

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE

**FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA
ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR**

**The Influence of Polite Manners on Communication in and
Structure of Jane Austen's Novels**

**Vliv společenských konvencí na komunikaci v románech Jane
Austenové a jejich strukturu**

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Eliška Horáková

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:
PhDr. Zdeněk Beran
Praha, 16. srpna 2012

Zpracovala:
Eliška Horáková
Anglistika a amerikanistika

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 16. 8. 2012

.....
Eliška Horáková

Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům.

Tímto bych chtěla srdečně poděkovat vedoucímu práce PhDr. Zdeňku Beranovi, s jehož pomocí jsem překonala mnohá úskalí. Bez jeho trpělivosti a vstřícného vedení by se práce neobešla.

Anotace:

Tato práce se primárně zabývá analýzou struktur jednotlivých románů Jane Austenové. K této analýze využívá novou teorii nazvanou Dramatica, která opouští od zavedených postupů, které pouze kloužou po povrchu příběhu, a pouští se do hloubkového studia vnitřních konfliktů mezi základními složkami příběhu. Práce ukazuje výhody tohoto přístupu a naznačuje možnost jeho využití v budoucnu. Následně práce osvětluje některé změny ve společnosti i ve způsobu přístupu jak k literatuře obecně tak k pojetí samotného románu. Tato část poukazuje také na některé dobové zvyklosti, jejichž znalost může buďto usnadnit nebo obohatit jak četbu, tak analýzu děl. Nakonec následuje aplikace výsledků strukturální analýzy, což jsou základní témata románů, na vybrané pasáže z různých příběhů. Cílem je ukázat jednak vzájemnou propojenost a komplexnost díla Jane Austenové, a potom je zařadit do kontextu soudobých konvencí.

Abstract:

This thesis is primarily concerned with individual structural analyses of Jane Austen's novels. It employs a new theory of story structure called Dramatica, which makes a departure from the standard methods of analysis that have trouble penetrating deeper than the surface structure of a story, and rather studies the basic conflicts between the individual components of the story. The thesis shows the advantages of this approach and tentatively recommends the ways in which it could be used in future works. The following part explores the changes in both society and literature (in particular concerning the development of the novel) which predated and therefore could influence Jane Austen. It also points out certain customs and behaviours which are not familiar to the present day reader and the knowledge of which can both simplify and enrich the study of the works. The final part applies the results of the analyses (the most important themes of the novels) to some passages from the stories. The aim is firstly to show the complexity and interconnectedness of Jane Austen's oeuvre, and secondly, to show it in the context of the conventions of the time.

Contents:

Contents.....	5
1. Introduction.....	6
2. The Structure of Conflict.....	11
3. The Structure of Courtship.....	25
4. The Analysis	
a. Sense and Sensibility, or Money and Lust.....	31
b. Know Thy Place.....	38
c. The Voice of Action.....	44
7. Conclusion.....	49

1. INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen's contemporaries considered her novels very true to life as they knew it. They commented upon the lack of forced plot twists and unnatural phenomena, of perfect, idealized heroes and heroines. They on the whole (at least those whose opinions have been preserved, some of them by Jane Austen herself) appreciated the fact. Reading their responses, they seem fed up with what we now call gothic novels and their over-the-top, convoluted plots and sentimental heroines. Austen's approach was more subtle: she wrote of the world "as it was" [but] that did not stop her from remaking it in an art which consistently gets the better of a situation of which there is no getting rid."¹ Annabella Milbanke (later Lady Byron) writes:

It depends not on any of the common resources of Novel writers, no drownings, no conflagrations, nor runaway horses, nor lap-dogs & parrots, nor chambermaids & milliners, nor rencontres and disguises. I really think it is the *most probable* fiction I have ever read.²

Sir Walter Scott says in his famous review of *Emma* that it belongs to

"a class of fictions which has arisen almost in our own times, and which draws the characters and incidents introduced more immediately from the current of ordinary life than was permitted by the former rules of the novel" by "copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of the splendid scenes of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him."³

Anthony Trollope later mentioned that

¹ Bharat Tandon, *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation* (London: Anthem Press, 2003) 17.

² Malcolm Elwin, *Lord Byron's Wife* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963) 159.

³ Sir Walter Scott, "Only a Novel: Sir Walter Scott's Review of Emma" 19 Jan. 2008, 12 Aug. 2012 <<http://onlyanovel.wordpress.com/austen-reviews/sir-walter-scotts-review-of-emma/>>.

She tells us with an unconscious accuracy how men should act to women, and women act to men. It is not that her people are all good; -- and, certainly, they are not all wise. The faults of some are the anvils on which the virtues of others are hammered till they are bright as steel.⁴

Finally, a Mrs. Pole was of the opinion that

There is a particular satisfaction in reading all Miss A----'s works -- they are so evidently written by a Gentlewoman -- most Novellists fail & betray themselves in attempting to describe familiar scenes in high Life; some little vulgarism escapes & shews that they are not experimentally acquainted with what they describe, but here it is quite different. Everything is natural, & the situations & incidents are told in a manner which clearly evinces the Writer to *belong* to the Society whose Manners she so ably delineates.⁵

They fit Ian Watt's description of 18th century realistic thought being applied in novel writing: "[Their] primary criterion was truth to individual experience."⁶ "The plot had to be acted by particular people in particular circumstances."⁷ This went hand in hand with the "insistence on the time process"⁸ which allowed something unheard of in the previous forms of literary writing, "detailed depiction of the concerns of everyday life."⁹ Jane Austen's novels do not deal with grand scenes of national importance; they concentrate on the lives of individual women and men whose trials and tribulations may not seem particularly exciting in the grand scheme of things but they are profoundly human and relatable for the readers. Such they were considered even by the very class

⁴ "Jane Austen's Art and her Literary Reputation," *Republic of Pemberley*, 2011, 13 July 2012 <<http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janeart.html#trollpop>>.

⁵ Deidre Lynch, ed., *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 80.

⁶ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1981) 13.

⁷ Watt, 16.

⁸ Watt, 24.

⁹ Watt, 24.

they described. As this is also the class for whom the conduct manuals were primarily addressed, it will be possible to compare the main themes of each novel – and Jane Austen’s opinion of them – with the approach of the etiquette masters. These themes can be determined through structural analysis of the individual novels.

Why is it useful to analyze the structure of the novels? Because it helps determining the motivations of the individual characters and the story as a whole – no two characters have exactly the same driving force behind their decisions and actions – and the story itself may have a yet different one. This work will use a theory of story structure called *Dramatica*¹⁰, which identifies the structure of any story through the conflicts in it. There are four main domains of conflict impacting four main storylines. The domains of conflict are: situation, activity, thought process (way of thinking), and fixed attitude. The four main storylines are those of: the main character, the impact character (the character who influences the main character the most), the relationship between these two characters, and the overall story. For sake of clarity, these can be filled in a simple table. Such an analysis forces us to find the actual problem areas in the characters and the story itself, to think about what is actually important in each of the novels.

It was relatively easy to determine the main characters: these were the heroines of the novels. The impact characters were harder to select. They are the ones who have the greatest influence on the main characters, those with whom the main characters have the most meaningful relationship. Given that for most of *Mansfield Park* Edmund is actively courting Mary Crawford, it was doubtful whether to see him as the impact character. Eventually, as will be shown, it was

¹⁰Melanie Anne Phillips and Chris Huntley, *Dramatica*, 17 July 2012, 22 July 2012 <<http://dramatica.com/>>.

established that he is not one because the romantic relationship is not the most meaningful one Fanny has. *Sense and Sensibility* is the other novel wherein the impact character is not the hero. There it is obvious that both the main and the impact characters are the Dashwood sisters: the problem here is to determine which is which. On the one hand, it is Marianne who undergoes a greater change (and she would also consider herself the heroine), on the other hand, for the majority of the novel Elinor acts as the reflector. Dramatica defines the main character as “the player through whom the audience experiences the story first hand.”¹¹ Thus, the main character of *Sense and Sensibility* is Elinor, with Marianne acting as the impact character.

How can this approach to structure relate to the social conventions? The structure in itself is not influenced by them, many radically different stories can have the same core structure. However, by identifying the problem areas, we can reflect about how these findings relate to the expected ways of thinking and acting. Once we boil everything down to the basics, the bigger picture starts to emerge, we begin to see the links between her novels, echoes of issues being dealt with differently under different conditions and circumstances. The character storylines will show them from the subjective points of view of the characters while the overall storyline will identify objectively what most (if not all) the characters are dealing with – and we can compare their individual approaches to the issue at hand. Last but not least, as Babb points out, “it is especially necessary for us to examine how the characters speak, because what we learn about them

¹¹ “Chapter 3: Introduction to Characters,” *Dramatica Theory Book*, 17 July 2012, 22 July 2012 <http://dramatica.com/theory/theory_book/dtb_ch_3.html>.

otherwise is commonly filtered through the mind of a heroine who has biases of her own.”¹²

¹²Howard S. Babb, *Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962) 28.

2. THE STRUCTURE OF CONFLICT

situation	activity
thought process	fixed attitude

Table 1

Table 1 shows the basic arrangement of the table used for structural analysis by the Dramatica method. Situation and activity describe external areas of conflict; thought process and fixed attitude are internal areas of conflict. Situation and fixed attitude are static; activity and thought process are active. When assigning the individual storylines to the conflict areas “any combination is acceptable save for one rule: the Main Character and Influence Character Domains must be diagonally opposed to each other.”¹ This means that one of the characters will always have an external sort of conflict, while the other’s will be internal.

Pride and Prejudice

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE	
Overall story	Impact Character (Darcy)
situation	activity
thought process	fixed attitude
Main Character (Elizabeth)	Relationship storyline

Table 2

In *Pride and Prejudice* it is simplest to first assign the characters. Darcy gets into conflict because of the way he behaves, be it his lack of proper manners (or lack of willingness to practice them), his inaction where Wickham is concerned or the way he proposes to Elizabeth. Ultimately it is also his actions which prove him worthy of the heroine’s affections: his politeness at Pemberley

¹ James Hull, “A Conflict Unlike Any Other,” *Story Fanatic*, 5 Dec 2011, 22 July 2012 <<http://storyfanatic.com/articles/story-structure/a-conflict-unlike-any-other>>.

and his rush to save Lydia. Basically, he has to accept that polite manners are a useful device which could, for relatively small effort, make his life much easier. (Though of course, it could also expose him to unwanted attention from the likes of Mr Collins.)

If Darcy occupies the “activity” corner, Elizabeth’s problem should lie in her “thought process” – as it, indeed, does. Elizabeth always acts properly; and even when she does not “there is a mixture of sweetness archness in her manner which makes it difficult for her to affront anybody.”²; it is the way she thinks that leads her to trouble. Her over-reliance on her first impressions means that she misjudges both Darcy and Wickham, that she is liable to emotional manipulation. Also “Elizabeth is concerned with attaining the kind of marriage that will allow her to retain her individuality,”³ that is, her independent way of thinking. Once she recognizes that Darcy never tried to prevent her from thinking independently and being herself, she begins to actually improve herself.

The relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy is fraught with difficulties because of their “fixed attitudes”. These are the titular pride and various prejudices, Darcy’s towards Elizabeth’s family, Elizabeth’s towards Darcy himself. It is interesting that these attitudes do not originate with the characters themselves, they are rather acquired from outside: Darcy is preconditioned by his elevated social status (Charlotte remarks: “His pride does not offend *me* so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour, should

² Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 35.

³ Katy E. Monahan Huntley, “Storytelling Output Report for *Pride and Prejudice*,” *Dramatica: Story Analyses*, 17 July 2012, 22 July 2012
<http://dramatica.com/story/analyses/analyses/pride_and_prejudice.html>.

think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a *right* to be proud.”⁴); while Elizabeth is led astray by Wickham.

This leaves the overall storyline within the conflict of “situation”. The vast majority of characters indeed face problematic situations which they would like to change. On the surface the greatest issue concerns money matters. The Bennet and Lucas girls have too little money; Georgiana Darcy and Mary King have too much. The Gardiners and the Bingleys have money enough, but not of the proper origin; the Bennets do have the proper kind of money but do not have enough of it. However, the conflict does not lie in money itself, but rather in its history: the origin of money, dealings with money. Thus the decisions of past generations regarding property influence the present story. The word “decision” will eventually emerge as the crucial one, for, in the end, who has the money will not be as important as whether they are influenced by their income in their decision making process. As Mary Lascelles says “Wherever in her novels it appears portentously we may be sure of an anti-climax.”⁵

Emma

EMMA	
Overall story	Impact Character (Knitley)
situation	activity
thought process	fixed attitude
Main Character (Emma)	Relationship storyline

Table 3

Coincidentally, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* are the only two novels with the same core structure. There is so much wrong with the way Emma thinks

⁴ P&P, 12.

⁵ Mary Lascelles, *Jane Austen and Her Art* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2000) 131.

that Austen needs the whole novel to show the extent and the impact of her errors. In the beginning “Emma's rhetoric impulsively piles one verbal unit on another, moving by accumulation rather than through antitheses. (...) In fact her thinking reflects her feelings only.”⁶ She must learn to rein herself in and to employ logic in her arguments to become worthy of Mr Knightley.

Even though Mr Knightley is fundamentally right, it is his actions of showing this that cause him trouble. He is the only one who dares scold Emma, dares to not flatter her. His actions reveal his goodness, propriety a responsibility: he takes care of Miss and Mrs Bates, and he saves Harriet from fate worse than death, the triumphant faces the Eltons would wear should she remain without a partner. Mr Knightley's example shows that in unearthing the structural conflicts we are not assigning value judgements: it is irrelevant whether the characters (their actions, thought processes etc.) are right or wrong, good or bad; that evaluation can come later. At first though, we are only interested in sources of conflict pertaining to these characters.

The relationship storyline deals again with the fixed attitudes: Mr Knightley has to overcome the notions that he is like a brother to her and too old for her, while Emma must first admit that she wishes to marry at all. Only then will they recognize their suitability in the romantic sense.

The overall storyline then deals with situations again, and money could be again seen as the heart of the problems, but the focus is different: where *Pride and Prejudice* is almost obsessed with actual sums, making great deals or alternatively consciously eschewing the money in order to receive a yet higher prize, *Emma* is interested in self-awareness. That some people are rich and some

⁶ Babb, 189, 194.

are poor is a fact with which the characters all have to come to terms one way or another, including the realization that with money comes responsibility. The community life lies at heart of *Emma* with a great range of characters who all have their place and purpose in the village life. This self-containment is stressed when we realize that despite her wealth, Emma is the only heroine who does not travel at all.

Mansfield Park

MANSFIELD PARK	
Relationship storyline	Main Character (Fanny)
situation	activity
thought process	fixed attitude
Impact Character (Edmund)	Overall story

Table 4

It may come as a surprise that Fanny Price's conflicts are rooted in her actions; though perhaps not so much when we realize that actions include *lack* of actions or *refusal* to act which is what Fanny's problem is (again, to reiterate, problem does not mean that she is wrong). Fanny's conflicts do not stem from her thoughts: these she guards jealously and for the majority of the story does not, and indeed cannot, share them with anyone. It is only when she acts according to her beliefs that conflicts arise around her. The greatest one (and the one which involves her personally) is obviously her refusal to marry Henry Crawford; but other conflicts are facilitated by her inactivity: she is the only one removed enough to notice all the indiscretions committed around her – or in case of Mary Crawford, the only one jealous enough – and yet she alerts no one to what she knows.

Edmund Bertram seems the obvious choice for the impact character. It was he who made Fanny feel welcome at Mansfield, he who instilled her high moral values and taught her to form her own opinions. His conflict would lie in the domain of thought process because throughout the novel he refuses to think through his attraction to Mary, or rather his physical attraction prevents him from accepting the implications of her words and attitudes. His storyline is one of recognizing the difference between actual value and value ascribed based on charm and engaging manners.

The overall story explores fixed attitudes, the lack of respect for family, society, community, history, duties and responsibilities. Every character is obsessed with their own concerns, ignoring and overlooking each other.

The relationship is then relegated to the situational part of the story. Even the first readers of *Mansfield Park* have been dissatisfied with the lack of romance between Edmund and Fanny. Jane Austen noted that her niece, Fanny Knight “Liked it, in many parts, very much indeed, delighted with Fanny; -- but not satisfied with the end -- wanting more Love between her & Edmund.”⁷ However, one of the themes of the novel is the chaos which passion brings, how it makes one forget the rules of decorum and the basic moral teachings. In the society as it is presented in *Mansfield Park* Edmund and Fanny are the odd ones out in that they honour these values above all else. In the end, they come together because they deserve it. However, the “conflict” part of the situation is very simple and is indicated in the very first chapter: “[Sir Thomas] thought of his own four children, of his two sons, of cousins in love, etc.”⁸ It is their relationship as cousins and Fanny’s inferior fortune which prevents anyone (including Edmund

⁷ Ian Littlewood, ed., *Jane Austen: Critical Assessment, Volume 1* (Mountfield: Helm Information Ltd, 1998) 278.

⁸ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003) 7.

himself) from regarding them as potential partners. Their mentor – disciple dynamic is reminiscent of the relationship conflict in *Emma*: the difference lies, as the table indicates, in the objectivity of the issue. While Mr Knightley and Emma had to overcome a mental block, the problem between Edmund and Fanny is very real. The situation has to change, that is, Fanny has to be accepted as a legitimate member of the family: “Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted.”⁹

It is curious that the analysis of the relationship between Fanny and Edmund should be defined by quotes not from either of them but from Sir Thomas. Furthermore, neither of these centres on a romantic relationship; it is rather the familial relationships that are accentuated. This might indicate a need to approach the story from a different angle, starting with changing the impact character to Sir Thomas:

MANSFIELD PARK	
Relationship storyline	Main Character (Fanny)
situation	activity
thought process	fixed attitude
Impact Character (Sir Thomas)	Overall story

Table 5

Although he is not physically present for almost a half of the novel but it is actually this absence which facilitates all the indiscretions among the young people. Even from the two short quotations mentioned above it is obvious that his thoughts change dramatically over the course of the story. Furthermore, he is the one who pressures Fanny to marry Mr Crawford, forcing her at last into taking a stance instead of meekly bowing down to the demands of those around her; that is, forcing her to at once being active and accepting the responsibility for her actions.

⁹ *MP*, 438.

Assigning Sir Thomas the role of the impact character could also explain why the romance between Edmund and Fanny does not work: because it is not the most meaningful relationship in the novel. When Fanny goes to Portsmouth, what she misses the most is not Edmund personally but Mansfield as a whole, all the people, the house, the grounds. “When she had been coming to Portsmouth, she had loved to call it her home, had been fond of saying that she was going home; the word had been very dear to her, and so it still was, but it must be applied to Mansfield. *That* was now the home. Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield was home.”¹⁰ At heart of *Mansfield Park*’s relationship storyline is Fanny’s journey to finding an actual family, which is not so much based on ties of blood as those of respect.¹¹

Sense and Sensibility

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY	
Main Character (Elinor)	Overall story
situation	activity
thought process	fixed attitude
Relationship storyline	Impact Character (Marianne)

Table 6

Elinor’s conflict stems from the situation she is forced into: an unwilling confidante of Lucy Steele, she knows she loves, she can safely surmise that she is loved but she can do nothing about it, not unless she is willing to compromise her own integrity. As the source of the conflict is external, so must the remedy be; the only thing Elinor can control is her own response to the situation.

¹⁰ *MP*, 400.

¹¹ This is what is useful about the Dramatica approach to analyzing the story structure: if you get any of the storylines wrong, the analysis as a whole will not work – but the other three will help you find the best answer.

Marianne, on the other hand, creates her own problems by her wilful insistence on practising her romantic notions. Her actions are wrong but what is worse, they spring from an honest persuasion that they are the proper responses to the given situations. Influenced by her novels and poetry, she allows Willoughby many liberties reserved properly only for the engaged couple, misleading her whole family (“Elinor immediately deduces, from Willoughby’s casual use of her sister’s Christian name, that a secret engagement exists between them.”¹²) and nearly ruining her own reputation.

The relationship between the sisters is then marked by their opposing approaches to expressing emotions and the systems of thoughts behind these approaches. Readers sometimes mistakenly believe that Elinor is all sense while Elinor is all sensibility. While they may at times seem so, the claim cannot, as we will discuss later in greater detail, be supported by the text from the simple objection that Elinor actually falls in love first.

The overall story is driven by the actions of the characters, whatever their individual motivations may be. There is a lot happening during *Sense and Sensibility*: a secret engagement, a seducing and a teenage pregnancy, a duel and a disinheritance – and that is just during the actual story, not counting the sordid history of Colonel Brandon. All these actions have consequences which have to be dealt with one way or another.

¹² Norman Page, *The Language of Jane Austen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972) 152.

Northanger Abbey

NORTHANGER ABBEY	
Impact Character (Tilney)	Overall story
situation	activity
thought process	fixed attitude
Relationship storyline	Main Character (Catherine)

Table 7

With *Northanger Abbey* the overall theme is actions, or more precisely, how do the characters act when they realize they were wrong. Some try to hide it, some try to shift the blame on to others, only the rarest few face their mistake.

This means that the relationship conflict concerns the thought processes of Henry and Catherine; and indeed, as Babb explains “Henry's invariable goal [is] to teach Catherine sensible processes of thinking and to make her accept responsibility for them.”¹³ This seems similar to the progress that Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse need to complete and yet, we have assigned it to their personal storylines. What makes *Northanger Abbey* different is the active involvement of Henry Tilney. Mr Darcy and Mr Knightley merely provide the other heroines with an example of the proper way of thinking but the women are active in adopting the processes of logic for themselves, once they are persuaded of their usefulness and truthfulness. Not so Catherine: unlike Elizabeth and Emma, she has no prior personal system of thinking; she is a clean slate on which anyone can write. Catherine’s journey to logic and reason is, in the end, a collaborative process between her and Henry Tilney, who “never, in contrast to the Thorpes, imposes his views on Catherine. The job he undertakes is of instructing her how to form her own opinions rationally.”¹⁴

¹³ Babb, 94.

¹⁴ Babb, 93-4.

The character storylines will therefore occupy the domains of situation and fixed attitude. We have put Henry in the situation corner because it is his father, an external force, who creates his problems. He is at first encouraged by him to pursue Catherine – and subsequently very severely discouraged from doing the same. He must acknowledge and overcome this influence to be able to make his own decision regarding his, and Catherine’s, future.

Catherine’s conflict should then be in her fixed attitude. It is, clearly, her insistence on being a heroine: “from fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine. (...) [And] when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her.”¹⁵ The conflict is not in her eventually becoming one, it is in her unrealistic expectations (based on the novels she reads) of what it entails to be a heroine. These expectations prevent her from accurately assessing the people around her, their motives and agendas. In the beginning, all it takes is for John Thorpe to mention a potential of seeing a “genuinely” historical castle and Catherine is willing to forgo a prearranged walk with the Tilney siblings.

“Blaize Castle!” cried Catherine. “What is that?”

“The finest place in England – worth going fifty miles at any time to see.”

“What, is it really a castle, an old castle?”

“The oldest in the kingdom.”¹⁶

What a change then can has been made in her understanding by the time Isabella deserts Catherine’s brother, on which occasion she gives up a chance to indulge in a deluge of feeling in favour of rational assessment of herself:

“You feel, I suppose, that in losing Isabella, you lose half yourself: you feel a void in your heart which nothing else can

¹⁵ Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (London: Harper Collins, 2010) 5, 7.

¹⁶ *NA*, 71-2.

occupy. (...) You feel that you have no longer any friend to whom you can speak with unreserve, on whose regard you can place dependence, or whose counsel, in any difficulty, you could rely on. You feel all this?”

“No,” said Catherine, after a few moments’ reflection, “I do not—ought I?”¹⁷

Persuasion

PERSUASION	
Main Character (Anne)	Relationship storyline
situation	activity
thought process	fixed attitude
Overall story	Impact Character (Wentworth)

Table 8

Anne is, similarly to Elinor Dashwood, in an untenable situation, which she needs to extract herself from in the course of the novel. She is either overlooked or exploited by her family; there is no one she can truly confide in, as her only maternal figure gives notoriously bad advice. At the beginning she is, similarly to Fanny, little more than a doormat. However, unlike in Fanny’s case, it is the object of her love who needs to recognize her value for the story to end in a success.

Captain Wentworth does indeed suffer from a case of fixed attitude. Himself of a “decided, confident temper”¹⁸ he cannot forgive what he perceives as “feebleness of character in (...) [giving] him up to oblige others.”¹⁹ His obdurate search for an openly stubborn woman will lead him to Louisa Musgrove and the accident at Lyme before he will begin to learn to appreciate the less flashy steadiness of Anne’s character.

¹⁷ NA, 187.

¹⁸ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (London: Headline Review, 2006) 64.

¹⁹ P, 64.

Theirs is the only relationship to be manifested in their actions. They are surprisingly tactile with one another. Even when they avoid speaking, they still help each other, are always aware of what the other is doing. He is the one to relieve her of her cumbersome nephew, the one to arrange for her to drive with the Crofts because he notices she is tired. She is the only one to keep a cool head after Louisa's fall, almost single-handedly arranging her removal to safety. Poignantly, their final understanding is mutually acknowledged not through words, but only meaningful looks:

He joined them; but, as if irresolute whether to join or to pass on, said nothing, only looked. Anne could command herself enough to receive that look, and not repulsively. The cheeks which had been pale now glowed, and the movements which had hesitated were decided.²⁰

The conflict which infuses the overall story is one of thought processes. All characters have their own way of looking at the world and actively pursue it, refusing to even consider a different point of view. Most of them are obsessed with their own station, their own situation in life, to the fatalistic mindset of everything or nothing. Overall, the problem can be summarised as a lack of balance, of compromise.

Structure – overview

The overall themes we have found to be: past and present decisions regarding money, responsibility in community life, (lack of) respect, accepting the consequences of one's actions, the reactions to mistakes and the necessity of balance. (Or: history, responsibility, respect, accountability, fallibility, balance.) Of these, the personal history of the characters is one of the features identified by Watt as distinguishing the plot of a modern novel which "use[s] past experience as

²⁰ P, 253.

the cause of present action: a causal connection operating through time replaces the reliance of earlier narratives on disguises and coincidences, and this tends to give the novel a much more cohesive structure.”²¹

The relationships deal most often with the development of thoughts and attitudes. Only *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* are different: the former relationship is determined by the situation while the latter progresses through the actions of the participants.

Of the individual storylines three novels (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Mansfield Park*) place the main and impact characters along the activity – thought process axis; and three novels (*Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Persuasion*) along the situation – fixed attitude axis. The first group can be therefore seen as driven by the individual, active development of the characters, while for the second group it is the external stimuli and behaviours which provide the impetus for development.

²¹ Watt, 24.

3. THE STRUCTURE OF COURTSHIP

We have shown the inherent conflicts driving each novel. Before we discuss how these relate to social conventions, to the expected forms of thought and behaviour, there is one more important feature that they have in common. Although each novel deals with its own set of problems and conflicts, they are all “based on a single action, a courtship,”¹ using which strategy Richardson “avoided an episodic plot.”² As Jane Austen’s writings are considered³ the culmination of the development of the novel in the 18th century, we can assume that she will, one way or another, comment upon the issues which interested her predecessors; of whom, at least regarding structure and plot, Richardson had the greatest influence on her.⁴ As Watt explains⁵, the importance of the choice of the partner in marriage increased rapidly with a changing approach to what constituted a family; thus the process of courtship was of immense interest to young men and women alike.

Watt documents the process in which family was changing from a more or less autonomous unit encompassing the whole household (including both more distant relations and the servants) wherein the toils of the members met all their needs; to a more consumerist one comprising only the husband, the wife and their children which depended, coarsely, on the man’s income, with food and clothing purchased outside of the home.⁶ In the former arrangement, the patriarchal family, the authority of the father was uncontested. The new arrangement, the conjugal family, fuelled by the industrial revolution and the social changes accompanying

¹ Watt, 152.

² Watt, 152.

³ Watt, 337.

⁴ “Harold Bloom observes that Austen ‘truly is the daughter’ of Samuel Richardson.” Robert Morrison, ed., *Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 12.

⁵ Watt, 152-196.

⁶ Watt, 156-9.

it on the one hand and Protestantism on the other, both of which propagated strong individualism, seemed to presume a greater equality of the partners. However, as the formal authority was still in the hands of the husband (“the only person in the household who was a legal entity”⁷), women sought a different source of power. Ultimately it came with “a redefinition of virtue in primarily sexual terms,”⁸ whereby they came to be seen as the guardians of the moral values in a corrupted world. This shift influenced “the ethical vocabulary itself: words such as virtue, propriety, decency, modesty, delicacy, purity, came to have the almost exclusively sexual connotation which they have since largely retained.”⁹ Contrariwise, the man was seen as fallible, driven by his sexual nature.¹⁰

With these stereotypes in place the progression of a courtship became a highly stylized dance of social interactions in which the lady was advised to “keep herself at a genteel Distance”¹¹ and let the man do the pursuing. As Mrs Smith says in *Persuasion* “Till it does come, you know, we women never mean to have anybody.”¹² To apply this approach could, however, lead to misunderstanding. Consider these two extracts:

It was generally evident whenever they met, that he *did* admire her and to *her* it was equally evident that Jane was yielding to his preference which she had begun to entertain for him from the first, and was in a way to be very much in love; but she considered with pleasure that it was not likely to be discovered by the world in general.¹³

⁷ Watt, 159.

⁸ Watt, 177.

⁹ Watt, 177-8.

¹⁰ Watt, 182.

¹¹ Wetenhall Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady*, qtd. in Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter* (London: Yale University Press, 1999) 53.

¹² *P*, 207.

¹³ *P&P*, 13.

There was no want of respect in the young man's address; and Fanny's reception of it was so proper and modest, so calm and uninviting, that he had nothing to censure in her. She said little, assented only here and there, and betrayed no inclination either of appropriating any part of the compliment to herself or of strengthening his views in favour of Northamptonshire.¹⁴

Two well bred young ladies on being an object of a gentleman's attention both follow Gregory's advice: "There is another case, in which I suspect it is proper to be secret, not so much from motives of prudence, as delicacy; I mean in love matters."¹⁵ Nevertheless, their motivations could not be more different. Where Jane simply wishes not to be "exposed to some very impertinent remarks"¹⁶ Fanny means to actively discourage her suitor despite her desire not to "occasion pain to anyone."¹⁷ Ironically (or perhaps, rather typically), they are completely misunderstood: Jane is presumably accused of the "deployment of the resources of the feminine role (...) to entrap a rich booby into marriage"¹⁸ while Fanny's reluctance is interpreted as maidenly timidity. Notably, though, Jane Austen is not criticising the ladies for their behaviour (they are, after all, both eventually vindicated); she rather shows the problem as one permeating the whole system of courtship and if there is someone at fault in these particular situations, it is clearly the gentlemen. Mr Bingley "yielded (...) to the *persuasion* of a friend"¹⁹ without taking into account his own superior understanding of the lady of which he must have been possessed from their relatively frequent interactions. Henry Crawford's

¹⁴ *MP*, 228.

¹⁵ John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (Philadelphia: Robert Campbell, 1795) 40.

¹⁶ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (New York: Nelson Doubleday, Inc., 1980) 49.

¹⁷ *P&P*, 129.

¹⁸ Watt, 191.

¹⁹ *P&P*, 33.

mistake is at first to attribute Fanny's reluctance "to the usual practice of elegant females"²⁰ and afterwards a lack of respect of her self-knowledge and conviction.

Hand to hand with the moral dimension of a courtship came the monetary one. As the lady was presumed free from the carnal impulse for matrimony, there was no reason for her to marry beneath her station. Thus "in most novels the courtship leads to a rise in the social status not of the hero but of the heroine."²¹ So it is in Jane Austen's works. All her heroines eventually marry men who are at the very least their equals, social or financial. Unions (or aspirations) where the lady holds the capital are invariably suspect, indicating such a man's want of character. When Elizabeth dismisses Wickham's pursuit of Miss King of whom the "sudden acquisition of ten thousand pounds was the most remarkable charm"²² with the maxim that "handsome young men must have something to live on as well as the plain,"²³ it speaks volumes to the attentive reader both about the (unacknowledged) partiality of the lady and the worthlessness of the gentleman. Similarly Mr Willoughby's numerous deficiencies are at first indicated by his engagement to a lady of fifty thousand pounds. The compounded knowledge of his sexual depravity only exacerbates the wound but cannot really surprise. Yet, there is one exception to the undesirability of this kind of inequality: even though in *Persuasion*, the only novel where "feeling (...) is the trustworthy agent of moral perception,"²⁴ Anne Elliot is not allowed to marry beneath herself, she comes to regret the decision and eventually claims that "[she] certainly never should, in any circumstance of tolerable similarity, give such advice."²⁵

²⁰ *P&P*, 75.

²¹ Watt, 185.

²² *P&P*, 102.

²³ *P&P*, 103.

²⁴ Babb, 238.

²⁵ *P*, 261.

The position of romantic feeling in forming an attachment was a precarious one. It was suspect firstly on account of the expected sexual naivety of the lady and secondly as a sentimentalist affectation. The conduct books sought to find an alternative: "What is commonly called love among you is rather gratitude, and a partiality to the man who prefers you to the rest of your sex."²⁶ While Austen draws from this argument, she effectively broadens its scope by having the hero as the affected party, proclaiming the tendency not simply feminine but human:

Though Henry was now sincerely attached to her, though he felt and delighted in all the excellencies of her character and truly loved her society, I must confess that his affection originated in nothing better than gratitude, or, in other words, that a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought.²⁷

On the whole this gradual, cerebral approach to love is preferable to Austen who shows herself as deeply distrustful of and discouraging from heedless, passionate attachments as she is of cold, materialistic ones. The fact that she "tends to renounce dialogue when events seem about to precipitate a scene with considerable emotional potential"²⁸ exemplifies her philosophy concerning the proper treatment of love and it is connected with Gregory's admonishment to keep love secret.²⁹ The moments that the engagements are finally formed represent the culmination of not just the story itself but the development of society. Two individuals come together having overcome their particular conflicts and difficulties. They come together of their own free will with the intention of

²⁶ Gregory, 47.

²⁷ NA, 222.

²⁸ Page, 137.

²⁹ See page 21

creating a new, conjugal family. This moment is theirs alone and nobody, neither the author nor the reader has any right to be privy to it.

On the contrary, unsuccessful proposals are regarded as a useful educational tool and often relayed in full. If a suitor is able to speak “in the most animated language” of the “violence of his affection”³⁰ that affection is already compromised, confirming the “the efficacy of poetry in driving away love”³¹. It is also remarkable that the proposals destined to be rejected often take place inside or (in the case of Mr Elton) in confined spaces from which the heroine cannot escape, while the accepted proposals are mostly situated outside, where the characters are together because they both want to be. This is compounded with the issue of privacy: for all that she tends not to mention servants, Austen is hyperaware “of what one can and cannot say within earshot.”³² It is more important to protect the delicacy of discovering actual love than being exposed to “the derision [of the world] for disappointed hopes.”³³

³⁰ *P&P*, 74.

³¹ *P&P*, 30.

³² Tandon, 106.

³³ *P&P*, 130.

4. THE ANALYSIS

a. *Sense and Sensibility, or Money and Lust*

The analysis has shown¹ that Jane Austen's most often recurring conflict is that between logic and feeling. *Sense and Sensibility* was Jane Austen's first published novel but the concept it embodied permeated the entirety of her oeuvre. Here more than in any other of her works its title is directly recognizably linked to the text: Elinor represents sense while Marianne is the manifestation of sensibility. At least that is the starting point; for almost from the first moment Elinor's sense is required to control the powerful feeling which she experiences. Of the two sisters it is the sensible one who falls in love first but it is also the sensible one who is reluctant to speak of her feelings, to name them: "I do not attempt to deny," said she, "that I think very highly of him – that I greatly esteem, that I like him."² Her control permeates even her verbal choices: the, in effect, double negation puts a distance between herself and the feelings that she is admitting. The words she uses to describe them are all stock expressions but brought together thus they speak of the respect she has for Edward. Elizabeth Bennet's claims that "There are few people whom I really love, and still fewer of whom I think well"³ support the importance of mutual respect in forming attachments: one can love without respecting but one cannot truly be *in* love without it. This includes not only the respect for your beloved, but also for yourself and for the "forms of worldly propriety."⁴ The mere number of times that the (im)propriety of Marianne's behaviour is discussed in the course of her whirlwind romance with Willoughby shows the danger to which

¹ See page 17

² *S&S*, 14.

³ *P&P*, 92.

⁴ *S&S*, 35.

Marianne exposes herself by her reliance on feeling unchecked by thought. Hers is “the career of a character whose expectations, derived from fiction, are challenged and found false by experience.”⁵

‘I am afraid,’ replied Elinor, ‘that the pleasantness of an employment does not always evince its propriety.’

‘On the contrary, nothing can be a stronger proof of it, Elinor; for if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure.’⁶

That Marianne expects her sense of decorum to prevent her from doing wrong even though she has spent all of her acquaintance with Willoughby suppressing its voice shows a fault of logic which gives evidence to support Elinor’s disquiet. Marianne’s childlike insistence that not feeling wrong equals not being wrong puts her dangerously close to the foolishness of the likes of Lydia Bennet. She is not drawn in by a rake (like Elizabeth), she enthusiastically throws herself at him, adopting both his problematic behaviour and thought system.

The peak of her deterioration is manifested by her cavalier attitude to money, which is exacerbated firstly by the implied expectation of a right to a property to which she has no real claim, and secondly by the fact that the owner of said property is still living:

I did not see it to advantage, for nothing could be more forlorn than the furniture, – but if it were newly fitted up – a couple of hundred pounds, Willoughby says, would make it one of the pleasantest summer-rooms in England.⁷

⁵ Lascelles, 56.

⁶ S&S, 49.

⁷ S&S, 50.

It should be remembered that the “couple of hundred pounds” that she, or Willoughby, plans on spending on remodelling one room, comprises her family’s joint annual income. Later she even claims that “money can only give happiness where there is nothing else to give it” in the same breath that names the sum of “two thousand a-year a very moderate income.”⁸ Only the most scheming of characters ever proclaim such disregard of money because “anyone who professes not to care about cash must be lying.”⁹ The notable examples include Isabella Thorpe’s “I hate money; and if our union could take place now upon only fifty pounds a year, I should not have a wish unsatisfied”¹⁰ (which occasion also marks Catherine’s growing penetration as she has to “endeavour to forget”¹¹ her doubts of Isabella’s sincerity); or General Tilney’s “The money is nothing, it is not an object (...) [other than] to promote the happiness of his children.”¹²

The most sensible approach to the topic of money is articulated, perhaps typically, by Mrs Gardiner whose husband is in trade:

Do not involve yourself or endeavour to involve him in an affection which the want of fortune would make so very imprudent. I have nothing to say against *him*; he is a most interesting young man; and if he had the fortune he ought to have, I should think you could not do better. But as it is, you must not let your fancy run away with you. You have sense, and we all expect you to use it.¹³

She explicitly stresses the connection between sense and awareness of reality represented by money, while also calling to mind Mary Wollstonecraft’s “My

⁸ S&S, 66.

⁹ John Mullan, “Ten questions on Jane Austen,” *The Guardian*, 18 May 2012, 20 June 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/may/18/ten-questions-jane-austen>>.

¹⁰ NA, 122.

¹¹ NA, 122.

¹² NA, 159, 186.

¹³ P&P, 98-9.

own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures.”¹⁴ It is not merely a guideline, the imperative mood and the inherent severity of the modal verb “must” that it is a rule which not just Elizabeth but all young ladies of her time and social standing are expected to follow. However, for a young lady to concentrate solely on money, to marry sensibly but without any affection was frowned upon as well but to a much lesser degree than when the opposite was the case. Such a bride was giving up the expectation of happiness in exchange for “a comfortable home.”¹⁵ Austen shows that to make such a union a success required a great steadiness of character and clarity of mind. We may scorn Charlotte Lucas’ choice but we certainly understand it, more so if we recall that “ladies’ lives resembled a stately progress through recognized station – maid, wife, mother and, if she was lucky, widow, dowager and grandmother – with different duties and liberties attached to each role.”¹⁶ If a lady did not advance beyond a maid, she was very much aware of being a burden to her family, for she had virtually no opportunity of earning a steady income, particularly if, as in Charlotte’s case, the family was attempting to shed the tint of trade. Finally, Charlotte is vindicated by her behaviour after the wedding: in the conjugal family the husband and wife owe primary allegiance to each other and their children, they “expect to be happy in a reasonable companion.”¹⁷ Despite being painfully aware of her husband’s limitations, she never betrays him:

When Mr. Collins said anything of which his wife might reasonably be ashamed, which certainly was not unseldom, she involuntarily turned her eye on Charlotte. Once or twice she

¹⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Valencia: JPM Ediciones, 2010) 15.

¹⁵ *P&P*, 87.

¹⁶ Vickery, 8.

¹⁷ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1814) 148.

could discern a faint blush; but in general Charlotte wisely did not hear.¹⁸

She guides him and arranges her home to the best of her comfort:

Elizabeth admired the command of countenance with which Charlotte talked of the healthfulness of the exercise, and owned she encouraged it as much as possible.¹⁹

Not all women who of their own will entered a marriage of convenience did as well as Charlotte. One case in particular, that of Maria Bertram, serves above all as a deterrent example. She eventually married Mr Rushworth not out of necessity or even an idle wish to “have more fine clothes and fine carriages”²⁰ than her sister: she meant it as a punishment for the desertion of her expected suitor. Thus she invited a third person into a union destined for just two: she showed no respect for either her fiancé or the revered institution of matrimony and as such, she was not worthy to remain in it. Notice how careful Austen is to elsewhere show the readiness of her characters to be married to just their husband or wife-to-be:

Exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny herself could desire.²¹

Marianne Dashwood (...) was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and with no sentiment

¹⁸ *P&P*, 107.

¹⁹ *P&P*, 107.

²⁰ *P&P*, 253.

²¹ *MP*, 436.

superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another.²²

Watt proclaims “the idealization of marriage” as a “distinctively” protestant value (as opposed to Roman Catholicism where “the highest religious values are connected with celibacy”), with Puritanism in particular enforcing “the sinfulness of all sexual activities outside marriage.”²³ The problem was of course the existence of the double standard concerning sexual impulse. While “conduct books treated adultery involving married women as a crime far worse than theft,”²⁴ their seducers escaped with their reputation more or less untarnished by the scandal. Such was the case with Maria and Crawford: even Austen’s narrator commented upon the unfairness.²⁵

Compared to the resolution of *Pride and Prejudice* the punishments of *Mansfield Park* seem especially harsh. One of the reasons for that can be the different circumstances of the participants for the misbehaviour: while both the women are driven by an unchecked carnal desire, Lydia is partially pardoned by her youth and her parents’ deficiencies; she was too young and immature to be let out on such a trip without sufficient supervision and her father should have accepted the consequences of his decisions. That he was content to let Darcy assume responsibility is the final failure of his parenting and it is symbolic that it occurs just as he is giving his most deserving daughter away. Lydia eventually proves herself worthy of the concession which she was granted: despite her youth and high spirits, she “retained all the claims to reputation which her marriage had

²² S&S, 275.

²³ Watt, 176

²⁴ Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 1998) 72.

²⁵ *MP*, 435

given her,”²⁶ that is, she honoured her marriage vows. This is why Maria’s punishment is so harsh: not only did she enter the marriage for the wrong reasons and presumably behaved in such a way as to alienate her mother-in-law, she finally committed adultery, which would be enough in itself but in this case was prompted not by pure feeling towards her lover but by her jealousy over his attachment to her cousin; all this despite the advantages of education, experience and attention from her father.

Wickham’s crimes are confined strictly to the area of money and as we have already mentioned²⁷, Austen tends to be more lenient with misbehaviours connected with lucre than those of morality (though we will notice that an assurance comparable to that of Lydia was *not* mentioned in connection to Wickham’s conjugal behaviour). Similarly, “Tom [Bertram]’s antics never include the lecherous. There is never a hint of womanizing, of a seduction or even of flirtations”²⁸ which is why he may be restored to full health and respectability by the end of *Mansfield Park*. The main problem with Henry Crawford is his lack of perseverance – he is the male version of Emma Woodhouse, enthusiastic for the beginnings of projects but getting bored quickly with lack of immediate gratification. It is this potential for the good which makes many readers overlook his shortcomings: they expect him to be a stereotypical reformed rake, drawn finally to the light by the love of a virtuous maiden. That it is an ideal impossible to attain is made clear as soon as he jokes about his flirtations and sexual conquests,²⁹ because “sex is the defining moral point of Mansfield Park, the line

²⁶ *P&P*, 261

²⁷ See page 28

²⁸ Rebecca Hasenauer, “Sex in the Park,” 27 Feb 2011, 24 July 2012 <<http://oldgreypony.wordpress.com/sex-in-the-park/>>.

²⁹ *MP*, 212.

that deems a character irredeemable once it has been crossed.”³⁰ That his final conquest of Maria is for him little more than sport is quite possibly the greatest tragedy of the novel; because it is nothing more and nothing less than the culmination of a long line of squandered chances for self-improvement; only now it finally brings real punishment: perhaps not as obvious as Maria’s but possibly more acutely felt.

³⁰ Hasenauer, <<http://oldgreypony.wordpress.com/sex-in-the-park/>>.

b. Know Thy Place

We have established the overreaching conflict in *Emma* as one of self-awareness, of knowing, accepting, and fulfilling one's place in society. Though this place stays the same for everybody, the relative power positions of the individual characters then vary according to their immediate company and with these their register should shift to fit the situation. As Lord Chesterfield explains, "it is extremely engaging, to people of every nation, to meet with a foreigner who hath taken pains enough to speak their language correctly; it flatters that local and national pride and prejudice of which everybody hath some share."¹ Although Chesterfield meant literally the mastery of foreign languages, the lesson is applicable in the social sphere as well: to adjust one's speech to local expectations, to seem interested in the host's concerns and take part in communal entertainment. This is where Mr Darcy fails at the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*. His failure is both linguistic and social: he refuses to become acquainted with the locals and fails to fulfil the duty which he accepted by coming to the dance: "Gentlemen were expected to ask the young ladies who were seated without a partner to dance. Failing to do this was ungentlemanly and went against the community."²

However, his case is more pardonable, after all he may not be planning to stay long and feels no need to make friends (even though his ungraciousness is putting his host in bad light), than the employment of basically the same behaviour by Mr Elton. For while Darcy gives the impression that any young lady would get the same treatment as Elizabeth, Elton deliberately slights Harriet Smith: he is not content to give her the mortification of having to sit a set out, he

¹ Philip Dormer Stanhope Chesterfield (Earl of), *The works of Lord Chesterfield: including his letters to his son, etc.* (New York: Harper, 1838) 447.

² Joan Klingel Ray, *Jane Austen for Dummies* (Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2006) 108.

mocks her feminine impotence by asking all other ladies present, the married ones that he knows have no intention of dancing, but on being prompted refuses to engage Miss Smith with the ridiculous retraction of being “an old married man [whose] dancing days are over.”³ His calculated insult is so effective because by refusing to even address her directly he prevents Harriet from employing her only defence against his impropriety, that of rejection. Furthermore, by the ostentatious way in which he ignores her he wishes to remind her (and everyone else) of her lack of official social status within their community:

Harriet Smith was the natural daughter of somebody. Somebody had placed her, several years back, at Mrs. Goddard’s school, and somebody had lately raised her from the condition of scholar to that of parlour-boarder. This was all that was generally known of her history.⁴

She has no official social circle, nobody who is unconditionally hers. In a society where a person’s life would be determined by the order in which they and their siblings were born, she was completely alone and completely direction-less⁵. That it was the vicar, the religious leader of the community who thus debased (objectively, though Emma still does not wish to admit it) one of lowest of the low of his flock is an abomination with an possible effect comparable to that of Emma’s own remark towards Miss Bates; and it is made even worse because unlike Emma’s stupidity this was a calculated attack. Though Mr Elton is secure in his position because “a clergyman in the Church of England, once instituted to a parish, had the tenure of the church and parsonage until his death or

³ Jane Austen, *Emma* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 2003) 307.

⁴ *E*, 23.

⁵ Although there is in Jane Austen’s mature novels one other lady of dubious origin, Miss Williams of *Sense and Sensibility*, their situations cannot bear comparison, for despite her numerous mistakes, Miss Williams can always rely on her protector, Colonel Brandon.

resignation,”⁶ such behaviour cannot encourage his community to practicing God’s word.

Emma’s blunder, unlike Elton’s, has direct repercussions for her: she is brought to see the error she had committed by Mr Knightley:

Were she prosperous, I could allow much for the occasional prevalence of the ridiculous over the good. (...) Were she your equal in situation— but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. (...) Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed! You, (...) in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her— and before her niece, too—and before others, many of whom (certainly some,) would be entirely guided by your treatment of her.—⁷

But while they are used to this kind of interaction, what marks the importance of this lecture, is the fact that Emma is forced to acknowledge the depth of her folly; and it shocks her to such an extent that she is unable to answer back to him, or indeed even bid him a goodbye. It is that final and seemingly less severe impoliteness that breaks the last straw of Emma’s self deception:

How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates! How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued! And how suffer him to leave her without saying one word of gratitude, of concurrence, of common kindness!⁸

While Emma’s feelings are at their lowest point, her reasoning is already showing signs of improvement. From haphazard, emotion-driven rhetoric which characterized her speeches in the first half of the novel⁹ she is even now sorting her self-flagellation into coherent triads, in short, coherent sentences, structuring

⁶Barbara M. Benedict, Deirdre Le Faye, eds., *The Cambridge Edition of Northanger Abbey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 291.

⁷*E*, 351-2.

⁸*E*, 352.

⁹ Brilliantly analyzed by Howard S. Babb, 175 - 202

her argument both chronologically and moving towards the climax of the greatest impact on her composure. She is sorry not only for her behaviour but also for the impact that her fault has on her loved one. It is significant that she does not try even to apologize, neither to Miss Bates, nor to Mr Knightley. Rather she resolves to persuade them of her improvement through her actions, and unlike Mr Crawford she perseveres with her newfound resolutions, not only for the sake of Mr Knightley but because she learns to recognize her own true value in regards to her sphere of influence.

With Emma's continuing improvement comes, conversely, Harriet's deterioration. As Emma learns more about what her standing as the community leader entail, Harriet almost completes Emma's original, convoluted plans to make her aware of her own worth, only that worth had been calculated from a mistaken presuppositions. The shift is most noticeable in their conversation, particularly the way they address each other. When Harriet asks for help following Mr Martin's proposal¹⁰, Emma calls her "dear Harriet", "Harriet" (six times), "my dearest Harriet", "dear affectionate creature", "my own sweet little friend"; while Harriet uses only "dear Miss Woodhouse" and "Miss Woodhouse", only once apiece. That is a dynamic of a teacher and a disciple (similar to the Mr Knightley - Emma), or indeed of an indulgent parent and a child. Harriet's speeches are furthermore interrupted by hesitations, false starts and reiterations: "No, I do not; that is, I do not mean – What shall I do? What would you advise me to do? Pray, dear Miss Woodhouse, tell me what I ought to do?"¹¹ Within a few breaths she has worked herself from a relatively decisive "no, I do not" (which probably constituted her true attitude) to a completely self-effacing plea for guidance, to

¹⁰ E, 50-3

¹¹ E, 51

which Emma replies with a seemingly final “I shall not give you any advice, Harriet. I will have nothing to do with it. This is a point which you must settle with your own feelings,”¹² which proclamation she follows with a detailed plan of action. While Harriet’s overreliance on Emma’s plans is, frankly, foolish, their interaction is conducted along the proper lines of new friends from different strata of society.

What a change has occasion and experience brought over them by the time the engagement between Frank Churchill and Miss Fairfax is discovered:¹³ firstly, it is now Harriet who initiates and dominates the discussion. She calls Emma “Miss Woodhouse” (five times) and “dear Miss Woodhouse” (twice) while Emma uses “Harriet” (three times) and “my dear Harriet”. The power shift is readily observable from the number of times each of the ladies used the other’s name. Although they still respect the social class boundary of Miss Woodhouse – Harriet, they are a long way from pet names. Now Harriet is in the position of the instructor, she is possessed of all the relevant information, setting straight Emma’s misunderstandings. The reversal is complete with this exchange:

‘Good God!’ cried Emma, ‘this has been a most unfortunate—most deplorable mistake!—What is to be done?’

‘You would not have encouraged me, then, if you had understood me? At least, however, I cannot be worse off than I should have been, if the other had been the person; and now—it is possible—’

She paused a few moments. Emma could not speak.

‘I do not wonder, Miss Woodhouse,’ she resumed, ‘that you should feel a great difference between the two, as to me or as to any body.’¹⁴

¹² *E*, 51

¹³ *E*, 379-82

¹⁴ *E*, 381

With her acceptance of her responsibilities Emma is now ready to face her, so far largely latent, feelings. As in the discussion with Mr Knightley¹⁵, the revelation momentarily robs her of her voice. The moments of muteness, of hesitation are the greatest mark of development, for they allow her what she lacked before: quiet reflection. Regarding Harriet, it is significant that she stops herself not out of hesitation but rather a habitual deference towards her mentor. She is also experimenting with a more complex syntax, with concessional clauses at least partially replacing the coordination.

Emma's progress is evidently towards to better, towards the logic and reason which will make her worthy of Mr Knightley. Harriet's case is a less clear, mainly because following the above scene her development towards the union with Mr Martin happens largely in the background. It is possible, given Mr Martin's thoughtful and steadfast nature, that he would encourage her in expanding her penetration; and at the same remind her of the value of practical application of her newfound self-assurance.

¹⁵ See page 34.

c. The Voice of Action

“A gentlewoman’s honour lay in the public recognition of her virtue, a gentleman’s in the reliability of his word.”¹

Of all Austen’s relationships it is *Persuasion* that speaks loudest without uttering a single word. Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth may pretend to ignore each other in casual social contact, but once in crisis, once it matters, they work together like a well oiled machine, aware of the other’s needs. Their second courtship happens unacknowledged not only by their friends but also by themselves. Frederick may be paying overt attentions to Miss Louisa but he is always aware of Anne’s position and her state: he is the only one who notices her fatigue, the only one who finds her relief:

Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage.

Yes,—he had done it. She was in the carriage, and felt that he had placed her there, that his will and his hands had done it.²

The “yes” is like a pinch Anne could give herself to make sure that the scene really happened. By choosing his “will” and his “hands” for the synecdoche she acknowledges the rift perceptible probably only to her: while his head and his heart are at war, their appendages are curiously united, both reaching towards her. This is possibly the origin of Louisa’s fascination with jumping of stiles and stairs: to be the sole object of his concentration and his touch. Intoxicated with her success, “she was too precipitate by half a second”³ and could not be caught. Therein lies the difference between obstinacy and self-assurance: obstinacy is self-indulgent and cocky while a self-aware person, would they even engage in

¹ Vickery, 54.

² *P*, 96.

³ *P*, 116.

such a foolish action as jumping down the steps, would wait till that their preserver was ready to catch them.

Following her accident Wentworth is made aware of the extent to which his absentmindedness has exposed him as an expected suitor of Louisa's. Despite finally knowing himself again, he must accept his role in the catastrophe. Those are the actions of a gentleman: regardless of a changed (or misunderstood) personal preference he must do his duty to whom he has pledged himself be it by word or a deed (for to a gentleman, they are one). This fate Frederick shares with Edward Ferrars: one the victim of public expectation, the other of secret engagement. They are both delivered by the fickleness of their lady, eventually free to choose according to their inclination: but this is their reward only because they were willing to sacrifice their happiness to the ideal of gentlemanly virtue. The example of Willoughby the too late regret of a man too interested in his own gratification to do what was right (by either of the ladies he has wronged):

His punishment was soon afterwards complete in the voluntary forgiveness of Mrs Smith, who, by stating his marriage with a woman of character, as the source of her clemency, gave him reason for believing that had he behaved with honour toward Marianne, he might at once have been happy and rich.⁴

The greatest difference between words and deeds is of course found with the best swindlers, be it Wickham working to turn the public opinion against Darcy, or Miss Crawford, pretending not to be damaged by her immoral upbringing. They are both aided in their pursuits by their not inconsiderable charm. Both are good speakers and good conversational partners, aware of the

⁴ S&S, 275.

importance of small talk in quieting their potential prey's fears⁵. Elizabeth comments appreciatively that "the commonest, dullest, most threadbare topic might be rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker."⁶ The success of Wickham's strategy lies in a careful mixture of fact, fiction and flirtation. He feeds her such a delicious mixture of half-truth and half-lies that she does not even notice when he with one at the same breath makes a claim and nullifies it, as in this exchange:

"He deserves to be publicly disgraced."

"Some time or other he *will* be – but it shall not be by *me*. Till I can forget his father, I can never defy or expose *him*."

Elizabeth honoured him for such feelings, and thought him handsomer than ever as he expressed them.⁷

When we concentrate in the minutiae of Wickham's claims, the incongruences are readily apparent. It is therefore a great achievement of Jane Austen that the majority of her first-time readers are as taken in as her heroine. Tandon even argues that "Austen's ideal reader *is* one who initially gets things wrong."⁸ Her misdirection functions through the aural quality of her art,⁹ the way in which it is "written to be read as if heard."¹⁰ The dialogue flows, aided by the italics indicating stresses which show that Wickham's rhetoric as tending towards dual oppositions (*him* and *me*, *ought* and *must*, *brotherly* and *filial*), while Elizabeth

⁵ Another character with a great grasp of the art of small talk is Henry Tilney. However, he is interested in the emptiness of this type of conversation from a linguistic point of view and enjoys sharing his ideas with his partners:

"Affectedly softening his voice, he added, with a simpering air, "Have you been long in Bath, madam?"

"About a week, sir," replied Catherine, trying not to laugh.

"Really!" with affected astonishment.

"Why should you be surprised, sir?"

"Why, indeed!" said he, in his natural tone. (NA, 16)

⁶ P&P, 52.

⁷ P&P, 54.

⁸ Tandon, 47.

⁹ Page, 119, paraphrased.

¹⁰ M. Gregory, "Aspects of Varieties Differentiation", qtd. in Page, 119.

concentrates on ascertaining the origin of her information (I *heard*, I can say *here*, *my* acquaintance, I *do* remember¹¹). The dual opposition has two distinct advantages: it is very effective in presenting a black and white view of the world, which is, of course, what Wickham is trying to do, and it is very easy to follow, having almost a hypnotising effect on the audience. The final component is the flirtation, or, as Elizabeth says “gentle but very intelligible gallantry”¹² which is especially gratifying for an Elizabeth still smarting from a Darcy-inflicted wound to her pride. It should be noted that Wickham is so successful in his manipulation of the good people of Meryton that they never suspect him of treachery until his elopement with Lydia. Elizabeth needed Darcy to spell the extent of his lies out before she was willing to even entertain the possibility of having been misinformed.

Although Miss Crawford is probably Jane Austen’s most skilful female manipulator, it is always unconsciously done: as long as she does not realize that she is manipulating the people around her, she is successful. This is due to the fatal flaw of her character, the too great exposure to immorality which has left her jaded without being aware of it. Her conversation partners, most often Edmund, seek apologies for her and try and reconcile this shortcoming with her disposition for the good, which she shares with her brother. However, when she consciously sets out to manipulate, she almost always fails spectacularly, be it to persuade Edmund to give up taking orders or to suppress the scandal of Henry and Maria: her approach is too heavy handed and she employs too strong a language. Unlike Wickham she betrays herself, to Fanny first and it is no coincidence that it takes the form of a letter: for “the true art of letter-writing, which we are always told, is

¹¹ *P&P*, 53-6.

¹² *P&P*, 54.

to express on paper exactly what one would say to the same person by word of mouth.”¹³

Letters, on the whole, play important roles in Jane Austen’s works, on some occasions highly symbolic ones that depended on the main rule the time, which “forbade correspondence between marriageable persons not engaged to be married.”¹⁴ Thus Elinor on being unsure whether her sister is engaged to Willoughby or not can say that “If we find they correspond, every fear of mine will be removed,”¹⁵ and Frederick Wentworth has only his own pride to blame when he learns that “if I had then written to you, would you have answered my letter? Would you, in short, have renewed the engagement then?,”¹⁶ Anne’s response would have been unequivocal. To conclude the discussion of the importance of actions, let us only add that of all letters present in *Pride and Prejudice* the most important one is not sent but delivered personally, and the second most important one has been misspent: for had Jane not “written the direction remarkably ill”¹⁷ there would have been no renewed meeting with Mr Darcy at Pemberley.

¹³ Jane Austen, qtd. in Tandon, 112.

¹⁴ Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002) 114.

¹⁵ *S&S*, 58.

¹⁶ *P*, 261.

¹⁷ *P&P*, 182.

5. CONCLUSION

There are many ways to approach a structure of a story. This work employed the Dramatica theory. We have made the decision to use neither the classic three-act view, nor the Aristotelian progression of exposition, collision, crisis, peripety and catastrophe, nor any other comparable approach, because they first look at the story as a linear progression of events and only afterwards they explore the conflicts of the novel. Dramatica, or at least the small part of the Dramatica studies that has been used in this work, is different, because it is primarily interested in the conflict areas. Thus it surpasses the surface structures and forces the researcher to explore the deep, basic conflict which is then manifested in the surface story. The one main concern that was connected to the use of this theory was that Dramatica comprehends also a software tool for writers to improve their own stories and it was unclear whether this commercial dimension may have diminished its functionality when applied to classic novels. This fear proved itself groundless. Indeed, the analysis was probably the most interesting part of this work because it led the researcher to interesting discoveries. Mainly, it solved the problem many readers have with *Mansfield Park* which if it is approached strictly as a love story, it simply does not work, and it leaves them dissatisfied. Because the analysis also seemed flawed, a different point of view had to be researched, one which worked better within the existing parameters. It seems so obvious now that it is really a family story but we wouldn't think of that before. This is what we suppose the greatest benefit of the Dramatica theory: that it approaches stories unburdened by expectations of genre, or the time of their creation, or even the individual incidents. There are just those four areas of conflict which, the theory posits, any story must include to be

complete, and the four lines of enquiry, to be appointed to the sources of tension, nothing more, nothing less – and it is enough.

The second chapter of the thesis covers the historical information relevant to Jane Austen's novels. The main source for this part of the thesis is Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, namely chapters on realism and Richardson. Despite the plethora of works on both Austen and her time, this was paradoxically the most difficult part to research. This was the only publication (that the researcher has found and was of a scholarly standard) that gave an overview not of the minutiae of life and times, but rather concentrated on the development of concepts and ideas.

The last chapter explores the underlying themes uncovered through the structural analysis. It is intentionally divided into three subsections according to the topic and not the individual novels. This is because one of the joys of reading and rereading Jane Austen's various works is to witness the various uses to which she can put seemingly stereotypical characters and situations. Most of Jane Austen scholars arrive at the conclusion that all the novels are intricately interconnected whether they see it in the individual features or in the deep embedded structures. In rereading the attentive audience gets a glimpse into her rich and multi-faceted inner world. It is obvious that she thought about things, that she often changed her mind or perhaps "found great enjoyment in occasionally professing opinions which in fact were not her own."¹

One of the original impetuses for attempting this analysis was to learn more about how Austen's works function at the linguistic level, namely the levels of syntax and lexicology – to put it plainly, it sprung from a curiosity regarding

¹ *P&P*, 119.

the fact that even without the knowledge of the intricacies of the proper conduct a modern reader can usually tell when a character misbehaves even when it is not explicitly mentioned in the text. Incidentally, a similar sense of curiosity of how exactly could a short scene, a few lines of dialogue be at the same time restrained and overflowing feeling², led Howard S. Babb to explore Austen's *Fabric of Dialogue*.

However, possibly due to a too ambitious a design, it was eventually largely abandoned in favour of exploring the thematic structure of the novels. The title of the work is "The Influence of Polite Manners on Communication in and Structure of Jane Austen's Novels," because at first it seemed reasonable to start with an overview of the expected standards and then progress to the individual manifestations in Austen's creations. As soon as the writing process began, it became apparent that the opposite approach, the one employed in this version, is much more comfortable and convenient both in gathering the data and their summarization in the work as it is presented here.

There are a lot of ways this work could be expanded or followed by subsequent research into some of the particulars. The researcher would like to further explore the Dramatica theory and the other approaches in its arsenal. These include a more detailed analysis of individual characters, for example their preferred response to difficulties, the way they solve their problems; or why, when analyzing the surface structure, Dramatica expects a four-act progression of the story instead of the classical three-act structure; which features, other than the inherent conflicts drive the stories etc. Regarding Jane Austen, it would definitely be interesting to analyze *Mansfield Park* individually in greater detail, discarding

² Babb, vii.

the stereotypical, and as we have discovered, faulty expectations. In short, learn about what is there rather than complain about what is missing. This thesis in itself is possibly a little too fragmentary, with too many objectives and methods and it could benefit from expanding in length and penetration, not in scope. Nevertheless, the researcher believes that the original approach to the analysis of the story structure and its application on the works of one of the best and most beloved novelists has merit and is eager to apply what she has learned in her future career.

Primary sources

- Austen, Jane. *Emma*. London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 2003.
- Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003.
- Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. London: Harper Collins, 2010.
- Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*. London: Headline Review, 2006.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995.
- Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. New York: Nelson Doubleday, Inc., 1980.

Secondary sources

- Babb, Howard S. *Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962.
- Benedict, Barbara M., and Deirdre Le Faye, eds. *The Cambridge Edition of Northanger Abbey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- "Chapter 3: Introduction to Characters." *Dramatica Theory Book*. 17 July 2012. 22 July 2012 <http://dramatica.com/theory/theory_book/dtb_ch_3.html>.
- Elwin, Malcolm. *Lord Byron's Wife*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963.
- Fordyce, James. *Sermons to Young Women*. London: Cadell & Davies, 1814.
- Gregory, John. *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*. Philadelphia: Robert Campbell, 1795.
- Hasenauer, Rebecca. "Sex in the Park." 27 Feb 2011. 24 July 2012 <<http://oldgreypony.wordpress.com/sex-in-the-park/>>.
- Hull, James. "A Conflict Unlike Any Other." *Story Fanatic*. 5 Dec 2011. 22 July 2012 <<http://storyfanatic.com/articles/story-structure/a-conflict-unlike-any-other>>.
- "Jane Austen's Art and her Literary Reputation." *Republic of Pemberley*. 2011. 13 July 2012 <<http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janeart.html#trollolp>>.
- Klingel Ray, Joan. *Jane Austen for Dummies*. Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2006.
- Lascelles, Mary. *Jane Austen and Her Art*. London: Continuum International Publishing, 2000.
- Le Faye, Deirdre. *Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002.
- Littlewood, Ian, ed. *Jane Austen: Critical Assessment, Volume I*. Mountfield: Helm Information Ltd, 1998.
- Lynch, Deidre, ed. *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

- Monahan Huntley, Katy E. "Storytelling Output Report for *Pride and Prejudice*." *Dramatica: Story Analyses*. 17 July 2012. 22 July 2012
<http://dramatica.com/story/analyses/analyses/pride_and_prejudice.html>.
- Morrison, Robert, ed. *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Mullan, John. "Ten questions on Jane Austen." *The Guardian*. 18 May 2012. 20 June 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/may/18/ten-questions-jane-austen>>.
- Page, Norman. *The Language of Jane Austen*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972.
- Phillips, Melanie Anne and Chris Huntley. *Dramatica*. 17 July 2012. 22 July 2012
<<http://dramatica.com/>>.
- Scott, Sir Walter. "Only a Novel: Sir Walter Scott's Review of *Emma*." 19 Jan. 2008. 12 Aug. 2012 <<http://onlyanovel.wordpress.com/austen-reviews/sir-walter-scotts-review-of-emma/>>.
- Shoemaker, Robert B. *Gender in English Society 1650-1850*. London: Pearson Education Limited, 1998.
- Stanhope, Philip Dormer, Chesterfield (Earl of). *The works of Lord Chesterfield: including his letters to his son, etc.* New York: Harper, 1838.
- Tandon, Bharat. *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation*. London: Anthem Press, 2003.
- Vickery, Amanda. *The Gentleman's Daughter*. London: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1981.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Valencia: JPM Ediciones, 2010.