

THE ARTS IN JANE AUSTEN'S MAJOR NOVELS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF
ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

JANE BROOKS, B.A.

DENTON, TEXAS

MAY, 1961

PREFACE

Interest in Jane Austen as a creative artist is evident in the large number of books published about her. These books include biographical facts and speculations, suppositions about the romance in her life, comments on her unique achievements in polished style and writing, and suggestions for the improvement or continuation of the well-known plots in her novels. Nowhere in the writings about her, however, have I found an organized study of her attention to the arts in her six novels. To that subject I have devoted my study in this thesis.

In this study, I have realized the importance of referring to carefully edited works. R. W. Chapman's editing of both Jane Austen's novels and her letters was extremely helpful to me. When quoting from her novels, I have recorded the spelling and punctuation as it appears in the text edited by Chapman, who attempted to preserve the novels in a form as nearly like that of the author as possible.

I wish to express my gratitude to the three members of the English faculty who have guided me through my year of study at the Texas Woman's University. I thank Dr. Constance Beach, who increased my interest in fiction through her

instruction in her course in the English novel and who then carefully read and checked this thesis, the manifestation of my interest, and Dr. Eleanor James, whose obvious delight in the many types of literature to which she introduced me created in me a desire for further and more serious study. Especially am I grateful to Dr. Autrey Nell Wiley, whose continual encouragement, wise counsel, and exemplary life have made this year of graduate study a time of pleasure, profit, and inspiration.

18 May 1961

Jane Brooks

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	
The Reputation of Jane Austen as a Writer.	1
Her letters.	1
Her novels	1
Autobiographical Details	2
Education	2
Family	2
Current events	3
Her Conception of Her Creative Powers.	4
Type of writing she could do	4
Arts of her day.	5
Her Use of the Arts, as the Subject for	
This Thesis	5
Minor Arts in Her Writings	6
Social dancing	6
Types of needlework.	7
The Arts as Accomplishments.	8
The accomplished woman	8
The accomplished man	9
Cultural Trends of the Period.	10
Attitude Toward the Arts	11

CHAPTER	PAGE
II. MUSIC	
Kinds of Music in Jane Austen's Novels	
and Letters.	13
Music in Her Life.	13
Her favorite instrument.	14
Her practicing the art	14
Her enjoyment of music as social entertainment.	15
Music in <u>Emma</u>	15
Emma's ability	15
Discussion between Frank and Emma.	16
Emma's feelings of inferiority	16
Harriet's analysis	17
Mystery of Jane's piano	17
Favor toward Jane	18
Mrs. Elton's palaver on music.	19
Music in <u>Sense and Sensibility</u>	20
Marianne's musical interests	20
Her pianoforte	20
Her performance.	20
Her attraction to Willoughby	21
Elinor's musical connections	22
Mrs. Dashwood's plans for Margaret	22
Music in <u>Mansfield Park</u>	23
Fanny's connections with music	23

CHAPTER	PAGE
Edmund's musical interests	24
Mary Crawford and her harp	25
Music in <u>Pride and Prejudice</u>	25
Elizabeth as the major musician.	25
Miss Bingley's music as a snare for	
Darcy's attentions	26
Lady Catherine's criticism	26
A clergyman's speech	27
Music in <u>Persuasion</u>	28
Anne as the major musician	28
Her musical ability contrasted to that	
of the Musgrove girls.	28
Her office as musician at social	
gatherings	29
The harp	30
Music in <u>Northanger Abbey</u> : Catherine in	
Contrast to Musical Heroines	30
Summary of Musical Activities in the Novels. . .	31
Jane Austen's treatment of music	31
Contrast to that of Victorian novels	31
Comments of an observer as well as a	
participant.	32
Notice of mechanics in music	32
Ridicule of attitudes toward music	33
Two heroes in relation to music.	34
Use of music as an art in the novels	34

CHAPTER	PAGE
III. LITERARY ARTS	
Literature as Part of Her Life and the Lives	
of Her Characters.	35
Same literature in letters and novels.	35
Books mentioned in the novels.	35
Reading habits of the heroines	36
References in her letters to ephemeral	
publications and literature.	37
Letter Writing	37
Interest in style of letter writing.	37
Illustration of certain style.	38
Use of letter writing in her novels.	39
<u>Mansfield Park</u>	39
Fanny Price as primary character	39
Her first letter from Edmund	40
Her correspondence with Mary	40
Lady Bertram's delight in	
correspondence	41
<u>Northanger Abbey</u> : discussion between	
Catherine and Henry on their first	
meeting.	42
<u>Emma</u>	42
Emma's reaction to letter from	
Robert	43
Mr. Knightley's perusal of Frank's	
letter	43

CHAPTER	PAGE
<u>Pride and Prejudice: Mr. Collins's</u>	
letter of introduction	44
Summary of letters in the novels	44
Literature	44
Books as a part of Jane Austen's home life	44
Writers mentioned in her novels.	46
<u>Emma</u>	47
Emma's sporadic interest in literature	47
Mr. Elton and literature	49
Robert Martin's literary pursuits.	49
Mrs. Elton's quotation from Gray	50
<u>Sense and Sensibility: Marianne Dashwood.</u>	50
Disappointment in Edward's lack of taste	50
Delight in Willoughby's literary taste	51
Her rapid acquaintance with Willoughby	52
The comfort she finds in books	52
<u>Mansfield Park</u>	53
Fanny's delight in literature.	53
Edmund's encouragement	53
Her private library in the old school room.	54
Books she reads.	54
Absence of books in her father's home	54
Encouragement of Susan	55
Reminder of Cowper	56
Sessions of reading aloud to Aunt Bertram.	56

CHAPTER	PAGE
Henry Crawford's skill in reading aloud.	57
<u>Persuasion</u>	57
Anne Elliot's literary interests	57
Lady Russel's literary influence	59
Sir Walter's only literary interest.	59
<u>Pride and Prejudice</u>	60
Mr. Bennet's reading habits.	60
Mr. Collins's oral reading	61
Miss Bingley's comment on Elizabeth.	61
Mary's pedantic airs resulting from reading.	62
<u>Northanger Abbey: Catherine Morland</u>	62
Her enthusiasm for novels.	62
"Horrid" novels she wants to read.	63
Discussion of <u>Udolpho</u> with John.	64
Literary discussion with the Tilneys	65
Influence of reading on her imagination.	65
Summary of Jane Austen's treatment of literature as an art	66
Theater.	66
Novels in which the theater is used as an art	66
Place of the theater in Jane Austen's life	67
Theater in <u>Mansfield Park</u>	68
Background of <u>Lovers' Vows</u>	68
Chapman's analysis of Jane Austen's treatment of amateur theatricals	69

CHAPTER	PAGE
Planned production of <i>Lovers' Vows</i>	71
John Yates's idea.	71
Opposing view to the production.	72
Edmund's final weakening	73
Fanny's connection with the production	73
Lord Bertram's return.	74
Oral reading in <u>Henry VIII</u>	75
Theater in <u>Persuasion</u>	77
Anne's preference for the theater to private parties.	77
Necessity of postponing attendance at the theater for a previously planned party.	77
<u>Theater in Northanger Abbey</u>	78
Importance of the theater to Jane Austen's heroines	79
Partial expression of Jane Austen's attitude toward the literary arts	79
Summary of Treatment of the Literary Arts.	80
 IV. ART AND ARCHITECTURE	
Art in Jane Austen's Life and in the Lives of Her Characters	81
Her interest in art.	81
Art as a serious accomplishment.	82
Classical and romantic approaches.	83

CHAPTER	PAGE
Art in <u>Emma</u>	83
Emma's characteristic lack of steadiness	83
Her portrait of Harriet.	84
Motive behind Mr. Elton's artistic	
interest	85
Art in <u>Sense and Sensibility</u>	85
Elinor's defense of Edward	86
Different attitudes toward the	
picturesque.	87
Landscape scenery.	88
Mrs. Jennings's interest in art.	88
Marianne's defense of Elinor's paintings	89
Art in <u>Mansfield Park</u>	90
Fanny's appreciation of art and	
landscape.	90
Art treasures in Fanny's room.	91
Fanny's interest in old portraits.	91
Art in <u>Pride and Prejudice</u>	91
Lady Catherine's questions	92
Elizabeth's artistic interest in	
Pemberley.	92
Art as an accomplishment	94
Art in <u>Persuasion</u>	95
Art in <u>Northanger Abbey</u>	96
Catherine's concern with her own	
ignorance.	96

CHAPTER	PAGE
Henry's instruction.	96
The Tilneys' display of artistic knowledge.	97
Art in <u>Sense and Sensibility</u> : more attention than in other novels	98
Architecture	98
Absence of mention of architecture in letters	98
Treatment of architecture in five novels . .	99
Willoughby's protests against changing Barton Cottage in <u>Sense and Sensibility</u> Fanny in <u>Mansfield Park</u>	99 100
Her attachment to things of the past	101
Her disappointment in the chapel . .	101
Her admiration of Sotherton as a whole.	102
Emma's joy in Donwell Abbey.	102
Catherine Morland in <u>Northanger Abbey</u> . .	103
Her interest in Blaize Castle. . . .	104
Her anticipation of Northanger Abbey	104
Her disappointment in the Tilneys' home	105
Elizabeth's delight in Pemberley	105
Jane Austen's treatment of architecture as an art.	106
Summary of the Arts of Architecture and Art. . .	107

CHAPTER	PAGE
V. CONCLUSION	108
Jane Austen's Use of <u>Taste</u> in Relation to the	
Arts	108
Unqualified Use of the Term.	108
Susan's Innate Taste	109
Jane Austen's Use of the Term in Relation to	
Specific Arts.	110
Literature	110
Susan's lack of taste in books	110
Edmund's encouragement of Fanny.	111
Captain Benwick's taste for poetry alone	111
Similarity of taste in Marianne and	
Willoughby	112
Emma's taste in collecting riddles	112
Music.	112
Natural taste of Fanny and Mary.	112
Elizabeth's deficiencies in taste.	113
Emma's taste	113
Emma's knowledge of her own taste.	114
Art.	115
Tilneys' taste for the picturesque	115
Edward's lack of taste	115
Edward's confession of lack of taste	116
Architecture or nature	117
Analysis of Jane Austen's Use of the Term.	118

CHAPTER	PAGE
Jane Austen's Artistic Experience Reflected	
in the Lives of Her Characters	118
Artistic inclinations.	119
Absence of authority	119
Literature the dominant art.	120
Summary of artistic trends followed by	
Jane Austen's characters	120
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	121

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen--the daughter of a country parson, a keen observer and recorder of human nature, and a writer with little worldly experience--holds a singular position in English literature as an artist of enduring interest. Her major works, numbering six novels, have maintained a steady popularity since their varying dates of publication just before and after her death in 1817. Characterized by her delicate irony, her own sense of reality, and her love of the burlesque, these novels, as well as her shorter works, are preserved from bitterness or didactic tendencies by an undertone of good humor and kindness, and, according to Harold Child,¹ come nearer to artistic perfection than any other novels in the English language.

Of Miss Austen's letters, which he spent ten years editing, R. W. Chapman² writes that they are memorable, because, read with attention, they yield a picture of the

¹"Jane Austen," Cambridge History of English Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), VII, Part X, 257.

²R. W. Chapman (ed.), Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others (2nd. ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. xl.

life of the upper middle class of that time which is surely without a rival. Later, he indicates that the letters are in the same class as the material for the novels.³ If her writings are typical of upper middle class life in England at that time, they are typical of her own life.

Jane Austen grew up in a country community with only occasional trips to London and to Bath to change the tenor of an existence which she enjoyed enough to portray in her novels. R. Brimley Johnson, in his introduction to Mansfield Park, has this to say of her life in relation to her novels:

It is her own life that Jane Austen has drawn for us in the novels; not even approaching autobiography outside a few isolated characters and events, but very precisely re-creating--with infinite wit, tenderness, and humour--the dear humanity she knew and loved so well; not seeking wider fields, more adventurous drama, or more varied characters, than any ordinary country parish would provide. The pleasures, the pre-occupations, the problems of her heroines were no less Jane's own; she wrote of nothing she did not know, she experienced nothing of which she has not written; it is the perfect union between the author and her books by which her genius achieved artistic beauty and truth.⁴

Her letters show her fond of country entertainment--parties, balls, walking, visiting--but they also show her as, part of the time, a stay-at-home, a favorite in her father's house, where she lived until her early death on July 18, 1817. In her father's home she enjoyed the companionship of a large, warm, and loving family, in which all were encouraged to

³Ibid., p. xlii.

⁴(London: Everyman's Library, 1948), p. xiii.

study, patronize, and participate in the arts. She was educated at home by her father, who was known as the "handsome tutor" in his Oxford days, and who felt that reading and writing were good experiences for his girls' lively minds. An academic atmosphere pervaded the home, for George Austen prepared his sons for higher education at Oxford; and usually a few other students, boys whose ages were near his sons', lived with the Austen family to take advantage of the Rector's instruction.⁵ In this atmosphere Jane Austen wrote with the encouragement of and for the entertainment of her family, and the publication of her later, more polished writings also became a family affair. Of her family's interest and influence Johnson writes:

Though completely isolated from literary friendships and never in touch with professional writers or critics Jane Austen's compensations were almost unique. Inheriting the culture of the classics and a respect for style from generations of distinguished university men, she grew up in the midst of her father's pupils and a family who all loved books, some of whom were fluent penmen, sharing her thoughts, her interests, and ambitions, above all blessed with a sense of humour and the love of life.⁶

Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern remind us that during Jane Austen's lifetime, 1775-1817, the American War of Independence and the loss of the American Colonies, the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror, and the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte became history. They observe,

⁵May Lamberton Becker, Presenting Miss Jane Austen (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1952), pp. 4, 8.

⁶p. xii.

however, that few references to any of these events can be found in her novels despite the influence these historical events had on English life. Explaining the omission of such references, they write that ". . . though her [Jane Austen's] interests were almost exclusively feminine and in the society of her day politics were left mainly, and we suspect indifferently, to the male, she must have been well aware of all that was going on, if only through the family's naval associations. Her decision, therefore, to ignore it all must have been for some good reason, due no doubt to one of her greatest gifts of grace and sense--a knowledge of the limits of her own powers."⁷

Harold Childe relates a story that illustrates her knowledge of the limits of her own powers.⁸ After she visited the library of Carlton House and it was intimated that she might dedicate her next novel to His Royal Highness, she was told that another novel should be dedicated to Prince Leopold of Coburg, an historical romance centering around the history of the House of Coburg. Characteristically, Jane Austen replied in a letter to James Stanier Clarke dated April 1, 1816:

You are very, very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, and I am fully sensible that an historical romance,

⁷ Speaking of Jane Austen (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), p. 21.

⁸ Pp. 258-259.

founded on the House of Saxe Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up, and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way, and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.⁹

Also within the limits of her own powers lay a knowledge of the prevailing arts of the day. In some fields, she had a knowledge resulting from her own participation; in others her knowledge was derived from observation or appreciation. She turned to her feminine interests and wove threads throughout her writing; one of these threads was the arts. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the manner in which she treats these arts. Important factors for consideration are the place the arts held in Jane Austen's day among the accomplishments of a person described by the word "accomplished" and Jane Austen's relation to the cultural trends of her day. These two subjects will be treated at the end of this introductory chapter.

The second chapter is on music as an art in Jane Austen's life and in the lives of her characters. The third chapter considers the literary arts in Jane Austen's life and in the lives of her characters. This includes letter writing, literature, and theater. In Jane Austen's novels, and in her

⁹Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others, pp. 452-453.

own life pictured in her letters, the literary arts are enjoyed by readers, practiced by writers, performed as theater, and delivered as recitation or oral reading. Chapter IV includes a discussion of both art and architecture in Jane Austen's life and in the lives of her characters. The concluding chapter contains a summary of Jane Austen's treatment of the arts, conclusions drawn, and a discussion of artistic taste in relation to the characters in her novels.

Minor arts receive attention in Jane Austen's novels, but they are not considered in this paper as separate topics. Of these minor arts, dancing is the most prominent. In every instance it is presented as a social art, and Miss Austen uses it primarily to advance her plots. Catherine Morland meets her future husband at a dance in Bath in Northanger Abbey. In Emma the complications between Emma Woodhouse and Frank Churchill increase while they are planning a dance which never materializes. Fanny Price, of Mansfield Park, first formally meets society at a dance her uncle, Lord Bertram, gives for her and her brother who is home on leave from the navy; this particular dance is frowned upon by some relatives who feel that Lord Bertram gives undue consideration to these inferior relatives. In Persuasion impromptu country dances are the social order in Anne Elliot's country community, and these dances give insight into Anne's emotional state when she prefers to play for the dances rather than participate in them. Balls at Netherfield in Pride and

Prejudice provide opportunity for the two major romantic combinations to develop. Only in Sense and Sensibility do the characters not participate in the country dance; they are preoccupied with burying sorrows in music and literature and jumping from cliffs.

The remaining minor arts are types of needlework. Charlotte Palmer in Sense and Sensibility has to her credit a landscape in coloured silks which she has embroidered; Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey draws out her netting-box, and her friend Isabella Thorpe mentions a girl who is netting herself "one of the sweetest cloaks you can conceive." Emma Woodhouse bemoans the fact that she has heard of nothing for a month but the pair of sox Jane Fairfax knits for her grandmother. Emma also announces that if she gives up music when she is old she will take up carpetwork. Her reasons for this are given in a statement to Harriet Smith: ". . . mine is an active, busy mind, with a great many independent resources; and I do not perceive why I should be more in want of employment at forty or fifty than one-and-twenty. Woman's usual occupations of eye, and hand, and mind, will be as open to me then as they are now, or with no important variation."¹⁰

¹⁰Emma, ed. R. W. Chapman (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 85. Throughout this thesis, all quotations from Jane Austen's novels are from the five-volume set of her six novels edited by R. W. Chapman. For this reason, facts of publication will not be repeated.

Woman's usual occupations of eye and hand and mind help to make up her accomplishments, so important in Jane Austen's day--accomplishments often shared by men. In one chapter in Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern's collection of essays concerning Jane Austen--a chapter devoted to the pleasures of living in the country in England during Miss Austen's time--we find a list of accomplishments to a lady's credit with which she can amuse herself. This list includes all the arts discussed in this thesis--letter-writing, music, reading, drawing, architecture, and types of needlework.¹¹

A discussion which takes place early in Pride and Prejudice during Jane Bennet's convalescence at Netherfield lists the accomplishments of a young lady. The conversation involves Elizabeth, Darcy, Bingley, and Bingley's two sisters, but it ends in the usual disagreement between Elizabeth and Darcy, with Darcy aided by the slightly biased and very single Miss Bingley, who is always eager to show Elizabeth to disadvantage in Mr. Darcy's eyes:

"It is amazing to me," said Bingley, "how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished, as they all are."

"All young ladies accomplished! My dear Charles, what do you mean?"

"Yes, all of them, I think. They all paint tables, cover skreens and net purses. I scarcely know any one who cannot do all this, and I am sure I never heard a young lady spoken of for the first time, without being informed that she was very accomplished."

"Your list of the common extent of accomplishments," said Darcy, "has too much truth. The word is applied

¹¹ Pp. 92-104.

to many a woman who deserves it no otherwise than by netting a purse, or covering a skreen. But I am very far from agreeing with you in your estimation of ladies in general. I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen, in the whole range of my acquaintance, that are really accomplished."

"Nor I, I am sure," said Miss Bingley.

"Then," observed Elizabeth, "you must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman."

"Yes; I do comprehend a great deal in it."

"Oh! certainly," cried his faithful assistant, "no one can be really esteemed accomplished, who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved."

"All this she must possess," added Darcy, "and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading."

"I am no longer surprised at knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any."

"Are you so severe upon your own sex, as to doubt the possibility of all this?"

"I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united."¹²

Though this conversation gives some idea of what was considered essential to the accomplished woman, emphasis upon the arts in Jane Austen's writing is not confined to women. Her male characters show interest in various arts and, in some cases, are criticized for not being interested. She was writing at a time when the long struggle for women's rights was beginning; and though she does not sympathize apparently with this movement, she does seem to approve of a woman's improving her mind by participation in the arts.

¹²Pp. 39-40.

Concerning the cultural trends of the period, Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern write:

When she was born the classical or Augustan age had already passed. Formality in art, manners, and ideas had given place to something much more free and spontaneous. In poetry the stiffness of the heroic couplet had yielded to more romantic and irregular verse-forms, and Pope and Addison had been dethroned as popular idols in favour of Cowper and Scott. Shakespeare, on the other hand, had come back into his own after years of eclipse as a barbarian. In art, formal representation of dignified and pleasing objects had given place to the new standards of the "picturesque"; abbeys, blasted trees, lowering skies and ragged bands of gypsies were the subjects of those popular prints turned out in their hundreds by new processes of engraving. As in art, so in architecture. The stiff, solid, useful shapes of Georgian country houses were being set upon by a gang of "improvers"--of whom Repton was the chief--and spiked and frizzled into Gothic gables. The Gothic became the rage as a symbol of ruin and romance, even to the extent of faked ruins and ornamental hermitages.¹³

Jane Austen is undoubtedly influenced by these cultural trends of her day. The "picturesque" in art is revealed in Marianne Dashwood's attitude; Cowper is quoted frequently enough to be considered by some as Jane Austen's favorite poet; Shakespeare provides Henry Crawford with one of his most impressive moments in Fanny Price's estimation; and Catherine Morland adores the Gothic.

Though Jane Austen is influenced by the cultural trends, she does not entirely go along with them, for as R. Brimley Johnson has said, she wrote of what she knew. In some respects she might be termed romantic, but extreme

romanticism finds only ridicule in her novels. Her own particular brand of realism, including irony and satire, is the prevailing tone of all her writing. Two devotees comment thus:

Jane Austen herself was certainly no romantic, and as a writer she stands away from the twin schools of the Picturesque Revival--the historical and the sensational--from the one which she admired as much as from the one which she did not. Her place is in the traditional, realistic school of English fiction which found other contemporary exponents in Henry Mackenzie and Fanny Burney. These writers are the direct descendants of Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett, and the direct ancestors of Dickens, Thackeray, and Arnold Bennett. But they are influenced by the Romantic Movement, even though it does not change their course. While avoiding the fantastic and sensational and confining themselves to much the same sort of subjects as their predecessors--that is, ordinary English life in their own day--they nevertheless treat that subject in a rather different manner.¹⁴

Her attitude toward the arts seems to be one of enjoyment and not specialization. In her own life, portrayed in her letters, this is true; she had experience in all the arts, she was skilled in some, and she showed appreciation for others. But only one of her heroines shares her well-rounded attitude. Of all her characters only Emma Woodhouse actively participates in all the arts. As Miss Austen points out, however, Emma does not do well in all of them. All the major characters share the author's enthusiasm for literature, and literature would seem to be the dominant art in the novels as it appears to be in Miss Austen's letters. In my

¹⁴Kaye-Smith and Stern, p. 28.

discussion of the role of the major arts in Jane Austen's six novels, I have included excerpts from her letters which show that Jane Austen wrote of what she knew and that these arts were important in the society of her time--the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth.

CHAPTER II

MUSIC

Music, the art receiving the most attention in Jane Austen's novels, was also a part of her life. Music of one form or another is frequently mentioned in her letters, showing not only that she was interested in this art but that she also practiced it. In the novels, she gives attention to both vocal and instrumental performances as well as to appreciation of music in concerts and entertainment at social gatherings.

Just as she shows her characters to be, Jane Austen was interested in such musical endeavors as writing music, playing the piano, singing, attending the opera, or discussing music. In a letter to Cassandra dated January 8, 1799, she writes: "Elizabeth is very cruel about my writing music, and, as a punishment for her, I should insist upon always writing all hers for her in the future, if I were not punishing myself at the same time."¹ Later, in the same letter, she mentions a mamalone cap which is "all the fashion now; worn at the opera." As an indication of her own musical ability, she writes in the same letter: "This complaint in

¹Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others, pp. 48-50.

my eye has been a sad bore to me, for I have not been able to read or work in any comfort since Friday, but one advantage will be derived from it, for I shall be such a proficient in music by the time I have got rid of my cold, that I shall be perfectly qualified in that science at least to take Mr. Roope's office at Eastwell next summer."

The favorite instrument in both her letters and her novels is the piano, which she writes of frequently in her letters and uses in each of her six novels. This delight in the piano, in characters who can play it, and in performances on the instrument is easily understood. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, during Jane Austen's life, the piano gained more and more supremacy over its predecessors, the clavichord and the harpsichord. The first recorded performance on a pianoforte in England occurred in 1767, only eight years before Jane Austen was born.² Apparently, in her community, the popularity of the instrument was established by the time she was old enough to be interested in it. Illustrative of her interest in the piano is a comment to Cassandra in a letter dated December 27, 1808: "Yes, yes, we will have a pianoforte, as good a one as can be got for thirty guineas, and I will practise country dances, that we may have some amusement for our nephews and nieces, when we have the pleasure of their company."³

²Kathleen Schlesinger and S. A. Hurren, "Pianoforte," Encyclopaedia Britannica, XVII (1960), 897.

³Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others, pp. 243-244.

Just as in her novels, music was, in her own life, a part of an evening's entertainment. She delighted in not only the piano but also the harp and singing, as we see in her letter to Cassandra dated April 18, 1811: ". . . above 80 people are invited for next tuesday Even & there is to be some very good Music, 5 professionals, 3 of them Glee singers, besides Amateurs.--Fanny will listen to this. One of the Hirelings, is a capital on the Harp, from which I expect great pleasure."⁴ This quotation and the following one in a letter to Cassandra written on May 29, 1811, indicate her pleasure in the music of other people: "Miss H. is an elegant, pleasing, pretty-looking girl, about nineteen and a half, or nineteen and a quarter, with flowers in her head and music at her finger ends. She plays very well indeed. I have seldom heard anybody with more pleasure."⁵

Like their author, her characters concern themselves with the arts. Music is more prominent in Emma than in any other novel, and in Emma more characters are involved with music than in any other novel. Those who actually practice the art of music are Emma Woodhouse, around whom the story centers, and her friend, Jane Fairfax. The contrast between the two girls' accomplishments provides much of the interest in the plot. Miss Austen explains Emma's playing on the pianoforte in this way: "She played and sang; . . . but

⁴Ibid., pp. 269-270.

⁵Ibid., pp. 282-283.

steadiness had always been wanting; and in nothing had she approached the degree of excellence which she would have been glad to command, and ought not to have failed of. She was not much deceived as to her own skill . . . as a musician, but she was not unwilling to have others deceived, or sorry to know her reputation for accomplishment often higher than it deserved."⁶

Frank Churchill, a major character in the book, who says of himself that he is excessively fond of music without the smallest skill or right of judging of anybody's performance, questions Emma about Jane's playing, and Emma replies: "You forgot how much she belongs to Highbury. I have heard her every year of our lives since we both began. She plays charmingly."⁷ Emma is able to make this comment after having played in Jane Fairfax's presence: "They had music; Emma was obliged to play; and the thanks and praise which necessarily followed appeared to her an affectation of candour, an air of greatness, meaning only to show off in higher style her [Jane's] own superior performance."⁸

Though the antagonistic feeling on Emma's part toward Jane Fairfax resolves itself in the happy ending to the story, it provides action for the plot, and much of the feeling of rivalry comes from Emma's feelings of inferiority in the art of music. Miss Austen writes: "She did unfeignedly and

⁶P. 44.

⁷Ibid., p. 201.

⁸Ibid., pp. 168-169.

unequivocally regret the inferiority of her own playing and singing. She did most heartily grieve over the idleness of her childhood; and sat down and practised vigorously an hour and a half."⁹

Harriet Smith throws more light on the contrast between the two and also on her own complete detachment from any knowledge of music when she interrupts Emma's practicing:

"Oh, if I could but play as well as you and Miss Fairfax!"

"Don't class us together, Harriet. My playing is no more like hers than a lamp is like sunshine."

"Oh dear, I think you play the best of the two. I think you play quite as well as she does. I am sure I had much rather hear you. Everybody last night said how well you played."

"Those who knew anything about it must have felt the difference. The truth is, Harriet, that my playing is just good enough to be praised, but Jane Fairfax's is much beyond it."

"Well, I always shall think that you play quite as well as she does, or that if there is any difference nobody would ever find it out. Mr. Cole said how much taste you had! and Mr. Frank Churchill talked a great deal about your taste, and that he valued taste much more than execution."

"Ah, but Jane Fairfax has them both, Harriet."

"Are you sure? I saw she had execution, but I did not know she had any taste. Nobody talked about it. . . ."¹⁰

Throughout the story, a mystery surrounding an anonymous gift of a piano to Jane Fairfax puzzles characters until, in the end, Frank Churchill admits to Emma that it is he who has given the piano to Jane. Especially in the eighth chapter of the second book, when the piano first is noticed, Miss

⁹Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁰Ibid.

Bates, Mrs. Cole, and Mrs. Weston divulge their own musical knowledge in talking about events surrounding the arrival of the piano. Mrs. Cole remarks: ". . . it was but yesterday I was telling Mr. Cole I really was ashamed to look at our grand pianoforte in the drawing-room, while I do not know one note from another, and our little girls, who are but just beginning, perhaps may never make anything of it; and there is Jane Fairfax, who is mistress of music, has not anything of the nature of an instrument, not even the pitifullest old spinet in the world, to amuse herself with."¹¹ Though Emma wishes to avoid discussion of the newly acquired pianoforte, her friend Mrs. Weston persists, according to Miss Austen: "Mrs. Weston, kind-hearted and musical, was particularly interested by the circumstances, and Emma could not help being amused at her perseverance in dwelling on the subject; and having so much to ask and to say as to tone, touch, and pedal, totally unsuspecting of that wish of saying as little about it as possible which she plainly read in the fair heroine's countenance."¹²

Miss Bates and her mother, both completely engrossed in the accomplishments of their niece and granddaughter, comment on music only in praise of their talented Jane, and for them the piano serves as a new topic of conversation concerning

¹¹Ibid., pp. 215-216.

¹²Ibid., p. 220.

her. Mrs. Weston adds the finishing touch to Emma's discomfort over the whole mystery by commenting on Mr. Knightley's interest in music as related to Jane and even suggests that perhaps he is the anonymous donor: "I have heard him express himself so warmly on those points. Such an admirer of her performance on the pianoforte, and of her voice. I have heard him say that he could listen to her forever. Oh! and I had almost forgotten one idea that occurred to me--this pianoforte that has been sent here by somebody . . . may it not be from Mr. Knightley? I cannot help suspect him."¹³

Ending the parade of characters in Emma who associate themselves in some way with music is the ridiculous Mrs. Elton, apparently a type which Jane Austen wants to parody. After assuring Emma of her own mediocre ability and praising Emma for her superior performing, Mrs. Elton rushes on to expand her grateful feelings for having landed in so musical a society as Highbury. She speaks of her husband's fears that she would be coming to a society of relative retirement in relation to what she has been accustomed to, but she reports that she has assured him that she can give up anything--parties, balls, plays, large rooms, two carriages, and all the luxuries of Maple Grove, her former home--if she only has music. I cite her own words: "'But,' said I, 'to be quite honest, I do not think I can live without something of a musical society. I condition for nothing else; but,

¹³Ibid., p. 226.

without music, life would be a blank to me."¹⁴ Emma acidly replies that she hopes Mr. Elton has not outstepped the truth "more than may be pardoned, in consideration of the motive."¹⁵

Characters associating themselves with music in some way are also prominent in Sense and Sensibility. Marianne Dashwood, the personification of the term sensibility in the title, is the most musical character in this novel. Music is apparently natural with Marianne, who finds it a part of her home life. After the Dashwoods arrive at Barton, their new home, one of the first attempts to establish the cottage as their own is the unpacking of her pianoforte.¹⁶ Even before the move, Marianne confides in her mother her doubts of Edward's taste, a cause for concern to her because of his apparent attachment to her sister Elinor: "And besides all this, I am afraid, mama, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him, . . . I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings; the same books, the same music must charm us both."¹⁷

Throughout the novel Marianne finds satisfaction in music. At one of Lady Middleton's social affairs, she per-

¹⁴Ibid., p. 277.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Pp. 29-30.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 17-18.

forms for the group: "In the evening, as Marianne was discovered to be musical, she was invited to play. The instrument was unlocked, every body prepared to be charmed, and Marianne, who sang very well, at their request went through the chief of the songs which Lady Middleton had brought into the family on her marriage."¹⁸ Willoughby, the young man who breaks her heart, connects himself with Marianne's music also. Early in their acquaintance "they speedily discovered that their enjoyment of dancing and music was mutual."¹⁹ Their brief friendship leaves Marianne with many memories, for "they read, they talked, they sang together; his musical talents were considerable."²⁰

These musical talents of Willoughby's are never off her mind again. When he leaves, even when she feels he will return, music is a source of nostalgia as it is on the first evening after his departure: "The evening passed off in the equal indulgence of feeling. She played over every favourite song that she had been used to play to Willoughby, every air in which their voices had been oftenest joined, and sat at the instrument gazing on every line of music that he had written out for her, till her heart was so heavy that no farther sadness could be gained; and this nourishment of grief was every day applied. She spent whole hours at the

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 34-35.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 47.

²⁰Ibid., p. 48.

pianoforte alternately singing and crying; her voice often totally suspended by her tears."²¹ The emotion evoked by music after she learns Willoughby's true character is even greater when she returns from the city to Barton: "After dinner she would try her pianoforte. She went to it; but the music on which her eye first rested was an opera, procured for her by Willoughby, containing some of their favourite duets, and bearing on its outward leaf her own name in his handwriting.--That would not do.--She shook her head, put the music aside."²² Later, as she faces reality, she announces her plans to devote half of her time each day to music.²³

Marianne's counterpart, the personification of sense in the title, is connected with music only in relation to Marianne, for Elinor's chief pastime is drawing. She does defend Marianne's behavior to Lady Middleton when Marianne refuses to join a rubber of casino by diplomatically saying, "Marianne can never keep long from that instrument you know, ma'am, and I do not much wonder at it; for it is the very best toned pianoforte I ever heard."²⁴

Though Mrs. Dashwood is not often connected in any way with music, she does remark when both girls are planning

²¹Ibid., p. 83.

²²Ibid., p. 342.

²³Ibid., p. 343.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 144-145.

to go away for a while to the city that she and their younger sister, Margaret, who is rarely mentioned in the story, will go on happily and quietly together with their books and music. She suggests as they are leaving, "You will find Margaret so improved when you come back again!"²⁵

In Mansfield Park, music takes on a new aspect with Mary Crawford's harp, but the major character, Fanny Price, contents herself only with a taste for music. Her two cousins, displaying their superiority which their Aunt Norris will not let them forget, report to this aunt early in the story, "But I must tell you another thing of Fanny, so odd and so stupid. Do you know she says she does not want to learn either music or drawing."²⁶

Music is the cause of much suffering on Fanny's part as she observes Mary's musical talent with the harp as well as with glees and other musical activities. This talent helps Mary captivate Edmund's attentions and affections, the object of the only desires Fanny has ever known. When Miss Crawford first announces that she has news of her harp and that it soon will be there, Fanny expresses a desire to hear her play, for she has never heard a harp. But it is Edmund, not Fanny, who is honored with all performances until after Edmund's departure; then one day when she is caught in the rain at the home

²⁵Ibid., pp. 155-156.

²⁶p. 19.

of Mary Crawford and her sister, Fanny hears the harp. When Miss Crawford happily agrees to perform, she first expresses astonishment that Fanny has not yet heard the harp, but, "To Fanny herself it appeared a very simple and natural circumstance. She had scarcely ever been at the Parsonage since that instrument's arrival, there had been no reason that she should."²⁷ As she plays, Miss Crawford notices that her new listener is obliged for the performance, full of wonder, and not wanting in taste.²⁸ An impromptu glee involving the Misses Bertram and Miss Crawford brings further pain to Fanny as Edmund joins the delighted audience for the trio's performance, forgetting his recent discussion with Fanny about being able to appreciate the beauty of a clear night and his promise to go outside with her to observe the skies.²⁹

To Edmund, who in time recovers his senses to realize that Fanny is the ideal wife, musical interest stems from his interest in Miss Crawford. As soon as he learns that Miss Crawford is awaiting the arrival of her harp, he proclaims the harp as his favorite instrument and receives a promise of an invitation to hear her play.³⁰ A discussion on the sea as a profession, provoked by the mention of Fanny's brother and Edmund's desire to protect Fanny from any slights as well as to agree with Miss Crawford's ideas on the subject, borders

²⁷Ibid., pp. 206-207.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 113.

³⁰Ibid., p. 59.

on the unpleasant until Edmund again mentions the harp and his anticipation of hearing Miss Crawford play.³¹ Edmund soon becomes a daily visitor to the parsonage to hear the lovely lady perform.

For Mary Crawford, music is a decidedly great advantage. Miss Austen comments that the harp arrives and rather adds to Miss Crawford's beauty, wit, and good humour. The author describes the musical activities thus: "A young woman, pretty, lively, with a harp as elegant as herself; and both placed near a window, cut down to the ground, and opening on a little lawn, surrounded by shrubs in the rich foliage of summer, was enough to catch any man's heart. The season, the scene, the air, were all favourable to tenderness and sentiment . . . it was all in harmony."³²

Pride and Prejudice also presents characters interested in the arts. In this novel, Elizabeth Bennet is the major musician. Her friend Charlotte Lucas is responsible for Elizabeth's playing at the first ball at Netherfield; the performance draws this comment from Miss Austen: "Her performance was pleasing, though by no means capital." But compared to her sister Mary, who immediately follows her at the instrument, Elizabeth is easy and unaffected, for Mary "had neither genius nor taste; and though vanity had given

³¹Ibid., p. 60.

³²Ibid., pp. 64-65.

her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner, which would have injured a higher degree of excellence than she had reached."³³ Mary's music brings only humiliation to Elizabeth on occasions such as the night when Mary plays at Netherfield to her own delight, to Elizabeth's consternation, and to the derision of Mr. Bingley's sisters.³⁴

Miss Bingley, who seeks Darcy's attention, is also musical and usually finds the attention she seeks on Elizabeth. On one occasion she asks Elizabeth to play first when a request for music comes, but Elizabeth politely refuses.³⁵ Yet Elizabeth realizes her own faults as a musician, and she confides this to Darcy when they are both in Lady Catherine's presence: "My fingers do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault--because I would not take the trouble of practising. It is not that I do not believe my fingers as capable as any other woman's of superior execution."³⁶

Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr. Collins's patroness, gives music her attention only in criticism of Elizabeth's

³³p. 25.

³⁴Ibid., p. 100.

³⁵Ibid., p. 51.

³⁶Ibid., p. 175.

musical ability and grief for her own invalid daughter's inability when Lady Catherine knows surely that her daughter would be good in music except for her poor health which made it impossible for her to pursue the art.³⁷ Bingley's two sisters also play and sing in the novel; once they sing together in an attempt to capture Darcy's attention, which is fixed on Elizabeth.³⁸ Darcy's sister, about whom Elizabeth grows increasingly curious as the story progresses, is, according to the housekeeper at Pemberley when Elizabeth first visits the estate, "the handsomest young lady that ever was seen; and so accomplished!--She plays and sings all day long."³⁹ News of Miss Darcy's musical accomplishments finds a line of communication in Miss Bingley, who wants to report all to Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

The pompous Mr. Collins expounds on music in relation to the life of the clergyman after Mary embarrasses the family with her dogged performance: "If I were so fortunate as to be able to sing, I should have great pleasure, I am sure, in obliging the company with an air; for I consider music as a very innocent diversion, and perfectly compatible with the profession of a clergyman,--I do not mean however, to assert that we can be justified in devoting too much of our time to

³⁷Ibid., p. 173.

³⁸Ibid., p. 51.

³⁹Ibid., p. 248.

music, for there are certainly other things to be attended to."⁴⁰

In Persuasion, as in Emma, Miss Austen sometimes contrasts the musical accomplishments of the heroine with those of lesser characters. Anne Elliot is the heroine in this novel and the main musician in the story, though the two Musgrove sisters, friends of Anne, also play and have the advantage of a loving and prejudiced family to encourage them in the art. Miss Austen compares the three girls in the following way: "She [Anne] played a great deal better than either of the other two, but having no voice, no knowledge of the harp, and no fond parents, to sit by and fancy themselves delighted, her performance was little thought of, only out of civility, or to refresh the others, as she was well aware. . . . In music she had always used to feel alone in the world; and Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove's fond partiality for their own daughters' performance, and total indifference to any other person's, gave her much more pleasure for their sakes, than mortification for her own."⁴¹

Yet the parents of the two Musgrove girls do commend Anne for her musical abilities on occasion. Anne, who is still cherishing a dream of Philip Wentworth, finds little enjoyment in the social activities of her country neighborhood

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 101.

⁴¹Pp. 46-47.

and uses her music to stay out of them: "The girls were wild for dancing; . . . and Anne, very much preferring the office of a musician to a more active post, played country dances to them by the hour together; a kindness which always recommended her musical powers to the notice of Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove more than anything else, and often drew this compliment--'Well done, Miss Anne! very well done, indeed! Lord bless me! how those little fingers of yours fly about.'"⁴²

Even after Captain Wentworth's return to the neighborhood, Anne's position as musician at social gatherings does not change, and often she is happy with the circumstances. "The evening ended with dancing. On its being proposed, Anne offered her services, as usual; and though her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she sat at the instrument, she was extremely glad to be employed, and desired nothing in return but to be unobserved."⁴³ Concerts which Anne and her friends frequently attend offer her further opportunity for contact with Wentworth, and on one occasion, she enjoys a grave conversation with him at intermission. This conversation is interrupted by a request from her cousin for further translation of Italian, and she "sacrifices to politeness with a suffering spirit."⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid., p. 47.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 71-72.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 190.

Though not so prominent as in Mansfield Park, the harp enters the musical scene of Persuasion. The two Misses Musgrove are also accomplished on the harp, and this instrument figures in one evening's entertainment at the cottage when the two girls announce that they have brought the harp since it seems to amuse their mother more than the pianoforte when she is out of spirits because of memories of her dead son Richard, the black sheep of the family.⁴⁵

Of all Miss Austen's novels, Northanger Abbey furnishes least comment on music. The heroine, Catherine Morland, a parody on the heroines of Gothic romances, is in complete contrast to the usual heroines of novels. In introductory statements, the reader learns that "Her mother wished her to learn music; and Catherine was sure she should like it for she was very fond of tinkling the keys of the old forlorn spinet, so at eight years old she began. She learnt a year and could not bear it; and Mrs. Morland who did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste, allowed her to leave off. The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life."⁴⁶ This particular reference to Catherine's lack of musical knowledge and training and isolated references to her attending evening concerts during her stay in Bath are

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁶p. 14.

the only comments Jane Austen makes on music in Northanger Abbey.

Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern summarize musical activities in the lives of Jane Austen's characters. After noting Emma Woodhouse's honesty in reference to her own performing, they continue:

We have already discovered that Mrs. Morland has such sense as not to make her young Catherine keep on banging at the piano when she has no natural gift for it. Mary Bennett earned the reputation, by assiduous practice and highbrow tastes, as a notable performer, but she keeps on too long at the Netherfield ball: "That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit." Mary, it is true, was an exhibitionist; her music can give little pleasure to others. Of Elizabeth's talent we hear when she visits Rosings: "Miss Bennett would not play at all amiss if she practised more, and could have the advantage of a London master. She has a very good notion of fingering." And Elizabeth confesses: "My fingers . . . do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault-- because I would not take the trouble of practising."

Marianne was forever at the piano, playing and singing; and Colonel Brandon was enraptured, though nobody else in John Middleton's house took the trouble to listen with any attention. Mary Crawford will always be associated with the harp. . . .

Henrietta and Louisa had been to school in Exeter. . . . Both sisters were wild for dancing, and Anne Elliot used to play country dances to them by the hour together. . . . Anne would never have been a showy performer in anything.⁴⁷

These same two authorities observe that Jane Austen does not follow the pattern of later Victorian novels in which the young ladies frequently fall in love with their

⁴⁷Speaking of Jane Austen, p.114.

music masters. They offer a suggestion as to why Jane Austen's heroines ignore their instructors: "In Victorian novels a little later, young ladies pined and sighed their bloom away for love of the drawing-master, the Italian master, the music-master; . . . But the masters in Jane Austen's books must have lacked romantic attraction, and their influence on their pupils' minds was absolutely non-existent; perhaps because the governess always sat in the room; but then the Bennets had no governess, we are told this expressly, when Elizabeth defends her father's ideas on education against the impertinent inquiries of Lady Catherine."⁴⁸

That Jane Austen herself practiced the art of music is evident from her letters, but she frequently includes comments and observations that could be made by a mere observer, one who does not practice the art. In her letters and in her novels music plays a definite part in country society, particularly for entertainment. Although much of her treatment of music could be that of a person who is no authority or critic, she does include comments that would need to come from the pen of a person practiced in the art.

Elizabeth Bennet's comment, which Kaye-Smith and Stern quoted, includes reference to force, fingering, and expression. The Musgroves comment on Anne Elliot's fingering,

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 107-108.

their only compliment to her musical ability. Emma and Harriet discuss a difference of opinion concerning taste and execution and which is to be preferred if both cannot be present in a person's playing. Emma Woodhouse and Elizabeth Bennet both express the idea that practice is essential for excellence. Emma is so remorseful over her own inability in comparison to that of Jane Fairfax that she practices steadily for one afternoon. Elizabeth implies that if she were to practice more she could be as good as other persons whose fingers do move with force and rapidity.

It is possible that two of Miss Austen's characters, whom Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern call "chumps,"-- Mr. Collins of Pride and Prejudice and Mrs. Elton of Emma-- are meant to ridicule attitudes toward music which Miss Austen deplores. Mrs. Elton is the one who palavers about the necessity of music in her life and about how she is grateful for having arrived in so musical a society as Highbury; yet her own musical ability is never demonstrated. Mr. Collins is the pompous, pious clergyman who owes all that he is and has to his gracious great lady, Lady Catherine de Bourgh; and he condescends during an evening's entertainment to place his stamp of approval on music as an activity completely compatible with the life of a church man--provided that music does not assume importance out of proportion to the importance of regular duties.

Two of Miss Austen's heroes are important in the musical scene. Frank Churchill of Emma is frank about his lack of education in music and thus can turn the burden of criticism of Jane Fairfax's playing to Emma. Willoughby in Sense and Sensibility completely captures Marianne's affections, being helped partially by his excellent musical talent and taste; but Miss Austen points out that his musical abilities simply show him to be more of an opportunist than a musician.

Thus, in her treatment of music as an art, Miss Austen shows it to be a part of upper middle-class life, one of the abilities of a young lady who is to be considered accomplished, a device in bringing about certain incidents in plots, and a subject about which she can be either an appreciative observer or a cultivated participant.

CHAPTER III

LITERARY ARTS

Just as literature of all types was a part of her life, Jane Austen makes it part of the lives of her characters. She shows them to have a knowledge of novels, histories, plays, poetry, essays, and even newspapers. She makes books available to them, for they were always available to her.

In her letters she voices decided opinions about literature, and many of these same literary works she mentions in her novels. She places literature as a part of a young person's education. Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern write that voluntary reading supplied much of the education given Jane Austen's heroines: "Yet it appears that though Mothers, governesses, and masters perform their share in the education of their daughters, a great deal is still left to voluntary reading."¹

"We could build a small library," they say "from the scattered mention of books throughout Jane Austen's six novels." Fanny Price's favorite novels include Lord Macartney's works, Crabbe's Tales, and the Idler; Marianne

¹Ibid., p. 112.

Dashwood favors Cowper, Scott, and Thomson; Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe share enthusiasm for "horrid" novels and name specifically Udolpho and the Orphan of the Rhine; John Thorpe rejects Camilla. Miss Andrews, a friend of Isabella Thorpe's who never appears in the story, reads Sir Charles Grandison, and Mr. Collins reads Fordyce's Sermons aloud to the five Bennet girls before he is rudely interrupted by Lydia's aimless chatter. After Robert Martin reads Vicar of Wakefield, Harriet Smith recommends Children of the Abbey and Romance of the Forest to him for further reading.²

These same two critics comment on two of Jane Austen's heroines and their reading habits. Catherine Morland of Northanger Abbey is a delightful opposite of the romantic heroine, but she is a heroine influenced by reading of such romantic characters. These writers point out Jane Austen's presentation of Catherine's reading habits as those any young heroine of the late eighteenth century should be developing. She reads Pope, Gray, Thomson, Shakespeare, and the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe--in Jane Austen's words, "those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in their [heroines'] eventful lives." Kaye-Smith and Stern delight in "that special mood of mocking at contemporary orthodoxy."³

²Ibid., pp. 117-118.

³Ibid., p. 111.

They then turn to an examination of Anne Elliot's reading habits and find a young lady of twenty-seven, well past the age that most young women marry and still cherishing a hope of marrying a childhood sweetheart, who finds comfort in her reading. This is obvious from her recommendations for reading to Captain Benwick to help him overcome the pain of a broken heart.⁴

The majority of her letters are written to her sister Cassandra, who shared her most intimate thoughts and ideas; and because reading was one of her happiest occupations, ephemeral publications and literature find their way into her letters. She frequently mentions occurrences of which she has learned from the newspaper, as in the following comment to her brother Frank in a letter dated July 3, 1813: "I wonder whether you happened to see Mr. Blacall's marriage in the papers last Jany. We did."⁵

Letter Writing

In her letters she displays an interest in letter writing and style that the characters in her book share. Among the earliest letters in R. W. Chapman's collection of her letters, she comments on her own letters and those of others. To Cassandra on January 14, 1796, she establishes two aspects of pleasing style in a negative way as she tells

⁴Ibid., p. 114.

⁵Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others, pp. 316-317.

of a previous letter she has written: "It was not very long or very witty, and therefore if you never receive it, it does not much signify."⁶ With the tongue-in-cheek humor she so often displays in her novels, she says in the same letter: "I am very much flattered by your commendations of my last letter, for I write only for fame, and without any view to pecuniary emolument." An illustration of her evaluation of Cassandra's humor and writing style comes in a letter to her dated September 1, 1796: "The letter which I have at this moment received from you has diverted me beyond moderation. I could die of laughter at it, as they used to say at school. You are indeed the finest comic writer of the present age."⁷

Of a certain style in her own letter she writes to Cassandra on September 15, 1813, and illustrates the style as she goes: "I am going to write nothing but short sentences. There shall be two full stops in every line. Layton and Shear's is Bedford House. We mean to get there before breakfast if it's possible; for we feel more and more how much we have to do and how little time. This house looks very nice. It seems like Sloane Street moved here. I believe Henry is just rid of Sloane Street."⁸

This enjoyment of writing and receiving letters, evident in the volume of her own correspondence, carries

⁶Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁷Ibid., p. 8.

⁸Ibid., p. 319.

over into her novels. Letters to and from her characters are commentaries on style in letter writing, means of characterization, or instruments in unwinding plots. Mansfield Park includes more on the literary art of letter writing than any other novel.

In this novel, Fanny Price is the primary character concerned with epistolary pursuits. She values her brother's letters highly and is shocked to hear Mary Crawford run down brothers generally for their lack of consideration for sisters or others in their families in not writing. Mary remarks that all men have one style among them--that of the fewest possible words--and continues by quoting a typical letter from her brother Henry, who is a perfect brother in every way except in the matter of correspondence: "Dear, Mary, I am just arrived. Bath seems full, and everything is as usual. Your's sincerely." She calls such a letter "the true manly style" and "a complete brother's letter."⁹ Fanny later comments to Edmund that although Mary Crawford's comments on letter writing almost made her laugh, "I cannot rate so very highly the love or good nature of a brother, who will not give himself the trouble of writing any thing worth reading, to his sisters, when they are separated." "I am sure William would never have used me so," she continues. "And what right had she to suppose you would not write long letters when you were absent?"¹⁰

⁹Pp. 59-60.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 64.

Fanny never has an opportunity to read a long letter from Edmund, but her first written communication from him comes in the form of a note attached to the gift he gives her before her first dance. To her, the note, written in haste, is without fault; and Miss Austen comments, showing Fanny's complete partiality for the writer of the note, ". . . it was impossible that she should ever receive another so perfectly gratifying in the occasion and style. Two lines more prized had never fallen from the pen of the most distinguished author--never more completely blessed the researches of the fondest biographer."¹¹

The intended relation between Fanny and Henry Crawford, intended by Henry and his sister, is the cause of much correspondence. Fanny finds it necessary early in Mr. Crawford's attempts at courtship to send a note to his sister telling her that she (Fanny) cannot continue to accept such overtures. She writes in haste, and "she had no doubt that her note must appear excessively ill-written, that the language would disgrace a child, for her distress had allowed no arrangement; but at least it would assure them both of her being neither imposed on, or gratified by Mr. Crawford's attentions."¹² Mr. Crawford's attentions, however, did not stop, and Fanny receives assurance of his continuing interest through letters from his sister. "It was a correspondence

¹¹Ibid., p. 265.

¹²Ibid., pp. 307-308.

which Fanny found quite as unpleasant as she had feared. Miss Crawford's style of writing, lively and affectionate, was itself an evil, independent of what she was thus forced into reading from the brother's pen, for Edmund would never rest till she had read the chief of the letter to him, and then she had to listen to his admiration of her language, and the warmth of her attachments."¹³

Concerning Lady Bertram's delight in correspondence, Jane Austen comments in a way to give the reader an understanding of this phlegmatic lady's personality:

Everybody at all addicted to letter writing, without having much to say, which will include a large proportion of the female world at least, must feel with Lady Bertram, that she was out of luck in having such a capital piece of Mansfield news, as the certainty of the Grants going to Bath, occur at a time when she could make no advantage of it, and will admit that it must have been very mortifying to her to see it fall to the share of her thankless son, and treated as concisely as possible at the end of a long letter, instead of having it to spread over the largest part of a page of her own.--For though Lady Bertram rather shone in the epistolary line, having early in her marriage, from the want of other employment, and the circumstance of Sir Thomas's being in Parliament, got into the way of making and keeping correspondents, and formed for herself a very creditable, common-place, amplifying style, so that a very little matter was enough for her; she could not do entirely without any; she must have something to write about, even to her niece, and being so soon to lose all the benefit of Dr. Grant's gouty symptoms and Mrs. Grant's morning calls, it was very hard upon her to be deprived of one of the last epistolary uses she could put them to.¹⁴

¹³Ibid., pp. 375-376.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 425.

In Northanger Abbey Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney discuss letter writing on their very first meeting at a ball in Bath. Henry tries to decide what Catherine will write in her journal about him, and he is sure that all young ladies keep journals. This leads to a discussion of the equality of men and women in the matter of letter writing, with Henry's characteristic teasing manner setting the tone of the discussion:

"It is this delightful habit of journalising which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Everybody allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female. Nature may have done something, but I am sure it must be essentially assisted by the practice of keeping a journal."

"I have sometimes thought," said Catherine, doubtfully, "whether ladies do write so much better than gentlemen. That is, I should not think the superiority was always on our side."

"As far as I have had opportunity of judging it appears to me that the usual style of letter-writing among women is faultless, except in three particulars . . . a general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and a very frequent ignorance of grammar."

"Upon my word, I need not have been afraid of disclaiming the compliment! You do not think too highly of us in that way."

"I should no more lay it down as a general rule that women write better letters than men, than that they sing better duets, or draw better landscapes. In every power of which taste is the foundation, excellence is pretty fairly divided between the sexes."¹⁵

In Emma, Emma's superior attitude is evident in her reaction to the letter Harriet receives from her yeoman friend Robert Martin, who proposes to Harriet. Emma is surprised at the style of his letter--there were no grammatical errors, and

¹⁵pp. 26-28.

the composition would not have disgraced a gentleman. She sees that the language is plain but strong and unaffected and the sentiments to the credit of the writer. "It was short, but expressed good sense, warm attachment, liberality, propriety, even delicacy of feeling. She paused over it while Harriet stood anxiously watching for her opinion, with a 'Well, well,' and was at last forced to add, 'Is it a good letter, or is it too short?'" When she answers Harriet's anxious inquiry, it is with the purpose of being nice but condescending: "Yes, indeed, a very good letter . . . I think one of his sisters must have helped him. I can hardly imagine the young man whom I saw talking with you the other day could express himself so well, if left quite to his own powers, and yet it is not the style of a woman; no, certainly, it is too strong and concise; but diffuse enough for a woman. . . . Yes, I understand the sort of mind. Vigorous, decided, with sentiments to a certain point not coarse. A better written letter, Harriet, than I had expected."¹⁶

Much later in the book, Emma shows Mr. Knightley a letter she has received from Frank Churchill, and his comments are those of a slightly jealous lover: "Humph! a fine complimentary opening: but it is his way. One man's style must not be the rule of another's. We will not be severe."¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 51-52.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 444-445.

In Pride and Prejudice the Bennet family's first acquaintance with Mr. Collins comes in his letter which announces his intention of visiting them. The letter draws varied reactions as each one in the family tries to determine what sort of man this distant cousin is. Elizabeth remarks: "He must be an oddity, I think. I cannot make him out.-- There is something very pompous in his stile.-- . . . Can he be a sensible man, sir?" Her father replies: "No, my dear, I think not. I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter, which promises well. I am impatient to see him." The pedantic Mary adds: "In point of composition his letter does not seem defective. The idea of the olive branch perhaps is not wholly new, yet I think it is well expressed."¹⁸

As a literary art letters in Jane Austen's novels have their place. Letter writing is a literary art practiced by writers, whether they are revealing character, developing plot, or commenting on style. Jane Austen uses letters in all these ways.

Literature

Books, an important part of her life, were fixtures in her home. To Cassandra on October 27, 1798, shortly after her arrival at Steventon, she writes: "The books from Winton are all unpacked and put away; the binding has compressed

¹⁸p. 64.

them most conveniently, and there is now very good room in the bookcase for all that we wish to have there."¹⁹ More specifically she discusses, in her letters, books that she has read and liked, books she has read and does not like, and books she intends to read or not to read. A few of these comments in letters show somewhat her sentiments concerning literature, particularly the novel or poetry. In a letter to Anna Austen dated September 28, 1814, she writes: "Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones.-- It is not fair.--He has Fame and Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people's mouths.-- I do not like him, & do not mean to like Waverley if I can help it--but fear I must.--I am quite determined however not to be pleased with Mrs. West's Alicia de Lacy, should I ever meet with it, which I hope I may not.--I think I can be stout against any thing written by Mrs. West.--I have made up my mind to like no Novels really, but Miss Edgeworth's, Your & my own.--"²⁰ Cowper is the source of an evening's entertainment frequently; she relates to Cassandra a typical evening and shows interest in what Cassandra does during an evening. "My father reads Cowper to us in the evening, to which I listen when I can. How do you spend your Evenings?"²¹ Again, in a letter to Cassandra on June 20, 1808, Scott receives criticism: "Ought I to be very much pleased with Marmion?--

¹⁹Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others, p. 25.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 404-405.

²¹Ibid., p. 39.

as yet I am not.--James reads it aloud in the Even--the short Even--beginning at about 10, & broken by supper."²²

R. W. Chapman includes in the back of the volume of Jane Austen's letters which he edited a list showing that in her letters she mentions forty-four different writers--novelists, dramatists, poets, biographers, and historians. Many of these same writers she mentions in her novels: Shakespeare, Gray, Cowper, Scott, Pope, Byron, Goldsmith, Lord Macartney, Thomson, Milton, Prior, and Sterne. Other writers whose works she mentions are: Crabbe, Fordyce, Mrs. Radcliffe, Elizabeth Inchbald, Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Fanny Burney, and Maria Edgeworth.

In Jane Austen's novels, her characters turn from calling the names of favorite poets, biographers, historians, and novelists to criticism of them; from perusal of favorite novels in private libraries to subscription to the circulating libraries that were popularizing fiction in Jane Austen's day; and from using volumes of literary works as a measure or standard for real life. Each of Jane Austen's heroines is an avid reader, and all of them exhibit an interest in books of the day. To these heroines, and sometimes to the less prominent heroes, an interest in literature is a basic factor in creating an atmosphere for romance. To her characters, literature can be a source of comfort, a means of escape from reality, or a form of entertainment.

²²Ibid., p. 197.

Emma Woodhouse, the central figure in the novel Emma, turns her attention to literature in much the same way that she attends to everything--with a lack of steadiness, which Miss Austen pointed out in relation to her music. Early in the novel, Emma sets up what she considers a good system for improving the culture of her newly acquired friend, Harriet Smith. She plans a reading list which the two of them will peruse together and feels that both will profit from the perusal. But it is the sage Mr. Knightley who sees through her scheme for reading, just as he sees through the envy she feels toward Jane Fairfax. This gentlemen comments to Mrs. Weston, Emma's former companion who is blindly loyal to Emma:

Emma has been meaning to read more ever since she was twelve years old. I have seen a great many lists of the drawing-up, at various times, of books that she meant to read regularly through--and very good lists they were, very well chosen, and very neatly arranged--sometimes alphabetically, and sometimes by some other rule. The list she drew up when only fourteen--I remember thinking it did her judgment so much credit, that I preserved it some time, and I dare say she may have made out a very good list now. But I have done with expecting any course of steady reading from Emma. She will never submit to anything requiring industry and patience, and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding. Where Miss Taylor failed to stimulate, I may safely affirm that Harriet Smith will do nothing. You never could persuade her to read so much as you wished. You know you could not.²³

Four chapters later Mr. Knightley's prediction becomes fact as Miss Austen reports: "Her views of improving her little friend's mind, by a great deal of useful reading and conversation, had never yet led to more than a few first

²³Pp. 36-37.

chapters, and the intention of going on to-morrow. It was much easier to chat than to study; much pleasanter to let her imagination range and work at Harriet's fortune, than to be labouring to enlarge her comprehension, or exercise it on sober facts."²⁴

Miss Austen continues to relate that the only literary pursuit which engaged Harriet's mind, the only literary provision she was making for the evening of life, was the collection of riddles. Emma lent a helping hand with this, supplementing her friend's lack of originality with her own: "In this age of literature, such collections on a very grand scale are not uncommon. . . . and Harriet . . . hoped, with Miss Woodhouse's help, to get a great many. Emma assisted with her invention, memory, and taste; and as Harriet wrote a very pretty hand, it was likely to be an arrangement of the first order, in form as well as quantity."²⁵

The collection of riddles, meant to improve the minds of Emma and her friend, adds to the complications evident in Emma's trying to promote a match between Harriet and Mr. Elton. The original charade which Mr. Elton contributed to the collection is written in thinly veiled compliments to some member of the fair sex, and Emma immediately assumes it is to compliment Harriet and tells Harriet so. Harriet soon convinces herself that she is in love with this man of her friend's choice, only

²⁴Ibid., p. 69.

²⁵Ibid.

to be disillusioned by Mr. Elton's preference for Emma, for whom the charade is actually intended.

Mr. Elton does not seem to be of a literary mind himself, though he does favor Harriet and Emma by reading aloud to them while Harriet sits for Emma to draw her portrait.²⁶ In relation to the romance which Emma supposes to exist between Mr. Elton and Harriet, Emma uses a familiar quotation from Shakespeare in her counsel to Harriet. After assuring Harriet, who does not think the romance is progressing so rapidly as it could, that she and Mr. Elton are by situation called together, she reminds her that "The course of true love never did run smooth."²⁷

Early in the book, when Emma tries to turn Harriet's interest from Robert Martin, a country lad whom Emma considers to be beneath Harriet's station in life, she questions Harriet about whether or not Mr. Martin is a man of information beyond his own line of work, farming. Harriet is quick to defend him: "He read the Agricultural Reports, and some other books that lay in one of the window seats--but he reads all them to himself. But sometimes of an evening, before we went to cards, he would read something aloud out of the 'Elegant Extracts,' very entertaining. And I know he has read the 'Vicar of Wakefield.' He never read the 'Romance of the Forest,' nor the 'Children of the Abbey.' He had never heard of such books

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 74-78.

before I mentioned them, but he is determined to get them now as soon as ever he can."²⁸

Mrs. Elton, whose marriage to the country parson occurs while he is away from Highbury recovering from his disappointment in not being able to win the affections of Miss Woodhouse, is not as vociferous on the subject of literature as she is on music; but she manages a quotation from Gray when she is concerned about Jane Fairfax's taking some unworthy "position":

. . . I dare say you have heard those charming lines of the poet--

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its fragrance on the desert air."

We must not allow them to be verified in sweet Jane Fairfax.²⁹

In Sense and Sensibility Marianne Dashwood is more interested in literature than are any of the other characters in that book. However, books seem to be a definite part of their home life, just as music is. In settling in their new home in Barton, Miss Austen writes that "each of them was busy in arranging their particular concerns, and endeavouring, by placing around them their books and other possessions, to form themselves a home."³⁰

Marianne confides in her mother her disappointment in Edward for his lack of feeling for literature equal to his

²⁸Ibid., p. 29.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 282-283.

³⁰p. 29.

lack of feeling for music. After establishing her own feelings on the necessity of having the same interests between possible marriage partners, she criticizes Edward's reading aloud to them the night before:

"Oh! mama, how spiritless, how tame was Edward's manner in reading to us last night! I felt for my sister most severely. . . . I could hardly keep my seat. To hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable calmness, such dreadful indifference!"--

"He would certainly have done more justice to simple and elegant prose. I thought so at the time; but you would give him Cowper."

"Nay, mama, if he is not to be animated by Cowper!-- but we must allow for difference of taste. Elinor has not my feelings, and therefore she may overlook it, and be happy with him. But it would have broke my heart had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility."³¹

Because of Marianne's intense delight in books and reading, it is only natural that she should be captivated by the charms of Willoughby, who learns quickly to suit his taste to hers. What she lacks in Edward, she finds in Willoughby. As Miss Austen points out: "He [Willoughby] was exactly formed to engage Marianne's heart, for with all this, he joined not only a captivating person, but a natural ardour of mind which was now roused and increased by the example of her own, and which recommended him to her affection beyond every thing else. His society became gradually her most exquisite enjoyment. They read, they talked, they sang together."³² Then "she proceeded to question him on

³¹Ibid., pp. 17-18.

³²Ibid., p. 48.

the subject of books; her favourite authors were brought forward and dwelt upon with so rapturous delight, that any young man of five and twenty must have been insensible indeed, not to become an immediate convert to the excellence of such works, however disregarded before. Their taste was strikingly alike. The same books, the same passages were idolized by each."³³

Elinor comments on Marianne's rapid acquaintance with Willoughby, suggesting that they soon will run out of topics of conversation: "Well, Marianne, for one morning I think you have done pretty well. You have already ascertained Mr. Willoughby's opinion in almost every matter of importance. You know what he thinks of Cowper and Scott; you are certain of his estimating their beauties as he ought, and you have received every assurance of his admiring Pope no more than is proper. But how is your acquaintance to be long supported, under such extraordinary dispatch of every subject for discourse?"³⁴

After Willoughby leaves Barton, Marianne is distraught. She turns to the books they have read together, "courting the misery which a contrast between the past and present was certain to give."³⁵ From this time on Marianne, unlike Elinor, does not attempt to join in with the activities of any crowd. At Cleveland one evening, though Elinor joins in the discourse

³³Ibid., p. 47.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p. 83.

of those present without really being interested, Marianne utilizes her knack for finding the library in any house and procures herself a book.³⁶ When she returns to Barton after Willoughby has disappointed her, she finally makes up her mind to begin anew and announces that she intends to spend half of her time each day in reading as a part of her emotional rehabilitation.³⁷

In Mansfield Park, Fanny Price, supported by her cousin Edmund Bertram, is the character most interested in literary pursuits. Contrary to her connection with music, Fanny actually participates in the reading and discussion of literature, and she develops a sense of literary taste as well. In fact, reading is her chief activity throughout the first part of the novel. Not being given the social opportunities of her cousins, Fanny usually stays at home and reads; and early in her training, Edmund recommends the books which she should read. When her cousins go out to some gay affair, Fanny's duty is to remain at home with Aunt Bertram. On such evenings, Fanny frequently entertains her aunt by reading aloud to her.³⁸ To Fanny's retiring nature, such activity is particularly suited, and she grows attached to the home where she is not welcomed by all. When she fears that she will have to move to Aunt Norris's, Edmund comforts

³⁶Ibid., pp. 303-304.

³⁷Ibid., p. 343.

³⁸p. 35.

her by telling her that she will still be at Mansfield Park often, with the same liberties to use the family library.³⁹

Fanny is able to remain at Mansfield Park, and the old school room becomes her own private domain which she loves in spite of its lack of heat. In this room all her most prized possessions are kept: "Her plants, her books,-- of which she had been a collector, from the first hour of her commanding a shilling--her writing desk, and her works of charity and ingenuity, were all within her reach."⁴⁰

A conversation with Edmund, which takes place in her room, provides further proof of Fanny's literary bent and the type of books she enjoys. He concludes: "And now, dear Fanny, I will not interrupt you any longer. You want to be reading. . . . You in the meanwhile will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord Macartney go on?-- (opening a volume on the table and then taking up some of the others.) And here are Crabbe's Tales, and the Idler, at hand to relieve you, if you tire of your great book. I admire your little establishment exceedingly."⁴¹

Much later in the book, when she returns to her real father's home in the city to spend some time, Fanny is disappointed in finding that through the years of her absence, no improvements in the way of life or thinking have been made.

³⁹Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 150-151.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 156.

Her reaction to her father is described in Miss Austen's words: "He did not want abilities; but he had no curiosity, and no information beyond his profession; he read only the newspaper and the navy-list; he talked only of the dock-yard, the harbour, Spithead, and the Motherbank; he swore and drank, he was dirty and gross."⁴² Though Miss Austen ridicules many types of people, and though several of her characters find fault with other characters for not being more interested in esthetic values, this picture of Fanny's father and of the home life in her real family is one of the few really sordid pictures in Miss Austen's novels.

But Fanny's return to her real family brings improvement in the trend of activity and thought of at least one person, her younger sister Susan. Though Susan lacks Fanny's early training in books, and though she is not turned toward quiet pursuits, she does possess a desire not to appear ignorant, and she grows to love and admire Fanny. Fanny explains what Susan reads, and Fanny becomes Susan's authority in all literary matters; for Susan vows she prefers Fanny's comments to those of any great writer.⁴³ Fanny enjoys this phase of her stay at home more than any other, for "Susan had read nothing, and Fanny longed to give her a share in her own first pleasures."⁴⁴ To do this, Fanny turns to the circulating

⁴²Ibid., p. 389.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 418-419.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 398.

library for books she wants Susan to read but which are not available in their father's house, and Fanny is amazed at her own desire to improve someone else's mind.

During this project, Fanny never ceases to be lonely for Mansfield Park, and this feeling brings Cowper to her mind: "Her eagerness, her impatience, her longings to be with them, were such as to bring a line or two of Cowper's *Tirocinium* for ever before her. 'With what intense desire she wants her home,' was continually on her tongue."⁴⁵

An evening with Fanny reading aloud to Aunt Bertram from Henry VIII is interrupted by the arrival of Edmund and Henry Crawford, and Henry continues the reading aloud by taking up where Fanny has left off. Fanny's reaction to this man, whose proposal of marriage she has refused, varies; for, being accustomed to good reading from her uncle and cousins, she cannot help enjoying Henry's excellent reading ability as the characters from Henry VIII come alive.⁴⁶ A discussion of Shakespeare between Henry and Edmund follows:

"Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how. It is a part of an Englishman's constitution. His thoughts and beauties are so spread abroad that one touches them every where, one is intimate with him by instinct.--No man of any brain can open at a good part of one of his plays, without falling into the flow of his meaning immediately."

"No doubt, one is familiar with Shakespeare in a degree," said Edmund, "from one's earliest years. His celebrated passages are quoted by every body;

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 431.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 336-337.

they are in half the books we open, and we all talk Shakespeare, use his similes, and describe with his descriptions; but this is totally distinct from giving his sense as you gave it. To know him in bits and scraps, is common enough; to know him pretty thoroughly, is, perhaps, not uncommon; but to read him well aloud, is no every-day talent."⁴⁷

Following this discussion of Shakespeare, the two young men discuss the art of reading aloud in general, particularly in relation to the Anglican church service, in which Edmund is taking instruction before taking orders in the church. Both young men deplore the lack of instruction in proper reading aloud in their day.⁴⁸

From Mansfield Park to Persuasion, the same pattern follows, with the heroine being the one most prominently interested in literature. It is to Anne Elliot that Captain Benwick turns for conversation, for he is very much interested in reading books and poetry, and only Anne offers a sympathetic ear.

. . . having talked of poetry, the richness of the present age, and gone through a brief comparison of opinion as to the first-rate poets, trying to ascertain whether Marmion or The Lady of the Lake were to be preferred, and how ranked the Giaour and The Bride of Abydos, and moreover, how the Giaour was to be pronounced, he showed himself so intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet, and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other; he repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imaged a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so entirely as if he meant to be understood, that she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry, and to say

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 338.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 339-340.

that she thought it was the misfortune of poetry to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly.⁴⁹

From the time of this conversation, Captain Benwick frequently seeks Anne's company. The following evening "they walked together some time, talking as before of Mr. Scott and Lord Byron, and still as unable as before, and as unable as any other two readers, to think exactly alike of the merits of either, till something occasioned an almost general change amongst their party."⁵⁰ Charles, the husband of Anne's sister Mary, remarks one day that Captain Benwick's "head is full of some books that he is reading upon your [Anne's] recommendation, and he wants to talk to you about them; he has found out something or other in one of them which he thinks . . . very fine."⁵¹

But Benwick does not seek Anne's company long, for he and Charles's sister Louisa soon fall in love. Anne "saw no reason against their being happy. . . . He would gain cheerfulness, and she would learn to be an enthusiast for Scott and Lord Byron; nay, that was probably learnt already; of course they had fallen in love over poetry. The idea of Louisa Musgrove turned into a person of literary taste and sentimental reflection was amusing."⁵²

⁴⁹Pp. 100-101.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 107.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 131.

⁵²Ibid., p. 167.

Lady Russell, Anne's older friend, shows great influence over Anne's literary tastes. Charles's sister tells Wentworth of Charles's first interest in Anne before he married Mary, and she explains that they all think it was Lady Russell who discouraged Anne in the interest because Charles was not bookish enough.⁵³ Lady Russell and Anne agree that perhaps Charles, a quiet and civil enough person, might be different if he had a wife of more equal and literary interests.⁵⁴ Soon after Captain Benwick appears on the scene, Charles and Mary mark him as the type of person Lady Russell would like because, "Give him a book, and he will read all day long."⁵⁵ Elizabeth, Anne's older sister, also comments on Lady Russell's literary interests when she sends a book back to Lady Russell with these words: "Pretend I have read it through. I really cannot be plaguing myself for ever with all the new poems and states of the nation that come out. Lady Russell quite bores me with her new publications."⁵⁶

To Anne's father, Sir Walter, a picture of fading nobility in England, the only book of interest is the Book of Baronetage, where his own history is recorded. This history gives him consolation in a distressed hour, and

⁵³Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 43.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 132.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 215.

occupation in an idle one; for his title is the only thing remaining of his nobility.⁵⁷ Elizabeth does not share her father's feelings for this great English book, for her history is also recorded--her name followed by no account of marriage.⁵⁸

In Pride and Prejudice, though the girls read, it is Mr. Bennet who is always seen with a book and who holds the library as his own sacred domain. On the evening of the first ball that Mr. Bingley gives in the neighborhood, he is waiting up with a book when Mrs. Bennet and her five daughters arrive home, for "with a book he was regardless of time."⁵⁹ After Mr. Collins comes to visit his relatives, Mr. Bennet is not so sure of his library's being left to himself, for on one occasion, Mr. Collins spends much of one morning supposedly reading a large volume but really annoying Mr. Bennet. Miss Austen describes the distress of the head of the house: "Such doings discomposed Mr. Bennet exceedingly. In his library he had been always sure of leisure and tranquillity; and though prepared, as he told Elizabeth, to meet with folly and conceit in every other room in the house, he was most used to be free from there."⁶⁰ When Mrs. Bennet bursts into her husband's library in a frenzy because Elizabeth has refused

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁹P. 12.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 71.

Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage, Mr. Bennet calmly raises his eyes from his book, administers some sound advice, and then says, "I shall be glad to have the library to myself as soon as may be."⁶¹

On one occasion during his visit, Mr. Collins agrees to read aloud to the ladies but is shocked to find a book in the Bennet household obviously from a circulating library, and he proclaims that he never reads novels. From this he turns to Fordyce's Sermons and, after being interrupted by Lydia, decides that young ladies of that day do not interest themselves in books of a serious nature, though such books are intended for them.⁶²

Just as she does with music, Miss Bingley continually tries to divert Darcy's attentions to Elizabeth by discussing literature. On one evening at Netherfield she picks up a book because Mr. Darcy is reading and then becomes more interested in his progress through his book than in her own.⁶³ When Elizabeth refuses to join a card game and picks up a book instead, Miss Bingley informs Darcy that "Miss Bennet is a great reader and has no interest in anything else." Bingley tries to ease the situation by assuring Elizabeth that his library is always open to her and by saying that he is sorry for being such an idle fellow and not providing

⁶¹Ibid., p. 112.

⁶²Ibid., p. 68.

⁶³Ibid., p. 55.

more books than he has. He combines this with a rueful confession that, at that, he has more than he ever reads. This talk of personal libraries gives Miss Bingley an opportunity to turn the conversation back to Mr. Darcy by commenting on his fine collection of books at his estate, Pemberley. He replies shortly, "It ought to be good, it has been the work of many generations." He adds that he cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library "in such days as these."⁶⁴

Elizabeth's sister Mary is also a book worm, though with her books, as with her music, she is a bore and tends to a pedantic attitude. She replies to Kitty and Lydia's account of their having met Jane and Elizabeth in the village by saying that she would infinitely prefer a book to such activity. When Bingley and Jane announce their marriage plans, her first request is that she be allowed to use the library at Netherfield.⁶⁵

For any long discussion of literature in Miss Austen's novels, the reader must turn to Northanger Abbey, itself a parody on the Gothic romance. Catherine Morland, described at the beginning of the book as not possessing the musical, literary, feminine, or tender qualities of the usual heroine, delights in reading novels. Catherine's first friend at Bath, Isabella Thorpe, shares her enthusiasm for reading novels, and

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 38.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 349.

frequently the two shut themselves up alone and read together. In discussing this friendship between the two and their mutual interest in the novel, Jane Austen launches into her famous defense of the novel as an art.⁶⁶ According to Jane Austen, Catherine, from the ages of fifteen to seventeen, read "all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives."⁶⁷ But until she met Isabella, Catherine had not read Udolpho, a fact which surprises Miss Thorpe very much: "It is so odd to me that you should never have read Udolpho before; but I suppose Mrs. Morland objects to novels." To this Catherine replies that her mother does not object to novels, that she even reads Sir Charles Grandison. She explains her not reading some books by saying that new books do not fall their way at home. Apparently, to the two girls, if a book is horrid, it is acceptable. Isabella comments that Sir Charles Grandison is an amazingly horrid book, and she in turn gives Catherine a long list of books to read and assures her that they are all horrid.⁶⁸

Apparently by the term horrid, the girls mean books or stories that evoke horror. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term as "causing horror or aversion," and quotes

⁶⁶pp. 36-38.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 39-42.

Shakespeare as having used it as such in 1601 in Twelfth Night. This list of "horrid" novels includes Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. In A Literary History of England, Samuel C. Chew comments on this list of "horrid" novels: "Montague Summers projected an edition of the seven 'horrid' novels which Miss Austen recommended to Isabella Thorpe, but only two--Horrid Mysteries and The Necromancer of The Black Forest--appeared."⁶⁹

With Isabella's brother John, Catherine finds little in common. On their first meeting as they walk to the lodgings of John's family, Catherine is bored by John's comments and hazards a question to see if he has read her favorite Udolpho, the consuming passion in Catherine's life at that time. He replies, "Udolpho! Oh Lord! not I; I never read novels. I have something else to do." He then continues: "Novels are all full of nonsense and stuff! There has not been a tolerably decent one come out since Tom Jones, except The Monk; I read that t'other day; but as for all the others, they are the stupidest things in creation." When Catherine shyly insists that he would like Udolpho if he would read it, he replies by saying that he will read no novels but Mrs. Radcliffe's, for "her novels are worth reading; some fun and nature in them." Catherine hesitantly tells him that Mrs.

⁶⁹Edited by A. C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1947). p. 1204.

Radcliffe is the author of Udolpho, but he is not embarrassed; he simply says he confused it with that book by the "woman who married the French emigrant." When Catherine identifies the book as Camilla, he says, "Yes, that's the book; such unnatural stuff! An old man playing at see-saw."⁷⁰

With the Tilneys--Henry and his sister--literary discussions are entirely different. Catherine is surprised to find that Henry reads novels, having thought that gentlemen never read novels because novels are not clever enough for young men. Henry sets her mind at rest by replying that "The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid." Both he and his sister assure Catherine that they enjoyed Udolpho immensely.⁷¹ Then she finds that these two new friends enjoy and appreciate history in a way which she cannot share, for in her own words. "I can read poetry and plays, and things of that sort, and do not dislike travels. But history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in."⁷²

As Miss Austen indicates,⁷³ Catherine has read all the novels that heroines should read, and this literary background prepares her for adventure when she visits the Tilney home, Northanger Abbey. Expecting it to be like "what one

⁷⁰Northanger Abbey, pp. 48-49.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 106-107.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 108-110.

⁷³Ibid., p. 15.

reads of"--just as she had expected Blaize Castle to be--she immediately looks for the characteristics of ruined castles she has heard and read about. The first, a chest in her room, holds only a white counterpane; the second, a secret compartment in a cabinet, offers only a yellow laundry list; and the part of the abbey which she finally sees under Henry's guidance offers, not the Tilneys' mother imprisoned by the tyrannical father or even traces of violence by which she might have died, but rather well-kept rooms including the mother's room, still kept as a memorial to her. And under Henry's scrutiny, Catherine learns that real life is not always like "what one reads of."

Through her characters, Miss Austen gives some of her decided opinions of literature to the reader, and she gives her characters, at least the major ones, an acquaintance with the literature which she enjoys, dislikes, or ridicules.

Theater

Harold Childe writes that in her provincial life Jane Austen paid occasional visits to London. "where she went not a little to the play."⁷⁴ Though the theater was a favorite mode of entertainment for her, she uses the theater, drama, or acting in only three of her novels--Mansfield Park, in which eight chapters are devoted to action, reaction, or

⁷⁴Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others, p. 71.

conversation concerning a drama called Lovers' Vows; and Persuasion and Northanger Abbey, in both of which she uses the theater briefly as a minor means of developing character or providing a place for action. Though Marianne and Elinor Dashwood, as well as the Bennet girls, visit the city, they do not attend the theater; and Emma Woodhouse, whose story develops entirely in her own country community, is too busy trying to prove that she understands people, when the whole point of the story is to prove that she does not, to be interested in the theater.

Jane Austen's life, as she recorded it in her letters, shows that the theater was a major part of her entertainment when she was away from home. From Bath she writes to her sister Cassandra on June 19, 1799: "The play on Saturday is I hope to conclude our Gaieties here, for nothing but a lengthened stay will make it otherwise."⁷⁵ The following quotation is from a letter to Cassandra on April 18, 1811: "Our first object today was Henrietta St. to consult Henry, in consequence of a very lucky change of The Play for this very night--Hamlet instead of King John--& we are going on Monday to Macbeth, instead, but it is a disappointment to us both."⁷⁶ Of actors and acting she writes to her sister a week later:

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 71.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 271.

We did go to the play after all on Saturday, we went to the Lyceum, & saw the Hypocrite, an old play taken from Moliere's Tartuffe, & were well entertained. Downton & Mathews were the good actors. Mrs. Edwin was the Heroine--& her performance is just what it used to be.--I have no chance of seeing M(rs) Siddons.--She did act on Monday, but as Henry was told by the Box-keeper that he did not think she would, the places, & all thought of it were given up. I should particularly have liked seeing her in Constance, & could swear at her with little effort for disappointing me.⁷⁷

A letter to Cassandra on September 15, 1813, includes a comment which indicates a change from her usual manner of attending the play: "I talked to Henry at the play last night. We were in a private box--Mr. Spencer's--which made it much more pleasant. The box is directly on the stage. One is infinitely less fatigued than in the common way."⁷⁸ Ten days later in a letter to her brother Frank, she expresses a general opinion of the theater in her day: "Of our three even in Town one was spent at the Lyceum & another at Covent Garden;--the Clandestine Marriage was the most respectable of the performances, the rest were singsong and trumpery, . . . but I wanted better acting.--There was no Actor worthy naming.--I believe the Theatres are thought at a low ebb at present."⁷⁹

Among her novels, Mansfield Park records the greatest attention to drama. A play entitled Lovers' Vows provides much of the drama in the novel. Much of the action centers

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 275.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 320.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 338.

around choosing a play that will suit everyone's fancy, and the final choice is one originally written in German by Kotzebue. In 1798, it was translated into English under the title of The Natural Son by A. Plumptre, published the same year by Porter as Lovers' Vows; and before the end of the year, Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald adapted it for presentation on the stage at Covent Garden.⁸⁰ Mrs. Inchbald's adaptation is the subject of primary concern in eight chapters in Mansfield Park--13 through 18 in Book I and 1 and 2 in Book II. Even in later chapters frequent reference is made to the young people's unsuccessful attempt to present Lovers' Vows.

R. W. Chapman calls Mansfield Park the most didactic of the novels and indicates the possibility that at the time of writing, Jane Austen was under the influence of one of her favorite divines or secular moralists. This opinion stems from her treatment of the production of Lovers' Vows, which Edmund and Fanny oppose.⁸¹ He says:

Jane Austen's attitude to private theatricals in general and to Lovers' Vows in particular, has puzzled many readers. She did not disapprove of the theatre; like Edmund Bertram, she was a lover of good, "hardened", professional acting. She can hardly have come to condemn amateur acting, which her family had practised, under the tuition of her brilliant cousin, Madame de Feuillide, in the rectory barn at Steventon. She can hardly have been much shocked by the ridiculous German play. It deals indeed with illegitimacy; but it

⁸⁰Allardyce Nicol, A History of English Drama (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), III, 65.

⁸¹R. W. Chapman, Jane Austen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 194.

had been adapted to the English taste by Mrs. Inchbald, and Jane Austen would have agreed with Mrs. Norris that anything too "warm" can readily be expunged.

The scruples stated by the virtuous characters, and endorsed by their author, are mainly domestic and topical. Edmund does state a case against ladies' and gentlemen's making fools of themselves before half the county; but that motive is not much stressed. Sir Thomas was in the West Indies; his predictable reprobation, however based, was enough to condemn the scheme. Worse than this, the casting of the play made it clear that there must be awkward situations and dangerous propinquities; for some of the dramatis personae knew that others of them were already skating on thin ice. Mary herself was taken aback when called on to "vamp" Edmund as the virtuous Anhalt, and suggested drastic cuts. And it was easily foreseen that the juxtaposition of Henry Crawford with either of the Bertram girls as his mother, "trying not to embrace", must disconcert poor Rushworth, and might have grave results--entanglements that could not be named.⁸²

In this discussion, Chapman makes one more point concerning the complications which Jane Austen develops to surround the production of Lovers' Vows. He points out that the idea was introduced by "an Hon. John Yates," whom he calls an aristocratic counterpart of John Thorpe in Northanger Abbey. In his opinion, this complicates the plot because "the class to which Jane Austen and her Bertrams belonged regarded the aristocracy with suspicious hostility," and he indicates the fact that the performance John Yates has just left before joining the Bertrams included a duke in its personnel and that "dukes as a class, and baronets and country parsons as a class, were then remote from each other." The situation resulting was that "the former class despised its inferiors,

⁸²Ibid., p. 198.

and the inferiors retorted with moral reprobation."⁸³

John Yates is the unwelcome addition to the Bertram family in the end of the story when he elopes with one of the giddy Bertram girls, and Jane Austen describes his arrival at Mansfield Park in this way: "He came on the wings of disappointment, and with his head full of acting, for it had been a theatrical party; and the play, in which he had borne a part, was within two days of presentation when the sudden death of one of the nearest connections of the family had destroyed the scheme and dispersed the performers . . . and being so near, to lose it all, was an injury to be keenly felt, and Mr. Yates could talk of nothing else."⁸⁴ His conversation invariably includes Ecclesford, its theatre, its arrangements and dresses, rehearsals and jokes; and he finds consolation in continually remembering the past. His enthusiasm for the theater spreads to others of the younger set at Mansfield Park--primarily the four Bertrams, Fanny Price, and Henry and Mary Crawford from the nearby parsonage. Before Mr. Yates's visit is well underway, everyone, with the exception of Edmund and Fanny, is wishing that he or she could be a part of such exciting procedures.⁸⁵

⁸³Ibid., pp. 198-199.

⁸⁴Mansfield Park, pp. 121-122.

⁸⁵Ibid.

Lord Bertram's absence during the plans for the play which the young people decide to produce causes Edmund to be uneasy. Though he is not the older son, he assumes responsibility before Tom does; and since he is entering the church, he feels that he must take a stand against the production of Lovers' Vows. To his sister he indicates his disapproval: "I think it would be very wrong. In a general light, private theatricals are open to some objections, but as we are circumstanced, I must think it would be highly injudicious, and more than injudicious, to attempt any thing of the kind. It would show great want of feeling on my father's account, absent as he is, and in some degree of constant danger; and it would be imprudent, I think, with regard to Maria, whose situation is a very delicate one, considering every thing, extremely delicate."⁸⁶ His reference to Maria, his other sister, concerns her interest in Henry Crawford in spite of her previous engagement to Mr. Rushworth. But Julia answers him with her view, the view that most of the young people hold:

You take up a thing so seriously! As if we were going to act three times a week till my father's return, and invite all the country. But it is not to be a display of that sort. We mean nothing but a little amusement among ourselves, just to vary the scene, and exercise our powers in something new. We want no audience, no publicity. We may be trusted, I think, in choosing some play most perfectly unexceptionable, and I can conceive no greater harm or danger

⁸⁶Ibid., pp. 125-126.

to any of us in conversing in the elegant written language of some respectable author than in chattering in words of our own. I have no fears, and no scruples. And as to my father's being absent, it is so far from an objection, that I consider it rather as a motive; for the expectation of his return must be a very anxious period to my mother, and if we can be the means of amusing that anxiety, and keeping up her spirits for the next few weeks, I shall think our time very well spent, and so I am sure will he.-- It is a very anxious period for her.⁸⁷

Even with such persuasion, Edmund and Fanny persist in their objections until Edmund finally gives in--possibly to the charms of Mary Crawford, who is to have a romantic lead--with this reason to Fanny: "I could not be easy till I had spoken to you, and come to a decision. Sleeping or waking, my head has been full of this matter all night. It is an evil--but I am certain making it less than it might be. If Tom is up, I will go to him directly and get it over; and when we meet at breakfast we shall be all in high good humour at the prospect of acting the fool together with such unanimity."⁸⁸

Fanny is disappointed in Edmund's decision to join rather than fight and in his reasoning that if he is among them to control the situation it will not be so bad. She makes a few predictions on which Miss Austen comments:

Fanny seemed nearer being right than Edmund had supposed. The business of finding a play that would suit everybody, proved to be no trifle; and the carpenter had received his orders and taken his measurements, had suggested and removed at least two sets of

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 156.

difficulties, and having made the necessity of an enlargement of plan and expense fully evident, was already at work, while a play was still to seek.

There were, in fact, so many things to be attended to, so many people to be pleased, so many best characters required, and above all, such a need that the play should be at once both tragedy and comedy, that there did seem as little chance of a decision, as any thing pursued by youth and zeal could hold out.⁸⁹

But the show does go on, and from this time on, Fanny's only part in the production is occasional help in preparing sets or props and rehearsing major characters in their lines. Both Mary Crawford and Edmund turn to Fanny for help with their lines, and Fanny grieves over the love scenes the play provides for Edmund and Mary to enact. Mr. Rushworth is impressed with his lines, as Henry Crawford recalls later, after the production is discontinued: "Poor Rushworth and his two-and-forty speeches! Nobody can ever forget them. Poor fellow!--I can see him now; --his toil and his despair."⁹⁰

To the consternation of most of the cast, and particularly to Mr. Yates, who sees his second opportunity of becoming great vanish, Lord Bertram returns home from his extended business trip in the middle of an evening rehearsal. The Crawfords hurry home, the family gathers at the father's side, and after Lord Bertram sees the confusion wrought in his household arrangement by the play and hears an explanation from Edmund, the play is never again mentioned except in

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 130.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 224-225.

retrospect. The Crawfords seem to be the happiest to recall. Henry remarks once: "It is a dream, a pleasant dream! I shall always look back on our theatricals with exquisite pleasure. There was such an interest, such an animation, such a spirit diffused! Every body felt it. We were all alive. There was employment, hope, solicitude, bustle, for every hour of the day. Always some little objection, some little doubt, some little anxiety to be got over. I never was happier."⁹¹ His sister Mary remembers when she visits Fanny in the old school room:

. . . The east room. Once only was I in this room before! --Once only before. Do you remember it? I came to rehearse. Your cousin came too; and we had a rehearsal. You were our audience and prompter. A delightful rehearsal. I shall never forget it. . . . The scene we were rehearsing was so very remarkable! . . . He was to be describing and recommending matrimony to me. I think I see him now, trying to be as demure and composed as ought taught, through the two long speeches. "When two sympathetic hearts meet in the marriage state, matrimony may be called a happy life." I suppose no time can ever wear out the impression I have of his looks and voice, as he said those words. It was curious . . . that we should have such a scene to play!"⁹²

But Lovers' Vows is not the only play given attention in Mansfield Park. One evening Edmund and Henry Crawford return home to find Fanny reading to Lady Bertram from Shakespeare's Henry VIII. Though Lady Bertram seems to be no authority on anything artistic, Henry is pleased when she

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., p. 258.

compliments his reading from the play, for he feels that if Lady Bertram, "with all her incompetency and langour," could feel as she does, then surely he will get even a more favorable response from her more enlightened niece. Lady Bertram comments: "You have a great turn for acting . . . I think you will have a theatre, some time or other, at your house in Norfolk. I mean when you are settled there." But Henry assures her, with an expressive look at Fanny, that there will never be a theatre at Everingham, indicating that he will do nothing to displease Fanny.⁹³

Though Fanny attempts to ignore the conversation and the pointed remarks concerning acting and theaters directed at her, she is truly impressed by Crawford's ability in reading Shakespeare and mentally is inclined to agree with her aunt:

To good reading, however, she had been long used; her uncle read well--her cousins all--Edmund very well; but in Mr. Crawford's reading there was a variety of excellence beyond what she had ever met with. The King, the Queen, Buckingham, Wolsey, Cromwell, all were given in turn; for with the happiest knack, the happiest power of jumping and guessing, he could always light at will, on the best scene, or the best speeches of each; and whether it were dignity or pride, or tenderness or remorse, or whatever were to be expressed, he could do it with equal beauty.--It was truly dramatic.--His acting had first taught Fanny what pleasure a play might give, and his reading brought all his acting before her again; nay, perhaps with greater enjoyment, for it came unexpectedly, and with no such drawback as she had been used to suffer in seeing him on the stage with Miss Bertram.⁹⁴

⁹³Ibid., pp. 338-339.

⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 336-337.

To Anne Elliott in Persuasion, the theater, which she and her family rarely attend, offers much more in the way of real entertainment than the private parties at home, to which they are addicted. Besides, the theater would offer an opportunity to see Phillip Wentworth: "The theatre or the rooms where he was most likely to be, were not fashionable enough for the Elliotts, whose evening amusements were solely in the elegant stupidity of private parties, in which they were getting more and more engaged."⁹⁵

Later, when Charles Musgrove returns to tell his family that he has secured a box for the theatre, Mrs. Musgrove is delighted until she remembers the private party Mary has planned for the same evening. "Well, mother," says Charles, "I have done something for you that you will like. I have been to the theatre, and secured a box for to-morrow night. A'n't I a good boy? I know you love a play; and there is room for us all. It holds nine. I have engaged Captain Wentworth. Anne will not be sorry to join us, I am sure. We all like a play. Have not I done well, mother?" Though Anne trembles at her own daring, when it is decided that the theatre must be postponed for the "elegant stupidity" of one of Mary's parties, she very decidedly declares: "If it depended only on my inclination, ma'am, the party at home (excepting on Mary's account) would not be the smallest

⁹⁵Pp. 179-180.

impediment. I have no pleasure in the sort of meeting, and should be too happy to change it for a play, and with you. But it had better not be attempted, perhaps."⁹⁶

Like Anne Elliot, Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey thinks that perhaps the theater will offer her an opportunity to talk with Henry Tilney. In her first conversation with him, he questions her about her activities since coming to Bath, and she assures him that she has been to the theater.⁹⁷ In addition to her desire to see Henry Tilney, she enjoys going to the theater: "Dejected and humbled, she had even some thoughts of not going with the others to the theater that night; but it must be confessed, that they were not of long continuance, for she soon recollected, in the first place, that she was without any excuse for staying at home; and, in the second, that it was a play she wanted very much to see. To the theater accordingly they all went."⁹⁸

At first, she comforts herself by thinking that the Tilneys will not be there "to plague or please her." She fears that perhaps "amongst the many perfections of the family a fondness for plays was not to be ranked." She assumes that perhaps this is attributed to their being accustomed to the finer performances of the London stage because Isabella has told her that the London stage renders

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 223-225.

⁹⁷Northanger Abbey, p. 26.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 92.

everything else of the kind "quite horrid." These are her thoughts, and her expectations of pleasure are fulfilled: "The comedy so well suspended her care, that no one observing her during the first four acts would have supposed she had any wretchedness about her. On the beginning of the fifth, however, the sudden view of Mr. Henry Tilney and his father joining a party in the opposite box recalled her to her anxiety and distress."⁹⁹

To the three heroines of the novels in which Jane Austen places the theater, drama brings either joy or sorrow, depending on what circumstances the desired lover is in. Yet Fanny, Anne, and Catherine all three express an enjoyment of drama.

Kaye-Smith and Stern write that the ". . . opinions of the characters are not necessarily the opinions of the author, and especially with Jane Austen, whose genius lies in character-drawing."¹⁰⁰ Yet from her characters, the reader can get some idea of her feelings on the literary arts. Although she writes in her letters that she does not intend to like Sir Walter Scott's novels, she mentions him frequently in her novels. She is provoked that he should write good novels when he already has so many to the credit of his pen and the enrichment of his pocketbook. Anne Elliot and Captain Benwick discuss Marmion and The Lady of the Lake

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ P. 241.

in Persuasion. The immature Catherine Morland, Jane Austen's only heroine, according to Kaye-Smith and Stern,¹⁰¹ who cannot be classed among those who speak unabused English, delights in "horrid novels," unlike her creator who intends Catherine Morland as a parody on such novels. Both the contrasting attitudes toward taste in literature illustrated in Sense and Sensibility by the two Dashwood girls can be identified, in part, as Jane Austen's point of view, showing the influence the Romantic Movement had on Jane Austen's usually realistic outlook.

In theater, the only extensive treatment comes in the planned production of Lovers' Vows in Mansfield Park. Chapman has been cited earlier in the thesis as saying that her attitude toward even an amateur production stems from the temporary influence of a favorite person connected with the church or some organization which would frown on any aspect of the theater.

In all aspects of the literary arts, Jane Austen shows letter-writing, literature, and drama to be a definite part of life in her social class--as entertainment, as proof that a person is well read, as subject of conversations, and as evidence of accomplishment, a goal not to be achieved without knowledge of the literary arts.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 240.

CHAPTER IV

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Not all arts receive the attention accorded music and the literary arts in Jane Austen's six novels, but other arts do appear in these novels and serve in ways similar to those of music and literature. In addition to music, literature, and the theater, the arts of painting, drawing, and architecture are worthy of consideration in this study of the role of the arts. In this group, art itself is used most frequently. As it was a part of her life, she makes it a part of the lives of her characters.

Drawing and art are not so predominant in her letters as they are in her novels. In a letter to Cassandra on June 2, 1799, she comments on the drawings of her nieces and nephews, and she illustrates one of her many comments on clothes and fashions by sketching the pattern of lace on a coat.¹ Occasionally a visitor to art galleries, she writes to Cassandra on April 25, 1811, of her intention of visiting an exhibit: "Henry has been to the Watercolour Exhibition, which opened on Monday, & is to meet us there again some morn."² In the

¹Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others, p. 63.

²Ibid., pp. 275-276.

same letter, she writes of the old Count: "He has some fine Paintings which delighted Henry as much as the Son's music gratified Eliza." Two years later, on May 24, 1813, she writes to Cassandra of a friend who, like her, frequented art exhibitions: "I have no chance of her in the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds's Paintings which is now showing in Pall Mall, & which we are also to visit."³

Concerning the late eighteenth century and the arts, Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern say, "After music and reading drawing appears among the more serious accomplishments of the day."⁴ This is true of the age depicted in Miss Austen's novels. Although she writes few descriptions of scenes or people or even houses, she frequently incorporates such descriptions in her accounts of the thoughts and conversations of her characters, and throughout the novels, her reader is aware of her sense of the artistic and the picturesque. Family portraits, private galleries in fine houses, such as Pemberley in Pride and Prejudice, and discussions of scenes suitable for a landscape, such as the dialogue between Henry Tilney and his sister in Northanger Abbey, show her awareness of this art. Drawing is Elinor Dashwood's dearest occupation in Sense and Sensibility; Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey is referred to as an unlikely heroine because of her inability to draw; Emma

³Ibid., p. 310.

⁴Speaking of Jane Austen, p. 118.

Woodhouse misinterprets interest in her mediocre painting to be the cause of a minor crisis in Emma; and Fanny Price is dubbed as inferior because of her lack of interest in learning to draw in Mansfield Park.

Through characters who draw or paint, characters who appreciate the art, lovers who are eager to please by too much admiration without enough knowledge, lovers who are not really interested, and characters who bewail their lack of knowledge in the art of painting, she represents both the classical and romantic approaches to art. Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern observe that "in Elinor's addiction to drawing she shows evident approval of a female accomplishment which the Romantic Movement had made fashionable. It is probable that Elinor's drawings were not original, like Emma Woodhouse's efforts some twenty-nine years later, but copies of some 'print of merit' in which no doubt 'ruined, tattered cottages' and 'old twisted trees' were featured as freely as in her sister's imagination."⁵

The only character in the novels who participates in all the arts is Emma Woodhouse, who displays the same lack of steadiness in her artistic efforts that she displays in her music and reading. She is one of the few characters who actually draw. Miss Austen indicates that Emma could be better than she is and that though she desires to excel at the art

⁵Ibid., p. 26.

and even does not object to having people think she does, she is not deceived concerning her own skill.⁶ But to Mr. Elton and Harriet Smith, before Mr. Elton's unsuccessful suit for Emma's affections, she certainly appears to be the best. Before she undertakes the task of sketching Harriet, for Mr. Elton's benefit, she conducts a showing of the sketches she has made, and Miss Austen acidly comments concerning her display: "There was merit in every drawing--in the least finished, perhaps the most; her style was spirited; but had there been much less, or had there been ten times more, the delight and admiration of her two companions would have been the same. They were both in extasies. A likeness pleases everybody; and Miss Woodhouse's performance must be capital."⁷

Much of the sixth chapter of the first book of Emma is devoted to a discussion between Mr. Elton and Emma concerning Emma's portrait of Harriet. Emma hopes to inspire a lover's emotions in Mr. Elton for Harriet through the portrait, and Mr. Elton wants to do the same to Emma by his admiration of her work. A general misunderstanding ensues from Emma's one great artistic effort as Mr. Elton rushes off to have the newly finished portrait framed. The time involved in sittings and sketching is difficult for Emma, for Mr. Elton always

⁶p. 44.

⁷Ibid., pp. 44-45.

manages to be around, Emma thinks, to see the progress made on his favorite's first portrait; and she feels she must endure this hardship for Harriet's sake. All the time, Mr. Elton's only desire is to be near his real favorite, the artist. To cure Mr. Elton's fidgets during the drawing process, Emma suggests that he read aloud to them. "Mr. Elton was only too happy. Harriet listened, and Emma drew in peace. She must allow him to be still frequently coming to look; anything less would certainly have been too little in a lover; and he was ready at the smallest intermission of the pencil, to jump up and see the progress, and be charmed."⁸

Later, when Emma's brother-in-law suggests that she is the one Mr. Elton is interested in rather than Harriet, she does some quick remembering: "Yet he would be so anxious for her being perfectly warm, would be so interested about her father, and so delighted with Mrs. Weston; and, at last, would begin admiring her drawings with so much zeal and so little knowledge, as seemed terribly like a would-be lover, and made it some effort with her to preserve her good manners."⁹

Elinor Dashwood of Sense and Sensibility has a problem contrary to Emma's. Though Elinor's favorite pastime is drawing, the young man with whom she is in love has no training, talent, or interest in the art. It is from Marianne,

⁸Ibid., pp. 46-47.

⁹Ibid., p. 118.

Elinor's sister, that the reader learns most about Elinor's interest in drawing and Edward's lack of interest. Included in the discussion that Marianne has with her mother, concerning Edward's lack of taste in literature and reading aloud, is a criticism of his not being interested in Elinor's drawing: ". . . and though he admires Elinor's drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. It is evident, in spite of his frequent attention to her while she draws, that in fact he knows nothing of the matter. He admires as a lover, not as a connoisseur. To satisfy me, those characters must be united."¹⁰ Just after this conversation with her mother, Marianne has an opportunity to discuss the same topic with Elinor. When she remarks to Elinor that she feels it a pity that Edward has no taste for drawing, Elinor is quick to defend him: "No taste for drawing, why should you think so? He does not draw himself, indeed, but he has great pleasure in seeing performances of other people, and I assure you he is by no means deficient in natural taste, though he has not had opportunities of improving it. Had he ever been in the way of learning, I think he would have drawn very well. He distrusts his own judgment in such matters so much, that he is always unwilling to give his opinion on any picture; but he has an innate propriety and simplicity of taste, which in

¹⁰Pp. 17-18.

general direct him perfectly right."¹¹

Soon after the Dashwood family moves to Barton, Marianne and Margaret begin to go out to enjoy the scenery which beckons them from every window of their new cottage,¹² and it is this same area which attracts Edward on his first visit to Barton. When he returns praising the scenes which he has enjoyed, Marianne begins to question him concerning the details which had attracted him, but he stops her:

". . . remember, I have no knowledge in the picturesque, and I shall offend you by my ignorance and want of taste if we come to particulars. I shall call hills steep, which ought to be bold; surfaces strange and uncouth, which ought to be irregular and rugged; and distant objects out of sight, which ought only to be indistinct through the soft medium of a hazy atmosphere. You must be satisfied with such admiration as I can honestly give, . . . It exactly answers my idea of a fine country, because it unites beauty with utility--and I dare say it is a picturesque one too, because you admire it; I can easily believe it to be full of rocks and promontories, grey moss and brush wood, but these are all lost on me. I know nothing of the picturesque."¹³

Marianne continues the discussion by answering Elinor's defense of Edward's remarks, which, according to

¹¹Ibid., pp. 19-20.

¹²Ibid., p. 41.

¹³Ibid., pp. 96-98.

Elinor, are to avoid affectation: "It is very true that admiration of landscape scenery is become a mere jargon. Every body pretends to feel and tries to describe with the taste and elegance of him who first defined what picturesque beauty was. I detest jargon of every kind, and sometimes I have kept my feelings to myself, because I could find no language to describe them in but what was worn and hackneyed out of all sense and meaning."¹⁴ Marianne is amazed at Edward and compassionate toward Elinor when Edward concludes the discussion: "I like a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles. I do not like crooked, twisted blasted trees. I admire them much more if they are tall, staight and flourishing. I do not like ruined, tattered cottages. I am not fond of nettles or thistles, or heath blossoms. I have more pleasure in a snug farm-house than a watch-tower-- and a troop of tidy, happy villagers please me better than the finest banditti in the world."¹⁵

When Mrs. Jennings and her daughter Mrs. Palmer come to Barton to visit unexpectedly, Mrs. Palmer calls attention to the drawings in the Dashwood living room, telling her mother she could look at them forever, and then forgets there are any such things in the room.¹⁶ Mrs. Palmer does have

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 108.

some artistic talent, evident in the landscape in coloured silks hanging over the mantle in the room which had been hers where Elinor and Marianne stay when they go to the city.¹⁷ This landscape, according to Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern, is embroidered.¹⁸

Mrs. Jennings, the indefatigable match-maker, finds a discussion over a drawing food for thought and conjecture. As Elinor examines a drawing she intends to copy, Colonel Brandon joins her in a serious discussion, which Mrs. Jennings is sure is a proposal of marriage, while all the time it is a discussion of Edward's newly announced engagement and subsequent break with his family.¹⁹

Marianne again enters the artistic scene with a vehement defense of her sister's painting occasioned by John Dashwood's showing Colonel Brandon a pair of screens Elinor has done for John's wife, who is Edward's sister Fanny. Colonel Brandon says that he is no connoisseur, but he examines and admires the screens with the enthusiasm he reserves for anything concerning Miss Dashwood. Fanny and her mother do not show the proper enthusiasm for the screens, in Marianne's estimation, and Marianne is further offended by their saying that Elinor's painting somewhat resembles the work of Miss Morton, who is Lord Morton's daughter. Marianne

¹⁷Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁸p. 119.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 280-281.

replies as she takes the screens and gives them the admiration she thinks they deserve: "This is admiration of a very particular kind!--what is Miss Morton to us?--who knows, or who cares, for her?--it is Elinor of whom we think and speak."²⁰ Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern find sardonic pleasure in this scene, for Mrs. Ferrars is soon to get a less talented--and less desirable--prospective daughter-in-law.²¹

In Mansfield Park, Fanny Price is the one chiefly concerned with art, though she does not participate in drawing or painting. Her two cousins report to their Aunt Norris on Fanny's interest in learning to participate in the arts: ". . . she says she does not want to learn either music or drawing."²² Yet Fanny has a definite natural taste for the artistic. Throughout the book she is able to appreciate a scene, a landscape, or the beauties of nature, in complete contrast to Mary Crawford, who cannot appreciate the most beautiful of natural scenes.²³ Fanny expresses this natural appreciation one evening as she and Edmund look out on a brilliant, unclouded night: "When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less

²⁰Ibid., pp. 234-236.

²¹p. 118.

²²p. 19.

²³Ibid., pp. 80-81.

of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene."²⁴

In Fanny's own room, the school room abandoned but for her use, she keeps all her treasures; and among these is a collection of artistic efforts: "three transparencies, made in a rage for transparencies, for the three lower panes of one window, where Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy, and a moonlight lake in Cumberland; a collection of family profiles thought unworthy of being anywhere else, over the mantle-piece, and by their side and pinned against the wall, a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William, with H.M.S. Antwerp at the bottom, in letters as tall as the main-mast."²⁵

When Fanny first visits Sotherton, the Rushworth estate, she alone of the whole crowd shows any interest in the old family portraits and the abundance of pictures, "some few good." Her interest in these old things can be attributed to her delight in connecting "any thing with history already known, or warm her imagination with scenes of the past."²⁶

Pride and Prejudice offers no artists, but Elizabeth does enjoy any artistic offerings available. A conversation

²⁴Ibid., p. 113.

²⁵Ibid., p. 152.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 84-85.

with Lady Catherine furnishes information on the Bennet family's artistic accomplishments:

"Do you draw?" [Lady Catherine]

"No, not at all."

"What, none of you?"

"Not one."

"That is very strange. But I suppose you had no opportunity. Your mother should have taken you to town every spring for the benefit of masters."

"My mother would have had no objection, but my father hates London."

When Lady Catherine contends that, without a governess to teach them, Elizabeth and her sisters must have been neglected, Elizabeth replies: "Compared with some families, I believe we were; but such of us as wished to learn, never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who chose to be idle, certainly might."²⁷ Early in her visit with Mr. and Mrs. Collins, Elizabeth, with the others, is forced to admire the view from Rosings, and Lady Catherine assures everyone that it is much better in the summer.²⁸

Not until the third chapter of the third book in Pride and Prejudice does Elizabeth get to see Pemberley, the Darcy estate, where she could be mistress long before she really is. This chapter is mostly devoted to Elizabeth's reaction to her first views of various parts of the grounds and the house. Miss Austen describes their progress through the grounds: "They entered the woods, and bidding adieu to

²⁷P. 165.

²⁸Ibid., p. 162.

the river for a while, ascended some of the higher grounds; whence, in spots where the opening of the trees gave the eye power to wander, were many charming views of the valley, the opposite hills, with the long range of woods overspreading many, and occasionally part of the stream."²⁹ Inside the house, Elizabeth notices that the windows of the saloon, open to the ground, "admitted a most refreshing view of the high woody hills behind the house, and of the beautiful oaks and Spanish chesnuts which were scattered over the intermediate lawn."³⁰

The paintings in the private gallery interest Elizabeth, particularly the family portraits. In the picture gallery are many good paintings, but, according to Miss Austen, "Elizabeth knew nothing of the art; and from such as had been already visible below, she had willingly turned to look at some drawings of Miss Darcy's, in crayons, whose subjects were usually more interesting, and also more intelligible." Finding the family portraits, she is interested in the only face she will recognize, Darcy himself: "At last it arrested her--and she beheld a striking resemblance of Mr. Darcy, with such a smile over the face, as she remembered to have sometimes seen, when he looked at her. She stood several minutes before the picture in earnest

²⁹Ibid., p. 246.

³⁰Ibid., p. 245.

contemplation, and returned to it again before they quitted the gallery."³¹

The only other portrait of interest to Elizabeth brings a feeling of shame, a portrait in miniature of Wickham, hanging with several other miniatures over the mantle. The housekeeper then calls Elizabeth's attention to another picture of Darcy, this one in miniature, and immediately Elizabeth grows in the eyes of the housekeeper when Aunt Gardiner remarks that Elizabeth knows him.³²

One evening at Netherfield Elizabeth finds herself involved in a discussion with Darcy and his faithful assistant, Miss Bingley, on what determines accomplishment. Miss Bingley asserts that, to be accomplished, a young lady must include in her assets the ability to draw.³³ Miss Bingley's sharp tongue is evident on another occasion when she tries to get a reaction from Darcy by urging him to be sure to place the portraits of his uncle and aunt Phillips in the gallery at Pemberley--a not-too-desirable uncle and aunt he will acquire if the much-feared (on Miss Bingley's part) marriage with Elizabeth takes place.³⁴ Just after that conversation, Mrs. Hurst and Elizabeth join Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy, and when the two other ladies engage Mr. Darcy's two arms, leaving Elizabeth alone, Elizabeth assures them that she will

³¹Ibid., p. 250.

³²Ibid., p. 247.

³³Ibid., p. 39.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 52-53.

go on her way: "No, no; stay where you are.--You are charmingly group'd, and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth."³⁵

Of all the novels, Persuasion offers fewest references to art. Only Captain Harville, a minor character, shows interest or ability in painting. Listed among his accomplishments as soon as he is introduced in the book is the fact that he draws.³⁶ Anne Elliot finds him one day looking into a printshop window and hears a bit of his criticism of a painting: "He was standing by himself, at a printshop window, with his hands behind him, in earnest contemplation of some print, and she not only might have passed him unseen, but was obliged to touch as well as address him before she could catch his notice. When he did perceive and acknowledge her, however, it was done with all his usual frankness and good-humour. ' . . . Here I am, you see, staring at a picture. I can never get by this shop without stopping. But what a thing here is, by way of a boat! Do look at it. Did you ever see the like? What queer fellows your fine painters must be, to think that anybody would venture their lives in such a shapeless old cockle-shell as that?"³⁷

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶p. 99.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 168-169.

Catherine Morland's concern with art in Northanger Abbey is that she knows nothing of it. In the first chapter of the book, describing Catherine in contrast to the usual heroine, Miss Austen says: "Her taste for drawing was not superior; though whenever she could obtain the outside of a letter from her mother, or seize upon any other odd piece of paper, she did what she could in that way by drawing houses and trees, hens and chickens, all very much like one another."³⁸ Shortly after this quotation, in discussing her improvement, Miss Austen writes: "Her greatest deficiency was in the pencil--she had no notion of drawing--not enough even to attempt a sketch of her lover's profile, that she might be detected in the design. There she fell miserably short of the true heroic height. At present she did not know her own poverty, for she had no lover to portray."³⁹

When Catherine finally gets to take the long-anticipated walk with Henry Tilney and his sister at Bath, she finds that she is in company with people who are much more familiar with the artistic and picturesque than anyone with whom she has ever come in contact. She listens as they discuss the landscape: "The Tilneys were soon engaged in another, on which she had nothing to say. They were viewing the country with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing, and they

³⁸p. 14.

³⁹Ibid., p. 16.

decided on its promise as a subject for pictures with all the eagerness of real taste. Here Catherine was quite lost. She knew nothing of drawing--nothing of real taste; and she listened to them with an attention which brought her little profit for they talked in phrases which conveyed scarcely any idea to her. The little which she could understand, however, appeared to contradict the very few notions she had entertained on the matter before."⁴⁰

From their conversation she assumes that no longer can a good view be taken from the top of a high hill and that a clear blue sky is no longer a proof of a fine day; and she is ashamed of her ignorance. When she confesses her ignorance and declares that more than anything she would love to draw, Henry begins a lecture on the picturesque "in which his instructions were so clear that she soon began to see beauty in everything admired by him; and her attention was so earnest that he became perfectly satisfied of her having a great deal of natural taste." Catherine proves such a hopeful scholar after his discussion of foregrounds, distances, and second distances, side-screens and perspectives, lights and shades, that when they reach the top of Beechen Cliff, she "voluntarily rejects the whole city of Bath as unworthy to make a part of a landscape." With this Henry closes the subject in delight at

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 110-111.

her progress but with the fear of tiring her with "too much wisdom at once."⁴¹

In Sense and Sensibility, the novel containing the greatest number of references to art, Jane Austen presents characters representing the two opposing ideas concerning all the arts during her day. Marianne Dashwood represents the romantic idea; she worships the "picturesque" in art and literature--elements fit to be the subject of a striking or effective picture. On the other hand, the more realistic attitude of Edward Ferrars--that he does not like "ruined, tattered cottages" and that he prefers a "snug farmhouse" to a watch tower--provokes shock and pity in Marianne. Only in Marianne's reactions does Miss Austen allow the reader to understand that Elinor must share some of Marianne's romantic ideas, for Elinor is usually busy defending Edward's lack of taste. Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern believe that Miss Austen pictures Marianne with detachment and that Edward's attitude is more indicating of the way Miss Austen really felt.⁴²

Architecture

The only one of the arts discussed in the six novels which Jane Austen does not mention frequently in her letters

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Pp. 25-26.

is architecture. Most of her letters are written to other members of her family, and her experiences are largely confined to areas familiar to all with whom she corresponded; so there was no necessity to mention and explain an appreciation for certain types of architecture. Perhaps this can account for the absence in her letters of references to this particular art which she does discuss in her novels.

In five of the novels the reader sees a deliberate attention to certain types of architecture. Particularly in Northanger Abbey, Catherine Morland finds herself intrigued by old castles and abbeys; she is disappointed not to see Blaize Castle, but Northanger Abbey, where she visits the Tilneys, fulfills all her fondest imaginations concerning an old abbey "like what one reads of." Sotherton, the Rushworth estate in Mansfield Park, disappoints Fanny Price when she sees the chapel with its modern furnishings; Emma Woodhouse revels in the style of Donwell Abbey in Emma; and Elizabeth Bennet finds joy in rambling through the halls and grounds of Pemberley in Pride and Prejudice. All the heroines, like Fanny Price in her attachment to Mansfield Park, show as much sentiment as taste in their regard for these types of architecture.

In Sense and Sensibility Willoughby protests against Mrs. Dashwood's plans to make changes in Barton Cottage, but the protest seems to arise from Willoughby's feigned sentiment

more than from any particularly tasteful regard for the architecture: "How little did I then think that the very first news I should hear from Mrs. Smith, when I next came into the country, would be that Barton Cottage was taken: and I felt an immediate satisfaction and interest in the event, which nothing but a kind of prescience of what happiness I should experience from it, can account for. . . . And yet this house you would spoil, Mrs. Dashwood? You would rob it of its simplicity by imaginary improvement! And this dear parlour, in which our acquaintance first began, and in which so many happy hours have been since spent by us together, you would degrade to the condition of a common entrance, and every body would be eager to pass through the room which has hitherto contained within itself, more real accommodation and comfort than any other apartment of the handsomest dimensions in the world could possibly afford."⁴³ After such a plea, Mrs. Dashwood declares that she will not change it. Yet Mrs. Dashwood does make plans to make some improvements in the cottage while the girls are in the city. As they leave, she reminds them of her plans: "And I have a little plan of alteration for your bedrooms too, which may now be performed without inconvenience to any one."⁴⁴

Fanny Price in Mansfield Park shows her attachment to things of the past particularly in her comments on Sotherton,

⁴³Pp. 73-74.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 155-156.

the estate which Mr. Rushworth is improving. Before she ever sees the place, Edmund tells her of some of Mr. Rushworth's intended improvements, and Fanny's reaction can be seen in the following conversation between her and Edmund:

"Cut down an avenue! What a pity! Does it not make you think of Cowper? 'Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited.'"

He smiled as he answered, "I am afraid the avenue stands a bad chance, Fanny."

"I should like to see Sotherton before it is cut down, to see the place as it is now, in its old state; but I suppose I shall."⁴⁵

When Fanny actually sees Sotherton, her imagination has prepared her for much more than she finds. She is particularly disappointed in the chapel--"a mere, spacious, oblong room, fitted up for the purpose of devotion--with nothing more striking or more solemn than the profusion of mahogany, and the crimson velvet cushions appearing over the ledge of the family gallery above." Fanny expects something grander and confides her disappointment to Edmund in a low tone:

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

"You forget, Fanny, how lately all this has been built, and for how confined a purpose, compared with the old chapels of castles and monasteries. It was only for the private use of the family. They have been buried, I suppose, in the parish church. There you must look for the banners and the achievements."

"It was foolish of me not to think of all that, but I am disappointed."⁴⁶

Mrs. Rushworth gives information concerning the chapel, which does not relieve Fanny's disappointment: "This chapel was fitted up as you see it, in James the Second's time. Before that period, as I understand, the pews were only wainscot; and there is some reason to think that the linings and cushions of the pulpit and family-seat were only purple cloth; but this is not quite certain. It is a handsome chapel and was formerly in constant use both morning and evening. Prayers were always read in it by the domestic chaplain, within the memory of many. But the late Mr. Ruchworth left it off."⁴⁷ For the house as a whole, Fanny held respect. Miss Austen writes: "Her eye was eagerly taking in every thing within her reach; and after being at some pains to get a view of the house, and observing that 'it was a sort of building which she could not look at but with respect' . . ."⁴⁸

To Emma Woodhouse, in Emma, Donwell Abbey, the home of Mr. Knightley, holds particular interest because of her sister's marriage to Mr. Knightley's brother and because of her oldest nephew's being in line to inherit the property in case the present owner does not marry. She is eager to

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 82-83.

refresh and correct her memory about the house and grounds, which she has not visited in some time. Miss Austen describes her feelings:

She felt all the honest pride and complacency which her alliance with the present and future proprietor could fairly warrant, as she viewed the respectable size and style, of the building, its suitable, becoming, characteristic situation, low and sheltered; its ample gardens stretching down to meadows washed by a stream, of which the Abbey, with all the old neglect of prospect, had scarcely a sight--and its abundance of timber in rows and avenues, which neither fashion nor extravagance had rooted up. The house was larger than Hartfield, and totally unlike it, covering a good deal of ground, rambling and irregular, with many comfortable, and one or two handsome rooms. It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was; and Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding.⁴⁹

Catherine Morland, the imaginative heroine of Northanger Abbey, possesses an interest in architecture--especially old castles and ruined abbeys--that eventually leads her into difficulty. Having read the most romantic of novels, she expects real life to offer the same adventure and romance she has found in her reading. When a ride is proposed by John Thorpe to include Catherine, her brother, and John's sister, she is reluctant to go because of other plans made previously; then when she is slighted by the Tilneys, she does decide to go, and her only comfort is that John has promised her she will see Blaize Castle, which he assures her has towers and long galleries, in short, "like

⁴⁹Pp. 357-358.

what one reads of." Miss Austen portray's Catherine's thoughts:

To feel herself slighted by them the Tilneys was very painful. On the other hand, the delight of exploring an edifice like Udolpho, as her fancy represented Blaize Castle to be, was such a counterpoise of good might console her for almost anything. . . .

Blaize Castle remained her only comfort; towards that she still looked at intervals with pleasure; though rather than be disappointed of the promised walk, and especially rather than be thought ill of by the Tilneys, she would willingly have given up all the happiness which its walls could supply: the happiness of a progress through a long suite of lofty rooms, exhibiting the remains of magnificent furniture, though now for many years deserted: the happiness of being stopped in their way along narrow, winding vaults, by a low, grated door; or even of having their lamp, their only lamp extinguished by a sudden gust of wind, of being left in total darkness.⁵⁰

En route to Northanger Abbey, the home of the Tilneys, Catherine has opportunity to talk with Henry about his home. She questions him if it is like "what one reads of," and he replies with a question: "And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce? Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?" Her reply shows the influence her reading has had on her expectations: "Oh! yes, I do not think I should be easily frightened, because there would be so many people in the house; and besides; it has never been uninhabited and left deserted for years, and then the family come back to it unawares without giving any notice, as generally happens."⁵¹

⁵⁰Pp. 84-88.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 157-158.

She is impatient for a glimpse of the abbey as they near the end of their journey: "Every bend in the road was expected, with solemn awe, to afford a glimpse of its mossy walls of grey stone, rising amidst a grove of ancient oaks, with the last beams of the sun playing in beautiful splendour on its high Gothic windows. But so low did the building stand, that she found herself passing through the great gates of the lodge, into the very grounds of Northanger, without having discerned even an antique chimney." To arrive in a sudden downpour of rain, to drive down a smooth gravel way without incident or catastrophe, and to see common rooms on the interior of the abbey strike Catherine as "odd and inconsistent." Even "the breeze had not seemed to waft the sighs of the murderer to her."⁵² Through her first few days at the abbey, she is determined to make the abbey conform to her standards of what a ruined abbey should be, but she finally realizes that real life, even in ruined abbeys, is not always like "what one reads of."

In Pride and Prejudice Pemberley, the Darcy estate, is the primary architectural concern, and it is of concern primarily to Elizabeth Bennet. She views it first while she is traveling with the city aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, who are of an inferior class in Darcy's opinion. Elizabeth is in high spirits as she approaches Pemberley for

⁵²Ibid., pp. 160-162.

the first time. She views with pleasure the exterior of the house--large, handsome, built of stone, and backed by beautiful woods; the interior of the house--well-proportioned rooms, handsomely fitted up; and the large park. As she tours the house and grounds, she thinks: "And of this place I might have been mistress! With these rooms I might now have been familiarly acquainted! Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might have rejoiced in them as my own, and welcomed to them as visitors my uncle and aunt.--But no, that could never be: my uncle and aunt would have been lost to me: I should not have been allowed to invite them."⁵³ Because of her own good taste, she is forced to admire the tastefulness of the entire Pemberley situation, but she reminds herself of her unpleasant experiences with the owner of the estate, and she banishes any regrets.

In relation to architecture as an art, Jane Austen's characters rarely view or comment as real authorities. The most they can do is to appreciate good taste, and those characters who possess good taste themselves do show an appreciation of architecture. Jane Austen does not present her characters as attracted to or repulsed by any particular type of architecture. Though during her time the Romantic Movement had inspired a new interest in old types of architecture, she does not go entirely along with the ideas. Both Fanny Price and Catherine Morland possess a love for the

⁵³pp. 245-246.

ancient, but Fanny is more realistic than the romantic Catherine. Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern write that Jane Austen identifies herself on occasion with conflicting attitudes, both evident in the attitudes of Fanny Price. Once Fanny opposes the improvements at Sotherton, and next she criticizes its chapel.⁵⁴ The only definite types of architecture Jane Austen uses are the ruined abbeys and the old castles, and she appears to ridicule the romantic interest two of her weaker characters have in these types.

Summarizing Jane Austen's attitude toward art and architecture, Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern write that there are not many descriptions of country scenery in the novels. Concerning landscape as scenery and the picturesque, they write: ". . . the cult of landscape as scenery is something comparatively new. In Jane Austen's time it was coming into fashion under the auspices of the Romantic Revival, but in this she shows very little tendency to be Picturesque. Such descriptions as she indulges in are invariably sedate, written obviously with no further idea than to produce a correct impression of what her people actually saw."⁵⁵ The descriptions quoted in the section on architecture seem to prove the contention of Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern that, "as a rule, she is more given to describing houses than landscapes."⁵⁶

⁵⁴pp. 25-26.

⁵⁵p. 96.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 97.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In relation to the arts, Jane Austen frequently uses the term taste. To her characters like Marianne Dashwood, taste is derived from a personal knowledge of the arts as well as habitual practice; to those like Fanny Price, it may mean only an appreciation for the arts, cultivated through interest and association. Taste, then, according to Jane Austen, can be either innate or cultivated. Her characters in the novels use the term in both ways, and sometimes she gives no surrounding circumstances to indicate that the term is used in any way except as illustrative of a general esthetic preference.

Twice in Mansfield Park, Jane Austen puts the term into the conversations of her characters, with no qualifications to indicate its being used as natural or cultivated. Because Fanny Price knows that she and Crawford have no tastes in common, she uses the term in defending her refusal to accept his proposal, so attractive in the eyes of all her associates: "We are so totally unlike," said Fanny, avoiding a direct answer, "we are so very, very different in all our inclinations and ways, that I consider it as quite impossible we should ever be tolerably happy together, even if I could

like him. There never were two people more dissimilar. We have not one taste in common. We should be miserable."¹ Crawford uses the term in the same way, simply to indicate individual aesthetic preference in his discussion with Edmund concerning the composition and delivery of a good sermon:

A sermon, well delivered, is more uncommon even than prayers well read. A sermon, good in itself, is no rare thing. It is more difficult to speak well than to compose an object of study. . . . The preacher who can touch and affect such an heterogeneous mass of hearers, on subjects limited, and long worn thread-bare in all common hands; who can say anything new or striking, any thing that rouses the attention without offending the taste, or wearing out the feelings of his hearers, is a man whom one could not (in his public capacity) honour enough. I should like to be such a man.²

A consideration of innate taste is seen in Fanny's getting to know her younger sister, Susan, after many years of separation. Fanny has had for several years the cultural atmosphere and influence of Mansfield Park and its inhabitants while Susan has been in the city home of their father, where the only item of literature is the newspaper, where the slovenly habits of the servants embarrass Fanny, and where the general tenor and tone of life is one that would kill any artistic tendencies. Fanny recognizes in Susan, however, a natural taste for the genteel. "Their conversations, however, were not always on subjects so high as history or morals.

¹p. 348.

²Ibid., p. 341.

Others had had their hour; and of lesser matters, none returned so often, or remained so long between them, as Mansfield Park. Susan, who had an innate taste for the genteel and well-appointed, was eager to hear, and Fanny could not but indulge herself in dwelling on so beloved a theme."³

Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern write that Jane Austen uses the term taste continually in relation to music, but I have observed that she uses the term in relation to other specific arts, several times in relation to literature. In Mansfield Park Fanny Price sees in her sister Susan a lack of interest in the right things, despite Susan's innate taste for the genteel and well appointed; determining to cultivate in her sister's mind a taste for books which she herself loves, Fanny subscribes to a circulating library for books not available in her father's house: "She became a subscriber--amazed at being any thing in propria persona, amazed at her own doings in every way; to be a renter, a chuser of books! But so it was. Susan had read nothing, and Fanny longed to give her a share in her own first pleasures, and inspire a taste for the biography and poetry which she delighted in herself."⁵

³Ibid., p. 419.

⁴p. 238.

⁵Ibid., p. 398.

Perhaps Fanny feels this cultivation of taste a necessity, for earlier in her own life Edmund Bertram had encouraged her intellectual relish for books: "He knew her to be clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good sense, and a fondness for reading, which, properly directed, must be an education in itself. Miss Lee taught her French and heard her read the daily portion of history; but he recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgment; he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise."⁶

In Persuasion Anne Elliot discovers in Captain Benwick a taste for poetry alone, which may be natural; but Anne hopes to be of use to him in encouraging him to cultivate a taste in other types of literature as well: "He was evidently a young man of considerable taste in reading, though principally in poetry; and besides the persuasion of having given him at least an evening's indulgence in the discussion of subjects, which his usual companions had probably no concern in, she had the hope of being of real use to him."⁷ Later, when Anne learns from Charles Musgrove of Benwick's attachment for Charles's sister and the sister's recovery from her accident, Anne notices how the tastes or

⁶Ibid., p. 22.

⁷Pp. 100-101.

esthetic preferences of the two men differ: ". . . and Benwick sits at her elbow, reading verses, or whispering to her, all day long," reports Charles. And Anne laughs as she replies, "That cannot be much to your taste, I know."⁸

In Sense and Sensibility Marianne Dashwood's natural taste for literature, heightened by cultivation, causes her to mistake Willoughby's feigned interest in her for similar taste: "Their taste was strikingly alike. The same books, the same passages were idolized by each--or if any difference appeared, any objection arose, it lasted no longer than till the forces of her arguments and the brightness of her eyes could be displayed."⁹

In Emma, Emma Woodhouse displays a natural taste for the better items in her work with Harriet Smith's project of collecting riddles like those collected on a larger scale by Miss Nash, head teacher at Miss Goddard's school: "Emma assisted with her invention, memory, and taste; and as Harriet wrote a very pretty hand, it was likely to be an arrangement of the first order, in form as well as quantity."¹⁰

Regarding music, Miss Austen uses the term taste in several of the novels. In Mansfield Park the use of the term taste in music concerns Miss Crawford's accomplishment on the harp. Miss Crawford assures Fanny, who has never

⁸Ibid., pp. 218-219.

⁹p. 47.

¹⁰pp. 69-70.

heard a harp, and Edmund, who vows it is his favorite instrument, that she will be glad to play for them, "for I dearly love music myself, and where natural taste is equal the player must always be best off, for she is gratified in more ways than one."¹¹ Fanny, in Miss Crawford's estimation, also displays a natural taste for music, though she does not practice the art. She is not immediately rewarded with a performance, as is Edmund, but when she finally does listen for the first time to Miss Crawford's performance on the harp, the artist, Miss Crawford, notices that Fanny is a listener "who seems so much obliged, so full of wonder at the performance, and who shows herself not wanting in taste."¹²

In Pride and Prejudice Elizabeth Bennet recognizes her own shortcomings as a musician on the pianoforte, but Lady Catherine points out that Elizabeth's lacks are in taste rather than execution. Lady Catherine's reference to taste could be interpreted as meaning either natural or cultivated taste: "She [Elizabeth Bennet] has a very good notion of fingering, though her taste is not equal to Anne's." As she continues her remarks on Elizabeth's playing, she unites them with many instructions on execution and taste.¹³

Much of the contrast and much of the plot in Emma center around music, for Emma realizes that she is not so

¹¹p. 59.

¹²Ibid., pp. 206-207.

¹³p. 176.

accomplished in music as is her rival, Jane Fairfax. In attempting to comfort Emma and keep her from feeling inferior to Jane Fairfax as a musician, Emma's friend Harriet Smith proves her own lack of taste, and in this comment, taste can be interpreted to mean either the kind that is innate or the kind that results from education: "Mr. Cole said how much taste you had! and Mr. Frank Churchill talked a great deal about your taste, and that he valued taste much more than execution. . . . I saw she had execution, but I did not know that she had any taste. Nobody talked about it."¹⁴

Again, in Jane Fairfax's company, Miss Austen presents Emma as performing with a full knowledge of her own ability and its limitations as well as a knowledge of her own taste: "She knew the limitations of her own powers too well to attempt more than she could perform with credit; she wanted neither taste nor spirit in the little things which are generally acceptable, and could accompany her own voice well."¹⁵ On a shopping trip one day Frank Churchill seeks Emma's opinion of Jane's playing and remarks that to him Miss Fairfax appears to "play well, that is, with considerable taste," but that he knows nothing of the matter himself.¹⁶ The ludicrous Mrs. Elton confides to Emma concerning

¹⁴pp. 231-232.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 201-202.

her taste in music: "I am dotingly fond of music--passionately fond; and my friends say I am not entirely devoid of taste; but as to anything else, upon my honor my performance is mediocre to the last degree."¹⁷

Miss Austen also refers to taste in relation to drawing and painting. In Northanger Abbey the Tilneys, the people whom Catherine most admires and most wants the admiration of, show taste for the picturesque which reveals Catherine's lack of taste; but this lack, which produces a desire in her to learn, leads to the idea that cultivation of taste in this art is possible:

They were viewing the country with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing, and decided on its capability of being formed into pictures with all the eagerness of real taste. Here Catherine was quite lost. She knew nothing of drawing--nothing of taste; . . . In the present instance, she confessed and lamented her want of knowledge; declared that she would give anything in the world to be able to draw; and a lecture on the picturesque immediately followed in which his instructions were so clear that she soon began to see beauty in everything admired by him; and her attention was so earnest, that he became perfectly satisfied of her having a great deal of natural taste.¹⁸

Marianne Dashwood sympathizes with her sister Elinor in Sense and Sensibility because of Edward's lack of taste for drawing, Elinor's favorite pastime, but the two sisters differ in their use of the term. Marianne implies that Edward lacks a true understanding and personal knowledge of

¹⁷Ibid., p. 276.

¹⁸pp. 110-111.

art, while Elinor, defending Edward, says he appreciates art without really personally understanding the art. Apparently, Marianne feels that taste is an innate rapturous quality that cannot be acquired through education, and Elinor seems to feel that taste is innate but subject to cultivation:

"What a pity it is, Elinor," said Marianne, "that Edward should have no taste for drawing."

"No taste for drawing," replied Elinor, "why should you think so? He does not draw himself, indeed, but he has great pleasure in seeing the performances of other people, and I assure you he is by no means deficient in natural taste, though he has not had opportunities of improving it. . . he has an innate propriety and simplicity of taste, which in general direct him perfectly right."

Marianne was afraid of offending, and said no more on the subject; but the kind of approbation which Elinor described as excited in him by the drawings of other people, was very far from that rapturous delight, which, in her opinion, could alone be called taste. . . .

"I hope, Marianne," continued Elinor, "you do not consider him as deficient in general taste. . . ."19

In the same book Edward evaluates his own artistic taste in these words: "Marianne--remember I have no knowledge in the picturesque, and I shall offend you by my ignorance and want of taste if we come to particulars."²⁰ Earlier in the story Marianne is delighted to learn that Elinor and Edward are not really engaged because it will give him greater opportunity to improve his natural taste, which Elinor insists he has, for Elinor's favorite pursuit, drawing. Marianne considers this development of taste necessary for married

¹⁹Pp. 19.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 96-98.

bliss. Marianne's understanding of taste is summed up in her very first words concerning Edward's lack of taste: ". . . he has no real taste . . . He admires as a lover, not as a connoisseur. To satisfy me, those characters must be united."²¹

In two novels Jane Austen uses the term taste in connection with beauty of ground or beauty of nature or architecture in the large country estates. Fanny tells Mary Crawford of her appreciation of Mrs. Grant's improvements at the rectory in Mansfield Park, implying a natural taste on Mrs. Grant's part: "It may seem impertinent in me to praise, but I must admire the taste Mrs. Grant has shewn in all this. There is such a quiet simplicity in the plan of the walk!"²² Concerning nature, Edmund commends Fanny for her taste and refers to it as early cultivated: "They are much to be pitied who have not been taught to feel in some degree as you do--who have not at least been given a taste for nature in early life. They lose a great deal."²³ When Elizabeth Bennet enters Pemberley, the Darcy estate, for the first time, she sees "with admiration of his [Darcy's] taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendor, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings."²⁴

²¹Ibid., pp. 17-18.

²²pp. 208-209.

²³Ibid., p. 113.

²⁴p. 246.

It would seem from Miss Austen's references to taste in relation to the major arts that she feels that to be able to cultivate taste, one needs a certain amount of natural taste. She writes of Mary Crawford that she has "none of Fanny's delicacy of taste, of mind, of feeling."²⁵ Elinor Dashwood is convinced that Edward has natural taste that is not yet developed. All her heroines possess fine artistic taste, and Edward Ferrars is the only hero not gifted in the same way. Apparently, Jane Austen wished to endow her characters with a quality which she possessed herself--a quality which enabled her to treat the arts as she does in her novels.

Conclusion

Jane Austen took her own experiences in the arts and used them in the lives of her characters; she pursued the arts and then sent her characters to do the same. Not all characters share enthusiasm for the same arts. Only one character participates in all the arts--Emma Woodhouse, who reads, writes, plays the piano, sings, does carpet-work, and draws in her characteristic sporadic manner. In some heroines the reader finds only one great love among the arts: Marianne Dashwood and literature; her sister Elinor and drawing; Catherine Morland and the novel; Mary Crawford and music. Elizabeth Bennet does enjoy both literature and music, but neither of the arts fills her with a consuming passion. Anne

²⁵pp. 80-81.

Elliot shares Elizabeth's interest in both music and literature, though she is more talented musically, according to Miss Austen's presentation, than is Elizabeth. The only art which Fanny Price practices is literature, but she shows appreciation for music, architecture, and drawing.

According to Jane Austen's letters and novels, women are more artistically inclined than men, though her men to participate in some arts. Henry Tilney delights in novels and in art; he feels that a person would have to be extraordinary not to enjoy the novel (he also enjoys history), and he instructs Catherine in the basic fundamentals of art and landscape. Edmund Bertram also shows an interest in literature and is skilled in reading aloud. Willoughby, a scoundrel rather than a hero, shares Marianne's enthusiasm for literature and music, and Frank Churchill sings duets with Jane Fairfax. Darcy and Elizabeth never come to an agreement to discuss books, but he has a large library in his country home.

None of Jane Austen's characters reach such a degree of excellence as is essential to authorities in their particular art, but they do have decided opinions about the arts just as did their creator, opinions evident in her letters. Her emphasis seems to be more on enjoying the arts rather than on reaching perfection, and she seems to illustrate the idea that experience is necessary for appreciation.

Of the major arts considered in this thesis, literature appears to be the dominant art. A vast amount of attention goes to this art, and more characters participate in the pursuit and enjoyment of this art than in any of the others.

The artistic trends followed by all Jane Austen's characters show them interested in the arts acceptable to the accomplished persons, mostly women, of a country neighborhood in the author's own time, just as she was interested in these arts. Yet in no field of art do the characters become critical authorities. Jane Austen has placed the arts in her novels because they were a natural part of middle class culture in the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She gives her characters strong opinions and feelings toward the arts, strong opinions and feelings which she experienced herself; but rarely does she let them criticize. She writes of upper middle class life at that time; she writes of what she knew best; she writes of the arts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allott, Miriam. Novelists on the Novel. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.
- Austen, Jane. Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others. Edited by R. W. Chapman. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1952.
- Austen, Jane. The Novels of Jane Austen. Edited by R. W. Chapman. 3rd ed. 5 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Austen-Leigh, J. E. Memoir of Jane Austen. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.
- Baker, Ernest A. History of the English Novel. 10 vols. London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1934.
- Becker, May Lamberton. Presenting Miss Jane Austen. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1952.
- Chapman, R. W. Jane Austen, Facts and Problems. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948.
- Childe, Harold (ed.). "Jane Austen," Cambridge History of English Literature. Vol. XII. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932.
- Colvin, Sidney. "Art" The Encyclopaedia Britannica, II (11th ed.; Cambridge: University Press, 1910), 660-661.
- Gagen, Jean Elisabeth. The New Woman. New York: The Twaine Publishers, 1954.
- Hale, Nancy. "The Magic of Creativity" The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXIV (April 29, 1961), 24, 68-71.
- Jenkins, Elizabeth. Jane Austen. New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1949.
- Johnson, R. Brimley. Introduction to Mansfield Park. Everyman's Library, no. 23. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1948.

- Kaye-Smith, Sheila, and G. B. Stern. More About Jane Austen. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949.
- Kaye-Smith, Sheila, and G. B. Stern. Speaking of Jane Austen. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944.
- A Literary History of England. Edited by Albert C. Baugh. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1947.
- Millett, Fred B. Reading Fiction. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950.
- Mudrick, Marvin. Jane Austen, Irony as Defense and Discovery. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.
- Munson, Gorham. "Who Are Our Favorite Nineteenth Century Authors?" College English, V (March, 1944), 291-296.
- Murray, James Gregory. "Measure and Balance in Jane Austen's Emma,"
- Reynolds, Myra. The Learned Lady in England. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920.
- Schlesinger, Kathleen, and S. A. Hurren. "Pianoforte" Encyclopaedia Britannica, XVII (1960), 897.
- Whitmore, Clara H. Woman's Work in English Fiction. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910.