 124.

15. “His principle is repulsion, his nature contradiction. . . . When he is in England, he does nothing but abuse the Boroughmongers, and laugh at the whole system; when he is in America, he grows impatient of freedom and a republic.” William Hazlitt, “Mr. Cobbett,” in *The Spirit of the Age; or, Contemporary Portraits* (1825; rpt. London: Grant Richards, 1904), 229.

16. Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic*, 12–13.

17. William Cobbett, *A Year’s Residence in the United States of America* (1819; rpt. Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press, 1964), 180.

18. Cobbett, *A Year’s Residence*, 18.

19. William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, ed. George Woodcock (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 209, 374.

20. Martin Kallich, *British Poetry and the American Revolution: A Bibliographical Survey of Books and Pamphlets, Journals and Magazines, Newspapers and Prints, 1755–1800* (Troy, N.Y.: Whitston, 1988), 1:677. Kallich estimates that approximately 5,600 poems related to the American Revolution were published in Britain between 1755 and 1800, though of course hardly any of these feature in received accounts of “English Literature” (1:xii).

21. William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Alicia Ostriker (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 221, 217, 213.

22. Lord Byron, *Don Juan*, ed. T. G. Steffan, E. Steffan, and W. W. Pratt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 496, 189.

23. J. G. A. Pocock, “Enlightenment and Revolution: The Case of English-Speaking North America,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 263 (1989): 251–52.

24. Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory*, 64. For a discussion of how these French wars served the useful purpose for the British government of consolidating a national identity recently threatened by its encounter with America, see J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 386.

25. Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 121.

26. On the disruptive influence of America in Europe, see Echeverría, *Mirage in the West*, 63, 156.

27. Edmund Burke, "Letter to the Sheriffs of the City of Bristol on the Affairs of America, 1777," in *Selected Writings and Speeches*, 193.

28. Kallich, *British Poetry and the American Revolution*, 1:xxxi. Pye's diatribe comes from his "Carmen Seculare for the Year 1800."

29. Colley, *Britons*, 143–45.

30. See, for instance, Richard Buel, *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789–1815* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), 1–49.

31. Karl Marx, *Political Writings*, vol. 2, *Surveys from Exile*, ed. David Fernbach (New York: Random House, 1973), 146–47.

32. Philippe Roger, "A Political Minimalist," in *Sade and the Narrative of Transgression*, ed. David B. Allison, Mark S. Roberts, and Allen S. Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 91.

33. Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 212; Spencer, *The Quest for Nationality*, 124.

34. Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 61.

35. Deirdre Lynch, "At Home with Jane Austen," in *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*, ed. Deirdre Lynch and William B. Warner (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 160.

36. Susan Fraiman, "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 21 (1995): 807.

37. Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), 112–19.

38. Terry Castle, "Sister-Sister," *London Review of Books*, 3 August 1995, 6, and letter, *London Review of Books*, 24 August 1995, 4.

39. Claudia Johnson, letter, *London Review of Books*, 5 October 1995, 4. Johnson develops her argument further in "The Divine Miss Jane: Jane Austen, Janeites, and the Discipline of Novel Studies," *boundary 2* 23, 3 (1996): 143–63.

40. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), 112, 183.

41. Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 161.

42. Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 172, 44, 182.

43. D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 50, 66.

44. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991): 833, 821–22.

45. Joseph Litvak, *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory, and the Novel* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 16, 31, 24.

46. Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 183. For a characteristically conservative English reading, see David Cecil, *A Portrait of Jane Austen* (London: Constable, 1978).

47. Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 9; Henry James, “The Lesson of Balzac” (1905), in *The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel*, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), 62–63.

48. John Bayley, “The ‘Irresponsibility’ of Jane Austen,” in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*, ed. B. C. Southam (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), 8–9.

49. Lionel Trilling, “*Emma* and the Legend of Jane Austen,” in *Jane Austen: Emma. A Casebook*, ed. David Lodge (London: Macmillan, 1968), 155; Bayley, “The ‘Irresponsibility’ of Jane Austen,” 9.

50. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents*, 66, 76.

51. Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Tony Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 91. Subsequent page references to this edition are given in the text.

52. Park Honan, “Jane Austen and the American Revolution,” *University of Leeds Review* 28 (1985–86): 188.

53. Jane Austen, *Catharine and Other Writings*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Douglas Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 149.

54. Honan, “Jane Austen and the American Revolution,” 183; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 80–97.

55. Moira Ferguson, “*Mansfield Park*: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender,” *Oxford Literary Review* 13 (1991): 129. See also Fraiman, “Jane Austen and Edward Said,” 812–13. On the “growing visibility of the navy in *Mansfield Park*” and ways in which this “supplements the increasing presence of empire at the edges of Austen’s texts,” see Suvendrini Perera, *Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 43.

56. The most convincing version of *Mansfield Park*’s chronology, taking account of various books mentioned in Austen’s narrative, suggests the novel’s plot runs from 1810 to 1813. Brian Southam, “The Silence of the Bertrams: Slavery and the Chronology of *Mansfield Park*,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 February 1995, 13–14.

57. Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 174–83. Trumpener argues that Austen, under the influence of Clarkson and others, is concerned deliberately to interrogate “the indirect effects of slavery and the long reach of the plantation system into the heart of England” (175).

58. R. W. Chapman, ed., *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 133; Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 318.

59. Jane Austen, *Emma*, ed. Ronald Blythe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 300. Subsequent page references to this edition are given in the text.

60. Austen, *Catharine and Other Writings*, pp. 244–45. Austen was “an inveterate reader of travel writings,” according to Susan Reilly, “‘A Nobler Fall of Ground’: Nation and Narration in *Pride and Prejudice*,” *Symbiosis* 4 (2000): 22. Reilly is one of the few critics

specifically to link Austen's work with "the influence of America and the American Revolution" (28), though she sees this American world as something that the author, in typically conservative fashion, seeks simply to resist.

61. Hunt, "Pornography and the French Revolution," 325; Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, 79–94. See also the valuable discussion in Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 69. For an analysis of how the "stresses and strains" of the French Revolution work their way into Austen's novels, see Warren Roberts, *Jane Austen and the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 4.

62. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 90.

63. Colley, *Britons*, 148.

64. Joseph Litvak, "The Infection of Acting: Theatricals and Theatricality in *Mansfield Park*," *ELH* 53 (1986): 343. See also Joseph Litvak, *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 1–26.

65. Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 96.

66. Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, 7, 209–10.

67. Pierre Klossowski, *Sade My Neighbor*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 54.

68. Paul Giles, "Gothic Paradoxes in *Pride and Prejudice*," *Text and Context* 2, 1 (1988): 68–75. For the author's description of *Pride and Prejudice*, see Austen, *Letters*, 299.

69. On this point, see the discussion by Joseph Litvak, "Reading Characters: Self, Society, and Text in *Emma*," *PMLA* 100 (1985): 771.

70. Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 82.

71. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents*, 50.

72. W. J. Harvey, "The Plot of *Emma*," *Essays in Criticism* 17 (1967): 55.

73. Harvey, "The Plot of *Emma*," 57, 52.

74. Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," 833, 834. For a description of Sedgwick's critique as "required reading for everyone interested in writing and reading about Austen," see Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, 231.

75. On the association of writing with unruly desire in *Emma*, see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 145.

76. Nicola J. Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790–1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 97, 102.

77. Thomas Keenan, "Freedom, the Law of another Fable," *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991): 235. For a commentary on "the remarkable parallels between Sade and Austen," particularly in their proclivity for exposing closely guarded secrets and brutally unmasking the illusions of sentimental consciousness, see John A. Dussinger, "Madness and Lust in the Age of Sensibility," in *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics*, ed. Syndy McMillen Conger (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 97–99, 101.

78. R. F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (New York: Barnes and Noble—Harper and Row, 1974), 273–94.

79. Austen, *Catharine and Other Writings*, 36.

80. Claudia L. Johnson, “‘The Kingdom at Sixes and Sevens’: Politics and the Juvenilia,” in *Jane Austen’s Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan*, ed. J. David Grey (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1989), 47–48.

81. Austen, *Catharine and Other Writings*, 36.

82. Austen, *Catharine and Other Writings*, 134.

83. Christopher Kent, “Learning History with, and from, Jane Austen,” in *Jane Austen’s Beginnings*, ed. Grey, 66.

84. Ellen E. Martin, “The Madness of Jane Austen: Metonymic Style and Literature’s Resistance to Interpretation,” in *Jane Austen’s Beginnings*, ed. Grey, 85; Roger, “A Political Minimalist,” in *Sade and the Narrative of Transgression*, ed. Allison et al., 91.

85. Brigid Brophy, “Jane Austen and the Stuarts,” in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*, ed. Southam, 21–38.

Chapter Six. Burlesques of Civility: Washington Irving

1. Lewis Leary, “Washington Irving and the Comic Imagination” (1973), rpt. in *Critical Essays on Washington Irving*, ed. Ralph M. Aderman (Boston: Hall, 1990), 199; Joy S. Kasson, *Artistic Voyagers: Europe and the American Imagination in the Works of Irving, Allston, Cole, Cooper, and Hawthorne* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), 39.

2. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 143.

3. Jane D. Eberwein, “Transatlantic Contrasts in Irving’s *Sketch Book*,” *College Literature* 15 (1988): 155, 157.

4. Washington Irving, *History, Tales, and Sketches* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 1049–50. Subsequent page references to this edition are given in the text.

5. Donald A. Ringe, *American Gothic: Imagination and Reason in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 100. For Hawthorne’s nineteenth-century reputation as a sentimental novelist, see Jane Tompkins, *Sentimental Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3–39.

6. Terry Castle, “The Carnivalization of Eighteenth-Century English Narrative,” *PMLA* 99 (1984): 908.

7. Martin Roth, *Comedy and America: The Lost World of Washington Irving* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1976), 6.

8. Roth, *Comedy and America*, 88, 93.

9. Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 52, 25.

10. Donald E. Pease, *Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writings in Cultural Context* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 14–16. On Irving’s cultural