Jane Austen's Historical Imagination

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Abstract

This thesis explores Jane Austen's historical imagination by anatomising her styles. While critics have ascribed her historicity to her thematic engagement with the political and social contexts of her contemporary world, this study argues that her formal experimentation and dialogue with contemporary historical writings prescribe her historical and historiographical aestheticism.

Chapter 1, 'Education', surveys the historical texts to which Austen was exposed. The comparison with schoolroom histories and Enlightenment histories reveals that the narration of Austen's *History of England*, whose digression from and indifference to exactitude make it a kind of transcription of a pupil's recital of English history by heart, betokens a literary reconstruction of the contemporary histories.

Chapter 2, 'Memory', scrutinises the narrational features of the child historian in Austen's *History*. The principle that directs its style, like the imagination of Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*, is less spatio-temporal order than free association. The dismantling of chronological and geographical coherence bespeaks a correction to the progressivism which Enlightenment histories more or less incorporate.

Chapter 3, 'Time', considers how that impulse to deconstruct chronological order works in the vehicle of the novel, a genre that is associated with temporal progress.

The chapter shows how Austen's scepticism about teleology, however, often gives way to the drive for narrativisation that the desire of her narrators and the requirement of the genre occasion.

Chapter 4, 'Character', examines the conflict between characters and such self-serving narrators. Their vying for dominance in narration, which materialises in the insertions of 'history' as a character's past life, impairs the conventional stereotype of Austen's impersonal narrator.

These chapters attest to Austen's consciousness of herself as a self-approving interpreter of the past. The thesis concludes by suggesting that such foregrounding of the personal voice, tinted with satire, flirts with the Romantic embracing of self and the Enlightenment ideal of detachment.

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Abbreviations

E	Jane Austen, *Emma* (1815), ed. by Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
J	Jane Austen, *Juvenilia*, ed. by Peter Sabor, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
JAFM	Jane Austen, *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts*, ed. by Kathryn Sutherland, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
L	Jane Austen, *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. by Deirdre Le Faye, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
LM	Jane Austen, *Later Manuscripts*, ed. by Janet Todd and Linda Bree, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
M	Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814), ed. by John Wiltshire, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
N	Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (1817), ed. by Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
P	Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (1817), ed. by Janet Todd and Antje Blank, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

PP	Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), ed. by Pat Rogers, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
SS	Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), ed. by Edward Copeland, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
TW	Jane Austen, *Teenage Writings*, ed. by Kathryn Sutherland and Freya Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Introduction

Jane Austen is, to be sure, historical. Her (voluntary) withdrawal from political and public life has long been recognised as a myth. Since such landmarks as Marilyn Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975), we have renewed our ways of admiring her brilliance. The wide-ranging insight into contemporary contexts, that the redrawn portrait of the author acquired, retroactively transformed her writings into rich materials for socio-history. Austen has been matchmade with every aspect of political, social, cultural issues, and the accumulation of those studies moulds the author into a figure as omniscient as the narrators she created herself. John Bayley presents the protean almighty that Austen obtains postmortem:

> Her relevance is unbounded; her implication limitless. Her art could see and understand everything, from the relation between houses like Mansfield Park and the West Indian sugar economy to the significance of the fact that Wickham, when Darcy gets him a regular commission, is posted not to Spain but to Newcastle, where there had been a good deal of 'trouble'.[1]

This 'historical' turn, however, has increasingly been turning away from the traces of her

[1] John Bayley, 'Yawning and Screaming', *London Review of Books*, 5 February 1987 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v09/n03/john-bayley/yawning-and-screaming> [accessed 4 October 2024]

literary manoeuvrings, for her prominence in them originally outshone the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century context in which her works were involved. The ambition of this thesis lies in reconciling the two camps of Austen criticism: namely, in anatomising the forms and styles of historical Jane Austen.

The term 'history' – that enigma ever bewildering and bewitching to the best of intellectual minds – takes on a tint of free indirect style when referring to a type of critical method. The 'historical' approach is historical for modern readers, not for Austen. It ruminates on what is the past for them and what was (broadly) the present for her. Note how Bayley flirts with the style in the above passage that questions the 'dissolv[ing]' of 'two distinct entities: the separate and unique personalities of writer and reader'.[2] This thesis seeks to redeem what Austen considered history. Indeed, long before becoming a published novelist in 1811, she chose the title of 'historian' for herself in *The History of England* (1791), a short ambitious history stretching from the coronation of Henry IV in 1399 to the death of Charles I in 1649. That was the only professional entitlement she assumed, as Freya Johnston points out.[3] In her literary career, she sticks to a genre-free, rather bland, designation of 'author', never even calling herself a novelist.[4]

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[2] Bayley [accessed 4 October 2024]
[3] Freya Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), p. 158.
[4] Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) records the usage: 'A writer of novels'. It does not offer any examples, however. *Oxford English Dictionary* quotes a use of the word in 1633 as the first. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755;1773), ed. by Beth Rapp

It is well-known that 'history' did not have to be dominated by facts. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) is not ashamed of its broad definition:

1. A narration of events and facts delivered with dignity.
2. Narration; relation.
3. The knowledge of facts and events.[5]

The repetition of the first explanation in the third marks a growing emphasis on 'facts'. However, it does not still banish the good old liberality of the word 'history', one that refers to 'narration' in general, whether past or present, or whether fictional or factual. The eighteenth century saw the publication of many novels described as 'history' including Henry Fielding's *History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), Samuel Richardson's *History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), and Frances Burney's *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), with all of which Austen was familiar. The appearance of these fictional life-narratives synchronised with the surging popularity of Enlightenment histories such as David Hume's *History of England* (1754–61) and William Robertson's *History of Scotland* (1759), and schoolroom

Young, Jack Lynch, William Dorner, Amy Larner Giroux, Carmen Faye Mathes, and Abigail Moreshead, 2021 <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com> [accessed 7 October 2024]

[5] *Dictionary* [accessed 7 October 2024]

abridgements such as Oliver Goldsmith's *The History of England* (1771). James Edward Austen-Leigh testifies that Austen was familiar with these three 'old guides': 'In history she followed the old guides—Goldsmith, Hume, and Robertson.'[6] This simultaneity in the birth of different kinds of 'histories' could have nudged her into the awareness of the contradictory multiplicity that history is well able to absorb. Her description of herself as 'a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian' tells its own tale (*TW*, p. 120). The fact that attributive adjectives are summoned, and as many as three, confirms her sensitivity to the equivocality of the concept.

In Johnson's definition of history, temporality matters less. Even if this is because fact presupposes pastness, he did not deem the point worth articulation. Instead, a formal feature of 'dignity' engrosses attention. This conforms to a motto of Enlightenment histories as described in an anonymous review of Robertson's *History of Scotland* in *The Critical Review*, which David R. Raynor attributes to Hume:

> A bare register of past transactions, unconnected by principles or causes, and unadorned with any elegance, deserves not the name of history. An historian is one, who, taking for his subject events of importance and dignity, traces them to their springs, and unfolds their series, in so clear and interesting a manner, as to make his readers present to the actions which he records, and to enlarge their acquaintance

[6] J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections* (1869), ed. by Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 71.

with human nature.[7]

For the reviewer, an ideal history must achieve the happiest harmony between 'elegance', adornment, and 'events of importance and dignity'. The stylistic elitism, however, was not the best way to recruit common readers into an enlightened circle. Hume's letter to Robertson of March 1759, about a month after the appearance of this review, tells of the most tragic fate into which his *History of Scotland* falls:

> I forgot to tell you, that two days ago I was in the House of Commons, where an English gentleman came to me, and told me, that he had lately sent to a grocer's shop for a pound of raisins, which he received wrapped up in a paper that he shewed me. How would you have turned pale at the sight! It was a leaf of your History, and the very character of Queen Elizabeth, which you had laboured so finely, little thinking it would so soon come to so disgraceful an end. I happened a little after to see Millar, and told him the story; consulting him, to be sure, on the fate of his new boasted historian, of whom he was so fond. But the story proves more serious than I apprehended. For he told Strahan, who thence suspects villany among his prentices and journeymen; and has sent me very earnestly to know the gentleman's name, that he may find out the grocer, and trace the matter to the bottom. In vain did I remonstrate that this was sooner or later the fate of all authors.[8]

Hume could wait not for three days to communicate to his friend-cum-rival the most

[7] [Anon.], '*The History of Scotland*', *The Critical Review*, February 1759, pp. 89-103 (p. 89). See also David Raynor, 'Hume and Robertson's *History of Scotland*', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 10 (1987), 59-63.
[8] David Hume, *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. by J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), I, 300.

innocent perpetration of lese-majesty and vandalism. His readiness to make the unasked report seems to originate in an impulse for competitive bantering and in the outlandishness of the case, which provokes even the publisher into searching for the culprit. The association with a 'grocer's shop' not only hurts authorial pride but contravenes the dignity of history. Compare this accidental bathos of 'a pound of raisins' embraced by solemn Queen Elizabeth to the intentional deflation that Austen stages in *Lesley Castle*; Charlotte Luttrell, a friend of the heroine Margaret Lesley, contrasts her sister Eloisa with herself:

> I always longed particularly to go to Vaux-hall, to see whether the cold Beef there is cut so thin as it is reported, for I have a sly suspicion that few people understand the art of cutting a slice of cold Beef so well as I do: nay it would be hard if I did not know something of the Matter, for it was a part of my Education that I took by far the most pains with. Mama always found me *her* best Scholar, tho' when Papa was alive Eloisa was *his*. Never to be sure were there two more different Dispositions in the World. We both loved Reading. *She* preferred Histories, & *I* Receipts. She loved drawing Pictures, and I drawing Pullets. No one could sing a better Song than She, and no one make a better Pye than I. (*TW*, p. 111)

The bathetic alternation of staple accomplishments and culinary arts is developed. The zeugma of 'drawing Pictures' and 'drawing Pullets', along with their double alliterations, gives material forms to Austen's burlesquing spirit to level out all these high and low

employments. By combining ‘Histories’ with ‘Receipts’, she visualises the increasing specification of history.

As the case of *Lesley Castle* shows, Austen rectifies the growing disparity between elevated history and common dailiness not always by dignifying the latter but by undignifying the former. Her famous jokes about the name Richard and its former possessor Richard III are one case in point, which Chapter 1 will examine in more detail. Her jokes about history are often not apparent, being absorbed into her everyday expressions. Thus, a historical image of beheading is irrelevantly summoned when one of her letters to Cassandra (24–26 December 1798) mentions their sailor brother Charles:

> The Lords of the Admiralty will have enough of our applications at present, for I hear from Charles that he has written to Lord Spencer himself to be removed. I am afraid his serene Highness will be in a passion, & order some of our heads to be cut off.— (*L*, p. 32)

The motif might have been in circulation within the Austen family, for it crops up in Mrs Austen’s famous testimony on the intimacy between Jane and Cassandra. When Cassandra enters a boarding school, nine-year-old Jane, too young for a school, was determined to accompany her sister: ‘“if Cassandra’s head had been going to be cut off

Jane would have her's [*sic*] cut off too."'[9] Mrs Austen's phrasing generates a sense of déjà vu in the readers of Jane's *History*, where beheading is regarded as a pleasant way of ceasing to exist:

> He [the Duke of Somerset] was beheaded, of which he might with reason have been proud, had he known that such was the death of Mary Queen of Scotland; but as it was impossible that he should be conscious of what had never happened, it does not appear that he felt particularly delighted with the manner of it. (*TW*, pp. 127-28)

The joke about beheading seems to pop up always against the backdrop of sisterly comradeship: Jane is worried about the possibility of the Austens' losing their heads in her letter addressed to Cassandra; their mother emphasises Jane's willingness to follow Cassandra to boarding school by her readiness to incur even the death penalty; Austen's *History*, a collaboration between Jane as a historian and Cassandra as a medallion painter, views decapitation as an extreme form of homage to Mary, Queen of Scots. It is likely the regular use of this beheading joke derives from the sisters' experience of historical education at boarding school, which Chapter 1 explores more thoroughly. The casual transplantation of a mode of execution into everyday life tackles the gradually sharpening

[9] The source of this anecdote is Austen's niece Anna Lefroy's letter, which she addressed to James Edward Austen-Leigh gathering information for the publication of his aunt's memoir, *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870). The letter is reproduced in Deirdre Le Faye, 'Anna Lefroy's Original Memories of Jane Austen', *The Review of English Studies*, n. s., 39.155 (1988), 417-21 (p. 420).

definition of history in two ways. On the one hand, it reminds us of that unconditional totality that history used to unconsciously represent and that it is now consciously discarding. On the other, the daily casualness with which the image of beheading is handled is rather a source of historicity; for the resemblance between the Duke of Somerset and Mary, Queen of Scots transforms the grisly event into a routine that frequently occurs throughout the course of history. For Austen, '[n]ot taking deaths very seriously was part of life', as John Mullan indicates.[10] It is also part of history. Beheading is both rare and quotidian. The exploitation of this duality is what shapes Austen's historical thinking.

Another example of Austen's bathetic historical view is revealed by Annette Upfal and Christine Alexander. They suggest Cassandra's medallion portraits of monarchs in the *History* are caricatured likenesses of Austen's families and friends.[11] Upfal's and Alexander's reading is mostly biographically oriented. However, the suggestion, for instance, that the witchlike portrait of Elizabeth I reflects Mrs Austen means more than

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[10] John Mullan, *What Matters in Jane Austen? Twenty Crucial Puzzles Solved* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 84.

[11] Jane Austen, *Jane Austen's The History of England & Cassandra's Portraits*, ed. by Annette Upfal and Christine Alexander (Sydney: Juvenilia Press, 2009). See also Annette Upfal and Christine Alexander, 'Are We Ready for New Directions? Jane Austen's *The History of England & Cassandra's Portraits*', *Persuasions On-Line*, 30.2 (2010) <https://jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol30no2/upfal-alexander.html> [accessed 8 October 2024]. The resemblance between the portrayed monarchs and Austen's family members was first suggested by Jan Fergus in Jane Austen, *The History of England: from the Reign of Henry the 4th to the Death of Charles the 1st*, ed. by Jan Fergus (Edmonton: Juvenilia Press, 1995), p. iv.

just teasing a skeleton out of the cupboard. The comicality in Austen's *History* and her historical imagination is not merely a bitter fruit of ill feelings, but rather what Stephen Bann calls 'a faithful indication of a generalized historical-mindedness that […] developed apace in the Romantic epoch'.[12] Bann's statement has in mind one satirical take on English history, Gilbert Abbott A'Beckett's *Comic History of England* (1851–52); Austen's hilarious *History* precedes it by more than fifty years.

Austen's debasement of the genre in her *History* was equated with the 'revenge', as Christopher Kent puts it, on fact-based, schoolroom pedagogy.[13] His reading was meant to admit more of Austen's recreative engagement with historical writing than Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's feminist supposition that Austen 'refused to take historical "reality" seriously': a 'reality' that does not recognise women's involvement.[14] This desertion and 'revenge' are softened into '(re)making' in Devoney Looser's argument that *Northanger Abbey* (1817) shows how history is redefined as it is incorporated into the

[12] Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), pp. 52-53.
[13] Christopher Kent, 'Learning History with, and from, Jane Austen', in *Jane Austen's Beginnings: The Juvenilia and 'Lady Susan'*, ed. by J. David Grey (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1989), pp. 59-72 (p. 60).
[14] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), p. 133. For feminist readings of Austen's *History of England*, see also Antoinette Burton, '"Invention Is What Delights Me": Jane Austen's Remaking of "English" History', in *Jane Austen and Discourses of Feminism*, ed. by Devoney Looser (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 35-50; Mary Spongberg, 'Jane Austen and the *History of England*', *Journal of Women's History*, 23.1 (2011), 56-80.

discourse of the novel.[15] For Looser, the 'history' that the novel portrays is absorbent and open-armed, adding to its repertoire a 'present-tense "history" which will, presumably, reflect well on its age' and mixing elements of 'history-as-"fact"' and 'history-as-fiction'.[16] Looser underlines the missing kinship between Austen and Walter Scott, despite the alleged antithesis between the two. Scott himself first established this in his journal (14 March 1826) in praise of Austen:

> That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me.[17]

Quoting Scott's *St Ronan's Well* (1823) set in a nineteenth-century spa town, Looser disputes this tenacious contrast less by joining Austen to the 'Big Bow wow strain' than by looking for the traces of 'present-tense "history"' in Scott.[18] In fact, he labelled his

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[15] Devoney Looser, '(Re)Making History and Philosophy: Austen's *Northanger Abbey*', *European Romantic Review*, 4.1 (1993), 34-56.
[16] Looser, '(Re)Making History and Philosophy', pp. 46, 48.
[17] Walter Scott, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by David Douglas, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), I, 155.
[18] Devoney Looser, 'Dealing in Notions and Facts: Jane Austen and History Writing', in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. by Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 216-25. Karl Kroeber also notes the similarity between the two authors and calls Austen a 'historical novelist'. Karl Kroeber, 'Jane Austen as an Historical Novelist: *Sense and Sensibility*', *Persuasions*, 12 (1990), 10-18. On pre-Scott historical novels, see, for instance, Fiona Price, *Reinventing Liberty: Nation, Commerce and the Historical Novel from Walpole to Scott* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

second published novel *Guy Mannering* (1815) 'a tale of private life' in a letter (19 January 1815).[19]

All these interpretations of Austen's historical perspective have in common a premise that traditional history, regarded as both too narrow and too selective, is chastised by Austen into more inclusiveness. Looser states: 'Austen's building up of novels at the expense of history may be an attempt to acquire "more land" for the burgeoning field of literature.'[20] Conventional history always suffers from a deficit, which requires thematic reinforcements of women, fiction, or present society. The broadening, however, is just one phase clipped out of the transition in the definition of history. The fact that history as '*histoire*' has divided into subcategories and that its later broadening is actually a restoration has not been taken into account. If the liberation from parochial history was Austen's major goal, her treatment of 'low' stuff should have been more considerate and less perfunctory. Her principle was perhaps too egalitarian in a way, as her satirical impulse targets high and low, history and gastronomy, and English rulers and Austen family members all equally. Bathos is not cumulative in nature; it exhibits an even distribution of attention. The elevation of 'private history' is not the sole cause that

[19] Walter Scott, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott: E-Text*, ed. by Herbert Grierson. <http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/etexts/etexts/letters.html#etext> [accessed 8 October 2024]. There is no surviving evidence that Austen read this novel.
[20] Devoney Looser, *British Women Writers and the Writing of History*, 1670–1820 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 202

engrosses Austen. Her customary deconstruction of 'high' history rather leads us to question how the classification itself comes into existence.

The bent for measuring Austen's historicity by the kinds of descriptive objects contained in her novels is encouraged in part by the critical favouring of her later works. These apparently imaginary pictures of contemporary society are often *made* historical by the extended coverage of history and sometimes interpolation of period detail. Earlier writings that include her treatment of English history have not undergone the close reading they deserve, instead being made to serve as a prelude to her later realisation in *Northanger Abbey* that the novel is a fuller version of history in its variety and observation. This study engages with Freya Johnston, who questions the teleological underestimation of 'juvenile' writings: that is, an assumption of 'progress in a straight line from immaturity to maturity, from "how she ought *not* to write" into "the right direction"'.[21] Such scepticism is justified by Austen's compositional chronology: 'Austen preserved, returned to, and revised her earliest unpublished works long after she became a published author.'[22] Once her corpus is seen as a complex product of her historical imagination, the necessity for more formal investigation accelerates, for she offers less a conceptual revolution than a stylistic rewriting of history proper. This present exploration, while

[21] Johnson, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 1.
[22] Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 1.

appreciating the achievements of a thematic approach that first shed light on Austen's interest in history writing, aims at changing direction by defining history not as the narrated past but as an *act* of looking at what has gone before. This loosely engages with the point made by Janine Barchas that the adverb is entitled to as much critical attention as the noun in Austen studies.[23] Questions raised here are not so much about what or which as about *how*.

The trend for contextualising Austen was redirected by William H. Galperin, who investigated how she exposes the very process of historicising. For him, Austen is 'oppositional' because her writings 'retrieved the real from the closure of realism so-called' by prioritising 'possibility' over 'probability'.[24] She was not a guardian of realism against the Gothic supernatural; on the contrary, she dissented from literary norms. Fresh as Galperin's formal parsing of Austen's historicity is, her historical impulse persists in such epithets as 'a chronicler of the everyday' or 'an historian of the present'.[25] Historical interpretations of Austen's works are still largely informed by the belief in the superiority of the present to the past; more precisely, the belief that 'present history' is more down-

[23] Janine Barchas, 'Very Austen: Accounting for the Language of *Emma*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 62.3 (2007), 303-38 (p. 310).
[24] William H. Galperin, *The Historical Austen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 4, 8, 9.
[25] Galperin, pp. 2, 8.

to-earth than history of the faraway past.[26] What is missing is ideas of the historical dynamism of interaction and isolation between the past and the present.

The gap is partly closed by Peter Knox-Shaw's delineation of Austen as 'a writer of centrist views who derives in large measure from the Enlightenment, more particularly from that sceptical tradition within it that flourished in England and Scotland during the second half of the eighteenth century'.[27] Her 'centrist' vision, Knox-Shaw argues in a chapter titled '*Northanger Abbey* and the liberal historians', is not 'the construct of a single will' but 'the meeting-point of opposing influences'.[28] The present study, while in line with Knox-Shaw in concluding that her historical view is 'centrist', intends to reconfigure the definition of that word. It suggests that Austen is 'centrist' not because she is a sage who does not fail to take the middle ground but because her historical imagination treats bigotry and scepticism as two sides of the same coin. Her announcement that she is 'a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian' is more equivocal than it sounds, swaying between the celebration of interpretative freedom and satirical detachment from such indulgence. The paradox is that the 'rowd[ier]' the historian gets,

[26] This ordering of the present over the past takes at face value Henry Tilney's famous expostulation to Catherine Morland, who switches the present reality to the illusion of the Gothic past: '"Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live"' (*NA*, p. 203).
[27] Peter Knox-Shaw, *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 5.
[28] Knox-Shaw, *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*, p. 128.

as Mary Lascelles puts it, the more hilariously self-critical the statement sounds.[29] While Austen's lasting interest in the subjectivity of the history consumer nudges her towards the Romantic school, her style of execution flirts with the Enlightenment legacy of self-doubt.

To avoid complicity with the progressive charting of Austen's career, this thesis does not allocate a chapter to each of her novels in chronological order (or composition or publication). Instead, the four chapters anatomise the formal strands of Austen's idea of history as a literary construct: education, memory, time, and character.

Chapter 1, 'Education', surveys, from three perspectives, the historical texts to which Austen was exposed: schoolroom history, narrative of progress, and romance. The first part reveals that the omnivorous tendency of her historical thinking, one that indiscriminately absorbs fictional and factual writings, signifies less revolt than conformity to conventional educational practice. Her eclectic *History of England* is an accurate materialisation of the reading lists for young history learners, as suggested by such educationalists as Hester Chapone and Erasmus Darwin. Some of the historical writings Austen read, particularly Enlightenment histories that are more or less characterised by progressivism, had frequent recourse to the metaphor of the child – a

[29] Lascelles calls Austen's *History* as 'a rowdy mock-history of the reigns of the kings of England from Henry IV to Charles I'. Mary Lascelles, *Jane Austen and Her Art* (London: Athlone, 1995), p. 9.

metaphor that refers to the primitive state of the earliest phases of human history. The second part of Chapter 1 argues that the style of Austen's *History*, inveterately deconstructing the idea of progress and chronological order, literalises the infant metaphor in the shape of a child historian. Its narration is voiced by a literary persona of a pupil who recites English history based on her personal preference and unretentive memory. The final part of the chapter explores how Austen de-romanticises her *History*. While Enlightenment historians customarily associated two queens, Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I, with amorous narrative and vocabulary, Austen swept away such clichés despite her attachment to the tragic Scottish queen. Her pro-Marian feelings are expressed rather by her narrator's noisy enthusiasm, cautiously tinted with a sense of authorial self-satirising.

Chapter 2, 'Memory', complements Chapter 1 by scrutinising further the narrational features of the child historian in Austen's *History of England*. Her refusal to conform to teleological narrative is not merely a case of childhood defiance – a negation for the sake of negation. Austen is equipped with an alternative principle that is best described as the performative re-enactment of John Locke's idea of free association. The narrator in the *History* freely discovers similarities and connections between historical (and sometimes even fictional) characters, a process which repeatedly occasions anachronism and

digression. Such neglect of chronological order in the *History* elucidates both Austen's compositional practice and her formal imagination. On the one hand, the dismantling of chronology suggests that Austen did not write the *History* straightforwardly from the beginning to the end. On the other, the *History* is a transcription of how memory dictates thoughts by forging accidental concatenation – a mnemonic failure that Locke is afraid is characteristic of young children. Austen's historian is prone not only to free association but also simply to forgetting, and forgetfulness informs the whole tenor of her teenage writings. In her *History* and many of other earlier works, it is as if the memory of narrators and characters is reset with almost every sentence. Hence the relationship between sentences in the teenage writings hesitates between that of a catalogue and that of a causal chain. The theme of forgetting, originally a kind of rebellion against progressivism, has ironically been taken advantage of to bolster the very developmental schema that has defined Austen's whole literary career. Forgetting, sometimes branded a sign of authorial immaturity, is paradoxically one of her historical expressions. Chapter 2 also examines Austen's disregard of spatial order; chronology and geography were typically regarded as two main pillars of history. In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny Price's imagination is apt to dislocate real locations: she assumes the Isle of Wight exists between England and Ireland; elsewhere, when visiting the English chapel in Sotherton, built in the time of

James II, her thought digresses into Melrose Abbey in Scotland through her memory of Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805). These geographical jokes are a parody of travel writing and, at the same time, a spatial reconfiguration of the past and history, an attempt that is reminiscent of Samuel Johnson's geographically ordered Scottish history, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775). Acknowledging Austen's dislocation of chronology and geography in both earlier and later works serves to correct the assumption that her juvenile wild fancy was silenced by the mature perfection of realism. Instead, she regularly suggests that her spatio-temporal realism is open, or vulnerable, to reconstruction through mnemonic association.

Chapter 3, 'Time', considers how that impulse to deconstruct chronological order works in the vehicle of the novel, a genre that is irrevocably associated with temporal progress. Some of Austen's teenage writings are left unfinished with ellipses. Such ambiguity in regard to ending makes it difficult to categorise her temporality either as that of the time of '*Tick, Tick, Tick*' or that of 'tick-tock': that is, Stuart Sherman's idea that eighteenth-century people imagined time as consisting of the repetition of homogeneous fragments, and Frank Kermode's idea that those fragments are not homogeneous, but rather establish the temporal phases of the beginning, the middle, and

the ending.[30] Sherman's formulation does not chime well with Austen's literary use of days of the week, a time notation that is usually associated with repetitive temporality. That is because she employs days of the week less to record all the details of everyday life than to reveal their incompatibility with the temporal poetics of the novel: the novel as an abridgement of everyday life. Austen's narrators tend to reckon days of the week in a meticulous way that is calculated to detain and irritate the imagined readers of a novel. An emphasis is placed on the coexistence of characters' lived time and the narrative temporality that is edited for readers. The sense of exaggerated protraction that days of the week create metafictionally visualises the powerful drive for curtailment. The awareness of this demand, one that is built into the form of the novel, however, was not enough to prevent Austen from downplaying her endings. Her perfunctory handling of closure has one of its roots in her letters. Many of them, especially the ones addressed to Cassandra, refer to the act of epistolary exchange, such as letters' expected time of arrival or complaints about delayed responses. Austen's letters always look forward to the future, when they will be sent or arrive. This theme of expectation is far from rendering her a slave to future uncertainty. She turns anticipation into a fixed game by writing, for

[30] Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (1967) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

instance: ‘Your letter came quite as soon as I expected, and so your letters will always do, because I have made it a rule not to expect them till they come’ (*L*, p. 26). The expectation for letters transforms itself into an occasion, on which fiction writers can exploit their privilege to forge the future as they see fit. The ending for Austen is not something that is fixed and inevitable, as Kermode defines it, but rather a metaphor for fiction itself. The narrators in her published novels also take advantage of this authorial foresight to the full, by hilariously pretending to make a prediction about the course of stories, one that is doomed to be fulfilled. This chapter concludes by arguing that it is the mobility with which Austen moves between different temporal rhythms that characterises her temporal imagination. This chimeric structure is a product of her keen genre consciousness – a consciousness that in turn makes her transcend such taxonomy.

Chapter 4, ‘Character’, enlarges on the relationship between characters and narrators, on which Chapter 3 touched. Some of the names of neighbours that Austen mentions in her letters are shown to be a kind of free indirect style: that is, names as are actually pronounced by friends or family members. This rhetoric has something to do with Austen’s historical expressions, for the business of history is partly to revive past figures through other people’s opinions, whether first-hand or second-hand. By analysing her usage of names, this chapter detects her historicity not so much in allusions to specific

historical characters, which Margaret Doody's *Jane Austen's Names* extensively explores, as in the realisation that names and characters cannot exist independent of relationships with and interpretations by others.[31] That is why, in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), it is the pairing of Elinor and Marianne, not the individuals considered separately, that makes the novel an homage to Sophia Lee's *Recess* (1783–85), a story about the fictional daughters of Mary, Queen of Scots: Ellinor and Matilda. The sisterly relation troubled by a male intruder is a leitmotif that aligns the two sibling pairs in *Sense and Sensibility* and *The Recess* with the royal cousins Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I. The emphasis on relationship in Austen's characterisation, achieved at the expense of distinct individual personalities, invites the swelling of a narrator's ego; a phenomenon that is observed in the contrast in Austen's *History* between the self-assertiveness of its historian-narrator and the quiet, modest portrayal of Mary, Queen of Scots, as discussed in the latter part of Chapter 1. Some of Austen's characters are not as well-behaved as the queen, occasionally threatening to snatch the initiative in narration from the hand of narrators. This conflict occurs when a character's 'history' is squeezed into stories – 'history' as a cliché in eighteenth-century novels that introduces the past anecdote of a character. Whereas such 'histories' in conventional novels encourage readers' sympathy and

[31] Margaret Doody, *Jane Austen's Names: Riddles, Persons, Places* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

immersion, they are described in Austen's novels as a thorn in narrators' sides that should be removed. In light of her reinterpretation of 'history' as something that undermines the narrator's authority, the assumption which has become almost a stereotype of her narrator as an impersonal 'god', as D. A. Miller puts it, deserves reconsideration.[32] This nearly equal relation between character and narrator symbolises Austen's own historical attitude; the past she imagines is less an ornament that flatters the more learned present than an autonomous entity that eludes and ridicules the historian's effort at narrative control.

A theme that all these chapters have in common is Austen's consciousness of a self – a consciousness of her being a self-serving interpreter of the past. Her theatrical self-indulgence is always annotated by self-monitoring. This odd divisiveness seems to characterise the peculiar trajectory of Austen's literary career. While critical convention describes its course as a consistent development from early practices to later novels of finesse, her habit of self-reflection usually makes her new work a kind of criticism of the preceding one. The witty Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) is delegated to the role of the heroine's antagonist Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* (1814), and the introvert Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* again to the heroine's antagonist Jane Fairfax in *Emma* (1815). Her attentiveness to the immediate past has a meandering movement that

[32] D. A. Miller, *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

serves to rewrite her imagined linear progress – and such a historical view constantly provoked Austen.

Chapter 1, Education

Schoolroom History

Young Jane Austen was enrolled in Reading Ladies Boarding School, an institution which was casually called by its pupils the 'Abbey-house' from 1785 till before the end of 1786.[1] The name was provided by its historic gateway attached to Reading Abbey, originally founded by Henry I in 1121; but it was already a ruin when Austen was a parlour boarder, due to its role as a Royalist fortification and the assault made by Parliamentary supporters during the English Civil War.[2] Mary Martha Sherwood, children's writer and educationalist, who was the same age as Austen and attended the school from 1791, remembered the landscape of the school's garden with the looming remnant of the abbey: 'Round two parts of this garden was an artificial embankment, from the top of which we looked down upon certain magnificent ruins, as I suppose, of the church, begun by Henry I. and consecrated by Becket in 1125.'[3] As Sherwood's recollection floats to the

[1] Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 50, 52; T. A. B. Corley, 'Jane Austen's "real, honest, old-fashioned Boarding-school": Mrs La Tournelle and Mrs Goddard', *Women's Writing*, 5.1 (1998), 113-30 (p. 117).
[2] [Anon.], 'Reading Abbey Quarter' <https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/your-visit/reading-abbey-quarter> [accessed 1 October 2024]
[3] T. A. B. Corley, 'Mrs Sherwood's Secrets: Jane Austen's Boarding-school at Reading in the 1790s', *Jane Austen Annual Report* (2009), 136-42 (p. 136); Mary Martha Sherwood, *The Life and Times of Mrs Sherwood: from the Diaries of Captain and Mrs Sherwood* (1910), ed. by F. J. Harvey Darton

background history of the formerly flourishing monastery, preteen Austen might have been struck with the unmistakably 'past-referring' ruin and hence the idea of history.[4] The visual impression of the abbey seems to survive in her *History of England*, the manuscript of which is dated 'Saturday Nov. 26th. 1791' (*TW*, p. 133), that is, about five years after her leaving the school; in the text, the narrator makes a cursory attempt to look on the bright side of the consequences of Henry VIII's flagitious acts:

> The Crimes & Cruelties of this Prince, were too numerous to be mentioned […] & nothing can be said in his vindication, but that his abolishing Religious Houses & leaving them to the ruinous depredations of time has been of infinite use to the landscape of England in general, which probably was a principal motive for his doing it. (*TW*, pp. 126-27)

The narrator retroactively forges a fresh cause for the king's dissolution of monasteries, turning the politically and personally motivated vandal into an anachronistic connoisseur of picturesque aestheticism. His far-sighted decision eventually enabled Austen to enjoy the peculiar beauty of the Abbey-house's garden, where boarders were allowed to 'lounge about' as much as they like.[5] The ruin of Reading Abbey, T. A. B. Corley suggests, might

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 124.

[4] Arthur C. Danto calls words and predicates that involve 'reference to certain past objects and events *causally* related to the object to which the term or expression is applied', such as 'scar' for instance, 'past-referring terms', with which '[o]ur language is saturated'. *Analytical Philosophy of History* (1965) (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 71-73.

[5] Sherwood recollects the laissez-faire policy of the school: 'The liberty which the first class had was so great that so long as we attended Mr. St. Quintin in his study for an hour or two every morning, or,

also have awakened her to 'the misconduct & Cruelty' of Charles I's Parliament (*TW*, p. 133) and reinforced her Royalist enthusiasm.[6] It is not only the Abbey-house in Reading but also the other historic environments, Oxford and Southampton, where young Austen was previously placed for education, that Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh, her great niece, estimates fertilised her literary resources: 'When, therefore, these early adventures in search of education came to an end and the sisters returned to continue their lessons at home, it must have been with imaginations already enriched by some acquaintance with the three old towns of Oxford, Southampton, and Reading.'[7] The word 'adventure' has a particular connotation, as its use in *Northanger Abbey* indicates: 'if adventures will not befal a young lady in her own village, she must seek them abroad' (*NA*, p. 9). Jane and Cassandra in boarding school are as if heroines of fiction. The implication suggests that Austen's education failed to bring her down to earth with sober knowledge but rather paved the way for her career as a fiction writer – an 'imaginist' (*E*, p. 362).

No wonder, then, that it is in *Northanger Abbey*, with its suitable backdrop of abbey and ruin, that Catherine Morland famously questions the attraction of history proper. Its

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in his absence, M. Malrone, no human being ever took the trouble to consider where we spent the rest of the day between our meals; whether we gossiped in one turret or another; whether we lounged about the garden, or out of the window above the gateway. No one so much as said, "Where have you been ?"'. *The Life and Times of Mrs Sherwood*, p. 127.

[6] Corley, 'Jane Austen's "real, honest, old-fashioned Boarding-school"', p. 118.

[7] Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh, *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 23.

landscape of medieval architects is obviously historical. At the same time, for Austen personally, ‘abbey’ would have gone hand-in-hand with the past in a different way, for that is a place where she learned subjects, probably including history. While rambling with Eleanor and Henry Tilney, Catherine begins to accuse history of its pretension to verisimilitude:

> ‘I can read poetry and plays, and things of that sort, and do not dislike travels. But history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in. Can you?’
>
> ‘Yes, I am fond of history.’
>
> ‘I wish I were too. I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all—it is very tiresome: and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention. The speeches that are put into the heroes’ mouths, their thoughts and designs—the chief of all this must be invention, and invention is what delights me in other books.’
>
> ‘Historians, you think,’ said Miss Tilney, ‘are not happy in their flights of fancy. They display imagination without raising interest. I am fond of history—and am very well contented to take the false with the true. In the principal facts they have sources of intelligence in former histories and records, which may be as much depended on, I conclude, as any thing that does not actually pass under one’s own observation; and as for the little embellishments you speak of, they are embellishments, and I like them as such. If a speech be well drawn up, I read it with pleasure, by whomsoever it may be made—and probably with much greater, if the production of Mr. Hume or Mr. Robertson, than if the genuine words of Caractacus, Agricola, or Alfred the Great.’ (*NA*, pp. 109-10)

Despite her aversion to the genre, Catherine’s point in argument is uncharacteristically

relevant and up-to-date, for '[i]t was not until the nineteenth century', as Karen O'Brien suggests, 'that there might be a tension between the narrative form of history and its empirical or philosophical content'.[8] The contradiction was a burgeoning theme when *Northanger Abbey* was finally published in 1817 after the long period of its gestation and hiatus from about 1798.[9] Yet Austen's interest in the conflict dates back to her *History*, which was composed even before the estimated date of her starting to write *Northanger Abbey*. The narrator of her *History* offers the following guarantee: 'Truth […] I think, [is] very excusable in an Historian' (*TW*, p. 131).

It is not, therefore, the narrative contents of the dignified histories per se in the eighteenth-century curriculum that enlightened Austen to the conflict between fact and fiction in historical writings. Instead, it seems that the very educational impulse which persistently warns against the flight of illusion that fiction brings about also authorises and encourages the reading of the genre, along with the Enlightenment histories, in order to acquire historical knowledge. Hester Chapone, in her *Letters on the Improvement of*

[8] Karen O'Brien, 'Historical Writing', in David Womersley, ed., *A Companion to Literature from Milton to Blake* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 522-35 (p. 522).
[9] Cassandra's autograph memorandum informs us that 'North-hanger Abbey was written about the year 98 & 99' (*JAFM*, V, 297-99). However, in the paratext of the novel, 'Advertisement, by the Authoress to *Northanger Abbey*', Jane herself reveals that the 'little work was finished in the year 1803' (*NA*, p. 1). After the publisher, Benjamin Crosby & Co., purchased her manuscripts and advertised the work under the title of *Susan; a Novel* in 1803, the proceeding was halted for no obvious reasons. Later, Austen retrieved the manuscript, which would be eventually published as *Northanger Abbey* by John Murray in 1817. See 'Introduction' in *NA*, pp. xxvi-xxix.

the Mind: Addressed to a Young Lady (1773), recommends to her niece, the addressee of her educational letters, such histories as Paul de Rapin de Thoyras's *History of England* (translated from French by Nicholas Tindal in 1725–31), David Hume's *History of England*, and William Robertson's *History of Scotland* and *History of the Reign of Charles V* (1769).[10] Nevertheless, on top of Chapone's list is enshrined 'my darling *Shakespear* [*sic*]':

> Among other *historians*, do not forget my darling *Shakespear*—a faithful as well as a most agreeable one—whose historical plays, if read in a series, will fix in your memory the reigns he has chosen, more durably than any other history.—You need not fear his leading you into any material mistakes, for he keeps surprizingly close to the truth as well in the characters as in the events.—One cannot but wish he had given us a play on the reign of every English king—as it would have been the pleasantest, and perhaps the most useful way of becoming acquainted with it.[11]

'[M]istakes' in historical accounts do not count as any substantial stumbling-block for the educational mission. Rather, educationalists often recoiled from excessive exactness in

[10] Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind: Addressed to a Young Lady* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), II, 246, 247, 250. Like Chapone, teenage Austen plays a role of an affectionately admonishing aunt in her dedications to her two nieces; the one to Jane Anna Elizabeth Austen reads: 'I dedicate to You the following Miscellaneous Morsels, convinced that if you seriously attend to them, You will derive from them very important Instructions, with regard to your Conduct in Life' (*TW*, p. 63); the other to Fanny Catherine Austen reads: 'As I am prevented by the great distance between Rowling & Steventon from superintending Your Education Myself, […] I think it is my particular Duty to prevent your feeling as much as possible the want of my personal instructions, by addressing to You on paper my Opinions & Admonitions on the conduct of Young Women' (*TW*, p. 151).

[11] *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, p. 247.

historical learning to avoid both the confusion of juvenile memory and the pedantic infatuation with what Oliver Goldsmith calls 'dates, names, and events'.[12] In Goldsmith's *History of England, in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son* (1764), an epistolary English history addressed from a fictional gentleman to his son, which John Bennet approves of as a historical book for girls as well in his *Letters to a Young Lady* (1792), narrative synthesis with less attention to accuracy similarly carries the day:

> But the true use of history does not consist in being able to settle a genealogy, in quoting the events of an obscure reign, or the true epoch of a contested birth; this knowledge of facts hardly deserves the name of science: true wisdom consists in tracing effects from their causes.[13]

What is a compositional principle of the Enlightenment history in boy's studies, however, metamorphoses into 'a curious dread of too much precision in a girl's studies' as Dorothy Gardiner terms it.[14] An educational compromise is arrived at, based on the limited capacity of infant, a theoretical inclination for narrative, and the desire to anchor girls to

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[12] Oliver Goldsmith, *An History of England, in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to His Son*, 2 vols (Parris: T. Barrois, 1788), I, 7.
[13] Goldsmith, *An History of England*, I, 7. John Bennet, *Letters to a Young Lady*, 2 vols (Newburyport: John Mycall, 1792), I, 113. Goldsmith's *An History of England* also received endorsement from Sarah Green: 'it is better at first to know well some abridgement, and that of Goldsmith is certainly the best; it is called the History of England, in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son.' *Mental Improvement for a Young Lady, on Her Entrance into the World; Addressed to a Favourite Niece* (London: Minerva-Press, 1793), p. 98.
[14] Dorothy Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School: A Study of Women's Education through Twelve Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 430.

unthreatening moderate accomplishment, readily promoting young Austen to consider both self-professedly impartial histories and Shakespearean plays as equally serious historical sources.

Thus intertextual comparison, rather than the perusal of a specific text, sets the tone for Austen's *History*, which seems to be not only a record of her reading experiences but also an imitated inventory of historical writings appropriate for pupils, as offered by Chapone and Bennet. While its overall structure consists of a polemical response to Goldsmith's *History of England*, her *History* is packed with a medley of quotations and allusions; present in its first half, between the reigns of Henry IV and Henry VIII, are Shakespeare's historical plays, and also Nicholas Rowe's *Tragedy of Jane Shore: Written in Imitation of Shakespeare's Style* (1714). '[T]he King made a long speech', the narrator states in the section on Henry IV, 'for which I must refer the Reader to Shakespear's [*sic*] Plays, & the Prince made a still longer'; the section on Henry V is also grounded on the playwright's words: 'He […] married the King's daughter Catherine, a very agreeable Woman by Shakespear's [*sic*] account' (*TW*, pp. 121, 122). The spelling 'Shakespear', though it was a common variant in the eighteenth century, might make more likely the direct influence of Chapone's *Letters* on this part of the *History*. The educational text actually appears in the catalogue of books recommended for girls by Erasmus Darwin in

A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education, in Boarding Schools (1797) though the standard spellings in general were not so fixed then as today and teenage Austen was not the most stable speller.[15] The historian's apparent joke about the employment of his plays in historical education would actually meet with wholehearted approval from Chapone and Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth in their *Practical Education* (1798), for '[w]ho ever forgets Shakespeare's historical plays?'.[16] At least in her choice of the historical plays, and against our likely assumptions, the conduct of the historian in Austen's *History* is more compliant than anarchic. Darwin regards some of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedies as 'entertaining and inoffensive', and thinks they 'may be read by young ladies without injury to their morals, or much outrage to their feelings'.[17] The historian's mention of Sheridan's *The Critic* (1781) in the section on James I, then, may be another example of Austen's unexpected deference to conventional advice (*TW*, p. 132). The schoolrooms of her times, in addition, witnessed dramas read and performed by female pupils: 'The love for play-acting found expression in the schoolroom almost as soon as girls' boarding-schools were established, and after the Puritan ban was removed the

[15] Erasmus Darwin, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education, in Boarding Schools* (Derby: J. Drewry, 1797), p. 123. See also 'Note on Spelling' in *TW*, pp. xlii-xlv.
[16] Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (1798), 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), I, 354.
[17] *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*, p. 32.

practice of encouraging children to perform on the mimic stage was again revived.'[18] Mary Martha Sherwood testifies that the girls in Reading Ladies Boarding School played Madame de Genlis's *La Bonne Mère* and that '[t]he great dancing-room at the Abbey was fitted up as a regular theatre, with foot-lights and everything else complete'.[19]

This creation of a kind of polyphony of historical writings, a by-product of contemporary pedagogical methods, is characteristic of Austen, whose way of dealing with the concept of history in her other works tends to be unsystematic and inconsistent. The above quoted dialogue from *Northanger Abbey* continues, swiftly sweeping through various topics from the binaries of historical event and trivia, of men and women, and of fact and fiction, and schoolroom history as the 'torment of little boys and girls' to historians' 'method and style':

> 'You are fond of history!—and so are Mr. Allen and my father; and I have two brothers who do not dislike it. So many instances within my small circle of friends is remarkable! At this rate, I shall not pity the writers of history any longer. If people like to read their books, it is all very well, but to be at so much trouble in filling great volumes, which, as I used to think, nobody would willingly ever look into, to be labouring only for the torment of little boys and girls, always struck me as a hard fate; and though I know it is all very right and necessary, I have often wondered at the person's courage that could sit down on purpose to do it.'

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[18] Gardiner, p. 348.
[19] *The Life and Times of Mrs Sherwood*, p. 144. We also know, from J. E. Austen-Leigh's memoir of his aunt Jane, that the Austen family sometimes enjoyed private theatricals, which were not against the wishes of Austen parents or the stricter sense of propriety in the Victorian period, when the account was first published. *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, p. 28.

> ‘That little boys and girls should be tormented,’ said Henry, ‘is what no one at all acquainted with human nature in a civilized state can deny; but in behalf of our most distinguished historians, I must observe, that they might well be offended at being supposed to have no higher aim; and that by their method and style, they are perfectly well qualified to torment readers of the most advanced reason and mature time of life. I use the verb “to torment,” as I observed to be your own method, instead of “to instruct,” supposing them to be now admitted as synonimous [*sic*].’ (*NA*, pp. 110-11)

Besides these multiple facets of history reading, Austen introduces into the novel those visual realisations of the past in the shapes of ruin and abbey; earlier, at the beginning of the novel, the narrator also summons Richard III out of the blue in association with Catherine’s father Richard: ‘Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard’ (*NA*, p. 5). Austen extensively fills the novel with a sense of the past, but her way of doing so is not fixed to one style or standard, or governed by a single identifiable motivation.

Similarly, *Kitty, or the Bower* (1792) is graced with a kaleidoscope of historical ideas and attitudes.[20] Austen charges the piece with names that possess Elizabethan connotations: the heroine Kitty’s ‘Maiden Aunt’, who is a champion of Elizabeth I, with whom she is indirectly associated; the Dudleys, who are her disagreeable neighbours; and

[20] This thesis engages with Kathryn Sutherland in regarding *Kitty, or the Bower* as the work’s original title before the intervention of Austen’s nephew James Edward (later Austen-Leigh) changes it to *Catharine, or the Bower*. Kathryn Sutherland, ‘From Kitty to Catharine: James Edward Austen’s Hand in “Volume the Third”’, *The Review of England Studies*, n. s., 66.273 (2015), 124-43.

the Stanleys, who are her distant relations (*TW*, pp. 169, 171, 172).[21] The bathos of historical name and local community in *Kitty* is combined with discussions of the characters of historical figures; hearing her aunt's 'wish that she might live to see the Manners of the People in Queen Elizabeth's reign, restored again', Kitty fervently protests against the return of Queen Elizabeth herself, for '[s]he might do as much Mischief and last as long as she did before' (*TW*, p. 175). Not long after this 'parodic after-supper conversation', in Clara Tuite's expression, Kitty enters into a conversation about Richard III with Edward Stanley, who 'was so far from being really of any party, that he had scarcely a fixed opinion on the Subject ['History']':

> They had continued therefore for sometime conversing in this manner on the character of Richard the 3[d], which he was warmly defending when he suddenly seized hold of her hand, and exclaiming with great emotion, 'Upon my honour you are entirely mistaken,' pressed it passionately to his lips, & ran out of the arbour. (*TW*, p. 198)[22]

The focus of this scene is not a character study of the king, which is easily eclipsed by Edward's burst of gallantry, but his 'indifference' to any historical disputes concerning the controversial monarch (*TW*, p. 198). Austen's habitual irreverence towards Richard

[21] Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester is a favourite retainer of Elizabeth; Henry Stanley, 4th Earl of Derby attended the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots.
[22] Clara Tuite, *Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 43.

III holds here, but it finds an expression different from the joke at the beginning of *Northanger Abbey*. While it is the narrator in *Northanger Abbey* who sports with historical names, it is her characters in *Kitty* who deliberate over historical figures.[23] There are coexisting different levels on which *Kitty* is concerned with the idea of history. Partly because the historicity of Austen's works in general often derives from the perspectives from which the past and history are looked back on, rather than from those objects of description, her sustained interest in the verbal understanding of the past has not qualified her to be regarded as a historical writer such as Walter Scott. Austen's constantly changing attitudes to the past and her peculiar keenness to survey the constellation of opinions that constitutes the study of history position her writings less as historical than as historiographical.

Austen's historiographical awareness is put into words most unambiguously through her interaction with Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England*, an abridgement based on Hume's *History of England*, along with Rapin's *History of England*, Thomas Carte's *General History of England* (1747–55), and Tobias Smollett's *Complete History of England* (1757–58) and its *Continuation* (1760–65).[24] Goldsmith's publication,

[23] Similarly, while it is the narrator in *Northanger Abbey* who discusses and defends the novel, it is the characters in *Persuasion* or *Sanditon* who give opinions about literature.
[24] Oliver Goldsmith, *The History of England, From the Earliest Times to the Death of George II.*, 4 vols (London: T. Davies, 1771), I, vi. It is further abridged by Goldsmith himself in 1774. See Goldsmith, *An Abridgement of the History of England. From the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Death of George II.* (London: B. Law, 1774).

catering to the later eighteenth-century demand for polite histories, was highly successful; '[r]eissued, corrected, updated, abridged and continued up to the present day, the work lived on, reaching its 41st edition by 1865' and the revised versions 'were sold widely to schools in England and America a hundred years on'.[25] Darwin recommends to female learners the succession of abridgements by Goldsmith, that is, *The Roman History* (1769), *The History of England*, and *The Grecian History* (1774), as replacements for such representative Enlightenment histories as Hume's *History of England* and Robertson's *History of the Reign of Charles V* and *History of America* (1777), which are 'too voluminous for school books'.[26] The view is shared by such a towering historical novelist as Scott: 'They [Goldsmith's *Abridgements of the History of Rome and England*] are eminently well calculated to introduce youth to the knowledge of their studies; for they exhibit the most interesting and striking events, without entering into controversy or dry detail.'[27] The appeal of Goldsmith's *History of England* to educational markets, however, does not render its overall pro-Tory sentiments and upholding of monarchical despotism immune from fierce bombardment from Whig adherents. One anonymous critic in *The*

[25] Karen O'Brien, 'The History Market in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. by Isabel Rivers (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 105-33 (p. 119); See also Yuhki Takebayashi, 'Oliver Goldsmith, Historical Thinker and Writer', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 34 (2019), 85-105 (p. 99).
[26] *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*, pp. 121-22. Darwin might be referring to Goldsmith's *History of England* as well as his earlier work *An History of England, in a Series of Letters*.
[27] G. S. Rousseau, ed., *Oliver Goldsmith: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 274.

Craftsman; or Say's Weekly Journal expressed virulent hostility against Goldsmith:

> If to be accused of a falsehood, even of the most trivial kind, is judged by the world to cast such an odium on a character, as to render it impossible *for any thing but blood* to wash out the stain, I am at a loss to name a punishment adequate to the crime of an historian, who, either through Tory principles, or mercenary views, asserts falsehoods in order to deceive posterity, and assist the advocates of tyranny in blackening the reputation of men who have struggled for liberty, and acted from an high sense of their duty, in opposition to arbitrary measures, though supported by Majesty, and a train of titled slaves.
>
> Throughout the whole of your history, wherever it has been in your power, you have shewn your desire to place the friends of despotism in the most favourable colours, and to cast a shade on their illustrious opponents.[28]

Goldsmith's proleptic resignation and recognition in his preface that 'in a country like ours, where mutual contention contributes to the security of the constitution, it will be impossible for an historian, who attempts to have any opinion, to satisfy all parties' do not prevent indefatigable partisans from making those bitter remarks.[29]

Austen's disapproval of Goldsmith's *History of England*, recorded in a copy that her family possessed, appears to be one of countless reactions against him. These annotations to the book, which are partly reproduced in the Cambridge Edition of *Juvenilia* edited by Peter Sabor, function as what Kathryn Sutherland calls 'a workshop

[28] [Anon.], 'Mr. Oliver Goldsmith—Author of a New History of England', *The Craftsman; or Say's Weekly Journal*, 14 September 1771, no pagination. For more of those aggressive reviews, see Takebayashi, p. 103.
[29] Goldsmith, *The History of England*, I, vii.

or storehouse of ideas'; they are made not only in Austen's but also in several different hands, probably her family members', as Freya Johnston suggests, which, nonetheless, are all united in their unaltered affection for the hapless Stuarts.[30] '[P]artisanship', as Johnston puts it, 'was always a family business'.[31] One of those marginalia concerning Goldsmith's description of the Old Pretender, James Edward, that is attributed by Sabor and Johnston to Austen, would pass as another pro-Whig animadversion against Goldsmith's 'partiality' without the fact that her complaint actually concerns his lack of sympathy for the Stuart bloodline; below are the quotation from his *History of England* and her angry apostrophe triggered by it:

> He was but a poor leader, therefore, to conduct so desperate a cause; and in fact, all the sensible[a] part of the kingdom had forsaken it as irretrievable.
>
> [a] Sensible! Oh! Dr. Goldsmith Thou art as partial an Historian as myself! (*J*, p. 337)

Unlike contemporary disputants in periodicals trying to chastise Goldsmith and so pressure him into joining the Whig camp, Austen demands that he should incline his

[30] Kathryn Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 204. Sabor's comments on those marginalia in the copy of Goldsmith's *History of England* is also found in Peter Sabor, 'Jane Austen: Satirical Historian', in *Swift's Travels: Eighteenth-Century British Satire and Its Legacy*, ed. by Nicholas Hudson and Aaron Santesso (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 217-32. For the examination of the variety of those hands, see 'A Note on Marginalia' in Johnson, *Jane Austen*, *Early and Late*, pp. 221-47.
[31] Johnston, *Jane Austen*, *Early and Late*, p. 247.

account further to the Tory side. His abridgement seems to be doomed to provoke attacks from every direction, whether from Whigs or Tories, and Austen's frustrated comment on his *History of England*, whose self-professedly balanced account pleases almost nobody, can be seen as a parody of the pro-Whig accusations with which hers coincide, at least in the dislike of Goldsmith.

It was not only its political principles and feigned impartiality but also its generic practice of abridgement that was targeted in Goldsmith's *History of England*; it must have counted as one of the 'swarms of *Abridgements*, *Beauties*, and *Compendiums*, which form too considerable a part of a young lady's library' and 'may be considered in many instances as an infallible receipt for making a superficial mind' as Hannah More puts it.[32] Goldsmith himself was no friend to fellow abridgers when he made a modest remark on his achievement bordering on elitist contempt and self-consequence:

> The business of abridging the works of others has hitherto fallen to the lot of very dull men; and the art of blotting, which an eminent critic calls the most difficult of all others, has been usually practised by those who found themselves unable to write. Hence, our abridgements are generally more tedious than the works from which they pretend to relieve us, and they have effectually embarrassed that road which they laboured to shorten.
>
> As the present compiler starts with such humble competitors, it will scarcely be

[32] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1799), I, 173-74.

> thought vanity in him if he boasts himself their superior.[33]

Individual acumen and expertise, even if Goldsmith claims them for his work, could not gloss over the fact that his compilations were accompanied with no 'archival study'.[34] One relatively favourable review of his *History of England* in *The Critical Review* admits: 'It is the fate of abridgements, however, though executed by men of acknowledged abilities, to be liable to various objections.'[35] In *Northanger Abbey*, the narrator too thinks that to be involved in abridgement is itself a stigma to be regarded as much inferior to creative professions:

> [W]hile the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the Spectator, and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens,—there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist. (*NA*, p. 31)

As is argued above, this novel offers multiple ways of consuming the past, and abridgement is also included in these variations. Although the narrator is furious about those compilers receiving unmerited approbation, their worldly fame is but short-lived.

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[33] Goldsmith, *The History of England*, I, i-ii.
[34] Takebayashi, p. 86.
[35] [Anon.], '*The History of England, from the earliest Times to the Death of George II*', *The Critical Review*, February 1772, 149-52 (p. 149).

Karen O'Brien sets the tone for the present critical consensus about the achievement of Goldsmith, who 'took almost word-for-word his chapters on the Tudors and Stuarts from Hume when compiling his own *History of England*': 'One of the most successful exponents of watered-down philosophical history was Oliver Goldsmith, whose historical works enjoyed extraordinary popularity until well into the nineteenth century. […] As a historian, Goldsmith always declared himself an exponent of French-style philosophical history in prefaces and chapter openings, even though the reality was more often plagiarized hack-work which was only philosophical insofar as it reproduced chunks of Voltaire and Hume.'[36]

Goldsmith earns at least one very powerful advocate for his historical works, that is, Samuel Johnson. It was not the depth of the erudition in the former's histories that the literary giant admired, for Johnson several times remarked on Goldsmith's general shortage of knowledge, as is recorded in James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785) and *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791): '"Goldsmith, rather than not speak, will talk of what he knows himself to be ignorant, which can only end in exposing him"'; '"It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows. He seldom comes where he is not more

[36] Laura B. Kennelly, 'Tory History Incognito: Hume's *History of England* in Goldsmith's *History of England*', *Clio*, 20.2 (1991), 169-83 (p. 169); 'O'Brien, 'The History Market', p. 119.

ignorant than any one else."'[37] The title that Jane Austen gives to herself in her *History*, based on Goldsmith's *History of England*, 'a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian', might be a gesture to his dubious qualification as a historian rather than just a self-reference both humble and subversive (*TW*, p. 120).[38] What delights Johnson instead is the conciseness of Goldsmith's composition, which is, to a certain extent, a natural consequence of the practice of abridgement:

> '[D]oubtless, Goldsmith's *History* is better than the *verbiage* of Robertson, or the foppery of Dalrymple. […] [I]t is the great excellence of a writer to put into his book as much as his book will hold. Goldsmith has done this in his *History*. Now Robertson might have put twice as much into his book. Robertson is like a man who has packed gold in wool: the wool takes up more room than the gold. No, sir; I always thought Robertson would be crushed by his own weight, — would be buried under his own ornaments. Goldsmith tells you shortly all you want to know: Robertson detains you a great deal too long. No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. […] Sir, he [Goldsmith] has the art of compiling, and of saying every thing he has to say in a pleasing manner.'[39]

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[37] Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, *'A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland' and 'the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides'*, ed. by Celia Barnes and Jack Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 327; James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by David Womersley (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 385.

[38] Thomas Babington Macaulay later similarly notices the clarity and ignorance of Goldsmith's *History of England*: 'These works he produced without any elaborate research [Goldsmith's abridgements], by merely selecting, abridging, and translating into his own clear, pure, and flowing language, what he found in books well known to the world, but too bulky or too dry for boys and girls. He committed some strange blunders: for he knew nothing with accuracy. Thus in his *History of England* he tells us that Naseby is in Yorkshire; nor did he correct this mistake when the book was reprinted'. Rousseau ed., *The Critical Heritage*, p. 351. Boswell's *Life* is published on 16 May 1791, just before the date 'Saturday Nov. 26th. 1791', which is inscribed at the end of Austen's *History*, making it possible that she is then familiar with the miscellany of Johnson's idea of history imparted there (*TW*, p.133).

[39] *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, pp. 385-86.

It is not exactly specified which histories by Robertson and Goldsmith Johnson has in mind here. Boswell started the conversation, saying: 'My dear Sir, you surely will not rank his [Goldsmith's] compilation of the Roman History with the works of other historians of this age?'.[40] At this point (30 April 1773), however, Goldsmith had published *The Roman History* and *The History of England*, and Robertson *The History of Scotland* and *The History of the Reign of Charles V*. Rather than considering individual characteristics of each history, Johnson is occupied with the more general difference between history proper and abridgement, or with the virtual non-existence of such differences; he does not seem very fastidious about distinguishing the limited number of topics narrated in a pruned version of history from the economy of literary style, the two of which are precisely not interchangeable. By Johnson, who 'persisted in reducing the historian to a compiler with literary skills' as Martin Watson Brownley puts it, the execution of abridgement, which often just serves pedagogical and commercial convenience, is translated into the stylistic merit of 'plain narrative'.[41] The confusion of semantic and formal qualities, with more emphasis placed on the latter, partly enables

[40] *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, p. 385.
[41] Martine Watson Brownley, 'Samuel Johnson and the Writing of History', in *Johnson after Two Hundred Years*, ed. by Paul J. Korshin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 97-109 (p. 98).

Johnson to estimate Robertson's more detailed history and Goldsmith's selective compilation according to the same measure.

The size of Austen's even shorter *History* (thirty-four manuscript pages) reflects her sensitivity to the formal aspects of history and abridgement, the latter of which is an extreme kind of narrative synthesis (*JAFM*, II, 318-84). Indeed, the physical shortness of her *History* uncovers and ridicules the universal assumption that history should be long. Goldsmith's influence on Austen's historical discourse is not confined to his animation of her partisanship, which has mostly engrossed critical attention; in fact, the stylistic features of his abridgement, especially the several levels of its succinctness which Johnson highlights, also seem to serve as a midwife to her monstrous *History*, which seems determined to disobey almost every single formal rule that is supposed to regulate the genre. The 'ignorant Historian', for instance, affectedly acts out her own designation, one that is on the verge of becoming an oxymoron; the beginning of the section on Henry VIII reads:

> It would be an affront to my Readers were I to suppose that they were not as well acquainted with the particulars of this King's reign as I am myself. It will therefore be saving *them* the task of reading again what they have read before, & *myself* the trouble of writing what I do not perfectly recollect, by giving only a slight sketch of the principal Events, which marked his reign. (*TW*, p. 126)

Historians can be allowed to speak out openly about their own ignorance in Austen's historical imagination. Moreover, the narrator changes the rationale for omissions from schoolroom history, replacing the educationalists' condescending underestimation of the capacity of pupils' memory with a regard for their historical knowledge. With the dignity of young scholars remaining intact, the works of abridgers are covertly satirised here, and, most happily, the 'torment' of learning history that Catherine Morland criticises is lessened. The structure of abridged history did add to Austen's metahistorical consciousness; for, after all, we do not have any direct proof of her reading the complete histories by Hume or Robertson but only the evidence of Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts: or Useful and Entertaining Passages in Prose Selected for the Improvement of Scholars* (1770). In a copy of this anthology owned by Austen and given to her niece Anna Austen (later Lefroy), the excerpts on the characters of Elizabeth I culled from Hume's *History* and of Mary, Queen of Scots from Robertson's *History of Scotland* accompany comments made in several hands including ones similar to Austen's.[42]

In the last quotation from Austen's *History*, there is a subtle sense of a community of fictional pupils, probably in a schoolroom, between '*them*' and '*myself*', or between the readers and the historian; an extension of the sibling collaboration of Jane and

[42] For the attribution of the marginalia in Knox's *Elegant Extracts*, see *Juvenilia*, p. 353.

Cassandra, the latter of whom attaches the medallion portraits of monarchs following Goldsmith's example. The colloquial expressions left unrevised through Austen's *History*, such as 'beat' and 'made a great fuss' (*TW*, pp. 121, 124), point to the possibility that it is not so much a brushed-up narrative that consists of constative statements as an improvisatory performance of reciting an English history by a pupil. Making a digest of what one acquires through reading, as M. O. Grenby indicates, is one learning method in the early nineteenth century:

> [E]ducationalists advised that the memory of what had been learned from books could best be cemented either by discussion or by producing a written digest. Maria Budden, for example, urged teachers not to encourage pupils to make simple memoranda of their reading, but rather to have them write 'some notice of its contents and [their] opinion of them'.[43]

Austen's *History* presents a process of a kind of active learning, or of being tormented in Catherine's words, but the historian does not simply resign herself to the persecution; she unusually makes her historical writing a burlesque in contrast to the majority of 'real solemn history', turning history into a shared space resonant with girlish giggles and laughter (*NA*, p. 109).[44] This necessarily reminds us of Austen's only surviving mention

[43] M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 229.
[44] Juliet McMaster considers Austen's comically oriented teenage writings as exceptional among other childhood works by such authors as George Eliot and Louisa May Alcott, which tend to be more

of her school days, which is found in her letter to Cassandra, her sister-cum-schoolmate (1 September 1796): 'The letter which I have this moment received from you has diverted me beyond moderation. I could die of laughter at it, as they used to say at school' (*L*, p. 5).

In addition, the spontaneity prevalent in the narration of Austen's *History* seems to be not only a wrought literary effect; it also prescribes the way in which she consumes Goldsmith's *History of England*. Sabor estimates that she made those marginal comments in her copy earlier in 1791, before the date recorded at the end of her own *History* (26 November 1791), suggesting that the marginalia are a form of preparatory memorandum (*J*, p. 316). In fact, however, most of the periods that her *History* and marginalia respectively deal with do not overlap; the former begins at the coronation of Henry IV (1399) and ends before the execution of Charles I, whereas the latter, with the exception of one stray remark on Richard III's murder of his nephews, ranges from the beginning of the Civil War to the death of George II, which coincides with the end of Goldsmith's *History of England*. We cannot be sure, therefore, that the marginalia fed into Austen's *History*. In terms of chronological order, it is more natural to estimate that the composition of her *History* rather preceded the annotations. In the section on Charles I in the *History*,

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serious. *Jane Austen, Young Author* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 7-8.

the narrator repeatedly announces her inability to cope with the staggering number of events and characters to be narrated in this stormy period: 'the *Villains* of the time would make too long a list to be written or read'; 'The Events of this Monarch's reign are too numerous for my pen' (*TW*, p. 133). Being overwhelmed, Austen might entirely have abandoned the historian's duty of explanation, which she had only carelessly fulfilled, and focused more on giving her opinions in the copy of Goldsmith's version. Her calling Goldsmith in marginalia 'as partial an Historian as' herself seems to suggest that she may at least have written the subtitle of her *History* ('a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian') before this specific comment. Alternatively, she might also have worked on both forms of historical contemplation simultaneously and sporadically, regardless of the chronology of the narrated past.

Sabor's estimation appears to originate in the belief that a shorter passage is likely to eventually mature into a larger aggregate of connected sentences, so that Austen's *History* and marginalia represent different stages of narrative development. This view disregards the performative aspect of these two earlier historical fragments of hers, which captures and presents a moment of intellectual digestion of the past. In this context, ignorance in a historian is quite acceptable because what matters is less the truth of historical facts than the acts of remembering and consuming them. Austen's *History* and

marginalia are close to a kind of history more as 'a way of knowing' than as 'a content of knowledge', as Lionel Gossman terms it.[45]

Enlightenment Histories – Narrative of Progress and the Child

Karen O'Brien states that 'Goldsmith's bid, in *The History of England*, for philosophical status looked increasingly at odds with the cheap, popular and pedagogical formats in which later editions of the work appeared'.[46] His minimised history for children must have been odd enough to make teenage Austen re-enact the bathos; her historiographical vocabularies, when the historian in her mock schoolroom history famously anoints herself as 'a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian', are imbued with the shibboleths of the Enlightenment historians. The very expressions in Hume's letter to James Oswald (28 June 1753) bridge the apparent gulf between the pupil and the philosophically erudite person: 'the History of England has never yet been written, not only for style, which is notorious to all the world; but also for matter; such is the ignorance and partiality of all

[45] Lionel Gossman, *Between History and Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 296.
[46] O'Brien, 'The History Market', p. 119.

our historians. Rapin, whom I had an esteem for, is totally despicable. I may be liable to the reproach of ignorance, but I am certain of escaping that of partiality.'[47] Although the present chapter does not aim to retroactively credit the precocious historian with a consciously philosophical intention, the shared catchwords suggest that young Austen was already familiar with the idioms of the Enlightenment historians, who detest serving as a spokesperson of a certain political interest.

Some of the traits of those more elevated histories are distinguished with the label of philosophical history or conjectural history. The idea, first named and conceptualised by Dugald Stewart in 'An Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith' (1795), refers to an uninterrupted history of stadial social development, supplemented by causal chains provided by 'conjecture':

> When, in such a period of society as that in which we live, we compare our intellectual acquirements, our opinions, manners, and institutions, with those which prevail among rude tribes, it cannot fail to occur to us as an interesting question, by what gradual steps the transition has been made from the first simple efforts of uncultivated nature, to a state of things so wonderfully artificial and complicated. […] On most of these subjects very little information is to be expected from history; for long before that stage of society when men begin to think of recording their transactions, many of the most important steps of their progress have been made. […]
>
> In this want of direct evidence, we are under a necessity of supplying the place of fact by conjecture; and when we are unable to ascertain how men have actually

[47] *The Letters of David Hume*, I, 179.

> conducted themselves upon particular occasions, of considering in what manner they are likely to have proceeded, from the principles of their nature, and the circumstances of their external situation. In such inquiries, the detached facts which travels and voyages afford us, may frequently serve as land-marks to our speculations.[48]

For conjectural historians, both 'the process by which an event *has been* produced' and 'how it *may have been* produced by natural causes' are equally of value.[49] While the definition of philosophical 'principles' is reminiscent of that of narrative history, H. M. Hopfl differentiates the two schemes not by methodology but by the nature of their substance: 'the sequences narrated in conjectural history were deemed to be *typical*, whereas the sequences of narrative documentary history were *unique* and *particular*.'[50] Due to this belief in the universality of human nature, philosophical history needs to foreground what might be described as a sociological approach, for, as Hume observes, '[*w*]*hat depends upon a few persons is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to chance, or secret and unknown causes: What arises from a great number, may often be accounted for by determinate and known causes*', and 'it is more easy to account for the rise and progress of commerce in any kingdom, than for that of learning'.[51] Hence Robertson's

[48] Dugald Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith', in Adam Smith, *The Works of Adam Smith*, 5 vols (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812), V, 401-529 (pp. 448-49).
[49] Stewart, V, 449.
[50] H. M. Hopfl, 'From Savage to Scotsman: Conjectural History in the Scottish Enlightenment', *Journal of British Studies*, 17.2 (1978), 19-40 (p. 23).
[51] David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. by Tom L. Beauchamp and Mark A. Box, 2 vols, The Clarendon Edition of the Works of David Hume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022),

History of Scotland, for instance, which O'Brien argues believes 'in the existence of a sphere of constructive operation for people in history within a framework of divine provision', does not sit well in this theoretical framework.[52] Conjectural history is not a slogan unifying the whole variety of contemporary historical writings. The classification by Hopfl runs as follows: 'Ferguson's *Essay* [*on the History of Civil Society*], Millar's *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*, several of Hume's *Essays*, and his *Natural History of Religion* conform closely to Stewart's account of conjectural history, whereas Hume's *History* [*of England*], Robertson's *History of Scotland*, Kames's *Historical Law Tracts*, and Millar's *History of the English Government* do not. But Smith's *Wealth of Nations* cannot be classified in this way, and Robertson's *History of America* moves with astonishing facility between conjectural and narrative, document-based history.'[53]

Philosophical history seems to become more prevalent as a kind of rhetoric than as a category of genre; its urge to applaud the present age as the consummation of historical progress formally requires the earliest times to represent a far less refined stage of civilisation. As a result, conjectural histories begin with the ritual of despising the

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I, 101-02.
[52] Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 123.
[53] Hopfl, p. 21.

'barbarous' origin of humanity:

> Conjectural histories begin at the beginning. The beginning is a condition variously referred to as 'man's primeval state,' 'rude and unpolished hordes' (Ferguson), 'original and most simple state of society' (Robertson), 'very early age of society,' 'nascent society' (Kames), 'rude ages,' 'barbarians' (Millar), 'first origin,' 'the first ages of the world' (Hume), 'rude, uncultivated ages,' 'first ages of society,' 'early and rude state' (Smith), 'rude tribes' (Stewart), and so forth. The people living in this condition are described as 'savages' or 'barbarous'.[54]

Those empty tropes of initial nascency in history, which is necessarily not deduced from any observation, are a convenient filler for the undocumented ages even in Hume's *History* or Robertson's *History of Scotland*, works that do not generally count as genuine conjectural history. Hume opens his *History* by being embarrassed at the savageness of the 'Barbarians', which he has few or no means to ascertain either at first-hand or second-hand:

> [T]he adventures of barbarous nations, even if they were recorded, could afford little or no entertainment to men born in a more cultivated age. […] [T]he sudden, violent, and unprepared revolutions, incident to Barbarians, are so much guided by caprice, and terminate so often in cruelty that they disgust us by the uniformity of their appearance.[55]

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[54] Hopfl, p. 24.
[55] David Hume, *The History of England* (1754–61), ed. by William B. Todd, 6 vols (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983), I, 3-4. Hereafter, this edition will be referred to unless otherwise specified.

Robertson's *History of Scotland* adopts the same stylistic procedure, employing the imagery of infancy:

> The first ages of the Scotch history are dark and fabulous. Nations, as well as men, arrive at maturity by degrees, and the events, which happened during their infancy or early youth, cannot be recollected, and deserve not to be remembered.[56]

As the logic of philosophical history requires that the first human beings should already live in communities, each of the different stages of society over the course of history can be made to correspond with the stages of one individual's human life. This analogy of social progress and a child's growth is such a worn-out cliché among Scottish philosophers as to drive Thomas Love Peacock to poke fun at them in his novel *Crotchet Castle* (1831):

MR. MAC QUEDY Nothing is so easy as to lay down the outlines of perfect society. There wants nothing but money to set it going. I will explain myself clearly and fully by reading a paper. (*Producing a large scroll.*) 'In the infancy of society—'

THE REV. DR. FOLLIOTT Pray, Mr. Mac Quedy, how is it that all gentlemen of your nation begin every thing they write with the 'infancy of society?'

MR. MAC QUEDY Eh, sir, it is the simplest way to begin at the beginning.[57]

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[56] William Robertson, *The History of Scotland*, 2 vols (London: A. Millar in the Strand, 1759), I, 1.
[57] Thomas Love Peacock, *Crotchet Castle*, ed. by Freya Johnson and Matthew Bevis, The Cambridge Edition of the Novels of Thomas Love Peacock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 52.

Mac Quedy's three attempts to begin his disquisition with 'the infancy of society' are all interrupted by the other discussants; Toogood assures him: 'Never mind the infancy of society. The question is of society in its maturity.'[58] The opening gambit metonymically tags along with Mac Quedy, an exponent of 'the anti-feudal views of the late eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment school of Hume and Robertson'; and the novel, against his inclination for advanced society, always prevents Mac Quedy from moving on to later ages, symbolically re-enacting the tension between progressive and cyclical historical views.[59] The set phrase, in the case of Hume's *History*, infiltrates itself into the maturation of more generic idea, event, or institution: 'science, as well as polite literature, […] yet in its infancy'; 'the infancy of the state'; 'the infancy of the reformation'.[60]

The metaphor of childhood is ubiquitous in the discourse of Enlightenment histories. This might look odd considering the then accepted notion of children as incapable of historical wisdom. '[W]e should be for ever children in understanding', Hume remarks, 'were it not for this invention [history]'.[61] This idea is not an eighteenth-century invention but dates back at least as far as Cicero, whose adage Freya Johnson quotes to attest to

[58] *Crotchet Castle*, p. 53. The stock phrase appears on pp. 52, 53, 55.
[59] 'Explanatory Notes' in *Crotchet Castle*, p. 268; for Peacock's idea about the temporal trajectory that history draws, see James D. Mulvill, '"The Four Ages of Poetry": Peacock and the Historical Method', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 33 (1984), 130-47.
[60] Hume, *The History of England*, V, 155; VI, 270, 609.
[61] *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, I, 28

Austen's extraordinary precocity: 'To know nothing of history, according to Cicero, is to remain a child. If so, Jane Austen's childhood ended early.'[62] If the use of figurative language is narrowly applied to the origin of civilisations, the seemingly contradictory combination of history and the imagery of childhood makes sense because the earliest periods did not always belong to the province of philosophical historians, but to that of antiquarians. Rosemary Sweet points out: 'The period preceding the testimony of the classical authorities was too uncertain to merit consideration as history and those who studied it could not draw upon the literary texts from which historical narratives were composed.'[63] The time of infancy is relegated to the status of a black box.

In a way, Austen gives flesh to this metaphorical childhood by re-casting her persona as a historian in the *History* as a pupil. Children are turned from a primitive, indecipherable object into a narrating subject, and the presence of a child narrator is felt in the colloquial terms prevalent in the *History*; in the section on Henry VI, the historian states: 'It was in this reign that Joan of Arc lived & made such a *row* among the English' (*TW*, p. 123). Samuel Johnson regarded 'make a row' as a 'very low expression', which would surely not be suitable for a history as he defines it: 'A narration of events and facts

[62] Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 158.
[63] Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), p. 1.

delivered with dignity'.[64] With narratorial authority in the hands of a juvenile historian, it is significant that Austen's *History* is silent about her subjects' periods of infancy till the coronation of Henry IV. Within this omission it parallels Robertson's *Abridgement of the History of Scotland* (1793), which appoints itself 'for the use of schools'. Its beginning skips the cliché of the rhetoric of infancy quoted above from Robertson's original *History of Scotland*:

> The first ages of the Scottish history are hid in the same obscurity which involves the other nations of Europe. Though, relying on the traditions of their bards, the Scots reckon up a long series of kings before the birth of Christ, yet the earliest accounts on which we can depend, are not from their own, but from the Roman authors.[65]

The absence of developmental expressions hints at not only Robertson's underestimation of child's ability to understand large-scale progress but also his uneasy awareness that the hackneyed rhetoric might be taken personally by his newly targeted readers of a tender age. The abridgement of Enlightenment histories can expose the awkward position their

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[64] 'Explanatory Notes' in *TW*, p. 300. The notes also quote the explanation by Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785), which associates the slang term with youth: 'Row. A disturbance: a term used by the students at Cambridge'. Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, 2nd edn (London: S. Hooper, 1788), no pagination. *Dictionary* [accessed 7 October 2024]

[65] William Robertson, *(For the Use of Schools.) An Abridgement of the History of Scotland, from Robertson, Stuart, &c. in the Manner of Goldsmith's Abridgement of the 'Histories of England, Rome, and Greece'* (Edinburgh: T. Brown, 1793), pp. 1-2.

own format takes, one that is torn between the appetite for demonstrating the superiority of the advanced present over the puerile past and the mission to coax puerile learners into becoming members of the civilised society.

In Austen's *History*, the aesthetic formality of the child in philosophical histories is overwritten by the tangibility of her young historian. This installation of an actual child goes hand-in-hand with her joking juxtaposition of images of children with metonymies of long periods of time, a juxtaposition which recurs in her teenage writings. In a dedication dated 'June 2^{d} 1793—', seventeen-year-old Austen affects to be a chaperone aunt to her six-week-old niece Anna, writing: 'never shall I regret the Days and Nights that have been spent in composing these Treatises for your Benefit—' (*TW*, p. 63). In another dedication attached to a mock panegyric *The beautiful Cassandra*, Austen compares her sister, two years older than herself, to 'a Phoenix', an emblem of eternity (*TW*, p. 37). In one of her marginal comments on Goldsmith's thoughts on the strict legislation passed by the Whig government, young Austen indulges in premature pessimism: 'My dear Dr G—I have lived long enough in the World to know that it is always so' (*J*, p. 340).[66] As these examples testify, the teenage author takes advantage of

[66] The theme of a child feigning tired maturity recurs also in one of Austen's later novels as Freya Johnston notes on the same passage from 'Marginalia': 'she later ascribed such teenage world-weariness to Fanny Price, who at eighteen "began to feel that she had not yet gone through all the changes of opinion and sentiment, which the progress of time and variation of circumstances occasion in this world of changes. The vicissitudes of the human mind had not yet been exhausted by her."'

her identification with a child reader and writer so as to work a certain literary effect. Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster settle teenage Austen's oeuvre under the biographical label of 'childhood writings as a body of literature, almost a genre, in their own right'; whether any encompassing characteristics can be presupposed in children's writings or not, we should not confuse the child author herself with the child narrator as Austen's literary construct, or as her representation of a child as a spontaneous and creative agent.[67] In the genre of history, where children are historically and stylistically absent, her juvenile persona gains stronger presence, one which is posited in contrast to the life and actions of the unobtrusively short-lived Edward V. His virtual non-existence in English history is made clear in her *History*:

Edward the 5th

> This unfortunate Prince lived so little a while that no body had time to draw his picture. He was murdered by his Uncle's Contrivance, whose name was Richard the 3d. (*TW*, p. 124)

The independent section on the ill-starred prince is reminiscent of the mention of a 'still-

Jane Austen, Early and Late. No pagination; *MP*, p. 431. See also seventeen-year-old Marianne Dashwood's love of reflection on the past: '"I love to be reminded of the past […] whether it be melancholy or gay, I love to recall it' (*SS*, p. 107).

[67] 'It has been an anomaly in recent literary criticism that whereas we expect, say, "women's literature" to be by women, we have understood "children's literature" to be not *by* children but only *for* them – and to be written by almost anyone *but* children.' Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster, ed., *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1, 3.

born son' in the Eliot family pedigree in *Persuasion* (1817) (*P*, p. 3). The historian draws less attention to the shocking murder of a young child than to his absence from our visual and historical imagination, the latter of which can symbolise the emptied rhetoric of the infant in stadial histories.

The historian as a concrete individual in Austen's *History* is what is missing in another short burlesque of English history, *1066 and All That* (1930), by W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman. The atmosphere of its narration is seemingly familiar for those who enjoyed Austen's tongue-in-cheek narration:

> Histories have previously been written with the object of exalting their authors. The object of this History is to console the reader. *No other history does this*.
>
> History is not what you thought. *It is what you can remember*. All other history defeats itself.
>
> This is the only Memorable History of England, because all the History that you can remember is in this book.[68]

Peter Sabor estimates that Sellar and Yeatman were acquainted with Austen's *History*, which is technically possible considering that its first public appearance in *'Love and Freindship' and Other Early Works* (1922) is nine years before the publication of *1066*

[68] 'Compulsory Preface' in W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993). No pagination.

and All That.[69] In fact, the list of Henry VIII's queen consorts in the latter is graced by the name 'Lady Jane Austin [*sic*]', which Sabor does not mention.[70] While he and other critics dwell on the analogy between the two texts, however, these histories clearly diverge in terms of the treatment of their narrators.[71] No first-person 'I' peeks out throughout Sellar and Yeatman's narration; and hence no ironical dramatisation of a narrator self that takes place in Austen's version. Overestimating the coincidence between Austen's *History* and *1066 and All That*, the latter of which appears more than 100 years after her transcription, might serve to diminish her critical reworking of the ideal of detached history in the later eighteenth century through the figure of the very human, child narrator.

Austen's historical styles and vocabularies engage with the progressive paradigm of Enlightenment histories through the unexpected pairing of history and the child, a pairing which survives in later novels; in *Kitty*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Mansfield Park*, it is always children who work their way through the labyrinth of historical learning, sometimes totteringly and sometimes elatedly. Austen's *History* recasts Goldsmith's

[69] Peter Sabor, 'Refashioning *The History of England*: Jane Austen and *1066 and All That*', in *The Afterlives of Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, ed. by Daniel Cook and Nicholas Seager (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 273-89; Jane Austen, *'Love and Freindship' and Other Early Works* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1922).
[70] *1066 and All That*, p. 54.
[71] For other comments on the parallel between Austen's *History* and *1066 and All That*, see Sabor, 'Refashioning', p. 274.

abridgement through the perspective of the child, traditionally an embodiment of obscure, forgotten, and barbaric times. As Chapter 2 argues in more detail, the accumulated sentences of her *History* obstinately refuse to be ordered and subsumed into a glorious prospect of social growth established on the basis of causality. Austen's seemingly stubborn escapism, both childlike and pro-Stuart, in fact betokens an aesthetic reconstruction of English history.

Enlightenment Histories – Romance and Sentiment

For Samuel Johnson, what Robertson writes:

> '[…] is not history, it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw, draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history-piece: he imagines an heroic countenance. You must look upon Robertson's work as romance, and try it by that standard. History it is not.'[72]

This critical assessment is palpably shared by Catherine in *Northanger Abbey*, who is again and again proved to be blessed with a keen insight into historical discourse, one

[72] *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, p. 386.

which is unappreciated by the gently enlightening Tilneys.[73] Compared to the term 'invention' that Catherine utters, 'romance' boasts of wider shades of meaning. Johnson's *Dictionary* defines it as: '1. A military fable of the middle ages; a tale of wild adventures in war and love'; '2. A lie; a fiction. In common speech'.[74] The second definition apparently applies to the use of 'romance 'in the quotation above. If Johnson is here thinking about Robertson's *History of Scotland* concerning the reigns of Mary, Queen of Scots and James VI, however, the word may also be tinted with the sense of amorous romance, for the historical representations of queens' reigns, especially those of Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I, saw their statecraft and political process customarily overshadowed by their personal feelings and romantic entanglements. In *The Recess; or, A Tale of Other Times*, a historical melodrama featuring fictional daughters of Mary, Queen of Scots and Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, Sophia Lee, writing that 'the reign of Elizabeth was that of romance', begs pardon for the follies of the characters: 'if love, or friendship, veil a fault, or irradicate a virtue, it is but reasonable to allow of a weakness all seek in some particular instance.'[75] Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* (1821), a

[73] Catherine was not alone in grumbling over boring classic histories; Lady Clarinda in *Crotchet Castle* discerns history's dependence on romance to engage readers: 'History is but a tiresome thing in itself: it becomes more agreeable the more romance is mixed up with it. The great enchanter has made me learn many things which I should never have dreamed of studying, if they had not come to me in the form of amusement.' p. 84. The comparison is made in the edition's explanatory notes, p. 266.
[74] *Dictionary* [accessed 7 October 2024]
[75] Sophia Lee, *The Recess* (1783–85), ed. by April Alliston (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), p. 5.

historical novel revolving around the secret marriage of Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester and its effects on the jealous Elizabeth I, is also subtitled 'A Romance'.[76]

Amatory portrayal of female reigns is not the monopoly of the novel. In Elizabeth I, who meticulously declines an avalanche of proposals, Hume does not fail to suspect the taint of 'female coquetry':

> But the queen gave all these suitors a gentle refusal, which still encouraged their pursuit; and she thought, that she should the better attach them to her interests, if they were still allowed to entertain hopes of succeeding in their pretensions. It is also probable, that this policy was not entirely free from a mixture of female coquetry; and that, though she was determined in her own mind never to share her power with any man, she was not displeased with the courtship, solicitation, and professions of love, which the desire of acquiring so valuable a prize procured her from all quarters.[77]

Even if a queen accepts her politically motivated suitor, it would be judged all the same to be a proof of blind infatuation. The case in point is Mary, Queen of Scots' adoration of Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley: 'while she was allured by his youth, and beauty, and exterior accomplishments, she had at first overlooked the qualities of his mind, which nowise corresponded to the excellence of his outward figure.'[78] Robertson is no less willing to

[76] Walter Scott, *Kenilworth: A Romance* (1821), ed. by J. H. Alexander (London: Penguin, 1999), p. iii. Robert Dudley marries Amy Robsart.
[77] Hume, *The History of England*, IV, 49.
[78] Hume, *The History of England*, IV, 76.

'feminise' female monarchs, as Karen O'Brien terms it:

> In judging of the conduct of Princes, we are apt to ascribe too much to political motives, and too little to the passions which they feel in common with the rest of mankind. In order to account for Elizabeth's present, as well as her subsequent conduct towards Mary, we must not always consider her as a Queen, we must sometimes regard her as a woman.[79]

In Robertson's case, the 'feminisation' is urged by his diplomatic need to take up a middle position between anti-Jacobite and nationalist sentiments: namely, to underplay Mary's potency as a 'nationalist icon to the Jacobites' and his Whig political principles that would not square with his self-identification as 'a truly national historian'.[80] Romancing the decisions and initiatives of these Queens is not only a literary attraction but also a highly politicised rhetoric of historical writings.[81]

Austen's pro-Marian and anti-Elizabethan *History* does not side with Hume or Robertson in romanticising these female sovereigns, nor exploit 'female jealousy', that, as Robertson maintains, 'increased the violence of their political hatred'.[82] The historian purges this part of her history of any mention of the courtships by Mary's later husbands,

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[79] O'Brien, *Narratives*, p. 119; Robertson, *The History of Scotland*, I, 223-24.
[80] O'Brien, *Narratives*, p. 119.
[81] The fact that novel and history had ceaselessly cross-fertilised each other has now achieved wide recognition. See Mark Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740–1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[82] *The History of Scotland*, I, 223.

Lord Darnley and James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, attributing her eventual misfortunes not to the sexual appeal of the former or the timely attentiveness of the latter but to her more general traits: 'the openness of her Heart, her Youth, & her Education' (*TW*, p. 130).[83] These personal failures of Mary echo a passage from *The Recess*: '"All blamed her [Mary's] errors, but they pitied her youth, and imputed many of them to inexperience and faults in her education."' [84] This coincidence gives credit to B. C. Southam's estimation that Austen implies an allusion to Lee's book when her historian says in the *History*: the 'Duke of Norfolk […] was so warm in the Queen of Scotland's cause' (*TW*, p. 127).[85] Austen's possible consultation of *The Recess* indicates that she intentionally shunned the locutions of Lee's Tudor romances. Compare the innocently unglamorous breakdown of the causes of Mary's tragedy to Robertson's description of the romantically available Mary:

> Adventurous as Bothwell's project to gain the Queen may appear, it was formed and carried on under very favourable circumstances. Mary was young, gay, and affable. She possessed great sensibility of temper, and was capable of the utmost tenderness of affection. She had placed her love on a very unworthy object [Lord Darnley], who requited it with ingratitude, and treated her with neglect, with insolence, and with brutality. All these she felt, and resented. In this situation, the

[83] In Austen's copy of Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts*, there is a marginal comment to the sentence on Mary Stuart's attachment to Bothwell, which briefly rules out the possibility of her ever being in love with him: 'She was not attached to him' (*J*, p. 354).
[84] *The Recess*, p. 25.
[85] Jane Austen, *Volume the Second*, ed. by B. C. Southam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 215.

> attention and complaisance of a man, who had vindicated her authority, and protected her person; who entered into all her views, who soothed all her passions, who watched and improved every opportunity of insinuating his design, and recommending his passion, could scarce fail of making an impression on a heart of such a frame as Mary's.[86]

It is surely not chaste coyness that makes the historian in Austen's *History* shy away from this kind of psychological dissection; as her open 'Sharade' on James I's sexual favouritism towards his minion Sir Robert Carr shows a willingness to make risqué jokes and insinuations:

> Sharade
>
> My first is what my second was to King James the 1st, and you tread on my whole.
>
> The principal favourites of his Magesty were Car, who was afterwards created Earl of Somerset and whose name perhaps may have some share in the above-mentioned Sharade, & George Villiers afterwards Duke of Buckingham. (*TW*, p. 132)

As Tuite points out, homoerotic implication persists in *Kitty*, which may be construed as Austen's immediate afterthought concerning Tudor history, mostly in the form of Aunt Percival, who tries to insulate her niece from male company.[87] The 'maiden' aunt is covertly likened to the Virgin Queen when she confines Kitty to a secluded country house

[86] *The History of Scotland*, I, 320-21.
[87] See Tuite, pp. 32-55.

as the English queen did Mary, Queen of Scots after she had sought refuge in England.[88] Through the figure of Aunt Percival, Austen reincarnates Elizabeth I as a man-hater rather than an over-feminised sovereign easily flattered by her male subjects. Mrs Percival's furious interference in the tête-à-tête between Kitty and Edward Stanley may be a homoerotic reinterpretation of Elizabeth I's apparently strategic disapproval of Mary Stuart's marriage with Darnley, as presented in Hume's version: 'She would rather have wished, that Mary had continued for ever in a single life.'[89]

Thus Austen's account of the queens does not let a romantic conventions prevail. When de-romancing their histories, however, the historian does not necessarily aspire to revolutionise amatonormativity and heteronormativity per se; instead, her radical, and also temporary, impulse is governed largely by an aesthetic distaste for those worn-out idioms of melodrama, on which 'dignified' histories feed.[90] In the poetics of Austen's *History*, moreover, the undercut presence of male historical characters is not always followed by the empowerment of the female rulers, especially her darling Mary Stuart.

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[88] Tuite, p. 46.
[89] Hume, *The History of England*, IV, 69.
[90] See Austen's letter to her niece Anna Lefroy (28 September 1814), where she discourages Anna then working on a novel from indulging in a stale novelistic cant: 'I wish you would not let him [one of Anna's characters] plunge into a "vortex of Dissipation". I do not object to the Thing, but I cannot bear the expression; it is such thorough novel slang—and so old, that I dare say Adam met with it in the first novel he opened' (*L*, p. 289). The combination of Adam and novel, both anachronistic and perhaps still bathetic in the early nineteenth century, is also characteristic of the historically minded author.

The fact that, in Austen's version, the queen takes up a large portion of the section allocated to Elizabeth I does not mean that Mary is represented as less passive. In this sense, her *History* is not quite a crisp zero-sum game as has generally been believed. The passage on Mary is not so much a history proper as a vindication, contrived to disentangle her from suspicions; here, the historian as narrating subject eclipses the tragic heroine as narrated object:

> Oh! what must this bewitching Princess whose only freind was then the Duke of Norfolk and whose only ones are now Mr Whitaker, Mrs Lefroy, Mrs Knight & myself, who was abandoned by her son, confined by her Cousin, Abused, reproached & vilified by all, what must not her noble Mind have suffered when informed that Elizabeth had given orders for her Death! Yet she bore it with a most unshaken fortitude; firm in her Mind; Constant in her Religion; & prepared herself to meet the cruel fate to which she was doomed, with a magnanimity that could alone proceed from conscious Innocence. And Yet could you Reader have beleived it possible that some hardened & zealous Protestants have even abused her for that Steadfastness in the Catholic Religion which reflected on her so much credit? But this is a striking proof of their narrow Souls & prejudiced Judgements who accuse her. (*TW*, p. 130)

With these formal embellishments including exclamations, rhetorical questions, and references to Austen's neighbours (Mrs Lefroy and Mrs Knight), it is made obvious that the focus here is the eloquent historian, whose own impassioned address to her readers drowns out the Queen's last words as presented in other histories such as Hume's or

Robertson's. Her solid presence intrudes on readers' sympathetic engagement with the tearjerking life of Mary Stuart. Lachrymose dramatisation, in contrast, informs the histories of Mary and also of Charles I by Hume and Robertson; Hume famously writes of his delineation of Charles I in his *History* in a letter to his friend William Mure (October 1754): 'if Mrs Mure be not sorry for poor King Charles, I shall burn all my Papers, & return to Philosophy.'[91] As Mark Salber Phillips observes, Hume, instead of 'prescribing a single historical style or normative distance', 'wanted to balance passages that aim at cultivating sympathetic engagement with others that deliberately foster a kind of reflective detachment'.[92] In the face of the King's execution, Hume's version can temporarily forget its obligation to reveal a more farsighted historical horizon:

> He forgave all his enemies, even the chief instruments of his death; but exhorted them and the whole nation to return to the ways of peace, by paying obedience to their lawful sovereign, his son and successor. When he was preparing himself for the block, bishop Juxon called to him: 'There is, Sir, but one stage more, which, though turbulent and troublesome, is yet a very short one. Consider, it will soon carry you a great way; it will carry you from earth to heaven; and there you shall find, to your great joy, the prize, to which you hasten, a crown of glory.' 'I go,' replied the king, 'from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown; where no disturbance can have place.' At one blow was his head severed from his body. A man in a vizor performed the office of executioner: Another, in a like disguise, held up to the spectators, the head, streaming with blood, and cried aloud, *This is the head of a traitor!*

[91] *The Letters of David Hume*, I, 210.
[92] Phillips, p. 57.

> It is impossible to describe the grief, indignation, and astonishment, which took place, not only among the spectators, who were overwhelmed with a flood of sorrow, but throughout the whole nation, as soon as the report of this fatal execution was conveyed to them.[93]

The scene is animated by the succession of direct speeches, and Hume applies this more novelistic technique also to the last moments of Mary, Queen of Scots despite his conviction that she was involved in the Babington Plot.[94] Her way to the scaffold is amply prolonged by the tearful interruption of her steward:

> Here she […] found Sir Andrew Melvil, her steward, who flung himself on his knees before her; and, wringing his hands, cried aloud, 'Ah, Madam! unhappy me! what man was ever before the messenger of such heavy tidings as I must carry, when I shall return to my native country, and shall report, that I saw my gracious queen and mistress beheaded in England?' His tears prevented farther speech; and Mary too felt herself moved, more from sympathy than affliction. 'Cease, my good servant,' said she, 'cease to lament: Thou hast cause rather to rejoice than to mourn: For now shalt thou see the troubles of Mary Stuart receive their long expected period and completion. Know,' continued she, 'good servant, that all the world at best is vanity, and subject still to more sorrow than a whole ocean of tears is able to bewail. But I pray thee, carry this message from me, that I die a true woman to my religion, and unalterable in my affections to Scotland and to France. Heaven forgive them, that have long desired my end, and have thirsted for my blood as the hart panteth after the water brooks.'[95]

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[93] Hume, *The History of England*, V, 540-41.

[94] Hume's letter to William Robertson (8 February 1759) reveals his ironclad confidence in this matter: 'I desire my compliments to Lord Elibank. I hope his Lordship has forgot his vow of answering us, and of washing Queen Mary white. I am afraid that is impossible; but his Lordship is very well qualified to gild her.' *The Letters of David Hume*, I, 297.

[95] Hume, *The History of England*, IV, 247. Goldsmith's version is basically a transcription of Hume's with more concise composition except that Sir Andrew's utterances are removed: 'In passing through an hall adjoining to her chamber, Sir Andrew Melvil, master of her household, fell upon his knees, and

Hume not only makes Mary an outlet for readers' emotional effusion, but also highlights the mournful witness Sir Andrew Melvil, from whom readers can take their cue to sympathise with the queen.[96] Hume's ideal of a detached history may prove compatible with the aesthetic dramatisation of her untimely death. Here, we should not confuse political biases (or efforts to eradicate them) with literary preferences.

Austen's case is almost the opposite to Hume's; she conveys her pro-Stuart feelings in unsentimental and physically reticent descriptions of Mary Stuart. All those audiences of the melancholic scene of her last moments are dismissed by Austen's historian in her *History*, who does not allow the apple of her eye even the indulgence of direct speech. In general, Austen is reluctant to employ direct speech in order to court sympathy and compassion. Arguably the most famous example of her virtuosity in handling different speech modes is the comic scene from the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*:

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shedding a flood of tears, lamented his misfortune, in being doomed to carry the news of her unhappy fate to Scotland. "Lament not, said she, but rather rejoice. Mary Stuart will soon be freed from all her cares. Tell my friends that I die constant in my religion, and firm in my affection and fidelity to Scotland and France. God forgive them that have long desired my end, and have thirsted for my blood, as the heart panteth for the water-brook."' *The History of England*, III, 126-27.

[96] The habitual transfiguration of Mary's execution into those beautified, heart-rending elegies might indirectly have fed the appetite for and infatuation with the purely physiological dimension of Mary's expiry that is articulated in the short film *The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots* (1895). Its whole running time (eighteen seconds) is all dedicated to the moments when her head departs from her body, with the technique of stop trick. *The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots*, dir. by Alfred Clark (Edison Manufacturing Company, 1895).

> ‘My dear Mr. Bennet,’ said his lady to him one day, ‘have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?’
>
> Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.
>
> ‘But it is,’ returned she; ‘for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.’
>
> Mr. Bennet made no answer.
>
> ‘Do not you want to know who has taken it?’ cried his wife impatiently.
>
> ‘*You* want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.’ (*PP*, p. 3)

Mr Bennet’s reserved indirect speeches entice readers into the flattering sense that they are in the narrator’s, or the author’s, confidence in sharing his intellectual superiority to those uninhibited characters like Mrs Bennet who are presented to us in direct speeches. While indirect speech can create an intimate elite community, direct speech can unexpectedly detach readers from characters.[97] As Austen’s use of direct speech, or, more precisely, of the complementary alternation of direct and indirect speech, often evokes a satirical response rather than sympathy, we should expect that she attempts to win readers over to Mary’s side by using different methods from Hume’s.

Similarly, the historian’s leaving undescribed the downfall and execution of Charles I in Austen’s *History* does not necessarily connote her aloofness. Silence in narration could originate from intense emotional engagement with the object, something which Hume perceives in Clarendon’s *History of the Rebellion* (1702–4); in the section titled

[97] See my discussion about this dialogue in Yuka Hiromoto, ‘Jane Austen Meets Manga: Yoko Hanabusa’s *Emma*’ in the forthcoming book *Austen in Asia*.

'Of Tragedy' in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, he observes:

> Lord Clarendon, when he approaches towards the catastrophe of the royal party, supposes, that his narration must then become infinitely disagreeable; and he hurries over the king's death, without giving us one circumstance of it. He considers it as too horrid a scene to be contemplated with any satisfaction, or even without the utmost pain and aversion. He himself, as well as the readers of that age, were too deeply concerned in the events, and felt a pain from subjects, which an historian and a reader of another age would regard as the most pathetic and most interesting, and, by consequence, the most agreeable.[98]

Phillips highlights this sense of distance in order to cut a clear contrast between histories viewed by witnesses and persons concerned and by later generations without first-hand experiences of the same events:

> Hume points to an irony that is central to the ways in which historical continuity and discontinuity change historical distance. For Clarendon and his generation, evidently, proximity had required an effort to push away the painful side of living memory, while two generations later, it had become possible for another generation, one not as 'deeply concerned in the events,' to recognize and even enjoy previously untouched possibilities for pathos.[99]

Historical writings about Charles I saw a transition in forms in which distance from, or intimacy with, narrated historical events and character is articulated; the indicator of a

[98] *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, I, 179.
[99] Phillips, p. 77.

historian's emotional devotion to the king changes from lamenting reticence to sympathetic dramatisation. When Hume works on his *History* in the eighteenth century, the painful trauma of regicide has settled into a sorrowful tale that can be exploited to elicit tears from Mrs Mure. Rowing against the stream, Austen rushes through Charles I's tragic end, which reminds us less of Hume's than of Clarendon's literary attitude: 'The Events of this Monarch's reign are too numerous for my pen, and indeed the recital of any Events (except what I make myself) is uninteresting to me' (*TW*, p. 133). The historian facetiously pretends ignorance not only to joke about any presupposed duty to narrate but also possibly to put on a brave face when invoking the persecuted monarch, who is associated with Austen's family history: the Leigh family, her maternal ancestors, sheltered Charles I in their estate Stoneleigh Abbey and were also relations of the martyr to his cause, Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford. As Brigid Brophy reveals, Austen seems to believe that her family through its bloodline had a due claim in English history and that 'her whole family had been dispossessed of something they had a right to' by pro-Whig propaganda narratives.[100] Considering the temporal distance that lies between her and the monarch who had been dead for more than 100 years when she was born, it

[100] Brigid Brophy, 'Jane Austen and the Stuarts', in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*, ed. by B. C. Southam (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 21-38 (p. 30). For Austen's interest in Peerage, see also D. J. Greene, 'Jane Austen and the Peerage', *PMLA*, 68.5 (1953), 1017-31.

is slightly laughable to imagine the child historian using the rhetoric of the seventeenth-century distressed politician. Although it is beyond my ambition to determine whether young Austen has Clarendon in mind here, the comparison clarifies that the lack of sentimentalism in her *History* is not tantamount to the narrator's being reserved towards her characters. On the contrary, she always roots for tragic heroines and heroes, such as Mary Stuart, Robert Devereux, and Charles I, who have shone most in a plethora of melodramatic expressions and characterisations. When the historian says tragedy is 'not worth reading', we should be aware that she refers not to its major protagonists but to its tragic literary languages and forms (*TW*, pp. 123-24).

It is just that Austen has her own way of expressing her partiality for Mary Stuart and others. The narrator in her *History* exhibits the depth of her affection for her darlings by the intensity of her anger for their archenemies. Early in *History*, the narrator makes clear her compositional policy: 'I […] [mean] only to vent my Spleen *against*, & shew my Hatred *to* all those people whose parties or principles do not suit with mine, & not to give information' (*TW*, p. 123). One of her targets is Elizabeth I; she picks a fight with her on behalf of Mary, calling her 'the destroyer of all comfort, the deceitful Betrayer of trust reposed in her, & the Murderess of her Cousin' (*TW*, p. 129). The root of all evil, however, is her male associates who initiate her into the most heinous of her crimes:

> [W]icked as she herself [Elizabeth] was, she could not have committed such extensive Mischief, had not these vile & abandoned Men connived at, & encouraged her in her Crimes. I know that it has by many people been asserted & beleived that Lord Burleigh, Sir Francis Walsingham, & the rest of those who filled the chief Offices of State were deserving, experienced, & able Ministers. But Oh! how blinded such Writers & Readers must be to true Merit, to Merit despised, neglected, & defamed, if they can persist in such opinions when they reflect that these Men, these boasted Men were such Scandals to their Country & their Sex as to allow & assist their Queen in confining for the Space of nineteen Years. (*TW*, p. 129)

What is going on here is a kind of conservation of energy; it is as if the degree of agony that Mary Stuart is represented as undergoing in Hume's and Robertson's tragic accounts is converted to the power of animosity displayed by Austen's narrator. While many critics since D. W. Harding have admired the author's art of 'regulating her hatred' through irony, the historian here needs to leave her malice unregulated in order to elevate the queen without the help of the sloppy hyperbole she shuns.[101] The 'historian's task', as Freya Johnston states, 'is, primarily, vindication of her favourites and abuse of her enemies', and one of the work's compositional jokes is that Austen conferred upon what is essentially a vindication the sonorous and authorially endorsing appellation of *The History of England*.[102] It is as if her historian's swollen egoism, an expression of an

[101] D. W. Harding, *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Jane Austen*, ed. by Monica Lawlor (London: The Athlone Press, 1998). 'Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen' was originally published in 1940.
[102] Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 162. In Austen's *History*, the historian names John

infantine mind yet in the process of being socialised, is simultaneously meant to take all the criticisms upon herself and so offer cover for helpless Mary, who only commits '[i]mprudencies into which she was betrayed by the openness of her Heart, her Youth, & her Education' (*TW*, p. 130).[103] The double-edged representation of ego is reminiscent of the double meanings of the term 'civil' in the Civil War: 'civil' as bigotry and politeness. As those three causes of Mary's tribulation must be the crucial interests of the young, candid historian learning history in this very moment, these words of hers sound somehow self-referential. In this sense, it can be said that the historian formally performs the very 'openness' of Mary's 'Heart' in expressing her historical views, creating a sense of comradeship between herself and the queen that transcends a period of more than two hundred years.[104] The narrator's strategy to vindicate her favourite is not only semantic but also performative, which isolates Austen from the rest of the pro-Tory advocates.

Whitaker, the author of *Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated* (1787), as one of Mary Stuart's few friends as cited earlier (*TW*, p. 130). These two fervent 'friends to Mary', however, differ in their treatment of truth. Whitaker maintains: 'while I profess myself a warm friend to Mary, I wish to be considered as a much warmer one to the truth of history in writing' (I, ix). Austen is more modest in priding herself on being no friend to truth; her historian in the *History*, for whom truth is narrowly 'excusable' for a historian as quoted earlier, declares: 'the recital of any Events (except what I make myself) is uninteresting to me' (*TW*, pp. 131, 133). See Whitaker, *Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated*, 3 vols (London: J. Murray, 1787), I, ix.

[103] D. D. Devlin considers this passage as suggesting the importance of education in psychological maturation of Austen's heroines. He intends moral education, not academic or historical ones, with which this chapter is concerned. *Jane Austen and Education* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1975), p. 1.

[104] Freya Johnston detects another analogy between the historian and Charles I, each of whom is despotic in narration and statecraft: 'Abruptly coercing her reader into agreement or submission, she plays the authorial equivalent of Charles I, insisting on the divine right of historians to rule their audiences — to supply or deny information as she sees fit; to pre-empt and pre-judge their responses.' *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 162.

When James Edward Austen-Leigh is embarrassed by his aunt's youthful partisanship, he does not take into account her subtle characterisation of the zealous historian:

> Jane, when a girl, had strong political opinions, especially about the affairs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She was a vehement defender of Charles I. and his grandmother Mary; but I think it was rather from an impulse of feeling than from any enquiry into the evidences by which they must be condemned or acquitted.[105]

Again, the concern of this chapter is not to ascertain that Austen was a Stuart supporter but to analyse how the portrait of the dedicated historian is made pregnant with the sense of detachment.

For Austen's historian, it is not only those specific villains but also the whole tribe of Scots that are to blame for dethroning the Stuarts:

> In this reign [of Charles I] as well as in that of Elizabeth, I am obliged in spite of my Attachment to the Scotch, to consider them as equally guilty with the generality of the English, since they dared to think differently from their Sovereign, to forget the Adoration which as *Stuarts* it was their Duty to pay them, to rebel against, dethrone & imprison the unfortunate Mary to oppose, to deceive, and to sell the no less unfortunate Charles. (*TW*, p. 133)

There is a sense that the Scottish people neglected their duty to protect Mary Stuart as well as Charles I from falling into the hands of England, a sense which also nurtured in

[105] *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, p. 71.

the mind of Samuel Johnson his well-known hostility to Scotland. In *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, he targets Boswell as its representative and admonishes him:

> I […] began to indulge *old Scottish* sentiments, and to express a warm regret, that, by our Union with *England*, we were no more;—our independent kingdom was lost. —*Johnson*. 'Sir, never talk of your independency, who could let your Queen remain twenty years in captivity and then be put to death without even a pretence of justice, without your ever attempting to rescue her; and such a Queen too! as every man of any gallantry of spirit would have sacrificed his life for.'[106]

The coupling of masculine chivalry and feminine helplessness certainly suggests 'the romantic side of Johnson's historical sense' as John A. Vance points out about this quotation.[107] Still, Johnson does not intend to lavish pathetic phrases on Mary; like Austen, he invites attention to himself, not necessarily to Mary, pouring out his tender feelings for her. The wordings of Austen and Johnson (or Boswell, who presents Johnson) are subtly modulated to sound excessively self-confident, and their fandom is both an indication of their own characters and a kind of panegyric metonymy of the queen, whose merits they believe duly excite warm enthusiasm in her faithful servants. This warm attachment, simultaneously a literary expression of Mary's traits, goes hand-in-hand with

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[106] *'A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland' and 'the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides'*, p. 160.
[107] John A. Vance, *Samuel Johnson and the Sense of History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), p. 45.

the wish to humble her daring persecutors down to repentance. While both Austen and Johnson have been thought to hate and neglect the genre of history, it seems that certain historical figures against whom their aversion is directed have been somehow confused with historical writings in general.[108] When they discuss history and historiography, their attitude is polarised; the process amounts to a poetics of dramatising their self-righteous literary personae and thereby of approving their favourites.

Austen and Johnson shy away from conferring the vocabularies of sensibility on Mary Stuart, but this does not prevent them from occasionally becoming emotional about her. Trying to discourage the widowed Mrs Thrale from marrying the Catholic Piozzi, Johnson, in his letter to her (8 July 1784), cites Mary's irretrievable decision to cross the border to England:

> When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrew's attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey and when they came to the irremeable Stream that separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection, pressed her to return. The Queen went forward.[109]

[108] For the past critical assumption that Johnson disliked history, see Vance, Brownley, and also William R. Keast, 'Johnson and Intellectual History', in *New Light on Dr. Johnson*, ed. by Frederick W. Hilles (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 247-56.
[109] Samuel Johnson, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Bruce Redford, 5 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), IV, 343-44.

'He was pleading urgently', as Mary Lascelles states, 'but with small hope of success; and, with characteristic unselfconsciousness, likened her to the forlorn Queen and himself to her last true counsellor'.[110] Curiously, his poignant persuasion contains an error; the fugitive was actually not on horseback but on a fishing-boat. Lascelles, estimating that no book Johnson has read is a source for this mistaken anecdote, ascribes it to memory as 'a sly servant', who seduces his or her master into pleasanter imageries and illusions.[111] Austen's historian also betrays a lapse of memory about the date when Mary Stuart perished: 'She was executed in the Great Hall at Fotheringay Castle (sacred Place!)' on Wednesday the 8th of February — 1586 — to the everlasting Reproach of Elizabeth, her Ministers, and of England in general' (*TW*, p. 130). The correct year is 1587, but it would be unfair to judge this lapse to be due to the historian's lack of due devotion; for the false date simultaneously suggests that Austen might have written this part without consulting Goldsmith's or other histories. The mistake bespeaks her willingness to relate the history of her cherished heroine solely in her own words. Fondly dwelling on Mary Stuart, Austen and Johnson let their own sensibility, not readers', overwhelm historical exactness (which Austen's historian has always slighted). Both of these aficionados appear to be aware of

[110] Mary Lascelles, 'Johnson's Last Allusion to Mary Queen of Scots', *The Review of English Studies*, 8.29 (1957), 32-37 (p. 33).
[111] Lascelles, 'Johnson's Last Allusion to Mary Queen of Scots', p. 37.

their own theatricality when the queen is in question, and these self-consciously affected manners arise from acts of mourning and commemorating, rather than recording or narrating.

Hume wrote in his letter to John Clephane (1756) about his political principles in terms which may also elucidate those of Austen:

> My views of *things* are more conformable to Whig principles; my representations of *persons* to Tory prejudices. Nothing can so much prove that men commonly regard more persons than things, as to find that I am commonly numbered among the Tories.[112]

Hume, a 'sceptical Whig', is conscious that his historical ideas are split into both Whig and Tory biases.[113] This duality is sensed by Samuel Johnson: '"Hume is a Tory by chance, as being a Scotchman; but not upon a principle of duty; for he has no principle."'[114] Given that nobody is definable by their political affiliation alone, it would be slightly inaccurate to argue that Austen's historical views, as they are manifested in her writings, are wholly governed by pro-Tory feelings. Although her interpretations of 'things' and 'persons' are inclined to be pro-Tory, or more precisely, pro-Stuart, her formal treatment of the

[112] *The Letters of David Hume*, I, 237.
[113] See Duncan Forbes, 'Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce, and Liberty', in *Essays on Adam Smith*, ed. by Andrew. S. Skinner and Thomas Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 179-201 (p. 180).
[114] *'A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland' and 'the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides'*, p. 324.

characters in her *History* is non-Tory for its refraining from emotional involvement. The historian's unabashed enunciation of her partiality should not be reduced to a campaign for promoting political causes; rather, it is a stylistic experiment with historical discourse.

This chapter has outlined the influences that could have cultivated Austen's sense of history. It seems then fitting to close the argument by looking at the influence *she* thinks her *History* would have in its turn. She entertains an imaginary scenario in the dedication attached to *Kitty* – a scenario in which her *History* becomes a tremendous best seller:

To Miss Austen

> Madam
>
> Encouraged by your warm patronage of The beautiful Cassandra, and The History of England, which through your generous support, have obtained a place in every library in the Kingdom, and run through threescore Editions, I take the liberty of begging the same Exertions in favour of the following Novel. (*TW*, p. 169)

It does not seem coincidental that Austen remembers her *History* in this paratext of *Kitty* because its protagonist discusses the 'mischief' Elizabeth I committed, a word that the *History* and Kitty share. In the following quotations criticising Elizabeth I, the first is from the *History* and the second is from Kitty.:

> It was the peculiar Mischief of this Woman to have bad Ministers. (*TW*, p. 129)
>
> [I]f she were to come again with the same Abilities and the same good Constitution She might do as much Mischief and last as long as she did before — (*TW*, p. 175)

With the premise that her *History* graced every library, Austen might have shaped Kitty, who 'was well read in Modern history', as a fictional reader of her own *History* (*TW*, p. 174). The protagonist seems to have absorbed from Austen's *History* the inveterate hatred for Elizabeth I, just as the 'partial' historian would have wished. Kitty inherits not only the antagonism to the queen but also the affective reaction to history in general. She eagerly seeks an opportunity for historical conversation:

> Kitty was by this time perfectly convinced that both in Natural Abilities, and acquired information, Edward Stanley was infinitely superior to his Sister. Her desire of knowing that he was so, had induced her to take every opportunity of turning the Conversation on History and they were very soon engaged in an historical dispute, for which no one was more calculated than Stanley who was so far from being really of any party, that he had scarcely a fixed opinion on the Subject. He could therefore always take either side, and always argue with temper. In his indifference on all such topics he was very unlike his Companion, whose judgement being guided by her feelings which were eager & warm, was easily decided, and though it was not always infallible, she defended it with a Spirit and Enthouisasm which marked her own reliance on it. (*TW*, p. 198)

Kitty's attitude to history corresponds to that of the historian in Austen's *History*. It is implied that the *History*, with its 'threescore Editions', is working in *Kitty* as a sort of

mild propaganda. If the two pieces, the *History* and *Kitty*, are combined, they make a composite that traces the process by which history infiltrates itself into different persons and generations. Hume's *History* read by Goldsmith, Goldsmith's by Austen, and Austen's by Kitty. Young Austen, educated at boarding school, was facetiously ambitious enough to educate others with her own rearranged version of English history. It seems the project did not end up just a daring daydream in her youth. In 'My Aunt Jane Austen' (1867), Caroline Austen (1805–80) describes her aunt's devotion to the Stuarts in a slightly different manner from her half-brother James Edward Austen-Leigh:

> Of her historical opinions I *am* able to record *thus* much — that she was a most loyal adherent of Charles the 1st, and that she always encouraged my youthful beleif [*sic*] in Mary Stuart's perfect innocence of all the crimes with which History has charged her memory —[115]

While James Edward ascribed Jane's Stuart favouritism to the enthusiasm of 'a girl', Caroline witnessed the persistence of such sentiment in her aunt, who was thirty years older than herself. Caroline was Kitty for Jane Austen, who here acted as her 'partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian' in her thirties or forties. Austen as a child historian,

[115] Caroline Austen, 'My Aunt Jane Austen', in J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, ed. by Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 163-82 (p. 173).

doubly masked in such a matronly persona as Hester Chapone, was still gently ‘encourag[ing]’ her pupil to remain loyal to Mary Stuart and her own ‘historical opinions’.

Chapter 2, Memory

Chronology and Dislocation

Jane Austen's *History of England* is subtitled 'from the reign of Henry the 4th to the death of Charles the 1st' (*TW*, p. 120), primly conforming to the general practice of other histories published in the latter part of the eighteenth century; David Hume's *History of England* traces the past 'from the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to The Revolution in 1688', and Oliver Goldsmith's, an abridgement of Hume's and other versions, 'From The Earliest Times to the Death of George II'. These defined periods imply the historians' intention of diachronic analysis: how the 'barbarous' ages – an adjective preferred both by Hume and Goldsmith – evolve into a more sophisticated modern civilisation, and into the always privileged present time. At the beginning of Goldsmith's *History of England*, the narrator assures his readers:

> It is fortunate for mankind, that those periods of history which are the least serviceable, are the least known. It has been the study of many learned men to rescue from obscurity, and throw light upon those early ages when the Britons were wholly barbarous, and their country uncultivated.[1]

[1] Goldsmith, *The History of England*, I, 1.

This is a bizarre argument, for how could one tell whether what is unknown is 'serviceable' or not? Although decently moderated by adverbs, the beginning of Hume's version is no less harsh:

> [T]he adventures of barbarous nations, even if they were recorded, could afford little or no entertainment to men born in a more cultivated age. The convulsions of a civilized state usually compose the most instructive and most interesting part of its history; but the sudden, violent, and unprepared revolutions, incident to Barbarians, are so much guided by caprice, and terminate so often in cruelty that they disgust us by the uniformity of their appearance; and it is rather fortunate for letters that they are buried in silence and oblivion.[2]

For both historians, the dawn of humanity in the British Isles is of less use than (for instance) the reign of Elizabeth I, at which Goldsmith marvels: 'the whole island seemed as if rouzed [*sic*] from her long habits of barbarity; arts, commerce, and legislation began to acquire new strength every day.'[3] Goldsmith's view of ancient times as the least 'serviceable' might be gladly embraced by those 'tormented' little children with whom Catherine Morland sympathises in *Northanger Abbey*, possibly reflecting the views of teenage Austen herself since such a view allows history, in the course of time, to shift its

[2] Hume, *The History of England*, I, 3-4.
[3] Goldsmith, *The History of England*, III, 154.

range rather than to expand infinitely.

We have a glimpse of Goldsmith's disregard of the distant past in the slovenly fixed starting point of his *History of England*: 'the Earliest Times'. His seemingly extensive scope tapers down to an endpoint in the specified commemoration of 'the Death of George II'. Austen's version takes over the formula of a tragic endpoint, the death of a monarch, but the ending of her narrative departs from Goldsmith's prototype; while his *History of England* fulfils its predestined conclusion by narrating George II's demise, hers avoids describing the bloody regicide, as Chapter 1 discussed, on the pretext of the narrator's indifference:

> The Events of this Monarch's [Charles I] reign are too numerous for my pen, and indeed the recital of any Events (except what I make myself) is uninteresting to me (*TW*, p. 133).[4]

Austen singles out the death of Charles I as the formal conclusion of her *History*, rather than that of George II, the most recent king whose reign had just concluded when Goldsmith and Austen finished their histories, or of Anne, the last monarch of Austen's favourite House of Stuart. The untimely death suffered by Charles offers a suitable

[4] Goldsmith's *The History of England* provides a decorous account of the king's death: 'George the second died in the seventy-seventh year of his age, and the thirty-third of his reign; lamented by his subjects, and in the midst of victory' (IV, 410).

parallel to the sense of unfinishedness, which Chapter 3 will show characterises some of her teenage writings. She seems to set her *History*'s scope 'from the reign of Henry the 4th to the death of Charles the 1st' only in order to empty it out to a decorative convention, deliberately failing to trace consistent progress from one temporal point to another.

Austen's *History* lacks a clear sense of developmental or incremental change over the years; except in its vocabulary and social assumptions, we cannot perceive the embryo of the later society in the earlier. Although, with the benefit of hindsight, the narrator sometimes grants her readers a glimpse of what is to happen in the near future, she is not guided by a principle of causality, with which each historian usually consolidates a number of facts into a philosophical history in his or her own way. When she is supposed to dwell on the last moment of the Duke of Somerset in the section on Edward VI, her thoughts drift to the death of her favourite, Mary, Queen of Scotland:

> He [the Duke of Somerset] was beheaded, of which he might with reason have been proud, had he known that such was the death of Mary Queen of Scotland; but as it was impossible that he should be conscious of what had never happened, it does not appear that he felt particularly delighted with the manner of it. (*TW*, pp. 127-28)

The only justification for juxtaposing the duke and the queen is the parallelism that stimulates the chain of ideas in the narrator's mind. The beheading is too commonplace

an event in histories, including Austen's, to excuse the narrator's whimsically conjuring up the queen suddenly. From the section on Henry VII onwards, the narrator is ready to remember the queen whenever she can, but she is less inclined to examine the possible repercussions of the political strife surrounding this historical figure than to return to and vindicate such events themselves.

Although the narrator often mimics the phrasing and structure of a causal narrative, she applies them to a very short time span in each monarch's reign – as other authors of abridgements understandably do. The whole life of Henry V in the *History* is a patchwork of causes and effects narrowly connected with the dramatic use of conjunctive adverbs:

Henry the 5th

> This Prince after he succeeded to the throne grew quite reformed & Amiable, forsaking all his dissipated Companions, & never thrashing Sir William again. During his reign, Lord Cobham was burnt alive, but I forget what for. His Majesty then turned his thoughts to France, where he went & fought the famous Battle of Azincourt [*sic*]. He afterwards married the King's daughter Catherine, a very agreable Woman by Shakespear's account. Inspite of all this however he died, and was succeeded by his son Henry. (*TW*, p. 122)[5]

Several words and phrases offer options of cause-and-effect relationships, from which

[5] Austen uses the French spelling of 'Azincourt', not 'Agincourt'.

readers are invited to choose whatever they like.[6] For instance, the intervention of 'then' in the third sentence is ambiguously poised, implying that having Lord Cobham 'burnt alive' might have made the king crave more violence and driven him to Agincourt, or that it was simply and accidentally the next thing that happened to occur to him. The phrase 'Inspite of all this however' in the last sentence sounds as if this king, for all his achievements, fairly deserves immortality, though what the adjective 'all' covers is uncertain.

Despite the conciseness of each section, the narrator routinely informs her readers of the death of a monarch and the ensuing succession, highlighting repetitions over linear development in history. Recurring motifs dominate especially the first half of Austen's history; the narrator seems to be so enchanted by the anecdote of would-be Henry V 'beat[ing]' Sir William Gascoigne in his father's reign, as to hasten to the anecdote again in the next section. Later again, this image of beating is decorously hinted at in the section on Elizabeth I, in which Robert Devereux Lord Essex 'clapped his hand on his Sword' because the queen boxed his ears (*TW*, p. 131). If violence is associated with children and schoolrooms, the theme itself proves the cyclical nature of human

[6] On Austen's downplaying of necessary causality in her plots, see Yoon Sun Lee, 'Austen's Swarms and Plots', *European Romantic Review*, 30.3 (2019), pp. 307-14.

history.[7] The custom of burning people alive also interests the narrator: after 'Lord Cobham was burnt alive' for some reasons the narrator forgot, Joan of Arc in turn falls victim to the same violence in the following section (*TW*, p. 123). What is interesting about this recursion is that the narrator does not seize the opportunity of chastising such 'barbarous' people, or of generalising her repetition into an observation on human nature. It is left simply as it is, as if Austen's *History* is narrated just as the narrator's partial, tottering memory dictates, and this fitful characteristic chimes well with the plosives of such words as 'beat', 'burn', or 'behead'.

In Austen's representation of English history, the succession by the next monarch or later generations fails to result in any political, social, economic, or psychological improvement in civilisation; it seems that, as soon as the crown is snatched away from the hand of a predecessor, everything gets reset to its original status to start another reign all over again. Without proper nouns and specific dates, each reign looks almost interchangeable with another; such recurrence necessarily spoils the supposed progress of human history.

[7] John Locke states that pupils often become targets, rather than practitioners, of violence, to which he ascribes their general 'Aversion' to books: 'Many children imputing the Pain they endured at School to their Books they were corrected for, so joyn those *Ideas* together, that a Book becomes their Aversion, and they are never reconciled to the study and use of them all their Lives after; and thus Reading becomes a torment to them, which otherwise possibly they might have made the great Pleasure of their Lives.' *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1689), ed. by Peter H. Nidditch, The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 399.

While the passage of time is rarely felt in Austen's version of English history, we can nevertheless see some of its events and anecdotes temporally located, a feature of the text which awkwardly contradicts the headline assumption that she wipes out 'facts and dates' from her *History*.[8] The boisterous warning at the beginning, 'N. B. There will be very few Dates in this History', is often considered as a proof of her 'revenge' on existing histories (*TW*, p. 120).[9] Nevertheless, the narrator includes several dates, including the year of the coronation of Henry IV with which her history begins (*TW*, p. 121). By keeping the use of dates to a minimum, she follows, rather than resists, the practice of contemporary philosophical and educational histories. In Goldsmith's *An History of England, in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to His Son*, to which Peter Sabor argues that Austen's narrator alludes (*J*, p. 455), the nobleman, releases his son from a common educational discipline of memorising a staggering number of 'dates, names, and events':

> Yet, still, nothing can be more useless than history, in the manner in which it is generally studied, where the memory is loaded with little more than dates, names, and events. Simply to repeat the transaction is thought sufficient for every purpose, and a youth, having been once applauded for his readiness in this way, fancies himself a perfect historian. But the true use of history does not consist in being able to settle a genealogy, in quoting the events of an obscure reign, or the true epoch of a contested birth; this knowledge of facts hardly deserves the name of science: true

[8] Kent, p. 64.
[9] Kent, p. 60.

wisdom consists in tracing effects from their causes.[10]

So it is not necessarily exclusive to Austen's 'partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian' to introduce a modest number of dates. Rather, the narrator's declaration can be read as a form of free indirect style, mimicking those philosophical historians who emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century and setting them against the more exhaustive practice of antiquarians.[11] It is made ambiguous whether she countenances or discountenances either of these two methods of historical representation. Downplaying of dates, moreover, is not only a manifestation of the principle of philosophical histories but also of an educational method; the exactness of dates can easily be hazarded for 'the ease of memory' as Hester Chapone, in her *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, assures us in her brief overview of the important dates in world history: 'exactness is not necessary for a beginner—and I have taken only round numbers for the greater ease of memory.'[12] The idiosyncrasy of Austen's *History*, then, lies not so much in its purging of dates itself as in its transferring the pedagogical compromise to the definitive narrative of *The History of England*, armed with impenetrable confidence and feigned authority.

The remark on 'very few Dates' is not just an intertextual response to other histories.

[10] Goldsmith, *An History of England*, I, 7.
[11] See Sweet, *Antiquaries*.
[12] *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 215.

We might note the bare discontinuity between this and the succeeding first sentence that contains a date; with an air of nonchalance, the narrator begins:

> Henry the 4th ascended the throne of England much to his own satisfaction in the year 1399, after having prevailed on his cousin & predecessor Richard the 2d, to resign it to him, & to retire for the rest of his Life to Pomfret Castle, where he happened to be murdered. (*TW*, p. 121)

She immediately cites the year 1399 in an almost entirely proper sentence of history, accompanied with historical names such as Henry IV and Richard II, a style of names or titles that is often omitted in the following sections. The relatively macroscopic reference to the year 1399 is again quickly replaced by the microscopic feeling of the king's 'satisfaction', which seems to resonate with the prejudiced historian's own satisfaction with her *History*.[13] This prompt change of principles suggests the forgetfulness of which the narrator continues to boast throughout the *History*. We should not, therefore, depend on her note as confirmation of her steady criticism of philosophical histories, as it is also one of her frequent whims, which is one of the rare examples of her consistency.

The narrator justifies her second reference to dates in the section on Henry VIII,

[13] The narrator expresses her contentedness with her production at the end of her *History*: '[M]y principal reason for undertaking the History of England being to prove the innocence of the Queen of Scotland, which I flatter myself with having effectively done' (*TW*, p. 133).

when dwelling on Anne Boleyn on the verge of execution, pretending to have forgotten about the first time she has mentioned the issue:

> Tho' I do not profess giving many dates, yet as I think it proper to give some & shall of course make choice of those which it is most necessary for the Reader to know, I think it right to inform him that her letter to the King was dated on the 6th of May. (*TW*, p. 126)

The way in which the narrator distributes dates in her short history is calculated to appear random, almost improvisatory, as if she does not remember where and when she has mentioned them before. This capricious narrator changes her intention from moment to moment and is willing to be guided by her partiality, which is, however, a natural privilege when licensed to compose history as he or she sees fit. That is why Austen's historian is allowed to draw in her favourite Frederic Delamere, the hero of Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788), in the sections on Edward VI and Elizabeth:

> This Man [the Duke of Somerset] was on the whole of a very amiable Character, & is somewhat of a favourite with me, tho' I would by no means pretend to affirm that he was equal to those first of Men Robert Earl of Essex, Delamere, or Gilpin. (*TW*, p. 127)

> This unfortunate young Man [Robert Devereux, Lord Essex] was not unlike in Character to that equally unfortunate one *Frederic Delamere*. (*TW*, pp. 130-31)[14]

[14] See also Charlotte Smith, *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* (1788), ed. by Judith Stanton, The

While, in its first appearance, the name is perfunctorily mentioned with those of two of her other favourites, in the latter example the narrator presents the full name underlined, as if this is the very first time she is introducing it to her readers.

These incongruities suggest that Austen might have not composed her *History* in linear fashion from the beginning to the end, and that she did not clean it up later to make it look consistent or to iron out repetitions. This possibility is endorsed by the section on Edward V, which lacks a medallion in her surviving manuscript, where a space is left before the next section, meaning she originally expected Cassandra to provide his portrait and that Austen worked on the section on Richard III first (*JAFM*, II, 330). Probably, she could not wait to discuss Richard III, for whose character she can answer solely because he was a '*York*' (*TW*, p. 124). To give way to a personal preference and convenience when writing history is not unique to Austen. David Hume began with *The History of Great Britain, Volume One, Containing the Reigns of James I and Charles I* (1754), which would make the first of his eventually six-volume *History of England: from the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Revolution in 1688*, because he thought the two reigns are particularly interesting.[15] In a letter to Adam Smith (24 September 1752), he wrote:

Works of Charlotte Smith (Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation, 2011).

[15] David Hume, *The History of Great Britain, Volume One, Containing the Reigns of James I and*

> Twas under James that the House of Commons began first to raise their Head, & then the Quarrel betwixt Privilege & Prerogative commenc'd. […] I confess, that the Subject appears to me very fine; & I enter upon it with great Ardour & Pleasure. You need not doubt of my Perseverance.[16]

The apologetic verbs of 'confess' and 'appears' sound as if they betray his uneasiness in giving priority to his personal choice, a concern which the narrator of Austen's *History* seems to be free of. Eventually, Hume wrote his six-volume *History* retrospectively, as 'witches say their prayers, backwards' as Richard Hurd puts it.[17] The first two volumes, covering the years 1603–49 and the succeeding period till the Revolution of 1688–89, appeared in 1754 and 1757; the next two on the Tudor Period were published in 1759, and the final two on the medieval period in 1762.[18] The order of publication seems roughly to accord with his own preference, and the appearance of the disparaging account of the 'Barbarians' naturally had to wait for the final volumes. The backward movement, at the same time, is also a fortuitous result of his reluctance to go to London for the purpose of collecting necessary materials; he writes in the letter to William Mure (15

Charles I (Edinburgh: Hamilton, 1754). He changed the title to *The History of England* from the second volume on the house of Tudor (1759) onwards.

[16] *The Letters of David Hume*, I, 168.

[17] Quoted in Duncan Forbes, 'Introduction', in David Hume, *The History of Great Britain: The Reigns of James I and Charles I*, ed. by Duncan Forbes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 7.

[18] See Donald T. Siebert, 'Hume's *History of England*', in *The Oxford Handbook of Hume*, ed. by Paul Russell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 546-68 (p. 547).

February 1757):

> I think you seem to approve of my going forward […]: But can I hope, that there are Materials for composing a just & sure History of it? […] I fancy it will be requisite for me to take a Journey to London, and settle there for some time, in order to gather such Materials as are not to be found in Print. But if I should go backwards, and write the History of England from the Accession of Henry the 7th, I might remain where I am; and I own to you, at my time of Life, these Changes of Habitation are not aggregable, even tho' the Place be better to which one removes.[19]

It is unfair, then, to blame only Austen as a historian for authorial liberty. Her preference influences more granular units of paragraphs and sentences. Especially the repeated name of Frederic Delamere, a fictional character, shows that the customary redundancy of the *History* results not only from a recurring historical view, but also from the peculiar method of its narration, or the apparent lack of it.

It is also likely that such repetition is the performative embodiment of the narrator's enthusiasm, and that it is intentionally staged for this effect. However, that would not wholly explain the long absence of Mary, Queen of Scots, the narrator's idol, until the section on Henry VII, in which the tragic heroine is very modestly introduced into the *History*:

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[19] *The Letters of David Hume*, I, 243. He writes almost to the same effect about the direction his *History* should take and his unwillingness to change places in his letter to Adam Smith (February or March 1757) in *Letters*, I, 246. On his choice of the backward order, see also Victor G. Wexler, *David Hume and 'the History of England'* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1979), p. 45.

> By this Marriage he [Henry VII] had two sons & two daughters, the elder of which Daughters was married to the King of Scotland & had the happiness of being grandmother to one of the first Characters in the World. But of *her*, I shall have occasion to speak more at large in the future. The Youngest, Mary, married first the King of France & secondly the D. of Suffolk, by whom she had one daughter, afterwards the Mother of Lady Jane Grey, who tho' inferior to her lovely Cousin the Queen of Scots, was yet an amiable young Woman & famous for reading Greek while other people were hunting. (*TW*, p. 125)

It remains unclear at this point that this figure is the main character of Austen's *History*. This is quite different from William Robertson's *History of Scotland* for instance, which highlights the queen's reign as one of its foci. Criticising his predecessors' prejudiced accounts of Mary on the basis that they served to vindicate the causes of their own parties, Robertson immediately clarifies the purpose of his *History* in the preface: 'to correct the inaccuracies of former Historians, to avoid their mistakes, and to detect their misrepresentations.'[20] In the case of Austen's unsystematic *History*, we have to wait until its ending to see the narrator finally proclaim her motive:

> [M]y principal reason for undertaking the History of England being to prove the innocence of the Queen of Scotland, which I flatter myself with having effectually done, and to abuse Elizabeth, tho' I am rather fearful of having fallen short in the latter part of my Scheme.—. (*TW*, p. 133)

[20] *The History of Scotland*, I, v.

The narrator's unfaithful indifference to her favourite in the earlier sections might simply be ascribed to the anachronism of referring to Mary in the course of writing about the Lancaster and York dynasties. Still, she does not seem to regard this kind of irrelevance as a substantial obstacle to historical coherence, as she compares the Duke of Somerset with the queen only because they were both beheaded; numerous other analogies could have been found. It is less convincing, therefore, to think of the repeated mentions of Mary in the latter half of Austen's *History* as expressions of the narrator's extreme loyalty than of the uneven, capricious nature of the human mind. Once her memory of Mary is unexpectedly provoked by the topic of Henry VII's descendants, her thoughts get irresistibly drawn to her again and again, to the degree that it spoils the overall unity of the composition. To attribute the cause of the *History* simply to 'martyrology and vindication', as Misty Krueger does, would miss its stylistic unevenness.[21]

The narrator's remembering Mary, Queen of Scots from Henry VII's elder daughter or the Duke of Somerset might be called, in Lockean terms, a 'wrong Connexion in our Minds of *Ideas*'.[22] He argues that custom cements the connection of two or more initially irrelevant ideas in the human mind:

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[21] Misty Krueger, 'From Marginalia to Juvenilia: Jane Austen's Vindication of the Stuarts', *The Eighteenth Century*, 56.2 (2015), 243-59 (p. 257).
[22] *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, p. 397.

> That there are such Associations of them made by Custom in the Minds of most Men, I think no Body will question who has well consider'd himself or others; and to this, perhaps, might be justly attributed most of the Sympathies and Antipathies observable in Men, which work as strongly, and produce as regular Effects as if they were Natural, and are therefore called so, though they at first had no other Original but the accidental Connexion of two *Ideas*, which either the strength of the first Impression, or future Indulgence so united, that they always afterwards kept company together in that Man's Mind, as if they were but one *Idea*.[23]

Mary, Queen of Scots and her 'grandmother' are not unrelated, but to recall the queen from the mention of 'Henry VII's daughter' seems to suggest the existence of a certain automatic connection in the narrator's mind or her thorough knowledge of the Stuart pedigree. If this kind of connection is reinforced by repetition, Austen's *History* is a process whereby accidental association, including the recurring 'wrong connection' of Frederic Delamere and Robert Devereux, Lord Essex in the above examples, is born and established. This proclivity, Locke warns, is frequently detected in children, who are the 'most susceptible of lasting Impressions'.[24] His idea reinforces the argument made in Chapter 1 that Austen's *History* is a pretended exercise by school pupils of reciting English history. The practice ends up in replacing causal narrative with wild or merely accidental (yet strongly reinforced) associations. Ironically, the unwanted concatenations

[23] *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, p. 396.
[24] *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, p. 397.

are further encouraged by the rote-learning whereby children learn history.

Considering the narrator's willingness to be inconsistent and repetitive, Austen's *History* is careful not to be subsumed into a broader rhetoric of development or progress; just as the successions of each reign are reduced into unconnected repetitions, each sentence seems to float independently of others, without developing the preceding ones or paving the way for those that succeed, irresolutely wavering between the narrated past of philosophical history and the catalogued version of antiquary tradition. Austen presents the latter convention in her quotation from a fictional Baronetage at the beginning of *Persuasion*, which Chapter 4 will discuss in more detail (*P*, p. 3). The fragile chains that poorly regulate these sentences are the narrator's memory of English history, and memory also bridges the two parts of which this history consists: in the first part, the narrator mainly follows Goldsmith's four-volume *History of England*, commenting on some of the events and anecdotes as she pleases; in the second part, once having remembered Mary, Queen of Scots, she suddenly dedicates her *History* to the exoneration of the queen and attaches the principal reason for this composition to its ending.

Forgetting and Reconstructing

This wayward guiding principle is hinted at in several references to mnemonic motifs in Austen's *History*, which disqualify it as either philosophical or educational histories. Its self-professed historian has no scruples to 'forget', an almost oxymoronic phenomenon considering a historian's probable access to necessary historical documents and his or her automatically assumed duty to conduct thorough research before narrating history. This enormous lack of effort as a historian, however, makes sense if the *History* is viewed as an act of recollecting history, not an investigation into archival documentation.

In their influential *Practical Education*, Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth champion the pedagogical merit of 'recollective memory' in contrast to 'retentive memory', while aware of the synergy between the two aspects:

> A number of facts are often stored in the mind, which lie there useless, because they cannot be found at the moment when they are wanted. It is not sufficient therefore in education to store up knowledge, it is essential to arrange facts so that they shall be ready for use, as materials for the imagination, or the judgment, to select and combine. The power of retentive memory is exercised too much, the faculty of recollective memory is exercised too little, by the common modes of education. Whilst children are reading the history of kings, and battles, and victories, whilst they are learning tables of chronology and lessons of geography by rote, their inventive and their reasoning faculties are absolutely passive.[25]

[25] *Practical Education*, I, 346.

The purely 'retentive' memory, whose accomplishments are especially for the sake of display, is exemplified in *Mansfield Park* (1814), published more than twenty years after the transcription date of Austen's *History* (1791); one of accomplished Miss Bertrams reminds their aunt of their ability to enumerate the kings and queens of England in chronological order:

> 'I cannot remember the time when I did not know a great deal that she [Fanny] has not the least notion of yet. How long ago it is, aunt, since we used to repeat the chronological order of the kings of England, with the dates of their accession, and most of the principal events of their reigns!' (*MP*, pp. 20-21)

One of the principal concerns in Austen's *History* reappears here in the emphasis on terms of temporality ('the chronological order'; 'the dates of their accession'), reinforced by the rhetorical usage of forgetting ('I cannot remember the time'; 'How long ago it is') to implicitly boast a long period has elapsed since the sisters' original acquisition of the knowledge. Whereas the Bertram sisters can recite the chronological order of English monarchs, they forget, or pretend to forget, the timeline of events in their own life. Their memory is ready to be as arbitrary as that of the narrator in Austen's *History*.

The mechanical learning of history practised by the Bertram sisters is corrected predictably by their more exemplary cousin, Fanny Price, who recollects history to

educate her younger sister Susan: 'Fanny was her oracle. Fanny's explanations and remarks were a most important addition to every essay, or every chapter of history. What Fanny told her of former times, dwelt more on her mind than the pages of Goldsmith' (*MP*, p. 485). The fact that Fanny repeats teenage Austen's exercise in annotating the history book might make us doubt the 'authenticity' of the proud oracle's words, which are, nevertheless, inherited by the next generation, the 'most attentive, profitable, thankful pupil' (*MP*, p. 485). Although Fanny fulfils the contemporary educational ideal of recollective memory, it might not necessarily secure the fixing of standard history in correct order, with which pupils are supposed to become familiar. Indeed, the scene might pay homage to Austen's own imagined project in her teenage years to disseminate her historical principles through 'every library in the Kingdom' (*TW*, p. 169).

Austen is generally very willing to expose the failings of memory. In the section on Henry V, the narrator brazenly confesses 'Lord Cobham was burnt alive, but I forget what for'; she also politely declines to enter into details of the reign of Henry VIII due to her hazy recall:

> It would be an affront to my Readers were I to suppose that they were not as well acquainted with the particulars of this King's reign as I am myself. It will therefore be saving *them* the task of reading again what they have read before, & *myself* the trouble of writing what I do not perfectly recollect, by giving only a slight

sketch of the principal Events which marked his reign. (*TW*, p. 126)

Unlike the first example, the second one shows that the narrator's memory of the reign of Henry VIII is in the process of fading, rather than having been completely lost, as the mitigating adverb of 'perfectly' suggests, and this foregrounds the sense of flowing time that works on memory.[26] A good metaphor for the temporal effect on the narrator's memory of English history can be found in her mention of the king's vandalism: 'Religious Houses […] [left] to the ruinous depredations of time' have significantly altered 'the landscape of England in general' (*TW*, pp. 126-27). Still, the narrator seems careful not to sound too nostalgic about the lost legacy, just as her forgetfulness is represented neutrally. Similarly, in *Persuasion*, Austen refrains from giving priority to either Mr and Mrs Musgrove of the older generation or their children of the new: 'The Musgroves, like their houses, were in a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement. The father and mother were in the old English style, and the young people in the new' (*P*, p. 43). The insertion of 'perhaps' makes it difficult to assess which is desirable, remembering or forgetting the past.

The opening sentence of each section of Austen's *History* also gives us an

[26] Austen uses the term 'perfection' in her famous letter to Fanny Knight (23 March 1817): 'He & I should not in the least agree of course, in our ideas of Novels & Heroines;—pictures of perfection as you know make me sick & wicked' (*L*, p. 350).

impression of the narrator's mnemonic exercise; in many cases, she starts by casually addressing the sovereign as 'this prince', as if gossiping about her personal acquaintances, by way of contrast to that of Henry IV, in which she imitates an authentic historical narrative with proper nouns and a date in order to contradict her preceding proclamation of 'very few Dates'. Using a demonstrative adjective, rather than confidently diving into the topic, offers an irresolute moment in which she digs back into her memories and tries to differentiate monarchs that might easily get mixed up with one another. The narrator's memory reorganises historical narrative into a composite of histories as biographies, a preferred usage of the word 'history' in eighteenth-century fiction; this is a novelistic technique which will be examined in Chapter 4.

The creative nature of memory is reflected on by Fanny, rambling with Mary Crawford, as her 'train of thought' similarly starts to wander at the sight of ever-growing shrubbery:

> 'This is pretty—very pretty,' said Fanny, looking around her as they were thus sitting together one day: 'Every time I come into this shrubbery I am more struck with its growth and beauty. Three years ago, this was nothing but a rough hedgerow along the upper side of the field, never thought of as any thing, or capable of becoming any thing; and now it is converted into a walk, and it would be difficult to say whether most valuable as a convenience or an ornament; and perhaps in another three years we may be forgetting—almost forgetting what it was before. 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 controul!—We are to be sure a miracle every way—but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out.' (*MP*, p. 243)[27]

Later in the quotation, the two gerunds of 'recollecting' and 'forgetting' possess equal weight – although Fanny, like Anne Elliot, has been celebrated for her remarkably retentive mind.[28] Forgetting seems potentially at odds with the Tory sensibility permeating the landed estates and families in *Mansfield Park*, hence an inexcusable breach of loyalty to what should be a lamented past. Likewise incongruous with the nostalgic spirit of this novel is the fact that the growth of shrubbery symbolises a narrative of improvement. This is, however, contrasted by an example of the deterioration that time can effect; in a letter to Cassandra (8 April 1805), Austen ponders changes over the years:

> This morning we have been to see Miss Chamberlayne look hot on horseback.—

[27] On memory and its active construction of reality in *Mansfield Park*, see Sarah Eron, 'Jane Austen's Allegories of Mind: Memory Fiction in *Mansfield Park*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 60.1 (2021), 79-106. Eron detects in Fanny's outburst of reflection a reminiscence of William Wordsworth's *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* (p. 86). The place is mentioned earlier in *Mansfield Park* in the description of the East Room, which this chapter will discuss later.

[28] On Austen and recollection, see Jocelyn Harris, *Jane Austen's Art of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Daniel Woolf, 'Jane Austen and History Revisited: The Past, Gender, and Memory from the Restoration to *Persuasion*', *Persuasions*, 26 (2004), 217-36; John Wiltshire, *The Hidden Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

> Seven years & four months ago we went to the same Ridinghouse to see Miss Lefroy's performance!—What a different set are we now moving in! But seven years I suppose are enough to change every pore of one's skin, & every feeling of one's mind. (*L*, p. 103)

In Austen's imagination, change can equally turn out to be the Enlightenment ideal of positive development or its obverse, decline. The irony is that it will not matter either way if, as Fanny says, memory effaces the trajectory, a possibility to which Austen's *History* amply attests.

Fanny's uncharacteristic eloquence, especially in the face of anyone other than Edmund, sounds almost like a form of ventriloquism in which the author roughly reverts to the irrelevant topic of memory, perhaps a reminiscence of Samuel Johnson's similar observations in *The Rambler* (1750–52) and *The Idler* (1758–60).[29] The untamed nature of memory, performed by Austen's slightly forcible way of introducing the theme, is noted by Johnson as well: 'to forget or to remember at pleasure, are equally beyond the power of man.'[30] Like Austen, he does not conclude that forgetting is a moral deficiency, allowing 'to forget' to precede 'to remember' in a symmetrical sentence that registers them as 'equally' beyond the power of man or woman. While, in *The Rambler*, he heartily

[29] See the note by John Wiltshire in *MP*, p. 695.
[30] Samuel Johnson, *'The Idler' and 'The Adventurer'*, ed. by W. J. Bate, John M. Bullitt, and L. F. Powell, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 226.

embraces the immortal life that memory is supposed to have, in *The Idler* that very blessing sometimes turns out to be a curse:

> Whatever we have once reposited […] is out of the reach of accident, or violence, nor can be lost either by our own weakness, or another's malice.[31]
>
> When an offer was made to Temistocles of teaching him the art of memory, he answered, that he would rather wish for the art of forgetfulness. He felt his imagination haunted by phantoms of misery which he was unable to suppress, and would gladly have calmed his thoughts with some 'oblivious antidote.' In this we all resemble one another; the hero and the sage are, like vulgar mortals, overburthened by the weight of life, all shrink from recollection, and all wish for an art of forgetfulness.[32]

Memory is Janus-faced; a regretted history tenaciously haunts us unless we sometimes actively forget it, or try to. As his invocation of a few authorities, such as Temistocles, 'the hero and the sage', suggests, the appreciation of forgetting does not seem to be an inviting or flattering theme to explore, even for Johnson, because of the conventional association of memory and wisdom and possibly because it hints at the existence of the writer's own past embarrassments and torments.

This representation of the past as incessantly pricking and burdensome is captured on a larger scale as 'the *dread* of the ancestor and his power, the consciousness of debts

[31] Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, ed. by W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), III, 224.
[32] *'The Idler' and 'The Adventurer'*, p. 139.

towards him' by Friedrich Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887).[33] 'Forgetfulness is necessary to remembrance', as Johnson formulates it, and also to assessment of the genuine present, free from encroachment by the past:

> Forgetfulness is not just a *vis inertiae*, as superficial people believe, but is rather an active ability to suppress, positive in the strongest sense of the word, to which we owe the fact that what we simply live through, experience, take in, no more enters our consciousness during digestion (one could call it spiritual ingestion) than does the thousand-fold process which takes place with our physical consumption of food, our so-called ingestion. […] [A] little space, a little *tabula rasa* of consciousness to make room for something new, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for ruling, predicting, predetermining (our organism runs along oligarchic lines, you see) – that, as I said, is the benefit of active forgetfulness, like a doorkeeper or guardian of mental order, rest and etiquette: from which we can immediately see how there could be no happiness, cheerfulness, hope, pride, *immediacy*, without forgetfulness.[34]

Nietzsche's idea of 'active forgetfulness' differs from nostalgia, which coaxes the past into a pleasant, unthreatening version of events.[35] He registers it as a merely temporary phase just 'to make room for something new', or to secure 'immediacy'; in other words, it questions the given connection between the past and the present, which fetters both. Although the present is represented as exploited by the past in Fanny's and Nietzsche's

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[33] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. by Carol Diethe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 61.
[34] *'The Idler' and 'The Adventurer'*, p. 225; *On the Genealogy of Morality*, p. 35.
[35] On Austen and nostalgia, see Nicholas Dames, *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

examples, the restraint is reciprocal, if we turn to the counterexample of 'the Whig interpretation of history' discussed by Herbert Butterfield: 'the tendency in many historians to write on the side of Protestants and Whigs, to praise revolutions provided they have been successful, to emphasize certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present.'[36] The impulse to study the past 'with direct and perpetual reference to the present' is so universal as to affect even non-Whig historians and to permeate through our mortal epistemology, bound up with the sense of progressive time.[37]

To reproduce the whole picture of 'the past for the sake of the past', or of the present for the sake of the present, it would be necessary to secure a provisional 'little space, a little *tabula rasa* of consciousness' in Nietzsche's wording.[38] The metaphors of blank 'space' and 'room' are visualised in one of Austen's teenage writings, *Sir William Mountague*, with its arrangement of a paragraph, which starts:

> Sir William Mountague was the son of Sir Henry Mountague, who was the son of Sir John Mountague, a descendant of Sir Christopher Mountague, who was the nephew of Sir Edward Mountague, whose ancestor was Sir James Mountague a near relation of Sir Robert Mountague, who inherited the Title & Estate from Sir Frederic Mountague.

[36] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 9.
[37] Butterfield, p. 17.
[38] Butterfield, p. 30.

> Sir William was about 17 when his father died, & left him a handsome fortune, an ancient House & a Park well stocked with Deer. Sir William had not been long in the possession of his Estate before he fell in Love with the 3 Miss Cliftons of Kihoobery Park. (*TW*, p. 34)

After overwhelming readers with the imposing pedigree of the Mountagues, the narrator switches the mode of narrative, as if he or she has already lost interest. Although Austen similarly quotes 'the Baronetage' at the beginning of *Persuasion*, in *Sir William Mountague* the narrator retrospectively catalogues the members of the Mountagues, giving up on the project at the point of Sir Frederic Mountague for no obvious reason, except that Frederic was one of Austen's favourite names.[39] The backward ordering seems to be groping for a point of conclusion to decide how many ancestors one should feel obliged to lay claim to, or how long a genealogy one needs to prove the respectability of the family. The narrator is less comically fastidious on this point than the narrator of Charles Dickens's 'The Baron of Grogzwig', who, introducing the baron's pedigree, sighs over the fact that later generations will always be privileged to boast of their longer lists of ancestors:

> 'Talking of the baron's ancestor puts me in mind of the baron's great claims to respect, on the score of this pedigree. I am afraid to say, I am sure, how many

[39] Austen had fun forging banns of marriage between herself and fictional males in the Marriage Register of St Nicholas Church, Steventon. See 'Frontispiece' in *J.*

> ancestors the baron had; but I know that he had a great many more than any other man of his time; and I only wish that he had lived in these later days, that he might have had more. It is a very hard thing upon the great men of past centuries, that they should have come into the world so soon, because a man who was born three or four hundred years ago, cannot reasonably be expected to have had as many relations before him, as a man who is born now. The last man, whoever he is – and he may be a cobbler or some low vulgar dog for aught we know – will have a longer pedigree than the greatest nobleman now alive; and I contend that that is not fair.'[40]

Consequently, the narrator in *Sir William Mountague* is sensible to cease the enumeration since it does not make any change in the total number of ancestors in the family.

The interest of this impatient narrator seems to coincide with that of Sir William, who boasts his own 'art of Forgetfulness'; he successively falls in love with '3 Miss Cliftons' (who are 'equally young, equally handsome, equally rich & equally amiable'), Lady Percival, Miss Arundel, and consents to marry Emma Stanhope, a sister of Mr Stanhope whom he shot; he then falls in love with an unnamed sister of 'his old freind Lady Percival', and possibly with the unidentified Miss Wentworth, with whose name his eventful history of five manuscript pages abruptly closes (*TW* p. 35; *JAFM*, I, 314-22). Sir William's too colourful love life pushes the necessity of forgetting the past to the extreme; his family pedigree and his life are resolutely split by the 'little *tabula rasa*' of the paragraph, and also by the fact that 'he left the Country & took Lodgings in a small

[40] Charles Dickens, *Selected Short Fiction*, ed. by Deborah A. Thomas (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 50.

Village near Dover', heedless of his 'ancient House & a Park well stocked with Deer' (*TW*, p. 34). Despite its apparent obsession with recording, *Sir William Mountague* is a story of incessant forgetting.

Forgetting is not a rare phenomenon in Austen's teenage writings. In *The adventures of Mr Harley*, which immediately precedes *Sir William Mountague* in *Volume the First*, the titular protagonist, a naval chaplain, comes back from a voyage:

> In half a year he returned & sat-off in the Stage Coach for Hogsworth Green, the seat of Emma. His fellow travellers were, A man without a Hat, Another with two, An old maid & a young Wife.
>
> This last appeared about 17 with fine dark Eyes & an elegant Shape; inshort Mr Harley soon found out, that she was his Emma & recollected he had married her a few weeks before he left England. (*TW*, p. 33)

Strangely, the first mention of the name Emma is not followed by any details about who this person is, just as the first mention of the name Delamere is left unexplained in Austen's *History*. It is as if not only Mr Harley but also the narrator of the work has forgotten that he was married to Emma. Taking advantage of Mr Harley's poor memory, the narrator can ignore and change the actual chronological order of the events as much as he or she likes. The delay of crucial information is similarly caused by the protagonist's amnesia in another of Austen's teenage writings, *Evelyn*. The story begins with Mr

Frederic Gower moving into a village, Evelyn, where he is given a house and marries a woman with a dowry of ten thousand pounds within ten manuscript pages (*JAFM*, III, 16-34). Once perfect happiness is secured, he suddenly recollects his original purpose in visiting the village:

> [O]ne day as he was walking in the Shrubbery with Maria [his wife] leaning on his arm, they observed a rose full-blown lyeing on the gravel […]. Maria stooped to pick up the beautiful flower, and with all her Family Generosity presented it to her Husband. 'My dear Frederic, said she, pray take this charming rose.' 'Rose! exclaimed Mr Gower—. Oh! Maria, of what does not that remind me! Alas my poor Sister, how have I neglected you!' The truth was that Mr Gower was the only son of a very large Family, of which Miss Rose Gower was the thirteenth daughter. (*TW*, p. 164)

Through association, the physical flower, a rose, reminds him of his sister Rose, who fell in love with a man of high rank. Their romantic engagement, however, is objected to by his family. They decide to send him to the Isle of Wight in order to discourage the relationship, but on his way the man dies in a shipwreck. Mr Gower sets off on his journey initially to comfort this hapless Rose:

> It was to soften her affliction by obtaining a picture of her unfortunate Lover that her brother undertook a Journey into Sussex, where he hoped that his petition would not be rejected, by the severe yet afflicted Father. When he reached Evelyn he was not many miles from —— Castle, but the pleasing events which befell him in that

> place had for a while made him totally forget the object of his Journey & his unhappy Sister. The little incident of the rose however brought everything concerning her to his recollection again, & he bitterly repented his neglect. (*TW*, p. 165)

As in *The adventures of Mr Harley*, the narrator blames his or her character's being prone to forget for the confusion in the chronology of the story and the unexpected revelation it effects. Austen does not have recourse to the hackneyed convention of contemporary fiction, whereby melancholic characters eventually unleash their secret histories. Instead of appearing to be hiding something, Mr Gower completely forgets his history. In Austen's teenage writings, the reconstruction of original events in chronological order does not always happen in order to create the sense of suspense necessary for story-telling – it is often simply because a character's memory fails.

Unlike these hard-boiled characters in Austen's teenage writings, Anne Elliott is praised for her 'retentive' mind (*P*, p. 65); but she also talks of a dogged memory with mixed emotions to Captain Harville:

> 'Yes. We [women] certainly do not forget you [men], so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately, and continual occupation and change soon weaken impressions.' (*P*, p. 253)

Again, Austen is careful not to idealise firm memory as 'merit', preferring a more equivocal alternative of 'fate'. She says 'not forget', rather than 'remember', which hints at the heroine's original attempt to erase her past attachment. The prevalent motif of forgetting throughout Austen's works, however, has been effectively eclipsed by the conventional downplaying of her teenage writings by the Austen family members and critics, who were also ready to forget the early part of her career. Her nephew James Edward insists: 'it would be as unfair to expose this preliminary process to the world, as it would be to display all that goes on behind the curtain of the theatre before it is drawn up.'[41] Alternatively, it is the very forgetting of causal bridges between actions and sentences that partly invited the underestimation of her teenage writings. In the first place, such broken relationships are not an essential compositional flaw. D. J. Womersley argues that William Robertson intentionally disregards such teleological connection in his *History of America* (1777) because the principle does not suit the marvels the New World offers:

> In his *History of America* the nature of his subject forces him to lay aside the cardinal assumption he had taken over from *philosophe* historiography, namely, that the past was an orderly and proportionate structure of causes and effects, whose apparent

[41] *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, p. 43.

> formlessness and chaos was but a seeming that would deceive only the unphilosophical, and in which the extraordinary was never anything more than an illusion caused by the historian's faulty perspective.
>
> Obliged to abandon the *philosophe* tenets which he had maintained and modified in his two earlier works, in his most mature history Robertson found his character as an historian being determined by the awed apprehension of startling facts. The would-be *philosophe* of the *History of Scotland* has become, in the *History of America*, almost a Romantic historian.[42]

The underplaying of cause-and-effect relationships, if practised by a renowned male historian, means an aesthetic technique. It would be unfair then that it turns into a stigma of immaturity if practised by a fifteen-year-old girl.

In criticism of Austen, only remembering, one of the aspects of mnemonic dynamism, is underscored in such scrupulous heroines as Anne and Fanny. Anne Elliot and Frederic Wentworth are famously a landless couple, who symbolically depart from a haunting family pedigree. Despite the nomadic quality of the sailor Wentworth, his family name has been associated with Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford, the steadfast supporter of Charles I, who was an ancestor of Austen on her mother's side.[43] Of all Austen's characters, Wentworth's name is the only one whose historical resonance is

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[42] D. J. Womersley, 'The Historical Writings of William Robertson', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 47.3 (1986), 497-506 (p. 506).

[43] Janine Barchas exceptionally identifies the hero's namesake as Frederic Wentworth, a descendant of the Earl, who sailed across the Atlantic to the New World, as Debrett's *Baronetage of England* (1815) records. *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen: History, Location, and Celebrity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 225.

foregrounded in her novels. Sir Walter is shocked at the fact that he is unrelated to the famous family:

> 'Wentworth? Oh! ay,—Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term *gentleman*. I thought you were speaking of some man of property: Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember, quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility become so common.' (*P*, p. 26)

What is significant is not that this Wentworth has things in common with that Wentworth but that this Wentworth is *not* that Wentworth. This negation, or the act of forgetting the attached connotation and the inherited past of the name, epitomises the novel's central theme of the problematic relation between the past and the present. Sir Walter's remembering the Strafford family anachronistically, which is reminiscent of Mr Harley and Mr Gower's belatedly recollecting their crucial backgrounds out of place in the stories, is another example of memory's potential to give birth to accidental associations.

The figure of Wentworth acts out a paragraph as *tabula rasa*. By forgetting, Wentworth and Sir William Mountague leave the past for the sake of the present, and this might seem to contradict Austen's refusal in her *History* to celebrate the present at the expense of the past. Her *History* lacks multiple paragraphs in each section until that of Elizabeth I. Even the location of its second indent seems arbitrary; after spending some

time in vindicating Mary, Queen of Scots and vilifying Elizabeth I, the narrator rushes into a more general account of the latter's reign without making a new paragraph:

> Having I trust by this assurance entirely done away every Suspicion & every doubt which might have arisen in the Reader's mind, from what other Historians have written of her, I shall proceed to mention the remaining Events, that marked Elizabeth's reign. (*TW*, p. 130)

Then, the narrator introduces Sir Francis Drake, implicitly praises Francis Austen with the help of atemporal analogy, and suddenly starts a new paragraph to give another example of a conspicuous figure:

> Though of a different profession, and shining in a different Sphere of Life, yet equally conspicuous in the Character of an *Earl*, as Drake was in that of a *Sailor*, was Robert Devereux Lord Essex. (*TW*, p. 130)

Although the most appropriate point at which to change paragraphs would be when the focus moves from Mary, Queen of Scots to Elizabeth I, the narrator chooses to indent a line in the middle of enumerating laudable historical figures, evading the pressure for semantic organisation. Alternatively, the indent may indicate Austen's return to the writing after some time away from it, as such a feature might suggest in her letters. In that case, the space may signify her forgetting what she had previously written.

The paragraphing also pushes the drifting focus of the narration back from the present to the past. In the sentences preceding the unexpected indent, the narrator jumbles up the past, the present and the future:

> It was about this time that Sir Francis Drake the first English Navigator who sailed round the World, lived, to be the ornament of his Country & his profession. Yet great as he was, & justly celebrated as a Sailor, I cannot help foreseeing that he will be equalled in this or the next Century by one who tho' now but young, already promises to answer all the ardent & sanguine expectations of his Relations & Freinds, amongst whom I may Class the amiable Lady to whom this work is dedicated, & my no less amiable Self. (*TW*, p. 130)

As the narrative moves from Sir Francis Drake, to Frank Austen, to 'my no less amiable Self', the grammatical tense changes from the past, to the future, to the present. Nevertheless, the swelling ego is cut short by the intervention of the new paragraph that transports the topic through time to the Elizabethan age again. This paragraphing functions as a way of disconnecting the past from the present, or of extracting 'the past for the sake of the past', embodying the narrator's avoidance of cause-and-effect relationships. The narrator, however, is soon tempted to dwell on her 'Self' again. Through analogy, her favourite Robert Devereux Lord Essex is invoked, who in turn introduces another work of fiction: 'This unfortunate young Man was not unlike in Character to that equally unfortunate *Frederic Delamere*' (*TW,* pp. 130-31).

A Tory attachment to the past is not necessarily the guiding principle in Austen's *History*, since its fragmentary syntax is an expression of the narrator's incessantly forgetting preceding sentences. Forgetfulness in her *History* also differs from the form and practice of 'Whig abridgement'; it not only prunes certain historical events and episodes but also, more crucially, fills in the gap with shortcut connections, seducing readers into the belief of a steadier trail of human development. Austen's narrators in the *History* and other teenage writings, in contrast, leave the blank space of memory as it is, without replenishing it with newly made causalities. This faithful replication of mnemonic movement can be verbalised rather as the 'loose, disultary, unconnected strain', whereby she once plans to narrate history to her friend Martha Lloyd:

> I am now laying in a stock of intelligence to pour out on you as <u>my</u> share of Conversation.—I am reading Henry's History of England, which I will repeat to you in any manner you may prefer, either in a loose, disultary [*sic*], unconnected strain, or dividing my recital as the Historian divides it himself, into seven parts, The Civil & Military—Religion—Constitution—Learning & Learned Men—Arts & Sciences—Commerce Coins & Shipping—& Manners;—So that for every evening of the week there will be a different subject; The friday's lot, Commerce, Coin & Shipping, You will find the least entertaining; but the next Eveng:'s portion will make amends.— (*L*, pp. 61-62; 12–13 November 1800)

The adjectives 'loose' and 'unconnected' sound precisely the right words for this occasion, presupposing the existence of two or more points only without links between these.

Austen's physically very short *History*, therefore, contradicts Butterfield's formulation that 'all history must tend to become more Whig in proportion as it becomes more abridged', which argues as if the extent of Whiggishness can be quantified. According to this theory, her 'extreme abridgement of an abridgement' should be an extreme manifestation of Whig partisanship, although, in fact, it works in exactly the opposite political direction.[44] The tendency to forget, then, does not endorse the early critical assumption that Austen 'refused to take historical "reality" seriously', but evidences her creative reworking of the genre.[45] The fact that her characters and narrators forget specific histories is not tantamount to the author's willingness to forget and disregard history in general.

Locations and Dislocations

The above quotation, where Austen 'lay[s] in a stock of intelligence' and 'pour[s] [it] out', turns us back to the issue of education again with its allusions to retentive and recollective

[44] Butterfield, p. 15; Freya Johnston, 'Jane Austen's Past Lives', *The Cambridge Quarterly* 39.2 (2010), 103-21 (p. 106).
[45] Gilbert and Gubar, p. 133.

memory. Despite her apparent diligence, however, her narrator-historian makes an assortment of typical blunders against which contemporary educational theories warn: especially rote and unorganised learning. Austen suggests 'repeating' Henry's *History* in a 'loose, disultary, unconnected strain'. Chapone uses the same adjective, 'desultory', in order to present a bad model of historical learning:

> I only mean to warn you against mixing *ancient* history with *modern*, or *general* histories of one place with *particular reigns* in another—by which desultory manner of reading, many people distract and confound their memories, and retain nothing to any purpose from such a confused mass of materials.[46]

Such a 'desultory manner of reading' would result in 'mixing *ancient* history with *modern*, or *general* histories of one place with *particular reigns* in another', interfering with the acquisition of coherent geography and chronology. For Chapone, these elements are interlocking and work like latitude and longitude to specify a certain point in history:

> You must be sensible that you can know but little of a country, whose situation with respect to the rest of the world you are entirely ignorant of—and that, it is to little purpose that you are able to mention a fact, if you cannot nearly ascertain the *time* in which it happened, which alone, in many cases, gives importance to the fact itself.[47]

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[46] *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 229. On Austen's and Chapone's use of the adjective, see Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, pp. 168-69.
[47] *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 207.

The idea that geography and chronology are warp and woof in history was a commonplace trope. The geographer Richard Hakluyt (1552?–1616) likens the two constituents to 'the Sunne and the Moone, the right eye and the left of all history'.[48] Having swallowed this historiographical and pedagogical standard, the Bertram sisters in *Mansfield Park* are astonished at Fanny's lack of such knowledge, evident in her assumption that the Isle of Wight is on the way from England to Ireland, and at her inability to recite the reigns of English monarchs and Roman emperors in chronological order (*MP*, pp. 20-21).[49] Her special treatment of the Isle of Wight by calling it '"*the Island*, as if there were no other Island in the world"' might pay subtle homage to Austen's young self, writing a history under the definitive title of *The History of England* (*MP*, p. 20).[50] For Fanny, '"who thinks of nothing but the Isle of Wight"', the island stops being a geographical reality and seems to gain certain personal significance, relocated between

[48] Quoted in Robert J. Mayhew, 'Geography as the Eye of Enlightenment Historiography', *Modern Intellectual History* 7.3 (2010), pp. 611-27 (p. 613).
[49] Both Chapone's *Letters* and the Edgeworths' *Practical Education* have a chapter titled as 'Geography and Chronology'. Chapone, 207-26; Edgeworths, II, 417-24.
[50] In her letter to Cassandra (20-21 November 1800), Austen herself refers to the Isle of Wight as 'the Island': 'Thursday Even[g] Charles leaves us on Saturday, unless Henry should take us in his way to the Island' (*L*, p. 64). The code seems to have been shared enough among the sisters to pass without annotation. The Isle of Wight is mentioned in Austen's *Evelyn* as well, as indicated earlier. Besides its physical affinity to Portsmouth, the recollection that the island is resided by the sailor Godolphin in *Emmeline*, whom the heroine marries in the end, might have helped the author's imagination here. The place is also tinted with Stuart association as the temporary refuge of Charles I, one of Austen's favourites, from the imprisonment at Hampton Court Palace. His flight is pathetically depicted in Goldsmith, *The History of England*, III, 297-99.

England and Ireland in her imaginative kingdom perhaps with the intervention of some desultory readings and free associations (*MP*, p. 20).

In *Mansfield Park*, a novel named after a location, places are so flooded with memory that their actual arrangement and geography are often warped and reconstructed by force of mind. In the East room, her precious sanctuary for solitary reflection, memory is in charge of organising its interior:

> She could go there [to the East room] after any thing unpleasant below, and find immediate consolation in some pursuit, or some train of thought at hand.—Her plants, her books—of which she had been a collector, from the hour of her commanding a shilling—her writing desk, and her works of charity and ingenuity, were all within her reach;—or if indisposed for employment, if nothing but musing would do, she could scarcely see an object in that room which had not an interesting remembrance connected with it.—Every thing was a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend. (*MP*, p. 178)

The furniture and its related memory are merged, acting out Jonathan Swift's analogy of a female mind to room in 'The Furniture of a Woman's Mind' (1727).[51] The physical relations of each object charged with histories are left obscure except that 'all [is] within her reach'. The items that are less tangible presence than media to bear 'her thoughts to a friend' are floating, waiting to be disposed under the command of Fanny's unruly memory.

[51] Jonathan Swift, *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. by Harold Williams, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), II, 415-18.

Significantly, the room itself is named as ‘east’, a direction rather than a fixed place; relativity rather than absoluteness.

Not all the reminiscence is so friendly and flattering, however, as Johnson explains in *The Idler* and *The Rambler*. There are some uninvited ghosts of the past squatting in the East room, where Fanny, surrounded by the little gifts from the Bertrams, absorbed in her agitated thoughts, agonises over whether she should join the theatricals against her own sense of propriety:

> To this nest of comforts Fanny now walked down to try its influence on an agitated, doubting spirit— […] [S]he had begun to feel undecided as to what she *ought to do*; and as she walked round the room her doubts were increasing. Was she *right* in refusing what was so warmly asked, so strongly wished for? What might be so essential to a scheme on which some of those to whom she owed the greatest complaisance, had set their hearts? Was it not ill-nature—selfishness—and a fear of exposing herself? And would Edmund’s judgment, would his persuasion of Sir Thomas’s disapprobation of the whole, be enough to justify her in a determined denial in spite of all the rest? It would be so horrible to her to act, that she was inclined to suspect the truth and purity of her own scruples, and as she looked around her, the claims of her cousins to being obliged, were strengthened by the sight of present upon present that she had received from them. The table between the windows was covered with work-boxes and netting-boxes, which had been given her at different times, principally by Tom; and she grew bewildered as to the amount of the debt which all these kind remembrances produced. (*MP*, pp. 179-80)

Fanny is haunted by the past, which assumes the innocent shapes of ‘work-boxes and netting-boxes’. Just as the narrator’s dormant knowledge is awakened by certain historical

keywords in Austen's *History*, oppressive memories are revived by those alms. They never fail to remind Fanny that her power to produce 'works of charity' is offset by her own dependence on support from relatives (*MP*, p. 178). At the end of the quotation, in the transferred epithet of 'all these kind remembrances', memory pilfers the adjective 'kind' from Tom, nonchalantly claiming reward, as if Fanny should feel obligation to the past in general due to the specific context of her being an adopted child. The transfer, which parallels her having been displaced, makes the unkindness Fanny is exposed to somehow blurred.

The constant retreat from actual physicality into loosely connected thoughts is also termed 'desultory' by Mary Wollstonecraft in *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796):

> In writing these desultory letters, I found I could not avoid being continually the first person—'the little hero of each tale.' I tried to correct this fault, if it be one, for they were designed for publication; but in proportion as I arranged my thoughts, my letter, I found, became stiff and affected: I, therefore, determined to let my remarks and reflections flow unrestrained, as I perceived that I could not give a just description of what I saw, but by relating the effect different objects had produced on my mind and feelings, whilst the impression was still fresh.[52]

[52] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

In contrast to a more regulated account, Wollstonecraft apologetically vindicates her 'desultory' notes, in which arising thoughts are immediately pinned down before they evaporate. Throughout her travel account, Wollstonecraft is careful to occasionally show that she is fully in control of her narrative, assuring readers that the meandering composition is not the result of authorial incompetence but of intended literary effect.

In a similarly 'desultory' train of thoughts, Fanny does not care to stage such self-monitoring, ceasing to have control of her memories as far as they rearrange the very objects and situations where they have been preserved. The analogy of Fanny's East room and Wollstonecraft's Northern European countries, or of the former's inner consciousness and the latter's published travelogue, is not so irrelevant considering the scale of Fanny's geographical imagination, which Edmund affectionately teases:

> '*You* in the meanwhile will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord Macartney go on?—(opening a volume on the table and then taking up some others.) And here are Crabbe's Tales, and the Idler, at hand to relieve you, if you tire of your great book. I admire your little establishment exceedingly; and as soon as I am gone, you will empty your head of all this nonsense of acting, and sit comfortably down to your table. But do not stay here to be cold.' He went; but there was no reading, no China, no composure for Fanny. (*MP*, p. 183)

In this fine example of 'desultory' reading, Fanny takes 'a trip into China' while 'sitting comfortably down to her table' and disregarding actual distance. It is again emphasised

that all these books are ‘at hand’, but they are ready to immediately take her anywhere she likes. In Edmund’s equivocal phrasing of ‘How does Lord Macartney go on?’, the physical progress of the delegation and the movement of Fanny’s attention on the pages overlap.[53] In her consciousness, however, the faraway land and her present situation are more seamlessly confused, as indicated in the last sentence of the quotation, where China is comfortably positioned in the interior of her East room.

The East room is not only a spatial visualisation of the storehouse of Fanny’s memory but also literally full of things that are related to real places:

> [I]ts [the East room’s] greatest elegancies and ornaments were a faded footstool of Julia’s work, too ill done for the drawing-room, three transparencies, made in a rage for transparencies, for the three lower panes of one window, where Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy, and a moonlight lake in Cumberland; a collection of family profiles thought unworthy of being anywhere else, over the mantelpiece, and by their side and pinned against the wall, a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William, with H.M.S. Antwerp at the bottom, in letters as tall as the mainmast. (*MP*, pp. 178-79)

[53] It is generally assumed that Fanny’s ‘great book’ refers to Lord Macartney’s *Journal of the Embassy to China* in John Barrow’s *Some Account of the Public Life and a Selection from the Unpublished Writings, of the Earl of Macartney* (1807) although Susan Allen Ford questions the certainty of this identification on the ground that such published first-hand accounts of the embassy proliferated in ‘Fanny’s “great book”: Macartney’s Embassy to China and *Mansfield Park*’, *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line*, 28.2 (2008) <https://jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol28no2/ford.htm> [accessed 9 October 2024]. Peter Knox-Shaw, assuming the ‘great book’ to be the Barrow’s edition, detects an overlap between Fanny and Lord Macartney, who refused to kowtow in the presence of the Emperor of China. ‘Fanny Price Refuses to Kowtow’, *The Review of English Studies*, 47.186 (1996), 212-27.

The syntax takes great care to neatly separate the description of the tangible 'transparencies' from the landscapes drawn on them. As Fanny gets absorbed into their contents, the three romantic locations merge together, establishing an impossible map in her mind, where 'Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy and a moonlight lake in Cumberland'. Although there is no evidence that Austen read Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', the eponymous abbey's lack of material presence in the poem doubly connotes that the actual geography is at the service of Fanny's mind. The layers of imagination and reality are indiscriminately jumbled in William's sketch, seen from her perspective, where the letters of H. M. S. Antwerp are 'as tall as the mainmast'.

With the signalling verb of 'trip', which Edmund uses, the reciprocal interaction between Fanny and the things in the East room can be regarded as a kind of parody of contemporary travel writings.[54] It is true that Fanny's unrealistic itinerary cannot be reduced to one or a few adjacent countries, but rather ambitiously spans almost all the whole world, including the Isle of Wight, Ireland, Tintern, Cumberland, Italy, and China, many of which, very likely, she has never visited, nor will she visit in the future; but all the mementoes in the East room, restoring her past, remind us of a passage from another

[54] In her examination of the description of the East room, Holly Fling emphasises the one-way influence of the things on Fanny, arguing that the things, previously gifts from her relatives, and her use of them for the family integrate her into the give-and-take network of the Bertram household. Holly Fling, 'Fanny Price's Curation of Lively Things in *Mansfield Park*', *European Romantic Review*, 31.4 (2020), pp. 401-20.

travelogue, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* by Samuel Johnson, who is intermittently alluded to in *Mansfield Park*.[55] At one point, he remembers when he listened to the tunes of a bagpipe:

> As we sat at Sir Alexander's table, we were entertained, according to the ancient usage of the North, with the melody of the bagpipe. Every thing in those countries has its history. As the bagpiper was playing, an elderly gentleman informed us, that in some remote time, the Macdonalds of Glengary having been injured, or offended by the inhabitations of Culloden, and resolving to have justice or vengeance, came to Culloden on a Sunday, where finding their enemies at worship, they shut them up in the church, which they set on fire; and this, said he, is the tune that the piper played while they were burning.
>
> Narrations like this, however uncertain, deserve the notice of a traveller, because they are the only records of a nation that has no historians, and afford the most genuine representation of the life and character of the ancient Highlanders.[56]

The sentence 'Every thing in those countries has its history' anticipates a similar sentence in the above-mentioned passage about the East room: 'she could scarcely see an object in that room which had not an interesting remembrance connected with it.—Every thing was a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend' (*MP*, p. 178). In these two examples, 'history' or 'remembrance' is syntactically an 'object' of the subject 'thing'; it is not that history

[55] John Wiltshire, 'Explanatory Notes', in *MP*, pp. 695, 728. On his Scottish journey, Samuel Johnson was accompanied by James Boswell, whose account of the trip *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* was purchased by Austen's family. See Austen's letter to Cassandra dated 25 November 1798 (*L*, p.23).
[56] Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, ed. by Mary Lascelles, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 49-50.

condescends to include ‘small’ details, such as the sounds of a bagpipe, but that these preserve a history, which would otherwise be lost.[57] Although the series of Fanny’s recollections, prompted by keepsakes, is never indicated as ‘history’, it is as if the novel tries to legitimatise Fanny’s physically smaller-scale exploration in her mental sphere of the East room by constantly peeping at the authoritative author and his travelogue.

Like Fanny, Johnson in the *Journey* often surrenders himself to chains of reflection on the past, triggered by the places he visits. The section on Inverness sees him connect its geographical feature with its historical background:

> Inverness was the last place which had a regular communication by high roads with the southern countries. All the ways beyond it have, I believe, been made by the soldiers in this century. At Inverness therefore Cromwell, when he subdued Scotland, stationed a garrison, as at the boundary of the Highlands. The soldiers seem to have incorporated afterwards with the inhabitants, and to have peopled the place with an English race; for the language of this town has been long considered as peculiarly elegant.
>
> Here is a castle, called the castle of Macbeth, the walls of which are yet standing. It was no very capacious edifice, but stands upon a rock so high and steep, that I think it was once not accessible, but by the help of ladders, or a bridge. Over against it, on another hill, was a fort built by Cromwell, now totally demolished; for no faction of Scotland loved the name of Cromwell, or had any desire to continue his memory.
>
> Yet what the Romans did to other nations, was in a great degree done by Cromwell to the Scots; he civilized them by conquests, and introduced by useful violence the acts of peace. I was told at Aberdeen that the people learned from

[57] On trivial and elevated topics in Johnson, see Freya Johnston, *Samuel Johnson and the Art of Sinking, 1709–1791* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Cromwell's soldiers to make shoes and to plant kail.[58]

The focus wanders back and forth between Oliver Cromwell and Macbeth, thematically re-enacting the past tension between England and Scotland. *Macbeth* and its eponymous protagonist in Shakespeare's play are introduced possibly by association with the 'elegance of the language' in Inverness, which is thought to result from the assimilation of Cromwell's soldiers with the local population. Just as this elegant language of Inverness is assumed to have originated in the English, *Macbeth* set in Scotland is also a creation of the English national playwright. With these facts, the apparent fluctuation of Johnson's perspective between England and Scotland turns out to be the one between England and Scotland that is created by England. It is not only the semantic content of his narration but also the formal movement of his mind that re-confirms the historical fact of England's victory over Scotland.

Mansfield Park seems to emulate, as well as imitate, Johnson's *Journey*, with its reversed digression from England to Scotland; on her visit to the ancient estate of Sotherton, the unexpectedly modern appearance of its chapel cannot baffle Fanny's free association:

[58] *Journey*, p. 27.

> Fanny's imagination had prepared her for something grander than a mere, spacious, oblong room, fitted up for the purpose of devotion—with nothing more striking or more solemn than the profusion of mahogany, and the crimson velvet cushions appearing over the ledge of the family gallery above. '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."'
>
> 'You forget, Fanny, how lately all this has been built, and for how confined a purpose, compared with the old chapels of castles and monasteries. It was only for the private use of the family. They have been buried, I suppose, in the parish church. There you must look for the banners and the achievements.'
>
> 'It was foolish of me not to think of all that, but I am disappointed.' (*MP*, p. 100)

Here, anachronism and anachorism meet each other; in gliding into Melrose Abbey, as described by Walter Scott in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the passage dismisses the English chapel built in 'James the Second's time' in favour of the Scottish abbey in the sixteenth century (*MP*, p. 100). Unlike Johnson, Austen lets Scotland, not England, finally take over the focus of the conversation. Fanny being magnetised to Scottish associations echoes the narrator in Austen's *History of England* hurrying to rescue Mary, Queen of Scots from a medley of accusation in the middle of the section on the legitimate Queen of England, Elizabeth I. The gradation of Fanny's free association seems to be captured in the repetition of 'no banners'; the first one accidently hits upon the unique semantic connection she seems to have made, and the second one still outside the quotation marks, which is not a pure replication of the first, bridges the transition into the interior of the

abbey in the Scottish borders. The use of quotation marks is less functional than ironical here, for the poetic fragments Fanny assumes to have cited are eroded by her own adjustments, whether intentional or unintentional (though habits of quotation are loose in this period). Scott's original wording read: 'Full many a scutcheon and banner riven, | Shook to the cold night-wind of heaven'.[59] Replacing 'riven' with 'blown' and omitting 'cold', Fanny tones down the gothic depiction of the abbey in order to accommodate it into the analogy with the healthier atmosphere of the chapel in Sotherton. The stylistic barrier to enclosing Scott's authentic voice within Fanny's is employed by the narrator only to disclose its very futility in face of the protagonist's creative energy. The above passage from *Mansfield Park* lays bare the process in which the accidental concatenation is adorned with retroactively made-up necessity.

Thus, Fanny's free association is often represented as a locationally-oriented movement; the comparison with Johnson's narration enables us to read her journey through her own memory behind things and places as a mini-travelogue, which is mentally no less restricted than other travel writings. Austen's interest in this genre has a long history; in *Volume the Second*, she wrote *A Tour through Wales—in a Letter from a young Lady—*, the name of whose narrator-cum-protagonist, Elizabeth Johnson, is the

[59] Walter Scott, *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), II.10.1-2 (p. 10).

same as that of Samuel Johnson's wife.[60] During this tour, Elizabeth and Fanny, probably her sister, run all the way along with a pony, revealing their extraordinary stamina, which ordinary travel accounts have no opportunity to show off:

> We travelled on horseback by preference. My Mother rode upon our little pony & Fanny & I walked by her side or rather ran, for my Mother is so fond of riding fast that She galloped all the way. You may be sure that we were in a fine perspiration when we came to our place of resting. Fanny has taken a great Many Drawings of the Country, which are very beautiful, tho' perhaps not such exact resemblances as might be wished, from their being taken as she ran along. (*TW*, p. 156)

After reading *Mansfield Park*, the extraordinary physical gift of Elizabeth and Fanny in *A Tour through Wales* might seem a sort of metaphor for the mobility of the power of association, by which the fidelity to actual topography is easily undermined. It is not only in the subversive burlesques of Austen's early years that a character is described as traversing a long distance. In *Plan of a Novel, according to hints from various quarters* written probably sometime after her exchange of letters (November 1815 to April 1816) with the librarian of the Prince Regent, James Stanier Clarke (*L*, pp. 308-9, 319-21, 325-26), whose name is mentioned in its notes (*LM*, p. 227), the heroine 'retreat[s] into Kamschatka' and then 'crawls back towards her former Country' (*LM*, pp. 228, 229). With

[60] See the note by Kathryn Sutherland and Freya Johnson in *TW*, p. 319.

the tone of its composition still undetermined between fiction and authorial notes, the round trip to Kamschatka also oscillates between the constraints of reality conjured up in fiction and the boasting of the creative freedom allowed to an author.

The preposterous degree of mobility shown by the characters in these two shorter writings is relegated into the recess of the protagonist's imaginative world in the much longer and published *Mansfield Park*. This apparent formal stifling of spatial imagination is doubly situated under a form of inspection by Fanny's brother-cum-tutor figure, Edmund. In the above-quoted scene at Sotherton, her confusion of different spatial and temporal contexts is immediately corrected by him and therefore does not entail a fatal consequence, while the similarly fanciful Catherine Morland gets penalised. Edmund's cooler rectification is a simplified version of Henry Tilney's famous homily:

> 'Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you—Does our education prepare us for such atrocities?' (*NA*, p. 203)

Notably, Catherine is told to 'remember' – not 'consider' – the place and the age in which she lives. In *Northanger Abbey*, the historiographical importance of not messing around

with geography and chronology, which Hester Chapone discourages, is turned into moralistic admonition that one should stay tuned to the position one takes in place and time. In contrast, Fanny does not have to pay, in real life, for what she incorrectly imagines. Her waywardly dislocated world purely remains her unique way of interpreting history, without becoming an omen for her future wrong-doing.

To embed *Mansfield Park* into real locational networks, as many critics have attempted, might overshadow its ambitious exploration of the relationship between space and history as a genre. One notable example is the postcolonial readings of the novel since Edward W. Said's famous denunciation of its quiet complicity with colonial exploitation.[61] The problematic family conversation about Antigua is later looked back on by Fanny and Edmund. He regrets her having been reticent:

> 'I only wish you would talk to him [Sir Thomas] more.—You are one of those who are too silent in the evening circle.'
>
> 'But I do talk to him more than I used. I am sure I do. Did not you hear me ask him about the slave-trade last night?'
>
> 'I did—and was in hopes the question would be followed up by others. It would have pleased your uncle to be inquired of farther.'
>
> 'And I longed to do it—but there was such a dead silence!' (*MP*, p. 231)

The 'dead silence' prevails in the room not only because Fanny innocently exposes the

[61] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

skeleton in the cupboard in Mansfield Park, that is, the business in Antigua. It is possibly also because the protagonist, generally silent and unobtrusive, flings the question out of the blue that the others, even Edmund chastising their indifference, were taken by surprise. The sudden burst of imperialistic implication and its immediate fading are enumerated by John Wiltshire, in his introduction to *Mansfield Park* of the Cambridge edition, as an example of the narrative's inclination to digress from political topics:

> [I]t [*Mansfield Park*] evokes imperialism and war only to disavow them as narrative material. The tales of danger and horror with which William enthrals the Bertram family are left unspecified, whilst the narrative line, carefully controlled by punctuation and syntax, focuses the reader on the comic behaviour, at once interfering and parsimonious, of Mrs Norris' search for a second-hand shirt button. Likewise, 'the slave-trade', emerging only in Fanny's question to her uncle, recedes again into obscurity. (*MP*, p. lxxxiii)

In quoting Wiltshire's argument, Freya Johnston personifies this narrative phenomenon with the word 'attention': 'the focus of attention is repeatedly diverted from subjects apparently fit for history and into local, immediate, domestic pressures; release from such pressures arrives in the form of objects: buttons, knives, jewellery, and luxury food products.'[62] Fanny's out-of-context remark on 'the slave-trade' is probably not only a narrative device of bathos but also an indication of the distance that its protagonist's

[62] Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 196.

imagination can leap over at once, from Mansfield Park to the West Indies. Johnston elsewhere compares Fanny to Mary Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, who is also a mistress of summoning quotations irrelevant to ongoing conversations: 'Might Fanny Price perhaps represent, among other things, an attempt to take Mary Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice* seriously?'.[63]

Alternatively, imaginatively reconstructing a world of one's own is also a wish fulfilment of a person always displaced against her will. Fanny's desire speaks for other helplessly confined characters of Austen's: Elizabeth Bennet, enraptured by the prospect of travelling to the Lake District; Frank Churchill, craving to go to Switzerland; and Anne Elliot, resigning herself to a woman's 'fate' to live at home and therefore oppressed by memory (*PP*, pp. 174-75; *E*, p. 396; *P*, p. 253). The analogy can be pushed further to include even Henry Crawford, who 'longed to have been at sea, and seen and done and suffered as much' and 'wished he had been a William Price' (*MP,* p. 275). If we consider Fanny's ready flight of fancy as an affectionate sister's attempt to imitate, or rival, her brother's nomadic profession, the binaries that Alistair Duckworth famously maintains dominate the novel, including the ones between Fanny and Henry, between improving and altering the inherited space, and between reactionary and radical, can be

[63] Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 60

reconfigured.[64] Both Fanny and Henry, spatial 'imaginist[s]' (*E*, p. 362), are contrasted with William, with a real sailing history, which expands as widely as Fanny's unrealised itinerary: 'Young as he was, William had already seen a great deal. He had been in the Mediterranean—in the West Indies—in the Mediterranean again' (*MP*, p. 275). The conscientious protagonist and her unprincipled suitor seem to share at least one aspiration. Then, it is not so improbable to imagine they would have married, as the narrator does, if Henry persisted: 'Would he have persevered, and uprightly, Fanny must have been his reward—and a reward very voluntarily bestowed—within a reasonable period from Edmund's marrying Mary' (*MP*, p. 540). In this sense, the dissimilarity between Fanny and Henry lies less in the political implications they symbolically convey than in how they treat their creative urge; that is, whether they are disposed to execute the imagined alteration actually and physically. Fanny articulates enthusiasm about the spatio-temporal significance of estate and garden, but this is constantly annotated by the revamping that is going on in her mind, one that involves larger dimensions of space and time. Her attention is torn between real and imaginative locational details, just as a pupil is seduced from a textbook by arbitrary concatenations.

It is widely known that Austen is a perfectionist, who always makes sure her stories

[64] Alistair Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate* (1971) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019).

are consistent with actual custom and geography. She asked Cassandra in a letter (29 January 1813) to inquire about the process of ordination and whether 'Northamptonshire is a Country of Hedgerows', probably thinking of *Mansfield Park* she was then working on (*L*, p. 210).[65] It might be inadequate just to argue, from this evidence of her exactitude, that topographical verisimilitude prevails in the whole of her novels. In the case of *Mansfield Park*, the descriptions of its backdrop precisely based on real landscapes contrastingly highlight the unreality of the novel's imaginative field. The novel uncovers the unimpeded movements of the mind between the two spheres: one determined by time and space and the other depending on semantic and often accidental couplings.

It is not necessarily the case that Austen's commentaries in her letter to her niece Anna Lefroy on the latter's novel (10–18 August 1814) anticipate realist doctrines. Jane and Cassandra's opinions read:

> [W]e think you had better not leave England. Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the Manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations. Stick to Bath & the Foresters. There you will be quite at home.—Your Aunt C. does not like desultory novels, & is rather fearful yours will be too much so, that there will be too frequent a change from one set of people to another, & that circumstances will be sometimes introduced of apparent consequence, which will lead to nothing.—It will not be so great an objection to <u>me</u>, if it does. (*L*, pp. 280-81)

[65] As to the question of in which novel Austen used the acquired knowledge about hedgerows, see Le Faye's note in *L*, p. 420.

Note Austen's equivocal phrases, simultaneously expressing both the movements of the characters and of the writer's perspective. About three months after the publication of *Mansfield Park*, in this letter, she soon returned to the analogy of travelling and imagining. In *Emma*, which she was then preparing according to her sister's memorandum about the composition dates of her published works (*JAFM*, V, 297-98), Austen herself decided to use the same strategy; she and her narrator 'stick to' Surrey while 'letting' the Campbells, Jane Fairfax's foster parents whom even Emma has never met, go to Ireland. What Austen objects to, then, is the authors' travelling out of their comfort zones, not characters', whether actually or metaphorically. Emma hears from Miss Bates about the interesting intimacy of three persons: Mr Dixon from Ireland, Miss Campbell whom he has lately married, and Jane Fairfax. This is when 'an ingenious and animating suspicion enter[s] Emma's brain with regard to Jane Fairfax, this charming Mr. Dixon, and the not going to Ireland [of Jane]' (*E*, pp. 170-71). The protagonist's imaginative freedom is encouraged by, or likened to, the distance between where she lives and the foreign country. This makes the novel structurally continuous with *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park*. This thematic or physical leap, if frequently repeated, would look 'desultory', as the above letter suggests. Austen emphasises *she* does not mind it, unlike Cassandra, and her

writings that are open to 'desultory' digression have shown that this is not just a fond aunt's false words to ingratiate herself with her niece at the expense of her own sister.

In fact, Austen's tutoring can be a masqueraded self-justification. In *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen*, Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh suspects her aunt's enjoyment of imaginary travel:

> She might, no doubt, have indulged in romantic flights of fancy with India or France for a background, and filled them with fictitious delights such as were to be found in the fairy tales with which she enchanted her little nieces during their happy visits to Chawton Cottage, but this would have been play work—and her books were to be solid pieces of real work, carefully designed and constructed, polished also with the utmost skill and patience before they could reach the high standard of original invention joined to entire accuracy in minute particulars, which she appears always to have set before herself.[66]

Virginia Woolf quotes the passage in her review of *Personal Aspects* and says: 'Jane Austen might have "indulged in romantic flights of fancy with India or France for a background", but it is equally undeniable that Jane Austen never did.'[67] Both Mary Augusta and Woolf emphasise that the imagined geography is eventually subsumed to pave the way for the birth of down-to-earth novelist Austen. This chapter has argued,

[66] *Personal Aspects*, p. 59.
[67] Virginia Woolf, 'Jane Austen and the Geese', *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 October 1920, p. 699 (p. 699).

however, that Austen's point lies in the very potency and unruliness of such 'romantic flights of fancy'. In her historical discourse, the two indispensable components of the genre, temporal and spatial consistency, are often summoned only to be driven away by the new imaginary and syntactic regime that is predicated on unique associations. This sometimes unearths overlooked similarities that appear over the years, or over siblings and generations. Fanny's identification of herself with her brother counts as an example of this sibling repetition, which echoes the cyclical temporality dominant in Austen's *History*. The next chapter returns to this theme of time and examines how narrative and repetitive time coexist in Austen's representations of the past.

Chapter 3, Time

Temporalising Austen

Austen's historical imagination thus tramples on temporal order and coherence; and the concept of ending does not escape either. In the dedication attached to *Lesley Castle*, which is addressed to Austen's brother Henry, 'The Author' announces that his or her alleged 'Novels' 'will always' be in want of ending:

> Sir
>
> I am now availing myself of the Liberty you have frequently honoured me with of dedicating one of my Novels to you. That it is unfinished, I grieve; yet fear that from me, it will always remain so; that as far as it is carried, it Should be so trifling and so unworthy of you, is
>
> another concern to your obliged humble
>
> Servant
>
> The Author (*TW*, p. 96)

Just as 'The Author' boasts, there are several 'unfinished' pieces in her teenage writings. In *Sir William Mountague*, 'un unfinished performance […] humbly dedicated to Charles John Austen Esq^{re}', the narrator introduces a new character immediately before quitting the story of Sir William's colourful love life (*TW*, p. 34). After two weeks' happiness of

marital life with Emma Stanhope, Sir William becomes enamoured of a sister of his former lover, Lady Percival:

> For a fortnight Sir William was compleatly happy, but chancing one day to see a charming young Woman entering a Chariot in Brook Street, he became again most violently in love. On enquiring the name of this fair Unknown, he found that she was the Sister of his old freind Lady Percival, at which he was much rejoiced, as he hoped to have, by his acquaintance with her Ladyship, free access to Miss Wentworth . . . . . (*JAFM*, I, 320-23)[1]

With the eight ellipses starting a space after 'Miss Wentworth', 'The Author' implies the sentence is going to continue, perhaps with a 'history' of Miss Wentworth or an introduction of another lady. Although *Lesley Castle* is suspended with the complete tenth letter and hence 'unfinished' only semantically (*TW*, p. 119), the last sentence of *Sir William Mountague* is semantically and also formally incomplete.

'[A]s unfinished as' *Sir William Mountague*, as Austen phrases it in another dedication to Charles, is *Memoirs of Mr Clifford*:

> To Charles John Austen Esq[re]
>
> Sir
>
> Your generous patronage of the unfinished tale, I have already taken the Liberty

[1] A female counterpart of Sir William is 'the lovely Charlotte' in *Frederic & Elfrida*, who, 'with the natural turn of her mind to make every one happy', indiscriminately accepts proposals and finds herself involved in 'double engagement' (*TW*, p. 7).

> of dedicating to you, encourages me to dedicate to you a second, as unfinished as the first.
>
> I am Sir with every expression
> of regard for you & y^{r} noble Family, your most obed^{t}
> &c. &c. . . .
> The Author (*TW*, p. 36).

The repetition of 'unfinished' and 'dedicate to you' attests to the similarity of these two attempts, both dedicated to Charles Austen. In fact, they are almost twins in that they end, or do not end, in a nearly identical way. Having never seen London, Mr Clifford makes up his mind to visit the metropolis; a plan that ends up unconsummated:

> In easy Stages he proceeded to Basingstoke. One day Carrying him to Clarkengreen, the next to Worting, the 3^{d} to the bottom of Basingstoke Hill, & the fourth, to Mr Robins's. . . . (*JAFM*, I, 330-31)

Sir William Mountague saw its final word followed by ellipses, and *Memoirs of Mr Clifford* follows suit. The immediate déjà vu and the comparative expression of equality ('as unfinished as') in the dedication, however, rather magnify their differences.[2] In the latter, no space exists between the last words 'Mr Robins's' and a period, which is

[2] The jokes about confused identities are prevalent in Austen's teenage writings. In *Frederic & Elfrida*, for example, the protagonists 'were exceedingly handsome and so much alike, that it was not every one who knew them apart.—Nay even their most intimate freinds had nothing to distinguish them by, but the shape of the face, the colour of the Eye, the length of the Nose & the difference of the complexion' (*TW*, p. 3). Chapter 4 will discuss this matter.

followed by three ellipses. The part preceding the period is a subordinate clause, falling short of a syntactically independent sentence. By contrast, the last sentence of *Sir William Mountague* contains a main clause, so its unfinishedness is owing to the lack of a period. Both works are abandoned right after new personages are summoned: Miss Wentworth and Mr Robins, whose 'histories' are never related. The label 'history' was a staple of novelistic technique that offers the background of characters to be deciphered and construed. Austen would later tantalise her readers with the 'history' of Mr 'Wentworth' at the beginning of *Persuasion*, which Chapter 4 analyses in more detail. Although 'Mr' Wentworth's history would eventually be submitted to readers' investigation, 'Miss' Wentworth continues to be an enigma, one that forbids the story to semantically end. Austen tries multiple methods to 'unfinish' on the levels of meaning, syntax, and punctuation. What matters for her is not whether a work is 'unfinished' but what makes a work feel so – another example of the formal experimentation that characterises her teenage writings.

Unfinishedness might not have always been 'grievous' in the late eighteenth century, as Stuart Sherman's *Telling Time* suggests. Before the onomatopoeia 'tick-tock', whose earliest appearance in *OED* is from *Vanity Fair* (1848), pervaded public imagination around the mid-nineteenth century, '*Tick, Tick, Tick*' had prevailed. In correspondence

with Christiaan Huygens's invention in 1656 of a more precise chronometry by attaching a pendulum regulator to clockwork, time started to be translated into 'a succession of small, identical impulses that define (by inference) a succession of small, identical intervals'.[3] Sherman attempts a historical amendment to Frank Kermode's influential work, *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), an argument that Sherman thinks hinges on 'a faulty assumption' that mortals universally crave to 'humanize' time:

> The fact that we call the second of the two related sounds *tock* is evidence that we use fictions to enable the end to confer organization and form on the temporal structure. […] The clock's *tick-tock* I take to be a model of what we call a plot, an organization that humanizes time by giving it form; and the interval between *tock* and *tick* represents purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to humanize. […]
>
> *Tick* is a humble genesis, *tock* a feeble apocalypse.[4]

Kermode's formulation is deployed around a temporal 'antithesis', '*chronos*' and '*kairos*': while '*chronos*' consists of blank repetition, '*kairos*' is coloured with expectation.[5] Sherman indicates, however, that seventeenth-century English people were doing very well without '*kairos*' since '*chronos*' was then felt to be quite fresh and intriguing. '[T]his new figure of the "simply successive"', he argues, was 'interesting

[3] Sherman, pp. 2-3.
[4] Sherman, p. 7; Kermode, p. 45.
[5] Sherman, p. 10.

enough to warrant a neologism, to prompt mystification […], and to become a preoccupation for […] a widening community of the chronometry-conscious and the timepiece-proud over the ensuing two hundred years'.[6]

Austen's career, ranging from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, is lost in the gap that is left between Sherman's and Kermode's coverage. It could seem a reasonable compromise to allocate her earlier, seemingly improvisatory exercises to Sherman's paradigm, and her later, physically 'finished' novels to Kermode's. However, her awareness of 'ending', or of its absence, articulated in the quoted paratexts, repels this periodising categorisation. In the dedication of *Lesley Castle*, she deems the missing of 'ending' a matter over which to be 'grieve[d]': more an affective incident (though in a comical way) than just an accidental break. Austen's charged gratitude, in the dedication of *Memoirs of Mr Clifford*, for Charles's generous patronage of the first 'unfinished' work, and for his encouragement to dedicate a second to him, possibly gilds his frustration with the lack of ending. Alternatively, it might be due to their deficiency that these two works are particularly foisted on the youngest child of the family, who would have been around ten.[7] Austen, only four years older than the boy she addresses as 'Charles John Austen

[6] Sherman, p. 11.
[7] *Volume the First* that includes *Sir William Mountague* and *Memoirs of Mr Clifford* is estimated to be written between 1787 and 1790, except for 'Detached peices', whose dedication is dated 'June 2[d] 1793—' (*TW*, p. 63).

Esq[re]', may well pretend to insist the idea of narrative is beyond a child's grasp. Either way, inconclusiveness is supposed to cause disappointment, as in Samuel Johnson's *History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), whose final chapter is famously titled: 'The conclusion, in which nothing is concluded.'[8] To proclaim her own works 'unfinished' makes these unended pieces essentially different from *The Watsons* and *Sanditon*, which Austen would apparently quit more or less unintentionally. It appears that dedications were needed partly to fashion incomplete writings into self-contained works and to elevate their abandonment into a form of deliberated literary expression. 'The Author' underlines this proto-Kermodian interest further by proudly calling the piece a 'Novel', a genre with an 'ending' that Sherman admits is not attended to enough in his diary-focused arguments.[9] In contrast, Kermode subtitled his book 'Studies in the Theory of Fiction'. The two systems are more peacefully compatible with one another than Sherman considers. Thus, that Austen's teenage writings are produced technically within the eighteenth century is not enough to classify them as what Sherman calls 'diurnal form'.

Austen's teenage writings are end-conscious, but not necessarily in Kermodian style either, since her end-consciousness usually resides in their physical and paratextual

[8] Samuel Johnson, *'Rasselas' and Other Tales*, ed. by Gwin J. Kolb, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 175.
[9] Sherman, p. xii. He treats novelists Daniel Defoe and Frances Burney in the last chapter: 'Defoe and Burney: The Unmaking of the Diurnal in the Making of the Novel'.

attributes. David Lodge uses the term 'end-orientation' to name this trait of the short story: 'the short story is essentially "end-oriented", inasmuch as one begins a short story in the expectation of soon reaching its conclusion, whereas one embarks upon a novel with no very precise idea of when one will finish it'.[10] The formal vulnerability of the written story – the impossibility of proceeding without betraying its visible endpoint – is noticed by Austen in the final chapter of *Northanger Abbey*, which Lodge also quotes:

> The anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity. (*NA*, p. 259)

If this is the case in longer novels, Austen's teenage writings, such as *Sir William Mountague* and *Memoirs of Mr Clifford*, are literally an open book. In its original manuscript, *Mr Harley* in *Volume the First* is confined to just two facing pages (*JAFM*, I, 310-12). Nevertheless, she chooses to baffle the reader by leaving some of her shortest pieces, *Sir William Mountague* and *Memoirs of Mr Clifford*, 'unfinished'; a paradox that jars with Lodge's formulation. Readers would be taken by surprise, without the caveat in their dedications, all the more because the light tone of the narration in these two works

[10] David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (New York: Viking, 1992), p. 225.

insinuates that they would not make lengthy, grandiose stories. The discrepancy is brought about by a kind of empathy that encourages readers to imagine characters as if living persons who live on past the end of the stories of which they are part. A family tradition has it that Austen had a 'custom of following her creations outside the printed pages'. It is reported that 'Knightley's exclusion from Donwell was ended by the death of Mr. Woodhouse in two years' time' and that 'Jane Fairfax survived her elevation only nine or ten years'.[11] Even if a visual hint that shorter works betray alerts readers to their 'ending', their characters do not have any obligation to brace themselves for the coming finale. Whereas Lodge's 'end-orientation' is generated only at the moment of a story's reception, it does not integrate characters' attitude to 'ending' in the future. Austen's unfinished short stories lay bare this double standard of temporality that narrative distortion necessitates.

What makes it difficult to codify the temporality in Austen's teenage writings is that several kinds and phases of time are entangled. As she flaunts the title of 'the Author' in many of those dedications, it is fair to pay attention to how 'the Author', apart from the characters he or she creates, is represented as perceiving time. This makes sense all the more because a dedication naturally occupies a larger proportion in each of Austen's

[11] William Austen-Leigh and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, *Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters, a Family Record* (London: Smith, Elder, 1913), p. 307

shorter pieces than in average eighteenth-century writings. In terms of length, her dedication sometimes threatens to equal, if not outweigh, the 'main' part of a story. Austen tends to elaborate her courtesies particularly in the shortest of her teenage writings; or more precisely, in the shortest ones that are hilariously aware of their own shortness, including *Memoirs of Mr Clifford*, *The beautiful Cassandra*, and what the author calls 'Miscellanious Morsels' that are grouped as 'Detached peices' (*TW*, p. 63). The contents of these dedications are as temporalised as the stories they chaperone, though in different ways. In *Lesley Castle*, 'The Author' declares to the dedicatee that his or her novels 'will always remain' incomplete. The future tense and the expanded temporal horizon it implants are a comical self-reference on the part of the yet teenage author. Austen's historical imagination often builds a symmetry between the future and the past, as insights exclusive to mature and advanced souls. This idea of the future as an adult's privilege is more pronounced in the dedication to her new-born niece that introduces 'Detached peices' (partially quoted in Chapter 1):

> To Miss Jane Anna Elizabeth Austen
>
> My Dear Neice
>
> Though you are at this period not many degrees removed from Infancy, Yet trusting that you will in time be older, and that through the care of your excellent Parent You will one day or another be able to read written hand, I dedicate to You the following Miscellaious Morsels, convinced that if you seriously attend to them,

> You will derive from them very important Instructions, with regard to your Conduct in Life.—If such my hopes should hereafter be realized, never shall I regret the Days and Nights that have been spent in composing these Treatises for your Benefit—. I am my dear Neice
>
> Your very affectionate
>
> Aunt.
>
> The Author (*TW*, p. 63)

The wise 'Aunt' recalls the efforts of 'Days and Nights' she has made, as well as seeing into the distant future, 'one day or another', when her labours bear fruit. The syntactic correspondence between the past and the future denotes, on the one hand, the geometrical air that characterises Austen's earlier productions; and, on the other, the quickness with which the Aunt-cum-Author moves back and forth in time. The mobility here results less from free association, which Chapter 2 explored, than from reflection over the generational comparison between niece and aunt, who share the Christian name 'Jane'. Austen takes pride in her seniority also in the dedication of the 'Scraps' addressed to her other niece, Fanny Catherine Austen: 'I think it is my particular Duty to prevent your feeling as much as possible the want of my personal instructions' (*TW*, p. 151). The matronly demeanour reconfirms the age difference, while inviting our attention to the opposite fact that the 'Aunt' is 'not many degrees removed from Infancy' either. Sometimes the past and the future become immediate neighbours, nearly interchangeable, and sometimes they are torn apart by the irrevocable track of time that lies between them.

This changing relation between tenses brings out the temporal duality that the very practice of dedication bears. Though positioned before a main part, a dedication can be both introduction and retrospection; both harbinger and rearguard. It has been suggested that some of Austen's dedications were written well after the text that they introduced. For instance, B. C. Southam points out that the dedication of *Frederic and Elfrida* 'is remarkable for being in a later hand than that in which the rest of the piece is written'.[12] *The Visit* probably also has to wait for some time until a dedication to James Austen is given, as its phrasing suggests:

> The Following Drama, which I humbly recommend to your Protection & Patronage, tho' inferior to those celebrated Comedies called 'The school for Jealousy' & 'The travelled Man', will I hope afford some amusement to so respectable a *Curate* as yourself; which was the end in veiw when it was first composed by your
>
> Humble Servant the Author. (*TW*, p. 44)

Peter Sabor observes '[t]he words "first composed" are […] significant, suggesting that the play was written well before the dedication'.[13] While his delicate reading is insightful, the time gap Sabor detects between Austen's dedication and the play might undercut his

[12] B. C. Southam, 'The Manuscripts of Jane Austen's *Volume the First*', *Library*, 17 (1962), 231-37 (232).
[13] Peter Sabor, 'Brotherly and Sisterly Dedications in Jane Austen's Juvenilia', *Persuasions*, 31 (2009), 33-46 (p. 38).

major supposition that the latter was prepared to imply a specific dedicatee. This holds true in some cases, including that of *The beautiful Cassandra*, whose protagonist is its dedicatee's namesake; but, if the interconnection is invested with too much significance, the coexistence of different temporalities might be missed. Apparently, the atemporality of *The Visit*, a playlet all about gluttony and gastronomy, does not survive in its dedication. The phrase 'end in veiw' verges on temporality and teleology, and the chronology of conception and composition is further complicated by the fact that 'the Author' is remembering the time when she had that 'end in veiw'.[14] Childhood timelessness in the story is not rectified later, but aligned with a heterogeneous mechanics of time.

Temporality of Living Persons: Days of the Week

The dedications in Austen's teenage writings are not just appendages, enabling a double standard of the time felt by characters and author.[15] In Austen's fiction, the time lived by

[14] The original manuscript reads: 'which was the end in veiw when they was first composed' (*JAFM*, I, 354). Changing 'they' to 'it', Austen waives the authorship of 'The school for Jealousy' and 'The travelled Man'. They could have been written by the dedicatee James for family theatricals.

[15] Austen's virtually forced dedication of *Emma* to the Prince Regent, by contrast, is drained of temporality: 'To His Royal Highness The Prince Regent, This Work is, By His Royal Highness's Permission, Most Respectfully Dedicated, By His Royal Highness's Dutiful and Obedient Humble Servant, The Author'. The facsimile of this dedication is available in the Cambridge Edition of *Emma*.

characters is often presented just as they actually calibrate it: one of the scales is days of the week. Virginia Woolf notices Austen's fastidiousness on this score: 'Light, landscape – everything that lies outside the drawing-room is arranged to illumine it. Distances are made exact; arrangements accurate. It is one mile from Meryton; it is Sunday and not Monday.' [16] This passage is quoted by Julia Grandison in her 'Jane Austen and the Almanac', an essay that reinterprets the function of the almanac in Austen's novels. [17] Her discussion remedies the conventional assumption that Austen sought calendrical realism by restoring the historical fact that the authority of the almanac was more doubtful for contemporary readers: 'many readers read the genre sceptically, overwriting its predictions with their observations, correcting its mistakes, and filling its calendars with their own idiosyncratic schedules.' [18] The almanac was a metaphor less for 'the homogeneous and regular timekeeping' than for the encounter of 'communal time and personal time'.[19] Just as the almanac was corrected by willing readers, the calendrical dates in Austen's works are often distorted by the personal wishes and feelings of her characters. One case in point is a scene in which Fanny Price complains that 'Easter

[16] Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf,* ed. by Stuart N. Clarke, 6 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), V, 59.
[17] Julia Grandison, 'Jane Austen and the Almanac', *The Review of English Studies*, n. s., 70.297 (2019), 911-29.
[18] Grandison, p. 913.
[19] Grandison, p. 913.

came—particularly late this year' (*MP*, p. 498). Easter was not particularly late in the calendar of 1808–9, which has been thought to fit the chronology of *Mansfield Park*. However, as Freya Johnston points out, this 'does not necessarily mean […] that Austen here departed, in error, from faithfully representing the calendar of 1808–9': 'To Fanny, stuck in Portsmouth and missing Edmund, Easter does seem very far off.'[20]

This chapter, engaged with this idea that dates in Austen's works are not always objective indicators, focuses on her usage of days of the week, not dates in general. Woolf thought it mattered for Austen that it is 'Sunday and not Monday'. It is actually inferred that she attaches a certain nuance to days of the week in particular from the trace of a revision at the end of *Love and Freindship*: before the final inscription of 'June 13th 1790' is an erased mark of 'Sunday' (*JAFM*, II, 142-43). June 13 in 1790 was actually Sunday, which excludes the possibility that the deletion was made in order to correct an error. 'Sunday' must have some connotation that led the author to delete it on second thoughts, whether because of its religious significance among seven days of the week, or of the prosaic air pertaining to the days of the week as a cyclical system.

Indeed, days of the week seems to have mattered for Austen as a part of her literary technique, for she did leave the day of the week in the date appended to the end of *The*

[20] Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 57. On Easter in *Mansfield Park*, see also Grandison, pp, 912-13.

History of England: 'Saturday Nov. 26th. 1791' (*JAFM*, II, 384-85). We know Austen's revision in her teenage writings is rather inconsistent and inadvertent, from such evidence as that she did not complete the change in the name of Kitty's aunt from Peterson to Percival and let the two names co-exist. 'Saturday' might have survived just accidentally; still the mention of it, at the same time, conforms to the *History*'s presentation of the date when Mary Stuart is decapitated: 'She was executed in the Great Hall at Fotheringay Castle (sacred Place!) on Wednesday the 8th of February — 1586 —' (*TW*, p. 130). This is the only remark on day of the week among the four dates given in the *History*, tying the historian and the Queen with the exclusively shared temporal cadence. It registers not just a droll irrelevance in historical writing, but establishes communion between the historian and the queen, whom she believes a universal idol.

Excluding the year 1399 of Henry IV's coronation in the first sentence, the quoted dates in the *History* are all related to the last moments of the historian's personal favourite: 'the 6th of May' when 'Anna Bullen' concludes her letter to Henry VIII, the date of Mary Stuart's execution, and 'the 25th of Feb.ry' when Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex is beheaded (*TW*, pp. 126, 130, 131). The year-based historical time for chronological documentation is untranslated into calendrical sequence in which those historical personages tangibly lived and died. Austen has the illustrious persons join the same

temporal rhythm in which she finally dates the *History*.

As Chapter 2 observed, the scarcity of dates in the *History* itself is not such an outrageous deviation from the standard practice of educational histories at the time. Its rubric that '[t]here will be very few Dates in this History' rather prizes the four dates, suggesting that they are the select 'few' (*TW*, p. 120). One of them is the date when 'Anna Bullen' writes a letter to Henry VIII to ask a pardon:

> Tho' I do not profess giving many dates, yet as I think it proper to give some & shall of course make choice of those which it is most necessary for the Reader to know, I think it right to inform him that her letter to the King was dated on the 6th of May. (*TW*, p. 126)

It is a date supposed to be recorded by Anne Boleyn, a memento of female authorship, which echoes in Austen's proud dating to mark the completion or transcription of the *History*. Compare this with the epistolary work *Love and Freindship*, none of whose letters are dated. There is no sense of the material practicality of letter exchange. Austen's dating at the end insists that she is the only one allowed to write such a conclusion. By way of contrast, she pays tribute to the date Boleyn left by integrating it into the narration of her *History* as it is. The treatment of this date implies another departure from David Hume and Oliver Goldsmith. Following Hume's *History* in its original edition (1759),

Goldsmith quotes Boleyn's letter in full, which ends as below:

> 'If ever I have found favour in your sight, if ever the name of Anna Boleyn hath been pleasing in your ears, then let me obtain this request; and I will so leave to trouble your grace any further, with mine earnest prayers to the Trinity, to have your grace in his good keeping, and to direct you in all your actions. From my doleful prison in the Tower, this sixth of May.
>
> Your most loyal
> and ever faithful wife,
> Anne Boleyn.'[21]

The date 'this sixth of May' is given in direct speech, alienated from Goldsmith's own narrative. This is in line with the general practice of Hume and Goldsmith, who append dates on the margin near the corresponding passage and keep them aloof from the perception of narrated characters. Those supplemented dates often include just the day of the month without the year, meaning Austen's inattention to years itself is not that singular. Rather, her invention resides in the fact that she lets 'the 6th of May', the date endured by the afflicted Anne Boleyn, dominate the chronology of English history. This confusion of temporalities is what Hume and Goldsmith try to avoid with their careful partition. Advancing the date into the main body of her text, Austen's version of English history becomes private – 'private' in the sense, as Samuel Johnson defines it, that it is '[n]ot

[21] Goldsmith, *The History of England*, II, 384. See also David Hume, *The History of England under the House of Tudor* (1759), 2 vols (London: Millar, 1759), I, 206.

open; secret'.[22]

It is 'private' not because Austen redeems a stifled female voice. Formally speaking, she rather 'stifled' Anne Boleyn's voice by not quoting any of her letters except the date.[23] Austen's 'emphasis' is 'on the "look" of the letter', as Mary A. Favret puts it.[24] Favret, pointing out about *Sense and Sensibility* that 'we "see" Marianne's letter [to Willoughby], but [that] her thoughts remain inaccessible', argues 'Austen de-activates the content of letters'.[25] This applies to Anne Boleyn in Austen's *History* as well. The content of her letter is not divulged as it would be in a typical epistolary novel. Even the well-known fact that it was a letter of petition is not revealed, for Austen mentions it as 'her letter to the King' in a matter-of-fact manner. The desperate servility of the cast queen is nullified. Then, what is left behind is just the disinterested transcription of the date – 'the 6th of May'. It is not a type of privacy that is staged for the pleasure of prying, but rather a quiet determination not to offer a better look at Anne's misery. The day of the month forms a parallel with the 'look' of her letter, forbidding the historical narrative of Henry VIII to make sense out of his murder of Anne Boleyn. The mixture of the day of the month makes

[22] *Dictionary* [accessed 7 October 2024]
[23] Hume expels Anne's letter to endnotes in his later editions (1773), but still quoted it. See David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Revolution in 1688* (1773), 8 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1773), IV, 456.
[24] Mary A. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics & the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 135.
[25] Favret, pp. 146, 147.

the *History* fall short of temporally unity, a property that can be shared by readers. It is not that the *History* is a simplified abridgement that wants to reform the conventions of long, abstruse history. On the contrary, it is shorter and somehow more abstruse, resistant to interpretation by others.

The jest about temporality in Austen's *History* is prescribed by its refusal to convert the lived time of calendrical dates into the chronological scale of years, despite the work's long scope of 250 years. Beginning with Henry IV's coronation in 1399, the *History* finally reaches 'Saturday Nov. 26th. 1791'. The mention of the weekday deftly exposes the incompatibility of time notations and disables the comparison between the past and the present, a major mission for standard historical writing.

Austen's use of dates does not always engender quotidian familiarity for readers. Conversely, it often builds a sort of barrier, one that needs to be deciphered into intelligible time notation. The way in which Sir William Mountague's scheduled wedding day is presented captures this disparity between different temporal schemes:

> Sir William adored her [Lady Percival] & she consented to become his Wife. Vehemently pressed by Sir William to name the Day in which he might conduct her to the Altar, she at length fixed on the following Monday, which was the first of September. Sir William was a Shot & could not support the idea of losing such a Day, even for such a Cause. (*TW*, p. 34).

The spirit of carpe diem makes the lovers choose 'the following Monday', the communal time running inside the story that is forbidden to readers living outside it. The comma reproduces the pause when Sir William remembers it is the first day of the partridge-shooting season as well as when the narrator bothers to translate 'Monday' into 'the first of September' for puzzled readers. '[T]he following Monday' cannot be omitted; otherwise, the impatience of the couple and the temporal autonomy within the story would be lost.

Days of the week in Austen's works construct a hermeneutical barrier, one that verges on confidentiality as in her *History*. Privacy for characters in fiction may be only nonsensical as in *The Mystery*, where the dialogue is largely concealed under ellipses and remains a '*complete* […] *Mystery*' to readers from the beginning to the end (*TW*, p. 49). However, it makes sense in a journal, a genre initially targeted to a very limited set of readers. Claire Tomalin mentions the possibility of Austen's keeping a diary.[26] Although there is no surviving proof for that, passages from a journal could have added to Austen's letters, some of which are written over a period of days. Indeed, in such letters, the change of a date is marked by days of the week just as it would be in a journal. Also, a passage in *Northanger Abbey* implies that a journal as a memorandum contributed to the recording

[26] Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p.6.

of the indiscriminate details of everyday life in Austen's letters. A phatic conversation that introduces Catherine and Henry to each other gradually reveals its proximity with journal-writing:

> 'Have you yet honoured the Upper Rooms?'
> 'Yes, sir, I was there last Monday.'
> 'Have you been to the theatre?'
> 'Yes, sir, I was at the play on Tuesday.'
> 'To the concert?'
> 'Yes, sir, on Wednesday.'
> 'And are you altogether pleased with Bath?'
> 'Yes—I like it very well.'
> 'Now I must give one smirk, and then we may be rational again.'
> Catherine turned away her head, not knowing whether she might venture to laugh.
> 'I see what you think of me,' said he gravely—'I shall make but a poor figure in your journal to-morrow.'
> 'My journal!'
> 'Yes, I know exactly what you will say: Friday, went to the Lower Rooms; wore my sprigged muslin robe with blue trimmings—plain black shoes—appeared to much advantage; but was strangely harassed by a queer, half-witted man, who would make me dance with him, and distressed me by his nonsense.'
> 'Indeed I shall say no such thing.'
> 'Shall I tell you what you ought to say?'
> 'If you please.'
> 'I danced with a very agreeable young man, introduced by Mr. King; had a great deal of conversation with him—seems a most extraordinary genius—hope I may know more of him. *That*, madam, is what I *wish* you to say.'
> 'But, perhaps, I keep no journal.'
> 'Perhaps you are not sitting in this room, and I am not sitting by you. These are points in which a doubt is equally possible. Not keep a journal! How are your absent cousins to understand the tenour of your life in Bath without one? How are

> the civilities and compliments of every day to be related as they ought to be, unless noted down every evening in a journal? How are your various dresses to be remembered, and the particular state of your complexion, and curl of your hair to be described in all their diversities, without having constant recourse to a journal?—My dear madam, I am not so ignorant of young ladies' ways as you wish to believe me; it is this delightful habit of journalizing which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Every body allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female. Nature may have done something, but I am sure it must be essentially assisted by the practice of keeping a journal.' (*NA*, pp. 18-19)

Days of the week organise in order a part of Catherine's experiences, which are crisply dissected, but the calendrical cycle prevents readers from mapping the whole chronology of *Northanger Abbey*. Obviously, the style of reckoning days operates less to inform readers than to serve a rhetorical purpose. Indeed, the brisk confirmation procedure of Catherine's Bath life, more ritualistic than explanatory, alerts us to the formal aspect of days of the week by further condensing their repetitive nature. The diurnal rhythm that surfaces through Catherine's concise answers for the sake of decorum prompts Henry to imagine a page of a journal. The substantiality of the quotation plays out the genre's bent for continuation; 'a total inattention to stops', which Henry ascribes to female diarists (*NA*, p. 20). Her evasive reply, 'perhaps, I keep no journal', augments the sense of secrecy that a journal forms; a sense that is at odds with the original intention behind the daily-based report: to share the same temporal scale with others and hence to expand a

community. The long passage about journalising traces the Janus-faced quality of days of the week, a quality that may effect both immersion and alienation. The sense of threshold, with which a journal separates inside and outside, is emphasised by another mention of the 'journal' when Catherine is in quest of evidence of 'the General's cruelty' to his wife:

> It would be impossible to explain to Eleanor the suspicions […]; nor could she therefore, in *her* presence, search for those proofs of the General's cruelty, which however they might yet have escaped discovery, she felt confident of somewhere drawing forth, in the shape of some fragmented journal, continued to the last gasp. (*NA*, p. 198)

Catherine, a suspected journal writer, would in turn become a journal reader. The unearthed journal is forecast to be 'fragmented', something that would require collecting and decoding. She imagines herself diving into intermittent dating and scrawling left on sparse papers. She becomes a parallel figure to that of the reader, who feels isolated from the daily tempo that the novel faithfully reproduces. That tempo resonates with that in some of her teenage writings, as mentioned earlier. The last words 'continued to the last gasp' are a kind of verbalised ellipsis. The journal Catherine imagines is both finished and unfinished.

In fact, the quiet transition from polite conversation to a journal passage licenses us to read *Northanger Abbey* as if it is a journal that Catherine 'perhaps' keeps. This liberty

in interpretation is encouraged by the novel's obsession with days of the week. One chapter begins:

> Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday have now passed in review before the reader; the events of each day, its hopes and fears, mortifications and pleasures have been separately stated, and the pangs of Sunday only now remain to be described, and close the week. (*NA*, p. 97)

The rapid consumption of days of the week without dwelling much on each day suggests or reveals that the use of the temporal system is more than a by-product of inveterate attention to everyday life. Despite the fact that the citation is a careless digest, the generic term 'a week' would still fall short, partly because the aim of the passage is to visually reproduce a page of a diary. The insertion 'before the reader' ontologically changes the counted days of the week from lived experiences into material characters that are inscribed on a paper – a change that similarly happens at the beginning of *Persuasion*, whereby human characters are transformed into characters printed on a page of the Baronetage. Days of the week, as a sort of cipher for readers, cease to indicate authorial perversity in the novel, turning out to be a natural outcome of journal writing. Austen's elasticity in tuning herself to genre-specific vocabularies is mirrored in her tendency to perceive genre as act. Henry commends women's mastery of 'journalizing'. The narrator

ridicules an outbreak of the 'abridger'. Catherine wonders what incentive could drive 'the writers of history' to bring forth volumes that only persecute children (*NA*, pp. 19, 31, 110). Through the enumeration of days of the week, the narrator evokes the style of routine recording just as Henry does pages ago. A difference is that the narrator gallops through the days without detailing 'hopes and fears, mortifications and pleasures'. In 'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday', then, a complex antagonism is at play; the one-by-one listing is a means to draw close to the lived time of the journal writer, but its cursory rhythm gives a side glance at novel-readers who would wish to spare no time for stopping by every day of the week. There may also be a note of graceful contempt for such hasty and vulgar people. The novelistic time of narrative and the journalistic time of daily life collide.

The breakdown of a week might also be one of the novel's innuendos about children's education. Several pages from Anna Letitia Barbauld's *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old* (1779) may strike us in this context as familiar:

> What is to day, Charles?
> To day is Sunday.
> And what is to morrow?
> To morrow will be Monday.
> And what is to morrow?
> To morrow will be Monday.

> And what will the next day be?
> The next day will be Tuesday.
> And the next day?
> Wednesday.
> And the next?
> Thursday.
> And the next?
> Friday.
> And the next?
> Saturday.
> And what will come after Saturday?
> Why then, Sunday will come again.
> Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. That makes seven days, and seven days make
> A week.[27]

By this analogy, the first sentence of the above quotation from *Northanger Abbey* becomes less constative than another kind of speech act. Like Barbauld's exercise, it induces the act of reading out each day of the week, pulling readers back from the world of meaning to the present when they are following those letters. This fusion of time notation and pedagogical practice was not a fresh invention for Austen; it dates back to *Kitty*, a similarly education-sensitive work. The case in point is Mrs Peterson's hypochondriac speech, which again bears affinity with the ensuing part of the citation from Barbauld:

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[27] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old. Part I* (Dublin: R. Jackson, 1779), pp. 5-7.

> ‘I must have caught a dreadful cold by this time—I am sure of being laid-up all the winter after it—’ Then reckoning with her fingers, ‘Let me see; This is July; the cold Weather will soon be coming in—August—September—October—November,—December—January—February—March—April—Very likely I may not be tolerable again before May.’ (*TW*, p. 200)

> And do you know how much four weeks make?
> How much?
> A month. And twelve months make a year---January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December.[28]

The mention of ‘reckoning with her fingers’ feels unnatural and unnecessary, but it becomes plausible in the context of education as an instructing gesture. Mrs Peterson’s characteristic complaints abruptly lead to the act of ‘reckoning’ for its own sake. The transition carries a tint of deliberate artificiality, opening up a possibility that the story of *Kitty* so far was merely a pretext for learning activity. What seemed just a casual assimilation of the shibboleth of a particular genre, whether it is textbook or journal, ceases to seem partial and becomes prescriptive, a process which reminds us of the ambiguous status of this ‘novella’. Once the reckoned months of the year overlap with a textbook, we are made aware of an unflattering coincidence between the ‘tormented child’ and impatient novel readers, including us. A similar equivocation survives in *Northanger*

[28] Barbauld, pp. 7-8.

Abbey, where Austen famously lets readers decide whether the novel is didactic or not: 'I leave it to be settled by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience' (*NA*, p. 261).

In the case of *Kitty*, the calendrical enumeration is linked with one character, nagging Mrs Peterson, who in turn characterises it for readers as inconsequential, even irritating. In *Northanger Abbey*, the same office falls on General Tilney, who deliberates over the schedule for an excursion to Henry's parish:

> 'Let me see; Monday will be a busy day with you [Henry], we will not come on Monday; and Tuesday will be a busy one with me. I expect my surveyor from Brockham with his report in the morning; and afterwards I cannot in decency fail attending the club. I really could not face my acquaintance if I staid away now; for, as I am known to be in the country, it would be taken exceedingly amiss; and it is a rule with me, Miss Morland, never to give offence to any of my neighbours, if a small sacrifice of time and attention can prevent it. They are a set of very worthy men. They have half a buck from Northanger twice a year; and I dine with them whenever I can. Tuesday, therefore, we may say is out of the question. But on Wednesday, I think, Henry, you may expect us; and we shall be with you early, that we may have time to look about us. Two hours and three quarters will carry us to Woodston, I suppose; we shall be in the carriage by ten; so, about a quarter before one on Wednesday, you may look for us.' (*NA*, p. 216)

The General's consideration forces readers, as well as the characters present, to make 'a small sacrifice of time and attention'. His scrupulosity, in tandem with his air of importance, stages the days of the week as a kind of jargon. Their association with

gentlemanly sociability in the quotation, however, makes it clear that the sense of inaccessibility is only in the eyes of readers. Austen's days of the week are less serviceable in locating an episode in temporal grids, and not just because they are sometimes phrased in a form of free indirect style warped by the boredom, hope, or longing that characters foster, as Freya Johnston observes about the author's use of dates in general; it is also because the time notation itself becomes metonymic of the perhaps intolerable continuation of everyday life.[29] This is not to say the cyclical temporality is devoid of content, which Sherman's arguments consistently deny; but that it comes to look 'empty'.[30]

Full listing of the seven days of the week exposes readers' itch for narrative time that has already undergone pruning. The technique is indirectly referred to in the conversation between Fanny and Henry Crawford that is held during her forced stay at Portsmouth:

> 'You have been here a month, I think?' said he.
>
> 'No. Not quite a month.—It is only four weeks to-morrow since I left Mansfield.'
>
> 'You are a most accurate and honest reckoner. I should call that a month.'
>
> 'I did not arrive here till Tuesday evening.' (*MP*, p. 475)

[29] Johnston, *Jane Austen, Early and Late*, p. 58.
[30] See Sherman, pp. 34-35.

Fanny is as precise a 'reckoner' of days as Austen. Still, this precision about time illuminates less the story's chronology, as Woolf guessed, than the heroine's helpless frustration with the situation she is thrown into. Her lack of efficacy in the Portsmouth household makes her a prisoner of the calendrical cycle, which the syntax of the sentences quoted below suggests:

> [E]very Sunday dressed them [the Price family] in their cleanest skins and best attire. Sunday always brought this comfort to Fanny, and on this Sunday she felt it more than ever. […] Sunday made her [Mrs Price] a very creditable and tolerably cheerful looking Mrs. Price. (*MP*, p. 473)

Placed at the outset of sentence, each 'Sunday' here looks like a headline in Austen's letters, signalling the change of days. What used to be a temporal indicator is raised to the subject, as if a journalistic style of writing interferes with and presides over the life of the Prices. The casual 'always' seems to confirm that the impatient generalisation is Fanny's inner thoughts, as might be recorded in the journal we can imagine that she keeps. The grammatical elevation of 'Sunday' plays out the firmness of her empirical conviction of the causal relationships between Sunday and comfort, that she attains at (almost) the end of her uniform four weeks. The verbs immediately placed after 'Sunday', with the skipped

preposition ‘on’ that normally comes before it, embody the automated quickness with which Fanny expects a humble treat: the quickness of conditioned reflex.

The syntactical subjugation to days of the week to which Fanny resigns herself does not affect the Crawfords. Both Mary and Henry seem to have a thorough command over their relationship to the temporality in which they live:

> ‘I wish you a better fate, Miss Price, than to be the wife of a man whose amiableness depends upon his own sermons; for though he may preach himself into a good humour every Sunday, it will be bad enough to have him quarrelling about green geese from Monday morning till Saturday night.’ (*MP*, p. 131)
>
> ‘And I do not know that I should be fond of preaching often; now and then, perhaps, once or twice in the spring, after being anxiously expected for half a dozen Sundays together; but not for a constancy; it would not do for a constancy.’ (*MP*, p. 395)

Days of the week figure as but a peripheral component in those sentence structures. The indifferent plurals (‘every Sunday’; ‘half a dozen Sundays’) suggest the sister and the brother are capable of living outside calendrical recurrence thanks to their financial security and psychological independence. Those temporal languages characterise their thought and background rather than identifying the time when they take a certain action. Their rather rough sense of time should not be confused with their moral remissness; a conclusion that the contrast with Fanny and their mutual depreciation of the clergy are

likely to nudge us into. (Henry's praise of her 'honest' enumeration sounds rather an absurdly far-fetched compliment from a glib talker in love.) Their temporal vantage point makes them both semi-character and semi-reader: namely, a metaphor of the reader. Henry's response to such a tenacious reckoner as Fanny epitomises that of readers to General Tilney or to other examples of journalistic temporality that Austen introduces. The Crawfords' being metafictional and in-between rather subjugates them to the convenience of readers. Henry converts Fanny's four weeks (minus one day) into a month, mediating the gap between Fanny living within a self-contained temporal universe and readers outside it. Her determined reserve against Henry corresponds to that of a character to a reader, or that of a journal writer to an unauthorised reader.

Mary's control over days of the week, however, is not as secure as it might seem. Later in the novel, her yearning for Edmund's return after their quarrel synchronises her perception of time with that of Fanny in Portsmouth:

> Her vexation did not end with the week. All this was bad, but she had still more to feel when Friday came round again and brought no Edmund—when Saturday came and still no Edmund—and when, through the slight communication with the other family which Sunday produced, she learnt that he had actually written home to defer his return, having promised to remain some days longer with his friend! (*MP*, p. 332)

The time notation brings Fanny and Mary closer together, despite the general assumption that their characters are established in diametrical opposition to one another. Sometimes Mary Crawford is able to govern temporal perception. At other times she governs her living time. This dynamism in the changing relations with time is at play especially in her representation of days of the week. The privatised time frame meets works of fiction that are intended for publication and sharing.

While historical writings clean up days of the week for achieving an unobstructed temporal overview, Austen conceives a plan to let days of the week sort out history, as in her letter to Martha Lloyd (12–13 November 1800), which Chapter 2 has examined:

> I will repeat [Robert Henry's *History of Great Britain*] to you in any manner you may prefer, either in a loose, disultary, unconnected strain, or dividing my recital as the Historian divides it himself, into seven parts, The Civil & Military—Religion—Constitution—Learning & Learned Men—Arts & Sciences—Commerce Coins & Shipping—& Manners;—So that for every evening of the week there will be a different subject; The friday's lot, Commerce, Coin & Shipping, You will find the least entertaining; but the next Eveng:'s portion will make amends.— (*L*, pp. 61-62)

Austen penetrates the implications of Henry's fresh thematic arrangement, which Mark Salber Phillips glosses as: 'a history whose comprehensiveness does not so much enlarge the scope of history's traditional public concerns as open the way for specialist readers to

reconstruct the narrative according to their own particular needs'.[31] She approves Henry's inventive gesture not just by being impressed with his unique ordering but by rearranging his arrangement herself, distributing subjects according to each day of the week. There is an odd parallel between Fanny and Mary in *Mansfield Park* and Henry's *History* (with its author's name accidentally relevant to the novel) that overcomes the discrepancy of character and genre. Austen confines and divides the genre of history, traditionally considered male, public, and bustling, into days of the week, forcing it to be accommodated to the calendrical cycle by which her female characters are compelled to abide. The assumed superiority of *kairos* is overturned, which nevertheless is not followed by the triumph of *chronos* either. Personal *kairos* is already burgeoning in the narrative that the pleasure of Saturday is a due treat to offset the boredom of Friday. Austen's writings register the difficulty of pinning down the whole of a self-contained work to either *kairos* or *chronos*. The author and her characters move back and forth between different temporalities – temporalities that Sherman and Kermode define.

The Absence of 'Ending': Letters and Expectations

[31] Phillips, p. 91.

The fidgety temporality in Austen's fiction finds its counterparts in her letters. The fact that her days of the week work to preserve the autonomy of characters' temporality implies the polyrhythmic structure of her works, one that comprises the time of readers or narrators. It is the writer's time that is repeatedly felt in epistolary interaction. Letters are unique among Austen's compositions, for her authorship is not masqueraded by any literary personae.[32] The writing self and the writing now are constantly put forward not only by their diaristic aspect and the custom of dating but also paradoxically by the interruption of arriving letters that distract a writer from absorption. Besides, according to Samuel Johnson, date means '[t]he time at which a letter is written, marked at the end or the beginning'.[33] Dates were closely associated with letter writing. No wonder it is the epistolary *Love and Freindship* that first introduces the date of creation or transcription to Austen's teenage writings.

Many critics have treated Austen's letters as secondary to her fiction or as just an evidential reinforcement of their arguments. This is probably because, as Madeleine Callaghan and Anthony Howe point out in regard to studies of Romanticism, 'letters tend

[32] This is except for Austen's letter to the publisher B. Crosby (5 April 1809) to retrieve her manuscript of *Susan*, a work that later turned into *Northanger Abbey*. The manuscript was sold to Crosby in 1803, but it remained unpublished for no obvious reason. Austen wrote the letter famously under the pseudonym of 'MAD': that is, Mrs Ashton Dennis (*L*, p. 182).
[33] *Dictionary* [accessed 7 October]. The definition comes first in the entry of 'date'.

[to] be thought of not as the business of literary critics but of biographers'.[34] One exception is Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade's *In Search of Jane Austen: The Language of Letters*. Her monograph conducts 'historical sociolinguistic analysis', evaluating Austen's letters as the best mirror available of her 'natural spoken language'.[35] Fulfilling as Tieken-Boon van Ostade's examination of Austen's epistles are, her 'search' for Jane Austen and of her 'spontaneous speech' disregards Austen's literary contrivance in letter writing, staying within the distinction between fiction and the journal that prescribes Sherman's and Kermode's compass.[36] It would be worthwhile to bring Austen's letters and fiction within the same frame in order to argue how the rhythm of correspondence, sending and receiving letters, parallels the temporal mobility in Austen's fiction; a type of mobility that is prompted by physical exchange of letters.

Austen's letters are quite self-referential. One routine in her letters, especially when addressing her close sister Cassandra, is that of complimenting her correspondent as a diligent (or negligent) letter writer. For example:

> Dear me! What is to become of me! Such a long Letter!—Two & forty Lines in the 2^{d} Page.—Like Harriot Byron I ask, what am I to do with my Gratitude?—I can do

[34] Madeleine Callaghan and Anthony Howe ed., *Romanticism and the Letter* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 8.
[35] Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, *In Search of Jane Austen: The Language of Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 6.
[36] Tieken-Boon van Ostade, p. 6.

> nothing but thank you & go on. (*L*, p. 244; 12 October 1813)
>
> Your close-written letter makes me quite ashamed of my wide lines; you have sent me a great deal of matter, most of it very welcome. (*L*, p. 157; 25 October 1808)
>
> I shall take care not to count the lines of your last Letter; You have obliged me to eat humble-pie indeed. (*L*, p. 204; 29 November 1812)

Austen's evaluation of letters partially depends on their material fullness. She is such a vigilant reckoner of lines; the slight difference between forty and 'two and forty' lines counts for her. Her pleasure lies in the density of characters and lines in letters as well as in their semantic contents. This twofold appreciation reveals Austen as an avid devourer of epistolary response. Her coveting gesture, though shrouded by hilarious self-satirising and decorous hyperbole, brings her closer to Fanny Price, who languishes in Portsmouth counting dates.

The analogy between counting lines and time is reminiscent of the eighteenth-century ideal of letter writing, which Austen mentions in one letter to Cassandra (3–5 January 1801):

> I have now attained the true art of letter-writing, which we are always told, is to express on paper exactly what one would say to the same person by word of mouth; I have been talking to you almost as fast as I could the whole of this letter. (*L*, p. 71)

The familiar letter as 'pseudo-oral form' was widely advocated.[37] One origin of Austen's phrasing could be Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belle Lettres* (1783), which she read: 'Epistolary Writing becomes a distinct species of Composition, subject to the cognizance of Criticism, only or chiefly, when it is of the easy and familiar kind; when it is conversation carried on upon paper, between two friends at a distance.'[38] 'The eighteenth century's wish-fulfilling notion that epistolary language is naked and authentic', in Julia Epstein's terms, gets a moralistic turn in David Fordyce's *The New and Complete British Letter-Writer* (1790): 'As letters are the copies of conversation, just consider what you would say to your friend if he was present, and write down the very words you would speak, which render your epistle unaffected, and intelligible.'[39] Austen's take on these instructions is slightly off-centre; what interests her is less the elegant paradox of feigning 'unaffectedness' than the coordination of the speed in writing letters and talking to friends. Her letters are dominated by a kind of resignation – a realisation that letters are always to be outpaced by conversation. A letter to Cassandra (26 October 1813) is conscious of its own helplessness in the face of spoken words: 'It is

[37] Julia Epstein, 'Jane Austen's Juvenilia and the Female Epistolary Tradition', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 21.4 (1985), 399-416 (p. 399). See also Joe Bray, 'The Tension of Jane Austen's Epistolary Style', in *Romanticism and the Letter*, ed. by Madeleine Callaghan and Anthony Howe (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 133-46.
[38] Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 2 vols (London: W. Strahan, 1783), II, 297.
[39] Epstein, p. 414; David Fordyce, *The New and Complete British Letter-Writer* (London: C. Cooke, 1790), p. 24.

throwing a Letter away to send it by a visitor, there is never convenient time for reading it—& Visitor can tell most things as well' (*L*, pp. 255-56). Letters are permanently tied down to the past since 'time will always outpace prose' as Sherman puts it; an argument made by John Donne: '"that which you call *present*, is not *now* the same that it was, when you began to call it so in this *Line*, (before you sound that word, *present*, or that *Monosyllable*, *now*, the present, & the *Now* is past)."'[40] In *Pride and Prejudice*, Bingley shows some impatience with written words, because they are forever doomed to be stale: '"My ideas flow so rapidly that I have not time to express them—by which means my letters sometimes convey no ideas at all to my correspondents"' (*PP*, p. 52). While Darcy attributes Bingley's 'humility' to the 'indirect boast' of 'a rapidity of thought', their creator well knew that letters never catch up with pronounced words or flowing ideas regardless of the intellectual prowess of an individual (*PP*, p. 53). Austen, a vigorous correspondent, changes the pursued harmony between letter and conversation into a rivalry – though it is a hopeless race for letters. The use of these letters in criticism as sociohistorical and biographical evidence appears to translate the eighteenth-century instruction that letters *should be* free of affectation into a prescription that her letters *are* free of affectation. On the contrary, her letters rethink and reinterpret this compositional

[40] Sherman, p. 44; The passage by Jonne Donne is quoted by Sherman, p. 44.

ideal. According to the testimony of Austen's cousin Philadelphia Walter, Austen at twelve was indeed 'whimsical & affected'.[41]

Joseph Kestner observes the stylistic consciousness in Austen's letters, arguing with reference to Tzvetan Todorov's idea of 'the *émetteur* "the sender" and the *récepteur* "the receiver"': 'the "writer" of a letter is, as a result, composed of three persons, himself as previous *récepteur*, as *émetteur*; and as observer of the addressee, the future *récepteur*'.[42] Although Kestner reckons this continued reciprocation latent in Austen's epistolary phraseology to be an archetype of the dialogue in her published novels, she rather alerts us to the time lag that makes letters fall short of conversation.[43] In her matter-of-fact letter to John Murray on the publication of *Emma* (3 November 1815), she prioritises the convenience of in-person meeting: 'A short conversation may perhaps do more than much Writing' (*L*, p. 307). This exchange with Murray takes place after she began working on *Persuasion* on 8 August 1815. It is not so odd, then, that the business-like preference for fast communication finds its parallel in one of the most earnestly romantic scenes among Austen's fiction; Wentworth's letter to Anne that discharges his feelings concludes with these words: 'A word, a look will be enough to decide whether I enter your father's house

[41] Le Faye, *Jane Austen: a Family Record*, p. 64.
[42] Joseph Kestner, 'The Letters of Jane Austen: The Writer as *Émetteur* / *Récepteur*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 14.3 (1978), 249-68 (pp. 259, 266).
[43] Kestner, p. 267.

this evening, or never' (*P*, p. 258).[44] To this, Anne responds later when Wentworth joined her, who walking with Charles, blissful and agitated:

> 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. (*P*, p. 260)

Wentworth is not calm enough to wait for a return letter, nor is Anne to sit and compose one. Just like business transaction, lovers' impetuosity dismisses sluggish epistle. In a way, Anne's having recourse to a meaningful look (not even a pronounced word) re-enacts a serious betrayal of the written word by a 'bookish' person who is infatuated with the power of prose and poetry.[45] Wentworth's letter, despite inciting a charged reaction, exposes the failure to reproduce actual verbal interaction.

Northanger Abbey, which was originally published together with *Persuasion*, surely winks at the tradition of epistolary fiction:

> Sally, or rather Sarah […] must from situation be at this time the intimate friend and confidante of her sister. It is remarkable, however, that she neither insisted on

[44] Compare a scene from *Emma*, where Jane Fairfax argues for the attraction of letters against John Knightley and brings up the similar distinction in topic of letters: 'You are speaking of letters of business; mine are letters of friendship' (*E*, p. 317).
[45] The Musgrove family guesses Anne turned down Charles's proposal because he was not 'learned and bookish enough to please Lady Russell' (*P*, p. 95).

> Catherine's writing by every post, nor exacted her promise of transmitting the character of every new acquaintance, nor a detail of every interesting conversation that Bath might produce. (*NA*, p. 11)

The departure from the convention does not imply the novel's indifference to the format; on the contrary, *Northanger Abbey* shares with *Persuasion* the theme of a letter that is often outwitted by the spoken word. Sent off from the abbey, Catherine has no choice but to return home by post-chaise:

> A heroine in a hack post-chaise, is such a blow upon sentiment, as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand. Swiftly therefore shall her post-boy drive through the village, amid the gaze of Sunday groups, and speedy shall be her descent from it. […]
>
> Her father, mother, Sarah, George, and Harriet, all assembled at the door, to welcome her with affectionate eagerness, was a sight to awaken the best feelings of Catherine's heart […].
>
> Reluctantly, and with much hesitation, did she then begin what might perhaps, at the end of half an hour, be termed by the courtesy of her hearers, an explanation. (*NA*, pp. 241-42)

Sarah finally receives not a letter but her sister. Just as Anne dares not trust to any letter, Catherines serves as a messenger of her own. At the inauguration of mail coach in 1784, as Mary A. Favret states, 'the post […] now transported both letters and bodies'.[46] The

[46] Favret, p. 16. For the history of British mailing industry, see Howard Robinson, *The British Post Office: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948).

overlapping of Catherine and letter refers to the odd phenomenon whereby the analogy-cum-rivalry of letter and conversation is unexpectedly embodied by the postal distribution of letter and human body together. The ending of the novel thus practises a parody of the epistolary novel by historicising and physicalising the convention.

The mediation of the post office is far from transparent for Austen and her characters. The third-person voice that offers a 'conclusion' at the end of *Lady Susan* is anxious about the loss that the mail service would suffer from the cessation of its fictional correspondence:

> This Correspondence, by a meeting between some of the Parties & a separation between the others, could not, to the great detriment of the Post office Revenue, be continued longer.—Very little assistance to the State could be derived from the Epistolary Intercourse of M^{rs}. Vernon & her Neice, for the former soon perceived by the stile of Frederica's Letters, that they were written under her Mother's inspection, & therefore deferring all particular enquiry till she could make it personally in Town, ceased writing minutely or often.— (*LM*, p. 75)

The letters in *Lady Susan*, shorter than those in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) or Frances Burney's *Evelina*, visualise the aspect of correspondence as physical action – the frequent intersection of letters from various quarters. The handling of all those letters by post office amazes Jane Fairfax:

> ‘The post-office is a wonderful establishment!’ said she.—
> ‘The regularity and dispatch of it! If one thinks of all that it has to do, and all that it does so well, it is really astonishing!’ […]
> ‘So seldom that any negligence or blunder appears! So seldom that a letter, among the thousands that are constantly passing about the kingdom, is even carried wrong—and not one in a million, I suppose, actually lost! And when one considers the variety of hands, and of bad hands too, that are to be deciphered, it increases the wonder!’ (*E*, p. 320)

Her uncharacteristic exclamation was intended to distract Mrs Elton from bothering to have her servants fetch Jane’s letters. At the same time, that ‘thousands [of letters] […] are constantly passing about the kingdom’ indicates that Frank Churchill’s letter quoted in the novel is originally embedded in epistolary intercourse, and in innumerable letters crisscrossing all over the country. Austen allows just one letter in each of her published novels. Then, focusing exclusively on such fictional ones obscures the attention to epistolary reciprocity that regularly bubbles up in her personal letters but which has received less critical attention.

Austen’s own letters are haunted by the sense of impaired mutuality caused by the physical task of writing and sending letters. The discrepancy between letter and conversation arises also from the fact that letters come intermittently and unexpectedly. Frank’s letter to Mrs Weston shares his creator’s epistolary locutions: ‘“If I made myself intelligible yesterday, this letter will be expected; but expected or not, I know it will be

read with candour and indulgence"' (*E*, p. 476). Many of Austen's letters to Cassandra are brimming with the disappointed expectation of return letters. They are poised between the future fondly conceived in the past and the present, poignantly confirmed against that earlier expectation. Thus, one letter addressed to Cassandra (25 November 1798) shows Austen's typical complaint: 'I expected to have heard from you this morning, but no letter is come' (*L*, p. 22). The conversational alternation is troubled equally by Cassandra's silence and by Jane's bombardment. In another letter (14–16 January 1801), Austen apologises for her epistolary harassment:

> Poor Miss Austen!—It appears to me that I have rather oppressed you of late by the frequency of my letters. You had hoped not to hear from me again before tuesday, but Sunday shewed you with what a merciless Sister you had to deal.—I cannot recall the past, but you shall not hear from me quite so often in future. (*L*, p. 75)

The 'Miss Austen' comes from the appellation Jane uses in the address on her letters to Cassandra, or it might be a form of free indirect style mixed with the imagined voices of deliverers, who would pity the '[p]oor' pestered receiver. While the lowercase 'tuesday' sits well under the control of Cassandra's own temporal scheme, again the towering 'Sunday' forces her into heterogeneous rhythm of time, one that is set by Jane's affectionate attack of letters. The interruption by letters is a sign of initiative and authority,

as Sherman points out in the case of *Evelina*:

> She [Evelina] initially devises her journal letters as a means of remaining in contact with Villars's wisdom and submitting to his judgement […]. Over the course of the novel, though, the imperatives of the journal letter's time form carry her away. Her copious, continuous, headlong narrative outpaces Villars's prudent interventions, to the point where as a writer of ordinary (rather than journal) letters, he can barely keep up.[47]

Austen's conscious unevenness in time and communication unveils the fact that correspondence is no more than a sham conversation, as Keith Stewart puts: 'no letter writer can respond immediately to the real presence of his correspondent; the imagined presence may be there, but in a sense one talks alone'.[48]

Austen does not allow herself to remain submissive to uncertain replies. In a way, she genuinely means it when she says: 'I cannot recall the past, but you shall not hear from me quite so often in future' (*L*, p. 75). The characteristically careless handling of the past is contrasted by the confidence about the future. To fend off the frustration that the time gap in correspondence causes, she endows herself a power to decide the present and the future. Thus, another letter to Cassandra (18–19 December 1798) reads:

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[47] Sherman, p. 260.
[48] Keith Stewart, 'Towards Defining an Aesthetic for the Familiar Letter in Eighteenth-Century England', *Prose Studies*, 5.2 (1982), 179-92 (p. 181).

> Your letter came quite as soon as I expected, and so your letters will always do, because I have made it a rule not to expect them till they come, in which I think I consult the ease of us both.— (*L*, p. 26)

Austen determines that her expectation arises without fail exactly when Cassandra's letter arrives. The hilarious assumption that the coincidence can be forged between expectation and delivery seems to be a joke about a privilege of hindsight that a historian or an author of fiction enjoys. For those who are not blessed with such an authorial prerogative to edit, expectation can bring pain. That is why Elizabeth Bennet appreciates only the expectation phase and fears the moment of its (un)fulfilment. She exults in the prospect of a trip to the Lake District almost solely because it can provide her with the unexhausted food for expectation and retrospection:

> 'What are men to rocks and mountains? Oh! what hours of transport we shall spend! And when we *do* return, it shall not be like other travellers, without being able to give one accurate idea of any thing. We *will* know where we have gone—we *will* recollect what we have seen. Lakes, mountains, and rivers, shall not be jumbled together in our imaginations; nor, when we attempt to describe any particular scene, will we begin quarrelling about its relative situation. Let *our* first effusions be less insupportable than those of the generality of travellers.' (*PP*, pp. 174-75)

The benefit of hindsight enables us to realise that Elizabeth's pointed criticism of the

'jumbl[ing]' of '[l]akes, mountains, and rivers' is virtually a harbinger of Fanny Price's exercise of free association, as discussed in Chapter 2. Austen has Elizabeth practise a kind of prolepsis over these consecutive novels. Elizabeth's expectation overlaps with Austen's own expectation of her next novel, whose inception takes place in February 1811, well before the publication of *Pride and Prejudice* (*JAFM*, V, 297-98). It is as if there is a dialogue between the two novels, through which their author reflects on the mystifying nature of memory and expectation.

It is not the case, however, that Elizabeth's opinion works to pin Fanny's winged imagination down to earth; nor that the rational former throws cold water on the irrational latter. The truth is that Elizabeth has her own way of 'jumbl[ing]'. Just as Fanny's mind travels reworked geography far and wide, Elizabeth's transcends the temporal order of the past, the present, and the future, like the historian of Austen's *History*. She does not think of the future in which she enjoys the Lake District; but the future in which she looks back to the past in which she enjoys the place. The moment of the very experience is missing. It is no more than a pretext for the act of longing and remembering. Elizabeth's sense of time is very Wordsworthian – she resembles the most celebrated poet of the Lakes.

The absence of expected *kairos* derives from Elizabeth's dread of future letdown:

> [S]he found, what has been sometimes found before, that an event to which she had looked forward with impatient desire, did not in taking place, bring all the satisfaction she had promised herself. It was consequently necessary to name some other period for the commencement of actual felicity; to have some other point on which her wishes and hopes might be fixed, and by again enjoying the pleasure of anticipation, console herself for the present, and prepare for another disappointment. Her tour to the Lakes was now the object of her happiest thoughts; it was her best consolation for all the uncomfortable hours, which the discontentedness of her mother and Kitty made inevitable; and could she have included Jane in the scheme, every part of it would have been perfect.
>
> 'But it is fortunate,' thought she 'that I have something to wish for. Were the whole arrangement complete, my disappointment would be certain. But here, by carrying with me one ceaseless source of regret in my sister's absence, I may reasonably hope to have all my expectations of pleasure realized. A scheme of which every part promises delight, can never be successful; and general disappointment is only warded off by the defence of some little peculiar vexation.'
>
> When Lydia went away, she promised to write very often and very minutely to her mother and Kitty; but her letters were always long expected, and always very short. Those to her mother, contained little else, than that they were just returned from the library, where such and such officers had attended them. (*PP*, pp. 263-64)

Elizabeth's philosophy of expectation is juxtaposed with a complaint about the sparse responses from Lydia. This thematic movement implies that Elizabeth's sense of time has an epistolary nature. The underestimation of future accomplishment indicates the sad resilience of a mind that is accustomed to disappointment – a kind of resilience Austen acquires through waiting for a letter in vain. The combination of quotation marks and the 'thought she' tag lets us imagine Elizabeth thinking out loud and trying to dissuade herself

from hoping too much.

The temporality Elizabeth feels does not conform to Sherman's concept of '*Tick, Tick, Tick*', for she needs some kind of end in view. But Kermode's idea of 'ending' does not apply either, because the endpoint is not only awaited but remembered. The 'ending' ceases to be an ending, being reduced to an occasional pain that one lets pass with a frown. Elizabeth's relativisation of *kairos* and her preference for retrospection can be metaphorically characterised as historical. Hayden White states that Georg Hegel likens history to a drama – a drama that consists of *kairotic* endings as 'tragedy'. Those 'tragedies', however, are just stages, and the drama as a whole, one that is scheduled to continue forever, is characterised as 'comedy':

> The important point is that Hegel asked us to regard ourselves as actors in a drama which, although its actual end is unknowable, displays the order and continuity of a well-wrought play or a dialectical argument, and which therefore gives us good reasons for believing that the resolution of this drama not only will not be meaningless but will not even be Tragic. The Tragic vision is given its due as a means of illuminating a certain aspect of our existence and a certain phase of both the evolution of a specific culture and the evolution of civilization in general. But it is enclosed within the higher perspective of the Comic nature of the whole.[49]

The Hegelian view of history, undercutting the importance of 'Tragedy' in comparison

[49] Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 130.

with ‘Comedy’, bridges Elizabeth and Austen’s historian even more closely. The historian declares, when describing Edward IV: ‘One of Edward’s Mistresses was Jane Shore, who has had a play written about her, but it is a tragedy & therefore not worth reading.’ (*TW*, pp. 123-24). Elizabeth’s dislike of ‘ending’ may be a family trait of Austen’s creations, for the historian, as Chapter 1 argues, averts her eyes from the death of Charles I. The comic nature of Austen’s *History* and her historical view more generally feeds not just on the teasing of historical figures but on her formal indifference to death and other kinds of ‘ending’; they register only an inauguration of another phase. That indifference is a kind of bravado that covers up the regular mortification suffered by a thirsty letter recipient.

Temporal Discontinuity

The delegation of ‘ending’ that applies to Austen’s writings is allied with the business of the letter-writer and the historian. Just as the ideal letter exchange should never end, history is supposed or wished to be never-ending. In terms of history, it is unfinished also because the ultimate objective of historian is to predict the future by extending chains of causality. Arthur C. Danto phrases causal history as ‘“the whole of history”’, something that is distinguished from ‘“the whole past”’. He argues that the ambition of the

philosophy of history lies in uncovering this '"whole of history"', one that ranges from the historical past to 'the whole *historical* future', and in prophesying based on the knowledge of past causal relationships.[50] To assume the existence of '"the whole of history"', that is 'bearing out some divine plan', Danto points out, is not only 'theological' but novelistic. Because '"the whole of history"' is unavailable to mortals, the historian-cum-prophet is no more than an ideal that is only fulfilled in the novel, especially in its second reading:

> I emphasize that it is only retrospectively that we are entitled to say that an episode has a given specific meaning, and then only with respect to the total work. But information concerning the total work is just what we lack when we are going through it for the first time: then, if something strikes us as meaningless, we have to wait and see whether it is so; and if something seems to us to have a certain meaning, then again, we must wait and see if we are right.

> Unlike those of us who have the whole novel before us, and are able to say with some authority what is the significance of this event or that, the philosopher of history does not have before him the whole of history. He has at best a fragment—the whole past. But he thinks in terms of the whole of history, and seeks to discover what the structure of this whole must be like, solely on the basis of the fragment he already has, and at the same time seeks to say what is the meaning of parts of this fragment in the light of the whole structure which he has projected.[51]

[50] Danto, pp. 3, 9.
[51] Danto, pp. 8, 9.

Danto deconstructs the binary of novel and (philosophical) history; a major obstacle that has hampered the criticism on Austen in connection with history writing. By throwing away some of her stories undone, Austen forbids the authorial privilege of 'the whole history', which we can simulate exclusively through the novel. Her narrator behaves less as a philosophical historian or a novelist than as an immediate witness. She pretends to be in the dark about how the journeys of Sir William and Mr Clifford are going to carry on. (Or perhaps she did not have any idea how their stories would have ended.)

As has been discussed, Austen often minimises the significance of 'ending' in favour of lived time. Her temporality marks a decided departure from a belief that causal links will bring us to the preordained ending. At the same time, however, it is also true that her imagination in her later career chooses the novel as its vehicle. Chapter 3 arbitrates this contradiction by concluding that Austen posits narrative, especially the novel, as a wish fulfilment of the philosophical historian. She discloses the elephant in the room – the fact that '[h]istory is […] the basic analogy for the narrator's own enterprise', as J. Hillis Miller remarks in regard to George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–72).[52] Austen's narrators call our attention to the metafictional process by which they convert lived time into 'the whole history', namely a novel. They are both a witness and a historian-cum-novelist.

[52] J. Hillis Miller, 'Narrative and History', *ELH*, 41.3 (1974), 455-73 (p. 463).

Their narration alternates between expectation and retrospection. This temporal splicing causes an inevitable rupture in our move from the beginning to the ending, impeding the formation of the familiar concept of progress. For Austen, what seems to matter is not whether human beings actually progress but the realisation that we *cannot* ascertain whether human beings progress. Her scepticism does not fall into sterile cynicism. It is rather an appreciation of our natural predilection for expectation and its distortion as a primordial drive for fiction writing.

'The whole history' typically deploys what Danto calls the 'narrative sentence':

> Their [narrative sentences'] most general characteristic is that they refer to at least two time-separated events though they only *describe* (are only *about*) the earliest event to which they refer. Commonly they take the past tense, and indeed it would be odd […] for them to take any other tense.[53]

Danto offers examples of narrative sentences and typical predicates that they employ:

> For it to be true that Petrarch opened the Renaissance, it is logically required that the Renaissance take place, though in point of fact the Renaissance might have taken place whether Petrarch opened it or not. Again, for it to be true that Piero da Vinci begat a universal genius, his offspring (in this case Leonardo) logically *had* to become a universal genius. Other examples [of predicates in narrative sentences] would be: 'correctly predicted', 'instigated', 'began', preceded', gave rise to', and so on. Each of these terms, to be true of an event E-1, logically requires the

[53] Danto, p. 143.

> occurrence of an event temporally later than E-1, and sentences making use of such terms in the obvious way will then be narrative sentences.[54]

Witnesses are incapable of being assured that 'Piero da Vinci begets a universal genius' in the present tense, entrapped in what Lady Macbeth terms the 'ignorant present'.[55] While a narrative sentence saves characters from falling victim to dramatic irony, it subjugates the autonomy of their epistemology to teleological cause. This unifying force, however, does not dictate Austen's *History*. Even in her hindsight, the historian with 'partial' knowledge lets the 'ignorant present' remain ignorant. In a sense, this exposure of inevitable ignorance signals a respect for historical figures. The historian puts herself in their shoes by unlearning the wisdom of later ages. The famous 'partiality' then refers not only to partisan attachment but to the uncertainty to which the present tense is doomed.

Austen's *History* and her novels do not dispense with temporal dichotomy. Rather, the debunking of the narrative sentence is executed in different vehicles. In *Northanger Abbey*, for instance, the narrator displays the artificiality of such a rhetoric by making prophecies in the course of his or her own novel – prophecies that can never fail. It is rightly guessed that Catherine Morland will metamorphose into a heroine when she turns

[54] Danto, p. 157.
[55] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (1606), ed. by Kenneth Muir, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), I. 5. 57.

fifteen:

> But from fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine: she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives. (*NA*, p. 7)

The nuance of the predicate ‘must’ is equivocal. A heroine has a duty to read books, but it is actually more a fate than a duty, for the narrator is determined that his or her own creation ‘must’ read books. It is also preordained that Catherine runs into a hero:

> There was not one lord in the neighbourhood; no—not even a baronet. There was not one family among their acquaintance 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.
>
> But when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way. (*NA*, p. 9)

Catherine ‘must and will’ find her future partner, and she does. It is an obligation by which she ‘must’ abide. The prophecy is shown to be a fixed game. Despite Catherine’s infatuation with the gothic past, the novel regularly bows to its own fixed future. The narrator is ‘end-oriented’ throughout the novel, even before we notice its ‘tell-tale

compression of the pages' (*NA*, p. 259).[56] The historicity of *Northanger Abbey* depends not only on its gothic landscape but also on its tongue-in-cheek mimicry of a philosophical historian, who prophesises the awaiting, inevitable future.

The narrative of Austen's novels is overshadowed by this idea of 'the whole history', one that is created by and hence known only to herself. In a way, the famous opening gambit of *Pride and Prejudice* is a major spoiler:

> It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.
>
> However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. (*PP*, p. 3)

'A single man in possession of a good fortune' *has to* be looking for a wife. The maxim *will* naturally be accomplished in the end. The narrator is sure both Bingley and Darcy are going to oblige the neighbourhood (after faint defiance from the latter). At the same time, the 'must' is an instance of free indirect style mixed with communal chitchat. The third-person statement is a composite of middle-class aspiration and empirical insight. The irony is that the conclusion (or expectation) of the community corresponds with the

[56] Lodge, p. 225.

authorial foresight of the narrator. Here, the 'ignorant present' is oddly in harmony with 'the whole history'. In predicting the surrender of the eligible bachelors, the former is as knowing as the latter.

In the unfinished *Sanditon*, the narrator displays less confidence as an infallible prophet. Austen's favourite 'must' is toned down into 'should' when Lady Denham, 'a great lady', is first introduced:

> Every neighbourhood should have a great lady.—The great lady of Sanditon was Lady Denham; and in their journey from Willingden to the coast Mr. Parker gave Charlotte a more detailed account of her than had been called for before. (*LM*, p. 150)

The pause created by the dash appears as if to grant us a glimpse of authorial uncertainty about the characterisation of this lady. The predicate 'should' makes the narrator less a caricature of the philosophical historian. The inequality of knowledge about the plot between the narrator and the author happens to come off well in *Sanditon*, for it was accidentally aborted. If I am allowed to offer one narrative sentence, the decrease in the omnipotence of a narrator anticipated that *Sanditon* would have no ending.[57]

[57] According to the transcription of *Sanditon*, there is no trace of revision in the first sentence of the quotation (*JAFM*, V, 64-65; *LM*, p. 414). It is not necessarily the case that revision tends to tone down an original passage.

In *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sanditon*, the narrator parades the supernatural ability to foretell, the essential wish of philosophical historian, by taking advantage of his or her status as a storyteller. Characters inside the story are banned from such a feat. Hence, in *Persuasion*, a work that revisits the past of the protagonist before the beginning of the novel, Anne is aware that the narrative sentence can be generated only in retrospection. She reflects on her past decision to give up Wentworth, something that has long tormented her:

> 'I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of the right and wrong, I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. To me, she was in the place of a parent. Do not mistake me, however. I am not saying that she did not err in her advice. It was, perhaps, one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides; and for myself, I certainly never should, in any circumstances of tolerable similarity, give such advice. But I mean, that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience. I have now, as far as such sentiment is allowable in human nature, nothing to reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion.' (*P*, pp. 267-68)

The point of her contemplation, as she owns, is not in ascertaining whether her obedience was right but that it was retroactively made right by their reunion. Despite her eloquence, however, the phrasing allows us room to suspect her decision would be made right even

if she remained engaged to Wentworth. Early in her monologue, she ‘must believe’ she ‘was right’. This tag disappears later: ‘I was right in submitting to her’. The passage follows how Anne, consciously or unconsciously, ‘persuades’ herself into a narrative sentence that endorses her past judgement. It has ultimately nothing to do with whatever judgement she made. While the novel envisions a constellation of alternative histories that the decisions of Anne and other characters would engender, it also suggests those parallel worlds anyway converge into her conviction that she did right. Moreover, Anne’s philosophy proposes an answer to the question raised at the end of *Northanger Abbey*: ‘I leave it to be settled by whomever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience’ (*NA*, p. 261). Because *Persuasion* implies ‘parental tyranny’ and ‘filial disobedience’ would equally be adjusted to contribute to the teleological arc, the question is pointless in the first or last place. *Persuasion* is a novel all about the compelling power that drives a narrative sentence into existence. This makes the work historical, regardless of its reference to a specific historical year: ‘the summer of 1814’ (*P*, p. 9).

Love and Freindship is another work of Austen’s that uncovers how hindsight ministers to the desire for coherent narrative. The story is a recollection by the protagonist Laura, now fifty-five, about ‘the Misfortunes and Adventures’ of her early years (*TW*, p.

69). It is second only to *The History of England* in Austen's corpus in the temporal scope of the story. This renders the burlesque fruitful for narrative sentences. Thus, Laura sighs over her happy days when she was unacquainted with the misfortunes that would soon befall her: 'Ah! little did I then think I was ordained so soon to quit that humble Cottage for the Deceitful Pleasures of the World' (*TW*, p. 71). Laura's theatrical condescension to her younger self is a caricature of progressivism. It is a caricature because the story later brings into question the belief that advancing in age does not mean development. Laura, separated from her husband Edward, exerts herself in vain to distract her friend Sophia from mourning over her imprisoned husband Augustus:

> From this Dilemma I was most fortunately releived by an accident truly apropos; it was the lucky overturning of a Gentleman's Phaeton, on the road which ran murmuring behind us. It was a most fortunate Accident as it diverted the attention of Sophia from the melancholy reflections which she had been before indulging. […]
>
> […] [E]very thought was now engaged by the horrid Spectacle before us. Two Gentlemen most elegantly attired but weltering in their blood was what first struck our Eyes—we approached—they were Edward & Augustus—Yes dearest Marianne they were our Husbands. (*TW*, p. 87)

Laura depicts the situation first from within her past perspective, not in her regular hindsight, thankful for the seemingly welcome accident. It is conjectured from the alternation of verbs, however, that her viewpoint is swaying in time. The 'most fortunately'

becomes ‘lucky’ and returns to ‘most fortunate’ again. The more colloquial adjective ‘lucky’ sounds like free indirect style, reproducing her exclamation of the moment. The more formal and less immediate ‘most fortunate’ is suspended between the past and the present. Free indirect style is a means to nullify temporal distance, occasioning what Rebecca Richardson calls ‘the interplay of the past and the present’ in her examination of free indirect style and confession in *Sense and Sensibility*.[58] The fact that Laura at fifty-five has no difficulty identifying with her eighteen-year-old self implies her poor psychological maturation (or deterioration) so far. This cancels any practical need for the narrative sentence, no matter how much characters may aspire to produce one.

In relation to the potential of confession to overturn temporal order, Richardson invites attention to Austen’s use of a phrase ‘[t]he past, the present, the future’ after Elinor hears Willoughby’s final self-justification: ‘The past, the present, the future, Willoughby’s visit, Marianne’s safety, and her mother’s expected arrival, threw her altogether into an agitation of spirits’ (*SS*, pp. 377-78). Richardson points out that the segmentation of tenses with the definite article, rather than jumbling them (‘the past, present, future’), is not found in Austen’s other novels.[59] It is a result, Richardson

[58] Rebecca Richardson, ‘Dramatizing Intimacy: Confessions and Free Indirect Discourse in *Sense and Sensibility*’, *ELH*, 81.1 (2014), 225-44 (p. 241).

[59] Richardson notes that other two examples employ ‘the phrase without repeating the definite article—and both are places of high emotion and crisis. In *Mansfield Park*, the narrator describes Fanny’s state after the confrontation with her uncle over Henry Crawford’s proposal: “Her mind was

estimates, of 'the need to reconcile and to order the narrative, literally to remind us of the chain of events'.[60] She does not clarify whose 'need' it is to restore the narrative order, whether Elinor's, the narrator's, or the novelist's. On this point depends the question whether the expression reflects the heroine's prudent self-discipline against the appeal of past narrative or the novel's requirement to stick to the linear progress of time; and whether *Sense and Sensibility* as a whole is reacting against such temporal anarchy. This matter relates to Chapter 4, where this kind of inserted anecdote is aligned with the novelistic convention of 'history' as a character's unveiled past. The 'history' in Austen's works is where the desires of narrator and character for narratorial dominance collide.

While Austen's narrators demonstrate their never-failing foresight, her characters practise retroactive, and hence similarly never-failing, explanation of the present in connection with the past. Her deployment of narrative sentences, whether projected into the past or towards the future, usually has a studied air, calling attention to how the temporality of narrative gradually achieves its dominance by meeting the demand to control the unyielding nicks of daily time. The inevitable subjectivity of the narrative sentence and its temporality, however, is not itself an object of criticism from Austen. It

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all disorder. The past, present, future, every thing was terrible" [*MP*, p. 370]. And in *Northanger Abbey*, the narrator notes: "The past, present, and future[,] were all equally in gloom"'[*NA*, p. 218]. Richardson, p. 243.

[60] Richardson, pp. 238-39.

seems more likely that her writings underline how covertly the swapping of temporalities can occur within a single work – something that Freya Johnston calls 'the mobility of Austen's style from letter to novel'.[61] The replacement is performed in a letter to Cassandra (1 November 1800), at the beginning of which Austen again expostulates with her on being a meagre correspondent:

> My dear Cassandra
>
> You have written I am sure, tho' I have received no letter from you since your leaving London;—the Post, & not yourself must have been unpunctual.—We have at last heard from Frank; a letter from him to You came yesterday, & I mean to send it on as soon as I can get a ditto, (that means a frank,) which I hope to do in a day or two.—En attendant, You must rest satisfied with knowing that on the 8th of July the Petterell with the rest of the Egyptian Squadron was off the Isle of Cyprus, whither they went from Jaffa for Provisions &c., & whence they were to sail in a day or two for Alexandria, there to wait the result of the English proposals for the Evacuation of Egypt. The rest of the letter, according to the present fashionable stile of Composition, is chiefly Descriptive; of his Promotion he knows nothing, & of Prizes he is guiltless.
>
> Your letter is come; it came indeed twelve lines ago, but I could not stop to acknowledge it before, & I am glad it did not arrive till I had completed my first sentence, because the sentence had been made ever since yesterday, & I think forms a very good beginning.— (*L*, p. 54)

The letter in question came 'twelve lines ago', not 'a few minutes ago', for instance. The

[61] In her argument on the 'public' and 'private' space in *The Watsons*, Johnston states: 'It is the mobility of Austen's style from letter to novel writing which militates against a divisive outside/inside reading of *The Watsons*, in which (as in the completed novels) rooms and writing are at once personal and social spaces, both inside *and* outside of their occupants'. Freya Johnston, 'Public and Private Space in Jane Austen', *English: Journal of the English Association*, 46.186 (1997), 193-212 (p. 196).

manuscript shows it came some time when Austen was writing the part 'have at last heard from Frank; a letter from him to You'.[62] With time notation materialised, the temporal gap between the past and the present is deconstructed into the insignificant distance on one sheet of paper. This is one of the features of Austen's letters, that, Mary Favret states, are often concerned about 'the "look" of the letter' or 'the pragmatics of letter-writing'.[63] The conscious visuality forwards the sense of 'now' – the moment of Jane's writing and of Cassandra's reading. The spatio-temporal construction reveals the fact that Austen, in the middle of writing down the first sentence, did not permit the unexpected letter to impose itself on her expectation, or interrupt her determination, that Cassandra's epistle would not arrive until she finishes hers. She 'could not stop', just as blabbering Miss Bates blockades Emma's interruption. Austen lets her pre-composed passage carry the day by the means of intentional silence, an act which borders on lying. Indeed, the first sentence could actually be a lie, considering the trace of revision in the original letter. In the sentence 'I am glad it did not arrive till I had completed my first sentence', the 'not' is added in superscript.[64] There is a possibility that Cassandra's letter *did* arrive before the completion of the first sentence and that Austen simply lied (and she did not care to

[62] Jane Austen, *Jane Austen's Manuscript Letters in Facsimile*, ed. by Jo Modert (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), F-51.
[63] Favret, pp. 135, 147.
[64] *Jane Austen's Manuscript Letters*, F-51.

cover up the implication). She slides, perhaps, into barefaced falsehood so as not to waste 'the very good beginning' she composed. A lie, in association with the theme of composition, becomes kindred to or a simile of fiction. What the experimental structuring of the letter performs is the seamlessness, not the conflict, with which the temporality of narrative steals into everyday life – the temporality whereby expectation casts off its natural uncertainty. That it is her letter that thus kindles a primordial form of fiction suggests the characteristic continuity between Austen's fiction and her allegedly fact-based writings.

In the logic of Austen's imagination, it is not that expectation is licensed by the authority of fiction; on the contrary, that expectation, once lovingly validated, becomes fiction. Fiction writing is less a purpose than a result. This is reminiscent of Kathryn Sutherland's appraisal of Austen's inclination for improvision. Drawing on Louis Hays's distinction between writing 'programmatically' and 'immanently', Sutherland gathers, from the author's manner of revision in the cancelled two last chapters of *Persuasion*, that Austen was an 'immanent' author, who writes without a blueprint.[65] This hypothesis can be supported by the use of auxiliary verb 'will' in the motto of Austen's *History*: 'There will be very few Dates in this History' (*TW*, p. 120). Although we need to consider

[65] Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives*, p. 127.

the possibility that the sentence was added later, during the transcription phase, the *History* is at least arranged to look as if it was written 'immanently'. Expectation, however extemporaneous, is always going to hit the mark.

Even Austen's *History*, which Chapter 2 showed is averse to centripetal narrative, is not immune to the seduction of the narrative sentence. As has been suggested, the sudden recollection of Mary, Queen of Scots in the middle channels its latter half into a campaign to absolve her. Claire Lamont writes that: 'In the early part of the history the historian is a Yorkist and in the latter half she disparages Queen Elizabeth in favour of Mary Queen of Scots'.[66] The junction, however, marks not just her proselytism but an inkling of a new stylistic trend. In the section on Mary I, the narrator accuses the 'Kingdom' of enthroning her, an act which would ensure the eventual succession of Elizabeth I, that archenemy of Mary, Queen of Scots and hence the narrator's:

> This woman [Mary I] had the good luck of being advanced to the throne of England, inspite of the superior pretensions, Merit, & *Beauty* of her Cousins Mary Queen of Scotland & Jane Grey. Nor can I pity the Kingdom for the misfortunes they experienced during her Reign, since they fully deserved them, for having allowed her to succeed her Brother—which was a double peice of folly, since they might have foreseen that as she died without Children, she would be succeeded by that disgrace to humanity, that pest of society, Elizabeth. (*TW*, p. 128)

[66] Claire Lamont, 'Jane Austen and the Old', *The Review of English Studies,* n.s., 54.217 (2003), 661-74 (p. 662).

Compare that passage with another piece of anachronism, as examined in Chapter 1:

> He [the Duke of Somerset] was beheaded, of which he might with reason have been proud, had he known that such was the death of Mary Queen of Scotland; but as it was impossible that he should be conscious of what had never happened, it does not appear that he felt particularly delighted with the manner of it. (*TW*, pp. 127-28)

Both are a kind of narrative sentence that contrives to dovetail two different points in time. While the latter passage admits the impossibility of precise foreknowledge, the former scolds the public for their want of that foreknowledge, whose impossibility has recently been confirmed. The cause to hunt for the murderer of Mary, Queen of Scots is more than enough to sweep away the stylistic policy – the policy to be incoherent, if such a thing is possible – that the first half of the *History* has stuck to. The flip-flop does not indicate the historian's belated awakening to the value of teleology but the process whereby the narrative sentence begins to take hold of the *History* in reaction to the random recollection of the queen. It is repeatedly implied that the narrative sentence goes hand-in-hand with loyalty to the persecuted idol:

> She [Mary I] died without issue, & then the dreadful moment came in which the destroyer of all comfort, the deceitful Betrayer of trust reposed in her, & the

> Murderess of her Cousin succeeded to the Throne.— (*TW*, p. 129)
>
> By this Marriage [with the Princess Elizabeth of York] he [Henry VII] had two sons & two daughters, the elder of which Daughters was married to the King of Scotland & had the happiness of being grandmother to one of the first Characters [Mary, Queen of Scots] in the World. (*TW*, p. 125)

The reconciling alliance of Elizabeth of York and Henry VII, for the historian, celebrates not the foundation of the House of Tudor but the faint origin of Mary, Queen of Scots. The very modest 'happiness of being grandmother to' Mary Stuart emphasises the carte blanche that the historian gives to her mnemonic function. Austen points to the flexibility of genesis, that is technically always at our service, in a way that is reminiscent of the 'beginning' of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–67). The protagonist's father regrets that: '*My Tristram's misfortunes began nine months before ever he came into the world*'; that is, at the moment of his conception.[67] While the two authors uproariously demonstrate the discretionary placement of beginning, Goldsmith glosses over the issue by opening his *History of England* with the studied ambiguity: 'the earliest Times'. The need for circumvention seems to fortuitously buttress the progressivism in Robertson's *History of Scotland*, which starts with the age of 'gross

[67] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by Melvyn New and Joan New, 3 vols, The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne (Florida: The University Press of Florida, 1978), I, 4.

ignorance'. [68]

Austen places the 'beginning' of her *History* in its middle – namely, the 'beginning' of the 'history' as a narrative, that makes up its second half. Her *History* becomes 'history' later, when the historian hits upon the genealogy of Mary, Queen of Scots. The configuration of the *History* parallels that of the above letter to Cassandra, one that follows how narrative comes to tempt a writer. It is also in the first sentence of the section on Henry VII, the section where Mary, Queen of Scots is first remembered, that an indent is first used in the *History* (*JAFM*, II, 335-36). The emergence of paragraphs loosely coincides with the historian's increasing penchant for 'history' as narrative. Although she has carefully avoided causality in the first part, the slightest recollection of that heroine is enough to bend her aesthetic principle. This may be one of the reasons why those indents in the latter half do not always herald a change in subject. In the section on Elizabeth I, the historian does not move on to a new paragraph when finished, for the time being, with vilifying the queen:

> Having I trust by this assurance entirely done away every Suspicion & every doubt which might have arisen in the Reader's mind, from what other Historians have written of her, I shall proceed to mention the remaining Events, that marked Elizabeth's reign. It was about this time that Sir Francis Drake the first English Navigator who sailed round the World, lived, to be the ornament of his Country &

[68] Robertson, *The History of Scotland*, I, 1.

> his profession. Yet great as he was, & justly celebrated as a Sailor, I cannot help foreseeing that he will be equaled in this or the next Century by one who tho' now but young, already promises to answer all the ardent & sanguine expectations of his Relations & Freinds, amongst whom I may Class the amiable Lady to whom this work is dedicated, & my no less amiable Self.
>
> Though of a different profession, and shining in a different Sphere of Life, yet equally conspicuous in the Character of an *Earl*, as Drake was in that of a *Sailor*, was Robert Devereux Lord Essex. (*TW*, p. 130)

An indent has to wait until another favourite of the historian, Robert Devereux, pops up. The rationale for paragraphing is less about thematic transition than favouritism. This indirectly confirms the correlation – and a correlation is rare in the *History* – between partiality and the narrative sentence.

This chimera of two disparate styles is not a fit of singularity in Austen's *History of England*, or merely the hallmark of a teenage prank. The same formula is deployed in *Sir William Mountague*, a combination of nominal enumeration and story-telling, that is reiterated in *Persuasion*, where, as Chapter 4 will investigate, the introduction of characters is superseded by the citation of fictional Baronetage. For Austen, even *Pride and Prejudice*, the most perfect gem for many of her fans and one that is rather '*too* good' in Alex Woloch's words, needs the complement of a contrasting literary style:

> The work is rather too light & bright & sparkling;—it wants shade;—it wants to be stretched out here & there with a long Chapter—of sense if it could be had, if not

> solemn specious nonsense—about something unconnected with the story; an Essay on Writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté—or anything that would form a contrast & bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness & Epigrammatism of the general stile [*sic*]. (*L*, p. 212)[69]

The options for supplementing the work are generally historical, including 'Walter Scott' and 'the history of Buonaparté'. This imagined, contrasting supplement testifies to the characteristic atemporality of the novel, where it is felt as if characters suddenly start to exist out of thin air. Being called Elizabeth Bennet seems to crop up at twenty years old sharp. Her earlier life is peculiarly blank. *Pride and Prejudice* is 'light', unburdened with the sense of the past that would distress Austen's next heroine Fanny Price, who is depicted in childhood. A possible way to fill the lacking temporality is not to restore the 'history' of pre-twenty-year-old Elizabeth but to align the story with a different type of temporality. The chimeric juxtaposition suggests the potential for realising Austen's two-fold scepticism; on the one hand, her habit of relativising her own composition, and, on the other, a recognition that beginning and ending are often 'unconnected' with each other. The dislocation results both from a doubt of the value system of progressivism and from the difficulty of keeping up the same style and temporality throughout a self-contained

[69] Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 47. Austen's comment is found in the letter to Cassandra dated 4 February 1813.

work.

The precipitous joint in some of Austen's compositions somehow parodies the paradox that the narrative of progress faces. Hayden White points out that: 'the growth of reason out of a state of unreason is ultimately "irrational," inasmuch as the original irrationality of man cannot be accounted for on the theory of the essentially rational nature of nature itself'.[70] A solution the Enlightenment historians come up with is to assume that 'the meaning of the historical process was to be found, not in the growth of reason *out of* unreason, but in purely quantitative terms, as the *expansion* of an originally limited reason into areas of experience formally occupied by the passions, emotions, ignorance, and superstition' and therefore that 'it was not a process of *transition* at all'.[71] A similar problem haunts *Sense and Sensibility*, whose title lures readers into a supposition that sensibility and sense will comprise a developmental narrative. Marianne Dashwood's growth is catalyzed by a magical illness, almost a piece of deus ex machina.[72] The storyline of the novel does not summon the quantitative explanation. Instead, Austen's historical imagination is bent on highlighting those drastic turning points so as to trouble the smooth surface of progressive discourse.

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[70] White, p. 63.
[71] White, p. 63.
[72] The similar trope of indisposition is employed in Charlotte Lenox's *Female Quixote* (1752) in order to occasion the disillusionment of the eponymous heroine.

The sense of unrelatedness between beginning and ending that Austen incorporates into her works, might save us the labour of calculating any self-contained chronology within her story. Such an approach flourished in the wake of efforts made by R. W. Chapman in the first collected works of Jane Austen, referring to contemporary calendars in order to establish the chronology of her novels.[73] Taking *Mansfield Park* as an example, however, a chronological hint is made rather to emphasise unreliability. The novel opens:

> About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to capture Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income. (*MP*, p. 3)

It is '[a]bout thirty years ago', not 'thirty years ago', just as Walter Scott writes in the subtitle of *Waverley* (1814), a novel published in the same year as *Mansfield Park*: ''Tis Sixty Years Since.' The 'about' is in line with the novel's undertone of mnemonic uncertainty. The concrete number is provided possibly as an excuse to use the term of equivocation. It is also unknown from which point we should go back in time for 'about

[73] See for instance, P. B. S. Andrews, 'The Date of *Pride and Prejudice*', *Notes and Queries*, 15.9 (1968), 338-42; Ellen Moody, 'A Calendar for *Sense and Sensibility*', *Philological Quarterly*, 78.3 (1999), 301-34.

thirty years'. Although J. A. Downie estimates it to be 1811, when Austen starts to work on *Mansfield Park*, no clear evidence seems to justify this premise.[74] Naturally, the date of reading experience varies every time readers open the book. The 'about', the first term the novel pronounces, announces the twists and turns its chronology would undergo.

Back to the problem of 'tick-tock' versus '*Tick, Tick, Tick*': it would miss the point to join Austen to either of the two camps. This is not because the early nineteenth-century author happens to be stuck in a chasm created by literary periodisation. Rather, the junction left in some of her compositions expresses the swiftness with which our impetus to fantasise trespasses against forms and temporalities. The absence of coherence is not such an artistic miscarriage as, according to J. Hillis Miller, irritates Henry James:

> Without the assumption of an historical basis a work of fiction would, it seems, disintegrate into unconnected fragments, or become a 'large loose baggy monster', in James's famous phrase, an invertebrate, a jellyfish or Medusa. Only if it is assumed to be history will a novel have a beginning, middle, and end, so forming a coherent whole, with a single meaning or individuality, like a vertebrated animal. [75]

Chapter 2 described how Austen's *History* and other writings perform as this kind of 'invertebrate': imitating the chaos that prescribes our first contact with the past. Chapter

[74] J. A. Downie, 'The Chronology of *Mansfield Park*', *Modern Philology*, 112.2 (2014), 427-34 (p. 429).
[75] Miller, 'Narrative and History', p. 459.

3 concludes by indicating that Austen's historicity hinges on her observation that the evolution, or more appropriately the transformation, from 'an invertebrate' to 'a vertebrate' in our historical thinking does not take billions of years – it is but the work of a moment.

Chapter 4, Character

Names as Free Indirect Style

In one letter (15–16 September 1796), Jane Austen writes about going to dine with 'my aunt Fielding':

> We dine to day at Goodnestone, to meet my Aunt Fielding from Margate, and a M^r^ Clayton, her professed Admirer; at least so I imagine. Lady Bridges has received very good accounts of Marianne, who is already certainly the better for her Bathing. (*L*, p. 10)

'Members of JA's family and others have been puzzled', as Deirdre Le Faye notes, because Mrs Fielding is not related closely enough to Jane to be called aunt. The explanation is that this is a momentary quotation of the voices of Sir Brook Bridges III's children, who are actually relatives of Mrs Fielding and therefore entitled to call her 'my Aunt'.[1] 'My Aunt Fielding' is not a neutral personage, but a Mrs Fielding in the eyes of

[1] Deirdre Le Faye, 'Notes' in *L*, p. 373.

those Bridges children. Here, other voices slip into Austen's sentences on a basis of just a short noun phrase. Unless well-informed of her family's pedigree, we would never notice her subtle mimicry, especially in letters without a change of voice.

Austen's letters showcase this peculiar habit of referring to a person in the voice or voices of others, defining their character in relation to someone else. Literally and grammatically speaking, she seems to be blessed with a wealth of 'my aunts' and 'my cousins', who turn out to be aunts and cousins merely of her neighbours. In her letter (24 May 1813), she partly underlines the spelling of one person's name in order to visually show that the name is a vocal address made by someone else:

> I have been interrupted by M^rs^ Tilson.—Poor Woman! She is in danger of not being able to attend Lady Drummond Smiths Party tonight. Miss Burdett was to have taken her, & now Miss Burdett has a cough & will not go.—My cousin Caroline is her sole dependance [*sic*]. (*L*, p. 221)

Austen is 'quoting Mrs Tilson's words and pronunciation'.[2] It is not just the private intimacy of kinship that this kind of literary effect illuminates; in another letter (25–27 October 1800), the names of her neighbours, Mrs Heathcote and Mrs Chute, are infused with voices of the general public:

[2] *L*, 'Note'.

> This morning we called at the Harwoods, & in their dining-room found Heathcote & Chute for ever—M^rs^ W^m^ Heathcote & M^rs^ Chute—[…] They had meant to come on to Steventon afterwards, but we knew a trick worth two of that. (*L*, p. 52)

Austen cites an electioneering cry; William Chute was a Hampshire MP from 1790 to 1806 and 1807 to 1820, and Sir William Heathcote his political ally.[3] The addressees, however, are their wives. Suddenly, through the private dining-room resound the cheers for Heathcote and Chute, a development which anticipates the dramatic spatial transformation from private to public in *The Watsons*, when Emma Watson leaves her neighbour's house for a bowl room: 'the party were transported from the quiet warmth of a snug parlour, to the bustle, noise and draughts of air of the broad entrance-passage of an inn' (*LM*, p. 93). Austen's expression in her letter replaces the identities of Mrs Heathcote and Mrs Chute, whose characters are wrapped in the veil of domestic life, with their marital status and the public personae of their husbands. Here, they are just the wives of 'Heathcote & Chute for ever', that is, Heathcote and Chute whom their supporters believe they are. The independent existences of the wives – if there can be anything independent of relationships – are alienated from the very construction of their own

[3] Chute's name recurs in Austen's letters partly because he often franks her and her family's letters. See Alice Marie White, 'The Austen Family and William Chute's 1806 Hampshire Election', *Jane Austen Annual Report 2006* (2006), 28-32 (p. 28).

identities.

To reproduce the idiolects and the disposition of a person who utters that name, some modifiers or typographical modulation have to be added. In Austen's writings, this idiosyncrasy is often marked by the use of possessives. Her letter to Frank Austen (29 January 1805), sent after the death of their father, indicates that she was fastidious about the choice of possessives: 'My Mother has found among our dear Father's little personal property, a small astronomical Instrument which she hopes you will accept for his sake' (*L*, p. 102). It is 'my Mother', not 'our Mother', while it is 'our Father', who is revived from the memory of him shared by Jane and Frank. Throughout her letters addressed to the Austen family members, she continues to call Mrs Austen 'my Mother'. This 'my' works less as a pure possessive than as an expression used when addressing people, which can possess various nuances including relaxed intimacy, condescension, or gentle chiding. Now that Austen's father is dead, it is as if he has turned into a more generalised, conceptual being, hence 'our father'; on the other hand, 'my' mother emphasises her physical presence, whom Austen addresses and is building varying relationships with, and whom she and Cassandra have increasing responsibility for.

Austen employs such a possessive similarly with a fictional character as well; in the last chapter of *Mansfield Park*, the narrator famously mentions her heroine Fanny Price

as ‘my Fanny’ in a both familiar and metafictional way that is not observed in any of Austen’s other works: ‘My Fanny indeed at this very time, I have the satisfaction of knowing, must have been happy in spite of every thing’ (*MP*, p. 533). It is not the privilege of the narrator to say ‘My Fanny’, however; in a tête-à-tête with his sister, Henry Crawford exults in ‘my Fanny’:

> ‘Yes, Mary, my Fanny will feel a difference indeed, a daily, hourly difference, in the behaviour of every being who approaches her; and it will be the completion of my happiness to know that I am the doer of it, that I am the person to give the consequence so justly her due. Now she is dependent, helpless, friendless, neglected, forgotten.’ (*MP*, p. 344)

Henry’s enthusiasm and impertinence seem to be copied by the narrator as the recurring phrases of ‘my Fanny’ and ‘indeed’ suggest. On the one hand, the narrator mimics the language of her own creation, Henry, to expose his confident disregard of multiple facets of Fanny’s personality that do not conform to his character study. On the other, it is Henry who usurps the authorial idiom of the narrator and offers himself as a creator of Fanny. The possessive functions as a signifier of both a partial knowledge and authorial aspiration, flirting with the power balance between the interpreter and the interpreted.

Building a person’s image through someone’s perspective, or especially through several perspectives, is what we do to bring historical figures back to life. If the figure in

question is already dead and first-hand knowledge of them is unavailable, all we have is an aggregate of views, multiplying on the basis of both direct and indirect experiences. At the time when Austen lived, people were encouraged to entertain and formulate opinions of history as part of decent education and accomplishment, and a historical figure was a particularly popular topic to talk about. As is spelled out in her *History*, Austen herself has a very determined idea of several monarchs, such as Mary, Queen of Scots ('one of the first Characters in the World') and Elizabeth I ('that disgrace to humanity, that pest of society') (*TW*, pp. 125, 128). At the same time, Austen is generous enough to permit her fictional characters to glorify a monarch who was anathema to her; in a scene from *Kitty* which Chapter 1 touched on, the protagonist, Mrs Peterson, and their visitors, Mrs and Miss Stanley, discuss the character of Elizabeth I:

> Mrs Peterson, who was firmly of opinion that the whole race of Mankind were degenerating, said that for her part, Every thing she beleived was going to rack and ruin, all order was destroyed over the face of the World, […] concluding with a wish that she might live to see the Manners of the People in Queen Elizabeth's reign, restored again. 'Well Ma'am, said her Neice, but I hope you do not mean with the times to restore Queen Eliz.th herself.'
>
> 'Queen Eliz.th, said Mrs Stanley who never hazarded a remark on History that was not well founded, lived to a good old age, and was a very Clever Woman.' 'True Ma'am, said Kitty; but I do not consider either of those Circumstances as meritorious in herself, and they are very far from making me wish her return, for if she were to come again with the same Abilities and the same good Constitution She might do as much Mischeif and last as long as she did before—then turning to

> Camilla who had been sitting very silent for some time, she added, What do *you* think of Elizabeth Miss Stanley? I hope you will not defend her.'
>
> 'Oh! dear, said Miss Stanley, I know nothing of Politics, and cannot bear to hear them mentioned.' (*TW*, p. 175)

While making Kitty voice her own sentiment, Austen ensures that there are numerous warring ideas in the name or the concept of Elizabeth I, whom we can directly face no more. Even the indifference of Miss Stanley, who could perhaps be assuming that the queen is still on the throne, establishes a Queen Elizabeth as a synecdoche to imply formidable 'Politics'. The name without quotation marks is already something like 'My aunt Fielding' or 'Heathcote & Chute for ever' because the Queen Elizabeth whom we imagine is less a tangible person than code, or a bundle of quotations. Unlike the characters of other fictional genres, in which readers are typically going to settle their views based on the presented narrative, those of history either agree or disagree with the prior notions that readers hold.

In the section in Austen's *History* on the controversial Richard III, suspected of infanticide, the narrator arranges the polyphony behind his name into narrative sequence:

> The Character of this Prince has been in general very severely treated by Historians, but as he was a *York*, I am rather inclined to suppose him a very respectable Man. It has indeed been confidently asserted that he killed his two Nephews & his Wife, but it has also been declared that he did *not* kill his two Nephews, which I am inclined

to beleive true. (*TW*, p. 124)

This is the only example in the *History* of the first sentence of a section beginning with 'The Character'. The passage is not so much about the king himself as about opinions of him. To attest 'it has also been declared that he did *not* kill his two Nephews' immediately after saying '[i]t has indeed been confidently asserted that he killed his two Nephews', therefore, is not necessarily another sample of the narrator's fickleness, for it is 'Character' that is in question here. The process by which a historical individual is alienated from his or her own name and it eventually reverberates through public imagination is depicted by Samuel Johnson, describing the life of Charles XII of Sweden in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*: 'He left the name, at which the world grew pale, | To point a moral, or adorn a tale.'[4] Once detached from the king (or probably even before his demise), his name 'point[s]' and then 'adorn[s]', having less and less to do with individual identity and turning into a literary ornament.

The names of characters in Austen's writings that slip into voices and opinions correspond with Casey Finch and Peter Bowen's argument about the permeation of free indirect style in the narrative of *Emma*: 'what is most strikingly absent from a novel like

[4] Samuel Johnson, *Poems*, ed. by E. L. McAdam, Jr., with George Milne, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 221-22 (p. 102). The analogy between Austen's and Johnson's use of historical characters is indebted to Freya Johnston, 'Jane Austen's Past Lives', p. 117.

Emma is the overtly acknowledged presence of a narrator at all, the explicit identification of the narration's source and purpose'.[5] Austen's usage of names not only paradoxically subverts any essential notion of personal identity but also transforms a name as an indicator of the person named as such into a reflection of the qualities and views of the person calling the name. Take Jane Fairfax, for instance; just as her background story invites interpretations from every quarter of the Highbury neighbourhood, her name invites readers to a hunt for historical connotations. Jane Fairfax's family name does not sound like a perfect synecdoche. Although her father was a lieutenant 'dying in action abroad', her traits are not reminiscent of Thomas Fairfax, the parliamentary commander in the English Civil War (*E*, p. 174). With the help of the shared initials, we can perhaps compare the pair of Jane Fairfax and her manipulating lover Frank Churchill with that of Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell. As David Hume comments in his *History*, 'Cromwell, by whose sagacity and insinuation Fairfax was entirely governed, is one of the most eminent and most singular personages, that occurs in history'.[6] This suppressed image of Thomas Fairfax suits Jane Fairfax better.

Alternatively, Jane's family name seems to anticipate the conflict between her and

[5] Casey Finch and Peter Bowen, '"The Tittle-Tattle of Highbury": Gossip and the Free Indirect Style in *Emma*', *Representations*, 31 (1991), 1-18 (p. 15).
[6] Hume, *The History of England*, V, 450.

Emma. Margaret Doody notes that '[a]ntipathy seems natural between a Woodhouse, connected to the Stuart-supporting Wentworths, and a Fairfax who assisted the chief regicide'.[7] It is interesting that Emma's vague dislike might be translated into specific partisan hostility towards a Parliamentarian, which teenage Austen shares. In her *History*, the narrator condemns Thomas Fairfax, along with Cromwell and other Parliamentarians, for distressing England and her favourite Stuarts:

> While the *Villains* of the time would make too long a list to be written or read; I shall therefore content myself with mentioning the leaders of the Gang. Cromwell, Fairfax, Hampden, & Pym may be considered as the original Causers of all the disturbances Distresses, & Civil Wars in which England for many years was embroiled. (*TW*, p. 133)

Austen's and Emma's feeling coincides in that both dislike a person called Fairfax. In this novel, extensively imbued with free indirect style, Emma's observations of Jane Fairfax sometimes unwittingly turn into Austen's of Jane Fairfax, or possibly even Thomas Fairfax. The author seems conscious of this infiltration when Emma is seized by a fit of charitable feelings towards Jane Fairfax, who is seemingly doomed to earn her own living:

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[7] Doody, p. 161.

> Upon the whole, Emma left her with such softened, charitable feelings, as made her look around in walking home, and lament that Highbury afforded no young man worthy of giving her independence […].
>
> These were charming feelings—but not lasting. Before she had committed herself by any public profession of eternal friendship for Jane Fairfax, or done more towards a recantation of past prejudices and errors, than saying to Mr. Knightley, 'She certainly is handsome; she is better than handsome!' Jane had spent an evening at Hartfield with her grandmother and aunt, and every thing was relapsing much into its usual state. (*E*, pp. 179-80)

Even if 'past prejudices' might also refer to Austen's self-professedly 'prejudiced' *History* in her early writings, we never know if the author herself finally succeeded in such a 'recantation'.

Austen markedly objectifies a Jane Fairfax by labelling her with the name, Fairfax, that was personally detestable to her. Jane Fairfax is a name Austen would bear if she got married to Thomas Fairfax.[8] It is an odd reconciliation of Royalist Jane Austen and Parliamentarian Thomas Fairfax; or, it might be an unreconciled juxtaposition of two naming methods. On the one hand, she likens Jane Fairfax to herself, possibly on account of beauty and elegance, and hence the first name Jane. On the other, the author's and the heroine's antipathy towards Jane Fairfax is embodied in the name Fairfax. The chimeric construction of her name seems to translate the elusiveness of this mysteriously reserved

[8] Again, as was mentioned in Footnote 38 in Chapter 2, Austen wrote fictional banns of marriage for herself. See 'Frontispiece' in *J*. They will be discussed later in this chapter.

character, indicating the unstable nature of a name's connotational function.

Despite the odd combination of the name 'Jane Fairfax', the character is always referred to by her full name. It is not usual for a heroine in Austen's works to be mentioned in this way, an act that is not very friendly. It happens only once in *Sense and Sensibility*, when Elinor is in agony and resentment after hearing from Lucy about her engagement with Edward: 'Could he ever be tolerably happy with Lucy Steele; could he, were his affection for herself out of the question, with his integrity, his delicacy, and well-informed mind, be satisfied with a wife like that—illiterate, artful, and selfish?' (*SS*, p. 160).[9] The name 'Jane Fairfax', however, is ubiquitous. This is mainly because Emma (or the narrator) is always pronouncing the words 'Jane Fairfax', as well as because everyone else, as Emma insists, is fussing about Jane Fairfax. 'Jane' and 'Fairfax' are glued to each other, as if forming one general noun – a noun that means someone whom one dislikes. Emma complains that: 'One is sick of the very name of Jane Fairfax' (*E*, p. 92).

Austen's idea of names parallels that of 'character', a term with double meanings: according to Samuel Johnson, 'character' means '[p]ersonal qualities; particular constitution of the mind' and also '[a] representation of any man as to his personal

[9] In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny (or the narrator) mentions Mary Crawford, her major antagonist, by her full name when she, at the ball held at Mansfield Park, frets over the growing intimacy between Edmund and Mary: 'Fanny […] would have been […] most happy, could she have kept her eyes from wandering between Edmund and Mary Crawford. *She* looked all loveliness—and what might not be the end of it?' (*MP*, p. 318).

qualities'.[10] Character, as well as some of Austen's names, can mean either inner value or outer reputation. Austen surfaces this difficulty of attribution paradoxically through the means of names, that is, a foundation of identification. Some parts of the mechanism of names and naming in Austen's imagination, therefore, do not dovetail with Margaret Doody's extensive detective work on the historical contexts that lie behind the author's choice of names. This instability of what a name indicates or connotes might rather remind us of Adela Pinch's concept of 'the circulation of feeling' in early nineteenth-century England: 'the period's concomitant tendency to characterize feelings as transpersonal, as autonomous entities that do not always belong to individuals but rather wander extravagantly from one person to another'.[11] Characters do not freely 'circulate' as they are, but the origins of what they signify are as indeterminable as those of emotions. It is perspective that decides where character dwells, and Austen's names are a metafictional expression of this mobility of qualities between the viewed and the viewer and of the anxiety that results from being unable to control representations of one's own character. Note, then, that the story of *Pride and Prejudice* centralises not so much character study as 'a studier of character':

[10] *Dictionary* [accessed 7 October 2024]
[11] Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 3, 164.

> ‘I did not know before,’ continued Bingley immediately, ‘that you [Elizabeth] were a studier of character. It must be an amusing study.’
>
> ‘Yes; but intricate characters are the *most* amusing. They have at least that advantage.’
>
> ‘The country,’ said Darcy, ‘can in general supply but few subjects for such a study. In a country neighbourhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society.’
>
> ‘But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever.’ (*PP*, p. 47)

The greatest irony is that Elizabeth, the assured ‘studier of character’, alters as much as Darcy, an object of her anatomy. The correspondence of ‘pride’ to Darcy and ‘prejudice’ to Elizabeth is confused in two ways. On the one hand, the novel has the two qualities swapped between the hero and the heroine; Darcy is prejudiced against her family whereas her pride hardens her to him after she overhears his derogatory remarks about her. On the other, it is ambivalent from whose viewpoint these two failings ultimately spring; the narrator representing Darcy as proud and, simultaneously, Elizabeth as thinking him proud. The pride in question could equally be a posterior quality imagined by the prejudiced ‘studier of character’. The titular coupling of ‘pride’ and ‘prejudice’ makes an odd asymmetry, adverting to concepts on two almost different levels; compared to ‘pride’, one of the seven deadly sins, ‘prejudice’ sounds more adverbial, defining one’s interpretive attitude. The apparently well-matched, jaunty, alliterated combination, in fact

registers a contention between character and character studier, that is, between object and subject.

Entwined Characters

For Austen, the work of erosion that free indirect style performs is not the only way to threaten the differentiating function of names. In her fiction, the vertical connection between a name and the person it indicates is often eclipsed by the horizontal one between two or more names. Her frequent use of similar names and shared initials suggests not the uniqueness of each character but the resemblance and interchangeability of characters and their mutual relationships. For instance, in the below passage quoted in Chapter 2, the narrator in Austen's *History* introduces two couples with the same initials of E and D: one is Elizabeth I and Devereux and the other is Emmeline and Delamere. The narrator discovers this as-yet-unrecognised analogy between these two sets of characters:

> This unfortunate young Man [Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex] was not unlike in Character to that equally unfortunate one *Frederic Delamere*. The simile may be

> carried still farther, & Elizabeth the torment of Essex may be compared to the Emmeline of Delamere. (*TW*, pp. 130-31)

The narrator compares Devereux and Delamere not only on the basis of their own dispositions but also on account of their being enslaved by the persons whose favour they crave. Here, the spelling of the names triggers free association, which probably retroactively sheds light on the parallel between the relations of the couples. The novel pairing through shared initials seems to be inherited in *Pride and Prejudice*, where Elizabeth Bennet similarly torments Darcy by turning down his first proposal. Names are employed to highlight similarity rather than particularity.

The specificity of characters created by Austen, a renowned 'character-monger', is often offset by the interchangeability of them.[12] Once each of her novels settles its heroine into a happy marriage, it typically turns to her sibling, who is going to fulfil the social role that the heroine can now vacate. In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny's younger sister Susan happily becomes a willing companion for Lady Bertram after her sister's marriage:

> Selfishly dear as she had long been to Lady Bertram, she could not be parted with willingly by *her*. No happiness of son or niece could make her wish the marriage. But it was possible to part with her, because Susan remained to supply her

[12] The epithet is given to Frances Burney by Samuel Johnson, as recorded in her journal (27 August 1778): '"O, you little *Character-monger*, you!"'. Frances Burney, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. by Lars E. Troide and Stewart J. Cooke, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), III, 110.

> place.—Susan became the stationary niece—delighted to be so!—and equally well adapted for it by a readiness of mind, and an inclination for usefulness, as Fanny had been by sweetness of temper, and strong feelings of gratitude. Susan could never be spared. First as a comfort to Fanny, then as an auxiliary, and last as her substitute, she was established at Mansfield, with every appearance of equal permanency. Her more fearless disposition and happier nerves made every thing easy to her there.—With quickness in understanding the tempers of those she had to deal with, and no natural timidity to restrain any consequent wishes, she was soon welcome, and useful to all; and after Fanny's removal, succeeded so naturally to her influence over the hourly comfort of her aunt, as gradually to become, perhaps, the most beloved of the two. (*MP*, pp. 546-47)

The difference between Susan's and Fanny's inclinations cannot hamper Lady Bertram's determined need for substitution. The narrator lets the individuality of character, that is wrought by herself, be washed away by the communal force to preserve the status quo of society with 'every appearance of equal permanency'. Similarly, at the end of *Sense and Sensibility*, Sir John Middleton and Mrs Jennings are immediately satisfied with fresh food for gossip as the youngest daughter Margaret Dashwood becomes eligible: 'fortunately for Sir John and Mrs. Jennings, when Marianne was taken from them, Margaret had reached an age highly suitable for dancing, and not very ineligible for being supposed to have a lover' (*SS*, p. 431). It almost seems that Margaret, who does not have much presence in a story about the exclusive confidence of two sisters, is invented just for the sake of attaching a sense of continuity that invalidates difference and change. Her name, nearly an anagram of Marianne, is artificial enough to signal a trace of authorial

hand and her own metafictional function. Again, it is as if the name of Margaret is adhered less firmly to the character called by this name than to the name Marianne. Thus, the autonomy of a character is eaten up by relation and resemblance. Indeed, Jane Austen herself was the seventh of eight children, who was born a 'plaything for her sister'.[13] The figures of Margaret and Susan as nonautonomous devices inspired Edith Charlotte Brown (née Edith Charlotte Hubback), Austen's great-great-niece, to write sequels that reward them with the position of protagonist.[14]

With its poetics of nomenclature, *Sense and Sensibility* apparently casts a side glance at Sophia Lee's *The Recess*. The names of Elinor and Marianne in the former not only recycle the initials of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots but also hint at those of Mary's daughters, Ellinor and Matilda. Lee's novel in fact contains the familiar phrase 'sense and sensibility': 'Ah! how rapid is the progress of passion, and how, in one moment, does it quicken, nay, double every sense and sensibility!'[15]

The Recess is a novel about relationships. The rivalry between Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I is re-enacted by a new generation, Matilda and Ellinor (although with less

[13] Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record*, p. 27.
[14] Hubback, Edith C., *Margaret Dashwood, or Interference* (London: J. Lane, 1929); *Susan Price, or, Resolution* (London: J. Lane, 1930).
[15] *The Recess*, p. 40. April Alliston notes: 'The effectiveness of Austen's title depends upon a pun on this common phrase of the time, which is used by Lee in the way it was generally understood, as referring to keen senses and sympathetic sensitivity thought to arise from them.' *The Recess*, p. 339.

fatal hostility), as the initials suggest. Neither sister displays a distinguished personality, but in the combination of siblings echoes the famous feud between the two queens. The serene sisterhood of Matilda and Ellinor is intruded on by the existence of Robert Dudley, with whom Matilda falls in love at first sight:

> I will frankly confess I wished her [Ellinor's] absence, and had imposed a task on her I could never have executed. The presence of Lord Leicester had awakened in my mind a thousand hopes and wishes unknown before. […] I aspired to his heart; and my apprehension of Ellinor's superior charms had made me meanly cheat her of an opportunity of making a first impression.[16]

Ellinor's beauty is deprived of 'an opportunity of making a first impression' on Dudley by Matilda's self-conscious jealousy, a feeling that is customarily assigned to Elizabeth I in her literary representation including *The Recess*: 'The jealousy and hatred that princess had long entertained for one so superior in those endowments most admired by herself, made this step excusable in Mary, only from the cruelty of her situation.'[17] This triangle

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[16] *The Recess*, p. 41.

[17] *The Recess*, p. 24; *First Impressions* is a working title of *Pride and Prejudice*. Cassandra's memorandum documents the alteration of the title: 'First Impressions begun in Oct 1796 Finished in Aug^{t} 1797. Published afterwards, with alterations & contractions under the Title of Pride & Prejudice' (*JAFM*, V, 297-98). As Harrison R. Steeves suggests, *The Recess*, along with Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) and Robert Bage's *Hermsprong* (1796), might also be one source for the final title of the novel by Austen with its recurring mentions to the combination of 'pride' and 'prejudice': 'I lay my heart unveiled before you, its passions, its pride, its prejudices; condemn them not my sister, however they may contradict your own'; 'I secretly accused the most upright heart existing of pride and prejudice.' *The Recess*, pp. 155, 316. Steeves, *Before Jane Austen: The Shaping of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century* (London: George Allen, 1966), p. 342.

of two females and an interrupting male loosely aligns with Austen's view of the female royal cousins, which is quoted in Chapter 1. For Austen, their conflict is unnecessarily instigated by men:

> It was the peculiar Misfortune of this Woman [Elizabeth I] to have bad Ministers—Since wicked as she herself was, she could not have committed such extensive Mischeif, had not these vile & abandoned Men connived at, & encouraged her in her Crimes. (*TW*, p. 129)

Austen roots for female solidarity again in her letter to Martha Lloyd (16 February 1813), to the detriment of the Prince Regent, who slights his wife Princess Caroline: 'Poor Woman, I shall support her as long as I can, because she <u>is</u> a Woman, & because I hate her Husband' (*L*, pp. 216-17). Although Lee's quintessentially romantic delineation of Mary, Queen of Scots's daughters as parallels of Mary and Elizabeth I might have provoked Austen's satirical urge, both authors contrive a what-if scenario in which potential sisterhood would remain intact, free of male interference. The alternative history of *The Recess* occasionally betrays a flickering image of another choice, making itself a nested structure of alternatives. In other words, it is said to be a story based on a literary second attempt in the fictional generation to redo the unachieved rapport between the two queens and on another failure with an irreconcilable disagreement of views between

Matilda and Ellinor. Later in the novel, Ellinor's letter to Matilda reveals that her 'first impression' of Dudley was in fact far from favourable:

> On the memorable day, when Heaven decided the destiny of the one sister, and perplexed that of the other, by presenting to the eyes of both the favorite of Elizabeth, how diametrically opposite were the impressions each took of his character! Astonishing that two agreeing in every instance till that moment, should for the first time differ in so decided a manner! […] His Heart, not warm by nature, had been rendered in a great degree callous, from its having expanded in the chilling atmosphere of a Court.[18]

Confronted by an alien opinion, Matilda begins to doubt her own. She wonders at her own past blindness to the merit of Robert Devereux, Earl Essex, Ellinor's lover in this novel:

> One must have loved Lord Leicester to see Essex with indifference—one must have loved him to the excess I did perhaps, not to remark the attachment my sister avowed.—Innumerable instances of it now flashed on my memory, I was astonished could at the moment escape me. If *she* was indeed more clear sighted than myself—But why do I enter on so vain a discussion?[19]

The realisation belatedly dawning on Matilda heightens all the more the novel's elegy for the wreck of sisterhood that might have been avoided. The pro-Stuart polarising

[18] *The Recess*, pp. 155-56.
[19] *The Recess*, p. 271.

characterisation of villainous Elizabeth and victimised Mary is balanced with the more nuanced tragedy of mutual jealousy and suspicion that repeats over two generations; or with the wearied tragedy of being pent up in the same pattern of relationship.[20] Here, resemblance either of daughter or of queen, therefore, is of less consequence.

Similarly, *Sense and Sensibility*, with the loaded names of its heroines, is an homage less to one historical figure, Mary, Queen of Scots, than to the interrelations between the two queens and between the characters in *The Recess*. The intimacy of the Dashwood sisters undergoes a familiar crisis with an appearance of their potential lovers. When Willoughby makes his way into the all-female utopia of the Dashwood family and takes 'his usual place between the two elder Miss Dashwoods', the narration is highlighted by a hint of narrative sentence, a rhetoric, which Chapter 3 discussed:

> [T]owards one of these hills did Marianne and Margaret one memorable morning direct their steps, attracted by the partial sunshine of a showery sky, and unable longer to bear the confinement which the settled rain of the two preceding days had occasioned. (*SS*, pp. 78, 49)

[20] While Anna Shajirat finds *The Recess* in alignment with the stadial historical view for its exploitation of the depiction of Jamaica as 'a mirror of the British past' and of 'racial difference as a natural outgrowth of history', this chapter instead ascribes the novel's historicity to the sense of generational reiteration that prevails in its plot. Anna Shajirat, 'The Colonial Mirror Fantasy: Race, Gender, and History in Charlotte Smith's *The Story of Henrietta* (1800) and Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1783–85)', *The Eighteenth Century*, 61.3 (2020), 313-33 (pp. 320, 28).

The adjective 'memorable', shared by the parallel scenes of the two novels, can strictly be used only in hindsight. It is likely that this expression enabled by knowledge of the future course of events is a remnant of the original epistolary version of *Sense and Sensibility* under the title of *Elinor and Marianne* in the first-person narrative, and the novel's original format would have further clarified its kinship with *The Recess*.[21] The retroactive dramatisation of a fatal crossroads is a common practice in stories about Mary, Queen of Scots's decline. Her decision to seek political asylum in England, which impassioned Samuel Johnson quotes, as discussed in Chapter 1, consummates the mournful finale of Walter Scott's *The Abbot* (1820), a historical novel about Mary's imprisonment at Lochleven Castle. The abbot tries to detain the queen in vain: '"Blinded, deceived, doomed Princess! your fate is sealed when you quit this strand.—Queen of Scotland, thou shalt not leave thine heritage!"'.[22] The wisdom of hindsight is exploited not to authorise the legitimacy of progressive historical view but to work a kind of dramatic irony. The same stagecraft emphasises Marianne's encounter with Willoughby, as well as Matilda and Ellinor's with Dudley, as an irretrievable turning point in sisterly relations.

[21] Cassandra Austen remembers: 'Sense & Sensibility begun Nov. 1797[.] I am sure that something of the same story & characters had been written earlier & called Elinor & Marianne' (*JAFM*, V, 297-98).
[22] Walter Scott, *The Abbot* (1820), ed. by Christopher Johnson, The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p. 371

Austen tinkers with the combinations of names and characters more extensively than Lee. Not only Marianne and Margaret, the latter of who has 'imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance', but also Elinor and Edward share nearly symmetrical names (*SS*, p. 8). From her teenage years, Austen was alert to alliterative and nearly anagrammed names, such as *Frederic and Elfrida* and *Edgar and Emma* in *Volume the First*. In the latter, the paired names do not necessarily guarantee the resemblance of the two characters, for the titular hero is away at college and absent from the beginning to the end of the story (*TW*, p. 26). As is typical of many of her teenage writings, *Edgar and Emma* is overwhelmed with a medley of names; Edgar's parents, Mr and Mrs Wilmot, whose 'Children were too numerous to be particularly described', visit the family of the heroine with nine of their children, including 'Robert, Richard, Ralph, & Rodolphus', excusing the others who are not present:

> 'Our children are all extremely well but at present most of them from home.' 'Amy is with my sister Clayton. Sam at Eton. David with his Uncle John. Jem &' 'Will at Winchester. Kitty at Queen's Square. Ned with his Grandmother. Hetty &' 'Patty in a convent at Brussells. Edgar at college, Peter at Nurse, & all the rest' '(except the nine here) at home.' (*TW*, pp. 25, 26)

Throughout the story, even those children who accompany their parents are not doing anything other than merely being existent. Here, the mention of names does not entail the

physical presence of their signified characters. The names are superfluous, failing to carve out a unique character, but reinforcing the horizontal connections with other names. When Austen referred to Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* and *Ethelinde* (1789) in *Kitty* and to Frances Burney's *Cecilia* and *Camilla* in her famous vindication of the novel in *Northanger Abbey*, it seems not only the individual worth of these works but also simply the well-matched titles that decide the selection (*TW*, p. 174; *NA*, p. 31). In the marriage register of St Nicholas Church, Steventon, which was mentioned earlier in Footnote 38 in Chapter 2, teenage Austen chooses her fictional husband merely for the visual and phonetic resemblance between his and her names: 'This Marriage was solemnized between us *Jack Smith & Jane Smith late Austen*, in the Presence of *Jack Smith, Jane Smith*.'[23] Also, the bride is acquiring exactly the same name as that of her new sister.

The entwined names, such as Elinor and Edward and Marianne and Margaret, set the tone for *Sense and Sensibility*. The world of this novel is a kind of reducible, even geometrical, artifact to the extent that almost any pairs in it can be categorised under the labels of either similarity or dissimilarity. As soon as the story begins, the narrator explains that '[t]he resemblance between her [Marianne] and her mother was strikingly great', assuring us that the inclination of a mother recurs in her daughter just as in *The*

[23] 'Frontispiece' in *J*.

Recess (*SS*, p. 7). The matrilineal inheritance of Mrs Dashwood's character transcends their bloodline. The ruin of Colonel Brandon's former romantic interest, Eliza, who 'in temper and mind greatly resembled […] [Elinor's] sister, who thought and judged like her', is repeated by her same-named daughter: '"Such," said Colonel Brandon, after a pause, "has been the unhappy resemblance between the fate of mother and daughter!"' (*SS*, pp. 67, 240). Significantly, the name of Lady Middleton's pampered daughter Annamaria anticipates another repetition of Marianne's consuming emotions. Edward is resolved to put an end to this cyclical history over generations, declaring: '"[t]hey [Edward's sons] will be brought up […] to be as unlike myself as is possible. In feeling, in action, in condition, in every thing"' (*SS*, p. 119).

Contrast is no less conspicuous. 'Colonel Brandon […] seemed no more adapted by resemblance of manner to be his [Sir John's] friend, than Lady Middleton was to be his wife, or Mrs. Jennings to be Lady Middleton's mother' (*SS*, p. 40). Siblings can likewise be diametrically opposite to one another: 'Mrs. Palmer was several years younger than Lady Middleton, and totally unlike her in every respect' (*SS*, p. 123). Lucy Steele derogates her future husband Robert Ferrars: '"I never saw him; but I fancy he is very unlike his brother—silly and a great coxcomb"' (*SS*, p. 170). In *Sense and Sensibility*, blood kinship does not determine whether any two persons are alike. The narrator goes

through as many ways of pairing and grouping characters as possible: from the conventional one by family relationships to the elected one by resemblance and opposition.

Categorisation is shown to be executed by subjective judgment. Sir John and Lady Middleton, for example, look sometimes similar, but sometimes not: 'however dissimilar in temper and outward behaviour, they strongly resembled each other in that total want of talent and taste which confined their employments, unconnected with such as society produced, within a very narrow compass' (*SS*, p. 38). No pair can escape some kind of connections, and the options of combination are numerous. In *Frederic and Elfrida*, Austen refuses to invent the perfect resemblance of the eponymous couple and thereby to cater to the romantic appetite of readers:

> They were exceedingly handsome and so much alike, that it was not every one who knew them apart.—Nay even their most intimate freinds had nothing to distinguish them by, but the shape of the face, the colour of the Eye, the length of the Nose & the difference of the complexion. (*TW*, p. 3)[24]

The heroine and hero can be distinguished by their different facial features. They are not destined to be united by their natural resemblance, which is, in fact, a work of posterior

[24] See also the note in *TW*, p. 247.

imagination nurtured by literary convention and the fond wish, also cherished by Marianne Dashwood, that lovers' tastes must 'in every point coincide' (*SS*, p. 20). Edward Ferrars 'was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person or address', distinguished as a hero thanks to his favourable contrast with his sister Fanny; but this dichotomy, at first, was not necessarily striking for Mrs Dashwood:

> She was first called to observe and approve him farther, by a reflection which Elinor chanced one day to make on the difference between him and his sister. It was a contrast which recommended him most forcibly to her mother.
>
> 'It is enough,' said she; 'to say that he is unlike Fanny is enough. It implies every thing amiable. I love him already.' (*SS*, pp. 18-19)

It is the contrast Elinor 'chanced' to observe that groups, in the mind of her mother, Fanny and Edward on the one hand and Elinor and Edward on the other. Because Edward is unlike his formidable sister, he must be 'every thing amiable', which necessarily combines him with Elinor under the generously loose label of the dissimilarity to Fanny. The couple's *a priori* resemblance, as their symmetrical names make us expect, is relentlessly replaced by the *a posteriori* forced analogy, that is almost only a work of accident.

It seems that, for tireless matchmakers such as Sir John Middleton, Mrs Jennings, the narrator, and the author, almost anyone may comfortably be anyone's lover; Mrs

Jennings is happy with Marianne united to either Willoughby or Colonel Brandon, or with Elinor to either Edward or the Colonel. Lucy switches from Edward to Robert, whom she had assured Elinor was totally unlike his brother. Most poignantly, it is Marianne who repeatedly mistakes other persons for Willoughby; first, Edward on horseback in the distance and, second, the Colonel rapping at the door (*SS*, pp. 99, 184). Austen offers 'possibilities' instead of 'probabilities', as William H. Galperin observes, subverting the constructed idea of 'reality'.[25]

The matchmaking of characters in *Sense and Sensibility*, which seems more exhaustive than in *Emma*, overlaps again with Locke's concept of free association, which, as Chapter 2 attempted to demonstrate, arranges historical events and characters in Austen's *History*. Locke himself resorts to the means of personification when describing 'a wrong connexion of ideas':

> Some of our *Ideas* have a natural Correspondence and Connexion one with another: It is the Office and Excellency of our Reason to trace these, and hold them together in that Union and Correspondence which is founded in their peculiar Beings. Besides this there is another Connexion of *Ideas* wholly owing to Chance or Custom; *Ideas* that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some Mens Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but its Associate appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang always

[25] Galperin, pp. 4, 9.

inseparable shew themselves together.[26]

Such terms as ‘Union’, ‘kin’, ‘company’, and ‘gang’ bridge Locke’s formulation and combined characters in *Sense and Sensibility*, making the story a sort of an allegory of free association. Locke likens right concatenation to blood relationships, but the main plot concerning the elder two Dashwood sisters evolves around the downsizing of their natural kinship. Through the shared experience of disappointment in romantic expectations, the connection between Elinor and Marianne is once dismantled, but, unlike in the case of Matilda and Ellinor, it is re-established. In other words, the novel traces the process of their weaning their rapport from the biological fact of being sisters. In the final passage of the novel, the reinforced intimacy of the sisters outshines the freshly achieved union of lovers:

> Between Barton and Delaford, there was that constant communication which strong family affection would naturally dictate;—and among the merits and the happiness of Elinor and Marianne, let it not be ranked as the least considerable, that though sisters, and living almost within sight of each other, they could live without disagreement between themselves, or producing coolness between their husbands. (*SS*, p. 431)

Glenda A. Hudson states that: ‘the sisters end up living in close proximity and become as

[26] *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, p. 395.

much "married" to each other as to their husbands.'[27] The denouement of *Sense and Sensibility* offers an alternative vision for the desolate resolution of Matilda and Ellinor's histories, which ends without initial sisterhood regained.[28] The happy ending is also overshadowed by the sense of a regretful retrospection over the discord between the Scottish and English queens.

Character and Narrative

Thus, Austen customarily hollows out names and characters (as represented personalities). Only with the random assignment of family members, friends, or lovers, is the fluidity of her fictional persons shown to become solid. Those empty vessels of signifiers, pushed to extremes, end up in the administrative jumbling of individuals as duplicated in the imaginary Baronetage which looms at the beginning of *Persuasion*. The mention of Sir Walter Elliot and his family is enough to endear the book, a roll of all baronets' family members and an inventory of brief histories about them, to the self-approving baronet:

[27] Glenda A. Hudson, *Sibling love and Incest in Jane Austen's Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 67.
[28] Jacqueline M. Labbe observes Austen's tendency to attenuate fatality when recycling Charlotte Smith's plots in her own novels. Jacqueline M. Labbe, *Reading Jane Austen after Reading Charlotte Smith* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 36.

> Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch-hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage […]. As he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century—and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he could read his own history with an interest which never failed—this was the page at which the favourite volume always opened:
>
> 'ELLIOT OF KELLYNCH-HALL.
>
> 'Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1760, married, July 15, 1784, Elizabeth, daughter of James Stevenson, Esq. of South Park, in the county of Gloucester; by which lady (who died 1800) he has issue Elizabeth, born June 1, 1785; Anne, born August 9, 1787; a still-born son, Nov. 5, 1789; Mary, born Nov. 20, 1791.'
>
> Precisely such had the paragraph originally stood from the printer's hands; but Sir Walter had improved it by adding, for the information of himself and his family, these words, after the date of Mary's birth—'married, Dec. 16, 1810, Charles, son and heir of Charles Musgrove, Esq. of Uppercross, in the county of Somerset,'—and by inserting most accurately the day of the month on which he had lost his wife.
>
> Then followed the history and rise of the ancient and respectable family, in the usual terms: how it had been first settled in Cheshire; how mentioned in Dugdale—serving the office of High Sheriff, representing a borough in three successive parliaments, exertions of loyalty, and dignity of baronet, in the first year of Charles II., with all the Marys and Elizabeths they had married; forming altogether two handsome duodecimo pages, and concluding with the arms and motto: 'Principal seat, Kellynch hall, in the county of Somerset,' and Sir Walter's hand-writing again in this finale:
>
> 'Heir presumptive, William Walter Elliot, Esq., great grandson of the second Sir Walter.' (*P*, pp. 3-4)

There is a contrast between one and a group. No precedence is given to the protagonist, Anne. The paradox that a genealogy carries was noticed by William Betham, author of *The Baronetage of England* (1801–05):

> But there is one imperfection incident […] to every genealogical account I have seen, of the hereditary dignities of England, which is, that for the want of a systematic mode of bringing down the descent, and arranging the collateral lines, it becomes extremely difficult to disjoin the one from the other; and this inconvenience is very much increased, by the frequent recurrence of the same Christian names, generally found in the contemporary members of the same family.[29]

Despite, or because of, this failure, the Baronetage seems to have attracted Austen. In *Sanditon*, she would return to such cataloguing in order to import a throng of characters or names all at once, inserting a page from a library subscription book that she makes up:

> The list of subscribers was but commonplace. The Lady Denham, Miss Brereton, Mr. and Mrs. Parker, Sir Edward Denham and Miss Denham, whose names might be said to lead off the season, were followed by nothing better than—Mrs. Mathews—Miss Mathews, Miss E. Mathews, Miss H. Mathews.—Dr. and Mrs. Brown—Mr. Richard Pratt.—Lieutenant Smith R. N. Captain Little,—Limehouse.—Mrs. Jane Fisher. Miss Fisher. Miss Scroggs.—Rev. Mr. Hankins. Mr. Beard—solicitor, Grays Inn.—Mrs. Davis. And Miss Merryweather.—Mr. Parker could not but feel that the list was not only without distinction, but less numerous than he had hoped. (*LM*, p. 166)

As the novel was left unfinished, these names, lavished upon the text, developed into nothing. It is equally likely, however, that the author was going to keep them unannotated anyway, since she generally treats names in a cold or disinterested way. This habit can be

[29] William Betham, *The Baronetage of England*, 5 vols (Ipswich: Burrell and Bransby, 1801–1805), I, ix.

traced back to *Memoirs of Mr Clifford*, where the narrator goes over from memory the protagonist's possessions:

> He [Mr Clifford] travelled in his Coach & Four, for he was a very rich young Man & kept a great many Carriages of which I do not recollect half. I can only remember that he had a Coach, a Chariot, a Chaise, a Landeau, a Landeaulet, a Phaeton, a Gig, a Whisky, an italian Chair, a Buggy, a Curricle & a wheel barrow. He had likewise an amazing fine stud of Horses. To my knowledge he had six Greys, 4 Bays, eight Blacks & a poney.
>
> In his Coach & 4 Bays Mr Clifford sate forward about 5 o'clock on Monday Morning the 1st of May. for London. (*TW*, p. 36)

More than half of Mr Clifford's assets are not recollected. The alliteration in the first part suggests the stress is not on paying homage to each item, but on the fact that the description is at the narrator's entire command. This indifference to things is transferred to the lists of persons in *Persuasion* and *Sanditon*, who get no better reception even in Austen's so-called mature novels.

The uninterested, and rather uninteresting, uniformity in those passages from *Persuasion* and *Sanditon* evokes Alex Woloch's argument about the contention among characters (as represented persons) for distinction in narrative:

> [M]any nineteenth-century novels sense the potential to shift the focus away from the established center, toward minor characters, and […] novels often obliquely or

> emphatically represent this process, even while constructing strong distinctions between a central protagonist and a manifold field of minor characters. The more dynamic examples of asymmetric characterization do not simply represent these minor characters but represent characters *becoming* minor within a complex narrative system.[30]

In *Persuasion*, the ritual of raising up a protagonist from a mass of people is first thwarted by the ironclad façade of the Baronetage with its homogeneous cataloguing. Indeed, this work keeps in suspense the identity of its central character much longer than any of Austen's novels (though *Edgar and Emma* in her teenage writings outstrips it in this respect). Soon after the presentation of the Baronetage, Anne seems to be duly promised a post as a heroine by the narrator: 'but Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;—she was only Anne' (*P*, p. 6). Her modest existence as a character, however, is elevated only to 'give way' to Elizabeth and the history of her mortifying affair with Mr Elliot. The history of Anne's aborted romance has to wait until chapter four. In chapter five, where Anne visits the Musgroves, the narrator finally establishes her as a focaliser and hence as a most likely protagonist.

The antithesis of single and plural persons in the Baronetage is attended by the

[30] Woloch, p. 44.

narrator's voice, which is now and then willing to betray his or her own thoughts. The sense of boredom escapes from such words as 'the usual terms' and 'all the Marys and Elizabeths they had married'. The narrator points to the impersonality of registered Elliots in a way that puts himself or herself forward instead. This is characteristic of Austen's narrators, who typically make a show of their authority less with their literary mastery of character delineation than with the triviality and interchangeability of their own creations. One case in point is the final chapter of the same novel:

> Who can be in doubt of what followed? When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point, be they ever so poor, or ever so imprudent, or ever so little likely to be necessary to each other's ultimate comfort. This may be bad morality to conclude with, but I believe it to be truth; and if such parties succeed, how should a Captain Wentworth and an Anne Elliot, with the advantage of maturity of mind, consciousness of right, and one independent fortune between them, fail of bearing down every opposition? (*P*, p. 270)

'Any two young people', that is, in this case, 'an Anne Elliot and a Captain Wentworth', can suffice for the purpose of the story. The phonetic redundancy of 'an Anne' further undercuts her privilege as a protagonist. Her name loses distinction even more considering that it might be a reuse of 'an Anne Cox' from *Emma*: '"She meant to be impertinently curious, just as such an Anne Cox should be"' (*E*, p. 251). The manuscripts

of the cancelled final two chapters of *Persuasion* reveal that the original phrase read 'Capt W— & an Anne E——' and that an indefinite article before Wentworth was added later (*JAFM*, IV, 260-61). Whether it was a second thought or had been intended from the first but accidentally dropped, the de-specification of the hero mattered for Austen. With the two dashes deleted in the published version, it becomes all the more emphasised that the resolution to get married is not solely Wentworth's but symmetrically and interchangeably shared by the lovers. The waning characters of 'a Captain Wentworth and an Anne Elliot' are compensated for by the narrator's amplified voice: 'This may be bad morality to conclude with, but I believe it to be truth.' On the one hand, Anne and Wentworth used to be called 'nobody', due to their local and social obscurity: 'Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody' (*P*, pp. 6, 270). On the other, they still remain 'nobody' at the end of the story and hence everybody, from the narrator's divine, arbitrary, and semi-metafictional perspective.[31] The narrator's 'godlike' voice,

[31] Compare this usage of the word 'nobody' to that of Frances Burney in the famous beginning of her journal: 'To Nobody […] will I write my Journal! since To Nobody can I be wholly unreserved—to Nobody can I reveal every thought, every wish of my Heart, with the most unlimited confidence, the most unremitting sincerity to the end of my Life!' […] No secret can I conceal from No—body, & to No—body can I be ever unreserved. Disagreement cannot stop our affection, Time itself has no power to end our friendship. The love, the esteem I entertain for Nobody, Nobody's self has not power to destroy.' Burney, *The Early Journals and Letters*, I, 2. The indefinite pronoun borders on presence and absence, on schizophrenic self-identification and absolute isolation, and on self-loving introspection and yearning for interaction with others. Austen's 'nobody' in *Persuasion* appears to be at odds with Burney's in that the former's narrator draws a decided demarcation between 'nobody' and herself. For readings of Burney's 'nobody' from gender perspective, see Joanne Cutting-Gray, *Woman as 'Nobody'*

which D. A. Miller assigns to its lack of '"character"', flaunts his or her liberty to place a favour or retrieve it as he or she sees fit.[32] Quite a human-like 'god', with a healthy appetite for power.

Just as the narrator pushes the heroine and the hero back into the statistical world of the Baronetage, Sir Walter inserts in its margin additional facts about his household. The novel's ending redirects readers to the beginning, where he is absorbed in the beloved pedigree. This completes the circular structure of the novel:

> [W]hen he saw more of Captain Wentworth, saw him repeatedly by daylight and eyed him well, he was very much struck by his personal claims, and felt that his superiority of appearance might be not unfairly balanced against her superiority of rank; and all this, assisted by his well-sounding name, enabled Sir Walter at last to prepare his pen with a very good grace for the insertion of the marriage in the volume of honour. (*P*, p. 271)

First, Sir Walter zooms in on Wentworth ('saw him repeatedly by daylight and eyed him well'), and then zooms out ('the insertion of the marriage in the volume of honour'). This shift encapsulates the changing degrees of the narrator's investment in the particulars of his or her character study. After initially distancing himself or herself from them in the Baronetage, he or she comes to stare at them through Anne's point of view, only to shut

and the Novels of Fanny Burney (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992).
[32] Miller, *Jane Austen*, p. 31.

them out again from the close psychological realism in the final chapter.

Sir Walter unknowingly but significantly acts out the narrator's usual disrespect for names and characters when he articulates his contempt for Mrs Smith: '"A Mrs. Smith. A widow Mrs. Smith,—and who was her husband? One of the five thousand Mr. Smiths whose names are to be met with every where"' (*P*, p. 170).[33] In Austen's fictional worlds, this is not an exaggeration; while her teenage writings are mostly dominated by polysyllabic, flamboyant names, the name Smith is almost omnipresent in her later works: Mr Smith in *Lady Susan*, who lets on to Reginald de Courcy about the history of Lady Susan's coquetry; Mrs Smith in *Sense and Sensibility*, who tantalises Willoughby in want with her financial legacy; Mr Rushworth's friend Mr Smith in *Mansfield Park*; 'a Miss Smith' in *Northanger Abbey*, who dances with Henry Tilney (*NA*, p. 70); Lieutenant Smith R. N. in *Sanditon*, recorded in the above-quoted subscription book (*LM*, p. 166). In *Emma*, the anonymity of the family name is fortified by the tautological addition of an indefinite article as anticipating 'an Anne': 'a Harriet Smith, […] one whom she could summon at any time to a walk, would be a valuable addition to her privileges' (*E*, p. 25). Austen's fascination with this everyday name flows into both the narrator's and Sir Walter's condescension towards common names and individuals; through this

[33] The editors of the Cambridge edition consider the name and character of Mrs Smith as an implicit reference to Charlotte Smith (*P*, pp. liii-liv). See also Labbe, p. 13.

resemblance, the author satirises the narrator, who satirises Sir Walter.

It is unclear whether the narrator is just exposed as unconscious of his or her overlapping with Sir Walter, or whether the narrator's sarcasm against the baronet and the narrator himself or herself is a defensive performance of self-irony, exploiting him as a lightning rod. In any case, the narrator in *Persuasion* is far from transparent and looks as self-confident as some of its characters. What is curious is the fact that the narrator's alter ego is none other than Sir Walter, a 'flat' character in E. M. Forster's famous formulation. His *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) defines a 'round' character as 'capable of surprising' readers with 'facets like a human being', in comparison with a 'flat character' as 'constructed round a single idea or quality' and 'easily recognized'.[34] Having settled this binary, Forster eventually reconfirms Austen's dexterity in deconstructing it by giving a glimpse of hidden aspects in flat characters, such as Miss Bates. This chapter, however, suggests that Austen tried another way of ironing out this contrast by appointing a flat character to the role of a historian in *Persuasion*. To the detriment of his self-suppressing daughter Anne, Sir Walter monopolises the opening of the story with a pen in his hand to edit 'his own history' (*P*, p. 3).

Although the classification of flat and round characters might not always apply to

[34] E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 73-74, 81.

fiction before Austen, the promotion of a flat character to the role of a historian subverts an eighteenth-century novelistic gimmick of giving the 'history' of a person, often someone melancholic or the natural child of someone, who is burdened by his or her past. This type of character would belong to 'round' characters in Forster's framework, with its functional raison d'être of exhibiting hitherto unknown aspects of a person or anecdotes, rather than its multi-faceted personality. Because his or her 'history', programmed to emerge sooner or later, is meant to engross all their sympathy or to quench readers' thirst for hidden episodes, the eighteenth-century version of a 'round' character is authorised to have as a long history as they like; and there is less tension between such an embedded story and the whole story that includes it. Some of the longest of such 'histories' are found in Charlotte Smith's *Ethelinde*, for instance. When the heroine's squandering, impetuous brother Harry discloses the background of a natural daughter Victoirine, whom he has secretly married, the 'history' spans eighteen pages in the original text until the outward story restores the submerged existence of the listener, Ethelinde's lover Montgomery, who 'listened attentively to this narrative'.[35] When it comes to length, the sorrowful history of Montgomery and his family defeats Victorine's;

[35] Charlotte Smith, *Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake* (1789), ed. by Stuart Curran, The Works of Charlotte Smith (Charlottesville: InteLex, 2011), pp. 217-23. For the length of Victorine's history, see the original edition of the novel: Charlotte Smith, *Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake*, 5 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1789), III, 97-114.

his mother betrays the 'narrative' in question, consuming more than fifty pages.[36] Smith lets these quasi-round characters take the initiative in her narrative and threaten to overturn the order of major and minor. In Smith's and other eighteenth-century sentimental novels, it is less the richness of inner quality than the licence to interrupt the progress of an overall story that is a touchstone for a kind of round characters, with whom a work more or less sides.

This reversal of inclusion relations between the whole story and a contained but lengthened history not only jeopardises the metafictional precedence of a narrator of the whole, but also confuses the identity of a historian. The apostrophes in the histories within *Ethelinde*, which are attached to the beginnings of each paragraph in order to signal direct speech, would be only a modest help for readers who return to the novel after a while. We know that Austen was familiar with the confusion that the succession of speeches could bring about, from her letter written at the time of the publication of *Pride and Prejudice* (29 January 1813): 'There are a few Typical errors—& a "said he" or a "said she" would sometimes make the Dialogue more immediately clear—but "I do not write for such dull Elves"' (*L*, p. 210).[37] The stylistic awkwardness that a long history causes seems to have

[36] *Ethelinde* (2011), pp. 46-65; as to the original edition (1789), see I, 128-85.
[37] Anne Toner remarks on the difficulty in identifying the provenance of utterances in Austen's works: '[O]ccasionally, an utterance hovers among a number of speakers, among whom a reader has to try to make a choice. Freed from attribution, the utterance may, in some cases, voice the curiosity or the indignation that the reader herself may feel. Like free indirect style, free *direct* style, the omission of

been felt by William Godwin in his *Caleb Williams* (1794). When introducing the history of Falkland that dominates most of Volume I, Caleb assumes the status of at once the novel's narrator and the narrator of this story-within-story, on behalf of the original historian Collins, so as to eschew the baffling alternation of narrators:

> I [Caleb] requested him [Collins] to enter into a more copious explanation. With this request he readily complied […]. I shall interweave with Mr Collins's story various information which I afterwards received from other quarters, that I may give all possible perspicuity to the series of events. To avoid confusion in my narrative, I shall drop the person of Collins, and assume to be myself the historian of our patron. To the reader it may appear at first as if this detail of the preceding life of Mr Falkland were foreign to my history. Alas! I know from bitter experience that it is otherwise. My heart bleeds at the recollection of his misfortunes, as if they were my own. How can it fail to do so? To his story the whole fortune of my life was linked.[38]

By reciting the conflation of Collins's narrative and his own additions unitedly under his own name, Caleb retains the alluring immediacy of a divulged history, which destabilises the fundamental component of history as a genre: its pastness; that is, distance from the present.[39] His vicarious narration facilitates both formal simplification and his and his readers' absorption into the past events that neither he nor they witnessed. Despite

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said hes and *said shes* in dialogue, can allow for an interesting complexity.' Anne Toner, 'A "Said He" or a "Said She"; Speech Attribution in Austen's Fiction', *Persuasions*, 34 (2012), 140-49 (p. 148).

[38] William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* (1794), ed. by Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 11-12.

[39] For exploration of the notoriously ambiguous concept of 'pastness', see Danto.

Godwin's awareness of the inconvenience deriving from the convention of inserted histories, he does not go so far as to jettison its effect of inflaming sensibility in his audience and to attend to the conflict between one character's history and a novel as a whole.

This kind of miniature history is recognised as a threat to the unity of an entire work in Scott's Waverley Novels. Scott's reputation as a trailblazer in the historical novel, associated with Georg Lukács's attribution of his historicity to 'the kind of concretization of the *here* and *now*', has underplayed his inheritance of the history as a formal property of the eighteenth-century novel.[40] The historian-cum-novelist is more alert to the unevenness that this sentimental discourse causes. Every time someone's history needs to interrupt the story, Scott's narrator attaches an apologetic justification for such an impediment to the narrative flow, making the transition rather unwieldy and clumsy. In his *Old Mortality* (1816), the history of John Balfour, a strict Covenanter, who persists in recruiting the hero Henry Morton into a rebel against Charles II's reign, can be squeezed in only after a proper excuse for such digression:

> That we may be enabled to dispense with detailing at length the arguments by which he urged Morton to join the insurgents, we shall take this opportunity to give

[40] Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (1937), trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 118.

> a brief sketch of the person by whom they were used, and the motives which he had for interesting himself so deeply in the conversion of young Morton to his cause.[41]

Despite his early appearance, Balfour's history is offered to readers only halfway through the novel, which is in line with a typical technique of eighteenth-century novels to stimulate readers' curiosity. Scott indirectly admits his own intimacy with this convention in the opening gambit of *Kenilworth*: 'It is the privilege of tale-tellers to open their story in an inn, the free rendezvous of all travellers, and where the humour of each displays itself, without ceremony or restraint.'[42] His heavy recourse to the motif of the mysterious traveller at the beginning of a story, as in *Guy Mannering* (1815) or *The Antiquary* (1816), goes hand-in-hand with the postponed revelation of those travellers' pasts. By calling this literary artifact 'a privilege', however, he seems to emphasise that his employment of the convention stems from voluntary authorial choice, rather than from mechanical imitation. In fact, Scott deviates from his predecessors in his belief that suspension of the larger story should be more or less controlled. This results in meticulous references to the movement of the narrator's focus, which often hampers readers from sinking into the turbulence of seventeenth-century Scotland. The history of Morton, unveiled in Chapter

[41] Walter Scott, *Old Mortality* (1816), ed. by Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 231. Although Austen never mentioned it, the novel, together with *Black Dwarf*, was first published on 2 December 1816 before her death on 17 July 1817.
[42] *Kenilworth*, p. 1.

XIII, similarly follows a preliminary: 'it is necessary to say something of his previous state of mind, and of the origin of his acquaintance with Edith.'[43] Elsewhere, when moving from the rebellious Covenanters to the royalists to whom the heroine belongs, the narrator addresses readers in order to explain the change of scene: 'We must now return to the fortress of Tillietudlem and its inhabitants.'[44] Readers might appreciate the narrator's guidance in order to disentangle the incessant 'wavering' of protagonist and of narrational focus switching between two politico-religious camps, as is characteristic of Scott's novels.[45] This impulse to clarify, at the same time, connotes a burgeoning sense that tracing the causal process of overall history and sojourning into investigations of character and anecdote are irreconcilable.

Austen shares with Scott an interest in balancing these two narrational movements: that is, metaphorically speaking, vertical and horizontal. She seems to have penetrated Scott's compositional effort when remembering in her letter to James Edward Austen (16–17 December 1816) an insertion of a history into *The Antiquary*:

> Uncle Henry writes very superior Sermons.—You & I must try to get hold of one or two, & put them into our Novels;—it would be a fine help to a volume; & we could make our Heroine read it aloud of a Sunday Evening, just as well as Isabella

[43] *Old Mortality*, p. 155.
[44] *Old Mortality*, p. 255.
[45] Most famous sample is the hero Waverley with his allegorical name. Walter Scott, *Waverley* (1814), ed. by Claire Lamont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

> Wardour in the Antiquary, is made to read the History of the Hartz Demon in the ruins of S^{t} Ruth—tho' I beleive [*sic*], upon recollection, Lovell is the Reader.— (*L*, p. 337)

Austen's memory is interested less in which character read 'the History of the Hartz Demon' than in the fact that it was incorporated into the novel. It might be guessed from this that Austen associates Scott's narrative with the act of interpolating itself. Her own approach is, however, qualitatively different from his: while Scott's narrators ask readers' pardon for insertions that he considers necessary, Austen makes her narrators blame the inflation of her characters' egos for otherwise avertible suspension. In her writings, the narrators' treatment of the 'history' of an individual figure is basically satirical, unlike in those of Charlotte Smith and others. In this light, it is not always the lack of sealed aspects or backgrounds that makes him or her 'flat'; conversely, what retrospectively makes a character look 'flat' is the fact that his or her 'history' is felt to be long.

Such an attitude of Austen's narrators is exemplified in their treatment of Cardinal Wolsey in her *History*, where the last words of his life are included in 'a slight sketch of the principal Events which marked his [Henry VIII's] reign': 'Among these may be ranked Cardinal Wolsey's telling the father Abbott of Leicester Abbey that "he was come to lay his bones among them"' (*TW*, p. 126). The distressed and showy line goes back to *Henry VIII* (1613) by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, where this statement is

reported in direct speech by Griffith, Katherine Dowager's gentleman usher, after Wolsey's downfall: '"O, father abbot, | An old man broken with the storms of state | Is come to lay his weary bones among ye. | Give him a little earth, for charity.'"[46] The way in which this quotation is presented varies among historical writings; Hume chooses indirect speech: 'When the abbot and the monks advanced to receive him with much respect and reverence, he told them, that he was come to lay his bones among them.'[47] The use of indirect speech seems to be deliberate so as not to establish Hume as a vindicator of Cardinal Wolsey as a result of his criticism of the opposite faction of 'those historians of partiality, who have endeavoured to load the memory of this minister with such violent reproaches'.[48] On the other, Goldsmith restores theatrical effect through direct speech: 'Being brought forward from thence, he with much difficulty reached Leicester Abbey; where the monks coming out to meet him, he said, "Father abbot, I am come to lay my bones among you."'[49] As a note to *Teenage Writings* indicates, Austen's narrator 'combines the two, keeping Goldsmith's speech marks but using Hume's third-person voice' (*TW*, p. 303). Given that the accommodation of the personal utterance into the summary of 'principal Events' in Henry VIII's reign parodies the swollen 'history' of

[46] William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *King Henry VIII, or, All is True* (1613), ed. by Jay L. Halio (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), IV. 2. 20-23.
[47] Hume, *The History of England*, III, 193.
[48] Hume, *The History of England*, III, 194.
[49] Goldsmith, *The History of England*, II, 361.

eighteenth-century novels, the strange amalgamation of direct and indirect speech in Austen's *History* formally performs the conflict between the narrator and Cardinal Wolsey fighting over initiative in narrative. This represents a contrast with the cases of Henry IV and Henry V, whose 'speeches' are shown to be perfectly tamed by the narrator: 'he [Henry IV] did not live forever, but falling ill, his son the Prince of Wales came and took away the crown; whereupon the King made a long speech, for which I must refer the Reader to Shakespear's Plays, & the Prince made a still longer' (*TW*, p. 121). The narrator's willingness to stifle Wolsey's raw words turns him into a 'flat' character, who presumptuously vies with him or her.

Austen makes Cardinal Wolsey stand out also in the narrative of *Mansfield Park*. Fanny has been reading *Henry VIII* aloud to Lady Bertram when Henry Crawford visits them. Cardinal Wolsey makes such a strong impression on Lady Bertram's mind that he succeeds in temporarily rousing her from tenacious inertia:

> 'We have not been so silent all the time,' replied his mother. 'Fanny has been reading to me, and only put the book down upon hearing you coming.'—And sure enough there was a book on the table which had the air of being very recently closed, a volume of Shakespeare.—'She often reads to me out of those books; and she was in the middle of a very fine speech of that man's—What's his name, Fanny?—when we heard your footsteps.'
>
> Crawford took the volume. 'Let me have the pleasure of finishing that speech to your ladyship,' said he. 'I shall find it immediately.' And by carefully giving way to

> the inclination of the leaves, he did find it, or within a page or two, quite near enough to satisfy Lady Bertram, who assured him, as soon as he mentioned the name of Cardinal Wolsey, that he had got the very speech.—Not a look, or an offer of help had Fanny given; not a syllable for or against. (*MP*, p. 389)

It is left ambiguous at which speech of Wolsey's Fanny's reading stopped, but we could assume that the line in question is the one on his bones that teenage Austen fondly cited, in view of the oddly detailed description of the book and its pages. The precise depiction of 'the inclination of the leaves', to which Crawford gives way, could be based on a specific copy in Austen's possession, where she repeatedly returned to her favourite Wolsey. Her association between teenage memory and Shakespeare, to whose plays she hilariously alluded in her *History*, is shared by Crawford: '"I do not think I have had a volume of Shakespeare in my hand before, since I was fifteen"' (*MP*, p. 390). It is, by the way, the age at which Austen completed the *History*. Whichever speech of Wolsey's the novel refers to, both Austen's *History* and *Mansfield Park* seem to load this historical figure with the sense of interruption.[50] The narrator's coercion of Wolsey into indirect speech in the *History* is reiterated in the form of Crawford's intrusion in the middle of Wolsey's speech. Overshadowed by the significant overlapping between Henry VIII and

[50] Cardinal Wolsey interrupts the storyline of *Love and Freindship* as well. His decline and fall are likened, out of the blue, to the overturning of a phaeton, which killed Edward and Augustus, husbands of Laura and Sophia: '"What an ample subject for reflection on the uncertain Enjoyments of this World, would not that Phaeton & the Life of Cardinal Wolsey afford a thinking Mind!"' (*TW*, p. 87).

his namesake Henry Crawford, Austen's personal preoccupation with Wolsey has received less attention; this indifference of critics, however, ironically implies the author's success in her ostentatious manipulation to downplay his presence.[51]

It is as if Austen's narrators nudge us into an assumption that the interruption to Cardinal Wolsey's speech is a reasonable measure to be taken against his verbosity, the degree of which they judge to be excessive. Both Wolsey and Richard III, the regular targets of Austen's affectionate satire, are characterised in Shakespeare's original plays as eloquent, manipulative knaves, whose speeches are gradually reduced as they proceed to eventual ruin. Her narrators join Shakespeare in containing their voices, and thereby turn them into 'flat' characters, of whom they think they are licensed to make fun.

These clashing desires to preside over narration that are entertained by narrator and character serve as Austen's response to the novelistic use of the term 'history' to squeeze in a character's hidden story. The same theme bubbles up in her later works besides *Mansfield Park*. The only usage of 'history' in *Sense and Sensibility* is reserved for Mrs Jennings, rather than for Colonel Brandon, one of the descendants of eighteenth-century 'historians' besides Jane Fairfax and Anne Elliot:

[51] For a reading of the scene with an emphasis on Henry Crawford's alluring performance and Fanny's resistance to it, see Kate Rumbold, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 164-71.

> She had already repeated her own history to Elinor three or four times; and had Elinor's memory been equal to her means of improvement, she might have known very early in her acquaintance, all the particulars of Mr. Jennings's last illness, and what he said to his wife a few minutes before he died. (*SS*, pp. 64-65)

Just as in the case of Cardinal Wolsey, Mrs Jennings's history is touched on irritably by the narrator or Elinor as a focaliser. Although Mrs Jennings is 'an everlasting talker' (*SS*, p. 64), her original recital, which must have been fairly long, is curtailed and chopped up into the smaller bits of 'all the particulars of Mr. Jennings's last illness' and 'what he said to his wife a few minutes before he died'. This formal fragmentation of her 'history' on the level of narration may re-enact the listener's inattention during the talk; or, it might equally visualise the efforts of the narrator-cum-focaliser to supress Mrs Jennings's overwhelming voice.

Likewise, one of the 'histories' in *Emma* is given by Mr Woodhouse, a seemingly 'flat' character. Among Austen's works, this novel is particularly full of the term 'history', and its characters atomise the past into 'histories' of not just persons but virtually of any subject. At the dinner at Randalls, Mr Woodhouse takes on the role of historian:

> The misfortune of Harriet's cold had been pretty well gone through before her [Emma's] arrival. Mr. Woodhouse had been safely seated long enough to give the

> history of it, besides all the history of his own and Isabella's coming, and of Emma's being to follow, and had indeed just got to the end of his satisfaction that James should come and see his daughter, when the others appeared, and Mrs. Weston, who had been almost wholly engrossed by her attentions to him, was able to turn away and welcome her dear Emma. (*E*, p. 127)

The history of 'Harriet's cold' focuses on a remarkably short-term event, and that of 'his own and Isabella's coming' and 'of Emma's being to follow' are even more specific.[52] From the latter part of the passage, it is inferred that well-mannered Mrs Weston has exerted herself to 'turn away' in vain, probably several times. On the one hand, the fragmentation of 'history' results from Austen's general tendency to juxtapose the grand genre of history with quotidian triviality; on the other, it again connotes the focaliser's attempts at interruption, making the inserted 'histories' a kind of literary rebel against the overall unification of narrative. Those mini 'histories' are almost omnipresent in *Emma*: 'the history of that day' when Jane Fairfax was rescued by Mr Dixon from being thrown into the sea, 'the history of the large room' that is to be used for the Highbury ball, or 'the history of her [Harriet's] hopes' for Mr Knightley's returning affection (*E*, pp. 171, 212, 445). These multiplied 'histories' unveil either of two polarising but equivalent claims: that a novel consists of nothing but some kind of interruption or that there is virtually no

[52] Compare with a similarly microscopic history in Austen's letter (14 October 1813): 'The history of his [Robert Wigram's] coming here, is that intending to go from Ramsgate to Brighton, Edw: B. [Edward Bridges] persuaded him to take Lenham in his way' (*L*, p. 247).

legitimate interruption in a novel.

Elsewhere in *Emma*, Austen's experiment in illustrating a character's aspiration to make his or her original voice heard takes the form of the deliberate confusion of direct and indirect speech, as in the example of Wolsey in her *History*. In the strawberry-picking party at Donwell, Mrs Elton 'was very ready to lead the way in gathering, accepting, or talking':

> Mrs. Elton, in all her apparatus of happiness, her large bonnet and her basket, was very ready to lead the way in gathering, accepting, or talking—strawberries, and only strawberries, could now be thought or spoken of.—'The best fruit in England—every body's favourite—always wholesome.—These the finest beds and finest sorts.—Delightful to gather for one's self—the only way of really enjoying them.—Morning decidedly the best time—never tired—every sort good—hautboy infinitely superior—no comparison—the others hardly eatable—hautboys very scarce—Chili preferred—white wood finest flavour of all—price of strawberries in London—abundance about Bristol—Maple Grove—cultivation—beds when to be renewed—gardeners thinking exactly different—no general rule—gardeners never to be put out of their way—delicious fruit—only too rich to be eaten much of—inferior to cherries—currants more refreshing—only objection to gathering strawberries the stooping—glaring sun—tired to death—could bear it no longer—must go and sit in the shade.'
>
> Such, for half an hour, was the conversation—interrupted only once by Mrs. Weston, who came out, in her solicitude after her son-in-law, to inquire if he were come—and she was a little uneasy. (*E*, pp. 389-90)

The editors of the Cambridge edition think this ingenious narrative mode is a transcript of 'the true voice of Highbury, a communal voice', where 'individual voices make

themselves heard, Mrs Elton's most stridently' (*E*, p. lx). Still, the 'conversation' interrupted 'only once' is nearly a synonym for Mrs Elton's vocal despotism. The phrase 'for half an hour', that is let out in the middle of the sentence, sounds like an irritated exclamation, further implying the narrator's ill feelings for Mrs Elton's protracted occupation of the narrative. Then, it is not only Mrs Elton but also the narrator, in the face of her powerful voice, who utters the words 'tired to death'. This betrayed grumble is not free indirect style proper, for the space which the narrator breaks into was originally reserved for Mrs Elton by quotation marks. It is not an unnoticeable switching of voices but open violation of territory. The chimera of direct and indirect speech, at the same time, makes the struggle for predominance a close game.

The irony of the passage above may also derive from how the prejudiced abridgement of Mrs Elton's colloquial words follows the manner of Enlightenment histories. Take the content of chapter XXIV in volume III of Hume's *History*, for instance, which is a neat list of significant names and events in the reign of Henry VII:

> XXIV
> HENRY VII
> *Accession of Henry VII. – His title to the crown – King's prejudice against the house of York – His joyful reception in London – His coronation – Sweating sickness – A parliament – Entail of the crown – King's marriage – An insurrection – Discontents of the people – Lambert Simnel – Revolt of Ireland – Intrigues of the dutchess of*

Burgundy – Lambert Simnel invades England – Battle of Stoke[53]

In these two quotations, both paratactic, a dash is a shared marker of disruption caused by each abridging phrase.[54] The difference between them is whether the narrator's motivation for pruning material is shown to be supported by his or her self-interest. So, Austen feels free to sometimes enlarge on and sometimes to curtail scenes and recitals, and this sense of narrative see-sawing is a point missed by Scott when he complains about Mr Woodhouse's or Miss Bates's monologues; he believes that the novel inclines to present these speeches to us unfiltered, as if without any editing:

> Characters of folly or simplicity, such as those of old Woodhouse and Miss Bates, are ridiculous when first presented, but if too often brought forward or too long dwelt upon, their prosing is apt to become as tiresome in fiction as in real society.[55]

Scott is actually entrapped in Austen's aesthetic trick by being annoyed at the outpourings of those 'simple' characters and hence by unknowingly empathising with her narrator,

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[53] Hume, *The History of England*, III. No pagination.

[54] Such abridgements are found also in novelistic chapter summaries, as in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749). For example, The summary of chapter 1 in book 1 reads: 'The introduction to the work, or bill of fare to the feast'. Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (1749), ed. by John Bender and Simon Stern (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7.

[55] Walter Scott, 'Walter Scott, an Unsigned Review of *Emma*', in B. C. Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, 2 vols (New York: Routledge, 2001), I, 58-69 (p. 68). Despite his objection to those chatterboxes, he seems to well imbibe Austen's language for talkativeness. Just as Miss Bates allows herself an intermission during her long speech only 'for breath' (*E*, p. 168), an earnest Covenantor Mause Headrigg in *Old Mortality* stops her harangue 'apparently much more from lack of breath than of matter'. *Old Mortality*, p. 105.

who is annoyed at their threatening to infringe on his or her claim on storytelling. Although Scott requests more brevity from Austen, elongation is in fact just one element of her narrational rhythm, which is established as a delicate power game played by her narrator and characters.

By criticising the prolixity in some parts of Austen's novel, Scott indirectly reiterates the gender binary between male and female discourse that Knightley offers when informing Emma of the engagement of Harriet and Robert Martin:

> 'He [Robert Martin] came down by yesterday's coach, and was with me this morning immediately after breakfast, to report his proceedings, first on my affairs, and then on his own. This is all that I can relate of the how, where, and when. Your friend Harriet will make a much longer history when you see her.—She will give you all the minute particulars, which only woman's language can make interesting.—In our communications we deal only in the great.' (*E*, p. 515)

Knightley's hypothesis that only women enlarge on particulars is refuted by Mr Woodhouse giving all the history of 'Harriet's cold', 'his own and Isabella's coming', and 'Emma's being to follow'. This counter-example implicitly deconstructs Knightley's confidence in male concision. Knightley expecting 'a much longer history' from his imaginary Harriet almost parallels the narrator, exhausted in face of Mrs Elton's volubility. The comparison of Harriet and Mr Woodhouse, therefore, registers not so much gender

essentialism as two characters competing for the position of narrator.

In this sense, the narrator's frustration with the lengthiness of the Baronetage in *Persuasion*, as mentioned earlier, does not necessarily equate to an attack on the elitist annal; it is rather a part of Austen's delineation of the narrator, who shares the contemporary contempt for the antiquary, branded as 'excessive' with 'no sense of proportion'.[56] In fact, Debrett's *Baronetage of England*, which it is generally agreed provided a model for Austen's fictional replication, is itself a pocket-sized abridgement of earlier, fuller productions, such as the two-volume Baronetage in octavo by Arthur Collins (1720), the four-volume one in octavo by Thomas Wotton (1741), and by the five-volume one in quarto by William Betham (1801–05).[57] Likewise, William Miller's *New Baronetage of England* (1804) in duodecimo could have added to Austen's Baronetage in duodecimo, for a copy of *The New Baronetage* with heavy annotations is housed in the Knight Collection at Chawton House Library. Its preface foregrounds its size:

> While successive editions of pocket PEERAGE are constantly proving the great convenience and utility of this form of publication, nothing on a similar plan has

[56] Ina Ferris, 'Pedantry and the Question of Enlightenment History: The Figure of Antiquary in Scott', *European Romantic Review*, 13.3 (2002), 273-83 (p. 275).
[57] While Janet Todd and Antje Blank think that Austen referred to the 1808 version (*P*, p. 334), Janine Barchas, as is remarked in Footnote 42 in Chapter 2, turns to the latest edition of 1815. See also Arthur Collins, *The Baronettage of England* [sic], 2 vols (London: W. Taylor, 1720); Thomas Wotton, *The English Baronetage*, 4 vols (London: Tho. Wotton, 1741). A copy of Betham is included in the Knight Collection at Chawton House Library.

been offered to the public respecting the order of BARONETAGE.[58]

The relative shortness of later productions including *The New Baronetage* and Debrett's *Baronetage* is achieved, despite ongoing additions of new creations, by their penchant for truncating anecdotal parts and for prioritising accurate data. Austen's emphasis on her Baronetage's being in 'duodecimo' implies that its air of lengthiness is but a construction. Thus, the family chronicle turns out to be a metonymy of not only snobbish Sir Walter but also of the narrator in *Persuasion* and other impatient readers of the Baronetage.

If Austen's 'flat' characters are metonymically defined by their disputes with self-interested narrators, 'round' characters are conversely defined by their conformity to them. Her treatment of Cardinal Wolsey and Mary, Queen of Scots represents a clear contrast. While the former, intertwined with the idea of speech, is made responsible for narrative suspension, the latter is presented as if too humble and too helpless to trouble the formal progress of narration. This is a decided deviation from many of Mary's verbal representations in other eighteenth-century histories, as it was a staple feature of such texts to adorn her farewell to the mortal world with direct speech and engrossing particulars about how she proceeded to the block.[59] This kind of emotional atemporality

[58] William Miller, *The New Baronetage of England*, 2 vols (London: William Miller, 1804), p. v.
[59] See Robertson, *The History of Scotland*, II, 146-49; Goldsmith, *The History of England*, III, 126-27.

is also reflected in the affiliation of the queen with the literary motif of painting, or with the practice of blazon. Three passages that Jayne Elizabeth Lewis extracts, from Eliza Haywood's *Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots* (1725), *The Recess*, and *The Abbot*, for the epigraphs of her argument about *The Recess*, say it all:

> CHARLES the Ninth, according to Mosieur BRANTOSME, never pass'd by her Picture, as it hung in a Gallery in the Palace, but he stopp's short, and however accompany'd and busied, burst out into the most passionate Expressions——[60]

> Being deprived of [...] books, to amuse a part of our melancholy leisure, we mutually agreed to invent tales from the many whole-length pictures, which ornamented the best room [...]. It [one picture] represented a lady in the flower of youth, drest in mourning, and seeming in every feature to be marked by sorrow; a black veil half shaded a coronet she wept over. [...] [T]his seemed to call forth a thousand melting sensations; the tears rushed involuntarily into our eyes, and, clasping, we wept upon the bosoms of each other. 'Ah, who can these be?' cried we both together. 'Why do our hearts thus throb before inanimate canvas? surely every thing we behold is but part of one great mystery; when will the day come, destined to clear it up?'[61]

> Her face, her form, have been so deeply impressed upon the imagination, that, even at the distance of nearly three centuries, it is unnecessary to remind the most ignorant and uninformed reader of the striking traits which characterize that remarkable countenance, which seems at once to combine our ideas of the majestic, the pleasing, and the brilliant, leaving us to doubt whether they express most happily the queen, the beauty, or the accomplished woman. Who is there, at the very mention of Mary Stuart's name, that has not her countenance before him, familiar as that of

[60] Eliza Haywood, *Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots* (London: D. Browned Junior, 1725), p. 4. See also Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, '"Ev'ry Lost Relation"; Historical Fictions and Sentimental Incidents in Sophia Lee's *The Recess*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 7.2 (1995), 165-84 (pp. 165-66).
[61] *The Recess*, pp. 9-10.

> the mistress of his youth, or the favourite daughter of his advanced age? Even those who feel themselves compelled to believe all, or much of what her enemies laid to her charge, cannot think without a sigh upon a countenance expressive of anything rather than the foul crimes with which she was charged when living, and which still continue to shade, if not to blacken her memory. That brow, so truly open and regal—these eyebrows, so regularly graceful, which yet were saved from the charge of regular insipidity by the beautiful effect of the hazel eyes which they overarched, and which seem to utter a thousand histories—the nose, with all its Grecian precision of outline—the mouth, so well proportioned, so sweetly formed, as if to speak nothing but what was delightful to hear—the dimpled chin—the stately swanlike neck, form a countenance, the like of which we know not to have existed in any other character moving in that high class of life, where the actresses as well as the actors command general and undivided attention. It is in vain to say that the portraits which exist of this remarkable woman are not like each other; for, amidst their discrepancy, each possesses general features which the eye at once acknowledges as peculiar to the vision which our imagination has raised while we read her history for the first time, and which has been impressed upon it by the numerous prints and pictures which we have seen. Indeed we cannot look on the worst of these, however deficient in point of execution, without saying, that is meant for Queen Mary; and no small instance it is of the power of beauty, that its charms should have remained the subject not merely of admiration, but of warm and chivalrous interest, after the lapse of such a length of time.[62]

These portraits of Mary, a kind of visually oriented siren, not only physically detain the characters but also charms its viewers into a timeless reverie, insulated from the marching on of history and world. Lewis remarks on this contradiction: ‘My epigraphs all place Mary Stuart at a point where modern historiography meets sentimental discourse. Each identifies her with a kind of sign—pictorial, particular, and emotionally provocative—

[62] *The Abbot*, pp. 187-88.

that troubles any dispassionate linguistic structure bent on replicating the seamless passage of chronological time.'[63] According to Victor G. Wexler, Hume and Robertson perceive a politico-historical significance in the queen's power of retarding progress and in people's corresponding willingness to be delayed in this manner:

> Most of Hume's campaign for the modernization of Scotland is implied in the second of the Tudor volumes, where he set out to denigrate the reputation of Mary, Queen of Scots. Both Robertson and Hume believed that, if ever Scotland were to enter completely the modern age, the romantic attachment to the heroine of the Highlanders and Jacobites would have to be cast away.[64]

As Chapter 1 states, the sentimental embellishment of Mary, Queen of Scots by Hume and Robertson is not at odds with their generally 'Whig view of things', for the measure is taken partly to underestimate her intellectual intervention into the political history of Scotland.

The narrator of Austen's *History* disconnects Mary, Queen of Scots from this infatuating atemporality. This is not only due to the author's resistance to flowery language, as discussed in Chapter 1; but also to an impulse to caricature the narrator being happy with her authority over the character, whose voice and appeal are contained and

[63] Lewis, p. 166.
[64] Wexler, p. 54.

far from threatening. The narrator harping on Mary's vindication, which nevertheless allows her no more than an inconspicuous presence, sounds affectionate and condescending. The patronising narrator anticipates Emma, a would-be mentor of her pupil Harriet, who is 'so far from pushing, shewing so proper and becoming a deference' (*E*, p. 22). Mary, the *History* assures, would have been spotless with some proper education, and so is Harriet, who is placed in boarding school (*TW*, p. 130). What is interesting is what the analogy suggests: that the narrator doats on the queen because the latter's meek character bestows on the former safe authority; and this character, we then realise, is the narrator's own construction.

Austen often exhibits a behind-the-scenes process of how the narrator distributes his or her characters into 'flat' and 'round' types by modulating the boundaries between the narration and his or her characters' 'history', modulations that are sometimes transparent and sometimes prominent. The unimpeded shift into the history of Mary, Queen of Scots's calamity vouches for the narrator's wholehearted approval, whereas the unrefined synthesis of direct and indirect speech in Wolsey's end bespeaks her performed reluctance to let his voice in. This binary survives in *Emma*; see how the history of ever-approved Harriet is braided into the consciousness of Emma, or the narrator:

> [A] note was brought from Mrs. Goddard, requesting, in most respectful terms, to be allowed to bring Miss Smith with her; a most welcome request: for Miss Smith was a girl of seventeen whom Emma knew very well by sight and had long felt an interest in, on account of her beauty. A very gracious invitation was returned, and the evening no longer dreaded by the fair mistress of the mansion.
>
> 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. She had no visible friends but what had been acquired at Highbury, and was now just returned from a long visit in the country to some young ladies who had been at school there with her.
>
> She was a very pretty girl, and her beauty happened to be of a sort which Emma particularly admired. She was short, plump and fair, with a fine bloom, blue eyes, light hair, regular features, and a look of great sweetness; and before the end of the evening, Emma was as much pleased with her manners as her person, and quite determined to continue the acquaintance.
>
> She was not struck by any thing remarkably clever in Miss Smith's conversation, but she found her altogether very engaging—not inconveniently shy, not unwilling to talk—and yet so far from pushing, shewing so proper and becoming a deference, seeming so pleasantly grateful for being admitted to Hartfield, and so artlessly impressed by the appearance of every thing in so superior a style to what she had been used to, that she must have good sense and deserve encouragement. Encouragement should be given. Those soft blue eyes and all those natural graces should not be wasted on the inferior society of Highbury and its connections. The acquaintance she had already formed were unworthy of her. The friends from whom she had just parted, though very good sort of people, must be doing her harm. (*E*, pp. 22-23)

Harriet is installed in the novel not as an independent being but as merely an imaginary antidote to Emma's craving for novelty. Into the rift between the outer narration (if there is any such thing) and Harriet's 'history' flows Emma's consciousness, and the end of this 'history' first dissolves into Emma's indirect speech: 'Emma was as much pleased

with' or '[s]he was not struck by'; and then into free indirect style: 'Encouragement should be given'. The above quotation could not but be this long in order to show how gradually and imperceptibly the assimilation is completed. The term 'history', which used to demarcate a narrative border in eighteenth-century novels, belatedly occurs in the second paragraph here and ceases to bespeak the change of phases. The inveterate intrusion of 'history' from Mr Woodhouse with 'his habits of gentle selfishness', as discussed earlier, doubly certifies Harriet's modesty, within and without the story (*E*, p. 6).

Jane Fairfax's 'history' wedges itself into narration as elegantly as Harriet's. As is the case with Harriet, Jane's name first pops up independently of her own presence, that is, in one of Miss Bates's torrents of eloquence. After anchoring her speech in some news about Jane, she wishes to supply Emma with her letter so that it can tell 'her own story':

> 'Well, now I have just given you a hint of what Jane writes about, we will turn to her letter, and I am sure she tells her own story a great deal better than I can tell it for her.'
>
> 'I am afraid we must be running away,' said Emma, glancing at Harriet, and beginning to rise—'My father will be expecting us. I had no intention, I thought I had no power of staying more than five minutes, when I first entered the house. I merely called, because I would not pass the door without inquiring after Mrs. Bates; but I have been so pleasantly detained! Now, however, we must wish you and Mrs. Bates good morning.'
>
> And not all that could be urged to detain her succeeded. She regained the street—

> happy in this, that though much had been forced on her against her will, though she had in fact heard the whole substance of Jane Fairfax's letter, she had been able to escape the letter itself. (*E*, p. 173)

Miss Bates is interlocked with the idea of being detained as firmly as is Mr Woodhouse himself. The letter 'itself' would have been an equivalent to inserted 'histories', to which eighteenth-century focalisers are always open; but Emma, the focaliser here, graciously declines to be detained further 'against her will'. Once she refuses to attend both to Miss Bates's and Jane Fairfax's raw words, Jane's 'history' is told anyway from the next chapter, but in third-person narrative:

> Jane Fairfax was an orphan, the only child of Mrs. Bates's youngest daughter.
>
> The marriage of Lieut. Fairfax, of the —— regiment of infantry, and Miss Jane Bates, had had its day of fame and pleasure, hope and interest; but nothing now remained of it, save the melancholy remembrance of him dying in action abroad—of his widow sinking under consumption and grief soon afterwards—and this girl. (*E*, p. 174)

Just like Harriet's, Jane's 'history' is unfolded in a sphere that is not equipped with a speaker or a listener; a sphere that we cannot figure out to be any specific place in Highbury. Her 'history' is not preceded by a narrator's apology either, to justify this narration for the sake of narration, as is often the case in Scott's novels. This sense of nowhereness does not really provoke us to question it, however, partly because of the

dominance of free indirect style in *Emma*, on which Finch and Bowen shed light. Thanks to the extensive application of this equivocal mode, those bumpy spots where 'history' is implanted are levelled out to be just arbitrary points in a flow of free association. Jane's 'history', factual as it is made to appear, can be encroached upon by the internal world of Emma, the focaliser, or the narrator (the separation of whom is of no consequence). Surely, they would feel, neither Jane nor Miss Bates must be entrusted with 'history' telling.

That Jane Fairfax's 'history' opens together with a new chapter renders the breakage in narrative movement even subtler, for it can be ascribed to mere formal necessity. Austen likes to mark a threshold for a different narrational mode by this accordance of semantic and formal beginnings. Jane's 'history' ends unpretentiously at the close of the same chapter, and the intermission between the chapters redeems the narrational focus from 'history' and Emma's consciousness to the larger storyline:

> The like reserve [of Jane Fairfax] prevailed on other topics. She and Mr. Frank Churchill had been at Weymouth at the same time. It was known that they were a little acquainted; but not a syllable of real information could Emma procure as to what he truly was. […] 'Did he appear a sensible young man; a young man of information?'—'At a watering-place, or in a common London acquaintance, it was difficult to decide on such points. Manners were all that could be safely judged of, under a much longer knowledge than they had yet had of Mr. Churchill. She believed every body found his manners pleasing.' Emma could not forgive her. (*E*, p. 181)

This chapter ending is followed by Austen's uncharacteristic repetition at the beginning of the next chapter: 'Emma could not forgive her;—but as neither provocation nor resentment were discerned by Mr. Knightley' (*E*, p. 182). This careful redundancy does not escape D. A. Miller's critical acumen:

> What generates the first 'Emma could not forgive her' is Emma's own affective consciousness, intimately accessed and ironically inflected by its free indirect narrative performance. What generates the second 'Emma could not forgive her' is pure narration, a detached consciousness to which Emma's own has ceased to contribute, having been reduced to a little bit of information useful to the plot.[65]

Or, as Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan state, '"Emma could not forgive her", the next chapter begins, and in the repetition irritation hardens into a fixed dislike' (*E*, p. lix). This 'hardening' signals the narrator's coming back to her senses from the distraction, or his or her self-discipline, which Miller illustrates:

> It is as though the narration were trying, and failing, to pull away from the attraction of free indirect style—from that identification with an image of the Person which is the only thing that distinguishes it, fantasmatically speaking, from its usual 'omniscient' mode.[66]

[65] Miller, *Jane Austen*, p. 65.
[66] Miller, *Jane Austen*, p. 66.

The ‘attraction’ is perhaps not a pure fruit of the mimicry and exploration of Emma’s inner voice, if we remember the preceding chapter was about the ‘history’ of someone, the type of narration that had mesmerised many eighteenth-century novel readers. This chapter deviates from Miller’s insightful reading, for it estimates that free indirect style works to mitigate, rather than contribute to, the allure of ‘history’. For Miller, the detached narration after the chapter break is no more than ‘a little bit of information useful to the plot’, but ‘history’ used to be the very tag to deliver facts indispensable to plot. Free indirect style at the end of this ‘history’ is not always something that we leave with regret: it rather helps connect past episode to present narration. This bridging effect does not contradict Austen’s long-standing scepticism about the narrative of causality, as examined in Chapter 2, because an emphasis is on exhibiting, through the contrast between ‘flat’ and ‘round’ characters, and shows how much trouble it costs to integrate ‘histories’.

A parallel use of the chapter break can be spotted in *Persuasion*. After Anne drops a hint at her ‘*he*’ at the end of Chapter 3 of the novel, the technique helps its story swim into Wentworth’s ‘history’:

> [A]s she walked along a favourite grove, said, with a gentle sigh, ‘a few months more, and *he*, perhaps, may be walking here.’ (*P*, p. 27)
>
> *He* was not Mr. Wentworth, the former curate of Monkford, however suspicious

> appearances may be, but a captain Frederick Wentworth, his brother, who being made commander in consequence of the action off St. Domingo, and not immediately employed, had come into Somersetshire, in the summer of 1806; and having no parent living, found a home for half a year, at Monkford. (*P*, p. 28)

Austen takes advantage of readers' sanguine expectation about Anne's romance with the former curate. The italicised '*he*' is an insinuation about the convention to tantalise prying minds with postponed revelations of 'history'. Nonetheless, the truth is promptly served to thirsty readers at the start of the next chapter. The ironical cancellation of expected suspense naturalises the authorial obligation of providing background; it is transformed into the literary craft of parodying. Compare this to the 'history' of Mr Parker in *Sanditon*, which he offers before characters and readers realise that they were curious: 'Mr. Parker's character and history were soon unfolded. All that he understood of himself, he readily told, for he was very open-hearted' (*LM*, p. 146). The disruption is due doubly to the spoof on the prolonged disclosure and to his characteristic 'readiness' to self-introduce. Mr Parker, a 'flat' character, is cognate with Cardinal Wolsey or Mr Woodhouse in that their voices hinder the narrator's in some way or other. Their forwardness is a compositional artifice that works similarly to the chapter break in *Emma* and *Persuasion*. The difference between Jane Fairfax or Anne and Mr Parker resides in whether the narrators consider the discontinuity as the faults of those characters.

Thus, Austen's characters constitute two groups: those who are spirited enough to vie with the narrators and those who do not aspire so far. In daring to posit the existence of a narrator, especially in *Emma*, a work teeming with unattributed voices, lies another difference between the claims of this thesis and those of Miller's, and Finch's and Bowen's, argument. The subject of Miller's passage above is 'narration' rather than the 'narrator', and his whole discussion builds on the constructed absence of 'the omniscient narrator', whose 'divinity proves constantly betrayed by his human verisimilitude, the all-too-familiar "character" with which he can't help tending to coincide'.[67] Miller's concept of impersonality, however, depends on the want of innate 'character' in Austen's narration, without recognising organic ties between narrator and character, each of whom struggles against and defines the other. This relativity of character traits does not invalidate the existence of a narrator in a novel, and my argument treats the narrator in *Emma* rather as a role, honourable and coercive, which is played by one character after another.

A large part of this reading engages with Alex Woloch's findings in regard to the scramble among characters for more representation. This, he observes, finds expression in many nineteenth-century novels, including *Pride and Prejudice*; yet, in terms of Austen's corpus, her intimacy with eighteenth-century 'history' should also be taken into

[67] Miller, *Jane Austen*, p. 31.

account. With this in mind, we notice how absorbing ‘history’ was inflected by an illustration of forwardness that the narrator exerts himself or herself to repress; and how the demure reluctance with which ‘historians’ betrayed their past was relaxed into an eagerness to confess. By investigating the handling of speeches and quotations, this chapter attempts to turn minor, or ‘flat’, characters in Austen’s works from helpless losers of the battle royal for what Woloch calls ‘space’, into more formidable beings who provoke the narrator’s utmost effort to control them. These characters and narrators, whose contest makes sense only metafictionally, appear as if personifications of the past and the present. Just as the historian looks back to the past from the present perspective, the narrator looks at the character from a vantage point. While the privilege associates the narrator with the present tense, Austen’s narrators are far from sages equipped with advanced intellect. Her narrators and characters are described as more similar to one another than Enlightenment historians and their narrated objects are. Those characters with ‘history’ in Austen’s works symbolise history itself, a notion that she imagines as more baffling than flattering to the present. These incarnations of history are nothing like Clio, but their difficult characteristics mark the warmest tribute to the past from Austen, who does not slight or adore it for its inadequacy. From her teenage years onwards, she always faced the past and history as an ever-intriguing, autonomous marvel.

Conclusion

Jane Austen's historical imagination is highly form-conscious. Her dialogue with the styles of historical writings in the latter part of the eighteenth century comes to the surface once her corpus, including her *History of England* and other early writings, undergoes textual analysis. Although the fact that the *History* was composed at an early age delayed its critical recognition, the historicity of the work partly feeds on the very aspect of its origins: that is, the premise that a child could write a history. Austen's *History*, with its digression and indifference to exactitude, is a kind of transcription of a pupil's recital of English history by heart. The odd combination of the child and the history-writing indicates not only Austen's precocity but also her familiarity with the contemporary practice of historical education and writings. The romanticising language that David Hume and William Robertson adopt to describe and marginalise female monarchs is shunned by Austen's comical take on English history. Her devotion to Mary, Queen of Scots finds its expression not in such linguistic gallantry but in the outpouring of the narrator's personal attachment.

The principle that directs the narration of Austen's *History* is less linear order

than free association. The chronological consistency gives way to the meandering trajectory of the narrator's memory. Such a drive for reconstruction is shared by the seemingly less self-assertive Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*. While Fanny, an adopted child burdened with past memory and the sense of obligation, is quiet and self-effacing in the real world, she dominates her imagined kingdom, one that consists of random anachronism and anachorism. Just as her sailor brother William voyages all over the world, Fanny somehow simulates such travel in her own fictional world expanding from Cumberland to China. The locational details in the novel, which have stimulated its postcolonial readings, are accompanied by an alternative map that Fanny creates. Her imaginary flight is an act of forgetting – an escape from the past to which she is permanently indebted – and the wish fulfilment of a person who always feels out of place. In broader terms, Fanny's dismantling of spatio-temporal coherence bespeaks a correction to the progressivism which Enlightenment histories more or less incorporate.

This scepticism about developmental narrative, however, does not necessarily elucidate the whole of Austen's historical discourse. In fact, the latter part of the *History*, after its narrator accidentally remembers her darling Mary, Queen of Scots, begins resorting to teleological relationships, an idea that lies in the foundation of the progressive historical view. Such causal chains help the narrator detect distant culprits in occasioning

the murder of the queen. Criticism of the belief in teleology and causality, therefore, is rather one motif in the portrayal of the historian, who is gradually seduced into such narrative explication: namely, the portrayal of how unembarrassedly the narrator is able to bend her aesthetic principle for the sake of her own desire and favouritism. That is why Austen's writings are more a chimera of different temporalities than a reorganisation of repetition into narrative progress. Austen, the celebrated artisan of realism, is unexpectedly willing to betray a kind of behind-the-scenes view, in which temporal chaos is left untidied.

To discover and admire this kind of artistic flux in Austen's works is not necessarily an anachronistic identification of postmodern aestheticism. The stress on the causer of such incoherence, that is, the narrator, characterises Austen's historical approach as somehow Romantic. Her narrators vie with characters for dominance in narration. This metafictional conflict materialises in Austen's 'history', which in contemporary usage meant the revelation of a character's past life. She transforms it from a means to dramatise a character's sentimental monologue into an indicator of a narrator's undermined authority. The overlapping between a character's ambition to usurp narration and a narrator's eagerness to stifle such presumption irons out the intellectual inequality that their roles in the novel initially establish. This rivalry impairs the conventional

assumption of Austen's godlike narrator.

What matters for Austen's historical expressions is who narrates history, and how. Her *History*, the only work among her fiction that is provided with visual portraits, is also a faithful, literary portrayal of the self-approving historian. The foregrounding of personal voice and feeling in history and other genres at first appears to be a Romantic farewell to the Enlightenment ideal of detachment. Such Romantic self-affirmation, however, oddly functions as a form of scepticism, which is originally a speciality of the Enlightenment: a scepticism that divulges the hypocrisy of imagined detachment. At the same time, Austen's Romantic embracing of self is tinted with satire. It is always carefully overshadowed by a sense of theatricality that relativises the magnified prerogative of the narrator. Austen's historical ideas, especially her apparent partisan enthusiasm, flirt with both the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Her writings do not trace a chronological transition from the former to the latter. Nor do these two values merge either, but rather complement each other. That is also not to say she is judiciously settled in a happy medium. The manifestation of her narrators' emotions and opinions, pushed to an extreme, becomes the obverse of self-mockery. This keen self-reflection – in other words, a reflection on the immediate past – itself betokens a historical gesture.

P. B. S. Andrews, despite his general supposition that Austen 'developed' as she

completed new works, is sensing the rambling nature of the course that her career takes: 'it seems to me incredible that the gay and young-in-heart *Pride and Prejudice*, and the mature and bitter *Mansfield Park*, can really be simultaneous productions of the same stage in the author's development.'[1] But youthfulness and maturity are 'simultaneous' in Austen's creativity. *Mansfield Park* was published in May 1814, after she had started the apparently more 'young-in-heart' *Emma* in January 1814. *Emma* was proofread in November 1815, after she had commenced the apparently more 'mature' *Persuasion* in August 1815.[2] *Persuasion* was completed in August 1816, a year in which she also wrote the advertisement attached to the apparently more 'young-in-heart' *Northanger Abbey*.[3] *Northanger Abbey*, the youngest production among her novels in that it was originally composed in 1798–99, was published bound together with *Persuasion*, the oldest (except for *Sanditon*) in its composition and the age of its protagonist.[4] The zigzag movement, which resonates with the capricious tendency and the quick self-observation that are prominent in Austen's teenage writings but are also characteristic of all her work, rewrites the progressive charting of her authorial career. The inclination to deconstruct causality,

[1] Andrews, p. 339.
[2] Austen's letter to Cassandra (26 November 1815) contains a progress report of the proofreading of *Emma* (*L*, p. 313).
[3] The advertisement reveals that *Northanger Abbey* had originally been finished in 1803, thirteen years before the paratext was written (*NA*, p. 1).
[4] For all those dates when Austen started and finished the composition of each novel, see Cassandra's memorandum (*JAFM*, V, 297-98).

which is more pronounced in her early attempts at authorship, is not enough to prove the inadequacy of young Austen's abilities. What provoked embarrassment in her family members and some of her critics appears to be not so much the lack of linear development in those writings as the simple fact that a girl produced them. Those attacks have not always been supported by close reading and attention to her formal experimentations. Virginia Woolf, one of the earliest critics who applauded Austen's early works, understood that the usual progressivism would not do:

> But Jane Austen knew it from her birth upwards. One of those fairies who perch upon cradles must have taken her a flight through the world directly she was born. When she was laid in the cradle again she knew not only what the world looked like, but had already chosen her kingdom. She had agreed that if she might rule over that territory, she would covet no other.[5]

Austen indeed ruled a realm of her own since childhood, one that does not know the myth of teleology.

The citizens of such an imaginative domain were Austen's actual neighbours. Caroline Austen throws light on what triggered her aunt's manipulation:

> The laugh she occasionally raised was by imagining for her neighbours impossible contingencies — by relating in prose or verse some trifling incident coloured to her

[5] Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (England: L. & V., 1925), p. 171.

> own fancy, or in writing a history of what they had said or done, that *could* deceive nobody —[6]

The 'impossible contingencies' that Austen comes up with, as fitfully as Fanny, explains well her impulse to combine things anachronistically and anachoristically. She is an extraordinary matchmaker, transcending a vast range of time and space, one who eclipses even Emma Woodhouse.

[6] 'My Aunt Jane Austen', p. 172.

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