

"A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE": AN APPLICATION OF  
GEORGE CAMPBELL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC*  
TO SELECTED NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, SPEECH, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

ESTHER HOUGHTALING B.A., M.L.S

DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST 2015

## DEDICATION

To all of the family, friends, teachers, and mentors along the way who have inspired and encouraged me: thank you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Phyllis Bridges for her unwavering support and guidance during my time at TWU. Thank you for always being there for me. You were there to answer my very first email inquiries about the rhetoric program; you were there to hold my newborn baby girls in your arms; and you were there to make your final marks on the last chapter of my dissertation. Thank you for helping me plan my course of study and for always making time for me. Thank you for your example of what a dedicated, hard-working professor looks like. For many students, you are the face of the English department at TWU. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work and study under you.

I would also like to thank Dr. Bruce Krajewski, Dr. Graham Scott, and Dr. Evelyn Curry for the time, energy, and effort they have invested in my education. Dr. K., thank you for your part in the beginnings of my program requirements. Dr. Scott, thank you for being so down-to-earth, for always putting my mind at ease, and for being so easy to talk to. Dr. Curry, thank you for your kind and cheerful spirit. You have all made this journey a little easier thanks to your kindness.

To my dear husband, Spencer: Thank you for encouraging me from the very beginning to pursue my Ph.D. Thank you for your love and support and for always believing in me (even when I do not). Thank you for reassuring me and pushing me to do

things that are out of my comfort zone. Sometimes I think you know me better than I know myself.

To my sister Liz: It has been said that "There is no friend like a sister." Thank you for being my best friend, my rock, my confidant. Thank you for always being willing to give me a listening ear and a word of encouragement or advice.

And finally to my mom and dad: Thank you for making me who I am today. Thank you for instilling in me a love of learning and for encouraging me along the way. You have always been my fiercest champions and my most enthusiastic cheerleaders. Thank you for always being there to listen to me, to give me sage advice, and to offer me a helping hand. Thank you for your unfailing love and for always believing in me. It really does take a village to raise children while a mom is working on her Ph.D. Thank you for being that weekend village for me. I could not have written this dissertation without your help.

ABSTRACT

ESTHER HOUGHTALING

"A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE": AN APPLICATION OF  
GEORGE CAMPBELL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC*  
TO SELECTED NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN

AUGUST 2015

Early in the course of *Northanger Abbey*, one of her earliest written novels, Jane Austen withdraws from the narrative to confront readers with an impassioned defense of the novel. Although many readers and critics may gloss over this defense, it is one of the most important passages in all of Austen's works. In it, she argues that novels display the "greatest powers of the human mind," exhibit "a thorough knowledge of human nature," contain the "liveliest effusions of wit and humor," and are written in the "best chosen language." Such a definition of the merits of the novel not only justifies her own interests in her own art, but also simultaneously exonerates novels from the harsh criticisms of the day by offering a definition of the novel that is rooted firmly in eighteenth-century rhetorical theory. This study investigates the relationship between Austen's conceptions of the merits of the novel and George Campbell's rhetorical tenets in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. By providing extensive examples from three of Austen's works (*Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Persuasion*), the argument is made that Austen's novels analogically illustrate key rhetorical themes in Campbell's work. This study concludes with a discussion of the ways in which Austen's adherence to rhetorical concepts allowed

her to give the novel genre an added sense of credibility in an age when the novel was being attacked. The conclusion offers an assessment of the successfulness of Austen's authorial intrusion in the defense of the novel and describes her talents as an author in light of Virginia Woolf's term "incandescence."

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. THE GREATEST POWERS OF THE HUMAN MIND.....	21
III. A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE.....	46
IV. THE LIVELIEST EFFUSIONS OF WIT AND HUMOR.....	71
V. THE BEST CHOSEN LANGUAGE.....	91
VI. PROBABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, NATURAL CHARACTERS, AND CONTEMPORARY CONVERSATION.....	122
VII. CONCLUSION: JANE AUSTEN, THE INCANDESCENT AUTHOR.....	145
WORKS CITED.....	153

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, when British novelist Jane Austen was writing, women writers were enjoying a period of exponential acceptance in authorship, but there was an unmistakable stigma attached to the novels that they were writing. Many women authors published their works anonymously or under a pseudonym while others tended to avoid the classification of novelist altogether. Maria Edgeworth, one of the period's popular female authors, offered an "Advertisement" to her 1801 novel *Belinda* in which she asked the reading public to consider her work as a "Moral Tale—the author not wishing to acknowledge a Novel." Edgeworth goes on to say that she would "adopt the name of novel with delight: But so much folly, error, and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination, that it is hoped the wish to assume another title will be attributed to feelings that are laudable and not fastidious."

The novel, however, had not always been held in such low estimation. In his seminal study of the origins of the novel, Ian Watt posits that the novel as a genre began with three early eighteenth-century authors: Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding. Watt suggests that these three authors founded a new type of fiction, one that rejected the generic conventions of the old romances and instead emphasized a formal realism based on Locke's philosophical ideas that focused on particularity and individuality. The novels



of Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding were revered and regarded as a worthy new form of literature. However, by the late eighteenth-century, long after the publishing activity of these three forerunners of fiction had ceased, a rather seismic shift had occurred in the general makeup of the reading public: to an existing aristocratic readership had been added a growing middle class who had become the new audience for novels. Along with this growth of middle-class readers, there was also a large increase in the number of women readers; and more and more women began to take advantage of a genre of writing that had become available to them by becoming authors of novels themselves. As Austen scholar Robert Irvine explains,

Unlike the genres of writing inherited from Greek and Latin antiquity (epic, pastoral, satire, tragic and comic drama, and so on) [the novel genre] did not require a classical education for its production, and since very, very few women even from the propertied classes received a classical education, the novel was available to them as those other genres were not. (17)

Toward the end of the eighteenth-century the marketplace had been flooded with an overabundance of female-authored novels that were typified by a new style and that were characterized largely by a reliance on gothic and sentimental themes. The revered novels of the early eighteenth-century -- the novels penned by Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding -- had been "replaced by the novel of their imitators, the novel of sentimentality and sensibility, the circulating library novel" (Halperin 4). Subsequently, there began to be an association not only of women with the production and consumption of novels,

something which Irvine argues led to the genre's "low status in the literary hierarchy" (Irvine 17), but also an association of "the mass reading public with low-grade fiction" (Altick 64).

John Halperin, an expert on the novelist Jane Austen, explains that "by 1800, novels were so numerous and in such bad repute that respectable journals such as the *Scots* and *Gentlemen's* magazines ceased to notice them at all" (5). Halperin goes on to explain that

the campaign against fiction was one of the most strenuous activities of both the Evangelical and the Utilitarian movements in the first third of the nineteenth century. Both groups regarded all forms of imaginative literature, and especially the novel, with suspicion. Novels were held to be dangerous because they over-excited the imagination of young people; they were linked to corruption, dissipation, and all sorts of immorality, including adultery and divorce. (5)

Indeed, there was a widespread fear that characters and situations in novels would prove to be bad examples for young people. The distinguished Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote of his fears of the novel's power of example: "These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life." Even the famed Romantic poet and literary critic, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, offered his own harsh pronouncements as to the deleterious effects of novel reading. In the first of his lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, Coleridge wrote,

Where the reading of novels prevails as a habit, it occasions in time the entire destruction of the powers of the mind: it is such an utter loss to the reader, that it is not so much to be called pass-time as kill-time. It conveys no trustworthy information as to facts; it produces no improvement of the intellect, but fills the mind with a mawkish and morbid sensibility, which is directly hostile to the cultivation, invigoration, and enlargement of the nobler faculties of the understanding. (3)

Jane Austen and her family, however, did not share in Coleridge's opinion, and they despised the fact that there should even be a "campaign against fiction" at all. In a letter written to her sister Cassandra on December 18, 1798, Jane Austen relates to her sister that she had been asked to subscribe to a circulating-library and had been assured by Mrs. Martin, the proprietor, that the "collection is not to consist only of novels, but of every kind of literature" (Austen, *Letters of Jane Austen*, 38-9). Austen goes on to say, "She [Mrs. Martin] might have spared this pretension to *our* family, who are great novel-readers and not ashamed of being so; but it was necessary, I suppose, to the self-consequence of half her subscribers" (Austen, *Letters of Jane Austen*, 38-9). With her usual piquant wit and sarcasm, Austen mocks society's tendency to disparage the novel and instead pokes fun at people's pretense and arrogance in assuming that novels are any less worthy to be read than other kinds of "literature."

Although the sensational novels were held in such low repute, Jane Austen did not shy away from them at all, and neither was she embarrassed to admit her preference for

them. From her letters, it is clear that "Jane Austen was as fond of low comedy and sensational novels as collections of sermons" (Stabler 47). In fact, one of her earliest novels exhibits an intimate knowledge of the generic conventions of gothic romance novels and simultaneously mimics and satirizes such gothic greats as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*. That novel is Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*.

In the entirety of her canon, none of Jane Austen's novels has quite as an exciting and important history as *Northanger Abbey*. *Northanger Abbey* holds the dual distinction of being Austen's first work to be accepted for publication and also the last of her six novels to be actually published. Although accepted for publication by Richard Crosby and Co. in 1803, it remained unpublished until after Jane Austen's death, when, in 1817, her brother published it along with *Persuasion*. Austen never had the pleasure of seeing her first novel -- the novel that had given her a hope of success -- being sent out into the world. One can only imagine how such a troubled beginning with a publisher must have affected the early dreams of Austen's writing career.

As it stands, *Northanger Abbey* was written with all the hopeful expectations of publication and before the heartbreaking dealings with the rather harsh world of book publishers. It is unique among Austen's novels in that she felt free to express her satirical purposes and let loose her biting sarcasm and wit; it is the Austen novel that most clearly mirrors the writings of her juvenilia in which she mocks novelistic conventions and satirizes all forms of pretense. *Northanger Abbey* is also unique among her mature work in that, within the course of the text, Austen is the most blunt and direct in her use of

authorial intrusion – perhaps because she has yet to be tamed by the disappointments of the publishing world which seemed intent to silence her forthright opinions as a novelist. In chapter five, very early in the novel, after the narrator has told the reader that Catherine and Isabella have “shut themselves up, to read novels together,” Austen begins one of her most extensive and pointed authorial intrusions in which she unabashedly defends the novel and attempts to exonerate it from the denigration and disparagement of society (*Northanger Abbey* 23). “Yes, novels,” she begins,

for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding – joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. (23)

Among these “greatest enemies” to which she refers are the “Reviewers” who “abuse such effusions of fancy” (*NA* 23). In this tirade against those who would denigrate the novel, Austen uses war terminology, admitting that “we [authors of novels] are an *injured* body” and that “our *foes* are almost as many as our readers” [emphasis added] (23). In the space of five short chapters, what had started out as a humorous, satirical novel suddenly transformed into a serious manifesto against those who “undervalue[e] the labour of the novelist” and who “slight[] the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them” (23). The entire defense of the novel is quite lengthy and,

in it, Austen provides a harsh criticism of “the trash with which the press now groans” while all the while defending undervalued and derogated novels (23).

Toward the end of her defense of the novel, Austen rescues the novel from those who would “bestow[] the harshest epithets on such works” by offering her own glowing evaluation of what exactly the novel is and what its function is (23). She defines the novel as

. . . some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language. (NA 24)

To conclude her defense of the novel, Austen compares novels with the *Spectator*, a series of essays that were quite popular among the literary elite:

Now, had the same young lady been engaged with a volume of the *Spectator*, instead of such a work, how proudly would she have produced the book, and told its name; though the chances must be against her being occupied by any part of that voluminous publication, of which either the matter or manner would not disgust a young person of taste: the substance of its papers so often consisting in the statement of improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and topics of conversation which no longer concern anyone living; and their language, too, frequently so coarse as to give no very favourable idea of the age that could endure it. (*Northanger Abbey* 24)

This passage in which Austen makes her pointed defense of the novel is arguably one of the most important statements in all of her work because, in it, she not only justifies her own interests in her own art – that of novel writing – but she also simultaneously exonerates novels from the harsh criticisms of the day by offering a definition of the novel that is rooted firmly in eighteenth-century rhetorical theory.

If Austen's defense of the novel is evaluated, certain key words and phrases emerge. Austen argued that novels display the "greatest powers of the human mind"; exhibit a "thorough knowledge of human nature"; contain "the liveliest effusions of wit and humour"; are written in the "best chosen language"; and, as compared to an issue of the *Spectator*, will not "disgust a young person of taste" and consist only of probable circumstances, natural characters, and culturally relevant topics of conversation. All of these characteristics that Austen gives of novels directly correspond with tenets in the Enlightenment's important rhetorical work: George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

Drawing upon Locke's faculty psychology, Campbell, a Scottish minister and teacher, produced a seminal work which grounded all human knowledge, including rhetoric, in human nature – a work which has been called "the most comprehensive and original treatment of rhetoric since the classical period" (Golden and Corbett 140). Campbell, along with his contemporaries Hugh Blair and Richard Whately, ushered in what has been termed the "New Rhetoric." The theory of rhetoric had remained basically the same since fifth-century Greece; what Campbell and his contemporaries did was to

combine classical rhetoric with the new philosophical ideas of the eighteenth-century. Thus, according to Carey McIntosh, "What is new about the New Rhetoric is its assimilation into rhetoric of recent ideas on taste, beauty, sublimity, orality, and psychology" (157).

It is not surprising that rhetoric should have undergone such a significant change during the eighteenth-century when one considers the improved literacy rates and the mass consumption of printed literature. While classical rhetoric focused on the composition of elegant oral argument, the New Rhetoric began to focus instead on the audience or the listener and the ways in which written texts are received. In short, the New Rhetoric ushered in by Campbell, Blair, and Whately, among others, could be construed as "an adjustment of classical rhetoric to print culture" (McIntosh 158). Relying upon much of the classical rhetorical tradition, Campbell translated old ideas about the canons of rhetoric, style, appeals, proofs, audience, even perspicuity, detailing them in a philosophical way that was consistent with the newly emerging eighteenth-century thought and practice.

Arthur Walzer argues that "Campbell is best known for his expansion of the province of rhetoric to include all types of discourse," (690) and it is true that one of the greatest contributions of Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is that, in it, he defines rhetoric as an all-encompassing art -- one that includes the realm of all methods of discourse and communication, including poetry and fiction. For Campbell, a handwritten note is as much a work of rhetoric as a novel a poem or a courtroom speech. This is an



important change in the views of what the study of rhetoric encompasses, and in viewing rhetoric as a universal art, Campbell opens the door for the disparaged novel to be considered a work of rhetoric. Certainly, Jane Austen's novels exemplify many different types of discourse or rhetoric all embedded within the works -- "communications from full-blown pulpit oratory to the chatter of Mrs. Musgrove, from the reconciled thoughts of Anne Elliot to the impassioned note scrawled to her by a heartsick Frederick Wentworth in *Persuasion*" (Rigberg 3).

The *Philosophy of Rhetoric* was also "new" in that Campbell applied the psychological theories of the human mind to his understanding and classification of the different kinds of discourse. Campbell defines *eloquence* as "That art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end" (1). Drawing upon Francis Bacon's theory regarding the faculties of the mind, Campbell suggests that there are four primary functions of the mind: understanding, imagination, emotion, and will. Related to each of the four functions of the mind are four specific types of discourse, each with a different aim: communication that seeks to "enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will" (Campbell 1).

George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* was published in 1776, one year after Jane Austen was born. At the same time that Campbell's work was being touted as "New Rhetoric," Austen's early critics were describing her as the author of a *new* type of novel, setting her apart and distinguishing her work from other novelists of her day. In an 1815 review of *Emma*, Sir Walter Scott makes a distinction between the gothic and sentimental

fiction of the last half of the eighteenth-century and a new type of fiction, to which he ascribes Jane Austen's works. What characterizes the "new novel," Scott says, is "the novelist's knowledge of the human heart" and the introduction of "characters and incidents [that are] introduced more immediately from the current of ordinary life" (64). He goes on to describe the "new novel" as a novel that is, at its core, entirely believable -- one that "neither [alarms] our credulity nor [amuses] our imagination by wild variety of incident, or by those pictures of romantic affection and sensibility, which were formerly as certain attributes of fictitious characters as they are of rare occurrence among those who actually live and die" (Scott 67). In order to be entirely believable, Scott suggests that what is the most distinctive of this new genre is its "art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of the splendid scenes of the imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him" (67). For Scott, Austen was the progenitor of a new genre of novel, one that rested firmly in the foundations of realism and one that hearkened back to the serious novels of Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding.

In 1821, six years after Scott's review was published, Richard Whately penned a glowing review of Austen's works and, like Scott, pronounced Austen's novels as ushering in a "new school of fiction" (Whately 98). Whately begins his review by suggesting that there is no longer a need to apologize for being a novel reader since novels are "more readily acknowledged by men of sense and taste" and have even been "discussed by some of the ablest scholars and soundest reasoners of the present day" (97).

Whately attributes this elevation of the status of the novel not to the changing tastes of the reading public, but to the actual worthiness of modern novels and to the ability of the new novels to provide moral instruction. Whately explains that the change that had taken place in the content of the new novels had

elevated this species of composition, in some respects at least, into a much higher class. For most of that instruction which used to be presented to the world in the shape of formal dissertations, or shorter and more desultory moral essays, such as those of the *Spectator* and *Rambler*, we may now resort to the pages of the acute and judicious, but not less amusing novelists who have lately appeared.

(Whately 101)

Whately places Austen firmly in this camp of the authors of this "new fiction" and suggests that there is perhaps "no one superior" in her ability to portray religious and moral instruction so subtly while maintaining the impeccable structure of good fiction through the use of probable and natural narrative and a realistic minuteness of detail.

In addition to the fact that both Campbell and Austen's works were both being described as new works, there remains one other important similarity between the two authors. In his review, Whately makes an interesting correlation between Jane Austen and Aristotle. Quoting from Aristotle, Whately suggests that "poetry (i.e. narrative, and dramatic poetry) is of a more philosophical character than history" (98). Pointing to the philosophical nature of studying Jane Austen's works, Whately suggests that reading and studying Jane Austen's novels is a philosophical pursuit in that her novels "display[] to us

a comprehensive view of human nature, and furnish[] general rules of practical wisdom" (98). In his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell sets out not to give a "definitive treatment of the art of rhetoric" (Bitzer xxii), but to take a more philosophical approach to the role of rhetoric in the science of human nature. Campbell says that his study "leads directly to an acquaintance with ourselves; it not only traces the operations of the intellect and imagination, but discloses the lurking springs of action in the heart" (lxxiv). In this way, both Austen and Campbell's texts evidence philosophical leanings and emphasize the importance of the role of human nature to rhetoric.

There are definite, strong ties between Jane Austen's works and George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. This study considers the following questions: How does Jane Austen's own defense of the novel in *Northanger Abbey* relate to key rhetorical concepts from George Campbell's work, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, and how do Austen's works analogically illustrate those concepts? This study focuses on three of Austen's major texts: her first novel, *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and her last novel to be completed, *Persuasion*. These three novels span the entirety of Austen's writing career and exemplify her growth as a writer from her first novel to her last.

In the course of this dissertation, the argument is made that the relationship between Jane Austen's defense of the novel and George Campbell's rhetorical theories was not just coincidental. In fact, it will be shown that Austen may have intentionally chosen to enumerate those characteristics of the novel that would echo the teachings in Campbell's work. Austen's decision to define the novel in a rhetorical framework was

purposeful in that she was attempting to ameliorate the low status of novels in her time. In order for people to see novels as more than silly, trifling, light, frivolous, or insipid, Jane Austen provided a definition of the novel that rested on revered rhetorical erudition.

This study is significant for a number of reasons. First of all, it shows that a complex relationship exists between Jane Austen's works and George Campbell's understanding of rhetoric in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Secondly, the link in this study between narrative and rhetoric bolsters Jane Austen's defense of the novel and explains how Austen gives the novel an added sense of credibility in an age when the novel was being attacked. Finally, investigating how Jane Austen's definition of the novel relates directly to the realm of rhetorical theory, specifically that of George Campbell, helps future readers of Austen to understand her novels from a more rhetorical perspective.

There is no direct evidence to suggest that Jane Austen was a reader of George Campbell's work. In all of Austen's extant epistolary records, she makes no specific reference to Campbell. Arthur Walzer humorously suggests that reading Austen's letters would "lead one to conclude that if Austen were to mention anyone's 'philosophy of rhetoric' or any description of the 'operations of the mind,' it would be to mock such pretension" ("Rhetoric and Gender" 693). It is important to note, however, that Austen was familiar with Hugh Blair and his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, an integral work in the "New Rhetoric" of the eighteenth-century. Austen mentions Blair in her *Juvenilia* and twice in her novels and this connection has given rise to many studies, including one of the foremost, Annette Stoller's *Jane Austen's Rhetorical Art: A*

*Revaluation*, in which Stoller links Austen to Blair in sharing a similar rhetorical agenda. Due to the lack of direct evidence for a connection between Austen and Campbell, however, few studies investigate the similarities between Austen and Campbell. The most important work in which a connection is made between Campbell's *New Rhetoric* and Jane Austen's works is Lynn Rigberg's *Jane Austen's Discourse with New Rhetoric*. Rigberg suggests that, although no direct link can be made between Austen and Campbell, "the alignment of Austen's range of rhetorical subjects with Campbell's presentation of rhetorical philosophy is enticement to believe she was directly familiar with his work" (27). Rigberg argues that Campbell, rather than Blair, proves a more trustworthy guide to the works of Jane Austen since Campbell "investigates the relationships between morality, reason, imagination, and rhetoric at a level of discussion that suits Austen's literary approach to these same rhetorical subjects" (9). Rigberg states "by demonstrating the extent of their common rhetorical considerations," her study "establishes the extent of Austen's occupation with the same morally, philosophically and sociologically infused issues that Campbell addresses in his *Philosophy*" (27).

Although this study is similar in purpose to Rigberg's, this study differs in that focus is given to the passage in *Northanger Abbey* where Austen specifically enumerates the rhetorical functions of the novel. This study is more focused on Jane Austen's own understandings of the rhetorical functions of the novel and keeps her definition of the novel central to the discussion and organization of topics. The key words and phrases

that Austen uses to define the novel are discussed in the order that she uses them in her defense of the novel.

The first chapter following the introduction of this dissertation deals specifically with what Jane Austen terms “the greatest powers of the human mind.” Although Austen never specifically explains what those powers are, the argument is made that, by the phrase, she intended the powers of the imagination. The dissertation then explains the importance of the imagination in Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and provides examples from Austen’s works which illustrate key concepts in Campbell’s work. The differentiation is made between specific instances of imagination in novels – that of the powers of the author’s imagination when creating a story and that of the audience’s imagination addressed. Campbell explains that “the imagination is addressed by exhibiting to it a lively and beautiful representation of a suitable object” (3). He also states that the task of the orator (or writer) “may, in some sort, be said, like that of the painter, to consist in imitation, the merit of the work results entirely from these two sources; dignity, as well in the subject or thing imitated, as in the manner of imitation; and resemblance, in the portrait or performance” (3). The dissertation explains these ideas of word painting, imitation, dignity, and resemblance and examines Austen’s works for these techniques.

The second chapter of this dissertation discusses Austen’s idea that novels contain a “thorough knowledge of human nature.” Human nature was a central concept in Campbell’s work. In fact, Campbell understood human nature as the foundation for

rhetoric and all communication. As Lloyd Bitzer explains in his introduction to Campbell's work, "He [Campbell] assumed that all the principles and processes necessary to explain and give coherence to this universal art [communication] can be found in human nature" (Bitzer xxv). This dissertation explains that both Campbell's and Austen's works lead "directly to an acquaintance with ourselves" and disclose "the lurking springs of action in the heart" (Campbell lxxiv).

The third chapter of this dissertation considers Austen's claims that novels contain the "liveliest effusions of wit and humour." Campbell discusses wit and humor at length in the second chapter of Book I in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. In fact, the title of his chapter is "Of wit, humour, and ridicule." Thus, the third chapter begins with a discussion of Campbell's understanding of how wit is used in communication. Campbell writes that wit is used by "debas[ing] things pompous or seemingly brave," by "aggrandiz[ing] things little and frivolous," and by "setting ordinary objects...in a particular and uncommon point of view" (8). The dissertation examines Austen's wit in this regard, citing examples from her works and relying especially on the character of Mr. Collins -- a pompous, ridiculous character from *Pride and Prejudice*. Next, this dissertation discusses Campbell's theories of humor. Campbell writes that "The subject of humor is always character. . . its foibles generally, such as caprices, little extravagances, weak anxieties, jealousies, childish fondness, pertness, vanity, and self-conceit" (16). Austen's works are examined using Campbell's understanding of humor, and it is shown that, in her novels, Austen relies on her characters for humor. This



dissertation also emphasizes the connection between Campbell's discussion of the importance of oddity as the "proper object of laughter" and Jane Austen's use of oddity in her works to produce laughter. Finally, the third chapter discusses Campbell's ideas of ridicule and identifies examples of ridicule in Austen's works. Campbell explained that ridicule "has a double operation, first on the fancy, by presenting to it such a group as constitutes a laughable object; secondly, on the passion mentioned, by exhibiting absurdity in human character, in principles or in conduct" (29). He goes on to explain that "those things which principally come under its lash are awkwardness, rusticity, ignorance, cowardice, levity, foppery, pedantry, and affectation of every kind" (21). This chapter focuses on identifying and analyzing examples of these ideas in Austen's novels. This chapter also includes a discussion of the relationship between Campbell's explanation that laughter is the cure for pride and contempt and Austen's transformation of the character of Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation discusses Austen's phrase "best chosen language" and how it relates to Campbell's theory of vivacity as it is espoused in the third book of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Campbell admits that "nothing can contribute more to enliven the expression than that all words be as particular and determinate in their signification as will suit with the nature and scope of the discourse" (286). This chapter focuses on Campbell's view that vivacity is accomplished through tropes and figures, brevity, the beauty of sound, and the effect of wit. It then explains each of these features in relation to Jane Austen's works.

The fifth chapter of this dissertation discusses Austen's ideas of probable circumstances and natural characters as they relate to Campbell's discussion of the seven circumstances in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Campbell believed that the orator, or writer, must attempt to "inquire what those circumstances are, which will make the ideas he summons up in the imaginations of his hearers, resemble, in lustre and steadiness, those of sensation and remembrance" (81). Campbell lists seven circumstances which operate on the passions of the hearers: probability, plausibility, proximity of time, importance, connection of place, relation to persons concerned, and interest in the consequences. This chapter discusses these circumstances as they relate to Austen's similar terms in her defense of the novel. Examples from Austen's works which illustrate these circumstances are provided.

The dissertation concludes with a chapter which discusses the overall implications of this study. The concluding chapter discusses Jane Austen's talents in light of Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*. The argument is made that, in her use of an extended authorial intrusion in *Northanger Abbey* in order to defend the novel genre, Austen neither succumbs to bitterness nor resorts to anger and is therefore able to maintain an incandescent and uninhibited writing style. The conclusion of this dissertation explains that Austen believed that women's experience deserved attention and that the novel genre was best suited for such purposes. It also concludes that Austen's defense of the novel was written with the intention to rally women's support for

their own superior literary genre -- a genre in which works of great merit could be understood in terms of rhetorical principles.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GREATEST POWERS OF THE HUMAN MIND

"Oh! it is only a novel!" replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference or momentary shame. -- 'It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;' or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed" (*Northanger Abbey* 24). Thus begins Jane Austen's defense of the novel. In her usual sarcastic and piquant manner, Austen mocks the tendency to overlook the genius of the novel writer. For Austen, novels like Frances Burney's *Cecelia* and *Camilla* or Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* exhibit what she terms "the greatest powers of the human mind." Although she never explicitly explains what these great powers are, one could easily assume that, in using such phraseology, she is drawing upon the writings of her favorite author in prose, Dr. Samuel Johnson. It is clear that Austen was very familiar with Dr. Johnson's works. "There is no question that Jane Austen read intently and deeply admired works by and about Johnson" (Gross). It is in the biography of Samuel Johnson written by James Boswell, a work with which Austen would have been familiar, that we find a similar use of the phrase "greatest powers of the human mind." Boswell includes in his biography of Samuel Johnson a quote in which Johnson makes a distinction between writers of history and such "eminent writers in Queen Anne's reign" as Alexander Pope and Joseph Addison:

Great abilities (said he) are not requisite for an Historian; for in historical composition, all the greatest powers of the human mind are quiescent. He has facts ready to his hand; so there is no exercise of invention. Imagination is not required in any high degree; only about as much as is used in the lower kinds of poetry. (Boswell 301)

In this quote, Johnson differentiates between the cold, hard facts penned by historians and works of great invention and imagination. Johnson says that "the greatest powers of the human mind" are absent in the writings of historiographers, and these powers he explains as invention and imagination. Thus, when Austen uses similar terminology to express the great worth of novels, one can assume that when she writes that novels display "the greatest powers of the human mind," she believes these powers to be those of the imagination and invention.

Although writing quite some time after Johnson and Austen, several other well-known authors have noted the eminence of the powers of the imagination. In the third volume of his work *Modern Painters*, published in 1856, John Ruskin, the leading English art critic of the Victorian period, described the imagination as the "grandest mechanical power that the Human intelligence possesses" (151). Just fifteen years later, the famous English naturalist Charles Darwin published his work *The Descent of Man*, and in it he described the imagination as "one of the highest prerogatives of man" (106). Darwin goes on to explain that "by this faculty he unites former images and ideas, independently of the will, and thus creates brilliant and novel results" (106).

The imagination, which so many people held to be one of humanity's greatest powers, was the source of much discussion during the early eighteenth century. In 1712, Joseph Addison wrote a very popular series on the imagination in his daily publication, *The Spectator*. In eleven separate papers, Addison discussed, at length, the pleasures of the imagination. For Addison, the imagination is a pleasure-seeking faculty that is ultimately gratified by things sublime, novel, and beautiful. Addison emphasized the importance of images and the sense of sight, which he termed "the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses" (62). For Addison, there are two types of pleasures of the imagination: "Primary pleasures" are those pleasures that the imagination receives when it is presented with visual stimuli. For example, when one stands in front of a beautiful painting, such a pleasure to one's imagination would be a primary pleasure. A "secondary pleasure," according to Addison, is a pleasure that the imagination receives when the *idea* of an image is called to mind. Thus, secondary pleasures would be pleasures created by memories or by fictitious descriptions. For Addison, descriptive writing or "word painting" is one of the best ways to appeal to the imagination. He writes, "Words, when well chosen, have so great a force in them that a description often gives us more lively ideas than the sight of things themselves" (83). Prior to Addison, interest in the faculty of the imagination had mainly been within the realm of how imagination contributes to the creative process of the artist. With the written contributions of Addison, however, interest in the imagination as a faculty shifted from a focus on the workings of the artist to an understanding of how the imagination inspires

pleasures in the minds of the audience; interest had shifted from the use of the imagination in the creative act of invention to imagination in the audience's response or to aesthetic response, in general.

Following Addison's lead, George Campbell included an extensive discussion of the ways in which the imagination is addressed in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. The main section of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* in which Campbell discusses imaginative response is in the first chapter of Book I. In this section, Campbell discusses the ways in which the imagination is addressed. He writes, "The imagination is addressed by exhibiting to it a lively and beautiful representation of a suitable object" (3). Campbell then goes on to explain how such a lively representation is made: "As in this exhibition, the task of the orator may, in some sort, be said, like that of the painter, to consist in imitation" (3). In using the idea of a painter to express how an orator can create beautiful representations in the minds of the audience, Campbell hearkens back to Addison's discussion of word painting. Due to the fact that Campbell cites Addison's *Spectator* series on the imagination elsewhere in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, it is obvious that Addison's ideas on the imagination influenced George Campbell's own views. Campbell's focus here on word-painting suggests that he viewed the role of the imagination in a very visual sense. Such a view was not at all new; it was, in fact, a very traditional rhetorical view of the role of the imagination.

In his *Institutes of Oratory*, the great Roman rhetorician Quintilian suggested that one of the most important factors in the ability of an orator to move or persuade his

audience is the orator's ability to communicate and express the same feelings he wishes to elicit from his audience. Quintilian says, "The chief requisite, then, for moving the feelings of others, is, as far as I can judge, that we ourselves be moved; for the assumption of grief, and anger, and indignation, will be often ridiculous, if we adapt merely our words and looks, and not our minds, to those passions." Quintilian goes on to suggest the way in which an orator can be made to feel the emotions he is attempting to exhibit and elicit: through word painting. He writes, "What the Greeks call φαντασίαι [phantasiai] we call visiones, images by which the representations of absent objects are so distinctly represented to the mind that we seem to see them with our eyes and to have them before us." He goes on to explain,

Whoever shall best conceive such images will have the greatest power in moving the feelings. A man of such lively imagination some call εὐφαντασίωτος [euphantasiōtos], being one who can vividly represent to himself things, voices, or actions with the exactness of reality, and this faculty may readily be acquired by ourselves if we desire it. When, for example, while the mind is unoccupied and we are indulging in chimerical hopes and dreams, as of men awake, the images of which I am speaking beset us so closely that we seem to be on a journey, on a voyage, in a battle, to be haranguing assemblies of people, to dispose of wealth which we do not possess, and not to be thinking but acting, shall we not turn this lawless power of our minds to our advantage? I make a complaint that a man has been murdered; shall I not bring before my eyes everything that is likely to have



happened when the murder occurred? Shall not the assassin suddenly sally forth? Shall not the other tremble, cry out, supplicate or flee? Shall I not behold the one striking, the other falling? Shall not the blood, and paleness, and last gasp of the expiring victim present itself fully to my mental view?

In calling up mental images in our own minds or in the minds of our audience, both Quintilian and Campbell see the importance of representing the "exactness of reality" or in imitation. Like a painting or a photograph, the imagination creates vivid and realistic images in the mind.

After discussing how the imagination is addressed, Campbell explains that the merit or worth of the "beautiful representation of a suitable object" lies in two sources: "dignity, as well in the subject or thing imitated, as in the manner of imitation; and resemblance, in the portrait or performance" (3). Thus, for Campbell, both the subject of the imitation and the way in which an object is imitated should be respectable. In imitating an object, Campbell suggests that there must be "resemblance" between the thing imitated and the real object. Once again, Campbell emphasizes the importance of realism in what he terms is the "principal scope for this class": narration and description.

At the end of this section on the ways in which the imagination is addressed, Campbell mentions the ability of imaginative description to "attain[] the summit of perfection in the *sublime*." For Campbell, descriptive word-painting can reach sublimity when "great and noble images, which, when in suitable colouring presented to the mind, do, as it were, distend the imagination with some vast conception, and quite ravish the

soul" (3). Campbell's conception of the sublime, here, as being endowed with some "vast conception" is reminiscent of the great Roman rhetorician Longinus's treatise *On the Sublime*. In this ancient work, Longinus relates five sources of sublimity, the first of which he lists as "the power to conceive great thoughts."

The next section of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* in which Campbell addresses the subject of the imagination is in chapter seven of Book I. In this section of the work, Campbell moves from a discussion of the ways in which the imagination is addressed to the ends or purposes in pleasing the imagination. Chapter 7 begins with the topic of the audience -- "of the consideration which the Speaker ought to have of the Hearers, as men in general" (71). Campbell explains that speakers should consider their audience as people both generally and particularly. In the first part of the chapter, Campbell says that a speaker should consider the "capacity, education, and attainments of the hearers" and that this consideration of the audience's intellectual aptitudes should be performed by thinking of the audience "not as men in general, but as men in particular" (73). After having considered the audience's level of understanding, Campbell goes on to say that the speaker should consider the audience as endowed with imagination. He explains that in order to appeal to the audience's reasoning, the imagination "must be engaged" (73). For Campbell, the imagination serves the important role of keeping the audience interested and engaged in a discourse. He writes, "Attention is prerequisite to every effect of speaking, and without some gratification in hearing, there will be no continuance" (73). Campbell goes on to enumerate four main ways in which to "gratify the fancy" or the

imagination: vivacity, beauty, sublimity, and novelty. It would seem that Campbell had taken Joseph Addison's list of the ways in which to gratify the imagination and had added to it one additional item: vivacity. For Campbell, vivacity, or the liveliness of ideas, is one way to coerce an audience to accept a belief since "lively ideas have a stronger influence than faint ideas to induce belief" (73). Unlike Hume, however, Campbell did not admit that imagination and vivacity have unlimited power in shaping the way human beings come to belief. To prove his point, Campbell contrasts the "languid narrative" of the "cold but faithful historiographer" to the lively ideas excited by the author of fiction -- as those excited by "Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles, or the Lear of Shakespeare" (73). Campbell says that, though the fictional tragedies are much more vivid and interesting, he would more readily believe the veracity of the dull historical tale. Furthering the distinction between history and poetry, Campbell goes on to conclude that "The ideas of the poet give greater pleasure, command closer attention, operate more strongly on the passions, and are longer remembered" (74). These four ends Campbell rightly designates to poetry, though it is obvious that he would also assign these purposes to fiction, as well. For Campbell, works that exhibit vivacity -- works that appeal to the audience's imagination -- are pleasing, forceful, moving, and memorable.

In summary, Campbell believed that, as a faculty, the imagination of the audience could be addressed through word-painting or descriptive communication that was realistic, dignified, and vivid. The effects or ends of communication addressed to the

imagination are: to give great pleasure, to awaken and command close attention, to operate forcibly on the emotions of the audience, and to be memorable.

Campbell, like his contemporaries, wrote mainly of the imagination as a faculty to be addressed; it is the audience's imagination in which he takes interest. On the other hand, Jane Austen, in her defense of the novel, seems more interested in the idea of the powers of the author's imagination -- of the greatest powers of the human mind of the author or creator of the novel. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists two similarly nuanced definitions for the word *imagination*. One definition defines the imagination as "'the mind's creativity and resourcefulness in using and inventing images, analogies, etc; poetic or artistic genius or talent' ("imagination," def. 5). This definition focuses on the imagination of the creator of a work. However, another definition explains imagination as "the mind considered as engaged in imagining; a person's mind, or a part of it, represented as the place where images, ideas, and thoughts are produced and stored, or in which they are contained" ("imagination," def. 2). This second definition focuses more on the act of imagining, as when the mind responds to certain images. Although the two definitions are slightly nuanced and although there would seem to be some discrepancy between Campbell's interest in "imagination addressed" and Austen's interest in "imagination invoked," there is no doubt that artistic creation and artistic reception are both imaginative acts. It takes both the imagination of the artist or author to create the work and the imagination of the audience to receive the work. There is a certain amount of imaginative transfer that occurs between the author or speaker and the audience, for

the imaginative powers that were necessary to create a work will necessarily elicit imaginative response in the audience. The imagination is integral to both Campbell's understanding of rhetoric and to Jane Austen's estimation of novels. Campbell argues that the imagination is addressed by a "lively and beautiful representation of a suitable object" (3). He emphasizes that such a representation occurs through imitation and he likens the task of this task to that of a painter. As such, Campbell's understanding of "word-painting" as it relates to imitation directly corresponds to Jane Austen's own exquisite "word-painting" in her novels.

It is of great interest that both Jane Austen and her nephew would have used painting imagery to describe Austen's writing. In an 1816 letter to her nephew Edward, Jane Austen contrasts his writing -- "strong, manly, spirited sketches, full of variety and glow" -- to that of her own "little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush" (Austen, *Letters*). In describing her work in this way, Austen is alluding to the practice of portrait painting. Zohn explains that portrait miniatures first appeared in England during the reign of King Henry VIII. These portraits were very small paintings that were originally painted on vellum. However, in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the practice of using vellum became obsolete when it was replaced with small ivory discs. Thus, Austen makes an important comparison when describing her work as miniature portrait painting. She recognizes that her painting techniques differ from those of other writers (her nephew, for example), but she understands her work as meticulous, miniature paintings of portraiture. In 1869, over fifty years after her

death, Jane Austen's nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh perpetuated this image of his aunt's works being those of a painter. In his memoir of his aunt, Austen-Leigh describes Jane Austen's needlework as excellent and then goes on to show admiration that "the same hand which painted so exquisitely with a pen could work as delicately with the needle."

However, while Austen and her nephew both likened her work to that of the artist, several critics found Austen's work to be lacking as word-paintings. One of the harshest criticisms of Austen's work came surprisingly from another nineteenth-century female British author: Charlotte Bronte. In a letter to the literary critic G.H. Lewes, Bronte was puzzled by Lewes' appreciation of Austen's works. Bronte could find nothing great in Austen's work -- nothing that she could appreciate. Instead, she writes, she only found in her work "an accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, high-cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck" (Bronte). Bronte goes on to question Lewes' appraisal of Austen as one of the "the greatest artists, of the greatest painters of human character" and instead argues that Austen is only "shrewd and observant" and that she lacks poetry, sentiment, and elegance. Bronte could not esteem Austen's writing because she felt that great writing -- that great word painting -- required more than a "daguerreotyped portrait."

In a review of Austen's works written eleven years after the aforementioned correspondence with Charlotte Bronte, G. H. Lewes attends to what he terms are some of

the defects in Jane Austen's works, though his overall estimation of Austen was a positive one. Lewes rather blatantly states that Austen has one glaring "defect" and "mistake" in her art:

So entirely dramatic, and so little descriptive, is the genius of Miss Austen, that she seems to rely upon what her people say and do for the whole effect they are to produce on our imaginations. She no more thinks of describing the physical appearance of her people than the dramatist does who knows that his persons are to be represented by living actors. (172)

Lewes obviously found fault with Austen's lack of descriptive imagery. "As far as any direct information can be derived from the authoress," Lewes writes, "we might imagine that this was a purblind world, wherein nobody ever saw anybody, except in a dim vagueness which obscured all peculiarities" (172). Lewes goes on to explain how Dickens and Balzac are so descriptive in their writing that they make the reader *see* the characters in the book; Jane Austen, Lewes says, is happy to make the reader *know* the characters in her books. Lewes rather harshly jests, "It is not stated whether she was shortsighted, but the absence of all sense of outward world -- either scenery or personal appearance -- is more remarkable in her than in any writer we remember" (172).

In order to explain the limited popularity of Austen's works, Lewes writes of Austen's "deficiencies in poetry and passion," echoing the critical opinions of Charlotte Bronte. However, Lewes then includes the comments of Bronte and concludes that Bronte's criticism exhibits "contemptuous indifference to the art of truthful portrait-

painting" (173). Lewes agrees that Charlotte Bronte's Rochester, Jane Eyre, and Paul Emmanuel are all vivid characters, but he says that the reader can only see them from the outside -- "he [the reader] does not penetrate their souls, he does not know them" (174). For Lewes, although Austen does not paint vivid pictures in her novels, she is still an artist of "truthful portrait-painting" -- on her two-inches wide of ivory -- and in the tiny portraits she paints, she has created characters that can be known, not merely seen.

When one is reading Austen's works, it is easy to see how Bronte and Lewes could criticize Austen's lack of descriptive imagery. It is clear that Austen did not consider word-painting or description in the same way as other novelists of her time. Word-painting or description were ideas often associated with Romanticism. Lush and vivid descriptions were meant to express the inner feelings of characters and were written often with the intent to glorify natural settings. In a brief article on the differing narrative techniques of Anne Radcliffe and Jane Austen, Chris Drummond suggests that Anne Radcliffe, a famed English gothic novelist whose work preceded that of Austen, employed vivid word-painting in her writing. He cites the following passage from Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* to evidence her descriptive writing:

Emily, often as she travelled among the clouds, watched in silent awe their billowing surges rolling below; sometimes, wholly closing upon the scene, they appeared like a world of chaos, and, at others, spreading thinly, they opened and admitted partial catches of the landscape — the torrent, whose astounding roar



had never failed, tumbling down the rocky chasm, huge cliffs white with snow, or the dark summits of the pine forests, that stretched midway down the mountains.

Drummond explains that "Radcliffe bombards the reader with rich and detailed descriptions of the environment, allowing her characters to become secondary to the world around them." This was the method of descriptive writing that was popular during the nineteenth century; this is the descriptive writing that one finds in Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot. However, this is not the type of description one finds in Jane Austen. One could take, for instance, a similar scene to that of Radcliffe's in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and compare the description of Emily's cloud-gazing to that of Catherine's. In this passage, Catherine Morland, the main protagonist of *Northanger Abbey*, is anxiously watching out the window, hoping that it will not rain so she can keep her plans to take a "country walk" with Miss Tilney and her brother:

At half past twelve, when Catherine's anxious attention to the weather was over and she could no longer claim any merit from its amendment, the sky began voluntarily to clear. A gleam of sunshine took her quite by surprise; she looked round; the clouds were parting, and she instantly returned to the window to watch over and encourage the happy appearance. Ten minutes more made it certain that a bright afternoon would succeed, and justified the opinion of Mrs. Allen, who had "always thought it would clear up." (*Northanger Abbey* 59)

In this passage, Austen neglects to describe vividly any aspects of the weather. While Radcliffe relies on verbs and adjectives to describe the natural setting (ie. "billowing

surges rolling," the "astounding roar" of the torrent, "huge cliffs white with snow," "dark summits of the pine forests"), Austen uses concrete singular nouns ("sky," "gleam of sunshine," "clouds,"). In Radcliffe's use of description, Emily as a character becomes of secondary interest to the real star character, nature. Austen's description, however, never loses sight of its main focus: that of the characters. What is of importance in Austen's passage is Catherine's reaction to the weather. The scene begins with Catherine's hoping that the clouds will pass and then moves through an hour and a half of Catherine's impatient activity and thoughts, for Austen tells us that "Catherine went every five minutes to the clock, threatening on each return that, if it still kept on raining another five minutes, she would give up the matter as hopeless" (58). Although lacking in descriptive language, this passage is a perfect example of successful word-painting because, in it, the reader gains insight into Catherine as a character. The reader becomes intimate with the ways in which Catherine thinks and acts, and so the character is known from the inside-out. The description is masterful also in the way that it captures the irony in life: at just the moment when Catherine has begun to give up hope, the skies begin to clear. The reader is also humorously acquainted with certain aspects of Mrs. Allen's nature. Initially, upon seeing the dark clouds, Catherine asks Mrs. Allen her opinion of whether it will rain or not. Mrs. Allen replies positively; "She had no doubt in the world of its being a very fine day, if the clouds would only go off, and the sun keep out" (58). At eleven o'clock, the rain begins to fall, and Catherine despairs, "Oh! dear, I do believe it will be wet, " to which Mrs. Allen replies, "I thought how it would be" (58). However, when the

weather does begin to clear finally an hour later, Austen says it "justified the opinion of Mrs. Allen, who had 'always thought it would clear up'" (58). In just this brief interchange, the reader can already ascertain that Mrs. Allen is a very changeable person and is willing to agree with anything that Catherine says -- a trait that does not make the best quality in a chaperone.

If one were to cull the most 'poetic' and vivid descriptive passages from Austen's works, a similar trend would be found to the one given above: they would pale in comparison to other passages from nineteenth-century novels which display much more emphasis on natural and physical descriptions, but they would focus on the characters and on the way in which the scenery has a direct effect on their moods, thoughts, and actions. One of Austen's most descriptive passages occurs in chapter ten of *Persuasion*. In this particular passage, Anne is attempting to avoid meeting with Captain Wentworth so as to spare herself any residual awkwardness or pain from her rejection of his marriage proposal many years before; but she and Mary Musgrove (her sister) are invited to go on a walk with Louisa and Henrietta and are unaware that Charles (Anne's brother-in-law) and Captain Wentworth are planning on walking with the group, as well. Austen describes that as the six characters set off on their walk to Winthrop,

Anne's object was not to be in the way of anybody; and where the narrow paths across the fields made many separations necessary, to keep with her brother and sister. Her *pleasure* in the walk must arise from the exercise and the day, from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges,

and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn, that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness, that season which has drawn from every poet, worthy of being read, some attempt at description, or some lines of feeling. (71)

Instead of adding to that storehouse of the "thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn," Austen is content to make Anne focus on "the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges" (71). Austen has no need to write yet another conventional poetical description of autumn. The reader gets a sense here that Austen is attempting to revolt against convention and hackneyed imagery. As Lloyd W. Brown writes, "She [Austen] is primarily interested in figurative language on the basis of its expressive value, and she attacks imagery when it fails to communicate, when. . . it has lost all meaning and 'ingenuity'" (53). This same sentiment of abhorrence to trite and commonplace writing conventions can be seen in Austen's defense of the novel. Austen says,

While the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the Spectator, and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens, -- there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them.

*(Northanger Abbey 23)*

Austen laments the fact that the overly-popular abridgers of history and anthologizers of poetry receive such glowing reviews in the press -- that they are "eulogized by a thousand pens" -- when they exert no energies of imaginative creation themselves, but are merely compilers of other authors' works. There is indeed something novel about novel-writing, and Jane Austen wants nothing to do with the well-worn patterns of convention. In refusing to use the traditional methods of descriptive imagery, Austen is proclaiming her own "genius, wit, and taste" in painting word-pictures that rely on other forms of imaginative description.

Anne's autumn reverie is important, despite its lack of descriptive imagery, for the fact that the autumn season -- the setting that Austen has chosen in this particular scene -- mirrors the autumn of Anne's love life; and for that reason the description becomes even more powerful. Anne here is forced to walk with a man who might once have been her husband, had she not let herself be persuaded against marrying him. Anne is twenty-seven years old, an age much exceeding the prime marriageable age of the time, and is in the decline of the season and in decline of spirits. When Anne overhears Louisa (Captain Wentworth's supposed new love interest) telling Captain Wentworth, "If I loved a man. . . I would always be with him, nothing should ever separate us, and I would rather be overturned by him, than driven safely by anybody else," Anne is filled with inner turmoil: "Anne could not immediately fall into a quotation again. The sweet scenes of autumn were for a while put by, unless some tender sonnet, fraught with the apt analogy of the declining year, with declining happiness, and the images of youth, and hope, and spring,

all gone together, blessed her memory" (72). From this last passage, the reader gets the sense that Anne has given up on the possibility of a love life and that she finds only the "sweets of poetical despondence" to comfort her. Thus, without offering her own vivid descriptions of the autumnal scene surrounding Anne, Austen successfully paints a portraiture of the inner workings of her character's mind. Austen's word-painting is non-traditional in its lack of flowery and descriptive language. George Barnett Smith, one of Austen's nineteenth-century critics, wrote in the *Gentleman's Magazine*: "She [Austen] never exhausts a scene by what is called word-painting. She indicates its main features, and describes the general effect it produces upon the spectator, rather than recapitulates the size, weight, and colour of its various component elements" (621). While she does not take pains to give in-depth descriptions of natural settings or physical characteristics, Austen's descriptions give a very realistic depiction of her characters.

Along with the autumnal scene in *Persuasion*, another example of one of Austen's descriptive scenes is Elizabeth Bennet's observation and description of Pemberley, Mr. Darcy's estate in *Pride and Prejudice*:

It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in

their admiration; and at that moment she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (*Pride and Prejudice* 185)

For Austen, this is descriptive writing at its height. There are many adjectives in this description; however, with regard to descriptive imagery, it still pales in comparison to the earlier passage from Radcliffe. Just like the autumnal scene, though, this descriptive passage accomplishes an important feat: it gives the reader a slight mental image of the setting while maintaining the emphasis on the characters in the story. The importance of this description lies not in what the scenery actually looks like, but in Elizabeth's response to the scene. This trip to Pemberley occurs after Mr. Darcy's first proposal of marriage to Elizabeth and his subsequent letter to her in which he attempted to clear himself of any fault in his dealings with Mr. Wickham. Due to Darcy's letter of explanation, Elizabeth has realized that she was mistaken about the character of Mr. Wickham and of Mr. Darcy; she realizes that she has been prejudiced against Mr. Darcy without good cause. Thus, Elizabeth's description of Pemberley mirrors her feelings about Darcy. She finds him impressive and handsome, and he is indeed a man who stands on rising ground -- he is a man of great wealth and social standing. Elizabeth's description of the stream illustrates her views of Mr. Darcy compared to Mr. Wickham. In her description, she emphasizes the stream as being natural rather than artificial; she says its banks were neither "formal nor falsely adorned" (185). This description mirrors her changing views of Mr. Darcy. While she still may think that Darcy is proud (that the natural stream has swelled into greater importance), she admits that there is nothing false

or artificial about him, unlike Mr. Wickham, whom she has come to find out is full of deceit. Thus, just as Anne's description of autumn gives the reader insight into her feelings, Elizabeth's description of Pemberley allows the reader a glimpse of her slowly evolving feelings for Mr. Darcy. The reader can almost feel Elizabeth's excitement that she came close to being the mistress of such a naturally beautiful estate.

It is no wonder, then, that early reviewers of Austen's work noted the artistry in her subtle descriptions. In two of the most important early reviews of her work, both Walter Scott and Richard Whately likened Austen's artistry to that of the Flemish school of painting. In a review of *Emma*, Scott writes,

The author's knowledge of the world, and the peculiar tact with which she presents characters that the reader cannot fail to recognize, reminds us something of the merits of the Flemish school of painting. The subjects are not often elegant, and certainly never grand; but they are finished up to nature, and with a precision which delights the reader" (71).

Five years later, Richard Whately made a similar comparison. He describes a new school of fiction ushered in by Austen and says of it, "When this Flemish painting, as it were, is introduced -- this accurate and unexaggerated delineation of events and characters -- it necessarily follows, that a novel, which makes good its pretensions of giving a perfectly correct picture of common life, becomes a far more *instructive* work than one of equal or superior merit of the other class" (98). Whately believes that Austen's realistic paintings of life provide a moral aspect and a philosophical method for the acquisition of important



life lessons. In this same vein, modern literary theorist Terry Eagleton argues that Austen's commitment to realism stems from her belief in the moral task of the novelist -- in her belief that "the novel has vital moral tasks to perform" (106). Eagleton goes on to explain that "Austen believes that the ethical life is primarily about action, not about feelings, intuitions, inner states or intentions" (106). Thus, since Austen is interested in the moral movements and behaviors of her characters, she does not feel it necessary to participate in the Romantic tradition of including long passages of secondary descriptions of nature and physical features. Instead, she spends her time creating realistic portraits of fallible people, highlighting their thoughts, conversations, and actions. Truly, as Elisabeth Lenckos writes, "Austen is a virtual master of character portraiture, to which natural beauty and sublimity form a mere backdrop" (105).

Related to her talent for creating vivid character portraiture are Austen's narrative choices regarding point-of-view. In each of her novels, Austen employs the use of an omniscient narrator -- a narrator who knows everything and can move freely in time and space. Omniscient narration is useful in that it allows the author to probe deeply into the minds and hearts of each of the characters in the story. In her book *Word Painting*, Rebecca McClanahan explains that while omniscient narration allows for much psychological complexity, it is a narrative point-of-view that "affects the quantity and quality of descriptive passages" (161). McClanahan reasons that since an omniscient narrator is all-knowing, this narrator is likely interested in imparting knowledge to the reader. The way in which the omniscient narrator imparts knowledge to an audience is

through *exposition* rather than description. Thus, the agenda of the omniscient narrator is one of telling, not showing. McClanahan writes, "Omniscience invites telling. After all, there's a lot of narrative ground to cover, and taking time to fully describe a tennis shoe, for example, or the bald spot on the back of a character's head, takes time away from all the other tasks you're called upon to perform as an omniscient narrator" (162). For Jane Austen, those "other tasks" involve sketching detailed character portraiture and focusing on the moral element in the actions of the characters. McClanahan uses the term "abstraction" to explain the internal view that the omniscient narrator will usually take. Bypassing concrete details, the omniscient narrator describes characters "not as an outside observer might, in specific bodily detail, but rather as a spirit who dwells inside their heads, which is exactly where omniscient narrators dwell" (162). She gives the example of Austen's brief descriptions of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, though many of Austen's character descriptions could be cited here as evidence, as well:

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.

*(Pride and Prejudice 3)*

Such a brief and limited description of the Bennets certainly does little to appeal to the reader's senses; the reader is not given any detailed account of the physical features of either character. However, Austen's description is a finely painted portraiture of the psychological aspects of the two characters and of their moral imperatives. So, while omniscient narration "invites exposition, internalization and the whole realm of ideas, sometimes at the expense of vivid description" (McClanahan 163), such vivid description is not necessary. The reader might not be able to recognize these characters by sight, but can certainly recognize them by their actions. And this, Jane Austen might argue, is the important task.

For Austen, this ability to paint realistic character portraits in fiction permitted novelists to boast in the imaginative powers of their art. There is an obvious connection, then, between Austen's understanding of the imagination as "the greatest powers of the human mind" and Campbell's writings on the importance of imitation and resemblance in imaginative communication. Both Austen and Campbell believed that realism and good art cannot be separated; they go hand-in-hand. Nowhere can a reader see this linkage more clearly than in a passage from Austen's *Persuasion*. Anne is walking down Milsom-street alone and happens upon Admiral Croft, who is standing before a storefront window, looking very intently at a painting that is housed inside. Anne has to tap him on the shoulder and address him before he even notices her. When he does notice her, he says,

'Ha! is it you? Thank you, thank you. This is treating me like a friend. 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 any body would venture their lives in such a shapeless old cockleshell as that. And yet here are two gentlemen stuck up in it mightily at their ease, and looking about them at the rocks and mountains, as if they were not to be upset the next moment, which they certainly must be. I wonder where that boat was built!" (laughing heartily); "I would not venture over a horsepond in it.' (*Persuasion* 137)

The Admiral is studying a painting of a boat, incredulous that someone would have painted it in such an unrealistic manner. He is surprised that the two gentleman in the painting would be riding in such a malformed ship without worrying that the boat was going to capsize. "I wonder where that boat was built!" the Admiral rather excitedly exclaims (137). The Admiral cannot separate art from realism. He cannot understand the reason anybody would paint an unrealistic picture. The same could be said of Austen and Campbell. Both believed that the greatest powers of the human mind were those powers of the imagination that could create and receive dignified and realistic word-paintings. Though Austen's works might suffer from a lack of vivid imagery, her commitment to painting realistic portraits of her characters allows her works to give great pleasure, to command close attention, to operate strongly on the passions, and to retain a lasting impression on the memory.

## CHAPTER III

### A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE

Rhetoric during the Renaissance experienced major transformation. French philosopher and rhetorician Peter Ramus transferred the classical canons of invention, arrangement, and memory from rhetoric to the field of dialectic and thereby reduced rhetoric to the study of style and delivery. Many influential voices of the seventeenth century, such as those of René Descartes and John Locke, also disparaged the utility of rhetoric. Locke believed that rhetoric was a "powerful instrument of error and deceit" and that it should have no place in philosophical discourse. He believed that language should be used as practically and efficiently as possible. In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, George Campbell sought to redress the attacks that had been made against rhetoric, to rescue it from its low status, and to reform it by setting it aright and grounding it in new Enlightenment thought. That Enlightenment thought centered around the new "science of the mind," a science interested not only in human thought but in human nature, as well.

Campbell believed that no great improvements had been made to the study of rhetoric since the time of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, he writes, "The observations and rules transmitted to us from these distinguished names in the learned world, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, have been for the most part only translated by later critics, or put into a modish dress and new

arrangement" (Campbell lxxv). Campbell admittedly set out to do more than merely translate rhetoric; he wanted to "bring us into a new country" (lxxv). In the conclusion to his introduction, Campbell gives a brief history of rhetoric and explains the place his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* takes in that history. He gives four stages in the history of rhetoric. The first stage, Campbell says, was "criticism by actual performances in the art" (lxxiv). By this, Campbell explains that "as speakers existed before grammarians, and reasoners before logicians, so doubtless there were rhetoricians, and poets before critics" (lxxiv). The second stage deals with the naming and giving taxonomies to the "modes or arguing, or forms of speech" (lxxiv). Campbell says that this second stage is the "beginnings of the critical science" (lxxiv). The third step entails comparing the effects of any given speech on an audience and discovering the various purposes of each type of speech. He explains that by this third step, "the rules of composition are discovered." The fourth and final step Campbell gives is to study the principles in human nature that attribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a message -- "to canvass those principles in our nature to which the various attempts are adapted, and by which, in any instance, their success or want of success may be accounted for" (lxxiv). Campbell goes on to say that "by the fourth [step], we arrive at that knowledge of human nature which, besides its other advantages, adds both weight and evidence to all precedent discoveries and rules" (lxxv). This fourth step is the reason that Campbell believed he would lead rhetoric into a "new country." Campbell credited the ancient philosophers for their foundational work in the first three stages. However, he believed that rhetoric was

missing this fourth stage -- this connection between rhetoric and the basic principles found in human nature -- and he believed it was his job to bring the study of rhetoric to completion by uniting rhetoric with the study of human nature.

The esteemed philosopher David Hume believed that the study of human nature is important for all fields of learning. In his *Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume reasons that the only way to find success in philosophical inquiries is to "leave the tedious lingering method, which we have hitherto followed, and instead of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier, to march up directly to the capital or center of these sciences, to human nature itself; which being once masters of, we may every where else hope for an easy victory" (xx). Campbell also believed that human nature was at the very core of the art of rhetoric. In the introduction to Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Lloyd Bitzer explains that "Campbell's discussions of rhetoric often can hardly be distinguished from his discussions of human nature...He often treats rhetoric and human nature at the same time and without distinction" (Bitzer xix). Campbell explains that the purpose of his work is to present not

a correct map, but a tolerable sketch of the human mind; and, aided by the lights which the Poet and the Orator so amply furnish, to disclose its secret movements, tracing its principal channels of perception and action, as near as possible, to their source: and, on the other hand, from the science of human nature, to ascertain with greater precision, the radical principles of that art, whose object it is, by the

use of language, to operate on the soul of the hearer, in the way of informing, pleasing, moving, or persuading. (lxvii)

In this way, Campbell sought to show a reflexive connection between rhetoric and human nature. Human nature would expose the principles of rhetoric, and rhetoric would serve as a guiding light for the ways in which the human mind works. Campbell explains that studying the underlying foundational principles of rhetoric "leads directly to an acquaintance with ourselves; it not only traces the operations of the intellect and imagination, but discloses the lurking springs of action in the heart" (lxxiv). He goes on to say that "in this view it is perhaps the surest and the shortest, as well as the pleasantest way of arriving at the science of the human mind" (lxxiv). For Campbell, the contents of the human mind and human motivations are the guiding principles which explain and ground the art of rhetoric.

Campbell thought of human nature in two ways. First, he held that human nature is universal, or common to all men at all times. It was, in fact, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau who initially advanced the idea of a universal human nature. However, Campbell, along with most of the philosophers of the Enlightenment, acknowledged the truth of this view. In speaking of how pity works upon the mind of hearers, Campbell writes that "It is a common remark of every people and of every age, and consequently hath some foundation in human nature, that benefits are sooner forgotten than injuries, and favours than affronts" (130). Thus, as his syllogistic reasoning goes, because such a thought process is common to "every people and of every



age," it naturally has its foundations in human nature since human nature is universal.

For Campbell, there is a uniformity in our basic nature: "The more we become acquainted with elementary natures, the more we are ascertained by a general experience of the uniformity of their operations (52). Campbell not only believed that human nature is universal, he also believed that it can and should be explored empirically -- that is, through direct observation and experience. Bitzer explains that, for Campbell,

All knowledge of the world of fact originates from the *mind's acquaintance with particulars*, rather than with concepts or general truths; all inferential knowledge about real objects is constructed from particulars *through the process of experience*, rather than through deduction by means of either strict demonstration or the syllogism. [emphasis added] (xxix)

Using a metaphor to suggest the practicality of the use of empiricism in his study and the importance of relying both on sight (sensation) and experience, Campbell explains that "it is now universally admitted by opticians, that it is not purely from sight, but from sight aided by experience, that we derive our notions of the distance of visible objects from the eye. The sensation, say they, is instantaneously followed by a conclusion or judgment founded on experience" (48-49). Thus, Campbell believed that the best ways to investigate human nature and the principles of rhetoric are through empiricism, that is, through observation and experience.

Campbell believed that in order to begin such an empirical study of how communication (or eloquence, as he terms it) functions in universal human nature, a

rhetorician must take into account the basic contents of the human mind and its operations. Campbell thought of the mind as embodying four distinct faculties: the understanding, the imagination, the passions, and the will. Since, according to Campbell, "in speaking there is always some end proposed, or some effect which the speaker intends to produce on the hearer (1)" and since eloquence can be denoted as "that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end (1)," Campbell explains four different types of discourse that are linked to each of the four faculties of the mind. He writes, "All the ends of speaking are reducible to four; every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will" (1). Campbell also later adds memory as one of the "powers of the mind" (72), and the will is a power of the mind that is understood in the context of how it is affected by the other faculties.

Campbell discusses, at length, the various appeals to the four faculties of the mind. He also describes how the faculties of the mind "ascend in a regular progression": "Knowledge, the object of the intellect, furnisheth materials for the fancy; the fancy culls, compounds, and, by her mimic art, disposes these materials so as to affect the passions; the passions are the natural spurs to volition or action, and so need only to be right directed" (2). For Campbell, understanding the progression of the mind is the goal of the philosopher of rhetoric. Campbell is interested in answering the question "Why does a certain message convince a certain type of audience?" and he answers this question by

focusing on the different faculties of the mind and the various goals of the different types of discourse. His is a rhetorical study of human nature.

If Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is a study of human nature as it relates to rhetoric, Jane Austen's novels have very similar intentions. In her defense of the novel, Austen argues that novelists exhibit "a thorough knowledge of human nature" and offer examples of "the happiest delineation of its varieties" (*Northanger Abbey* 24). In making this point about the importance of human nature to the task of the novelist, Austen aligns herself with the focus of George Campbell. Like Campbell's version of human nature, Austen characterizes a universal human nature. However, it would seem that Austen's assessment of universal human nature is one that is much more bleak than Campbell's. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen pits Darcy's wit against that of Elizabeth Bennet. In his bantering with Elizabeth Bennet, Darcy says, "There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome" (*Pride and Prejudice* 43). Elizabeth retorts that Darcy's defect is "a propensity to hate every body" to which Darcy replies, "And yours is wilfully to misunderstand them" (43). Here the characters are rooting out the defects in their own natures -- namely, their pride and prejudice, respectively. In *Persuasion*, Austen has yet another character express a rather gloomy view of universal human nature. In speaking of a nurse's occupation and her abilities to witness "such varieties of human nature," Anne Elliot takes a positive view of the types of human virtue that she must witness: "What instances must pass before them of ardent, disinterested, self-denying attachment,

of heroism, fortitude, patience, resignation: of all the conflicts and all the sacrifices that ennoble us most. A sick chamber may often furnish the worth of volumes" (*Persuasion* 126). Anne's invalid and impoverished friend, Mrs Smith, responds with a much more negative view of human nature:

Yes, sometimes it may, though I fear its lessons are not often in the elevated style you describe. Here and there, human nature may be great in times of trial; but generally speaking, it is its weakness and not its strength that appears in a sick chamber: it is selfishness and impatience rather than generosity and fortitude, that one hears of. There is so little real friendship in the world! and unfortunately (speaking low and tremulously) there are so many who forget to think seriously till it is almost too late. (*Persuasion* 127)

Perhaps it is Elizabeth Bennet's sentiment toward the end of *Pride and Prejudice* which reveals the most about Austen's pessimistic assessment of universal human nature.

Shocked by her friend Charlotte Lucas's acceptance of Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage (Elizabeth was shocked that Charlotte would marry a man whom she did not love), Elizabeth tells her sister Jane, "There are few people whom I really love, and still fewer of whom I think well. The more I see of the world, the more am I dissatisfied with it; and every day confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence that can be placed on the appearance of either merit or sense" (*Pride and Prejudice* 104). While Campbell discusses universal human nature in a descriptive

sense, Austen explores the universality of human nature in a much more condemnatory manner.

Aside from sharing a common belief as to the universality of human nature, Jane Austen and George Campbell also share an affinity in that Austen also undertakes her study of human nature in a strictly empirical manner. In his study of the novel, Ian Watt argues that the distinguishing characteristic of eighteenth-century novelists from their romance-writing predecessors is their reliance on the use of realism. Watt writes that realism necessitates a focus on the particulars of individual experience rather than a reliance on generic conventions. This focus on the particulars of individual experience occurs through observation and experience -- the very techniques of an empirical study. In his book *Jane Austen & Charles Darwin: Naturalists and Novelists*, Peter Graham suggests that Jane Austen and Charles Darwin rank as "the two great British empiricists of the nineteenth century" because they both "look with scrupulous, penetrating, and relatively unbiased attention at the rich and messy details of the world around them" (2). Graham gives an example of Austen's attention to detail as she expressed it in an 1814 letter to her friend Martha Lloyd:

I am amused by the present style of female dress;—the coloured petticoats with braces over the white Spencers & enormous Bonnets upon the full stretch, are quite entertaining. It seems to me a more marked change than one has lately seen.—Long sleeves appear universal, even as Dress, the Waists short, and as far as I have been able to judge, the Bosom covered.—I was at a little party last night

at Mrs Latouche's, where dress is a good deal attended to, & these are my observations from it.—Petticoats short, & generally, tho' not always, flounced.—The broad-straps belonging to the Gown or Boddice, which cross the front of the Waist, over white, have a very pretty effect I think. (Austen, *Letters*)

Although Austen's real-life attention to such minute detail does not necessarily translate directly to her novels (she never gives such detailed descriptions in her novels), her empirical study of the world around her enabled her to portray a realistic representation of human nature in her novels.

In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, George Campbell suggested that a study of rhetoric as it relates to human nature would "lead directly to an acquaintance with ourselves" (lxxiv). In the same way, Austen believed that in writing stories about "3 or 4 families in a country village," the truth of human nature would emerge. In his book *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, Raymond Williams explores the novelist's ability to lead readers to an acquaintance with themselves by representing real and "knowable" communities of people. He explains, "Most novels are in some sense knowable communities. It is part of a traditional method -- an underlying stance and approach -- that the novelist offers to show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways" (23). In Austen's novel *Persuasion*, the heroine Anne Elliot makes a move from one knowable community to another:

Anne had not wanted this visit to Uppercross, to learn that a removal from one set of people to another, though at a distance of only three miles, will often include a

total change of conversation, opinion, and idea. She had never been staying there before, without being struck by it, or without wishing that other Elliots could have her advantage in seeing how unknown, or unconsidered there, were the affairs which at Kellynch Hall were treated as of such general publicity and pervading interest; yet, with all this experience, she believed she must now submit to feel that another lesson, in the art of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle, was become necessary for her. (*Persuasion* 38-39)

In taking this short-distance trip to Uppercross, Anne learns a valuable lesson about human nature that she wishes her prideful family would learn -- that a distance of three miles can change a community and that such a change of "conversation, opinion, and idea" could lead to the conclusion that not everyone was as interested in Sir Walter Elliot's baronetcy and esteemed lineage as he was himself. The narrator goes on to describe the new community to which Anne was headed:

The Mr. Musgroves had their own game to guard, and to destroy; their own horses, dogs, and newspapers to engage them; and the females were fully occupied in all the other common subjects of housekeeping, neighbours, dress, dancing, and music. She acknowledged it to be very fitting, that every little social commonwealth should dictate its own matters of discourse; and hoped, ere long, to become a not unworthy member of the one she was now transplanted into. With the prospect of spending at least two months at Uppercross, it was highly

incumbent on her to clothe her imagination, her memory, and all her ideas in as much of Uppercross as possible. (*Persuasion* 39)

Austen's description of "every little social commonwealth" that dictates its own matters of discourse sounds very much like the rhetorician Chaim Perelman's "discourse communities," but it also bears a striking resemblance to the "knowable communities" that Williams describes. Readers of *Persuasion* become acquainted not only with the Kellynch community, but also with the community at Uppercross, as well; and each community is fully knowable in the examples the characters provide of the truth of universal human nature. It is interesting that in order for Anne to be found a worthy member of her new community at Uppercross, she knows that she needs to "clothe her imagination, her memory, and all her ideas in as much as Uppercross as possible" (39) -- to fully immerse her nature in the Uppercross community so that she can be knowable. Austen's description of how Anne fully immerses herself in a new community reminds one of George Campbell's faculties of the mind, for this immersion involves Anne's imagination, memory, and sense.

As Austen has argued, a thorough knowledge of human nature is integral to the novelist, and Austen shows her knowledge of human nature through her knowable communities as well as in the main plots of her novels, for each of Austen's novels revolves around the struggles of the heroine to find a suitable mate -- a struggle that is a universal and central human issue. Within this plot structure, there is an ongoing conversation between the hero and the heroine in which both characters try to convince or



persuade one another as to their suitability for each other. Since such conversations involve persuasive discourse (especially in the marriage proposal scenes), Campbell would argue that there is need to engage and arouse the passions: "When persuasion is the end, passion also must be engaged" (77). Campbell goes on to explain how the passions must be awakened. He writes,

Passion must be awakened by communicating lively ideas of the object...A passion is most strongly excited by sensation. The sight of danger, immediate or near, instantly rouseth fear; the feeling of an injury, and the presence of the injurer, in a moment kindle anger. Next to the influence of sense is that of memory, the effect of which upon passion, if the fact be recent, and remembered distinctly and circumstantially, is almost equal. Next to the influence of memory is that of imagination; by which is here solely meant the faculty of apprehending what is neither perceived by the senses, nor remembered. (Campbell 81)

Here Campbell seems to be differentiating between the various mental powers based on their degree of vivacity. Sense is the most vivid power for awakening passion; next is memory; and last is the imagination. Campbell believes, however, that all three faculties must be engaged in order to appeal to the passions and therefore end in persuasion.

Austen's novels correspond with Campbell's philosophy here in that in each of Austen's novels, passion is awakened in the heroines through the use of these three powers or faculties of the mind: sense, memory, and imagination. The passions of the heroines are also usually awakened in a three-step process: 1) The heroine has a transformation in her

understanding about the hero, 2) The heroine comes to an acquaintance with herself, and  
3) The heroine's passions are finally awakened, and she is persuaded to marry the hero.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet's opinions of Darcy first begin to change after she reads his letter in which he explains the entire and truthful account of his history with Wickham. The letter was written immediately following Elizabeth's rejection of Darcy's first marriage proposal, when Elizabeth was still upset about learning that Darcy had been instrumental in causing her sister Jane's unhappiness by convincing Mr. Bingley to leave Netherfield and to break ties with Jane. Darcy's first marriage proposal had not gone well at all. He had emphasized Elizabeth's inferiority, which justified her opinions of him as being the "proudest, most disagreeable man in the world" (7). However, after she reads the letter in which Darcy explains the truth about Wickham's villainous nature, she begins a transformation in her opinions of Darcy. In the first stage in which her passions are beginning to be awakened to Darcy, Elizabeth relies mainly on her memory; and her former thinking about Wickham begins to change due to Darcy's letter -- an instance of persuasive communication:

She perfectly remembered everything that had passed in conversation between Wickham and herself, in their first evening at Mr. Phillips's. Many of his expressions were still fresh in her memory. She was now struck with the impropriety of such communications to a stranger, and wondered it had escaped her before. She saw the indelicacy of putting himself forward as he had done, and the inconsistency of his professions with his conduct. She remembered that he

had boasted of having no fear of seeing Mr. Darcy—that Mr. Darcy might leave the country, but that he should stand his ground; yet he had avoided the Netherfield ball the very next week. She remembered also that, till the Netherfield family had quitted the country, he had told his story to no one but herself; but that after their removal it had been everywhere discussed; that he had then no reserves, no scruples in sinking Mr. Darcy's character, though he had assured her that respect for the father would always prevent his exposing the son. How differently did everything now appear in which he was concerned! (*Pride and Prejudice* 158)

Thus, in the very beginning stages in which Elizabeth's passions are being awakened and in which her ideas about Darcy are being transformed, she relies on memory to assist her in forming a new and right opinion of Wickham, a man in whom she had taken a romantic interest. Darcy's letter also convinced Elizabeth that Darcy had not acted with malicious intent in separating Jane and Bingley, and this new knowledge led to Elizabeth's final transformation of thinking about Darcy. After reading the letter, Elizabeth comes to an "acquaintance with herself":

She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd. "How despicably I have acted!" she cried; "I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or

blameable mistrust! How humiliating is this discovery! Yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love [with Wickham], I could not have been more wretchedly blind! But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself.  
*(Pride and Prejudice 159)*

Elizabeth's realization that "Till this moment I never knew myself" stems from her reliance upon the faculty of her memory -- of what she had formerly believed and how she had formerly behaved. The fact that Elizabeth also says that she had "driven reason away" shows that she realized that she had let her passions rule her thinking and her behavior rather than keeping her passions and her reason in a right balance. Surely, this passage is one of the most important in all of *Pride and Prejudice*, for "this is the moment when the heroine looks inside herself and, with an act of will and intelligence, pulls her disparate memories and responses together, when she overcomes the limitations and distortions of her mind and emotions to achieve a marvelous cohesion and clarity of self" (Konigsberg 233).

The final stages of the awakening of Elizabeth's passions occurs in the first chapter of the third volume. Elizabeth finds herself on a sightseeing tour of Pemberley, Darcy's estate, with her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. Elizabeth agrees to go

only after she has been assured that Darcy will not be there. When they arrive, Elizabeth glories in the beautiful scene:

They gradually ascended for half-a-mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. (*Pride and Prejudice* 185)

Elizabeth's passions are here being awakened by sense, by sight, of the majestic Pemberley. The sight of Pemberley causes her to invoke the use of her imagination, and she suddenly finds herself feeling that "to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!" (185). She later imagines, "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" (186). Elizabeth is so pleased with the beauty of Pemberley that she begins to imagine what it would have been like had she accepted Darcy's first proposal of marriage.

While on their tour of Pemberley, Elizabeth and the Gardiners come upon the housekeeper of Pemberley, Mrs. Reynolds. Mrs. Reynolds shows them into the house and leads them to a gallery where there are paintings of both Wickham and Darcy. Mrs. Reynolds explains to the group that Mr. Wickham "has turned out very wild" (186), adding weight to Darcy's former testimony about him. However, when asked about her master, Darcy, Mrs. Reynolds has only praise of the highest degree. She praises the good

nature of Darcy to such an extent that Elizabeth wondered "Can this be Mr. Darcy!" (188), and she eagerly "listened, wondered, doubted, and was impatient for more" (188).

When Elizabeth comes to stand before the portrait of Darcy, the narrator explains,

There was certainly at this moment, in Elizabeth's mind, a more gentle sensation towards the original than she had ever felt at the height of their acquaintance. The commendation bestowed on him by Mrs. Reynolds was of no trifling nature.

What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant?" (189).

The fact that Mrs. Reynolds's testimony plays such an important part in cementing Elizabeth's final estimations of Mr. Darcy relates to Campbell's emphasis on the importance of testimony in securing empirical certainty. Campbell believed that testimony was a form of evidence, and "his theory of knowledge and of evidence repeatedly highlighted the mechanisms in human psychology that compel people to trust their experience, their memory, and the testimony of others" (Suderman 100).

The final awakening of Elizabeth's passions occurs when she is back at home with Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner and reflecting on their visit to Pemberley. Elizabeth lies awake, trying to ascertain what exactly her feelings are toward Darcy. She quickly decides against hatred, for "hatred had vanished long ago" (201). She also rules out the newly formed feelings of respect and esteem for him -- respect and esteem created mostly by Mrs. Reynolds's testimony about him -- and she settles on something she feels more than respect and esteem:

Gratitude, not merely for having once loved her, but for loving her still well enough to forgive all the petulance and acrimony of her manner in rejecting him, and all the unjust accusations accompanying her rejection. He who, she had been persuaded, would avoid her as his greatest enemy, seemed, on this accidental meeting, most eager to preserve the acquaintance, and without any indelicate display of regard, or any peculiarity of manner, where their two selves only were concerned, was soliciting the good opinion of her friends, and bent on making her known to his sister. Such a change in a man of so much pride excited not only astonishment but gratitude—for to love, ardent love, it must be attributed; and as such its impression on her was of a sort to be encouraged, as by no means unpleasing, though it could not be exactly defined. She respected, she esteemed, she was grateful to him, she felt a real interest in his welfare. (*Pride and Prejudice* 201)

Any reader of the above passage would question whether it is Darcy who had changed, as Elizabeth supposed the case to be, or whether Elizabeth is the one who had transformed her ways of thinking about Darcy. This transformation of her opinions and the awakening of her passion for Darcy (for though she admits to only gratitude, respect, esteem, gratefulness, and an interest in his welfare, it is clear that, at this point, Elizabeth is in love with Darcy), is accomplished through the engagement of the three faculties of her mind -- her sense, her memory, and her imagination -- and through an acquaintance with herself.

In *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot goes through a similar process in the awakening (or reawakening) of her passions for Captain Wentworth. The title of this novel relates to the central conflict in the story: that Anne had let Lady Russell persuade her from marrying Wentworth, a man whom Anne truly loved, but who was without fortune or family connections. Lady Russell thought of such an alliance as "degrading" and "a throwing away" of all of Anne's "claims of birth, beauty, and mind," and by using her position as a surrogate mother to Anne, by using her "mother's love" and "mother's rights" (27), Lady Russell had persuaded Anne "to believe the engagement a wrong thing -- indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it" (28). Anne allows reason to trump her passions in this situation, for she could find no reason to distrust Lady Russell's arguments. The narrator explains Anne's reasoning thusly: "Lady Russell, whom she had always loved and relied on, could not, with such steadiness of opinion, and such tenderness of manner, be continually advising her in vain" (28). The novel begins eight years following Anne's rejection of Wentworth, and the reader is introduced to an Anne who is well past the prime of marriageable age, who regrets her decision to reject Wentworth, who has lost her bloom and spirits, who has "been forced into prudence in her youth" (30), and who has been unable to find any man "who could bear a comparison with Frederick Wentworth, as he stood in her memory" (28).

Although Anne believes it impossible that Lady Russell could be "continually advising her in vain" (28), during the course of the novel, the reader witnesses Lady Russell's attempts to once again persuade Anne in the matters of matrimony -- this time



to marry her cousin, Mr. William Elliot. As opposed to the "unfortunate" connection that marriage to Wentworth must have been, Lady Russell attempts to convince Anne that marriage to Mr. Elliot would make a happy and "most suitable connection" (129). Lady Russell, in attempting to convince Anne, appeals to Anne's memory of her deceased mother and to Anne's imagination of how marriage to Mr. Elliot would restore her to her true home in the role that her mother once embodied:

I own that to be able to regard you as the future mistress of Kellynch, the future Lady Elliot--to look forward and see you occupying your dear mother's place, succeeding to all her rights, and all her popularity, as well as to all her virtues, would be the highest possible gratification to me.--You are your mother's self in countenance and disposition; and if I might be allowed to fancy you such as she was, in situation, and name, and home, presiding and blessing in the same spot, and only superior to her in being more highly valued! My dearest Anne, it would give me more delight than is often felt at my time of life! (129-30).

When one analyzes Anne's thoughts following this persuasive discourse, it becomes clear how both the faculties of the memory and the imagination become important in Anne's decision making process:

Anne was obliged to turn away, to rise, to walk to a distant table, and, leaning there in pretended employment, try to subdue the feelings this picture excited. For a few moments her imagination and her heart were bewitched. The idea of becoming what her mother had been; of having the precious name of "Lady

Elliot" first revived in herself; of being restored to Kellynch, calling it her home again, her home for ever, was a charm which she could not immediately resist.

(130)

Anne is almost persuaded by Lady Russell once again. She simultaneously employs her imagination and the memory of her mother in supposing what it would be like to take her mother's place at her childhood home of Kellynch. However, in this instance, Lady Russell's persuasion, although powerful upon the mind of Anne, fails to be successful ultimately because it fails to affect Anne's overriding sense of reason. Lady Russell believes that if Mr. Elliot could have appeared at that very moment to make an offer of marriage to Anne, that Anne would have accepted. However, the narrator explains that Anne believed that such an appearance and offer from Mr. Elliot would produce entirely different effects:

The same image of Mr. Elliot speaking for himself, brought Anne to composure again. The charm of Kellynch and of "Lady Elliot" all faded away. She never could accept him. And it was not only that her feelings were still adverse to any man save one; her judgment, on a serious consideration of the possibilities of such a case, was against Mr. Elliot. (130)

Lady Russell attempts to play upon Anne's passions, but Anne's reason remains in proper balance to her emotions. The idea of Mr. Elliot's proposing brings Anne back to her senses, and all the charming persuasive attempts of Lady Russell fade away. Anne's reason keeps her emotions in check. She realizes that she does not really know the true

character of Mr. Elliot, and she ultimately concludes that Mr. Elliot is seemingly too perfect. "She felt that she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped" (131). Lady Russell's persuasive attempts are successful in some way, at least: they allow Anne to come to an acquaintance with herself. In the course of her mental response to Lady Russell's arguments, Anne realizes that her feelings truly are "adverse to any man save one" -- Captain Wentworth -- and it takes the rest of the novel for Anne to be persuaded that Wentworth loves her still, as well.

This pattern of an Austen heroine's experiencing a revolution in ideas due to sense, memory, and imagination, in coming to an acquaintance with herself, and of finding her passions awakened can be found in *Northanger Abbey*, as well. The heroine of the novel, Catherine Morland, finds a romance blossoming between herself and Henry Tilney during her stay at the Tilney's family home, Northanger Abbey. Part of the intrigue of *Northanger Abbey* for Catherine is the Gothic setting -- castles, abbeys, ramparts, cloisters, sliding panels, tapestry, and gloomy chambers -- namely, as Henry teases Catherine about her views of the abbey, those things that are "just like what one reads about" (114) in Gothic romance novels. Although it is in *Northanger Abbey* that Austen makes her extended defense of novels, Austen uses Catherine's excessive interest and immersion in Gothic romance novels to criticize the Gothic genre; for, in the course of the novel, Catherine becomes overcome by improbable, Gothic-inspired imaginings

and fears. It is only when Henry leaves for a few days to attend a parish meeting at his parsonage in Woodston that Catherine is able to experience a revolution in ideas. When Henry leaves, Catherine begins to ground her thinking not in fiction, but in the reality of life. Upon Henry's departure, the narrator examines Catherine's thoughts:

From Saturday to Wednesday, however, they were now to be without Henry. . .

The past, present, and future were all equally in gloom. . . What was there to interest and amuse her? She was tired of the woods and the shrubberies—always so smooth and so dry; and the abbey in itself was no more to her now than any other house. The painful remembrance of the folly it had helped to nourish and perfect was the only emotion which could spring from a consideration of the building. What a revolution in her ideas! She, who had so longed to be in an abbey! Now, there was nothing so charming to her imagination as the unpretending comfort of a well-connected parsonage, something like Fullerton, but better: Fullerton had its faults, but Woodston probably had none. If Wednesday should ever come! (156)

In this passage, Catherine's awakening passions are reliant upon her sense, her memory, and her imagination. The sights of Northanger Abbey no longer interested Catherine; she was tired of seeing the same old woods and shrubberies. The only thing that Catherine could do now when she looked at Northanger Abbey was to remember how foolish she had been in thinking it would be anything like what she read about in the Gothic novels she loved so much. Thus, the sight of Northanger Abbey finally leads her to an

acquaintance with herself; she realizes how irrational she has been. As the narrator exclaims, "What a revolution in her ideas!" Reality, instead of imagination, has finally taken hold of her. The only thing left to imagine is how wonderful it would be to find herself with Henry in Woodston. Her last sentiment, "If Wednesday should ever come!" could be read thusly: "If Henry should ever come!" Catherine has found her passions awakened and has come to a new acquaintance with herself by employing her sense, memory, and imagination.

It is obvious that Jane Austen had a very "thorough knowledge of human nature" and of the ways in which the mind works, especially when it is processing and responding to persuasive discourse. Austen parallels Campbell in the notion that universal human nature is best studied in an empirical manner. She also satirically suggests what the study of human nature does *not* look like. In *Pride and Prejudice*, when Jane and Elizabeth return home from a stay at Netherfield, they find that their sister Mary was, "as usual, deep in the study of thorough bass and human nature; and had some new extracts to admire, and some new observations of thread-bare morality to listen to" (*Pride and Prejudice* 45). A thorough knowledge of human nature does not happen in one afternoon, nor does it stem from the contemplation of conduct books. Reginald Farrer's assessment that "Jane Austen's heroes and heroines and subject-matter are, in fact, universal human nature, and conterminous with it" is certainly apt. For Jane Austen, there is no distinction between human nature and the communication and thoughts of her characters just as there is no distinction for Campbell between human nature and rhetoric.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LIVELIEST EFFUSIONS OF WIT AND HUMOR

In 1752, the popular English novelist Henry Fielding wrote, "Of all kinds of writing, there is none on which this variety of opinions is so common as in those of *humour*." Fielding was popular because of his rich satire and wit, but wit and satire have not always been so venerated. In fact, comedy has had a rather problematic history, beginning with the ancient philosophers. One of the early Greek philosophers Plato believed that comedy and laughter have no place in the lives of respectable people. Rather, he viewed laughter as malicious. As a philosopher who valued moderation in everything, Plato believed that laughter was an exhibition of an excess of passion over reason. In his dialogue *The Republic*, Plato, through the voice of Socrates, describes an idealistic class of leaders which he terms the "guardians." In listing the various desired characteristics of the guardians, Plato explains that "they [the guardians] must not be too fond of laughter" (75). Aristotle, Plato's philosophical successor, also expressed doubts about the propriety of comedy and laughter. Although Aristotle admitted that there could be a valuable place for wit, he wrote that "Most people delight more than they should in amusement" (*Nicomachean Ethics*). The early philosophers and the Stoics valued moderation of emotions and self-control. As such, laughter was seen as an excess of unrestrained emotion. Many people sided with the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus when he warned, "Let not your laughter be loud, frequent, or abundant."

During the Renaissance, theories of comedy relied on Aristotle's distinction between comedy and tragedy as set forth in his *Poetics*. Aristotle had distinguished comedy from tragedy in that comedy deals with baser and lower characters and actions than those in tragedy. However, while the subject matter of comedy might be of a baser nature than tragedy, Aristotle explained that comedy deals with a "defect of ugliness which is not painful or destructive." Using Aristotle's *Poetics* as a guide, Renaissance writers viewed comedy in a similar manner: comedy dealt with base things for the purpose of chastising them. In his *History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, Joel Spingarn explains how comedy was viewed by many Renaissance poets, writers, and literary theorists. Aside from being the "means of chastisement and vituperation of things that are base and evil" (Spingarn 102), comedy was believed to be aroused by slight evil -- evil "which is neither sad nor destructive" and which is aroused by "suddenness, novelty, or surprise" (Spingarn 103). For writers and philosophers in the Renaissance, then, comedy was aroused by slight evils for the purpose of "rendering the minor vices ridiculous" (Spingarn 104). Renaissance thinkers believed that by rendering the minor and slight vices ridiculous, comedy was the "best corrective of men's morals" (Spingarn 104).

Still, while many Renaissance thinkers found a worthy purpose for comedy and humor, many unfavorable views of comedy and laughter lingered and began to regain strength and momentum in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1708, one anonymous poet compared laughter to the seven deadly sins: "Laughing is unbecoming

and unkind, / And oft betrays an injudicious Mind: / And tho' few think so, 'tis a heinous Vice, / Attended both by Pride and Avarice, / Lust, Rapine, Treach'ry, and Intemperance, / And ev'ry Thing that has not Innocence" (qtd. in Tave 47). Laughter, once again, began to be seen in a negative light. As Plato had argued, laughter began to be understood as having a malicious intent. In his book, *The Amiable Humorist*, Stuart Tave explains that one of the foremost English philosophers who was responsible for the concept of laughter as "a mean, scornful expression of superiority to a deformed thing" was Thomas Hobbes (46). Thomas Hobbes, a renowned seventeenth-century philosopher, believed that human beings are innately competitive and that people are always looking for signs to show that they are either winning or losing. When one is losing, one feels bad; when one is winning, one feels happy; and the feelings of superiority are likely to exhibit themselves through laughter. With Hobbes, then, the idea was born that comedy and laughter arise from feelings of *superiority* to base and deformed things. Unlike the Renaissance thinkers, writers in the early eighteenth-century objected to the use of wit as a vehicle for ridicule. "Even the ostensibly moral purpose of the satirical use of wit -- the exposure of folly and vice -- was distrusted, if not discredited" (Monteiro 81). Lord Shaftesbury, writing in the early eighteenth century, distinguished between the vulgar laugh of ill-bred people and the more joyful laughter of the polite world. For Shaftesbury, it is the vulgar who have a coarse and violent laughter. He wrote, "Laughter is the accompaniment of savageness, barbarity, inhumanity, brutality, tyranny" (qtd. in Tave 55). Obviously, then, from the time of the ancients through the early eighteenth century, humor and laughter



were rarely viewed as admirable. Few philosophers or theorists believed there to be much worth in a good, hearty laugh.

However, during the course of the eighteenth-century, such negative views of comedy and laughter began to diminish. In his study on eighteenth-century comic theory, Stuart Tave explains that during the eighteenth century, there were a number of authors who were "intent upon denying the unpleasant quality of laughter, confuting the arguments that tend to equate it with self-love, ridicule, and animosity, and who [were] eager to set up their own counter-theory to prove its amiable nature" (56). Tave goes on to discuss how the philosopher Francis Hutcheson was the first critic to dismantle Hobbes' paralyzing views of the superiority inherent in laughter. He explains that Hutcheson was important in the history of humor because he was the first to distinguish laughter from ridicule. Once again, as with Aristotle, emphasis began to be placed on the moderation of humor and laughter. As Joseph Addison wrote in his 1712 issue of the *Spectator*, the business of virtue is to moderate and restrain, not to "banish gladness from the heart of man." In the attempt to define appropriate laughter, eighteenth-century writers focused on the *ends* for which wit was employed.

The eighteenth century also witnessed another important philosopher's attempt to justify the uses of humor: George Campbell's. As was discussed in the previous chapter, it is clear that Campbell believed that there is no distinction between human nature and rhetoric. Thus, it is not surprising that Campbell would incorporate humor into his theory of rhetoric since humor is a universal human response. Campbell's inclusion of humor in

his philosophy of rhetoric is important because he allowed a proper place for humor and laughter in certain rhetorical settings, and he likewise renewed the importance of the various modes of discourse -- modes of serious and colloquial eloquence. Campbell's discussion of wit, humor, and ridicule encompasses the entirety of Book I, chapter II of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Early on in this chapter, Campbell makes the distinction between two different modes of discourse -- modes that he terms the "eloquence of conversation" and the "eloquence of declamation" (8). According to Campbell, the standard mode of discourse is that of declamation; the lighter mode is that of the eloquence of conversation. Colloquial eloquence, or the eloquence of conversation, is suited more to light and trivial matters. However, like its counterpart (declamation), its first end is to enlighten the understanding. Campbell points out that while declamation pleases the fancy through sublimity and description, the eloquence of conversation uses wit and moves the will through ridicule.

After a brief introduction to the two different modes of discourse, Campbell begins his discussion of wit. He explains that "it is the design of wit to excite in the mind an agreeable surprise, and that arising, not from any thing marvellous in the subject, but solely from the imagery she employs, or the strange assemblage of related ideas presented to the mind" (8). Campbell goes on to explain that wit occurs in three different ways: 1) by "debasement of things pompous or seemingly grave," 2) by "aggrandizing things little and frivolous," or 3) by "setting ordinary objects... in a particular and uncommon point of view" (8). In general, Campbell ascribes wit to a basic theory of incongruity -- a

theory of humor which other great eighteenth century philosophers, including James Beattie and Immanuel Kant, posited. After explaining the ways in which wit creates an "agreeable surprise" in the mind of the audience, Campbell suggests that the purpose of wit is diversion. Wit "tickles the fancy, and throws the spirits into an agreeable vibration" (10).

Having concluded the first section on wit, Campbell begins section two with a discussion of humor in general. While wit appeals to the imagination, humor appeals to the passions and is a complement to tragedy. Campbell points out that while it is usually sympathy that allows passion to be communicated to an audience, humor excites the passions through a different means. Because humor is an emotion that is "either not violent or not durable, and the motive not any thing real, but imaginary" (15) and because humor sometimes "displays itself preposterously, so as rather to obstruct than to promote its aim," (15) humor addresses contempt, not sympathy. Harkening back to the Greek Stoic Epictetus' warning that laughter should not be "loud, frequent, or unrestrained," Campbell says that humor is an emotion that must be neither violent nor long-lasting. He says, "This limitation is necessary, because a passion extreme in its degree, as well as lasting, cannot yield diversion to a well-disposed mind, but generally affects it with pity, not seldom with a mixture of horror and indignation" (16). Thus, Campbell seems to agree with Epictetus that humor should not be violent or long-lasting.

Finally, in this section on humor, Campbell explains that "the subject of humour is always character," but not all types of character; the subject is "its foibles generally,

such as caprices, little extravagances, weak anxieties, jealousies, childish fondness, pertness, vanity, and self-conceit" (16). Campbell's list of laughable character foibles here echoes the Renaissance view that comedy was aroused by examples of slight evils since many of these foibles are only slight character flaws. Campbell concludes this section on humor by once again discussing how incongruity causes humor and laughter and how it is oddity itself that is the "proper object of laughter" (20).

Following the section on humor, Campbell moves into a discussion of ridicule. He defines ridicule as being a unique blending of wit and argument intended to "influence the opinions and purposes of the hearers" (20). Campbell points out, however, that though there is an element of argument or reasoning involved in ridicule, "the reasoning in ridicule...is always conveyed under a species of disguise" (23). In a description very reminiscent of Renaissance theories of comedy, Campbell explains that ridicule is "fitter for refuting error than for supporting truth, for restraining from wrong conduct, than for inciting to the practice of what is right" (20). In this statement, one can see traces of the Renaissance beliefs that comedy was intended for the correction of manners. Campbell enumerates the types of subjects to which ridicule is applicable: "Those things which principally come under its lash are awkwardness, rusticity, ignorance, cowardice, levity, foppery, pedantry, and affectation of every kind" (21). Campbell concludes this section on ridicule by suggesting that ridicule should have little or no place in the church. Campbell was a minister in the Church of Scotland; his interest in philosophy and rhetoric was secondary to his first and foremost calling. As Arthur

Walzer has explained, Campbell was "interested in rhetoric largely because he thought rhetoric could help him and his students become better preachers" (5). For Campbell, then, rhetoric was a means to an end; and he always had in mind how rhetoric might benefit pulpit oratory. Campbell believed that ridicule "is seldom or never of service in those which come from the pulpit" (26). He goes on to say that

the reverence of the place, the gravity of the function, the solemnity of worship, the severity of the precepts, and the importance of the motives of religion; above all, the awful presence of God, with a sense of which the mind, when occupied in religious exercises, ought eminently to be impressed; all these seem utterly incompatible with the levity of ridicule. They render jesting impertinence, and laughter madness. Therefore, any thing in preaching which might provoke this emotion, would justly be deemed an unpardonable offence against both piety and decorum. (26)

For Campbell, the church was a serious place -- one full of reverence and solemnity. While ridicule certainly deserves attention in his theory of rhetoric since it is appropriate for other forms of eloquence and situations of communication, Campbell argues that ridicule in the church setting would be out of place and inappropriate.

Arthur Walzer has noted that Campbell's analysis of wit, humor, and ridicule in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* was greatly admired by his colleagues because it provided evidence that "his novel approach to rhetoric could accommodate a broader view of the art than classical rhetoric had" (43). Indeed, Campbell's definition of eloquence is so

broad that all forms of discourse and communication are included -- including literature. In his chapter on wit, humor, and ridicule, Campbell uses many examples from literature and poetry -- from talented authors such as Jonathan Swift, Samuel Butler, and Alexander Pope. It is not difficult to assume, then, that other examples of literary wit and humor can be culled from the works of other writers.

When one applies Campbell's theories of wit and humor to the writings of Jane Austen, it becomes clear that both authors shared a similar philosophy on the importance of comedy to the eloquence of conversation. To Jane Austen, wit and humor were an integral part of a writer's talent. In her defense of novels, Austen argues that novels are works in which the "liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world" (24). Thus, humor and wit were important to Austen's understanding of novel-writing just as they were to Campbell's philosophy of rhetoric, and there are many striking similarities between Campbell's theories of humor and Austen's literary examples of humor.

Just as Campbell believed that "the subject of humour is always character" (16), it is the characters in Austen's novels that serve as the basis for her wit. It must also be remembered that Campbell believed that it is not just any kind of character traits that elicit humor, but that humor relies on "its foibles generally, such as caprices, little extravagances, weak anxieties, jealousies, childish fondness, pertness, vanity, and self-conceit" (16). In the same way, Jane Austen makes the foibles of her characters the foundation for her humor. In fact, taking Campbell's listing of characters foibles into

account, one could easily find examples in Austen's novels that correspond with each. For a compelling example of a character with weak anxieties, one need look no further than Mr. Woodhouse in *Emma*; for pertness, *Pride and Prejudice*'s Elizabeth Bennet; for vanity and self-conceit, Sir Walter Elliot in *Persuasion*. In the breadth of her work, Jane Austen provides readers with such a litany of characters and their foibles that a reader might readily react through laughter. It is through such laughter that readers learn to correct their own manners; for who, through laughter, does not recognize the folly of Sir Walter Elliot's excessive vanity? The characters' foibles and personal failings are a warning to readers not to fall prey to the same behaviors. Laughing at the characters becomes, for the reader, a cleansing process of catharsis -- a process by which readers can attain identification with the characters and can rid themselves of their own similar undesirable behaviors.

Laughter is an important theme in *Pride and Prejudice*, though it often goes without notice. Austen's own tongue-in-cheek description of the novel, written in a letter to her sister Cassandra, shows that she tended to view the novel as a lighthearted comedy:

The work is rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had; if not, of solemn specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story: an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté, or anything that would form a contrast and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and general epigrammatism of the general style. (Austen, *Letters*)

Although Austen jokes about the lack of sense in *Pride and Prejudice*, the work is very serious in its lessons about the proper way to laugh -- how long one should laugh, how heartily, for what reasons, and at what cost. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen offers readers several different ways in which laughter can be understood. Ultimately, the reader comes to a conclusion about what Austen felt was the proper place for laughter.

The very first line of *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the most famous first lines in the history of novels; and with that very first line, Austen alerts the reader to the comedic element of the work: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (1). Austen continues on in this humorous manner to suggest that, though it is a truth universally acknowledged, often the "single man in possession of a good fortune" is completely oblivious to such a "universal truth": "However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters" (1). From these very first two lines, Austen establishes not only the comedic nature of the novel, but gives the reader a brief synopsis of the entire plot of the novel. In the remainder of this first chapter, the reader is introduced to two characters: Mr. Bennet and his wife. The humor of the first two lines of the novel begins to reassert itself through the dialogue between this husband and wife, and the reader comes to the realization that it is Mrs. Bennet who feels some claim to their new wealthy and single neighbor, Mr. Bingley. While Mrs. Bennet excitedly relates the news to Mr. Bennet that



"Netherfield Park is let at last," Mr. Bennet listens and responds to her tattle with humor and sarcasm. Mrs. Bennet exclaims,

"A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"

"How so? how can it affect them?"

"My dear Mr. Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them."

"Is that his design in settling here?" (1)

Mr. Bennet teases his wife and torments her about her designs on their new neighbor; and at the conclusion of the first chapter, the narrator explains that Mr. Bennet "was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character" (3). While Mr. Bennet's sarcasm quite often takes the reader by surprise and induces laughter, it becomes evident throughout the rest of the novel that Mr. Bennet uses his humor and laughter as a means of escape. He feels trapped in his marriage to his silly wife whom he married for superficial reasons, and they have failed to produce a male heir. Thus, upon his death, his estate will be entailed away to a distant male relative. Mr. Bennet believes his daughters to be "silly and ignorant like other girls" (2), but he does nothing to correct their behavior. Overall, Mr. Bennet's wit and laughter stem from his exhaustion in life and his powerlessness to change his situation. One feels that Mr. Bennet laughs because that is all he can do; in laughing, he finds his escape from the

realities of life. However, he laughs at the expense of his family. Austen writes that, "contented with laughing at them, [he] would never exert himself to restrain the wild giddiness of his youngest daughters" (163). Patricia Spacks explains that Mr. Bennet's laughter "calls attention to his abnegation of responsibility. He makes fun of his daughters' failings instead of trying to correct them; he ridicules his wife instead of confronting her folly" (Spacks 73).

If Mr. Bennet is one example of the way in which laughter can be used inappropriately, his second to youngest daughter Lydia is another example of using laughter as an incorrect response to life. Lydia is easily the silliest and most ignorant of the Bennet sisters. She is also the sister with the least discretion, and she winds up causing her family much disgrace when she runs off with the charming military officer George Wickham. There are many problems with the way Lydia laughs. First of all, she laughs at everything and makes no distinction; everything is comedy to her. As Spacks explains, "Lydia laughs when she buys an ugly bonnet, laughs when she lacks money to pay a reckoning, and laughs at every detail of her own morally reprehensible elopement and marriage" (73). In fact, in the letter that Lydia writes to Mrs. Forster explaining that she has run off with Wickham, the word *laugh* is repeated several times; and it is clear that Lydia thinks that her morally and socially unacceptable behavior is all just a joke:

My Dear Harriet,

You will laugh when you know where I am gone, and I cannot help laughing myself at your surprise to-morrow morning, as soon as I am missed. I

am going to Gretna Green, and if you cannot guess with who, I shall think you a simpleton, for there is but one man in the world I love, and he is an angel. I should never be happy without him, so think it no harm to be off. You need not send them word at Longbourn of my going, if you do not like it, for it will make the surprise the greater, when I write to them and sign my name 'Lydia Wickham.' What a good joke it will be! I can hardly write for laughing. (221)

It is clear that Lydia cannot distinguish between proper objects of laughter and improper ones. Lydia's laughter has no connection to the intellect and is instead a boorish laughter. In his 1878 *History of English Humour*, Alfred L'Estrange explains that physical laughter requires "no exercise of judgment, and therefore has no connection with the intellectual powers of the mind" (24). He writes that "the lowest boor may laugh on being tickled, but a man must have intelligence to be amused by wit" (24). Certainly, Lydia's laughter is wholly disconnected from her intellectual powers and her intelligence.

Lydia laughs not only without distinction, but she also laughs too loud and too long. Campbell echoes the Greek writer Epictetus when he warns that humor should be neither violent nor durable. It would seem then that for Campbell and for many other philosophers, proper laughter involves an appropriate force and duration. Lydia defies all sense of moderation and laughs loudly and without regard to anyone's feelings. When Lydia is first invited to Brighton by Mrs. Forster, Lydia prances about the house laughing loudly without any regard for the feelings of her sister Kitty who was not invited to go. "Wholly inattentive to her sister's feelings, Lydia flew about the house in restless ecstasy,

calling for everyone's congratulations, and laughing and talking with more violence than ever" (175). Like her father, Lydia proves to be a poor example of what proper laughter should look like.

Another character in *Pride and Prejudice* who is often found laughing is Mr. Bingley's sister. Miss Bingley's laughter is a direct representation of Hobbesian laughter in that she laughs to show her superiority. The day after Elizabeth trudges through muddy fields and arrives at Netherfield to check on her sister Jane who has fallen ill and who has been taken in by Bingley, Miss Bingley discusses Elizabeth's appalling, disheveled appearance with Mrs. Hurst and says, "I could hardly keep my countenance" (25). Miss Bingley derives her humor from Elizabeth's "country town indifference to decorum" (26). As Spacks suggests, "She enjoys claiming social superiority by laughing at deviations from strict propriety" (73). Miss Bingley also enjoys laughing at Elizabeth in particular as a way to combat her jealousy, for Darcy is much more interested in Elizabeth than in Miss Bingley.

Miss Bingley finds pleasure in laughing at deviations from strict propriety, thus she finds it utterly impossible to laugh at the respectable Mr. Darcy. When Elizabeth suggests that they tease and laugh at Mr. Darcy as punishment for a witty remark and suggests that his friends must know how to tease him since they are all so intimate with him, Miss Bingley says, "Upon my honour, I do *not*. I do assure you that my intimacy has not yet taught me *that*. Tease calmness of manner and presence of mind! No, no; I feel he may defy us there. And as to laughter, we will not expose ourselves, if you please, by

attempting to laugh without a subject" (42). Elizabeth sarcastically laments that Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at and says, " I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can. But these, I suppose, are precisely what you are without" (43). Elizabeth's piquant wit here pokes fun at the starched propriety of Darcy. Unlike Miss Bingley who is incapable of finding fault in Darcy and who is therefore unable to laugh at him, Elizabeth recognizes Darcy's pride and arrogance and can laugh at his faults. Earlier in the novel, when Bingley suggests to Darcy that he dance with the partner-less Elizabeth, Darcy refuses and says, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (7). Elizabeth hears Darcy's haughty description of herself and, instead of taking offense, turns the situation into an opportunity to laugh at Darcy. "She told the story with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous" (8). Elizabeth's laughter here perfectly illustrates the Renaissance understanding of comedy in that her laughter is aroused by Darcy's pride -- a slight evil -- and is performed for the purpose of rendering the vice of pride ridiculous and for correcting his manners.

Interestingly enough, in his chapter on ridicule, Campbell discusses the "unpleasant passions" of pride and contempt. What Campbell writes can be directly applied to Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Campbell writes, "Pride, and contempt, its usual attendant...are unpleasant passions, and tend to make men fastidious, always

finding ground to be dissatisfied with their situation and their company. Accordingly, those who are most addicted to these passions are not generally the happiest of mortals" (31). This is very clearly illustrated in *Pride and Prejudice* by the distinction made between Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy. The narrator says,

The manner in which they spoke of the Meryton assembly was sufficiently characteristic. Bingley had never met with more pleasant people or prettier girls in his life; everybody had been most kind and attentive to him; there had been no formality, no stiffness; he had soon felt acquainted with all the room; and, as to Miss Bennet, he could not conceive an angel more beautiful. Darcy, on the contrary, had seen a collection of people in whom there was little beauty and no fashion, for none of whom he had felt the smallest interest, and from none received either attention or pleasure. (11)

Bingley, while wealthy and respectable, can find enjoyment and pleasure at a country ball unlike Darcy who is too proud to be able to find satisfaction with the country in general and its inhabitants. Thus, Bingley is presented as being a much happier individual than Mr. Darcy, whom everyone believes to be "the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world" (7). Campbell explains, "The merriest people...are the least suspected of being haughty and contemptuous people. The company of the former is generally as much courted as that of the latter is shunned" (32). Similarly, in *Pride and Prejudice*, everyone desires Bingley's presence, while "every body hoped that he [Darcy] would never come there again" (7).

Campbell makes one more important point about pride that directly corresponds to *Pride and Prejudice*. Campbell says that "It hath been often remarked of very proud persons, that they disdain to laugh, as thinking that it derogates from their dignity, and levels them too much with the common herd" (32). This is very reminiscent of Miss Bingley's inability to find fault with Mr. Darcy. Not only is Miss Bingley unable to laugh at Darcy, but Darcy is unable to laugh at his own faults, and both of these characters' inability to laugh stems directly from their feelings of pride and social superiority. Campbell suggests that the only cure for pride is wit and humor -- the ability to laugh. Campbell explains that it is only when the prideful person has "gotten for an alloy a considerable share of sensibility in regard to wit and humour, which serves both to moderate and to sweeten the passion, that it can be termed in any degree sociable or agreeable" (31). This is the crux of the lesson in *Pride and Prejudice*: Darcy has to learn to be laughed at and to laugh at himself. And the way he learns this lesson and cures his pride is through the wit, humor, and proper laughter of Elizabeth Bennet. This is the transformation that encompasses the entire novel, for in it we see Darcy transform from a haughty and proud man to a true gentleman who can laugh at his own foibles and follies. Elizabeth attributes "such a change in a man of so much pride" to "love, ardent love" (201), and she was half right. It was Darcy's love for Elizabeth that caused his transformation, but his transformation would have been impossible had Elizabeth's disposition been anything but "lively and playful." Thus, *Pride and Prejudice* can be read as a lesson on the proper form of laughter and humor. From the examples of Mr.

Bennet, Lydia, Miss Bingley, and Elizabeth Bennet, Austen provides readers with her own philosophy of laughter and humor -- one that corresponds with Campbell's. She suggests that laughter should not be used to escape life's responsibilities; it should be always in check and should always be used with discretion; it should be neither too loud nor too long-lasting; and it must not be used as a means to show superiority. Proper laughter makes for a merry disposition and is the only cure for the unpleasant vices of pride and arrogance.

Although some critics might find Austen's humor cynical or even "inhumanly cold and penetrating" (Mudrick 1), Austen promotes a theory of proper humor that is very similar to George Campbell's. Shortly after her death, Jane Austen's brother James wrote an encomium in which he praised his sister's proper wit. He writes,

Though quick and keen her mental eye

Poor nature's foibles to descry

And seemed for ever on the watch

Some traits of ridicule to catch.

Yet not a word she ever pen'd

Which hurt the feelings of a friend

And not a line she ever wrote

'Which dying she would wish to blot.' (qtd. in White 131)

Surely, Jane Austen could say along with Elizabeth Bennet, "I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, *do* divert me, I own,



and I laugh at them whenever I can" (*Pride and Prejudice* 43). In fact, Austen laughed because she could not help it; one gets the sense that hers is a paradoxical laughter -- a laughter that is pointed and sometimes restrained, but one that is wholly involuntary. But, it is Austen's humor -- her biting sarcasm, her witty repartee, her ability to laugh at the universal foibles and follies of the characters in this world -- that makes reading her novels so pleasurable.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BEST CHOSEN LANGUAGE

For both Jane Austen and George Campbell, wit and humor are integral components of conversational discourse; they are important tools for both the writer and the orator, respectively. But, wit and humor are products of language; it is only through language that humor can be conveyed. Thus, in her defense of the novel, Austen suggests that the talent of the author lies in his or her abilities to convey to the world both the "most thorough knowledge of human nature" and the "liveliest effusions of wit and humour" through the use of the "best chosen language" (*Northanger Abbey* 24). For Austen, artistry depends upon the "best chosen language." The correct usage of language is the foundation upon which an author's abilities are built.

In his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell, likewise, explains the inherent connection between eloquence and language: "Eloquence hath always been considered, and very justly, as having a particular connexion with language. It is the intention of eloquence to convey our sentiments into the minds of others, in order to produce a certain effect upon them. Language is the only vehicle by which this conveyance can be made" (139). For Campbell, an orator, if he be a skilled artist, must make language of the utmost importance. Campbell employs an extended metaphor to make his point. He reminds readers of an analogy he had utilized earlier in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*: "The grammatical art bears much the same relation to the rhetorical, which the art of the mason

bears to that of the architect" (169). However, Campbell points out one major difference between these two pairs: "In architecture it is not necessary that he who designs should execute his own plan; he may therefore be an excellent artist in this way who has neither skill nor practice in masonry; on the contrary, it is equally incumbent on the orator to design and to execute" (170). Campbell suggests that an architect may accomplish artistry through the mere creation of plans, but an orator must be able to execute his design. Language, Campbell says, is the key to this execution of design. "He ought therefore to be master of the language which he speaks or writes, and to be capable of adding to grammatic purity those higher qualities of elocution which will give grace and energy to his discourse" (170). Becoming a "master of language" is an important attainment for Campbell, so much so that two-thirds of his entire *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is devoted to a discussion of the cultivation of proper language and style.

Campbell's extended discussion of language and style is built upon the premise that the foundation of eloquence is purity of language: "The first thing in elocution that claims our attention is purity; all its other qualities have their foundation in this" (151). For Campbell, purity is the equivalent of "grammatical truth" -- it is the "conformity of the expression to the sentiment which the speaker or the writer intends to convey by it" (214). According to Campbell, purity can be measured or quantified by its adherence to certain standards -- the standards of use. Campbell makes a distinction between "good use" and "bad use" and suggests that bad use in language stems ultimately from a lack of education. He writes, "The far greater part of mankind, perhaps ninety-nine of a hundred,

are, by reason of poverty and other circumstances, deprived of the advantages of education " and therefore "the portion of language known to them must be very scanty" (142). This distinction is important for Campbell because from it, he can proceed to the first of three properties that he suggests are essential to good use -- reputable use. By the term reputable use, Campbell suggests that good usage is largely determined by "those who have had a liberal education, and are therefore presumed to be best acquainted with men and things" (143). Campbell posits that when arbitrating questions of usage, we look to "authors of reputation" to settle disputes as they are "the best judges of the proper signs, and of the proper application of them, who understand best the things which they represent" (144, 143). Campbell's theory here that it is the linguistic habits of well-educated authors that dictate proper English usage is echoed later in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* when he suggests that writing directly reflects a person's knowledge and taste. Campbell writes, "An ambiguous, obscure, improper, languid, or inelegant expression is quickly discovered by a person of knowledge and taste, and pronounced to be a blemish" (331). It is the responsibility of the "person of knowledge," then, to evince not only proper English in their own communicative acts, but also to instill and inspire proper usage in others.

Aside from reputable use, Campbell argues that good use of language is designated by two other qualities: national and present use. Regarding national use, Campbell argues that "the introduction of extraneous words and idioms, from other languages and foreign nations, cannot be a smaller transgression against the established

custom of the English tongue, than the introduction of words and idioms peculiar to some precincts of England, or at least somewhere current within the British pale" (146-47). For Campbell, national use of language requires words and phrases that are local, not foreign. Finally, Campbell says of good use that it is characterized by present use. He explains that instead of using the terms *recent use* or *modern use*, he chose to use the term *present use* because the proper contrary of "present use" is *obsolete*, not *ancient*. Thus, by present use, Campbell suggests that good language usage depends upon words and idioms that are in continued and current use.

Having established that purity of language can be measured by good usage (usage that is reputable, national, and present), Campbell moves on to offer three main faults against purity of language. The first of these faults he terms "barbarism." He explains that barbarism can occur in three ways: "By the use of words entirely obsolete, by the use of words entirely new, or by the formations and compositions from simple and primitive words in present use" (171). The second fault against purity that Campbell lists is the solecism. Campbell explains that grammarians consider solecisms a much greater fault than barbarisms, but he goes on to argue that when the grammatical mistake does not obstruct the writer's aim or view, when "solecisms are not very glaring, when they do not darken the sense or suggest some ridiculous idea, the rhetorician regards them as much more excusable than barbarisms" (180). To conclude his list of faults against language purity, Campbell offers one last class of faults -- what he terms "the impropriety." Campbell explains, "the barbarism is an offence against etymology, the

solecism against syntax, the impropriety against lexicography" (190). Campbell goes on to explain that the business of the lexicographer is "to assign to every word of the language the precise meaning or meanings which use hath assigned to it" (190). Thus, language can be improper, says Campbell, if words are misapplied or if words are used "as signs of things to which use hath not affixed them" (190-91).

Purity was of the utmost importance to Campbell's conception of style as it served as the foundation for eloquence. However, Campbell acknowledged five additional qualities of style -- qualities that he termed "simple and original": perspicuity, vivacity, elegance, animation, and music (216). These five qualities, Campbell says, correspond to the various faculties of the human mind. Along with purity, perspicuity is considered as an object to the understanding; vivacity and elegance attend to the imagination; animation appeals to the passions; and music appeals to the ear. Thus, in enumerating the qualities of style, Campbell retains emphasis on how a text or speech affects the various human faculties.

For Campbell, purity was closely related to perspicuity since they are both qualities of style that address the same human faculty: the understanding. Campbell writes that of all of the qualities of style, perspicuity is the "first and most essential" (216). He explains that perspicuity is a quality that is universally required in every act of eloquence. "But whatever be the ultimate intention of the orator, to inform, to convince, to please, to move, or to persuade, still he must speak so as to be understood, or he speaks to no purpose" (216). Campbell repeats this view much later in his *Philosophy of*

*Rhetoric*, and he does so in a much more figurative manner. Campbell maintains that "Without perspicuity, words are not signs, they are empty sounds; speaking is beating the air, and the most fluent declaimer is but as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal" (336). Perspicuity, for Campbell, is of the utmost importance because, without it, there is no purpose or meaning. All of the other qualities of style are dependent upon perspicuity. Campbell concludes that "The effect of all the other qualities of style is lost without this" (216). Campbell explains that perspicuity originates from word choice and syntax. He then goes on to enumerate the various ways in which perspicuity can be violated. He suggests that, first of all, perspicuity can be violated by "the obscure" (217). Obscurity in language has many different sources, and Campbell lists these out and gives a brief discussion of each. He suggests that obscurity can occur from a defect in the expression, through bad arrangement, from using the same word in different senses, from uncertain reference in pronouns and relatives, from too artificial a sentence structure, from technical terms, and from long sentences. Another way in which perspicuity can be violated, according to Campbell, is by the use of "double meaning" (226). Campbell explains that "The fault in this case is not that the sentence conveys darkly or imperfectly the author's meaning, but that it conveys also some other meaning, which is not the author's" (226). Campbell suggests that the double meaning occurs either due to "equivocation" or "ambiguity" (226). Campbell's discussion of both equivocation and ambiguity deals with unintentional errors in construction that cause readers confusion. Finally, the third and final way in which Campbell suggests perspicuity can be violated is

what he terms the "unintelligible" (243) -- when a speaker expresses himself unintelligibly "and so convey[s] no meaning at all" (243). Campbell admits that, though it would seem highly unlikely that "a man of sense, who perfectly understands the language which he useth, should ever speak or write in such a manner as to be altogether unintelligible," yet "this is what frequently happens" (243). Campbell explains that there are three factors that can contribute to a speaker's unintelligibility: a confusion of thought, which Campbell suggests is often "accompanied with intricacy of expression"; an "affectation of excellence in the diction"; or a "total want of meaning" (243).

Having discussed the importance of perspicuity and the various violations against it, Campbell moves in the third book of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* to discuss, at length, two more of the six qualities of style that he had earlier enumerated. Book III of Campbell's work is almost entirely dedicated to the subject of the quality of style that he terms "vivacity." While Campbell had suggested that purity and perspicuity were qualities of style that addressed the faculty of human understanding, he differentiates that both vivacity and elegance address the imagination. Campbell explains that the qualities of vivacity and elegance serve two different ends. "By vivacity of expression, resemblance is attained, as far as language can contribute to the attainment; by elegance, dignity of manner" (285). Resemblance plays an integral role in Campbell's understanding of vivacity. He believed that communication benefits from a vivacious style in that language can begin to resemble primary sense impressions; through vivacity, language can begin to *resemble* experience. Arthur Walzer points out that vivacity, for



Campbell, was a sort of emphasis that could be placed on certain key concepts, a way to direct an audience's focus:

Vivacity is, then, a style that achieves emphasis, a style that directs or rivets the listener's or reader's attention on a conceptually relevant element by engaging the imagination. Any device that directs the reader's attention on the part of the sentence that expresses the particular feature of the idea that the orator wants to make present to the audience's mind is a technique of vivacity. (106)

For Campbell, there are three such "devices" upon which vivacity depends and which help direct the reader's attention: "the choice of words, their number, and their arrangement" (285).

It is interesting that Campbell lists word choice as the first element upon which vivacity depends because he also discusses word choice as being a crucial element of perspicuity. Thus, word choice is an extremely important factor in Campbell's overall conception of style. In his discussion of the choice of words as it relates to vivacity as a quality of style, Campbell explains that there are three topics which deserve attention. He says that "Words are either proper terms, or rhetorical tropes; and whether the one or the other, they may be regarded not only as signs, but as sounds" (285). Thus, the three subjects to which he devotes his discussion of word choice are 1) proper terms, 2) rhetorical tropes, and 3) words considered as sounds. Campbell's discussion of words as proper terms centers around his belief that the most important quality of proper terms is the quality of specificity or *speciality*. Campbell explains,

Nothing can contribute more to enliven the expression, than that all the words employed be as particular and determinate in their signification as will suit with the nature and the scope of the discourse. The more general the terms are, the picture is the fainter; the more special they are, it is the brighter. (286)

To illustrate his point, Campbell offers an example from the song of Moses in the Book of Exodus. He offers the line "They *sank* as *lead* in the mighty waters" and suggests that had the line instead read "They *fell* as *metal* in the mighty waters," much of the spirit and "colouring" of the sentiment would have been lost. In the latter sentence, the use of more general terms ("fell" and "metal") as opposed to the more specific terms ("sank" and "lead") results in a fainter image. Such a faint image, therefore, "cannot give equal pleasure to the fancy, and by consequence will not contribute so much either to fix the attention, or to impress the memory" (286). Campbell goes on to give a very detailed analysis of the various parts of speech (verbs, adjectives, participles, adverbs, etc.) that are the "most susceptible of this beauty" of precise, vivid language. Thus, for Campbell, the precision of language -- the use of specific terms -- lends vivacity to language; the use of specific terms invigorates the sentiment and causes those sentiments to give pleasure, to impress themselves on the memory, and to be relished.

In his discussion of word choice, Campbell also examines the use of rhetorical tropes as they contribute to a vivacity of style. He focuses on four different tropes: metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and antonomasia, though he also briefly discusses personification and irony. He argues that the use of these rhetorical tropes produces

vivacity in four ways. The first way rhetorical tropes can produce vivacity is "when they can aptly represent a species by an individual, or a genus by a species" (310). Campbell singles out the use of antonomasia (the use of a proper name to represent an entire group) and synecdoche as particularly useful in this regard. Secondly, Campbell suggests that rhetorical tropes produce vivacity when they "serve to fix the attention on the most interesting particular, or that with which the subject is most intimately connected" (310). Campbell explains that the two tropes most suited for this purpose are synecdoche and metonymy. Campbell makes it a point here, however, to comment on the use of common and trite images in the usage of figurative language. He gives an example of a well-worn metonymy -- the substitution of *pen* for writer, as in "it is the production of an elegant *pen*" -- as a warning against the use of hackneyed expressions, for "it must be owned that the triteness of such expressions considerably lessens their value" (302). Campbell puts forth a third way in which rhetorical tropes can create vivacity -- namely, when they "exhibit things intelligible by things sensible" (310). This function is carried out through the use of metaphor and metonymy. Finally, Campbell suggests one last way in which tropes produce vivacity -- when they suggest things lifeless by things animate" (310). This end is attained by the use of personification, metaphor, and metonymy.

Aside from discussing the use of specific proper terms and rhetorical tropes, Campbell admits that there is one final consideration that must be made of word choice as it relates to the production of vivacity: that of "the relation which the sound may bear to the sense" (285). Campbell's discussion here of words as considered as sounds

indicates his focus on the way language can resemble actual experience -- of the imitative qualities of language. In the beginning of his discussion of words considered as sounds, Campbell offers a quote from Alexander Pope to strengthen his assertions: "The sound is made an echo to the sense" (317). Campbell's intention is to point out the ability of language to mirror or resemble sense impressions. He believes that, through language, there can be "resemblance between the signs and the things signified; and this doubtless tends to strengthen the impression made by the discourse" (317). Campbell, here, once again offers a taxonomy of the various subjects to which language is capable of bearing resemblance. Language, Campbell writes, not only can resemble sound, but also time and motion, size, difficulty and ease, and things disagreeable and agreeable. He offers extensive literary examples for each of these subjects. He then concludes this section by offering an observation that elocution cannot be faulted if it should lack the imitation of language to sense. He also warns that "it is not prudent in an author to go a step out of his way in quest of this capricious beauty, who, when she does not act spontaneously, does nothing gracefully" (333). Campbell warns that the conscious attempt to force language to resemble sense experience can prove to be a hindrance to style. He urges that such a style must stem from organic communication and must not "serve[] as a contrast to the sentiment" (333).

Having concluded his discussion of the importance of word choice to the creation of vivacity, Campbell moves into an examination of the remaining two characteristics upon which vivacity depends: the number of words and their arrangement. In discussing

how vivacity is affected by the number of words, Campbell offers a maxim: "The fewer the words are, provided neither propriety nor perspicuity be violated, the expression is always the more vivid" (333). Campbell argues that the type of discourse does not matter; concision is always to be desired as it produces more energy, focus, and liveliness. It is interesting to note that Campbell points out the connection between the "aphoristic style" (the use of proverbs and "maxims of common life") and concision. He concludes that "though the combination of the figurative with the concise is very common, it is not necessary" (337). Put another way: though there is an undeniable relationship between the aphoristic style and concision, a writer can still be concise without the use of a trope. Campbell gives an example from Swift in which no figure is present: "I am too proud to be vain" (337). Campbell says of this quote that "simplicity, perspicuity, and vivacity are all happily united" (337). He goes on to write, "An inferior writer, in attempting to delineate fully the same character, would have employed many sentences, and not have said near so much" (337-38). Thus, Campbell argues for the importance of saying as much as can be said in as few words as possible. He concludes his discussion of brevity by enumerating several of the faults that can be made against it. These include tautology, pleonasm, and verbosity.

Following his discussion of brevity, Campbell offers a discussion on the third and last quality on which vivacity depends: the arrangement of words. He structures his discussion around the distinction between simple and complex sentences, and his overall evaluation is that arrangement should flow from a natural order rather than an artificial

one. It is of note that, in his discussion of arrangement, Campbell discusses the use of antithesis at length. He considers antithesis to be a structure that carries with it a great deal of vivacity. Toward the end of his discussion of antithesis, he explains the importance of antithesis to fiction: "This figure is particularly adapted [to] the drawing of characters. You hardly now meet with a character either in prose or in verse, that is not wholly delineated in antithesis" (378). Campbell offers an example of antithesis from Alexander Pope and he exclaims, "With what a masterly hand are the colours in this picture blended; and how admirably do the different traits, thus opposed, serve, as it were, to touch up and shade one another!" (378). Obviously, then, Campbell values the use of antithesis as a means by which an author can create character portraits that offer a striking resemblance to nature.

Campbell's extended discussion of vivacity as a desirable quality of style is summed up nicely by Arthur Walzer. Walzer writes,

In Book III, vivacity, then, is an intensifier, a sentence-level stylistic device that leads the reader or listener to attend to one feature over others. Its appeal is aesthetic. The orator or poet chooses words, tropes and figures, and syntactic structures that exploit the incredible resources that language has for the sensitive writer or speaker. (108)

As Walzer explains, Campbell's understanding of the effects of vivacity is best understood in terms of its ability to direct a reader to important features of the intended communication. Campbell's theory of vivacity is very detailed and in-depth, but vivacity

was only one of "five simple and original qualities of style" that Campbell initially listed (perspicuity, vivacity, elegance, animation, and music). While Campbell discusses perspicuity at length in Book II and vivacity in Book III, it is worth noting that he never completes his discussion of style; he never addresses elegance, animation, and music. This fact led one of his early reviewers to note the omission and to assume that a subsequent volume would be published to discuss those qualities of style that Campbell had left unaddressed. No such subsequent volume was published, but as it stands, Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* can rightly be understood not only as a philosophy of rhetoric, but also as a guide to good writing and style in general.

Campbell's conception of what constitutes good writing finds its corresponding counterpart in Jane Austen's understanding of "the best-chosen language." Austen believed that it is only through "the best-chosen language" that a novelist can convey the "greatest powers of the human mind," the "most thorough knowledge of human nature," and the "liveliest effusions of wit and humour" (*Northanger Abbey* 24). Her phraseology in this statement illustrates that Austen viewed writing as a process of making active choices with regard to language. The talent of an author lay in his or her ability to choose the precise word that best conveyed a certain sentiment and that would affect an audience in the intended manner. At the heart of Austen's conception of the best style is the preponderance of word choice -- the same idea that was dominant in George Campbell's overall conception of style. Thus, it is beneficial to analyze Austen's style -- her "best-chosen language" -- in relation to Campbell's conception of good style. The similarities

between Austen and Campbell's conceptions of what constitutes good style are worthy of note.

Campbell argues that vivacity depends upon the choice of words -- specifically, on the use of specific terms versus the use of general terms. For Campbell, the chief importance of proper terms is their specificity. Thus, for Campbell, the best-chosen language is language in which "all the words employed [are] as particular and determinate in their signification as will suit the nature and scope of the discourse" (286). At first glance, it might seem that Campbell and Austen differed drastically in opinion on this point. When readers are first introduced to Austen's "best-chosen language," they may be surprised to find that she utilizes a seemingly limited vocabulary of very abstract terms. In fact, many scholars have recognized Austen's reliance upon abstract language. In his in-depth analysis of Jane Austen's style, Howard Babb has rightly noted that there is a minimum of physical action in Austen's novels. He argues that "the human mind and heart, in fact, are the major fields of activity" in Austen's novels (8). Because most of the action in the novels occurs in the minds and hearts of the characters, Babb suggests that this has a direct impact on Austen's style. He argues that it not only causes her verbs to carry little weight, but that the lack of physical action in the novels is also the reason for her reliance on the passive voice. He concludes that Austen "avoids highly particular words on the whole" and suggests that she instead employs a more generalized vocabulary (16). Babb points to a passage from *Sense and Sensibility* in which the main verbs serve to distinguish between basic categories of human response: "considering,



believing, supposing, feeling, knowing" (9). Babb terms these "conceptual terms" (9) and suggests that, while they are abstract nouns in nature, they ultimately are universal, relatable, shareable concepts that "gain a kind of life of their own" (9). Babb understands the reason for Austen's reliance on abstract rather than specific terms and he rationalizes that "In a world stabilized by public agreement on certain concepts, we would hardly expect a vocabulary of evocative particulars to flourish" (16). Both Babb and another Austen scholar, Mary Lascelles, agree that it is not surprising that Austen would rely on the use of abstract language. Both see this behavior as culturally derivative -- as indicative of the era in which she was writing. Lascelles explains, "To us Jane Austen appears like one who inherits a prosperous and well-ordered estate -- the heritage of a prose style in which neither generalization nor abstraction need signify vagueness, because there was close enough agreement as to the scope and significance of such terms" (107).

Other scholars have also noted Austen's tendency to use abstract rather than specific terminology in her novels. What Babb terms "conceptual terms," Norman Page calls "key-words." In a discussion of *Mansfield Park*, Page points to words such as "liveliness," "horror," "evil," "noisy," and "tranquility" and terms them key-words. He says that these key-words are "recurring terms which, properly scrutinized, afford an insight into the dominant attitudes and values of the novel" (39). Page explains that these recurring terms often involve "the standards she [Austen] deems desirable in human conduct and social relationships" and that they are qualities of "character and

temperament rather than outward appearance" (55). Recently, Maggie Lane, another Austen scholar, has published a book devoted entirely to an analysis of several of the recurring abstract nouns in Austen's novels. Among the key concepts that Lane discusses are genius, wit, taste, elegance, openness, reserve, exertion, composure, liberality, candour, gentility, delicacy, reason, feeling, person, countenance, air, address, mind, temper, spirit, sensibility, sense, sentiment, firmness, fortitude, forbearance, propriety, and decorum.

While it is true that Austen relies on abstract terms for the lexicon in her novels, her usage of the abstract terms is fixed; she uses each of the abstract nouns with an intense focus and specificity of meaning. As Arnold Kettle has explained in his *Introduction to the English Novel*, "Each word -- "elegance," "humour," "temper," "ease" -- has a precise unambiguous meaning based on a social usage at once subtle and stable" (93). Echoing the thoughts of Lascelles and Babb, Kettle argues that such a specificity of abstract terms resulted from a universal cultural morality that is since bygone: "The same exquisite clarity, the sureness of touch, of Jane Austen's prose cannot be recaptured because in a different and quickly changing society the same sureness of values cannot exist" (94). So, although Austen relies mainly on abstract nouns and concepts in her novels, those abstract nouns embody a specific mental conception and are as "particular and determinate in their signification" as suits the nature and scope of her moral discourse (Campbell 286).

While Campbell focuses on the importance of the use of specific proper terms for the production of vivacity, he also analyzes many of the different parts of speech that are susceptible to the beauty of vivacity. Campbell makes a distinction between the effects of various verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. He points out that certain words are stronger, more energetic, more spirited, and brighter than their weak, languid, spiritless, faint counterparts. Campbell argues that the use of strong, energetic, spirited, and bright words helps to contribute to vivacity. When one analyzes Austen's novels with regard to her word-choice, it is clear that her conception of the best-chosen language corresponds with Campbell's conception of vivacity. Austen's adjectives contribute to the vivacity of her style. There are many, many examples in the novels where Austen utilizes just the right adjective to clarify a noun. When Darcy makes a surprise visit to Elizabeth after she has just learned the "dreadful news" about Lydia, she cannot contain her grief and involuntarily bursts into tears in front of her visitor. Austen writes that Darcy sat in "wretched suspense" and could only observe her in "compassionate silence" (209). Similarly, after Elizabeth finally relates the situation to Darcy, he paces up and down the room in "earnest meditation" (210). Austen's use of adjectives lends to the strength and vivacity of her expression. Had Austen omitted the adjectives in these instances, the reader would not have been as intimately aware of Mr. Darcy's feelings; with the removal of the adjectives above, much of the import of the characters' mental states would be lost upon the reader. To give another example of the strength of Austen's adjectives, when Elizabeth is reunited with Bingley, she searches his countenance and behavior for signs

that he is still in love with her sister Jane. Austen writes, "Two or three little circumstances occurred ere they parted, which, in her anxious interpretation, denoted a recollection of Jane, not untinged by tenderness" (198). Austen's use of the adjective "untinged" here lends to the strength of the expression because it not only is alliterative ("untinged by tenderness"), but it calls attention to the fact that Bingley has been untinged by the attempts of his sister and Darcy to dissuade him from his romantic feelings for Jane. Austen's expression here is much stronger than had she instead written "not unaffected by tenderness." Certainly, Austen's use of "untinged" is more liable to be relished and makes more of an impression on the memory than had she used a less vivid adjective.

Although Babb suggests that Austen's verbs carry little weight in the course of her novels, a simple analysis proves that Austen's verbs are as prone to vivacity as her adjectives. When Austen describes that the jealous "Miss Bingley was *venting* her feelings in criticisms on Elizabeth's person, behavior, and dress," her usage of the verb "venting" clearly resembles Miss Bingley's mental state. Had Austen instead said "Miss Bingley was criticizing Elizabeth," such a description would have been much fainter and would not have illustrated so well the petulant vehemence with which Miss Bingley was expressing her jealousy. Another example of Austen's masterful use of verbs, occurs when Elizabeth is relating the news about Lydia to Darcy, she says, "My youngest sister has left all her friends -- has eloped; -- has *thrown* herself into the power of -- of Mr. Wickham" (209). Elizabeth's use of the verb "thrown" in this instance signifies much

more than had she merely said Lydia "*has given* herself into the power of Mr. Wickham." In using the verb "has thrown," Austen is emphasizing the fact that Lydia has made this decision freely and willingly and with some speed. Darcy's response to this news is equally telling. Austen explains that "Darcy *was fixed* in astonishment." Had Austen instead merely written "Darcy was astonished," the reader would have lost the nuance that such news had a paralyzing effect on Darcy. While Darcy is pacing the room in "earnest meditation," Elizabeth realizes that "Her power was sinking; every thing *must* sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace" (210). Austen's use of the verb "sinking" is much more vivid than had she merely written "Her power was weakening." The verb "sink" also effectively represents Elizabeth's hopes for happiness with Darcy which are slowly dissipating.

Austen's spirited use of verbs can also be seen in two instances in which Austen is describing a character's happiness. Austen describes, "Smiles *decked* the face of Mrs. Bennet," (239) and later she describes that "the expression of heartfelt delight *diffused* over his [Darcy's] face" (280). What is important in these descriptions is that the "smiles" and the "expression of heartfelt delight" are the subjects performing the action in the sentence. Instead of writing "Mrs. Bennet smiled," it is the smiles that have performed the action -- that have decked the face of Mrs. Bennet. Similarly, instead of writing that "Darcy was delighted," it is the expression of delight that has diffused over Darcy's face. In assigning the action to the emotions of Mrs. Bennet and Darcy, Austen suggests that the emotions held power over the two characters. Likewise, the very verbs

themselves call attention to the specific manner in which joy was evident on both characters' faces. Smiles covered Mrs. Bennet's face, which in the context of the rest of the sentence stands in direct opposition to the rest of her family's reception of Lydia: "Her husband looked impenetrably grave; her daughters, alarmed, anxious, uneasy" (*Pride and Prejudice* 239). Similarly, delight diffuses over Darcy's face, signifying a slow but steady change, for Darcy had been expecting Elizabeth to tell him that her opinions of him were unchanged, and he was surprised to find out that she now was in love with him. The use of the verb "diffused," then, perfectly illustrates this slow revelation of the truth of Elizabeth's feelings for Darcy.

According to Campbell, vivacity depends on more than merely specific, vivid terminology. It is important to remember that Campbell also included rhetorical tropes in his discussion of vivacity. Once again, readers of Austen may be surprised at the initial realization that there is an overall lack of figurative language in her novels. Mary Lascelles explains that "Any close observer of her [Austen's] ways must have noticed that she is, so to speak, *shy* of figurative language, using it as little as possible, and least of all in her gravest passages" (111). Perhaps Lascelles terms it right; for, though Austen's style is shy on figurative language, her writing is not completely devoid of such ornamentation. Unlike Lascelles, Mark Schorer finds no fault with the amount of Austen's figurative language. Instead, he suggests that one must search for her usage of figures. "Jane Austen's metaphors are generally of the buried kind, submerged, woven deep in the ordinary, idiomatic fabric of the language" (Schorer 550). Howard Babb also

describes Austen's use of figurative language as usually being obscure. He writes, "Jane Austen's usual metaphors are such old friends that we hardly notice them" (19).

Regardless of the frequency or visibility of her figurative language, it is important to note that Austen's use of rhetorical tropes generally follows the patterns and guidelines prescribed by George Campbell in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

Austen was obviously aware of the benefits of figurative language to the vivacity of writing. In a sarcastic letter to her sister Cassandra, Austen confesses that her style might be affected by the praise of her niece Fanny Knight:

I wish the knowledge of my being exposed to her discerning Criticism, may not hurt my stile, by inducing too great a solicitude. I begin already to weigh my words and sentences more than I did, and am looking about for a sentiment, an illustration or a metaphor in every corner of the room. Could my Ideas flow as fast as the rain in the Store closet it would be charming. (*Letters* 256)

For Austen, then, illustrations and metaphors should be appropriate, meaningful, and organic. Like Campbell, Austen also despised the use of trite and hackneyed tropes. This is clear from another letter to her sister in which she mocks the use of a trite metaphor: "He. . . poor man! is so totally deaf that they say he could not hear a cannon, were it fired close to him; having no cannon at hand to make the experiment, I took it for granted, and talked to him a little with my fingers" (*Letters* 242). Austen is not completely averse to figurative language; it is the trite and overworn imagery that she attacks. As Lloyd Brown expertly concludes, "She is primarily interested in figurative

language on the basis of its expressive value, and she attacks imagery when it fails to communicate, when, in Marianne's words, it has lost all meaning and 'ingenuity'" (53).

A simple investigation into a few chapters of one of Austen's novels reveals that there are plenty of rhetorical tropes just waiting to be discovered and analyzed. During Elizabeth's awkward encounter with Darcy at his home in Pemberley, the narrator explains that "She [Elizabeth] wanted to talk, but there seemed an embargo on every subject" (194). Such a metaphor perfectly illustrates the point Austen was hoping to make -- that there was an impediment to every possible topic of conversation between Elizabeth and Darcy. It is not only the narrator in *Pride and Prejudice* who speaks metaphorically. In fact, several different characters make use of metaphors. In a half-witted moral abstraction, Mary Bennet offers advice for the family after learning of Lydia's disgrace: "We must stem the tide of malice, and pour into the wounded bosoms of each other, the balm of sisterly consolation" (219). Mr. Bennet also speaks metaphorically when one of his daughters comes to fetch tea for the supposedly inconsolable Mrs. Bennet. Regarding Mrs. Bennet's behavior, he exclaims, "This is a parade...which does one good; it gives such an elegance to misfortune!" (227). Mr. Bennet also later in the novel relates to Elizabeth a metaphor from Mr. Collins' letter about how he will soon be expecting a child: "The rest of his letter is only about his dear Charlotte's situation, and his expectation of a young olive-branch" (278). In fact, the image of the olive branch is used twice in *Pride and Prejudice*: both times by Mr. Collins. It should be noted that this is a hackneyed trope and is therefore used by the fool



in the novel. Finally, one last character in *Pride and Prejudice* who utilizes metaphor is Sir William Lucas. The narrator explains that, in his congratulations to Darcy on securing Elizabeth's hand, Sir William Lucas "complimented him [Darcy] on carrying away the brightest jewel of the country" (294).

Austen also employs the use of metonymy in *Pride and Prejudice* in the hyperbolic exasperations of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Upon hearing a rumor that Elizabeth was soon to marry her own distinguished nephew Darcy, Lady Catherine exclaims, "Heaven and earth! -- of what are you thinking? Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?" (273). Lady Catherine's substitution here of "shades" (woods) to signify the entire estate of Pemberley calls attention to the true object of concern: the honor and reputation of her nephew and his estate. Austen also utilizes another rhetorical trope discussed by Campbell -- that of personification. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth's heart is said to whisper (248) and in *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine's "spirits danced within her, as she danced in her chair all the way home" (57). Instances of metaphor, metonymy, and personification in her novels lend to the vivacity of Austen's style. Her rhetorical tropes create resemblance between the figure and experience, and the presence of the figure effectively engages the imagination and emphasizes the sentiment that Austen wished to put forth in her audience's minds. In this way, then, Austen's understanding and employment of rhetorical tropes directly corresponds to Campbell's conception of vivacity as a quality of style.

Like Campbell, Austen also valued the quality of concision in speech and writing. In fact, Austen is known for her epigrams and pithy statements. Babb terms these statements "generalizations" and discusses the integral role they play in Austen's style. What Babb terms "generalizations," Campbell calls "maxims of common life" (337). Campbell explains that "the combination of the figurative with the concise is very common" (337); and it is the maxim that utilizes both figurative and concise language that Campbell suggests offers the most power, liveliness, and energy. Austen's novels are brimming with such aphoristic maxims. She offers readers such pithy sayings as "There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort" (*Emma*) and "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of choice" (*Pride and Prejudice*) and "What is right to be done cannot be done too soon" (*Emma*). Austen valued concision in her writing, and she was thus able to say a lot in very few words. Maggie Lane extols Austen for her concise writing style and suggests that it is largely due to this quality that she is still so valued today in both the general readership and the academic world. Lane writes, "While other novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may seem longwinded to the modern mind, their treasures having to be hunted down among the verbiage, Jane Austen's sentences spring as freshly and succinctly off the page for us as they did for their first delighted readers."

Lane's analysis that Austen's sentences "spring" off the page perfectly captures that quality of energy and vivacity in her style that is created by the arrangement of her words. The arrangement of words was, of course, important to Campbell's conception of

vivacity; and it is clear that Austen was also aware of how the structure of her words could focus a reader's attention on the most salient part of her sentiment. In section two of Book III, Campbell discusses the benefits of what he terms an "inverted" expression. He posits that vivacity is attained when an author manipulates the normal grammatical order of a sentence -- when the author intentionally disregards the "rigid rules of grammar" for more dramatic effect (359). Once again, Campbell suggests that such a reordering of sentences allows an author to focus the reader's attention on a particular sentiment; it allows the author to focus the reader's attention on a salient point. John Hale, a noted Milton and Austen scholar, has also commented on the energy created when an author disregards normal syntactical patterns. Hale explains, "Syntax establishes a rhythm, then continually modifi[es] it so as to energize the evolving meaning" (80). With regard to Austen, Hale argues that syntax is "often this author's best marker, not only of a character's individuality but of the currents and changes of feeling within each character" (79). One of Austen's characters who often utilizes inverted syntax is Darcy. In fact, it is interesting that many of the instances of inverted syntax in his speech occur during the two proposal scenes. In his first proposal to Elizabeth, Darcy confesses, "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (*Pride and Prejudice* 145). The inversion in expression here is very telling. Had Austen followed the typical grammatical rules in this instance and written instead, "I have struggled in vain," the effect -- the energy -- would have been greatly reduced. The disruption of the normal

sentence structure mirrors the agitation of feelings with which Darcy is struggling. It is interesting in this instance, also, that by shifting the adverb "in vain" to the beginning of the sentence, Austen is focusing the reader's attention on this first word. Perhaps Austen intended a slight play on words here since not only is Darcy's first proposal made "in vain" (Elizabeth rejects him), but it is vanity itself that is the reason for his unsuccessfulness. Darcy's tendency to resort to syntactical inversions also reasserts itself following his second, successful proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. After Elizabeth has accepted his proposal, Darcy reflects on his former bad behavior and Elizabeth's admonitions. He says, "Your reproof, so well applied, I shall never forget. . . The turn of your countenance I shall never forget" (281). Further reflecting on how Elizabeth had been instrumental in changing his behavior, he says, "Such I was [proud and selfish], from eight to eight and twenty; and such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! What do I not owe you!" (282). Campbell argues that when analyzing syntax, "every thing is best judged by comparison" (359). Thus, if a comparison is made of Darcy's statements here to what they might have been had they followed normal grammatical patterns, it is clear that the inverted syntax lends much to the style in these passages. Had Darcy said, "I shall never forget your reproof. . . I shall never forget the turn of your countenance," the emphasis in such a sentence structure would have been on the verb "forget," and, because the emphasis is placed on the verb in such an instance, the reader takes little heed of what it is that Darcy will never forget. In using the inverted syntax, then, and by calling attention to his past remembrances

(Elizabeth's reproof and the turn of her countenance), the reader is made to feel, not merely to believe, the sincerity of Darcy's emotions. The inversions in syntax in these instances also cause the language to resemble effectively Darcy's emotional state. The reader is supplied with a sense of the fervor of Darcy's appreciation for the role Elizabeth has played in his transformation.

Austen uses the inverted syntax not only to illustrate and illumine the inner workings of her characters' feelings, but she also utilizes it as a way in which to convey humor. Often, Austen's humor is located in the disparity between expectations and reality or between things as they should be (convention) and things as they really are. To give one example of an instance from *Pride and Prejudice* that illustrates not only the inverted syntax but this disjunction in thought, one could note the following: "Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters" (295). First of all, it will be noted that had Austen followed the natural grammatical order, the effect -- the sarcastic humor -- of this sentiment would have been lost: "Mrs. Bennet was happy for all her maternal feelings on the day in which she got rid of her two most deserving daughters." Phrased in such a way, this sentiment loses its sting, its vigor, its strength. In utilizing an inverted syntax in this instance, Austen effectively directs the reader's attention to the first word of the sentence and focuses on the emotional state of Mrs. Bennet: happiness. The humor of this passage lies in the apparent disjunction between Mrs. Bennet's feelings of happiness, expressed at the beginning of the sentence, and the reason for her happiness -- that she has "got rid" of

two of her daughters. The reader is so focused on Mrs. Bennet's happiness at the beginning of the sentence that the latter half of the sentence takes the reader completely by surprise, for happiness would not seem to be a normal response to a mother's loss (in this case, by marriage) of two daughters. However, perhaps in focusing on Mrs. Bennet's happiness, Austen finds the perfect denouement for her novel. For, marrying off her daughters has been Mrs. Bennet's design since Mr. Bingley first moved into the neighborhood.

In discussing sentence structures that lend to vivacity, Campbell suggests that not only inversions in expression, but also antithesis play an important role. Campbell comments at length on the ways in which the contrasts inherent in antithesis prove to augment the natural resemblance of language to life. He writes, "The effect produced by the corresponding members in such a sentence is like that produced in a picture where the figures of the group are not all on a side, with their faces turned the same way, but are made to contrast each other by the several positions" (372). From this illustration, it is clear that Campbell believed that the "opposed members" in antithesis imbue language with a realistic quality. Antithesis is perhaps one of Austen's most frequently used structures, and it is clear that this understanding of the truths of reality helped shape her use of antithesis. As mentioned earlier, Austen creates humor by emphasizing the disparity between expectations and reality. This is a theme that is common to many of her uses of antithesis as well. There is one very apt example in *Pride and Prejudice* of Austen's reliance on antithesis to reveal the disparity between expectations and reality:

Upon the whole, therefore, she found, what has been sometimes found before, that an event to which she had looked forward with impatient desire, did not in taking place, bring all the satisfaction she had promised herself. It was consequently necessary to name some other period for the commencement of actual felicity; to have some other point on which her wishes and hopes might be fixed, and *by again enjoying the pleasure of anticipation, console herself for the present, and prepare for another disappointment* [emphasis added]. (181)

The opposition in the last part of this quote contrasts the enjoyment of anticipation with the preparation of what must surely turn out to be a disappointment. Elizabeth's consolation through anticipation in this situation would be near impossible with the simultaneous preparation for disappointment. This reflection on the reality of life and the patterns of human behavior accurately represents many of Austen's other uses of antithesis, as well. In several instances in *Pride and Prejudice*, the reader is alerted to Elizabeth's keen awareness of the inherent ironies of life. These ironies present themselves in the form of antithesis. Readers are told that "more than commonly anxious to please, she [Elizabeth] naturally suspected that every power of pleasing would fail her" (197). In another instance, the reader is introduced to Elizabeth's true feelings at a very ironic time: "She was convinced that she could have been happy with him [Darcy]; when it was no longer likely they should meet" (236). The two halves of this sentence confront readers with the expectations or feelings of a character and the rather harsh reality to which those expectations and feelings must be submitted. This same sentiment is echoed

in *Northanger Abbey*, as well. Austen writes, "Catherine's expectations of pleasure from her visit in Milsomstreet were so very high, that disappointment was inevitable" (93).

Austen's style -- her conception of "the best-chosen language" -- very closely echoes George Campbell's conception of style in that both authors believed that language, when properly and expertly used, could produce a certain vivacity of thought that resembled actual sense experience. Certainly, Austen's intentional use of abstract nouns, rhetorical tropes, and antithesis lend to her concise writing style the ability to communicate effectively the inner workings of the minds and hearts of her characters. The structure and style of the dialogue that she creates for each character represent that specific character's feelings or personalities. Thus, readers can easily recognize Mr. Darcy's various states of agitation, distress, and happiness through the particular figures and syntax Austen uses to describe him and his speech. Similarly, readers can recognize the foolish characters in the novels through their use of trite, hackneyed figures or expressions (Mr. Collins and John Thorpe, for instance). Language for Austen serves a dual purpose: it reveals the taste levels of characters and it is the method by which she resembles reality. Austen's "best-chosen language" relates to Campbell's understanding of vivacity in that her word-choice invigorates her sentiments, gives pleasure to readers, impresses thoughts on the memory, and is relished for its linguistic perfection.



CHAPTER VI  
PROBABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, NATURAL CHARACTERS, AND  
CONTEMPORARY CONVERSATION

In the final portion of her extended defense of the novel in *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen makes one final attempt to demonstrate the superiority of novels to other forms of literature. Having argued that novels display the "greatest powers of the human mind" in the way that they convey "the most thorough knowledge of human nature" and the "liveliest effusions of wit and humour" in the "best chosen language," Austen moves to a final point of comparison between novels and a much more respected, polite form of literature of the time -- the periodical journal. In her defense of the novel, Austen imagines a hypothetical situation in which a young woman might be ashamed to admit to others that she is absorbed in the act of reading a novel. Austen contrasts this situation by suggesting that, were the same young lady to be reading a volume of the *Spectator*, "how proudly would she have produced the book, and told its name" (*Northanger Abbey* 24). The *Spectator* was one of three publications produced by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, two Oxford-educated poets and playwrights. The daily papers included discussion of various subjects ranging from dress, literature, theater, opera, and morality; and the discussions were posed in the form of debates between fictional characters. These papers were widely popular, and it was through such publications that the values of "polite" society were effectively promulgated.

In contrasting novels with the more polite form of literature (the *Spectator*), Austen does not end her comparison with an examination of the contrast between the various social responses attendant in the reading of novels versus the reading of periodical journals like the *Spectator*. She continues in her comparison by contrasting the "matter" and "manner" of the popular *Spectator* to the desirable characteristics of novels that she has already expounded upon at length:

Chances must be against her being occupied by any part of that voluminous publication [the *Spectator*], of which either the matter or manner would not disgust a young person of taste: the substance of its papers so often consisting in the statement of improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and topics of conversation, which no longer concern any one living; and their language, too, frequently so coarse as to give no very favourable idea of the age that could endure it. (*Northanger Abbey* 24)

While novels are engrossing and written in a tasteful manner, Austen argues that the writing style of the popular *Spectator* would disgust a person of taste. By suggesting that the *Spectator* displays improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and topics of conversation, which no longer concern anyone living, it is clear that Austen believed that novels were characterized by the exact opposite: probable circumstances, natural characters, and contemporary topics of conversation. For Austen, these three characteristics were marks of tasteful literature. It was ironic for Austen, then, that novels, which she believed displayed all the marks of tasteful literature, should be so

denigrated by society that young ladies would be ashamed to admit that they were reading them. Austen suggests the shame should come from finding social approbation in choosing for reading material the male-authored periodical journals that were characterized by gross language, improbabilities, and antiquated topics of conversation. According to Jo Alyson Parker, Austen here "questions the reputed ease and familiarity of Addison's and Steele's styles and thus both puts forward a female-based canon and denigrates the supposed superiority of the male-based one" (49).

Austen's enumeration here of the negative attributes of the *Spectator* -- and, thus, by inference, her argument for the positive qualities of novels -- provides evidence of her belief that in order for literature to be tasteful and engrossing, it must be characterized by certain elements -- namely, probable circumstances, natural characters, contemporary topics of conversation, and refined language. Her understanding of the requirements of good literature, here, echoes George Campbell's assertions as to the ways in which communication can operate on the human passions.

In chapter seven of Book II of his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell begins a discussion of "the consideration which the speaker ought to have of the hearers, as men in general" (71). Campbell's discussion here of the audience focuses on the various faculties of the human mind that an effective orator must attend to. "In order to persuade me to any particular action or conduct," says Campbell, "it is not therefore the understanding alone that is here concerned. If the orator would prove successful, it is necessary that he engage in his service all these different powers of the mind, the

imagination, the memory, and the passions" (72). Campbell goes on to discuss how the audience should be understood in relation to each of these faculties of the mind -- the understanding, the imagination, the memory, and the passions. When he arrives at the discussion of "men as considered as endowed with passions," Campbell simply concludes that "when persuasion is the end, passion also must be engaged" (77). He, therefore, focuses his attention on how it is that passions can be aroused and awakened in the audience.

Following Hume's theories, Campbell maintains that, in order for emotion to be aroused in an audience, the ideas communicated must be "lively" and must resemble actual sense as closely as possible. Using a hierarchical classification system, Campbell argues that sense is the most forceful creator of passion. He reasons, "The sight of danger, immediate or near, instantly rouseth fear; the feeling of an injury, and the presence of the injurer, in a moment kindle anger" (81). While sense has an immediate effect upon the emotions and passions, Campbell explains that "next to the influence of sense is that of memory, the effect of which upon passion, if the fact be recent, and remembered distinctly and circumstantially, is almost equal [to sense]" (81). Besides sense and memory, Campbell relates one final faculty that is instrumental in arousing the passions: "Next to the influence of memory is that of imagination; by which is here solely meant the faculty of apprehending what is neither perceived by the senses, nor remembered" (81). Campbell explains that the orator is chiefly concerned with communication that works in this third way -- communication that evokes a passionate

response by working in tandem with the audience's imagination. Campbell also suggests that there are certain "circumstances" which will help the orator to make the ideas he summons up in the audience's imaginations more closely resemble sense and memory impressions. He lists seven circumstances that are "chiefly instrumental in operating on the passions": probability, plausibility, importance, time, place, relationship, and consequences. These seven circumstances are "situational features that intensify belief [and] that increase the audience's attention or sense of urgency" (Walzer 81). Campbell's circumstances help orators to create passionate response in the audience and to increase the audience's belief in the reality of a situation.

The first circumstance which Campbell discusses is that of probability. Very briefly, he explains that "probability results from evidence, and begets belief" (81). Campbell contrasts the highest form of belief -- certainty -- to the lower form -- probability. He uses a metaphor to describe the two, calling them a "stronger light" and a "weaker light," respectively, and suggesting that a speaker who relies on probability, "in lieu of sunshine," gives his audience "twilight" (82). After this very brief description of probability, Campbell immediately moves into a discussion of his second circumstance, plausibility. He explains that plausibility is completely distinct from probability as it "ariseth chiefly from the consistency of the narration" -- from narration that is "natural and feasible" (82). Campbell explains that the French understand this by their term *vraisemblance*, and he makes an interesting point that English critics commonly confuse plausibility with probability and often mistakenly call it by the latter term. He also points

out that plausibility is the very nature of all fiction. He says, "We know that fiction may be as plausible as truth. A narration may be possessed of this quality to the highest degree, which we not only regard as improbable, but know to be false" (82). Campbell's point here is that fiction is by nature improbable because it does not deal in truth. Probability is the realm of the historian, not the poet or novelist. But, for however improbable fiction is, it can be, nevertheless, imbued with plausibility -- that is, with natural and consistent narration that is true to experience and true to life.

To illustrate the differences between probability and plausibility, Campbell offers examples from the *Iliad*. Campbell suggests that, when readers are confronted with a "haughty, choleric, and vindictive hero [Achilles]" who, because he has been offended by Agamemnon, withdraws his troops and watches as his countrymen die, such a situation does not run contrary to a reader's own experience of how someone invested with these qualities would act. Therefore, such a situation is probable because it aligns itself with a reader's experience of the real world. However, as Campbell writes, "That there were such personages, of such characters, in such circumstances, is merely possible. Here there is total want of evidence. Experience is silent" (84). Campbell explains here that it is merely plausible that such men as Achilles and Agamemnon lived and acted as described by Homer. Such a task would be left to the historian, not to the poet. "His object we know is not truth but likelihood" (Campbell 84).

In concluding his discussion on probability and plausibility, Campbell offers an allegory to illustrate the similarities and differences between the two. Campbell presents

probability and plausibility as sisters, who though they have different mothers, both claim Experience as their father. Probability's mother is Reason and Plausibility's mother is Fancy. Similarly, the favorite friend of probability is Truth, but Campbell explains that it is difficult to say whether the favorite friend of plausibility is Truth or Fiction (thus emphasizing that plausibility deals in verisimilitude to actual life experience). Arthur Walzer makes a nice distinction between the two sisters, as well: "Plausible argument is, almost by definition, what experience has taught us to expect; what is probable or even certain can run counter to our expectations or experience" (Walzer 83).

Campbell says that, of the seven circumstances that aid an orator in operating on the passions, probability and plausibility are the two "principal" and "indispensable" circumstances. While the other circumstances may not be useful in every address, Campbell says that, nonetheless, it is important to describe them, as well. The third circumstance Campbell addresses, then, is that of "importance." The importance of a subject can be emphasized in many ways. Campbell suggests that a subject derives importance from its own nature, from those concerned in it, and from its consequences. For instance, the importance of an action can be emphasized by stressing the number of people an action would affect. All in all, Campbell views "importance" as the ability of an orator to "fix[] attention more closely" and to "add brightness and strength to the ideas" (86).

The fourth circumstance that Campbell discusses is "proximity of time." Campbell writes,

Every one knows that any melancholy incident is the more affecting that it is recent. Hence it is become common with story-tellers, that they may make a deeper impression on the hearers, to introduce remarks like these; that the tale which they relate is not old, that it happened by lately, or in their own time, or that they are yet living who had a part in it, or were witnesses of it" (87).

Campbell also suggests that the same application can be made to the future as to the past. "An event that will probably soon happen hath greater influence upon us than what will probably happen a long time hence" (87).

The fifth circumstance that Campbell enumerates is "connexion of place." By this, Campbell explains that people are likely to be more affected by things that concern their geographical location. "Who is not more curious to know the notable transactions which have happened in his own country from the earliest antiquity, than to be acquainted with those which have happened in the remotest regions of the globe, during the century wherein he lives?" (88). Similarly, Campbell argues, the evidence of the influence of this circumstance in operating on our passions is witnessed daily. "With how much indifference, at least with how slight and transient emotion, do we read in newspapers the accounts of the most deplorable accidents in countries distant and unknown! How much, on the contrary, are we alarmed and agitated on being informed that any such accident hath happened in our neighborhood" (88).

Campbell's sixth circumstance is one that he says is greater than either connection of place or proximity of time: "relation to the persons concerned." More so than any



connection to place that an audience may feel, a connection to people will create a much stronger sense of passion in an audience since passions are, by nature, directed to and by people. Campbell, explains, "It is the persons, not the place, that are the immediate objects of the passions love or hatred, pity or anger, envy or contempt" (89). Campbell concludes by enumerating the various kinds of personal relations among people: "They are consanguinity, affinity, friendship, acquaintance, being fellow-citizens, countrymen, of the same surname, language, religion, occupation, and innumerable others" (89).

The seventh and final circumstance that Campbell lists as having an effect on the audience's passions is that of "interest in the consequences." Campbell argues that of all the "connective circumstances" -- those that connect the audience to the subject -- it is the interest of the consequences that has the most power to convey passion.

It is clear that Jane Austen must have been familiar with the seven circumstances for creating passionate response that Campbell articulated. In her defense of the novel, she focuses the reader's attention on the "improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and topics of conversation, which no longer concern any one living" that can be found in the *Spectator*, and she infers that the contrasting qualities are characteristic of novels (24). It is striking how Austen's description of the qualities of good and bad writing echo Campbell's terminology. Her term "improbable circumstances" relates to Campbell's idea of probability; her "unnatural characters" relates to Campbell's description of plausibility; and her "topics of conversation, which no longer concern any one living" directly correlate with Campbell's "proximity of time" and "relation to persons concerned."

It is not merely through her language that the connection to Campbell's circumstances can be seen. In one very telling passage from *Northanger Abbey*, it is clear that Austen was fully aware of how the circumstances create passionate response. Catherine, full of the fluff from all of the gothic novels she has been reading, deduces from Eleanor's description of her mother's death that something malicious -- some evil-doing -- must have been at work. The fact that Eleanor and Henry's mother died so suddenly, with neither of her children at home, coupled with the inference that Catherine has made that General Tilney was not very fond of his wife, leads Catherine to the "probability that Mrs. Tilney yet lived, shut up for causes unknown, and receiving from the pitiless hands of her husband a nightly supply of coarse food" (138). As such, Catherine becomes very anxious to explore Northanger Abbey, especially the room of the late Mrs. Tilney. After venturing out and sneaking into Mrs. Tilney's room, Catherine makes the shocking discovery that there was nothing mysterious about it at all. As she is making her way back to her room, Henry Tilney intercepts her in the hallway and he deduces from her hesitant explanation what she was doing in his mother's room. Henry says, "And from these circumstances. . . you infer perhaps the probability of some negligence—some"—(involuntarily she shook her head)—"or it may be—of something still less pardonable" (144). After explaining the veracity of the details of his mother's death (she had suffered from a seizure and Henry had been at home to witness the many doctors who had attended to his mother during her last days), Henry chastises Catherine for her foolish conclusions:

If I understand you rightly, you had formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to—Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting? (*Northanger Abbey* 145)

Henry's rebuke is set within a frame in which he appeals to her as a parent would a child; he both begins and ends his discourse by directing his admonishments to "Dear/Dearest Miss Morland." After his initial address, he asks Catherine an important rhetorical question: "What have you been judging from?" Probability serves as an important tool for Jane Austen in that it allows for her characters to judge the behaviors and actions of others. The next few sentences of Henry's rebuke illustrate his use of Campbell's circumstances in order to elicit a certain emotional response (shame) in Catherine. He asks her to "remember the country and the age in which we live" (145). In this statement, Henry is very clearly alluding to their connection of place (England) and the proximity of time (the age in which we live). He goes on to say, "Remember that we are English, that

we are Christians" (145). His repetition of the pronoun "we" here is linking Catherine to himself as he reminds her of the ways in which they are connected and related (Campbell's term for this being "relation to persons concerned"). Henry tells Catherine to "consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you" (145). This tripartite command involves Henry's appealing to Catherine's reason, the probable, and her own experience. He then continues to ask a series of rhetorical questions aimed at rooting out Catherine's improbable suppositions, calling attention to the various things in their experience that would supply the evidence to prove her assertions to be false. The entire tone of Henry's rebuke is one of surprise, shock, and superiority. The many rhetorical questions renders his address very passionate and eloquent. And, indeed, the very passions that Henry means to stir up in Catherine are the ones that she is left to feel: "They reached the end of the gallery; and with tears of shame she ran off to her own room" (146).

While this passage demonstrates well the fact that Jane Austen was aware of the integral role that all of the circumstances played in the arousal of certain passions in an audience, Austen usually focused on the circumstance of probability. In the three Austen novels that this study considers, the words "probability," "probable," and "probably" occur 109 times. To give some comparisons of other important terms in the three Austen novels, the word "reason" (and all of its derivatives) appears 152 times; the word "sense" occurs 105 times. However, in using the term "probability," Austen makes the same mistake that Campbell suggests many English critics make by conflating the use of

"probability" with "plausibility." Austen understands probability as versimilitude between fiction and reality; her probability is a fidelity to realism.

For Austen, probability was the hallmark of good writing. In a letter to her niece, Anna, Austen reminds her of the importance of probability in fiction. She advises Anna that her setting should not shift to Ireland -- a place with which her niece was unfamiliar -- for "You will be in danger of giving false representations" (Austen, *Letters*). She also warns Anna about other things that will "appear unnatural in a book" such as a character walking out just after having a broken arm set (*Letters*). Anna's writings were not the only ones in which Austen found fault with the probability of events. In another letter, this one to her sister Cassandra, Austen criticizes Mary Brunton's novel *Self-Control* for its lack of adherence to the quality she terms probability: "I am looking over *Self-Control* again, and my opinion is confirmed of its being an excellently-meant, elegantly-written work, without anything of nature or probability in it. I declare I do not know whether Laura's passage down the American river is not the most natural, possible, everyday thing she ever does" (*Letters*). Although Austen's use of the term "probability" in these instances is more closely aligned with Campbell's term "plausibility," it is clear that Austen understood the importance for an author of fiction to create a natural and consistent narrative that is true to experience and true to life.

Austen relied on probability for her own plots, and she often called attention to probability as one of her authorial techniques. In two separate passages from two different novels, Austen reasons with the reader regarding the probability -- the

plausibility -- of the action in her novels. Toward the end of *Northanger Abbey*, Austen describes Henry and Catherine as anxiously waiting and hoping for General Tilney (Henry's father) to give his consent for their marriage. Austen writes,

The anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity. The means by which their early marriage was effected can be the only doubt: what probable circumstance could work upon a temper like the general's? (*Northanger Abbey*185)

Austen jokes that, because readers can see that they are coming to the end of the book, they must know that a happy ending is near. Thus, she reasons, the only obstacle left to surmount (for herself as an author and for the happy couple) is to find the "probable circumstance" that would cause General Tilney to give Henry and Catherine his blessing. Austen works out this situation with a very plausible circumstance -- "the marriage of his daughter [Henry's sister] with a man of fortune and consequence, which took place in the course of the summer—an accession of dignity that threw him into a fit of good humour, from which he did not recover till after Eleanor had obtained his forgiveness of Henry, and his permission for him "to be a fool if he liked it!" (185). The other instance in which readers can see Austen working out the plausibility of her plots is in a passage

from *Pride and Prejudice*. In this passage, the narrator is examining the likelihood of gratitude and esteem serving as the foundation for love:

If gratitude and esteem are good foundations of affection, Elizabeth's change of sentiment will be neither improbable nor faulty. But if otherwise—if regard springing from such sources is unreasonable or unnatural, in comparison of what is so often described as arising on a first interview with its object, and even before two words have been exchanged, nothing can be said in her defence, except that she had given somewhat of a trial to the latter method in her partiality for Wickham, and that its ill success might, perhaps, authorise her to seek the other less interesting mode of attachment. (*Pride and Prejudice* 211)

Austen is here discussing the plausibility of the behavior of her characters. She suggests that readers, if they find it true to their experience that gratitude and esteem can serve as the foundations for affection, will not find Elizabeth's change of opinions about Darcy improbable. However, Austen sarcastically suggests that if the reader should find such affection improbable in comparison to the more natural, conventional foundation for love (love at first sight, "before two words have been exchanged"), then the only defense that she can give is that Elizabeth had tried the latter method and it had failed terribly.

Austen combines humor with probability again in *Northanger Abbey* when she mocks the absurd characters and events in gothic romance novels. Austen pits the conventions of gothic romance novels against her own more realistic novel:

He [Henry Tilney] looked as handsome and as lively as ever, and was talking with interest to a fashionable and pleasing-looking young woman, who leant on his arm, and whom Catherine immediately guessed to be his sister; thus unthinkingly throwing away a fair opportunity of considering him lost to her forever, by being married already. But guided only by what was simple and probable, it had never entered her head that Mr. Tilney could be married; he had not behaved, he had not talked, like the married men to whom she had been used; he had never mentioned a wife, and he had acknowledged a sister. From these circumstances sprang the instant conclusion of his sister's now being by his side; and therefore, instead of turning of a deathlike paleness and falling in a fit on Mrs. Allen's bosom, Catherine sat erect, in the perfect use of her senses, and with cheeks only a little redder than usual. (*Northanger Abbey* 36)

Here Austen contrasts the behavior of her own character Catherine to the behavior of other heroines in gothic romance novels. Her own heroine, in this instance, relied only on what was "simple and probable" in forming her conclusions about the woman who was walking with Henry. The reader is given an inside view of the ways in which Catherine logically works out this mystery. Guided by the probable, she relies on the evidence of Henry's behavior, his language, and her own experience to come to the conclusion that the woman with whom he was walking must be his sister. Thus, Austen suggests that, unlike the heroines of other gothic novels who would be guided by



improbable suppositions and who would revert immediately to emotional theatrics, Catherine remains "in the perfect use of her senses" (36).

Catherine is not always such a master of her senses, however; and throughout the course of *Northanger Abbey*, the reader witnesses Catherine's transformation from a young, naive girl who understands life in terms of the improbabilities of the gothic romance novels, to an intelligent heroine who has been cured of her naiveté and introduced to the real evils in life. The definition of the probable changes for Catherine during the course of the novel because she experiences a major paradigm shift. Before her transformation, Catherine makes her conclusions based on the probabilities typical of gothic romance novels. Thus, for instance, she can reach the conclusion that Mrs. Tilney has been locked up in a remote part of Northanger Abbey. "The suddenness of her [Mrs. Tilney's] reputed illness; the absence of her daughter, and probably of her other children, at the time -- all favoured the supposition of her imprisonment" (138). These "clues," however, do not naturally lead to such a conclusion. Catherine's mind has been so overcome by the romance novels with which she was engrossed that the probabilities she discusses are wholly improbable. However, during the climax of the novel, when Catherine is spending her last night in Northanger Abbey before being forced by General Tilney to leave the house, the narrator tells readers that

Heavily passed the night. Sleep, or repose that deserved the name of sleep, was out of the question. That room, in which her disturbed imagination had tormented her on her first arrival, was again the scene of agitated spirits and unquiet

slumbers. Yet how different now the source of her inquietude from what it had been then—how mournfully superior in reality and substance! Her anxiety had foundation in fact, her fears in probability; and with a mind so occupied in the contemplation of actual and natural evil, the solitude of her situation, the darkness of her chamber, the antiquity of the building, were felt and considered without the smallest emotion; and though the wind was high, and often produced strange and sudden noises throughout the house, she heard it all as she lay awake, hour after hour, without curiosity or terror. (*Northanger Abbey* 167)

This scene -- Catherine's last night in Northanger Abbey -- stands in stark contrast to her first night in the abbey. On her first night in the castle, Catherine had been full of fear and was not able to sleep; she had been overcome by the gothic characteristics of the environment: violent gusts of wind, darkness, the knowledge of a curious black cabinet in her room, and footsteps in the hall. However, the passage describing her last night at Northanger Abbey characterizes Catherine as being much more grounded in reality. Her fears are no longer founded upon the improbable circumstances typical of gothic romance novels, rather her fears are grounded in the reality of actual evil -- of General Tilney's unacceptable and unexplainable behavior in so rudely turning her out of his house. This passage is important because it illustrates another key use of the circumstances as related by George Campbell in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. While the main emphasis is given to how the seven circumstances work to create passionate response, Campbell also discusses how the circumstances can be used in an inverse way to calm a passion. Campbell says

that there are two ways to calm an unfavorable passion: by "annihilating, or at least diminishing the object which raised it" or by "exciting some other passion which may counterwork it" (93). Catherine's transformation here from her first night at Northanger to her last night showcases how such an unfavorable passion can be calmed. By coming to the realization of her in treating gothic novels and reality as one in the same and by recognizing the improbabilities of fictional evils, Catherine is able to calm her unfavorable passions of fear and alarm; she is able to spend her last night in the same circumstances as her first night but "without the smallest emotion" -- "without curiosity or terror" (167). As Douglas Lane Patey has concluded, "If literary works are to teach rather than corrupt, they must help to found in readers rational expectations, those founded on 'prognostics' from the probabilities of real experience rather than of romance" (217). This is no less true for Catherine as a reader of gothic romance novels than it is for the reader of *Northanger Abbey* who must use the probabilities and plausibilities in the novel to deduce the moral lesson inherent in the work.

Probabilities serve not only as the basis for the structures of her own novels and as the means by which her characters can experience transformation, but probability allows characters to form judgments about other characters. In *Pride and Prejudice*, after Elizabeth has read Darcy's "faithful narrative" of his true dealings with Wickham, the narrator tells us that "She put down the letter, weighed every circumstance with what she meant to be impartiality -- deliberated on the probability of each statement" (157). In weighing the probability of each of Darcy's statements, Elizabeth begins to realize that

she had been mistaken as to Wickham's character. In considering her experience and knowledge of Wickham and his behavior, Elizabeth begins to realize that "she had never heard of him before his entrance into the -----shire Militia" (157). She therefore did not have a very strong relation to Wickham (one of Campbell's circumstances) and did not know him as well as she had thought. She also begins to reflect upon the "inconsistency of his professions with his conduct" (158). Consistency is the mark of plausibility, and it becomes evident to Elizabeth that the truth of Wickham's assertions was largely implausible and that the greater probabilities lay in Darcy's "faithful narrative." Stuart Tave argues that "It demands a greatness to determine a probability in spite of oneself" (55). By this, he means that Elizabeth rather magnanimously allows her reason and her reliance on the probabilities of the situation to reign supreme, even when it means that "she must bring herself to a humiliating self-knowledge in the discovery of how her self-flattery has meanly distorted her sight" (Tave 55). Thus, in forming her final judgments of Darcy's and Wickham's true characters, Elizabeth must rely largely on the probabilities of the situation.

Although Austen focused mainly on the circumstances of probability and plausibility in her novels, it is clear that she was fully aware of the importance of two of the other circumstances --"proximity of time" and "relation to the persons concerned," especially as they related to procuring the pleasure and passions of her audience. In her defense of the novel, Austen emphasizes the importance of literature that discusses topics of conversation that are current and of interest to the people of that time. She

accomplishes this by contrasting this characteristic of good writing to the literature that can be found in the *Spectator* which discusses "topics of conversation, which no longer concern any one living" (*Northanger Abbey* 24). As has been mentioned earlier in this study, *Northanger Abbey* had a troubled publication history. The publisher Richard Crosby and Co. purchased the novel from Austen in 1803. When, six years later, her beloved novel had not yet been published, Austen sent a letter to the publisher under the pseudonym of Mrs. Ashton Dennis (M.A.D.) suggesting that the only circumstance which she could conceive of that would explain why her novel had not been published was that it had been lost. She sought to rectify the situation by offering to send a new copy of the text. However, she explained that was this not the case, she would seek to have her work published elsewhere. The publisher wrote back very promptly, explaining that no time frame of publication had been originally stipulated; and the publisher offered the manuscript back to Austen for the price that was paid to her for it: 10£. Austen purchased her work back from the publisher, but it was not until after her death that *Northanger Abbey* was published; she was never able to see her novel in print. Before she died, however, Austen penned an "advertisement" to the novel, and it very clearly illustrates her understanding of the effects of the circumstances upon the passions of her readers. The advertisement reads,

This little work was finished in the year 1803, and intended for immediate publication. It was disposed of to a bookseller, it was even advertised, and why the business proceeded no farther, the author has never been able to learn. That

any bookseller should think it worth-while to purchase what he did not think it worth-while to publish seems extraordinary. But with this, neither the author nor the public have any other concern than as some observation is necessary upon those parts of the work which thirteen years have made comparatively obsolete. The public are entreated to bear in mind that thirteen years have passed since it was finished, many more since it was begun, and that during that period, places, manners, books, and opinions have undergone considerable changes. (*Northanger Abbey* 3)

In relating, very briefly, the publication history of her "little work," Austen evinces her beliefs as to the importance of the "proximity of time" to the novelist. She did not want her critics to say of her that her topics of conversation were no longer relevant. She, in fact, knew that, as a novelist, her abilities to influence the passions and affectations of her readers, relied heavily on her ability to relate to them the circumstance of the proximity of time -- that the subjects of her novels were relevant to their lives. It is ironic that Austen should have been so concerned with outdated "places, manners, books, and opinions" when it is those very antiquated subjects that lend to the nostalgic quality of her works that so many of her readers still enjoy over 200 years later. Perhaps the ability of Jane Austen to create passionate response in her readers relies on circumstances other than the proximity of time. Her ability to affect readers and inspire belief rests in her reliance on plausible, consistent narration; on the moral weight and importance of her

universal subjects of human nature; and in the interest readers share of the consequences of the behavior of her true-to-life characters.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION: JANE AUSTEN, THE INCANDESCENT AUTHOR

Toward the end of chapter three of *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf describes Shakespeare as a mind that was "incandescent" and "unimpeded." She attributes his authorial success, his incandescence as a writer, to the fact that his "grudges and spites and antipathies are hidden from us" and to the fact that "all desire to protest, to preach, to proclaim an injury, to pay off a score, to make the world the witness of some hardship or grievance was fired out of him and consumed." Woolf then begins chapter four of this same work by arguing that it would have been impossible to find any woman writer during the sixteenth century who exhibited this same incandescent writing style due to woman's low status in society. As evidence of her point, Woolf cites the seventeenth-century poet Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, and explains how her poetry lacks the incandescence of Shakespeare's work. Woolf explains that Lady Winchilsea's poetry is "harassed and distracted with hates and grievances" and she goes on to write that Finch's poetry failed because Finch viewed the human race as being split up into two parties. Woolf argues that, for Finch, "Men are the 'opposing faction'; men are hated and feared, because they have the power to bar her way to what she wants to do -- which is to write."

Following her discussion of Anne Finch and a few other early female poets, Woolf proceeds to the nineteenth-century writers and discusses how women novelists



generally failed to attain the incandescence of Shakespeare. She takes as her primary example Charlotte Bronte and references a passage from her novel *Jane Eyre*. The passage from *Jane Eyre* that Woolf discusses is one in which Bronte withdraws from the narrative of the story to make an authorial intrusion in which she protests the position of women. Bronte leaves the voice of her narrator behind and inserts her own voice into the course of her story to argue that

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (Bronte, *Jane Eyre* 109)

Woolf suggests that this passage evinces the reason that Charlotte Bronte could not be considered an incandescent and unimpeded author. "Anger was tampering with the integrity of Charlotte Bronte the novelist," says Woolf. "She left her story. . . to attend to some personal grievance. . . Her imagination swerved from indignation and we feel it swerve."

Woolf found that this "swerve" was apparent in the work of most nineteenth-century female novelists. She says of women novelists during this time that, as writers, they were "meeting criticism" from the patriarchal society in one of two ways, either by

aggression, anger, and emphasis or by conciliation, docility, and diffidence. The two women authors whom Woolf exempts from this assessment are Jane Austen and Emily Bronte. Of Jane Austen, Woolf writes "Here was a woman about the year 1800 writing without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching." Woolf likens Austen to Shakespeare as a mind that was incandescent and uninhibited. She describes Austen as a female author imbued with independence and confidence in her abilities. She argues that Austen (and Emily Bronte) wrote "as women write, not as men write. Of all the thousand women who wrote novels, then, they alone entirely ignored the perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue -- write this, think that."

When one considers the passage in *Jane Eyre* with which Woolf found fault, it is rather surprising that Woolf would not also have found fault with Austen's own authorial intrusion in *Northanger Abbey* in which she defends the novel. Like Charlotte Bronte, Austen leaves the story to attend to a personal argument. And, as in Bronte's intrusion, there are two warring parties. In Bronte's intrusion, the two parties at war with each other are men and women. In Austen's own intrusion, the divisions are made along similar gender lines. Austen aligns herself with the community of other women novelists (the authors of novels such as *Cecilia*, *Camilla*, and *Belinda*) and pits her own group against their male counterparts: the "Reviewers" who abuse novels, the "nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England," and the "man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior" (*Northanger Abbey* 23). Austen's war is one being waged against male literary tradition, and she steadfastly situates herself in the

female-centered space. However, Austen's intrusion differs greatly from Bronte's in that her intrusion in *Northanger Abbey*, her defense of the novel that has been evaluated in the course of this dissertation, is not one typified by anger and bitterness. In her defense of the novel, Austen's main goal is not to attack patriarchal tradition; her comments on the inferiority of male literary convention are merely a by-product of her defense. Austen's main goal in her extended defense of the novel is to rally support for the community of women writers. When Austen begins her defense, she describes Catherine and Isabella as having locked themselves up together in order to read novels. Austen intrudes into the narrative to reassert,

Yes, novels -- for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding -- joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust.

(*Northanger Abbey* 23)

Interestingly, there is a certain degree of residual anger here in Austen's defense of the novel, but the anger is not directed toward men. Rather, Austen's anger in this passage is directed toward those female authors, who refuse to be known as novel-writers or novel-readers. Austen's grievance here -- the reason for her intrusion -- is that women novelists as diverse as Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Mary Wollstonecraft often

disowned novels and refused to associate themselves with the community of women novelists. Frances Burney refused to attach the categories of 'romance' and 'novel' to her work because she wanted to emphasize the seriousness of her works and did not want her work to be thought of as mere love stories. Edgeworth, in her advertisement to her novel *Belinda*, asked readers to consider her work as a "Moral Tale -- the author not wishing to acknowledge a Novel." This was Austen's main concern in her defense of the novel, then. Austen's anger is directed toward the lack of female support for novels, not at the patriarchal society which denied to acknowledge the literary talents and value of female novelists. The "us" that she speaks of when she writes, "Let *us* leave it to the Reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy" and "Let *us* not desert one another" is clearly in reference to the group of female novel writers with whom she associates. In her defense of the novel, Austen is acting as a spokesperson to defend the "injured body" of female authors, and she is imploring other female authors to similarly stand up for themselves and their craft -- their novels.

Although the legitimacy of the novel as a genre was being questioned at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Austen believed that women's experience deserved to be represented in literature and that the genre that was best suited for this task was the novel. Park Honan, a celebrated Austen biographer, has recounted the story that, at the age of thirteen, Jane Austen wrote a letter to her brothers, signed 'Sophia Sentiment,' in which she complained about the lack of female-centered stories in their literary journal *The Loiterer*. In the course of the letter, Austen applauds the work of her brothers only to

say later, "But really, Sir, I think it the stupidest work of the kind I ever saw. . . Only conceive, in eight papers, not one sentimental story about love and honour. . . No love, and no lady" (Honan 61). Austen, writing as Sophia Sentiment, concludes her letter saying, "In short, you have never yet dedicated any one number to the amusement of our sex, and have taken no more notice of us, than if you thought, like the Turks, we had no souls" (Honan 61). Although the entire tone of the letter is one of sarcasm and playfulness, there was certainly an element of truth in Austen's complaint; and Honan has noted that, after receiving her letter, her brothers changed the types of stories that were published in their paper. "They wrote less and less about Oxford, and more and more about love and the blisses and torments of marriage" (Honan 61). Certainly, however, there was a certain stigma attached to the writing and reading of literature dealing with women's concerns. As Woolf explained, critics often differentiated between important and insignificant works, and it was always the masculine values that prevailed. As an example, Woolf writes, "This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room. A scene in a battle-field is more important than a scene in a shop." Although masculine values may have prevailed, Austen recognized the need to represent the female experience -- the day-to-day incidents in women's lives, and she did so without regard to patriarchal convention or canon. However, as this study has pointed out, Austen bolstered her credibility and the credibility of the work of other female novelists by relying upon the rhetorical tenets as set out in George Campbell's *Philosophy*

*of Rhetoric* to prove the worthiness of the novel genre. Austen's confidence in the superiority of her craft stemmed directly from her belief that female-authored novels analogically illustrated Campbell's rhetorical concepts. To evaluate Austen's novels, then, in terms of Campbell's conceptions of the way in which rhetoric works is to situate an understanding of her works in the core of her literary aspirations.

The passage in *Northanger Abbey* in which Austen intrudes into the story to defend the novel is one of the most important passages in all of Austen's work. In it, Austen makes a bold claim that literature is woman's rightful sphere. Her intrusion, unlike Charlotte Brontë's, is not filled with bitterness or anger. In fact, it is fitting that Woolf likened Austen to Shakespeare because her defense of the novel is similar to Henry V's St. Crispin's Day speech in the way that it rallies a sisterhood of novel-writers and inspires in them feelings of confidence, a sense of victory, and the promise of great fame. Austen's stance is one of victory no matter the outcome (no matter what the male Reviewers might say). In her defense of the novel, Austen is neither "admitting that she was 'only a woman', or protesting that she was 'as good as a man' (Woolf), rather she was arguing that female-authored novels (hers included) are far superior to publications steeped in patriarchy and convention like the *Spectator*. Austen is confident that female-authored novels exhibit the greatest powers of the human mind, display the most thorough knowledge of human nature, and convey the liveliest effusions of wit and humor to the world in the best chosen language. Her defense of the novel is a stirring oration that champions the writing activities of women, that emphasizes the need for

women authors to support each other in their literary accomplishments, and that rouses women authors by expressing her confidence that theirs is a true art form. Virginia Woolf was right. Austen *must* have been a firebrand because she is able to say, "Literature is open to everybody. Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt, that you can set upon the freedom of my mind."

## WORKS CITED

- Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator*. Vol. VI. 12th ed. London: J & R Tonson, 1739.  
*Google Book Search*. Web.
- Altick, Richard D. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*. U of Chicago P, 1957. Print.
- Aristotle. *Nichomachean Ethics*. Trans. W. D. Ross. *The Internet Classics Archive*.  
Web.
- . *Poetics*. Trans. S. H. Butcher. *Project Gutenberg*. Web.
- Austen, Jane. *Emma*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- . *Letters of Jane Austen*. Brabourne Edition. *The Republic of Pemberley*,  
2011. Web.
- . *Mansfield Park*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- . *Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon*. Oxford World's Classics.  
Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- . *Persuasion*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- . *Pride and Prejudice*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- . *Sense and Sensibility*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford UP, 2008. Print.



- Austen-Leigh, James Edward. *Memoir of Jane Austen*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1871. *Project Gutenberg*. Web.
- Babb, Howard S. *Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue*. Ohio State UP, 1962. Web.
- Bator, Paul G. "Rhetoric and the Novel in the Eighteenth-Century British University Curriculum." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30.2 (1996-7), 173-191.
- Bialostosky, Don, and Lawrence D. Needham, eds. *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. Print.
- Bitzer, Lloyd. Introduction. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. By George Campbell. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1963. Print.
- Boswell, James. *Life of Johnson*. Oxford World Classics. Oxford UP, 1998. Print.
- Boyer, Stephanie Ann. "Hugh Blair's Rhetoric and Jane Austen's *Persuasion*." Wichita State U, 1986. MA.
- Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Ed. Margaret Smith. Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- Brown, Lloyd Wellesley. *Bits of Ivory: Narrative Techniques in Jane Austen's Fiction*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State UP, 1973. Print.
- Campbell, George. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Ed. Lloyd Bitzer. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1963. Print.
- Coleridge, Samuel T, and John P. Collier. *Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton*. New York: B. Franklin, 1968. Print.

- Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man*. Part One. New York: American Dome Library Co, 1902. *Google Book Search*. Web.
- Drummond, Chris. "Techniques of Austen and Radcliffe." *The Victorian Web*, 2000. Web.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The English Novel: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2004. Print.
- Edgeworth, Maria. *Tales and Novels*. Hildesheim, 1969. Print.
- Epictetus. *The Enchiridion*. Trans. Thomas W. Higginson. New York: Liberal Arts P, 1948. *Project Gutenberg*. Web.
- Farrer, Reginald. "Jane Austen ob. July 18, 1817." *The Quarterly Review* 228.452 (1917), 1-80. Web.
- Fergus, Jan. *Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel: Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, and Pride and Prejudice*. Barnes and Noble Books, 1983. Print.
- Fielding, Henry. "Essay on Humour." *The Edinburgh Magazine: Or Literary Miscellany*. Vol. 18. *Google Books*. Web.
- Golden, James L., and Edward P. J. Corbett. *The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately*. Southern Illinois UP, 1990. Print.
- Graham, Peter. *Jane Austen & Charles Darwin: Naturalists and Novelists*. Ashgate, 2008. Print.
- Hale, John. "'In Vain Have I Struggled': *Pride and Prejudice*, Chapter 34." *Persuasions: Journal of the Jane Austen Society of North America* 19.4 (2000): 79-82. Web.

- Halperin, John. "Jane Austen's Nineteenth-Century Critics: Walter Scott to Henry James." *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays*. Ed. John Halperin. Cambridge UP, 1975. Print.
- . *The Life of Jane Austen*. The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996. Print.
- Honan, Park. *Jane Austen: Her Life*. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1987. Print.
- Howell, Wilbur Samuel. *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971. Print.
- Hume, David. *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding: A Letter from a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub Co, 1977. Print.
- . *Treatise on Human Nature*. New York : E. P. Dutton & Co., 1911. Print.
- "Imagination." Def. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 3rd ed. 2009. Web.
- Irvine, Robert P. *Jane Austen*. Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Kettle, Arnold. *An Introduction to the English Novel: Defoe to George Eliot*. Vol. 1. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960. Web.
- Konigsberg, Ira. *Narrative Technique in the English Novel: Defoe to Austen*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1985. Print.
- Knox-Shaw, Peter. *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*. Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.
- Lane, Maggie. *Understanding Austen: Key Concepts in the Six Novels*. London: Robert Hale Ltd., 2012. Print.
- Lascelles, Mary. *Jane Austen and her Art*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1939. Print.

- Lenckos, Elisabeth. "From Sublime Abbey to Picturesque Parsonage: The Aesthetics of *Northanger Abbey* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*." *Persuasions* 32 (2010): 105-114. Web.
- L'Estrange, Alfred. *History of English Humour*. London: Hurst & Blackett Publishers, 1878. *Project Gutenberg*. Web.
- Lewes, G. H. "The Novels of Jane Austen." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (July 1859). In *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*. B.C. Southam. 2003. Web.
- Lewis, C. S. *Selected Literary Essays*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge UP, 1969. Print.
- Locke, John. *Essay on Human Understanding*. Pittsburgh : Kay & Co., 1850. Print.
- Longinus. *On the Sublime*. Trans. H. L. Havell. London: Macmillan & Co, 1890. *Project Gutenberg*. Web.
- McClanahan, Rebecca. *Word Painting: A Guide to Writing More Descriptively*. Writers's Digest Books, 1999. Print.
- Morreall, John. "Philosophy of Humor." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2006. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. Web.
- Mudrick, Marvin. *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery*. U of California P, 1952. Print.
- Mullan, John. "Psychology." *Jane Austen in Context*. Ed. Janet Todd. Cambridge UP, 2005. Print.
- Newsome, Robert. *A Likely Story: Probability and Play in Fiction*. London: Rutgers UP, 1988.

- Page, Norman. *The Language of Jane Austen*. Routledge, 2012. Print.
- Paris, Bernard J. *Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels: A Psychological Approach*. Wayne State UP, 1978. Print.
- Parker, Jo Alyson. *The Author's Inheritance: Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, and the Establishment of the Novel*. Northern Illinois UP, 1998. Print.
- Patey, Douglas Lane. *Probability and Literary Form: Philosophic Theory and Literary Practice in the Augustan Age*. Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.
- Phillipps, K. C. *Jane Austen's English*. London: Deutsch, 1970. Print.
- Pinch, Adela. *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*. Stanford UP, 1999. Print.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Ed. G. R. F. Ferrari. Trans. Tom Griffith. Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.
- Quintilian. *Institutes of Oratory*. Ed. Lee Honeycutt. Trans. John Selby Watson. Iowa State, 2006. Web.
- Radcliffe, Ann. *The Mysteries of Udolpho: A Romance*. Project Gutenberg. Web.
- Rigberg, Lynn R. *Jane Austen's Discourse with New Rhetoric*. Peter Lang, 1999. Print.
- Ruskin, John. *Modern Painters*. Vol. 2. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1879. Google Book Search. Web.
- Schorer, Mark. "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy.'" *The Kenyon Review* 11.4 (1949): 539-60. JSTOR. Web.

- Scott, Walter. "Walter Scott, an Unsigned Review of *Emma*, *Quarterly Review*." In Southam, B. C. *Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2003. Web.
- Shaw, H.E. *Narrating Reality: Austen, Scott, Eliot*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1999. Print.
- Silk, Christine Murphy. "Narrative in Rhetorical Argument." Carnegie Mellon U, 1996. *ProQuest*. Web.
- Smith, George Barnett. "More Views of Jane Austen. *Gentleman's Magazine* v. 258 (1885): 44. In *The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors*. Vol. IV. Ed. Charles Wells Moulton. Buffalo, NY: Moulton Pub Co., 1902. Web.
- Southam, B. C. *Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2003. Web.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. "Austen's Laughter." *Women's Studies* 15 (1988): 71-85. Web.
- Springarn, Joel. *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*. Columbia UP, 1899. *Project Gutenberg*. Web.
- Stokes, Myra. *The Language of Jane Austen: A Study of Some Aspects of Her Vocabulary*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991. Print.
- Stoller, Annette Linda. "Jane Austen's Rhetorical Art: A Revaluation." Brown U, 1974. *ProQuest*. Web.
- Suderman, Jeffrey. *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment: George Campbell in the Eighteenth Century*. McGill-Queen's UP, 2001. Print.

- Tave, Stuart M. *The Amiable Humorist: A Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1960. Print.
- Waldron, Mary. *Jane Austen and the Fiction of her Time*. Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.
- Wallace, Robert K. *Jane Austen and Mozart: Classical Equilibrium in Fiction and Music*. U of Georgia P, 1983. Print.
- Walzer, Arthur E. *George Campbell: Rhetoric in the Age of Enlightenment*. State U of New York P, 2003. Print.
- . "Rhetoric and Gender in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*." *College English* 57.6 (1995): 688-707. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Whately, Richard. "Unsigned Review of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*." *Quarterly Review* 24 (1821): 352-76. In Southam, B. C. *Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2003. Web.
- White, Laura Mooneyham. *Jane Austen's Anglicanism*. Ashgate, 2011. Print.
- Williams, Raymond. *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*. Chatto & Windus, 1970. Print.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Harcourt, 2005. Print.
- Zohn, Kristen Miller. "Tokens of Imperfect Affection: Portrait Miniatures and Hairwork in *Sense and Sensibility*." *Persuasions On-Line* 32.1 (Winter 2011). Web.