

## Classifying Jane: The Romantic in the Novels of Jane Austen

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In his contribution to an essay collection compiled in celebration of Jane Austen's bicentenary, Stuart M. Tave begins his article by stating an obvious but often overlooked historical detail: "A birthday volume seems to say that dates have meaning. If Jane Austen was born in 1775 that means she was born in the middle of the decade which made her an exact contemporary not only of Scott but of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey ...of Hazlitt, too. It means that, like them, the decade in which she comes to maturity and begins serious authorship is in the 1790's" (61). It was a time of revolutionary change, as noted by David Perkins in the introduction to English Romantic Writers:

The half-century from approximately 1775-1830 saw the American Revolution and the emergence of the United States, the French Revolution and Napoleon, the spread throughout Europe and America of democratic and egalitarian ideals, the origin or intensification in every European country a sentiment of national identity, and, especially in England, the first important development of the industrial system. At the same time, virtually every realm of thought and art underwent a profound modification if which we still feel the impact. (1)

Certainly, Jane Austen was involved, albeit limited due to her premature death, in this literary revolution. If Tave's and Perkin's assertion are true, then modern critics must ask themselves this question; since Austen and the major Romantic poets were living during the same time and, for the most part, occupying the same country, what relation is there between Jane Austen's novels and the poetry of her contemporaries? Although there are several instances of direct allusion to works of the Romantic poets, the Jane Austen's novels, as Susan Morgan states, point

to “a few of the moments at which Austen’s work and particular romantic poems touch” (Qtd. in Thomas). Karl Kroeber, Romantic era critic at Columbia, correctly asserts that Austen’s works should be studied, not in light of her eighteen-century predecessors, but with the realization that Austen and other novelists, like Scott and Edgeworth, “were aware not only of whence they came but also of where they were—in a period of redefinition, reassessment, and expansion ...” (300). Such was the work of Jane Austen. Her innovations that combined existing notions about the rapidly developing genre with new approaches to style and theme were crucial in the development of the novel from a much-maligned genre into a well-respected art form.

Before a study of the Romantic elements contained in Miss Austen’s novel can commence, they must properly be identified. It is always a risk when one makes generalizations in order to define a group of people, events, or items of interest; however, a close reading of the Romantic Movement’s literature reveals several common characteristics held by the authors at work during this era. Douglas Bush in English Poetry gives, perhaps, the most complete definition of the era when he states that the Romantic Movement, in part, consisted of:

A turn from reason to the senses, feelings, imagination, and intuition; from the civilized, modern and sophisticated to the ... natural; from urban society to rural solitude; [...] from normal, generic abstractions to the variety of concrete particulars; from impersonal objectivity to subjectivism; from public to private themes. (42)

In addition to Bush’s suggestions, Perkins notes that another important facet of Romantic literature is advocacy for the betterment of those oppressed by long existing social stratification (5-6). Certainly, Austen’s novels contain these themes; of course, the argument for “Jane Austen, Romantic” is stronger in some than in others. Karl Kroeber remarks in his article, “British

Romanticism and British Romantic Fiction” that Austen should be considered a “conservative Romantic,” especially in her later novels. Austen was not a Romantic in the same way that Wordsworth or Shelley were; but, as Kroeber noted, stylistically “congruous, where an artist not so much reflects contemporary trends, but independently develops what we (with the advantage of hindsight) recognize as unique contributions to the evolving total pattern of his or her stylistic epoch—never a simple unity but always an intricate coherence of alternatives” (292). It is this coherence, especially in her later novels, that reveals the possible influence that the Romantics had on the remarkable Miss Austen.

It is impossible to overlook the romantic elements that are manifested in the character of Marianne Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility. Bush suggests that an attribute of Romantic literature was evidence of “a turn from reason to the senses, feelings, imagination, and intuition.” Marianne’s personality encompassed these Romantic sensibilities completely. Austen describes her character as “sensible and clever; but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting; she was everything but prudent” (4). When Elinor tells Marianne that she “think[s] very highly”, of her beloved Edward and that she “greatly esteem[s] and like[s] him” (13), Marianne silences her in mid sentence and cries, “Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh! worse than cold-hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise. Use those words again and I will leave the room this moment” (13). Marianne’s objection her sister’s perceived embarrassment of showing her feelings is intolerable to her as it is to the Romantic ideal of free expression of emotion. Another manifestation of the Romantic in the character of Marianne is the manner in which her intense relationship with Willoughby quickly developed. He, too, possesses some of the same characteristics that Marianne does. Austen writes that Willoughby “strongly resembled and peculiarly delighted” Marianne (32).

Austen continues, “When he was present she had no eyes for any one else. Every thing he did, was right. [...] This was the season of happiness to Marianne” (35). Marianne relied solely on intuition and feeling when she was falling in love with Willoughby. For a time, it appears that the impetuous “love at first sight” philosophy, highly esteemed by Marianne, has found a true match for her in Willoughby. The end of their relationship also demonstrates Marianne’s romantic sensibilities. She relies, not on the reasonableness of the spoken word, but on her feelings and intuition about Willoughby’s intentions of marriage. After their parting, Marianne “played over every favorite song that she had been used to play to Willoughby, every air in which their voices had been oftenest joined, and sat at the instrument gazing on every line of music that he had written out for her. [...] In books too, as well as in music, she courted the misery which a contrast between the past and present was certain of giving” (55). The constant revisits to past feelings and sentiments is not reasonable; such visitations are only causing her more pain; but Marianne, like all good Romantics would do, continues to dwell upon the past. Additionally, Marianne seems to enjoy taking walks in the countryside by herself. Austen writes, “If her sisters intended to walk on the downs, she directly stole away to the lanes; if they talked of the valley, she was as speedy in climbing the hills, and could never be found as others set off” (57). Later, Marianne discusses the scenic grounds of Norland, her former home, in the Autumn when they are covered dead leaves. In a fashion that would make Mr. Shelley proud, she remarks: “‘Oh!’ cried Marianne, ‘with what transporting sensations have I formerly seen them in the fall! How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind! What feelings have they, the season, the air altogether inspired! Now there is no one there to regard them.’” (58). Elinor sarcastically sympathizes with Marianne’s statement: “‘It is not everyone’, said Elinor, ‘who has your passion for dead leaves’” (58). This passion for solitary

walks and love of the natural is another example of the Romantic sensibility of Marianne Dashwood. In his article, “The Sense of a Beginning,” Gene Rouff notes that, “For Marianne Dashwood, inveterate foe of second attachments, love is literally something else, removed from such common modes of feeling” (182). It is her definition of love, her search for, and reactions to the experience that make her a kind of type for the Romantics.

Another important attribute of Romantic literature, again from Bush’s article, is “the turn from urban society to rural solitude...From the civilized to the modern and sophisticated to the ...natural.” This theme certainly appears in each of Austen’s novels. Each story’s setting takes place in a rural village, away from the cities of London and Bath. Life in the big city is never ignored; characters need to travel to the city for business affairs and fashionable clothes. Austen tends to portray these cities as having a corruptive influence on their visitors. In Sense and Sensibility, both Willoughby and Brandon go to the city unexpectedly and return much different than they were before their journey. Of course, Willoughby marries for money and Brandon’s life is changed when he learns that a former love, corrupted by the evils of life in the city for the poor, has died and leaves a daughter under his care. In both Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, Bath is a place where the aristocracy went, in words of Scott Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby, “to retreat back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together and let other people clean up the mess they had made” (181). Similar to these experiences that occur in Bath, a disaster in the city of Brighton, the elopement of Lydia Bennet and Mr. Wickham, takes place in Pride and Prejudice. In Mansfield Park, Fanny finds disorder in the city of Portsmouth. She discovers that life is better at Mansfield. Although the preference for country living and references to the evils of the big city are a part of these novels, this theme most recognizable in Emma.

L.J. Swingle, in “The Perfect Happiness of the Union: Jane Austen’s Emma and English Romanticism,” asserts that the village setting of Emma is very appealing to romantic sensibilities because it advocates the “pursuit of enclosure.” He argues that, “The elect individual or small group of individuals close themselves and their values in, thereby at the same time closing out the individuals and values (or lack of values) of a surrounding, negative environment” (314). He states that it is important for the characters to “gain some center of security, wherein one is ‘fenced and guarded’ from dangers that exist without” (316). It is in this country setting of Highbury that the characters of the story can develop naturally, without the interruptions of city life; however, these influences do appear in the novel personified in the character of Mrs. Elton. Austen describes her as “a vain woman, extremely well satisfied with herself; and thinking much of her own importance; [...] that all her notions of living were drawn from one set of people, and one style of living...”(182). Ironically, Mr. Elton meets his wife while vacationing in Bath. She is the city’s greatest advocate as she tries to persuade the Woodhouse family to vacation in the town: “The advantages of Bath to the young are pretty generally understood. It would be a charming introduction for you, who have lived so secluded a life; and I could immediately secure you some of the best society in the place” (184). Mrs. Elton is an unwelcome addition to the Highbury residents; not because of where she has come from, but because of what the “where she has come from” has done to her. These people do not desire to visit Bath or anywhere else, for that matter. The group is extremely satisfied with their idyllic life.

Another piece of Austen’s “conservative Romanticism” appears through her usage of natural landscape throughout her novels. Rosemarie Bodenheimer, author of “Looking at the Landscape in Jane Austen,” argues that, “Austen consistently used responses to landscape as she used other literary languages or contemporary ideas, in the service of characterization: and the

views of her landscape in her novels are more fully and wittingly weighted with metaphorical value that has been recognized in any sustained fashion" (605). In Sense and Sensibility and Northanger Abbey, Austen is, according to Bodenheimer, "a satirist of the picturesque cult of landscape viewing."(605). After Edward, of Sense and Sensibility, explains his confusion about the notion of the picturesque to Marianne and Elinor and his lack of emotional furor about natural settings, Elinor remarks, "Because he [Edward] believes many people pretend to more admiration of the beauties of nature than they really feel, and is disgusted with such pretensions, he affects greater indifference and less discrimination in viewing them himself than he possesses. He is fastidious and will have an affectation of his own" (64). Through Elinor's comment, Austen is expressing her views on people belonging to the cult of the Picturesque who express, what she seems to believe, fashionable sensibilities about nature, but truly cannot authentically appreciate natural settings because they are over occupied in search of "particulars" (64). Marianne's reply to Elinor's comment solidifies Austen's satire when Marianne expresses her distaste for the fashionable lover of landscapes:

"It is very true," said Marianne, "that admiration of landscape scenery is become a mere jargon. Every body pretends to feel and tries to describe with the taste and elegance of him who first defined what picturesque beauty was. I detest jargon of every kind, and sometimes I have kept my feelings to myself, because I could find no language to describe them in but what was worn and hackneyed out of all sense and meaning." (64)

This same satire appears in Northanger Abbey, as Henry Tilney is instructing the naïve Catherine on landscape drawing. Again, it appears that simply admiring the beauty of the hillsides, as Edward did, was not enough:

The Tilneys ... viewing the country with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing, and decided on its capability of being formed into pictures, with all the eagerness of real taste. Here Catherine was quite lost. She knew nothing of drawing--nothing of taste: and she listened to them with an attention which brought her little profit, for they talked in phrases which conveyed scarcely any idea to her. The little which she could understand, however, appeared to contradict the very few notions she had entertained on the matter before. It seemed as if a good view were no longer to be taken from the top of a high hill, and that a clear blue sky was no longer a proof of a fine day. She was heartily ashamed of her ignorance. [...] In the present instance, she confessed and lamented her want of knowledge, declared that she would give anything in the world to be able to draw; and a lecture on the picturesque immediately followed ... He talked of foregrounds, distances, and second distances--side-screens and perspectives--lights and shades; and Catherine was so hopeful a scholar that when they gained the top of Beechen Cliff, she voluntarily rejected the whole city of Bath as unworthy to make part of a landscape.

(74-75)

Austen's criticism of the "picturesque" appears in another form. She is an opponent of unnatural estate improvement in Mansfield Park. Mr. Rushworth's estate, Sotherton Court, looks "like a dismal old prison" according to its owner (63). When this conversation is taking place, Rushworth has just returned from a visit to a Mr. Smith's estate grounds that had just undergone renovation under the direction of a modern landscaper, Humphrey Repton, who published

Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening in 1803, is renowned for inventing the term "landscape gardening" to express his theory that the art requires "the united powers of the landscape painter and the practical gardener." It appears that Repton was an advocate of taking neoclassically influenced landscaping and transforming them into scenes containing rambling gardens and areas of supposed wilderness that needed to be highly maintained. Rushworth ironically states: "I should be most thankful to any Mr. Repton who would undertake it, and give me as much beauty as he could for my money; and I should never look at it till it was complete" (66). Fanny is aghast when Rushworth details his vision for the estate:

"There have been two or three fine old trees cut down [at Smith's estate], that grew too near the house, and it opens the prospect amazingly, which makes me think that Repton, or anybody of that sort, would certainly have the avenue at Sotherton down: the avenue that leads from the west front to the top of the hill, you know." [...] Fanny, ... who had been attentively listening, now looked at him, and said in a low voice, "Cut down an avenue! What a pity! Does it not make you think of Cowper? 'Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited'".

(66)

Bodenheimer remarks that this kind of "radical estate improvement are "violations between nature and artifice" (603). Austen's criticism of Repton's artistic vision here is overwrought with irony. Because Repton must cut down trees and rearrange the natural state of the grounds into a more "picturesque" scene, he is violating one of the major tenants of Romanticism: beauty is truth. An artificial arrangement of the landscape would be false and therefore not philosophically pleasing to a person who truly believed in the power of natural settings. Repton's work might

have been fashionable and “romantic” on the surface; however, in Austen’s estimation, the truth contained in nature could not be artificially imposed.

Additionally, the estates of Pemberley and Donwell Abbey are recognized, according to Bodenheimer, as “keys to the social virtues of their owners” (605). She remarks that Elizabeth “recognizes Darcy’s value at Pemberley” and that Emma “validates her esteem for Mr. Knightly at Donwell Abbey” and begins “to mend her view of Robert Martin as she looks at Abbey-Mill Farm” (610). The picturesque descriptions of the land and the images of beauty that each woman sees during their respective visits are loaded with language that emphasizes the positive aspects of the personalities of their owners.

Bodenheimer remarks that the beginning of the third book of Pride and Prejudice was designed “to flood heroine and reader with an almost overwhelming new positive vision of Darcy. [...] The sequence of descriptions in the chapter creates a sense of ascent, multiplicity, and expansion which defines not only the landscape but also the widening of Elizabeth’s vision of Darcy and the increasing intensity of her feeling” (610). The carriage ride was an enlightening experience for Elizabeth. Austen writes that, “She [Elizabeth] had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste” (203). ) The party enters the estate’s woods from “one of its lowest points” and makes a gradual climb to the top of a hill where the estate house comes into view. When she is inside the manor house, Elizabeth continues to be overcome by its prospects. Bodenheim correctly asserts that, “The multiplicity of views, all fine, contributes to the general strategy of piling up positive impressions, and of superseding the earlier rigid and partial assessment of Darcy” (610). As Elizabeth and the Gardiners walk through the grounds, Austen’s descriptions continue to suggest the heroine’s growing feelings and belief in the possibility of becoming Mrs. Darcy. “Every step

was bringing forward a nobler fall of ground, or a finer reach of woods" (208). Shocked by the quality and extent of what she was beginning to feel about Darcy, Elizabeth can hardly see in her "usual acute way" (Bodenheimer 611) as everything comes together and begins to swirl in her mind. By the end of the description, this extended metaphor makes clear that Miss Elizabeth knows that both the larger and the more complex perspectives she seeks are available at Pemberley. According to Bodenheimer, "Darcy's character, expansive, intricate, and occasionally 'abrupt' like the hills, is also implicit in the unobtrusive handling of conventional picturesque terminology" (611).

Likewise, in Emma, this kind of language appears as Robert Martin's farm is seen from the grounds of Donwell Abbey. This description ends, in the words of Bodenheimer, "with a rather uncharacteristic narrative paean to the English countryside" (611). Austen uses this description: "It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdue, English culture, English comfort, seen under a bright sun, without being oppressive"(?). It is from this vantage point that Emma begins to soften her heart toward the yeoman-farmer. It is important to recognize that Emma stumbles upon Abbey Mill Farm as she is wandering around Mr. Knightley's grounds, looking for a place to seek shelter from the outdoor fete that she was attending. She is seeking a kind of refuge and finds comfort in her first encounter with the property "favorably placed and sheltered" with "meadows in front, and the river making a close and handsome curve around it" (Emma ?) Bodenheimer argues that this is "one among the many metaphors about vision in the novel, bearing in its own way upon the theme of corrective perception" (612). Like Elizabeth, prejudices against another person begin to lessen as the true nature of the person is reflected in the beauty of their land. "The sun's dispiriting heat now turns to light, bright but not oppressive; the conjunction of relief and orderly vision prefigures the

larger stability of social vision and order with which the novel ends” (Bodenheimer 613). These responses on the part of Emma and Elizabeth, according to Bodenheimer, “suggest a process of social discovery or corrected perception”(613).

Nature also plays another important role in the world of Emma Woodhouse. A. Walton Litz remarks that, in Emma, “The course of Emma Woodhouse’s life is subtly related to the cycle of seasons: Mr. Elton’s distressing proposal takes place against the background of a dark and snowy December evening, while Knightly’s confession of love occurs on a delightful day in July” (151). The chapter that finally brings Knightly and Emma together opens with a description that “foreshadows the human changes” (Litz 152):

The weather continued much the same [a cold stormy rain] all the following morning; and the same loneliness, and the same melancholy, seemed to reign at Hartfield—but in the afternoon it cleared; the wind changed into a softer quarter; the clouds were carried off; the sun appeared; it was summer again. With all the eagerness which such a transition gives, Emma resolved to be out of doors as soon as possible. Never had the exquisite sight, smell, sensation of nature, tranquil, warm, and brilliant after a storm, been more attractive to her. She longed for the serenity they might gradually induce... (285).

A similar symbolic use of the natural setting and the acknowledgement of a character representation with a “sensation of nature” are also seen in Persuasion, where mentions of Anne Elliot’s sadness and her “early loss of bloom” are, according to Litz, “continuously presented through the imagery of autumn” (154). Anne’s feelings for the landscape are harmonized with her emotions for Captain Wentworth:

The sweet scenes of autumn were for a while put by—unless some tender sonnet, fraught with the apt analogy of the declining year, with declining happiness, and the images of youth and hope, and spring, all gone together, blessed her memory. She roused herself to say, as they struck by order into another path, “Is not this one of the ways to Winthrop?” But nobody heard, or, at least, nobody answered her. (?)

Immediately, the narrator expands Anne’s vision, which gives her poetic response to autumn a more inclusive context:

Winthrop, however, or its environs—for young men are, sometimes, to be met with, strolling about near home, was their destination; and after another half mile of gradual ascent through large enclosures, where the ploughs at work, and the fresh-made path spoke the farmer, counteracting the sweets of poetical despondences, and meaning to have spring again, they gained the summit of the most considerable hill, which parted Uppercross and Winthrop. (?)

Jon Spence, in his article “Nature in Persuasion,” remarks that “Austen juxtaposes two distinctly different ways of looking at nature: the static view, in which nature reflects a particular state of mind; and the dynamic view in which nature reveals the unceasing movement and change in life” (629). Anne Elliot’s wider comprehension of the scene, in which the plows at work and the newly made paths are recognized, “hints the limitation of Anne’s view. However sweet are the sweets of poetical despondence of autumn, autumn can no more function as a metaphor for the whole of nature than can spring” (629). This enlargement of perception is similar to the experience of Elizabeth and Emma; as Anne becomes aware of the reality of the scene that is before her, she begins the process of understanding her self in relation to the natural landscape.

Undoubtedly, Austen's scenic style is related to the Romantic ideals and techniques in the sense that "it points inward, consistently pulling the emphasis away from the pictorial description itself to the vision of feeling of the viewer" (Bodenheimer 622). Austen's descriptions of nature serve well as a representation of a character's viewpoint, whether opinion of self or others. The inclusion of these scenes demonstrates Austen's sensitivity to the power of nature, which is a prerequisite for the Romantic writer.

In addition to such imagery and style used in Persuasion, Austen adopts "lyrical structures and strategies" according to Keith G. Thomas in "Persuasion and Coleridge's Conversational Poems." He argues that this adoption is "not simply a matter of mechanics" for "it entails an assimilation of Romantic lyric ideology" (895). Thomas cites M.H. Abrams definition of Romantic lyrics:

Romantic lyrics present a determined speaker in a particularized, and usually a localized outdoor setting, whom we overhear as he [or she] carries on ... a sustained colloquy, sometimes with himself [or herself] or with the outer scene. [...] The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely interwoven with the outer scene. (896)

Many of the scenes previously discussed in this paper fit this description almost invariably, especially the autumn walk scene from Persuasion. In addition to this Romantic parallel, Thomas remarks that the book is more than occasionally romantic because its focus is on Anne's consciousness. He states, "The narrator may objectively present the characters' actions and

dialogue, but the only interpretation and penetration of character, motivation, and behavior are given belong to Anne" (901).

When Persuasion or any other Austen novel is read, the reader is drawn to the specifics of the main characters lives; it is the particulars of life that concern Austen. She transports her reader, not to exotic lands, but to estate ballrooms. Her readers gain understanding about the human condition as novels are consumed. This tendency to focus on "the tree rather than the forest" is considered by Bush's to be another identifying trait of Romanticism; themes in these works focus not on normal, generic abstractions but on "the variety of concrete particulars." Kroeber correctly argues that Romantic art, not just poetry, "encourages imaginative activity, precipitating it through an interplay between the forces of social/cultural/aesthetic tradition and personal experience, interaction between the conventional and the sensational" (293). This allows the mind to be stimulated without, in Wordsworth's terms, "gross and violent stimulus" (Qtd. in Kroeber 293). It is from this paradigm that Austen's "abiding delightfulness" springs eternal, according to Kroeber. Her commitment to uncovering the "astonishing potentialities of feeling within lives which remain decorously commonplace, excitement without violence, are necessary calls to attention to a characteristic Romantic willingness to admit that things are what they appear to be" (293). Furthermore, the attention to details and reality de-emphasises the plot. The reader is not present if a character goes off to the West Indies, like Sir Thomas in Mansfield Park, takes to the ocean with her husband, as Mrs. Croft in Persuasion, or suddenly exits a picnic on horseback, as Colonel Brandon in Sense and Sensibility. Because Austen isn't writing an adventure, mystery, or thriller, she can focus entirely on her characters' lives; therefore, she is able to depict individuals as they exist in the world.

The last Romantic element that can be found in Austen's novels is her advocacy for the betterment of those oppressed by long existing social stratification. Women are its victims. The practice of primogeniture and the laws of entailment are heavily criticized. The Dashwoods are forced to leave their home. Elizabeth and her sisters are aware that they will be at the mercy of their cousin when Mr. Bennet dies. Fanny is treated unequally and often unfairly, as she grows up under her aunts' care. Emma learns the responsibility for kindness and generosity that comes with privilege. Anne Elliot's penniless friend, Mrs. Smith, is a product of the unfairness of inheritance as well as the treatment of the legal system toward women during her lifetime. The reality of the situation is, at best, distressing. Perhaps because Austen was a victim of sexist inheritance laws herself, the reality of situation for women at this time needed to be documented. Mary Mitford, author of Jane Austen: A Life wrote this of Austen: "You must have remarked how much her stories hinge upon entailed estates—doubtless she has learnt to dislike entails. Her brother was adopted by a Mr. Knight, who left him his name and two much better legacies in an estate of five thousand a year in Kent, and another of nearly double the value in Hampshire"

(Qtd. in Kroeber 305).

Readers who see Jane Austen as belonging to an eighteenth-century moralistic tradition—delightedly gathering her three or four families in a country village in order to pronounce judgement upon their assembled heads—cling to the assertion that she is championing some truths and that she is attacking others. On the other hand, there are readers that can see the works of Jane Austen in a broader context. Kroeber remarks that these readers recognize that, "For her, as for other writers of her period, one could hold other truths, operate within other systems. What makes one incline to the particular truths one does hold is the fact that those truths accord with one's nature" (227). Classifying Jane Austen as an eighteenth century writer detracts

from the complexities and richness of her works. Considering the intersections between Austen and the developing Romantic idealism is not an exercise in futility.

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