Chapter IX

THE STYLE AND THE LANGUAGE OF JANE AUSTEN

Upon examining Jane Austen's novels, one will notice her ability to command a variety of sentence patterns, loose as well as highly-structured. She can manage a sentence of more than one hundred words in length without loss of clarity; the first four paragraphs of the third chapter of Pride and Prejudice, apart from one sentence of dialogue, comprise eighteen sentences which range from five to ninety-one words in length. Even the longest sentence in the passage involves no loss of clarity, for example:

> The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.
>
> (Pride and Prejudice, chapter III, page 6)

Sometimes, Jane Austen employs a longer sentence than usual to suggest irony.[1] A complete account of Mr. Elton's conquest of his bride is presented in one long sentence of one hundred sixty-three words. The compression of the material within a single sentence constitutes an ironic comment on the haste and determination of both

---

[1] Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery (Los Angeles, 1968). p. 135.

sides to push the business through.[2]

Sometimes, the length and the syntax of sentences are also used to convey tedium experienced by the characters,[3] for example, the tedium of the morning which Catherine spent in the company of Mrs. Allen is created in a see-saw structure:

> ...whose vacancy of mind/ and incapacity for thinking were such,/ that as she never talked a great deal,/ so she could never be entirely silent; and, therefore, while she sat at her work, if she lost her needle,/ or broke her thread, if she heard a carriage in the street,/ or saw a speck upon her gown, she must observe it aloud, whether there were anyone at leisure to answer her/ or not.
>
> (Northanger Abbey, chapter IX, page 80)

The see-saw structure of this long sentence suggests the monotony of Catherine's morning and conveys an implicit comment on Mrs. Allen's limitations as a companion.[4]

On the other hand, Jane Austen can also handle short, fast-moving sentences very well, for example; the rapidity of a leave-taking is suggested by a series of brief statements:

> The ball was over - and the breakfast was soon over too; the last kiss was given, and William was gone.
>
> (Mansfield Park, chapter XXIX, page 287)

---

[2] Ibid., p. 137.

[3] Norman Page and Basil Blackwell, The language of Jane Austen (Oxford, 1972), p. 94.

[4] Ibid., p. 111.

Another example is from Emma:

> They arrived, the carriage turned, the step was let down, and Mr. Elton, spruce, black, and smiling, was with them instantly.
>
> (Emma, chapter XIII, page 101)

In the first three of these four statements, the stress falls on verbs denoting physical action. The statements end with an emphatic conclusion marked by the adverb "instantly".

A succession of short sentences can often mark the experience of the instant,[5] for example:

> ...the figure of a man on horseback drew her eyes to the window. He stopt at their gate. It was a gentleman, it was Colonel Brandon himself. Now she should hear more; and she trembled in expectation of it. But it was not Colonel Brandon - neither his air - nor his height. Were it possible, she should say it must be Edward. She looked again. He had just dismounted; - she could not be mistaken; - it was Edward. She moved away and sat down. "He comes from Mr. Pratt's purposely to see us. I will be calm; I will be mistress of myself."
>
> (Sense and Sensibility, chapter XLVIII, page 348)

The syntax offers not the ordering of an experience in retrospect but a dramatic enactment.

An extremely short sentence is sometimes mingled with long sentences to serve a specific purpose. Take the narrative description of the wedding of Maria Bertram, for example:

---

[5]Ibid., p. 115.

> It was a very proper wedding. The bride was elegantly dressed - the two bridesmaids were dully inferior - her father gave her away - her mother stood with salts in her hand, expecting to be agitated - her aunt tried to cry - and the service was impressively read by Dr. Grant.
>
> (Mansfield Park, chapter XXI, page 217)

The first sentence is unusually short when compared to the one that follows. Its briefness allows stress to fall on the word "proper", and thus signals the irony that is to be sustained throughout the much longer sentence in which Jane Austen chooses to employ independent clauses in place of the customary subordinate clauses. In so doing, the stress can fall successively on words which carry an ironic intent: "elegantly dressed", "dully inferior", "expecting to be agitated", "tried to cry", "impressively read". This sentence, similar to a series of snap-shots, indicates the author's wish to appear detached, for it seems that she is not imposing upon the reader any interpretation but simply allowing the scene to speak for itself in all its insincerity.[6]

At times, Jane Austen employs fragmentary sentences to suggest strong feeling, embarrassment, forces tugging against an impulse for expression.[7] For example, when Willoughby confesses to Elinor his true feeling towards Marianne, his whole account is full of fragmentary sentences:

---

[6]Ibid., p. 119.

[7]Robert Liddell, The Novels of Jane Austen (London, 1966), p. 96.

> "When the first of her's reached me, (as it immediately did, for I was in town the whole time,) what I felt is - in the common phrase, not to be expressed; in a more simple one - perhaps too simple to raise any emotion - my feelings were very, very painful. - Every line, every word was - in the hackneyed metaphor which their dear writer, were she here, would forbid - a dagger to my heart. To know that Marianne was in town was - in the same language - a thunderbolt. - Thunderbolts and daggers! - what a reproof would she have given me! - her taste, her opinions - I believe they are better known to me than my own, - and I am sure they are dearer."
>
> (Sense and Sensibility, chapter XLIV, page 319)

In her narrative, Jane Austen also displays her capacity to manipulate a modern-seeming sentence whose structure forces a miming of the heroine's experience upon the reader as he moves through it[8]; for example, when Marianne is very ill, Elinor's thought and feeling are reflected in the syntax of the sentence:

> About noon, however, she began - but with a caution - a dread of disappointment, which for some time kept her silent, even to her friend - to fancy, to hope she could perceive a slight amendment in her sister's pulse; - she waited, watched; and examined it again and again; - and at last, with an agitation more difficult to bury under exterior calmness, than all her foregoing distress, ventured to communicate her hopes.
>
> (Sense and Sensibility, chapter XLIII, page 309)

The sentence moves forward in a series of jerks. Its hesitations and

---

[8]John Halperin, The Language of Meditation (Elms Court, 1973), p. 148.

uncertainties reflect the progress of Elinor's mood from doubt to hope, and also her caution.

Besides being dramatic, Jane Austen can also be epigrammatic. She is fond of generalization because she is interested in what is commonly or universally true and, equally, in human behavior. Incidents, changes of heart or opinion, moments of insight into one's own motives and biased opinions - in short, everything that happens in her novels - are subjected to constant generalization often with ironic tone.[9] A striking example is:

> Human nature is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations, that young person, who either marries or dies, is sure of being kindly spoken of.
>
> (Emma, chapter XXII, page 149)

It has been observed by literary critics that, for the purpose of distancing herself from her narrative, Jane Austen employs a lot of passive and impersonal constructions to define states of feeling, moral and social reactions, moments of perception in her characters. Thus:

> Emma was not required, by any subsequent discovery, to retract her ill opinion of Mrs. Elton. Her observation had been pretty correct. Such as Mrs. Elton appeared to her on this second interview, such she appeared whenever they met again, - self-important, presuming, familiar, ignorant,

---

[9] Hudrick, op. cit., p. 152.

> and ill-bred. She had a little beauty and a little accomplishment, but so little judgment that she thought herself coming with superior knowledge of the world, to enliven and improve a country neighbourhood; and conceived Miss Hawkins to have held such a place in society as Mrs. Elton's consequence only could surpass.
>
> (Emma, chapter XXXIII, page 224)

The passive and the impersonal constructions in the passage quoted above are characteristic of Jane Austen's writing. The opening sentence, which is in the passive mood - "Emma was not required, by any subsequent discovery, to retract her ill opinion of Mrs. Elton" - is followed by a few statements of impersonal construction - "Her observation had been pretty correct. Such as Mrs. Elton appeared on this second interview, such she appeared whenever they met again. Most novelists would have written "She had been pretty correct", and so on.

Vocabulary analysis is important to the study of Jane Austen's work. The opening paragraphs of a few chapters in Emma will be used as examples to illustrate the function of vocabulary in her fiction in terms of its relation to the design of the novel as a whole:

The first chapter begins with

> 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.
>
> (Emma, chapter I, page 19)

This one-sentence paragraph pivots on the word "seemed", which suggests unobtrusively a potential discrepancy between the superficial reality of Emma's situation and another reality beneath it, a discrepancy from which will arise the circumstances which "distress" and "vex" her.[10]

The initial paragraph of Chapter II is an exposition of Mr. Weston's story:

> Mr. Weston was a native of Highbury, and born of a respectable family, which for the last two or three generations had been rising into gentility and property. He had received a good education, but on succeeding early in life to a small independence, had become indisposed for any of the more homely pursuits in which his brothers were engaged; and had satisfied an active cheerful mind and social temper by entering into the militia of his country, then embodied.
>
> (Emma, chapter II, page 26)

This paragraph centers on his "independence" which is presented in terms of his "active cheerful mind and social temper".

Chapter four opens with the immediate action with which the novel is concerned:

> Harriet Smith's intimacy at Hartfield was soon a settled thing. Quick and decided in her ways, Emma lost no time in inviting, encouraging, and telling her to come very often; and as their acquaintance increased, so did their satisfaction in each other. As a walking companion, Emma had very early foreseen how useful she might find her. In that respect Mrs. Weston's loss had been

---

[10]Malcom Cowley and Howard E. Hugo, The Lesson of the Masters (New York, 1971), p. 187.

> important. Her father never went beyond the shrubbery, where two divisions of the grounds sufficed him for his long walk, or his short, as the year varied; and since Mrs. Weston's marriage her exercise had been too much confined. She had ventured once alone to Randalls, but it was not pleasant; and a Harriet Smith, therefore, one whom she can summon at any time to a walk, would be a valuable addition to her privileges. But in every respect as she saw more of her, she approved her, and was confirmed in all her kind designs.
>
> (Emma, chapter IV, page 34)

Emma's tyranny over her friend is explicitly portrayed in this paragraph. Harriet is "useful" to Emma; although Emma's designs for Harriet are "kind", "a Harriet Smith" is "a valuable addition to her privileges".

The above examples illustrate how Jane Austen uses simple terms to convey a deeper complexity of meaning. These terms are relevant cues to the themes of the novel.

In Northanger Abbey, the style and the language of the author are also highly appropriate to the theme of the book. It is surely no accident that Northanger Abbey begins with a statement that is deliberately ambiguous:

> No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine.
>
> (Northanger Abbey, chapter I, page 37)

At the outset, Catherine's status as heroine is equivocal; does the opening sentence mean that she will prove a heroine in spite of early

appearances, or that of course there can never be any question of her becoming a heroine?[11]

An example of amusingly ambiguous dialogue is found in chapter fourteen when the naive Catherine observes to Henry Tilney and his sister "in a rather solemn tone of voice":

> "I have heard that something very shocking indeed, will soon come out in London."
>
> Miss Tilney, to whom this was chiefly addressed, was startled, and hastily replied, "Indeed! - and of what nature?"
>
> "That I do not know, nor who is the author. I have only heard that it is to be more horrible than any thing we have met with yet."
>
> "Good heaven! - Where could you hear of such a thing?"
>
> "A particular friend of mine had an account of it in a letter from London yesterday. It is to be uncommonly dreadful. I shall expect murder and every thing of the kind."
>
> "You speak with astonishing composure! But I hope your friend's accounts have been exaggerated; - and if such a design is known beforehand, proper measures will undoubtedly be taken by government to prevent its coming to effect."
>
> (Northanger Abbey, chapter XIV, page 126)

Miss Tilney and Catherine talk at some length, each in ignorance of the other's meaning, until Henry, who has grasped the nature of the misunderstanding, intervenes. It is his intervention that clears up the misunderstanding. Here ambiguity is caused by the double meaning

---

[11] Joseph Wiesenfarth, The Errand of Form (New York, 1967), p. 161.

of certain words. The key words in this dialogue are each capable of more than one interpretation: "come out" (be perpetrated, be published), "author" (perpetrator, writer), "murder" (in fact and in fiction); and the words Catherine applies to her favourite reading -- shocking, horrible, dreadful -- are given a very different valuation by Miss Tilney. Such a passage is, of course, not merely a play on words but very pertinent to the central theme; namely: the confusions arising when the make-believe of fiction is mistaken for reality.

Thus, the use of ambiguity is a marked feature of the style of Northanger Abbey because the novel sets out to show that things are not necessarily what the seem.

In Mansfield Park, recurring terms are used to give an insight into the dominant attitudes and values of the novel. Take the word "comfort" and its derivations for example. They appear around seventy or eighty times in the book, and sometimes even three or four times on a single page. "Comfort" and its derivations are employed in Mansfield Park to refer to emotional needs and satisfactions rather than to physical and material satisfactions. They are used to provide a clue to the nature and to the role of Fanny Price, as well as to the emotional security that she seeks so desperately.[12]

Near the beginning of the novel, Edmund befriends the miserable child, and the reader is told that "from this day Fanny grew more comfortable" (Mansfield Park, chapter II, page 53). Later Mary Crawford is shown to be "the chief bane of Fanny's comfort" (Mansfield

---

[12] W.A. Craik, Jane Austen: The Six Novels (London, 1965), p. 165.

Park, chapter XVI, page 172); William, on the other hand, is a great source of "comfort" to his sister. When Mrs. Norris threatens to accompany Fanny and William on their journey to Portsmouth, Fanny sadly reflects that "all the comfort of their comfortable journey would be destroyed at once" (Mansfield Park, chapter XXXVII, page 36). After Mrs. Rushworth's adultery and Julia's elopement, Fanny is "sent for as a comfort" (Mansfield Park, chapter XLVI, page 431), and Edmund greets her with these words. "My Fanny - my only sister - my only comfort now" (Mansfield Park, chapter XLVI, page 432); even Lady Bertram bursts out "Dear Fanny! now I shall be comfortable" (Mansfield Park, chapter XLVII, page 434). Sir Thomas at last comes to realize that, in Fanny, "his charitable kindness had been rearing a prime comfort for himself." Finally, on the closing page of the novel, we learn that Fanny's and Edmund's home was "the home of affection and comfort" (Mansfield Park, chapter XLVIII, page 447).

One may conclude then that the kind of vocabulary used in any given piece of writing is largely determined by its subject matter, and therefore, vocabulary analysis is important for evaluating Jane Austen's narrative technique.

Most readers recognize that Jane Austen pays little attention to physical description, or to the narration of physical action. The reader is intimately acquainted with Emma, her thoughts and feelings; in some respects he knows her better than she knows herself; yet, of her physical looks, he knows almost nothing. The description of Emma is, apart from a reference to her "hazel eyes", remarkably lacking in precise detail. In order to appreciate to the full Jane Austen's

inattention to the physical looks of her characters, one may compare a description of one of her characters with a similar description in the work of another novelist. Here the description of Miss Bates is compared to Dickens' description of Miss Tox in Dombey and Son. Both characters possess some points of resemblance. In Emma, Miss Bates is introduced to the reader as a woman who:

> enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married. Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world of having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her, into outward respect. She had never boasted either beauty or cleverness. Her youth had passed without distinction, and her middle of life was devoted to the care of a failing mother, and the endeavour to make a small income go as far as possible. And yet she was a happy woman, and a woman whom no one named without good-will. It was her own universal good-will and contented temper which worked such wonders...The simplicity and cheerfulness of her nature, her contented and grateful spirit, were a recommendation to every body and a mine of felicity to herself. She was a great talker upon little matters, which exactly suited Mr. Woodhouse, full of trivial communications and harmless gossip.
>
> (Emma, chapter III, page 31)

There is not a single term that describes her physical appearance, beyond the negative definition that "she had never boasted either beauty or cleverness". However, the passage is highly informative in the sense that Miss Bates' position, character and qualities are seen in the light of conventional standards. The balance-sheet of her deficiencies and virtues is carefully drawn up with humourous

observation.[13] Whereas the description of Miss Bates is concentrated on her position, character and qualities, Dickens offers his reader a catalogue of Miss Tox's physical oddities:

> The lady thus specially presented was a long lean figure, wearing such a faded air that she seemed not to have been made in what linendrapers call "fast colours" originally, and to have, by little and little, washed out. But for this, she might have been described as the very pink of general propitiation and politeness. From a long habit of listening admirably to everything that was said in her presence, and looking at the speakers as if she were mentally engaged in taking off impressions of their images upon her soul, never to part with the same but with life, her head had settled on one side. Her hands had contracted a spasmodic habit of raising themselves of their own accord as in involuntary admiration. Her eyes were liable to a similar affection. She had the softest voice that ever was heard; and her nose, stupendously aquiline, had a little knob in the very centre or key-stone of the bridge, whence it tended downwards towards her face, as in an invincible determination never to turn up at anything.
>
> (Dombey and Son, chapter I, page 9)

Figure, head, hands, eyes, voice, nose are all mentioned here. There is some description of her mental qualities, but her physical characteristics are of prime concern. A further paragraph, too long to quote here, describes in detail her dress and gait: her "bonnets and caps", "collars, frills, tuckers, wristbands", tippets, boas and muffs", "lockets", etc. Dicken's visualization of his characters is, of course, exceptionally strong, but what is really remarkable in Jane

---

[13] J.F. Burrows, Jane Austen's Emma (Sydney, 1968), p. 196.

Austen is the complete absence of this element, in spite of which her descriptive passages are extremely forceful.

A comparison of Jane Austen's novels with those of Eliot, Dickens, or Charlotte Bronte show that she uses much fewer words than they do referring to parts of the body.

TABLE I[14]

Verbs Referring to Parts of the Body and Bodily Movement

Novelist	Novels Sampled	Total Verbs in Sample	Verbs of Bodily Movement	Ratio
Austen	5	2,032	13	.006
Dickens	5	3,106	78	.025
Bronte	4	1,487	30	.020
Eliot	7	2,537	38	.015

[14] Ibid.

TABLE II[15]

Nouns Referring to Parts of the Body and Bodily Movement

Novelist	Novels Sampled	Total Nouns in Sample	Nouns Referring to Parts of Body	Ratio
Austen	Northanger Abbey	539	28	.05
	Sense & Sensibility	267	2	.01
	Mansfield Park	198	12	.06
	Emma	591	18	.03
	Persuasion	791	19	.02
	Total	2,386	79	.03
Dickens	Oliver Twist	591	53	.09
	David Copperfield	425	69	.16
	Bleak House	471	19	.11
	Great Expectations	412	91	.22
	Our Mutual Friend	237	35	.15
	Total	1,836	267	.15
Bronte	The Professor	169	25	.15
	Jane Eyre	124	32	.26
	Shirley	252	28	.11
	Villette	447	52	.12
	Total	992	137	.14
Eliot	Adam Bede	443	19	.04
	Mill on the Floss	363	39	.11
	Silas Marner	506	48	.09
	Romola	214	22	.10
	Middlemarch	397	10	.13
	Daniel	348	41	.12
	Total	2,271	179	.08

[15]Cowley and Hugo, op. cit., p. 211.

And this corresponds to the fact that Jane Austen's novels are remarkable for their lack of physical action, although such a lot happens in them. What action there is lies in the development and recognition of character, not in external events. Take Emma for example. The whole book deals with the development of a character whose weaknesses at the beginning are described thus:

> The real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments.
>
> (Emma, chapter I, page 19)

As the novel progresses, Emma Woodhouse comes to perceive "the real evils of her situation", to suffer as she comes to understand her conceit and her snobbery, and to reform herself when she sees their results.

The deliberate avoidance of detailed physical description is her way of focusing attention upon mental processes, rather than upon physical appearance, costume and scenery. Stylistically this tendency is manifested in her preference for abstract nouns to the concrete terms that denote appearance. When actual physical objects are mentioned, the reference is most often ironical or satirical, as in the case of the laundry bills which caused Catherine Morland such feverish excitement, or of Mrs. Allen's clogs, the return of which gives rise to a false alarm, the only thrill that occurs during their journey to Bath.

R.H. Bronson has pointed out that Jane Austen shares the eighteenth-century taste for preferring the "abstract" to the "concrete" term.[16] A comparison of Jane Austen's novels with those of Eliot, Dickens and Charlotte Brontë proves that she employs many more abstract nouns than they do.

---

[16] Ian Watt (ed), A Collection of Critical Essays (New Jersey, 1963), p. 121.

TABLE III[17]

"Abstract" Nouns

Novelist	Novels Sampled	Total Nouns in Samples	Selected Nouns	Sample in Which Noun Occurs	Occurrences
Austen	7	2,427	feelings	7	26
			love	7	24
			spirits	7	23
			happiness	7	17
			manners	7	17
			visit	6	13
			attention	6	12
			pleasure	6	10
			account	6	9
			connection	6	7
			sensibility	6	7
			beauty	5	7
			journey	5	7
					179
Dickens	5	1,673	manner	4	9
			look	4	8
			influence	4	6
			course	3	7
			death	3	7
			nothing	3	5
			point	3	4
			matter	3	4
			silence	3	4
					54
Brontë	5	1,270	love	3	12
			nature	3	8
			degree	3	7
			taste	3	5
					32

[17] Cowley and Hugo, op. cit., p. 212.

Novelist	Novels Sampled	Total Nouns in Samples	Selected Nouns	Sample in Which Noun Occurs	Occurrences
Eliot	7	2,327	sense	7	17
			feelings	6	14
			love	6	13
			pleasure	5	15
			opinion	5	14
			presence	5	11
			experience	5	10
			consciousness	5	9
					103

From this table, it appears that Jane Austen makes more frequent use of abstract nouns than the other novelists.

Furthermore, Jane Austen employs more verbs representing psychic action than the sampled novelists.

TABLE IV[16]

Verbs Representing "Psychic" Action

Novelists Using Word	Verb	Austen	Eliot	Dickens	Bronte
all four	believe	5/11	3/8	4/7	3/7
three	hope	5/13	4/5		3/4
	know	4/8		4/6	3/4
	like	3/7	4/12	4/9	
two	mean	3/9	3/6		

[16] Ibid.

Since Jane Austen cares very little for physical description and pays more attention to the development of mental processes, her writing relies heavily on abstract terms, especially when she is dealing with the emotions and responses of her characters. Take, for example, Mr. Knightley's speech when he rebukes Emma for her brutal rudeness to Miss Bates:

> ...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.
>
> (Emma, chapter XLIII, page 295-296)

Since, here, Mr. Knightley voices for Jane Austen the moral lesson she wants to convey to her reader, we can accept his language as Jane Austen's own style and tone. Was there ever a rebuke so abstract and conceptual in its vocabulary as this one? And yet the rebuke is, in the context of Emma, a very strong one and its effect on Emma is intense and far reaching:

> Emma felt the tears running down her cheeks, almost all the way home, without being at any trouble to check them, extraordinary as they were.
>
> (Emma, chapter XLIII, page 297)

Weeping in a book by the author of Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility is extraordinary indeed, and for some readers this is one of the most moving passages. Thus, one may conclude that the reliance

on abstract language enables Jane Austen to handle emotion of great intensity without seeming at all forced or sentimental.

In reading Jane Austen's novels, one finds a world of material interests co-existing with a world of refined sensibility, of concern with moral propriety. The moral lesson derived from the tension and discrepancy between these two kinds of values is successfully brought home to us by her choice of words. Mark Schorer has commented on Jane Austen's use of words that suggest "number or money, physical size or material value".[19] Ian Watt divides the words employed by Jane Austen into five categories which he calls metaphors of scale, of money, of business and property, of number and measure and of matter, although perhaps some of them are not exactly metaphors in the conventional sense. The metaphors of scale comprise all the metaphors for high and low, sink and rise, advance and decline, superior and inferior, rank and fortune, power and command. Examples of this group are: "held below the level", "raise her expectations too high", "materially cast down", "the intimacy between her and Emma must sink". The money group is composed of such words as: "credits", "value", "interest", "rate", "reserve", "secure", "change" and "exchange", "alloy", "resources", "gain", "want", "collect" (for "assume"), "reckon", "render", "account", "claim", "profit", "loss", "accrue", "tax", "due", "pay" "lose", "spend", "waste", "fluctuate", "dispense", "precious", "deposit", "appropriate", "commission", "safety". The group of business and property is made up of words as: "inherit", "certify", "procure",

---

[19] B.C. Southam (ed), Critical Essays on Jane Austen (London, 1968). p. 171.

"solicit", "entitle", "business", "venture", "scheme", "arrangement", "endue", "cut off", "trust", "charge", "stock". Some words from the group of number and measure category are: "add", "divide", "multiply", "calculate", "how much", "how little", "more and less". Examples from the group of matter are: "encumbrance", "weight", "substance", "material", "comfort".[20] These terms are constantly appearing, both singly and in clusters, for example:

> ...it became henceforth her prime object of interest; and during the ten days of their stay at Hartfield it was not to be expected - she did not herself expect - that any thing beyond occasional, fortuitous assistance could be afforded by her to the lovers. They might advance rapidly if they would, however; they must advance somehow or other whether they would or no. She hardly wished to have more leisure for them. There are people, who the more you do for them, the less they will do for themselves.
>
> Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley, from having been longer than usual absent from Surry, were exciting of course rather more than the usual interest. Till this year, every long vacation since their marriage had been divided between Hartfield and Donwell Abbey.
>
> (Emma, chapter XI, page 84-85 - my underlining)

Thus, these terms, as a functioning element in the novel, begin to call attention to themselves when we come across them, especially where moral and material values are either juxtaposed or equated.

Normally, Jane Austen has no need for emphatic language to make her points. Her habitual tone is quiet, avoiding declamation and

---

[20] Ian Watt (ed), A Collection of Critical Essays (New Jersey, 1963), p. 237.

rhetoric; and, when emphatic language is used, it is generally to express her own censure of a certain act, thought, feeling of a character.[21] In Pride and Prejudice, Darcy is liked by those in the Netherfield neighbourhood "till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity, for he was discovered to be proud..." (Pride and Prejudice, chapter III, page 6). The splendid metaphor "turned the tide" reflects the shallowness of those who eagerly admire him because he is handsome, but quickly reject him when he is unresponsive.

Furthermore, Jane Austen also employs emphatic language at some exceptionally crucial moments in the story.[22] Perhaps the best example of this occurs near the end of Emma. Believing that her match-making has succeeded only in causing her to lose the man she wished to marry, Emma finds herself in misery and shame, and we read of her "wretchedness" and her "ruined happiness" in a passage which also contains such words as "agony", "cruel", "melancholy". These words are commonly employed by the Romantic poets among Jane Austen's contemporaries, but are rare enough in her work, at least when used in their serious sense. Their appearance, therefore, inevitably draws the reader's attention. Emphatic language here gains additional effect from its rarity.

Another example is the speech of Willoughby when he makes his dramatic confession to Elinor when Marianne is ill. This speech bears out that Willoughby, though without principles, is not without feeling.

---

[21] Page Norman and Basil Blackwell, op.cit., p. 62.

[22] Burrows, op. cit., p. 215.

It expresses considerable passion and constitutes one of the very few passages in which Jane Austen permits violent speech and oaths:

> ...what a sweet figure I cut! - what an evening of agony it was! - Marianne, beautiful as an angel on one side, calling me Willoughby in such a tone! - Oh! God! - holding out her hand to me, asking for an explanation with those bewitching eyes fixed in such speaking solicitude on my face! - and Sophia, jealous as the devil on the other hand, looking all that was - Well, it does not signify; it is over now. - Such an evening! - I ran away from you all as soon as I could; but not before I had seen Marianne's sweet face as white as death.
>
> (Sense and Sensibility, chapter XLIV, page 320-321)

This is a deliberate violation of her customary writing, for Jane Austen rarely uses such emotionally charged language. His swearing, his strong diction such as "bewitching", "speaking solicitude", "devil", or his metaphors such as "white as death" - unite to reveal Willoughby's moral chaos.

A thorough examination of Jane Austen's syntax and characteristic words, as exemplified by this chapter, reveals that her language, down to the smallest detail, possesses a nature and function intimately related to each of her works as an aesthetic whole.

****