Part V: Jane Austen, Moralist

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12. Introductory: Social Ethics and the Morality of Love

If we want to understand the conception of humanity in society that provides the working foundation for Jane Austen's novels, we should do well to begin by making a distinction that could not be made clearly in the philosophical vocabulary of her own world. We should separate the *objective ethical structure* of society, from the *subjective moral process* of personal consciousness. Jane Austen's novels are all about the moral formation of personal character. Her aim is always to make the plot express the character, and the character generate the plot in an indissoluble unity; and it is *moral* character that interests her. But she could not make the plot and character mutually expressive, if the *ethical* structure of her world were not quite stable, and universally understood. This social-ethical structure creates a serious problem for those who seek to translate her novels into a foreign language, because nothing quite like it has existed in any other community. Every society has its own ethical structure, but artificial uses of terms — together with explanatory notes — are needed in order to express the social ethics of one community in the language of another.[i]

We do not (directly) learn a lot about this ethical structure from the novels, because it is naturally taken for granted. Jane Austen's contemporary audience all live together in this same social world. In order to be potential readers of her work, they must of necessity be perfectly "ethical." To be *unethical* is (generally speaking) to be "criminal" — or at least to be criminally disposed. Everyone who can read, and pay the subscription of a circulating library, knows how to behave properly; and they know this not just in general, but *particularly* in reference to their own personal position in the social structure. Children coming into the world — even the illiterate poor who receive no formal education at all — must learn the *mores*, the way of life that is common to all, in the particular shape in which the social structure incorporates them. That structural shape will

evolve for them as they grow up. But it remains particular and relatively precise for each of them, because it is *objective*. That is to say it is defined by the general expectations of others. We might say (with fair precision) that "ethics is what other people agree in expecting."

This general expectation would be called "moral" in Jane Austen's world (and not only there and then, alas!). But the understanding of it is not the moral formation that Jane Austen is interested in; and it should not be confused with that. The end of *ethical* education is to be "respectable"; and as long as one retains the respect of one's neighbors, one can pursue one's own selfish ends in ways that most of us would agree are "immoral." Thus, Mrs. John Dashwood is able to persuade her husband that his promise to his father to assist his stepmother and half-sisters, can be fulfilled by occasional gifts (of the kind required by "respectability" in the absence of any promise at all); and Mrs. Bennet, whose "morality" is almost as conspicuous by its absence as that of Fanny Dashwood, is perfectly ethical (except about "entails," which are indeed morally dubious institutions).

The only *unethical* modes of behavior that enter into the novels are seduction, adultery and non-payment of debt. Since what is unethical violates general expectation, it is socially *punished*, either formally or informally. Adultery is particularly interesting to Jane Austen because an *immoral* attitude towards the ethical institution of marriage is peculiarly likely to result in adultery; and because a respectable marriage was generally the most desirable mature status in the very restricted list of ethical placements that an adolescent girl could aspire to. Also, adultery was morally interesting, because the social punishment fell very unequally upon the partners involved. Henry Crawford's respectability is damaged only in a minor way by public knowledge of his adultery with Maria Rushworth; Maria loses her place in society almost completely. Seduction necessarily involves unethical behavior by both parties; but, if it is not ethically made good by marriage, the social penalty falls almost entirely on the girl. So seduction is presented in the novels as a "moral crime" by the man (who is always older) against the girl. (In this instance, the "ethics" and the "morality" of Jane Austen's world are radically opposed.)

In Jane Austen's world, non-payment of debt was a *formal* crime, which could be punished by actual imprisonment until the debt was paid. But it never comes to that in the novels, because there are always family connections who assume the liability, and pay the debt. Thus Wickham's debts are settled by Darcy, as part-payment for his marrying Lydia Bennet; and no doubt the fear of imprisonment was one of the pressures that drove Wickham to this settlement. *Finding* him, was an important step in forcing him to behave *ethically*. In *Mansfield Park*, the payment of Tom Bertram's debts, at a time when Sir Thomas was himself financially embarrassed, forced the latter to *sell* the preferment of Mansfield Parsonage to Doctor Grant. Selling the post of "rector" or "vicar" in the Church, was just as normal ethically, as the sale of commissions in the Army and Navy. John Dashwood is amazed to learn that Colonel Brandon has simply *given* the much lesser preferment of Delaford Vicarage to Edward Ferrars. But even according to the "starched" legalistic morality of Mansfield, Sir Thomas felt that the sale was rather *disgraceful*; for someone like Colonel Brandon, whose morality was properly "loving," it would have been quite impossible.

Now that the concept of "love" has been introduced, we can begin upon the study of *morality* proper. We become "ethical" creatures out of rational self-interest. We want to be accepted by society, and to enjoy all the freedom of self-seeking that our social position makes possible. The range of this freedom varies a great deal in different positions, but we want as much of it as we can get. This drive has its origin in the love that Blake's "Pebble" sings: "Love seeketh only Self to please/ To bind another to its delight." Every infant coming into the world is a hard pebble of selfish determination to bind all others to its delight.

But as it develops human love becomes malleable, and self-love even inverts itself. The Pebble becomes a "Clod of Clay" and sings: "Love seeketh not itself to please,/ Nor for itself hath any care;/ But for another gives its ease."[ii] The pebble is still there at the heart of the clod; but the clay has a new kind of freedom. This is what Jane Austen's novels are about.

The normal point of origin for other-regarding love in Jane Austen's social world is the family. Even Fanny Dashwood loves her own child altruistically — though she may "spoil" him,

because her understanding of what is really good for him is certainly defective. When we ask whether Jane Austen really belongs to the "moral sense" school, and believes that the "love of our neighbor" is universally innate, we cannot give a decisive answer, because Henry Crawford, the one clear counter-example in her work — the highly intelligent rational man who appears to lack moral sense altogether — is an orphan. It may be that his moral sense has almost completely atrophied as a result of having no mother; and when he falls in love with Fanny it begins to recover. That is a possible reading. But by setting up my own discussion in terms of Blake's little poem, I mean to indicate that the question about the "moral sense" is itself mistaken. Love — and the sense of "self and other" — are radically ambiguous. I do not mean to ascribe any such view as this to Jane Austen herself, who never saw "The Clod and the Pebble" (etched and printed in a tiny edition in 1794). I take her position as a novelist to have been simply skeptical. We just do not know why Henry Crawford developed in one direction, and his sister Mary in another. Certainly, the fact that he was a boy, and she a girl, was crucially important. Henry was influenced by the example of his uncle the Admiral, and Mary by sympathy for her aunt. But we can only *observe* the influences, not understand why they operated as they did. Edmund and Fanny agree that the Crawfords were both ruined by their defective education. But for their creator it remains uncertain both whether Mary *is* morally ruined, and whether *any* education could have saved Henry. The educational assumption made by Edmund and Fanny is morally mandated for us by the Christian love of our neighbor. Edmund and Fanny are morally obliged to assume that something *could have* been done about Henry; and Jane Austen herself does indicate that Mary may yet be saved.[iii]

A good example of how moral principle is instilled is offered by Jane Fairfax. She is another orphan, raised first by her grandmother and aunt in genteel poverty; and then given every educational advantage by her father's commanding officer. She has been lovingly taught to reverence what is right; and she is terrified at the prospect of leaving her loving moral environment to become a governess in some family with conventional ethical values. She falls into the serious moral error of becoming *secretly* engaged to a young man with excellent prospects which might be spoiled if his indiscretion were known. The two of them are in love; but Jane's conscience — and the moral irresponsibility of her lover — torture her until she ends the engagement. Then, when the

situation is saved after all, and the engagement is published, she is most anxious that everyone should know she was properly brought up, and that the moral failure was all her own. She does not want those who have loved her since childhood to be criticized. On the other side, her "talking aunt," Miss Bates, who loves all the world, and speaks the truth almost compulsively, reveals her own knowledge of Jane's secret, by telling a lie — and trying to take the blame for one of Frank Churchill's most foolish indiscretions.[iv]

What is involved in the acquisition of "moral principle" is *identification* with one's social position as the defining focus of one's responsibilities towards others, rather than as the source of one's status, and of the rights that others must respect. Jane Fairfax falls into temptation partly because she sympathizes with Frank's fear that he will lose his status and its advantages; but more fundamentally, I think, because she is about to lose her own free status, and she cannot face the responsibilities she will have to accept, all by herself, as a governess. In spite of her own good fortune thus far in her life, Jane is a pessimist. She makes no allowance for the possibility that she might be as fortunate as Miss Taylor — and it must be admitted that under the aegis of Mrs. Elton any such outcome is rather improbable! The world has been kind to Jane; but that is what has led to her moral downfall.[v]

Fanny Price, whose early history is not unlike Jane's, is preserved against any such risk, both by her natural humility, and by Mrs. Norris. Ethically speaking, Fanny is a "nobody." As a child she had already begun to assume moral responsibility at home in Portsmouth. At Mansfield, she wants to go on being a "good girl"; but she does not know how, until cousin Edmund begins to teach her. Meanwhile Mrs. Norris, who tells the Bertram nieces whom she loves, what important "somebodies" they are, steadily impresses upon Fanny that she is a complete nonentity. Fanny soon becomes important to Lady Bertram (who loves her selfishly and can teach her nothing); only Edmund loves her properly, and she becomes absolutely devoted to him as a result. When Edmund falls in love with Mary, Fanny belongs only to her author as "my Fanny." Her willing acceptance of ethical insignificance, seriously distorts Fanny's moral judgment, but in a way that is not at all obvious. With nothing to look forward to except being a "companion" to Lady Bertram, Fanny is a

singularly unbiased observer of everybody except Mary Crawford. But her judgment is distorted by the assumption that the moral standards of Mansfield are perfect. The distortion shows clearly in her assessment of Mary (about whom she is naturally much biased by jealousy). Mary's just appreciation of Fanny is an important part of her own moral education. But although Mary loves Fanny, it is not easy for poor Fanny to love her.[vi]

Here Blake's two loves are at war; and Fanny's judgment of Mary shows how powerful Mansfield's own "moralized" version of conventional standards is in its general ethos. Mary's education has been conventionally *ethical*. She has learned to *do* what is right, but not to love it for its own sake. It is a problem for her that those who follow the path of prudence in a perfectly respectable way, are generally not as happy as they expected to be. This is very evident in the case of her sister, Mrs. Grant, the one *moral* person whom she truly loves. We are allowed to watch Mary, as she begins to discover that moral character is more important to happiness than social position and wealth. But Fanny gives her no credit for her moral progress; she ignores the fact that Mary is morally a far better person than Maria, Julia or Tom. She can see only the resemblance between Mary and her brother Henry (who has *no* moral sense, no "principles," at all). Henry does not identify responsibly with any social position. About him, Fanny is absolutely right; but under Edmund's tutelage, she has accepted Sir Thomas Bertram as a moral authority. She does not admit to herself that Sir Thomas is morally confused in exactly the same way that Mary is. When he puts pressure on her to accept Henry's proposal, she thinks the only problem is that he does not know Henry as well as she does. But there is a much deeper fault here. Sir Thomas really agrees with what Jane Austen calls "almost the only rule of conduct . . . which Fanny had ever received from her aunt [Bertram]": "it is every young woman's *duty* to accept such a very unexceptionable offer" — and that is exactly the code that Mary learned when she was growing up (*MP*, III, ii, [302]). Mary is condemned because she continues to speak honestly in her conventional terms. But the banishment of Maria shows that Mansfield is just as conventional in its rigorously moral way.

The complex problem of the relation between Mansfield morality and the properly Christian love of our neighbor, is a topic that deserves — and will have — its own essay. But we must not

rush from Lady Bertram's advice to the opposite extreme, according to which it is immoral to marry without love. Mary Crawford is not wrong in regarding Mrs. Grant as a moral paragon; but if Mrs. Grant ever was in love with her husband, she was sadly self-deceived, because he certainly did not deserve it. Charlotte Lucas is not at all deceived about Mr. Collins; but she is a good wife to him, because she knows what it means to identify with her position responsibly.[vii] (Probably, as with Fanny, it was responsibility for younger siblings that began her moral education.)

David Cecil summed up Jane Austen's view of the economics of marriage by saying that while it was wrong to marry for money, it was foolish to marry without it.[viii] Charlotte does not marry for money, but for the home (and hopefully the family) that comes with a sober spouse, and a sufficient income. But she tests David Cecil's generalization, because Jane Austen approves of her. Even the folly of married poverty is a very relative matter, since it is clear that Sophy Croft was poor when she married. She was probably as poor as Mrs. Price, but she had no children, whereas Mrs. Price had too many, and Lieutenant Price failed in his career. Neither of them, we must conclude, was properly prudent. The model of moral prudence is Elinor Dashwood. Edward Ferrars is prepared to marry Lucy Steele with nothing but the Delaford stipend of £200 a year. Elinor thinks that that is quite inadequate, so she and Edward have to wait till Mrs. Ferrars relents, and gives Edward £10,000. But we must be mindful that Mrs. Ferrars would *never* have done that for Edward and Lucy; also they had been engaged for four years, and Edward would be only too happy if Lucy ended the engagement. In fact, he is trying to force Lucy to do this. Jane Austen is directing our attention to that crucially important fact, when she indicates that the Delaford stipend was not regarded as adequate for a marriage that was earnestly desired by two very rational partners.

Wickham's income will *always* be inadequate for his needs; but his marriage to Lydia Bennet is unavoidably necessary, since she will not leave him. Whatever sum is settled upon her is presumably tied up as securely as possible so that she and her children will never be paupers. But like Mrs. Price, Lydia illustrates the terrible dangers of a love that has no rational prudence. The Miss Churchill who eloped with Captain Weston illustrates, rather, the dangers of a passion that is not *moral*. She does not accept responsibility for what she has done. She wants to be Miss

Churchill of Enscombe still, and she is willing to be reconciled with her family, although they continue to reject her husband. She beggars her husband; and it looks very much as if, when she dies, he *sells* their child back to the Churchills. (The amiable Mr. Weston is a happy-go-lucky man, and certainly not a moral paragon.)

The conventional wisdom that Mary Crawford learns to distrust, is enshrined in the aphorism with which *Pride and Prejudice* begins. Mrs. Bennet's own personal experience would have taught her to distrust it, if she could learn anything at all. But her husband's resentful teasing has only made her rather like Lady Bertram — someone who demands love, rather than gives it. Jane Austen would have us believe that Mr. Bennet has instilled moral responsibility into his two elder daughters, without being responsible enough himself to do anything prudent about their future during fifteen years. But this I myself cannot accept; the passage in which she accuses him of it (*PP*, III, viii, 308) must be set aside as one of Miss Austen's very few mistakes (like the callous comment about Dick Musgrove — *P*, I, vii, 50). It is true that intelligent children in a happy family — especially the elder ones —can become morally responsible through the simple force of circumstance; and Jane and Elizabeth do appear to be more lovingly responsible than their father in their attitude towards the reception of Lydia after her marriage. But that is a false impression. Mr. Bennet strikes the conventional posture recommended by Mr. Collins, simply in order to tease his wife. He never seriously intends to shut out Lydia — who is her mother's favorite. (It amuses him also to let Jane and Elizabeth *persuade* him — and they understand that — *PP* III, viii, 310, 314.)[ix]

Mrs. Oliphant thought it morally disgraceful that Elizabeth should blush for her mother.[x] But she understood clearly enough that Darcy was rescuing Elizabeth from a moral quagmire. Jane Bennet, who is a paragon of "candour" (which is Jane Austen's word for the virtue of *charity*) presumably does not blush for her mother, but sympathizes with her good intentions, and apologizes (inwardly) for her failings. Similarly, Fanny Price is always apologetic for all failings, until her jealousy gives her critical consciousness a cutting edge. But *Pride and Prejudice* forces us to recognize that "candour" by itself is not enough. Things would quite probably not have come out right for Jane and Bingley, that candidly humble pair, without the moral indignation of Elizabeth.

Thus even perfect virtue is a function of social support and collaboration in Jane Austen's view; and for Elizabeth herself — wherever her moral "principle" came from — the willingness to be quite severely critical of those she loves best (her father as well as her mother) is essential to her salvation. (This critical capacity is just what Fanny and Edmund lack.)

The *passionate* relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth is not very marked on her side. She seems to fall in love very rationally indeed; but she is conscious of Darcy's being attracted to her, from the first; and there is a responsive attraction on her side, which competes with her powerful moral prejudice against him. Then there is a "rebound" effect when she discovers that Wickham — to whom she has been attracted much more strongly, and partly by moral sympathy — is a confidence trickster and would-be seducer.[xi] When she tells her father: "'I do, I do like him [Darcy]' . . . with tears in her eyes. 'I love him,'" (*PP*, III, xvii, 376) she is not deceiving herself. It was her earlier dislike that was largely a conventional pretense — though some sincere commitment went into it on Wickham's behalf (as Darcy himself was quick to notice — *PP*, II, xi, 191).

Pride and Prejudice provides the happiest image of Jane Austen's social philosophy. She is a conservative thinker, but not a *laudator temporis acti*. She does not long for an imaginary past, or wish that the clock could be stopped. Her society is on the move, and she seeks to project an ideal image of what the movement can bring forth.[xii] In *Mansfield Park*, and again in *Persuasion*, "London" is the name of a moral nightmare. But in *Pride and Prejudice*, the Gardiners from Cheapside become the best friends of the Darcys; and Elizabeth ought never to have believed that Darcy looked down on trade and commerce, since the Bingleys came from it. It was Bingley's father, presumably, who made the money; but Darcy and Bingley are friends of long standing (from school?). It is *Meryton* commerce that Darcy despises: Mrs. Phillips, Sir William Lucas, and perhaps Mr. Phillips, though he remains invisible to us. Mrs. Reynolds makes it clear that everyone on the Pemberley estate loves and admires Darcy — as they did his father before him. Mrs. Gardiner's attempt to dredge up negative memories of him only brings out the actual social gulf between the townsfolk and the "county" families. Elizabeth, Georgiana and the Gardiners will make something of a bridge there, once the Darcys are more regularly at home.[xiii] Elizabeth will certainly

keep up her music; she may take up drawing seriously if she finds she has any gift for it. But she is more likely to start an estate school — if Pemberley does not have one already.

One does not see Emma doing that at Donwell. She will need *something* to do, and with Mr. Knightley's advice no longer rejected automatically as what must at all costs be rebelled against, Emma will find plenty of useful and rewarding occupations in the two parishes for which she is "lady of the manor." She is someone who can take pleasure in the simple observation of the daily life of her village street;[xiv] and she looks forward resolutely to her old age as a benevolently active old maid. The critics who think she can only be unhappy as Mrs. Knightley, simply do not know her. They do not know how to like someone who is as intelligent, but as completely unintellectual, as she is; yet they feel that Emma is likable, so they conclude that she is bound to be unhappy.[xv] In fact Emma will be as busy (though not as aggressively bossy) as Lady Catherine de Bourgh. *Emma* shows us the self-contained society that is not threatened by "London"; and it is morally charitable, instead of being morally "ordained" (or "righteous") like Mansfield. But it is conservatively "comfortable" in the sense that the *movement* of society is brought almost to a standstill.

The *movement* of society becomes the main topic of *Persuasion*. Lady Russell is a rather blind social conservative; and she imposes upon Anne a completely false conception of her social position and its ethical responsibilities. (Even Mrs. Bennet had — of necessity — a sounder understanding of the social significance of the hateful "entail.") The Wentworth family are gentlefolk by education, but not by possessions. Frederick Wentworth is another happy-go-lucky officer (like Captain Weston, and no doubt Lieutenant Price also). There can be no doubt that Anne's engagement was imprudent. Anne herself (unlike Lucy Steele) thought it wrong to bind a young man to a long engagement, with no certainty about when the marriage could take place. Wentworth assumed that Anne was controlled by Lady Russell's social superstitions. From this misunderstanding their story arose.

Anne does indeed love Kellynch, and she would like to be responsible for it. Hence, being obliged to reject the possibility of marrying Mr. Elliott, and succeeding to her mother's place, does

cause her a real twinge of regret. It is this identification with her home place that Wentworth misreads as the pride of status that is so marked in her father and her sisters. Wentworth can hardly be blamed for his error, because Anne's identification with Kellynch was completely mistaken. Anne Elliott already knew quite well in 1806 that she was not destined to be mistress of Kellynch Hall.

It is worthwhile at this point to reflect on Jane Austen's own comment that Anne is "almost too good for me" (*Letters*, [1952], 487; [1997], 335). She did not feel this way about Fanny Price — who would be called more than a little too good by many readers (sometimes including myself). On the contrary, her attitude to Fanny is protective and motherly; and the reason is that Fanny, even in her virtue, is *dependent*. Everything that "being good" means to her she has learned from Edmund. When she becomes critical of Edmund, she is only applying — or jealously trying to apply — the standards she has learned from him; and those standards are not the best possible. There is no sense in which Fanny is really "too good" — or, at least, it is not just to blame her for her proto-Victorian moral righteousness (which is "too good" in an ironic sense).

With Anne the case is different. Her standards are truly her own — and truly charitable. She has matured enough to see that Lady Russell was mistaken in urging her to terminate her engagement. But she still insists that she was right to follow her surrogate mother's advice; and that is where she is "almost too good." Captain Wentworth is horrified to realize that if he had written to her when he returned to England in 1808, everything would have come right. He feels in 1814 that he has been luckier than he deserves. We must assume that when Anne terminated the engagement, he stormed away in a fury. If he had listened more patiently, a correspondence might have been arranged — or at least suggested. But why did Anne not try to make contact with him after that temper tantrum? She accepted her fate too passively. Like Jane Bennet she was "too good for her own good." That is bound to be the feeling of someone more like Elizabeth, someone a little more inclined to the self-assertion of Blake's "Pebble of the brook."

Sir Walter Elliott was already in debt when the engagement was terminated. By the time that the story begins, he is so badly embarrassed that he must let his estate to Admiral Croft; and Anne, who loves her home and village, must face the knowledge that the new tenants are better custodians of the ethical structure of her little world, than the official owners. Captain Wentworth returns with a fortune in prize money. He and Anne will have to *buy* a home, since Anne can have no permanent responsibility for Kellynch.[xvi] We are clearly meant to think of Wentworth as going on (like Jane Austen's two "sailor brothers") to a successful career in the Navy after the War. But it is the integration of the Navy into the landed gentry that is the ethical theme of the book.[xvii]

The important work of the world will be done by those who are competent; and the morality of the world must be in the responsible keeping of those who are intelligent.[xviii] So the intelligent must be educated into moral responsibility; and the foundation of responsibility is loving identification with a social position that one understands clearly and correctly. But the social structure must be flexible enough to permit the free mobility of the morally intelligent. Hence the logical climax of moral responsibility is a charitable love of one's neighbor. This attitude is the essential condition of moral happiness.

This charitable attitude is vitally necessary for all whose social opportunities are restricted — especially when the restriction is rationally unfair, as it clearly is in the case of women generally. "Regulated hatred" is the natural response of an intelligently moral mind to unfair boundaries and restrictions, and especially to the irritation induced by continual association with the unintelligent. But the regulating power is precisely that of "candour" — i.e. of the appreciation of everything for what it is positively worth. It is love that comprehends hatred properly.[xix] There will always be those who say that Jane Austen is "cold"; and they are not the stupid readers, for they have seen how clearly she recognizes the hard necessities even of a comfortable life. But those who understand her best, love her for her warmth. She was not herself as fortunate as Jane Fairfax. But she shows us how to make the best of life; and that best is well worth having.

Notes

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i. See Andrew Wright in J. Halperin (ed.), 1975, 298-317.

ii. "The Clod and the Pebble," *Songs of Experience* (*Complete Writings*, ed. G. Keynes, Oxford, 1978, p. 211).

iii. "Mary, though perfectly resolved against ever attaching herself to a younger brother again, was long in finding . . . anyone who could satisfy the better taste she had formed at Mansfield" (*MP*, III, xvii, [428]). It is not clearly implied that she *did* find someone; and there is a conflict between her "perfect resolution" and her "better taste." But "perfectly" is a very ironic adverb here.

iv. I do not think there is a more graphic example of how Jane Austen's "morality of love" operates than this (*E*, III, v, 346). It is clear that Miss Bates has grasped that there is a secret understanding between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. By confessing that she may herself have said something about the Coles' plan to set up their own carriage, and insisting that Jane would never have done so, she is foolishly drawing attention to the fact that Jane can reasonably be suspected — and so to the very secret that she wants to protect. But by trying to tell a lie (and showing she has no idea how to do it) Miss Bates demonstrates how deeply she loves her niece, and sympathizes with her in her moral dilemma. This adds to Jane's sense of guilt, and makes her later insistence that she alone is responsible for the moral failure more vividly necessary.

v. Jane Fairfax was lucky, but not as lucky as Emma, the only other clever girl in the small world of her childhood. Her envy of Emma was another factor in her downfall. If they had

made friends as children the story would probably have been different (and the novel spoiled!).

vi. When Mary says "I believe I now love you all" (*MP*, III, v, 358) it is primarily Edmund and Fanny of whom she is thinking. She certainly does not love Mrs. Norris, and her goodwill towards Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram is only a participation in the feelings of those whom she really does love. Back in London, her conventional attitudes make it easy for her to imagine Tom Bertram dead; and the readiness with which she can indicate this to Fanny is a sign of her "trust" — to use the normal moral name for it. When Fanny uses this implicit confession to prove to Edmund that Mary never really loved him — and Edmund allows himself to be convinced — they are both guilty of self-deception and moral injustice.

vii. It is her eminent good sense combined with her solid moral principles that make this possible for her — the very things that Elizabeth thinks she has disgraced and betrayed. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that a superior intelligence was essential. Hetty Bates would have done the same at twenty-seven; and she would have been even more reliably happy. (But she would have been able to persuade herself that she loved her husband properly.)

viii. *Jane Austen*, Cambridge, 1935, .

ix. It is the advice of Mr. Collins which convinces me that Mr. Bennet is only teasing Mrs. Bennet. But Jane Austen tells the story with a very straight face. If one can believe that Mr. Bennet would seriously agree with Mr. Collins, then Jane and Elizabeth must get the moral credit here; but it is only the wedding clothes that are seriously denied in my view.

x. Review of the *Memoir* in *Blackwoods Magazine*, 1870; reprinted in B.C. Southam (ed.), 1968; the relevant passage is also in J. O'Neill (ed.), 1970, 14.

xi. Jane Austen's comment about Elizabeth's earlier trial of the more usual pattern of attraction (*PP*, III, iv, 279) refers indirectly to this. Compare also the violence of Elizabeth's reaction when she learns the truth about Wickham (*PP*, II, xii, 204-8).

xii. The idealization is one aspect of what makes Jane Austen so "modern." Military flogging is mentioned by Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice*; but the naval press-gang is silently ignored in *Persuasion*. Poaching (and its terrible penalties) do not get into *Emma*. (For some other moral horrors of the time, see Sheila Kaye-Smith, 1943, 22.)

xiii. Jane Austen told the family circle that Kitty married "a clergyman near Pemberley" (*Memoir*, 1871, 148). Mrs. Bennet boasted that "we dine with four and twenty families." It seems safe to suppose that the Darcys did no less. (They also had portraits painted by the best London artists — but Jane Austen decided that Mr. Darcy would not permit the public exhibition of Elizabeth's — *Letters* [1942], 309-10; [1997], 213.

xiv. Jane Austen knew that this was possible from her own experience; and she only supposes it to *be* possible (for someone who is not also a writer) as long as the observer has an active and influential place in the local life which she is observing. Emma has this already in the novel; but much of her influence is not yet beneficial.

xv. I confess that I cannot see her ever doing "carpet work" like Lady Bertram. Emma is deceiving herself there — and Jane Austen knows it (*E*, I, x, 85). As an old maid Emma would disturb the established order somewhere in the early Victorian world. But she would

be happy doing it; and she will be even happier *not* doing it at Donwell Abbey. Julia Kavanagh doubted whether Jane Austen believed happiness was possible for the intelligent woman. Some modern believers in her "regulated hatred" may agree. G.B. Stern thinks the ending of *Emma* "unhappy" (1943, 175-6), and Angus Wilson thinks Emma will have nothing to do (B.C. Southam, ed., 1975, 198). (They are all mistaken.)

xvi. From her over-enthusiastic identification with a *rooted* community on land, Anne passes to happily anxious identification with an essentially mobile community on the water. But when she becomes a mother, she will have to have a stable home base. She cannot be like Sophy Croft; but she must live with anxiety (as Sophy did at Deal).

xvii. Through Mrs. Smith's troubled affairs in the West Indies, the commercial expansion of the gentry is brought to our notice (and unlike "Sir Thomas Bertram M.P." Mrs. Smith is unmistakably *bourgeois*). On the other side, Sir Walter's comment on "Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term *gentleman*" (*P*, I, iii, 23) helps us to understand why Mary Crawford did not want Edmund to be ordained. Jane Austen's own clerical family was aristocratically connected like the Darcys. But she knew quite well that her father, like most of the clergy, was moving up in the world.

xviii. It would be fair to say that Jane Austen's novels are all concerned with "the governing class." But it is rather more precisely informative to say that her general topic is "social responsibility."

xix. The word "spies" in *Northanger Abbey* (II, ix, 197-8) is not such an expression of hatred as D.W. Harding supposes. Anyone who has lived in a country village knows how Catherine Morland would take it. No one could call it morally neutral. But it is entirely *natural* in its

context. Henry Tilney wants Catherine to see the *positive* value of an aspect of country life which no one appreciates when they are the subject of it. It was only in the spy-hysteria of 1914 that the word acquired the aura that made Harding pounce upon it as something that Henry would not spontaneously say. I believe he is mistaken. One wouldn't call one's own village a "neighbourhood of voluntary spies" if any of one's neighbors were in hearing; but one could well have — and readily express — that consciousness of villages in general. The world of 1803 is at war; and Henry Tilney is (quite justly) proud of his own satirical consciousness of life. So the word comes to his lips quite spontaneously. (The "spies" in his world are mainly agents of the government that he loyally supports.)