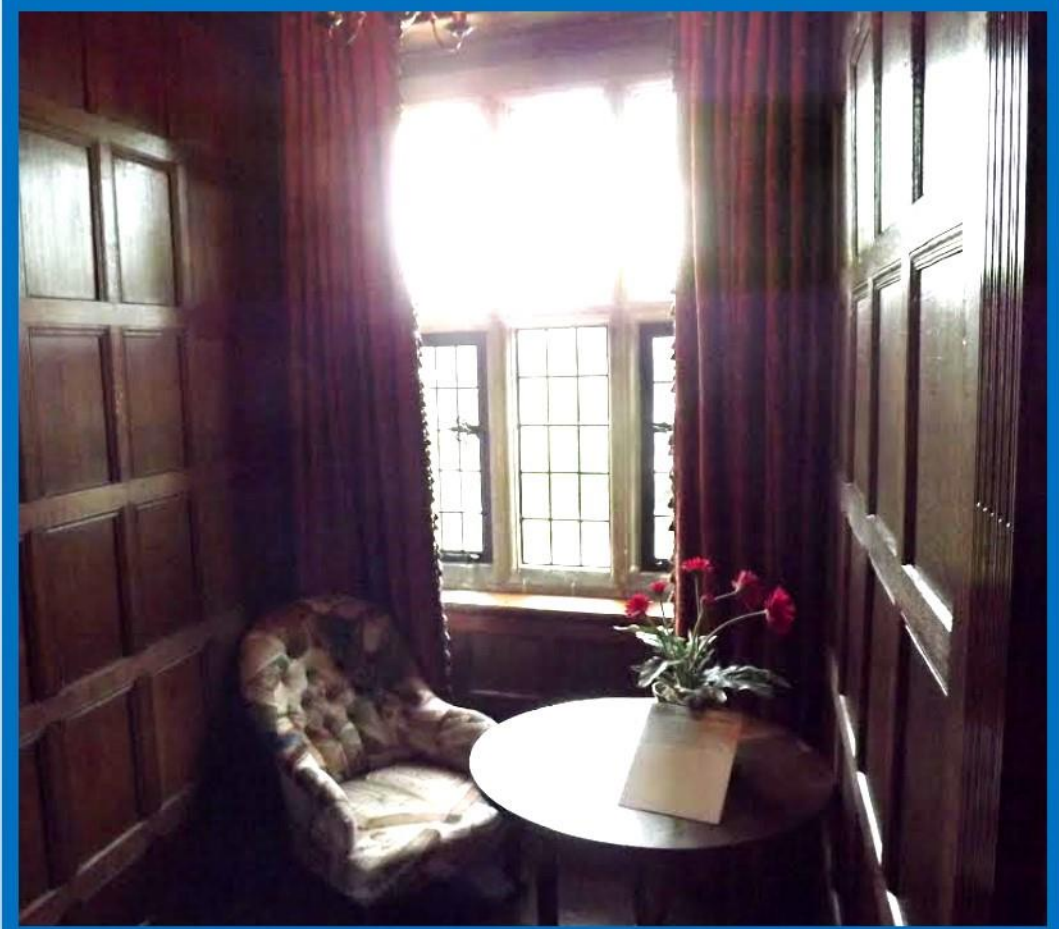


The ESSE Messenger



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Jane Austen's Reading Nook at Chawton House
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Bringing the Young Ladies Out

An Insight into Female Oppressors in Frances Burney's *Camilla* (1796),
Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and
Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814)

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore female oppressors in three novels by Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen, who have been traditionally related and studied by gender studies as paramount in the development of British fiction by women. After defining the concept and the main features of this category, we will explore female oppressors as they evolve from Miss Margland in Burney's *Camilla* to Mrs. Norris in Austen's *Mansfield Park* by focusing on how they are perceived by other characters, the female ideal they represent, their views of woman's education and society and their relationship with the protagonists.¹

Keywords: Frances Burney- Maria Edgeworth-Jane Austen- gender studies- British literature

Introduction

One of the reasons to study Jane Austen (1775-1817) is that, like many other British novelists at the turn of the nineteenth century, she was concerned with female freedom and women's relationships as sisters, friends, mother and daughters. A darker side of these relationships refers to social exploitation and dependence —not always economic—, which is the main topic of this paper. Here we are interested in female oppressors in Frances Burney's *Camilla* (1796), Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). All these works deal with a young lady's entrance in society and were not the first literary success of three authors who knew, admired and felt indebted to each other, as prefaces and allusions in their novels show. Edgeworth and Austen were subscribers to *Camilla*, and the former praised Austen's *Persuasion* as "exceedingly interesting and natural" in a letter dated 21 February 1818 to her aunt, Mrs Ruxton (Hare 260). Dale Spender relates the three authors as mothers of the novel and, in the 1990s, Audrey Bilger considers that Burney's, Edgeworth's and Austen's writing careers did not damage their standing as proper middle-class ladies (11) and that their *oeuvre* contributed to the ongoing debate about women's proper place in society by criticizing, among other things, eighteenth-

¹ This essay is part of the outcome of the University of A Coruña research network "Rede de Língua e Literatura Inglesa e Identidade III" ED431D2017/17.

century gender politics (9). More recently, Elaine Bander has analyzed the references to Burney in Austen's *oeuvre*, how both authors approached non-submissive female characters and Austen's criticism to Burney. Brian McCrea refers to a quote by Austen Dobson about *Evelina* where the three novelists are related once more: "it carries the novel of manners into domestic life, and prepares the way for Miss Edgeworth and the exquisite parlour-pieces of Miss Austen" (34).

Austen certainly carried Burney's and Edgeworth's legacy further and is indebted to them in her portrait of malignity and of the obstacles that their heroines have to face to achieve happiness. This gender-based study is part of a major research project on how Austen refashioned and interacted with the work of other authors (Fernández 2015; forthcoming) and refers to a restricted category of characters sharing some common features. They are middle-aged ladies who function as mediators between the family and the public sphere and are highly aware of the role of social appearances. Besides, their authority depends on a higher one or is very weak. These negative images of woman reveal the constraints to which women were subjected at the end of the eighteenth century, especially in two pivotal realms, education and marriage. An additional point of interest is that —though they are secondary figures—, Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Stanhope have attracted the interest of some critics, but this is not the case of Miss Margland in *Camilla* who has never merited individual status. Here we will trace how this figure became a masterful rendering of malignity in Austen's hands.

Miss Margland's Work of Supererogation in *Camilla*

In *Camilla* there is a mixture of despise and compassion to Miss Margland, a woman of family and fashion —a "Miss", and not a "Mrs" —, who is not liked by anyone. Sir Hugh tries to avoid Indiana's governess as much as possible. He stands her because "respect and pity for her birth and her misfortunes, led him to resolve never to part with her till Indiana was married" (Burney 46). Burney's miserable period at Court as Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte and her difficult relationships with her fellow Mrs. Schwellenberg taught the novelist a painful lesson in dependence which joined her lifelong desire to become a respected novelist. A governess was one of the few professions open to women of the gentry who had to support themselves. At the same time that they marketed their class and education for money, they were socially displaced: governesses lived with the upper classes, but they did not belong to them by birth. Miss Margland's family was ruined due to her father's liking for gambling and extravagance, so she anticipates what *Camilla* might become if she is manipulated by Lionel.

By appropriating herself of the ideology expressed in sermons and conduct books, Indiana's governess teaches the girl how to be a coquette and attract Edgar. Miss Margland's opinion coincides with conduct books which condemned female self-display and emphasized domesticity and submission: "A gentleman [...] when he sees a young lady admired and noticed by others, he falls naturally into making her the same compliments, and the affair goes into a regular train, without his almost thinking of it" (Burney 58). She is also aware of the importance —and

dangers, if not properly supervised— of showing a woman in public. A female is then valued for her invisible self, not for what she does or desires, and every social appearance devalues a girl with no title. However, Miss Margland insists to Sir Hugh on “the necessity of *bringing the young ladies out*, and the duty of *thinking of their own establishment*” (Burney 54), revealing more than an altruistic purpose.

Miss Margland’s female ideal is based on repression and prepossession and has negative consequences. Eighteenth-century women depended on public opinion; they were created for others: “Women were supposed to be by nature sprightly and witty to amuse men, refined and tasteful to polish their manners, sweet and compliant to soothe their tempers, pure and self-controlled to elevate their morals” (Rogers 37). The type of training that Miss Margland envisions for Indiana conforms to the view that a woman must repress her feelings and exert influence through cajolery or tears, never by stating her thoughts. Consequently, Indiana’s marriage is likely to become a nightmare or a curse and bring unhappiness to both husband and wife. Unable to understand that a woman is more than just a beautiful face, Miss Margland regrets Indiana’s defeat in Southampton: “the common herd were repulsed from approaching her by the repulsive manners of Miss Margland [...] the time was past when the altar of Hymen required no other incense to blaze upon it” (Burney 747). Meanwhile, as Indiana’s astonishment grows, she confronts her self-image as a demi-goddess with the feeling of being “the most unaccountably ill-used person in the creation” (Burney 748) because she only has one marriage offer. The consequence if this situation is the frustration of both parties. As a matter of fact, the thirteen years of “unwilling attendance” (Burney 818) of Indiana have not given Miss Margland any satisfaction.

Camilla is a novel about education and what strikes most is that, like Indiana, Miss Margland has not been educated, but she tries to impose her opinion even if it is unfounded. Arrogance meets ignorance in Miss Margland, and those around are too blind to see her shortcomings. Though Miss Margland likes arguing, she is not intellectually brilliant, and she demonstrates against female scholars and Eugenia: “[...] what an obstacle it will prove to her making her way in the great world, when she comes to be of a proper age for thinking of an establishment. What gentleman will you ever find that will bear with a learned wife? Except some mere downright fogrum that no young lady of fashion could endure” (Burney 46). Her views of education contrasts with the curriculum followed by Eugenia since “any accomplishment beyond what she had herself acquired, would be completely a work of supererogation” (Burney 46). For Miss Margland, a woman should reign through her beauty, not her brain, so, instead of defending the liberalization and desexualization of learning, she upholds traditional female education. As critics have stressed, the later was based on accomplishments—including drawing, music, penmanship, French, dancing and deportment— and continued being essential for catching a husband (Rogers 28; Todd 212). Excessive learning can affect beauty, so, according to Miss Margland, these skills should “be but slightly pursued, to distinguish a lady of fashion from an artist” (Burney 46) and censoring scholarly education is related to Miss Margland’s social survival. She even detaches herself from literature as pernicious: “Writing love verses at fifteen!

[...] I thank Heaven I never made a verse in my life! and I never intend it” (Burney 679), echoing Burney’s own relationship with writing.

Camilla shows the debate about the value of intellect or rank and the evils of snobbism. Miss Margland is not interested in the abolition of social classes; she does not believe in the capacity to improve oneself, but simply defends the status quo and the perpetuation of social differences. A governess is the female version of a male tutor and so is Miss Margland with respect to Dr. Orkborne, whom Miss Margland and Indiana despise. Miss Margland’s lack of social commitment corresponds with her little intellectual knowledge. Accordingly, when Eugenia wants to offer some alimony to the poor on the way to Northwick, Miss Margland retorts: “Miss Eugenia, never encourage beggars; you don’t know the mischief you may do by it” (Burney 83) and snatches a paper with a petition from Camilla. Not only does she avoid the poor, but she is also cruel to them: “O yes! they look in much joy indeed! they seem as if they had not eaten a morsel these three weeks! Drive on, I say, coachman! I like no such melancholy sights, for my part. They always make me ill. I wonder how any body can bear them” (Burney 97). Her undemocratic attitudes are applied to a more personal level, so she criticizes Camilla for dancing with the poor and discredits her before Edgar.

Indiana’s governess likes spying the movements of others and she is also a selfish hypocrite. A usurper of privacy, she wants to know about Bellamy’s letter, but Sir Hugh stops her: “Eugenia shall read her own letters. I have not had her taught all this time, by one of the first scholars of the age, as far as I can tell, to put that affront upon her” (Burney 114). Her double-faced attitude regarding the girls’ integrity becomes obvious when Eugenia disappears. It is not that Miss Margland is unconcerned with reality; she would not leave London until Sir Hugh tells her so and not until the young scholar reappears, which contrasts with her restlessness until she hears from Indiana. Other characters will take advantage of Miss Margland’s weaknesses: thanks to her, Bellamy obtains Mr. Tyrold’s sanction to get married to Eugenia, so Miss Margland becomes a participant in Eugenia’s nightmarish marriage.

One of Miss Margland’s concerns is to control the relationship between Edgar and Camilla. She even accuses the latter of stealing a suitor from Indiana “only ask yourself, Miss Camilla, how you should like to be so supplanted, if such an establishment were forming for yourself, and every thing were fixt, and every body else refused, and nobody to hinder its all taking place, but a near relation of your own, who ought to be the first to help it forward” (Burney 166). Regarding others, Miss Margland is much less demanding, even when Edgar announces his plan to go on a tour. Aware that people will believe that Edgar and Indiana will not get married, Indiana’s governess reminds Camilla of “the injury done to young ladies by reports of this nature, which were always sure to keep off all other offers. There was no end, she said, to the admirers who had deserted Indiana in despair; and she questioned if she would ever have any more, from the general belief of her being actually pre-engaged” (Burney 214). She hurts Camilla first by hinting that Edgar has declared being indifferent to women and that he only wants to have fun, and later by spreading that Camilla was in love with Edgar and that she has done all she could to get him. The externalization of the private realm seriously injures the reputation of a young lady and Camilla’s psyche:

[she] now felt wholly sunk; the persecutions of Miss Margland seemed nothing to this blow: they were cruel, she could therefore repine at them; they were unprovoked, she could therefore repel them: but to find her secret feelings, thus generally spread, and familiarity commented upon, from her own unguarded conduct, exhausted, at once, patience, fortitude, and hope, and left her no wish but to quit Cleves while Edgar should remain there (Burney 350).

Indiana's marriage to Macdersey does not mean beginning a new life: Miss Margland accompanies her because "she was so spoilt by her blandishments, and so accustomed to her management, that she parted from her no more" (Burney 909). As we will see, Edgeworth increases the female oppressor's pressure on the heroine and moves her to a more central position which compromises Belinda's happiness more seriously.

Speculating with Beauty: Aunt Stanhope's Philosophy

Mrs. Stanhope is represented as an educated lady, the perfect connoisseuse of the art of establishing herself in the world. Worldliness is precisely what sets her apart from the other female oppressors. The reader is told that Mrs. Stanhope's resources are limited, but she moves in high circles and mixes with the best society in Bath. A precedent of Mrs. Beaumont in *Manoeuvring* (1809), Mrs. Stanhope is "a foolish educator whose twisted values can lead only to misery for her protégées" (Yates 144) and her advice is close to Edgeworth's *An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification* (1795) and *The Modern Griselda* (1805) which are deeply concerned with the education of women.

Teresa Michals reads *Belinda* as Edgeworth's attempt to link moral and financial credit and considers that Belinda's match-making aunt Stanhope shows the family understood as an economic entity which gives benefits (13). Disregarding the companionable marriage—in which husband and wife feel some affection and esteem for each other—, Mrs. Stanhope prides herself of having married her six nieces though all these unions not based on affection have failed. Only Belinda remains single and, to Mrs. Stanhope's dismay, the girl disagrees with her aunt's policy: "What miseries spring from these ill-suited marriages! The victims are sacrificed, before they have sense enough to avoid their fate" (Edgeworth 24). A very interesting feature concerning Mrs. Stanhope is that she never interacts with characters personally, but by letter. In her first epistle to Belinda, she explains that the objective of every girl is to please and then to establish herself in the world, even if sacrifices are necessary. Mrs. Stanhope carries feelings to the economic realm. The recurrent image of spinsterhood of commentators in the 1780s (see quotation in Todd 210) is re-elaborated by Edgeworth from an economic perspective:

who, after spending not only the interest, but the solid capital of her small fortune un dress, and frivolous extravagance fails in her matrimonial expectations (as do many for not beginning to speculate in time). She finds herself at five or six and thirty a burden to her friends, destitute of the means of rendering herself independent (for the girls I speak of never think of learning to play cards), *de trop* in society, yet obliged to hang upon all her acquaintance who wish her in Heaven, because she is unqualified to make the *expected* return for civilities, having no

home, I mean, no establishment, no house, &c. fit for the reception of company of a certain rank (Edgeworth 8-9).

In order to marry well, Belinda is advised to spend or invest in appearing important, which will bring her a rich husband. Mrs. Stanhope asks Belinda to stop being a domestic woman —but not to turn into a rebel— and to become fashionable. Demeanour matters, so if Miss Margland saw overexposure as an evil to a lady, Mrs. Stanhope also cautions her against looking like a prude: “no niece of hers would set up for a prude; a character more suspected by men of the world, than even that of a coquette” (Edgeworth 16). Both Butler and Lisa Moore have discussed about the attempt of Thomas Day, a friend of the Edgeworths, to educate the foundling Sabrina Sidney and its parallelism with Virginia Saint Pierre’s in *Belinda* (see Butler, *Maria* 309; Moore), but, as we can see, there is another training in the novel. Additionally, Mrs. Stanhope’s risks being defeated too. Socially Belinda is *her* creation. The question is whether or not the heroine will agree with Stanhope’s choices for her.

In a society based on appearances, it is necessary to convince others of one’s value, as Mrs Stanhope explains by resorting to a metaphor: “I have covered my old carpet with a handsome green baize, and every stranger, who comes to see me, I observe, takes it for granted, that I have a rich carpet under it” (Edgeworth 9). Mrs. Stanhope’s imposture on Belinda consists in making her aware that she has symbolically given Belinda a loan, an amount of social *éclat* that, if properly administrated, can lead the girl to become a socialite and married woman, but, if rejected or badly spent, can condemn her to ostracism. Domestic affairs must not surpass the home realm, so Belinda is warned to keep silence if the Delacours have a quarrel and to think about the social consequences of her behavior. Mrs. Stanhope’s discourse seems taken from a conduct book and confirms the conventionalism of this character: “the slightest taint in the reputation of the woman who is, or who is to be, his wife, would affect his own peace, or his honour, in the eyes of the world” (Edgeworth 199). Any display of affection ruins a lady’s reputation: “Even a coronet cannot protect a woman, you see, from disgrace: if she falls, she and it and all together are trampled under foot” (ibid.). Sir Philip Baddely —with his estate of fifteen thousand a year in Wiltshire and his uncle Barton’s estate in Norfolk— proves to be a good choice for Belinda while Hervey is a “man of genius” and will never marry nor declare his love. Belinda will be waiting for such avowal the entire novel risking her self-debilitation.

The antidote against figures like Mrs. Stanhope is the protagonist’s awakening. This coincides with the episode in which Belinda lends some money to Lady Delacour to pay a debt to Clarence Hervey. When Belinda is accused of lavishing her aunt’s money, Mrs. Stanhope relates money to reputation and calls Belinda ungrateful and presumptuous:

for I am not such a novice in the affairs of this world, as to be ignorant that when a young lady professes to be of a different opinion from her friends, it is only a prelude to something worse. She begins by saying, that she is determined to think for herself; and she is determined to act for herself — and then it is all over with her — and all the money, &c, that has been spent upon her education, is so much dead loss to her friends (Edgeworth 85).

Mrs. Stanhope is annoyed at Belinda's growing independence and she spreads that the protagonist wants to seduce Lord Delacour "in hopes of frightening her niece into an immediate match with the baron" (Edgeworth 211). Instead of blackmailing Belinda with public slander, Mrs. Stanhope sends her a letter with the miserable story of her nieces' marriages and victimizes herself because she feels emotionally bankrupt. Edgeworth moves one step from Burney and reveals aunt Stanhope's tragic loneliness, a consequence of the emptiness of the *haut monde*, which is not far from Lady Delacour's:

There's your sister Tollemache has made a pretty return to all my kindness! She is going to be parted from her husband, and basely throws all the blame upon me. But 'tis the same with all of you. There's your cousin Joddrell refused me a hundred guineas last week, though the piano forte and the harp I bought for her before she was married stood me in double that sum, and are now useless lumber on my hands; and she never could have had Joddrell without them, as she knows as well as I do. As for Mrs. Levit, she never writes to me, and takes no manner of notice of me. But this is no matter, for her notice can be of no consequence now to any body. He has run out of every thing she has in the world! All Levit's fine estates advertised in to-day's paper — an execution in the house, I'm told. I expect that she will have the assurance to come to me in her distress; but she shall find my doors shut, I promise her. Your cousin Valleton's match has, through her own folly, turned out like all the rest. She, her husband, and all his relations are at daggersdrawing; and Valleton will die soon, and won't leave her a farthing in his will, I foresee, and all the fine Valleton estate goes to God knows who! (Edgeworth 214).

At the same time that she closes the door to reconciliation, Mrs. Stanhope contradictorily opens her arms to Belinda with a condition: "PS. If you return directly to Lady Delacour's, and marry sir Philip Baddely, I will forgive the past" (ibid.). Belinda's refusal to make this deal confirms her as independent from Mrs. Stanhope:

The regret which Belinda felt at having grievously offended her aunt was somewhat alleviated by the reflection that she had acted with integrity and prudence. Thrown off her guard by anger, Mrs Stanhope had inadvertently furnished her niece with the best possible reasons against following her advice with regard to sir Philip Baddely, by stating that her sister and cousins, who had married with mercenary views, had made themselves miserable, and had shown their aunt neither gratification nor respect" (Edgeworth 215)

Fanny Price resembles Belinda for her integrity and resolution, but there are many affinities between Burney's fiction and Austen's uncomfortable novel as well. Not coincidentally, Julia Epstein brands *Camilla* as "a complex psychological novel" and a "critique of social ideology" (125), while Edward Said has similarly talked about the "aesthetic intellectual complexity" (96) of *Mansfield Park* where Austen's most courageous heroine questions patriarchy from a slippery position, as a stranger in the family and an observer of the well-off.

“Wonderfully Borne with her Manners”: Mrs. Norris in *Mansfield Park*

Mrs. Norris's role in the family is very significant. Formerly Miss Ward, she was the eldest daughter and married a reverend and friend of Sir Thomas Bertram. Mrs. Norris definitely looks a lot more energetic than indolent Mrs. Bertram and foolish Mrs. Price. Though Sir Thomas comes to feel Mrs. Norris's presence “as an hourly evil” (Austen 316), she proves to be more his accomplice than his enemy in Mansfield Park since they establish Fanny's value in the house as the rulers of Mansfield and the decision-makers of the children's fate.

According to Marilyn Francus, Mrs. Norris functions as a faulty mother who controls through assertion, diversion, and flattery, and no one monitors Mrs. Norris: “she has freedom from the surveillance and accountability that caregivers usually experience, and that Gisborne recommends. As a result, her power as a surrogate mother is disproportionate to her status”. For Francus, Fanny also bolsters Mrs. Norris's social position by raising her from the bottom of the family hierarchy and this contrasts with the fact that the Bertrams never remind Fanny that she is their poor relative. Following this scholar, we might say that Mrs. Norris has authority over her children and niece without responsibility; she is not their biological mother and does not give them anything positive. Therefore, her attitude to Fanny evolves from a foster mother's initial generosity to stinginess, as she exposes to Sir Thomas:

“Give a girl an education, and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well, without farther expense to anybody. A niece of ours, Sir Thomas, I may say, or at least of *yours*, would not grow up in this neighbourhood without many advantages [...] she would be introduced into the society of this country under such very favourable circumstances as, in all human probability, would get her a creditable establishment” (Austen 7)

The possibility of obtaining some profit for the family if Fanny is brought up with the Bertrams is coupled with the prospects of the girl's better life. Sir Thomas is aware of the socioeconomic consequences of educating Fanny as a gentlewoman, of the risk of social displacement if Fanny is educated above her status or if she becomes a fashionable girl: “we must secure to the child, or consider ourselves engaged to secure to her hereafter, as circumstances may arise, the provision of a gentlewoman, if no such establishment should offer as you are so sanguine in expecting” (Austen 8). Nevertheless, to press the gentleman further, Mrs. Norris falsely appeals to family bonds and feigns caring about Fanny, so she reassures him: “Is not she a sister's child? and could I bear to see her want while I had a bit of bread to give her?” (ibid.). Surprisingly, after Mr. Norris's death Mrs. Norris is terrified by the idea of living with Fanny. Her poor health proves to be a very frail excuse to avoid the situation since she really refers to the expenses of her new life. However, she also explains to Lady Bertram that if Fanny stays with them she could save for the children: “It is for your children's good that I wish to be richer. I have nobody else to care for, but I should be very glad to think I could leave a little trifle among them worth their having” (Austen 23), where she proves to be a very cynical person who will be ready to monitor Fanny. Should the girl not behave properly, she would be sent back to the Prices.

Mrs. Norris's ideal of woman consists in that, rather than feigning a persona she is not, Fanny must learn to be self-effacing and submissive to others, and this is the key to understand modern readings of *Mansfield Park*. Mrs. Norris partly facilitates Fanny's socialization at Mansfield Park. For Ames, Mrs. Norris uses the authority society gives her as an 'Aunt', an older relative, to make Fanny submit to her as well as to the wealthy relatives (491-2). Besides, Mrs. Norris sees no danger that the cousins fall in love; coeducation is the best to prevent this, so she is not as isolating as Miss Margland and introduces Fanny to the children: "There is a vast deal of difference in memories, as well as in everything else, and therefore you [the Bertram children] must make allowance for your cousin, and pity her deficiency. And remember that, if you are ever so forward and clever yourselves, you should always be modest; for, much as you know already, there is a great deal more for you to learn" (Austen 16)

Fanny is never free at Mansfield Park; her partial insertion in the family is soon evident. According to Ames, Mrs. Norris is a dependent, but at the service of self-interest until her inability to pretend Maria's flirting outside marriage is exposed to everyone. Austen comes to say that those who follow their conscience, like Fanny, are rewarded (Ames 494). Mrs. Norris has an argument with Edmund on the subject of Fanny having a horse, since it is an unjustifiable purchase, and she also commands that no fire ever be built in the room that Fanny first adopts as her own. The circumstance amazes Sir Thomas later: "Here is some great misapprehension which must be rectified. It is highly unfit for you to sit, be it only half an hour a day, without a fire. You are not strong. You are chilly. Your aunt cannot be aware of this" (Austen 212).

Since the 1990s, when Moira Ferguson's and Edward Said's revelatory essays were published, there have been a wave of interest in relating Fanny's position to African slavery among researchers. Thus, Moreland Perkins (2005) draws on the analogy between Fanny and an inferior being and Faith Baron gives this statement a broader dimension by maintaining that *Mansfield Park* "connects these domestic power dynamics to the international atmosphere of slave-related issues, revealing mechanisms of power production that are maintained through conditional benevolence for the submissive, certain exile for the rebellious, and a conspicuous lack of consequences for those who exist at the crest of the hierarchy" (79). Fanny becomes as submissive and isolated as the black slaves who lived in England at the time. Under that light, Butler's statement that, for the first time in her novels, Austen gives her external world a solidity and scale which eventually belittles individual characters (Jane 228) has additional value. Though Butler places Fanny at the level of standard heroine-types of reactionary novels of the 1790s (ibid: 294), she means a radical departure from Elinor Dashwood or Elizabeth Bennet.

The strongest scene in the novel is Fanny's refusal to marry Henry Crawford. The Regency Cordelia (see Calvo) becomes then a bad investment for the Bertrams because she does not behave as she is expected. Camilla and Belinda did not face their female oppressors so openly. The protagonist destabilizes the action twice and is twice called ungrateful. Firstly, when she explains that she cannot like Henry Crawford well enough to marry him (Austen 214) and she hides that she dislikes Henry's principles not to betray Maria and Julia (Austen 215). Sir Thomas is disappointed and accuses Fanny of being selfish:

“[...] you can be willful and perverse; that you can and will decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you, without even asking their advice [...] [you] are, in a wild fit of folly, throwing away from you such an opportunity of being settled in life, eligibly, honourably, nobly settled, as will, probably, never occur to you again” (Austen 216).

A similar scene takes place when she refuses to play Cottager's wife in Elizabeth Inchbald's *Lovers' Vows* (1798) by stating that she cannot act. Despite the amateur actors' insistence that they do not aspire to perfection, Fanny cannot explain what happens to her. Either Fanny is incapable to feign in general or she is inconsiderate to her cousins who need her for the play. Mrs. Norris is constantly reminding Fanny of “[t]he nonsense and folly of people's stepping out of their rank and trying to appear above themselves” (Austen 151). She disapproves her anxiety to pass for “dear Mrs. Rushworth or Julia” (ibid.). Again, the principle of being “the lowest and last” (ibid.) must be foremost and Fanny should comply with other people's wishes.

The only authority over Mrs. Norris is Sir Thomas, and here Austen departs from Burney's paternalism in *Camilla* and Aunt Stanhope's ease in *Belinda*. The narrator makes evident that Mrs. Norris prides herself of her achievements when Sir Thomas returns from Antigua and Mrs. Norris gives him the news of Maria's marriage: “But her chief strength lay in Sotherton. Her greatest support and glory was in having formed the connexion with the Rushworths. *There* she was impregnable. She took to herself all the credit of bringing Mr. Rushworth's admiration of Maria to any effect” (Austen 130). Sir Thomas is twice displeased: first, when he returns home and sees that there have been preparations for the theatrical, and then when he blames Mrs. Norris for his daughters' disastrous matches. Unwillingly, Mrs. Norris has revealed Sir Thomas's worst side. A bad ruler in Antigua, he “is confronted at the heart of his own terrain by a mouthing puppet who represents a grotesque version of himself” (*Jane* 235) and sees how his deputy at home has mismanaged the family, who is now corrupted, and he is ultimately blameful for that:

Too late he became aware how unfavourable to the character of any young people must be the totally opposite treatment which Maria and Julia had been always experiencing at home, where the excessive indulgence and flattery of their aunt had been continually contrasted with his own severity. He saw how ill he had judged, in expecting to counteract what was wrong in Mrs. Norris by its reverse in himself; clearly saw that he had but increased the evil by teaching them to repress their spirits in his presence so as to make their real disposition unknown to him, and sending them for all their indulgences to a person who had been able to attach them only by the blindness of her affection, and the excess of her praise (Austen 314).

One of Mrs. Norris's favourite strategies to hurt Fanny is blaming others for her own mistakes, which are many. When Fanny refuses Henry Crawford, her arguments are the same as Sir Thomas's. Fanny has been a usurper: “It was an injury and affront to Julia, who ought to have been Mr. Crawford's choice; and, independently of that, she disliked Fanny, because she had neglected her; and she would have grudged such an elevation to one whom she had been always trying to depress” (Austen 225). As the narrative progresses, Mrs. Norris feels others

have been unkind to her. Unable to control the young people, she feels defeated and Fanny is also to blame. Austen gives us a unique opportunity to have access to Mrs. Norris's feelings, which never happens in Burney:

She was an altered creature, quieted, stupefied, indifferent to everything that passed. The being left with her sister and nephew, and all the house under her care, had been an advantage entirely thrown away; she had been unable to direct or dictate, or even fancy herself useful. When really touched by affliction, her active powers had been all benumbed; and neither Lady Bertram nor Tom had received from her the smallest support or attempt at support. She had done no more for them than they had done for each other. They had been all solitary, helpless, and forlorn alike; and now the arrival of the others only established her superiority in wretchedness. Her companions were relieved, but there was no good for *her*. Edmund was almost as welcome to his brother as Fanny to her aunt; but Mrs. Norris, instead of having comfort from either, was but the more irritated by the sight of the person whom, in the blindness of her anger, she could have charged as the daemon of the piece. Had Fanny accepted Mr. Crawford this could not have happened (Austen 304).

Mrs. Norris ends up living abroad with Maria, who gets a divorce from Rushworth, and nobody misses her at Mansfield Park. Like Mrs. Margland, she is expelled from the country estate and from England with positive effects. Sir Thomas no longer relies on her and he begins to think that “either time had done her much disservice, or that he had considerably overrated her sense, and wonderfully borne with her manners before” (Austen 316).

Conclusions

Burney created a figure which would be enriched by Edgeworth and perfected by Austen. Though Mrs. Stanhope moves in a different sphere where frivolity reigns and there is no prudery, she is as emotionally alone as Mrs. Norris and Austen has the merit of undressing her interiority in an unusual way. Miss Margland's comicalness turns into cruelty to Fanny Price in Mrs. Norris. The later inherits Miss Margland's obsession for rank and her dependence from male authority symbolized by Sir Hugh and Sir Thomas. Burney leaves apart the former's attitude to Miss Margland's treatment of Camilla, and, like Austen, she clearly invalidates male authority since patriarchy is not exemplary. Still, there is a disparage between Burney and Austen regarding patriarchy, so Sir Hugh's lack of resolution cannot compare to Sir Thomas's irresponsible abstentism from family management.

Ignorance and snobbism are attacked through these characters. Instead of promoting rational education, female oppressors create obstacles to learning and show their social displacement, neither belonging to the upper classes —whose values they seem to sponsor—, nor to the lower classes —with whom they share their economic position. Miss Margland and Mrs. Norris represent an ideology of repression and stagnation which only engenders claustrophobic ruin and frustration in others and in them and the three are the victims of patriarchal fallacy in that society empowers them to believe they can rule over others and they forget the extent of their powers. As a matter of fact, society supports them as long as they guarantee the stability of domestic relationships and rejects them if their

pupils fail, what explains Mrs. Margland and Mrs. Norris's expulsion from the narratives because there is no place for oppression in the world that these novelists dream of. Through Mrs. Norris, Austen sublimated what Burney and Edgeworth just hinted: the female ideal is far from excessive knowledge, excessive exhibition in public and excessive behavior; a woman should be neither a prude nor a rebel. Austen does not voice the yearning for freedom, but the need for female freedom, a valuable lesson that she taught to later generations.

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Understanding Jane Austen

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Abstract: Two hundred years after the death of Jane Austen, not only have her works not lost their relevance, but they are becoming more and more well-known. However, the large number of existing film adaptations and other audiovisual versions may have the consequence that many people have got to know these stories without having read the books. These versions could also promote a superficial reading of the novels, in which their literary value is not appreciated. In this article, some keys are proposed to understand and to appreciate the literary style of Jane Austen.

Keywords: Jane Austen, style, irony, narrator, characters

Introduction

Jane Austen is a renowned writer. She has millions of readers, many of whom declare themselves to be "unconditional fans." There are cinematographic adaptations of all her novels, as well as films, series and books inspired –more or less freely- by some of her works or characters.

As a result of this media success, many people are partially aware of some of Austen's stories without having read any of her books. And there is also the risk that some readers of these novels, predisposed by the films, could fail to appreciate their literary value, remaining only on a superficial level, which focuses attention on the details of the age (dances, dresses, carriages, etc.), on the romantic moments, and on other secondary factors, without noticing the mastery of the literary style of Jane Austen that is displayed throughout all her works.

In this article, we will offer some keys to a better understanding of Jane Austen's novels and, through them, a way to enjoy these works with greater satisfaction and fulfilment.

1. Sensing the tone: sense of humour present in the novels

To appreciate a song, it is not enough to know the lyrics, you also need to listen to the melody. Something similar happens in the reading of these works. To understand them, it is necessary to grasp the author's sense of humour, which manifests itself in different ways, but especially through irony, which will be discussed in the next section.

In almost all her works, this humorous tone is marked from the start. The opening lines of *Pride & Prejudice* is well known, but, although perhaps the most successful, it is not the only beginning in which Austen left her personal mark. The same happens, for example, in the opening paragraphs of *Mansfield Park* and *Northanger Abbey*:

“About thirty years ago Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, *with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate 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.” (*Mansfield Park* 1)

“No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy *would have supposed her born to be an heroine*. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and *a very respectable man, though his name was Richard -- and he had never been handsome.*” (*Northanger Abbey* 1)

With just a few words, the author sets the tone in which her work will unfold and will be reinforced by an infinite number of comments from the omnipresent narrator, who shows her vision of ironic and humorous tint, hardly catching the attention of the reader.

2. The irony

As it has been explained in the previous point, the comic tone permeates almost all the work of Austen through the use of irony. As Kierkegaard explains:

“Irony is an existential determination, and nothing is more ridiculous than to suppose that it consists in the use of a certain phraseology (...) Whoever has essential irony has it all day long, not bound to any specific form, because it is the infinite within him.” (449)

In Austen's novels we find hundreds of examples in which, through the narrator and the characters, the author shows her ability to achieve the ironic effect which she uses for humorous purposes and social criticism. Here are some strategies used by this writer in *Sense and Sensibility*.

[a] Irony through the narrator:

[a1] Using a structure more or less common, but changing the meaning to surprise the reader:

“She had *had no opportunity, till the present, of shewing them* with how little attention to the comfort of other people she could act when occasion required.” (4)

[a2] Varying a word or expression until the meaning changes completely:

“Lady Middleton was *more agreeable* than her mother *only in being more silent.*” (46)

[a3] Exaggerating when telling thoughts, attitude or words of someone showing the defects that they imply:

“Sir John wanted the whole family to walk to the Park directly and look at his guests. Benevolent, philanthropic man! *It was painful to him even to keep a third cousin to himself.*” (102)

[a4] Pointing out the differences between what is said and what is done:

“Lady Middleton frequently called him to order, wondered how any one's attention could be diverted from music for a moment, and asked Marianne to sing a particular song which Marianne had just finished.” (29)

[a5] Ridiculing a common behaviour by pointing out the absurdity of the situation:

“ ‘You may believe how glad we all were to see them,’ added Mrs. Jennings, leaning forward towards Elinor, and speaking in a low voice as if she meant to be heard by no one else, though they were seated on different sides of the room” (92)

[b] Irony through a character:

[b1] Replaying thoughts or words of someone evidencing his or her defects and the absurdity of those statements:

“Five hundred a year! I am sure I cannot imagine how they will spend half of it; and as to your giving them more, it is quite absurd to think of it. *They will be much more able to give YOU something.*” (9)

[b2] A character ridicules the attitude or words of another:

“It is not every one,” said Elinor, “who has your passion for dead leaves.” (75)

[b3] A character affirms a quality of another (the reader knows that it is not so) but the interested person doesn't grasp the contradiction:

“Indeed, brother, your *anxiety for our welfare and prosperity* carries you too far.” (195)

[b4] Unconscious contradiction between a character's words and deeds:

“Her constitution is a good one, and her resolution equal to any thing. She has borne it all, with the fortitude of an angel! She says she never shall think well of anybody again.” (228)

3. Flesh and blood characters (Auto-characterization)

Jane Austen does not sketch the personality of her characters. She sculpts them with soft but steady strokes. From the first moment, we are shown the distinctive features of each one and, during the whole work, their behaviours and attitudes evolve with coherence, especially the young protagonists.

“The character of the heroine is not static; it grows and unfolds, sometimes in two directions –by critical self-discovery on the one hand, and on the other by the slow fruition of innate virtues.” (Gillie 107)

Austen's characters are not those "portraits of perfection" that made her "sick and wicked" (Letters 350). They are flesh and blood characters, with defects.

“It is human nature in all its complexity that fascinates Austen, and she is capable of providing her novels with interesting, well-developed central characters who are believable precisely because they are flawed.” (Magill 114)

Austen prefers showing to describing. Therefore, in her works, the dialogues abound and in this way, "the reader then discovers for himself the nature of the speaker; not only through the ideas the speaker expresses, but through his mode

of speech, through his manerism" (Nabókov 13). And what is even more remarkable is that she does not reserve this careful elaboration for the protagonists and other important characters, but for each and every one of the actors of her works.

4. Beyond appearances: timelessness of situations

One of the factors that has allowed the works of Austen not to age over time is her ability to deepen into human condition and express it with her characters. After two hundred years, readers continue to recognize familiar behaviour in the situations and attitudes of the protagonists of these novels.

Here are some examples of feelings and situations that could easily be adapted to a current work, and most likely to have been witnessed or experienced by any reader.

In this first text, we are told about the strength of the first love and how that experience remains in time, even if it ended in failure.

"She still cherished a very tender affection for Bingley. Having never even fancied herself in love before, her regard had all the warmth of first attachment, and, from her age and disposition, greater steadiness than most *first attachments* often boast." (*Pride and Prejudice* 198)

In the following excerpt, we find Mr Darcy's explanation about Wickham's story in order to justify the bad opinion that had been forged on him, as opposed to the good esteem in which his father held him.

"The vicious propensities--the want of principle, which he was careful to guard from the knowledge of his best friend, could not escape the observation of a young man of nearly the same age with himself, and who had opportunities of seeing him in unguarded moments." (*Pride and Prejudice* 175)

Finally, we offer a text that shows the dearth of tenderness of an unloving father towards his daughter, and how, after fulfilling the minimum requirements of paternity, he focuses on his son, to talk about that common interest, which in this novel are ships, but today could be football.

"Mr. Price now received his daughter; and having given her a cordial hug, and observed that she was grown into a woman, and he supposed would be wanting a husband soon, seemed very much inclined to forget her again (...); and he talked on only to his son, and only of the Thrush." (*Mansfield Park* 339)

5. The beauty of small things: daily scenes. The care of the details

Charlotte Brontë despised the novels of Jane Austen for not finding in them the forces and passions of human soul. Perhaps this is because Austen preferred to show the daily facets of the human being, without falling into extreme situations that usually do not arise in their daily life. It is in this context that we must appreciate her art and value her skill.

“Jane Austen displays a characteristic preference for ‘shallow modelling’. Since this allows the reader’s attention to be concentrated on subtler differences of attitude among her characters.” (Copeland 174).

The reader of the works of Austen must be very attentive to small detail to capture the grandeur of the set.

In some of these daily scenes, we can find autobiographical parallels of the author, as for example in the pleasure that many of her heroines find in the long walks, the taste for dances, her ability to analyze the personality of those around her, love for books, affectionate relationship between siblings (in cases where it is so), rejection of marriage without affection, etc.

The care of the details brings a greater realism to the novels, as can be seen in the following example, in which Austen strives to recreate the protocol process of the educated people of her time, thus allowing her contemporaries to perceive the veracity of the situation. Centuries later, although the social norms have undergone great variations, the readers soon became familiar with the etiquette of that time, thanks to the abundant annotations of the author.

“Lady Middleton *had sent a very civil message* by him, denoting her *intention of waiting* on Mrs. Dashwood as soon as she could be assured that her visit *would be no inconvenience*; and as this *message was answered by an invitation* equally polite, her ladyship *was introduced* to them the next day.” (*Sense and Sensibility* 25)

She also brings more realism by taking care of the details that show the characters' way of being, so that their behaviour is seen as coherent. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice* we find a dialectical confrontation between Elizabeth Bennet and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, which could be seen as unreal, owing to the difference in age and position of the two ladies. As Jenkyn explains:

“In anticipation of this scene, Lizzy is made to answer back to Lady Catherine on her visit to Rosings, many chapters before, and Lady Catherine remarks on how forward she is for a young woman in expressing her own opinions.” (44)

And we also find that taste for detail in other more material aspects such as economic information, as Nabokov explains in his analysis of *Mansfield Park*.

“One may note the tidy way Miss Austen keeps her monetary accounts in this sequence of events that explain the Crawfords’ advent. Practical sense combines with the fairy-tale tone, as often happens in fairy tales.” (19)

6. Complicity with the narrator

The reader of these novels is not a stranger who peers out to snoop. From the first moment, the narrator invites him to be part of the story, and will make him a custodian of his confidences and opinions of naughty streak. For this reason, the reader will feel comfortable, despite the space-time distances with respect to what is narrated there.

The narrator of the novels of Austen acts, on many occasions, like another character. Far from being a mere transmitter of events, he participates with his opinions, his critical vision, ironic comments, creation of expectations, incitement

to confusion, etc. This use of the narrator, according to Morini, brings him closer and strips him of his deifying characteristics.

“If, on the other hand, the narrator is seen as a character among many (though one with a special functional status), his/her personal interventions need no longer be seen as intrusions, and his/her evaluative and epistemological uncertainties become a sign of human, no longer godlike, authority.” (Morini 29)

Let's look at some examples of how the narrator becomes visible in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Sometimes this intervention is reduced to a word, which could go unnoticed by a hurried reader, but which reveals an intention to interfere in the story and manipulate the -to a greater or lesser extent- public's perception

“Bingley *was* quite uncomfortable; his sisters *declared* that they were miserable” (34)

However, it is not always so subtle, and we also find passages in which that narrator reveals himself, showing us the characters' attitudes from a subjective view.

“Mr. Bingley *was unaffectedly civil* in his answer, and *forced his younger sister to be civil* also, and say what the occasion required. *She performed her part indeed without much graciousness*, but Mrs. Bennet was satisfied.” (39)

There are times, in which it is not difficult to imagine that narrator character, giving us a wink of complicity, while adding some event with a jocular commentary.

“Mrs. Bennet was diffuse in her good wishes for the felicity of her daughter, and impressive in her injunctions that she should not miss the opportunity of enjoying herself as much as possible--*advice which there was every reason to believe would be well attended to.*” (206)

The narrator of Austen's novels does not resist evaluating the attitude of the characters, and sometimes gives a lesson, or resorts to a vital experience to justify that way of acting.

“Persuaded as Miss Bingley was that Darcy admired Elizabeth, *this was not the best method of recommending herself; but angry people are not always wise*; and in seeing him at last look somewhat nettled, she had all the success she expected.” (235)

And, just in case there was any doubt about the fundamental role of this narrator-character, and his eagerness to meddle in the story, we offer a last example in which it is shown speaking in the first person and judging without question the attitude of Mrs. Bennet.

“I wish I could say, for the sake of her family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable, well-informed woman for the rest of her life; though perhaps it was lucky for her husband, who might not have relished domestic felicity in so unusual a form, that *she still was occasionally nervous and invariably silly.*” (337)

7. Stories with romances vs romantic novels

Jane Austen did not write romantic novels. Love is present in each of her works, and all end with the marriage of the protagonists, but these romances are one of the threads of the story, which has many other threads to complete the tapestry.

It would be much more correct to classify the works of this author as "novels of characters." That is to say, narrations in which the main thing are the protagonists and their human environment, and not so much the events that happen. We do not mean by this that the argument is not important, but is at the service of the characters and, for this reason, romances are means and not aims. Jane Austen uses love relationships to deploy a whole cast of vital attitudes.

"The elaborate social ritual of courtship and the amount of time and energy expended on it by the parties involved provide Austen with an ideal target for her satirical portraits. Dances, carriage rides, and country walks are the settings for the romances that unfold in her books, and the individual's infinite capacity for misconceptions and self-delusions provide the books' dramatic structure." (Magill 113)

Uncontrolled feelings, the solitude of the judicious, the combats between the head and the heart, the consequences of prejudices, second chances, the effects of reading in an uncontrolled imagination, the benefits of persevering in good, jealousy, a sense of inferiority, the dangers of meddling in the lives of others, and so on, would be some of the topics discussed in Austen's writings, through concrete, close, and endearing examples.

8. The exact word: refined language but not conceited

"It is not unusual that in the course of his literary career a writer's style becomes ever more precise and impressive, as indeed Jane Austen's did" (Nabokov 60)

In both her letters and in some passages of her novels, Austen shows her eagerness to use the word that best expresses what she wants to say. However, the elaborate process of creation and its subsequent corrections do not end in an overdone or pompous style. Quite the opposite. The success of this work lies in achieving a simple and agile language, but which is a faithful reflection of the author's intentionality.

"Her corrections show her mind moving among words, arranging and rearranging them, until she gets them phrased to her liking, and so every one of them remains exquisitely whole, like a falling drop of water, and no two or three of them are allowed to run together and settle into stagnant pools." (Lascelles 115)

In this way, we find paragraphs, such as the one we transcribe below, in which the strength of some key words, strategically placed, manage to convey perfectly the atmosphere of the scene, with its contrasts and excesses.

"The *rapture* of Lydia on this occasion, her *adoration* of Mrs. Forster, the *delight* of Mrs. Bennet, and the *mortification* of Kitty, are scarcely to be described. Wholly *inattentive* to her sister's feelings, Lydia flew about the house in *restless ecstasy*, calling for everyone's congratulations, and laughing and talking with more *violence* than ever; whilst the *luckless* Kitty continued in the parlour

repined at her fate in terms as unreasonable as her accent was peevish." (*Pride and Prejudice* 201)

Other times, showing her conciseness, Austen collects in a single term the attitude of the characters, which has been shown in all its depth.

"Bingley was *ready*, Georgiana was *eager*, and Darcy *determined*, to be pleased." (*Pride and Prejudice* 227)

Among the advice on writing, which Austen offered to her niece Anne Lefroy through her letters, is to avoid the terms that have been used too much, whether in books or in everyday language. Also in her novels we find some dialogues in which the characters maintain this same attitude.

"'That is an expression, Sir John,' said Marianne, warmly, 'which I particularly dislike. I abhor every *common-place phrase* by which wit is intended; and 'setting one's cap at a man,' or 'making a conquest,' are the most odious of all. Their tendency is gross and illiberal; and if their construction could ever be deemed clever, time has long ago destroyed all its ingenuity' ". (*Sense and Sensibility* 38)

"But that expression of 'violently in love' is so hackneyed, so doubtful, so indefinite, that it gives me very little idea. It is as often applied to feelings which arise from a half-hour's acquaintance, as to a real, strong attachment. Pray, how *violent* was Mr. Bingley's love?" (*Pride and Prejudice* 124)

One of the characteristics of Austen's style is her tendency to create trios of linguistic elements, be they adjectives, verbs, nouns or syntactic constructions. The result of these trios is a greater strength and a rhythm to which the reader, little by little, gets accustomed and that recognizes like something proper of this author.

"And entered a room splendidly lit up, quite full of company, and insufferably hot." (*Sense and Sensibility* 149)

"Elinor's attention was then all employed, not in urging her, not in pitying her, nor in appearing to regard her, but in endeavouring to engage Mrs. Jennings' notice entirely to herself." (*Sense and Sensibility* 153)

"He had left the girl whose youth and innocence he had seduced, in a situation of the utmost distress, with no creditable home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his address! He had left her, promising to return; he neither returned, nor wrote, nor relieved her." (*Sense and Sensibility* 179)

"To the rest of the family they paid little attention; avoiding Mrs. Bennet as much as possible, saying not much to Elizabeth, and nothing at all to the others." (*Pride and Prejudice* 76)

We could also classify as part of her personal seal, the clear tendency to use comparatives and establish gradations between the qualities of the characters and their attitudes.

"After some time spent in *saying little or doing less*, Lady Middleton sat down to Cassino." (*Sense and Sensibility* 149)

“Colonel Brandon (...) received his eager civilities with some surprise, but much more pleasure.” (*Sense and Sensibility* 198)

“Elizabeth would not quit her at all, till late in the evening, (...) and when it seemed to her rather right than pleasant that she should go downstairs herself.” (*Pride and Prejudice* 31)

“Though more astonished than gratified herself by this effect of her charms.” (*Pride and Prejudice* 78)

Conclusion

As it was said at the outset, this is a schematic approach to Austen's works. Some of the aspects discussed here could be - and indeed are - subject matter for doctoral theses, and on any one of them extensive articles for literary magazines could be written. But this is not the object of the present work, which we now conclude. Our intention has been to emphasize some of the characteristics that distinguish Austen's work from her predecessors and contemporaries, and which, even today, remain a trait in which this young Briton stands out above other authors.

One of Jane Austen's achievements has been to create a seemingly simple style, but that denotes a great mastery not only in the making of the plot, the design of the characters and the setting, but also in everything related to the way of telling the stories. However, this simplicity could be misinterpreted by some inattentive reader, or not valued in its right measure by someone foreign to the process of literary creation. And for this reason, with these eight keys we have tried to point out the way so that no one gets lost when entering the universe of Jane Austen.

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A Historical Reflection on Jane Austen's Popularity in Spain

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Abstract: In this article, I explore Jane Austen's popularity in Spain from a historical perspective. I believe that Austen's success since 1919, when the first translation of one of her novels was published, is directly related to the socio-cultural and political circumstances of the Spanish literary market, which made her narratives be appreciated by editors, critics and readers alike. I study three periods in particular –the First Francoism (1939-1959), the 1996-2003 period, and the bicentenaries' period (2011-2017)–, linking them by means of two thematic foci: the irregular explosions of the literary market, and the readers' longing for escapism and belonging.

Keywords: Jane Austen; translation; Spanish literary market; Francoist Dictatorship

Introduction

Jane Austen is a best-seller in Spain, there is no doubt. It is enough to attend to the number of editions published between 2011 –the bicentenary year of the publication of *Sense and Sensibility*, her first published novel– and 2017: 83 different editions of her novels, minor works and letters have been put into the Spanish market in seven years.[1] Some editions are bilingual; some editions belong to special bicentenary book series; some editions contain an extra charm such as Hugh Thompson's illustrations; one edition is the very first integral Spanish translation of the *Letters*. Outside of this compute, Spanish readers can also find all kinds of adaptations: Mary Butler's comic versions, children's adaptations, and the mash-ups with zombies and sea monsters by Seth Grahame-Smith and Ben H. Winters, respectively.

But, why Austen? Why not other English female authors with whom Austen is frequently associated? The Brontë sisters accumulate among themselves 20 more editions than Austen throughout their publication history in Spain –Emily was translated for the first time in 1921, Charlotte in 1943 and Anne in 1944–, but they do not add up to half of Austen's editions in the last seven years. Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot, with 43 and 54 editions respectively since the 1920s, have also been fairly popular, especially since 2000. Far behind fall the contemporaries of Austen Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Charlotte Lennox: Burney and Lennox have been published only twice, whereas Edgeworth's editions amount to eight in their respective translation histories.

The individual popularity of these literary figures, and Austen's great one in particular, reveals the importance of analysing their presence in the Spanish market from a historical point of view, and of contextualizing their individual and group reputations among editors, critics and readers alike. In the present article, I connect Austen's popularity, among other elements, to her categorization as "classic" author. However, her classicism has also to do with the usage of that concept in different periods of the Spanish literary market for different purposes and prone by different social and business concerns. In the same way, I claim that

Austen's superiority in number of editions and readers over the other female writers mentioned here is associated with the accumulated effect of a series of specific events related to socio-political, cultural and economic circumstances.

Thus, I analyse Austen's popularity through the translation history of her writings in, paying attention to the flows of translation and publication and investigating the socio-cultural and economic conditions of each historical period in which Austen has been remarkably popular. This study, performed in comparison to the history of translation into Spanish of the other eight female authors named above, provides the foundation of a historical reflection on the reasons behind Austen's popularity in Spain nowadays and throughout the times. I present my research thematically according to two specific elements that diachronically traverse Austen's popularity in Spain: the irregular explosions of the literary market, and the readers' longing for escapism and belonging.

The irregular explosions of the literary market

The history of translation into Spanish of Jane Austen starts in 1919, when *Persuasion* entered the market in a translation by Manuel Ortega y Gasset, brother of the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. The same publishing house, Calpe, published *Northanger Abbey* in 1921, and *Pride and Prejudice* in 1924. Since then, Austen's novels have been present in the literary market almost constantly. However, her popularity has evolved in parallel with the irregular explosions that have occurred in the literary market.

In fact, three different moments can be found in the interlinked history of the Spanish literary market and the history of translation of Austen: the First Francoism (1939-1959), an eight-year period at the turn of the millennium (1996-2003), and the last seven years (2011-2017). In the two first periods, the Spanish literary market underwent a growth of editions in comparison with the previous years; in the latter, on the other hand, the market has got slightly reduced, but with a growth in the production of non-paper formats. During each of the periods, the number of new translations as well as re-editions of Austen's writings has suddenly increased, producing an abundance of copies into the bookshops' shelves and the readers' hands, something that has not happened with the Brontës, Gaskell or the other female authors mentioned previously. The connection between these three periods and Austen's popularity, then, is made explicit by means of contextualizing the literary market and the socio-cultural circumstances of each time span.

The explosion of the literary market during the First Francoism was directly linked to the socio-political circumstances of Spain. Between 1936 and 1939, the country had been immersed in a Civil War, between the legitimate Republican government and the rebel Nationalists. The war had ended in the establishment of the Francoist Dictatorship (1936-1975). The literary market was, thus, able to partially return to normality, although under a tight censorship. By the Orden de 29 de abril de 1938, every book to be published or imported into the literary market had to be evaluated and approved prior to publication if the editors did not want to face high fees and worse punishments. The problem came from the ambiguous guidelines given to both editors and censors: personal views often

influenced censors' evaluations, and books which were approved for publication at a given moment could be banned by a different censor months later. In fact, this happened with Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, for instance, which was suspended in its first application in 1944 because the protagonist falls in love with a vicar, but the following year it was approved twice for publication without encountering any problem at the censorship boards (Pajares Infante 60-1). Consequently, editors were careful in their selection of works for publication.

This situation prepared the ground for Jane Austen to become a bestseller. In the First Francoism (1939-1959), the market saw 30 editions of her six novels being published either as books or as issues of literary magazines. *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* were the less popular –with one and two editions respectively–, whereas *Pride and Prejudice* already established itself as the most popular with ten editions. The quality of the editions, in general, was very poor, especially in the 1940s: paperback covers, brownish papers, tiny letter fonts, scarce interlinear space, and occasional double columns. In addition to the paper restrictions imposed by the government, publishing houses were having a hard time after the losses derived from the war, and were aiming at reducing production costs. Austen was cheap to publish not only because her novels did not carry royalties, but also because the publishing houses reused, with or without consent, translations already in the market. *Northanger Abbey* is such a case: at least four of the seven editions published during the First Francoism copy and/or modify the first translation, dating from 1921.

The cultural reform that the Dictatorship wanted to bring about also promoted Austen as an eligible author for both editors and readers. For the conservative National-Catholic Regime, many authors represented a threat to the social and political values the Francoists defended. In contrast, Austen, with the illusory simplicity of her novels, seemed to fit within the limits of the Dictatorship's ideology, especially in relation to morality and women's roles. Besides, Austen's novels were frequently valued by the censors as "romantic novels" (AGA 21/11494-3565; AGA 21/07417-3255) with a happy married life at the end for her young characters. Thereby, they were inoffensive publications that helped to instruct women in their adulthood duties as wives and mothers. At the same time, Austen stood for the perfect combination of cultivated literature put at the service of the Francoist re-education; her novels, considered classical writings, were published in cheap editions in order to "ganar lectores populares derribando las barreras económicas" [win popular readers by knocking down economic barriers] [2] (Ruiz Bautista 240) and counteract the expansion of the popular novel, that is, dime novels on adventures, crimes and mystery, and romances, perceived as harmful readings for young and adult audiences alike.

During these same years, Charlotte and Emily Brontë enjoyed some recognition –21 editions for the former, and 16 for the latter–, but their popularity peak happened just after the First Francoism. Together, they achieved 93 editions between 1960 and 1982, when censorship boards stopped working. The relaxation in the socio-cultural norms of the Francoism in the 1960s and 1970s, in addition, may have promoted these books as appealing readings full of strong feelings and passionate lives. Su much success was not possible during the 1940s and 1950s simply because of the contents of their novels, which had to be self-censored by

translators in order to pass the censorship evaluation (Pajares Infante 62-3; Ortega Sáenz 288).

Four of the other six female authors previously mentioned, also got some editions during the First Francoism, with different importance in their individual histories of translation into Spanish. For Anne Brontë, for instance, her 10 editions in the First Francoism and in the Developmentalist Francoism (1960-1975) constituted the peak of her popularity, although since 1996 her novels have intermittently reappeared in the market. The 13 editions of George Eliot during the years of the Dictatorship's censorship, on the other hand, contrast with her recent popularity and her 24 editions in the last 20 years. Elizabeth Gaskell and Maria Edgeworth, lastly, got very few editions during the Francoist period, accounting for less than 20% of their total quantity of translations into Spanish. As pointed before, the translation flows of Austen's novels do not correspond with the other authors, making Austen a very particular case in which the conditions of the literary market and her popularity go hand in hand.

Between 1960 and 1996, Austen's popularity went into hibernation with just 41 editions in total, until editors revived interest on her writings in the 1996-2003 period. The proliferation of new translations –20– and reeditions of these and previous translations –58– made Austen available again for the older generations, but also for the first time for young readers. Publishing houses did not have to spend much in promoting Austen, for her novels were constantly on cinema and television screens. Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), Douglas McGrath's *Emma* (1996), Roger Michell's *Persuasion* (1995), and Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* (1999) were showed either at movie theatres or on tv channels, sometimes both, between 1995 and 2000. Newspapers, as well, commented constantly on the film adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, even with opinion articles on the movies and the novels themselves.

An even greater force was at play, however. Classic authors like Austen became a great asset for publishing houses after the economic crisis suffered in the first half of the 1990s. From 1996, when production started to grow again, until 2003, the number of first editions and reprints –understood as a non-first edition that does not require a new ISBN– increased steadily, with a positive development over 50% in the case of literature (*Panorámica de la edición española de libros 2005* 69). During this period, most publishing houses were small ones –that is, with less than 100 books published annually–, so they tended to focus on literature. They usually combined reduced print runs with specialization in very specific market segments. Classic authors, though, were never forsaken, for their enduring value and reliability made them a great investment niche, particularly when reedited in paperback editions and aimed at young readers, as it happened with the book series Punto de Lectura (ABC 42).

Another characteristic of the market to consider in relation to Jane Austen is the prominent vision of the book as an object of consumption rather than as a cultural good (Gil and Jiménez 30-2). Publishing houses made the most of the consumption conception of the book by the constant issuing of literary novelties. However, this strategy could be particularly negative: new books appeared and disappeared from bookshops very fast, making sales successful only in short-term and small numbers. Thus, best-seller authors and writers with long-term benefit compensated the possible losses of publishing houses. Austen, either as a

temporary top-seller writer or as a perpetual classical author, was always of this latter group, and her novels got reedited regularly and surely.

The Brontë sisters, Eliot and Gaskell were part of this same group, backing up the production of novelties, but they lacked the indirect promotion that Austen had from film adaptations. Thus, their publications in the 1996-2003 period –a joint total of 62– contrast with Austen's individual accomplishment of 78 editions. In the following years, fortunes changed slightly. Between 2004 and 2010, many new small publishing houses tried to find their space in the market, and they did so by attending to disregarded literary genres and books. The Brontës, Eliot, Gaskell, even Edgeworth and Lennox, attracted publishers' attention due to their limited presence in the market. Several previously untranslated works by Charlotte Brontë, Eliot, and Edgeworth got their first editions, and Gaskell's novels, such as *North and South* and *Cranford*, got new translations since their latest editions in the 1930s. Austen, with her limited production of novels, did not offer such possibility.

However, since 2011, the bicentenaries around Austen and her writings have inverted the tendency again, reducing the joint production of the Brontës, Eliot, Gaskell, Burney, Edgeworth, and Lennox, to 55% of those of Austen's novels. Austen's works have constantly been published in the last seven years, frequently in renewed editions with fresh covers and introductions, and in new books series such as Alba's Biblioteca Jane Austen or Alianza's Centenario Jane Austen. These editions aim at offering something additional to the texts that readers already know, so illustrations and vintage features have been incorporated in various of the 83 editions published in the last seven years. In the special bicentenary edition of the *Letters* by the publishing house d'Época, in addition to notes and illustrations, bibliographic and topographic indexes, a chronology, and postcards with Austen's quotes have been added. The intention, certainly, is to attract readers to buy again the same books with the pretext of having a physically beautiful collection of Austen's writings.

Austen, however, is not the only author being reedited during this period. The market is currently composed of many small companies, which publish few books per year, and several big companies, which put hundreds of titles into the market. The latter, though, put several editions of the same book into the market thanks to the different imprints that they comprise due to extensive mergers of multiple publishing houses. Penguin Random House, for instance, has published two editions of *Emma* and of *Sense and Sensibility* as well as three of *Mansfield Park* and of *Pride and Prejudice* through its general imprints –Penguin Clásicos and Random House– and through one of its smaller imprints –Debolsillo. Thus, classical authors such as Austen overwhelm the market and the audience's preferences, for they are certain investments both for the editor and for the readers.

At the same, publishing houses obtain new ISBNs for old books, accumulating thus an apparently big production with a minimal cost. The consequence, however, is the reduction of the literary offer: in addition to old books getting reprinted with a new ISBN, the output of publishing houses has reduced a 27.5% between 2011 and 2015 (*Panorámica de la edición española de libros 2015* 25). In these circumstances, Austen dominates by means of old editions in new formats, for only 12 of the 83 editions of Austen's writings published since 2011

were new translations. The case of the publishing house Alianza, part of the conglomerate Anaya, perfectly shows the current situation. In the last seven years, Alianza has published, on the one hand, new translations of *Northanger Abbey* (2012), *Mansfield Park* (2013), and *Sense and Sensibility* (2013); on the other, it also edited its old translations of *Pride and Prejudice* –dating from 1996– and *Emma* –dating from 1971– and a 2003 translation of *Persuasion* by a different publishing house. All these have been reprinted again with new ISBNs in 2016, due to the bicentenaries, whereas a fresh translation of *Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon*, and *Love and Freindship* have just appeared in 2017. What better strategy than to repeatedly publish a steady-selling author like Austen in formats that look like novelties due to new covers and book series?

The readers' longing for escapism and belonging

In the translation history of Austen into Spanish there is one word that could define the readers' attraction for her novels: escapism. In each of the three periods previously referred to –the First Francoism (1939-1959), the 1996-2003 period, and the 2011-2017 span–, Austen's works have represented a gate away from the difficulties faced in real life. In fact, the end of the Spanish Civil War, the visual access to her novels through the 1990s films, and the hectic lifestyle of present day have created conditions for nostalgic sceneries, for idealistic evasion, for escapist longings.

After the Civil War (1936-1939), Spain was a country sunk in misery. The war had dried the state treasury and had created international debts to be paid during the first years of the Dictatorship. Physically, Spain was devastated, with great material losses and goods for production ruined. Human losses were also vast, for, in addition to the war, the Dictatorship inflicted a strong political repression afterwards. The First Francoism came to be characterised by an economic autarchy, which proved to be disastrous for Spain, dependent as the country was on international markets. Individuals were affected by rationing, the black market's prices, and hunger. Liberal measures were adopted for the first time in 1952, although the definitive change of policy did not take place until 1959, with the Plan de Estabilización.

Escapism was, then, a necessary ingredient in the spare time activities of Spaniards. Literature, a cheap leisure with multiple repetitions for a single payment, became the perfect means for readers to avoid their reality, as well as for the State to create an atmosphere of ease and security after the war. José Pemartín Sanjuan, a member of the Ministry of Education during the First Francoism, recommended the English novels of the Victorian period and other popular literature –“thrillers, westerns, detective novels, love stories” (Pegenaute 93)– precisely because “our world provides such a dreadful environment and so many wounding emotions that those novels which might be written today about tragic adventures would look insipid because they cannot match the terrible reality that Spain has gone through and that the world is now experiencing” (1942, cited in Pegenaute 92). The promotion of “a culture of *evasion* whose aim was to provide an escape from immediate reality” (Pegenaute 93, emphasis in original)

meant the translation and publication of this kind of foreign books, especially during the first years of the Francoist Dictatorship.

Austen, although never mentioned explicitly by Pemartín Sanjuan, stood for the recommended escapist novel. Her works not only provided evasion from the consequences of the war: they also allowed readers to escape from the social class hierarchy that the Francoist claimed to have eradicated. Such a claim was aimed at preventing class struggles and the resurgence of communist ideas. However, the Francoist control of society simply enforced social class immobility during the First Francoism. The National-Catholic discourse also talked of redemption through work, but the working and middle classes could not really aspire to moving up the social ladder. Novels such as Austen's offered readers of these two social groups an imaginary interlude from their daily hardships, as well as from the temporal and spatial surroundings of their social class (De León 5). In this sense, Austen's works were an excellent choice, for the plots develop around "the daily family life of the 'home', of that ancestral manor which is the usual dwelling of the British high bourgeoisie" (Pemartín 1942, cited in Pegenaute 92), and, at the same time, contributed to "a consumer culture, devoid of political or intellectual content, and therefore innocuous" (Carr and Fusi 119).

Women were another group of readers which were attracted to escapism by Austen's novels. Women's behaviour and role in society was rearranged by the Francoist government according to conservative ideas. Thus, the image of a modern, independent woman promoted during the Republican era was eradicated, and women's expectations were redirected towards marriage and motherhood. Books for female readers were supposed to be educative, morally strict, and ending "en la única situación real admisible: el matrimonio" [in the only admissible real situation: marriage] (Huguet 146). This limited future needed to be counteracted, and literature offered evasion in the form of love conflicts, with success against all adversity, but with sexually-repressed characters and relationships. In Austen's novels, the heroines are in a similar situation to that of the women in the First Francoism –marriage as a life aim, the political objection to working women, the impossibility of divorce, the censorship of sexuality. However, Austen's stories also provided a certain female independence as seen in Elizabeth Bennet or Catherine Morland, a detail which seems to have been beyond the understanding of the censors.

After the First Francoism, the relative economic and social openness of the country eroded the necessity for escapism, for new cultural contacts through books, films, and people created a refreshed longing for something else than evasion. Austen continued to be published until the end of the Dictatorship, but the preferences for one or another of her novels changed. During the First Francoism, the amorous Bildungsroman of Catherine Morland fit rather well in the Francoist pattern of female submission and marriage-ending expectations. Thus, *Northanger Abbey* was published eight times during the First Francoism, but not even one between 1960 and the end of the censorship's control in 1982. *Emma*, on the contrary, with its independent, witty but comic main character, was more in line with women's freedom and new labour conditions at the end of the Dictatorship. In fact, *Emma* got four editions between 1971 and 1982, compared to just one during all the previous years of the Francoist Regime.

In socio-political terms, the 1996-2003 period differs radically from the First Francoism, but the economic conditions of the two eras have much in common. In the early 1990s, Spain suffered a strong economic recession, with high rates of unemployment and the devaluation of the peseta. This created a great social instability in the shape of relative poverty and labour uncertainty, especially among the young and women. The later economic recovery did not get translated into individual or family improvements, and so socio-economic precariousness became almost permanent. Austen's novels, under the circumstances, were approached for a sense of security, for, as Walton Litz put it, "the essential stability of her world is very appealing in an unstable decade" (1995, cited in Rodríguez 50).

The escapist allure of Austen during the 1996-2003 period is also directly related to the film adaptations that overflowed cinemas and television schedules. Mostly, the visual portrayal of Austen's stories added a new layer of charm. Spanish audiences had already enjoyed four domestic adaptations of Austen's works in the 1960s and 1970s (see Romero Sánchez, "A la Señorita Austen"), but the Hollywood versions of the 1990s were far more glamorous and vibrant. In a newspaper review of Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility*, the "minucioso y agradable tejido fílmico" [film's meticulous and agreeable fabric] (Rodríguez Marchante, "Sentido y sensibilidad" 90), composed of settings, music and light, was highly praised; the same happens with the "ambientación elegante y sin agobios" [elegant and stress-free setting] of Douglas McGrath's *Emma* (Rodríguez Marchante, "Emma" 100).

In addition, Austen's works, either as books or as films, generated a nostalgic feeling for a by-gone era. In the centre-right newspaper *La Vanguardia*, journalists and readers expressed their yearning for a refined society where specific rules determined the behaviour and the happiness of characters. A reviewer of the film *Emma* insisted on the fact that the protagonist deserves her happy ending –that is, marriage–, because she has been able to improve as a person (Gomis 17). This, for him, is the right conclusion for a moral comedy, as he sees Austen's story. The authors of another article, this on Austen's popularity, welcomed the social norms of Austen's times with "valores morales como la modestia, la sinceridad, el decoro o la buena educación" [moral values such as modesty, sincerity, decorum or good education] (Martí Gómez and Ramoneda 19). A reader confirmed this too: in her opinion, Austen's adaptations were a great alternative to "tantas películas violentas con palabras malsonantes y desprovistas de humanidad" [so many violent films with coarse words and devoid of humanity], and find in them "una ventana abierta al encuentro de una sociedad que nos muetsra su 'bien hacer', su 'bien hablar'" [an open window to the encounter with a society that shows us its 'good deeds', its 'good speech'] (Francolí 18).

Austen's popularity continued steady until a new period of great acclaim came along in 2011, when the interest for escaping into the by-gone world of the Regency era expanded firmly again. In the internet forum 'El salón de té de Jane', site for Spanish fans, readers debate about values using Austen as a departure point. They mirror present-day Spanish politeness –or lack thereof– on the manners displayed by Austen's characters, wishing them in their daily lives in the 21st century (see, for instance, the discussion topic "Jane Austen me ha cambiado

mi forma de hablar”). In addition, Spanish audiences find in Austen’s times a lifestyle simplicity which contrast highly with their own lives, experienced as fast and demanding. Austen’s letters, for instance, are thought of as a treasure box filled with intimacy and domesticity, away from philosophical and political discussions (Ascanio). In a conservative newspaper, Austen herself is praised for being “una mujer sencilla y bondadosa” [an unaffected and kind-hearted woman] who saw “la belleza de todas esas pequeñas cosas de la vida cotidiana” [the beauty of all those small things of daily life] (De la Fuente 60). Readers, then, use her writings for travelling back in time to enjoy “como si de la hora del té se tratara ... que Jane se sentara a nuestro lado en una de esas lluviosas tardes de otoño” [as if it were tea time . . . that Jane would sit down at our side in one of those rainy autumn evenings] (Nepomuceno 32) – a very romanticised construction of Regency past.

Another topic around which the escapist attraction of Austen is built today is that of love relationships. In a similar way to that of manners and values, Spanish readers find relaxation in the literary heroes and heroines that Austen offers, and long for respectful and devoted partners and selves. Luis Magrinyà, editor and translator of Austen, stated that, upon reading Darcy’s proposal, he decided to propose himself in the same fashion or not at all (10). Readers approach Austen’s writings because her love stories are “reales, maduras y llenas de sentimiento sin caer en la cursilería” [real, mature and full of sentiment without falling into cheesiness] (Mendoza). The marriage plot on which Austen’s novels rest, in addition, creates an unrealistic comfort about relationships for, after all the difficulties, love triumphs. This, however, still has relevance “en la era del culto al single o del divorcio exprés” [in the era of the cult of being single or of express divorce] because “somos unos románticos incurables” [we are incurable romantics], according to literary journalist Antonio Lozano (59).

In the 2011-2017 period, a greater longing for a trans-historical sense of humanity has become part of Austen’s popularity. Readers of all eras have seen themselves reflected in Austen’s characters, particularly her heroines and heroes. This has always created a feeling of community through Austen and her novels, but nowadays this combined desire for individualism and belonging gets expressed openly and publicly. In the book *Historia de los Austenitas*, about Spanish-language fans, Romero Sánchez states that these Janeites “sentían una cierta sensación de ‘soledad’” [felt a certain kind of ‘loneliness’] (location 232, par. 5) before the Internet arrived. Since then, forums, on-line book clubs, blogs, and most recently video-blogs and social networks have provided a platform of interaction and debate that provides the communal experience of being an individual lover of Austen. The bicentenaries have brought about a greater sense of it, to the point that, “como austenita, ya no deberías sentirte solo” [as Janeite, you shouldn’t feel alone anymore] (Romero Sánchez, *Historia de los Austenitas* location 311, par. 2).

However, this desire for belonging through Austen seems fairly recent among Spanish readers. Available materials from the First Francoism period do not suggest that Austen’s readers shared at the time a sense of community through her novels. We must assume, then, that if such feeling existed, it was partaken by a small proportion of the Spanish audience, for it never got disclosed into public statements in newspapers, for instance. The 1996-2003 period, on the contrary,

witnessed the start of the communal experience of Austen. The film adaptations of Austen's novels during these eight years promoted a more daily longing for participation in a/the community of Austen's readers, just as the interaction, commented above, between journalists and readers in the newspaper *La Vanguardia* shows. The age of Internet, in addition, brought about the first Spanish-language website on Austen in 2001, opening more the possibilities for readers to fulfil their longing for a communal experience of their love for Austen. Nowadays, many new Spanish reader of Austen will doubtlessly not only long for to become Amanda Price in *Lost in Austen*, but also for a community of fellow Janeites to tell to and comment with his/her experiences.

Discussion and future research

In this article, I have presented a historical explanation of Austen's popularity in Spain based on the socio-cultural and literary contextualization of her translations into Spanish. The direct interlink observed between the explosions of the Spanish market with her peaks of publication highlight how much Austen is regarded by publishers and readers as a central piece of the literary polysystem in Spain: her constant presence in books shops and audience's shelves is grounded on the status of classic assigned to her works and on the perception of her stories as ideal for individual and communal evasion. However, such a social and commercial identification for Austen has been the result of specific historical circumstances that have, in the short term, spotlighted her and her novels and, in the long term, settled her as the model for other authors.

From this historical perspective, Austen's popularity in present-day Spain is primarily dependent on two events: her apparent fit to socio-cultural expectations of the First Francoism, and the successful adaptability of her writings to the silver screen, particularly in the 1990s. Unlike Austen, Fanny Burney and Charlotte Lennox had to fight a different kind of censorship: Burney's *Evelina* was banned in the 1830 by the Inquisition (Lasa Álvarez), whereas Lennox's *The Female Quixote* appeared in Spain in 1808 without her name (Lorenzo-Modia 107). Another example is found in comparison with Elizabeth Gaskell, for she did not enjoy much popularity during the Francoist years, probably because her novels were associated with the working classes' ideals of the Republican period (1931-1939). Gaskell's limited presence in the Spanish market between 1939 and 1982 has, in the long run, determined her meagre success in latter periods. In relation to the influence of movies on Austen's popularity, the Brontë sisters offer the best contrastive case. The Brontës were quite popular during the 1939-1959 period, but their novels did not happen to be transformed into films either so satisfactorily adapted or so timely released as Austen's. In fact, the movie adaptations of the Brontës' novels are considered to "have been lacking" because these works make "for an intensely personal reading experience" (Hesse) unlike the more communal interpretation that Austen's audiences experience.

Throughout this article, I have also insisted on the importance of coupling Austen with the concept of "classic" and its different associated values in relation to literary popularity. The Francoist idea of classicism helped, without doubt, to settle down the foundation of Austen's popularity. Conceived as a cultural ideal,

classic literature was profusely published to inculcate the Francoist ideology on lower classes as well as on women and children; at the same time, it developed into the backbone of the literary canon for the next generations. Thus, the authors who got published during the Dictatorship –namely Austen, the Brontës, Eliot, and, in a more limited manner, Gaskell– have enjoyed a greater number of editions in the last twenty years, when the publishing industry has been driven by globalization forces. By the 1996–2003 period, the concept of “classic” had already become associated with readings trustworthy in terms of quality –from the perspective of readers– and commercial success –from the perspective of publishers. In the present decade, classic books and authors stand on their own, without the requirements of positive marketing, making Burney, Edgeworth, and Lennox to be vindicated as classics themselves because of their failure in such grounds when firstly entering the Spanish market.

However, why Austen has obtained a larger benefit from such circumstances than any of the Brontë sisters, Eliot, or Gaskell? The answer is found in the fact that Austen's works have adapted so easily and pleasingly to the different evasions that Spanish readers have longed for throughout the years. The socio-cultural environment in which Austen's novels take place is as complex as any of the other eight female authors here mentioned, but her style and her stories prove to be more adaptive: the vast quantity of translations, film and television adaptations, inspired-by writings, and pop-culture products highlights that, in fact, there is an Austen for each person. Eliot's and Gaskell's novels, in contrast, require from readers a certain reflective mood in order to cope with their heavily social plots, with far deeper moral and economic criticisms than Austen's stories. The Brontës' wild passions and distresses, for their part, do not produce in the reader the same comfortable feelings of security and calmness as Austen's ironic humour. In the same way, the classification of Edgeworth as a moralistic and educational writer –present in her Spanish editions in the late 1800s and to some extent in the 2000s editions– makes readers feel detached, at least, from the connotations and the outlines of her stories.

To finish, I shall point out another element that may have contributed to Austen's popularity but which I have not studied here due to space limitations: the quality of the translations. As observed previously, Austen has been widely published throughout the decades, but only 34% of her 300 editions in Spain are first publications of a new translation. In fact, only Emily Brontë has a lower figure, with 33.15% of fresh translations among all her Spanish editions. This means that publishing houses are constantly reusing Austen's translations, old and recent, rather than commissioning new versions. This may potentially have contributed to the sustained popularity of Austen, for the published translations have always shown a great degree of quality. The opposite case is found in the 1808 translation of Lennox's *The Female Quixote* and in the late-1800s translations of individual stories from Edgeworth's *Popular Tales* and *Tales of Fashionable Life*: the former translation was a completely gender-biased version, starting with the title, *Don Quijote con faldas* [Don Quixote with skirts] (Lorenzo-Modia); the latter translations omit a significant portion of Edgeworth's explanatory notes and show manipulations to make the stories comply with the conservative values of Spanish institutions (Fernández Rodríguez, “Un Oriente muy poco convencional” 93; Fernández Rodríguez, “Traducción y didactismo en

el siglo diecinueve” 27). However, this hypothesis should be studied in depth, not only to establish or deny a direct relation between the quality of the translations and Austen’s popularity, but also to determine the reasoning behind such link.

Notes

[1] The data here presented has been collected from the database of the Spanish National Library (www.bne.es). However, the data for the editions of 2017 is still incomplete until early in 2018. Only the 2017 editions present in the publishing houses’ catalogues have been counted.

[2] All translations into English are mine.

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Authorial Realism or how I Learned that Jane Was a Person

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Abstract: In marking 200 years since Jane Austen died, this paper comes as a personal testimony of how I as a reader became more familiar with the person behind the name. Furthermore, it is the somewhat hidden, somewhat obvious intention of this paper to awake in Austen fans a desire to visit the place she lived in while writing her masterpieces and also the last place to have had her mark while she was alive and healthy. The effect will be inevitably the same as always; Jane Austen will become just Jane, my friend, that author I met once but cannot remember having shaken her hand, yet still she is familiar.

Keywords: author, real, Chawton, reading, visitor, biography, mark

In November 2014, as a newly minted PhD candidate, I was joining the ranks of Visiting Fellows at Chawton House Library, a research center focusing predominantly on women writers' works, where for all intents and purposes I would spend a month of intense reading about Mary Shelley's life and works. Little did I know that living there for a month would not only help me gather information for my doctoral thesis but would also reveal to me the real person behind a name too well known to those in literary academia.

Chawton House Library, also known as 'The Centre for the Study of Early Women's Writing, 1600-1830,' was the house of Edward Austen Knight, the older brother of Jane Austen, and her place of residence between 1809-1817 when she died.

This impressive Elizabethan manor, located in the small village of Chawton was like a hovel in the midst of a storm invaded forest as it began at the end of Alton, a small yet noisy town, one hour's train ride from London. You come from the hubbub of London's airports and crowded streets, all the way through the bus rides into Victoria, only to end up running to catch a train to Alton, where the only means further is a taxi ride into the unknown. And then Chawton begins, Chawton Cottage appears on your left thanks to the taxi driver, kind enough to fill the role of tour guide as well as driver, only to be replaced by the Great House, Chawton House Library itself.

Chawton village, a dozy place startled into attention several times a day by the clatter of rapid coach traffic through its centre, stood where three roads met: to the north, Alton and London; to the south, Winchester if you followed one fork, Gosport along the other. The Austens' cottage was on the corner at the divide, so close to the road that the beds in the front rooms upstairs were sometimes shaken by the six-horse coaches that thundered past. Slower carriages allowed curious passengers to see into the rooms. "I heard of the Chawton Party looking very comfortable at Breakfast, from a gentleman who was travelling by their door in a Post-chaise," Mrs. Knight wrote to Fanny soon after Mrs. Austen had moved in. (Tomalin, *Kindle Locations* 3827-3832)

I have often wondered what it must have been like for Jane the first time she ended around these parts of England, homeless, mourning the loss of her father, and without a secure future anywhere near in sight. Claire Tomalin's biography of Jane landed in my hands shortly after I returned home her account of the move described what I had imagined at the first sight of the home so many years into the present day and age:

The house was L-shaped, of old red brick. Built as a farm about 1700, it later served as an inn; there were two main storeys, and attics above under the tiled roof. Opposite it, between the fork in the roads, was a wide shallow pond, and at the back a "pleasant irregular mixture of hedgerow, and grass, and gravel walk and long grass for mowing, and orchard, which I imagine arose from two or three little enclosures having been thrown together, and arranged as best might be, for ladies' occupation," according to Jane's niece Caroline, who knew the place well. There was a kitchen garden, a yard and generous outbuildings. The church, the rectory and Chawton House were ten minutes' walk away along the Gosport road. (Tomalin, *Kindle Locations* 3844-3859)



And then Jane Austen moved here. Tomalin tells the story as if her friend, Jane, had told it herself:

By 7 July they were in the cottage at Chawton, joined soon afterwards by Cassandra and Martha. The effect on Jane of this move to a permanent home in which she was able to re-establish her own rhythm of work was dramatic. It was as though she were restored to herself, to her imagination, to all her powers: a black cloud had lifted. Almost at once she began to work again. Sense and Sensibility was taken out, and revision began. (Tomalin, *Kindle Locations* 3818-3823)

I reached the Great House before I had a chance to catch my breath after seeing her house, and was met by the breathtaking view of Chawton House Library at that point of day that most photographers strive to use, those twenty or so minutes of perfect sunlight. In England, in November, those twenty minutes decorate the village landscape in tones that still to this day evoke the age of Austen and Dickens.



I spent a month reading about Mary Shelley and her family, as a Visiting Fellow, not really being aware that a much more profound research was happening at the back of my mind. Chawton House Library was restored to the way it looked back in the 18th century in order to offer its visitors the most authentic experience of the times. There are Shire horses at the farm attached to the property, sheep graze peacefully on the fields that have been returned to their original state, having been

agricultural lands for years, the gardens are cared for year round to ensure that the warm seasons offers visitor a chance to enjoy the wide variety of flowers, and Mandy in the kitchen spoils both guests such as myself, and occasional visitors, with Victoria Sponge Cake and tea that she makes using the Knight Family's Old Cookbook. One cannot help but enter into the peacefulness of the place.



Jane's mark is present in every corner of Chawton, from the little churchyard where her mother and sister are buried, to the rectory house across the street from the Great House where Henry Austen lived and worked as a priest. Most visitors come to Chawton with a sense of expectation and anticipation, perhaps not even aware that these take the edge off the whole experience. The Library

historian, during our tour of the house, told us how visitors come and sit at the large dining table where Jane sat during family dinners, making sure to sit on every chair, now knowing for sure where the author sat, just so they can go back home and say that they have 'rubbed knees' with Jane.

It was two weeks reading and working in the small reading nook before I found out by accident that this is where Jane herself would sit and write,

sometimes read, other times meditate or read letters from friends, according to the same historian.

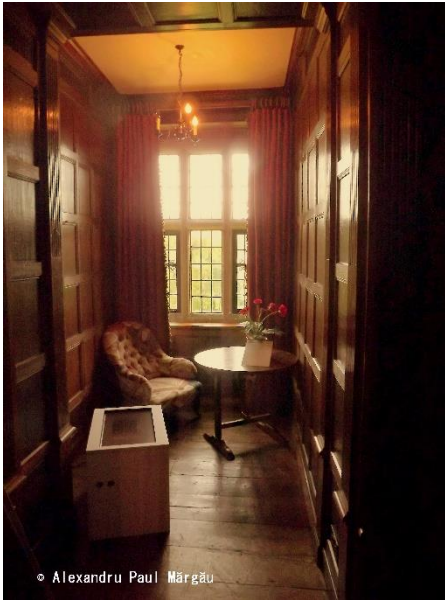


Photo from Constance Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes And Friends*.

The Great House had by then become a home away from home, not just because of the staff that cares for the place as volunteers, but also because at every turn and corner, the mark of the Austen family awaited to remind me once more of the stories I had heard during the tour on my first day. The scribbles of Fanny on the painting by Mellichamp, the servants kitchen where Many's cooking greeted me daily with amazing scents and the story of the maidservant that quit because one of the male servants had not deemed to be aware of her interest in him, Edward's journal from the Grand Tour while he was at Neuchatel, or the painting of the adoption of Edward by the Knight family.



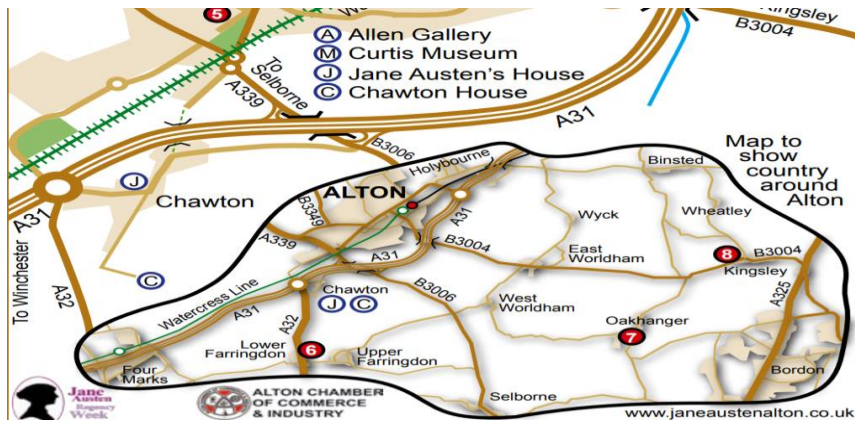


Photo from *The Jane Austen Trail*.

I spent the free days, mostly weekends, exploring the surrounding areas, such as Chawton and Alton, walking into across little streets that seemed to be endless only to pleasantly end with a small shop of some sort, or a little bookstore, or walking across fields and into parts of a forest, only to come out into Farringdon's streets, a small town within walking distance of the Great House. Only later did I hear about the Jane Austen Trail, presumably the itinerary that Jane would follow during her walks while living in Chawton, which had actually been a great part of the itinerary that I and the other Visiting Fellows had walked on.

While there is no actual written evidence of these places being part of Jane's walks, while reading her novels one gets a sense of familiarity. The Donwell Abbey of *Emma* with its gravel path is reminiscent of the downward walk towards Chawton Great House, the fields that stretch between the House and Farringdon take one next to Elizabeth or Elinor on their walks to and from one place or another.

I started my journey to Chawton House Library having in mind what Tomalin calls "the uneventful life of Jane Austen," which had been been

"the generally accepted view. Compared with writers like Dickens or her contemporary Mary Wollstonecraft, the course of her life does seem to run exceedingly quietly and smoothly. Jane Austen did not see her father beat her mother, and she was not sent to work in a blacking factory at the age of twelve; yet, if you stop to look closely at her childhood, it was not all quiet days at the parsonage. It was, in fact, full of events, of distress and even trauma, which left marks upon her as permanent as those of any blacking factory. That she was marked by them will become clear in the course of her story; and that she also overcame them and made them serve her purposes. (Tomalin, *Kindle Locations* 205-210)

What is more, on my last week there I awoke one day and realized that this name had become a person whose life I had been granted access to, as a sort of first hand witness. I scoured the bookshelves of the Great House for any books about Jane's life, and enlisted the help of the historian that had unknowingly set me on this path from the first day. All accounts seemed to confirm a general dullness attached to her life, and it was Tomalin's storytelling gifts once more that confirmed this as she says that

the first biographical note, written in the aftermath of her death, consisted of a few pages only, and her brother Henry, who wrote it, explained that hers was “not by any means a life of event.” Nothing more was published for another fifty years, when a memoir by her nephew James-Edward Austen-Leigh appeared. It confirmed Henry’s view of her. “Of events her life was singularly barren: few changes and no great crisis ever broke the smooth current of its course.” (Tomalin, *Kindle Locations* 199-205)

I returned home with extensive notes for my doctoral thesis, weighed only by the extensive notes made in my last week reading about Jane every spare minute outside of my time dedicated to the original purpose of my Fellowship.

Also, I came back with a sense that I had made a friend in Jane, that I now could see beyond the text and know what lies behind it and the name, with a knowledge that still escapes words of the fact that two hundred years ago, a woman whose life seemed uneventful by all accounts, especially those intentionally written so as to convey this, created a bridge between two historical periods by connecting the Romantics and the Victorians. She did not care for fame, hers was a life lived inside her mind and only briefly revealed to the few she felt close enough to, and even today her work takes precedence over herself, just as she had intended all along.

Movies such as Julian Jarrold’s *Becoming Jane* are the only source for one to begin to imagine what she looked like, what sort of life she led or who is the person behind the name. I have used scenes from the movie during my lectures, if only to try and convey to a very small degree the revelation that I had after living in Chawton. I encouraged my students to apply for the various fellowships offered by the Centre or to visit the place as mere tourists, only so they can begin to understand what neither I nor anyone else that has lived there can accurately describe in words. I have yet to hear their feedback on the matter, but Chawton and the Great House were my home and remain my home still, a place where I will always return to meet with Jane and thus get a better understanding of her novels.

Picture credits

p. 43: Constance Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Friends*

(<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/hill/austen/p228f.gif>, retrieved 29 October 2017).

p. 44. *The Jane Austen Trail* (<http://www.janeaustentrail.org.uk>, retrieved 29 October 2017).

All the other pictures belong to the author’s personal collection.

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Adaptations, Sequels and Success

The Expanding Sense and Sensibility Text Universe

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Abstract. This article asks why people are obsessed with Jane Austen's stories and why her stories are spreading across the globe, across media forms, and across generations? In an attempt to analyse the Austenmania-phenomenon, this article examines various re-presentations of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* in order to discuss what these re-presentations contribute with to the understanding of the source text and to the text universe as a whole. The analysis shows that the re-presentations not only expand Austen's story and provide insight into the characters and their actions, but also draw attention to historical and contemporary power hierarchies and gender roles.

Keywords: Jane Austen; *Sense and Sensibility*; text universe; re-presentation; adaptation; fan fiction.

1. Introduction

“a picture is worth a thousand words—unless they're Jane Austen's, of course”
(Nora Foster Stovel, n.pag.)

Although it is 200 years since Jane Austen's life (1775-1817) came to an end, her presence is still very strong particularly through her fictional works which are more read and wider spread today than ever [1]. Most famous are her six novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Northanger Abbey* (1818), and *Persuasion* (1818). These novels are famous in their own right, but also through the numerous re-presentations that exist in the forms of version novels, movies, TV-series, and fan fiction that connect to the characters and fictional worlds of her novels in some way. Austen's novels, her settings and particularly her characters live on in ever-expanding text universes. Hence, Austen's six novels have developed into a huge phenomenon – a shared passion sometimes referred to as “Austenmania” (Pucci and Thompson 1). This phenomenon nourishes a franchise that exists beyond the written word, which can be seen in the numerous fans from all over the world, Janeites, who visit the places where Austen lived and the places where the novels were filmed. In addition, through online discussion communities such as “The Republic of Pemberley,” fandoms such as “Bits of Ivory” and Twitter accounts such as “@DailyJaneAusten” with more than 25.000 followers and “@JaneAustenLIVES” with more than 23.000 followers (as of October 2017), Austen's stories reach an even larger population.

Looking at the huge phenomenon of Austenmania, it is relevant to ask: why are people still obsessed with Jane Austen and her stories 200 years after their publication and why are her stories still spreading across the globe, across media forms, and across generations? Why do people feel the need or desire to keep expanding Austen's fictional works and worlds? Many readers want to interact with her stories and to alter them so that they become what the readers want them

to be, or to continue the stories so that they end in different ways or not end at all. This article analyses the Austenmania-phenomenon by looking more closely at re-presentations of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* as it analyses (parts of) the Sense and Sensibility text universe in order to discuss what the various re-presentations contribute with to the understanding of the source text, that is Austen's novel, as well as of the text universe as a whole.

What, then, is a text universe? When parts of a story (source text), such as plot, setting, characters etc. are used in the creation of new stories in various text- and media forms, the source text and the various re-presentations together form a *text universe* relating to a particular text. Just like *the* universe, a text universe is constantly expanding, since every story offers infinite possibilities to be expanded through, for example, prequels and sequels, as well as through web pages and merchandise. Every new story adds to the text universe by (unique) contributions that develop the story further. These contributions problematise the hierarchical relationship that traditionally has existed between the source text and the various re-presentations. Because the participants in a text universe have various first encounters with the story (one might have Austen's novel while another might have Lee's film as their first encounter), the various texts might be seen as holding a more equal position in the text universe. Because every participant creates his or her own text universe depending on which texts, re-presentations, he or she adds to it, every text universe is an individual construction. While one participant might have watched Lee's film, read Austen's novel, written and read hundreds of fan fictions relating to the Sense and Sensibility story, another participant might have watched Alexander's TV-series and read Austen's novel. Even though their text universes are different, they share the experience of participating in the Sense and Sensibility text universe. Clearly, there are numerous ways to use a story. To experience the story in different ways is a trend, as Pucci and Thompson point out: "Increasingly, this is the way cultural experiences are disseminated and consumed: see the film, read the book, buy the soundtrack, check out the Web site, visit the 'actual' Austen sites in English country houses and countryside" (5). As a result of this trend, Austen's stories and characters exist in several forms and contribute to a growing franchise which, like a ripple effect, keeps spreading and thus reaching new audiences, new (co-)creators, and new fans.

A text universe may thus consist of numerous stories told in very disparate text and media forms. In order to work with such a large and diverse text universe, and as a way to illustrate that the various texts that make up the universe neither have the same aims, nor the same frame works, the various re-presentations are divided into three different categories of which the first two will be dealt with in this article; *remakes*, where the story is made again – a repetition of the same story but in new and/or different fashion (which might be achieved through the transfer of the story to a new medium, an adaptation), *makeovers*, where the story is made anew – an alteration of the story to fit a new audience (through for example variation novels, and fan fiction), and *factions*, where (parts of) the fictional story is made non-fictive or made to appear as real (examples of this category are Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, merchandise, buildings and locations, and cosplay).

2. Remakes and Makeovers

One large category of *remakes* are film adaptations, which aim to retell a story in a new medium and at the same time stay faithful to the source text. Fans of a story will always question why this or that scene is deleted, altered, or added etc. “The challenge for filmmakers is to find the visual language and a reading of the original that allow the story to speak to that new audience,” as Penny Gay argues (108). An adaptation thus has a double target audience in that it addresses fans as well as newcomers to the story. In addition to the double address, the story needs to be translated from a linguistic to an audio-visual medium when it is adapted from a novel to a film. Hence, when Austen’s 200-year-old novel was adapted to a film in 1995, the late 20th century audience of fans as well as newcomers needed to be taken into consideration. “Bridging the historical gap is a major challenge for any adapter of Austen,” Foster Stovel argues (n.pag).

The film adaptation *Sense and Sensibility* directed by Ang Lee and broadcast in 1995, won Emma Thompson an Academy Award for best adapted screenplay. While adaptations are remakes that aim to tell the same story with minor changes, and as such invite comparison, it is fruitful to discuss what these changes contribute with to the *Sense and Sensibility*-text universe and to the understanding of the source text, Austen’s novel, rather than foregrounding the similarities and differences between the two texts. “Exploring Thompson’s adaptation can highlight differences between page and screen,” Foster Stovel claims (n.pag), and adds that “[i]t can also illuminate Austen’s text *and* the change in sensibilities between Regency and modern societies” (n.pag). One major difference that is noticeable between the Regency era in which Austen’s novel and Lee’s film are set and the late 20th century in which the watching of the film takes place, is gender roles. In the film, Margaret Dashwood, aged 13, holds a position from which it is okay to be ignorant of and ask questions related to social and cultural codes. Hence, she represents the position of the audience, “[i]n order to bridge the cultural gap,” Foster Stovel argues (n.pag). An example of this is the scene where Margaret wonders why they cannot stay in the house and Elinor explains: “Because houses go from father to son, dearest—not from father to daughter. It is the law” (00:05:25-00:05:45). She thus clarifies the primogeniture that Austen fans are likely familiar with, but which can be difficult to understand by an audience in 1995.

Another notable change in Lee’s film is the portrayal of the male characters. Being a story about a family of women, Austen’s novel focuses on the portrayal of the female characters, but Lee’s film adds sympathetic features to Mr Ferrars, which can be seen in his kindness to Margaret (00:10:50-00:10:58) and his attempt at teaching her to fence (00:13:20-00:13:53), as well as to Colonel Brandon, who is portrayed as a father-figure who fails because he gives his protégée too much independence (1:31:00-1:31:07). Hence, Lee’s *Sense and Sensibility* “used updated versions of the early 19th-century heroes to sell emerging ideals of manhood to the late-20th century, at a time when the pro-feminist men’s movement was challenging gender norms in the realm of politics and pop culture” as Devoney Looser claims (n.pag). As a result,

[t]he changes Lee and Thompson made to Austen’s original story meant the title *Sense and Sensibility* no longer alluded to just the characteristics of its heroines.

It now applied to the heroes as well, with Rickman and Grant's characters proving men could combine a heightened emotional sensitivity ("sensibility") with the traditionally masculine bedrock of clear-eyed rationality ("sense"). (Looser, n.pag.)

This remake, though set in the Regency era, translates some elements, including the male characters, in order to make them believable to the audience in 1995. In addition, Austen's critique of gender roles is further enhanced in Lee's film. An example of this is when Elinor explains to Edward, who believes that he and Elinor are in a similar position because he is forced into an idle and useless job by his family, that "you will inherit your fortune. We cannot even earn ours" (00:17:06-00:17:13). Through this film, the economic and social status of women during Austen's era is placed in the foreground. *Sense and Sensibility* is Austen's "sourest look at the oppression of women through marriage, property and family" (Fuller 20), and Lee's remake enhances the social and economic critique initiated by Austen. Linda Hutcheon argues that adaptation may "keep that prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise," because "adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places" (176). Hence, this remake contributes to the text universe not only by transferring the story to an audio-visual medium, and thus making it accessible to a new audience, but also by illuminating and strengthening gender aspects put forth in the source text.

Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* is a commercial success, not only because it received positive reviews and earned seven Academy Awards nominations (of which Thompson won for best adapted screenplay) and eleven BAFTA nominations (of which Thompson won for Best Actress in a Leading Role, Winslet won for Best Actress in a Supporting Role, and the cast led by director Lee and producer Doran won for Best Film), but also because it generated an increased interest in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* as well as her other fictional works, and has contributed to the Sense and Sensibility text universe as it has inspired numerous remakes and makeovers.

In 2008, BBC broadcasted a remake of Austen's novel as a 3-episodes TV-series adaptation entitled *Sense & Sensibility* directed by John Alexander with screenplay by Andrew Davies. Naturally, this remake relates to Austen's novel, but it also needs to relate to previous remakes or makeovers. In particular, it needs to relate to Lee's film released more than 10 years prior. Just as Lee's film, Alexander's series follows Austen's story closely with some small adjustments to the plot, in addition to the adjustments required when transferring the story from one medium (novel) to another (TV-series). As a story broadcast to a 21st Century audience, Alexander's series, emphasises the inequality of men and women during Austen's era, which can be seen in Elinor's response to her half-brother John inheriting Norland: "Sons are always heirs. There is nothing anyone can do about it" (Ep 1, 00:05:00-00:05:06). This response clearly highlights the disadvantageous position of daughters in Austen's contemporary society. In a discussion of Austen adaptations, Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield claim that "[w]hat the writers and directors behind the four updates find regrettable is Austen's lack of advocacy for women's careers (other than as wife)" (n.pag.). In Austen's story, the most important task for women is to find suitable husbands, a

life-mission that when placed in such an illuminate position, might be considered as a subtle critique against prevailing social gender norms. Alexander's TV-series, foregrounds this life-mission and further questions it, which can be seen in particular when the Dashwood family meet with their relative, who greets them by claiming: "I dare say we shall find you all husbands before the year is out. How is that?" (Ep 1, 00:33:12-00:33:14), upon which Elinor points out: "My youngest sister is perhaps a little young for a husband, Sir" (Ep 1, 00:33:20-00:33:22). Hence, the ridiculousness of this haste to marry of one's female relatives further enhances the criticism of the position of women during Austen's era.

One widely discussed adjustment in Alexander's series is the opening scene portraying an erotic encounter where Willoughby seduces a young woman (Ep 1, 00:00:00-00:01:01). For fans and people familiar with Austen's story, this scene might be slightly confusing, but it is possible to understand who they are. However, for people not familiar with the story, this scene might be very confusing, and in addition, distracting to the story as it reveals Willoughby's true character long before Marianne realises what he is like. In a newspaper article about the adaptation, Julie Moulton and James Mills bring up critique from the chairman of the Jane Austen Society against Andrew Davies for including the scene in a TV-series, which "is lowering itself by degrading fine English literature in the battle for ratings" (n.pag.). In the same article, it is reported that "Davies rubbished suggestions he had sexed-up the novel for ratings – although he admitted his version was more overtly sexual than previous adaptations" (n.pag.). Ratings are of course important in the entertainment industry, and this particular episode was reportedly watched by over five million viewers (Moulton and Mills n.pag.). However, besides an increase in circulation, this remake, like other remakes, strengthen the already close relationship between the audience and Austen's stories where some themes initiated by Austen, are criticised, explained and emphasised.

Remakes of *Sense and Sensibility* make minor adjustments to the source text, but through the adaptation of the story to another medium and to another target audience, these changes are significant to the understanding of the source text as well as of the text universe. One consequence of remaking the story is that *Sense and Sensibility* enthusiasts may come into contact with Austen and her literary productions through remakes rather than through the novel. The possessiveness they experience is thus dependent on which version of the story they prefer to identify as the "original." Regardless of whether it is Austen's words in a book, Lee's words and images of Austen's words in a movie, or Alexander's interpretations in a television series that is a person's first contact with *Sense and Sensibility*, the many and various remakes contribute to and profit from an ever-growing Austen universe.

While remakes make small, but significant, alterations to the source text, *makeovers* aim to alter the story in more dramatic ways, for example re-tell the story from another character's perspective, change the setting, time period, or genre, or continue with the story after Austen's novel ends. One large category of makeovers are version novels, that is novels where writers use parts of the source text, for example, setting, plot, or characters, and create a new story, thus contributing to the constantly expanding text universe. While there are numerous

version novels that relate to Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, there are also many, though not as many, version novels that relate to *Sense and Sensibility*.

The first example of version novel that will be discussed here is part of a larger project – the Austen project – created by the publisher HarperCollins with the idea to assign six contemporary best-selling authors to retell Austen's six novels. So far, four novels have been re-told in the project, and the first one to be published is Joanna Trollop's *Sense & Sensibility* (2013). Although, Trollop's novel is set in contemporary England, the story, plot, and characters are very close to Austen's story, plot, and characters. What this story adds to the text universe apart from an updated context is a critique of the power hierarchies based on gender and social status found in Austen's contemporary society, but also in the society of today. In Austen's contemporary society, family fortunes were inherited by male relatives. Though this is not a general custom in today's society, it is still the case in Trollop's novel where "Darling Uncle Henry didn't leave [Mr Dashwood] Norland or any money or anything. He got completely seduced by being a great-uncle to a little boy in old age. So, he left everything to them. He left it all to John" (9). The decision to let the male heir inherit the estate is portrayed as an act of will rather than a social restriction. However, when this primogeniture takes place in the 21st Century, it seems out of place and thus illuminates social structures created to privilege men over women. Hence, while continuing these structures, the makeover can, at the same time, be seen as a critique of the same.

While readers of Austen's novel in the 21st Century might accept the fact that the mission in life for Elinor and Marianne is to find suitable husbands who can support them because it reflects Austen's contemporary society, they might expect a difference when the story is set in the 21st Century. However, this is not the case in Trollop's novel, although Elinor is a working girl, who functions as the breadwinner of the Dashwood family, since neither Marianne nor her mother are willing to find work. Except for Elinor, the female characters are portrayed as rather helpless and seem to be unable to take care of themselves. The youngest Dashwood sister, Margaret, questions women's role in society, but apart from this, there is not much adjustment to the contemporary audience.

In addition to Margaret's questioning of women's role in society, Trollop gives voice, however little, to Belle Dashwood, expressing a desire to find love again: "she did have a desire not to look only like the mother of three grown daughters," and a wish to be acknowledged as "a woman who was admired for what she still had, rather than was pitied for what she now lacked" (171-172). Even though her attempts to be introduced to the London society is immediately silenced by Mrs Jennings who claims: "You dear? What would you want with London, living where you do?" (173), Mrs Dashwood's "heart was a muscle as well as an organ, and required exercise" (172). This acknowledgement of Belle Dashwood as a woman who yearns to be recognised and loved, can be read as a critique against the fact that in the source text, Mrs Dashwood is not as a woman considered suitable to find a husband, though she is not much older than Colonel Brandon. Trollop's Belle is not a suitable match form Colonel Brandon either, but this novel adds to the text universe by acknowledging the mature woman as an emotional and sexual being.

Another project that aims to re-present Austen's novels by creating mash-ups of Austen's classic novels and elements from popular culture is undertaken by

Quirk Books, and the most famous makeover in the series so far is *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) by Seth Graham-Greene. As part of this project, Ben Winter's version of Austen's novel, *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* (2009), aims to popularise Austen's novel by making it into a sea monster action story. In an interview, Dr. Troost explains that this makeover is "a market calculation," where the "people at Quirk Books decided they wanted to do something that was kind of exciting" (Carone and Cavanaugh n.pag.). Apart from functioning as a popularisation, that is, a classic story with elements from popular culture, *Sense and Sensibilities and Sea Monsters*, adds to the text universe by bringing in elements of horror, satire and comedy. Moreover, it brings in mutant characters, who look horrible, but are kind, in the form of Colonel Brandon who "suffered from a cruel affliction [...]. He bore a set of long squishy tentacles protruding grotesquely from his face [...] like hideous living facial hair of slime green" (38). Thus, this makeover makes it very clear that Marianne needs to learn to appreciate certain qualities in a man when choosing whom to marry. Hence, this novel strengthens the beauty and the beast-theme subtly initiated by Austen. Another contribution to the *Sense and Sensibility* text universe provided by Winter's version novel is the portrayal of physically strong female characters who use weapons to survive on the island surrounded by sea monsters. In particular, Mrs Dashwood acts quickly when the family is first attacked by a sea monster: "She grasped a spare oar from its rigging, snapped it in twain upon her knee with a swift motion, and plunged the sharp, broken point into the churning sea – piercing the gleaming, deep-set eye of the beast" (30). Hence, the mature woman is portrayed as fearless and physically strong in this makeover.

Regarding popularisations, it is neither possible nor necessary to discuss whether the function of the popular elements is to introduce a classic story to a new target audience or whether the function of the classic text is to provide credibility and status to a popular text. Instead, as this article argues, it is fruitful to look at what the various pieces in the text universe mosaic contribute with when it comes to the understanding of the source text and of the text universe as a whole.

Many writers have taken on larger individual makeover projects of rewriting several of Austen's novels. Two such projects are mentioned here. Emma Tennant has created sequels to several Austen's novels, as for example, *Pemberley; or, Pride and Prejudice Continued*, *An Unequal Marriage; or, Pride and Prejudice Twenty Years Later*, *Emma in Love: Jane Austen's Emma Continued*, and *Elinor and Marianne: A Sequel to Sense and Sensibility*. In *Elinor and Marianne: A Sequel to Sense and Sensibility*, Tennant uses the sisterly bond between Elinor and Marianne to continue the story through a series of letters sent between Elinor Ferrars and Marianne Brandon. In addition to continuing the story and thus contributing with an expansion of the plotline, Tennant uses letters to convey a personal tone and an insight into the characters' thoughts and wishes. As a result, the reader is distanced from the plot, but at the same time gains a closer understanding of the two sisters.

Amanda Grange re-write Austen's story from the perspective of the main male character, as for example, *Mr Knightley's Diary*, *Mr Darcy's Diary*, *Captain Wentworth's Diary*, *Edmund Bertram's Diary*, *Colonel Brandon's Diary*, *Henry Tilney's Diary*, *Wickham's Diary*, and *Dear Mr Darcy*, in addition to the sequels

Mr Darcy Vampyre and *Pride and Pyramids* with Jacqueline Webb. In *Colonel Brandon's Diary*, the story, told from the perspective of Colonel Brandon, focuses on his love to Eliza and his care for her daughter – events only mentioned in Austen's novel. Hence, this version novel contributes with a fuller understanding of Colonel Brandon's actions, and provides insight into why he might be the way he is and behave the way he does. As an effect, the reader sympathises with Colonel Brandon already from the start and sees Willoughby for who he is.

Another makeover that is set in the 21st Century is the film *Scents and Sensibility* (2011) directed by Brian Brough with screenplay by Jennifer Jan and Brittany Wiscombe. The connection to Austen's novel is made clear in the title of the film, however, with a pun. In this film, the basic story of Austen's novel is set in the 21st Century United States. Instead of Mr Dashwood's death, Elinor and Marianne's father is imprisoned for fraud and embezzlement, which means that Mrs Dashwood and her daughters have to leave everything they own and have to find new jobs. The film makers have incorporated an element of shunning to illustrate the difficulty for the Dashwood sisters to find a job, hence maintaining the connection to the source text while still making the story believable to the audience. On the one hand, it is impossible for Elinor to find a job that suits her competence, so she needs to work as custodian at a spa. Marianne, on the other hand, lies about her name, and finds job as a copy girl. In addition to finding jobs and supporting their mother and younger sister, Marianne and Elinor start a successful business creating lotion, which illustrates that young women can be successful in business as well as in love. As a result, this story contains empowering elements for young women of the 21st Century and, as such, contributes to the expanding text universe by adding a contemporary response to Austen's novel.

The film *From Prada to Nada* (2011) directed by Angel Gracia with screen play by Fina Torres, Luis Alfaro, and Craig Fernandez is also a makeover of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Set in the 21st Century Los Angeles, the story focuses on the drastic change from a life among the wealthy in Beverly Hills to a life with their aunt in East Los Angeles for Nora and Mary Dominguez upon the sudden death of their father. In addition to focusing on the appropriation of living under poorer circumstances and valuing other aspects of life than what they are used to, the film brings in the aspect of valuing a cultural heritage. Having lived in Beverly Hills, the sisters identify themselves as American, which can be seen when Mary explains that her parents are Mexican, but that *she* is "American of course" (00:40:50-00:41:05). Furthermore, cultural stereotypes are placed in the foreground in this film, where Mary immediately thinks that Bruno is going to steal from her (00:34:30-00:34:34). When he then asks: "Do you think all Mexicans steal?" (00:34:42), she replies: "I don't know. I'm not Mexican" (00:34.45). The denial of their Mexican heritage can further be seen in the fact that neither of the sisters speaks Spanish (00:41:20-00:41:23). Gracia's Mary, just like Austen's Marianne, goes through a humbling learning experience and, as a result, she and her sister start to accept their cultural heritage and appreciate their life in east Los Angeles. While Austen's novel focuses on a small, homogenous, and monocultural part of English society, this makeover, though it uses many elements from Austen's novel, adds to the text universe by incorporating the

aspect of double cultural belongings not only for the main characters, but also for the city of Los Angeles.

While version novels and films is one big category of makeovers, fan fiction is another. Fan fiction is not a new phenomenon even if the term is fairly new [2]. However, during the last decade there has been an enormous increase in this kind of literature much due to the expansion of the Internet. Fan fiction is a concept that relates to texts of various length and quality, often in English as a global language, written by fans and based on texts (printed, visual or other) that they admire. Writers of fan fiction use an already existing narrative world or characters when they create their own interpretations, alterations or continuations of the source text.

Fan fiction is produced on an amateur level online often in specific communities, so-called fandoms, where writers participate anonymously using pseudonyms. There are plenty of websites and fandoms dedicated to Jane Austen's literary production. In one of the larger communities, *Fanfiction.net*, there are, for example, nearly 800 stories related to the novel *Pride and Prejudice* alone. There are also other websites more specifically aimed towards Austen-fans, such as *Jane Austen Fan Fiction* (janeaustenfandfiction.com). A large website that contains fan fiction along with discussion boards for "The Truly Obsessed" is *The Republic of Pemberley*, where there are specifically categorized fan fiction rooms such as "Jane Austen Sequels" that focuses on continuations of Austen's novels and "Bits of Ivory" that focuses on the Regency era only. This website is run by a volunteer committee and is host for a large number of fan fiction writers and Austen enthusiasts. Located online, fan fiction is part of the globalization of various text universes, and fan fiction connected to Austen contributes to the global spread of these text-universes as well as to the current Austenmania.

Interactivity is a keyword of the fan fiction writing process. The practice of fan fiction illustrates a fan's desire to be an active part of the creation of the story. The reader or watcher becomes a *prosumer*, the combination of producer and consumer of literature (Toffler 492). Not only is the act of writing fan fiction interactive, but the activity within the communities is also interactive since they are participatory cultures where it is common to comment on one another's productions as well as to evaluate and rate them. The response process aims to improve such productions, at the same time as it creates a dialogue between writers and readers from various areas across the world. "Fan fiction can be seen," Henry Jenkins claims, "as an unauthorized expansion of these media franchises into new directions which reflect the reader's desire to 'fill in the gaps' they have discovered in the commercially produced material" (n.pag.). Among the ways to "fill in the gaps" are: to rewrite the story from a new perspective, to continue the story or to alter the heterosexual pairings in the source texts into new heterosexual constellations or more frequently into homosexual pairings called slash (male) and femslash (female) (Pugh 91, 109). In a way, a fan fiction writer can be seen as a critical reader of the source text in that he or she may emphasize what he or she sees as its weaknesses.

Fan fiction and version novels share many similar traits, but also differences, the biggest one being that while fan fiction writers write for a limited group of people with a common interest in the same story without making any profit, the version novel writers make a profit from their productions. Hence, while fan

fiction is written by fans for fans, version novels are not necessarily, but could be, written *by* fans, however, they are clearly written *for* fans.

It is imperative to treat the source text with utmost respect when producing a piece of fan fiction. Many pieces of fan fiction start with a writer's comment, where the ideas behind the story are explained. "Marianne's Lesson" by A.Lady.001, for example, begins with an explanative comment: "*Hi. I want to share this idea that I had with you all. I guess I really don't want Marriane gets Brandon XD. But I hope you enjoy it. Story is altered in order of some things could happened, but the facts thar are not mentioned here are supposed to have occurred as it is known*" (n.pag, original emphasis and spelling). In the story, the woman whom Colonel Brandon loved many years prior, who was married to his brother and after an accident were presumed dead, suddenly comes back: "After twelve years missing, Eliza Brandon was standing at that door, looking at him with wet eyes and a tender smile. [...] [H]e ran to her and took her in his arms as tight as he could" (n.pag.). Clearly, A.Lady.001 does not see Colonel Brandon and Marianne as a suitable match. Since Marianne does not appreciate him and his characteristics, she needs to learn a lesson:

Every time Marianne saw, from Elinor's window, the boys and his father returning from hunting, all smiling and running, she couldn't stop thinking about the possibility that she once had of be the mother of those beautiful kids and the wife of that amazing man, who only now she noticed. This certainly gave her a lesson and she will definitely learn of it. (n.pag.)

By learning too late that Colonel Brandon is a good man with qualities sought after in a husband, and realising that she should not have been so foolish as to reject his addresses in favour of Willoughby, Marianne learns her lesson. This makeover adds to the text universe an alternate ending to Austen's novel, and thus suggests that the match between Marianne and Colonel Brandon is wrong, since she needs to appreciate him fully in order to deserve him.

There are many fan fiction stories that focus on the relationship between Marianne and Colonel Brandon, illustrating a desire to show how they fall in love and learn to respect one another. In "There and Back, Again" by dyingforsomefiction, which extends the plotline, Colonel Brandon is wounded in battle, and Marianne who misses him when he is away, decides to join him at the hospital and stay with him during the amputation of his arm. After this ordeal, "[s]he, in her foolishness, had completely misread the man" and realises that she has "every reason to regret the way that she had treated him" (n.pag.).

These two examples of fan fiction contribute to the *Sense and Sensibility* text universe by adding pieces of Colonel Brandon's past relationships, thus creating a fuller character portrayal, and in different ways suggest that Marianne and Colonel Brandon are not suitable for each other at the end of Austen's story. Whereas they do not end up in a relationship in "Marianne's Lesson," they do end up together, but after some time with several difficult trials in "There and Back, Again". In his latter story, one could argue that Marianne learns her lesson.

Fan fiction based on *Sense and Sensibility* is a result of the interest Austen's novel generate. Version novels, on the other hand, might also be a result of an interest in Austen's novels, but also demonstrate a wish to make a profit from these stories. Both forms of remakes often focus on past and present gender roles and power hierarchies that

are either present or absent in Austen's novel, or on relationships that need to be explored further.

3. Conclusion

What is the attraction of Austen's stories? Why do people want to tell their version of the story over and over again? It is clear that readers, academics and enthusiasts alike, want to share her stories with people who are just as passionate about them. The remakes of *Sense and Sensibility* provide various interpretations of Austen's novel and thus invite comparisons between the interpretations and the reader's/fan's own interpretation. The primary effects of using a well-known story are the elements of understanding and recognition, that is, the readers and/or viewers already know what will happen and can thus focus on the way the story is told and compare it with the "original" story or other remakes. However, in addition to a comparison, it is fruitful to analyse the various remakes and makeovers in order to see how they contribute to the understanding of Austen's novel, and also to the *Sense and Sensibility* text universe as a whole. The makeovers not only expand Austen's story and provide insight into the characters and their actions, but also draw attention to primarily issues of gender roles. By illuminating gender and sexual aspects, the makeovers place both historical and contemporary power hierarchies in focus.

Both remakes and makeovers bear witness to the pleasure and passion Austen enthusiasts experience from her novels. It is an increasingly contemporary phenomenon to participate in one another's texts - something that can be seen in the explosion of blogs and wikis on the Internet. Websites like YouTube draw on contributions and comments. There is a tendency to measure a contribution's success based on how many viewers it has or how many comments or likes it receives. This participatory culture strengthens the already existing phenomenon of fan fiction, which is facilitated by the structure of the Internet and allows for easy, immediate, and global feedback. It is not only participation in the circulation of the story that is significant in fandoms, but also participation in the discussion of the source text and its various re-presentations. It is a communal experience to create texts for and with the help of initiated readers who share an interest in and appreciation of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*.

Austen's novels are clearly captivating and fascinating, but one must not forget that there is also profit to be made from the Austenmania that exists in today's society. One of the many makeovers, *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*, is a popularization that aims to profit from various cultural phenomena as it has been written for a world-wide audience using elements from popular fiction such as monsters and pirates, and combining them with elements from high-brow literature. Hence, writers and publishers use not only Austen's novels, but also the surrounding Austenmania to make profits. Whether there is a political agenda, a wish to make a profit, or a personal passionate relationship to Austen's characters that inspire readers and fans all over the world to contribute to the growing Austen-universe, her novels have encouraged and will continue to encourage multiple interpretations.

Notes

[1] This article is a re-writing of the chapter entitled “Pleasure and Profit: Representations of Jane Austen’s Ever-Expanding Universe” published in *The Global Jane Austen: Pleasure, Passion, and Possessiveness in the Jane Austen Community*, edited by Lawrence Raw and Robert Dryden in 2013. While the chapter is centred around the *Pride and Prejudice* text universe, this article, though it re-uses several elements of the chapter, focuses on the *Sense and Sensibility* text universe.

[2] The concept appeared during the 1960s in relation to fanzines (amateur magazines) about *Star Trek*. See Coppa 41.

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Reviews

Herrero, Dolores and Sonia Baelo-Allue (eds.), *The Splintered Glass: Facets of Trauma in the Post-Colony and Beyond*. Cross Cultures 136. (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011).

262 pages. ISBN: 978-90-420-3388-7

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This book, with its wonderfully evocative title *The Splintered Glass*, is eye-catchingly advertised as presenting a new take on literary trauma studies; its focus, the blurb text claims, is on trauma in providing “linkage through cross-cultural understanding and new forms of community” (back cover). Its ambitious premise is that “Western colonization needs to be theorized in terms of the infliction of collective trauma” and that “the West’s claim on trauma studies (via the Holocaust) needs to be put in a perspective recuperating other, non-Western experiences” (back cover). This creates expectations of a distinctly new and perhaps even breakthrough contribution to the present situation in which trauma theory and postcolonial criticism are uneasy bedfellows. Indeed, the introduction by editors Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allue (both of the University of Zaragoza, Spain) at first appears to distance itself boldly from the trauma theory developed by the Yale School critics in the 1990s, for which Cathy Caruth has become the household name. The editors regard Caruth’s definition of trauma as a victim’s mental wound as too narrow a conception of trauma, which, they assert, needs to be studied for its effect on whole societies. What is needed, according to the editors, is a sociological orientation, following not the deconstructionist and psychoanalytical tradition but, rather, developments in the field of sociology where “the focus has turned from the individual to the collective, creating a different conception of trauma, where it affects whole societies and generations” (xi). This interesting call for a turn to a sociological approach to trauma as affecting whole societies and generations is, however, not elaborated into a consistent and new positioning. While the editors do point out an important publication from cultural sociology, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* by Jeffrey Alexander et al. (2004) they do not seriously address the implications of prioritizing cultural sociology, but in fact continue the current usage of combining and juxtaposing Caruth’s views with those of other critics. It appears, then, that the editors do not seriously delineate a new, non-Western trajectory in postcolonial trauma criticism along sociological lines, nor is the question of how societies are collectively dealing with trauma or affected as whole societies and generations rigorously addressed in the book’s essays, which for the greater part focus on single novels’ main characters and their individual conflicted states, within the context of their local cultures and historical situations. This I consider a strength rather than a weakness of the collection, as the essays cover a wide

variety of national literatures, and in fact present fascinating facets of postcolonial criticism rather than addressing the theme of trauma theory's splintered glass.

One of the strengths of the book's introduction is its detailed overview of the many diverse voices in the literary trauma debate (its bibliography lists 36 references). It shows that the various facets of trauma in literary studies are often conflicting and contradictory; like shards of broken glass, they clearly need to be handled with care, particularly in postcolonial criticism, where Caruth's Freudian psychoanalysis and trauma theory's Western conceptions of trauma have been attacked as Eurocentric and incompatible with the socio-historical and political orientation of postcolonial criticism. In navigating a cautious course among the many cliffs of trauma theory, the editors also draw particular attention to the ethical claims of trauma theorists, which, in brief, are a call for an empathetic reception of trauma literature. I was surprised, in this context, by the editors' vehement attack (in a far from empathetic manner) on the United States of America in a remark that in its sweeping generalization is surely incorrect and unethical: "Despite its civil-rights movements, the U S A eternally creeps back inside its truly 'colonial' shell: the amnesiac denial of the country's slavery past and its near-annihilation of the so-called First Nations" (xvi). However, this unexpectedly acerbic remark is made in a footnote to the introduction which itself is carefully worded and draws on a wide array of reliable sources. Unfortunately, the editors make no reference to Roger Luckhurst's excellent *The Trauma Question* (2008) or Ruth Leys's cogent *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2008), which perhaps came out too late for the editors or contributors to take into consideration; there are no references in this book to publications later than 2008.

What then does this book contribute to the theoretical conundrums that it outlines? This is a hard one, not clearly answered even by the editors themselves, who not only criticize but also endorse Caruth as the cornerstone of literary trauma criticism while at the same time calling for a broadening of the postcolonial field; "It stands to reason," they write, "that postcolonial trauma fiction asks for a combination of theory with fact, and of the psychological with the cultural, drawing on sociology, psychoanalysis, philosophy and history to study the aesthetic representation of trauma" (xiv). Thus, the editors' well-considered and interesting overview of the trauma situation in postcolonial criticism ends with no more than this gesture at the usefulness of trauma theory in a general sense, discarding previous claims to an innovative approach in favour of a less ambitious objective: "When applying trauma theory to a postcolonial context, it is undeniable that it can shed light on the interpretation of postcolonial traumatic fiction. After all, trauma fiction and postcolonial fiction are, more often than not, closely related" (xv).

This subject of the relationship between trauma and fiction re-surfaces in Part Two of the book, in Susana Onega's interesting essay "Trauma, Madness and the Ethics of Narration in J.M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*." In a sense, Onega continues the editors' introductory survey by looking more closely at definitions of trauma given in literary criticism, using two publications, Granofsky's *The Trauma Novel* (1995) and Whitehead's *Trauma Fiction* (2004). From these books Onega concludes that in order to classify as trauma fiction, novels must have as their background collective disaster such as war or similarly

major conflicts, rather than personal hurt such as abuse or loss. This claim, I would say, remains open to discussion, particularly in the light of the definitions of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder since the 1980s, but this discussion is not in fact particularly relevant to Onega's essay, which focuses on Coetzee's protagonist Magda and her personal history of hurt and loss. If Onega does not rely on trauma theory in this analysis, this is no great loss, as her essay does a very good job in engaging with a broad range of relevant literary sources, most notably Paul Ricoeur and Derek Attridge (neither of whom are trauma theorists) and constitutes an excellent example of informed, sensitive and erudite criticism.

The collection's other ten essays all in their way demonstrate that trauma theory often neither helps nor hinders the critical analyses of postcolonial literature. Indeed, the most fascinating essays, to my mind, are the ones that least engage with trauma theory or that engage with it in a spirit of independent scrutiny, weighing the validity of concepts against the critical praxis of postcolonial literary studies. Of the first category, the essays that ignore or minimally engage with trauma theory, the two most striking ones are by creative artists. The poet Meena Alexander contributes a personal account of her creative process during 9/11 and the year afterwards, presenting a selection of her poetry from these two points in history. With its original and creative contents, this is a thought-provoking essay, and not in the least flawed for its lack of interest in decolonizing trauma theory. Interestingly enough for the theoretically minded, Alexander uses phrases like traumatic awareness and traumatic recovery which are oxymorons in Caruth's theory, but which are meaningful in Alexander's discussion. A second essay by a creative writer is Melinda Bobis's "Passion to Pasyon," which addresses trauma theory only to reject it as deficient. Bobis for me provides the most rewarding chapter in the book, not only raising theoretical concerns but also presenting her personal account of the creative process of writing in a postcolonial context. Bobis's essay belongs to the tradition of familiar essays, both private and academic, vigorous and meditative, presenting facts of political and social history of her home region in the Philippines as well as her personal experiences in Australia.

The indigenous traditions of storytelling are not part of contemporary trauma theory, but Bobis's essay makes clear that there is a need to incorporate orality in postcolonial theories of trauma, by illuminating how orality functions as a catalyst in processes of mourning and grieving in the aftermath of traumatic events. From a Philippine perspective, aspects of trauma that need to be taken into account are the fact of poverty and the need for relief and rehabilitation. This need is answered by the native tradition of storytelling and seeking counsel with family and friends; language and storytelling are thus fundamental in coping with the present and moving on. Trauma is therefore closely connected with recovery in Bobis's essay, which also touches on the spiritual and magical as aiding the recuperative influence of narrative. Trauma theory's emphasis on unspeakability and melancholy as defining states is rejected implicitly in this excerpt from Bobis's *A Novel in Waiting*: "Writing visits like grace. In an inspired moment we almost believe that anguish can be made bearable and injustice can be overturned, because they can be named. And if we're lucky, joy can even be multiplied, so we may have reserves in the cupboard for lean times" (quoted on 65). Maite Escudero's chapter on Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* similarly

foregrounds resilience, as necessary addition to current trauma theory, introducing queer theory's emphasis on militant activism and social cohesion.

The chapter contributed by Chantal Zabus engages not so much with trauma theory as directly with trauma as immediate physical and mental wounding with an irreversible impact on identity; it reports on autobiographical accounts of genital alterations in various forms and shapes, from female genital mutilation or excision to male circumcision and sex-reassignment surgery. This is a carefully and precisely worded chapter, and, needless to add, it is not for the squeamish. While it is placed in the book's Part Two, "Women and Cultural/Colonial Trauma," it may be useful to point out that this well-written essay deals not only with female autobiography but also with male and transgender narratives of personal traumatic processes.

Marc Delrez's essay is an excellent example of postcolonial criticism that carefully scrutinizes concepts from trauma theory without paying lip service to the notions commonly held as sacrosanct in essays drawing on trauma theory. It is placed in the book's Part Three, with other essays on Australian literature: Barbara Arizti on Tim Winton's *Dirt Music*, Heinz Antor on Richard Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, and Isabel Fraile on Janette Turner Hospital's *Oyster*. Marc Delrez's discussion of McGahan's *The White Earth* engages with aspects relevant to this novel's genre, which is the rural apocalypse novel of the Australian outback, and its context of contemporary Australian writing, before addressing the use and usefulness of trauma theory in this context. In casting a critical light over the intricacies of the theory, Delrez's essay warns against facile analogies and itself constitutes a refreshing alternative to the general tendency to unquestioningly repeat oft -heard quotations from trauma theory. Delrez's focus on trauma envy and settler envy adds interesting and thought-provoking ideas to the present limited range of trauma theory in postcolonial literature. For readers picking up the book to learn about trauma theory (before 2008), Delrez's is therefore the essay that I would recommend. However, most readers will be interested in this book for its treatment of specific literatures, authors and novels, and, for example, those interested in the Haitian-American author Edwige Danticat will be fascinated by Aitor Ibarrola-Armendáriz's essay "Broken Memories of a Traumatic Past and the Redemptive Power of Narrative in the Fiction of Edwige Danticat," which is one of the few essays that deal with more than one novel by a single author.

Many essays of the collection demonstrate that a single-novel focus can make fascinating and insightful reading. Donna Coates's essay on Patricia Grace's novel *Tu* presents the historic backdrop to the novel's narrative of the famous Maori Battalion, admirably performing the function of postcolonial criticism by explaining and elucidating contextual facts as well as presenting insightful textual interpretation. The essay is in fact strongest when it paints the historic backdrop to the novel, providing us with the details of historic developments that can have no place in the novelistic world that Patricia Grace evokes but which did inform it (for as we know, Grace conducted meticulous research for this book). What Coates's essay as well as other essays in this collection demonstrate is that trauma theory may well be losing ground as a theoretical model in postcolonial criticism due to its inherent limitations. They also demonstrate that postcolonial literary criticism is at its best when it remains true to its tradition of rigorous scrutiny of

literary authors' postcolonial situations and a meticulous consideration of literature in its cultural, social and historical specificity.

Nancy Ellen Batty, *The Ring of Recollection: Transgenerational Haunting in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* (New York: Amsterdam, 2010). 305 pages. ISBN: 978-90-420-31005.

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Nancy Ellen Batty's *The Ring of Recollection: Transgenerational Haunting in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* is a critical discussion about the neglected early novels of Shashi Deshpande like *Come Up and Be Dead* and *If I Die Today*. With the help of the arguments given by other critics of Shashi Deshpande, Batty focuses on the gothic elements in Deshpande's novels. In her opinion, without considering the "gothic elements" (20) in Deshpande's novels, there will be misreading of her fiction and therefore, gothic elements cannot be ignored by readers. She opines that the novel *A Matter of Time* is an overtly gothic work by Deshpande in which she has described the mysteries of human life. Batty's considers Deshpande's first novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* as a mystery and a horror. She also views the novel as a feminist work which highlights the psychological damage inflicted on women by a patriarchal society when a male child is preferred over a female. She writes, "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*, is structured around a secret: the kernel of childhood trauma, the confession of which is deferred until near the end of the novel" (55). In Batty's views, Deshpande depicts the psychological depth of the characters in the novel *That Long Silence* yet she points out that outer world not only impinges on domestic life, but it is an important factor in defining the aspirations and anxieties of its characters.

Batty writes that the novels of Shashi Deshpande are not overtly political, yet they are a microcosm of the larger historical and political realm. They are a record of the mythical, historical, political, geographical, religious and socio-cultural values of Indians. In her view, Deshpande's men, women and children occupy "historical-political-geographical spaces" (186) that shape their experiences. For example, she writes that the novel *The Binding Vine* is a mysterious novel and that the deepest mystery in the novel is Urmi herself, a middle-class woman. The novel is based on a widely publicized rape case. Batty views *Small Remedies* as a typical novel by Deshpande which reveals women's struggle, the breaking of women's silence and the most politically engaged work in Indian English fiction. She writes that dreams and nightmare are dominant features of the novel. Further, Batty details religious events which took place at Ayodhya in 1992 through the character of Madhu. She makes it clear from the opening words of the novel that neither Madhu could escape from her memories of the past nor the horrific events set in motion at Ayodhya.

In Batty's opinion, Shashi Deshpande is one of those Indian women writers who can be interpreted as an Indian regionalist author working in a realist mode. Batty considers Deshpande as a writer who is influenced by the British fiction of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, consequently, she roots "gothic" and its historical roots in a certain kind of British fiction. In her opinion, Deshpande has highlighted women's issues of economic freedom, patriarchy, matriarchy, marriage, mother-daughter relationships, domestic violence, rape murder, myths, individual fears, conflict of wills and psychological insights into the characters of her novels. Batty's attempt to compare female characters of Deshpande's novels to the female characters of Indian religious texts like *The Mahabharata* reveals her deep understanding of cultural values of the East and the West. The author has delved into Indian culture in order to depict the women characters in the novels of Deshpande.

Nancy Ellen Batty's *The Ring of Recollection: Transgenerational Haunting in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* explores Shashi Deshpande's views about feminism and various issues like patriarchy, marriage, rape, the relationship between husband and wife, domestication of women, economic dependence on men, domestic violence, murder and the sexual exploitation of women. The book also reveals Nancy Ellen Batty's insight into cross-cultural understanding. In the "Foreword", Jasbir Jain writes, "She [Nancy Ellen Batty] establishes an active relationship between reader and the text as she explores the mysterious ways in which memory works, fear travels, and the writer's own impressions merge with narration" (xiii).

Konstantina Georganta, *Conversing Identities: Encounters between British, Irish and Greek Poetry, 1922-1952* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012).
224 pages. € 50, ISBN: 978-90-420-3563-8

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Greece can be said to play both a central and a peripheral role in Anglophone literature and culture. Precisely as Keats described the urn, for many centuries the idea of Greece was frozen as an aesthetic, political and philosophical ideal in the English-speaking imagination—a conception that became all the more rigid as the country itself was thought to be sinking into some form of Balkan/Ottoman squalor. And if the classics were vigorously reimagined throughout the twentieth century, most other Greek literature was neglected. In this light, it is apposite that Konstantina Georganta's examination of interactions between Greek, British and Irish poetry in the first half of the twentieth century should focus on different dynamics of centrality and peripherality.

1922 was not only the annus mirabilis of Modernist literature, but it was also the year of the great fire at Smyrna that accompanied the retaking of the city (modern day Izmir) by Turkish forces. Besides killing thousands of Greeks and Armenians, this catastrophe created an immediate diaspora, as thousands more

escaped the city. Coincidentally, a Smyrniot merchant, Mr. Eugenides, turns up in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and it is with an examination of this figure that Georganta begins her study, which is based on a PhD thesis defended at the University of Glasgow. Although he betrays some Orientalist stereotyping, Georganta argues that Eugenides ('well born') embodies modern deracination in a manner that points to Eliot's scepticism about eugenics. Taking this into the following chapter, a dialogue is created between Eliot and Cavafy that revolves around the ambivalent representations of cities in their works.

After Eliot (an Anglo-American) and Cavafy (an Alexandrine Greek), attention shifts in the third chapter to William Plomer, a South African writer who identified himself as an Englishman. This emphasis on hybrid and hyphenated identities is further pursued in the later chapters on W.B. Yeats and Louis MacNeice, who are presented (albeit in differing degrees) as Anglo-Irish writers.

Influenced by Cavafy, with whom he corresponded, Plomer's short stories and poetry inspired by his time in Greece are read as examples of inter-war Anglophone conceptualisations of the country, which tended to frame it as a place of sensuality caught between tradition and the new. Such representations gesture towards the tensions between the myth of Greece and its reality that were explored by the poet Demetrios Capetanakis in his wonderfully-titled 1942 essay "The Greeks are Human Beings", which is the focus of the fifth chapter. Capetanakis was born in Smyrna and worked for the Greek embassy in London and, like Cavafy, Plomer, John Lehmann (whose work is discussed in chapter 6) and 'Mr. Eugenides', was gay. As Georganta hints, this adds to the sense of displacement and to the search for different forms of home that can be found in their works.

As the book well illustrates, there were personal links between Capetanakis, Cavafy, Plomer and Lehmann. But in the middle of discussing these poets, Georganta places a chapter (4) that develops Seamus Heaney's suggestion that parallels exist between the journeys from bards to modernists undertaken by W.B. Yeats and Kostas Palamas in search of suitable ways of articulating their nations. This is a very different sort of comparison that focuses, amongst other things, on how women are ascribed national roles in their works. An account is offered of how their poetic outputs evolve from celebrations of the nation to a later point at which they come to describe the intersection of the national and the cosmopolitan, and so bring these into communication with each other. Throughout the study these two states are presented in terms of a dichotomy between the freedom fostered by hybridity and a potentially restrictive need to belong, and the tensions these pulls engender are once again charted in the chapter on Louis MacNeice's engagements with Greece in the early 1950s, which brings to a close the detailed readings of poets.

By framing Greek writers both in terms of their local and comparative contexts, as well as shining a light on some of the lesser-known Anglophone poetic figures of the period, this book usefully opens up new fields of research. Having said that, its ambition is marred by a number of unclear passages and by its uneven negotiation of the structural problems inherent in any comparative undertaking. At times, Georganta's close readings of the poetry shift the argument too far from any sort of involvement with Greece—for instance, in her exposition of Yeats's "Crazy Jane" sequence. These links are rendered even more tenuous by

the fact that many of her arguments rely too heavily on citations from secondary texts that are not concerned with comparative understandings of the writers. Moreover, this book does not engage with any theories of cultural interaction that might help structure its comparative project, but is informed by an open-ended notion of encounters. As the description of the chapters has shown, this encompasses a diverse set of convergences. Such a heterogeneous approach is not necessarily a bad thing if it creates spaces in which unexpected and illuminating points of contact might be unveiled. These are to be found here, even if they are obscured somewhat by the constantly shifting focus, which distracts attention from issues that would benefit from deeper exploration. For instance, the homosexuality of the poets, which is noted frequently, might have been thought about in a more comprehensive fashion, particularly considering the book's emphasis on relationships between the peripheral and the centre. The tendency, though, is to portray this topic and the examinations of the disparate encounters as variations on the book's overarching concern with the contrast between homogeneous national visions and more fluid, homeless, cosmopolitan ones. While this dichotomy can at times seem too rigid, it nonetheless unveils how Greece functioned as a (real or imagined) site wherein Anglophone modernist poets might reimagine the problems of home, and it is in the explorations of this theme that this study has considerable merit.

George Z. Gasyna, *Polish, Hybrid, and Otherwise: Exilic Discourse in Joseph Conrad and Witold Gombrowicz* (London: Continuum, 2011).

288 pages. ISBN 978-1441140791

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This volume aims to present the way in which Joseph Conrad's and Witold Gombrowicz's writing and their techniques embody their iconoclasm as exiled authors, and at the same time, as hyphenated Poles. Gasyna looks at both authors together insofar as they constitute authors of modernist and postmodernist fiction and because of a number of striking analogies in their mature artistic vision. Thus, Conrad and Gombrowicz represent simultaneously the major cultural and philosophical ideas of their time, and were iconoclastic in their poetics or their politics, especially with regard to the homeland (23).

The opening chapter has an excellent grasp of some key problems regarding exilic discourses and then locates both authors within the continuum of modernist and postmodernist thinking about exile and the construction of exilic identity. Gasyna foregrounds the importance of language for exiles and argues that both Conrad and Gombrowicz relied on language to articulate an exilic space of hope, a process that principally engaged the notion of hybridity. By the term hybridity, in the context of exilic writers, Gasyna suggests "a condition of cultural in-betweenness that allows for the fabrication of an identity that is more than a

sum of the constituent parts of the cultural imaginaries and the linguistic landscapes of the former homeland and the place of expatriation” (20).

In chapter 2, Gasyna examines a number of principal modes of theorizing the relations between modernism and postmodernism and queries the logic of such apparently natural concepts as nation, community, and exile within the context of identity politics (and the landscapes after the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s). Finally, the author discusses Conrad’s narrative technique and some of his textual devices such as temporal disruption, layering of embedded narrative and the use of multiple narrators, to suggest that particularly in his ambivalent inscription of subjectivity, including that of his own bicultural persona, Conrad epitomizes an ex-centric, deterritorialized modernism of the hybrid and outsider.

In chapter 3, the author deals with the “life writing” of Conrad and Gombrowicz, exploring the author’s exilic experience for their poetics and self-inscription. The author discusses how the exilic condition and the linguistic spaces interpenetrate, leading to the formation of an exilic polemic and of a new discourse: that is, their philosophies of writing the self (94). Gasyna’s acute discussion explores the concept of “discourse of exile” arguing that the experience of linguistic and cultural distanciation can produce aesthetic or thematic achievement, as part of the affirmation of a new exilic epistemology of identity creation (97-8).

Chapters 4 and 5 constitute a comparative analysis in which the author discusses Gombrowicz’s and Conrad’s principal heterotopic novels, respectively *Trans-Atlantyk* (1953) and *Nostromo* (1904) seeking to demonstrate how both works develop each writer’s exilic discourse and may be read as allegories of nation and nation-making by and for exiles. On the one hand, the author’s sharp discussion on *Trans-Atlantyk* proves an insightful study on not so much the designation of a paradigm of exilic discourse as such, but rather the problems which are implicit in its construction, and more specifically the development of particular textual structures as a function of the exilic condition. On the other hand, Gasyna perceives *Nostromo* as an exilic narrative which presents a form of linguistic refuge. The novel figures as a wall of language, “metonymically signalling a house (or fortress) of language which, ultimately, is the sole place where the exile, the stranger fundamentally unhoused and caught ‘between’ languages, can feel at home” (183).

In the final chapter the author explores “the conditional narrativity” of Gombrowicz’s *Cosmos*, and the liminal positionality of the exilic subject. The narrative represents at once an attempt at a postmodernist poetics and a coda to the poetics of subjective failure (220).

To conclude, Gasyna’s brilliant understanding operates along two axes which are necessarily intertwined; insofar as both authors’ status as expatriate Poles is primary in this volume, the discussion of the modes of modernist poetics will be framed by the discourses of exile (36). The edition of this volume on exilic discourse shows how urgent and prominent is the need to explore the topic and its literary versions. It offers a challenging and thought-provoking reading for scholars and non-specialists interested in Gombrowicz’s and Conrad’s work.

David Tucker, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx: Tracing a literary fantasia*. (London: Continuum, 2012).

240 pages. ISBN 978-1441139351.

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At the beginning of 1936, when he was in the late stages of writing his novel *Murphy*, Samuel Beckett immersed himself in research on the obscure seventeenth-century Belgian thinker, Arnold Geulincx. Contrary to previous claims that Geulincx appeared as only a single reference in Beckett's oeuvre, this philosophical research, as David Tucker's excellent new book demonstrates, was not only important for the final composition of *Murphy*, but it was also to have a lasting, if intermittent, influence on his work. Indeed, Beckett told Lawrence Harvey in 1962 that the two most important formulations for him were Democritus's "nothing is more real than nothing", and Geulincx's foundational axiom, "ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil veles" (wherein you have no power, therein you should not will). This latter, cryptic, near-symmetrical phrase is key to Geulincx's philosophy of Occasionalism, the much-maligned brand of ultrarationalist post-Cartesian thought. For the Occasionalist, the inevitable failure to fully comprehend the nature of causation is humanity's true condition. To Geulincx, who had a rather extreme, but ethical, view of reality, this meant that it is by no means provable that physical processes derive from mental thoughts, and therefore the origin of all action must derive from God's willing it to be so. It is from this idea that Tucker suggests Beckett found an ethical foundation that enables human beings to go on in the face of arbitrary existence and epistemological ignorance.

That Beckett is a philosophical writer has long been recognized, even though the writer himself always rejected his writing as philosophy. Of course, Geulincx is not the only philosopher that Beckett was interested in, as Tucker admits, but he is nonetheless a more significant one than was previously understood. The path to Geulincx was indirect. Beckett had complained that his failure to take a course in philosophy was a shortcoming of his University education, and so in the 1930s he set about compiling his "Philosophy Notes", based initially on second-hand accounts of the history of western thought. Obviously, he encountered Geulincx through this study, and would later read the philosopher's *Ethics* in the Latin version (indeed, this was the only version available to Beckett, as the sole copy in Ireland belonged to the library in Trinity College, Dublin). Less clear, however, is the vexed question of why Beckett was so attracted to Geulincx that he began producing more detailed transcriptions of the *Ethics*. On this point, Tucker concedes that although Beckett had been approached by Brian Coffey to produce an academic monograph on the philosopher, there is no concrete evidence to say that Beckett had seriously considered undertaking the project. Instead, Tucker suggests that Beckett had less scholarly and commercial reasons which rather appealed to his intellectual and ethical side. Not only did Geulincx's rejection of the possibility of causal relations chime with Beckett's epistemological worldview of the unknowable order of things, it is also because, as Tucker claims,

“Beckett recognized a kindred figure in Geulincx, whose ultrarationalist philosophy also speaks of friendship, the persistence of failure and a kind of doomed quest the object of which is singularly intangible” (8). Although he could not have had access to a biography of the philosopher, Geulincx’s observations on the wretchedness of human life and references to his own misfortunes that are found in the pages of the *Ethics* would surely have been picked up by Beckett.

Geulincx’s influence on Beckett is most keenly felt in between 1936 and the early 1950s. This influence is reflected in the material examined in Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx. The first chapter on *Murphy*, the most obvious starting point, impressively combines an account of the empirical and historical facts of Beckett’s study of Geulincx with close textual reading of the Geulingian aspects of the novel. This useful method means that the reader gains an insight Beckett’s development as an artist, from his youthful practice of borrowing phrases and words from other artists and thinkers which were then integrated into his fiction for intellectual effect, as in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, to Beckett’s later, more nuanced engagement with philosophical ideas. In tracing Beckett’s writerly intentions and processes, then, Tucker helps to establish to what degree a text such as *Murphy* can be considered a deliberately philosophical novel, as opposed to one which simply borrows philosophical ideas. The second chapter on *Watt* argues that Beckett was no longer seeking to directly incorporate Geulincx into his work as he had in *Murphy*, but that the philosopher’s oblique presence in the later novel demonstrates a move from description to performance that draws attention to the role of memory in Beckett’s creative process. In an excellent and insightful chapter on the *Trilogy*, Tucker shows how deeply invested in a Geulingian ethics of failure Beckett’s narratives had become by the period of his most sustained creative output. Although Geulincx’s influence undoubtedly waned on Beckett over his career, the fascinating, final chapter on later works such as *How It Is*, *Act Without Words* 1, and the musical works, *Ghosts Trio* and *Nacht und Träume*, convincingly argue that this influence was a lasting one.

Published in Continuum’s Historicizing Modernism series, this study pays close attention to both those Beckett texts where Geulincx is mentioned, and also to Beckett’s grey canon. The detailed archival and textual discussions pursued have the advantage of piecing together the creative processes between the published and unpublished work. They are also used to pin down Beckett’s processes of reading, writing, drafting and editing, particularly helpful in a chapter exploring Geulincx’s presence in Beckett’s early shorter fiction. Tucker is, for instance, able to offer near-conclusive evidence of where and when Beckett composed his notes to Geulincx’s *Ethics*. While this approach demonstrates how responsible and forensic a scholar Tucker is, it is also important for the overall purpose of the book because it gives undoubted weight to the formal analyses of the texts considered.

Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx has much to offer the ever-expanding field of Beckett studies, but particularly to scholars interested in the vast intersections of philosophy and literature within modernism. Although the collection is primarily focused on Geulincx, Tucker places Beckett’s interest in the philosopher in the context of his more general interest in philosophy. However, one pleasing conclusion that can be generally drawn from the book is that

Beckett's writing, often read as the supreme culmination of literary modernism, can also be thought of as a link with a specific intellectual strand of the early Enlightenment. In excavating the ethics of human failure as conceived by this seventeenth-century ultrarationalist and presenting it through the dislocations of twentieth-century consciousness, Beckett's work offers lines of continuity with an enduring, if only faintly vibrant, European philosophical tradition. This book is, then, partly a study of the genealogy of a particular subjectivist strand of western intellectual heritage, and the continued translation of that heritage into different intellectual and cultural forms.

Beyond Beckett Studies, philosophical aesthetics, and the study of philosophical literature, Tucker's book touches on other fields of research. For students of Irish Studies, for instance, Tucker's research also offers further empirical evidence that 1930s Ireland was not entirely an inhospitable environment for intellectual and aesthetic experimentation, even if literary modernism struggled to ultimately flourish in that country. Yet that Beckett should intersperse his most bitter attack on the Irish Revival in *Murphy* with references to seventeenth-century ultrarationalism raises all kinds of questions about the intersections of philosophy, cultural identity and literary modernism in Ireland in the 1930s. But the primary focus of Tucker's book is on Beckett's interest in Geulincx for his overall artistic vision, which is convincingly demonstrated to be far greater than previously recognized. Replete with exacting footnotes and a helpful chronology of Beckett's references to Geulincx in his correspondence, notes and literary texts, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx* is an excellent contribution to our understanding of this most philosophically provocative of high modernists.

Stephen J. Burn, *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide*. 2nd edition (New York, London: Continuum, 2012).

121 pages. £12.99. ISBN 9781441157072.

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The Hipster Lit Flowchart, a playful infographic created by the book cataloguing website Goodreads.com, offers suggestions for what to read next by starting with the question "have you read *Infinite Jest*?" Yes leads to a series of further queries and alternative titles, but no leads only to "you aren't a hipster". *Infinite Jest* may indeed have been the hip novel to read among earnest twenty-somethings at a moment in time, but its complex structure and sheer girth (over a thousand pages long, a hundred or so of which are endnotes) mean it is a hard nut to crack for most. Stephen J. Burn's updated edition of David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide* does an excellent job of unpacking the novel's themes and contexts in a way that is helpful to newcomers as well as stimulating for Wallace scholars.

Much has changed since 2003 when Burn first published his study, not least of which being Wallace's suicide in 2008. This second edition arrives in the shadow of a sadly truncated career, but also as Burn states "in a world where Wallace's critical star has ascended" (viii), for it is in academic rather than hipster circles that *Infinite Jest* is now being assessed as a major novel in contemporary U.S. literature. As should be expected Burn is of the converted, confident in the knowledge that *Infinite Jest* is "a magnificent monument...a layered masterpiece that carries out an echo sounding exercise designed to measure the depth of the modern self during the twilight hours of human identity" (32). Thankfully this is the extent to which Burn adds to the already considerable hagiography surrounding Wallace. If anything, Burn's conviction of the novel's magnificence spurs his interrogation of methodologies which, though they are not redundant, have begun to over-determine much Wallace criticism.

Chief here is the tendency to read Wallace's fiction through the lens of two texts produced early on in his career: his 1993 essay on televisual irony and literature "E Unibus Pluram", and an interview he did with Larry McCafferey for *Review of Contemporary Fiction* published in the same year. Although Burn acknowledges their significance, for him these documents have led to an obsessive critical circling around issues of irony, solipsism and postmodernism that "tends to obscure Wallace's engagement with the non-literary and non-postmodern influences" (21). To explicate this point he briefly looks at "A Radically Condensed History of Postindustrial Life", Wallace's shortest piece at 79 words. In a microscopically close reading Burn highlights the story's Oulipian aesthetic and its suggestion of how rarefied scientific concepts like the human genome inform everyday life. By zeroing in on a seemingly tangential piece of Wallace's oeuvre, Burn promotes a fresh approach that locates his fiction within broader artistic traditions and sociological issues than are normally considered.

These arguments appear in Chapter Two, and will be of most interest to those already familiar with Wallace's work. It is the next chapter, however, "The Novel", on which this study's success as an introductory guide to *Infinite Jest* must be measured. Burn hedges expectations of a scene by scene analysis by stating that "Infinite Jest eludes total mapping...the sane cartographer has to recognize that his map will necessarily be partial" (34). Yet for all its inevitable partiality Chapter Three's overview of *Infinite Jest*'s key concerns will be a useful first step for those wishing to unlock its mysteries further. Burn strikes a successful balance between making the novel more user-friendly (by unravelling its three main synchronous and interlinking narrative strands, for example) and offering new critical insights. The innovativeness of Burn's readings arise from the attention he pays to how the book works "centrifugally, pointing outward to the world...and the larger literary matrix" (75). Whether showing how *Infinite Jest* alludes to a Joycean mythic template, or how it draws upon materialist theories of the mind that circulated during the 1990s, Burn admirably follows through on his pledge to open the novel to a more diverse range of interpretative frameworks.

This does not mean that Chapter Three sacrifices close reading for contextual explorations; in fact, it synthesises the two in surprising ways. Burn's detailed account of the importance of particular dates, for example, leads him to expound upon November 8th /Interdependence Day (marking the joining of the U.S., Canada and Mexico into a super-state) in the novel, and the date that scientist

Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen discovered x-ray in 1895. Burn convincingly argues that Wallace exploits this extra-textual resonance to make November 8th a day for illuminating characters' "hidden interiors" (54). Such enthusiasm for showing how "little in this long book...does not serve some larger purpose" (61) though is at times problematic. For one, Burn's suggestion that Wallace is evoking the U.K.'s Remembrance Day when he has various characters remember things on November 11th is tenuous at best. Still, this focus on *Infinite Jest's* "harmonic structure" (40) is pertinent, especially if it will disabuse readers of the popular notion that Wallace's vociferously large novel is recklessly composed.

Perhaps the most questionable aspect of *A Reader's Guide* is its epilogue devoted to "Wallace's Millennial Fictions". Compiling Burn's previously published reviews of *Everything and More* (Wallace's pop-tract on the mathematics of infinity), the short story collection *Oblivion* and the posthumous novel *The Pale King*, this epilogue breaks up the study's otherwise cohesive focus on *Infinite Jest* for what amount to only cursory overviews of later works. The absence of 2005's essay collection *Consider the Lobster* here is also notable; yes, it may not fall under the rubric of millennial fictions, but then neither does *Everything and More*. To fault Burn's study too heavily for its epilogue alone is churlish, and his inclusion in an appendix of a timeline that chronologically charts *Infinite Jest's* main events re-orientates the study towards its overriding purpose: to provide a critical introduction to the novel. As such *A Reader's Guide* is in many ways indispensable, being accessible and informed enough for first time readers whilst also pushing scholarship of *Infinite Jest* in exciting new directions.

Interview

Finding a Jamesian tone and digging down

Interview of John Banville with Hedwig Schwall,
Dublin, 29 September 2017.



Hedwig Schwall is Director of the Leuven Centre for Irish Studies (LCIS) at the University of Leuven, Belgium (<http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/lcis>) and Project Director of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS, www.efacis.eu). In this capacity she is currently setting up a world-wide translation project on texts by John Banville; this will be rounded off with a conference on Banville (and innovations in twenty-first century Irish fiction styles) in Leuven on 7-8 December 2018. Schwall's research focuses on psychoanalytic and anthropological approaches of contemporary Irish literature (Banville, Enright, Trevor, Madden, Barry, Doyle, Friel, Groarke et al). She has edited *Irish Studies in Europe* 8 which focuses on *Boundaries, Passages, Transitions* (to be launched in Vienna in January 2018) and is preparing the third issue of the open access journal *RISE*, the *Review of Irish Studies in Europe*, an issue on Irish text(ile)s to be published in January 2018 (<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/rise>).

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John Banville
by Jose Ramon Vega

HS: Good to see you - and congratulations on your new novel. Over the years you have been saying you admired Henry James and when I read *Mrs Osmond* I thought you do write on the same wavelength, even though the narrative is vintage Banville. Did you actually try to imitate James' style, or did you just let yourself sink into the Jamesian atmosphere?

JB: I didn't want to *imitate* James, but I did want to write in the spirit of *The Portrait of a Lady*. I couldn't have written this book in twenty-first century English—it simply wouldn't have worked. I expected it to be a very difficult task, but it proved surprisingly . . . I won't say easy – writing fiction is

never easy – but I did find a ‘tone’, a Jamesian tone, very quickly. That was a surprise, and a delight.

HS: *James’ heroine seems to have imbued a few Nietzschean values, like her hunger for life and her embracing of her fate; it is even in the quote from James that you chose as the motto for your own book: “Deep in her soul—deeper than any appetite for renunciation—was the sense that life would be her business for a long time to come”.¹ The Nietzschean spirit must have helped to feel at ease with James’s Isabel?*

JB: Well, Nietzsche is my philosopher—is my poet. I can find few things in his work, and I’ve read most of it, that I disagree with. Except, of course, his attitude to women. But I wouldn’t have thought of *Mrs Osmond* as a Nietzschean work. Yet I suppose Isabel’s determination to *affirm life* is a Nietzschean urge.

HS: *That and his lack of humour at times - as in Zarathustra?*

JB: I’ve never managed to get to the end *Zarathustra*—it makes me giggle helplessly. This is a serious admission for a confirmed Nietzschean to make, but there it is. The *Genealogy of Morals*, *The Gay Science*, *Daybreak*, even that last one that his awful sister compiled—*The Will to Power*, is that it?—these are superb and astonishing works—truly revolutionary. His writings are full of humour, but it’s humour of a very dark, harsh variety. He didn’t have enough experience of actual human beings—he had no friends, to speak of, except Paul Ree, for a while, and the extraordinary Lou Andreas Salome, also for a while. One of the saddest things I read of him was a report by someone staying in the same *pensione* that he was in, in Genoa or Turin, I can’t remember, who was going out to dinner and saw him playing the piano in the parlour, all alone—improvising, I imagine—and when the person came back from dinner, there he was, still playing, still alone. If he had found someone to love, it’s possible we wouldn’t have the philosophy. And what a loss that would be, not only to philosophy but to literature in general. He writes so beautifully: even in translation, Nietzsche’s writing is so beautiful. But I doubt Henry James ever read a word he wrote.

HS: *Both you and James often let Isabel use the word “happy” and “happiness” in a sense which does not necessarily mean pleasant; it can imply suffering, but only the kind which makes someone stronger, more resilient. Is this what you understand under Amor fati?*

JB: Yes, of course, Nietzsche is always in favour of life, messy, coarse, undecided life, against the naysayers. There a wonderful poem by Constantine Cavafi based on that passage in *Antony and Cleopatra*, when Antony hears the god—Dionysus?—abandoning him and his fallen fortunes. He hears in the street the departing music and revels as the god and his retinue leave, but the poet urges him to be strong, to be valorous, and not to feel sorry for himself. ‘*Say goodbye to her, to the Alexandria you are losing.*’ And of course, in this instance, ‘Alexandria’ represents all that has made Antony’s life sweet up to now. Lawrence

¹ John Banville, *Mrs Osmond*. London: Viking/Penguin, 2017; motto.

Durrell, of all people, put Cavafy as a character in his *Alexandria Quartet*.¹ Cavafy is a wonderful poet, too little known. As to *amor fati*, that's what James was speaking of when he described Isabel as a young woman determined to 'affront her fate'.

HS: *Usually your protagonists are very narcissistic men, now you pick a lady who James has fitted out with an intelligent and enterprising spirit, even with a lot of empathy, at times.*

JB: James makes it very clear that she's not the high intellectual that she thinks she is. And he doesn't make her altruistic, really, though she has a 'good heart'. If you read her very closely in the *Portrait*, she's selfish, self-willed, almost a monster of ego, though not at the level of Madame Merle or Gilbert Osmond, of course; being young, she just wishes to have her own way, and sees no reason why she shouldn't. In her eager youthfulness she reminds me of myself when I was young—she reminds me of *all* of us, when we were young. She knows her own mind, she knows what she wants and how to go about getting it—or imagines she does; but she learns the error of her ways, of her wishes, and of her will. Incidentally, it's one of the ironies of the *Portrait* that many readers mistakenly believe James is writing about a young, untried American girl being set upon and maimed by nasty Europeans. But all the main players in the *Portrait* are Americans. Madame Merle is American, born in Brooklyn; Gilbert Osmond is from Baltimore—Baltimore!—Caspar Goodwood is a New Englander; Henrietta Stackpole is quintessentially the 'new' American female; and the Touchett family, who might be said to be the ones who initially set in train Isabel's disaster, they're American also. The only character of consequence who is European is Lord Warburton, but really, he's not of *much* consequence, except to spin the plot along. I think the Isabel of the *Portrait* is different to my Isabel. Mine is wiser and sadder, and older, even, in a way—though she's not yet thirty, if my calculations are correct. I suspect that in the second half of the *Portrait* James forgot just how

¹ When suddenly, at midnight, you hear
an invisible procession going by
with exquisite music, voices,
don't mourn your luck that's failing now,
work gone wrong, your plans
all proving deceptive—don't mourn them uselessly.
As one long prepared, and graced with courage,
say goodbye to her, the Alexandria that is leaving.
Above all, don't fool yourself, don't say
it was a dream, your ears deceived you:
don't degrade yourself with empty hopes like these.
As one long prepared, and graced with courage,
as is right for you who proved worthy of this kind of city,
go firmly to the window
and listen with deep emotion, but not
with the whining, the pleas of a coward;
listen—your final delectation—to the voices,
to the exquisite music of that strange procession,
and say goodbye to her, to the Alexandria you are losing.

young she still was, and presents her as almost middle-aged, as *una grande signora*. I had to make her young again, but toughened by all the horrors she has been through, very recently—in *Mrs Osmond*, it's only a matter of weeks since she learned of how she was betrayed by Mme Merle and her husband.

HS: *Is Goodwood corrupted by Europe? In James he seems to be the perfect foil to Lord Warburton; the Lord practising his charm in panelled rooms and oak-studded landscapes, while Goodwood is feverishly steaming back and forth over the ocean, crossing Europe in what seems a perfect train system, being the dynamic suitor. In your sequel neither reappear on the stage, except in reflections.*

JB: Goodwood is utterly incorruptible, which is one of the reasons Isabel finds him so boring. But then Warburton is hardly the firebrand he considers himself to be, and he too bores our heroine. I see Goodwood and Warburton as Tweedledum and Tweedledee, one in Boston, the other in the Home Counties. For Isabel it is easy to withstand Lord Warburton's blandishments: his grand title, his houses and castles, his thousands of acres. She just had to take one look at his sweet, mousey sisters—very minor characters with whom nevertheless James has splendid, subtle fun—to say to herself, *I'm not marrying into this*. But she knows she doesn't want Goodwood, either, his uprightness, his decency, his awkward ardour, his stiff New England values. All the same, it is he, at the very end of the *Portrait*, who awakens Isabel to that Nietzschean sense of life and its possibilities—raw, coarse, *fleshly* life—when he seizes her in his arms in the twilit arbour at Gardencourt and kisses her as she has never been kissed before. If I were to criticise *Mrs Osmond*—and God knows I have many critical things I could say of it, as of all my novels—I would deplore the fact that I didn't allow her to follow up on this erotic awakening. Perhaps someone else will do so—a woman?—in a sequel to my sequel. And so *ad infinitum*.

HS: *But in James she seems to genuinely like the Warburton sisters.*

JB: She may like them but she does not want that existence for herself. She says to herself, do I want to become like this—contained, trammelled, 'held down' by convention? And that's what Warburton would have expected of her, and Goodwood too. Neither of them can offer her the freedom she so desires and considers her due. One of the things James understood very clearly was that men, when they are wooing women, say, Oh, of course, you'll have your freedom. But when they marry they say, no, you'll have babies. Goodwood and Warburton would have set out just as determinedly as Gilbert Osmond did to break her spirit, even though their methods would have been softer and subtler.

HS: *Your Isabel is, I think, the first feminist in your novels. Via the Misses Stackpole (who takes her time to get married) and Janeway she finds her way (a distracted one) to contribute to the New Women's cause.*

JB: She takes out the money as a gesture of liberation; she loses it because, subconsciously, she despises mere 'filthy lucre'. She has come to understand that all her troubles had their origin in money. When she's made the gesture of withdrawing a satchel of cash, what good is it to her? It's just money, and, inevitably, she mislays it. And then she thinks, I know what I'll do, I'll give it to

‘the cause’—even though she is not quite sure yet what the cause is. I like Miss Janeway, for all her coldness and calculation. I say of her at one point, that she would lay waste of the world in order to further the cause. Janeway is a fanatic. And Isabel likes this. She has been taken in by people who behaved ‘nicely’ and pretended to be civilised, but Miss Janeway doesn’t pretend to be anything other than ruthless. So, Isabel sees a way in which to take action, to ‘affront her fate’, if only in terms of cash.

HS: *Did you check on the legal rules of that period? Could she keep her own money?*

JB: Of course not. This is fiction!

HS: *When Isabel learns that Miss Janeway is dying and she decides to stay with the lady in her final struggle she wonders “Her end will mark, for me, a beginning ... does that seem like my old selfishness asserting itself again?”¹ She is rather harsh on herself here.*

JB: Isabel is self-willed, as we’ve observed. When Janeway’s nephew tells her he wants to start up a newspaper, she’s perfectly aware that she is being approached for money, yet again. And maybe she will give him the money—who knows?—but she will make sure that it is she who will run the newspaper. *She* will be the editor, not him. My original idea was that she was going to meet the nephew, they would fall in love—he would have been a more acceptable, a more malleable, Caspar Goodwood, though not as handsome, which perhaps Isabel would have been glad of, handsome men being more persuasive. In that version, Myles Devenish would have said, *I want to see this ‘New World’*, and Isabel would suddenly have realised that was what she also wanted—to return home—and they would have gone off together; they would, like Huck Finn, have ‘lit out for the territory’. . . but then I thought better of it. The book had to end in ambiguity.

HS: *James’ Portrait ends with the sentence that Isabel now knows that her way will be straight back.² Your Isabel does not go straight home but passes by Paris where she is invited to a palace full of Watteau-like rococo-decorations out of which, suddenly, Madame Merle steps forth. In this episode your Isabel becomes one of your typical heroes who finds her usual perspective inverted: the world was not just a scene to watch but she has been watched by the world. Is that what triggers her revenge?*

JB: Isabel’s not knowing how she was used, how she was ‘made a convenience of’, as she says, must have had something in it of wilful ignorance. Everybody else would have known what was going on, especially in a city like Rome, James’s Rome, where there’s nothing people don’t know about. Yet Isabel is appalled when it occurs to her, in *Mrs Osmond*, that her blindness was known to all. Equally, Mme Merle is afraid of being exposed—it’s one thing for people to know and keep quiet, but quite another that her wickedness should be talked about openly in

¹ *Mrs Osmond*, chapter 34, 374.

² “She had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path”. Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady*, www.gutenberg.org, produced by Eve Sobol and David Widger; December 1, 2008; EBook #2833, Volume 2, chapter 55.

salons halfway across Europe and even in America. I think there is a question of gender here. I suspect women worry more about being disgraced in public than men do; women don't think of infidelity in graphic terms. A man would not so much care about people knowing, he would be more turned in on himself. The real torment for a man is *imagining the two of them together*. That is the absolute agony—think of Othello.

In my book Isabel is facing up to her mistakes. In her meeting with Miss Janeway she begins slowly to realise how she might establish her freedom, and the first step in the process is to mislay the bag of money, which perhaps subconsciously she meant to do from the start. She has made her gesture to the cause—the freeing of womankind—and now she turns her mind to Mme Merle and Osmond, and how she might exact from them a reckoning—not revenge; I don't see her as a vengeful character. There used to be an extraordinarily cruel method of execution, whereby a person was strapped face to face with a corpse and then thrown into a dungeon—imagine the fiendish mind that thought that up! It's a version of this punishment that Isabel wreaks upon Merle and Osmond: she has bound this man, who has never learned how to live, to this woman who had the misfortune, long ago, to meet and fall in love with him, and was thereby infected with the bacillus of his deathliness. They are a pair of corpses, and Isabel has lashed them together. Can you imagine them fighting over the palazzo?

HS: *Sartre's Huits clos would be a bit like that: people stuck together who make each other face the mistakes of their past.*

JB: I read that play when I was about fifteen. I remember thinking, life can't be like this. But of course, it can.

HS: *You say Merle was “infected with ... his deathliness” – could one say that Osmond is the death drive, der Geist der stets verneint?*

JB: I'm not a Freudian, I never was a Freudian, and I never will be. I don't believe that all of our unconscious life is directed by sex. But I would agree that it is to a large extent directed by the death drive, or at least by our abiding consciousness of the fact of death. Paradoxically, however, I think it is this very knowledge that gives life its sweetness—the knowledge that all this, that's here, for us, will end, makes it so painfully precious. But Gilbert Osmond is the very spirit of death-in-life. He is the spirit of negation. It was quite a feat of James to convince us that Isabel would be capable of marrying such a man—he's not even convincingly charming. He is a dried-out, sterile dilettante, as Ralph Touchett assures Isabel; but what Ralph sees as desiccation of the spirit, Isabel takes for greatness. I've known people like this, people who would regard it vulgar to write a book, or paint an original picture. One of the most wonderful scenes in the *Portrait* is the one in which we see Osmond for the last time, when Isabel is leaving to go to Ralph Touchett who is dying. What is Osmond doing? He is making a copy of a painting of a coin. He's not even painting the coin itself, *he's making a copy of a painting of a coin*. He is one of the living dead, like the ghost Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw*. James knew about these people, how they feed on other people's lives, how they take away people's freedom, which he considered a very great sin.

HS: *You made it very clear in this book.*

JB: Henry James makes it clear.

HS: *But your Isabel suddenly realizes that it is purely her narcissism which makes her fall in love with Osmond: "it had not been Osmond she had fallen in love with, when she was young, but herself, through him", a recognition which she thinks has "a universal application".*¹

JB: Well, all my protagonists in all my books are mistaken about most things, and this is true also of Isabel in the *Portrait*. James makes Isabel go through the fires of hell at the end of the novel—most of the action in his book takes place in the last thirty or forty pages, when she learns so many terrible things. But in my version, it is not the fires of hell she endures, but an alchemical fire.

Isabel liked to be flattered, to be attended to, and Madame Merle was the perfect mirror for her. They went on a Grand Tour together, yet in all those months together Isabel never once saw the real Madame Merle. She saw what she wanted to see, and only later, after the crisis at the end of the *Portrait*, she realizes she has been willfully ignorant. Love is always narcissistic. We all look into the eyes of the beloved and we think, *how wonderful I am, how beautiful I am, how altogether bewitching!* We thrive, the ego thrives, when we look the beloved in the eyes and see ourselves reflected there. That's what love is for. It's not love for the other person, it's love for yourself. It doesn't last, of course, or last in an entirely different form. There should be a term for it, maybe something like 'passionate friendship'. That's the best we can hope for, and we should be glad of it.

HS: *The theatre metaphor is pretty basic in your work, it is omnipresent. Madame Merle fits the bill, she even fits in the Watteau-like scenes of Isabel's visit to Paris. Is she a nineteenth-century Madame de Merteuil?*

JB: Certainly, though I'm not sure Mme Merle is as clever or expertly manipulative as Mme de Merteuil. But Merle is the perfect actress, the expert in the theatre of life. Osmond is not, he is too egotistical to be a good actor, but he can keep up pretences when he needs to. Both Merle and Osmond are poor, and poverty is destructive of the spirit. A friend and I once agreed to agree that money is the root of all happiness. And the lack of it, Henry James and I would add, is the root of much unhappiness, and ruthlessness, and cruelty.

HS: *But what about Ralph's role in this theatre? He is rich and uses his money for an experiment. He tweaks things a bit and then sits back – yet, in your version, not quite, as "the intensest living Ralph had done he had done through her, by way of a passionate vicariousness, watching in smiling wonderment from his seat at the ringside".*²

JB: There is an argument to be made that he is the one who inadvertently almost destroyed Isabel's life, by arranging secretly for her to have half of his inheritance. Ralph has manipulated her life in just the same way that Madame Merle did. Or maybe not exactly the same way; he does it for amusement, because he's dying,

¹ Chapter 28, 279.

² Chapter 1, 5.

and is desperate to see Isabel live as fully as he's incapable of doing. Madame Merle too is desperate, but desperate for life, and the things of life that money can bring—for instance, a dowry for Pansy. All these people act out of desperation in one form or another. Gilbert Osmond is not young any more, he has no money, he has an expensive daughter who's getting bigger all the time, and he has to buy new clothes for her. What's he going to do? He's desperate. And then comes Madame Merle to say to him, *Look! I've found an heiress for you.*

What I love about the *Portrait* is the intricacy of it, and the relentlessness; it digs down and down, and then down deeper again, and there are still more intricacies. What was the motive of this person, what was the motive of that person? James was a Freud before Freud; he was a greater psychologist than Freud.

HS: *He certainly is more literary. Coming back to the cast of characters in this book, you definitely give Pansy a twist.*

JB: I never believed in Henry James' portrait of Pansy. Her father is Gilbert Osmond, her mother is Madame Merle, but she is this little angel? No! At the end of *Mrs Osmond*, Isabel comes into a room and sees her from behind and thinks at first it is Madame Merle. And when Pansy is leaving, she looks at Isabel through half-closed eyes, just as Osmond does. For the first time it strikes that Pansy is the daughter of a pair of monsters. You could write a novel about Pansy's future life, but it wouldn't be a very pleasant novel. And the Countess Gemini, of course, is a wonderful character, one of the best and most entertaining in the novel.

HS: *I had a good laugh when her "comely calf" has been appreciated "in more than one bedchamber".¹ You really pick up on the comic aspect, especially in Warburton, "he of the half-dozen castles and the myriads of acres"², presented together with Goodwood as "not as a comic duo in a slapstick show, but like the mechanical figures in a medieval clock tower".³ Where the comic aspect remains somehow subdued in James, you seem to relish in it.*

JB: Yes, I suppose there is some humour there. But James is funny, too, in his sly fashion. We have to read him in our time, but if we were reading him in *his* time, we would see the humour much more plainly than we see it now, because we live in a time in which there is nothing you cannot say. No words are banned any more, whereas in James's day, novelists had to resort to euphemism. Though James does have the odd bit of indecent fun—recall Mrs 'Condrip' in *The Ambassadors*, and in the same novel the grossly named Mamie Pocock. Oh yes, James wasn't as pure of mind as he pretended.

HS: *Talking about names: in your book Isabel's servant, Staines, not only gets a name but a vital role as well. And Staines has always understood Pansy, better than her mother.*

¹ For the full passage: "she was gracefully endowed in her lower extremities, being possessed in particular of a comely calf, as she had been gallantly assured on more than one occasion, and in more than one bedchamber" (Chapter 20, 202).

² Chapter 16, 154.

³ Chapter 9, 94.

JB: Servants know everything; they watch everything, they see everything. When their employers and their guests are at table, they are standing behind them, listening to everything that is being said. James, in his lordly fashion, never took any notice of the servants. Do you know Henry Green's novel *Loving*? It's about the lives of servants in a big house in Ireland in 1941, during the war; it's beautiful, a kind of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Green's people seem simple, but of course they aren't at all—they're every bit as complicated as their 'betters'. I like Staines; she's comic, but endearing and, I hope, *real*.

HS: *She reminds me a bit of Billie Stryker in Ancient Light, who gets on well with Lydia, Alex' wife. Likewise, Staines gets on well with Lydia Touchett.*

JB: As people do. My aristocratic friend Beatrice von Rezzori, who lives in Tuscany, gets on with the servants: it's the middle class that she disdains. Beatrice and the servants speak the same language. They are, Beatrice included, primitive. In the same way, it's not surprising that Staines and Mrs Touchett get along well. Mrs Touchett seems another monster, but as we learn in *Mrs Osmond*, she has had a hard life. She too was once betrayed.

HS: *And suddenly, in Banvillean fashion, there's a half-brother.*

JB: But doesn't it explain the mystery of the marriage between her and the 'wonderful' Daniel Touchett? As my wife Janet would say, the wonderful man turned out to be *just a man*.

HS: *I understand you wrote Mrs Osmond on Janet's suggestion?*

JB: Yes, it was Janet who urged me, years ago, to 'complete' *The Portrait of a Lady*. At the time I didn't think I could do it.

HS: *Your Lydia Touchett reveals a few things but so does Staines. Why does Staines speak up so late?*

JB: She didn't reveal the things she knows earlier because it's not the place of servants to speak up; and besides, it just would have been too hurtful to Isabel to know the truth, and Staines loves Isabel and tries to keep her from harm and pain. It's when she comes to understand that Isabel is in danger of being betrayed again, of getting into the clutches of Madame Merle again, that she decides it's time to 'tell all'. I imagine you've known marriages in which the husband or wife was having an affair; did you go straight away to one or the other and say, *You know what...*? That's another of James' great themes: do not interfere in other people's lives. Let them make their mistakes.

HS: *There is the scene in the beginning and the ending of your book about the man in Paddington Station who is visibly in despair. He is the opposite of Merle's smoothness. Why is this scene so important to you, that it marks the start and end of your book?*

JB: Because I saw him one day, a red-haired man on a street corner weeping helplessly, and the image stayed with me so vividly that I knew I had to use it. He seemed to me the perfect 'objective correlative' for Isabel's inner agony, this man suffering helplessly in public. She feels for him, and with him. As she says, 'Why don't we *all* stand on street corners weeping?' And in the end the great test of the

shallow young man Myles Devenish is for Isabel to ask him, 'What would *you* have done?' Isabel still feels *she* should have done something; the weeping man seemed to offer her a task, and she shirked it. And so, with his bland reply to her question, Devenish fails the test. So Isabel, I assume, is going to turn down the offer—of love?—that he seems to be tentatively offering her. She won't fall for another Gilbert Osmond, even one as pleasant and attractive as Devenish, but will find a way actually to *do* things, to take action.

HS: *It must have been great fun for you to write this book, with a complicated heroine who travels all over Europe towards your favourite country: Italy, to find there one of your favourite dark characters, Osmond.*

JB: Italy is the country where people know how to live. They have figured out the food, the wine, the weather, the passion. Life is exquisite there. Italy is the most beautiful country in the world. The first time I visited Rome, when I was eighteen, I arrived at night, and in the morning, I stepped out of the *pensione* and opened a map, and two men—they *both* looked like Federico Fellini—were passing by, and one of them, seeing me with the map, stopped and with a sweeping gesture said, *Issa Roma!* I knew nothing about the world, but Rome, Italy, set about teaching me. In a bar I stood at a very small marble table—I can see it still—and all I had was a glass of Frascati and a piece of Parmesan cheese, and I thought, 'This is the world,' while Ireland was diminishing to a tiny green spot way off in the distance.

HS: *This brings us back to the Europe-America thing. Whereas James merely says his Isabel is a great reader, you specify that she reads Emerson, Hegel, and Maistre...*

JB: She reads Emerson because she is from the same part of the world, and, of course, everybody was reading Emerson in those days: he was the Sage of Concord. Yet one of the big moral problems for American intellectuals in those days was, what to do about the wilderness? Out there, in the 'territory', was slavery, and the slaughter of the American Indians. Emerson never once mentioned, to my memory, the aboriginal American people. He says a few things about black people, but not to much effect. His kind of intellectual just wasn't interested; their gaze was still turned eastwards, towards Europe. Emerson's great essay 'The American Scholar' is the second American Constitution. In it he declares to his fellow Americans, 'We no longer owe anything to Europe, we are a new thing, we are a new phenomenon'. Anybody who wants to understand America has to read 'The American Scholar' and its sister piece, 'Self-Reliance'. So, Isabel is a product of that intellectual world, and when we meet her first, in the *Portrait*, there she is, diligently reading philosophy—but in translation, as James slyly informs us.

HS: *You are a very European writer – with Kleist as one of your major heroes. I loved the passage in The Infinities where someone says "it was the poet Goethe – entirely forgotten now but in his time there were those who would have ranked him above the sublime Kleist!"*¹

¹ *The Infinities* 161.

JB: I have the highest admiration for Kleist, and I pay due homage to him in *The Infinities*, the book of mine that displeases me least. In it, lightness and weight are evenly balanced, as always in Kleist. There is far more of him in that book than there is of *The Tempest*, or of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

HS: *In Mrs Osmond too, Shakespeare pops up but in a negative way, as Isabel feels she cannot present Merle as Lady Macbeth, "thrusting incarnadined hands towards a cold heaven", as life is more complicated than a play.*

JB: One of my favourite lines, that, though it borrows shamelessly not only from *Macbeth* but also from Yeats's poem 'The Cold Heaven'. But my favourite little joke, or perhaps it's more a knowing nudge, occurs when Isabel confronts Madame Merle with the full extent of her and Osmond's deceit, and I write of Merle's gaze being 'fixed upon a mote in the middle distance'. As I'm sure you know, Max Beerbohm wrote a famous parody of Henry James called "The Mote in The Middle Distance".

HS: I also liked the joke where Isabel, at the start of your novel, *finds herself in London being watched by a man who feels her eye on him, while she feels "held ... in the unblinking beam of those preternaturally wide-open ... organs", feeling "reassessed" by "the portraitist" ... looking to see how his composition had weathered with the years, and what time had done to the quality of the pigment."*

JB: Yes, I thought it only right that old HJ should make a fleeting appearance, like Hitchcock in his films.

HS: *Yeats too seems an undercurrent in your writing, in this novel and others. I think of the opening of Mefisto¹, where there are overtones of 'Leda and the Swan'.*

JB: He is one of my great influences! Nobody ever picks up on that, for some reason. He is a wonderful poet, the greatest of the twentieth century, without doubt. Of course, like all poets he writes lines that sound splendid but mean nothing.

HS: *Yet they are so rich and striking that they ring true.*

JB: They are true, and they are great, but they have no literal meaning. It's not a fault, just an effect of the musicality of poetry.

HS: *To write as poetically as you do, with structures rather than plots, it sounds like a novel for you is like a painting, a composition?*

JB: When I go to my room and start work, more often than not I have no idea what is going to appear on the page. I act out of sheer desperation. And every morning it is the same: I don't know how I managed to write yesterday, how I will write today. It all seems an utter impossibility. Then another version of me takes over, and I'm off. Writing is done in the dark, and one must never leave the darkness out. The writer must follow instincts, even into the deepest blackness. Those are the moments that are most worthwhile, when you lose yourself, when

¹ ... surging in frantic ardour towards the burning town, the white room and Castor dead. (John Banville. *Mefisto*. London: Minerva, 1993; 3)

you trust the medium itself. And gradually you see patterns emerging and they fall into place and you hone them. Art is a thing of beauty but made from a mess.

HS: *The rag and bone shop of the heart?*

JB: Yes. Old W.B. again.

HS: *I was hoping that some painters would find their way into this novel. James himself mentions a Bonington that Isabel is paying attention to; in your version this painter becomes part of the next scheme to “sell” Pansy off, but he is also paired with Turner. What do you like about them?*

JB: Bonington is a wonderful painter; he is not a great painter, but a wonderful miniaturist. Turner I admire, but I wouldn't go further than that. I mean, he's not great as Piero della Francesca is, as Bonnard is, as Velasquez is. The world of painting is so wide—let's not venture into it, we'd get lost.

HS: *A last question maybe? James writes psychological novels, yours seem more mythological: instead of explaining people you describe atmospheric shifts ascribing them to fauns or other funny divine forms – metaphors for poetry, as in The Infinities? In Mrs Osmond I found only few and slight mythological presences. Does that mean you want to move more into psychology?*¹

JB: Mrs Osmond is a 'one-off', not to be repeated. I wanted to see if I could write a 'psychological' novel, just for the interest of it. As I said earlier, I was writing in the spirit of HJ, not of JB. The latter writes of a non-existent world, where the gods still rule, which is a parallel to ours. I've said it before, and it's true: I'm not interested in what people do, only in what they *are*. You know that wonderful, seemingly enigmatic but, to me, entirely congenial outburst of Kafka's in the so-

¹ In this last question I am referring to passages such as “with the garden all around them, two wild things, nymph and faun, struggling in the midst of subdued nature, like an old master's illustration of a moment out of Ovid” (John Banville, *Eclipse*, London: Picador, 2000, 164);

“There is a multi-coloured patch in my memory of the moment, a shimmer of variegated brightness where her hands hover. Let me linger here with her a little while, before Rose appears, and Myles and Chloe return from wherever they are, and her goatish husband comes clattering on to the scene; she will be displaced soon enough from the throbbing centre of my attentions” (John Banville. *The Sea*. London: Picador, 2005; 86); in *The Infinities* one of my favourite sentences is when Helen, actress who has to impersonate Alcmene in Amphitryon, “walks from the room ... and what she takes to be Roddy's eyes on her is in fact my dad [Hermes' father, Zeus] shambling eagerly in her warm wake”. (John Banville, *The Infinities*. London: Picador, 2009. 193)

“In the course of these somewhat aimless animadversions, an observer of the pair of friends as they circumambulated the dusty perimeter of the little pleasure garden might have been forgiven for thinking that one of them, namely Miss Stackpole, had herself drifted into that very state of unappreciated potential upon which Isabel had just been musing. However, such an assumption, on the part of a speculative faun, say, peeping out from his hiding place among the verdure skirting the path, would have been mistaken” (*Mrs Osmond*, chapter 13, 128).

called *Zürkau Aphorisms*? ‘Never again psychology!’ he cries. I’m going to have that carved in marble and fixed to the wall above my desk . . .

HS: To then translate the mud you mentioned earlier into marble? There’s alchemical fire for you. Many thanks indeed for your generous sharing of time and ideas.

Notes on Contributors

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