

JANE AUSTEN: A STUDY OF THE EVIDENCES OF ROMANTICISM
IN THE NOVELS AFTER 1812 AND IN THE FRAGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen's lifetime, extending from 1775 to 1817, almost coincided with what would now be called the pre-romantic period and the first half of the romantic age. Although the tendencies of this period were of a very mixed character and difficult to define specifically, they may be largely resolved into the classical and the romantic, the first being a survival of preceding years and the second a revolt against that survival. With romanticism Jane Austen is not usually thought to have been in sympathy. She found her closest ties with eighteenth century classicism.

✓ The standards of classicism endured throughout the eighteenth century in spite of a powerful undercurrent of sentimentalism. The sovereignty of reason made for order and dignity, while a scrupulous searching after perfection produced a certain tension of the mind and an alertness of the intellect. An attitude of objectivity resulted in a habit of fixed and careful attention, and the temper of the age was logical and judicial. There was a respect for the essential unity and harmony of the universe, so that the classicist sought for truth in the world of physics and of philosophy. Intellectual detachment resulted in a sceptical

attitude; and, as the ironic mood dominated over the idealistic one, the period was one of sparkling wit and of pointed satire.

In literature, eighteenth century classicism for the most part drew its subject matter from the closed and ordered life of man in society. Urban life was preferred. Man was generally thought to be a more interesting object of study than nature. Critical standards were drawn from the models of Greek and Latin literature and from seventeenth century French classicism. By close adherence to acknowledged rules and methods, the classicists sought a literature rational and polished in the highest degree. The aesthetic ideal was, in fact, an intellectual perception of keen and finished outlines, of abstract and universal truths, of graceful structure and polished style.

The movement of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century romanticism proceeded largely from a revolt against the constraining forces of reason. In general, man began to regard himself more as an individual than as a member of society. He was attracted, not by the constant striving to probe the realities of life, but by the fascination of the world of the imagination. He felt himself impelled to that which was strange and hidden rather than to the understandable and the precise. The temper of the age was therefore both rebellious and idealistic. Impulses tended to the picturesque and the adventurous. Intense emotion, cultivated to feed the

awakening senses, made for a renaissance of mysticism, of faith in intuition rather than in science.

The romanticist held to no very clearly defined aesthetic creed as did the classicist; he desired novelty rather than fixed standards. He drew his subject matter, therefore, from the limitless world wherein all things are possible, from his perception of the relationship between man's soul and nature, from his intuition of the vast unknown. He strove not for detachment but for emotional intensity; not for reserve and restraint of self, but for self-expression. He did not attempt the perfection, the satisfying completeness, which characterize classic art, but the indefiniteness and suggestiveness of wonder and mystery.

In classical writing every idea is called up to the mind as nakedly as possible, and at the same time as distinctly; it is exhibited in white light, and left to produce its effect by its own unaided power. In romantic writing, on the other hand, all objects are exhibited, as it were, through a colored and iridescent atmosphere. Round about every central idea the romantic writer summons up a cloud of accessory and subordinate ideas for the sake of enhancing its effect, if at the risk of confusing its outlines.¹

From 1770 to 1798, the classic tradition seemed to decline before the growing strength of the opposing movement so that 1798 saw the full tide of romanticism sweep in, to be dominant for a period of about thirty-four years. It was during this transition from one set of values to another that Jane Austen grew up. Her life covered a period that politically and socially was one of the most exciting in

¹ Henry A. Beers, A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century, p. 17.

history, a period of momentous events and epochal changes. She was born in 1775, the year of the American Revolution. In 1789 came the French Revolution; in 1793, the Reign of Terror. Thereafter, the wars of revolutionary France and of Napoleon continued with but short intervals of peace. European monarchs and dynasties fell and were replaced, while in England, at least until Trafalgar, was felt the real and ever-present threat of a French invasion. Throughout her life, until Waterloo, a year before her death, the European scene was one of confusion and danger.

In spite of the fever of change and confusion in the great world, Jane Austen's life was remarkably uneventful. She was brought into contact with nothing startling, or mysterious, or adventurous. All of her life was spent in a very small area in the south of England, at that time perhaps the quietest and most civilized portion of the country. With extremes of fortune she remained quite unacquainted, for the classes of people she knew were the country gentry and the established middle class. In its peace and security, her existence was probably the reverse of romantic, while her environment and training were such as to give her an early inclination toward classicism, which her natural qualities strengthened and confirmed.

She grew up in the quiet village of Steventon, where her father was the parish clergyman and a gentleman of comfortable means. Since the clergymen of that age were usually

the younger sons of the gentry and the nobility, and came into their livings through the patronage of relatives and benefactors, they formed a distinctly conservative element of society. In politics, as a rule, the clergy of the Established Church belonged to the Tory party, resisting the political movement of democracy, combating the radical theories of the revolutionary philosophers, and upholding conservative traditions in government and society. To all appearances Jane Austen's home was typical in this respect, and her opinions do not appear to have been different from those of the class to which she belonged. Moreover, her family circle was

entirely united and happy so that the home influences under which the girl grew up, combined with a natural sweetness of disposition . . . gave her a genial view of life, and inclined her to play gently with the foibles of humanity.²

The main interests of the Austens were calls and conversation, dinner parties and dancing. At home the graceful amenities of social life were carefully preserved, and the prevailing atmosphere was one of humor and liveliness.

The Austen family as a whole was well-educated. Jane's father was a student of the classics, able to prepare his sons for the university. All the members of the family were great novel readers, and their tastes ran to the light and lively. In general, Jane seems to have read what most people read in those days: the poetry of Pope and his school, the

² Goldwin Smith, Life of Jane Austen, p. 17.

Spectator papers, the works of Johnson, the novels of Richardson and Fanny Burney, the poetry of Thomson, Gray, Cowper, and Crabbe. There is, however, no evidence that she was acquainted with such authors as Rousseau and Godwin.

Her tastes were of the character of her literary preferences, typical of the society to which she belonged, conservative and refined. She felt a certain affinity for solid and regular standards like those of Johnson, for her choices were conditioned by the verified and the practical. Truth to fact and sense of form she probably regarded as indispensable qualities of literature. She disliked anything which hinted of excess; she met deviations from the norm with her clear sense of humor. In her novels there is nothing romantic in the ordinary sense of the word, nothing startling or unusual. Of the luxury and decadence of the regency there is no hint in her books. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars apparently did little to set off her imagination. Her contact with the exciting events of the day was chiefly through two of her brothers who were in the navy, and through a cousin, the Countesse de Feuillade, whose husband was guillotined during the Reign of Terror, and who lived with the Austens after her escape to England. Tales of thrilling adventure might conceivably have been constructed of what Jane Austen knew through these sources of contemporary events, but her artistic bent was not in that direction.

Neither did Jane Austen share that spirit of revolt which was a predominant note of her day. Her temperament was realistic rather than idealistic; her view of life was that of a satirist, not of a sentimentalist. Reality she accepted with a simple and easy grace. With her the power of facts was indisputable, and in her self-possession and her detachment, she achieved the objectivity of the analyst. Human character and life were the subject of her study, and her touch was as calm as her penetration was clear. Her observations, heightened and intensified, appear in her novels deflected only by her particular bias, a delightful sense of the ironic. She was gifted with a remarkable sense of proportion, and every deviation from good sense and good breeding appealed to her keen sense of the ludicrous. The light of the comic spirit shines through all her novels, throwing into clear relief the human personalities of whose thoughts and actions she had a rare understanding.

As her perceptions were subtle and exact, so was her expression deft and sure. She was a careful craftsman, always precise in her use of words. Her style is particularly well-adapted to her comedies of manners, for it has a conversational quality which gives it elasticity; yet it is correct and beautiful, with the lucidity and the polish of fine eighteenth century prose.

The form and style of her writings reflect her keen intellect and sober care, and she shows genuine creative power in her selection and combination of character and

incident, which are harmoniously unified and transmuted to a reality higher than that of life. Her art is of the finest type, based on truth, yet receiving the impress of her individual preferences for order and propriety and elegance. With undeniable limitations of range, her novels nevertheless come near to perfection. They have an absolute quality--a certain intensity, which derives not from the author's visible emotions but from her understanding and her artistic method. Her novels reflect the sense of balance, the instinct for unity, the precision of the conscious artist, which are typical of eighteenth century literature. Professor Cazamian says:

All Jane Austen's work is transfused with the spirit of Classicism in its highest form, in its most essential quality; a safe, orderly harmony among the powers of the mind, a harmony where of necessity the intellect is paramount.³

That Jane Austen was an artist of predominantly classical tastes is definitely conceded. Yet her very sensitivity would make her especially aware of the impact of romanticism on the classical heritage to which her temperament and environment held her. How would she normally meet the expansion and luxuriance of the new age? It would be logical to expect that her reaction to romanticism in its incipient stage would be one of cool reserve. As time went

³ Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature, Vol. II, p. 243.

on, her hostility might become even more pronounced, or, on the other hand, it might be lessened during the years of her life in which she had the opportunity to become acquainted with the best features of romanticism, especially in the poetry of the earlier group of romantic writers which she would have had the opportunity to read before her death. With the passing of the years, did she come into any sympathy with any aspects of the movement, or did she remain entrenched in classicism? It is not unreasonable to suppose that her attitude, conscious or unconscious, would be reflected in her writings. There was a long interval between her writing of the first three novels (between 1796 and 1798) at the end of the pre-romantic period, and of the three later novels (between 1812 and 1817) toward the middle of the romantic period. This interval would tend to make somewhat more clear and definite any changes which may have occurred in her attitude during the intervening period. The purpose of this paper is to trace in her novels and fragments any evidences of romanticism, whether they seem to be conscious or unconscious on her part, with especial emphasis on the fragments and the later novels.

CHAPTER II

THE NOVELS BEFORE 1800

In order to follow the reactions of Jane Austen to romanticism, it is desirable from the start to settle upon the various manifestations of the movement with which she became acquainted. (Romanticism being a vaguely general term, one finds difficulty in setting limits to its meaning, but certain general tendencies in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century ^{and associated} thought may be noted.

One of the first signs of the romantic rebellion was a new interest in nature, especially in the beauties of the rural landscape. Weary of urban civilization and the society of their fellows, people turned to contemplation of nature for refreshment and began to exhibit a feeling for fine prospects. With this popular regard for the charms of the English countryside, a new school of landscape gardening arose so that the classic formality of the Queen Anne period yielded to informal arrangement, and the vogue of the picturesque was born. To the romanticists, the stillness of the country was a refreshing change from the bustling activity of cities. The relaxation from tension induced the contemplative mood, while the theme of nature soon was coupled with intense emotion.

In their thirst for solitude and their love of nature, men felt the call of the spirit of adventure, especially

the urge to explore. Responding to the fascination of lands different from their own, they began to travel to remote regions--to Scandinavia, to the Orient, to the Balkans, to America. The Alps, to which the Augustans had been quite indifferent, were rediscovered. Gloomy forests, wild moors, desolate lands became fascinating. The untidiness of gaunt crags or creeper-clad boulders was a pleasing emblem of the victory of chaos over order. The severity and the grandeur of steep cliffs and of mysterious forests appealed to the new love of perpendicular lines, reaching toward the infinite, and of intricate shadows, like the pinnacles and fretted surfaces of the Gothic cathedral--the direct opposite in art to the Greek temple, the symbol of the reality, the completeness, the unity, and the sculptured perfection of classic tastes.

A renewal of sensitiveness to the beauties of the landscape recalled the old thrill of nature worship, devitalized and submerged for centuries but deep in the hearts of the northern European races. Communion with nature became a source of poetic inspiration. Gradually a belief grew up in the moral excellence of places of retreat and solitude, so that nature was thought to have an especially fine influence on man. Untouched by the contaminating influence of civilization, man was believed to possess an innate nobility. It was no longer thought desirable, therefore, to repress the instinctive side of personality. Such regard for the primitive state of mankind led to research into the

ancient mythology and folk-lore of the northern races. The primeval past and the golden age of chivalry proved to create remarkably fascinating ways of escape from the present. The term "gothic," which had been a term of reproach during the age of classicism, acquired a strange new dignity.

While the wild, untouched spots of nature, the crumbling ruins of castles and abbeys, the scenes of historic battle grounds awoke the passionate remembrances of old ties with the past, the renaissance of wonder in men's hearts endowed even the commonplace with a thrilling strangeness and beauty. The shortness of man's life, the transience of his handiwork, the shrouded mystery of his destiny, the fatality of his hopes and aspiration--all these thoughts were evoked in the romanticist. Soon autumn had become the favorite season of the year, and twilight the favorite part of the day. In that season and in that hour the tender memories of yester years and yearnings after the impossible induced a strangely sweet sorrow of the heart. Grief acquired an almost voluptuous quality.

First | Once again, too, man felt the fascination of things magical and supernatural, while the rekindling of idealistic zeal inspired a new exaltation of religious sentiment. The contemplation of the eternal mystery of life and death became associated with the sublime and mystical qualities of Christianity, the religion of sorrow. The rational deistic philosophy of the eighteenth century dissolved as the belief in

the infallibility of reason gave way to a renaissance of faith in things unseen. /

With the revival of deeply religious feeling there increased a tender regard for the weak and the unfortunate. Humanitarian feeling was intensified into a desire for political and social adjustments. The temper of reform was also compatible with the spirit of rebellion against eighteenth century conservatism, which had tended to preserve the status quo. While the later classicists had been charmed by a conventionalized pastoral life because of the release it offered from the elegance of drawing room society, the romanticists exhibited their more genuine interests in the common people by their lament for the misfortunes and tragedies of the lower classes.

Conclusion / These manifestations of romanticism: love of nature, interest in the past, melancholy view of life, renaissance of wonder, call to adventure, inclination of the imagination to the sublime, rebirth of religious faith, humanitarianism, reform in social and political fields, interest in humble life--all are usually identified as characteristic of the literature of the pre-romantic and romantic ages. Few romanticists, of course, exhibit most of these qualities; others have major characteristics quite inconsistent with some of them. Romanticism perhaps is better felt than defined, but in general it is manifested in that mode of

thought which is characterized by rebellion, against either reality or society, and which appeals to the emotions and to the imagination. The essence of the romantic spirit is a passionate love of liberty and a yearning for that which is remote, indefinable, and unattainable. /

In the eighteenth century novel the faint beginnings of romanticism are reflected. Professor Cross thinks that Richardson's novels, although not basically romantic, show a trend toward sensibility in their psychological analysis of love and passion;¹ that Smollett's imagination delighted in terror and mystery;² that Sterne felt "sweet and pleasurable nerve vibrations" as he listened to "the tale of human misery."³

In the period between the publication of Smollett's last novel in 1771 and that of Scott's Waverley in 1814, the romantic content of the novel is increased. During this period, also, several distinctive types of the novel, tracing their descent from the first school of novelists, come into existence. These are: the novel of sentiment, usually considered to have been originated by Sterne; the novel of

¹ Wilbur L. Cross, The Development of the English Novel, p. 35.

² Ibid, p. 69

³ Ibid, p. 75.

terror, foreshadowed in Smollett; and the novel of manners, cultivated by realists in the tradition of Richardson.

Typically romantic are the novel of sentiment and the novel of terror, both of which arise from the need of escape from reality. The former deals with the rediscovery of the heart, especially in its manifestation of the tender emotions of love and pity. A revolution of manners and morals answers to a new delicacy of taste, while the sensations of joy and grief are courted assiduously, and, blended, become a vague, indefinable attitude toward life which may be called sensibility. Alienated from the cruel and vulgar world of reality, the keenly sensitive person becomes whimsical or unbalanced, as his inclinations veer toward fantasy or morbidity.

Mackenzie's novel The Man of Feeling is a study of the most delicate gradations of emotion, the hero being so sensitive that he endures a kind of pleasing suffering at every contact with life. In what is surely the most sentimental scene in literature he dies of excess joy in being accepted by the lady of his heart. It is evident that in this kind of novel the exquisite emotion of sensibility, whether it takes the form of happiness or of grief, or like poor Harley's, thoroughly confuses the two, is set up to be an end in itself. Diffused through the novels of the period this attitude of sensibility educed the plaintive tone, the whimsical gesture, the habit of grave moralizing, and the tender musing upon self, which are eminently its characteristics.

Proceeding, like the novel of sensibility, from the search for the most intense stimulations of emotion, is the novel of terror, created by Horace Walpole, who, in the Castle of Otranto, set the conventional form, characters, and paraphernalia of the stylized Gothic novel. The thrill of adventure, the thirst after the supernatural, the pleasant suffering arising from vague anxiety and a sense of terror--all were evoked by the new romance, which was built upon a swiftly moving plot of sensational events constructed from horrid crimes, ghostly visions, and secrets from a dark and dreadful past.

Perhaps the most popular of the novelists who followed Walpole was Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, whose novel The Mysteries of Udolpho is still considered one of the best examples of the Gothic romance. Allied with its atmosphere of uncertainty and threatening horror, which she was remarkable skillful in suggesting, is a heavy strain of sentimentality inherited from the novel of sentiment. While Mrs. Radcliffe follows the conventional Gothic details of structure and aspiration in her treatment of the mysterious, the weird, and the supernatural, she infuses the whole with a sentimental, moralizing tone arising from her passion for refinement, elegance, and romantic idealism.

[Typical of these novels of sentiment and terror, The Mysteries of Udolpho is also representative of the kind of

contemporary novels with which Jane Austen was familiar. This particular book, moreover, was chosen by Jane Austen as the specific model for her parody of the Gothic novel in Northanger Abbey, and it is therefore particularly interesting for the purposes of this study.]

The heroine of The Mysteries of Udolpho, Emily St. Aubert, lives in a chateau in Gascony, which has an idyllic setting near a mysterious forest, where at the solemn hour of twilight, nightingales are heard singing, and strains of ethereal music float, as it seems, from heaven. Emily possesses the exquisite beauty of the conventional romantic heroine; she is also remarkably accomplished, and her tastes bespeak the authentically romantic soul.

It was one of Emily's earliest pleasures to ramble among the scenes of nature; nor was it in the soft and glowing landscape that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood walks that skirted the mountain; and still more the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart, and lifted her thoughts to the God of Heaven and Earth. In scenes like these she would often linger alone, wrapt in a melancholy charm, till the last gleam of day faded from the west; till the lonely sound of a sheep-bell, or the distant bark of a watch-dog, were all that broke the stillness of the evening. Then the gloom of the woods; the trembling of their leaves, at intervals, in the breeze; the bat, flitting on the twilight; the cottage lights, now seen and now lost--were circumstances that awakened her mind into effort, and led to enthusiasm and poetry.⁴

⁴ Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 7.

Of a very sensitive temperament, Emily experiences the most poignant sensations. She sighs and weeps a great deal, and very often must be supported lest she faint. She is refined and unacquainted with the ways of the world. Her retiring manners and pensive, dreaming air attest the modesty of her bearing and the nobility of her thoughts.

The young hero of the book, Valancourt, is united in spirit to Emily by his high idealism as well as by his habitual melancholy. He also sighs and weeps, although he does not faint, and his frankness and enthusiasm move the admiration of Monsieur St. Aubert, who

discovered in his sentiments the justness and the dignity of an elevated mind unbiased by intercourse with the world. He perceived that his opinions were formed, rather than imbibed--were more the result of thought, than of learning; of the world he seemed to know nothing, for he believed well of all mankind; and this opinion gave him the reflected image of his own heart.⁵

After her father's death, Emily continually reminds herself of the "necessity of resisting even virtuous sorrow,"⁶ but she is nearly always unequal to the exertion. She is impelled to seek the renewal of her grief in everything which reminds her of her father: his favorite room, his books and flowers, the romantic haunts where he loved to walk, even the approach of twilight, his favorite hour.

⁵ Ibid, p. 27.

⁶ Ibid, p. 48.

From the further melancholy indulgence of her grief, Emily is prevented by her aunt, now her guardian, who takes her to Thoulouse, where she is forced into a fashionable circle and encounters everywhere the selfishness, the insincerity, and the dissipation which remind her but too cruelly of the tenderness, truth, and simplicity to which she had always been accustomed. Madame Cheron, her aunt, is a vulgar, unfeeling woman, who separates Emily from Valancourt because, although of noble birth, he is not rich, and offends Emily with her ambition to make a wealthy marriage for her niece.

With all her worldly knowledge and her passion for sway over others, Madame Cheron is duped into marrying Montoni, a mysterious Italian, and, from the moment he first appears, a clearly recognizable villain.

This Signor Montoni had an air of conscious superiority, animated by spirit and strengthened by talents, to which every person seemed involuntarily to yield. The quickness of his perceptions was strikingly expressed on his countenance; yet that countenance could submit implicitly to occasion; and more than once in this day the triumph of art over nature might have been discerned in it. His visage was long, and rather narrow; yet he was called handsome; and it was, perhaps, the spirit and vigour of his soul, sparkling through his features that triumphed for him. Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore.⁷

At his palace in Venice, amid the fantastic splendors of the ancient city, the festivity of the carnival, and the songs of the gondolieri, Montoni soon reveals his

⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

character by attempting to secure possession of his wife's property and engaging in evil plots with other haughty Venetian noblemen. Emily is to be forced to marry one of these when she is saved by an inexplicable change of Montoni's plans, which takes the party to the Castle di Udolpho, a mediæval fortress in the Apennines.

On approaching the castle, whose towers are visible in the declining rays of the sun, Emily feels the most horrible forebodings.

The gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark gray stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity . . . As she surveyed through the twilight its desolation--its lofty walls over-topped with briony, moss, and night-shade, and the embattled towers that rose above--long suffering and murder came to her thoughts.⁸

At the castle Emily's fears prove to have been well founded. Soon separated from her aunt, whom Montoni imprisons in a dungeon, Emily walks on the ramparts at twilight, catching a sudden glimpse of a ghostly figure. Or, again, leaning from her casement, she hears the enchanting

⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

strains of a heavenly music. Wandering through the intricate passages of the castle, she finds a portrait covered with a heavy black pall or a strangely-carved chest which she has not seen before. Once on a staircase, in an uncertain light of a flickering taper, she sees a little track of blood. At the midnight revels of Montoni and his dissolute companions, a sepulchral voice mocks his every word.

From these supernatural terrors Emily escapes to France, to find shelter at still another medieval fortress, Castle le Blanc. There old Dorothee, the ancient servant, sees in Emily's face a strange resemblance to her long dead mistress, the Marchioness de Villeroi, who was poisoned by her husband, and in whose dusty suite of rooms Emily finds a black veil, never disturbed since the hand of the dead marchioness laid it there. At the nearby monastery of St. Clair, a dying nun, Sister Agnes, murmurs in her delirium of ghastly crimes, and, as she turns her wild eyes to Emily, utters a horrible death cry. With all these suggestions of the supernatural, Mrs. Radcliffe creates an atmosphere of delicious, threatening horror, while also sustaining a tone of melancholy sensibility throughout the book.

In direct contrast to the novels of terror and of sentiment, whose limitations and absurdities are but too clearly manifest, is the novel of manners. Refined into a detailed, realistic study of contemporary society, this

type of novel received from Fanny Burney an ironical tinge. In Evelina, for example, the absurdities of fashionable society are satirized and characters are presented so as to expose their comic elements. False sentiment is usually detected and satirized, and the atmosphere is sanely healthy and moral.

[It was the novel of manners which would naturally have appealed to the classic and realistic tastes of Jane Austen. In the very type of novel she wrote, therefore, she may be contrasted with the authors of romantic fiction. Her earliest writings seem to have been realistic sketches and burlesques, and from two of these she developed her first two novels: Pride and Prejudice, completed in 1797, and Sense and Sensibility, completed in 1798. Both of these were carefully revised before their publication. Northanger Abbey, written in 1798, after both the others, may, however, be considered the best example of her earliest work, since it was never revised by Jane Austen and was published only after her death. The purposes of Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility are similar. Northanger Abbey is a parody of The Mysteries of Udolpho, while containing sly thrusts at the whole school of Gothic novels. Sense and Sensibility satirizes the cult of sensibility which was glorified in the novels of sentiment like Mackenzie's Man of Feeling.]

There is an exhilaration in Northanger Abbey which suggests that Jane Austen found her purpose a delightful one. Since it is a comic version of The Mysteries of Udolpho, she begins by making the heroine almost everything that Emily St. Aubert was not. Catherine Morland in her childhood was not beautiful, nor had she great accomplishments.

She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught, and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid.⁹

Her tastes, also, were quite inferior.

She was fond of all boys' play and greatly preferred cricket, not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush.¹⁰

Against her claims to heroism were not only her personal and intellectual traits but her situation in life and the character of her father and mother.

Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected and poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard, and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence, besides two good livings, and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and, instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on--lived to have six children more--to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself.¹¹

⁹ Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 1063.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 1063.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 1063.

It is remarkable that with all these serious drawbacks Catherine was still neither unfeeling nor vulgar. When she had reached the age of fifteen, however, her appearance began to improve so that she had the pleasure of occasionally hearing her parents remark that she was becoming almost pretty. Yet these improvements were unfortunately wasted upon the unromantic background in which Catherine had been placed by fate. At the age of seventeen she had not yet fallen in love.

This was very strange! But strange things may be generally accounted for if their cause be fairly searched out. There was not one lord in the neighborhood; no, not even a baronet. There was not one family among their acquaintances who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door; not one young man whose origin was unknown. Her father had no ward, and the squire of the parish no children.¹²

Jane Austen amended this awkward situation by transferring her heroine to Bath as the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Allen. Unlike Emily St. Aubert in most other respects, Catherine did then have the opportunity to see the fashionable, depraved society of the great world. At Catherine's departure, however, her mother appeared to be oppressed with no dark forebodings nor did she counsel her daughter for hours against the machinations of wicked lords.

¹² Ibid., p. 1065.

Everything, indeed, relative to this important journey was done on the part of the Morlands with a degree of moderation and composure, which seemed rather consistent with the common feelings of common life, than with the refined susceptibilities--the tender emotions which the first separation of a heroine from her family ought always to excite.¹³

Regrettable as was the attitude of her family, that of Catherine was scarcely less so, for she looked forward to her first ball with delight. Rather than seeking the solitude of her own reflections, escaping from dissolute young lords, and rejecting dozens of proposals, Catherine was not even presented to a partner. Nor, even later, did she meet a handsome, melancholy young man who fell in love with her at first sight, but Henry Tilney, whose principal characteristic was a delightful sense of humor, and whose affection for her "originated in nothing better than gratitude," since a "persuasion of her partiality for him was the only cause of giving her a serious thought."¹⁴

Authentically romantic, however, were Catherine's interests in ruined castles and all the other trappings of Gothic romance. An ardent admirer of Mrs. Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, Catherine looked forward with breathless anticipation to her visit to the home of the Tilneys, which was, of all marvels, an abbey.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1066.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1202.

With all the chances against her of house, hall, place, park, court, and cottage, Northanger turned up an abbey, and she was to be its inhabitant. Its long, damp passages, its narrow cells and ruined chapel, were to be within her daily reach, and she could not entirely subdue the hope of some traditional legends, some awful memorials of an injured and illfated nun.¹⁵

But Catherine was to be severely disappointed. In contrast to Montoni's ascent into the Apennines, the Tilneys drove on level, pleasant roads with Catherine expecting every turn in the road

to afford a glimpse of its massy walls of grey stone, rising amidst a grove of ancient oaks, with the last beams of the sun playing in beautiful splendour on its high Gothic windows. But so low did the building stand, that she found herself passing through the great gates of the lodge, into the very grounds of Northanger without having discerned even an antique chimney.¹⁶

Moreover, when she was actually within the walls of Northanger Abbey itself, she could see nothing of what Emily had observed at Udolpho. Although the Gothic windows had been preserved, there were no painted glass, no cobwebs, no crumbling columns.

At least one parallel with Emily's situation awaited her, however, for in her room at the abbey there was a high, old-fashioned black chest, in which, cautiously exploring, she found a roll of paper, yellowed with age. Picking this up, with the most deliciously terrified sensations, she was

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 1140.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 1152.

on the point of opening it, when by a sudden gust of wind her candle was extinguished, and she was left in the dark with the mysterious paper unread. Next morning, a quick investigation revealed it to be a washing-bill.

But Catherine's romantic hopes and fears were not yet subdued. By observing the curious behavior of General Tilney, who occasionally marched up and down the room, with downcast eyes and contracted brow suggestive of a Montoni, Catherine pieced together a very creditable romantic story in which the general figured as his wife's murderer. When she visited the dead woman's rooms, however, Catherine found that they were not only clean and well-kept, but preserved no memento of their former occupant, certainly no black veil lying crumbling to dust where her hand had last placed it.

Her visions of picturesque crime over, Catherine at last recovered her sense of balance. Reflecting upon the teasing words of Henry Tilney, who had divined her black suspicions of his father, she was forced to conclude that

Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters. There, such as were not as spotless as an angel, might have the dispositions of a fiend. But in England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad. Upon this conviction, she would not be surprised if even in Henry and Eleanor Tilney some slight imperfection might hereafter appear; and upon this conviction she need not fear to acknowledge some actual specks in the character of their father, who, though cleared from the grossly injurious suspicions which she must ever blush to have entertained, she did believe, upon serious consideration, to be not perfectly amiable.¹⁷

From the nature of her burlesque it is not difficult to reach a conclusion as to Jane Austen's attitude toward the Gothic novel, as well as to the type of romanticism that was its source. The stock characters and conventional trappings she found untrue and therefore amusing. Noticeably absent from Jane Austen's novel are the villain, the degenerate nobleman, the monk, the comic serving wench, and peasants, banditti, and conspirators. General Tilney, for instance, does not have to murder his wife to be thoroughly unpleasant; he is only a martinet, indulging in numerous petty tyrannies.

Artificiality in situation, pathos and horror for their own sake, and the excessively imaginative in character and incident were the focal points of Jane Austen's attack. The paraphernalia of the Gothic romance: the ruined castle, the ghost, the pallid countenance, the ready tear--all of these she exposes in the daylight of common sense. They seemed to her neither average nor universal, and certainly, in the society which she knew, they were improbable. Her reaction to them was very clearly that of a staunch classicist with an unfailing sense of humor.

[In Sense and Sensibility Jane Austen's purpose was to show up the follies of exaggerated sensibility, and to demonstrate that strong feeling is not necessarily incompatible

with self-restraint. Two sisters, Elinor and Marianne, were used for the purpose of a contrast, Elinor representing sense and Marianne, sensibility. While Elinor possessed a fine intellect and a sane judgment, she also "had an excellent heart; her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong, but she knew how to govern them."¹⁸ Marianne, on the other hand, with the same refinement of mind, placed an undue emphasis upon the delicacies of keen sensibility.

She was sensible and clever, but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting; she was everything but prudent.¹⁹

In order to bring out her contrast clearly, Jane Austen often placed the sisters in identical situations so that their different reactions would be effectively shown. Both were destined to unhappy love affairs, but how differently they took their misfortunes!

Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting from Willoughby, ²⁰

and as the days went on, she allowed her grief to overpower her in an authentically romantic manner suggestive of Emily St. Aubert: 7

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 49.

She played over every favourite song that she had been used to play to Willoughby, every air in which their voices had been oftenest joined, and sat at the instrument gazing on every line of music that he had written out for her, till her heart was so heavy that no further sadness could be gained; and this nourishment of grief was every day applied . . . In books, too, as well as in music, she courted the misery which a contrast between the past and present was certain of giving.²¹

On the other hand, Elinor, upon parting from Edward Ferrars,

busily employed herself the whole day, neither sought nor avoided the mention of his name, appeared to interest herself almost as much as ever in the general concerns of the family, and if, by this conduct, she did not lessen her own grief, it was at least prevented from unnecessary increase, and her mother and sisters were spared much solicitude on her own account.²²

To Marianne, Elinor's behavior appeared the conclusive evidence of her sister's lack of feeling. Self-restraint was incomprehensible to her, for she considered that with strong feelings it was impossible.

That Marianne took some degree of pride from her own fine feelings is manifest, and throughout the books she gave way to the impulses of melancholy and restlessness to which she wondered her sister did not yield. With Marianne, sensibility was never artificial and perhaps not greatly exaggerated, but it was always unwise. In giving way to her feelings, therefore she was sometimes morbid and often not thoughtful of others. While Elinor quietly accepted

²¹ Ibid., p. 50.

²² Ibid., p. 62.

a situation which appeared to be inevitable and achieved her poise by constant and painful exertion, Marianne increased her dejection by retiring from the society of others whenever she could, by seeking the solitude of her own thoughts in long walks and occasional effusions of regret in the presence of some melancholy aspect of nature. Like Emily St. Aubert, she was often too melancholy to attend to conversation. On the journey to London, whether the sisters had been invited by the good natured Mrs. Jennings,

Marianne's behaviour as they travelled was a happy specimen of what her future complaisance and companionableness to Mrs. Jennings might be expected to be. She sat in silence almost all the way, wrapt in her own meditations, and scarcely ever voluntarily speaking, except when any object of picturesque beauty within their view drew from her an exclamation of delight exclusively addressed to her sister. To atone for this conduct, therefore, Elinor took immediate possession of the post of civility which she had assigned herself, behaved with the greatest attention to Mrs. Jennings, talked with her, laughed with her, and listened to her whenever she could.

As in this incident, Elinor was always mindful of the duties which propriety demand. Observant, perhaps, of the eighteenth century dictum that the unpardonable sin in good society is to let the mind wander, Elinor always appeared serene and calm, attentive to others, and of an amiable disposition. In vain did she counsel self-command to Marianne, for her sister could see only deceit and insipidity arising from the subjection of the true feelings to

reason and decorum. Of a truly romantic nature, Marianne always held to the inherently noble character of the instincts, and for that reason tolerated only perfect sincerity. Marianne, then, would always do what she felt right, and she would always speak her heart. To her there was no more virtue in moderation of language than in restraint of feelings. Thus she admired Willoughby for the very things which Elinor censured in him, a propensity

of saying too much what he thought on every occasion, without attention to persons or circumstances. In hastily forming and giving his opinion of other people, in sacrificing general politeness to the enjoyment of undivided attention where his heart was engaged, and in slighting too easily the forms of worldly propriety, he displayed a want of caution which Elinor could not approve.²⁴

In her tendency to form hasty conclusions and to hold to them steadfastly, Marianne resembled Willoughby. Elinor, on the other hand, was objective and reserved, analyzing character and making decisions fairly and reasonably. While evidently lauding this habit of Elinor's, which was indeed her own, Jane Austen engaged in a few playful thrusts at Marianne's peculiar and cherished prejudices. One reason for Marianne's indifference to poor Colonel Brandon was

²⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

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her belief that a man at the advanced age of thirty-five has
"outlived all acuteness of feeling and every exquisite power
of enjoyment,"²⁵ just as "a women of seven-and-twenty can
never hope to feel or inspire affection again."²⁶ She also
believed that she could never love a man whose tastes did
not in every point coincide with her own. In this way her
early inclination for Willoughby was confirmed by his com-
plete agreement with her "in almost every matter of impor-
tance," by "his estimating the beauties of Cowper and of
Scott as he ought," and by her "receiving every assurance of
his admiring Pope no more than was proper."²⁷

In Marianne's feeling for nature was the passionate love
of the true romantic. Fallen leaves she viewed with a
rapturous delight, tinged, however, with that melancholy
feeling of sensibility which the presence of death should
arouse. Pointing out a scene to the retiring Edward Ferrars,
she challenged him to view it and yet remain tranquil. Reluc-
tant to disappoint her, Edward said:

²⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

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I have no knowledge in the picturesque, and I shall offend you by my ignorance and want of taste, if we come to particulars. I shall call hills steep, which ought to be bold; surfaces strange and uncouth, which ought to be irregular and rugged; and distant objects out of sight, which ought only to be indistinct through the soft medium of a hazy atmosphere. You must be satisfied with such admiration as I can honestly give. I call it a very fine country . . . I dare say it is a picturesque one too, because you admire it . . . I like a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles. I do not like crooked, twisted, blasted trees. I admire them much more if they are tall, straight, and flourishing. I do not like ruined, tattered cottages. I am not fond of nettles, or thistles, or heath blossoms. I have more pleasure in a snug farmhouse than a watchtower--and a troop of tidy, happy villagers please me better than the finest banditti in the world.²⁸

While Marianne "looked with amazement on Edward and with compassion on her sister,"²⁹ one can be certain that Jane Austen indulged in a smile. That she expressed here her own opinion of the picturesque as she then understood it, one has little doubt.

[From the drawing of the two sisters in Sense and Sensibility, it is easy to detect Jane Austen's view of the romantic sensibility of Marianne: that such sensibility is formed upon selfishness, real if unconscious, and allied with a judgment essentially immature. Marianne has narrow prejudices and judges others by her own feelings; she exhibits her feelings in manners and speech in ways at least slightly incompatible with good breeding; she so unwisely indulges

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 57-58.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

her grief as to bring on her serious illness. When finally she becomes aware of her errors, her awakening gives her the first objective view of herself.

In Sense and Sensibility one can see that what Jane Austen disliked in romantic sentimentality was substantially what she disliked in romantic terror. Indulgence and expression of emotion for the pride of fine feelings, like cultivation of the fantastic for the sake of excitement, she saw as aberrations of the norm. She was perfectly aware that underneath the glamor of romanticism lay tendencies toward the ridiculous, on one hand, and toward the morbid, on the other; and she was therefore not to be blinded by that glamor. On the contrary, she was wide awake and self-composed. Quite naturally she delighted in the ridiculous excesses of the average romantic novel, and it is not at all surprising that two of her first three novels were satires of those excesses.

But, after all, not all of romanticism inclines toward the ludicrous, and not all of its manifestations are necessarily silly or morbid. Jane Austen's own sense of values was more than positive; it was fair. While her vision was penetrating, and she was relentless in exposing shams and absurdities, no one was more sympathetic to sincere emotion, which must be classed as one of the real values of romanticism. What was good in romanticism, one may be sure she would understand and not mock, in the true tradition of the comic spirit. Jane Austen's attitude must have been that of

Elizabeth Bennett, when she says

I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can.³⁰

Jane Austen's was never a cynical attitude toward feeling. While her sentiments are not with excessive emotion, neither are they with the lack of emotion. Minor's judgment of Lady Middleton was a severe one, for her ladyship's

reserve was a mere calmness of manner with which sense had nothing to do. Towards her husband and mother she was the same as to them; an intimacy was therefore neither to be looked for nor desired. She had nothing to say one day that she had not said the day before. Her insipidity was invariable, for even her spirits were always the same.³¹

Jane Austen's censure, also, is especially directed toward Isabella Thorpe and the Misses Steele, whose principal traits are their desire for self-advancement, boldness of attitude, and meanness of soul. Isabella is particularly irritating in her "exaggerated feelings of ecstatic delight or inconceivable vexation on every little trifling occurrence."³² The sentiments which she professes are as artificial as the expression of them is effusive. She tells Catherine:

³⁰ Ibid., p. 265.

³¹ Ibid., p. 32.

³² Ibid., p. 1090.

There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves; it is not my nature. My attachments are always excessively strong;³³

and again:

I cannot help being jealous, Catherine, when I see myself slighted for strangers; I, who love you so excessively! When once my affections are placed, it is not in the power of anything to change them. But I believe my feelings are stronger than anybody's: I am sure they are too strong for my own peace.³⁴

Another character that Jane Austen delights in exposing is General Tilney, for he is shown simply as devoid of any feelings except those of pride and greed.

Never had the General loved his daughter so well in all her hours of companionship, utility, and patient endurance, as when he first hailed her "Your Ladyship."³⁵

And while never subscribing to the code of extreme sensitivity, Jane Austen leaves us in no doubt about her attitude toward the indelicacy, the lack of fine understanding shown by such persons as Mrs. John Dashwood and old Mrs. Ferrars.

It is apparent that strong feeling itself was not what in romanticism Jane Austen disliked. Even in the high comedy of Pride and Prejudice there is no lack of suggestion of the deep feeling of the characters. The affection between her two sets of sisters, Elinor and Marianne, and Jane and Elizabeth Bennett, is not only well-drawn, but it is ex-

³³ Ibid., p. 1078.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 1116.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 1206.

phasized. Moreover, the Austen heroines never consider marriage as a practical expedient. None would marry a man whom she did not love, even at the risk of becoming an old maid; and in that age the very term "old maid" was an epithet of derision.

To certain manifestations of romanticism, provided they were expressed moderately, Jane Austen was not hostile. Indeed, certain traits which she exhibits in her earliest works are not incompatible with romantic feelings. Although one critic has remarked, "Of course there was not a ha'porth of 'Nature worship' in her, for she was very vague about prospects and very exact about mileage,"³⁶ even in her purest comedy of manners, Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth Bennett had this reaction when she received an invitation for a summer tour in the Lake District.

"My dear, dear aunt," she cried rapturously, "what delight! what felicity! You give me fresh life and vigour. Adieu to disappointment and spleen. What are men to rocks and mountains?"³⁷

And later, when Elizabeth visits Pemberley, her

mind was too full for conversation, but she saw and admired every remarkable spot and point of view. They gradually ascended for half-a-mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House,

³⁶ A. B. Walkley, "Jane Austen," Nineteenth Century, Vol. 91: p. 634.

³⁷ Jane Austen, op. cit., p. 324.

situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste.³⁸

At least, Jane Austen gave to Elizabeth a taste for the natural and informal in gardening. It might even be possible that Jane Austen did not more clearly reveal an admiration for nature, because, as Elinor said, "Many people pretend to more admiration of the beauties of nature than they really feel,"³⁹ and Jane Austen always preferred understatement to overstatement.

Jane Austen, moreover, with all her banter, does not show a positive dislike of any but artificial or excess sensibility. She was amused, not shocked, by Catherine's romantic dreams, like Henry Tilney, who after he had teased her about her fanciful suspicions, neither neglected nor despised her, as Catherine fully expected, and "the only difference in his behaviour to her was, that he paid her rather more attention than usual."⁴⁰ And, while Jane Austen had considered such idealized characters as Emily and Valancourt ridiculous, she had also showed that because

³⁸ Ibid., p. 324.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 1175.

Catherine and Henry Tilney lacked the typical romantic traits they did not necessarily fall into the opposite extremes of complete unattractiveness and insensibility. While without the beauty and sensibility of Emily St. Aubert, Catherine — has vivacity, candor, and the right impulses; in love she becomes really charming.

That Jane Austen always admired genuine emotion, if its form were a proper and an admirable one, is shown in her treatment of Marianne, for, although Marianne's view of life is intended to be unwise and at times absurd, she is made, perhaps unconsciously, very fascinating. Marianne's awakening from the errors of sensibility has something of the fervent romanticism of her own soul. Marianne, no doubt, will always look at life with a highly imaginative eye, and her sensations will always be vivid. Jane Austen seems to like her better for her consistency, and one wonders if the character did not run away with her. While she evidently respects and admires Elinor, she is not interested in her. Elinor has a beautiful sanity, but she remains rather abstract. Marianne lives and charms our hearts by her little follies as well as by her real affections. She is unforgettable. When one thinks of Sense and Sensibility, one thinks of Marianne.

Such slight touches as these, in the first group of novels which Jane Austen wrote, from 1796 to 1793, indicate that she was not disposed even in her earliest period, when the influences of her classical training would be perhaps

strongest and when the evidences of romanticism which she had seen about her and in literature had least impressed her, to consider some qualities of romanticism inconsistent either with her own opinions or with her art. It is not too much to expect that her sympathies lay rather more with some aspects of romantic feeling than she chose consciously to exhibit in these first three novels.

CHAPTER III

THE FRAGMENTS

There is a long period between 1798, when Jane Austen finished Northanger Abbey, and 1811, when she began Mansfield Park, during which she is believed to have written nothing except two fragments. One theory which has been advanced for the lack of literary production during this period is that she became discouraged in not finding a publisher. It seems unlikely, however, that this reason alone would completely extinguish her ardor for writing, since she had written constantly during her girlhood, designing her first sketches and novels apparently more than anything else for the diversion of her family and friends. It is more logical, perhaps, to consider as a factor the relatively unsettled condition of her life during most of the idle period. From 1801, when the Austen family moved from Steventon, until 1805, she lived at Bath, and from then until 1809, at Southampton. The diversions of life in town may have prevented her from writing as much as formerly, for her three later novels were written after her return to the country, to Chawton, a village in Hants not far from her old home. Probably there was a combination of circumstances which prevented her from writing although she continued to read aloud from the manuscripts to her family and friends. Whatever the reason which prevented the production of further

novels, she is believed to have worked with old manuscripts throughout the years they remained in her possession, revising and polishing them, and with this constant practice, strengthening her powers as a conscious artist. Thus Sense and Sensibility is known to have been carefully revised before it was published in 1811, and Pride and Prejudice also, before its publication in 1813. During the years between the writing of the earlier and the later novels, Jane Austen's literary activities must have been limited to this improvement of her earlier works and to the beginning of two stories, Lady Susan and The Watsons, which were never finished and which were certainly not intended for publication.

Lady Susan, for which conflicting dates of composition have been given, is now thought to have been written in Bath about 1805. Mr. R. Brimley Johnson, who studied and edited the texts of the fragments, notes that this one is

a complete and, as we may safely assume, a final draft--the manuscript almost free from corrections and erasures, in that respect an example of finished work. On the other hand, it is written in "Letters," a form experimented with in the early days, and expressly discarded for ever as an instrument of narration.¹

Although usually spoken of as a fragment, Lady Susan may more properly be called a novelette; it is really unfinished, however, in that Jane Austen discarded the

¹ Jane Austen, Sandition, The Watsons, Lady Susan, and Other Miscellanies, p. xii.

epistolary form before she had completed the story and gave the projected dénouement in a narrative summary. It bears little resemblance to any of her completed novels, but its construction may be similar to the early sketch Elinor and Marianne, which was written in letters and formed a basis for the completed novel Sense and Sensibility. One might even assume that Lady Susan was designed as a preliminary exercise in the molding of characters intended for a real novel. A hint of such an opinion is indicated in Mr. Johnson's comments on the origin of Lady Susan.

Upon careful examination of her life and the continuous development of her art, I am personally disposed to believe that it was a deliberate exercise in composition, as Love and Friendship and the fragments of childhood were written--without design. Her novels were thought out, first written, redrafted, and finally revised, when settled in Steventon or Chawton. During the unsettled years in Bath and Southampton, she gave some, interrupted, attention to old and new work; during which it may well be that she was exercised about her ability to deal with a type of character never congenial to her joyous and loving imagination, the villain of the piece. For the domestic novel, this would occasionally, if not often, be expected to figure as the accomplished vamp--though, in fact, never appearing thus in a true Jane Austen novel.²

Lady Susan is usually regarded as a sincere attempt at a complete novel, left unfinished because the portrayal of Lady Susan demanded powers of Jane Austen which she believed she did not possess. In the almost completely evil traits of the central character and in some of its other features, this fragment bears little resemblance to any other of her works.

² Ibid., p. xii.

Although Jane Austen, in Northanger Abbey, had given her heroine the conclusion that in English people "there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad" and that only in the Alps and Pyrenees "those who were not as spotless as an angel might have the disposition of a fiend,"³ it is possible that she toyed with this idea and attempted to create one of these unmixed characters which previously she had pronounced impossible, at least in England. Whether her purpose was to practice the portrayal of "the villain of the piece," later to figure as "the accomplished vamp" in her novels, or to create a novel around such a villain, there is no indication that she intended to draw the comic side of such a character, for Lady Susan is treated with all seriousness. Perhaps like Elizabeth Bennett, Jane Austen could not laugh at "implacable resentment."⁴ Totally different from the burlesque of the novel of terror, Lady Susan is perhaps Jane Austen's nearest approach to the Gothic novel itself, complete as it is with a villain in Lady Susan, an innocent heroine in her daughter Frederica, and a hero in her duped admirer, Reginald de Courcy, without, however, any of those clichés of the Gothic plot: the ruined castles and secret passages, the improbable coincidences and sensational crimes.

³ Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 1176.

⁴ Ibid., p. 265.

That Jane Austen was attempting to create such a villain similar to the typical one of the novel of terror is purely an assumption, but the facts of the story are not inconsistent with it. Considering the essential traits of a villain like Montoni, one is struck by their parallel with those of Lady Susan. While Montoni was thought handsome, "it was perhaps the spirit and vigour of his soul sparkling through his features that triumphed for him."⁵ He had also

an air of conscious superiority, animated by spirit and strengthened by talents, to which every person seemed involuntarily to yield. The quickness of his perceptions was strikingly expressed on his countenance; yet that countenance could submit implicitly to occasion; and more than once in this day, the triumph of art over nature might have been discerned in it.⁶

In settling upon the traits of a thoroughly wicked mind, Jane Austen gave to Lady Susan substantially the same which Montoni possesses. Lady Susan's chief traits are hypocrisy, selfishness, and malice, combined with those natural endowments and those artifices which make her a past mistress of deceit. Of course, Lady Susan lives in a society which limits the scope of her villainy, but in her native impulses and in her abilities for plot and intrigue she is a character which bespeaks the author's penetrating vision into the motives of an evil personality.

⁵ Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, op. cit., p. 61.

⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

Long considered "the most accomplished coquette in England,"⁷ Lady Susan is a woman of extraordinary personal beauty, rare brilliance of intellect, and very graceful and engaging manners. She is the widow of a man for whom she never cared and has a daughter whom she despises as the image of her father. Lady Susan's is the brilliant world of fashionable London, and she is a finished product of an artificial and corrupt way of life. Whether or not it is the baneful effects of town life which have led her astray is not a discernible element in Jane Austen's theme. There are no disquisitions in the book on the wickedness and profligacy of civilization in the approved romantic manner; but, fitted as she is for society, Lady Susan finds the country a dull, stupid place, and life at Churchill an intolerable exile from all that she thinks diverting. She despises the Vernons because they "do not know what to do with their fortune, keep very little company, and never go to London but on business."⁸

It is part of Lady Susan's art that she contrives not to reveal what she is. Mrs. Charles Vernon is quick to remark her dissimulations.

One is apt, I believe, to connect assurance of manner with coquetry, and to expect that an impudent address will necessarily attend an impudent mind; at least I was myself prepared for an improper degree of confidence in Lady Susan; but her countenance is absolutely sweet, and her voice and manner winningly mild. I am sorry it is so, for what is this but Deceit? Unfortunately, one knows her too well. She is clever and agree-

⁷ Jane Austen, Sanditon, The Watsons, Lady Susan, and Other Miscellanies, p. 154.

⁸ Ibid., p. 156.

able, has all that knowledge of the world which makes conversation easy, and talks very well, with a happy command of language, which is too often used, I believe, to make Black appear white.⁹

Cloaking her real nature beneath such an engaging exterior charm, Lady Susan easily imposes upon the unsuspecting victims. Before Mrs. Mainwaring is cognizant of the danger, Lady Susan has contrived to alienate her husband, and at the same time has deprived Miss Mainwaring of her acknowledged admirer, Sir James Martin. She takes great pride in her sway over others, deliberately cultivating their admiration either for the sensations of power which such admiration can confer or for the profits which it may later accrue to her. She has "a regard for Charles Vernon because he is easily imposed upon,"¹⁰ and she rejoices in her opportunity to engage the affections of Reginald de Courcy, especially since he is predisposed to censure her. She tells Mrs. Johnson

There is exquisite pleasure in subduing an insolent spirit, in making a person pre-determined to dislike, acknowledge one's superiority. I have disconcerted him already by my calm reserve; and it shall be my endeavour to humble the pride of those self-important De Courcys still lower, to convince Mrs. Vernon that her sisterly cautions have been bestowed in vain, and to persuade Reginald that she has scandalously belied me.¹¹

⁹ Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 156.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 160.

The selfishness of Lady Susan is equalled only by her malice. Her pleasure in revenge is so great that she is sometimes worried whether to pursue the ends which will bring her what she wants or to gratify her wishes for revenge. At one time she requests Mrs. Johnson's counsel about the course to follow with Frederica, whether she "owes it more to her character" to force her daughter into a marriage with Sir James, because she has so commanded, or to attain her own security by marrying Reginald de Courcy.

Although she may be in a passion of rage against someone who has interfered with her plans, Lady Susan is cool enough to follow the procedure which will gain her own ends. With the purposefulness of the conscious criminal, she tells Mrs. Johnson:

At present my Thoughts are fluctuating between various schemes. I have many things to compass. I must punish Frederica, and pretty severely too, for her application to Reginald; I must punish him for having received it so favourably, and for the rest of his conduct. I must torment my sister-in-law for the insolent triumph of her look and Manner since Sir James has been dismissed--for in reconciling Reginald to me I was not able to save that ill-fated young Man--and I must make myself amends for the humiliations to which I have stooped within these few days.¹²

Lady Susan, then, has most of the characteristics which Montoni possesses. Her beauty and her engaging address cloak her real self; she has the spirit and fire of a lively

¹² Ibid., p. 202.

nature. Brilliant in intellect, she knows how to submit her own impulses to the requirements of the moment and how to gain her own ends by the most subtle means. Her resentment is keen and implacable, while her arrogance and her innate cruelty would become an Italian conspirator. Montoni, in removing his wife to a dungeon during her illness, in depriving Emily of his protection to make her give him important papers, in abandoning to his death the former confederate who attempts to usurp his power, has not more evil intent than Lady Susan, who delights in spreading ill-will and takes a delicious gratification in rendering others miserable. In their springs of action, they are the same; they differ chiefly in method, Lady Susan's being infinitely more subtle; but, although they are less calculated to disturb the public peace and to bring her into the notice of the police, they are not less effective in achieving her ends. Diabolical is a strange word to use in describing an Austen character, but for Lady Susan it is perhaps not inept. Although Lady Susan plays her part in a typical Austen setting--the drawing rooms of polished society and the shrubberies at Churchill where she walks with Reginald, her heart would to credit to the satanic fancies of a Gothic novelist.

The plot is centered in Lady Susan and grows out of her machinations. Foil to her is the young Frederica, whose nature and whose situation answer much that a typical

romance could demand, and who therefore suggests that Jane Austen may have been trying to deal with the ingenue in a desperate plight. Without the endowments of the typical romantic heroine, Frederica has the charm of candor and of sensibility. She is the greatest contrast imaginable to her mother, for, although she is pretty, she is not beautiful, and, since her education has been almost wholly neglected, she lacks that ease of manner and that command of language which distinguish Lady Susan. She is in her right place at Churchill, in the quiet of the country. Her unfamiliarity with the great world, her shyness, and her occasional melancholy lend her a certain charm, which the reader divines in Mrs. Vernon's letters. Her mother speaks dis-
cainfully of her strong affections:

I never saw a girl of her age bid fairer to be the sport of Mankind. Her feelings are tolerably lively, and she is so charmingly artless in their display, as to afford the most reasonable hope of her being ridiculed and despised by every Man who sees her.¹³

While Mrs. Vernon is delighted with Frederica's admiration of Reginald, her mother perceives her "romantic nonsense" with disgust, and far from being moved by such feelings as she believes Frederica to have, is confirmed in her resolution to force her daughter into a marriage with Sir James by the strategic device of "rendering her thoroughly uncomfortable until she does accept him."¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 160.

In her qualities of artlessness, sensibility, and rebellion, Frederica bears a faint though recognizable resemblance to such a romantic heroine as Emily St. Aubert. In Reginald's situation also, there is a parallel with Valancourt, the hero of The Mysteries of Udolpho. A victim of his own open heart, he is caught for a time in the toils of an adventuress until he learns not to trust others by judging them by himself.

Although in some ways it may have pointed toward tragedy, Lady Susan has the conventional happy ending. It is perhaps quite logical that Lady Susan cannot escape being what she is and so entangling herself in her own past misdeeds. In finding it impossible to carry out her plans and resigning her hopes of vengeance to the more reasonable course of providing for herself through marriage with Sir James, Lady Susan acts from logical, as well as recognizably selfish motives. Such an outcome, given in narration at the end of the letters, leads one to believe that Jane Austen did rather hastily add the ending because she did not see fit to go on with the story. The dénouement itself is logical, but it seems that there should be more to the story. It is possible that Lady Susan would not have resigned Frederica to the Vernons without a struggle, without another attempt at vengeance.

Why the story remained virtually unfinished is a matter for speculation. Although some believe that the portrayal

of Lady Susan was not consonant with Jane Austen's powers, there is no real weakness in the character drawing, and no flagging of interest is discernible throughout the letters. Lady Susan, moreover, is startlingly real, with that intensity possessed by major Jane Austen characters. While Jane Austen does not again betray interest in pure villainy, and while she did not go far with her initial interest, what she did was well done. Whatever interest she developed later in romanticism, however, did not take the direction of the strain of terror, although in Lady Susan there will always be a tantalizing suggestion of what her talents in that direction might have proved to be.

In spite of their being nearly always considered together, Jane Austen's two fragments are quite unlike. The Watsons resembles the other Austen novels, except that it is incomplete. There was a plot for it, fully devised, known to Jane's family because she sketched it in some detail for them. Twelve chapters of finished composition compose the fragment. R. Brimley Johnson characterizes it as:

the unpolished version of a Jane Austen novel, as carefully written after revisions of a first draft, itself extensively corrected in the process of re-drafting; lacking only the final finish of perfected phrase and thought.¹⁵

Some have suggested that she found the situation of the family beyond her ability to handle their story, that

¹⁵ Ibid., p. xi.

they were too ill-bred or too sunk in poverty, but her treatment of the drab, vulgar life of the Price family at Portsmouth shows that she had no lack of knowledge of lower life. R. Brimley Johnson believes that she left the story unfinished "to avoid reflections upon a favourite sister-in-law."¹⁶ Probably she left it so long unfinished that she became more interested in another plot and therefore never took it up again.

The plot of The Watsons is much more like a typical Jane Austen story than that of Lady Susan. In it one finds the elements with which she usually worked: two or three families settled near a small village, a ball, an afternoon call, much conversation, a sensible clergyman, a handsome rattle, and a stupid lord. These are the things and the characters which go to make up a recognizable Austen plot. This fragment departs from the chief features of the earlier novels in being, "notably weak in humour and wit,"¹⁷ and in the character of the heroine. Like Frederica, Emma Watson may be thought as somewhat more romantic than the earlier heroines, if one excepts Marianne, whose leanings toward romanticism were satirized. While having none of the exaggerated sensibility of Marianne or the imaginative nonsense of Catherine Morland, Emma does show traits akin to

¹⁶ Ibid., p. xi.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. xi.

romantic ones, and if they are barely perceptible otherwise, they do show up somewhat more clearly if she is compared with Elinor Dashwood or Elizabeth Bennett. Although she does not differ from them in a radical way, she is much more serious than Elizabeth and less restrained than Elinor. Some of the characteristics which she possesses in common with theirs are more emphasized; one is made more aware, for instance, of the strength of her feelings.

Like all the Austen heroines, she dislikes the thought of a marriage for practical reasons. From the outline of the story, one finds that she is to refuse a man of high rank and of wealth and to marry his clergyman. This development of the plot would be perfectly in line with her character as it is presented. Her independent spirit and her resolution are shown in her conversation with Elizabeth on the way to the Edwardes' home. Discussing their sister Penelope's attempts to catch a husband, Emma says:

To be so bent on Marriage, to pursue a Man merely for the sake of situation, is a sort of thing that shocks me; I cannot understand it. Poverty is a great Evil, but to a woman of Education and feeling it ought not, it cannot be the greatest. I would rather be Teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a Man I did not like.¹⁸

To this Elizabeth replies that she would rather do anything than teach in a school. She remarks that she has noticed Emma's refinement of mind, a quality which will not

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

make her happy in her present surroundings, and which is emphasized especially in Emma's place in her family circle.

By nature, Emma was sweet-tempered and sympathetic. She was particularly charming when she danced with the little Charles Blake at the ball. When she saw the little boy, cruelly disappointed in the loss of his partner,

Emma did not think or reflect; she acted. "I shall be very happy to dance with you, Sir, if you like it," said she holding out her hand with the most unaffected good humour.¹⁹

and when her action was remarked with astonishment by the others,

though rather distressed by such observations, Emma could not repent what she had done, so happy had it made both the boy and his Mother.²⁰

This same quickness to act, arising from her impulsiveness and her generosity, is also seen in her offering to stay home from the ball so that Elizabeth can go, and in her quick opening of the note which Elizabeth had sent her "rather before Mrs. Edwards had entreated her to use no ceremony."²¹ Not a whit disturbed by the dignity of Lord Osborne's rank, she shows her displeasure in her cool retort to him. One wonders if Elinor, that soul of propriety, would

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

²¹ Ibid., p. 106.

have acted in quite the same way, and it is questionable whether even Elizabeth Bennett, with her liveliness of mind and dislike of pomposity, might have expressed herself so freely to Tom Musgrave, as Emma does, in response to his question as to what she thinks of Lord Osborne:

That he would be handsome even though he were not a Lord, and perhaps better-bred; more desirous of pleasing, and shewing himself pleased in a right place.²²

In her sensitivity, Emma reminds one somewhat of the "romantic delicacy" of Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne. Far from being complimented by the visit of Lord Osborne and Tom Musgrave, she could feel only its impropriety. "Of the pain of such feelings, Elizabeth knew little; her simpler Mind or juster reason saved her from such mortification."²³ Perhaps this greater refinement of Emma foreshadows the shrinking delicacy of Fanny in Mansfield Park. She prefers silence and her invalid father's company to the family conversations, since the vulgarity and conceit of her brother and sister-in-law, the sentimental manner of her sister Margaret, and the generally quarrelsome nature of the family are trying to her rather delicate nerves.

Eager to be as little among them as possible, Emma was delighted with the alternative of sitting above, with her father, and warmly entreated to

²² Ibid., p. 109.

²³ Ibid., p. 113.

be his constant Companion each Evening; and as Elizabeth loved company of any kind too well, not to prefer being below, at all risks, as she had rather talk of Croydon to Jane, with every interruption of Margaret's perverseness, then sit with her father, who frequently could not endure talking at all, the affair was so settled.²⁴

The earlier Austen heroine, Elizabeth Bennett, one feels, — might have quite easily liked to remain with the company, if for nothing else than to be diverted by their foibles and inconsistencies and perhaps to draw them out a little in the manner of her father with Mr. Collins. Emma's preference for silence and peace rather than delight in the company of others is the beginning of a change in the Austen heroines which will be seen later in Fanny and Anne.

While The Watsons does not lack in interest, it has a kind of dull finish, a quality which contrasts with the brilliance of the three earlier novels and which arises perhaps from the absence of the sparkling Austen wit. Except for Lord Osborne and Tom Musgrave, there is a lack of truly comic characters. Although such a noticeable lack of her usual humor does not necessarily betoken a more romantic tone, it is possible that in these fragments (for Lady Susan also has a similar quality) Jane Austen was exploring a somewhat different field of character study and portrayal of the life she knew. That she is more reflective and inclined to present less definitely limited and defined characteristics is seen in her way of relying less upon conversation for the drawing of character and more upon the subtle implications of her comment.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

Together these fragments might be thought of as representing Jane Austen's mind in a state of the changes which could be brought about by the years between her earlier and later works. The fragments are, however, scarcely long enough to offer incontrovertible bases for a statement that Jane Austen was leaving some of the colder rationalism or the brilliant wit of her earlier books. While there may not be complete evidence in them to indicate she had become more interested in romanticism or more consciously or unconsciously influenced by some of its features, still there are trends of a later development. The fragments are different from her earlier writings, as well as different from each other, and in some ways they indicate a greater difference in the novels to be written. In this way they may be thought of as a sort of transition between the earlier and later novels.

CHAPTER IV

THE NOVELS AFTER 1812

[In 1812, encouraged perhaps by the publication of Sense and Sensibility and by the permanence of her residence at Chawton, Jane Austen once again gave her attention to her writing. By 1817, she had finished three novels, Mansfield Park, Emma, and Persuasion, and four of her six novels had been published.

The intervening years between her first and her second periods of writing, from 1798 to 1812, while little altering the general tenor of her life, had brought many changes in the great world. The Napoleonic Wars had stirred England to a high pitch of patriotic fervor, and the reaction to the French Revolution had established a harshly reactionary government at home. In the world of literature there had been a flowering of those romantic tendencies which the closing years of the eighteenth century had foreshadowed. The rich and varied production of literature during this period is especially notable, and by 1817, the year of her death, Jane Austen had certainly become acquainted with some of the romantic poets. With the poetry of Scott and Byron she was evidently familiar, as the two poets, with some of their works, are mentioned in her later novels. While Tintern Abbey is referred to, she seems to have been less well-acquainted with Wordsworth. At all events, romanticism

to her in her last years could no longer have meant merely certain features of the novels of sentiment and terror.

Jane Austen's attitude toward exaggerations and artificiality of romanticism remained substantially the same during her lifetime. A short sketch entitled "Plan of a Novel According to Hints from Various Quarters," written in 1816, shows that she still delighted in burlesquing the stock romance. In 1815, on its being suggested to her that she write a "historical romance illustrative of the august house of Coburg," she remarked that "she could no more write a romance than an epic poem."¹ Her art was always to be at its best in the realistic novel of manners, with her chief interest in character, not in incident. Still there are touches in these last three novels which show that her attitude toward certain features of romance had undergone a change.

One of the most important of these changes is shown in her increased affection for nature. As a few passages in Sense and Sensibility and in Pride and Prejudice show, she had early appreciated the charm of the countryside when it united "beauty with utility,"² and she had liked informal landscaping. In the early novels, however, nature had been

¹ Goldwin Smith, op. cit., p. 37.

² Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 58.

regarded primarily as a social factor--the weather. In the later ones not only is nature mentioned much more, but its presence is tenderly felt. With Fanny in Mansfield Park, the out-of-doors is a delight and a spur to her imagination. On the ride to Sotherton, for instance, she is supremely happy to observe the passing scenes, and on her return from Portsmouth to the country

her perceptions and her pleasures were of the keenest sort . . . Her eye fell everywhere on lawns and plantations of the freshest green; and the trees, though not fully clothed, were in that delightful state when further beauty is known to be at hand, and when, while much is actually given to the sight, more yet remains for the imagination.³

That Jane Austen knew what it was to be stirred to real enthusiasm for the beauties of nature is shown in the words of Fanny, when, standing at the window in an evening in midsummer, she contemplates the scene outside,

where all that was solemn, and soothing, and lovely appeared in the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shade of the woods. Fanny spoke her feelings. "Here's harmony!" said she; "here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry can only attempt to describe! Here's what may tranquillise every care, and lift the heart to rapture. When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly could be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene."⁴

³ Ibid., p. 743.

⁴ Ibid., p. 537.

Emma Woodhouse also has a feeling for nature, although her expression of it is not so rapturous as Fanny's. On several occasions Emma eagerly seeks to be out-of-doors as soon as possible, where "the exquisite sight, smell, sensation of nature, tranquil, warm, and brilliant after a storm,"⁵ might gradually bring serenity to her troubled spirits.

It is in Persuasion, however, that occur the most significant passages illustrative of Jane Austen's real feeling for nature. While Emma seeks the presence of nature for its calming influences, and Fanny for its influence on her imagination as well as for its repose, Anne has an even warmer and more intimate connection with nature. She speaks of her "dear, dear country," and with her family going to Bath, grieves "to forego all the influence so sweet and so sad of the autumnal months in the country."⁶ In the rather melancholy aspects of nature Anne finds a response to her aching heart. Her regrets, perhaps, are not tranquilized, but she experiences an exquisite pleasure in her walk

from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges, and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn, that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness, that season which has drawn from every poet, worthy of being read, some attempt at description or some lines of feeling.⁷

⁵ Ibid., p. 1022.

⁶ Ibid., p. 1229.

⁷ Ibid., p. 1260.

Jane Austen, in the autumn of her own life, had been drawn to the beauty of the autumn of nature, that favorite season of the romanticists. It is to be noted that her sympathy with Anne is clearly evident, but it was never given so completely to Marianne in Sense and Sensibility. Although the situation of the two heroines is not dissimilar, they are seen in a different way. Marianne's affection for nature and her search in it for comfort are presented as an exaggerated sensibility. Anne is graceful and charming; there is nothing artificial or unworthy in this romantic indulgence of her feelings.

That Jane Austen could paint from nature may be noted — in her famous description of Lyme Regis. In her picture of the Cobb she makes use of fresh, glowing expressions which betoken her real feeling:

Its old wonders and new improvements, with the very beautiful line of cliffs stretching out to the east of the town, are what the stranger's eye will seek; and a very strange stranger it must be, who does not see charms in the immediate environs of Lyme, to make him wish to know it better. The scenes in its neighborhood, Charmouth, with its high grounds and expansive sweep of country, and still more, its sweet, retired bay, backed by dark cliffs, where fragments of low rock among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide, for sitting in unwearied contemplation; the wooded varieties of the cheerful village of Up Lyme; and, above all, Pinny, with its green chasms between romantic rocks, where the scattered forest trees and orchards of luxuriant growth declare that many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state, where a scene so wonderful and so lovely is exhibited as may

more than equal any of the resembling scenes of the far-famed Isle of Wight; these places must be visited, and visited again to make the worth of Lyme understood.⁸

With this passage Jane Austen displays not only her skill in sketching nature, but her faculty of subtly suggesting far more than she describes. It shows, too, the enthusiasm of one to whom nature is no longer beautiful only when it is combined with utility. Here one can see her awakening to the fascination of old ties and wider horizons than she had seemed hitherto to be aware of. One can see her imagination reaching back into the past and into a wider world than she had even known.

Such a love for old ties and old traditions, suggestive of romanticism, is to be detected in Fanny Price, in passages which show quite definitely that Jane Austen was no longer insensible to the charm of the past. At Sotherton, Fanny

attended with unaffected earnestness to all that Mrs. Rushworth could relate of the family in former times, its rise and grandeur, regal visits and loyal efforts, delighted to connect anything with history already known, or warm her imagination with scenes of the past.⁹

and, later, when the party visited the family chapel at Sotherton, Fanny's imagination had evidently created, through the influence perhaps of Scott's poetry, more romantic visions than she was to see.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 1267-1268.

⁹ Ibid., p. 520.

"I am disappointed," said she, in a low voice to Edmund. "This is not my idea of a chapel. There is nothing awful here, nothing melancholy, nothing grand. Here are no aisles, no arches, no inscriptions, no banners. No banners, cousin, to be "blown by the night wind of heaven." No signs that a "Scottish monarch sleeps below."¹⁰

Again, when Fanny and Mary Crawford are talking, Mary exclaims:

"There is something in the sound of Mr. Edmund Bertram so formal, so pitiful, so younger-brother-like, that I detest it."

"How differently we feel!" cried Fanny. "To me, the sound of Mr. Bertram is so cold and nothing-meaning, so entirely without warmth or character! It just stands for a gentleman, and that's all. But there is nobleness in the name of Edmund. It is a name of heroism and renown; of kings, princes, and knights; and seems to breathe the spirit of chivalry and warm affections."¹¹

These passages, suggestive of a new liking for the past, especially for the middle ages and chivalry, express what must have been Jane Austen's own preferences. Her satire is never directed toward the manifestations of romanticism in her heroines, Fanny and Anne, as it had previously been toward those of Marianne and of Catherine Morland.

The later heroines also are more given to solitary meditation than the earlier ones. This fact shows perhaps that Jane Austen herself was doing more thinking of a deeper kind than she had hitherto, and that, while her imagination was not necessarily turning toward the roman-

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 520.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 596.

tically sublime, it was sometimes occupied with the mysteries of being. Fanny, for instance, evidently having been affected by the memory, takes delight in the fascination of the wonderful and the elusive quality of the human mind. Once she says,

"How wonderful, how very wonderful the operations of time and the changes of the human mind." And following the latter train of thought, she soon afterwards added: "If any one faculty of our nature may be called more wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient; at others, so bewildered and so weak; and at others again so tyrannic, so beyond control! We are, to be sure, a miracle every way; but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting do seem peculiarly past finding out."¹²

This does not seem like the cool speech of a rational classicist. Fanny's enthusiastic tone indicates rather that it is quite possible for an Austen heroine to engage in the rapture of wonder and to perceive the strange and the beautiful in every phenomenon.

Once again, Fanny, in talking to Mary Crawford, speaks in a tone of wonder, allied with feeling, real feeling for inanimate nature:

The evergreen! How beautiful, how welcome, how wonderful the evergreen! When one thinks of it, how astonishing a variety of nature! In some countries we know the tree that sheds its leaf is the variety, but that does not make it less amazing, that the same soil and the same sun should nurture plants differing in the first rule and law of their existence. You

¹² Ibid., pp. 595-596.

may think me rhapsodising; but when I am out of doors, especially when I am sitting out of doors, I am very apt to get into this sort of wondering strain. One cannot fix one's eyes on the commonest natural production without finding food for a rambling fancy.¹³

Although it is not to be asserted that Jane Austen ever read much of the poetry of Wordsworth (and it would be just as interesting if she had not), the last sentence of this passage suggests the famous lines of the poet,

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Between Jane Austen's conventional prose and Wordsworth's mystic poetry there is, of course, no resemblance of expression, but one can see an interesting similarity of idea. Besides, Jane Austen's "rambling fancy" might mean much more than it seems. Her expression of emotion was rendered more casual rather than more intense, as in the case of poetry, and she always tended to understatement.

In addition to this evidence that Jane Austen could occasionally speculate upon the marvels of nature and of the human mind, there are other suggestions that she had become more absorbed with philosophic reflection than before. In deft little touches, which would have been strange in her earlier novels, she records her observation of fleeting glimpses into the recesses of the mind. "One does not love a place the less for having suffered in it,"¹⁴ Anne thinks,

¹³ Ibid., p. 595.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1321.

and again, she finds that she must submit to a lesson "in the art of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle."¹⁵

In general, these last three books reveal the growing consciousness of Jane Austen that the world was greater, that there was much more to it than she had ever before suspected. Along with the expansion of her imagination into past ages, and into the mysteries of life, Jane Austen began to feel a more intense interest in the great world far beyond her home, an interest manifested primarily in the adventure and the heroism of the English navy. Her painting of such characters as William Price and Captain Wentworth shows that her highest ideal of manhood comprised the "glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance,"¹⁶ of the conqueror of the sea. William, "distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and to consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour"¹⁷ is Jane Austen's picture of the young and adventurous sailor.

Captain Wentworth, the mature and the successful William Price, is perhaps the most romantically interesting of Jane Austen's men. Jane Austen, like Anne Elliot, feels the charm of his sanguine temper, his ambitious and adventurous spirit, and his fearless mind.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 1234.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 612.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 612.

He was confident that he should soon be rich: full of life and ardour, he knew that he should soon have a ship and soon be on a station that would lead to everything he wanted. He had always been lucky; he knew he should be so still. Such confidence, powerful in its own warmth, and bewitching in the wit which often expressed it, must have been enough for Anne.¹⁸

An admiration for the navy shows itself again and again in Persuasion, and Jane Austen seems to like it especially for the opportunities it offers to the heroic and the confident. When Sir Walter Elliot says that his strong point of objection to the navy is that it is the

means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers never dreamt of,¹⁹

thus putting him in danger of "being insulted by the rise of one whose father his father might have disdained to speak to,"¹⁹ we have ample reason to believe that Jane Austen liked it for that very reason.

That a hint of the romantic spirit of rebellion also is not wholly lacking in Jane Austen, one can see occasionally in her later novels. Captain Wentworth does not hesitate to criticize the Admiralty, who

entertain themselves now and then with sending a few hundred men to sea in a ship not fit to be employed.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1225.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 1221.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 1248.

And Jane Austen's dislike of rank, though visible even in her early novels, becomes more acute in her later ones. No person with a title gets favorable treatment from her. Far from possessing that respect for differences in social class which Dr. Johnson had, she rebels against the claims to special attention of the titled nobility. There is only one peer in her works, Lord Osborne in The Watsons, and he is the most stupid and boorish of her characters. Not one of the baronets is accorded her respect. Sir John Middleton is a boisterous fool; Sir Thomas Bertram is pompous and narrow, although it is given to him to see some of his mistakes; Sir Walter Elliot is an egotist of the most extreme dimensions. The titled women fare no better. Lady Susan Vernon is the wickedest; Lady Bertram, the dullest; and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the most haughty and conceited.

Even more forceful than her treatment of the titled characters is Jane Austen's satire of those who bow servilely to the claims of rank. In his obsequious attentions to Lady Catherine, Mr. Collins becomes her greatest fool. Tom Musgrave is little better than an over-awed fop in his dancing attendance upon the Osbornes, and those great snobs, the Elliots, are unforgettable, parading the length of the ball-room with "our cousins, the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple and her daughter, the Honourable Miss Carteret."²¹

²¹ Ibid., p. 1299.

The explanation of Jane Austen's placing such insignificant value upon rank and connection is perhaps to be found in her perception of the exaggerated deference which was paid to them in her age. During the period of reaction in England against the French Revolution the social hierarchy of England became stiffened in an obstinate, wooden conservatism.

Jane Austen, an intellectual, with an intellectual's secret contempt for all distinctions save those of intellect, resented the adulatory homage paid to rank and to its complacent acceptance of "the great" who were not intellectually great.²²

Related perhaps to her rebellion against the social claims of position by birth, is Jane Austen's undoubted dislike for the pretensions of riches.—Mrs. Elton is satirized for her taste for finery and parade. Maria Bertram becomes a pitiable object with her catch of a bore with 12,000 pounds a year. The attitude of Elinor in Sense and Sensibility is reversed by Anne Elliot. While Elinor and Edward do not wish to marry on his slender income because

neither was quite enough in love to suppose that three hundred and fifty pounds a year would supply them with the comforts of life,²³

Anne Elliot deeply regrets that she had allowed herself to be persuaded that her engagement was indiscreet because Captain Wentworth was penniless.

²² A. B. Walkley, "The Aversions of Authors," The Living Age, Vol. 315, p. 588.

²³ Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 221.

She felt that if any young person in similar circumstances were to apply to her for counsel, they would never receive any of such certain immediate wretchedness, such uncertain future good . . . How eloquent could Anne Elliot have been! how eloquent, at least, were her wishes on the side of early warm attachment, and a cheerful confidence in futurity, against that over-anxious caution which seems to insult exertion and distrust Providence! She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older: the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning.²⁴

In Mansfield Park, also, Sir Thomas Bertram learns too late to regret his daughter's acquisition of a husband whose value lies in his name and his fortune; and when Edmund wishes to marry the penniless Fanny Price, he gives his consent, "sick of ambitious and mercenary connections, prizing more and more the sterling good of principle and temper," and "with the high sense of having realised a great acquisition in the promise of Fanny for a daughter."²⁵

In addition to Jane Austen's rebellion against rank and riches as the indication of the respect to which a person is privileged, there is something in the later books which tends toward a humanitarian feeling for the unfortunate. There is, for example, an indication in Emma of a radical sympathy with the lot of the oppressed governess. The advertising offices for governesses she calls "offices for the sale, not quite of human flesh but of human intellect."²⁶ One feels that Jane Austen had a great deal of sympathy for a victim of the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 1227.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 758.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 946.

"governess-trade," Jane Fairfax, who, being early forced into the resolution to become a governess, resolved

at one and twenty to complete the sacrifice, and retire from all the pleasures of life, of rational intercourse, equal society, peace and hope, to penance and mortification forever.²⁷

These strong words indicate clearly enough the feeling of horror with which Jane Austen regarded the position of the educated but underpaid gentlewomen. The treatment of Mrs. Weston and Jane Fairfax might even be interpreted as a plea for the better treatment of their class.

That Jane Austen felt a real sympathy with people of unfortunate circumstances is seen in her treatment of Mrs. and Miss Bates and her satire of the Eltons for their unkindness to Harriet Smith. Emma's regret for her careless remark to Miss Bates is intensified by her realization that it was to someone below her in rank, someone "sunk from the comforts she was born to" and deserving of her compassion.

Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck.²⁸

Although the prevailing atmosphere of Jane Austen's early works shows her to have had a fine moral taste, the books show nothing of a deeply religious feeling. This circumstance is slightly changed in her later books, where

²⁷ Ibid., p. 861.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 993.

a greater fondness is evident for simplicity, morality, and piety. There is some emphasis put on the moral excellence of the country as against the corrupting influence of the city in Mansfield Park, and there is a hint of a deeper respect of the clergy than Jane Austen had before chosen to show. Her satire of Dr. Grant and Mr. Elton as persons unbecoming the ministry is more caustic than that directed toward Mr. Collins. When Mary Crawford remarks disdainfully that a clergyman is nothing, Edmund, who takes his duties more seriously than any other of the Austen clergymen, replies:

I cannot call that situation nothing which has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind individually or collectively considered, temporally and eternally, which has the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence.²⁹

Such an attitude toward religion, though not taking the form of remarkable fervor or of mysticism in an authentically romantic fashion, indicates that in the older Jane Austen there was an approach toward the renaissance of religious feeling.

In these general respects which have been mentioned--in the new interest which Jane Austen was beginning to feel in some aspects of romanticism--one can see a definite sign of the changes which make the tone of the later novels different from that of the earlier ones. Evidences of a more intense feeling for nature, especially as it affects the

²⁹ Ibid., p. 524.

emotions, of a new interest in the past, of attitudes which can be related to the renaissance of wonder, of the rebellion against social injustice, of the return to religion--all of these show that Jane Austen was reflecting more upon the ways of the world and the meaning of life in a way which suggests the dreaming and sometimes rebellious romanticist.

Jane Austen's new tendency to probe deeper into things she does not understand, to see vague relationships and undercurrents of ideas, rather than to concentrate exclusively in the classical manner upon the keen, clear outlines of things, is a factor in her later psychology of character. Opinions which seem to be the results of her own reflections creep into the later books, lending them a somewhat more subjective tone than the earlier ones possess. Mlle Léonie Villard, in her doctoral dissertation, Jane Austen and Her Works, notes the presence of romantic feelings in the last books, and ascribes such feelings to the influence of a love affair in Jane Austen's life, a purely hypothetical incident since there is no biographical proof for it. Mlle. Villard says

Une chose est certaine, cette épisode qui contient toute la vie sentimentale de Jane Austen est à l'origine du changement qu'on remarque dans les trois derniers romans. Rien ne fut changé au cours paisible de son existence, mais la sympathie et la tendresse que l'amour avait éveillées en elle laisserent dans la seconde partie de son oeuvre une trace lumineuse et parfumée.³⁰

³⁰ Lillian Rowland-Brown, "Jane Austen Abroad," Nineteenth Century: Vol. 98, p. 786.

Virginia Woolf also has remarked the change in her work and seems to assign it to the same cause.

There is an expressed emotion in the scene at the concert and in the famous talk about woman's constancy which proves not merely the biographical fact that Jane Austen had loved, but the aesthetic fact that she was no longer afraid to say so. Experience, when it was of a serious kind, had to sink very deep, and to be thoroughly disinfected by the passage of time, before she allowed herself to deal with it in fiction.³¹

Whether or not it is indeed a certain spiritual identity of Jane Austen and her later heroines which makes for the more tender expression of feeling in the later books, one cannot, of course, be sure, but in Fanny, the white violet of spring, in Anne, the "exquisite rose d'automne", and even in the saucy, imaginative Emma, there are qualities which must have represented many of the feelings of Jane Austen herself. Since the heroines were always the center of vision in her novels, such preferences and tastes as Jane Austen had might very logically creep into her portrayal of them. If such a theory is at all acceptable, one cannot escape ascribing the striking difference between the earlier heroines to a change in Jane Austen herself. If one counts out Marianne and Catherine Morland, since they are subjects of satire, the early heroines: Elizabeth with her fearless, independent spirit, her delicious wit, her arch temperament, her tastes for the light and lively, and Elinor with her

³¹ Virginia Woolf, "Jane Austen at Sixty," The New Republic, Vol. 37, p. 261.

common sense, her regard for propriety, her restraint, might easily represent the principal traits of the young Jane Austen. Two of the later heroines, on the other hand, have a larger portion of some of the qualities first noted in Emma Watson, those qualities which arise from the ascendancy of sensibility. There is in Fanny and Anne, besides their emotional inclination toward nature, a tendency to something like romantic melancholy. They are of a more sensitive, retiring disposition. Fanny is rather consciously self-effacing, and "her own thoughts and reflections were habitually her best companions".³² She is so different from the other Austen heroines that she has even been called a "projected character", but whether Jane Austen had found her traits in life or whether she was attempting to create a romantic heroine by means of her own new interests in such a figure, it is evident that her feeling for Fanny was sympathetic.

As a foil to Fanny, Jane Austen gave us Mary Crawford, who has an undeniable charm and even some of the delightful qualities of Elizabeth Bennett, but who is hard, without ethical principle, and guided by selfishness.

³² Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 517.

She had none of Fanny's delicacy of taste, of mind, of feeling; she saw Nature, inanimate Nature, with little observation; her attention was all for men and women, her talents for the light and lively.³³

When Jane Austen endows Mary with a positive dislike of the country, with a disposition to regard witty conversation and the superficial graces as the ends of life, with a casual disdain of clergymen, with a determination to catch a rich, titled husband for convenience and not for love, one can be sure that Mary was meant to be inferior to Fanny, beside whom she loses on every important point except assurance and wit, traits which Jane Austen now seems to value less than in her earlier works. Fanny in her recessiveness, her tendency to dreams, her childlike wonder, her simple morality, is indeed a great contrast to the early heroines. To Mlle. Villard she is

*l'héroïne aussi séduisante que la brillante Elizabeth; elle nous apparaît douée d'une beauté morale et d'un charme émouvant qu'Elizabeth ne possédait pas.*³⁴

There is even that in Fanny which could appreciate Tintern Abbey (She had a picture of it in her room), and in some of her qualities she is surely Jane Austen's nearest approach to the shy, pensive, unworldly heroine of romance.

Anne Elliot is more mature, more experienced; she has a vitality which Fanny lacks. She is never dim, never consciously self-effacing. At twenty-seven she is an old maid,

³³ Ibid., p. 517.

³⁴ Lillian Rowland-Brown, op. cit., p. 786.

but she remains assured and graceful, with an elegance of beauty and with "manners as consciously right as they were invariably gentle".³⁵ Her melancholy she never allows to become offensive like Marianne's, but she has a broken heart and her poignant regrets Jane Austen represents with a depth of feeling and understanding which adds a magically poetic touch to the most poetic love in her novels. Anne Elliot is for Mlle Villard:

| exquisite rose d'automne dont le parfum délicat et la grace un peu effacée ont plus de charme encore que la jeunesse et la fraîcheur des autres figures féminines de Jane Austen.³⁶

Never in high spirits, and with a sensibility which renders them often unhappy and even with an inclination to tears, Fanny and Anne have a true romantic delicacy. Both have an inclination for poetry, and quotations from their reading occasionally creep into their conversation. Anne, with this interest in poetry, is a welcome companion to Captain Benwick; seeking to help him in his tragic love-affair, she is secretly amused to find that "like many other great moralists and preachers, she has been eloquent on a point which her own conduct would ill bear examination".³⁷

35 Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 1302.

36 Lillian Rowland-Brown, op. cit., p. 786.

37 Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 1271.

Having talked of poetry, the richness of the present age, and gone through a brief comparison of opinion as to the first-rate poets, trying to ascertain whether Marmion or The Lady of the Lake were to be preferred, and how ranked the Glaour and The Bride of Abydos, and moreover, how the Glaour was to be pronounced, he showed himself so intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet, and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other; he repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imaged a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so entirely as if he meant to be understood, that she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry, and to say that she thought it was the misfortune of poetry to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly.³⁸

This is a remarkably revealing passage, for it not only shows that Jane Austen was well aware of contemporary romantic literature and could appreciate the poetry of Scott and Byron but also suggests that perhaps her own restraint concealed more intense interest in feeling than she is ordinarily supposed to have possessed. It hints of the aspiration of the romantic spirit, something which she never revealed in the three first novels. Her understanding of the emotions gives her the power of searching the depths of the heart, a power first suggested, although in a very mild way in Pride and Prejudice through the growth of Elizabeth's feeling for Darcy. Fanny's secret attachment for Edmund, Emma's heartfelt regret over Mr. Knightley's supposed attachment to Harriet, Anne's despair of regaining Wentworth's love--all of these feelings of the later heroines are portrayed with skill and sympathy.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 1271.

In general, the characters in Jane Austen's later books who are satirized are those who have neither feeling, nor principle, nor unselfishness. As Fanny notes of Henry Crawford:

Here was again a want of delicacy and regard for others which had formerly so struck and disgusted her. How evidently was there a gross want of feeling and humanity where his own pleasure was concerned; and alas! how always known, no principle to supply what the heart was deficient in.³⁹

A great emphasis in these last books is laid upon the tenderness, the depth of feeling which is an indispensable quality of excellent character. (Emma, reflecting upon Harriet's disappointment in Mr. Elton, is grateful that Harriet's nature should not be of "that superior sort in which the feelings are most acute and retentive".⁴⁰)

There is even a hint that Jane Austen has acquired at least to some degree, Marianne's romantic illusion concerning the impossibility of second attachments. There are, for instance, the significant expressions of Wentworth; he talks of Captain Benwick's disappointment, of his "heart pierced, wounded, almost broken"; he observes that "A man does not recover from such a devotion of the heart to such a woman! He ought not: he does not".⁴¹ There is, above all, the

³⁹ Ibid., p. 668.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 846.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 1320.

famous talk of constancy in Persuasion and Captain Wentworth's own letter to Anne, a letter of intense feeling and devotion, attesting his belief in the power of first love.

There is also evidence which makes one believe that Jane Austen no longer regarded reason as infallible, and occasionally even she sees it as allied with selfishness. Much of Anne Elliot's regret lay in her reasonable decision in regard to her engagement to Wentworth, in her having been "forced into prudence in her youth". Mary Crawford's is quite a reasonable search for a husband. She coolly looks over Mansfield Park and Tom Bertram, and seeing that the title and the establishment are what are perfectly proper and desirable, she decides that "she will have him". The force of Jane Austen's satire is to be felt here and again, even more strongly, when Mary Crawford deplores the unforeseen difficulties of her friend, who attempted to form her marriage according to the admirable precept of looking first to her own advantage. There was, Mary thought, nothing improper or unreasonable in her friend's action:

She did not run into the match inconsiderately; there was no want of foresight. She took three days to consider of his proposals, and during those three days asked the advice of everybody connected with her whose opinion was worth having, and especially applied to my late dear aunt, whose knowledge of the world made her judgment very generally and deservedly looked up to by all the young people of her acquaintance, and she was decidedly in favour of Mr. Fraser.⁴²

⁴² Ibid., p. 689.

In these later books, also, Jane Austen appears now to admire the outward show of feeling, the appearance of sensibility. Her heroines become far more attractive when they are caught in the midst of some intense feeling. After her engagement to Wentworth has been renewed, Anne becomes:

glowing and lovely in sensibility and happiness,
and more generally admired than she thought about
or cared for.⁴³

Fanny catches the interest of Henry Crawford, when, happily excited at the prospect of her brother's visit, her

attractions increased--increased two-fold; for the sensibility which beautified her complexion and illumined her countenance was an attraction in itself. He was no longer in doubt of the capabilities of her heart. She had feeling, genuine feeling. It would be something to be loved by such a girl.⁴⁴

Such sensibility, however, although betrayed in the countenance, is often restrained in speech. Frequently recurrent in Jane Austen's books is the idea that emotions are sometimes too deep to be put into words. In Pride and Prejudice Darcy replies to Elizabeth's query why he did not speak sooner with "A man who felt less might." Lady Susan "speaks too well to feel deeply". In the later books this idea re-occurs. The worldly knowledge of Mary and Henry Crawford gives them a command of language, but the more admirable characters are sometimes without words. Once, when Mr. Knightley and his brother met, they

⁴³ Ibid., p. 1360.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 611.

succeeded in the true English style, in burying under a calmness that seemed all but indifference the real attachment which would have led either of them, if requisite, to do everything for the good of the other.⁴⁵

Mr. Knightley tells Emma, "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more".⁴⁶ Of Fanny it is said that "her happiness was always more inclined to silence when feeling most strongly."⁴⁷

This idea that there were emotions of tenderness which could not be clothed in words may arise perhaps from the natural inarticulateness of the English where feeling is concerned or from a natural liking of understatement. Perhaps also it arises from Jane Austen's dislike of that kind of facile speech more often possessed by the worldly wise than by the ingenuous, open temperament which charmed her.

That preference which Jane Austen held for reticence was not connected with guile or cunning, for Jane Austen could admire the expression of feeling, if it were sincere and in taste. The same dislike which she had shown of Lady Susan's consummate art in dissimulation she shows in Mr. William Elliot of Persuasion. When Anne is given the proof of Mr. Elliot's true nature, she regards him as "a disin-

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 823.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 694.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 694.

genuous, artificial, worldly man".⁴⁸ Even before that time, however, he appeared

rational, discreet, polished, but he was not open. There was never any burst of feeling, any warmth of indignation or delight, at the evil or good of others. This, to Anne, was a decided imperfection. Her early impressions were incurable. She prized the frank, the open-hearted, the eager character beyond all others. Warmth and enthusiasm did captivate her still. She felt that she could much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped.⁴⁹

Much of Emma's dislike for Jane Fairfax arises from her belief that Jane has a secret to hide and that she is cold, cautious, and unfeeling. Mr. Knightley understands her a little better:

I do not accuse her of want of feeling. Her sensibilities, I suspect, are strong, and her temper excellent in its power of forbearance, patience, self-control; but it wants openness. She is reserved; more reserved, I think, than she used to be; and I love an open temper.⁵⁰

Even the worldly, experienced, practical Mary Crawford sees the charm of "the frank, open-hearted character", and, almost wistfully for her, she says of the people of Mansfield Park:

You have all so much more heart among you than one finds in the world at large. You all give me a feeling of being able to trust and confide in you, which in common intercourse one knows nothing of.⁵¹

A still more significant passage is the one in which is

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 1336.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 1307.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 938.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 688.

attested the strength of Emma's admiration for generosity and feeling.

"There is no charm equal to tenderness of heart", said she afterward to herself. "There is nothing to be compared to it. Warmth and tenderness of heart, with an affectionate, open manner, will beat all the clearness of head in the world, for attraction: I am sure it will. It is tenderness of heart which makes my dear father so generally beloved--which gives Isabella all her popularity. I have it not; but I know how to prize and respect it. Harriet is my superior in all the charm and all the felicity it gives. Dear Harriet! I would not change you for the clearest-headed, longest-sighted, best-judging female breathing. Oh, the coldness of a Jane Fairfax."⁵²

When such a speech as this one is given to Emma, one feels in the enthusiasm of the tone, not only the impress of the personality of Jane Austen herself, but also the effects of the change which had come to her personality since she had written the earlier novels. It becomes clear that she has come to value less the sheerly intellectual powers of the mind and to value more high ethical principles and tenderness of the heart. It is indeed quite possible that she had acquired in her maturity a greater understanding and sympathy which made her identify herself somewhat more with her characters' point of view. Certainly her intuition of the complexities of character makes her able to penetrate deeper into the recesses of the heart and to report more fully than before. This intuitive faculty, this more subjective method contribute to those subtle changes in the last three books which hint of romantic feeling. They re-enforce the effect of those definite aspects of romanticism--

⁵² Ibid., p. 926.

the interest in nature and the past, the love of adventure, the renascence of wonder and of religious feeling, the rebellion against social injustice--which have been noted as the characteristic signs of the romantic movement and which may be found in Mansfield Park, Emma, and Persuasion.

In general these last three novels may be said to differ from the earlier ones in their greater complexity, in their finer psychology of the mind, in their more subdued comedy, and in a certain quality of mellowness, as opposed to the quality of brilliance in the first three books.

Mansfield Park is especially to be noted for the great range and number of its characters, and for the strength of the moral atmosphere. It contains, moreover, an extraordinarily fine psychological analysis of behavior. A great power of insight and a great understanding of the consistency of the traits of a personality make Jane Austen's a masterly development of the character of Fanny Price from the timid, backward, little girl into the young woman of perception, taste, and high moral integrity. In the other characters foibles are not merely noted but are accounted for by a fine synthesis of the natural traits of the character with the aspects of his background. Mary and Henry Crawford are seen as the products of their environment and of their own selfishness. The education and the home influences of Maria and Julia combine with their innate lack of principle to make for their unfortunate behavior.

In Emma there is again the indescribably intricate relationship of character and incident which mark the later novels. In its beautifully woven texture of character and incident, in its perfection of form, it is probably superior to Mansfield Park and Persuasion. In Emma, moreover, is an example of the perfection of Jane Austen's faculty of suggestion. In handling Jane Fairfax, her character and her secret, she transmits the fascinating sensation of a mystery in so indirect and subtle a manner that although one is kept completely unaware of the nature of Jane's secret, one is fascinated by the gradual revelation of the human heart which Jane Austen gives through her.

For Persuasion Jane Austen took as her theme the "uncertainty of human events and calculations". Blended with the melancholy beauty of an unhappy love story, this theme gives us a novel which is perhaps Jane Austen's nearest approach to romanticism. As in Mansfield Park and Emma there is a complex lacing together of personality and incident which, while lacking the scope of Mansfield Park and the perfect form of Emma, provide a structure for Jane Austen's finest portrayal of the subtle shades of the feelings and of the inter-relationships of the characters. Harold Child says of it

Such imperfections as Jane Austen may have may be seen with equal fairness as signs of growth rather than of decay. Jane Austen was changing her tone, and had not yet completely mastered the new conditions.⁵³

⁵³ Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. XII, p. 267.

And again

Considering its difference from the other novels it suggests that Jane Austen had she lived would have excelled in fiction of another kind than that which she had hitherto practiced.⁵⁴

Persuasion does indeed lead one to believe that Jane Austen was changing her artistic method. Although she never failed to solidify her wisps of reverie, her most visionary ideas in her books in a clear, concrete manner, she developed something of the touch of the romanticist, whereas her early artistic method had been almost exclusively that of the classicist. While the classicist seeks to grasp the main aspects of things and to express their prominent traits in bold, keen, clear relief, the romanticist delves into those subtle, uncertain shades of feeling and of being which are related to the subconscious, dreaming side of personality. In Persuasion Jane Austen not only attempts the subtle representation of her ideas, the complexities of life and of character as in Mansfield Park and Emma, but she is herself more relaxed and more dreamy, more willing to contemplate what in life is esoteric rather than manifest.

While her style retained the main features of clear, correct eighteenth century prose, it changed somewhat in tone. Formerly crisp, sparkling, and epigrammatic, her

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 267.

style became more subdued and more musical, and acquired the eloquence of feeling. At times it takes on poetic cadences, creating the magical atmosphere of the reverie. Language is used in a dreamier way, with overtones and subdued harmonies which hint at the half-recognizable sensations of feeling, of shadowy perceptions of the mind, of thoughts only partly formed, of memories already half-forgotten. Among the last sentences that Jane Austen ever wrote is one which describes Anne's walk through the woods on a hazy autumn afternoon, and which suggests of the charm of a romantic style.

The sweet scenes of autumn were for a while put by, unless some tender sonnet, fraught with the apt analogy of the declining year with declining happiness, and the images of youth, and hope, and spring, all gone together, blessed her memory.⁵⁵

If one compares Persuasion with Pride and Prejudice, he cannot doubt that Jane Austen had changed through the years and had changed probably through many of the influences of romanticism. There one finds an atmosphere of greater emotional intensity, an inclination toward reflection and melancholy, a positive repudiation of the complete superiority of the reason and the intellect over the inclinations and the affections. There one may discover some of the most exquisite touches of Jane Austen's art--in the grave beauty of her style, in the autumnal mellowness of tone, which as

⁵⁵ Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 1261.

the book was written in the autumn of her life, make it quite appropriately her swan-song. In it, moreover, those romantic tendencies coalesce and become too strongly evident to be denied, suggestive as they are of the aspirations, the regrets, the dreams of the romantic spirit.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Although Jane Austen's novels have now been rewarded with the immortality which is the mark of the classic, her merit was not generally recognized until romantic fantasy and Victorian sentiment had died down. During the nineteenth century her fame grew slowly. To the multitude her tales were regarded as trivial or commonplace, lacking that note of sensation or of pathos which usually insures popular regard. It is true that she was a favorite of some of the great writers of the century, like Scott, for instance; but to the romantically inclined in general, she appeared too completely alien a temperament to affect them with much enthusiasm. It cannot be forgotten that she was primarily a classicist and a realist.

It is also true that in her first period of writing Jane Austen satirized the excesses and artificiality of the early romantic movement, but even in the novels written before 1800 she exhibited qualities which were not wholly incompatible with certain romantic tendencies. The fragments, written between her earlier and later periods of writing, hint at the transition through which she passed as she was becoming more sympathetic toward some of the features of romanticism. The novels written after 1812

show that not only had she caught some of the traits of romanticism, but had even, in her own manner, become fascinated by them, for the evidences of romanticism which are contained in these later novels are genuine and appear to have perceptibly changed the tone of her writings and the artistic method behind them. The difference between her three earlier books and her three later ones, often remarked and assigned to various reasons, is certainly due in some measure to the influences upon her of romanticism.

It is true that Jane Austen never could have written a "romance" in the ordinary nineteenth century connotation of the term. She was a "novelist of manners", but that term does not imply that she was merely a retailer of chatter or a portrayer of contemporary fashion. She interpreted the diversities of human character as they were known to her, and it is to be emphasized that those evidences of romanticism which one finds in her novels are discordant neither with her character nor with her art.

Professor Cazamian has remarked that

Classicism in England hardly ever shows itself in a state of absolute purity. . . . The authors have temperament, in which an irrepressible instinct which gives rise to the personal, lively, emotive impulses condemned by a theory of rational art. Sensibility, imagination, lyricism show through in a word, an image, a movement, an accent. The relatively less pure character of British classicism as compared with the French is made up of these

numberless discordances of mind, taste, and instinct; this deeper layer of national originality.¹

Such an explanation may in part apply to the evidences of romanticism in Jane Austen's novels. It is only logical to suppose what "discordances in mind, taste, and instinct" she possessed might be further developed when she perceived some of the better features of the romantic age in which she lived. While her temperament did not incline her toward anything violent or exalted, she appears to have had a taste for the purer and more peaceful emotions of romanticism. She was never narrow, never provincial. She lived, it is true, in a small and secure world, which dictated the scene and the scope of her novels, but "no woman had ever less the provinciality of her sex, no lady less the provinciality of her sphere".² Her knowledge of the particular became synthesized into a knowledge of the universal, and her spirit of observation, her artistic sense, and her imagination, which touched the commonplace with color, found in the world sources for inexhaustible study. Once in Emma, she remarked:

A mind lively and at ease can do with seeing nothing, and can see nothing that does not answer.³

¹ Emile Légonis and Louis Cazamian, op. cit., p. 81.

² Elizabeth Bowen, "Jane Austen: Artist on Ivory", Saturday Review of Literature, Vol. 14, p. 3.

³ Jane Austen, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, p. 904.

This passage suggests that she was not dissatisfied with the restricted society in which she lived, and without being clamorous for wider horizons and unrealizable ideals in the true romantic manner, she found in the little familiar things much that can be learned about the great world. She sought to heighten the aspects of ordinary existence and to show with her understanding of the delicate nuances of thought and feeling, their meaning and their relationships.

Jane Austen, moreover, had too much taste, and conscience, and proportion not to have felt deeply, and while her code demanded of her a fine restraint, she undoubtedly felt something of what in life is deepest in passion and wonder and dreams. While she could never become a child dazzled by the romantic illusions or the mirage of the world, or strike out boldly, blindly, passionately at the things which she hated, she could become more aware of the mysteries of being.

Virginia Woolf, remarking the change in the art of Jane Austen with the later novels, and noticing her leanings to romanticism, reminds us that Jane Austen died at forty-two, at the height of her powers. She also speculates as to what direction the further changes of her art might have taken-- what might have appeared in the novels she could have written by the time she was sixty. Speaking of Persuasion, the last novel, Miss Woolf says

She is beginning to discover that the world is larger, more mysterious, and more romantic than she has supposed. We feel it to be true of herself when she says of Anne: "She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older--the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning". . . . What effect would all this have had upon the six novels that Jane Austen did not write? She would not have written of crime, of passion, or of adventure. But she would have known more. Her sense of security would have been shaken. Her comedy would have suffered. She would have trusted less (this is already perceptible in Persuasion) to dialogue and more to reflection to give us a knowledge of her characters. Those marvellous little speeches. . . would have become too crude to hold all that she now perceived of the complexity of human nature. She would devise a method, clear and composed as ever, but deeper and more suggestive, for conveying not only what they are, but . . . what life is.⁴

What Jane Austen might have done is, of course, a question for speculation; however, it seems quite clear that in Persuasion she was in a transitional stage, which, if continued in the direction of earlier changes, would have brought yet more evidences of her contact with and assimilation of romantic tendencies. The last novels are perhaps an approach to an intermediary artistic method which would retain the mastery of detail, the fine finish, the perfect form of classic art fused with the sensibility and awareness of romantic feeling.

⁴ Virginia Woolf, op. cit., p. 261.

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