

The Many Lovers of Jane Austen: Irony & Parody



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For Cassandra: The Sister I Never Had

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Needless to say, I would also like to thank Jane Austen because without her the world would have no one to copy from.

Additionally, I declare that not only have I completed this master dissertation by myself, but I have also made use of the sources exclusively listed in the bibliography.

ABSTRACT

English Abstract: In view of the plain fact that it exists a vibrant culture of Austen academic studies as well as interpretations, prequels and sequels of her novels together with an extensive production of films and on line series, not to mention the tones of merchandising sold in big stores about Austen herself or about her male character *par excellence*, Darcy, one keeps wondering why Jane Austen. Indeed, whilst the term “Janeites” was coined late 19th century, it is hard to imagine admirers of Shakespeare calling themselves “Willies”. In addition, pilgrimage to Austen’s holy spots was long ago surpassed by visits to Stratford. This paper seeks to debate about the reasons why a woman who used to sign her works “by a lady”, and on the brink of fading away were it not for her nephew, James Edward Austen Leigh, is still well alive. The truth is that being Jane Austen regarded as one of the greatest novelist ever, she left no diaries and her sister Cassandra made disappear from the letters she thought too compromising. Austen constitutes definitely something of a mystery. Accordingly, some argue that the mayor reason for this 21st century global phenomenon would lie in the fact that we have to use our imagination to fill in the blanks she deliberately left empty either in her novels or in her own life. However, I do not strongly agree with this argument as a means of shedding some light on why we keep reading Jane Austen today. My main task will be, therefore, to prove that Austen’s appeal must be sought, above all, in her ability to laugh at unfair conventions. Her technique, however, is applied in such a subtle way that it is not “suitable for all audiences”. As a consequence, the vast majority of the adaptations as well as sequels and prequels of Austen’s novels are nowadays displayed in crude parody such as *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* (2015).

Key words: Janeite, Austen fandom, Jane global phenomenon, crude parody, subtle irony.

Spanish Abstract: los hechos hablan por sí mismos; hoy más que nunca existe una cantidad ingente no sólo de estudios académicos, sino de interpretaciones, adaptaciones y virtuales continuaciones de las novelas de Austen, amén de las toneladas de objetos en venta que pretenden ser recordatorio de la misma novelista o de alguno de sus personajes por antonomasia, como Darcy. El hecho es que una no deja de preguntarse por qué. No deja de ser curioso, a su vez, que el término “Janeites” fuera acuñado a finales del XIX, mientras que nunca ha existido un término análogo, digamos “Willies” para denominar a los seguidores de Shakespeare. Por no mencionar que las visitas turísticas a los lugares denominados “santos” de Austen son inmensamente superiores a las de la ciudad de Stratford. Así que este trabajo tiene por objeto debatir acerca de las razones por las que una mujer que firmaba sus obras con el seudónimo “by a lady” y que habría caído en el más profundo de los olvidos si no llega a ser por su sobrino, James Edward Austen Leigh, se ha convertido en un auténtico icono. Lo cierto es que Jane Austen está considerada una de las grandes novelistas de todos los tiempos. En ese sentido, hay voces que apuntan hacia el misterio que entraña la ausencia de información acerca de su vida, ya que no contamos con ningún diario y su hermana Casandra se encargó personalmente de hacer desaparecer aquellas cartas que pudieran ponerla a ella o a la familia en cuestión. Como consecuencia, esas mismas voces apuntan como principal explicación a este fenómeno global sin precedentes, el de poder disfrutar de plena libertad para completar los huecos con los que Jane Austen nos obsequia en sus novelas. Sin embargo, como no comparto plenamente este argumento, me consagraré en las siguientes líneas a demostrar que lo realmente atractivo de Austen es la sutil ironía con la que censura las convenciones sociales. La sutileza de su técnica, no obstante, impide que llegue a todos los públicos, de ahí que todas las adaptaciones actuales de su obra no constituyan sino burdas parodias, entre otras, *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* (2015), jocosa caricatura de *Emma*.

Palabras clave: Janeite, fenómeno global austeniano, burda parodia, sutil ironía.

Basque Abstract: gaur egun inoiz baino gehiago, begi-bistakoa da Austen-en nobelei buruzko hamaika ikasketa zein interpretazio, moldaketa nahiz jarraipen birtual daudela. Zer esanik ez, idazlearen beraren edo idazleak berak sortutako pertsonaiaren baten ustezko oroimenean salgai dauden ehunka tona oroigarri, Darcy-renak esate baterako. Kontua da ezin diodala nire buruari zergatik galdetzeari utzi. Era berean, bitxia da oso “Janeites” terminoa XIX. mendearen amaieran sortu izana, Shakespeare-ren jarraitzaileak izendatzeko, ordea, ez dago horrelakorik, demagun “Willies”. Bestetik, Austen-en santutegietako bisita kopurua franko handiagoa da Stratford hirira baino. Beraz, honako idazki honek Jane Austen zergatik bihurtu den ikono izango du mintzagai, kontuan izanda “a lady” ezizenaz sinatzen zuela eta bere ilobari esker, James Edward Austen Leigh-i, mundua bere izenaz ez zela ahaztu. Egia esateko, Jane Austen munduko idazlerik onenetakotzat hartzen da. Ildo horretarik, batzuen ustez, bere figurari misterio dariola egunkaririk utzi ez zuelako. Horretaz gain, ahizpa Casandrak eskutitz arriskugarriak desagerrarazi zituen. Hori dela eta, XX. mendeko *fan* fenomeno orokor horren azalpena idazleak apropos utzitako hutsuneak betetzeko gure irudimena libreki erabiltzean datza. Ni, ordea, ez nago guztiz ados argudio horrekin. Beraz, nire biziko helburua zera izango da; gizarteko bidegabeko ohiturez barre sotila eragitea dela Jane Austen-en ezinbesteko erakarpina. Bere teknika, ordea, hain da apala, non irakurle guztiek ezin baitute sotiltasuna ulertu. Hori dela eta, bere obren gaur egungo irakurketa gehienak parodia gordinean daude oinarrituta, esate baterako *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* (2015), *Emmaren* parodia hain zuzen.

Giltza-hitz: Janeite, Austeni buruzko fenomeno orokorra, parodia zakarra, ironia sotila.

French abstract: Les faits parlent d'eux-mêmes. Aujourd'hui plus que jamais il y a une grande quantité non seulement d'études académiques mais aussi d'interprétations, d'adaptations et de suites virtuelles des romans d'Austen. En plus, on trouve des tonnes d'objets en vente qui veulent être des souvenirs du même auteur ou d'un de ses plusieurs personnages très connus, comme Darcy. Le fait est qu'on ne peut pas s'arrêter de se demander le pourquoi. Il est très curieux que le mot « Janeites » ait été utilisé depuis la fin du XIX siècle, mais par contre, il n'y a jamais eu un mot analogue, on dirait « Willies », pour nommer les supportes de Shakespeare. Il ne faut pas mentionner que les visites touristiques aux lieux d'Austen considérés « saints » sont immensément supérieurs que les lieux de la ville de Stratford. L'objectif de ce travail est d'analyser les raisons pour lesquelles une femme qui signait ses œuvres avec le surnom de « a lady » est un icône authentique. Grâce à son neveu, James Edward Austen Leigh, elle n'a pas été oubliée. On doit constater que Jane Austen est considérée une des grandes romancières de tous les temps. Dans ce sens, il y a des voix qui remarquent le mystère sur le manque d'information de sa vie puisqu'il n'y avait pas aucun journal et sa sœur Casandra était personnellement en charge de faire disparaître toutes le lettres qui pouvaient mettre en question sa famille. Comme conséquence, ces mêmes voix indiquent comme explication principale à ce phénomène global sans précédents, le fait de pouvoir profiter avec liberté pleine pour compléter les trous qui Austen nous offrent dans ses romans. Cependant, comme je ne partage pas complètement cet argument, je vais me consacrer dans les lignes suivantes à démontrer que ce qui est réellement attirant chez Austen est l'ironie subtile avec laquelle elle censure les conventions sociales. Néanmoins, la subtilité de sa technique empêche qu'elle arrive à tous les publics. Pour cette raison, toutes les adaptations actuelles de son œuvre sont des parodies grossières, entre eux, par exemple « Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre ».

Mot-clé : Janeite, Jane phénomène mondial, grossière parodie, subtile ironie.



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ABBREVIATIONS

S&S Sense and Sensibility

P&P Pride and Prejudice

MP Mansfield Park

E Emma

P Persuasion

NA Northanger Abbey

KK Kandukondain Kandukonadain

B&P Bride and Prejudice

1. INTRODUCTION

*Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it. (NA VI, 918)*¹

Ever since the publication of Jane Austen's novels, the approaches to her work have been very varied, and over the years they have become more and more specialized². Aside from a multitude of papers and anthologies, the amount of thorough studies devoted to Austen's work has steadily flourished comprising topics as diverse as guidebooks³ to the places where Austen lived and that she visited along with the English landscape as an allegorical interpretation of that traditional and secure England desperately sought by British soldiers after the post First World War⁴ chaos; critical works attempting to disclose how a fragment⁵ of a sermon apparently by James Austen and stuck to a letter discovered in a first edition of her *Memoir*⁶ may after all have been written by Jane Austen; or even studies about the cause of her death⁷, though ironically, Jane Austen often ridicules characters who fuss excessively about the state of their health⁸, not to mention those works dedicated to Georgian music and dance⁹ aimed at highlighting balls as key moments in match making. The list could be made much longer and even include other areas of knowledge and fields of art; from cooking to knitting.

¹ Quotations from Jane Austen's novels are taken from Race Point Publishing edition of *The Complete Novels of Jane Austen*. References are given within the text, by chapter and page number.

² See Barnum.

³ For virtually travelling to Jane Austen's pilgrimage spots see Freire, Wells (*Everybody's Jane* 104-140) and Campos Pico.

⁴ For more about the relationship between soldiers at the First World War and Jane Austen's novels see Fullerton (*Happily* 27). See also the documentary by the BBC "The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen" on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the publication of *S&S* where Halsey (32') explains that mainly men looked for in Austen's novels. See also Halsey about Jane Austen and her readers.

⁵ See the extract of the news bulletin by the BBC "Jane Austen note: Hidden Text Linked to Mansfield Park Novel" as well as the documentary entitled "Jane Austen's Manuscripts" explained by the professor at Oxford and expert on Austen, Kathryn Sutherland.

⁶ Jane's Edward Austen-Leigh (Jane's eldest brother's son) wrote her *Memoir* in 1869 where for the first time it was reported Austen as the author of some of the best novels in English literature. As a result, an unprecedented literary phenomenon broke into the book market. For more recent biographies see Tomalin and Byrne.

⁷ See the article of The Guardian by Bowcott "Cause of Jane Austen's Death Not Universally Acknowledged" along with the Appendix 1 of *Jane Austen: A life* by Claire Tomalin a note on Jane Austen's last illness where the author has doubts whether Austen died from Addison's disease. See also the article by Greene "What Really Killed Jane Austen?" See also Wiltshire ("Medicine" 306-316) "Medicine, Illness and Disease".

⁸ See Mullan (243) about whether "Ill People Are Really to Blame for Their Illnesses" (Chap. XXII) in her novels.

⁹ See Fullerton (*A Dance* 2012) for a clear and detailed study of a ball in Georgian times and see the superb documentary by the BBC "Pride and Prejudice: Having a Ball" narrated by the historian Amanda Vickery on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the publication of *P&P*.

There is also an extensive production of films ranging from Jane Austen's "accurate" novel adaptations as well as sequels, prequels, parodies, fandom or even those focused on certain aspects of her life.¹⁰ In this sense, whilst according to Harman (7), the publication of James Edward Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* of Jane Austen in 1869 constituted the first wave of Austenmania triggering an unprecedented literary phenomenon, the second torrential wave, this one made up of film and television versions of Austen novels in the mid-1990s, was initiated by Colin Firth's BBC appearance in the role of Mr Darcy. From then on, Jane Austen and Mr Darcy's marketing phenomenon turned into a riot of key rings, mugs, calendars, t-shirts asking, among other things, "What do you mean Mr Darcy isn't real?" Or even "Mr Darcy soap" so that one can rub themselves all over with Mr Darcy while taking a shower. As a consequence, her name has been brought to every corner of the world and still remains at the heart of some major debates concerning the nature of the sisters' (Jane and Cassandra's) relationship¹¹.

Therefore, not only is Jane Austen essential in literature, but in audio-visual media as well, though according to Fullerton (*Happily* 201) on the issue of *P&P* "the films will come and the films will go, but her novel has lasted 200 years and has not yet delighted us for long enough"¹².

¹⁰ For an adequate sequel of *P&P*, watch the BBC TV miniseries *Death Comes to Pemberley* (BBC, 2013) based on the novel of the same name by the recently deceased PD James. For one of many recent parodies of *P&P* watch the TV miniseries *Lost in Austen* (Mammoth, 2008), it goes without saying *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Miramax, 2001) and *The Edge of Reason* (Miramax, 2004). For an approach to certain aspects of her life watch the controversial *Becoming Jane* (focused on her alleged liaison with Tom Lefroy) and for a better understanding of the last years of her life watch *Miss Austen Regrets* (BBC, 2008). For an idea about her fandom watch *Austenland* (Jickle Fish, 2013). For getting an idea of the huge impact of Jane Austen in India watch *KK* (Sry Surya, 2000), *B&P* (Pathé, 2004) and *Aisha* (PRV, 2010). For an overall view of her masterpiece *The Jane Austen Book Club* (Sony, 2007) based on the novel of the same name by KJ Fowler. For being updated about what is going on on YouTube watch *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (Agreable, 2012). Just for fun watch *From Prada to Nada* (Odd Lot, 2011) with certain hints of *Sense and Sensibility*. Finally, coming soon *Love and Friendship* (2016) based on the juvenilia epistolary novel *Lady Susan* by Austen, and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016) based on the novel of the same name by S. Grahame-Smith.

¹¹ See Mullan (26) regarding whether sisters slept together. In 1995 a review article by Professor Terry Castle of Stanford University on Deirdre Le Faye's new Oxford edition gave rise to an in-depth discussion about Jane Austen. It was concerned mainly with the confirmation in surviving letters of the closeness between the two Austen sisters, including their physical closeness. Indeed, that issue carried the next question: Was Jane Austen Gay? Later, Professor Castle denied that she had ever suggested that Jane was "gay", but affirmed that the two sisters shared a bed for the whole of their adult lives. It is at any rate rather peculiar that Marianne and Elinor Dashwood as well as Jane and Elizabeth Bennet shared bedrooms. In their shared room, Jane tells Elisabeth everything. Hence, the bedroom constitutes a sacred refuge, and only special people may enter. In all Jane's fiction indeed, we never find a husband and wife together in a bedroom. Admission to a bedroom is an exceptional privilege, for the reader as well as for a character.

¹² See Garber (208-210) where although she rejoices in some ways in the Austenizing of modern culture, what she calls "The Jane Austen Syndrome", she also worries about the increasingly secondary place the novels and letters

In addition, Jane Austen is also firmly established on the internet not only in English but in Spanish as well¹³, since, as stated by Mirmohamadi (10), virtual spaces “locate and gather online fans and visitors within [...] libraries, and assemblies, allowing them to orient themselves within a borderless and limitless cyberspace through reference to discrete, locatable geographic points and communities.”

As a result of this overwhelming amount of approaches, it is no wonder Vickery argues in her article for the Observer “200 Years On: Why Jane Austen Lovers Find New Reasons for Their Passion”, that “the Jane Austen brand has global reach” for there are booming Austen societies all over the world. Additionally, Austen's novels have been re-imagined as Californian high school students, Bollywoodian shows¹⁴ and most recently as a comedy featuring zombies¹⁵. In Britain, on top of that, *P&P* is one of the nation's favourite novels (second only to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* in the BBC's Big Read of 2004)¹⁶.

The main aim of the present study is to discover how Jane Austen and her genteel fiction has become a 21st century global phenomenon after having transcended the limits of the apparently provincial English countryside life depicted in her novels. Let us not forget that Jane Austen was not only an anonymous and minor novelist in her own lifetime, but according to Byrne (110) “it has also been broadly understood that she was a retiring spinster who confined her novels to the small universe of her village life because in the popular imagination, she spent almost half of it, working on her embroidery and gossiping about her neighbours”¹⁷. I also wish to comment on the

seem to play in comparison to films, adding, like Fullerton, that it can never be said of Austen's novels “you have delighted us long enough” (*P&P* Chap. XVIII, pp. 251)

¹³ See the website “Hablando de Jane” managed by Mila Cahue, popular blogger, it is by far the most updated and serious online resource to be kept informed in Spanish.

¹⁴ For more on Bollywoodian adaptations of Jane Austen novels, see pp. 2, footnote 10 of the present study. See also Jones (175) “The Ethics of Geography: Women as Readers and Dancers in Gurinder Chadha's *B&P* (2004)”.

¹⁵ For more information about *P&P Meets Zombies and Aliens*, see Fullerton (*Happily* 167).

¹⁶ See The Big Read: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Big_Read

¹⁷ With respect to the traditional view about Jane Austen, Byrne (110) argues strongly against it. She claims that Austen lived in the fashionable city of Bath which constitutes the setting of at least two of her novels (*NA* and *P*). Besides, another seaside resorts are mentioned in her novels, such as Lyme Regis, where she loved to spend her summer holidays. Frequent trips to London are also described in her fiction. In addition, she even went as far as the coast of mid-Wales, 250 miles away. Likewise, Tomalin (6) affirms that unlike Austen's contemporaries Mary Wollstonecraft who saw her father beat her mother, or Charles Dickens, sent to work in a blacking factory at the age of twelve, Jane's life at Steventon was not all “peace and love” either. It was, in fact, full of continuous stress and shocking events, which left marks upon her as everlasting as those of any unhealthy factory and time will be witness to the marks those traumatic events leave on her.

modern “consumption” of Austen and to establish connections between her persona — and the protagonists of her novels seen through the author’s eyes — and modern needs and cultural expressions.

The starting point of the present study was found in the documentary by the BBC “The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen” on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the publication of *S&S*¹⁸. There, the historian Amanda Vickery posed the same question as that which I set out to answer in this master’s thesis. To that end, she proposed to look at the history of how Jane Austen was read, who was reading her and why. At the same time and as a clear proof that Austen’s academic status today is just as potent as her commercial brand, Vickery herself attended a public auction at Sotheby’s in London where a fragment of her unfinished novel *The Watson*¹⁹ was sold for a stunning £850,000.

In response to the question about “what it is in Austen’s prose to be both so freely adapted and so widely read”, Vickery suggests that “one of the most surprising things is how little we know about Austen herself. Even the site of the vicarage where she was born is all nettles and cowpats today, so we have to use our imagination to fill in the blanks which is just what Jane Austen trusted her readers to be able to do”²⁰. Vickery adds that we are not entangled in descriptive details and to depict it she gives an example: “all we are really told about Willoughby and Mr Darcy’s looks is that they are uncommonly handsome, which has the uncanny effect of allowing each new generation to see themselves reflected back from her pages”. Vickery concludes that “it is her spare, restrained style of writing that has also allowed Austen to be so widely reinvented and ultimately popularised”.

¹⁸ For an objective opinion of the academic value of the documentary, see Artts et alii (65-81). The only con according to Artt (66) constitutes the fact that “the Austen fandom analysed here focuses exclusively on British and American fans”. On another level, I will not discuss the ideological confrontation between popular and academic Austen, since Vickery’s intention as well as mine is to reconcile both: academic investigation and fan enthusiasm.

¹⁹ For more information about this uncompleted novel see the documentary “Jane Austen and the Watsons” where Kathryn Sutherland reveals some peculiarities, among others, that it was her nephew who chose the title for the novel and that each time Jane wanted to add a paragraph, she patched them with steel pins. See also Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 128-147) Chap. IV “Manuscripts and the Acts of Writing”.

²⁰ In accordance with James Edward Austen Leigh’s *Memoir* Chap. II, (my English version published by Amazon has no page numbers, thus I will use, in the pages to come, my Spanish version’s pagination also cited in the bibliography). The rectory was considered unworthy of being the house of a family, and it was about forty-five years before he wrote the *Memoir* that it had been pulled down for the purpose of erecting a new house in a far better situation on the opposite side of the valley. For more information about “blanks” and their relevance in the act of reading, see Iser (280)

To be honest, I do not strongly agree with Vickery's argument in her venture of trying to shed some light on why we keep reading Jane Austen today. Albeit correct, I do think that Vickery's statement does not place enough emphasis on the importance of humour and irony in Austen novels. My task will be, therefore, not only to provide an overview of the way Austen is consumed today, but to qualify Vickery's statement about filling in the blanks, showing that Austen's appeal should be sought in her ability to laugh at unfair conventions rather than in allowing the readers freedom to use their imagination in order to fill the gaps she deliberately left empty. Her technique, however, is applied in such a subtle way that it is not "suitable for all audiences". As a consequence, the vast majority of the adaptations as well as sequels and prequels of Austen's novels are nowadays displayed in crude parody. For instance, *Lost in Austen* (2008) on the screen²¹, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012) on line²², and *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* (2015) on paper²³.

In order to arrive there, I will begin by identifying a series of categories, such as Jane Austen's first readers, irony or the mystery surrounding her portrait, and recapitulate the opinions taken from scholarly works, websites and documentaries about these different phenomena. Finally I will provide a personal statement on why I believe Vickery is wrong and what really constitutes the core of Austen's popularity today, by means of analysing the expression and effects of irony in *Emma*, Austen's perhaps most accomplished novel.

To that end, I will devote the second chapter to look at the history of how she was read, who was reading her and why, beginning with her own family and close friends. I will afterwards delve deeper into certain details about her great achievement in spite of her fragile prestige as a writer due to the arrival of Romanticism, which apparently put an end to all hope for Austen as a literary figure of merit. After the real turning point constituted by the publication of her *Memoir* by Austen's nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh, where the first image of Jane Austen was forged as the incarnation of Victorian femininity, I will explore the inception of a select group of Jane Austen

²¹ See pp. 34 of the present study.

²² See pp. 38 of the present study.

²³ See pp. 64 of the present study.

academic fans who called themselves Janeites, mainly male, difficult as it may be to believe.

The third chapter will offer us an overview of what is going on today *à propos* of the Jane Austen brand on screen, by Hollywood as well as by Bollywood, digital format and on line. The views expressed on the issue of contemporary interpretations of Austen's novels, however, highlight the range of opinions that have been a feature of the debate on the advantages or disadvantages those rereadings may really bring to the understanding of her novels.

The hot debate about her image as well as the appropriation of her body displayed in the fifth chapter, will provide us, in addition, with an answer, in a globalized world, about why variations of "Austens" keep proliferating, while there is no evidence of such thing as the "real" Austen, proving that she may be "consumed" in different ways by different socioeconomic groups.

In the fifth chapter eventually, and in consonance with my approach to the issue at stake, that is, the importance of humour and irony as the key element of Jane Austen's popularity today, I will analyse one of many rewritings of her masterpiece *E, Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* (2015), on paper, as an evidence, in Vickery's words that "underneath all the dressing up and role play found in the spin-offs and the merchandise, there are plenty of committed Austen readers".

With this purpose in mind, I will make use of the main critical tenets of cultural studies by Derrida in my approach to this subject; being as media and public sphere, that is, television, internet and techno culture, are essential constituent elements of popular culture. I will also make a selective use of Jussieu and his reception theory, for the reader is regarded there, as the main actor in the process of interpreting the literary text which clearly illustrates why Jane Austen has been read with seriousness at an academic level, while she is also consolidated among a new mass audience in cinemas and sitting rooms all over the world.

I will also take advantage of Pozuelo Yvancos' study about the revitalization of parody and the particular nuances of irony in contrast to parody as a theoretical basis for the sixth chapter of the present work.



2. THE BEGINNING

Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure (P&P LVIII, 389)

In the present chapter, I pretend to offer a virtual trip²⁴ to explore the most important Jane Austen landmarks in connection with her writing as well as her readers in order to know how she was read, who was reading her and why. I will take her own family and close friends as a starting point followed by the publication of her *Memoir* by Austen's nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh. I will conclude with Jane Austen as the embodiment of Victorian femininity and the *leitmotiv* for those academic fans who called themselves Janeites at the time of the First World War.

2.1 WITHIN HER FAMILY

“Steventon is a small rural village upon the chalk hills of north Hants, situated in a winding alley about seven miles from Basingstoke”. This is the beginning of the description James Eduard Austen-Leigh (*Memoir* 33) offers of Steventon, Jane Austen’s birthplace²⁵. He continues portraying her family house²⁶: “The house itself stood in a shallow valley, surrounded by sloping meadows, well sprinkled with elm trees, at the end of a small village of cottages, each well provided with a garden, scattered about prettily on either side of the road”.

This is similarly the world of a Jane Austen novel; a refined Georgian portrait where Emma Woodhouse may be taking tea with her father and Anne Elliot might be reading poetry while Mr Darcy is writing a relevant letter. It seems, likewise, a quiet scenery, the framework for her stories where intelligent young ladies are kindly courted by elegant gentlemen. The major question to keep asking, therefore, is why there are millions of readers still reading these period romances after 200 years of their first publication and how this genteel fiction has become a 21st century global phenomenon.

²⁴ For more graphic information about the spots directly related to Jane Austen, see Jane Austen Map: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jane_Austen_Map.png; in accordance with Wikipedia, there are more than 30.

²⁵ According to Austen Leigh (2012: 21), Mr and Mrs George Austen resided first at Dean, but removed in 1771 to Steventon. Austen Leigh adds that George Austen came into possession of the two adjoining Rectories (Dean and Steventon), but “this was no very gross case of plurality” for the two villages were little more than a mile apart.

²⁶ To know more on the importance of a home of one's own, since Home remained the happy ending of every Austen’s novel, see the three-episode documentary entitled “At Home with the Georgians” (BBC, 2013) where Vickery argues that “to lose your house was to lose your status and independence and, ultimately, to lose yourself”.

Ángeles de la Concha, professor at UNED, provides us with her own answer in the documentary “Jane Austen 200 años después: una escritora para todas las épocas I”:

Es sorprendente que en una época como la nuestra goce de tanta popularidad la obra de Jane Austen. Por un lado, sus temas son aparentemente muy tradicionales tratados en un estilo muy tradicional, lo que se ha venido llamando el realismo clásico. Por el otro, sus obras se han escrito hace 200 años y parece que teniendo en cuenta las circunstancias de hoy en día, nuestro modo de pensar... podríamos deducir que ese modelo está totalmente pasado. Sin embargo, la obra de Jane Austen tiene probablemente la universalidad que tiene por las características de su escritura y además los temas que trata son mucho más profundos de lo que a primera vista pudiera parecer, pues no por ser cotidianos son menos importantes. (14’)

Vickery (8’), for her part, proposes in the documentary “The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen”, to look at the history of how Jane Austen was read, who was reading her and why. For Jauss (181-182) “el método de la historia de la recepción es imprescindible para la comprensión de la literatura largamente pretérita”, adding that (176):

La relación entre la literatura y el público no se agota en el hecho de que cada obra tenga su público determinable, específica, histórica y sociológicamente, que cada escritor dependa del medio del círculo de intuición y de la ideología de su público y que el éxito literario presuponga un libro que exprese lo que el grupo esperaba, un libro que revele al grupo su propia imagen (176).

Vickery assures us that the very first people to read Jane Austen were her family. We know that Jane Austen was clever and precocious she was writing by the age of 12²⁷. In addition, she was born into a big, bookish family²⁸ where all her brothers and her beloved sister Cassandra loved reading, re-reading, reading aloud, writing²⁹, drawing and amateur theatricals. In relation to her father, Austen-Leigh (*Memoir* 25), affirms that “being a very good scholar, he was able to prepare two of his sons for the

²⁷ According to Austen-Leigh (*Memoir* 60), “it is impossible to say at how early an age she began to write. There are copy books extant containing tales some of which must have been composed while she was a young girl, as they had amounted to a considerable number by the time she was sixteen”. However, Austen-Leigh (*Memoir* 41) states that “she also took the principal parts in the private theatricals in which the family several times indulged...Jane was only twelve years old at the time of the earliest of these representations, and not more than fifteen when the last took place”.

²⁸ See Halsey (17); the Austens formed part of the Chawton Book Society and Jane continued to borrow books from both public and private libraries. Halsey concludes that “Jane read both intensively and extensively, knowing some books almost by heart”.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 20. Jane Austen was not the only writer of the family. James Austen wrote plays, poetry and *Belles Lettres*, Mrs Austen wrote light verse, George, Henry and James Austen all wrote sermons, Cassandra Austen wrote charades and verses, and a later generation of nephews and nieces wrote novels.

University, and to direct the studies of his other children, whether sons or daughters, as well as to increase his income by taking pupils". Regarding her mother, in addition, Austen-Leigh highlights that "she united strong common sense with a lively imagination, and often expressed herself, both in writing and in conversation, with epigrammatic force and point".

In *The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen*, Vickery (9') continues describing Austen's first years adding that "the teenage Jane was theatrical³⁰, irreverent and prolific, dashing off romantic parodies and satires for the entertainment of her clever siblings and bookish relatives". In consonance with her *Memoir* (65), nonetheless, Austen-Leigh justifies the family decision about not to publish her early writings, since "it would be as unfair to expose this preliminary process to the world, as it would be to display all that goes on behind the curtain of the theatre before it is drawn up". Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 88) argues in this sense that "as in all the best regulated families there were secrets to hide"³¹ and she adds Oliphant's opinion given in her essay entitled *The Ethics of Biography*³²: "The family were half-ashamed to have it known that she was not just a young lady like the others, doing her embroidery³³".

The most critical argument in the matter comes from Auerbach (8) who claims that "no one who reads Austen's uncensored early writings and satiric fragments can ever return to the image of dear Jane Austen", and concludes with an open question: "How could they reconcile their biographical presentation of Saint Jane with her adolescent stories

³⁰ According to Halsey (33), theatricals, reading novels and plays aloud constitute a social and a particular family rooted tradition, and it is also shown in her fiction, for instance, MP (XIII, 465) where *Lovers' Vows* is displayed within MP. See also Richardson (397-405) about reading practices.

³¹ Sutherland mentions the family's wish to hide the existence of a second brother, the handicapped but long-lived George Austen (junior), and the incarceration of Mrs Leigh-Parrot (her great-aunt) on a charge of shoplifting in Bath. To know more on the issue, see Tomalin (9-10, 151-153). See also Byrne (17-19, 160-161).

³² See Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 87); Margaret Oliphant, novelist and biographer, reviewed the *Memoir* in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1870) and made it clear that she gave no credence to its idealized portrait. She pronounced the Austen family "a kind of clan", their happy and loose circle more like a prison and Austen-Leigh's "sweet young woman" a stifled figure.

³³ See Byrne (110) who rejects the traditional view of Jane Austen as a "retiring spinster who confined her novels to the small universe of her village life" since "in the popular imagination, she spent almost half of it, working on her embroidery and gossiping about her neighbours". See also Sutherland out in the documentary entitled "The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen" (26') where she points out that she is described really in a way that fits Victorian ideals of femininity which gives us a myth that remained powerful for an extremely long time, since Jane Austen is shown "parcelling out her time": preparing breakfast, keeping an eye on the quantities of tea in the household, sitting at her desk over there...

about young women who toss rivals out the window, raise armies and get dead drunk?”³⁴

While it is true that Jane Austen’s relatives took extra care when her life was to be exposed, and even went as far as lying, I hold that they cannot be blamed for it, since few people of the time would have dared to behave differently. In a time when women were only expected to raise their offspring and remain occupied at home, the mere fact of suggesting that Austen’s own father had encouraged her to read a wide variety of books, to write and even publish her writings would have been more than enough to fear the worst.

Regarding her Juvenilia, I will highlight Upfal and Alexander’s argument on the issue of *The History of England*³⁵ expressed in their article entitled “Jane Austen’s *The History of England & Cassandra’s Portraits*”, on *Persuasion* online, as a representation of the Austen family, since “their revelation may challenge the traditional reading of her cheerful childhood home, and loving, supportive parents³⁶”. In consonance with the above-mentioned statement, “the most obvious is the clue that the images correspond, wherever possible, to family members and friends of the same name”. The brothers James, Edward and Henry, for example, are depicted as James I, Edward VI and Henry V respectively. Jane Austen is portrayed as Mary, Queen of Scots elegantly dressed as for a ball, while her mother, rather unexpectedly, is identified with “the wicked old witch Elizabeth II”. Along with some remarks in her surviving letters, they “indicate not only emotional distance but also a possible damaged relationship between Austen and her mother”. According to Tomalin (8), however, this argument is hardly conclusive³⁷.

³⁴ See Sabor for a full coverage of her Juvenilia. See Byrne (53-72) to know more on the three vellum notebooks where Austen wrote her Juvenilia. In Byrne’s opinion, *Catharine, or The Bower* and *Love and Freindship* (sic) it is not a spelling mistake, well, maybe it is, but not mine, constitute the best stories by young Austen. I will add that the coming film entitled *Love and Friendship* has nothing to do with this little story, but with *Lady Susan* another Juvenilia writing by Austen.

³⁵ See Sabor (176-189) to read this short story: *The History of England*, by young Austen.

³⁶ As stated by Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 105), here we are looking not for the facts, but for the truths of the situation. There are three highly controversial situations in her life; Jane’s relationship with her mother, her experience in Bath and her attitude to her rich brother Edward.

³⁷ According to Tomalin, “the emotional distance between child and mother is obvious throughout her life; and not only between child and mother”. In addition, she continues analysing the mood of her letters to prove that “they lack tenderness towards herself as much as towards others [...] they are the letters of someone who does not open her heart”. At the same time, let us remember that Jane Austen suffered at least three episodes of depression and both related to her mother somehow; the particular system of child-rearing, the occasion of having Cassandra departed for school at the age of 10 and their retirement to Bath.

Whereas it is true that Jane Austen was often challenged by her own parents — she was sent with her sister Cassandra to a boarding school at a very early age, she had to move with her parents to Bath and consent to be exhibited like a parcel searching for its owner, she had not a house of her own — I would not dare to say either that she did not get on well with her mother, it is just an example of how unfair life becomes when the lack of money places one at the mercy of others.

“By her early twenties, Jane Austen had completed drafts of three novels, *First Impressions*, *Elinor and Marianne* and *NA* but it would be another 14 years and numerous disappointments, before she was finally published” (Vickery, *The Many Lovers of Miss. Jane Austen* 10’) thanks to Henry’s connections with Thomas Egerton’s Military Library³⁸. *Elinor and Marianne* became *S&S*, and first went on sale 200 years ago in October 1811. By contrast, it took her seventeen years to publish *First Impressions*, under the title of *P&P* (January 1813) and twenty for *NA*. For her part Tomalin (157) confesses to be surprised by the fact that each of them “approaches its subject in a different way: *S&S* is a debate, *P&P* a romance and *NA* a satire, a novel about novels and novel reading”, since “she was too inventive and too interested in the technique of fiction to settle in any one mode, and she tackled the problems of three such diverse forms with astonishing skill”.

Tomalin (239) offers an additional detail about how Austen managed the critics of her novels. Indeed “for *MP* and *E*, she did something she had not done before, which was to collect and write down the opinions of her readers demonstrating that she was detached enough to collect rude remarks as well as praise and without adding any defensive replies of her own”. It is remarkable that Austen behaved this way just with *MP* and *E*, her third and fourth novels. I wonder whether she had doubts about her success with both. Was she more confident with her previous and subsequent novels? Is this the reason why she behaved differently? Obviously, I do not have the answer but those are the novels I like the least.

I will, in any case, underline the opinions expressed by Walter Scott (albeit after Austen’s death), the French writer Madam de Staël and the Prince Regent. According to

³⁸ See Byrne (123-133) to know more about this surprising connection.

Austen-Leigh (*Memoir* 177) the following remarkable words were written by Sir Walter Scott in his diary March 14, 1826:

Read again, for the third time at least, Miss Austen's finely, written novel of "Pride and Prejudice". That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big Bow-Wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary common-place things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!"

According to Tomalin (242), on the occasion of the visit by Madam de Staël to London in 1813-14, Henry Austen tried to introduce Jane Austen to her, but she was refused³⁹. Later de Staël expressed her view that "Austen's novels were *vulgaire* and too close to the English provincial life she detested for its narrowness and dullness". Tomalin diminishes there, the importance of this remark adding that "her English was perhaps simply not good enough to allow her to enjoy brilliance of a different kind".

In this particular case, I do not see why it is so difficult to face the fact that Jane Austen's fiction may have not been to everyone's taste. As a result, Madam de Staël did not simply accept Austen in her *salon* and disqualified her novels due to their topic, style or tone, even working on the assumption that Staël was proficient in the language. After all, the idea that Austen did not like publicity sounds too familiar to us after having read her relatives' particularly inaccurate portrait.

In accordance with the memory of Caroline Austen (Byrne, 297), eventually, "Henry Austen⁴⁰ shared a doctor with the Prince⁴¹". The doctor told the Prince that "Jane Austen was in London⁴² and the Prince advised his librarian (the Reverend James Stanier Clarke) to wait upon her". Accordingly, he informed her one day that "the Prince was a great admirer of her novels; that he read them often, and kept a set in every

³⁹ Fergus (1) as well as Barry claim that it was Austen herself who refused to meet the writer Germaine de Staël, so as to emphasize Austen's ladylike disdain for publicity, not the other way round.

⁴⁰ See Byrne (157-158) to know more on Henry's illness and its suggested treatment in Bath.

⁴¹ When King George III was so mentally ill as to abdicate, the future king George IV was appointed Regent from 1811 to 1820.

⁴² See Byrne (109); in her opinion, it is not unreasonable to say that Jane was a very well-travelled woman, since at a young age, Austen wrote a story called *The Memoirs of Mr Clifford: An Unfinished Tale* where she reveals her knowledge of many varieties of road transport vehicles available at the time. See also Le Faye (*Jane Austen's Letters* 238-239); in one of her letters, Jane gave her brother Frank very particular details of various modes of transport.

one of his residences. He also declared that if Miss Jane Austen had any other novel forthcoming she was at liberty to dedicate it to the Prince". As a consequence, the dedication was prefixed to *E* (Austen-Leigh, *Memoir* 143)⁴³.

In addition, seeking a convincing answer about why Jane Austen published anonymously, Vickery (11') interviews Mullan⁴⁴:

People say it's because she was modest and unassuming... No! This is actually baloney, because Sir Walter Scott, who was the bestselling novelist of the age, also published anonymously. Therefore, it's a polite convention, which enabled her to have quite a lot of fun, actually, because, of course, people guessed a lot. For instance, a lady in the village in Chawton, a Mss Benn, came round and *P&P* had just been delivered and Jane Austen and her mum took turns reading out about half of the novel over several hours, and Mrs Ben was delighted and said how brilliant the author must be. Jane Austen didn't tell her⁴⁵. That is the reason why I guess she quite liked those sorts of games.

I see Jane Austen taking advantage of this polite convention of publishing anonymously. On the one hand, in order to avoid direct confrontation, as often is the case with Austen, I guess she just closely met the formality without resigning herself to introduce her own touch of irony. On the other hand, in such a tiny village, Austen must have enjoyed providing clues on the authorship of her novels while hiding, at the same time, from her own readers. I am sure she fancied listening to the comments on her fiction by those who were unaware of the authorship.

Vickery, for her part, insists on the fact that calling it "by a Lady", gives the readers a clue about the writer's identity, for Jane Austen makes it clear that it's a female author. So Vickery poses a new question about how readers might have been affected by this information and whether women would be more likely to buy a novel by a lady:

⁴³ See Byrne (297-303). Judging by the letters Jane Austen and the Reverend sent to each other, Jane was far from willing to implement the Prince Regent's will. She eventually dedicated it "To his Royal Highness The Prince Regent" from the first page.

⁴⁴ Professor of English at University College London. He is a specialist in eighteenth-century literature, currently writing the 1709-1784 volume of the Oxford English Literary History.

⁴⁵ After having checked all the letters Jane Austen wrote in 1813, that is, the year *P&P* was published, the nearest sentence pronounced by Miss Benn (a spinster living in greatly reduced circumstances, sister of the Reverend John Benn, rector of nearby Farrington) I found, reads as follows (Le Faye (*Jane Austen's Letters* 210); Sunday 24 January 1813): "Oh dear!, yes, very much; very droll indeed". In a following letter (Friday 29 January), additionally, Austen highlights that Mss Benn does seem to admire Elizabeth (Bennet). Byrne (294), by contrast, states that "like so many others in Austen's wide circle of acquaintance, clearly Mss Benn knew the secret of her authorship".

I think saying, "By a Lady" on the title page, did affect people's expectations. I think they would have known that it was an advertisement for the kind of product they were getting. They weren't going to get roistering scenes of, sort of, sexual impropriety. In addition, I think when you see "By a Lady" on the cover, what you expect is really a tale of courtship. You expect a story about a young woman who is not married at the beginning of the novel and is married at the end.

So this time, Vickery (*The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen* 13') addresses Earl Spencer⁴⁶ and asks him about the readers of *S&S* in order to prove that fiction on courtship in relation to social and psychological drama was utterly transformed after Austen's novel:

Although 750 copies were sold in the next couple of years, there aren't many clues about who actually bought it. But luckily, there are letters from one woman, Countess Bessborough, that prove *Sense and Sensibility*, was read with pleasure in Althorp, the breath-taking Northamptonshire home of the Spencer family.

The high price of books notwithstanding, "the story of Marianne and Elinor and their broken hearts was appreciated by an audience well beyond the libraries of the aristocracy thanks, [in Spencer's opinion] to the popular circulating libraries⁴⁷". Therefore, "Austen's novels also made their way into the hands of a wider public". Spencer concludes, as a result, that "by the standards of Jane Austen's day, in her own lifetime, in that very short period of six years between her first published novel and her death, she was really very successful".

Indeed Earl Spencer adds that Austen published her first novel, *S&S*, at her own expense getting a profit of £250 precisely. At the time, in comparison to other professionals whose earnings may hopefully reach £500 a year, Austen was doing rather well from the very beginning. Making slow but steady progress, Austen published three more novels in three consecutive years: *P&P* in 1813, *MP* in 1814 and *E* in 1815.

Similarly, Tomalin (18') argues in the documentary "Jane Austen" that Austen had great difficulties in the first place in getting published; she wrote three novels in the 1790s which were not published until 16-17 years after her death. So she had a difficult

⁴⁶ Lady Diana's brother.

⁴⁷ See pp. 30 of the present study for more on circulating libraries.

beginning, but the first two published novels, *S&S* and *P&P*, were very well received, to the extent that someone said that they were too clever to be written by a woman⁴⁸, which made her laugh. That was, therefore, a very good start and she wrote two more, *E* and *MP*, but then she died; having had only four of her novels published in her lifetime.

However, by the time her last two manuscripts had been published, *NA* and *P*, health disorders had already made Austen feel increasingly weak and eventually led to her death in 1817, at the age of 41 with her sister as only witness. Not surprisingly, there was no magnificent *adieu*. Her success in life, if any, did not reach public recognition. She is simply remembered as “a daughter, as a true Christian, for the benevolence of her heart, the sweetness of her temper and the extraordinary endowments of her mind”⁴⁹. But that is all, nothing on her great novels.

I will insist on the fact that Austen’s family’s attitude should not take us by surprise. On the contrary, if her family would have organized a magnificent farewell party in her memory, few had understood such ado about so little matter; a woman, neither married, nor rich who died from an unknown *maladie* like many others before.

Within three years of her death, however, Austen had fallen out of fashion and out of print. Her tranquil stories on gentle courtship were no longer reprinted and prices reached unprecedentedly low prices. So it seemed, according to Vickery’s “The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen”, that “at the very moment of her death, her great achievement and her fragile prestige as a writer were going to perish with her”. As a consequence of the arrival of Romanticism, Jane Austen’s fiction rooted in gentle manners and tame settings, in severe contrast with romantic wilderness, turned definitely out of literary fashion.

⁴⁸ See Tomalin (221) “Henry Austen was told by a literary gentleman that it was much too clever to be the work of a woman”, no more details are provided.

⁴⁹ Words taken from her memorial tablet in Winchester Cathedral, the site of Austen’s burial. Later, an additional plaque was added to make known the authorship of her novels. See also Campos Pico (39); regarding the cathedral, she complains about being so expensive its admission fee, £6,5. However, it constitutes a must visit, for it is the place where Jane Austen passed her last days in search of a cure, and she was also buried there. Besides, in accordance with Campos Pico’s information (40), the exact house where Jane Austen died is not far from the cathedral, it cannot, by contrast, be visited and its owners make it clear with a deterrent note on its window.

By the 1840s, the Brontës depicted broad skylines and tragic landscapes like no one had ever dared before. Vickery (22'), this time addressing Lucasta Miller⁵⁰ in "The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen", a Brontë expert looking for an explanation of Charlotte's attitude to Austen⁵¹:

I think it suggests that Austen just wasn't hugely popular in the 1820s and '30s when Charlotte Brontë was, as it were, doing her apprenticeship as a writer. I mean, she was a hugely voracious reader but what she was reading was stuff that was completely opposed to the Austen sensibility. I think Brontë thought that Austen was in denial about human psychology. I mean, Brontë... You know, the sex instinct and the death instinct are the things that you get in the Brontë novels. They're sort of, you know, pulling them right up to the surface and Brontë thought that Austen was shallow, prim, and superficial, sort of averting her eyes from the truth about human nature. I would say that's a really unfair caricature of Austen because there's just as much pain and suffering, disinheritance, poverty, outsiders and depression there as there is in any Brontë novel. But clearly there's something lacking as far as romantic readers are concerned. Not surprisingly, Brontës' heroines incarnate, in Lucasta's opinion, "individualism" and rebellion whereas Austen's heroines constitute the embodiment of temperance seasoned with "smiling irony" rather than "hysteria"⁵². Soon after her death, consequently, Austen was overcome by the Brontës' dramatic landscapes, the romantic stories of Sir Walter Scott, as well as the social novel of Thackeray, Gaskell and Dickens. Victorian golden age, however, triggered a new surge in Austen's popularity thanks to the introduction of a particular invention: rail.

2.2 HER MEMOIR

The most important repost after the arrival of rail was a change in the speed of life. Reading became, unexpectedly, a more widely open activity to be performed anywhere. In fact, the very first railway⁵³ bookshop, WH Smiths, was opened in 1848, at Euston where anyone could buy a copy in their way home or to work. These very cheap editions were known as yellowbacks. At the time, Austen's novels had fallen out of copyright, as a consequence their price reached such ridiculous sums that their inclusion among the early yellowbacks sold by WH Smiths did not pose major difficulty.

⁵⁰ See Miller.

⁵¹ See Southam (1986); the division of Jane Austen's readership into two opposing camps, the Janeite devotees and the anti-Janeites, is an amusing controversy, long antiquated and dead long ago. In her opinion, it was an overwhelming claim by G. H. Lewes in favour of Austen what provoked Charlotte Brontë's classic statement of the anti-Janeite case.

⁵² To know more on the differences between Austen and the Brontës, see "Jane Austen vs Emily Brontë: The Queens of English Literature Debate". Chair: Erica Wagner. Perf. John Mullan and Kate Mosse in The Royal Geographic Society 26 February 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mP8dIIKpEg>

⁵³ Ironically, Jane Austen's growing popularity was due to the progress of the Industrial Revolution, a fact entirely omitted from her fiction. See Moretti (18) to know more about the existence of "two Englands" in Austen's novels; the rural and the industrialised one.

Nevertheless, thanks to these low-priced popular editions⁵⁴ Austen made herself known for the first time to a mass audience.

But the real turning point, or “first surge of Austenmania” according to Harman (7) came when Jane Austen’s nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh, decided, on his own initiative to publish a family-authorized version of her life. He (Austen-Leigh, *Memoir* 13) even made use of this quotation taken from the first chapter of *The Life of Columbus* by A. Helps: “He knew of no one but himself who was inclined to the work. This is no uncommon motive. A man sees something to be done, knows of no one who will do it but himself, and so is driven to the enterprise”.

The first edition of the *Memoir* would have a print run of a thousand copies by 16 December 1869, the 94th anniversary of her birthday. A year later, a second edition was printed adding fragments of unfinished or early drafts of works, including the cancelled Chapter 10 of Volume 2 of *P*, the early manuscript works *Lady Susan* and *the Watsons*, and synopsis of *Sandition*, under the title of *The Last Work*.

In this sense, Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 63-64) remarks on “how late Jane Austen’s biography remained a family property, and that her collateral descendants continued to exert an influence as biographers and keepers of the archive until relatively recently”. In fact, Sutherland adds that “Jane remained the particular property of that branch of the family descended from her eldest brother, James, through the Austen-Leighs and the Lefroys” to the extent that even Deirdre Le Faye, when she rewrote in 1989 the last Austen biography by Austen-Leigh, *Life and Letters*, as *A Family Record* had to do it “under the Austen-Leigh’s name and aegis”.

Unsurprisingly, it is easy to ask who is the Jane Austen portrayed in this biography. According to Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 66-67), “in offering a portrait of a woman whose novels were the effortless extension of a wholesome and blameless life lived in simple, natural surroundings, Austen-Leigh was influenced by a mid-nineteenth-century naturalism”. Sutherland adds, as a result, that “he sketched a mental and emotional

⁵⁴ Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 4-6) points out that it was possible to have S&S for sixpence in double columns in buff paper covers and she literally adds that “not only was each novel to be had for sixpence, they could also be traded for soap wrappers”.

geography whose narrow perspectives effectively cut us off from the larger contexts in which she moved, not least in their misunderstood and imposed quaintness”.

Sutherland concludes (*Textual Lives* 69-71) that “Austen-Leigh’s narrow provincialism”, determining “Austen’s seclusion within nature and family, served a mythographic interest”; that of the lost English “village geography” of the *cliché* everyone has in their mind. The great problem, in Sutherland’s (71) opinion, this *Memoir* poses, however, lays on the fact that “it is both authoritative and equivocal”. Besides, “it was written in a spirit of censorship as well as communication”.

No wonder the decision to write down Jane Austen’s major events was taken by her eldest brother’s children; Anna, James Edward and Caroline, as they had inhabited her natal home after their father took over clerical duties there on the retirement to Bath⁵⁵ of his father, George. All three were closer to her Hampshire roots than other branches of the family. As a consequence, Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 77) infers that “Austen-Leigh’s *Memoir* of his aunt is not just a family production, it is the production of a particular family view of Jane Austen; [...] nature loving, religious, dutifully domestic and middle class”. Whilst Kentish Jane Austen was “a more emotional figure, inward and passionate, and more gentrified, improved willy-nilly by contact with her fine relations”.

Regarding writing strategies shown in the *Memoir*, Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 86) highlights that Austen-Leigh makes use of an approach similar to that of Gaskell⁵⁶ describing Charlotte Brontë. He therefore, in all manners of way, attempts to avoid further enquiry from anything “familiarily disruptive, or counter-social as writing” by showing domestic activities of daily living like “a profoundly self-absorbed occupation”

⁵⁵ See Tomalin (76, 35-36, 174-175) to know more on the Austens’ retirement to Bath and its terrible consequences for Jane Austen, since she did not write a line for a long time. See also Dryden (2012: 107) to know more on the bright side of this retirement, for the spa town provided Austen with characters and situations depicted in her fiction.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Gaskell wrote and published the life of her friend and fellow novelist, Charlotte Brontë, in 1857. Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 85) claims that “Gaskell manipulated the evidence, suppressing details of Charlotte’s passionate feelings for and correspondence with Monsieur Heger, and providing a misleading portrait of her father, Patrick Brontë. Both distortions were performed in her opinion, in the service of domestic drama of the suffering woman, who before all else was a dutiful daughter and sister and whose writings were the excusable consequences of the damaging circumstances in which she lived”. See also Miller (30-62); according to her, “before she had even met Charlotte, Gaskell had formed a vivid mental picture of her, derived from a mixture of gossip and prejudice. Indeed, it was important for her to see Charlotte as a figure of pity, even if that meant exaggerating the isolation and misery of her life, since a focus on suffering seems to have been essential to her acceptance of the author of *Jane Eyre*”.

suggesting indirectly “a glimpse of a women for whom at times writing was more important than service to home and family”.

I find remarkably ironic that after the strong rejection expressed against Jane Austen by Charlotte Brontë, to have her fiction eventually accepted in the traditional Victorian society, Charlotte’s life had to be retold in such a refined manner that it ended up bearing a stronger resemblance to Austen’s life rather to her own, to the extent that Charlotte became, along with Austen, the embodiment of Victorian femininity.

2.3 JANEITES IN THE TRENCHES

Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 16) establishes “Jane Austen in her cult status” between 1880 and 1914. Therefore, whilst the old order was about to fade away, Jane Austen, her representative, paradoxically survived. In the documentary by the BBC “The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen”, Vickery (31’), for her part, claims that “100 years ago there was a rather more serious male interest in Austen’s books, precisely, a sophisticated and high-brow clique of academics and aesthetes who called themselves the Janeites”⁵⁷. To know more on the issue, Vickery invites Katie Halsey (32’) who explains there, that for Janeites like Sir George Saintsbury, “the proper appreciation of Austen's literature was an exclusive and reverential pursuit”. Halsey adds that

They are a sort of cosy elite of Oxford dons and literati, such as Montague Summers, A. C. Bradley, Lord David Cecil, Sir Walter Raleigh, R. W. Chapman, and E.M. Forster who are all really interested in Jane Austen, to such extent that they say things like, “I would like to marry Elizabeth Bennet and spend my life with her.”

It looks as though Janeites were, according to Halsey, “interested in falling in love with her characters, knowing more about them, being part of a world Jane Austen had created” and above all, Janeites did find, in Halsey’s view, “an idea of an England that had gone, a secure world that has rules, however much those rules may be subverted and undercut in the novels”. So surprisingly for many, Austen’s novels were recommended to British veterans suffering post-traumatic stress syndrome after the

⁵⁷ See Hanaway (28); although the word “Janeite” was coined in 1894 thanks to Saintsbury who insisted in spelling “Janite” without the middle “e”, it was not introduced in the *Oxford English Dictionary* until 1976. Besides, the entry lists “Jane-ite” and “Janite” as alternative spellings. Whether he intentionally did it or not, it was Kipling along with JASNA later, who made the word “Janeite” popular.

First World War or in Johnson's ("Divine Miss Jane" 33) words; "for soldiers whose minds were shattered by dynastic history, the famously limited dimensions of Austen's fictional world could feel rehabilitative". Indeed, there is a claim that *P&P* was the most read novel in the trenches. Unfortunately, there is no reliable proof of it.

Halsey (33') concludes that "it is good to know that there are all these male supporters of Jane Austen throughout history because somehow the fact Austen is now seen as a kind of female author with a female readership has somehow undermined her status"⁵⁸.

Regarding comments on Austen's wide curative effects, Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 17) points out two interpretations, one scholarly and one popular: on the one hand, Robert Chapman's Press critical edition of *the Novels of Jane Austen* (1923), and Kipling's short story entitled *The Janeites* (1924) on the other. The former constitutes, according to Sutherland, "the first and remains the only serious scholarly edition" of Austen's novels annotated and commented. In this sense, Sutherland adds that some authors⁵⁹ highly trust "moral and social powers of a national canon of Classical and English texts, represented by" academic *élite* as well as "by the democratizing policies of the National Home Reading Union and recently introduced cheap reprint series like Oxford University Press's World's Classics" as means of virtually combatting in the war. Indeed, "during the war, thanks to the efficiency of the Field Post Office, books were plentiful at the front".

In connexion with *The Janeites*, Kipling, a loyal Janeite who had lost his only son in battle, in search of consolation and comfort, used to read Austen aloud to his wife and daughter, and he even went on to write a short story (Johnson, *Jane Austen* 100) set in a London Masonic Lodge in 1920 where a war veteran talks about a secret society into which he was introduced during the conflict. Eventually, it turns out that whenever they talked in trenches about Jane Austen or any issue related to her, it constituted a kind of access code for acquiring certain products from the black market. The truth is that at the time, there were many who thought that all was placid in Austen's novels. Therefore,

⁵⁸ See Chap. III of the present study to understand why Austen is seen now as a kind of female author with a female readership.

⁵⁹ Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 18) Paul Fussell: *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 1975.

Kipling tries to suggest, according to Halsey (203) just the opposite, since he was aware of the fact that those novels were being advised to wounded soldiers:

That Austen's works are more than ever relevant in a wartime society, and employs many of the same strategies as Austen herself, such as irony, misdirection, inviting the reader to exercise ingenuity, and undercutting and subverting the characters' certainties. It is probable that Kipling knew that wounded soldiers were advised to read Jane Austen.

Johnson (*Jane Austen* 104), for her part, argues that Kipling's "Janeites do not link Austen nostalgically to a gentle England whose beauty and vulnerability are what menfolk must go to war to protect. By this reading, Austen would offer a way out of the horror of war and into some more comfortable part or imaginary place". For Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 20) additionally, Jane Austen's power lies in the kind of friendship Janeites as well as members of masonic lodges or soldiers share "secret societies, whether masons, soldiers or Janeites, share ways of making sense of the world [...] they create an alternative kinship group, closer to club or college fellowship than family, which they celebrate in the collegial masculine pleasures of cigarettes and port".

I will humbly suggest that soldiers, as any human being, needed to believe that no matter how much has been destroyed, particular things in life would remain unchanged, as those timeless topics in Jane Austen's novels which would eventually explain their success in war time: how important money is when one is lacking it, to choose the correct partner in life, the role each of us plays in society, humour and irony as a general state to tackle every day challenges...

However, the term "Janeite" was coined for the first time by Saintsbury in his introduction to a new edition of *P&P*, in 1894, as shown in Harman's (161) words, "how widespread and mainstream Austen fandom had become by then, far surpassing the sentimental cult of any other writer". In a similar way, Johnson (Fullerton, *Happily* 23) has defined the term as a "self-consciously idolatrous enthusiasm for Jane and every detail relative to her". As a consequence, religious imagery began to appear everywhere, from Austen's books being frequently described as "sacred" and "immortal" and her name "hallowed", to a passage in *P* being called "one of the very sacred things of literature".

At the time the Second World War broke out, additionally, A. A. Milne⁶⁰ argued that *P&P* was a test of character: “if you did not love *P&P* there was something fundamentally wrong with you” (Fullerton, *Happily* 27); even Winston Churchill, for example, read Jane Austen in the middle of the war and confessed that she had cured him; “Antibiotics and Jane Austen made me better from a fever”. Halsey (33’), finally, concludes that in spite of the fact that “part of the appeal of Janeitism was its inherent Englishness, cultural and linguistic reasons, paradoxically, slowed the dissemination of her works in the non-Anglophone world⁶¹”.

In the documentary “The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen”, Vickery (35’) ends up adding that in the universities, studying humanities became fashionable, for “after the unimaginable barbarity of world war, the civilising power of culture seemed essential for the future of mankind”, particularly English literature. Within this new discipline in vogue and thanks to the writings of FR Leavis, a controversial Cambridge don, “Jane Austen's ranking in the literary league tables⁶² was utterly transformed by 1948. Vickery adds that “Leavis was one of the most opinionated and influential critics who formed the taste of generations of graduates, from the 1930s right through to the 1960s”, and in his guidebook, “entitled *The Great Tradition*, FR Leavis asserted that there are only five truly great novelists writing in English: D. H. Lawrence, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, George Eliot, and then, the writer he declared the mother of the great tradition, Jane Austen”.

Finally, the JAS (Jane Austen Society) was founded during World War II to restore Chawton cottage⁶³, which had been divided into workers’ flats nearly a century earlier.

⁶⁰ Best known for his books about the teddy bear Winnie-the-Pooh.

⁶¹ See Favret (166-187); it is asked there, that along with Shakespeare, if Jane Austen constitutes the most English writer, how an American or whatsoever citizen (my own comment) can profess a love for her, without surrendering to Anglophilia, that is, Royal Navy, English countryside, Bath, Steventon Parsonage, Chawton Cottage.... Favret’s straightforward response reads as follows: “for those readers something else must be named: freedom and the pursuit of happiness”. In fact, making Austen free and happy in America, according to Favret (182), helped establish emerging definitions of a democratic nation, but it also encouraged the nation to “forget” race, slavery and unhappiness.

⁶² See Dow (2010); such is Austen’s popularity that Dow herself recognizes how difficult results sometimes to get her students to write on any other early nineteenth century author.

⁶³ Jane Austen lived there between 1809 and 1817, along with her mother and sister Cassandra, thanks to their wealthy brother Edward. Nowadays, it hosts the Jane Austen’s House Museum, not to be confused with Chawton House Library, about to be demolished until a wealthy American Janeite (Sandy Lerner) bought and restored it. Nowadays, it is dedicated to the study of women’s writing in English from 1600 to 1830, which opened on July, 10, 2003.

After having explored the most important Jane Austen landmarks in connection with her writing as well as her readers, I keep wondering what would have happened if she had not died at so early an age. Let us remember that by the age of twenty, she had already accomplished her major novels. Would her fame have been boosted if she had been considered a child prodigy?

The end of this virtual journey over Austen and her highly educated first readers as an example of high culture gives way in the next chapter to some of the main spontaneous illustrations of Austen's afterlives in popular culture, that is, television, screen and internet-related, profit-oriented Austen merchandise. Let us see what it may offer.



3. AUSTEN ON THE SCREEN, IN DIGITAL FORMAT AND ON THE WEB

Business, you know may bring money, but friendship hardly ever does (E XXXIV, 802)

In this chapter, I propose to present an overview of the current state of the Jane Austen brand on screen, by Hollywood as well as by Bollywood, digital format and on line. While it is true that Austen's novel adaptations, versions, rereadings and spin-offs proliferate, the fact remains that the range of opinions on whether they pose risks rather than offer advantages for a proper understanding of Austen's work spread rapidly and I intend to gather the most interesting ones in the next lines.

As stated in the introduction of the present study, the second torrential wave of Austenmania was triggered by film and television versions of Austen novels in the mid-1990s (Harman, 7), started by Colin Firth's BBC appearance in the role of Mr Darcy "who barely restrains eroticism: he plays billiards, fences, and, memorably, swims".⁶⁴

Sánchez-Reyes⁶⁵ (386-387), similarly, points out that "los años 95 y 96 presenciaron el estreno de tres largometrajes basados en otras tantas obras de Jane Austen: *Persuasion*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*, donde se debe buscar el origen de lo que se ha venido a llamar austenmanía". Unlike Harman, Sánchez-Reyes poses a rather thought-provoking question: "¿Es posible afirmar que los tres largometrajes recogen la esencia del universo de ficción creado por Jane Austen?"

According to Fullerton (*Happily* 175), there is not a conclusive answer:

Films have diminished vital aspects of *Pride & Prejudice* and enhanced others; they have eroticized the novel, cheapened⁶⁶ it and reinvented it. Without any doubt, they have hugely popularized it. It has become a truth most truly acknowledged universally that *Pride & Prejudice* is a joy to movie-makers. As the heroine of *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict* confesses, "if there were fifty adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, I'd see them all".

⁶⁴ See Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 348). See also Cahue (53); in spite of the overwhelming 1995 version by Andrew Davis, that Darcy does not really exist in Austen's fiction. Indeed, in the 1995 version, we fall hopelessly in love with that Colin Firth coming out of a lake. That is not definitely Jane Austen's Darcy ... we get enchanted though by the excellency of his manners... we are also captivated by his know how to behave and his subtlety, since what matters for him is just Lizzy's feeling towards him and whether Lizzy loves him back.

⁶⁵ Awarded a life membership of the Jane Austen Society of UK.

⁶⁶ See Wells ("Austen's Adventures"); screen adaptations in particular have created a mass market for Austen-related material, consumers to whom publishers appeal by issuing economical priced paperbacks.

Lynch (117), in a similar way, argues that Austen movies in the last decades have overshadowed the books and “I wonder whether this would not be the consequence of her own nephew’s words who claimed with pride that his aunt’s books were too tame for the tastes of the multitude”. There, Lynch concludes that “we might all want Jane Austen real in some way, but differ as to which way”.

Romero (*Austenitas* 113), by contrast, as a Spaniard fan, makes a positive remark:

Es evidente que aunque sea de forma bizarra, las adaptaciones austenianas siguen adelante. Es complicado seguir “exprimiendo” el limón con esta autora, pero creo que aún seguiremos viendo en nuestras pantallas a Jane Austen durante muchos años. Aunque yo sea una fan y me guste ver nuestras historias de forma adaptada, pienso que nuestra querida Jane necesita un descanso en la pantalla, momento ideal para adaptar cualquiera de las múltiples historias de época aún por producir en formato audiovisual.

Nonetheless, in her article on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the publication of *P&P* “Jane Austen: Icono Pop”, Romero (“Jane Austen” 30) asserts that “El amor a la obra de Jane ha pasado de la mayor ortodoxia literaria a arrastrarse a la aceptación de obras fuera del canon, que en muchos casos, “asesinan” a los personajes”.

Auerbach (278-279) for her part wonders what Austen might think of the amount of films from 1940 to the present with some connection to her novels. Her ironic guess leaves no doubt: “Austen would enjoy sharing box office profits but would discover that, as in the case of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, directions have made various kinds of cinematic monsters of her novels”. Auerbach adds that “yet even those films reasonably faithful to Austen’s plot and characterization have tended to focus on romance at the expense of other themes.”

Andrew Davies⁶⁷ (52’) and Sánchez-Reyes may illustrate the most conclusive and opposed opinions about the issue at stake; the latter showed indeed a very confident and optimistic vision of the adaptation world, while interviewed by Vickery in the documentary “The Many Lovers of Miss Jane Austen”:

⁶⁷ Legendary Welsh writer of screenplays and novels, best known for the adaptation of *P&P* (1995) starring Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle. Besides, Sutherland (“Jane Austen on Screen” 227) points out that Davies’ skill lies in writing lines that either sound like Austen’s or that the context persuades us she might have written.

What impact do you think the adaptations have on the readership of the books themselves? Well, I think there's been a change in a lot of ways, because a lot of kids, a lot of students, come to the books through the adaptations. Well, it's a good way to get school kids in particular to read the books.

So what's happening to the Austen brand now? Do you think her popularity has peaked for a while? I think it might have peaked over here in the West, at any rate. I'm not sure whether we've heard enough from the Chinese, from the Far East, in fact. I don't know when... because there's a huge enthusiasm for Jane Austen, in Japan and increasingly in China as well. So we've had Southern California, Bollywood and next stop China? Well, that's my bet.

The latter, Sánchez-Reyes (395), makes, eventually, a response, as powerful as sarcastic, to the abovementioned question whether films depict the essence of Austen's fiction:

Sería más preciso, denominar a la autora inspiradora de las películas por un nuevo nombre, Jane Absent. Tal vez así surgiría una nueva raza de pobladores de esa tercera vía, un grupo de incondicionales que, por analogía con el término "austenita", deberían nombrarse absentitas, y que ahora vagan sin encontrar su lugar, compartiendo el destino del holandés errante.

In this chapter, I will just consider, in any case, some of the numerous adaptations from Jane Austen's novels as well as biopics⁶⁸, for as John Wiltshire (*Recreating* 12) suggests; "to possess the past, it is necessary to remake it, since the novels speak to us, we -as scriptwriters, as filmmakers and novelists, and as critics- can speak back to them".

3.1 HOLLYWOOD

According to Wiltshire (*Recreating* 39) then, The BBC *NA* (1986) was the first version which dared to reinvent the text, a mixture between current cinematographic influences and a re-Gothicisation of Austen's original anti-Gothic satire. In his view, additionally, today's Jane Austen's novels transposed to the screen are treated with a similar freedom. Wiltshire (*Recreating* 41), consequently, establishes the main issue for debate which is how the filmic adaptation is judged; by fidelity to the original? (Then, who is original?) Or as a movie *per se*. Wiltshire presumes that divided between the

⁶⁸ Talking about Jane Austen, *Becoming Jane* and *Mss Austen Regrets*, Wells (*Everybody's Jane* 141) defines biopic as a biographical feature film.

adaptations conducted under the rubric of fidelity or those that destroy and then remake the original, the last ones are “more fruitful”⁶⁹.

I do share with Wiltshire the opinion that those adaptations not faithful to the original may be “more fruitful”, but in which sense? I guess they contribute to speculate about those aspects not fully answered according to the information we are provided with and above all to enjoy imagining how different one’s life may result just by adding or removing one key element of their life: what if Jane Austen had ever got married, etc.

Not surprisingly, Wiltshire offers there “a beginning to the creation of a theory of transposition of texts, not a comparison of filmic texts with Austen’s originals, but an account of the inner process of transformation into other media”. To that end, Wiltshire considers two films; *Jane Austen in Manhattan* (Merchant-Ivory, 1980) representing a discussion about Jane Austen and the ways in which her novels are alive today — indeed, “Jane Austen” is difficult due to the problems of cultural distance — and *Metropolitan* (Westerley Film, 1990), interested also in the very question of continuity, discontinuity and reinvention, that is, what we think about the relationship between a modern text and a Regency one.

The former regards two rival New York theatre directors each of whom wants to put on a play which Jane Austen adapted from the novel *Sir Charles Grandison*⁷⁰ by Samuel Richardson. The main actress of the adaptation is abducted by the rival director, suggesting that “a similar violence of appropriation is at work in his production of Austen’s text” following Wiltshire’s (*Recreating* 42) argument. The truth is that it was

⁶⁹ See also Dow (2012: 1); in this way, it is declared that the questions raised by the cultural uses of Jane Austen are more significant and more intriguing than debates over the fidelity of recreations.

⁷⁰ See Southam (1996); Samuel Richardson, the author of the original play *Sir Charles Grandison*, was Jane Austen’s best loved novelist. Southam informs there that a manuscript play, *Sir Charles Grandison*, 53 pages long, was to be auctioned in the late 70s and he had been asked to prove its authenticity. At first, the document had been regarded as a new writing by Austen due to the fact that it was thought to have been invented by her niece and transcribed by Austen, but Southam eventually concluded that the short play had been composed by the novelist as homage to her idol for her niece Anna in the years before 1800. However, in my edition of *Juvenilia: the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*, Sabor (2013), this play cannot be found even when it is alleged that all Austen’s *Juvenilia* is fully covered. There is no track of *Sandition* or *Lady Susan* either. See also Halsey (219) footnote 15, chap I. According to her, the issue still remains controversial.

Jane Austen herself who transposed events, characters and speeches from Samuel Richardson's context to her own⁷¹. Indeed, Wiltshire (*Recreating* 43) affirms that

In the eighteenth century the genre of the "Imitation" was particularly popular, its terms and conditions clearly understood. An imitation was not, as its name might suggest, a copy, but a version of a classical original into English which transposed events, characters and allusions into contemporary equivalents.

However, the difference is clear, at the time it was highly regarded. The latter (*Metropolitan*) follows a few days in the life of two friends; Tom and Audrey. Tom, for his part, cannot believe Audrey still enjoys Austen, for what Jane Austen wrote seems ridiculous from today's perspective. Audrey, additionally, is put in Fanny's⁷² position (*MP*) since she is in love with Tom, while Tom discusses with Audrey his feelings for another girl. The link between *Jane Austen in Manhattan* and *Metropolitan*, according to Wiltshire (*Recreating* 57), is the question of how to reconcile fidelity to Jane Austen with contemporaneity and how to manage the transition between a writer thought to be elitist, with modernity.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to watch *Jane Austen in Manhattan*, for it is too old to be found on the web or elsewhere at a reasonable price. However, I wish it were "more fruitful" than *Metropolitan*. To be honest, the latter could illustrate an adaptation of Jane Austen's fiction as well as any other writer's.

For Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 341), by contrast, one of the main difficulties regarding adaptations, lies in the fact that the effects we see are always more specific than those we hear, rather than in being faithful, since the subsequent question would lead us to wonder, faithful to what? In order to validate her statement, Sutherland accuses some filmic devices' reliance of "clumsy reductive or inapposite by comparison with the novel's subtler ambiguities of voicing". For example, in *E*, (Miramax, 1996) the conversion of indirect discourse into direct conversation between Emma and Mrs Weston, or the heroine apparently addressing herself in a mirror, or writing in her very

⁷¹ Ibid. 10. Halsey considers Austen as a "resisting reader" as well as "appropriative reader", since Austen enjoyed the ability to resist and appropriate for her own purposes what she perceived as ridiculous or unnatural in the writing of others.

⁷² Let us remember that Fanny Price, the adopted niece of Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, is secretly in love with her cousin Edmund almost from her adoption at the age of ten. Her cousin, by contrast, cannot think about any other woman than the Londoner Mary Crawford.

un-Austenian diary⁷³, or just with the ironic narrator missing. Many films lack Austen's original force.

The major obstacle in the transference of Austen novels to film, nonetheless, constitutes, in Sutherland's (*Textual Lives* 348) opinion, "the visualization of the leading romantic males, because in this is buried the rich novelistic ambivalence over their ultimate significance in the heroine's maturation". On the contrary, Sutherland blames "the film versions for consistently inverting the novels' assumptions". As a result, males are endowed with physical and emotional expressiveness. For instance, Colin Firth (BBC, 1995) played an "erotically enhanced Darcy with smouldering eyes who strips and dives into a pool"⁷⁴ or "Colonel Brandon's unsavoury novelistic reserve is transformed into a smouldering mix of Byronic adventure and a sexual mystery" (*S&S*, Sony, 1995)⁷⁵.

Regarding the controversial male issue in Jane Austen's screen adaptations, it is more related, in my opinion, to a common assumption that men should have leading roles in film, otherwise their characters must be twisted, introduced or invented by force. Well, let us accept that in Jane Austen's fiction female heroines occupy a central space and the reason why men exist is their contribution to women's psychological development. To some, however, this does not seem enough. As a result, their physical enhancement should come to fill on screen their lack of protagonism.

To provide a context for the nature and limits of screen adaptations and biopics, Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 351-353) draws a parallel between the impact of circulating libraries⁷⁶ and novel reading at Austen's time and that of cinema nowadays. Those revolutionary libraries, which included elaborate marketing strategies such as flyleaf advertisements or newspaper promotions of forthcoming titles, indeed marked "a new democratization of knowledge driven by popular market forces rather than by elite ideological purposes". As a consequence, critics were abundant, since popular novels

⁷³ See Halsey (18); Jane Austen did not leave a diary or journal and unlike many women of her period and class, she does not seem to have kept a commonplace book or album of quotations. See also Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 59); where Cassandra's precise dating of her sister's last completed novels points to the existence of a diary. Sutherland adds there, that Tomalin also speculates about its existence.

⁷⁴ See Auerbach (279)

⁷⁵ Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 348)

⁷⁶ For more information on subscription lists and rental and lending libraries see Byrne (75-89). See also Halsey (41)

sought entertainment over instruction, and regarded them as a dangerous pastime. In addition, it was considered that reading novels, identified with women readers and authors, required less effort than other literary forms.

Needless to say, Jane Austen's writing represents her ambition to take the novel in a new direction. However, in their continuous supply of visual signals, Auerbach (280) points out that "some filmmakers have reduced her novels to little more than sappy love stories". In her opinion, "the marketing of Austen films as "chick flicks" seems only to have reinforced the notion that her novels are feminine". Auerbach (283) states eventually that "Jane Austen is no more a writer for women than Shakespeare is a writer for men", adding that assertive phrase of Anne Brontë: "If a book is a good book it is for both men and women".

Enkvist (144) similarly criticises the diminished view of Austen as a romantic writer as a result of screen adaptations:

Austen describe a personajes y situaciones estrictamente contemporáneas a su momento, mientras que estas adaptaciones cinematográficas se han convertido en los ejemplos paradigmáticos de películas que reflejan épocas históricas. Los elementos añadidos en las películas, como las escenas nocturnas, la iluminación con antorchas y la belleza de los vestidos, nos pueden dar una idea falsa de Austen como escritora romántica.

For Brownstein (196) "Austen's novels must seem slow and dull to anyone who has enjoyed the handsome, clever, richly coloured movies, costume dramas calculated to persuade people to see her love stories as naïve, absurdly chaste romances of mostly historical interest". According to Auerbach (286-287) in addition:

the explosion of attention paid to Austen, whether in spoofs, films, scholarly books, websites, societies, detective books, musicals, or other creative extensions, has helped generate exiting new interest in Jane Austen. They also serve to prove Virginia Woolf's assertion that "Jane Austen's characters are so rounded and substantial that they have the power to move out of the scenes in which she places them into other moods and circumstances: Emma Woodhouse can become a spoiled Valley Girl (*Clueless*, Paramount Pictures, 1995) or Mrs Bennet is spotted serving gherkins at Christmas parties (*Bridget Jones's Diary*, Miramax, 2001).

Therefore, in Sutherland's ("Jane Austen on Screen" 220) opinion "current adaptations are part of the rebranding of Jane Austen as the godmother of twenty-first-century

romance”. She accuses these film makers of depicting Jane Austen is an utterly different way as she once was: “a writer of impeccable Johnsonian credentials, barbed wit and complex morality; now she is savvy, sexy and very modern”.

Romero (*Austenitas* 80) for instance, expresses her disagreement with the last screen adaptation of *P&P* (Focus Features, 2005) directed by Joe Wright, starred by Keira Knightley and nominated for an Oscar:

Yo no puedo considerarla positiva, aunque lo sea de esa manera. Creo que los actores realizaron un trabajo correcto, que la música de Dario Marianelli fue espléndida, pero que metieron ideas equivocadas en las cabezas de algunos austenitas; y no sólo porque cambiaron el nombre de la protagonista de “Lizzy” a “Lizzie”. El daño más importante fue la transformación de la novela original en una espiral “rosácea” de folletín romántico, sobre todo si se piensa en el final “especial” que se preparó para su emisión en EEUU, y que se puede ver en DVD. La irónica Jane que siempre escribía sobre romances racionales, como bien sabemos, era apartada por la fuerza de los sentimientos a un mundo más propio de Marianne Dashwood en fase de depresión post-Willoughby.

Associating myself with Romero’s objection to the film, for instance, I will add that during Jane Bennet’s illness, Austen tells us that she receives the visits of the Bingley sisters in her bedroom, at Netherfield (*The Complete Novels of Jane Austen* 219). As shown in the film (*P&P* 2005 35’), by contrast, Mr Bingley does visit Jane Bennet in her bedroom during her illness, which is not possible, for he is a man. Only Mr Bingley’s sisters are permitted to entertain Jane with their conversation in the bedroom. Elizabeth Bennet, meanwhile, signals her closeness to her sister by spending much of her time in the bedroom. However, when Jane is able to come down Mr Bingley sits with her and talks to almost no one else⁷⁷.

Regarding biopics, Cano-López (143) points out that whilst Jane Austen mocks Northanger Abbey’s heroine, “no one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine, for Catherine is neither pretty nor intelligent, and her learning, drawing and music skills are all deficient”, recent film adaptations, have ironically transformed Jane Austen into a literary heroine, just the precise opposite of her will.

⁷⁷ See pp. 2, footnote 11 of the present study regarding the sisters’ intimacy sharing bedrooms.

The highly controversial biopic *Becoming Jane*⁷⁸ (Hanway, 2007), for example, constitutes for Wells (*Everybody's Jane* 162), a portrait of “Austen as a young woman who struggles to realize her desires in the face of social and economic barriers erected by the conservative, patriarchal society of her time”. The positive aspect of the film lies for her in the fact that it makes us believe that she could live on her own work, since Austen is depicted “as more ambitious and professionally savvy, and hence more welcoming of recognition”. Sutherland (“Jane Austen on Screen” 222), however, describes it as “an extremely loose adaptation of elements from *P&P* masquerading as a biopic of Austen’s early life”.

Miss Austen Regrets (BBC, 2008), in Sutherland’s (“Jane Austen on Screen” 228) opinion, ventures further into how Jane Austen’s life might appear if we view it from her decision to reject a marriage proposal. Therefore, whether or not Jane made the right decision in remaining unmarried is the big unanswered question. North (109), for her part, claims that the film suggests that “the condition of being a woman in this society is that of uncertainty” adding that “the only sure thing is the precariousness of a woman’s fate when it depends on marriage to the right man”. North concludes that “*Miss Austen Regrets* shares with *Becoming Jane* a conception of Austen’s life as a failed romance”. Besides, in both films, the absence of a partner is regarded as a tragedy.

I insist on the fact that we are confronted in Jane Austen’s fiction with dilemmas of the 19th century easily transferred to our daily life and that is precisely the reason why screen versions exploit hot news such as placing Jane Austen at the circumstance of having to choose between love and personal development at work, between having a large family and professional success.

North (110) admits, however, that

Recent biopics have made a significant contribution to the multiple ways in which Austen has been put to “use” as a catalyst for creative interventions. If Virginia Woolf found that Austen’s fiction invited the reader to “supply what is not there”, then her life story, with all its openings for interpretation and its endlessly contentious relationship with her work, positively demands competitive “imaginative retellings”.

⁷⁸ North (92) sustains that Jane simply does things that “Jane” did not do: she visits Ann Radcliffe in London, for instance, and she elopes with Tom Lefroy. That said, Tom Lefroy probably wore his hair powdered and Mrs Austen had lost several of her front teeth. In addition, JASNA on Line <http://www.jasna.org/film/becoming-jane.html>

A propos of Lost in Austen (Mammoth Screen, 2008), the four-part television series written by Guy Andrews, Sutherland (“Jane Austen on Screen” 221) claims that it constitutes a transposition of *P&P*. Amanda Price, a woman from modern London “disenchanted with life and love”, enters the plot of the novel through a portal in her bathroom, to join the Bennet family affecting events disastrously. Sutherlands point out as innovative, there, the fact that till now

The idea that a book absorbs us as we read is familiar enough. But the opportunity literally to enter its pages and eject the heroine in the process offers unusual scope; both for our understanding of how fiction works and for developing a more critical relationship to adaptation⁷⁹.

For Dryden (2013: 115), *Lost in Austen* brings together reality with fiction as well as past with present facts, however, it is not time travel, or costumes what matters but Austen’s universal themes, since “we love to invent and reinvent Jane Austen, we are drawn to her themes of manners, courtesy, love, and respect”. Laurie Kaplan (2010), by contrast, appreciates “this carefully constructed three-part vignette”. In her opinion, *Lost in Austen*, like *P&P* presents at least two realities, two codes of social behaviours, two cultures, and two languages, but Amanda seems delighted with those qualities more related to the traditional culture; such as manners, courtesy, grace and romance, rather than her twit-and-blog-charged ugly truth she is definitely confronted to.

Death Comes to Pemberley (BBC, 2013) eventually constitutes the adaptation of PD James's homage novel to *P&P* in 3 episodes. After six years of marriage, Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy are preparing for their annual ball when celebration comes suddenly to a halt due to a murder. Unlike the previous one, I would recommend this three-part mini-series. Just to give an idea of the importance of this sequel, I will say that the BBC

⁷⁹ To learn more about this series, see http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/lost_in_austen.

channel received hundreds of complaints about the last scene where Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy appeared, chastely dressed and embraced, in bed⁸⁰.

Everything suggests that audiences read Jane Austen's novels, otherwise I wonder how they guess that there is no explicit sex in any of her novels, or were all the complaints coming from scholars and professors? Once again Wiltshire (*Recreating* 40) asks himself "Does one need to abduct, remake, reinvent and transgress the original in order to make Austen's work heard by a contemporary audience? Can one work of art be true to its predecessor only through a kind of creative destruction?"

I presume screen adaptations, spin-offs and biopics should play the role of mere advertising, propaganda to bring virtual readers to Jane Austen's novels, since in today world image precedes written words.

3.2 BOLLYWOOD

Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 357-358) states that "there is still the intriguing new possibility of a more complex cultural reanimation of Austen's narratives of social manners when their stories are transposed to a non-Western setting". Gurinder Chadha, for example, takes advantage of the film genres of Mumbai, London and Los Angeles to mediate Austen's novels in the temporal shift from Regency England to modern-day India in *B&P* (Pathé Pictures International, 2004). Sutherland adds, there, that the film results in a "spectacle and dance, exuberant performance pastiche, and characters with diverse establishing and moving across many ethnic, geographic and cultural boundaries", this way, Chadha may have found, in Sutherland's opinion, "the way to communicate the lively difference of Austen's social realities". Sutherland concludes with a positive note "this hybrid product may nevertheless be Jane Austen's most effective ambassador in the 21st century".

Fullerton (*Happily* 194-195), for her part, claims that despite being only loosely based on Jane Austen's novel *P&P*, "Regency bodices for Indian saris work surprisingly well, and the scenario of an Indian Mrs Bakshi who is desperate to marry off her four

⁸⁰ For more information on Austen screen adaptations ranked in terms of sexual frustration, see <http://www.mtv.com/news/2170587/jane-austen-movies-sexual-tension/>: "In the pantheon of Austen adaptations, the 1995 *P&P* reigns supreme".

daughters is most convincing”. Fullerton eventually judges this *B&P* “fun and memorable”.

For Jones (175), however, *B&P* “is not quite or only an Indian or British Indian version of *P&P*”, since she considers it essential to apprehend this Indian version through Said⁸¹ and his critical wake. She points out that *B&P* “strives to affirm all sorts of cultural, racial and artistic hybridities towards a diminution of the impact of differences”. As a consequence, “we are asked to celebrate capitalism as though it is a triumph of multicultural upward mobility”. On top of that, replacing *Pride* with *Bride* results, according to Jones, in “the triumph of the romantic narrative over the sardonic ambivalences of the original text that a number of scholars have identified as a worrying feature of the extraordinary surge of popular adaptations of Austen’s novels”.

KK (*Sri Surya Films*, 2000), for its part, illustrates a reworking of *S&S*, and becomes, in part, a movie about a man who does not want to make a movie like *KK*, since the condition *sine que non* to get financed consists on inclusion of big song and dance numbers. In addition, the image of characters being suddenly transported into an international location that bears no relation to the narrative is a defining feature of Bollywood. For Jones (177), however, Indian women both read and dance, here, in ways that are incomprehensible within Austen. In her opinion, “the primary colours of clothing and set, the lusciously varied, differently modest and immodest forms of movement challenge the contained tenor of Austen”.

Aisha (*PVR Pictures*, 2010) eventually exemplifies the Indian adaptation of *E*, perhaps influenced by *Chueless*. Unlike the others, the heroine lives in a world of extreme privilege and no risk. Like the original heroine, Aisha is preoccupied with herself all day long. The film, finally, may subtly question whether Aisha is the result of this modern youth-oriented and hedonistic culture, not limited by any parental demand, enjoying absolute freedom, but not a single obligation to perform.

⁸¹ Chada’s film shares many of the statements introduced by Said on Orientalism which rejects that image of the East as a place full of “sensual women to be used by men, a kind of mysterious place full of secrets and monsters, “the marbles of the East” as it is used to be called” (Said’s words taken from the video below, 5’). To know more on Orientalism, watch this video on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g about Edward Said himself explaining the context within which he wrote *Orientalism*, his theory and its influences on how we look at the East today.

Johnson (*Jane Austen* 184) conclusively expresses her point, in a similar way as Sánchez-Reyes, about screen versions adding that “to the extent that Austen is known first and sometimes primarily or solely as a creature of visual culture, then, her modern-day cult is a breakaway sect that has eliminated her fundamental aspects of her mystery rather than revelled in it”. In fact, “only by reading and rereading her novels could her acolytes begin to fathom her secrets and marvel at her glory”.

3.3 DIGITAL AUSTEN

For Yaffe (181) today, from China to New Zealand, and Australia to Bilbao, students write essays on Jane Austen issues, and lectures and seminars are taking place all over the world. However, Jane Austen fandom, “an international community of people bound together by a shared love for Austen’s books and their film adaptations, is a creation of the digital age”. Svensson (215), however, replies that technology is not the only reason for the growing fan fiction phenomenon, but participation is a significant feature where the wish to take part, to let your voice be heard or seen, is an important factor. Indeed, almost every one of the following website cited offers the possibility to take part in their debates, reading, meetings or any other suggested activities.

According to Yaffe (182), “*Republic of Pemberley*, soon to become the Internet’s largest Jane Austen fan community”, was formed “for people addicted to *P&P*”, so that they could “feel free to gush” and today “Pemberleans” from around the world argue, inform and debate on Jane Austen issues. There, Yaffe offers information about the beginning of the site; for instance, the domain was registered in May 1997, and since then Pemberley’s list of nearly eight hundred registered members includes at least twenty-two variants of Elizabeth as alias, but not a single Darcy⁸². Additionally, according to Yaffe, this website has got five to ten millions hits each month from 150,000 unique visitors coming from 165 countries. In addition, *Republic of Pemberley* covers any type of information related to Jane Austen; ranging from her Juvenilia to the genealogy of any of the characters of her fiction or bibliography of her sequels.

⁸²“The Pulsating Mr. Darcy”. *The Economist*, 28 Jan, 2013: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2013/01/daily-chart-19>. Ironically, looking at the graphic about how many times Elizabeth and Mr Darcy are mentioned in books or journals throughout history to compare their particular allure, Mr Darcy’s popularity seems to be submitted to historic time, whilst Elizabeth’s is more timeless, since her name is steadily mentioned. Mr Darcy, by contrast, suffers periods where he is not mentioned at all, as well as peaks of popularity.

Furthermore, *Hablando de Jane*, managed by Mila Cahue, constitutes by far the best Austen-connected website in Spanish. She regularly informs on-line users of any article, film, writing or meeting on the issue. Indeed, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank her for the invaluable information her website provides. As for *El club Mrs Darcy*, although I was unable to contact its administrator from Zaragoza, this website provided me with invaluable information on documentaries related to Austen. *El Salón de Té* run by, among others, Carmen Romero offered me additional information. Regarding particularly Jane Austen movies, in addition, "Jane Austen Movies" paved the way for the writing of this chapter. *El Sitio de Jane*, finally, is exclusively administrated by the Romero sisters (Almudena and Carmen). It concerns mainly Austen fiction and its numerous screen adaptations.

Not surprisingly, Svensson (217) holds the idea that through the creative work of enthusiastic fans, Austen's stories become part of a global universe that extends far beyond her own creation. These remakes and makeovers prove that there is a need and desire to express one's own interpretation of the novel and its characters. As a consequence, there is a chance that the story reaches a new, wider audience, and thus the Austen community expands, as is the case of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (Pemberley Digital, 2012) a Primetime Emmy Award winning series based on Jane Austen's *P&P*, in YouTube format. In this series three adult Bennet sisters; Jane, Lizzie, and Lydia, live with their parents as they cope with school, student loans, and underemployment in a struggling economy. Jane is a fashion merchandiser who has failed to pay her student loans, Lizzie is earning a master's degree in mass communications and accumulating loans she may not be able to repay, and Lydia is enrolled in a community college but takes partying far more seriously than her academics.

For Zerme (2013) the issue at stake with this YouTube series lies on the question whether women's success and happiness depend on financial security or on having good relationships. The series suggests, according to her, that women can and should achieve both, but while *P&P* suggests that love should lead to financial security, the YouTube series privileges career over romance and, despite its supposedly happy ending, calls into question the cultural mandate for women to balance successfully their careers and their relationships.

Regarding Youtube, as far as I know, *Emma approved*⁸³, has just been awarded an Emmy for interactive storytelling.

As a final remark, while I must confess my absolute and profound devotion for any product suspected of keeping any relation, even in the most remote way, with Jane Austen or any of her novels, I share with Svensson (217) the opinion that “the continuous interest in Austen’s fiction is very much about pleasure and passion, but also about profit”. As a result, I doubt whether any of those spin-offs will ever offer any serious and academic argument for a better understanding of either Jane Austen or her fiction which would lead us straightforwardly to the concept of “popular culture” whose aim, with the exception of the websites, which are spontaneously managed and maintained, according to During (198), “is profit not quality”, since “it is not the spontaneously produced culture of the community, but instead is the product of commercial enterprises”. Lacking any better statement, I thus face facts when it comes to Jane Austen, and admit my complete ignorance and vulgar nature just “seeking to relax, forget work and have a good time in *my* leisure hours” (During, 198).



⁸³ To know more on this YouTube series, watch this video to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeeXkf8LZ_8

4. AUSTEN'S BODY

The past, present, and future, were all equally in gloom (NA XXVI, 1006)

In this section, I obviously do not pretend to offer an answer to the question posed by Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 117) about “how the archive evolved from which Jane Austen has been fashioned with such a mixture of circumspection and apparent ingenuousness”. What I pursue is rather to present how notions about Austen’s body developed from the nineteenth century to this day along with a remarkable shift in the content of the debate about Austen’s image; from how she looked, that is, whether her portrait is accurate, to, in more recent times, whether it is a genuine portrait of Jane Austen.

For this reason, the present chapter will provide us with certain clues about why I consider that there is not one single, but a multifaceted image of Jane Austen. Accordingly, in case there is an academic Austen as opposed to a popular one, both are perfectly compatible⁸⁴. Indeed, there are so many Austen images as anyone wish to imagine, since I share the opinion Fowler (1) offers in the prologue of her book that “Each of us has a private Austen”, as well as Dryden’s (104) statement, in the sense that “the sketch drawn by Cassandra is so widely open, no little detail in her face, that we shape her into our own design”.

According to Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 111), while Jane Austen’s life events have been “minimally recorded, her appearance curiously has not”. As a consequence, anyone might think that after compiling so much information about how her body looked like, Janeites would already enjoy a consistent portrait of Jane Austen. Tomalin (110) holds, however, that eyewitnesses’ accounts differ to such degree as to portray her “as somewhere between a doll and a poker”⁸⁵. Auerbach (19) goes further and adds that “if a picture speaks a thousand words, then we can learn voluminous tomes from the many touch up jobs given to Jane Austen’s portrait”.

⁸⁴ See Barker (199); in her article about the analysis of t-shirt exhibiting Austen’s sentences or images, Barker concludes that Austen is “a figure who embodies the tensions between the mainstream and the alternative visions of the world, because she can easily represent both”. These two opposing sentences [Jane Austen: Reading is Sex], are often placed together on the same t-shirt. It decidedly brings together Austen’s high-cultural status and the elite group of Janeites with alternative and more modern interpretations far from conventions and stereotypes.

⁸⁵ See Tomalin (110) Chap. X “The Doll and The Poker”.

Johnson (*Jane Austen* 18), for her part, suggests that “the belief in Austen’s uncanny textual power has for the most part depended on the banishment of her body” and that would be, in her opinion, the reason why there is only one authenticated portrait of her. Here, Johnson claims as well that “portraits, images and even motion pictures deserve more attention, regardless of their authenticity or accuracy, because they testify how the story of Jane Austen’s body gets imagined and reimagined”. Johnson eventually concludes that “the vehemence that images of Jane Austen can arouse shows that more is at stake than academic questions of authenticity” (18).

For Kirkham (68), “there is no good, undisputed portrait of Jane Austen and controversy has developed over what there is”, partly, in her opinion, from lack of knowledge about many aspects of Austen’s life. She paradoxically adds that “once all those of the two generations who had known Austen had died, some information relevant to the portraits was gone for good”, suggesting that her relatives, rather than helping to shed light on Austen’s real image, made it blur.

4.1 AUSTEN IMAGES

According to the National Portrait Gallery (Johnson, *Jane Austen* 30), there is only one authenticated portrait of Jane Austen: the pencil and watercolour sketch of Austen by Cassandra that the museum purchased for £130, in 1948. To be honest, Fowler’s *Jane Austen Book Club* members, as well as any self-respecting Janeite, feel less than happy with this image. Indeed, when in 1833, Richard Bentley, editor of Austen’s six novels asked Cassandra and Henry for any portrait of the writer, they never mentioned this sketch.

To such extent may the portrait happen to be disappointing that Johnson (*Jane Austen* 32) wonders “whether Cassandra is trying to produce a caricature or just being clumsy at producing an informal portrait”. The truth is that the National Portrait Gallery dates it in 1810, although the Austen family never said a word about its existence. It was not indeed until it became the frontispiece of Austen-Leigh’s *Memoir* of 1869-70 that the portrait saw the light.

In spite of this, according to Johnson (*Jane Austen* 32), it is not sufficiently documented that this aforementioned portrait were drawn by Cassandra, since it was provided by

Cassandra's great-niece in 1869 without any explanation; neither from her own nor from Cassandra's part, for there is not a single comment in the latter's will about it.

Contrary to what one could expect, the image used as frontispiece for the first edition of the *Memoir* was not eventually the abovementioned portrait, but an engraving commissioned to a professional portraitist, James Andrews of Maidenhead, based on the simple sketch by Cassandra, where Jane's facial expression was sweetened and her posture corrected. On this matter, Sutherland (*Textual Lives* 115) highlights that:

We have been readier to assume that the sketch is just bad rather than that it is calculated in what it reveals of a "partial and prejudiced" social satirist. The double portrait of sketch and commission inevitably unsettle each other, forcing recognition of the limits of any impersonation. Not being "like", as the family recognized in the case of the engraved commission, functions as a form of protection at the same time as it offers an image which can live outside and thus comfortably escape control.

Kirkham (76), for her part, affirms that this last commissioned portrait sought "to make Jane Austen presentable to the Victorian public. In any case, Kirkham brands this image of Austen as an "imaginary portrait." However strange that may seem, only one descendant, Frank Austen's grandson, John H. Hubback, valued Cassandra's sketch of Jane enough as to reproduce it in *Austen's Sailor Brothers* (1906). It was indeed, according to Johnson (*Jane Austen* 46) the only published version of the sketch until 1948 and ironically it is frequently reprinted, for it is now in the public domain.

A different version of Austen came to light in 1884 when Lord Brabourne, a great-nephew from the wealthier Knight branch of the family, edited and released an unpublished batch of her surviving letters with a remarkable biographical preface which he dedicated to Queen Victoria. Whilst for the Steventon or Hampshire Austens, Jane Austen is "nature loving, religious, dutifully domestic and middle class", for the Kentish Austens (descendants of Austen's healthy brother Edward) Brabourne's Austen is "a more emotional figure, inward and passionate, and of course more gentrified" (Sutherland, *Textual Lives* 77).

The fact is that thanks to some neglected letters recently discovered at Chawton Cottage, Lord Brabourne took seriously the duty of finding and authenticating a portrait

for use as a frontispiece (Johnson, *Jane Austen* 46). Surprisingly, Brabourne discovered that one of his cousins (J. Morland Rice) had a picture said to be of Jane Austen which turns out to be the “Rice portrait”⁸⁶, highly likely to portray her in her early teens, and reprinted as such until the 1930s.

Although the Rice family was so proud and protective of his treasured portrait, it was eventually possible to take a photograph of the oil on canvas drawn by Ozias Humphry. Johnson (*Jane Austen* 47) insists on the fact that to such a degree were the Rices careful that in 1930s, when the National Portrait Gallery tried to acquire it “amidst veiled threats”, they strongly refused its offer, otherwise it would be in the museum along with the sketch watercolour by Cassandra.

According to Johnson (*Jane Austen* 48), the Rice portrait happens to be the finest picture of Jane Austen⁸⁷, for unlike Cassandra’s watercolour, it is professionally executed. Regarding the artist, on the other hand, it is not a trivial issue for Johnson to underline Ozias Humphry as the executor, since he was a frequent visitor to Austens Cottage, rather than Zoffany, to whom its authorship had been firstly attributed, who was in India when the portrait was executed.

Eventually, Johnson (*Jane Austen* 50) concludes that the publication of the portrait in 1884 enabled readers to reject Austen’s previous image “with a saintly and shy figure” depicted by the *Memoir* and encouraged them instead to imagine her “energetic, mischievous, high-spirited and satiric”. At the same time, she wonders why neither Cassandra nor Henry made any mention of the Rice portrait when they were asked for a picture for use in the frontispiece.

The answer to this question lies, according to Johnson (*Jane Austen* 52), in their unwillingness to place any image of Austen into commercial circulation, “least of all a portrait of a robust girl who, far from shrinking modestly from view, fronts the beholder dauntlessly, whose expression conveys all the sauciness and satire Henry already insisted she never had”.

⁸⁶ See pp. 49 of the present study for more information about this portrait.

⁸⁷ Although some scholars (Johnson among others) think this painting may be authentic, Le Faye concludes that “this attractive little girl is not Jane Austen”. In any case, Auerbach (20) questions why anyone would put a painting of a girl on the frontispiece of a woman’s collection of letters?

Sutherland (quoted in Wells, *Everybody's Jane* 144) expresses herself in the same way as Johnson. Indeed, the former singles Cassandra out as the major responsible for these varying depictions of Jane Austen, since Cassandra not only kept many of her sister's private papers from view by destroying them, but also divided the remainder among different branches of the family.

In addition, it should not be forgotten that according to Le Faye, in her article entitled "Three or Four Families: Suggestions for New Directions in Biographical Research", only 160 out of a possible total of 3000 letters written during Austen's adult lifetime survived, not to mention that she kept no diary or journal in which to record her private feelings: "It is this lack of knowledge of her private life that is so frustrating for biographers and that makes the absence of diaries and journals so particularly unfortunate".

Wells (*Everybody's Jane* 144), for her part, agrees that more than any other person, including Austen herself, Cassandra determined what can and cannot be known about Austen. Austen fans may give two possible responses to Cassandra's display: "Austen fans can resent Cassandra for limiting access to their beloved author. Or, Cassandra can be celebrated for opening up so much space to imagine Austen".

Finally, Sutherland (quoted in Wells, *Everybody's Jane* 144) adds that Cassandra did a profound service when she censored or destroyed her sister's private papers and correspondence, for she "licensed the imagining of fact, the dream of history".

If Andrew's modified version of Cassandra's sketch was, in Johnson's opinion (*Jane Austen* 34) "twee enough", the steel engraving based on it and drawn by the Lizars firm in 1870 did not ameliorate it, paradoxically though, the latter has been the most widely reprinted portrait of Jane Austen. Unlike Johnson, some of Austen's descendants highlighted the "pleasing, sweet" expression in Andrew's version of Jane's face, while the engraving was accepted, since "it gives a face and a body to an aunty sweetness acknowledged to be inaccurate or unreal" (Johnson, *Jane Austen* 37).

In the section related to silhouettes, eventually, Kirkham (75) adds *The Collins* and *the Lefroy* silhouettes. The former shows the right profile of a woman's head and it was

found pasted into volume 2 of a second edition of *MP* (1816). In accordance with the National Portrait Gallery, however, “the identity of the silhouette is not absolutely proven”, although it may be attributed to Mrs Collins, a professional profilist who worked in Bath in the late 18th and early 19th century. The latter was given by Jessie and Lefroy, great-grandnieces of Jane Austen, to Winchester Cathedral, probably in the late 1930s, showing the left profile of a woman’s head⁸⁸. The truth is that Le Faye herself examined the silhouette in 1995 and concluded that the inscription on its back had been written in modern blue-black ink⁸⁹.

I will finally add Johnson’s (*Jane Austen* 66) remark:

How could any image be commensurate to what we think and feel about her? How could so momentous and yet so intimate figure, one so divine and so domestic, one who has become the site of such different and such contradictory visions and fantasies –about civility, love, history, and England itself- survive figuration without arousing disappointment or anger?

Thanks to Jane Austen’s pelisse⁹⁰, however, her size is apparently the only feature of her aspect that can be taken for granted. It dates back to 1814, made in twill weave silk with a repeat design of oak leaves. It would suggest then that she was quite tall and slender at approximately 1.70m, with a 76-81 cm bust, making her a modern UK size 6 or US size 2 (Downing, 21).

I consider that historic circumstances have constantly marked Austen’s image. At first, her role as a leading writer had to be hidden for fear that Austen had not played well enough her role of pious woman and devoted to her domestic chores according to Victorian standards, that is the reason why any vestige of popularity had to be erased and no portrait of her could come to light, even the most clumsily done. Later, when she was well known, any affaire related to her would virtually make their owner famous and rich, therefore any portrait of her was welcome, above all the ones where Jane Austen might be depicted as a dignified and professional writer. I dare say new alleged portraits of her not seen before are soon to come, and little it matters whether they are genuine or not.

⁸⁸ It is precisely the one shown at the end of the present study.

⁸⁹ See Kirham (75)

⁹⁰ To know more on the reconstruction of Jane Austen’s pelisse, see <http://austenonly.com/> by Hilary Davidson.

4.2 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

4.2.1 THE BYRNE PORTRAIT

The latest controversy on Austen's image unfolded shortly after regarding what "can be called the Byrne portrait" (Deborah Kaplan, 121). The facts are as follows: at Christmas season of 2011, a BBC documentary entitled *Jane Austen: The Unseen Portrait?*⁹¹ explores whether the portrait owned by the literary scholar Dr Paula Byrne (a small pencil and ink drawing on velum) is a genuine depiction of the novelist as well as why there has been so much interest in what Austen looked like.

In the aforementioned documentary, Byrne herself tells the audience that the portrait was given to her as a 15th wedding anniversary gift by her husband (Prof. Jonathan Bate, Shakespearian scholar and provost of Worcester College, Oxford), valued at "only" £2000, since it had been dismissed as "imaginary". Not content with that and in cooperation with the BBC, Byrne managed to gather the greatest experts on Jane Austen, among others; Professor Kathryn Sutherland of Oxford University, Professor Claudia L. Johnson of Princeton, Deirdre Le Faye, editor of Jane's letters, and Claire Tomalin, her biographer.

Byrne's words in *Jane Austen: The Unseen Portrait?* constitute a real challenge: "my portrait presents a very different sort of Jane Austen. It presents an image of a professional writer. She seems very comfortable in her own skin. She's taking on the world".

To begin with, Deborah Kaplan⁹² (122) dismisses the above-mentioned documentary on the grounds that:

Its organization is crude. Seeking to build dramatic tension, the special's creators gave the investigation of the Byrne portrait the shape of a quest, one that culminates in a mock trial. And yet, along with this overblown structure and the clichéd and hyperbolic narrative leading the television audience through it, the BBC program also intermittently airs quieter, evocative moments. These moments turn the act of seeing into an implicit theme of the program by showing the responses of several variously-trained specialists as they look at the portrait for the first time. Those keen and sensitive observers, particularly the Austen scholars and the

⁹¹ Unfortunately, I have not seen it, since it is no longer on display. However, I obtained its subtitles on the web that is the reason why I came along with its full written content.

⁹² Deborah Kaplan is Associate Professor of English at George Mason University. In addition to her book, *Jane Austen among Women*, she is the author of essays on Austen and other women writers, on the performance history of Restoration comedies, on professional issues, and, most recently, on hoarding.

staff of her museum, help us understand why the novelist's admirers want so much not only to know what Austen looked like but also to confirm the existence of the elusive physical object itself, an authentic portrait. At the same time they enable us to see why the Byrne portrait –or any portrait- is unlikely to fulfil those desires.

Later, Sutherland and Johnson, in spite of the fact that there are still many questions to be answered, remain open to the possibility that it is genuine. Le Faye, by contrast, shows no inclination to join them: "it's just not her. It's just somebody's idea of what they hoped she might have looked like" (*Jane Austen: The Unseen Portrait?*). In addition, when asked, Tomalin, (Deborah Kaplan, 125), admitted that "people long to find portraits of writers they admire. We all long to find them and the longing to have one and the longing to feel that there she is at last is very understandable". Consequently, we should ask ourselves whether the mere longing is enough to conclude that it is genuine.

No wonder Deborah Kaplan (131) is by no means interested in the resolution of this quest, adding albeit, a good remark in line with Fowler's (1) statement "Each of us has a private Austen":

So the portrait debates will continue, and the desire for a reliable likeness will remain out of reach. But why is that so bad? We bring to our looking different kinds of training, reading experiences, and the impression we form from that reading. And that means that anyone interested in what Jane Austen looked like probably already knows.

Unfortunately, Byrne was later accused of making propaganda for her own biography on Jane Austen, published in 2013 (*The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things*). Additionally, if it were proved that her portrait is genuine, we would be talking of a sum between £100000 and £1000000. So even if the portrait could not be authenticated, the public attention that the portrait attracted is also good publicity for her book.

I do not dare to say if the aforesaid documentary constitutes a *mise en scene* orchestrated by Byrne to sell more copies of Austen's biography or just an exhibition on screen of Byrne's gratitude to her husband for such a present. It is hard to find any relationship between Byrne's own motivations and the issue at stake within this Master dissertation.

After that point, heated debates on Austen still rage and her appearance constitutes a real cause for concern. Indeed, as reported by Allen and Stewart (2013) in their article “Jane Austen to appear on £10 note”, “Jane Austen has been confirmed as the next face of the £10 note in a victory for campaigners demanding female representation, aside from the Queen”. It all began, as stated there, when the feminist activist Caroline Criado-Pérez, of Spanish origin, waged a campaign (supported by more than 35.000 people) against the removal of the social reformist Elizabeth Fry from £5 notes, in favour of the former Prime Minister Winston Churchill. She argued that British banknotes would lose female presence.

It was accordingly decided that Austen would replace the 19th-century naturalist Charles Darwin, who has been on the notes since 2000, on the £10 note in 2017, the bicentenary of her death. Along with a portrait of Austen, it was agreed that the new note would include images of her writing desk and quills at Chawton Cottage, and a quote from Miss Bingley, in *P&P*: "I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading!"

Since then, as Bennholdaug informs us in her article entitled “Bid to Honour Austen Is Not Universally Acknowledged” that “the campaign for the bill was faced with a counter campaign of harassment”. Indeed, the same day the Bank of England announced that Austen would appear of future £10 notes, “a trickle of abuse grew into a shower of crude rape and death threats against Ms. Criado-Perez at a rate of nearly one per minute”. Here, Bennholdaug claims that “few could have foreseen that Austen, a writer perhaps best known for her musings on 19th-century romance, might inadvertently become a feminist symbol”.

To top everything, as soon as the sketch of the £10 note was released, controversy mounted. As currently expressed by Paula Byrne in Celis’s “¿Jane Austen o Una Muñeca?”:

Es una imagen con unos retoques muy sentimentales. Parece una muñeca. Sus ojos son demasiado grandes. Sinceramente, me parece un cambio de imagen a lo Katie Price de la escritora más divertida que ha pisado el planeta y a la que ahora han hecho que parezca una retrasada mental”.

But the truth is that Austen's image-note has been taken from an 1869 engraving signed by William Home Lizards, in turn inspired by a sketch drawn by Cassandra Austen herself in 1810. Celis adds that it was Elisabeth Proudman, the president of the Jane Austen Society, who sent the chosen image to the Bank managers as soon as it was announced that Darwin would be substituted by Jane Austen.

According to Proudman, quoted in “¿Jane Austen o Una Muñeca?”, however, Jane Austen was not a feminist, since she just accepted life as it was. Regarding the sketch, additionally, Proudman argues that: “No parece una muñeca. Aunque sus sobrinos opinan que los ojos son demasiado grandes, a mí me da la sensación de que está mirando con ojos que lo analizan todo, con una mirada muy diferente”⁹³.

4.2.2 THE RICE PORTRAIT

Along with the Byrne's portrait controversy, an ancient debate has surprisingly arisen on the issue of the Rice portrait of Jane Austen, thanks to recent decisive evidence. Unfortunately, the story of the Rice portrait (owned by the Rice family, direct descendants of one of Jane's brothers) is long and complicated, so I am just explaining here the major facts according to the information provided on the website www.janeaustenriceportrait.com by Prof. Claudia Johnson.

The portrait first appeared in 1884 along with the first edition of Austen's letters. However, the National Portrait Gallery delegitimized it on the grounds of dating, as Austen's dress was apparently not in style until Jane was older than the image of herself pretends to illustrate.

Surprisingly, a photograph taken in 1910 of the portrait itself has just been found, showing an image as it existed before its twentieth-century cleanings. Unlike on the canvas, the portrait's author (Ozias Humphry) can be clearly read, as well as the date (1789) and the sitter's name (Jane Austen).

⁹³ The opinion expressed by Tomalin in the documentary “Jane Austen” (20') by TVE, on the occasion of the bicentenary of the publication of *P&P*, it should not be neglected that “no one could call her a feminist but she was certainly aware of the questions of feminism. For example, the fact that she presented young women as the chief characters in her novels already says something; that we can look at women and take them seriously, and take their moral dilemmas and economic position seriously. This all contributes to the debate about the position of women.”

Regarding the Rice portrait, Ed Butler argues in his article “Jane Austen: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl?” that “A definitive attribution of the portrait as Austen may represent something of an embarrassment to the National Portrait Gallery, which granted the picture a licence for sale abroad on the basis that it could not be the writer. The gallery chose not to comment”. As a result, while the picture failed to reach a £350000 price at auction in 2007, the Rice family may still expect a much higher sale price. The controversy is served.

All in all, the issue of Jane Austen’s images is not a trivial one. Indeed, we know how all the great novelists of the past looked except for one; Jane Austen. Their images are on display at the National Portrait Gallery in London and still shape how we regard them today. Therefore, it is understandable that thousands of janeites long to find a portrait of the writer they admire.

Still, it is not strictly true to say that we do not know what Jane Austen looked like. As we have previously stated, there is only one authenticated image of Jane Austen, a tiny sketch by her sister Cassandra, unsmiling and with her arms crossed, in 1810, so rough and little that even some of her relatives did not think it was a good likeness. However, Britain’s National Portrait Gallery bought it in 1948. The rest, according to Deborah Kaplan (121), “are widely recognized today as idealized Victorian images”.

Similarly, there may be indeed questions about why there is no decent portrait of Jane Austen. The fact is that Jane and her sister Cassandra never married, that is, their lives were “barren of events”, hence her family did not think she was important enough to sit for a portrait, as they were done for specific reasons: engagements, marriages, to go abroad, etc. To appreciate Jane Austen, by contrast, in Auerbach’s (29) opinion, “we must put aside our long-standing assumptions about what is important and what is not in life and in literature”. Auerbach adds, in agreement with Woolf, that “it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex... Yet it is them masculine values that prevail”.

Le Faye (15’) asserts in the documentary entitled “Jane Austen: The Unseen Portrait?” that there was a huge proliferation of portraits around Austen’s period, since Regency portraits were so much more than status badges, and portrait miniatures held a special

place in the hearts of the British gentry, both men and women. They were indeed treasured possessions, intimate and often startlingly lifelike keys to understanding and remembering who the sitter truly was. The best portrait artists, eventually, charged about thirty guineas for a miniature and about three hundred guineas for an oil painting⁹⁴. Accordingly, there is no excuse not to have one for Jane and Cassandra on the grounds of price, mainly at a time known to be the golden age for British Portraiture.

As I announced at the beginning of this section, a remarkable shift has occurred in the content of the debate about Austen's image; from how she looked like, that is, whether her portrait is accurate, to, in more recent times, whether it is a genuine portrait of Jane Austen. Just as Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* has been analysed and contextualized in order to discover the reasons why Austen's family was so eager to describe "the usually tranquil course" of her life, in a similar way, Austen's physical portrait in a nineteenth-century context must also be called into question, since in Sutherland's (*Textual Lives* 110-111) opinion:

Like biography, portraits, more directly than other art forms, confront the issue of truthfulness of representation. But it is a truth which depends less on descriptive accuracy –did Jane Austen look like this or like this- than on the coincidence of the perceptions shared by portraitists and viewers, neither of whom is innocent.

In addition, I presume that not only will the series of debates on Austen's looks go on, that is, whether she looked like a housewife or quite the opposite, a consolidated novelist, but they will become a bigger issue, for there is plenty of money at stake as indeed it seems obvious with this alleged new portrait of Jane Austen. In any case, the description of the appropriation of Austen's body displayed in this chapter only serves to reinforce the statement announced in the introduction of the present study, on the question about the "real" Austen, that is, there is no such thing as one Austen but all sorts, each of them enjoyed in different ways by different socioeconomic groups.



⁹⁴ Ibid. (17').

5. IRONY OR PARODY

The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid (NA XIV, 954)

One half of the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other (E IX, 49)

A large income is the best recipe for happiness I ever heard of (MP XXII, 512)

English verdure, English culture, English comfort (E XLII, 837)

What could be better than England? (My own words)

In line with my approach to the issue at stake, that is, the importance of humour and irony as the cornerstone to understand this compulsive idolatry for Jane Austen-related works, I will analyse in the present chapter, one of many rewritings of her masterpiece *Emma*, *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* (2015), on paper, as an evidence, in Halsey's (38) words, that "though most evident in her juvenilia and letters, laughter was both a habitual cast of mind for Jane Austen and a powerful artistic impulse":

I could not sit seriously down to write a serious Romance under any other motive than to save my Life, & if it were indispensable for me to keep it up & never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first Chapter. –No- I must keep to my own style & go on in my own Way; And though I may never succeed in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.⁹⁵

5.1 EMMA⁹⁶

At the beginning of 1814, at thirty-eight, Jane Austen started working on what would be her fourth published novel, *Emma* (November 1815)⁹⁷. She was, however, so highly

⁹⁵ See Le Faye (*Jane Austen's Letters* 326); letter by Jane Austen to James Stanier Clarke, in 1816. It illustrates Austen's answer to Stanier's suggestion about writing a historical romance. Apparently, more than a suggestion it was taken as an offensive command. As a consequence, Austen makes use of parodying the fact itself as well as sentimental novels in one of her minor works "The Plan of a Novel", 1816.

⁹⁶ See Brownstein (212); although it is the only novel she published that is named for the heroine, the name figures in some of Austen's juvenile works: *The Adventures of Mr Haley*, *Lesley Castle* and *Sir William Mountague*. Her incomplete novel *The Watsons* has also a heroine named Emma. In addition, the name would have evoked to her readers other Emmas in fiction: *Emma or the Unfortunate Attachment* (1773) by Georgiana Spencer, *Emma Corbett* (1780) by Courtney Melmoth or Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Curtney* (1796).

⁹⁷ In consonance with Byrne's (295) information, *E* was finished in March 1815 and printed in November of the same year. Fergus (12) affirms that *E* was written in only fourteen months, from 2 January 1814 to 29 March 1815. He claims that Jane Austen was clearly at the height of her genius. See also Le Faye (*A Family Record* 230); although *E* had been first advertised in the *Morning Post* of 2 December 1815 as forthcoming soon, delays in printing meant that the book was not on sale until the last week of December and the title-page was in fact dated 1816.

concerned about whether it would be well received that she expressed some of her fears to Mr Clarke⁹⁸ in December 1815⁹⁹:

“My Emma is now so near publication... my greatest anxiety at present is that this 4th work shd not disgrace what was good in the others... I am very strongly haunted by the idea that to those readers who have preferred *P&P*, it will appear inferior in Wit, & to those who have preferred *MP*, very inferior in good sense”.

Paradoxically, *E* is generally regarded, according to Tomalin (250), as Austen’s “most perfect book” where she describes the Highbury¹⁰⁰ community to the reader by means of how its inhabitants speak and what they say, but above all, it emphasises the moral learning process of her heroine, Emma. For Gay (55), in addition, *E* “anticipates the detective story in being a novel designed to be reread, with the reader each time discovering more complexities to the hidden story”. Tomalin (250) holds, additionally, that “the pleasures of a detective story are added to the study of human psychology.” The fact is that by October Austen had had an offer from John Murray¹⁰¹, who as well as publishing *E* was happy to release a second edition of *MP*. Both books appeared in early 1816. Byrne (295) suggests, by contrast, that “this may have been a commercial error, as they competed with one another, reducing the number of copies sold and forcing Murray to remainder 539 of the two thousand copies of *E*¹⁰².”

⁹⁸ See Chapter I, pp. 13 of the present study.

⁹⁹ See Le Faye (*Jane Austen’s Letters* 2014) letter from Jane Austen to James Stanier Clarke. Monday 11 December 1815.

¹⁰⁰ See Brownstein (215); there, it is considered that Highbury is possibly an anglicised version of “Alton” (from the Latin “altus”, meaning high), the name of the larger village near Chawton.

¹⁰¹ See Barry: “in 1815, John Murray became Jane Austen’s publisher. He had been Byron’s since 1812”. Although Byron and Austen did not meet each other, “in the years 1813-15, such a meeting was within the realm of at least remote possibility. *In fact*, Byron’s *Childe Harold* was published in June 1812 *while* Austen was much in London, staying with her brother overseeing the publication of her own books”. Before Murray, and thanks to Austen’s brother Henry, Thomas Egerton was her first publisher.

¹⁰² Fergus (13) claims that it is true that “Murray produced Austen’s book more expensively during her lifetime than Egerton had, which reduced her possible profit. Nonetheless... Murray’s imprint carried much more prestige than Egerton’s... Furthermore, Murray was reputedly very open-handed to authors, offering large copyright fees... Murray offered the sum of £450 altogether for the copyrights of *E*, *MP* and *S&S*”. Austen, however, did not accept his copyright offer which “suggests how highly she valued her work and how willing she was to risk a different valuation from the public. Unfortunately, *E* was not as popular as her earlier works”.

5.1.1 E IN THE CONTEXT OF CONDUCT BOOKS AND SENTIMENTAL NOVELS

At Austen's time (Halsey: 29), glorification of "female ideal of domesticity", that is, modesty, virtuosity, chastity and practicality seemed to lie at the heart of every conduct book for both men and woman, however, above all, "women's education should derive from Christian principles, and be directed towards encouraging her to live in accordance with these principles. *Women* should avoid, *in addition*, open intellectualism and public display" in order to focus on the fulfilment of their duties as wife and mother.

Austen, on the other hand, adopting the position of an ironical albeit subtle narrator, presents the following heroine, since this novel is about a heroine who is decidedly not a picture of perfection:

"Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father; and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period. Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses; and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection". (*E* I, 653).

Halsey (31), for her part, offers what any author of conduct literature would include as essential readings: among others, the Marquis of Halifax's *Advice to a daughter* (1688), Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774), Madame de Genlis' *Theatre d'Education* (translated in 1781), the poetry of Homer, Virgil, Milton, Pope, Dryden, Akenside and Cowper, Shakespeare's plays and poetry, Addison and Steele's essays, Richardson's novels, Hume's, Goldsmith's and Rollin's *Histories*, Blair's *Lectures*, Fordyce's *Sermons* and above all, the Bible.

In spite of the fact that Jane Austen was far from opposed to the central convictions of conduct literature¹⁰³, according to Halsey (35) her "novels belong in a tradition that believed in the importance of educating women to read more selectively, more carefully, and, crucially, more intelligently". That is the reason why Austen subtly

¹⁰³ She Brownstein (199); "Jane Austen is a moral writer, but she does not moralize".

mocks Emma's taste (IV, 665) when she encourages Harriet to refuse Robert Martin for reading¹⁰⁴ *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Elegant Extracts*¹⁰⁵ rather than Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* and Regina Roche's *Children of the Abbey*¹⁰⁶:

“Mr. Martin, I suppose, is not a man of information beyond the line of his own business? He does not read?”

“Oh yes!—that is, no—I do not know—but I believe he has read a good deal—but not what you would think anything of. He reads the Agricultural Reports, and some other books that lay in one of the window seats—but he reads all them to himself. But sometimes of an evening, before we went to cards, he would read something aloud out of the *Elegant Extracts*, very entertaining. And I know he has read the Vicar of Wakefield. He never read *The Romance of the Forest*, nor *The Children of the Abbey*. He had never heard of such books before I mentioned them, but he is determined to get them now as soon as ever he can.”

Not only does not Emma suggest any serious reading to Harriet, but on top of that, Emma encourages her to collect riddles, to Austen's enjoyment and mockery as well (*E* IX, 687):

It was much easier to chat than to study; much pleasanter to let her imagination range and work at Harriet's fortune, than to be labouring to enlarge her comprehension or exercise it on sober facts; and the only literary pursuit which engaged Harriet at present, the only mental provision she was making for the evening of life, was the collecting and transcribing all the riddles of every sort that she could meet with, into a thin quarto of hot-pressed paper, made up by her friend, and ornamented with ciphers and trophies.

However, while reading (Halsey, 31) “enlarges and strengthens the mind, thus making the young woman less vulnerable, reading is *also* seductively dangerous, since certain books may distract women from domestic duties”. As a result, reading can be “both virtuous and potentially dangerous, educative but also seductive”, just as in the case of fiction. Halsey (32) points out, therefore, that “fiction is reckoned to be bad for women for a number of reasons: primarily their supposed susceptibility to example, overly developed sensibility, and propensity to idleness and romanticism”.

¹⁰⁴ See Halsey (26); moralists and commentators of Austen's period and onward frequently suggested that “we are what we read” and in Austen's fiction “how we use what we read defines us”. The fact of pointing out these novels, therefore, provides a little clue to our understanding of the characters: Robert Martin and Emma.

¹⁰⁵ See <http://austenonly.com/2010/01/17/austenonly-emma-season-robert-martin-and-the-elegant-extracts/> to know more about Vicesimus Knox, editor of the popular anthology of prose *Elegant Extracts*.

¹⁰⁶ Auerbach (212) suggests the possibility of a link between *Emma* and *NA*, since the same sensational writers are mentioned by Isabella Thorp and Catherin Morland in *NA*. Auerbach wonders, additionally, “whether Austen deliberately wove into *E* some of the same ideas about the process of writing novels that had made the main focus of the still unpublished *NA*. Whereas she chose to interrupt the storyline of *NA* to comment directly about novels, novelists, heroines, publishers, reviewers and readers, in *E* she does so indirectly and subtly”.

Like all other Austen heroines, Emma marries and supposedly fulfils the duties of a wife and a mother as expected¹⁰⁷; however, she is the most unconventional¹⁰⁸ of all, perhaps that is the reason why Austen wrote “I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like”¹⁰⁹ because she knew, in Auerbach’s (229) opinion, that her contemporaries were not ready for an intelligent and self-sufficient woman. Brownstein (197) claims, for her part, that *E* is “the least romantic and the most original and characteristic of Austen’s novels”. As a proof of her unconventionality, the following astonishing conversation on celibacy between Emma and Harriet (*E* X, 695) gives us a clue:

"My being charming, Harriet, is not quite enough to induce me to marry; I must find other people charming—one other person at least. And I am not only, not going to be married, at present, but have very little intention of ever marrying at all."

"Ah!—so you say; but I cannot believe it."

"I must see somebody very superior to any one I have seen yet, to be tempted; Mr. Elton, you know, (recollecting herself,) is out of the question: and I do not wish to see any such person. I would rather not be tempted. I cannot really change for the better. If I were to marry, I must expect to repent it."

"Dear me!—it is so odd to hear a woman talk so!"—

"I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing! but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want: I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's."

"But then, to be an old maid at last, like Miss Bates!"

"That is as formidable an image as you could present, Harriet; and if I thought I should ever be like Miss Bates! so silly—so satisfied—so smiling—so prosing—so undistinguishing and unfastidious—and so apt to tell everything relative to everybody about me, I would marry tomorrow. But between us, I am convinced there never can be any likeness, except in being unmarried."

"But still, you will be an old maid! and that's so dreadful!"

"Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid! the proper sport of boys and girls, but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as any body else."

¹⁰⁷ See Johnson (“Cults and Cultures” 242); contrary to what some academics thought about Emma’s sexual inclination, Johnson claims that “the marriage plot becomes the novel’s fundamental meaning, the telos towards which the narrative has moved since the first page. In fact, the plot itself brings about the change in Emma’s character, a reform defined only in terms of the destiny of heterosexual love: only when she is ready for marriage with the man she loves, only then is the novel ready to end”. See also Gay (62); he argues that “if Emma has very little intention of ever marrying at all, it is because her idea of marriage (perhaps based on her sister’s) denies the woman any adult responsibility in the partnership”.

¹⁰⁸ See Brownstein (219); of all the Austen heroines she is the only one to own, or nearly own, a plot of land. Mistress of her father’s house, “Emma is free of the marriage market: unlike Elinor and Marianne, Elizabeth and Fanny, Catherine and Anne, she does not have to sell herself to a man in order to get a home of her own. Being rich, she is not a commodity”.

¹⁰⁹ See Austen-Leigh (*Memoir* 185)

Not surprisingly, out of the forty-three “opinions” about this unconventional heroine that Austen took note of, Tomalin (252) registers that “twelve were distinctly hostile, and only six gave unreserved praise. Four said they liked it best of her works so far (two of these being opinions of her brothers Francis and Charles)¹¹⁰, but, just as she had feared, seventeen said they preferred *P&P*.” Furthermore, if the above quoted paragraphed from *E* was to be isolated, any one could think of it as part of any current writing against matrimony, just the opposite of Austen’s will.

Unsurprisingly, in Emma’s hands, Harriet incarnates the perfect model of romance heroine (*E* III, 662):

Those soft blue eyes, and all those natural graces, should not be wasted on the inferior society of Highbury and its connexions. The acquaintance she had already formed were unworthy of her. The friends from whom she had just parted, though very good sort of people, must be doing her harm.

Tomalin (250) surmises, in this sense, that Austen may have had her first flash of an idea for Emma as she wrote *MP*, since “Emma shares with Fanny Price the inner voice which tells her exactly what to do... Emma’s inner voice tells her, for instance, to take up Harriet Smith, an unsuitable friend whose life she proceeds to make unhappy”:

She would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, and powers. She was so busy in admiring those soft blue eyes, in talking and listening, and forming all these schemes in the in-betweens, that the evening flew away at a very unusual rate. (*E* III, 662)

Consequently, Emma is soon inventing a romance for Harriet with the handsome Mr Elton:

Emma could not feel a doubt of having given Harriet's fancy a proper direction and raised the gratitude of her young vanity to a very good purpose, for she found her decidedly more sensible than before of Mr. Elton's being a remarkably handsome man, with most agreeable

¹¹⁰ See Le Faye (*A Family Record* 230); Frank’s comments headed the list “Captn. Austen liked it extremely, observing that though there might be more Wit in *P&P* & and higher Morality in *MP* yet altogether, on account of its peculiar air of Nature throughout, he preferred it to either”. Charles for his part out in the *Mediterranean*, wrote home with his comments on the novel “Emma arrived in time to a moment. I am delighted with her, more so I think than even with my favourite *Pride & Prejudice*, & have read it three times in the Passage”.

manners; and as she had no hesitation in following up the assurance of his admiration by agreeable hints, she was soon pretty confident of creating as much liking on Harriet's side, as there could be any occasion for. She was quite convinced of Mr. Elton's being in the fairest way of falling in love, if not in love already. She had no scruple with regard to him. He talked of Harriet, and praised her so warmly, that she could not suppose any thing wanting which a little time would not add. His perception of the striking improvement of Harriet's manner, since her introduction at Hartfield, was not one of the least agreeable proofs of his growing attachment. (*E VI, 672*)

Despite the fact that Emma does not succeed in her attempt to matchmaking Harriet, just because contrary to what she suspected Harriet exemplifies the opposite of Mr Elton's female ideal, Emma resets her mind and turns to Jane Fairfax in order to speculate about her unexpected and mysterious return to Highbury: "Upon the whole, Emma left her (Jane Fairfax) with such softened, charitable feelings, as made her look around in walking home, and lament that Highbury afforded no young man worthy of giving her independence; nobody that she could wish to scheme about for her." (*E XX, 737*)

Austen emphasizes, in this way, Emma's brain, mind, thoughts and ideas. She gives the heroine the skills of a writer in order to make us believe that the story is being narrated by Emma herself as she takes the leading role of an omniscient narrator. However, according to Garrido Domínguez (124) given the uncertainty about human existence at the beginning of the 19th century, a certain decline is already detected in the use of complete omniscience. In fact, Jane Austen makes use here of a selective omniscience, that is, the screening of the story by Emma's consciousness. Later, H. James (Garrido Domínguez, 124) adds:

Utilizando al personaje como reflector o conciencia central se logran dos objetivos: la ocultación del narrador y el amortiguamiento de la omnisciencia gracias al gran relativismo que con este procedimiento se introduce en el ámbito del relato. En ese sentido, no interesa tanto saberlo todo como insistir en el hecho de que no existe una verdad absoluta y universalmente admitida: cada uno refleja la realidad tal como es vista por él desde sus peculiares circunstancias.

Given the circumstances of Emma's preeminent performance, little wonder that Emma gets angry when, managing without her, it turns out that Mr Elton has a plot of his own (*E XV, 720*):

"Never, madam," cried he, affronted in his turn: "never, I assure you. I think seriously of Miss Smith!—Miss Smith is a very good sort of girl; and I should be happy to see her respectably settled. I wish her extremely well: and, no doubt, there are men who might not object to—Every body has their level: but as for myself, I am not, I think, quite so much at a loss. I need not so totally despair of an equal alliance, as to be addressing myself to Miss Smith!—No, madam, my visits to Hartfield have been for yourself only; and the encouragement I received—"

"Encouragement!—I give you encouragement!—Sir, you have been entirely mistaken in supposing it. I have seen you only as the admirer of my friend. In no other light could you have been more to me than a common acquaintance. I am exceedingly sorry: but it is well that the mistake ends where it does. Had the same behaviour continued, Miss Smith might have been led into a misconception of your views; not being aware, probably, any more than myself, of the very great inequality which you are so sensible of. But, as it is, the disappointment is single, and, I trust, will not be lasting. I have no thoughts of matrimony at present."

In this regard, it seems as if some characters revolt against Emma's imposed will, that is, the author's own wish which constitutes, according to Orejas (133), an usual resource in metafiction:

La ruptura de los códigos formales, de las convenciones del género, es otro procedimiento característico de la narrativa de metafiction, y que supone una llamada de atención al lector respecto a la ficcionalidad de la historia... Esa ruptura puede llevarse a cabo por múltiples vías, quebrando los límites entre ficción y realidad, creando un relato inconexo, vinculando historias múltiples sin vínculo alguno entre sí, incorporando juegos de palabras o frases sin sentido, anulando toda posibilidad de significante.

In addition, it is worth reading the episode, narrated by Emma, where Harriet is rescued by Frank Churchill from a group of gypsies¹¹¹ (*E* XXXIX, 823) which exemplifies a kind of elopement or abduction always present in any self-respecting sentimental novel, where women tend to be depicted as fragile and scared, but eventually safe and sound thanks to Mr whosoever's gentlemanly assistance:

Such an adventure as this, -a fine young man and a lovely young woman thrown together in such a way, could hardly fail of suggesting certain ideas to the coldest heart and the steadiest brain... It was a very extraordinary thing. Nothing of the sort had ever occurred before to any young ladies in the place within her memory; no rencontre, no alarm of the kind; -and now it had happened to the very person, and at the very hour, when the other very person was chancing to pass by to rescue her! -It certainly was very extraordinary!

¹¹¹ See Brownstein (216); England is changing at the beginning of the 19th century. There are gypsies, and talk of turkey thieves to come, but Highbury and its environs are cosy and pleasant. See Moretti (18) to know more about the existence of "two Englands" in Austen's novels. Little wonder that gypsies are intentionally introduced coming from industrialized cities, but never at the heart of a rural area as Highbury.

In relation to Emma's qualities, she faces no competition at all in beauty as well as in intelligence or wealth, thus, she must have let it go to her head and does not show any improvement since she was a little child, for she has hardly read a decent book:

Emma is spoiled by being the cleverest of her family. At ten years old, she had the misfortune of being able to answer questions which puzzled her sister at seventeen. She was always quick and assured: Isabella slow and diffident. And ever since she was twelve, Emma has been mistress of the house and of you all. In her mother she lost the only person able to cope with her. She inherits her mother's talents, and must have been under subjection to her. (*E V*, 669)

"But I have done with expecting any course of steady reading from Emma. She will never submit to anything requiring industry and patience, and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding. Where Miss Taylor failed to stimulate, I may safely affirm that Harriet Smith will do nothing.—You never could persuade her to read half so much as you wished.—You know you could not." (*E V*, 669)

As a result, the narrator keeps cleverly mocking Emma, for she misunderstands others' feelings and intentions:

Emma was not sorry to have such an opportunity of survey; and walking a few yards forward, while they talked together, soon made her quick eye sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Robert Martin. His appearance was very neat, and he looked like a sensible young man, but his person had no other advantage; and when he came to be contrasted with gentlemen, she thought he must lose all the ground he had gained in Harriet's inclination. (*IV*, 666)

He had frightened her a little about Mr. Elton; but when she considered that Mr. Knightley could not have observed him as she had done, neither with the interest, nor (she must be allowed to tell herself, in spite of Mr. Knightley's pretensions) with the skill of such an observer on such a question as herself, that he had spoken it hastily and in anger, she was able to believe, that he had rather said what he wished resentfully to be true, than what he knew any thing about. He certainly might have heard Mr. Elton speak with more unreserve than she had ever done, and Mr. Elton might not be of an imprudent, inconsiderate disposition as to money matters; he might naturally be rather attentive than otherwise to them; but then, Mr. Knightley did not make due allowance for the influence of a strong passion at war with all interested motives. (*E VIII*, 685)

In addition, she has hardly left home, travelled to London or even to Box Hill, within a couple of miles from Highbury. She has never seen the sea, which could be read, according to Gay (59), "as a metaphor for her sexual inexperience, since the sea was associated with passion by the Romantic poets [...] thus the visits to Box Hill and Donwell carry a *symbolic meaning*," since there is a new scenario in the maturation

process of the heroine. “She goes thus beyond the bounds of Highbury for the first time” (*E* XLIV, 845):

The wretchedness of a scheme to Box Hill was in Emma's thoughts all the evening. How it might be considered by the rest of the party, she could not tell. They, in their different homes, and their different ways, might be looking back on it with pleasure; but in her view it was a morning more completely misspent, more totally bare of rational satisfaction at the time, and more to be abhorred in recollection, than any she had ever passed. A whole evening of backgammon with her father, was felicity to it. There, indeed, lay real pleasure, for there she was giving up the sweetest hours of the twenty-four to his comfort; and feeling that, unmerited as might be the degree of his fond affection and confiding esteem, she could not, in her general conduct, be open to any severe reproach. As a daughter, she hoped she was not without a heart. She hoped no one could have said to her, "How could you be so unfeeling to your father?—I must, I will tell you truths while I can." Miss Bates should never again—no, never! If attention, in future, could do away the past, she might hope to be forgiven. She had been often remiss, her conscience told her so; remiss, perhaps, more in thought than fact; scornful, ungracious. But it should be so no more. In the warmth of true contrition, she would call upon her the very next morning, and it should be the beginning, on her side, of a regular, equal, kindly intercourse.

That is the reason she needs a tutor, the gentleman Mr Knightley¹¹², the only character to point out Emma's mistakes who she ends up, unsurprisingly to anyone except to herself, marrying to, (*E* XLIII, 844):

“Emma, I must once more speak to you as I have been used to do: a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps, but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation?—Emma, I had not thought it possible.”

Emma recollected, blushed, was sorry, but tried to laugh it off.

“Nay, how could I help saying what I did?—Nobody could have helped it. It was not so very bad. I dare say she did not understand me.”

“I assure you she did. She felt your full meaning. She has talked of it since. I wish you could have heard how she talked of it—with what candour and generosity. I wish you could have heard her honouring your forbearance, in being able to pay her such attentions, as she was for ever receiving from yourself and your father, when her society must be so irksome.”

In fact, by the end of the novel, Emma confesses her mistakes to Mr Knightley, her tutor, and she incriminates herself: “I do own myself to have been completely mistaken in Mr. Elton. There is littleness about him which you discovered, and which I did not:

¹¹² See Browstein (220); every marriage plot or love story requires a mate for Emma. Mr Knightley (a very appropriate name) is a member of one of the three of four families in her country village, more precisely a member of Emma's own family, her sister Isabella's brother. Besides, Mr Knightley owns unsurprisingly Donwell (Donewell) Abbey.

and I was fully convinced of his being in love with Harriet. It was through a series of strange blunders!" (XXXVIII, 821)

She felt completely guilty of having encouraged what she might have repressed. She might have prevented the indulgence and increase of such sentiments. Her influence would have been enough. And now she was very conscious that she ought to have prevented them.—She felt that she had been risking her friend's happiness on most insufficient grounds. Common sense would have directed her to tell Harriet, that she must not allow herself to think of him, and that there were five hundred chances to one against his ever caring for her.—"But, with common sense," she added, "I am afraid I have had little to do." (XLVII, 859)

The unconventionality presented by the heroine is even more surprising when instead of having Emma suddenly struck by Mr whosoever love's arrow more in line with the kind of relationship presented in sentimental novels, she gets involved, almost without realizing it, in a slowly developed relationship which ends up in matrimony (*E* LXVIII, 865):

Till now that she was threatened with its loss, Emma had never known how much of her happiness depended on being first with Mr. Knightley, first in interest and affection. - Satisfied that it was so, and feeling it her due, she had enjoyed it without reflection; and only in the dread of being supplanted, found how inexpressibly important it had been. -Long, very long, she felt she had been first; for, having no female connexions of his own, there had been only Isabella whose claims could be compared with hers, and she had always known exactly how far he loved and esteemed Isabella. She had herself been first with him for many years past. She had not deserved it; she had often been negligent or perverse, slighting his advice, or even wilfully opposing him, insensible of half his merits, and quarrelling with him because he would not acknowledge her false and insolent estimate of her own -but still, from family attachment and habit, and thorough excellence of mind, he had loved her, and watched over her from a girl, with an endeavour to improve her, and an anxiety for her doing right, which no other creature had at all shared. In spite of all her faults, she knew she was dear to him; might she not say, very dear?

According to Brownstein (221), nevertheless, total victory is Emma's, as it is Elizabeth Bennet's, since

She keeps living in Hartfield along with her father and husband. Her heirs, presumably, will inherit Donwell, while little Henry, her older sister's son, will have only Hartfield. When Emma looks at Donwell Abbey in the same way as Elizabeth considers Pemberley, however, she is charmed less by its beautiful blend of nature and art than by its stability, being already, after all, well connected with the place.

In consonance with Halsey's (30) information, conduct literature tends, furthermore, to pay too much attention to "simple and universal truths" rather than to everyday real difficulties and their practical resolution. It takes for granted, in addition, that a great deal of the knowledge women acquired was taken from the novels they read, as so few among them attended school beyond an early age. The key question for Halsey then is what constitutes a "proper education" for a woman? Little wonder the major debate constitute what "proper" and "education" mean. Indeed, "most conduct-book writers agree that controlling girls' reading will help to form their moral characters, but how to control their reading, and what they should read are moot questions."

Halsey (33) adds that "conduct books emphasize not only the control of reading matter, but the manner in which young ladies must read. Reading aloud to a daughter, but skipping immoral passages, insisting that a young woman reads only in company, or demanding a form of self-censorship." Halsey reports also the recommendations offered by such books: "a young woman should read in a domestic circle, and she will discuss what she reads with her parents or preceptor, so that any misapprehensions into which she slips can be corrected." Everything suggests, in this sense, that "the Austen family answered well to conduct book directives about the necessity for a young woman to read in company, though the often mocking, resistant and oppositional nature of those communal reading practices did not."

At the time, therefore, (Halsey 34) women in disagreement with the above mentioned tenets established by conservative literature had no choice but to face them *tête-à-tête* (like Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*)¹¹³, or in a more indirect but cunning way, that is, through irony, parody or satire, as Austen's does. At the same time, Halsey (21) argues that

by its nature, parody assumes prior knowledge of the work being parodied, and to some extent, it creates a readership which shares the author's sentiments about the works, authors or genres being parodied. That is, after all, the aim of parodied, since it points out the

¹¹³ See Halsey (30); "Mary Wollstonecraft and the circle around her future husband William Godwin posited a new version of femininity based on the idea that women, like men, are primarily rational creatures, and their physical differences irrelevant in the light of their mental similarities. Hence, the rules that govern the conduct of women should not be different from those of men." See also Brownstein (202) and her statement about the importance of details and words Austen used in her novels. As an example of such significance, she wonders whether Jane Austen "evokes Mary Wollstonecraft when Elizabeth Bennet calls herself a rational creature and Mrs Croft, in *P*, defends women as rational creatures as opposed to fine ladies."

weaknesses, absurdities and follies of the original, and implicitly asks the reader to align him or herself with the parodist's stance.

In this sense, Halsey (15) reckons that although Austen's style does not clash with polite behaviour, exquisite manners and traditional views, it suggests a type of reading far beyond the literality of her fictional words in order to understand the full meaning of marriage plots not as subscribers, but as detractors of conduct books.

Halsey (22) lists as well two assumptions made by Jane Austen on her reading community. The first one implies that "her readers would immediately recognize her works as parodies of particular originals, and that they would share her satirical perceptions of those originals¹¹⁴". The second one infers that "her readers would recognize the relevance of characters and situations to their own lives¹¹⁵". Austen encourages readers to recognize the allusions to situations and characters, and to delight with her in her teasing of family members."

5.2 CONFESIONES DE UNA HEREDERA CON DEMASIADO TIEMPO LIBRE

Using Enkvist's (149) summary of the major achievement of Austen's fiction, "Las obras priorizan el humor como lazo de contacto entre autor y lector [...] si podemos reírnos de las mismas cosas, podemos entendernos en otros aspectos también" as a point of departure, I will now proceed to analyse the epistolary novel *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* addressed to a virtual friend named Edwina, as evidence of the importance of humour and irony in Jane Austen's popularity today, for it embodies an explicit parodic rewriting of her masterpiece *E* which Barroso emphasizes with each of her jokes.

¹¹⁴ See pp. 28 of the present study regarding *Sir Charles Grandison* on screen. See also Halsey (38); "Austen's favourite novel, Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*, was transformed into a brief humorous piece for the entertainment of her young niece, and Sir Charles himself appears comically exaggerated in the person of Charles Adams, in *Jack and Alice*". See (Sabor, 13) to read this tale.

¹¹⁵ See Chap. I, pp. 11 of the present study *à propos* of *The History of England*. See also Halsey (21-22); "at least two members of Austen's family recognized the parodic nature of the works. Henry Austen added a very brief parody of another kind of genre, after one of her dedications. Cassandra, for her part, produced thirteen illustrations which strongly underline the satirical tone of the text, and reflect its political bias: Mary, Queen of Scots is depicted as soft, round and smiling, while Elizabeth I has a gaunt, hook-nosed and unsmiling visage."

Ángeles de la Concha (18'), for her part, provides us with her own explanation in the documentary "Jane Austen 200 años después: una escritora para todas las épocas II" about why Jane Austen still today enjoys an excellent reputation:

Una de sus muchas muestras de popularidad radica en las reescrituras de todo tipo que se han hecho de sus novelas, por ejemplo, *Pemberley* y *Un Matrimonio Desigual*. Fundamentalmente, el objetivo de estas obras es el de ironizar sobre el supuesto realismo de estas novelas que se definen como realistas, pero que son lo menos realista de este mundo. Lo que hace Emma Tennant es una especie de pastiche agudizando e hiperbolizando todos los elementos de la obra de Jane Austen.

Having said that, for Pozuelo Yvancos (4)

La parodia o es subversiva e implica no sólo cita, sino también confrontación burlesca y distancia respecto al texto parodiado o no es tal parodia. La parodia nace como otredad no sólo en el sentido de ser especular, sino de deformar, de rebajar, de actuar sobre el rostro de tal espejo desvelando sus líneas y subvirtiendo su sentido, revelando y rebelándose respecto al texto originario."

In her (10) opinion, however, "no hay parodia sin homenaje porque subvertir es rebajar, desplazar de nivel, pero también es ofrecer una versión, una vuelta, otra vez el texto origen, metamorfoseado, sí, pero vuelto a encontrar en el giro paródico que lo subvierte, lo confirma y lo homenajea." As a consequence, *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre*, constitutes an homage to *E* and I will take advantage of the celebration of the 200 anniversary of the latter's publication to pay tribute to both.

To begin with, the very structure of the novel is ironic. The eponymous title reflects Emma's self-centred way of viewing the world, like *Confesiones de una heredera con demasiado tiempo libre*: "¡Qué insistencia esta de Anémona en no darse cuenta de que lo que *yo* tengo que decirle siempre es más interesante!" (Barroso, 169), which implies the very sarcastic definition of the heroine herself, that is, a rich young woman who has very little to do as often present in the novel:

Los últimos días del invierno languidecen aquí, en Paisley Manors, tal y como languidezco yo. No tengo mucha idea de lo que significa "languidecer", pero espero que sea "estar aburrido hasta el límite", porque es exactamente lo que me pasa a mí. Así que cuento los días para que comience la temporada social de Lagsfalls Upon Avon y pueda acudir a bailes, y por fin cazar marido. (13-14)

- ¿Qué te ocurre hija?
 - Que me aburro.
 - ¡Como corresponde a una persona de tu clase y condición! Es más, puedes presumir de que tu familia lleva aburriéndose de forma contumaz durante por lo menos cinco generaciones.
- (18)

A similar example is the following: “Lo peor es que sin tener otra ocupación en mi mente, no como de costumbre, que la tengo muy ocupada pensando en trapitos, no hacía más que darle vueltas en mi linda cabecita al desafortunado encuentro con lord Futuromarido y su discutible amigo”. (28)

The truth is that our heroine, like Emma, goes to work on the people around her finding an escape from boredom. She tries to move people around and invent lives for them seeking to create fictional characters and a romance plot. It appears eventually that matchmaking becomes her speciality:

He decidido presentarla [Anémona] en el próximo baile que se celebre en nuestro concejo. La ayudaré a brillar en sociedad. Conseguiré que los jóvenes solteros dejen de ponerle sus abrigos encima al verla, le encontraré un pretendiente adecuado y, de paso, dejaré de aburrirme tanto y dejaré de aburrir también a mi amiga Edwina con interminables y siempre inconclusas cartas. (51)

No me he arrepentido ni lo más mínimo de haberla [Anémona] tomado bajo mi protección, cual pajarillo que se hubiera caído del nido y al que rescatas privándote del delicioso espectáculo que sería ver cómo algún gato lo tortura, descuartiza y devora lentamente. Pero así somos las almas sensibles. Hasta mi mayordomo se ha admirado de mi altruismo. (55)

Our heroine then thinks, forms, invents, fancies and schemes her way out of boredom imagining all sorts of stories and plots:

Reconozco que es posible que cada vez que un hombre soltero cruza conmigo más de tres frases seguidas, y no te digo nada si son cuatro, es vagamente posible que me imagine cómo quedaríamos juntos frente al altar el día de nuestro enlace. Pero, por favor, no creas que soy una loca que se ve casada con el primer caballero con aspecto de poseer tierras, e incluso título, que le dirige la palabra... Y ni me vi casada con él ni nada. De hecho, no pasé de escoger el vestido para la ceremonia”. (234)

Similarly, Barroso emphasizes the main protagonist’s brain, mind, thoughts and ideas. Unlike Emma, however, Barroso’s heroine is far from clever and her clumsiness,

unfortunately, does not improve all along the novel. Nonetheless, she pretends to give the heroine, the perspective and creativity of a resourceful writer, indeed at the end of the novel our protagonist reveals herself as “Jane” (Austen), the author herself.

- Creo que me reclaman, pero antes tengo que preguntarle algo.
- Espero que no sea qué opino de ser la señora de Algernon Pincus.
- No es eso. Por favor, dígame ¿Cómo se llama?
- Jane.
- Lo sabía. (314)

Because of this, Orejas (131) argues that:

El empleo de la parodia y las referencias hipertextuales son también procedimientos característicos en la construcción de la obra metafictiva. Como en los casos anteriores, no se trata de procedimientos nuevos, sino de un recurso técnico tradicional reactualizado y puesto al servicio de la creación de un texto literario que supone la exploración de sus aspectos formales y la puesta en cuestión del realismo narrativo.

Besides, our heroine, having taken the leading role of the omniscient narrator, as indeed Emma does, cannot accept either that other characters of the novel may plot letting her aside or even against her will:

- Bueno verá, resulta que hoy mismo va a anunciarse un nuevo compromiso en la familia. No puedo evitar reírme.
- ¡Querida! ¡Qué cosas dice! ¡Cómo va a casarse alguien más en mi familia! ¿Quién más hay que pudiera casarse?
- Su hermano Vincent.
- ¡Pero si es sólo un niño!
- Créeme, Edwina, que en ese momento habría pedido las sales si no me hubiera quedado muda por completo. (300-301)

In addition, while Austen suggests to readers that a woman without guidance or higher purpose may waste her time and talent, for society at the time offered women no encouragement to use their skills, Barroso claims it openly. As a consequence, our protagonist keeps confusing matters of importance with trivialities and vice versa. It is also put on display how dull and confining life is for a woman:

En definitiva, que esta mañana me he dirigido a las vastas propiedades de nuestro vecino más ostentadamente rico: lord Arlington por donde casualmente paso a diario y donde

casualmente no puedo evitar quedarme mirando con atención, durante por lo menos cuarenta y cinco minutos, las ventanas de su impresionante mansión, Arlington Road, para casualmente averiguar si ya ha vuelto de Londres, o si ha cambiado los visillos, o si el mayordomo se sigue bebiendo el brandy a escondidas, o cualquier otra información de vital importancia. (23)

No podía dejar de contarte el que sin duda ha sido el acontecimiento social de la temporada... y es que mi padre dispuso hacer una merienda campestre en uno de los más encantadores rincones de nuestra propiedad para agasajar a la buena sociedad que está en estos días en el condado. (133)

Our heroine, for her part, does not give up and seems to be looking for ways to fill her time as there is not much a young woman is allowed to do: “En realidad, en estos últimos días no paro de dar paseos. El miércoles, hasta que no vi un cartel que ponía “está usted entrando en Escocia” y un lago con un extraño animal de largo cuello que emergía de sus aguas, no me decidí a volver a casa”. (19). She continues, nonetheless, with her project of improving Anémóna’s life:

He complementado su educación transmitiéndole todo lo que a nosotras nos enseñaron en el internado de señoritas. Y debe ser extraordinariamente despierta porque no ha tardado más que unas pocas semanas en aprender a la perfección todo lo que nos inculcaron a nosotras en varios años: hacer mohines, reverencias, saludos enrevesados y todas las frases que sabemos de francés. ¡Las cuatro! (57-58)

However, she does so with little success. Then, she moves on to literature and presents Anémóna her readings seeking to display superior cultural knowledge. She shows the same silly and shallow feminine taste as Emma does:

Así que ahora permítame que le enseñe mi biblioteca –dije, acompañando la frase con un donoso ademán de mi brazo para señalar los anaqueles que contienen mi extenso fondo literario.

- ¿Estos tres libros son su biblioteca?

- Leí algunos más en el internado, pero estos son los que decidí traerme a casa. Escuche los títulos: *La duquesa y el corsario*, *La princesa y el bandido*, *La vizcondesa y el salteador de caminos*. (167)

Al momento acudimos a la biblioteca, y no me refiero, por supuesto, al coqueto rincón donde guardo mis interesantes libros, sino a la biblioteca oficial de la mansión, ese lugar únicamente frecuentado por algún invitado que desea echarse una siesta discreta en uno de sus grandes sillones, entretanto algún grueso libro encuadernado en piel se le resbala de las manos. (247)

Small wonder, in such an isolated environment, without readings or guidance, that the protagonist knows nothing about life. She is full of imperfections which, unlike in *E*, do not seem to improve by the end of the novel, since it is essential to remember that Austen's major objective regarding *E* constitutes the moral learning process of her heroine. She thus longs for gossip, intrigue, suspense and adventure without remedy:

Es la primera vez que voy a ver a lord Skeffington desde que sé que nos amamos (Jane).
 - ¿Le ama? ¿Desde cuándo? –preguntó y, ya de paso, cerró la boca.
 - Ay, ay, ay, cabecita loca, ¿Acaso no recuerda que le conté que me besó tras la tormenta?
 - Lo recuerdo perfectamente, pero no sabía que le amara.
 - ¿Y qué otra cosa podía ser?... si hay beso, hay amor verdadero. (214-215)

Along with conduct books, Barroso bluntly mocks boarding schools and the kind of education young ladies received at the time: “Como miss Flora nos decía en clase, hice lo que debe hacer una señorita cuando no sabe qué decir: exclamé “Oh” y la dejé proseguir con su relato.” (48) or “Recuerdo que en el internado nos dijeron que lo de “afectísima”, signifique lo que signifique, siempre queda bien incluirlo en una carta, así que no pienso olvidarlo ni una sola vez.” (16). Let alone the following hilarious examples:

Como siempre fui de las alumnas más aventajadas de la clase de buenas maneras de miss Flora, para empezar le he hecho la reverencia esa que nos enseñaron, esa que bajas la cabeza y la pegas con el cuello de la forma más incómoda posible, recordarás que yo era la única de clase a la que no se le caía la aceituna al suelo, y me he dirigido a él. (23)

¿Tú tienes la más remota idea de cuánto pesa una carta? ¿Y de cuánto es una libra? No recuerdo que en el internado nos explicaran nada de esto, que ahí se nos pasaban los días entre las clases de modales y las clases de piano. ¡Uf, con lo que nos costó aprenderse esas cuatro canciones! (40)

The adult Jane (Tomalin, 39) wrote unsurprisingly against schoolmistresses as follows: “I would rather be Teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a Man I did not like”. Tomalin adds that

All her life Jane found it hard to see girls' schools as anything but places of torment for pupils and teachers alike.... After a measles epidemic, besides, both sisters were taken to a new school run by Madame Latournelle, in Reading. This was a well-established place, over the ruins of Riding Abbey and a garden overlooking the ruins of the rest, where the children could run about and play as they liked. However, Madame La Tournelle's real name was

Sarah Hackitt and she spoke no French. So the false name was simply a tribute to the good expectations of parents, as French teachers had become fashionable.

Similarly, Barroso does not miss the slightest opportunity to make fun in an open way, of the little knowledge our protagonist shows: “Por fin podré poner en práctica los complicadísimos pasos de baile que me enseñó el profesor que mi madre mandó traer del continente, el mismo día que cumplí los dieciocho sin un marido a la vista.” (81), or “- ¿Y eso es malo? - *Au contraire*.- Mi madre, como yo, sabe poco francés pero le saca mucho partido.” (229)

5.2.1 FAMILY, MARRIAGE, SEX AND BABIES

Taking into account that at the time, marriage and giving birth represent important milestones in every woman’s live, I will devote the present section to analyse how those topics have been parodied by Barroso.

In fact, one of the main differences I observe, between the two novels analysed in the present study, lies in the fact that, although both heroines are obsessed with matrimony, Emma kills the time matchmaking others, whilst Barroso’s Jane devotes her life to find a husband for herself. In this way, Barroso bluntly mocks the kind of life women lead after matrimony:

Mi situación [Jane] es desesperada ya que este año cumpliré los diecinueve y todavía no he recibido ninguna oferta de matrimonio digna de mención. Me pregunto si no acabaré las dos décadas de vida que, siendo optimistas, me quedan en un convento, en vez de morir en mi tercer parto múltiple, antes de cumplir los veinticinco, tal y como soñamos todas las jovencitas. (14)

Sería un drama que no me casara precisamente yo (Jane), que, como sabes, deseaba fervientemente tener muchos hijos para luego dárselos a la nodriza y que de la nodriza pasasen a la niñera, de la niñera a la institutriz, de la institutriz al internado, del colegio a la universidad y de ahí a donde les diera la gana, porque ni creo que entonces yo estuviese viva ni, aunque lo estuviera, me importasen lo más mínimo esas criaturas a las que no habría visto en la vida. (15)

Anémona, for her part, also provides a *detailed* account of her parents’ life: “Mis padres se instalaron allí recién casados, años ha. Mi padre se dedicó a sus obligaciones como párroco y mi madre se mantuvo bastante ocupada dando a luz a un número

indeterminado de hijos de los cuales sobrevivimos once.” (47). Later, her own father adds:

Doy gracias al Señor por haberme permitido conocer a mi dulce esposa y por haber podido fundar con ella una familia cristiana, con tantos hijos para poner al servicio de nuestro Señor; yo mismo se los presentaría, si tuviera una idea aproximada de dónde están la mayoría de ellos. ¿Qué estaba diciendo? Ah, sí. Una maravillosa numerosísima familia que hizo que se mudaran sistemáticamente todos los vecinos que tuvimos durante años y que llevó a mi mujer a la tumba antes de cumplir los treinta y cinco. (141)

In Georgian England, sex, according to Tomalin (8), “led to pregnancy and it often led to death, though separate bedrooms was the usual form of birth control. For her part, Jane seems to have phobia to childbirth as she knew a great number of women had died giving birth, including two of her sisters-in-law.” It is striking nonetheless that at a time when the mortality rate ran high, the Austens did not register any victim¹¹⁶. At the same time, Tomalin (8) also reports that in London “over half the children born died before they could reach the age of five, and although things were better in the country, the mortality was still alarmingly high.” In addition, the scarcity of doctors came to worsen the situation, since “the nearest doctor from Steventon was in Basingstoke, seven miles away over bad roads”. As a result, seldom was a doctor called for something as usual as childbirth.”

Barroso openly criticises husbands’ universally limited engagement with their own children: “Mi padre hace poca vida de familia, al encontrarse inmerso de pleno en la temporada de caza, que por lo que he podido comprobar desde mi vuelta, a veces se prolonga hasta once meses al año”. (59)

Regarding sex, Barroso does not miss any opportunity to boldly laugh at the disproportionate zeal with which everything related to the body is treated: “También se nos explicaba que las enaguas sirven para, a ver si recuerdo las palabras exactas, “atenuar las formas femeniles”. Tres años me llevó saber qué significaba lo de “atenuar” y sobre lo de femeniles aún tengo mis dudas” (74), or:

¹¹⁶ See Tomalin (7); “Mrs Austen’s child-rearing system was an unusual one. Her practice was to give each baby a few months at the breast as a good start [3 month according to Tomalin] and then hand the child over to a woman in the village to be looked after for another year or eighteen months, until it was old enough to be easily managed at home.”

- Querida humilde mía (Anémona), lo primero que se debe llevar es una camisa fina de algodón que vaya directamente pegada al cuerpo y que... Veo que se está congestionando, ¿Se ha atragantado o algo?
- Es que ha dicho cuerpo.
- Pues casi no cuento lo de los pantaloncitos, ¿verdad? Vale, vale, pasaré al corsé. ¿Puedo decir corsé?
- Se ve que no, que no podía. Después de que Branson nos trajera las sales y Lucy el abanico, pasamos a las enaguas. (70)

Besides, our protagonist's (Jane) mother employs a French teacher to help her daughter to learn some basic steps for the ball. Her teacher, however, seems to keep too "progressive" an attitude, according to her standards and so she ends up sacking him:

- Le pido encarecidamente que no vuelva a referirse más a las enaguas, es más, no debe usted mencionar delante de mi hija ninguna prenda de ropa que toque directamente el cuerpo. (106)
- ¿Y el sombrero? ¿Puedo decir sombrero? Es que en algunos bailes los caballeros hacen el gesto como de...
- Sí claro, porque el pelo no forma parte del cuerpo, eso lo sabe todo el mundo. (107)

Ese baile en el que el caballero, hija mía, no escuches esto, en el que el caballero, toca a su pareja de baile... Es una auténtica inmoralidad, algo indecoroso, porque le toca algo que... que ningún caballero debería tocar jamás a ninguna dama... Jamás. Llevo casada más de veinte años y puedo decir orgullosa que lord Hawthornetone-Williamsmith nunca me ha tocado la cintura¹¹⁷, es más, ni si quiera creo que sepa dónde la tengo. (108)

Unsurprisingly, couples' sexual relationships are also straightforwardly mocked, borrowing the cliché that matrimony constitutes just a self-interested institution seeking to ensure and preserve the continuity of the lineage:

Incluso después de casarse, cuentan que tu tío segundo, lord Harrington, se enteró de que su esposa era coja tras dieciocho años de matrimonio, cuando su terrier favorito, en medio de la caza del zorro de Shropshire, decidió salir corriendo con su pata de madera en la boca en vez de con el zorro, para gran disgusto de lady Harrington y profundo deleite del zorro en cuestión... se oyeron rumores de que Skippy y la pierna iniciaron una feliz convivencia en la costa de Cornualles. (297)

Mira, querida, un buen matrimonio, sólido y duradero, se basa precisamente en el desconocimiento mutuo; que si ya lo supiéramos todo el uno del otro, nos aburriríamos en enseguida, y hay que tener en cuenta que tenemos toda la vida por delante para descubrir

¹¹⁷ See Fullerton (*A Dance* 111); although it may seem an exaggeration, Fullerton reminds us that "the arrival of waltz in England in 1815 caused considerable commotion, with many regarding it as a scandalous form of public embrace [...] Newspapers even reported that the excitement of waltzing was so great that it caused women to faint, and as late as 1825 it was still being considered by some to be a riotous and even indecent dance. But Thomas Wilson, who published *A Description of the Correct Method of Waltzing* in 1816, insisted that the dance was not an enemy of true morals and would not endanger virtue."

todas y cada una de las cosas que nos irritan profunda y malsanamente de nuestro cónyuge....
Es más, ¿Tú crees que si yo hubiera conocido de verdad a tu padre me habría casado con él?
(296)

5.2.2 FASHION AND CLOTHING

Fashion is no different, and Barroso laughs at the dressing style: “La moda ha dado un gran cambio estos últimos años y que ahora es mucho más ligera, apenas hay que llevar una camisa, unos pantaloncitos, cinco enaguas, un corsé... al parecer, somos muy afortunadas”. (72) Or regarding petticoats:

El número de enaguas. A más enaguas, más señorita. Cinco en lo idóneo. Esto nos lleva a varias preguntas fundamentales en la vida de toda joven. ¿Puede llevar una auténtica dama menos de tres enaguas? ¿Debe expulsarse de la sociedad a una mujer que se atreva a llevar solo dos? ¿O basta con que viva en una cueva despreciada por sus semejantes? (71)

Muslin illness¹¹⁸ is also subjected to Barroso’s derision: “Así nos dijeron en el colegio y si prueba a salir a la calle con la lluvia que está cayendo hoy con solo este vestido, vuelva y me dice si se ha cogido la enfermedad de la muselina o la de la pulmonía triple”. (73) Futility, in terms of fashion, constitutes a timeless cause for laughter:

- Pero ¿y los chales? Usted me ha dicho que llevar un chal es algo fundamental. ¿Los chales no pueden servir para abrigarnos?
- No, no, no, en ese punto he de mostrarme inflexible (y si me dejara explicarle en detalle lo del corsé, vería por qué). El chal solo se lleva para que se te caiga así, a medio brazo ¿ve? Un chal que abrigue algo, ¡Qué idea! (74)

On top of everything, we need to mention the reference to certain food habits always present, according to the cliché, in particular cultures, such as abusing alcohol:

En Londres nunca falta Negus...Es un vino caliente y azucarado con algunas especias que se sirve en cualquier baile que se precie¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁸ See Fullerton (*A Dance* 24); waistlines had moved upwards and styles gowns more revealing. Doctors blamed light muslins and so much uncovered flesh for a rise in consumption; “the muslin’s disease” is what they called it. See also Downing (24-25); as a consequence of increasing trade with India, fine muslins and cashmere shawls import spread and ladies were so committed to figure-revealing styles that little was worn with their scanty muslin gowns even in winter, giving rise to an increase in the incidence of consumption. Indeed, if a lady was not fortunate enough to suffer from such a glamorous illness, she could feign going “into decline”.

¹¹⁹ See Fullerton (*A Dance* 121); “Negus was a late-night drink, often served to ball guests before they departed into the cold of a winter’s night. Invented by Colonel Francis Negus, a British courtier and fox hunter, the drink was made

- Ah, el viejo coronel, que Dios le bendiga. Dicen que el coronel Francis Negus ha unido más parejas en Inglaterra que cualquier obispo. A él y a su contribución para pasar las largas guardias...ya sabe, los riesgos de una campaña militar. (94)

En ese momento mi madre entró en el salón y saludó a nuestras visitas, ofreciéndole unas sales a la viuda.

- Las sales no, por favor, querida, ese olor me repugna. Pero si me pudiera ofrecer algún tónico o reconstituyente, se lo agradecería.

- ¿De qué tipo?

- De los que vienen en una botella con una etiqueta que pone brandy. (250)

5.2.3 WEALTHINESS AND STATUS

Barroso, taking advantage of the sentence expressed in *E* “His indifference to a confusion of rank, bordered too much on inelegance of mind” (*E* XXIV, 752), shamelessly mocks the way characters that do not belong to the gentry are treated:

¡Oh qué ilusión! Nunca había conocido a un Thompson. Había oído hablar de ellos, de hecho tengo entendido que abundan extraordinariamente, pero jamás había tenido en mi propio saloncito a alguien de nombre tan vulgar... ¿Qué más te puedo decir de ella, Edwina? Es una criatura fascinante, creo que es eso que llaman *una pobre*. (34-35)

Pero desde que volví del internado, no recuerdo que hubiéramos tenido por aquí ningún ejemplar de “hija de clérigo” con que el que tratar, o quizá siempre tuve algo mejor que hacer que hablar con una.

- Qué original ocupación. Siéntese, siéntese. Tengo ganas de saber cosas de alguien tan inusual, sin ir más lejos, nunca había conocido a nadie que ignorara de tal manera los dictados de la moda. (43)

At the same time, Barroso makes flagrant comments on the lifestyle the gentry leads: “Me preguntaba si habría salido a pasear para matar el tiempo mientras sus arrendados se matan a trabajar para que él siga viviendo en el ocio más abundante”. (23) Or, in the same vein, “Yo no me ofendí porque sé que a mi padre no se le dan bien estas cosas y además sus obligaciones como terrateniente (esquilmar las reservas de caza de la zona y pasearse con displicencia entre sus aparceros) le reclaman. (295)

An additional example is the following:

- Comprendo que estarán muy ocupados, su padre sin duda estará visitando a sus aparceros...

from wine (usually port) mixed with hot water, with lemon, cloves-foot jelly and spices added for flavour; sugar was added for sweetness.”

- Espero que la administración de tan gran hacienda no le suponga demasiado trabajo. Solté una risa.
- Disculpe, es que es la primera vez que oigo la palabra “trabajo” asociada a mi padre en la misma frase. (185)

Along with rank, wealthiness is also subjected to mockery: “Nos explicó que al no esperarse invitados aquella tarde, habían tenido que improvisar un servicio de té con apenas tres tartas, cinco tipos de bollería y sándwiches de menos de ocho clases distintas”. (50)

5.2.4 SOCIAL CONVENTIONS

As Jane Austen novels are characterized by the detailed study of characters’ manners and behaviour, there is little wonder that Barroso does not miss the opportunity to boldly laugh at every social convention and *cliché*: “Una vez superamos la fase de los saludos y las preguntas sobre la salud de todos nuestros familiares de hasta cuarto grado la charla fue derivando hasta convertirse en varias conversaciones paralelas” (92), or the following priceless lines, well worth quoting in full: “Todos nos reímos pero un poco, sin excedernos, que somos británicos.” (93)

Una vez pasamos al salón y nos sentamos cómodamente, Lord Arlington me fue preguntando sucesivamente por la salud de toda mi familia, tal y como marcan las normas de la buena sociedad, o eso decía miss Flora, como sabrás, que si algo distingue a la buena sociedad de la mala es que en la mala a nadie le importa lo más mínimo si tu tía Mary, la que vive en Surrey, está pasando por un horrible catarro. (181)

Esta es la idea: que cada uno de nosotros se sitúe en un lado de mi yegua, porque no puede haber nada indecoroso en que un británico de alta cuna se encuentre piel con piel con un caballo. –Y como me vio dudar, añadió muy severo-: Sobre todo si la montura es un miembro de la aristocracia, como es Duchess... De manera que las estrecheces rompían no solo todas las normas sociales que rigen el pudoroso encuentro entre una dama y un caballero, sino también las relativas a establos y caballerizas para potros y potrancas de más de dos años. Iniciamos algunos tímidos intentos de conversación, especialmente sobre el tiempo, hasta que quedó claro que ambos estábamos de acuerdo en que, sin duda, llovía. Después pronunciamos, uno u otro, variaciones sobre el verbo escampar, en un número indeterminado de veces: a ver si escampa, esperemos que pronto escampe, después, en cuanto escampa, sale el sol en un momento, sí... y los caracoles también (204)

Decidí alargar un poco la conversación, en vista de que a la feliz recién casada se la veía cada vez más cansada y empezaba a cambiar el peso de un pie a otro. Así que planteé un tema de vital importancia, de esos a los que los británicos no nos podemos resistir.

- ¿No les parece que esta temporada está siendo especialmente cálida? (263)

As will be shown, Barroso makes reference to *P&P* regarding the scene in which Mr Darcy asks Miss Bennet the following dances as part of her particular homage:

When those dances were over she returned to Charlotte Lucas, and was in conversation with her, when she found herself suddenly addressed by Mr. Darcy, who took her so much by surprise in his application for her hand, that, without knowing what she did, she accepted him. He walked away again immediately, and she was left to fret over her own want of presence of mind; Charlotte tried to console her. (*P&P* XVIII, 245)

In Barroso's version:

No sé si es propio de una jovencita aceptar bailar con un hombre estando comprometida – aunque sea ficticiamente- con otro, pero como cuando quise contestar vi que ya estaban saludando a otros invitados, me quedé sola con la palabra en la boca, comprometida para los primeros dos aaah que tocan y los siguientes uuum. (216)

There is, eventually, another mention of Austen's novels in Barroso's writing, such as the elopement of Lydia Bennet. In fact, there is a mixture between the elopement of *P&P* and the secret engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax in *E*:

"I have just had a letter from Jane, with such dreadful news. It cannot be concealed from anyone. My younger sister has left all her friends—has eloped; has thrown herself into the power of—of Mr. Wickham. They are gone off together from Brighton. You know him too well to doubt the rest. She has no money, no connections, nothing that can tempt him to—she is lost for ever." (*P&P* XLVI, 339)

"You may well be amazed. But it is even so. There has been a solemn engagement between them ever since October—formed at Weymouth, and kept a secret from every body. Not a creature knowing it but themselves—neither the Campbells, nor her family, nor his.—It is so wonderful, that though perfectly convinced of the fact, it is yet almost incredible to myself. I can hardly believe it.—I thought I knew him. "Emma scarcely heard what was said.—Her mind was divided between two ideas—her own former conversations with him about Miss Fairfax; and poor Harriet;—and for some time she could only exclaim, and require confirmation, repeated confirmation. "Well," said she at last, trying to recover herself; "this is a circumstance which I must think of at least half a day, before I can at all comprehend it. What!—engaged to her all the winter—before either of them came to Highbury?" "Engaged since October,—secretly engaged.—It has hurt me, Emma, very much. It has hurt his father equally. Some part of his conduct we cannot excuse." (*E* XLVI, 855)

Barroso's text offers an ironic blend of the two:

Pero cuando llegó a su hogar descubrió que, aunque era tarde, su hijo no había regresado a casa...- Ni Agnes regresó a la suya. ¿Entienden lo que quiero decir? Ambos desaparecieron del mismo baile y ninguno regresó a su hogar. En toda la noche. ¿Comprenden lo terrible que es?... Se contaba que habían huido juntos a otro condado, donde un pastor amigo de la pareja

les habría convertido en matrimonio incluso antes de que se recibieran dichas notas por su respectivos destinatarios... Parece ser que en Londres se habían tratado mucho durante la pasada temporada, tanto que la duquesa se empezó a preocupar por la excesiva familiaridad y, conocedora de la inexistente dote de Agnes, se opuso abiertamente a tanta visita y tanta confianza. (252-253)

To conclude, as stated in the introduction of this study, I will stress, contrary to Vickery's argument, that Austen's appeal should be sought in her ability to laugh at unfair conventions rather than in allowing the readers freedom to use their imagination in order to fill the gaps she deliberately left empty. Her technique, however, is applied in such a subtle way that it is not "suitable for all audiences". As a consequence, the vast majority of the adaptations as well as sequels and prequels of Austen's novels are nowadays displayed in crude parody. According to Pozuelo Yvancos (5-6) however, irony and parody are not quite the same:

Por eso la parodia y la ironía que tantas cosas tienen en común, se diferencian en que frente a la dualidad textual de la parodia, el otro texto respecto al cual la ironía tendría lugar, no está explícito, es complejo, y hay que deducirlo de la actividad intelectual del lector. Para mí la ironía es una figura intelectual en el sentido más estricto y etimológico, puesto que resulta de *intus legere*, leer por dentro, leer lo que no está explícito, y que la actividad de lectura construye, por eso la ironía es el lujo de la hermenéutica y su lugar de despliegue, ya que solo vive en el espacio recepcional del intérprete capaz de percibir dos textos donde aparentemente solo hay uno. En eso se diferencia de la parodia, que sostiene el enfrentamiento de dos textos en el que el parodiado es explícito y reconocible.

Following Pozuelo Yvancos's (2004: 5-6) distinction between irony and parody, I therefore postulate that *Emma*, along with the major Austen's novels, constitute an example of fine irony elaborated with subtleness where readers must try hard to make an educated guess on what Jane is implicitly making fun of; conduct literature and sentimental novels particularly, whilst Barroso presents us in *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* just an explicit and bold parody of a well-known text as *E* which does not require any additional skill to be understood, that is, "for all audiences". Austen, therefore, can be read by scholars as well as by aficionados, purists or fanatic janeites what ultimately paves the way for her worldwide popularity.



6. CONCLUSIONS

That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit. (P&P XVIII, 251)

While there are still many questions left unanswered about Jane Austen's life, for according to Anna Chancellor¹²⁰, in the documentary entitled "The Real Jane Austen" (BBC), "Jane Austen is something of a mystery, since she left no diaries and her sister Cassandra made a bonfire from the letters she thought too personal. She never married, never was she rich" and on top of that, "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree. The pen is in their hands" (P XXIII, 1151), I have aimed in this master thesis to establish that at least two urban legends are not true:

First of all, Jane Austen was not an elderly woman, since she died at the age of forty-one, who isolated from the madding crowd killed her time, according to many, working on her embroidery and gossiping about her neighbours. As a matter of fact, her first writings date back to the age of 12 and four of her six grand novels were already drafted by the age of 25. As a detail of her intellectual stature, *Emma*, Austen's perhaps most accomplished novel was written in a matter of months. At the same time, she definitely did not confine her novels to the small universe of her village life thanks to her travels and worldwide connections as far as London, Paris or even India.

Secondly, Jane Austen did not write sentimental or romantic novel addressed to a female audience as a result of her spinsterhood; quite the opposite. Being strongly against the kind of literature for women at the time, mainly conduct and sentimental books, her fiction is developed through irony, parody or satire, that is, an indirect and cunning way of expressing disagreement, in clear contrast to authors as Mary Wollstonecraft. Regarding her alleged female audience, spectacular candles and flashy dresses displayed on the big screen have confused and misled us to think that everything was about love and live happily ever after. By contrast, among her first readers there were women as well as men and praises were also received from male and female critics.

¹²⁰ Jane Austen is her great aunt from eight generations ago.

In connection with her spinsterhood, I mention at least one alleged romance with Tom Lefroy as depicted in the film *Becoming Jane*, but there are others such as Edward Bridges, the Reverend Samuel Blackall and the proposal of marriage on the Devonshire coast¹²¹ which give evidence of the importance of writing for Austen, since she was unwilling to give up writing for marriage at any rate. There is nothing more certain that if she had accepted any proposal, we were not talking about her right now.

As a result of the above mentioned arguments, however hard it may result to believe to some like VS Naipaul¹²², I postulate that Jane Austen has become a 21st century global phenomenon, a commercial brand enjoyed by mass fandom as well as academics thanks to her particular literary skill at taking advantage of unfair convention in order to make readers laugh at those very circumstances she intends to condemn, not in accordance with the opinion expressed by Vickery, who understands Austen's popularity in terms of the kind of license Austen grants her readers with to freely use their imagination in order to fill the blanks she deliberately left empty.

Following Pozuelo Yvancos's (2004: 5-6) distinction between irony and parody, I therefore postulate that Emma, along with the major Austen's novels, constitute an example of fine irony elaborated with subtleness where readers must try hard to make an educated guess on what Jane is implicitly making fun of; conduct literature and sentimental novels particularly, whilst Barroso presents us in *Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre* just an explicit and bold parody of a well-known text as *E* which does not require any additional skill to be understood, that is, "for all audiences". Austen, therefore, can be read by scholars as well as by aficionados, purists or fanatic janeites what ultimately paves the way for her worldwide popularity.

At the same time, I strongly believe that the very wittiness of Austen's technique prevents "all audiences" from fully noticing the kind of irony displayed in her fiction. As a consequence, crude parody becomes the leading strategy of the vast majority of current adaptations as well as sequels and prequels of Austen's novels, such as

¹²¹ For more information on this subject see Murray and Norman.

¹²² See "VS Naipaul finds no woman writer his literary match – not even Jane Austen". *The Guardian* 2 June 2011: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/02/vs-naipaul-jane-austen-women-writers> regarding qualities such as "sentimentality and the narrow view of the world women possess." See also "La polémica entre V.S. Naipaul y Jane Austen", at *Hablando de Jane*: <http://hablandodejaneausten.com/2011/06/20/la-polemica-entre-v-s-naipaul-y-jane-austen/>.

Confesiones de una Heredera con Demasiado Tiempo Libre (2015) on paper, a perfect illustration of the terms in which popular culture is consumed as means of food for recuperation and distraction of mass audiences in clear contrast with *E Austen's* perhaps most accomplished novel in terms of subtle irony.

Regarding future investigations, I presume that Austen's image will be at the heart of a series of debates, which far from coming to an end will intensify, for there is plenty of money at stake as indeed it seems obvious with the Rice and the Byrne portraits. It appears to me as if seeking to go unnoticed, no authenticated image but a clumsy sketch depicted by Cassandra, Jane Austen had succeeded in making a huge impact, that is quite the opposite to her own will. I guess there is no greater irony than her subtle invitation to have, each of us, our private Austen as a result of her own sister's clumsiness.



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