

COMIC, THEMATIC, AND MIMETIC IMPULSES
IN JANE AUSTEN'S PERSUASION

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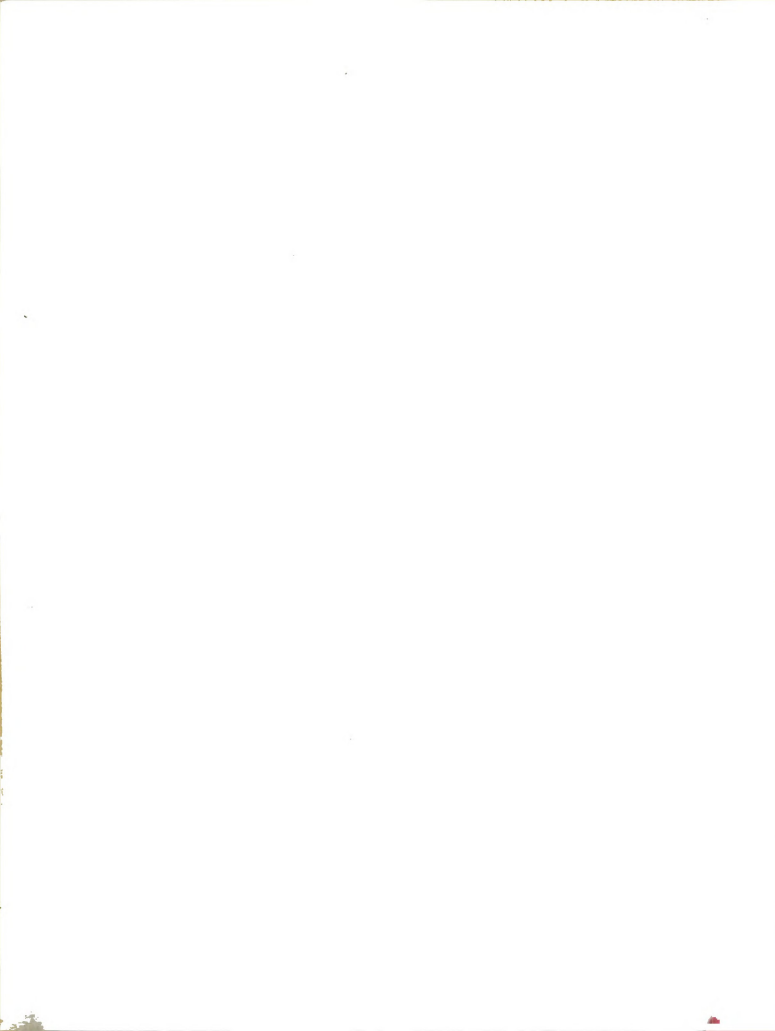
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ABSTRACT

COMIC, THEMATIC, AND MIMETIC IMPULSES IN JANE AUSTEN'S PERSUASION

By

George Graeber

Any attempt to interpret a Jane Austen novel must take into account its thematic, mimetic, and structural impulses because it is claimed that her contribution to the development of the genre is her integration of these impulses, which earlier writers had developed separately. A methodology for studying her novels in this way is suggested by the perspectival approach which synthesizes the insights achieved from a variety of critical points of view. Persuasion is an ideal novel to study from the perspectival point of view because of its fully developed comic structure, its clearly articulated themes, and its rich mimetic characterization.

Anne Elliot's progress from the unloved daughter of Sir Walter to the wife of Captain Wentworth parallels what Northrop Frye identifies as the archetypal structure of comedy. The mythic content of rituals which celebrate the renewal of life in spring is echoed not only in the structure of Persuasion but in the autumnal and vernal imagery of the novel. Sir Walter's preposterous vanity, Louisa Musgrove's nearly fatal accident on the Cobb, William Elliot's role as father-surrogate/false suitor, and the "fortuitous

circumstances" which make possible the triumphant resolution of the conflict. all partake of a logic inherent in the nature of comedy.

In addition to presenting typically comic social themes, Jane Austen sets up in Persuasion a moral dilemma concerning the propriety of Anne's having yielded to Lady Russell's persuasion to break her first engagement to Captain Wentworth. Because the narrator does not comment on the issue, the reader must rely on other rhetorical devices to determine the norms against which Anne's decision must be judged. These rhetorical devices, which together constitute what Wayne Booth calls the implied author of a work, suggest that Anne herself articulates the norms of the novel. At the moment of Anne's comic triumph, Wentworth admits that he had misjudged her, Lady Russell admits that her advice had been wrong, and Anne insists that she had been right all along. Anne's long period of suffering for her adherence to her rigid sense of duty must finally be seen as an ordeal which qualifies her for a role of moral authority in the emerging society.

When we view Anne as a mimetic character we discover that her self-image, emotions, and defensive reactions correspond to those described by psychologist Karen Horney as characteristic of the strategy of perfectionism. Anne attempts to model herself on the example of her dead mother, both because it was from her that Anne received the only unconditional affection and support she ever received and because her mother's devotion to high principles and right conduct had seemed to insulate her from the abuses of Sir Walter's narcissism. The pride the perfectionist places in behaving

in accordance with principles of right conduct accounts for Anne's susceptibility to Lady Russell's persuasion to break her engagement. This pride is her solace through the eight years of estrangement from Wentworth, and it explains why Anne solicits his acknowledgment that she had been right to yield to Lady Russell's persuasion.

From the perspectival point of view, Persuasion seems less well integrated but more powerful as mimesis. The expectation of causal plot development generated by the realistic characterization clashes with expectations generated by the comic structure, which relies on coincidence to effect the desirable conclusion. Furthermore, the thematic interpretation offered by the novel seems inadequate to the mimetic portrayal of Anne's compulsive defensive reactions. Although this interpretation of Persuasion requires that we reject the traditional notion that Jane Austen synthesizes separately developed conventions of the novel, it also demonstrates that the genuine achievement of her novels is their mimetic portraiture.

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By

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for Susan

her love, patience and optimism
inspire more dedication
than I can write on a page

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INTRODUCTION

One attempt to characterize the achievement of Jane Austen rests on the premise that her novels successfully harmonize conventions in the novel which earlier writers had developed separately. The foremost proponent of this view is Ian Watt. In his The Rise of the Novel,¹ Watt credits Samuel Richardson with developing in his novels the technique of portraying characters by means of a minute detailing of the particulars of an individual's life. Watt calls this technique "realism of presentation," and he notes that its premise is the premise of modern philosophical realism: that "truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses" (Watt, p. 12). The "truth" sought after is truth to human experience:

Formal realism, in fact, is the narrative embodiment of a premise that Defoe and Richardson accepted very literally, but which is implicit in the novel form in general: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms (Watt, p. 32).

The strengths of realism of presentation are the strengths of its premise: attention to particularizing detail helps to achieve a sense of truth by allowing the reader to participate in the human experience of another individual. What is achieved is phenomenological truth. Watt discusses also another kind of realism crucial

to the development of the novel: realism of assessment. It is Fielding rather than Richardson among early English novelists who exemplifies realism of assessment for Watt. As the term suggests, realism of assessment focuses upon the wit and wisdom of the author --his artistic skills in the service of his moral intentions--rather than upon the authenticity of the characters:

Fielding brought to the genre something that is ultimately even more important than narrative technique--a responsible wisdom about human affairs which plays upon the deeds and the characters of his novels. . . . at the end of Tom Jones we feel we have been exposed, not merely to an interesting narrative about imaginary persons, but to a stimulating wealth of suggestion and challenge on almost every topic of human interest. Not only so: the stimulation has come from a mind with a true grasp of human reality, never deceived or deceiving about himself, his characters or the human lot in general. . . . his work serves as a perpetual reminder that . . . the new genre . . . had to find a way of conveying not only a convincing impression but a wise assessment of life . . . (Watt, p. 288).

Fielding did not manage both realism of presentation and realism of assessment, according to Watt, but Jane Austen did. It is difficult to ascertain just how what Watt means by realism of assessment differs from what most other critics mean by the moral vision of a novel. In fact, Watt's dichotomy between realism of assessment and realism of presentation parallels Erich Auerbach's famous dichotomy between the classical-moralistic and the problematic-existential impulses in Western literature.² It would seem that the adequacy of the realism of assessment of a work is to be judged by the truth of the moral vision which informs the novel or which the novel is intended to illustrate. Watt's expectation of wisdom from a realistic novelist is in essence an expectation

that the reader will be able to acquiesce to what the novelist makes of the characters and events he portrays.

Watt claims that Jane Austen successfully reconciled realism of presentation and realism of assessment:

Jane Austen's novels, in short, must be seen as the most successful solutions of the two general narrative problems for which Richardson and Fielding had provided only partial answers. She was able to combine into a harmonious unity the advantages both of realism of presentation and realism of assessment, of the internal and of the external approaches to character (Watt, p. 297).

In addition to the traditional elements of character and theme accounted for by Watt, a third element must also be considered in any discussion of fiction. The impulse to structure the events recorded in a novel, to give them form, constitutes an important factor in the equation which comprises the totality of any particular work. This is especially true in Jane Austen's novels in that they are comedies, because comedy is largely a matter of structure. Structure in general, and comic structure in particular, carries with it traditions and conventions which must be fulfilled for the reader to experience satisfaction. These genre-based expectations, however, may conflict with other expectations generated by a work, expectations generated, for instance, by the novel's thematic or mimetic impulses. A novel's success depends upon the author's having harmonized or reconciled the competing conventions and expectations generated by the various impulses in the work.

Jane Austen's Persuasion is a particularly suitable work by means of which to explore how structure, theme, and characterization work together in a novel. It is suitable because it has a fully

developed comic structure, clearly articulated themes, and a rich mimetic characterization of its heroine, Anne Elliot. Various studies have attempted to interpret Persuasion in terms of some one of its impulses, but no single study has yet tried to examine Jane Austen's efforts to integrate structure, theme, and character in that work.³ Article-length discussions could never fully accommodate all of the implications of each impulse or incorporate the perceptions of critics of this novel. And, since each of the separate impulses requires a different critical approach, the methodology for such a study has seemed problematic.

A methodology for exploring how Persuasion attempts to integrate the conventions inherent in its structure, themes, and characterization is suggested by Avrom Fleishman's study of Mansfield Park. Fleishman attempts to reconcile different critical approaches to that novel by synthesizing the insights achieved by each of them into "an approximation of a total reading."⁴ The diversity of impulses in any particular novel (not to mention the sheer volume of criticism directed at the works of important authors) demands extended discussion and, more importantly, what Fleishman calls a perspectival view. The novel, he says,

is organic to the degree to which its multitudinousness creates the illusion of a living world; the escape of many fictional details from any critical net cast to hold them can substantiate an impression of life's heterogeneity. If the novel is by nature various, our point of view on it must follow suit.⁵

Fleishman's "perspectival" approach to the study of Mansfield Park is adaptable to the study of Persuasion. I propose that a valid

interpretation of Persuasion can be approximated only by examining in depth the conventions and reader expectations generated by the three dominant impulses in the novel: the comic, the thematic, and the mimetic. The conventions and expectations inherent in the comic nature of Persuasion are best understood by comparing the novel to the archetypal structure of the comic mythos as identified primarily in the work of Northrop Frye. Such a study reveals complicated and, perhaps, unsuspected coherence among the scene descriptions, the characters, and the structure of events in the work.

Many of Persuasion's themes emerge from its comic nature; but, in addition, the novel has a quite separate moral impulse. Using Wayne Booth's conception of the implied author, it is possible not only to investigate the moral vision that informs this novel but to understand how Jane Austen communicates it. The advantage of using the concept of the implied author to elucidate the moral impulse of a novel like Persuasion is that it obviates the practice of utilizing biographical and historical data and of attempting to find consistencies and relationships between its themes and the themes of Jane Austen's other novels. The themes thus derived are entirely a product of the novel under scrutiny.

While the understanding of the moral dimensions of Persuasion advanced in this study is not radically different from that achieved in other studies, the conception of character proposed here represents something of a departure from more traditional interpretations. Anne Elliot is best understood in terms of the patterns of behavior and thought identified by the American Third Force

psychologist Karen Horney as the strategy of perfectionism.⁶ Once it is perceived that Anne's typical actions and responses correspond closely to those Horney describes as perfectionistic, it can also be seen how these behaviors were developed as a defense against the pathogenic environment at Kellynch. The question of whether Anne's development in the novel represents a genuine personality change or merely a new manifestation of a personality structure which she possesses all along is ultimately a psychological rather than a thematic question. The analysis presented here focuses on Anne in terms appropriate to her mimetic characterization: because she achieves for the reader something like the identity of an actual person, she can be studied and analyzed in the way in which actual people are studied and analyzed.

It is when one attempts to synthesize the perceptions achieved through separate analysis of the various elements of Persuasion that one becomes aware of the stresses among these impulses. Each impulse arrives complete with its own set of conventions and generating its own expectations, and this leads to tensions and incongruities not easily resolved. For instance, the emphasis on desirability inherent in comedy frequently results in plots which are resolved by means of fortunate coincidences and unlikely changes in character. There is nothing about these sudden turns of event which violates the spirit of comedy, but they are contrary to expectations of plausible plot development which are produced by the mimetic characterization. The stresses which become apparent in Persuasion are almost always between the conventions and expectations

associated with the mimetic characterization and those associated with either the comic or the thematic elements of the work. In essence, the mimetic characterization subverts the other elements in the novel by accentuating both the artificiality of the comic structure as a vehicle for the characterization and the inadequacy of the moral vision which the characterization is intended to illustrate. Watt to the contrary notwithstanding, Jane Austen's novel embodies powerful and unreconciled tensions, not a harmony among its elements.

It is not necessary to debunk Persuasion or its critics. Its successes are remarkable, its critics perceptive. The perspectival approach, however, helps us both to reconcile conflicting critical responses to Persuasion and to see more clearly the nature of its strengths and weaknesses. From the perspectival point of view the novel seems less well integrated but more powerful as mimesis.

NOTES: INTRODUCTION

¹Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957); my edition is the University of California paperback (Berkeley, 1967). All references to Watt are to this latter source and will be cited in my text thus: (Watt, p. 12).

²Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (Berne: Francke, 1946); English edition trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton University Press, 1955).

³Because I deal extensively in my text and notes with the pertinent articles and books concerned with Persuasion, I forgo in my introduction the customary review of criticism.

⁴Avrom Fleishman, A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis, Minnesota Monographs in the Humanities 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), p. 4.

⁵Fleishman, p. 5.

⁶The technique of analyzing realistic characters in terms of Horneyan psychology was developed by Bernard J. Paris. See especially his A Psychological Approach to Fiction: Studies in Thackeray, Stendahl, George Eliot, Dostoevsky, and Conrad (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974). Paris also uses Horneyan psychology to analyze the implied authors of realistic novels, a strategy I adopt in Chapter IV of this study.

CHAPTER I

THE ARCHETYPAL STRUCTURE OF PERSUASION

Most attempts to study the comic impulse in Jane Austen's works have been explorations of what she finds funny in society, or of how she creates humorous characters, or of how she establishes a comic mood. These studies are valuable contributions to the understanding of Jane Austen's adaptations of certain comic conventions, and they often help to illuminate characteristics of her style.¹ Such studies seem congruent with L. J. Potts' pronouncement that comedy is distinguishable by its philosophy:

I shall treat it as a literary form. But since it is distinguished from most of the literary forms by its philosophy rather than its structure, I shall call it a mode of thought; by which I mean that its character depends on the attitude of the writer to life.²

Without entering into a debate with Potts, it is perhaps fair to observe that the writer's attitude to life manifests itself in literature by the way in which he structures the events of his work.³ It is thus by the identification of the structure of an individual work with the analogous structures in other works that we classify them as belonging to the same genre. The most commonplace observation, that comedy moves from unhappiness to happiness and usually ends with a wedding, or that tragedy ends sadly and usually with the death of the hero, implies a recognition of structural principles.

It is not for the purpose of classification that a consideration of the structure of a Jane Austen novel is valuable. It is rather that, once one recognizes the comic structure in Persuasion, one is able to account for many other features of that work which are likewise attributable to its comic impulse. To identify the comic impulse requires a comprehensive theory of comedy, one which satisfactorily accounts for as many elements in a comic work as possible. To put it in other terms, one requires a genre description which identifies as fully as possible the elements of a work which are attributable to its comic impulse.

There is no shortage of theories of comedy.⁴ Northrop Frye's study of the archetypal basis of comedy has several advantages over other theories: (1) his study is capable of subsuming the observations made by other theoreticians; (2) his explanation begins with a recognition of the structural principles underlying comedy; and (3) most importantly, Frye's account of the characteristics of comedy includes more specific correspondences with Persuasion than do other theories with which I am familiar. In brief, I use Frye because Frye works.⁵

In this chapter I shall summarize the premises of Frye's theory of archetypal criticism and the features of his discussion of comedy which are appropriate to my analysis of Persuasion. I shall investigate the ways in which Frye's observations illuminate Persuasion, especially its narrative structure, the details of its conclusion, and its imagery. Finally, I shall discuss what I consider

to be the limitations of archetypal criticism for accounting completely for all facets of the novel.⁶

The Mythos of Spring

From the point of view of archetypal criticism, narrative is studied as

ritual or imitation of human action as a whole, and not simply as mimesis praxeos or imitation of an action. In archetypal criticism the significant content is the conflict of desire and reality which has for its basis the work of the dream.⁷

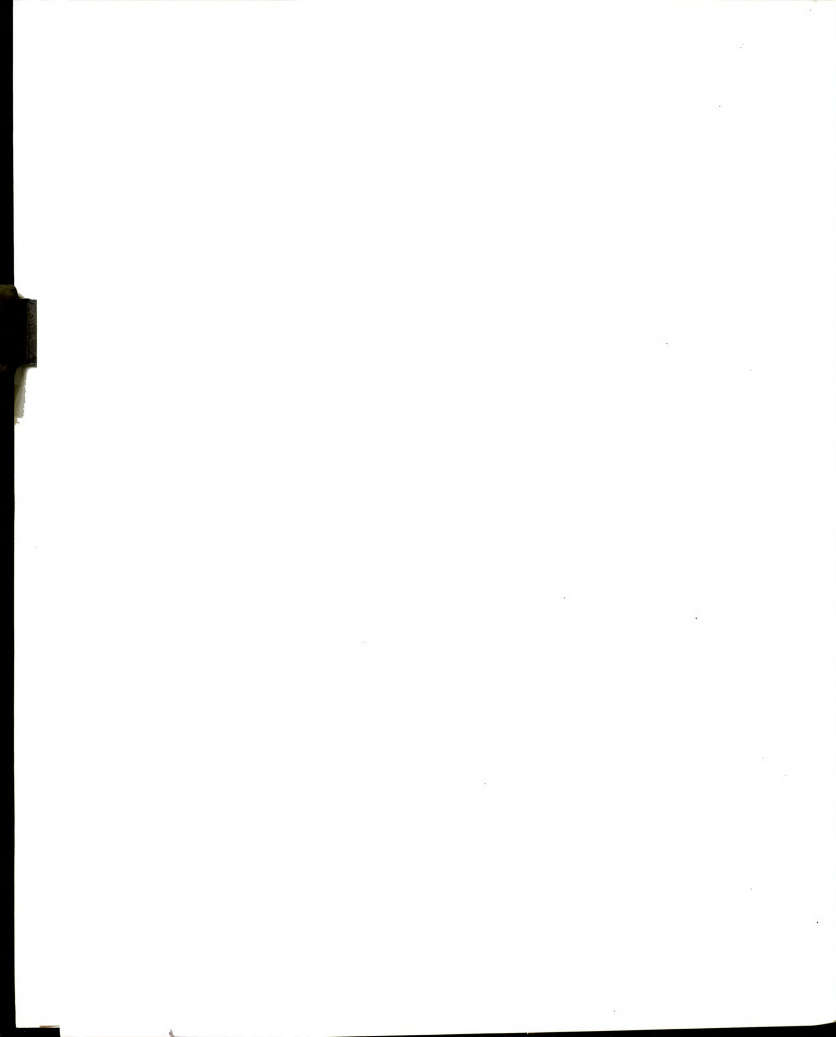
Myth makes communicable the structure inherent in ritual which is, by itself, pre-verbal and therefore incommunicable. Ritual, then, is the inherent structure of myth. Rituals themselves can be understood as the attempt to celebrate or to recognize the dependence of man upon the cyclical processes of nature, a fact made clear by the attachment of ritual to significant points of all natural cycles: "Every crucial periodicity of experience: dawn, sunset, the phases of the moon, seed-time and harvest, the equinoxes and the solstices, birth, initiation, marriage, and death, get rituals attached to them" (Frye, p. 105).

Myth is the literary form in which ritual structure is isolated, that is, it is the literary form in which the narrative structure is wholly determined by the ritual which the myth makes communicable. The world of myth is apocalyptic or demonic, a world in which action is the expression of human desire or its opposite without regard for plausibility; and it is a "world of total metaphor, in which everything is potentially identical with everything

else, as though it were all inside a single infinite body" (Frye, p. 136).

Literary forms other than myth exist between the pure white of apocalyptic myth and the pure black of demonic myth. The hues of these forms are determined by the degree to which they are influenced by the impulse of plausibility. All of these forms are structured by the identical ritual design that structures myth, but in realistic literature these structural principles are displaced away from the mythical and toward the human. Where plausibility becomes a factor, total metaphorical identification is displaced toward analogical or coincidental identification.

Frye recognizes three structures of imagery intermediate to the dialectical poles of undisplaced myth. The structure which "presents a human counterpart of the apocalyptic world . . . we may call the analogy of innocence" (Frye, p. 151). The corresponding human counterpart of the demonic world Frye calls the analogy of experience. Between these two structures is the analogy of nature and reason. The action in the analogical structures consists of the movement from one structure to or toward another; in the structures of myth the action stays within the world in which it originates. Thus, the total structure of the analogical modes is cyclical; the poles between which the analogical modes revolve are the static structures of archetypal and demonic myth. This cyclical movement corresponds to the natural cycle of the seasons, and the narratives typical of any phase of that cycle will have a structure



paralleling the rituals and myths of the corresponding phase of the natural cycle.

"There are thus four main types of mythical movement: within romance, within experience, down and up" (Frye, p. 162). The movement from romance to experience is tragic; the movement from experience to romance is comic; the movement within romance Frye calls romance; and the movement within experience, he identifies as irony or satire. Tragedy, comedy, romance, and irony or satire constitute the "four pregeneric elements of literature which I shall call mythoi or generic plots" (Frye, p. 162). Romance is the mythos of summer; tragedy is the mythos of fall; irony and satire together constitute the mythos of winter; and comedy is the mythos of spring.

In the cycle of the seasons, spring is the rebirth of nature, a rebirth from its death-like state in winter. In myths associated with rituals of spring (the myth of Proserpine is typical), the central being is reborn or returns from some exile or is restored to a lover to the accompaniment of festival and images of fertility and fruitfulness. Typically, there is a sense that the desirable state of affairs that emerges at the end of such myths is not merely a triumph of the desirable over the undesirable, but a reclamation of authority from the powers or beings who have usurped it from its rightful possessors.

Comedy is a displaced version of such myths, structured by the same rituals which structure the myths. Although the fact that the triumph of the desirable characters represents a re-emergence

of a former golden age is not usually dramatized in comedy, it is an element understood by the audience. Frye summarizes the usual action of comedy in this way:

What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will. In this simple pattern there are several complex elements. In the first place, the movement of comedy is usually a movement from one kind of society to another. At the beginning of the play the obstructing characters are in charge of the play's society, and the audience recognizes that they are usurpers. At the end of the play the device in the plot that brings hero and heroine together causes a new society to crystallize around the hero, and the moment when crystallization occurs is the point of resolution in the action, anagnorisis or cognitio.

The appearance of this new society is frequently signaled by some kind of party or festive ritual, which either appears at the end of the play or is assumed to take place immediately afterward. Weddings are most common . . . (Frye, p. 163).

The movement of comedy, thus, is from the parental society, usually characterized by "folly, obsession, forgetfulness, 'pride and prejudice,'" (Frye, p. 171) to the younger society of the hero which is freer, perhaps revolutionary, and which is recognized as embodying some moral norm with which the audience is in sympathy. The action of comedy is determined by the obstacles which the usurping society places in the way of the hero's attempts to become united with the heroine, and the resolution of that action which unites the pair is often triggered by an event or discovery which causes the dissolution of the blocking society and the formation of a new society around the hero.

The fact that a comedy will often end with a wedding or a feast points to its correspondence with rituals of spring, weddings

being the most obvious of fertility rituals. The dissolution of the blocking society also corresponds to ritual, namely, the scapegoat ritual. Wylie Sypher (following F. M. Cornford) has called attention to the presence of both of these ritual elements in comedy, the sacrifice and the feast. Sypher maintains that the ritual from which comedy derives celebrates the "double occasion" of the killing of the old king and the resurrection of the new king.⁸ While there is an element of the scapegoat ritual in the dissolution of the blocking society in which some irreconcilable character is expelled, the mood at the end of comedy is festive, and usually most of the blocking characters are in the end converted to or tolerated in the new society rather than expelled from it.

Rather than suffering the actual expulsion that ritual would assign to them, the blocking characters are made the subjects of ridicule in comedy. Provoking laughter is one of the ways in which comic characters heighten the comic mood, which is not only appropriate to the festive occasion of comedy but is also necessary to keep the audience from taking "a serious action seriously."⁹ Taken seriously the predicaments in which the comic hero finds himself could be viewed by a sympathetic audience only with concern, thus upsetting the comic balance. But the audience is not ever really concerned because the characters who oppose the hero are less wicked than absurd; and if the audience knows it is watching a comedy, it never doubts that the hero will prevail.

The principle which makes the blocking characters ridiculous is their state of what Frye calls "ritual bondage" (Frye, p. 168).

The blocking character is dominated by an obsession which characterizes not only him but the society he represents. Repeated often enough, this obsession becomes laughable, and it makes his society laughable, as well. Making the blocking forces ridiculous is one way in which comedy allows the hero's society to triumph. A society which is ridiculous is not a viable alternative to a society which is free from obsession and undeserving of ridicule.

The characteristics of comic structure summarized to this point are descriptive of the middle range of comedy. When it is recalled that Frye positions comedy opposite tragedy and between irony and satire on the one hand and romance on the other, it is to be expected that some varieties of comedy partake of ironic elements, and others have characteristics associated with romance. Frye recognizes six phases of comedy from the most ironic to the most romantic. We can summarize these phases briefly, and then devote more careful attention to the phase the characteristics of which are most descriptive of Persuasion.

"The first or most ironic phase of comedy is the one in which a humorous [blocking] society triumphs or remains undefeated" (Frye, p. 177). In this sort of comedy, the blocking forces are less absurd than sinister, a condition appropriate to the proximity of this phase to irony and to the demonic archetype. Very often the hero averts death or catastrophe only by some deus ex machina, and, in fact, Frye observes that the action in ironic comedy often seems to move toward some inevitable tragedy before the hero miraculously

escapes or is rescued. He calls this moment of narrow escape (apologetically) the "point of ritual death" (Frye, p. 179), and cites as examples a hero's imprisonment or a heroine's nearly mortal illness.

In the next phase of comedy, the quixotic phase, the blocking society does not triumph, but neither does the hero. Instead, the hero runs away from the dominant society or creates a new society which is based upon obsession as surely as is the blocking society.

The comic norm is that in which the hero's society triumphs over the blocking society. The generalizations made about comedy earlier are descriptive of this third phase of comedy. Frye elaborates on the action of comedy in this phase noting that "like the Christian Bible, [it] moves from law to liberty. In the law there is an element of ritual bondage which is abolished, and an element of habit or convention which is fulfilled" (Frye, p. 181). The "law," of course, is a displaced version of necessity.

The characteristics of fourth phase comedy are descriptive of Shakespearian comedy. They are also constitutive of an element in Jane Austen's Persuasion, and as such will be treated more thoroughly below. Suffice it to say here that in this phase an increasing influence of the analogy of innocence, and a decreasing influence of the analogy of experience is apparent. Frye calls this phase romantic comedy.

More romantic still is the fifth phase in which the hero's society is already established, but in which the sympathetic characters undergo a kind of metamorphosis into childlike innocence. The

society "takes on an increasingly religious cast and seems to be drawing away from human experience altogether" (Frye, p. 185).

Ghost stories and Gothic romances are typical of the sixth phase of comedy. Here the social units are small; the realism appropriate to the more ironic phases is completely absent; the mood is not humorous but pensive. If the phases of comedy are thought of as corresponding to the life of an individual society, the most ironic being a story of its infancy, and each succeeding phase being like some stage in its maturation and growing independence, then this last phase is the stage when the "comic society has run the full course from infancy to death, and . . . myths closely connected psychologically with a return to the womb are appropriate" (Frye, p. 186).

The phases of comedy are differentiated by the degree of influence which is exerted on them by the ironic and satiric elements at one extreme and the romantic at the other. In all comedy the direction of movement is from the ironic toward the romantic, or, in terms of the dialectical forms of myth, from the demonic toward the apocalyptic, or, in terms of the analogous modes, from the analogy of experience toward the analogy of innocence. That being so, the resolution of the comic plot is determined not by necessity, but by desirability, the apocalyptic being that version of metaphorical identity which is shaped by human desire. And since desirability and not plausibility shapes the outcome of the comic plot, we expect and find frequent manipulation of the events of comedy. As Frye observes, "Unlikely conversions, miraculous

transformations, and providential assistance are inseparable from comedy" (Frye, p. 170).

The characteristic action of comedy described by Frye as generally true of comedy and typical of third phase comedy is descriptive of some of the action in Persuasion. It is his description of fourth phase comedy, romantic comedy, however, that corresponds most recognizably with the events of Jane Austen's last completed novel. In this phase the comic plot is "assimilated to the ritual theme of the triumph of life and love over the waste land." "Thus, the action of the comedy begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world" (Frye, p. 182). It is the presence of this metamorphosis in a green world and the symbolism of the victory of summer over winter associated with the green world which distinguishes this phase most clearly from the more realistic third phase.

A ritual frequently associated with the green world is that of "carrying out Death," in which the triumph of summer over winter is enacted in the ritualized death of some figure in the green world. Another convention associated with the theme of rebirth inherent in the green world motif is that of the death and revival of some feminine figure, or her disappearance and return, although this feature is sometimes displaced to the extent that her "disappearance" is into male clothing. The disappearing figure is usually, but not always, a woman.

One other feature of fourth phase comedy is appropriate to Persuasion, namely the fact that the action in this phase often takes place "on two social planes, of which one is preferred and consequently idealized" (Frye, p. 182). What normally happens in comedy is that the attention is focused on the blocking characters; the emerging society is left undefined except in the most romantic types of comedy in which it receives most of the attention and the blocking characters are thinly drawn. In the romantic comedy of the fourth phase both the blocking society and the hero's society exist side-by-side and are defined with some specificity.

Frye points out that in the simple pattern of comedy in which the lovers overcome obstacles and become united, complex elements of competing social orders are involved. The presence of these two elements in Persuasion becomes clearer after the action of the novel is analyzed in terms of its main plot and sub-plot. The main plot consists of the events in the lives of Anne Elliot and Captain Frederick Wentworth which culminate in their reunion and marriage. The sub-plot has to do with the parallel interests of Sir Walter Elliot, Anne's father, and his heir William Elliot. The theme of competing societies is inherent in the rival interests of Sir Walter's society and the society of sailors.

The Main Plot

Comedy is ritually like the triumph of summer over winter, and it therefore portrays the hero moving from a state contrary to that which an audience might desire for him toward a state which is

deemed desirable by him and a sympathetic audience. But the total mythos of comedy sees in the triumph of the hero a recollection of

a golden age in the past before the main action of the play begins. Thus we have a stable harmonious order disrupted by folly, obsession, forgetfulness, "pride and prejudice," or events not fully understood by the characters themselves, and then restored (Frye, p. 171).

The existence of a golden age in the past which is re-established by the triumph of the hero is an aspect of the mythos which comedy does not ordinarily make very explicit. The audience is often aware of an ideal state of affairs toward which the action of comedy tends.

In Persuasion the existence of a golden age in Anne's life which has been lost by the time the main action begins is an important element of the plot. That golden age was, of course, the brief period of Anne's engagement to Wentworth some eight years before the action of the novel begins.¹⁰ Anne was only nineteen at the time and the engagement lasted only a few months, but for Anne it was a "period of exquisite felicity."¹¹ Anne was persuaded (thus the novel's title) by her friend and confidante, Lady Russell, and by her father, Sir Walter Elliot, to break the engagement. Captain Wentworth was without fortune and had no influence to assure himself of further advancement in the navy. To her status-conscious family and friend this was enough for them to persuade Anne that the engagement was "indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it" (27). Furthermore, Anne believed breaking the engagement to be in Wentworth's interest, but he was "unconvinced and unbending" (28), and felt himself ill-used by her.



Wentworth left the country in consequence of the broken engagement, and when the novel begins Anne has not seen him for eight years. From the "exquisite felicity" of the golden age of her engagement Anne sinks into suffering and regret at its loss, a state of mind which even eight years later is described as "a sort of desolate tranquility" (36). Wentworth's long absence and Anne's desolation following the breaking of their engagement are ritually like the withdrawal of vitality and fertility in nature during winter. The analogy with the mythical stories of the disappearance of some life-embodying personage (Proserpine, for instance) is clear. In Persuasion the first phase and part of the second phase of the ternary form of the comic mythos are constituted by events preceding those dramatized in the novel. When the story begins, the eight-year long winter of Anne's life is drawing to a close.

Much of that portion of Volume I which precedes the Lyme chapters (i.e., Chapters xi and xii), when not concerned with the interests of the sub-plot, delineates Anne's "desolate tranquility." A microcosmic view of Anne's life since her broken engagement is afforded at Uppercross where Anne ministers to her hypochondriac sister Mary and her two boys. There Anne is always called upon to play music at the little impromptu dances arranged by Mary's sisters-in-law, Louisa and Henrietta Musgrove. The fact of Anne's never having found a man to take Wentworth's place, her following of his career by means of newspapers and navy lists, and her conviction that, in similar circumstances, she would never have given the advice Lady Russell gave to her because of the wretchedness she experienced

because of it, all bespeak Anne's continuing love for Wentworth and regret at having lost him.

Wentworth returns to Kellynch as a guest of his sister and her husband Admiral Croft, who are renting the Elliot home, the owners of it having been unable to maintain it. Wentworth has given the lie to Lady Russell's predictions for him by becoming rich, but his arrival does not immediately result in a return of Anne's exquisite felicity. In fact, Anne's pain and regret are exacerbated by his presence, and she soon must admit to herself that she still loves him and recognize that he has not yet forgiven her.

Anne's state of desolation and wretchedness, and the passivity with which she conducts her life, contribute to the often remarked upon autumnal quality of the first part of Persuasion. The foremost factor contributing to the autumnal mood is the fact that the action begins in autumn. The autumnal setting is appropriate to the stage in Anne's life which has been described as one of desolate tranquility. The descriptions of the landscape associate Anne's state of mind with the images of the dying year. For instance, at the prospect of going to Bath with her father and older sister after they quit Kellynch, Anne grieves "to forego all the influence so sweet and so sad of the autumnal months in the country" (33).

A more extended description of the autumnal landscape, again associated with Anne's mood, comes later, when on a November day Anne walks from Uppercross to Winthrop in the company of Charles and Mary Musgrove, Captain Wentworth, and Louisa and Henrietta. Of

course to be in the company of Captain Wentworth as the Musgrove girls flirt with him is a source of pain to her.

Her pleasure in the walk must arise from the exercise and the day, from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges, and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn, that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness . . . (84).

The noteworthy thing about these passages is not only the correspondence between them and Anne's state of mind, but also how appropriate the descriptions of the landscape are to the point in the comic mythos at which they are found. These scenes occur near the beginning of the novel, but in terms of the total comic mythos which structures the events in the lives of the characters in the novel, this is the middle action, the period following the loss of the golden age of the past. Thus the landscape descriptions, Anne's state of mind, and the stage in the comic mythos in which these are found all contribute to and partake of the novel's autumnal mood.

The descriptions of Anne's physical appearance at this stage in her life also correspond to the other autumnal qualities of Persuasion. The novel's first description of Anne is that she "had been a very pretty girl, but her bloom had vanished early" (6). Again, after summarizing the events of the first courtship of Anne by Wentworth, and of Anne's breaking the engagement, the narrator discloses that "her attachment and regret had, for a long time, clouded every enjoyment of youth; and an early loss of bloom and spirits had been their lasting effect" (28). When Anne is told by Mary that Wentworth thought her "so altered he should not have known

you again," Anne can only admit to herself that "the years . . . had destroyed her youth and bloom" (61).

The obstacles in the way of the desired reunion between Anne and Captain Wentworth are several. Whereas Anne has recognized that she still loves Wentworth, he is not in love with her. He declares to his sister that he is ready to marry, but the narrator announces that "He had a heart for either of the Miss Musgroves, if they could catch it; a heart, in short, for any pleasing young woman who came in his way, excepting Anne Alliot" (61). His requirement that the girl be one with a "strong mind, with sweetness of temper" is indicative of his reason for excluding Anne. By the time the party of young people departs for Lyme, he is already assumed to be courting Louisa.

The short holiday to Lyme is proposed by Wentworth and undertaken by him, Charles and Mary Musgrove, Louisa and Henrietta, and Anne. They enjoy the scenery there and especially the hospitality of Wentworth's friends, Captain and Mrs. Harville, and another sailor, Captain James Benwick. Before leaving Lyme the sailors and the visitors from Kellynch and Uppercross decide upon a last walk upon the Cobb (a cobblestone pier). Emboldened by Wentworth's admiration for her strong mind, Louisa insists that he help her jump down from one level of the Cobb to another. In doing so, Louisa stumbles and is nearly killed. The accident is the turning point of the action. It provides Anne with the opportunity to display her resourcefulness, and it causes Wentworth to re-examine his high regard for firmness of character.

As a result of the accident, Wentworth must question the basis upon which he has judged Anne, that is, upon the absolute desirability of resoluteness of mind. That he might indeed begin to change his mind on the subject occurs to Anne when, in the wake of the accident, she muses perhaps somewhat gloatingly:

whether it ever occurred to him now, to question the justness of his own previous opinion as to the universal felicity and advantage of firmness of character; and whether it might not strike him, that, like all other qualities of the mind, it should have its proportions and limits. She thought it could scarcely escape him to feel, that a persuadable temper might sometimes be as much in favour of happiness, as a very resolute character (116).

Anne and the reader must wait until the end of the novel when Wentworth recapitulates the events at Lyme from his point of view to have the satisfaction of knowing that such thoughts as these had indeed occurred to Wentworth at this time. Another event at Lyme, however, shows that Wentworth is beginning to come around even before the accident. While the party of young people is walking in town, a young man (who is later discovered to be William Elliot, Sir Walter's heir apparent) is attracted by Anne. In fact, the narrator announces,

It was evident that the gentleman, (completely a gentleman in manner) admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which shewed his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance,--a glance of brightness, which seemed to say, "That man is struck with you,--and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again" (104).

William Elliot's noticing of Anne calls attention to a transformation that has taken place in her at Lyme. The sea air has breathed back into Anne some of her lost youthful appearance:

She was looking remarkably well; her very regular, very pretty features, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had also produced (104).

Later, back at Kellynch, Lady Russell notices Anne's revived appearance, too, a recognition which leads to Anne's "hoping that she was to be blessed with a second spring of youth and beauty" (124).

Just as the autumnal mood of the early chapters of the novel is reflected in the landscape descriptions and in the accounts of Anne's loss of youth and bloom, so is the return of her youthful beauty accompanied by descriptions of the scenery around Lyme. Instead of "tawny leaves and withered hedges," the area around Lyme offers images of growth and fertility. Among the views Anne admires is the following:

--the woody varieties of the cheerful village of Up Lyme, and, above all, Pinny, with its green chasms between romantic rocks, where scattered forest trees and orchards of luxuriant growth declare that many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state (95-96).

When all that is associated with Lyme is taken together, the function of the Lyme chapters in the total comic mythos of Persuasion can be understood. At Lyme Anne's relationship with Wentworth begins to improve; at Lyme Anne's youthful bloom is restored; at Lyme the autumnal imagery and mood of the earlier chapters give way to imagery of growth and fertility. The scenes at Lyme Regis function precisely in the way that Frye ascribed to the green world of fourth phase comedy.

Frye says, in a passage already quoted, that the action of fourth phase comedy "begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world." The description could serve as an outline for Volume I of Persuasion. And if the Lyme scenes constitute a green world in the archetypal structure of Jane Austen's comedy, Louisa's fall from the Cobb is clearly a displaced version of the ritual of "carrying out Death." Frye summarizes the ways in which Falstaff's function in The Merry Wives corresponds to that of a fertility spirit in rituals of the defeat of winter. He is "thrown into the water, dressed up as a witch and beaten out of a house with curses, and finally supplied with a beast's head and singed with candles" (Frye, p. 183). Louisa's fate is not so obviously ritualistic, but her nearly fatal plunge from the Cobb, near the sea from which the hero returns, and the breeze which restores the heroine's youthful bloom, in the vicinity of Lyme which is described in images of growth and fertility, points clearly to a ritual function.¹²

By the end of the scenes at Lyme, then, some of the obstacles in the way of Anne's reunion with Wentworth have been removed. He is no longer convinced of "the universal felicity and advantage of firmness of character," and he has displayed just enough jealousy at William Elliot's noticing of Anne at Lyme to indicate a continuing interest in and affection for her. Nonetheless, he is assumed to have an understanding with Louisa, and Volume II requires further twists in the plot before Anne and Wentworth are reunited.

A further complication in the way of the reunification arises when it appears that Anne has attracted a new suitor in the person of Captain Benwick. Anne and Benwick were often together at Lyme, with many mutual interests. Not only do they both read, but he is, like Anne, grieving because of the loss of one to whom he had been betrothed. He had been engaged to Captain Harville's sister, Fanny, who "had died the preceding summer, while he was at sea" (96). Benwick's interest in Anne is further evidence of her revived attractiveness. His major function in the plot, however, is to become engaged to Louisa, thus removing her as an obstacle in the way of the eventual reunion of Anne and Wentworth. In the hints of an earlier attraction between Benwick and Anne, the novel establishes Benwick as a suitable consolation prize for Louisa. Anything less might have impugned Wentworth's judgment and therefore his worthiness of Anne; for although Wentworth insists that he was surprised to learn he was supposed to be engaged to Louisa, by his actions at Uppercross and at Lyme he encouraged such speculation. Neither Benwick nor Louisa can be portrayed as entirely absurd characters if the judgments of Anne and Wentworth are to be endorsed. Louisa and Benwick fell in love over poetry, Anne surmises, without the least resentment over Benwick's fickleness. "He must love somebody" (167), she concludes.

In the meantime Anne seems to have attracted still another suitor in her cousin, William Elliot.¹³ The implications of Mr. Elliot's pursuit of Anne are more appropriately discussed later in this chapter in the context of a consideration of the sub-plot. Here it is important to note that by the time Wentworth arrives in

Bath immediately following the news of Louisa's engagement to Benwick, it is already assumed that William Elliot and Anne have reached an understanding.

What happens to Wentworth in Bath is a parallel set of events to Anne's experiences in the novel. The central fact in this double structure of events is the appearance of a false rival for both characters. Wentworth was surprised to learn from Harville that he is thought to be engaged to Louisa. Anne's belief in that attachment further dampened her hopes that she and Wentworth might ever find their way back to one another. Similarly, Anne is surprised to learn from her friend Mrs. Smith of the assumption that she will marry William Elliot. Wentworth's knowledge of this assumption likewise makes him reluctant to make his renewed love for Anne known to her. The reader experiences one set of misunderstandings and disappointments from the inside (i.e., Anne's point of view) and the other from the outside (i.e., Anne's view of Wentworth's misunderstandings). It is not until Anne and Wentworth are finally rejoined that all of the misunderstandings are unraveled by having Wentworth retell the events of the main plot from his point of view.¹⁴

Anne is not unmindful of Wentworth's dilemma. From the time she learns of Louisa's engagement to Benwick until Wentworth finally confesses his love for her, Anne's activities are largely a series of efforts to determine Wentworth's feelings for her, or to create opportunities for him to know hers. She grows increasingly bold in her maneuverings,¹⁵ the result of her rejuvenation at Lyme and her knowledge that Wentworth is no longer attached to Louisa. The next

time they meet, at a concert, Anne draws out Wentworth on the subject of Louisa and Captain Benwick, and concludes from the conversation that "He must love her" (186).

Finally, at a gathering of the Musgroves at the White Hart Inn, Anne debates with Captain Harville on the relative constancy of men and women.¹⁶ Anne remarks pointedly, "All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it) is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone" (235).

Anne, of course, is speaking of her own continued love for Wentworth, and she is overcome by her own words. So is Wentworth who has been writing at a desk nearby and has overheard the debate.¹⁷ As he leaves he thrusts a letter into Anne's hands, and Anne hastily opens the letter and reads. The upshot of the letter is that Wentworth has been moved by her words to Harville, that he loves her still, and that he wishes for a sign from her if his suit is acceptable. A short time later she meets Wentworth on the street and gives the sign.

There they exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once seemed to secure every thing, but which had been followed by so many, many years of division and estrangement. There they returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when it had been first projected; more tender, more tried, more fixed in a knowledge of each other's character, truth, and attachment; more equal to act, more justified in acting (240-41).

In their returning "again into the past," Anne and Wentworth's reunion recalls the first part of the ternary structure of the comic mythos, the golden age which was lost when their first

engagement was broken. Now, however, their paradise is far more felicitous, not only because they are older, wiser, and richer, but because it is set off against their nearly having lost it. Appropriately, the comedy ends with marriage, not only Anne's to Wentworth, but also Louisa's to Benwick, and Henrietta's to Charles Hayter. The mood of the novel has moved from the autumnal quality that prevailed at the beginning to the festive mood at the end. As the plot moves toward the comic conclusion, the outcome depends increasingly on coincidence, overheard conversations, and unlikely interventions. All of these "fortuitous circumstances"¹⁸ are appropriate in a world that leaves necessity and plausibility behind and moves toward marriages and reconciliations, a world shaped by human desire.

The Sub-Plot

Frye observes that the form of comedy can be developed in two different ways:

one is to throw the main emphasis on the blocking characters; the other is to throw it forward on the scenes of discovery and reconciliation. One is the general tendency of comic irony, satire, realism, and studies of manners; the other is the tendency of the Shakespearean and other types of romantic comedy (Frye, pp. 166-67).

Persuasion begins as if it were a traditional comedy of manners. Until Jane Austen packs them off to Bath in Chapter v, Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and later Mrs. Clay dominate the early action of the novel. From the moment he is introduced, Sir Walter functions in the role of the blocking character. He is not villainous but

absurd. Frye explains the source of the absurdity in blocking characters by citing Jonson:

Ben Jonson explained this by his theory of the "humor," the character dominated by what Pope calls a ruling passion. The humor's dramatic function is to express a state of what might be called ritual bondage. He is obsessed by his humor, and his function in the play is to repeat his obsession (Frye, p. 168).

Jane Austen does not leave the reader to infer Sir Walter's humor: "Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and vanity of situation" (4). Much of the early action of the novel serves to illustrate the truth of this generalization. It is the preposterous self-indulgence of Sir Walter and Elizabeth which has gotten them so deeply into debt. Their utter inability to separate their self-indulgence from their dignity allows them to sacrifice residence at Kellynch rather than deny themselves the luxuries which feed their sense of their own consequence. Sir Walter's vanity is illustrated most clearly in his estimate of the naval profession. The significance of his judgments about the navy is not felt until later in the novel where so many of the sympathetic characters are naval officers, but his statements about the navy amply illustrate his peculiar prejudices:

"I have two strong grounds of objection to it. First, as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction . . . , and secondly, as it cuts up a man's youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man; I have observed it all my life" (19).

"Vanity of person and of situation." The two objects which are consistently associated with Sir Walter are mirrors (vanity of person) and the Baronetage (vanity of situation).¹⁹ Each of the

characters identifiable as a member of Sir Walter's society exhibits this vanity in one way or another. Elizabeth has hardly any identity except as an extension of Sir Walter. Mary Musgrove's ruling passion is hypochondria, certainly a variety of vanity. Even Lady Russell shows more than a little vanity of situation: she was "generally speaking, rational and consistent--but she had prejudices on the side of ancestry" (11).²⁰

As Frye says, the action of comedy is determined by the obstacles placed in the way of the reunion of the hero and heroine by the blocking characters. Lady Russell's original objection to Anne's marriage to Wentworth, of course, was the crucial obstacle in Anne's life. Sir Walter and Elizabeth continue to block Anne's development and to insure her unhappiness because their snobbishness and insensitivity exclude her from any comfort that might be derived from a close feeling of family. Their failure even to include Anne in their yearly trips to London prevents her from enlarging upon "the small limits of the society around them" (28). A larger society might have led to a "second attachment, the only thoroughly natural, happy, and sufficient cure" for a broken heart, the narrator informs us; but Sir Walter and Elizabeth are too bound up in their own consequence to think of Anne.

As the consideration of the novel in terms of the characteristics of Frye's fourth phase comedy makes clear, Persuasion is less a comedy of manners than a romantic comedy. Typically in fourth phase comedy the action is conducted on two social planes. The action of the main plot reaches its turning point at Lyme, where all

of the characters are associated with the navy, and where the values of the naval characters are affirmed by the novel. The action of the sub-plot takes place against the background of the blocking society of Sir Walter at Kellynch and at Bath.²¹ The main interest of the sub-plot is to see if Elizabeth will escape spinsterhood and whether Sir Walter will marry, as well.

The form of the events of the sub-plot has a ternary structure which is the mirror image of the structure of events of the main plot. The Elliots of Kellynch once enjoyed a golden age parallel to Anne's period of exquisite felicity. The Baronetage provides some of the details of Sir Walter's ancestors who had acquired distinction for the family name, doing so by "serving the office of High Sheriff, representing a borough in three successive parliaments, exertions of loyalty, and dignity of baronet, in the first year of Charles II" (4).

While Lady Elliot lived, some measure of that dignity remained at Kellynch, but with her death the golden age of Kellynch also died. The second phase of the ternary structure in the main plot is the period of Anne's desolate tranquility; for the Elliots of Kellynch the phase following the loss of the golden age is the period in which Sir Walter's vanity, self-indulgence, and irresponsibility culminate in his having to rent Kellynch in order to maintain himself and his daughter in some semblance of luxury. This period is appropriately portrayed in the novel in correspondence with the autumnal qualities which are associated with Anne's state of mind preceding the Lyme chapters. Sir Walter is like the impotent

king of the wasteland society: his only son was still-born, thus Kellynch will pass to William Elliot upon Sir Walter's death. The world of Kellynch is static and sterile, a society in need of rejuvenation or replacement by a younger, more vigorous hero of a freer, more virile society. At the beginning of the novel Kellynch is in a state which is ritually like that period in the contest between summer and winter in which winter dominates. Of course, such a judgment is made from the point of view of the naval society, the values of which are affirmed by the novel. From their own point of view the Kellynch characters are neither decadent nor sterile.

Anne's eight-year winter ended following the action at Lyme, a green world which is the romantic counterpart of an archetypal heaven. The blocking characters move not into a green world but to its dialectic opposite: Bath.²² In Bath, a winter watering place (in contrast to Lyme, a summer resort), all of the follies and absurdities of Sir Walter's society at Kellynch are magnified. Continuing in his ritual bondage, Sir Walter complains of the preponderance of plain women in Bath: "'once, as he stood in a shop in Bond-street, he counted eighty-seven women go by, one after another, without there being a tolerable face among them'" (141-42).

At Lyme a new set of characters is introduced: Wentworth's brother-sailors, who embody the virtues which Anne admires, and in whose presence Anne feels most poignantly her regret at the life she forfeited when she broke the engagement: "'These would have been all my friends,' was her thought; and she had to struggle against a great tendency to lowness" (98). In Bath a quite



different set of characters is introduced. Anne finds her father and sister in a great agitation to be in the company of their cousins "the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple, and her daughter, the Honourable Miss Carteret" (148), genuine Irish nobility. Even Lady Russell and Mr. Elliot excuse and participate in the fawning over the Elliots' noble cousins. Anne, of course, is vexed over the behavior of her family and friend, being herself "'too proud to enjoy a welcome which depends so entirely upon place'" (151).

From a world of winter following a decline from a golden age, the novel traces Anne's life through a green world where her fortunes begin to ascend, to her triumph in her marriage to Wentworth. The descending fortunes of Sir Walter and Elizabeth are traced from a world which, in terms of the values the novel affirms, is equally fallen from a golden state, through a world which is the demonic antithesis of the green world, to the defeat of all the schemes and interests dear to the Kellynch society.

Not only are the main plot and the sub-plot inversions of each other, but the characters in the main plot are seen to have their opposite number in the sub-plot. Frye notes that "doubled characters . . . [run] all through the history of comedy" (Frye, p. 181). In Persuasion the characters of the main plot have ironic doubles in the minor plot. Like Anne, Elizabeth had also been attached to a man sometime in the past before the novel begins. In this case, it was not the woman but the man who broke off the acquaintance. Sir Walter had been promoting a match between his eldest daughter and his cousin, William Elliot, heir presumptive of

Kellynch. Mr. Elliot, however, "Instead of pushing his fortune in the line marked out for the heir of the house of Elliot, . . . had purchased independence by uniting himself to a rich woman of inferior birth" (8). William Elliot is the demonic counterpart of Wentworth who also used his time following his break with a daughter of Sir Walter to obtain wealth, albeit by somewhat more honorable means.

Following the departure of William Elliot from the Kellynch scene, Sir Walter and his connections learned that his heir had spoken contemptuously of him and of the baronetcy itself. Consequently, Mr. Elliot was much resented and never spoken of at Kellynch. By the time Anne arrives in Bath following the scenes at Lyme, however, she finds Sir Walter and Mr. Elliot very much reconciled. Now a widower, Mr. Elliot has set all to right by denying that he had ever spoken disrespectfully of them, and by insisting that he had married for love, not money. Mr. Elliot appears to be renewing his courtship of Elizabeth, providing yet another parallel to the romantic interest of the main plot. Of course, because we see the events from Anne's point of view, we perceive Mr. Elliot as her suitor. Elizabeth and Sir Walter remain oblivious to William Elliot's interest in Anne; by them he is always viewed as Elizabeth's suitor.

In the main plot the reunion of Anne and Wentworth is for a time delayed by Wentworth's attachment to Louisa, and Anne's interest in Benwick. The complication is resolved offstage when Louisa and Benwick become engaged to each other. A parallel complication occurs in the sub-plot in the intrigue between William Elliot and

Mrs. Clay, but, of course, the resolution is much different. Mrs. Clay had been assumed to be maneuvering herself into becoming the wife of Sir Walter. Instead, she runs off to London to become the mistress of William Elliot. In the main plot an offstage alliance promotes the resolution which the characters deem desirable; in the sub-plot an offstage alliance frustrates the marriage plans of Sir Walter for his favorite daughter.²³ The difference between the nature of the alliance which promotes the resolution of the main plot and the alliance which frustrates a desirable resolution to the sub-plot is itself a version of the apocalyptic-demonic tension which exists between the idyllic society of sailors and the decadent society of Kellynch and Bath.

The triumph of the sympathetic characters and the defeat of the blocking characters is dramatized in the success and failure of their respective efforts. Comedy involves more than this, however. As Frye has pointed out, "the movement of comedy is usually a movement from one society to another" (Frye, p. 163). In Persuasion, this movement is seen in Anne's beginning as the daughter of Sir Walter of Kellynch and ending as the wife of Captain Wentworth of the navy. Anne's association with Wentworth and her identification with all the naval characters, in contrast with Sir Walter's objections to the navy, represent a triumph of Wentworth's society over Sir Walter's. That the naval society replaces Sir Walter's society as the dominant one is the clear implication at the end of the novel.²⁴ That event is foreshadowed by the replacement of Sir Walter at Kellynch by Admiral Croft. When Anne visits the Crofts at

Kellynch, "she could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-hall had passed into better hands than its owners'" (125).

Anne's marriage to Wentworth is not directly opposed by Sir Walter, whatever his role may have been in breaking their original engagement. The real force exerted by Sir Walter's society against Anne's attachment to the naval society is embodied in William Elliot's proposal to Anne that she become his wife. It has already been noted that Mr. Elliot functions in the main plot as the false suitor, a stock character in comedy. Frye notes of this character that he is "generally someone who partakes of the father's closer relation to established society: that is, a rival with less youth and more money" (Frye, pp. 164-65). He concludes that this type of character is a father-surrogate. Because Mr. Elliot is a father-surrogate, his proposal to Anne is a proposal that she become the next Lady Elliot, who, like her mother, Lady Elliot, would renew the vitality and restore the dignity of Sir Walter's society. It is one of the structural triumphs of the novel that Mr. Elliot's offer to Anne to become the revitalizing force in the old society comes in the very same chapter (Chapter viii of Volume II) in which she realizes that Wentworth "must love her," and that she therefore is likely to have the option to choose between suitors and between societies. The main plot and the sub-plot, which to this point had been developing along parallel but distinctly separate lines, intersect in this event. As soon as it is clear that Anne has the choice of becoming the wife either of Wentworth or of Mr. Elliot,

it is also clear that the resolutions of the main plot and the subplot are interdependent.

The thought of becoming the next Lady Elliot is not without its attractions for Anne. Lady Russell articulates the appeal the idea has for Anne:

"I own that to be able to regard you as the future mistress of Kellynch, the future Lady Elliot--to look forward and see you occupying your dear mother's place, succeeding to all her rights, and all her popularity, as well as to all her virtues, would be the highest possible gratification to me" (159-60).

Even Wentworth, in his retrospective summary of the events of the novel from his point of view, must admit that when he came to Bath and heard the rumors of Anne's attachment to Mr. Elliot he was dismayed by "all the horrible eligibilities and proprieties of the match!" (244). Although she toys only briefly with the idea of becoming Lady Elliot, once Mrs. Smith discloses the damaging information about Mr. Elliot's true character, Anne admits to herself that she might have yielded:

Anne could just acknowledge within herself such a possibility of having been induced to marry him, as made her shudder at the idea of the misery which must have followed. It was just possible that she might have been persuaded by Lady Russell! (211)

That Anne does not yield, that she rejects the appeal to revitalize the old order in favor of establishing a new order is the substance of the triumph of the naval society over Sir Walter's society.²⁵ Anne's decision not to accept Mr. Elliot's offer does not depend on Mrs. Smith's revelations about his true character. In fact, she rejects him even before he makes his half-proposal, and

before Mrs. Smith tells her story. She will not marry him because she loves Wentworth. Furthermore, she distrusts his motives for renewing his relationship with Sir Walter, and she is suspicious of a character which can please not only herself, but such diverse personalities as Lady Russell and Mrs. Clay. Anne would have liked him better had he displayed "any warm burst of feeling," and she distrusted the sincerity of "those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped" (161). There is also the matter of his bad habits in his past--like Sunday-traveling.²⁶ When Mr. Elliot finally does utter his wish to Anne that her name "might never change" (188), she is only vexed. She has by this time determined that Wentworth still loves her, and her interest is to let him know of her feelings and to create opportunities to be near him. Mrs. Smith's information plays no role in creating Anne's distrust of Mr. Elliot. It merely confirms her suspicions.

The importance of Mrs. Smith's information about Mr. Elliot is in the commentary it provides on the society and the characters who are taken in by him. Frye observes of the false suitor/father-surrogate characters of comedy that they are "imposters, and the extent to which they have real power implies some criticism of the society that allows them their power" (Frye, p. 165). This is indeed the case in Persuasion: the characters most enamored of Mr. Elliot are Sir Walter, Elizabeth, of course Mrs. Clay, and Lady Russell, the last of whom "could not imagine a man more exactly what he ought to be than Mr. Elliot" (161).

Mrs. Smith's information reveals Mr. Elliot to be something less than he ought to be. Anne's suspicion of his character and his eagerness to re-establish a cordial relationship with his cousins is borne out by the testimony of Mrs. Smith, who had once been Anne's classmate and is now an impoverished widow. Mrs. Smith shows Anne a letter from William Elliot (who had been associated with her husband) in which he speaks insultingly of Sir Walter and Elizabeth, and asserts that "'my first visit to Kellynch will be with a surveyor, to tell me how to bring it with best advantage to the hammer'" (203). As to the reason for renewing his association with his family (he will inherit Kellynch and the baronetcy in any case), Mrs. Smith also has an explanation. Now that he is rich he has altered his opinion "'as to the value of a baronetcy'" (206). The only event which could deny Mr. Elliot that title would be if Sir Walter should yet produce a male heir. Having gotten wind of Sir Walter's intimacy with Mrs. Clay, Mr. Elliot decided to prevent their marrying in any way he could. Either by intimidating Mrs. Clay or by marrying Anne (presumably he had been ready to settle for Elizabeth before meeting Anne) and including in the marriage articles a provision that Sir Walter may not marry Mrs. Clay, Mr. Elliot meant to insure his inheritance of Kellynch. After learning of Anne's engagement to Wentworth, he succeeds in his endeavor by establishing Mrs. Clay "under his protection in London" (250).

The Comic Conclusion

Sypher reminds us of the double occasion of comedy--the festival and the sacrifice. Not only is there rejoicing at the triumph of the hero and heroine, and renewal in their union, but there is a contrapuntal mood of defeat of the blocking characters. The scapegoat ritual of their sacrifice also contributes to the renewal which comedy celebrates.

Having to confront the collapse of their plans and the humiliation of recognizing themselves as the victims of the duplicity of both Mr. Elliot and Mrs. Clay, Sir Walter and Elizabeth are "shocked and mortified" (251). Lady Russell's coming to terms with Anne's second engagement to Wentworth, and her recognition of Mr. Elliot's true character represent an abandonment of the feudal values of the blocking society by their most respectable proponent. She must recognize that her "prejudices on the side of ancestry" and her weakness for good manners (both versions of Sir Walter's vanity) are inadequate standards, and the implication is that a society based on such standards is not a viable one.

With all the guilt heaped upon her, Lady Russell becomes the scapegoat of the piece, exonerating Anne from any blame, indicting all the characters who opposed Anne's union with Wentworth, the values behind that opposition, and the society based upon those values. By the end of the novel, Lady Russell must "take up a new set of opinions"; Sir Walter has been forced to vacate Kellynch for a sailor and his wife; Elizabeth is not likely ever "to be certain of being properly solicited by baronet-blood" (7), and Mary is

pretty effectively neutralized by her husband's society at Uppercross.

There is also a suggestion of the scapegoat ritual in Mr. Elliot's alliance with Mrs. Clay. The apparent triumph of Mr. Elliot's plan to prevent Sir Walter from marrying is tempered by the narrator's suggestion that Mrs. Clay's cunning may yet wheedle and caress Mr. Elliot into making her the next Lady Elliot. His renewed interest in the baronetcy, once he had obtained wealth through his first marriage, was presumably based upon his conviction that the title would give him dignity. Mrs. Smith suggests that "'Having had as much money as he could spend, . . . he has been gradually learning to pin his happiness upon the consequence he is heir to'" (206-07). That Mrs. Clay, who from the beginning has been the butt of the narrator's vilification, ridicule, and scorn, will share, and that Sir Walter has shared in that "consequence" is surely an indication of the double-edged nature of Mr. Elliot's victory. The defeat of the blocking characters and the novel's repudiation of their society for the society and values of the naval characters undermines any consequence Mr. Elliot seeks in his title.

Associated with the festive mood of the multiple marriages at the end of comedy is a pervading mood of reconciliation. Frye notes that the "tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society: the blocking characters are more often reconciled or converted than simply repudiated" (Frye, p. 165). In Persuasion, Lady Russell is the only one who is truly converted. Her recognition of her own misjudgments of Captain Wentworth and

Mr. Elliot, and her having "to take up a new set of opinions and of hopes," and the narrator's assurance that Lady Russell is still at the end of the novel one of Anne's two friends, all indicate that she is to be included in the new society.

Sir Walter is not converted to the new society, but he is in some measure reconciled. His consciousness of Wentworth's twenty-five thousand pounds and "superiority of appearance," "enabled Sir Walter at last to prepare his pen with a very good grace for the insertion of the marriage in the volume of honour" (248-49). Beyond that consolation, and in the face of his later shock and mortification at the discovery of Mrs. Clay's duplicity, Sir Walter has the company of Viscountess Dalrymple and her daughter to flatter his vanity.

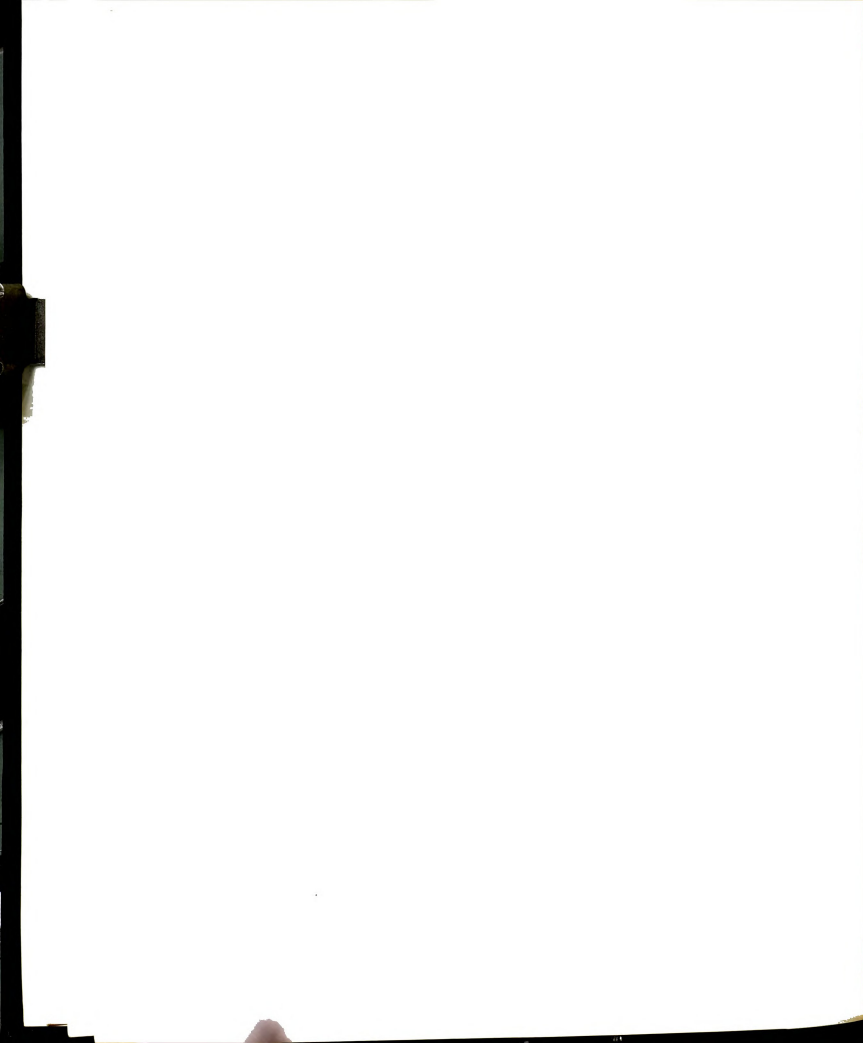
Mary is pleased enough at the marriage, confident that her own situation at Uppercross is superior to Anne's, "if they could but keep Captain Wentworth from being made a baronet" (250). Elizabeth, besides sharing her father's mortification at being taken in by Mrs. Clay, and in addition to facing the bleak prospect of spinsterhood, "did nothing worse than look cold and unconcerned" (248). It is true of Anne's sisters as it is true of their father that they are not so much converted as they are allowed to live on in the illusions of their ritual bondages which have defined them from the beginning, and which Anne has broken free of in her alliance with the naval characters. They do not recognize, as Lady Russell recognizes, that the events recorded in the novel constitute an indictment

against them, and that the society which is triumphant in the comic conclusion dismisses them as irrelevant.

Mrs. Smith's timely information about the true character of Mr. Elliot is duly rewarded by Wentworth's "putting her in the way of recovering her husband's property in the West Indies" (251). As Anne's only other friend besides Lady Russell, Mrs. Smith is included in the triumphant society of Anne and Captain Wentworth, a point made clear by the information that she was "their earliest visitor in their settled life" (251).

In the triumph of the naval society and the defeat of the society of Sir Walter, and in the marriage of Anne to Wentworth the ternary structure of comedy is complete. The conclusion recalls and improves upon the golden age of the exquisite felicity of the couple's first engagement; the triumph of the naval society recalls a golden age when power and social prestige were granted to Sir Walter's ancestors as recognition of their service to society.²⁷ Society renews itself by transferring power and status from those who no longer serve to those who do.

The importance of viewing Persuasion from the perspective of its archetypal structure is that in so doing many of the elements of the novel are seen to have a coherence which is not otherwise obvious. The autumnal mood which is so pervasive in the first half of the novel is entirely appropriate to the second stage of the ternary structure of comedy which defines the present at the opening of the novel. As the heroine in need of rejuvenation, Anne partakes



of the autumnal mood, in her physical appearance as well as in her mental state. The impotence of the characters of the dominant society of Sir Walter, and their replacement by the lively sea characters at Kellynch partake of a logic inherent in the association of rituals of spring with the cycle of the seasons.

The emphasis on Wentworth's long absence and Anne's retreat into passive life, the association of Lyme with fertility and vitality, the ritual death of Louisa, and the marriages and the atmosphere of qualified reconciliation which concludes the novel are all seen to be not merely comic conventions, but conventions which have their origin in the comic impulse to celebrate the triumph of summer over winter, the impulse to celebrate life and to minimize death. Because necessity, or fate, is a concept alien to the celebration of desirability, even the arbitrary twists of the plot and unlikely coincidences obtain legitimacy.

Persuasion is most obviously related to what Frye has identified as the third and fourth phases of comedy. Particularly in the presence of a green world motif and in the presence of action on two social planes does Persuasion partake of conventions that Frye ascribes to fourth phase or romantic comedy. In its realistic characterization and its emphasis on the bleakness of life for an unmarried Anne, and in the inability of Mrs. Smith to act for herself to get possession of the property that is hers (and her consequent poverty), the novel exhibits ironic elements associated with phases of comedy closer to the demonic archetype. Anne's retrospective admission that she might indeed have been tempted or persuaded

to marry Mr. Elliot, an admission which "made her shudder at the misery which must have followed," is an aspect of the story resembling the narrow escapes characteristic of the most ironic first phase comedies. Mr. Elliot's success in insuring his inheritance of the baronetcy, and the consequent continuance of Sir Walter's society through him are further ironic elements, even though that society has been found absurd and even though it loses Anne. The fact is that there are elements in Persuasion which are characteristic of the full range of comedy, from the most ironic to the most romantic.²⁸

An understanding of the strength of the comic impulse in Persuasion, then, provides a means of apprehending the structural principles underlying the sequence of actions in the novel. But there are other impulses at work as well. Although it is typical of comedy that the values of a younger, more virile, more liberal society are affirmed, the specific nature of those values is not inherent in comic convention. Furthermore, whereas the comic structure necessitates some stock character types, there is nothing about comedy which requires realistic character development. In fact, the comic impulse, with its goal of depicting the desirable, is in some ways antithetical to a realistic impulse, which makes necessary the structuring principle and grows out of an ironic as opposed to a romantic point of view. Yet realistic characterization and an affirmation of a specific value system are certainly present in the novel. In the next two chapters the nature of those two impulses in Persuasion will be considered in detail.

One value of analyzing exhaustively the comic conventions of a work is that such a study accounts for the way in which the work is capable of setting up a system of expectations in the reader. By fulfilling, or by modifying and then fulfilling the reader's expectations, the work engenders aesthetic enjoyment in the reader in his perception of patterns completed. The reader's expectations are governed by his perception of the nature of the pattern under scrutiny; and his enjoyment of the work is governed by the fulfillment of his expectations. To the degree that his expectations are not fulfilled, or that he does not develop expectations, the reader will conclude that he has made an incorrect guess about the pattern or that the writer has set up (deliberately or ineptly) false pattern signals.

In Persuasion, the reader recognizes such elements as the humorous character of Sir Walter, the ternary structure of events, the mood created by such characters as Admiral Croft and Mary Musgrove, and the quickening pace associated with the return of Wentworth. Based upon his experience with similar sets of circumstances, the reader concludes that Anne will get her man and that the characters in her way will be defeated. When these expectations are fulfilled, the reader experiences pleasure at the rightness of the conclusion (the ending being inherent in the beginning) and delight in the manner in which his expectations are fulfilled.

Not all of the expectations the reader forms about Persuasion are governed by his perception of the novel's comic form. If critics are to be believed, readers are offended by the narrator's

reference to Mrs. Musgrove's "large fat sighings" over her dead son. Some have objected to the deus ex machina of the introduction of Mrs. Smith in order to assassinate the character of Mr. Elliot; others have taken exception to Mrs. Clay's unlikely decision to abandon her pursuit of Sir Walter to become the mistress of Mr. Elliot. Unlikely twists in plot, coincidence, divine intervention, and abuse of characters are the stuff of comedy, so the impatience readers express with these developments in Persuasion is not based on the violation of expectations developed by the perception of the comic nature of the work. The unfulfilled expectations are those developed from the perception of other impulses at work in the novel, impulses which are to some extent in conflict with the novel's comic impulse. It shall be the business of subsequent chapters to explore those other impulses and the expectations they develop.

NOTES: CHAPTER I

¹See for example Joseph Wiesenfarth, The Errand of Form: An Assay of Jane Austen's Art (New York: Fordham University Press, 1967); Lloyd W. Brown, "The Comic Conclusion in Jane Austen's Novels," PMLA 84 (1969): 1582-87; Earle Davis, "Jane Austen and the Comic Flaw," Kansas Quarterly 1 (1969): 23-34; William O. Binkley, "Comic Self-Discovery in Jane Austen's Novels" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1961); Jean Eldred Pickering, "Comic Structure in the Novels of Jane Austen" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford, 1973).

²[Leonard] J[ames] Potts, Comedy (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1949), p. 11.

³"The plot," says Lane Cooper in his adaptation of Aristotle's remarks on tragedy to an "Aristotelian" theory of comedy, "is the very soul of comedy." "The incidents of the action, and the structured ordering of these incidents, constitute the end and aim of comedy." An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), p. 184.

⁴Two excellent anthologies of theories of and observations about comedy are Robert W. Corrigan, ed., Comedy: Meaning and Form (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965); and Paul Lauter, ed., The Theories of Comedy, Anchor Books (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday, 1964).

⁵Joseph Wiesenfarth points to some of the correspondences between the novel and Frye's account of the comic mythos in his "Persuasion: History and Myth," The Wordsworth Circle 2 (Autumn, 1971): 160-68. Necessarily, some of my observations in this chapter repeat those Wiesenfarth has already made. For the sake of expedience I have cited only those correspondences between his observations and those in this chapter which seem to me uniquely his. Wiesenfarth's use of Frye was to show that "history provides the realistic context in which Jane Austen works out the myths of Persuasion" (167). Some of his argument was deleted for publication due to lack of space. My use of Frye is for a much different purpose, as will become clear; and I am able to analyze in much greater detail in the space of this chapter the full extent to which Persuasion partakes of the mythos of spring.

⁶Anyone attempting an archetypal analysis of a Jane Austen novel must be given pause by Douglas Bush's caustic spoof of such activity in his "Mrs. Bennet and the Dark Gods: The Truth About

Jane Austen," Sewanee Review 64 (1956): 591-96. Hopefully this chapter will justify itself against the implied objections to archetypal analysis in Bush's article. Nonetheless, I cannot be entirely comfortable with the familiar ring of such mocking passages as the following:

"... hieroglyphics of pain and death, both mythic and worldly are reinforced by the process of the seasons. The book opens in early autumn, and in this season of harvest and death there is a ritual dance, which, ominously, takes place at Netherfield [which Bush previously has associated with a nether or lower world], Bingley's house. It is during the late autumn and winter that blows fall upon the Bennets--Mr. Collins' unhappy visit, Bingley's departure and abandoning of Jane Bennet and her heavy disappointment and Elizabeth's sympathy for her. The worst blow, Lydia's elopement with Wickham (note, by the way, the ancient view of the shallow, sensual quality of Lydian music), does occur in the summer, but it is this event which sets everything in motion toward rebirth, or what is crudely called a happy ending. Darcy--now a saving Hercules--rescues Lydia and wins Elizabeth; Dionysus-Bingley returns and is restored to Jane; and Mrs. Bennet, again a radiant Venus, rises from the depths in a foam of rejoicing" (Bush, pp. 595-96).

Bush concludes with the wry prediction that "the subject of archetypal myth in Jane Austen needs a book, and will doubtless get one" (Bush, p. 596).

⁷Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). This citation is to the Atheneum paperback edition (March 1970), p. 105. Hereafter all citations will be to this edition and will be cited in the text following the quotation thus: (Frye, p. 105). Most of my quotations from Frye are from the third essay, "Archetypal Criticism: The Theory of Myths," but a few of the preliminary remarks, such as the present one, are from the second essay, "Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols."

⁸Wylie Sypher, "The Meanings of Comedy," in Comedy, Doubleday Anchor Books (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday & Company, 1956), pp. 193-255. Sypher's essay is an appendix to an edition of Henri Bergson's "Laughter" and George Meredith's "An Essay on Comedy," which edition also includes an introduction by Sypher. Sypher's arguments are based primarily upon Francis M. Cornford's The Origin of Attic Comedy (1914), but he also cites Frye's Essay "The Argument of Comedy," published in 1948. Anatomy was published in 1957.

Sypher insists that both comedy and tragedy have their origin in

"a prehistoric death-and-resurrection ceremonial, the rite of killing the old year (the aged king) and bringing in the new season (the resurrection or initiation of the adolescent

king). Associated with killing the old king and devouring his sacrificial body was the ancient rite of purging the tribe by expelling a scapegoat on whose head were heaped the sins of the past year" (216).

Killing the old king saved the tribe from sterility, and expelling the scapegoat (ritually the same thing) purged the tribe of its sins.

Following Cornford, Sypher suggests that tragic drama descended from this ritual festival, but that it suppressed the sexual and festive connotations, concentrating instead on the "portrayal of the suffering and death of the hero, king, or god."

"Comedy, however, kept in the foreground the erotic action, together with the disorderly rejoicing at the rebirth or resurrection of the god-hero who survives his agon. In this sense comedy preserves the archaic 'double occasion' of the plot formula, the dual and wholly incompatible meanings of sacrifice and feast, cruelty and festival, logic and license" (218).

We can accept Sypher's observation of the ritual "double occasion" in comedy without agreeing that comedy is derived from some historical ritual. "It does not matter two pins to the literary critic whether such a ritual had any historical existence or not" (Frye, p. 109). What Frye insists upon but Sypher neglects is that

"ritual is the content of dramatic action, not the source or origin of it. The Golden Bough is, from the point of view of literary criticism, an essay on the ritual content of naive drama: that is, it reconstructs an archetypal ritual from which the structural and generic principles may be logically, not chronologically, derived" (Frye, p. 109).

⁹The phrase is Henri Bergson's, from his essay "Laughter" (1900), reprinted in Comedy, Wylie Sypher, ed. (ibid., pp. 61-190), 153. Noting some characteristic differences between comedy and "high-class drama," Bergson observes that comedy directs the attention of the audience to gestures instead of actions:

"to prevent our taking a serious action seriously, in short, in order to prepare us for laughter, comedy utilizes a method, the formula of which may be given as follows: instead of concentrating our attention on actions, comedy directs it rather to gestures. By gestures we mean here the attributes, the movements and even the language by which a mental state expresses itself outwardly without any aim or profit, from no other cause than a kind of inner itching. Gesture, thus defined, is profoundly different from action. Action is intentional or, at any rate, conscious; gesture slips out unawares, it is automatic" (153; Bergson's emphasis).

Bergson's comic "gesture" is a version of what Frye calls "ritual bondage" and what Bergson later identifies as the source of all laughter: "something mechanical encrusted on the living" (84).

¹⁰The events of the earlier engagement are summarized by the narrator in Chapter iv of the novel, which one early critic likened to "an Euripidean prologue." See anonymous review article by Richard Whately, "Northanger Abbey and Persuasion," Quarterly Review 24 (1821): 369.

¹¹Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, Vol. V of The Oxford Illustrated Jane Austen, ed. by R. W. Chapman (3rd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 26. Hereafter citations to this work will be included in my text following the quotation thus: (26).

¹²Of course, in terms of the mythic archetype, Anne's loss of vitality and bloom is the more significant instance of a displaced version of ritualistic death: it is her physical renewal which signals the renewal of society. Louisa's nearly fatal fall, however, is a kind of substitute death, a scapegoat ritual in Persuasion.

¹³Anne is at one time or another in her life courted by Wentworth, Elliot, Charles Musgrove (before he was Mary's husband), and Captain Benwick.

¹⁴This doubling of the events of the plot is elaborated upon by Alistair Duckworth:

"Wentworth's position in the second volume, it becomes clear, repeats that of Anne in the first. In the first volume, up to the trip to Lyme Anne was at a disadvantage, since she was constrained to watch her former lover flirting with Louisa before her eyes, as in the drawing rooms at Uppercross (I, viii). In the second volume, however, it is Wentworth who must suffer seeing Anne and Mr. Elliot in apparent league, as on the evening of the concert in the Bath rooms (II, viii). Then again, at Uppercross it was Anne who overheard the conversation of Wentworth and Louisa in the hedgerow, as (unaware of her presence) Wentworth made his open avowals of affection to Louisa (I, x). At Bath, however, it is Wentworth who overhears Anne's impassioned defense of woman's constancy to Captain Harville in the White Hart (II, xi)."

The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 200.

¹⁵Henrietta Ten Harmsel sees these maneuverings of Anne's as Jane Austen's "changing the characterization of her heroine from that of passive acceptance to that of active participation, and by basing her attitude throughout upon the delicate consciousness of a heart made sensitive by an unchanging and painfully suppressed love, Jane Austen skillfully transforms the conventional passive heroine into a memorable and psychologically credible woman." Jane Austen: A Study in Fictional Conventions (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), p. 173. In a

note, Ms. Ten Harmsel insists that this change is not an instance of developing character, development of a Jane Austen heroine always being a matter of overcoming moral weakness. This "change" is based on Anne's consistent principle of not encouraging love unless she thinks success possible.

¹⁶This scene between Anne and Harville is effusively admired by many of Jane Austen's critics. Bishop Whately (see supra, note 10) thinks it exquisite. Richard Simpson is certain Jane Austen had Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in mind while writing this scene, and Viola in mind while creating Anne. See his unsigned review article of J. E. Austen-Leigh's *Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870), *North British Review* (April 1870): 129-52; reprinted in *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by B. C. Southam, Critical Heritage Series (London: Routledge and K. Paul; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), pp. 241-65. Robert Liddell calls the scene "the most beautiful and the most exciting love-scene in English fiction." *The Novels of Jane Austen* (London: Longman's, 1963), p. 135.

¹⁷This overheard conversation is one of many in the novel. An important one takes place in Volume I. On the walk from Upper-cross to Winthrop, Anne overhears Wentworth lecture Louisa on the value of a firm character, an idea very much responsible for Louisa's fall from the Cobb. Mrs. Smith's knowledge of William Elliot comes partly from conversations overheard by her nurse, Mrs. Rooke. Frye observes that "overhearers of conversations or people with special knowledge . . . are the commonest devices for bringing about the comic discovery" (Frye, p. 166).

The scene which finally emboldens Wentworth to write his confession of love for Anne and his proposal to her is that in which Anne makes known her belief that women remain in love longer than do men. In many respects the scene parallels that in which Anne becomes convinced of Wentworth's love for her. In that earlier scene at Lady Dalrymple's concert, Wentworth expresses his disappointment in Benwick's recovering so quickly from the loss of Fanny Harville: "'A man does not recover from such a devotion of the heart to such a woman!--He ought not--he does not'" (183). Nonetheless, Benwick has recovered, and Anne realizes that Wentworth is speaking about himself, not Benwick, and that he therefore must love her. In the latter scene at the White Hart, the subject is again Benwick's hasty recovery from the death of his fiancée, only this time the conversation is between Anne and Harville, but within Wentworth's hearing. Whereas Wentworth had expressed his view that men do not quickly relinquish deep attachment, now Anne professes that women love longest "when existence or when hope is gone" (235). Just as Anne had deduced that Wentworth had been projecting his own feelings for her in the guise of a discussion of Benwick, Wentworth now sees the applicability of Anne's sentiments about women in general to her feelings for him. As a consequence he writes his letter: a classic example of the overheard conversation bringing about comic discovery and resolution.

¹⁸The phrase is Andrew H. Wright's. He claims that Anne's "reconciliation with Captain Wentworth stems not from the resolution of . . . opposites, but from a series of fortuitous circumstances which makes the match possible after all." Jane Austen's Novels: A Study in Structure (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 161.

¹⁹Wiesenfarth takes note of the symbolic value of the book and the mirrors when he calls attention to their disappearance after Admiral Croft moves into Kellynch: "Happily, when Sir Walter moves from his ancestral house, the symbols of rank and appearance, the Baronetage and the looking glasses, disappear from Kellynch-hall" (The Errand of Form, p. 148).

²⁰Bergson identifies vanity as the perfect comic humor. His requirements for "creating an ideally comic type of character," requirements which he says are met in vanity, are these:

"It must be deep-rooted, so as to supply comedy with inexhaustible matter, and yet superficial, in order that it may remain within the scope of comedy; invisible to its actual owner, for the comic ever partakes of the unconscious, but visible to everybody else, so that it may call forth general laughter; extremely considerate to its own self, so that it may be displayed without scruple, but troublesome to others, so that they may repress it without pity, but immediately repressible, so that our laughter may not have been wasted; sure of reappearing under fresh aspects, so that laughter may always find something to do; inseparable from social life, although insufferable to society; capable--in order that it may assume the greatest imaginable variety of forms--of being tacked to all the vices and even to a good many virtues" (Bergson, p. 171).

²¹The different locations in Persuasion constitute an ever-widening circle for Anne, a fact noted by Mary Lascelles: "the story of Persuasion can be described not solely as the reconciliation of Anne and Wentworth, but also as the bursting open, for Anne, of the prison that Sir Walter and Elizabeth have made at Kellynch--the expansion of her world." Jane Austen and her Art (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 181.

²²Wiesenfarth says that "Bath is literally a 'fen of stagnant waters' belonging to a sick aristocracy." In a note to this sentence Wiesenfarth writes: "Smollett had shown in 1752 that Wordsworth's words ['fen of stagnant waters'] describing London were literally true of Bath. See his An Essay on the External Use of Water, ed. Claude E. Jones (Baltimore, 1935)." ("History and Myth," p. 165 and n. 20.)

²³It is interesting to speculate upon the shape of the story had Jane Austen carried out completely the symmetry of the main plot and the sub-plot. Anne was once attached to a man, but the engagement was broken and the man disappeared. Anne's man returns, but before the reunion, she seems to begin to form an attachment for another (Benwick), and he seems to become attached to another woman (Louisa). Elizabeth, like Anne, had had an earlier attachment, and her man also returns, but he too becomes involved with another woman (first Anne, then Mrs. Clay). Anne's dilemma is resolved when the two false suitors marry each other (Benwick marries Louisa), thus freeing Wentworth for Anne. Elizabeth's suitor marries Mrs. Clay, who had been assumed to be attached to Sir Walter. A symmetrical conclusion in the sub-plot paralleling that in the main plot would require the two remaining unattached persons to marry each other, i.e., that Elizabeth marry Sir Walter. The theme of incest and possible incest is frequent in comedy (e.g., Tom Jones), and although there is no hint of it in Persuasion, Sir Walter and Elizabeth in the end have only each other, a fact which insures the continued sterility of the Kellynch society.

Frye points out that "The possibilities of incestuous combinations form one of the minor themes of comedy," where they are often the demonic antithesis of the union of the hero and heroine. "Oedipus and incest themes indicate that erotic attachments have in their undisplaced or mythical origin a much greater versatility [than in displaced forms]" (Frye, p. 181).

²⁴Malcolm Bradbury extends the novel's judgment of the societies in Persuasion to Jane Austen's judgment of her own society. He claims that the tension embodied in Anne is about "to put it at its grandest, the question of who shall inherit England." "Persuasion Again," Essays in Criticism 18 (October 1968): 387-88.

²⁵Marvin Mudrick, like Bradbury and others, sees the characters in Persuasion as representative of competing classes in early nineteenth century England. For him, the class conflict is the real conflict of the novel:

"the conflict is between the feudal remnant, conscious of its tradition, and the rising middle class, conscious of its vitality, at the turn of the nineteenth century: between Sir Walter and Mr. Elliot, between Lady Russell and Wentworth, between Mary Musgrove and her husband; and always at the center, mediating directly or as involved onlooker, is Anne Elliot."

Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952): 232. My citations are to the paperback edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); hereafter they will be noted in my text thus: (Mudrick, p. 232).

²⁶Mudrick finds the novel's and Anne's dismissal of Mr. Elliot characteristic of Jane Austen:

"Jane Austen is not exasperated with Mr. Elliot: she simply cannot cope with his type, as she cannot cope with Willoughby or Henry Crawford. Her plots require that all these men be ultimately defined as rakes; but her genius was either inadequate, or too blocked by moral taboos, to develop events (and thoughts are the most signal events in her novels) probable and vivid enough for the purpose" (Mudrick, p. 221).

²⁷Wiesenfarth puts it succinctly: "Sir Walter has lost Kellynch because of his self-love and spendthrift indolence. Admiral Croft has gained it because service to his country has earned him a distinguished rank and made him a wealthy man. What Sir Walter's ancestors once were to England, Admiral Croft now is" ("History and Myth," p. 163).

²⁸Mudrick claims that while there are "comic scenes and comic characters in Persuasion . . . its inner orbit and final effect are not comic" (Mudrick, p. 239). The basis for this claim is George Meredith's observation that the field of the comic poet is "the operation of the social world upon [men's] characters." (An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit, New York, 1897, 79f. [Mudrick's note; see supra, my note 8].) Persuasion, Mudrick insists, is more concerned with "the emotional resistance that men put up against the perpetual encroachments of the social world" (Mudrick, p. 239). Anne's triumph is a "lonely personal triumph" (Ibid.).

A personal triumph it certainly is, but not a lonely one. The conflict is not simply Anne vs. society, but one society vs. another, as Mudrick himself observes. All of the naval characters, Mrs. Smith, and the converted Lady Russell constitute a society rejoicing and sharing in Anne's triumph. Frye's definition of comedy, broader than Meredith's, reveals the novel's genuine comic form.

CHAPTER II

COMIC THEMES AND MORAL ISSUES IN PERSUASION

Social Judgments as Comic Themes

Inherent in the comic nature of Persuasion are a number of thematic elements which Jane Austen's novel shares with all comedy. Frye, among others, notes that the ethical concern in comedy is less often with moral than with social judgments. The resolution of comedy which unites hero and heroine represents a triumph of one social organization (the hero's society) over another (the blocking society). Typically, the movement from the absurd society to the desirable society is a movement "from a society controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law and older characters to a society controlled by youth and pragmatic freedom . . ." (Frye, p. 169). Comedy affirms the values of the triumphant society, laughs at the defeated society, and finds the transfer of authority from the latter to the former a desirable event. Therein is the essence of the social judgment inherent in the genre of comedy.¹

The preceding chapter was concerned to some extent with the clash between the established society of Sir Walter and the emerging society of sailors represented by Admiral Croft, Captain Harville, and, of course, Captain Wentworth. The first part of this chapter will consider in somewhat more detail the natures of these two societies and the qualities about them which entitle the one to success

and the other to ridicule. The last part of this chapter will consider moral issues in the novel as they are perceived and resolved by Anne herself. It will be shown that Anne's resolution of these issues corresponds to the moral perspective of Jane Austen.

It has been noted that the sailors of Persuasion by virtue of their service in the Napoleonic wars are to England what Sir Walter's ancestors once were. The truth of this generalization is illustrated in the characters who exist at the head of each of the two groups, Sir Walter and Admiral Croft. As noted earlier, the fact that the former vacates Kellynch-hall, the residence which is symbolic of social prestige and authority, and that the latter takes up residence there is a foreshadowing of the novel's judgment of the two social groups those characters head. The opposition personified in Sir Walter and Admiral Croft is repeated and modified in other pairings of characters, for instance Lady Russell vs. Sophia Croft and William Elliot vs. Captain Wentworth. Other characters, chiefly the Musgroves, exist somewhere between Sir Walter's inherited distinction and Admiral Croft's earned distinction. Anne Elliot's is the consciousness through which the rivalry of the two social systems is viewed, and their worthiness is to some degree measured by the treatment she is afforded in each. Anne is also the prize awarded to the triumphant naval society, a prize more significant than Kellynch, which will someday pass to William Elliot.

Kellynch-hall is less an extension of Sir Walter's vanity than a symbol of the dignity invested in the social position he inherited. Early in the novel, when Anne and Lady Russell attempt

to formulate a plan for extracting Sir Walter from debt by having him reduce his expenditures, Lady Russell is hopeful that he can be persuaded that

Kellynch-hall has a respectability in itself, which cannot be affected by these reductions; and that the true dignity of Sir Walter Elliot will be very far from lessened, in the eyes of sensible people, by his acting like a man of principle (12).

Sir Walter, however, is unable to see that his residence at Kellynch betokens dignity; he chooses to give up living in his ancestral home rather than to stay there with every "'comfort of life knocked off! Journeys, London, servants, horses, table,--contractions and restrictions every where'" (13). It is Sir Walter's solicitor, Mr. Shepherd, who persuades him that the "character of hospitality and ancient dignity" (13) of Kellynch requires him to abandon Kellynch in order to maintain a style of living he considers consistent with the resident of Kellynch-hall. For both Sir Walter and Elizabeth, dignity is a matter of conspicuous consumption, and "they were neither of them able to devise any means of lessening their expenses without compromising their dignity" (10).

Lady Russell shares with Sir Walter his concern that dignity be maintained, although for her dignity is enhanced less by conspicuous consumption than by "acting like a man of principle." Her plans for extracting him from debt attempt to balance what is due to him as a gentleman against what is "due to the character of an honest man" (12). But Lady Russell "had a value for rank and consequence" (11) that Anne did not share. Anne "saw no dignity in

any thing short of" clearing away the claims of all her father's creditors, and she thinks Lady Russell's proposals for his reductions "too gentle" (13). For Anne, the social position of her family does not so much confer dignity as it requires duty.

She considered it as an act of indispensable duty to clear away the claims of creditors, with all the expedition which the most comprehensive retrenchments could secure, and saw no dignity in any thing short of it. She wanted it to be prescribed, and felt as a duty (12-13).

We are thus given a spectrum of views on what should be done about the Elliots' indebtedness. Sir Walter and Elizabeth can brook no curtailment whatever of their luxuries and comforts; Lady Russell urges that they attempt to balance their style of living (to which she agrees they are entitled by their rank) against action that befits "the character of an honest man"; Anne thinks that true dignity is achieved by fulfilling one's duty, and that duty dictates that the claims of creditors be cleared at the expense of all of Sir Walter's luxuries.

The point, of course, is not that the novel advocates paying one's debts as opposed to living beyond one's means. Rather, the point of this early juxtaposition of judgments is that it illustrates an aspect of the value system of Sir Walter's society. The fundamental characteristic of that society is that it is one in which the rituals and customs have become merely self-perpetuating, divorced from any utilitarian function relevant to the operation of society-at-large, and meaningful only in the limited way in which the rules of a game are meaningful to those who have agreed to play it. Thus, a display of wealth is a matter of dignity to Sir Walter



regardless of the fact that he attempts to display a wealth he does not possess. His ancestors had been honored by society with position and wealth because of the valuable contribution the family had made to the functioning of that society. Displaying such position and wealth may indeed have been a matter of dignity when the position and wealth signified social contribution. Now it is only Anne who insists upon a correlation between the family's duty and the symbols conferred on it as a recognition of performance of duty; Sir Walter and Elizabeth care only for symbols. The perfect image of the state of Sir Walter's society is that presented in the first paragraphs of the novel: Sir Walter contemplating his own consequence in the Baronetage.

Sir Walter is merely inconvenienced by his financial straits. The source of his dilemma is that he cannot afford to live as he pleases. The source of the dilemma from Lady Russell's point of view is that Sir Walter is unable both to live in his accustomed extravagant style and to act like a man of principle. The narrator tells us early on that Lady Russell harbors "two leading principles" which are in opposition:

She was of strict integrity herself, with a delicate sense of honour; but she was as desirous of saving Sir Walter's feelings, as solicitous for the credit of the family, as aristocratic in her ideas of what was due to them, as any body of sense and honesty could well be (11).

As "the widow of only a knight, she gave the dignity of a baronet all its due" (11).²

The conflict between Lady Russell's two leading principles is not resolvable. As long as she continues to embrace Sir Walter's

own conception of his rank, to conceive of it, that is, in terms of what is due to him, her aristocratic ideas are irreconcilably at odds with her feelings about what is "due to the character of an honest man." Her "prejudices on the side of ancestry" put her in Sir Walter's camp because they compromise her otherwise strict sense of integrity.

Persuasion offers a second social group somewhat more amenable to Anne's opinions and personality than the Kellynch group. Sir Walter's youngest daughter, Mary, has married into a nearby family of landed though untitled gentry. The warmth and affection of the Musgroves for one another, their relative lack of rank-consciousness, and their comparatively active and varied lives are qualities which contrast pointedly with those seen at Kellynch, but Uppercross falls short of the standards which would make it worthy of Anne. And, as Anne is the embodiment of the novel's standards, it is apparent that Uppercross does not qualify as the heroic society of this comedy.

Mary brings all of the vanity, status-consciousness, and false dignity of Kellynch to Uppercross. She complains to Anne that her mother-in-law often failed "to give her the precedence that was her due [as the daughter of Sir Walter], when they dined at the Great House with other families" (46). For their part, the Musgroves share Anne's unconcern for the privileges of rank. In a conversation with Louisa and Henrietta, one of them observes to Anne:

"I have no scruple of observing to you, how nonsensical some persons are about their place, because, all the world knows how easy and indifferent you are about it: but I

wish any body could give Mary a hint that it would be a great deal better if she were not so very tenacious; especially, if she would not be always putting herself forward to take place of mamma. Nobody doubts her right to have precedence of mamma, but it would be more becoming in her not to be always insisting on it. It is not that mamma cares about it the least in the world, but I know it is taken notice of by many persons" (46).

The Musgroves' relative unconcern for rank is displayed again in their acceptance of Charles Hayter as a suitable match for Henrietta, in contrast to Mary's objections to the proposed marriage.³

The Musgroves also differ from Sir Walter and Elizabeth in their esteem for Anne. Whereas at Kellynch Anne's "word had no weight," at Uppercross she is appealed to in disputes between Mary and her husband, Mary and her mother-in-law, and Mary and her sisters-in-law. Anne finds this particular recognition of her judgment one of "the least agreeable circumstances of her residence there" (44), but it is evidence of the esteem in which she is held, and inasmuch as Lady Russell's consultation of Anne at Kellynch was presented with approval, the reader is not inclined to be too disapproving of the same activity among the Uppercross characters.

The most striking difference between Kellynch and Uppercross is less one of the opinions of the respective residents than of the moods that attach to each place. To put it briefly, the mood of exuberance, bustle, and even turmoil which is exhibited at Uppercross is in pointed and deliberate contrast to the mood of sterility and indolence at Kellynch.

Mary, as the embodiment of Kellynch in residence at Uppercross, is first pictured in the novel lying on the sofa, exhausted by

the activity of her two children. It is a characteristic quite consistent with the picture already provided of life at Kellynch. Never in the first three chapters of the novel, which are concerned exclusively with the characters of Kellynch, do we see any of them engaged in any activity but conversation; the one exception is the picture of Sir Walter contemplating the Baronetage. Kellynch is a society grown stagnant by its attachment to meaningless symbols and ceremony. It is a society which resents exertion. Sir Walter and Elizabeth feel themselves "ill-used and unfortunate" (10) in their financial difficulties, but the suggestions of Anne and Lady Russell that they take action against their indebtedness are met with immediate rejection. It is easier for them to flee to Bath than to undertake more stringent measures.

Another instance of the disdain for action at Kellynch is Sir Walter's dislike of the naval profession because it is a "means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction" (19); it is precisely by their own exertion that men are able to raise themselves, and Sir Walter resents it.

Anne, of course, does not share her family's resentment of the need for exertion, as her plans for their retrenchment make clear. Indeed, one of the reasons she now thinks she was ill-advised to end her engagement to the then penniless Frederick Wentworth is that such a decision seemed "to insult exertion" (30). The contrast between the Kellynch indolence and Anne's own activity is presented tellingly in the first scene at Uppercross. While the hypochondriac Mary lies on the sofa, exhausted from the

activity of her two boys, Anne responds to her query about what she can "'possibly have to do'":

"I have been making a duplicate of the catalogue of my father's books and pictures. I have been several times in the garden with Mackenzie, trying to understand, and make him understand, which of Elizabeth's plants are for Lady Russell. I have had all my own concerns to arrange--books and music to divide, and all my trunks to repack, from not having understood in time what was intended as to the wag-gons. And one thing I have had to do, Mary, of a more trying nature; going to almost every house in the parish, as a sort of take-leave. I was told that they wished it" (38-39).

With Anne's sentiments clearly on the side of activity against indolence, and with the resentment of the need for exertion one of the carefully delineated characteristics of the absurd society, the bustle of Uppercross seems clearly intended as one of its virtues.

The activity at Uppercross centers around Mary's sisters-in-law, Henrietta and Louisa, "young ladies of nineteen and twenty, who had brought from a school at Exeter all the usual stock of accomplishments, and were now, like thousands of other young ladies, living to be fashionable, happy, and merry" (40). Henrietta and Louisa illustrate a characteristic of Uppercross about which Anne is especially sensitive: their affection for one another. However shallow Henrietta and Louisa's enjoyments appear to Anne, she cannot observe their warmth and consideration for each other without some regret.

Another of the more pointed contrasts between the Uppercross and Kellynch societies is the popularity of the Musgroves in their neighborhood:

The neighbourhood was not large, but the Musgroves were visited by every body, and had more dinner parties, and more callers, more visitors by invitation and by chance, than any other family. They were more completely popular (47).

Their popularity seems an extension of their zest. This robustness expresses itself in Charles Musgrove's love of hunting, and in the long walks the girls seem to enjoy, such as the eventful walk from Uppercross to Winthrop, with Anne and Wentworth in attendance.

The families at Uppercross, then, present many social characteristics opposite to those found at Kellynch. The Musgroves disdain rank consciousness, exhibit liveliness and exertion, maintain some affection for one another, and hold Anne and the naval profession in high esteem. Uppercross would, on these grounds, seem to do quite nicely for the heroic society with which comedy characteristically supplants the absurd society.

The fact is that Anne had once had the opportunity to marry into the Uppercross family. Before Charles married Mary he had first proposed to Anne. Louisa tells Captain Wentworth on the walk to Winthrop that the family would have preferred Anne, but that she refused. The Musgroves assume, erroneously, that Lady Russell had persuaded Anne against marrying Charles because he "'might not be learned and bookish enough to please Lady Russell'" (89). In fact, "Lady Russell had lamented her refusal" (28). The reason for Anne's refusal was simply that Charles didn't measure up in her mind to the standard of excellence she had found in Wentworth. When Anne visits Uppercross, there is no discomfort on her part in the knowledge that she could have occupied the social position now flaunted by her



younger sister: Charles was not possessed "of powers, or conversation, or grace, to make the past, as they were connected together, at all a dangerous contemplation" (43).

Just as Anne is later presented with the opportunity to repeat her mother's role as the stabilizing influence and the possessor of values in the Kellynch society by marrying her cousin and becoming Lady Elliot, she also has had the opportunity to act the role of a stabilizing force and bringer of values in the Uppercross society. Anne and Lady Russell agree that Charles (and Uppercross) would have benefited by his marrying someone more like Anne instead of Mary: "a more equal match might have greatly improved him; . . . a woman of real understanding might have given more consequence to his character, and more usefulness, rationality, and elegance to his habits and pursuits" (43). But Anne rejected that opportunity, too. She, of course, was not in love with Charles, but the significant point is that he is not worthy of Anne. While his character may have been improved by marriage to Anne, by himself, "he did nothing with much zeal, but sport; and his time was otherwise trifled away, without benefit of books, or anything else" (43). All of the benefit of the marriage would have been his, except in the fact that it would have insured social and financial security for Anne. Charles's marriage to Mary, so much Anne's inferior, a year after Anne's rejection of him demonstrates his lack of appreciation of Anne's real value.

Like Charles, the rest of the Uppercross society, however much of an improvement it represents over Kellynch, is unequal to

the qualities Anne embodies. The liveliness of Uppercross manifests itself in Charles in a love for hunting, and in his sisters in a desire to be "fashionable, happy, and merry." It can be said of all of the characters of Uppercross, as it is said of Charles, that they lack "usefulness, rationality, and elegance" in their "pursuits and habits." It is the channeling of energy into usefulness, among other things, which distinguishes the naval characters from those of both Kellynch and Uppercross, and it is the need to be useful which is one of Anne's most characteristic traits.

Uppercross, then, will not serve as the heroic society of this comedy. It is only in the naval characters that all of the virtues of Uppercross are combined with a strong sense of duty and a genuine dignity. Those qualities are exhibited, along with other domestic virtues, in Captain Wentworth, in Admiral and Mrs. Croft, and in the naval characters met with at Lyme Regis.

Sir Walter is induced to let Kellynch-hall to the Crofts because, although "not very wise . . . still he had enough experience of the world" to know that an "admiral speaks his own consequence" (24). Anne identifies Admiral Croft as a "'rear admiral of the white [who] was in the Trafalgar action, and has been in the East Indies since'" (21-22). Her information serves to create an impression of naval officers as people worthy of honor and distinction,⁴ in contrast with Sir Walter's society. The very first time Anne is made to speak it is to defend the right of the naval officers to whatever comforts they can get:

"The navy, I think, who have done so much for us, have at least an equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the privileges which any home can give. Sailors work hard enough for their comforts, we must all allow" (19).

From the very early chapters, then, by Anne's warm defense of the rights of sailors to live at Kellynch, by the reference to the strategic importance of the navy in the recent war with France, by the snobbish attitude displayed against the navy by the absurd characters such as Mrs. Clay, and even by Sir Walter's grudging admission that an "admiral speaks his own consequence," the navy and the naval characters to be met with later in the novel are cast in a highly favorable light.

It is Sophia Croft, Wentworth's sister, who first displays some of the qualities which belong uniquely to the naval characters, qualities which set the naval society apart not only from Kellynch but from Uppercross, as well. Interestingly, she exhibits one of these characteristics by objecting to her brother's overly-protective, patronizing attitude toward the idea of women aboard ship. Whereas he would permit women aboard only for visits on the grounds of "rating the claims of women to every personal comfort high," Sophia objects that "'Women may be as comfortable on board, as in the best house in England'" (69).

There are two qualities evinced here which are not to be found among the women of Kellynch or Uppercross. First, Sophia's insistence upon the comforts of ship life is not so much a claim that a ship really is as luxurious as a country estate, but that women do not require such luxuries for their comfort and happiness.

She says to Wentworth, "'I hate to hear you talking so, like a fine gentleman, as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures'" (70). Kellynch and Uppercross have "fine ladies" enough. Even Henrietta and Louisa display more than a little demand for luxurious living in their protestations to their father: "'I hope we shall be in Bath in winter; but remember, papa, if we do go we must be in a good situation--none of your Queen-squares for us!'" (42).

The other trait exhibited by Sophia Croft is the warm and close relationship she has with her husband. In the marital relationships shown or talked of elsewhere in the novel, there is nothing to suggest warm attachment or even much of mutual interest between husband and wife. But Sophia Croft wants above all to be with her husband, and she says so to Mrs. Musgrove. Her attitude manifests itself not only in her being often aboard ship with him, but also in her sitting contentedly at his side as he careens around the countryside in their gig. In contrast to the picture presented at Uppercross of the men engaged with game and newspapers and the "females" occupied with "house-keeping, neighbours, dress, dancing, and music" (42-43), the narrator paints this picture of the Crofts in residence at Kellynch:

Admiral and Mrs. Croft were generally out of doors together, interesting themselves in their new possessions, their grass, and their sheep, and dawdling about in a way not endurable to a third person, or driving about in a gig, lately added to their establishment (73).

It is to be assumed, of course, that Anne's marriage to Captain Wentworth will emulate the Crofts' rather than the Musgroves' or the Elliots'.

Sophia Croft, then, especially in her relationship with her husband, embodies some of the qualities which belong peculiarly to the naval society. That these qualities are indigenous to the naval society and not peculiar to Sophia is demonstrated in the repetition of some of those qualities in the naval characters met with at Lyme Regis.

The immediate affinity that develops between Anne and the Harvilles is another proof of the superiority of the naval group to the other societies in Persuasion. The first and most striking quality of the Harvilles is their genuine and unreserved hospitality towards Captain Wentworth's friends. Anne is impressed by the "bewitching charm in a degree of hospitality so uncommon, so unlike the usual style of give-and-take invitations, and dinners of formality and display . . ." (98). The Harvilles are "almost hurt that Captain Wentworth should have brought any such party to Lyme, without considering it as a thing of course that they should dine with them" (98).⁵

Not only do the Harvilles display genuine hospitality, but they are totally without pretentiousness or vanity. They feel no dignity threatened in accommodating and entertaining the Upperclass party in their tiny rooms at Lyme. Anne is struck by the way in which Captain Harville has decorated his home with souvenirs of his travels and articles he has fashioned by hand.

All of the virtues of the Harvilles come together in their response to Louisa's accident. Captain Harville repeats the cool-headedness displayed by Anne in his immediate decisions about what was to be done:

Shocked as Captain Harville was, he brought senses and nerves that could be instantly useful; and a look between him and his wife decided what was to be done. She must be taken to their house--all must go to their house--and wait the surgeon's arrival there (112).

For all that the Harvilles, and Captain Benwick and Admiral and Sophia Croft contribute to the characterization of the naval society, their roles are that of a supporting cast to the principle embodiment of heroic virtues, Captain Wentworth. He shares with Admiral Croft and Captains Harville and Benwick the distinction which has been ascribed to the navy in general by virtue of their actions in the war with France. But he likewise embodies some virtues which are not otherwise emphasized by the naval characters, but which nevertheless contribute to the general characterization of the naval society by the fact of his possession of them. The most noteworthy of these virtues is the compassion he exhibits towards Mrs. Musgrove in her grief over her lost son, Richard.

While at sea, Dick Musgrove had been assigned for a brief time to Wentworth's ship, the Laconia, and under his influence had written home "the only two disinterested letters" (51) he had ever written. Mrs. Musgrove muses to Anne at one point that her son, had he lived, would have turned out to be "just such another" as Wentworth, a thought to which Anne listens kindly, but which forces her to suppress a smile. When Mrs. Musgrove expresses to Wentworth her



wish that her son had never left his ship, Anne is certain she detects on Wentworth's face evidence "that instead of sharing in Mrs. Musgrove's kind wishes, as to her son, he had probably been at some pains to get rid of him" (67). But just as Anne listened kindly to Mrs. Musgrove and suppressed a smile, Captain Wentworth commiserates with her "with so much sympathy and natural grace, as shewed the kindest consideration for all that was real and unabsurd in the parent's feelings" (67-68). The whole purpose of introducing the late Dick Musgrove at all seems to be that it illustrates the very admirable quality in Captain Wentworth: his discernment of genuine feeling beneath Mrs. Musgrove's sentimentalization of her son.⁶

The naval society is understood as the sum of its characters. The Crofts contribute an impression of lively activity, self-sufficiency, and a robust affection for each other, with little regard for customary notions of sexual roles. The Harvilles exhibit warm hospitality and an ability to adjust to their circumstances without longing after material symbols of status and wealth. Captain Benwick evinces a perhaps exaggerated sensibility, but nonetheless a contemplative nature which is akin to Anne's, and he shares with her a love of reading. Captain Wentworth shows, among other things, an impulse of compassion towards people vulnerable to ridicule. All of the naval characters share a disdain for rank-consciousness, affection for one another, esteem for Anne, and above all a strong value for usefulness which manifests itself in their commitment to duty. The need to be engaged in purposeful activity is perhaps the single most important trait which separates the naval

society from the otherwise generally admired characters at Upper-cross. Their sense of duty, their warmth and spontaneity attract Anne to the society of sailors.

From the beginning of the novel, each character is measured in part in terms of his sense of duty and commitment to usefulness. Lady Elliot, Anne's mother, once she recognized the folly of her marriage to Sir Walter,

had humoured, or softened, or concealed his failings, and promoted his real respectability for seventeen years; and though not the very happiest being in the world herself, had found enough in her duties, her friends, and her children, to attach her to life, and make it no matter of indifference to her when she was called on to quit them (4).

This brief account of Lady Elliot's life sounds a theme which is to be repeated elsewhere in the book. What is noteworthy in the passage is the value attached to Lady Elliot's sense of duty, not only in spite of the disappointment of her marriage, but to some extent as a kind of narcotic to detach herself from the pain of that disappointment. The novel does not provide much in the way of details of how Lady Elliot's sense of duty manifested itself in her actions, but from the information that while "Lady Elliot lived, there had been method, moderation, and economy, which had just kept [Sir Walter] within his income" (9), it is possible to conclude that, like Anne and Lady Russell, she had been kept busy devising schemes to balance the claims of Sir Walter's vanity against the family's resources. Anne's other activities, especially those connected with their departure from Kellynch, provide a clue as to the kind of duties that Lady Elliot must have busied herself with.

Elsewhere in the novel are other examples of usefulness and dutifulness as a defense against emotional pain. Captain Harville illustrates in the face of his ill health and modest accommodations a determination to make the best of his situation:

His lameness prevented him from taking much exercise; but a mind of usefulness and ingenuity seemed to furnish him with constant employment within. He drew, he varnished, he carpentered, he glued; he made toys for the children, he fashioned new netting-needles and pins with improvements; and if every thing else was done, sat down to his large fishing-net at one corner of the room (99).

Harville's refusal to submit to his misfortunes, and the genuineness of his hospitality endear him to Anne. He shares with Anne the determination to live a useful life, and the ability to distinguish real pleasures in life from artificial ones. He lives, although perhaps not without regret, without bitterness.

The introduction of Mrs. Smith in Volume II of Persuasion is patently a device for providing material with which to round out the plot. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Mrs. Smith must be established as a sympathetic character if her gossip about Mr. Elliot is to be received by Anne and the reader as anything more than the self-serving character assassination it certainly is. One of the ways in which the narrator attempts to create sympathy for Mrs. Smith is by insisting upon her affection for Anne. But more important (and more to my point) is that Mrs. Smith is portrayed as exhibiting some of the same virtues glorified in the characterization of Captain Harville.

Like Harville, Mrs. Smith suffers from a physical disability; she "had been afflicted with a severe rheumatic fever, which finally

settling in her legs, had made her for the present a cripple" (152). In addition, she is impoverished, widowed, and friendless. Yet her circumstances cause only occasional melancholy in her. She resembles Captain Harville not only in this respect, but in her determination to remain active and useful. While at Bath, Mrs. Smith occupies her time with more than just the gossip her nurse provides. In speaking of Mrs. Rooke to Anne, Mrs. Smith says,

"besides nursing me most admirably, [she] has really proved an invaluable acquaintance.--As soon as I could use my hands, she taught me to knit, which has been a great amusement; and she put me in the way of making these little thread-cases, pin-cushions and card racks, which you always find me so busy about, and which supply me the means of doing a little good to one or two very poor families in this neighbourhood. She has a large acquaintance, of course professionally, among those who can afford to buy, and she disposes of my merchandize" (155).

Unlike Lady Russell, who must first admit her misjudgments before she can be admitted to the triumphant society, Mrs. Smith has had the right virtues all along. Certainly, her timely revelations about Mr. Elliot, what the narrator calls her "recent good offices by Anne" (251), are partly responsible for her being included in the emerging society; but she has a character of her own, traits which identify her with the sympathetically drawn sea characters, with Anne's mother, and with Anne herself.

The importance of usefulness is not only in its capacity to carry one out of one's self, to adapt Anne's phrase about Mrs. Smith.⁷ It is the recognition of duty, the determination to be useful which confers genuine dignity. As had been noted, it is in its sense of duty that the naval society differs most markedly from the

otherwise genial, hospitable society at Uppercross, and which identifies the naval society as the preferred society of this comedy.

The Elliots of Kellynch have a sense of dignity which is conscious only of what is owed to them, never of what is required of them. Thus, Mary Musgrove bristles at her mother-in-law's failure to give place, and Sir Walter and Elizabeth blithely sacrifice residence at Kellynch in order to preserve the appearance of luxury at Bath. When she visits them in their chambers at Bath, Anne is not surprised but dismayed that they find so much to be proud of:

She might not wonder, but she must sigh that her father should feel no degradation in his change; should see nothing to regret in the duties and dignity of the resident land-holder; should find so much to be vain of in the littleness of a town; . . . (138).

At Kellynch, whatever real dignity belonged to the Elliots had been preserved first by Lady Elliot, then by Anne. And it was in their attendance to the duties associated with being the "resident land-holder" that the dignity was maintained.

Not surprisingly, when the Crofts take possession of Kellynch-hall, they are more scrupulous in attending to the duties associated with residence there than were the real owners. Anne

considered her father so very fortunate in his tenants, felt the parish to be so sure of a good example, and the poor of the best attention and relief, that however sorry and ashamed for the necessity of the removal, she could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-hall had passed into better hands than its owners' (125).

Of course, it has been Anne all along who has set the standard of dutifulness required of land-holders, as her account to Mary of her leave-taking activities makes clear.

By the end of Volume I, the characteristics of each of the three societies in the novel have been drawn clearly. From the perspective of Frye's observation that the typical movement of comedy is from an absurd society to a heroic one, Volume I of Persuasion is devoted to characterizing the competing societies (three in this case); Volume II is concerned with seeing how the good society becomes triumphant. The point here is that the thematic interests inherent in the comic structure of Persuasion are largely those connected with the conflict between the society of Sir Walter and the society of sailors. The characteristics of those societies are developed in Volume I; in Volume II those societies, and the characters from Uppercross as well, are transplanted to Bath where the comic resolution to the conflict is worked out. In Volume I the naval society is shown to be the one most worthy of Anne because the characters of that society display virtues which are glorified in the character of Anne, and because the naval characters know best how to value Anne's virtues. Volume II depicts the unfolding of events by which Anne, as the embodiment of virtue and the symbol of renewal, is joined to the naval society, in which resides the virtues which qualify it for perpetuation. The naval profession, the narrator says, "is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance" (252).

The Moral Impulse

The conflict between societies in Persuasion, which Mudrick identifies as "the central opposition in the novel" (Mudrick, p. 231),

is the central opposition of comedy. The social themes inherent in the novel's comic structure are based upon rather simplistically drawn characterizations of the competing societies, too obviously dependent on caricature to be taken seriously as the basis for a consideration of genuine moral issues. Nonetheless, the novel does concern itself with some complex and subtle moral questions. These moral issues are resolved in the final chapters of the novel coincidentally with the comic resolution of the novel and its inherent social judgments.

The endorsements and repudiations of the societies represented in Persuasion are manifested by the degree to which their respective members display qualities which are attributed to Anne (or which are admired by her), and by the degree to which she finds acceptance in each. Anne, in other words, embodies the norms of the novel.

Anne embodies the moral virtues as well as the social virtues which the novel endorses. The novel's position on the issues, and, indeed, the nature of the issues with which it is concerned, are ascertainable by what Anne thinks and says about the events of her life. The ironic narrator, although entirely reliable, has little to say about the ethical dimensions of the novel. Nonetheless, the narrator, especially in her ironic commentary about characters who represent views contrary to Anne's and in her sympathetic treatment of Anne, helps to define the moral perspective that the novel endorses. The ethical norms of the novel are further reinforced by the comic structure, i.e., by the way in which the events

are manipulated to vindicate Anne's judgments and to elicit the reader's sympathy for the characters whose triumph is celebrated in the comic conclusion.

In speaking about the ethical norms of the novel as they are indicated by the combined elements of reliable narrator, sympathetic heroine, and the novelist's structuring of incidents, it is useful to adopt Wayne Booth's concept of the implied author.⁸ For a satisfactory reading of a novel, the reader must be able to infer the moral norms from the novel itself, without reference to extraneous data. In Booth's words, the reader needs "to know where, in the world of values, he stands--that is, to know where the author wants him to stand."⁹ The concept of implied author, however, includes not only such "extractable meanings" as the moral perspective from which the action is to be viewed,

but also the moral and emotional content of each bit of action and suffering of all of the characters. It includes, in short, the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole; the chief value to which this implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that expressed by the total form.¹⁰

In sum, the "'implied author' chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices."¹¹

The central theme of the novel would seem by its title to be a consideration of the desirability of a persuadable temper. Indeed, the subject gets a good deal of attention in Volume I of the novel. The narrator introduces this apparent theme when summarizing Anne's

earlier engagement to Wentworth. Lady Russell, "who had almost a mother's love, and mother's rights" (27), persuaded Anne to dissolve the engagement. After Wentworth returns to Anne's life, the narrator resumes her role as the reliable observer with limited omniscience to establish that after eight years he had not forgiven Anne, and that he regarded her breaking of their engagement as "the effect of over-persuasion. It had been weakness and timidity" (61). With his attitude towards Anne thus firmly established, his expressions to Louisa on the walk to Winthrop are not only consistent, but they serve to develop the theme that has been emerging about the value of a persuadable temper. Emboldened by Wentworth's reception of her expression of approval for Sophia Croft's determination to be always with her husband no matter the risk, Louisa says to Wentworth of her insistence that Henrietta visit the Hayters as planned:

"And so, I made her go. . . . What!--would I be turned back from doing a thing that I had determined to do, and that I knew to be right . . . ? No,--I have no idea of being so easily persuaded. When I have made up my mind, I have made it" (87).

Wentworth expresses delight in Louisa's determination ("let those who would be happy be firm" [88]), and with this encouragement Louisa makes her nearly fatal second jump from the Cobb. After Louisa's fall, Anne, who has overheard the conversation near Winthrop, and who has not missed the fact that she is the point of comparison in Wentworth's mind as he praised Louisa, wonders what his opinion is now: "whether it might not strike him, that, like all other qualities of the mind, it should have its proportions and limits" (116).

Few can be in doubt that Wentworth has indeed seen the error of his opinion. Anne has the pleasure at the end of the story of hearing Wentworth confess as much to her. He says that at Lyme "he had learnt to distinguish between the steadiness of principle and the obstinacy of self-will, between the darings of heedlessness and the resolution of a collected mind" (242).

The "problem," then, of which sort of temperament is more "in favour of happiness" is apparently solved by the end of Volume I, although Anne must wait awhile to hear Wentworth confess his misjudgment on the subject. Insofar as there is any conflict at all, the resolution of it is clearly Anne's conclusion that qualities of the mind should have "proportions and limits," and that neither a persuadable temper nor a resolute character can be relied upon as invariable desirable attributes in all circumstances.

The real moral concern which the action and the rhetoric of the novel confront is not whether a persuadable temper is superior to a resolute character.¹² The larger question which engages the moral faculties of both Anne and the implied author is much more subtle and complicated than Wentworth's reduction of it to a question of temperament. The essential focus of the implied author's moral interest in the novel is on the importance of a sense of duty as a guide to individual action, and upon a commitment to duty as a prerequisite to moral authority in society. The moral interest is not developed by having the heroine or the narrator resolve dilemmas. Anne insists from first to last on the correctness of her judgment, given the circumstances under which it was made, and her judgment is

affirmed by the novel. From the point of view of the moral interest of the novel the action serves not to resolve a moral dilemma which exists in Anne's mind but to vindicate Anne's judgment in the eyes of the characters whose judgment matters, primarily Wentworth, and thereby to recommend her value system to readers.

Kenneth Moler has shown how the question of a child's duty regarding the wishes of his parents as to a marriage partner was one that engaged a number of Jane Austen's predecessors and contemporaries.¹³ Even without considering the historical background of the moral questions with which Persuasion concerns itself, it is possible to examine the ways in which the characters, the action, and the rhetoric of the novel are related to this central moral interest.

In recounting the events of the earlier engagement and Anne's present perspective on those events, the narrator carefully distinguishes between the quality of Lady Russell's advice and the propriety of Anne's having taken it. Even Anne believes Lady Russell was wrong to advise her to break the engagement, wrong because her advice was based on excessive prudence and snobbish regard for Anne's social position, and wrong because she had not considered Anne's feelings for Wentworth:

Anne, at seven and twenty, thought very differently from what she had been made to think at nineteen.--She did not blame Lady Russell, she did not blame herself for having been guided by her; but she felt that were any young person, in similar circumstances, to apply to her for counsel, they would never receive any of such certain immediate wretchedness, such uncertain future good.--She was persuaded that under every disadvantage of disapprobation at home, and every anxiety attending his profession, all their probable fears, delays and disappointments, she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the

engagement, than she had been in the sacrifice of it; and this, she fully believed, had the usual share, had even more than a usual share of all such solitudes and suspense been theirs, without reference to the actual results of their case, which, as it happened, would have bestowed earlier prosperity than could be reasonably calculated on.

· · · · ·
 How eloquent could Anne Elliot have been,--how eloquent, at least, were her wishes on the side of early warm attachment, and a cheerful confidence in futurity, against that over-anxious caution which seems to insult exertion and distrust Providence!--She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older --the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning (29-30).

That passage has nothing of the ironic narrator in it: it is a direct statement of Anne's own thoughts on the subject of prudence versus romance, and her own misery that resulted from her having been misguided on the subject. Several critics have noted that Anne is unlike Emma Woodhouse or Elizabeth Bennet in that she is not made to undergo a revaluation of her opinions. But insofar as her value for prudence in the face of "early warm attachment, and a cheerful confidence in futurity" is concerned, she certainly has undergone a change of opinion, albeit that the change has taken place before the novel begins.

Lady Russell's reasons for persuading Anne against Wentworth were all prudential. She worried about Wentworth's lack of money and social position, the danger of his profession, and his "sanguine temper, and fearlessness of mind" (27), which she considered evidence of a dangerous character. To these reasons Anne added her own prudential reasons for breaking the engagement:

But it was not merely a selfish caution, under which she acted, in putting an end to it. Had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than her own, she

could hardly have given him up.--The belief of being prudent, and self-denying principally for his advantage, was her chief consolation, under the misery of a parting--a final parting . . . (27-28).

Once again there is no evidence of distance between Anne's views and those of the implied author, even though Anne has repudiated her faith in prudence as an exclusive guide to decision making by the time Wentworth returns into her life. Interestingly, we are never told just what advantage Wentworth was to derive from Anne's "being prudent, and self-denying principally for his advantage," nor does the narrator explain why Anne felt no necessity to consult Wentworth about which of her actions might be for his own good, although, to be fair, the advantages of an ambitious naval officer's not being encumbered by a wife and perhaps a family are fairly obvious.

There is more than a little irony in the prudence vs. romance issue. Anne never goes so far as to reject prudential values categorically, and the novel clearly repudiates imprudence. Lady Elliot's ill-considered marriage to Sir Walter, Captain Wentworth's thoughtless dalliance with Louisa, and Mrs. Smith's husband's entrusting his fortune to William Elliot are all imprudent actions that have dire consequences. Even Mrs. Croft, that personification of the romantic naval values, agrees with Mrs. Musgrove at the end of the novel that "To begin without knowing that at such a time there will be the means of marrying, I hold to be very unsafe and unwise, and what, I think, all parents should prevent as far as they can" (231). The implied author's position seems to be that neither "over-anxious caution" nor unrestrained romanticism insures

happiness, but that a certain openness to risk taking is acceptable if the risks are understood and the love is real. Anne was forced into prudential behavior and later learned to value the romantic point of view, and the narrator tells us that such a process is the natural conclusion to an unnatural beginning. The implied corollary is that the natural conclusion to a natural beginning is for young people to learn the value of prudence as a consequence of what they suffer for having acted on romantic values. Lady Elliot's life (and, perhaps, Mrs. Smith's) illustrates just such a process. Neither prudential nor romantic values guarantee happiness, but Anne's conviction that even had Lady Russell's prudential cautions been justified she would have been happier had she continued the engagement is as close as the novel comes to resolving this ironic dilemma.

Prudence versus cheerful confidence in futurity, however, is no more the question at issue than are the relative merits of persuadable and resolute tempers. Both of these matters are settled long before the novel winds toward its conclusion. Anne thinks "very differently from what she had been made to think at nineteen," and there is never the slightest doubt that the implied author concurs.

In a word, Lady Russell's advice was wrong. But did Anne make a mistake in heeding Lady Russell's wrong advice? Lady Russell's advice was based on prudence, and Anne's rationalization that she was "being prudent, and self-denying principally for his advantage," specifically evokes prudence as sufficient cause for her action. Eight years later, Anne has repudiated prudence as a sufficient motive for ending a genuine romance, and the implied author endorses

that repudiation. It would seem to follow, then, that Anne should not have allowed herself to be persuaded by Lady Russell. Yet Anne "did not blame Lady Russell, she did not blame herself for having been guided by her." Anne's refusal to fault herself for following bad advice while at the same time repudiating the rationale which prompted that advice appears to embody a contradiction not only in Anne's character but in the moral perspective of the implied author.

The issue of the propriety of Anne's submitting to Lady Russell's advice is not raised again in the abstract until after her reconciliation with Wentworth. There, Anne again insists upon the distinction between the advice itself and her having taken it:

"Do not mistake me, however. I am not saying that she did not err in her advice. It was, perhaps, one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides; and for myself, I certainly never should in any circumstance of tolerable similarity, give such advice" (246).

Indeed, Captain Harville's reduced circumstances and injury point to events which could have made Lady Russell's advice seem better than the actual events have shown it to be. But Anne had said to Wentworth that afternoon, "'If I was wrong in yielding to persuasion once, remember that it was to persuasion exerted on the side of safety, not of risk'" (244). This marks the only occasion when she seems to allow the possibility of her having been at fault. That evening she takes it back:

"I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of the right and wrong, I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being

guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. To me, she was in the place of a parent . . . and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion" (246).

Anne's refusal to blame herself for taking bad advice, then, does not embody any contradiction because that refusal is not based upon a belief in prudence as a guide to conduct, but upon a sense of duty that is owed to a parent, or in this case, a woman who is in the place of a parent.¹⁴ The very factor which distinguishes the naval society as worthy of the comic triumph which the action of the novel moves to bestow on it is invoked by Anne herself as justification for her having submitted to Lady Russell's persuasion.¹⁵

Anne's highly developed sense of duty is one of the most consistently insisted upon aspects of her character throughout the novel. As we have seen, her admiration for the navy and the naval characters stems in part from her recognition of the importance of duty in their lives and the distinction which their having acted out of duty has brought to them. Additionally, Anne's own conduct is often guided by her sense of the duty attached to the social position of her family. It is Anne's sense of duty which prompts her to urge her father to clear his debts, and it is out of that sense of duty that she takes upon herself the responsibility to visit the houses in the parish before the Elliots vacate Kellynch-hall. Indeed, from the very first, Anne has been described as "glad to have any thing marked out as a duty" (33), and among such duties has been her sense of responsibility towards Mary and especially towards Mary's sons.

Anne's sense of duty is particularly apparent in her relationship with her father. In the face of all his enormous vanity, his lack of affection for her, and his contempt for her finer sensibilities, Anne insists upon a show of respect towards him, to which she feels he is entitled by the very fact of his being her father. For example, when Sir Walter castigates Anne for associating with the undistinguished Mrs. Smith, when she might be spending time attending to Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret:

Anne could have said much and did long to say a little, in defence of her friend's not very dissimilar claims to theirs [Mrs. Clay], but her sense of personal respect to her father prevented her (158).

Thus Anne's appeal to dutifulness as the justification for her having heeded Lady Russell's advice is consistent with her characterization elsewhere in the novel. From Anne's point of view, her action was justified not because it was prudent, not because she was of a persuadable temper, but because at nineteen she owed to Lady Russell a duty as strong as that which is owed to a parent.

The soundness of Lady Russell's judgment (always excepting her "prejudices on the side of ancestry") and the similarity of her opinions to Anne's, as in the matter of the necessity for Sir Walter's retrenchment, are conspicuous aspects of her characterization. But even more significant than her usually sound judgment and her stepmother-like relationship to Anne is the genuine affection that exists between the two women. Since the death of Anne's mother, Lady Russell was the only character before Wentworth to show Anne affection or know how to value her properly. The clear intention of

the novel's repeated insistence on Lady Russell's devotion to Anne is to justify Anne's sense of duty towards her. After Lady Russell has been made the scapegoat of the comedy, having "to admit that she had been pretty completely wrong, and to take up a new set of opinions," the narrator steps in to qualify this harsh judgment by asserting that Lady Russell was "a very good woman, and if her second object was to be sensible and well-judging, her first was to see Anne happy. She loved Anne better than she loved her own abilities . . ." (249). Thus Lady Russell is purged of what the novel finds faulty in her character and redeemed because of what it holds up for admiration.

Persuasion's exploration of the requirements of duty upon the individual is complicated by its apparent endorsement of a system of values which also prizes love as a principle upon which action may be based. In many of the oppositions in the novel, the values being opposed constitute a dichotomy, with only one element of that dichotomy consistent with the norms informing the novel. Thus Sir Walter's rank consciousness is opposed to the sailors' lack of it, and the novel endorses the sailors. In other oppositions the novel contrasts two traits and leaves Anne to conclude that excessive allegiance to either is an evil, and that what is required is a mixture of both. Thus Wentworth's contrasting of Louisa's "firmness of character" with Anne's apparent persuadability is resolved at the Cobb when Anne wonders if Wentworth might now realize that "all qualities of the mind" have their "proportions and limits."

The opposition between love and duty is not like either of these conflicts, however. The novel appears to affirm both qualities and the value systems attending to each. Anne's rejections of the offers of marriage from both Charles Musgrove and William Elliot were based upon her allegiance to the idea of love as a prerequisite to marriage. All of the happy marriages in Persuasion have in common that they were love matches.

The sailors entitle themselves to social triumph by virtue of their dutifulness, but it is also true that they display or express allegiance to a system of values which seems to esteem most highly action which is motivated by love. Thus Sophia Croft is embarrassed but not penitent about the short duration of her courtship with the Admiral. Captain Benwick's romantic melancholia at the loss of Fanny Harville is exaggerated and somewhat comical, but all of the heroic characters, including Anne, are sympathetic with his feelings and both Wentworth and Harville are dismayed that he recovers from his grief so quickly. His story seems intended as an illustration of the dangers of postponing a love match, and thus provides a variation in microcosm of Anne's own lost love, although his loss of Fanny Harville is, of course, permanent. When the announcement comes that he and Louisa Musgrove plan to marry, Anne speaks with approval her conviction that "they had fallen in love over poetry" (167).

The famous debate in Bath between Anne and Captain Harville about the relative constancy of men and women depends upon a shared but unarticulated premise that constancy is evidence of commitment



to a value system which prizes love, and that such a value system is an appropriate one to inspire action. One of the implications of such a value system is that it allows action which is justifiable emotionally rather than rationally. Thus Anne says to Harville that women do not forget men as easily as men do women: "'It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves'" (232). Anne, of course, speaks out of her own experience, her eight years of suffering being testimony to her own constancy. The point is that each party in the debate insists that his sex is more capable of acting in a manner consistent with a commitment to love.

It is in the context of this love-centered value system that Captain Wentworth's resentment of Anne is to be understood. A genuine commitment to that value system on Anne's part, he reasons, would have given her more firmness in resisting Lady Russell's persuasions.

The apparent dilemma, then, is that while Anne claims to have "learned romance as she grew older," she maintains at the very end that she was right in dutifully yielding to Lady Russell's prudential advice. This contradiction is irresolvable as long as love and duty are regarded as mutually exclusive value systems. However, in Persuasion they are not so regarded. The values implied by the word love and those implied by the word duty are not, finally, in opposition, but are elements in a hierarchy of values, insofar as the norms of the novel are concerned.¹⁶ Anne's having had to choose between love and duty, and her defense of her choice to Wentworth at the end of the novel, are evidence of the priority which the implied

author accords to duty. Under normal circumstances, there would be no conflict between the two elements of the novel's value system. Anne's was a special case, when, at nineteen, she still owed duty to Lady Russell and was therefore "forced into prudence." Later, when she was a few years older and Lady Russell's prudence was shown to be unfounded, she would have been free to marry Wentworth had he asked. When, after their reconciliation, Wentworth asks Anne if she would have married him, "'when I returned to England in the year eight, with a few thousand pounds,'" she replies with an enthusiastic "'Would I!'" (247).

Wentworth imagines Anne's decision to have been between love and prudence, and blames her for choosing prudence. However, Anne's dilemma was actually between love and duty, and she chose duty. Anne discovers through her suffering that Lady Russell's prudential values are inferior to Wentworth's romantic ones, but she persists in thinking (and the novel affirms) that the requirements of duty supersede those of love. Anne reprimands Wentworth for his failure to distinguish her having yielded to persuasion in the name of duty in breaking her first engagement to him and the possibility that she would yield to persuasion and marry William Elliot, a case in which neither duty nor love nor even prudence was a factor: "'In marrying a man indifferent to me, all risk would have been incurred, and all duty violated'" (244).

Interestingly, the ironic narrator is silent on the whole issue of duty, and never specifically endorses Anne's justifications of her actions.¹⁷ The attitude of the implied author, however, and

consequently the position which the novel takes towards Anne's self-justification is clearly an endorsement of Anne. One proof of this claim is, of course, the importance of duty as a characteristic of the triumphant naval society. More important is the evidence that Anne embodies the moral norms of the implied author. This is most clear in the fact that Anne articulates her convictions and her self-justification to Wentworth at the moment of her own comic triumph. The cumulative effect of the sympathetic characterization and the manipulation of events by the implied author is to give the novel's authority to Anne when she pronounces upon the moral issues of her story.

In Persuasion, duty manifests itself as a guide to social responsibility and as a guide to interpersonal relationships. As a social responsibility, duty requires the individual to subsume his personal interests to the common good, and to endure personal danger for the sake of the survival of the society. Those who accept their social duty, those who are most instrumental in the protection of society, are rewarded by the society with social distinction. In the sphere of interpersonal relationships, duty requires the individual to subsume his judgment of his own personal interests to the judgments of individuals whose social or familial position entitles them to moral authority. Those who recognize and accept moral authority become, in turn, entitled to moral authority, especially if they endure hardship and suffering for having followed duty.

Anne's moral authority is conspicuous from the beginning of the novel. It is evident in the distinctions she makes between genuine dignity and Sir Walter's vanity; it is evident in her recognition of the justice of Admiral Croft's replacing her father at Kellynch-hall; it is evident in her judgments about Lady Russell's aristocratic notions; it is evident in her admiration of Mrs. Smith's "disposition to be comforted"; and it is evident in her suspicions of William Elliot and in her rejection of his suit. Most important, however, Anne's moral authority is evident in her perspective on the events surrounding her first engagement to Wentworth. When she announces to him at the end of the novel that she was right in submitting to Lady Russell's persuasions, she is not articulating a conviction just arrived at, but one developed during the long period of "desolate tranquility" before Wentworth returns into her life. The very fact of her speaking that conviction at the moment of her comic triumph, and Wentworth's acquiescence to her reasoning, betoken the acceptance of Anne's moral authority in the new society.¹⁸

Anne has earned her triumph by virtue of the long years of loneliness and the consciousness of being misunderstood which she endured for having acted out of duty: "'I was right, much as I suffered from it.'" Her emergence as the moral authority of the novel's society has been earned by her suffering as surely as the naval society's triumph was earned in battle. Lady Russell's failure as a figure of moral authority rests upon two errors in judgment: her prejudice towards ancestry, which led her to judge both William

Elliot and Wentworth on the basis of their appearance, and her inability to balance the claims of prudence against the suffering which a too strict enforcement of those claims must cause. About Lady Russell's failure to see beneath the surface of Anne's suitors, Anne's judgment is harsh:

This however was what Lady Russell had now to do. She must learn to feel that she had been mistaken with regard to both; that she had been unfairly influenced by appearances in each; that because Captain Wentworth's manners had not suited her own ideas, she had been too quick in suspecting them to indicate a character of dangerous impetuosity; and that because Mr. Elliot's manners had precisely pleased her in their propriety and correctness, their general politeness and suavity, she had been too quick in receiving them as the certain result of the most correct opinions and well regulated mind (249).

The above passage is preceded by the statement that "Anne knew that Lady Russell must be suffering some pain" as the result of having been so much in error. That statement suggests that the judgment of Lady Russell is Anne's own, and that no interpreting narrator is required to speak for the norms of the implied author. This fact reinforces Anne's emergence as the moral authority of the novel's heroic society.

Admiral Croft replaces Sir Walter at Kellynch because his acceptance of duty has entitled him to social prominence. In the same way, Anne replaces Lady Russell as the figure of moral authority in the triumphant new society because Anne has endured the personal suffering which resulted from her having accepted duty.¹⁹

Society not only renews itself, it improves. The naval society is not only more dutiful than Sir Walter's society, it is less rigid, more nearly democratic, and it knows better how to value

individuals of genuine worth. Anne's moral authority is superior to Lady Russell's because it places less value on social position, is more rigorous in its requirements of social responsibility, and because it values the emotional side of human nature as well as the rational (i.e., prudential) side.

The comic triumph of the heroic characters is manifested in their acquisition of wealth and social prominence, and it depends upon unlikely coincidences. The moral resolution of the novel depends upon Wentworth's recognition that Anne's rejection of him was based upon sound moral principles, not upon her persuadable character.

From the perspective of the novel's thematic interests, Anne's happiness, like Mrs. Smith's, has nothing to do with wealth or social prominence. In fact, the narrator suggests, wealth may prevent happiness in lesser creatures than Mrs. Smith and Anne:

[Mrs. Smith] might have been absolutely rich and perfectly healthy, and yet be happy. Her spring of felicity was in the glow of her spirits, as her friend Anne's was in the warmth of her heart. Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth's affection. His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish that tenderness less; the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine (252).

In this final insistence upon Anne's participation in the romantic values of the sailors, the narrator reaffirms the novel's celebration of those non-prudential values. But in her reservations upon the permanence of Anne's felicity, the narrator recalls the theme

that the novel has illustrated: in the ideal society, duty supersedes even love when the two values are in conflict.

Just as the comic impulse raises and satisfies certain expectations in the reader, so too does the moral dimension of the work raise and satisfy expectations. In part, the reader's response to the work will depend upon his perception of the degree to which the action and the resolution of that action are shaped by the implied author's moral vision; and, perhaps, at another level, his response will depend upon the correspondence of that vision to his own ethical and moral convictions.

Although the moral themes are not inherent in the comic structure of Persuasion, the comic vision, which in Feibleman's words "consists in the indirect affirmation of the ideal logical order by means of the derogation of the limited orders of actuality,"²⁰ incorporates the implied author's moral vision: duty to society and duty to moral authority are the preeminent virtues of the socially and morally responsible individual. Anne's character, her words, and her actions exemplify the virtues which the novel affirms. Her story illustrates the scope of the implied author's moral vision by contrasting that vision with the dialectically opposed value system of the Kellynch society, by measuring it against the amiable but amoral Uppercross society, and by incorporating it with the virtuous sailor society, whose chief representative must re-align his own priority of values and reassess his judgment of Anne before the comic resolution can take place.



A consideration of the moral dimension of Persuasion reveals a coherence to many elements of the work which are not specifically related to its comic structure. Particularly in those scenes designed to force Wentworth's re-examination of his previous opinions of Anne, and in Anne's own expression of the moral implications of her story, the moral dimension of the work makes itself felt. Yet neither the comic structure nor the moral impulse of Persuasion can account for many of the details of the novel, especially those details concerned with the characterization of Anne herself. If Mudrick is right in observing that the interest of Persuasion "is to illustrate the plight of a sensitive woman in a society which has a measure for everything except sensitivity" (Mudrick, p. 239), then neither the comic nor the moral aspects of the work provide a sufficient context within which to consider that interest. It is rather in a consideration of the mimetic characterization of Anne Elliot for its own sake, unrelated to other impulses in the work, that the full significance of Anne's character can be analyzed, and a full appreciation of the impact of that characterization can be realized.

NOTES: CHAPTER II

¹In his discussion of comedy, James Feibleman identifies the conflict between the emerging and absurd societies as a conflict between the ideal and the actual. Comedy, he says,

"is a restorer of proportions, and signals a return from extreme adherence to actual programmes, in so far as these programmes are found to be faulty. Thus indirectly comedy voices the demand for more logical programs.

"Needless to say, this kind of ridicule does service to the ideal, to the truth of an unlimited community, an ideal society, by jesting at things which in the limited community, the current society, have come to be taken too seriously."

In Praise of Comedy: A Study of Its Theory and Practice (New York: MacMillan Co., 1939), p. 181.

Calling attention to the point of view inherent in such a structuring of events and such a juxtaposition, Feibleman notes,

"Comedy is in the fullest sense a moral principle, an ethical force. It ever reminds us that nothing thus far attained is sufficient; it laughs at actual values for their manifest limitations, which it takes great delight in pointing out; and it calls for the girding up of loins and the pressing ever forward toward fresh values and original organizations, demanding new victories and new achievements for the human race" (214-15).

²In his edition of Persuasion, Andrew Wright comments in a note that "As a baronet Sir Walter ranked below the nobility and was in fact a commoner--in effect an hereditary knight." Further, Wright notes, Lady Russell's husband's rank, that of a knight, "ranks just below a baronet. Thus Lady Russell's exalted view of Sir Walter's rank is more than a trifle excessive" Jane Austen, Persuasion, ed. with introduction and notes by Andrew Wright, Riverside Editions (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 217.

³To be sure, the Musgrove insistence that Mrs. Musgrove does not care for rank is a little suspicious, especially since she has little rank to be protective of. Furthermore, it will not do to overestimate the lack of rank consciousness among the Musgroves. Mary's opposition to the marriage between Henrietta and her cousin Charles Hayter is based upon her belief that Henrietta has no "right to make a choice that may be disagreeable and inconvenient to the principal part of her family [i.e., the Elliots], and be giving bad connections to those who have not been used to them [i.e., Mary]" (76). When she expresses her opinion of the Hayters to Wentworth,

that it "'is very unpleasant, having such connexions!'" she is treated to his "contemptuous glance" (86). Anne "perfectly knew the meaning of" that glance, and she and the narrator and the reader are presumed to share in Wentworth's contempt. But to read too much of a democratic spirit into the novel is to misread it. While the narrator and the sympathetic characters are contemptuous of Mary's overblown class consciousness, to modern sensibilities they are not without it themselves. For instance, there is no suggestion at all that Charles' rebuttal of Mary's disparagement of a marriage between his sister and his cousin is intended with irony, or does not have the complete sympathy of the narrator. He says, "' . . . and you will please to remember, that he is the eldest son; whenever my uncle dies, he steps into very pretty property. The estate at Winthrop is not less than two hundred and fifty acres, besides the farm near Taunton, which is some of the best land in the country. I grant you, that any of them [the Hayters] but Charles would be a very shocking match for Henrietta, and indeed it could not be; he is the only one that could be possible; . . .'" (76).

⁴Wright's edition of the novel notes that at Trafalgar the British defeated "the combined French and Spanish fleets in 1805." Persuasion, ed. by Andrew Wright, p. 217. For a fuller discussion of the historical background of the naval characters in the novel, see Joseph Wiesenfarth, "Persuasion: History and Myth."

⁵The quality of the Harville's hospitality becomes especially apparent when contrasted with the spirit in which invitations are given and received by Sir Walter's crowd at Bath. When the Musgroves arrive in Bath, Elizabeth finds herself in a quandary over how to get around an obligation to invite them to dinner:

"She felt that Mrs. Musgrove and all her party ought to be asked to dine with them, but she could not bear to have the difference of style, the reduction of servants, which a dinner must betray, witnessed by those who had been always so inferior to the Elliots of Kellynch. It was a struggle between propriety and vanity; but vanity got the better, and then Elizabeth was happy again. These were her internal persuasions.--'Old fashioned notions--country hospitality--we do not profess to give dinners--few people in Bath do--Lady Alicia never does; did not even ask her own sister's family, though they were here a month; and I dare say it would be very inconvenient to Mrs. Musgrove--put her quite out of her way. I am sure she would rather not come--she cannot feel easy with us. I will ask them all for an evening; that will be much better--that will be a novelty and a treat. They have not seen two such drawing rooms before'" (219-20).

Of course, Elizabeth and Sir Walter displayed quite a different attitude toward their noble cousin, Lady Dalrymple, in an effort to insinuate themselves into her company.

⁶R. S. Crane's reading of the whole Dick Musgrove incident is more clearheaded than most critics':

"Dick's worthlessness and Mrs. Musgrove's sentimentality are perhaps overplayed; but the artistic function of the incident is clear enough: it is a device for emphasizing Wentworth's intelligence and goodness of heart at the moment when we most need to perceive these virtues in him --just before and just after his painful first meeting with Anne. It is made plain that he has no illusions about 'poor Dick' but has nevertheless treated him kindly at sea (before getting rid of him) and is now equally kind to Mrs. Musgrove, though he sees as clearly as Anne does the false pathos of her feelings: the boy and his mother had to be depreciated if the point about Wentworth was to come out."

"Jane Austen: Persuasion," in his The Idea of the Humanities and Other Essays Critical and Historical, Vol. II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 300.

⁷Anne's admiration of Mrs. Smith is based on her recognition that her friend's resilience in the face of misfortune betokens more than mere submissiveness:

"--A submissive spirit might be patient, a strong understanding would supply resolution, but here was something more; here was that elasticity of mind, that disposition to be comforted, that power of turning readily from evil to good, and of finding employment which carried her out of herself, which was from Nature alone. It was the choicest gift of Heaven; . . ." (154).

⁸The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

⁹Booth, p. 73.

¹⁰Booth, pp. 73-74.

¹¹Booth, pp. 74-75. In an expanded version of chapter VI of Rhetoric, Booth includes this instructive observation, only part of which is included in Rhetoric:

"Even the novel in which no narrator is dramatised creates an implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scenes, whether as stage-manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails. This implied author is always distinct from the 'real man'--whatever we may take him to be--who creates a superior version of himself as he creates his work; any successful novel makes us believe in an 'author' who amounts to a kind of 'second self.' This second self is usually a

highly refined and selected version, wiser, more sensitive, more perceptive than any real man could be."

"Distance and Point-of-View; An Essay in Classification," Essays in Criticism 11 (1961). The article is reprinted in The Theory of the Novel, ed. by Philip Stevick, The Free Press (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 87-107. The excerpt above is from the latter source.

¹²Critics who have reduced the moral impulse in Persuasion to a question of persuadability have not much liked the thematic aspects of the work. Gilbert Ryle, for instance, is certain that the "theme notion of persuadability was . . . too boring to repay Jane Austen's selection of it, and I believe that she herself found that her story tended to stray away from its rather flimsy ethical frame." "Jane Austen and the Moralists," Oxford Review 1 (1966); reprinted in Critical Essays on Jane Austen, B. C. Southam, ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968). My quotation is from the latter source, pp. 109-10.

¹³Moler points to the specific implications of the word "persuasion" for Jane Austen's contemporaries:

"The term 'persuasion' was used in a rather specialized sense in Jane Austen's day. Conflict between a parent who wishes his child to make a marriage that is socially and economically acceptable and a child who wants to follow the inclination of his heart seems to be an eternally interesting subject: it was particularly appealing to the writers and readers of Jane Austen's period. Case histories of the sad results of parental despotism or filial imprudence in affairs of the heart abound in the novels and appear in many of the other literary forms of the period. And a parental attempt to influence a child's choice of a matrimonial partner was frequently described as 'persuasion.'"

Jane Austen's Art of Allusion (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p. 193.

¹⁴E. Rubinstein states that "Anne is the only Jane Austen heroine who refuses a suitor on primarily financial grounds." Jane Austen's Novels: The Metaphor of Rank, Literary Monographs, Vol. 2, ed. by Eric Rothstein and Richard N. Ringler (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 185. Wentworth's financial position at the time of his first engagement to Anne may, indeed, have been the grounds for Lady Russell's persuading Anne to refuse him, but, if the word of Anne and the implied author is granted any credibility at all, Anne's yielding to Lady Russell was not primarily a financial decision.

¹⁵Andrew Wright, for one, fails to distinguish between prudence and duty as the justification for Anne's breaking the original engagement. He gives the long passage just quoted in my



text as evidence that "Never, even at the end of the book can she abandon her commitment to the prudential values, even when she is happily betrothed to Captain Wentworth." (*A Study of Structure*, p. 161). As we have seen, not only does she abandon her commitment to prudence, but she has already done so before the novel begins. Wright's reading of the novel as the exploration of an ironic dilemma in the conflict between love and prudence depends upon his failure to heed Anne's early repudiation of Lady Russell's excessive prudence, and her attachment to "cheerful confidence in futurity," and it ignores the implied author's manipulation of the events of the novel in support of Anne's repudiation.

¹⁶William Binkley notes the importance of the conflict between love and duty in many eighteenth century novels:

"Another . . . didactic theme which was a favorite with novelists of the late eighteenth century is the conflict of love and duty, a part of the larger problem of the conflicting claims of personal and social obligations. Duty is generally the least appealing at the moment of choice, but the proper, the sensible heroine must always decide in favor of duty, most often the duty owed to family. Though she may suffer as a result of having chosen duty, the suffering that follows mere personal gratification is inevitably much keener. Fanny Burney's Cecilia must decide between her feelings of duty toward Mrs. Delville and her love for young Delville; her lover must choose between responding to her love or to his family's intense and selfish pride. Cecilia's weakness is that though she acts with determination whenever there is no doubt that she is acting correctly, she wavers when there is a more difficult choice and is too sensible of others' suffering, whether it is Mr. Harrel's threats of self-destruction or Delville's argument for a secret marriage. As a result she sometimes weakens and makes her choice in favor of love and not duty. Her suffering, which culminates in madness, is a consequence of her setting aside duty for love in marrying Delville. Emily St. Aubert must decide between her love for Valancourt and her duty to the guardian her father has appointed. She chooses in favor of duty even though her decision means a prolonged separation from her lover and leads to her persecution by Montoni at Udolpho. What ever the consequences the higher claims are never to be the merely personal ones."

"Comic Self-Discovery," pp. 15-16.

¹⁷While it is true that the narrator does not specifically develop the theme of the conflict between love and duty, it must not be overlooked that the perimeters of that conflict are established by the narrator in the first few chapters. Booth notes, "Once the



ethical and intellectual framework has been established by the narrator's introduction, we enter Anne's consciousness and remain bound to it" Booth, p. 251.

¹⁸Thomas P. Wolfe calls attention to the theme of the heroine's search for a society in Persuasion and finds parallels to it in Pride and Prejudice and Emma:

"Anne, like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma, finds herself in a society in which the full extent of her intellectual and moral qualities cannot find expression. We are aware that the characters possess what we might call a superfluous or unutilizable knowledge; the movement of the three novels can be understood as the heroines' attempts to find a society or sub-society that can appreciate their better selves."

"The Achievement of Persuasion," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 11 (Autumn 1971): 694.

¹⁹In his book on Jane Austen, Joseph Wiesenfarth has also taken note of the pervasiveness of the theme of duty in Persuasion. Much of my argument and evidence in this chapter parallels his chapter on Persuasion. However, as with his article in which he considers Persuasion in terms of Northrop Frye's discussion of comedy (see my Chapter I), he uses similar evidence in the service of a much different point.

Wiesenfarth believes that the theme of Persuasion is the relationship between dignity and duty. From the perspective of this thesis he understands the plot to be "a series of episodes which draw out [Anne's] dignity and measures that of others in relation to it" (144). The moral purpose of the novel, in Wiesenfarth's view, is to delineate true dignity, which quality Anne embodies. Acting out of a sense of duty is, in turn, the quality which confers genuine dignity, and it is Anne's dutifulness to Lady Russell which imparts dignity to Anne:

"The novel moves to its close by reminding us of the ironic truth that set it in motion. Anne's suffering comes to her because at one moment in her life two people loved her dearly enough to want the best for her. Their notions of what that best might be were irreconcilable. In the moment of doubt, Anne followed the path of duty. On that path she met the hard reality of true dignity. Persuasion is thus a love story in which rank, consequence, and sundry artificialities at first prosper but ultimately suffer their just deserts and in which love and duty first suffer but ultimately prosper as nature conducts mature lovers to the mellow fruitfulness of an autumn love. The harvest of that love reaps [sic] the reconciliation of those who love Anne best." (Errand of Form, 163).

The difficulty with this argument is that it seems to insist that dutifulness precedes dignity, which may be true, but there is

nothing in Persuasion which justifies Wiesenfarth's thinking so. Truly, characters in the novel who lack dignity also fail to act dutifully, but the suggestion that duty is a kind of ordeal which one endures for the purpose of achieving dignity is not justified by the novel. Insofar as the evidence is concerned, every indication is that Anne possessed dutifulness and dignity all along.

Similarly, Wiesenfarth's insistence that "Anne's reward is Wentworth's recognition of her personal dignity" (161) is not based upon any evidence in the novel--there is never any suggestion that he suspected her of lack of dignity. Wiesenfarth says that Wentworth sees dignity in Anne

"with little Charles at Uppercross cottage, in Anne at the piano in the Great House, in Anne with the fallen Louisa on the Lower Cobb at Lyme, in Anne in conversation with Captain Harville in Bath. And he sees it finally even in Anne's rejection of his first proposal . . ." (161).

His evidence that Wentworth sees Anne's dignity in her "rejection of his first proposal" is her long speech of self-vindication to him in which she invokes duty as the justification for her action. The question of dignity never comes up at all, and it is only Wiesenfarth's equation of dignity and duty which makes Anne's speech seem to him evidence of Wentworth's recognition of her dignity.

The fact is that what Anne meets on "the path of duty" is a lot of suffering and loneliness. Her having suffered in the name of duty entitles her to a place in the triumphant society. That place is a position of moral authority, and it is her moral authority which is recognized by Lady Russell and by Wentworth in their reconciliation with each other.

²⁰In Praise of Comedy, pp. 178-79.



CHAPTER III

THE MIMETIC CHARACTERIZATION OF ANNE ELLIOT

Mimesis in the Novel

The roles that Anne Elliot plays as the central figure in both the comic and the thematic structures of Persuasion help to develop our sense of her character. Yet neither her archetypal nor her thematic function can account for the fact that we also respond to Anne as we might to a real human being. Much of the detail of her characterization has little to do with her being either a comic heroine or the embodiment of the moral issues with which the novel is concerned. Rather, many of the actions in which we see Anne involved, her emotional responses to the situations in which she finds herself, and the idiosyncrasies of her behavior seem to have no other function than to establish her as a fully realized person about whom we care as we would any person whom we have come to know so intimately. Yet most discussions altogether ignore what is perhaps the greatest achievement of Persuasion: the mimetic creation of Anne Elliot. This chapter is a study of Anne Elliot as a mimetic character. In my final chapter I shall examine the relationship of the characterization of Anne to the formal and thematic functions of the novel.

Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg¹ provide a useful theoretical basis for discussing characterization by differentiating

among several types of characters according to their function in a novel. The three types of characters enumerated by Scholes and Kellogg are the esthetic, the illustrative, and the representational. The characteristics of each of these three types also help to define the various roles that a single complex character might play in a work of fiction.

The esthetic character is defined entirely by the structural requirements of the work in which he appears. Our response to such characters is, therefore, emotional rather than intellectual. In Persuasion, insofar as they do not exceed their roles as stock characters in comedy, Sir Walter, William Elliot, Captain Wentworth, and Anne, herself, embody characteristics of esthetic types. Our impulse to hiss Mr. Elliot and to rejoice at Anne and Wentworth's eventual triumph over Sir Walter and his society is clearly an emotional response shaped by the esthetic function those characters fulfill. We do not require that we be convinced of the reality of these characters. In fact, esthetic characters "do not represent real individuals or types, nor do they illustrate essences or concepts. They merely borrow human shapes or human characteristics because these have become in most Western fiction a necessary minimum of narrative equipment" (S & K, p. 99).

The second type of character, the illustrative, exists as a product of the impulse to create characters who embody some aspect of the novelist's vision of truth. The impulse of illustration, say Scholes and Kellogg, seeks

to present selected aspects of the actual, essences referable for their meaning not to historical, psychological, or sociological truth but to ethical and metaphysical truth. Illustrative characters are concepts in anthropoid shape or fragments of the human psyche masquerading as whole human beings (S & K, p. 88).

Whereas characters fulfilling an esthetic function serve as part of the narrative machinery and require an emotional response from the reader, characters in their illustrative aspect are creatures of the thematic impulse of a work and require an intellectual response. Anne's embodiment of the correct balance of duty, sensibility, prudence, and love reveals her illustrative role in the implied author's impulse to dramatize her moral vision.

Scholes and Kellogg suggest a third kind of characterization, which they call "representational." Representational characters owe their traits neither to the formal requirements of the plot nor to the intellectual or moral content of the work, but to a quite separate impulse: the mimetic impulse. A mimetic character differs from an illustrative one primarily in the fact that the mimetic character has nothing to do with meaning. In this the mimetic character is like the esthetic, but he is different from the esthetic type in that the impulse which created the mimetic character has to do only with the artist's attempt to create the impression of lifelikeness, and nothing to do with the structural requirements of the narrative:

. . . we can say that [esthetic types] have little to do with "meaning" In a quite different way the most mimetic characterizations seem also to exist largely outside the area of meaning. The highly individualized character draws the reader into a very intimate connection with the fictional world and makes the world assume something like the solidity of reality. By awakening complex

correspondences between the psyches of character and reader, such characterization provides a rich and intense "experience" for the reader--an experience which may not only move him but also exercise his perception and sensibility, ultimately assisting him to perceive and comprehend the world of reality more sharply and more sensitively than he otherwise might (S & K, p. 103).

The individualization of a literary character permits us to view him and to respond to him outside of the formal and thematic functions he serves in the work. Additionally, mimetic characterization involves the reader in the character's world of reality. We not only perceive his reality, we participate in it. We come to know phenomenologically what it is like to be a particular character, with that character's perception of the world. We experience the choices which present themselves to a character in his world and we likewise experience his motivations for choosing as he does. We are allowed to empathize with his thoughts and emotions--with the life of another person.

The problem for the literary critic is to determine how to discuss the phenomenological experience of a character and the details of a character's behavior when those details are not related to the author's formal or thematic intentions for the work.

An approach to the analysis of mimetic characters is suggested by Scholes and Kellogg's observation that such characters are the product of an impulse to create "highly individualized figures who resist abstraction and generalization and whose motivation is not susceptible to rigid ethical interpretation" (S & K, p. 101). Scholes and Kellogg make clear that the impulse to create psychologically accurate portraits "does not inevitably include reference

to systems of psychological classification" (S & K, p. 101). To be sure, the artist's psychological impulse is not an attempt to create characters who illustrate or conform to categories invented by psychologists. It does not follow from this truth, however, that the critic may have no recourse to the psychologist's categories to illuminate and account for those patterns of thought and behavior which constitute a mimetic portrait.²

In a persuasively argued rationale for the psychological study of fictional characters, Bernard J. Paris proposes that, because the achievement of much realistic fiction is precisely the lifelikeness of its central characters, "in certain cases it is proper to treat literary characters as real people and that only by doing so can we fully appreciate the distinctive achievement of the genre."³ Insofar as literary characters are like real people, that is, insofar as they convince us that their actions, thoughts, and feelings are motivated by their own unique psychological composition and not by the esthetic or thematic requirements of the work, the discipline of psychology provides us with a vocabulary for talking about such characters.

The inevitable charge against treating literary characters as if they were real people is that such a supposition ignores the obvious fact that characters are, after all, the creations of their authors; they cannot do or think or feel anything not prescribed for them by their creators. It is carrying the illusion too far, the argument goes, to probe the psychological depths of a character whose author may never have understood or intended to portray the

workings of the subconscious. Furthermore, psychological analysis of characters frequently describes them in ways which are not only beyond what an author intended but positively subversive to thematic and structural functions the character is supposed to fulfill. That being the case, psychological analysis of literary characters cannot help us interpret fiction.

Paris notes, however, that novelists themselves, as well as many critics of realistic fiction, have testified to the frequency with which mimetic characters overflow what was intended for them and take on a life of their own. E. M. Forster, in particular, observes of "round characters" that they

arrive when evoked, but full of the spirit of mutiny. For they have these numerous parallels with people like ourselves, they try to live their own lives and are consequently often engaged in treason against the main scheme of the book.⁴

Paris also quotes Georg Lukács, who states succinctly how characters develop according to the logic of their own personalities:

The characters created by the great novelists, once conceived in the vision of their creator, live an independent life of their own; their comings and goings, their development, their destiny is dictated by the inner dialectic of their social and individual existence. No writer is a true realist--or even a truly good writer, if he can direct the evolution of his characters at will.⁵

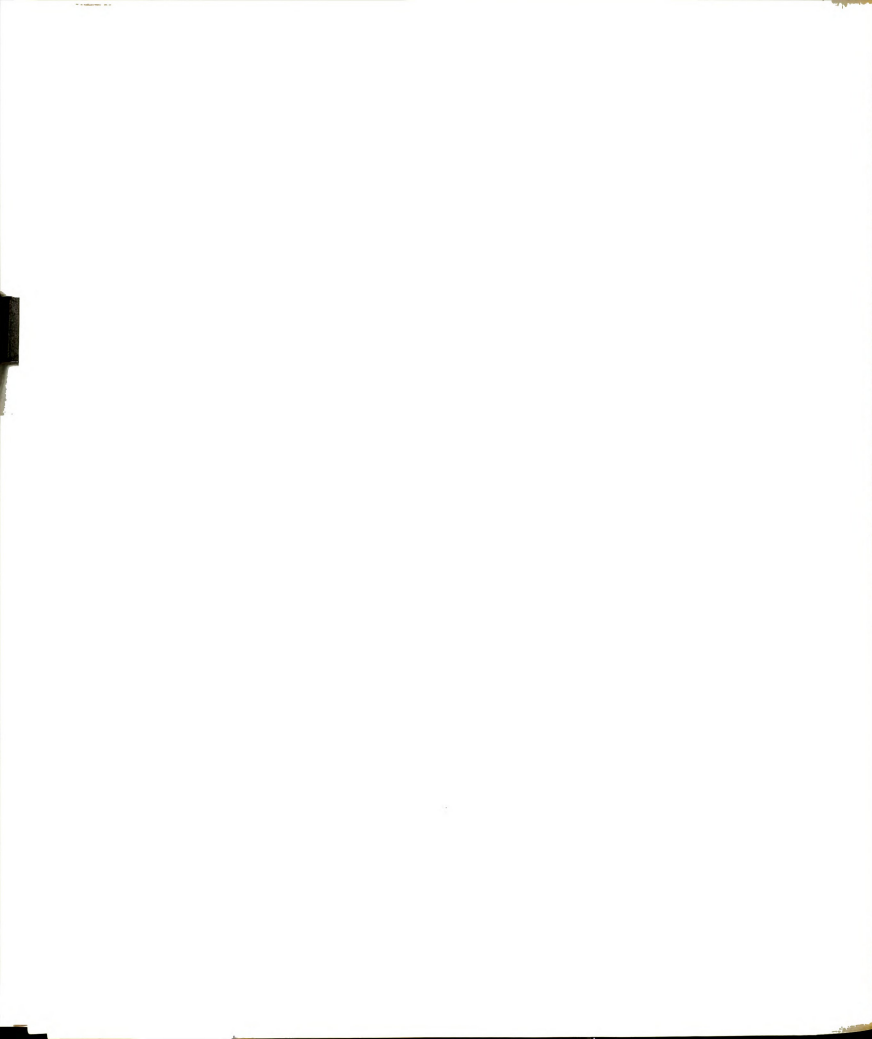
The testimony of novelists and critics is, perhaps, less to the point than are our own experiences with mimetic characters. We feel their uniqueness, their aliveness, their human dimension. We remember characters long after we have forgotten stories (not to mention themes). But is it the inevitable conclusion of this observation that the way to discuss such characters is in terms of modern

psychology? W. J. Harvey, whose study of the problems of analyzing literary characters begins with a recognition of the failure of critics to develop a vocabulary for talking about mimesis, argues that psychological criticism "tends to fall into one of two errors":

Either it leads to a naive kind of naturalism, seeking to supply motives and explanations for characters who in fact are being used conventionally; or it tends to translate the character into its own terms. But this is reductive and wrongly abstract; Falstaff or Heathcliff, we protest, are not dramatizations of the id; Mr. Knightly is not a super-ego.⁶

The argument that it is reductive is, in fact, among the most frequently heard objections to the psychological study of mimetic characters. Of course, every critical strategy is ultimately reductive: no theory accounts for everything in a novel; all select details which together seem to form meaningful patterns. Psychological criticism, at least, begins from the premise that mimetic characters are ruled by the same laws of human behavior which govern actual persons.

Some readers resist psychological interpretation of literary characters because it appears to them that the critic reduces the rich mimetic creation to a mere case study. Such objections, however, seem based on a frequent error which Frederick Crews identifies as "the common but unreasonable demand that a theory 'feels like' what it describes."⁷ No intellectualization about phenomena can reproduce the experience of phenomena, nor does it attempt to do so. Psychology and mimetic literature offer distinctly different ways of knowing the same kinds of phenomena. Paris notes the



different perspectives provided by psychology and realistic literature upon the same areas of experience:

If we understand by phenomenology the descriptive analysis of subjective processes, we can say that realistic fiction gives us a phenomenological grasp of experience. It gives us immediate knowledge of how the world is experienced by the individual consciousness and an understanding of the inner life in its own terms. It enables us to grasp from within the phenomena which psychology and ethics treat from without.⁸

Objections to the psychological analysis of mimetic characters stem, I think, from the wrong notion that to interpret a character's actions, thoughts, and feelings as neurotic is to deprecate him, to blame him for not being what he ought to be. In the case of a character like Anne Elliot, the proper focus should not be measuring her against twentieth century standards of psychological health, but evaluating the nature of the society which blocks the full realization of her rich potential. Anne, after all, does the best she can. A sociological evaluation is certainly implicit in some of the conclusions about Anne derived from a psychological study of her character. But the real point is that interpretation, psychological or otherwise, precedes criticism; it seeks to understand, not judge. Besides, the ideal of complete psychological health as defined in the next section of this chapter is so rare that none of us can safely equate neurosis with moral weakness.

We look to psychology, then, not to reproduce our esthetic experience of Anne Elliot, and certainly not to condemn her, but to provide us with a terminology for talking about the structure which underlies the mimetic quality of her characterization.

The Psychology of Karen Horney

The psychological system I intend to employ to analyze the mimetic characterization of Anne Elliot is that of the American Third Force psychologist, Karen Horney. As with my rationale for using psychology to analyze character, I am following Professor Paris in my use of Horneyan psychology. Before proceeding with an analysis of the character of Anne, it is necessary for me to summarize some of the basic tenets and classifications of Horneyan psychology. In doing so, I duplicate some of the second chapter of Paris's book.⁹

A fundamental premise of Horneyan psychology is that each individual has within him not only inherent talents but a basic desire to develop and realize his potentialities. Given the right kind of love and attention to his basic needs, a child will develop "the unique alive forces of his real self":

the clarity and depth of his own feelings, thoughts, wishes, interests; the ability to tap his own resources, the strength of his will power; the special capacities or gifts he may have; the faculty to express himself, and to relate himself to others with his spontaneous feelings. All this will in time enable him to find his set of values and his aims in life. In short, he will grow substantially undiverted, toward self-realization.¹⁰

Without the required love, understanding, and encouragement, however, a child does not develop the necessary sense of security about himself in the world, "but instead a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness, for which I use the term basic anxiety" (Horney, p. 18). The energy which in a healthy person would be channeled

into the realization of the potentialities of his real self is diverted instead into allaying this basic anxiety.

Horney identifies the consequences of basic anxiety as an alienation of the person from his real self, which he regards as worthless and unlovable because it has not secured for him the satisfaction of his basic need for support and affection, and the development of strategies for dealing with other people "in ways which do not arouse, or increase, but rather allay his basic anxiety" (Horney, p. 18). There are essentially three strategies by which a person attempts to relate to others: he may move toward them, clinging to people he perceives as more powerful than himself; he may move against them, developing an antagonistic or rebellious relationship with others; and he may move away from them, shutting out others from his inner life. Characteristically, all three strategies are explored, but gradually one becomes dominant because it is perceived as most successful.

In an effort to compensate for his self-image of worthlessness and unlovableness, the alienated person employs an intrapsychic strategy of self-glorification, a process of endowing himself in his imagination "with unlimited powers and exalted faculties" (Horney, p. 22). The idealized image thus developed becomes for the individual an idealized self, "not primarily because it is more appealing but because it answers all his stringent needs" (Horney, p. 23). Expectedly, the energy which in a health person would be directed toward self-realization is directed in the alienated person toward actualization of the idealized self. To attempt to

actualize the idealized self the individual embarks upon a quest which Horney labels "the search for glory." The elements of this search for glory are a need for perfection, neurotic ambition, and a need for vindictive triumph. All three aspects of the search for glory have in common that they are compulsive (as opposed to spontaneous) and that they are imaginative (i.e., distortions of reality).

The search for glory which an individual pursues through his development of an idealized self and through his interpersonal strategies can never produce the self-confidence and spontaneity he needs so desperately; instead, when his strategies are working well, he achieves a kind of substitute for self-confidence: neurotic pride. The neurotic invests enormous pride in whatever tendency serves to actualize his idealized self; but, because at bottom his pride is only a counterfeit for genuine self-confidence, it makes him extremely vulnerable. He responds to attacks on his pride, real or imagined, with automatic (i.e., compulsive) efforts to restore pride, and one of the most frequent endeavors to restore pride is the search for vindictive triumph. Other efforts to restore pride include a tendency to forget or distort incidents which threaten pride, a loss of interest in activities in which his pride might be hurt, and the use of humor to remove the sting of injured pride.

Two kinds of threat exist to an individual's pride: those that result from his failure to behave consistently with his idealized image of himself and those related to the failure of others to treat him with the deference due to a person of his lofty

self-image. The former threat is based on the individual's ruthless requirements of himself, inner dictates which Horney calls the neurotic's "shoulds." The latter threat is based on his demands not only upon others but upon life itself. Horney calls these demands neurotic claims. Both shoulds and claims are manifestations of the search for glory which is, in turn, the essential element in the attempt to actualize the idealized self.

Co-existing with the desperate attempts to actualize an idealized self is a profound self-hate directed at the actual self as viewed from the imperial perspective of the ideal self:

The best way to describe the situation is in terms of two people. There is the unique, ideal person; and there is the omnipresent stranger (the actual self), always interfering, disturbing embarrassing (Horney, p. 111).

The actual self becomes offensive to the ideal self, and the neurotic in his glorified image turns against his actual self with anger and contempt. The person is at war with himself. He expresses this self-hate in his relentless demands on himself, self-accusation, self-frustration, self-tormenting, and, occasionally, self-destruction.

The self-hate generated by the conflict between the ideal self and the actual self is, of course, a source of enormous tension. Just as the individual attempts to allay the tension of his basic anxiety by a process of self-glorification, so, too, does he attempt tension-reducing measures to minimize the hate engendered by the confrontation between actual and ideal selves. The most important of the general measures to relieve such tension is further

alienation from self: an attempt to obviate the conflict by eliminating from consciousness one of the selves giving rise to the conflict. The ultimate victim is not merely the actual self (who the person is at any given time), but the real self (the force toward unique individual growth and fulfillment):

if we exile our real self the conflict between it and the pseudoself not only disappears from awareness but the distribution of forces is so changed that it actually abates. Naturally this release of tension can be achieved only at the cost of an increased autonomy of the pride system (Horney, p. 178).

Other general measures to relieve tension mentioned by Horney which are appropriate to a discussion of Persuasion include:

- (a) the externalization of inner experiences, i.e., experiencing "the intrapsychic processes . . . not . . . as such but . . . as occurring between the self and the outside world" (Horney, p. 178);
- (b) automatic control, i.e., unconsciously checking feelings, thoughts, and actions which threaten a person's feeling of equanimity;
- (c) belief in the supremacy of the mind, i.e., attempting to control the emotions and the physical manifestations of the real self by dint of pure intellect.

Because of his alienation from his real self, the neurotic person does not know who he really is. Sometimes he will experience himself as the realization of his idealized image of himself: his proud self. But this proud self is an imaginary construction, created by the alienated person as a denial of qualities in himself he most needs to suppress. At times the qualities he most loathes emerge to constitute a different identity: his despised self. The individual identifies completely with one or the other self at any

given time; his self-evaluation, his behaviors, drives, and relationships to others are determined by whether the proud self or the despised self prevails at the moment.

Eventually, to eliminate the tension of being defined by two opposite personalities, the alienated individual attempts to achieve integration by suppressing completely and permanently either the proud or the despised self. Alternatively, he may attempt to solve the internal conflict "by withdrawing interest from the inner battle and resigning from active psychic living" (Horney, p. 190). We are thus presented with three intrapsychic strategies for resolving conflicts, and Horney uses these strategies to establish and classify neurosis into three major types. Essentially, they are the expansive type, who identifies with his glorified self, the self-effacing type, who identifies with his despised self, and the resigned type, who declares himself uninterested in the conflict between his proud and his hated selves.

We shall now look at each of these solutions in some detail. In summarizing Horney's delineations of each of the defensive strategies, I shall include the goals of each, their intrapsychic and interpersonal manifestations, the pathogenic circumstances which typically give rise to them, and the result of each strategy when it is pursued to its ultimate conclusion. Where appropriate, I shall also include a discussion of subspecies within the major categories of neurosis.

The expansive solution encompasses at least three distinct variations, but all are based upon a need to control:

The appeal of life lies in mastery. It chiefly entails [the neurotic's] determination, consciously or unconsciously, to overcome every obstacle--in or outside himself--and the belief that he should be able, and in fact is able, to do so. He should be able to master the adversities of fate, the difficulties of a situation, the intricacies of intellectual problems, the resistances of other people, conflicts in himself. The reverse side of necessity for mastery is his dread of anything connoting helplessness; this is the most poignant dread he has (Horney, p. 192).

The expansive person attempts self-glorification through ambitiousness and vindictiveness, and he prides himself on the strength of his will power and intelligence. He despises in himself any evidence of "softness" which might hinder the actualization of his idealized image. He is exceptionally sensitive to criticism because he is proud of his capacity for fooling others, and criticism signifies to him that his bluff has been called. Unconsciously, of course, he fears he is nothing more than bluff.

There are several kinds of expansive solutions: the narcissistic (in which the person identifies with his idealized image), the perfectionistic (in which he identifies with his standards), and the arrogant-vindictive (in which he identifies with his pride). The narcissistic type has no doubts about himself: "he is the anointed, the man of destiny, the prophet, the great giver, the benefactor of mankind" (Horney, p. 194). He possesses great charm and buoyancy and self-confidence. He is capable of overlooking imperfections in his own character or of transforming them into virtues, and he is often tolerant of imperfections in others, as well.

While the narcissistic type apparently needs to confirm his self-image by captivating others with his charm, he "does not seem to mind breaking promises, being unfaithful, incurring debts, defrauding" (Horney, p. 195). He rather feels entitled by his own self-importance to abuse or exploit others in this way. Having already actualized his idealized image (in his own mind), he is unable to recognize limitations; he is too expansive, his pursuits are too numerous, and he therefore encounters failures. Failure, being entirely alien to his idealized self-image, often provokes self-hate, which in turn causes spells of depression and pessimism and even suicide.

Whereas the narcissistic type identifies with his idealized image, the perfectionist identifies with his standards. He

feels superior because of his high standards, moral and intellectual, and on this basis looks down on others. His arrogant contempt for others, though, is hidden--from himself as well--behind polished friendliness, because his very standards prohibit such "irregular" feelings (Horney, p. 196).

The perfectionistic type achieves flawless standards of excellence by the mere fact of his possessing high standards: "knowing about moral values and being a good person" (Horney, p. 196) are in his mind the same thing.

The perfectionist has made a "deal" with life: he will behave in accordance with his rigorous shoulds, he will be honest, fair, dutiful, mannerly, and in turn he is entitled to justice from others and from life itself. He thereby "deserves" good fortune; bad luck, accidents, and failure are unfair because they violate his

"deal" or call into question his having lived up to his shoulds. From others the perfectionist demands first that they honor the bargain he has made with life, second that they respect him for his rigid standards, and third that they also hold such high standards if they are to avoid his contempt.

The third sub-species of the expansive solution is embodied in the arrogant-vindictive type. Identifying with his pride, this type is motivated by a need for vindictive triumph as a way of confirming his mastery of life and allaying his anxieties about himself.

In human relationships, vindictiveness manifests itself in extreme competitiveness and in intolerance for any person who exhibits superiority to him in any endeavor. The vindictive neurotic is subject to violent rages when his claims are not met. He is distrustful of others, arrogant and rude, and thrives on humiliating or frustrating others. He regards any flow of warm feeling in himself, any failure to assert his rights or to retaliate for injuries done, as evidence of his "getting soft."

Horney suggests that experiences of sheer "brutality, humiliations, derision, neglect, and flagrant hypocrisy" (Horney, p. 202) may have caused a child to harden his sensitivity to such abuses in order to survive. Concluding that affection is unattainable for him, the child no longer seeks it, but substitutes mastery over others for winning their affection. The two basic ingredients in his recipe for dealing with others are the need to triumph and the

need to reject positive feelings, both those which he feels toward others and those which he perceives that others feel toward him.

The intrapsychic factors in the arrogant-vindictive strategy are related to the interpersonal factors. The vindictive person takes pride in not allowing himself to feel hurt by others. Unable to admit to being hurt or to recognize that his vindictiveness is a retaliation for such hurts, the individual transforms in his mind his vindictive rages into "warranted wrath at a wrong done and into the right to punish the wrongdoer" (Horney, p. 205). Between vindictive rages, this person appears to monitor his expressions of emotions carefully--to be over-controlled. This is not due to any desire to be liked but to his fear that his aggressive impulses will provoke retaliation, and because if others successfully retaliate his pride will be undermined.

Whereas all expansive types identify with their proud selves, self-effacing types identify with their despised selves. Consequently, the self-effacing solution glorifies exactly those tendencies which the expansive solution is most anxious to eliminate or deny. The self-effacing person

must not feel consciously superior to others or display any such feelings in his behavior. On the contrary he tends to subordinate himself to others, to be dependent upon them, to appease them. Most characteristic is the diametrically opposite attitude from that of the expansive type toward helplessness and suffering. Far from abhorring these conditions, he rather cultivates and unwittingly exaggerates them; accordingly anything in the attitude of others, like admiration or recognition, that puts him in a superior position makes him uneasy. What he longs for is help, protection, and surrendering love (Horney, p. 215).



Almost every sort of behavior that is characteristic of the expansive type finds its opposite in the self-effacing person. He has taboos against pride, self-assertion, ambition, vindictiveness, and triumph. Not only does he avoid arrogance, conceit, and presumptuousness, but he often regards the most innocent (and healthy) recognition of his own attributes, virtues, and accomplishments as evidence of his conceit, and he hates himself and feels guilty for it. Although he generates much hostility in himself, his taboo against expressing such hostility prevents him from striking back against real or imagined abuses. He prefers to forgive others, or to "understand" them. He is unable to carry a grudge--consciously.

The shoulds of the self-effacing neurotic are largely shoulds. But, while he has taboos against almost any endeavor in his own behalf,

he is not only free to do things for others, but, according to his inner dictates, should be the ultimate of helpfulness, generosity, considerateness, sympathy, love and sacrifice. In fact love and sacrifice in his mind are closely intertwined: he should sacrifice everything for love--love is sacrifice (Horney, p. 220).

Although the self-effacing person abhors aggressiveness and vindictiveness in himself, he often admires these traits in others, or, at least, is unable to distinguish between healthy self-assertion and neurotic ambition and arrogance in others.

According to Horney, as we have seen, the expansive type often developed his strategies in a hostile, neglectful, and derivative environment in which he concluded that love was unattainable. In contrast, the self-effacing strategies emerge when affection of a

sort is available, but affection which requires the person to abandon his real self and to adopt compliant, self-subordinating traits. He cultivates lovable qualities in himself, and winning the affection of others is of paramount importance to him.

In addition to the "lovable" qualities that the self-effacing individual glorifies in his idealized image of himself he also cultivates secondary qualities of helplessness, suffering, and martyrdom. The cornerstone of these secondary qualities is his capacity for deep feeling:

In contrast to the arrogant-vindictive type, a premium is also placed on feelings--feelings of joy or suffering, feeling not only for individual people but for humanity, art, nature, values of all sorts. To have deep feelings is part of his image (Horney, p. 222-23).

Needless to say, having deep feelings is not in itself evidence of neurosis, but the self-effacing person may actually exaggerate his deep feelings and his suffering as evidence of his helplessness in response to attacks from others and as a way of appeasing his self-hate.

In spite of suffering a great deal from others, for their real or imagined neglect or abuse, the self-effacing person desperately needs their affection and appreciation. In Horney's words, he "is worth as much as he is loved" (Horney, p. 227). He needs not only emotional support from others but their help. His profound need for emotional support and help turn into the expectation that such help will be forthcoming, and even into the feeling that he is entitled to such support because his need for it is so great. His suffering is a means of coercing others into fulfilling his claims,

as is his character of usefulness and duty. The frustration of his claims perpetuates his suffering and his feeling of being abused, which in turn increases his need to have filled his claims for support and help.

Suffering in the self-effacing person is an automatic response to his feeling abused, having his feelings hurt, failing to live up to his shoulds, and feeling unloved or unappreciated. But suffering also acquires another function: "that of absorbing rage and making others feel guilty, which is the only effective way of getting back at them" (Horney, p. 233). This functional suffering (as Horney calls it) is nearly the only way the self-effacing person has of venting his hostility and his vindictive tendencies while remaining consistent with his other shoulds. In addition, functional suffering provides him with an alibi for failing to achieve much in his own life. "To put it briefly: his suffering accuses others and excuses himself!" (Horney's emphasis, p. 235).

The self-effacing person needs not only to be loved, but also to love.

To love, for him, means to lose, to submerge himself in more or less ecstatic feelings, to merge with another being, to become one heart and one flesh, and in this merger to find unity which he cannot find in himself. His longing for love thus is fed by deep and powerful sources: the longing for surrender and the longing for unity (Horney, p. 240).

This longing for love helps to account for the self-effacing person's overriding desire to cultivate lovable qualities in himself. Often he can develop fairly satisfactory love relationships and

achieve a measure of happiness, provided his partner can respond positively to his weakness and dependency.

"The third major solution of the intrapsychic conflicts consists essentially in the neurotic's withdrawing from the inner battlefield and declaring himself uninterested" (Horney, p. 259). The resigned person attempts to find peace from his inner conflicts by settling for less, by giving up striving and struggling altogether and undergoing "a process of shrinking, of restricting, of curtailing life and growth." The "picture of resignation when maintained consistently, is one of life at a constantly low ebb--of a life without pain or friction but also without zest" (Horney, p. 260).

Resignation exhibits several characteristics which distinguish it from the other neurotic solutions discussed. Firstly, the resigned person senses himself an onlooker on life, not only on the life around him, but on his own life. Secondly, the resigned individual avoids striving for achievement. Toward any kind of sustained effort he develops a profound inertia, or he resists tasks through procrastination or listless effort. Thirdly, he lacks any sense of direction or planning in his life. All of these characteristics indicate his basic strategy of restricting his wishes for anything. Among his neurotic claims the two outstanding ones are "that life should be easy, painless, and effortless and that he should not be bothered" (Horney, p. 264).

The resigned person's relationships with other people are characterized by detachment. Although he can maintain distant relationships with others, he endeavors to avoid emotional involvement

with them. He expects neither good nor bad from others--in fact, he doesn't expect much of anything. Although he does not have a taboo against deep positive feelings in himself as does the arrogant-vindictive type, he considers that his feelings are his own business, not to be shared with others. Wishing to avoid ties of any kind, he develops an aversion to anything that feels to him like coercion or pressure from others. He also resists change of any kind.

The resigned person may display some characteristics of the expansive solution, the self-effacing solution, or both, but these traits are always in the service of his own solution of detachment and withdrawal. Where expansive trends predominate he may develop elaborate fantasies about what he is capable of or about his general attributes. His attributes, however, exist mainly in his imagination, and he does little or nothing by way of attempting to accomplish any ambitious plan. Neither does he seek vindictive triumph through any active means.

If self-effacing trends predominate in a resigned person's solution, he may develop a low opinion of himself. People in this class

are frequently keenly sensitive to the needs of other people, and may actually spend a good deal of their lives in helping others or serving a cause. They often are defenseless toward imposition and attacks and would rather put the blame on themselves than accuse others. They may be overanxious never to hurt others' feelings. They also tend to be compliant. This latter tendency, however, is not determined by a need for affection, as it is in the self-effacing type, but by the need to avoid friction (Horney, pp. 271-72).

Resignation is largely an attempt at integration through negation. The primary positive appeal of the solution is the importance to it of the idea of freedom in contrast to mastery in the expansive solution or love in the self-effacing solution. Basically, the resigned person wants to do what he pleases. The problem is, of course, that he often does not know what it is he wants because of the taboo he has placed upon wishing or on setting goals for himself. He is sure of what he does not want, however; he does not want to be forced into doing anything.

An individual may develop resigned traits in childhood if the influences upon him then were cramping and too restrictive to permit open rebellion.

In short there was an environment which made explicit and implicit demands for him to fit in this way or that way and threatened to engulf him without sufficient regard for his individuality, not to speak of encouraging personal growth.

So the child is torn for a longer or shorter time between futile attempts to get affection and interest and resenting the bonds put around him. He solves this early conflict by withdrawing from others. By putting an emotional distance between himself and others, he sets his conflict out of operation. . . . by withdrawing into a world of his own, he saves his individuality from being altogether cramped and engulfed. His early detachment thus not only serves his integration, but also has a most significant positive meaning: the keeping intact of his inner life (Horney's emphasis, p. 275).

Horney distinguishes three distinct forms of the resigned solution. Those people in whom the traits described heretofore are present consistently she characterizes as persistently resigned. In spite of their general inertia, neurotics of this type are generally able to struggle to do daily work if it does not involve initiative



or the need to fight for something. In its more extreme form, however, persistent resignation can lead to a parasitic existence and finally to a resistance even to thinking and feeling.

A second form of resignation is that in which expansive tendencies are more predominant. Persons in this category tend to become rebellious toward internal and external restrictions. Although rebellion against his own taboos may have a certain liberating effect and may therefore free the individual for more creative and productive work, such rebellion does not alter his detachment from others and his indifference toward his personal life.

A third variation of the resigned solution Horney calls shallow living. This seems to be a development of persistent resignation, but with the positive factors such as being in touch with one's own feelings removed. Only the negative aspects of the solution are manifested in shallow living. People of this type may seek to allay feelings of futility by pursuing distracting pleasures; they may seek an artificial self-esteem through money, prestige, or opportunistic success; or they may become "well-adapted" automatons. The "well-adapted" person seems to fit in with others by complying with their codes and conventions, but such an attitude betokens his complete loss of touch with his own thoughts and feelings and a "general flattening out of the personality" (Horney, pp. 287-88).

This quick overview of Horney's penetrating and subtle analyses of neurotic processes gives the illusion of a much more rigid system of classification than she intends. Not only does my

summary do injustice to her careful insistence that neurosis is not so easily pigeonholed, but Horney herself qualifies the very attempt to create categories of neurosis, and prefers to think in terms of directions of development rather than types of individuals. The particular traits which she isolates and labels help to characterize certain neurotic strategies, but these strategies seldom exist in a "pure" form in real people. People can have tendencies from any or all of the solutions in addition to entirely healthy motives and drives. Often traits from one solution are employed in the service of another. The question becomes less one of identifying particular behaviors as belonging to a specific neurotic solution than of discovering the primary motives for such behavior.

If rigid categorization of neurosis serves no valid function in psychoanalysis it can hardly have heuristic value in the study of literary characters. My purpose in attempting a psychological explanation of a character like Anne Elliot, then, is not to "prove" that she is neurotic. Nor is it to rubricize her experiences. But if by isolating those elements of Persuasion which are identifiable as characteristics of comedy we can better perceive the comic structure of the work, and if by isolating the thematic elements we can better understand its thematic structure, perhaps by identifying those patterns of behavior which correspond to patterns of behavior in real human beings we can better understand the structure of Anne's personality. In the next section I shall attempt to illustrate how Karen Horney's analysis of human behavior illuminates Jane Austen's mimetic portrait of Anne Elliot.

"She Was Only Anne"

It is not until Chapter iv of Volume I of Persuasion that Anne's story begins to be told. While the focus of attention is upon Sir Walter at Kellynch-hall, Anne comes in for only peripheral attention. It is appropriate that we learn so little of Anne while we learn of Sir Walter's struggles to reconcile his inflated sense of dignity with his financial straits. Compared to his regard for himself and for his eldest daughter, Anne is "of very inferior value" (5) to him.

Sir Walter's characterization as a comic alazon signals the nature of the work from the very first pages of the novel. With that indication of genre in mind, the reader is not likely to miss the Cinderella motif in the brief references to Anne in the early chapters. Nor is he likely to take very seriously the really monstrous treatment to which she is subjected by her father and older sister. Such oppressive family backgrounds are de regueur for Cinderellas and comic heroines. When Anne's identity as a mimetic character begins to emerge, however, the harshness of her family environment assumes a new dimension. The reader not only sympathizes with Anne and wishes her to overcome her unfair circumstances, but he begins to understand the sources of her personality traits, especially those which may strike him as compulsive.

Anne's personality develops in reaction to the pathogenic environment at Kellynch. After the death of her mother, she did not enjoy even the love or esteem which her father bestowed upon Elizabeth. Having to live in the shadow of both her vain father and her

avored sister, Anne becomes alienated from her real self. Her energies are directed not toward growth and self-realization but toward the development of an image of herself which will give her a sense of worth and protect her from the pain caused by the callousness of her treatment at home.

The lack of affection with which Anne is treated by Sir Walter and Elizabeth is demonstrated in a number of instances. For example, Elizabeth determines that the family might retrench by "taking no present down to Anne, as had been the usual yearly custom" (10). Anne is never invited to accompany Sir Walter and Elizabeth on their spring excursions to London. Elizabeth advises that Anne had better stay with Mary at Uppercross after the family vacates Kellynch-hall, "for nobody will want her in Bath" (33). But the low esteem in which Anne is held appears most consistently in the failure of Sir Walter and Elizabeth to consult Anne or to consider her opinions on any subject. She is excluded from any meaningful participation in the affairs of the family. Her advice is not sought on the matter of the family's retrenchment because she "never seemed considered by the others as having any interest in the question" (12). When she expresses a desire that the family take up residence in a smaller house in the country, "the usual fate of Anne attended her, in having something very opposite from her inclination fixed on" (14). When Anne presumes to caution Elizabeth about the danger of putting Sir Walter in constant company with Mrs. Clay, Elizabeth is positively incensed. Anne "was nobody with either

father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;--she was only Anne" (5).

Although these instances of the pathogenic nature of Anne's environment all take place when she is an adult, it can be assumed that they represent Anne's lifelong relationship with her father and sister. Anne never remembers a time when she received affection from her father. The references to Lady Elliot's unhappiness in her married life indicate that Sir Walter has always been the strutting peacock we meet in the first pages of the novel. In fact, the whole atmosphere of stagnation which characterizes life at Kellynch-hall reinforces the impression that the situation there, at least with regard to Anne's status with her father and older sister, has always prevailed.

An environment like that at Kellynch could only produce in Anne a frustration of her basic needs for love, safety, and a sense of belonging. While she lived, Anne's mother was an important source of reinforcement for her, but "never since the loss of her dear mother, [had she] known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste" (47). Having received support and affection from her mother, Anne models herself on her mother's example. Her success in doing so also wins for her the affection of Lady Russell, who believes that "it was only in Anne that she could fancy the mother to revive again" (6). Anne's self-esteem now rests upon her estimation of her success in living by the values which she admired in her mother and which won affection

from both her mother and Lady Russell. She also requires Lady Russell's confirmation of her success in emulating her mother.

The terms in which Lady Elliot is described offer an insight into the kind of person into which Anne tries to mold herself. Except for her decision to marry Sir Walter, "Lady Elliot had been an excellent woman, sensible and amiable; whose judgment and conduct . . . had never required indulgence afterwards" (4). She had relied upon Lady Russell "for the best help and maintenance of the good principles and instruction which she had been anxiously giving her daughters" (5). Her preoccupations had been with duty, principles, judgment, and right conduct. It was these interests which served as an antidote to the unhappiness of her life with Sir Walter and which, apparently, served as a bond between her and Lady Russell. While her virtues seem to have been lost on her husband her other two daughters, they made a strong impression on Anne, whose adoption of her mother's values won her mother's love and Lady Russell's affections. She now uses those values, as her mother had used them, as a basis for her self-esteem and as a defense against loneliness. In a word, Anne's self-esteem depends upon her conviction of her moral superiority.

In both her defensive responses to threats against her self-esteem and in the kinds of reassurance she seeks from others, Anne's behavior parallels that which Karen Horney associates with the strategy of perfectionism. The central characteristic of the perfectionist is that he identifies with his high standards. Anne displays this characteristic in abundance, but analysis of her



personality is complicated by the fact that she also possesses characteristics of the self-effacing and the resigned solutions. I shall attempt to demonstrate that the basic structure of her personality is perfectionistic, and that her self-effacing and resigned traits are best understood in relationship to that central solution.

One evidence of Anne's perfectionism is her strategy for insulating herself from her lovelessness at home. Because she has received little confirmation of her worth since her mother's death, Anne does not devote much energy to seeking reinforcement from others. Instead, she maintains her self-esteem by assuring herself of her own superior standards whenever she is threatened.

An instance of Anne's characteristic defensive reaction occurs at Uppercross, when she observes the warmth and good nature with which Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove regard each other and with which they are regarded by their parents. Conscious of the dissimilarity between their environment and her own, Anne responds to that recognition by assuring herself that she would not trade places with them:

Anne always contemplated them as some of the happiest creatures of her acquaintance; but still, saved as we all are by some comforting feeling of superiority from wishing for the possibility of exchange, she would not have given up her own more elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments; and envied them nothing but that seemingly perfect good understanding and agreement together, that good-humoured mutual affection, of which she had known so little herself with either of her sisters (41).

Certainly, there is some irony in that "saved as we all are," but not so much irony that we disbelieve the genuineness of Anne's preferring her "more cultivated mind." In fact, Anne's evoking her



high principles and superior taste in situations which remind her that she is "of inferior value" at home or which show the ability of others to win love is a quite consistent pattern in her behavior. Anne's opinion about the family's retrenchment is unsolicited, but she urges "more vigorous measures, a more complete reformation, a quicker release from debt, a much higher tone of indifference for everything but justice and equity" (12) than even Lady Russell is prepared to suggest. The pattern is repeated in Anne's response to Elizabeth's preferring Mrs. Clay's company to Anne's in Bath. Lady Russell is aggravated by the affront Elizabeth's attitude presents to Anne, but "Anne herself was become hardened to such affronts" (34). Consciously, Anne does not feel hurt by Elizabeth's preference for Mrs. Clay, but she does feel compelled to suggest to Elizabeth the danger of putting Mrs. Clay in frequent company with Sir Walter:

Anne was so impressed by the degree of their danger, that she could not excuse herself from trying to make it perceptible to her sister. She had little hope of success; but Elizabeth . . . should never, she thought, have reason to reproach her for giving no warning (34).

The primary thing to Anne is not that her advice be heeded, but that she gives it--that she is able to determine proper conduct, right principles, and correct behavior to the satisfaction of her own lofty standards. Her need to be right operates in place of resentment, jealousy, or hurt feelings. When Henrietta seems to be a candidate for Wentworth's affections, Anne becomes sensitive to the potential harm of a rivalry between the Musgrove sisters and especially to the unfair treatment Charles Hayter suffers as a

result of Henrietta's interest in Wentworth: "Anne longed for the power of representing to them all what they were about, and of pointing out some of the evils they were exposing themselves to" (82). Likewise, when Louisa seems destined to marry Wentworth, Anne becomes critical of the firmness of character by which Wentworth is so charmed. Following Louisa's accident, of course, Anne hopes that the lesson has not been lost on Wentworth.

In Horney's terms, Anne's attempts to maintain self-esteem by evoking her high standards are defenses by which she protects her lofty image of herself in circumstances which seem to cast doubt on her worth. These defenses are primarily intrapsychic responses in the sense that they do not depend upon reinforcement from others; Anne reassures herself instead of attempting to seek reassurance from others.

Another factor to be considered in analyzing the structure of Anne's personality is the way in which she relates to other people. For the perfectionist, interpersonal relationships are in some respects affected by his need not to recognize his own failure to live up to his rigid standards. He must not acknowledge weakness or helplessness in himself. To do so suggests that he has lost control of his life because of a failure to fulfill his shoulds. Consequently, the perfectionist externalizes the self-hate he may feel for not achieving his high standards or for any evidence he detects in himself of self-effacing trends. He feels contempt for others when he perceives in them qualities he cannot admit in himself.



The perfectionist's relationship to others is also influenced by his need for some confirmation of his image of himself. The admiration of those he does not respect is of little consequence to him. His contempt for the judgment of people with standards or accomplishments he regards as appreciably beneath his own leaves him immune to their failure to recognize his superior values. But from those whom he regards as nearly equal, from people whose values and accomplishments he admires, the perfectionist needs respect. His failure to earn their respect calls into question the validity of his image of himself and, therefore, his ability to master his own life. Without confirmation of the superiority of his judgment and his standards, the perfectionist feels vulnerable and helpless.

As Persuasion begins, Anne's only real friend is Lady Russell; and Lady Russell's distinguishing characteristic is that she maintains standards nearly as high as those held by Anne. Anne repeats both her mother's value for Lady Russell's judgment and her close friendship with her; in turn, Lady Russell's regarding Anne as "a most dear and highly valued god-daughter, favourite and friend" (6) is based upon her perception that Anne alone, among Lady Elliot's daughters, seems to have adopted her mother's dedication to high principles. None of the other characters, either at Kellynch or at Uppercross, holds Anne in the same high regard as does Lady Russell. Anne's need for respect is satisfied by Lady Russell's esteem for her, and Lady Russell's own high principles earn her Anne's friendship.



Most of the other characters in Persuasion are esteemed by Anne in proportion to the respect they evince for her and to the height of their standards. If one were to rank the characters according to their exhibition of just these two traits, one would have a pretty accurate guide as to how positively Anne responds to them. At the top of the scale are the Crofts and the Harvilles, whose principles are beyond reproach, and who receive Anne warmly and acknowledge her goodness. Mrs. Smith ranks highly because of her affection for Anne, although her early promotion of Mr. Elliot as a suitor for Anne makes her principles a little suspect. The Musgroves are friendly enough and seem to acknowledge Anne's good judgment, but they are not fully appreciative of all her talents and they display no serious interest in moral principles. Sir Walter and Elizabeth come near the bottom, of course, and Mrs. Clay, who is a kind of vulgar Elizabeth, ranks dead last.

Mary is a special case. Although she is not a fully developed character, Mary is shown to have a relationship with Anne that is a good deal more complex than Elizabeth's. Anne anticipates her two-month stay at Uppercross, if not with pleasure, at least without dread: "Mary was not so repulsive and unsisterly as Elizabeth, nor so inaccessible to all influence of hers" (43). (It is typical of Anne to hold people in some regard if they acknowledge her superior judgment.) Nonetheless, Mary's values do not bear a comparison with Anne's. The fact that Mary married Charles Musgrove, whose proposal Anne had rejected, bespeaks Mary's inferior standards.

Mary's personality, like Anne's, has been shaped by the pathogenic environment at Kellynch. Unlike Anne, however, she has attempted to resolve the resultant anxiety by a strategy of self-effacement. She relates to people by displaying helplessness and overt suffering. Mary's hypochondria is a plea, a demand, for help; and her suffering provides an alibi for her mismanagement of her children. When her claims are met, she is reasonable enough, but when they are not, she is miserable:

Mary had not Anne's understanding or temper. While well, and happy, and properly attended to, she had great good humour and excellent spirits; but any indisposition sunk her completely; she had no resources for solitude (37).

Her fear of being left alone and her complaints about not being visited often enough are based upon her neurotic claims for the support of others. Mary's image of herself is focused through her sense of victimization.

Anne never admits to feeling contempt for Mary. Among the "irregular feelings" which are taboo in the mind of a perfectionist must certainly be contempt for one's own sister. It is something akin to contempt, however, which prompts Anne to think Mary's happiness at going to dine with Wentworth "oddly constructed" (58) considering that little Charles had just broken his collarbone. Following the accident at Lyme, when Mary insists that she, rather than Anne, stay with Louisa, Anne acquiesces; but she "had never submitted more reluctantly to the jealous and ill-judging claims of Mary" (115). While Anne does not admit to feeling contempt toward her sister, in the face of all of Mary's hypochondria, her



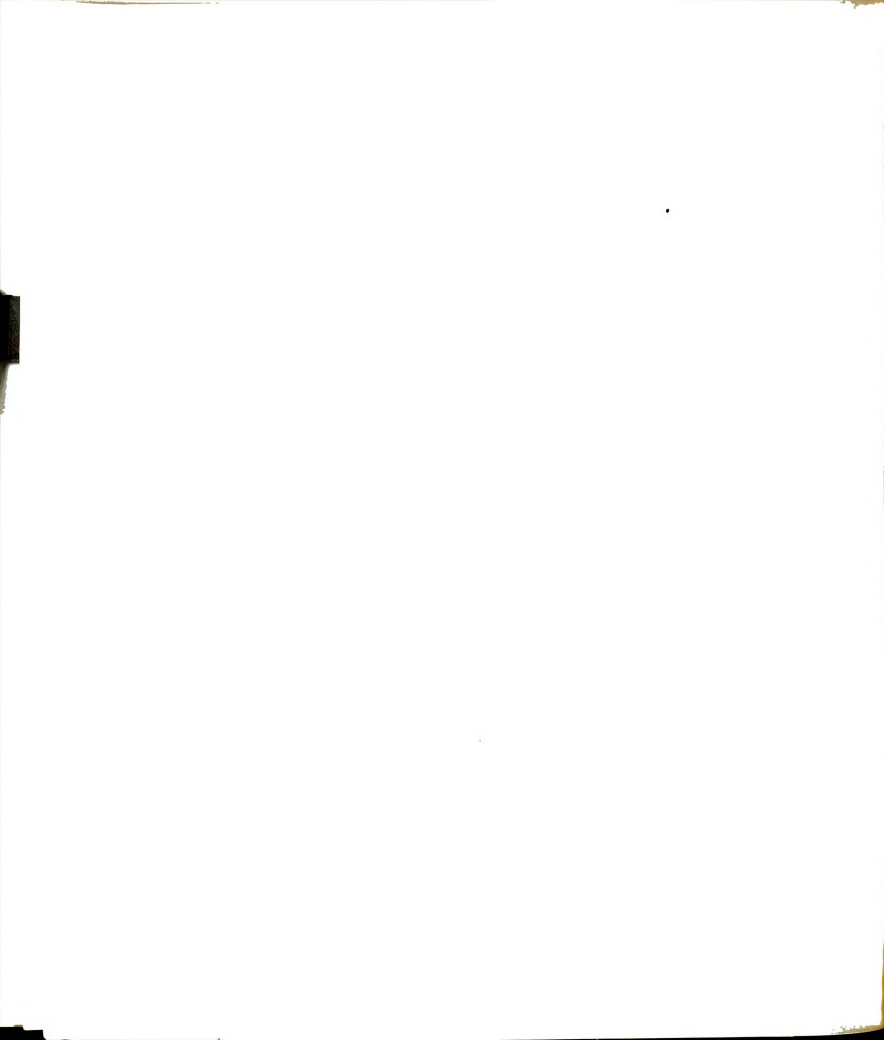
snobbishness, and her incompetence at child-rearing, we are likely to feel the contempt for her that Anne suppresses.

Anne experiences her contempt for Mary as a sense of moral superiority. For instance, she is sympathetic to the distress of the Musgrove girls about Mary's snobbish insistence upon Mrs. Musgrove's recognizing her higher social rank. Characteristically, when confronted by evidence that Mary has achieved at least some degree of happiness and, perhaps, love with Charles, Anne comforts herself with the conviction that she would have made a better wife for him than Mary. The basic reason that Anne needs to feel superior to Mary is the necessity she feels to reject her sister's self-effacing traits. Because Mary tries to cope with life by projecting an image of herself based upon helplessness and suffering, her solution threatens the validity of Anne's own strategies. Anne's need to feel superior to--to reject--Mary's self-effacing traits is grounded in part on the fact that she is not without self-effacing traits herself. Because she cannot admit to helplessness in herself, she externalizes her perception of it, and despises it in the exaggerated form in which it is embodied in Mary.

Expansive strategies differ from self-effacing strategies primarily in the fact that the former develop from the individual's identification with his proud self, the latter from his identification with his despised self. Anne's self-effacing tendencies, which co-exist with her other trends, can be seen in her need to be needed and in her sympathizing with almost everybody. When Mary claims that she "cannot possibly do without Anne," Anne is "glad to be

thought of some use": "To be claimed as a good, though in an improper style, is at least better than being rejected as no good at all" (33). There is something in these sentiments beyond mere dutifulness: this is Anne, feeling a little sorry for herself, feeling victimized, and being grateful that Mary acknowledges her usefulness. A similar tone is heard in the description of Anne's feelings about Lady Russell's esteem for her. She thinks "with heightened gratitude of the extraordinary blessing of having one such truly sympathising friend as Lady Russell" (42). Certainly, some part of the reason for Anne's yielding to Lady Russell's persuasions was her gratitude for her affection.

Related to Anne's need to be thought of as useful is another self-effacing trait: her apparently limitless capacity for sympathy, which endears her to many characters. She earns more than respect; she earns affection. Anne sympathizes with Lady Russell's depression at the Elliots' need to vacate Kellynch-hall, sympathizes with what is genuine in Mrs. Musgrove's grief for her dead son, sympathizes with Charles Hayter's moritification at Henrietta's flirtation with Wentworth, sympathizes with Henrietta's wish for Dr. Shirley to retire so that Hayter might get his parish, and, at one point, sympathizes with Benwick's grief over having lost his bride-to-be, Fanny Harville, and, at another point, sympathizes with Captain Harville's grief over Benwick's not having grieved long enough. It is Anne's capacity for offering sympathy to almost anyone who seeks it which accounts for her being made privy to all sides of the complaints at Uppercross.



These compliant characteristics are related to Anne's need to be perfectly good, but, more to the point, they also serve to win for Anne a place in the hearts of those she serves or to whom she is sympathetic. Anne's self-effacement does not much resemble the trait as it is found in Mary. Her need to control life through her perfection militates against her expressing an open appeal for support and affection by displaying helplessness. In fact, as we have seen in her feelings toward Mary, Anne displays contempt masked as moral superiority for the self-effacement she finds in others. Anne allays the tension produced by the conflict between her perfectionistic and her self-effacing tendencies by directing her contempt at others who display self-effacing characteristics.

The narrator's open contempt for Mrs. Musgrove's "large fat sighings" (68) is shared with the reader, but not attributed to Anne. Mrs. Musgrove indulges her feelings and romanticizes her dead son to the point of imagining that he would have been "just such another" (64) as Captain Wentworth had he lived. Anne's knowledge of the real character of Dick Musgrove and the unlikelihood of his ever having amounted to much is expressed in a smile as Mrs. Musgrove laments her loss, and in amusement when she detects Wentworth's fleeting expression of contempt for "poor Richard." But Mrs. Musgrove is not the only character in the novel who languishes over an extended period of time, and whose grief might be at least partially based upon a sentimentalization of the lost loved one. Anne's own suffering for Wentworth expresses a dependence and a vulnerability which in some ways conflict with her need to feel in

control of her own life. She externalizes her contempt for her own self-effacing tendencies by finding these traits amusing in Mrs. Musgrove.

Captain Benwick evokes in Anne some genuine sympathy and positive response, but also a degree of condescension for his grief over Fanny Harville. A knowledge of Benwick's misfortune and an intuition that "he has not, perhaps, a more sorrowing heart than I have" (97) incline Anne to befriend him. Typically, Anne feels "the right of seniority of mind" (101) toward Benwick, so much so that she advises him to indulge less in romantic poetry:

She ventured to recommend a larger allowance of prose in his daily study; and on being requested to particularize, mentioned such works of our best moralists, such collections of the finest letters, such memoirs of characters of worth and suffering, as occurred to her at the moment as calculated to rouse and fortify the mind by the highest precepts, and the strongest examples of moral and religious endurances (101).

Anne sees in Benwick's romantic grief a self-indulgent sentimentality which she does not admit in her own suffering over Wentworth. She exercises her moral superiority over Benwick's ostentatious grief in a way which parallels her attempts to master her own tendency to wear her broken heart on her sleeve. While she does not admit that Benwick has a heart as sorrowing as her own, she does recognize and is amused by her preaching "patience and resignation" to a man she has just met: "nor could she help fearing, on more serious reflection, that, like many other great moralists and preachers, she had been eloquent on a point in which her own conduct would ill bear examination" (101). It is an unintended irony, I think, that Anne includes herself among "other great moralists and

preachers." The real point, however, is that Anne's condescension toward Benwick, like her amusement with Mrs. Musgrove and her feelings of moral superiority toward Mary, is a kind of displaced contempt for her own self-effacing traits. Recognizing in others those compliant tendencies which she despises in herself, Anne directs her self-contempt outward in feelings of moral superiority toward those who display such self-effacing characteristics.

Anne is far more complex than she would be if she were motivated only by her comic and thematic functions in the novel. When we view Anne as a person who is conditioned by the frustration of some of her basic needs and whose responses to others are related to her defensive drives for perfection, we begin to understand the dynamics of her interpersonal relationships. In most instances, Anne's response to a character is simple and one-dimensional, because the character with whom she interacts is simple and one-dimensional. Her responses can be complex and sometimes contradictory, however, as is seen in her ambiguous relationship with Lady Russell.

We have seen that Anne's perfectionistic tendencies and her need for approval govern her attachment to Lady Russell. We have also seen that gratitude for Lady Russell's affection accounts for Anne's somewhat compliant relationship to her mother's old friend. It is curious, therefore, that Anne spends a great deal of time assuring herself of the extent to which her own opinions differ from those of Lady Russell. The basic difference between Lady Russell's values and Anne's is the former's "prejudices on the side of

ancestry" (11). These prejudices account for her more lenient recommendations for Sir Walter's retrenchment, her misjudgment of Admiral Croft, and her promotion of William Elliot as a husband for Anne.

Anne's insistence on the superiority of her own judgment seems based upon a need to fix the blame for her loss of Wentworth on Lady Russell. Of course, Anne insists that she does not blame her, that it was "one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides" (246). But Anne is convinced that she would never have given Lady Russell's advice, and Lady Russell has "to admit that she had been pretty completely wrong" (249) with regard to both William Elliot and Captain Wentworth. These facts suggest that, at least unconsciously, Anne blames Lady Russell. Her reminding herself that her own judgment is superior to Lady Russell's absolves Anne of responsibility for her own unhappiness. Anne was only being dutiful.

Another factor suggests that Anne has externalized the blame for the dissolution of her engagement. Anne is incapable of harboring vindictive feelings, even toward one whom she blames for frustrating her chance at happiness. But Anne suffers for eight long years because of Lady Russell's persuasions; and Lady Russell, who genuinely cares for Anne, begins to feel "the anxiety which borders on hopelessness for Anne's being tempted" (29) by some worthy suitor. Whatever else may be behind Anne's loss of bloom and spirits, and her long-suffering in Lady Russell's presence, there is a quality of perverseness about them, which recalls Karen Horney's

description of "functional suffering." Anne's suffering, like that of Horney's self-effacing neurotic, is a way "of absorbing rage and making others feel guilty" (Horney, p. 233). Her loss of vitality and youth accuses Lady Russell and exonerates herself.

In addition to the perfectionistic and self-effacing tendencies she evinces, Anne also reveals a tendency toward resignation. This is particularly apparent early in the novel, and there is enough reference to her early life to suggest that she developed resignation as a defense against the low esteem afforded her by Sir Walter and Elizabeth. While her intrapsychic strategies for restoring pride are clearly determined by her perfectionism, her efforts to avoid conflict and her minimal expectations of others are characteristic of detachment. Even Anne's relationship with Lady Russell, for all her gratitude for the affection the older woman gives her, seems distant. Anne's liking for lonely walks, her reading, her love of poetry all signify her active inner life, but they also help to isolate her from others. The detachment Anne exhibits in the novel is attributed to her loss of Wentworth, but there are strong suggestions that she developed the strategy much earlier in her life.

Now that we have seen the extent to which Anne's personality is structured by the three defensive strategies outlined by Karen Horney, we shall review the major events of the novel from the perspective of that understanding. It will become clear that, from a psychological perspective, Anne's actions and responses assume



a quite different significance from what may be construed from a structural or thematic perspective.

Most of the time, Anne's defenses work pretty well. Her conviction of her moral superiority, her lack of vindictiveness, her dutifulness, and her knowledge of right conduct are successfully integrated. She receives enough recognition of her sound judgment from the Musgroves and enough affection from Lady Russell to reinforce her image of herself as the embodiment of perfect goodness; and that image is vital to her defense against the lack of esteem she experiences in her own family.

At one point in her life, however, Anne's various defensive strategies were in conflict. That was, of course, during the brief period of her first engagement to Wentworth. Wentworth fulfilled Anne's highest standards of perfection, and she his: "It would be difficult to say which had seen highest perfection in the other, or which had been the happiest" (26). The attributes of each were complemented rather than duplicated in the other. "He was, at that time, a remarkably fine young man, with a great deal of intelligence, spirit and brilliancy; and Anne an extremely pretty girl, with gentleness, modesty, taste, and feeling" (26). Except that Anne is at least as intelligent as Wentworth, each represented to the other the perfection of qualities he admired but did not possess. They seemed ideally suited for each other, and their engagement was the natural sequel to their having met.

Wentworth's romantic dash, self-confidence, and hearty spirit are typical enough heroic virtues in comedy; but for Anne these traits must have been especially appealing. For all the reasons previously discussed, Wentworth and the navy represent a repudiation of Sir Walter and his value system. For Anne, who is the major victim of Sir Walter and his values, Frederick Wentworth of the navy represents the ideal vehicle for her triumph over those who have hurt her. Anne's own values and her ideal image of herself prohibit her from seeking vindictive triumph, but her marriage to Wentworth would have offered a measure of vindictive triumph, nonetheless. As even Sir Walter recognizes, the navy's heroic actions have raised to distinction men to whom he once would not have spoken. The navy's assault on the closed ranks of the landed gentry foreshadows the diminution of Sir Walter's society, and Anne's marriage to the young, aggressive naval captain would have insured her participation in the dismantling of Sir Walter's world. Wentworth's aggressiveness and his confidence in his luck and his own ability constitute the very qualities required for Anne's retaliation against the abuses of her father, but they are qualities she lacks.

Lady Russell's opposition to the match precipitated a conflict among some of the elements basic to Anne's character. Anne's pride in her own judgment prompted her to trust Wentworth's self-confidence about making his fortune in the navy: "Such confidence, powerful in its own warmth, and bewitching in the wit which often expressed it, must have been enough for Anne" (27). Yet Lady Russell's prudential objections were not without foundation, as Anne



recognized. Lady Elliot's marriage had been contracted in a moment of "youthful infatuation" (4); and Anne's consciousness of her mother's unhappiness justified prudence. Additionally, Anne's veneration of her mother made her especially vulnerable to the persuasion of Lady Russell, on whom her mother had relied for advice in matters of principle. These factors and Anne's somewhat submissive attachment to Lady Russell, as well as her need to exhibit perfection in matters of principle and conduct, conspired to convince her to break the engagement.

We must accept the genuineness and the intensity of the conflict Anne experiences because of Lady Russell's opposition to the engagement if we are to understand the eight years of Anne's suffering. As we have seen, Anne's only really effective defense against the lovelessness of her home is to invest all her pride in her knowledge of correct behavior. In addition to providing her with a self-concept which protected her from the pain of her inconsequence at Kellynch-hall, Anne's high standards won for her Lady Russell's affection. Thus, when Lady Russell questioned Anne's discretion and her sense of propriety in contracting the engagement, she appealed to Anne at the point where she was most vulnerable. In doing so, in calling into question the efficacy of Anne's ideal image of herself, she conjured up Anne's compliant self.

Yet the high standards by which Anne judges others found perfection in Wentworth, and the aggressive qualities she requires were available through him--he was one of the very few men she could love and she knew it. She was unable to resolve the dilemma



presented by her genuine love for him and Lady Russell's prudential objections to the marriage until she convinced herself that the dissolution of the engagement was "principally for his advantage" (28). She could not yield to Lady Russell's persuasion on the basis of what was prudent for her when breaking the engagement meant rejecting her own evaluation of Wentworth's character and hurting him in the process. Her need to be good prohibited her from hurting others, particularly the man she loved. By convincing herself that Wentworth's interests were better served if she relieved him of the responsibility of a wife while he was trying to make his way in the navy, Anne tried to reconcile the conflict between her desire not to hurt anyone--to be perfectly good--and her desire to conform to Lady Russell's concept of propriety and discretion. Anne's decision, because she chose against her own happiness, satisfied her self-effacing demands upon herself as well as those demands dictated by her perfectionism.

From Anne's point of view, the ideal sequel to this difficult period in her life would have been for Wentworth to go off, make his fortune, and then return and renew the engagement. All of Lady Russell's prudential objections would have been obviated by then; and Anne's decision to break the engagement, as well as her original estimation of Wentworth's character, would have been vindicated. In fact, Wentworth considered just such a course, as he confesses after their reconciliation, but "I was proud, too proud to ask again. I did not understand you. I shut my eyes, and would not



understand you, or do you justice'" (247). Earlier, the narrator provides a more complete picture of Wentworth's resentment:

He had not forgiven Anne Elliot. She had used him ill; deserted and disappointed him; and worse, she had shewn a feebleness of character in doing so, which his own decided, confident temper could not endure. She had given him up to oblige others (61).

Anne's own perception of Wentworth's attitude is a source of her grief. She cannot reconcile her high regard for him with his "unconvinced and unbending" (28) resentment of her. She cannot defend herself against his bitterness toward her in the way in which she characteristically defends herself against the abuse of others--by assuring herself of the superiority of her standards and her values. She is, therefore, completely vulnerable to his resentment.

The "only thoroughly natural, happy, and sufficient cure" (28) for her pain would be for her to fall in love with someone else. But Anne persists in maintaining her standards in spite of what she suffers; no one suited to "the nice tone of her mind, the fastidiousness of her taste" appeared within "the small limits of the society around them" (28). Anne suffers her loss of Wentworth for eight years.

The basis upon which the perfectionist deals with the world is a "conviction of an infallible justice operating in life [which] gives him a feeling of mastery":

His own perfection therefore is not only a means to superiority but also one to control life. The idea of undeserved fortune, whether good or bad, is alien to him. His own success, prosperity, or good health is therefore less something to be enjoyed than a proof of his virtue. Conversely,

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any misfortune befalling him . . . may bring this seemingly well-balanced person to the verge of collapse. He not only resents ill fortune as unfair but . . . is shaken by it to the foundations of his psychic existence. It invalidates his whole accounting system and conjures up the ghastly prospect of helplessness (Horney, p. 197).

Anne's "deal" with life is nullified by Wentworth's failure to understand the reasons for her breaking their engagement and to return when he was financially secure enough to marry. Anne responds to this invalidation of her accounting system, this attack on the foundations of her psychic existence, just as she did in response to her father's failure to love her: by withdrawing from an active participation in life: "Her attachment and regrets had, for a long time, clouded every enjoyment of youth; and an early loss of bloom and spirits had been their lasting effect" (28).

The rationale for Anne's withdrawing from others is clearly to avoid the pain she endured because of the whole episode with Wentworth. Her defensive strategies of perfectionism had been developed to protect her from the pain of her lovelessness at home. Her moral superiority had seemed to insure her sense of self-worth and to secure for her the esteem of people of real understanding. With Wentworth, her exercise of her moral judgment brought her more lovelessness and more pain. Anne has no weapons with which to cope with life if her strategies of perfectionism are invalid. Consequently, instead of seeking love, she forsakes it, resigns herself to doing without it, and comforts herself with her usefulness to her nephews, the affection she receives from Lady Russell, and the

interest she derives from the tame pursuits in which she engages in the neighborhood of Kellynch.

Karen Horney suggests that a person who develops resigned tendencies often does so following some period of distress, "of anxiety, of depression, of despair about some failure or about some unfortunate life situation in which he has become involved" (Horney, p. 269). Anne's failure simultaneously to maintain her high standards and to claim her reward for doing so constitutes such a situation. The "desolate tranquility" which characterizes Anne following Wentworth's departure resembles the persistent resignation described by Horney.

Anne never really abandons her perfectionistic image of herself. The glimpses we get of her psyche show that her defensive strategies for maintaining her self-worth in her own mind are still bound up with her identification with her high standards. But Anne has curtailed her openness to emotional involvement with others as a result of her experience with Wentworth.

One of the positive functions served by detachment is "the keeping intact of [one's] inner life" (Horney's emphasis, p. 275). The inner life Anne strives to keep intact is the consciousness of her moral superiority. By withdrawing from others, she eliminates the risk of having that conviction threatened by circumstances, as it was by her involvement with Wentworth. In effect, Anne takes a second step back from love and the emotional risk connected with loving. The first step was her creation of her image of moral superiority as a defense against her futile attempt to win love from



her father. Now she takes a second step and tries to eliminate the need for romantic love as confirmation of her worth.

Anne's resignation is manifested in several ways. Before Wentworth returns, Anne's life is lived without zest or enthusiasm. In a life which seems to lack goals or direction, one of Anne's chief pursuits is the avoidance of conflict. And, although she feels strongly about many things, and although she experiences many emotions, she strives to conceal her feelings from others.

Among the attractions which make Uppercross preferable to Kellynch in Anne's mind are Mary's children, in whom "she had an object of interest, amusement, and wholesome exertion" (43). Except for her walks and her reading, there is very little else in Anne's life which she regards with enthusiasm. Her dutifulness at Kellynch is largely defensive, and her friendship with Lady Russell is unfulfilling. But Uppercross has its disagreeable circumstances, as well. Anne is "treated with too much confidence by all the parties, and [is] too much in the secret of the complaints" (44) between Charles and Mary, and between the residents of the Great House and the residents of the Cottage. Anne's judgment and sympathy are appealed to by all, but she cannot abide conflict. "How was Anne to set all these matters to rights?" wonders the narrator on Anne's behalf. Anne tries to "listen patiently, soften every grievance, and excuse each to the other" (46) to eliminate the conflicts which disturb her tranquility.

One of Anne's most distinguishing characteristics is that she feels things deeply but struggles to hide her deep emotions from



others. The view we get of Anne at the piano at Uppercross, "very much preferring the office of musician to a more active post," being used to feeling "alone in the world" (47), epitomizes her withdrawal from others and her effort to conceal her emotions from them. Where Wentworth is concerned, Anne strives to deny even to herself that she retains strong feelings for him. When she first hears that Wentworth's sister, Sophia Croft, is to live at Kellynch-hall, she struggles to suppress the surge of emotion she feels: "many a stroll and many a sigh were necessary to dispel the agitation of the idea" (30). Following her first encounter with him since his departure eight years before, her agitation increases:

Soon, however, she began to reason with herself, and try to be feeling less. Eight years, almost eight years had passed, since all had been given up. How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an interval had banished into distance and indistinctness (60).

But she reasons in vain: "Alas! with all her reasonings, she found, that to retentive feelings eight years may be little more than nothing" (60). She even begins to hate herself for wondering what Wentworth's feelings were toward her.

The conflict is instructive. Whatever tranquility Anne had achieved by resigning herself from involvement with others is now threatened. She resists now the loss of that tranquility, but her feelings are overpowering. She searches for evidence that her resurgent emotions are groundless. When Mary repeats Wentworth's observation that he thought Anne "so altered he should not have known you again" (60), she rejoices. His words "were of a sobering

tendency; they allayed agitation; they composed, and consequently must make her happier" (61).

Anne's composure is short-lived; Wentworth's return has destroyed her equanimity. When she plays the piano, she is still "glad to be employed, and desired nothing . . . but to be unobserved," but now "her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she sat at the instrument" (71).

Each time she encounters Wentworth her emotions reassert themselves and she attempts to scold them back. When Wentworth removes young Walter from Anne's back as she is attending little Charles, Anne becomes "ashamed of herself, quite ashamed of being so nervous, so overcome by such a trifle; but so it was; and it required a long application of solitude and reflection to recover her" (81). Anne fears that if Lady Russell were to see her in Wentworth's company she might "think that he had too much self-possession, and she too little" (93).

Gradually, however, Anne comes to recognize that her resignation no longer works and to accept the inevitability of her feelings toward Wentworth. On the walk to Winthrop Anne begins to become more accepting of her feelings for him. When, conscious of her fatigue, he hands her into the gig with the Crofts, she cannot contemplate his gallantry "without emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain, that she knew not which prevailed" (91). Her response here is something quite different from her nervous, embarrassed reactions to their earlier encounters. Although Wentworth has yet given no

indication that he might have renewed his interest in her, Anne begins to accept her emotional attachment to him.

Anne does not suffer the less in Wentworth's company for having accommodated herself to the fact that she still loves him. She is able, nonetheless, to harden herself to Wentworth's presence. Conversing with him "becomes a mere nothing" (99) for Anne.

Anne's gradual abandonment of her restrictions on her own feelings renews her vulnerability. In admitting to herself that she still loves Wentworth, she forsakes detachment and becomes more like the Anne Elliot with whom Wentworth had fallen in love. Anne has no thought of winning Wentworth back; in her mind he is as good as engaged to Louisa; but she shows greater willingness to become emotionally attached to others, as her warm response to the Crofts and the Harvilles makes clear. More importantly, she appears once again to be open to romantic attachment.

Anne's early interest in Benwick derives from a combination of her desire to be sympathetic to others and a certain presumption of moral authority. Neither attitude is especially contrary to a strategy of detachment but her emotional involvement with him is contrary to that strategy. By the time she leaves Lyme, Anne has a decidedly undetached interest in Benwick: "she felt an increasing degree of good-will towards him, and a pleasure even in thinking that it might, perhaps, be the occasion of continuing their acquaintance" (115). Early in Volume II, when Charles Musgrove intimates that Benwick may be in love with Anne, her "good-will . . . was not to be lessened by what she heard" (130-31).

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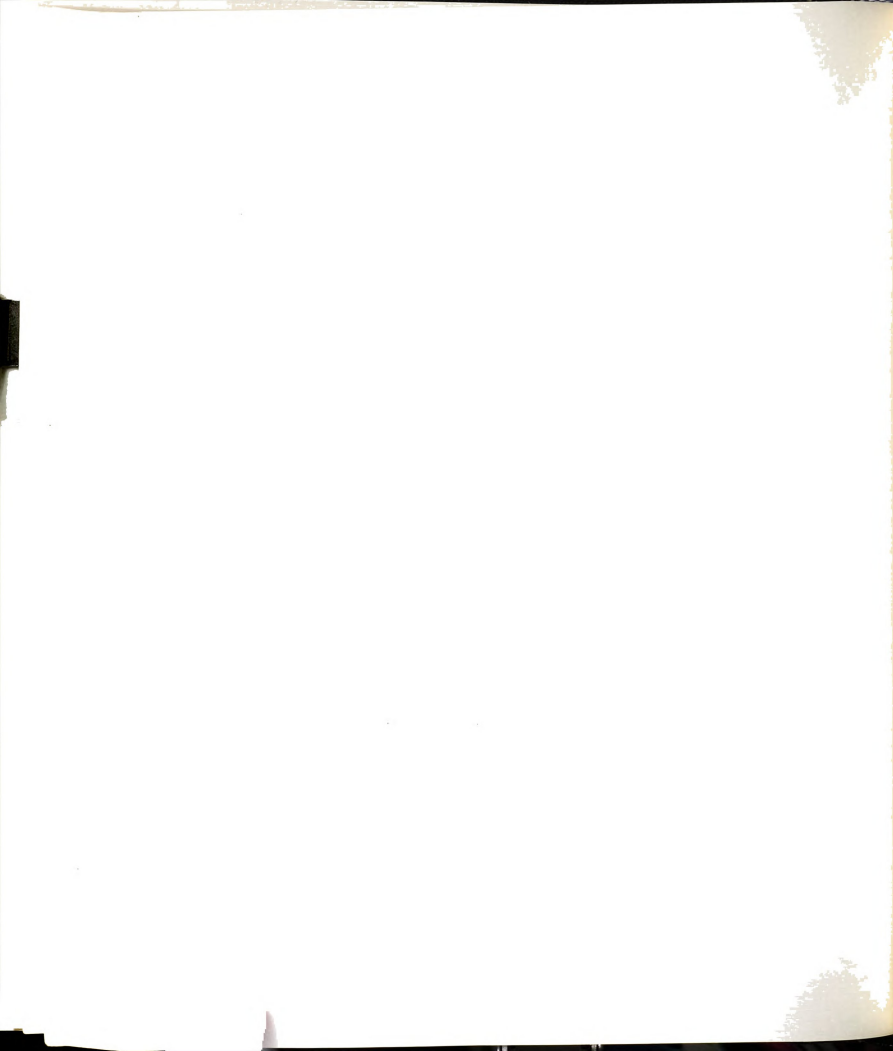
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The return of Anne's bloom is accounted for by the narrator as the result of "the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion" (104) at Lyme. It is noteworthy, however, that the restoration of Anne's bloom accompanies her gradual willingness once again to involve herself emotionally with others. When Anne first encounters William Elliot on the beach at Lyme, she is not insensible to his "earnest admiration" (104) of her, and even Wentworth begins to see "something like Anne Elliot again" (104). Anne's wish to know who her admirer is suggests more than a detached curiosity and, in context with her warm relationship with Benwick, suggests further a renewed receptiveness to romantic attachment. Although once learning Mr. Elliot's identity Anne cautions Mary of the inadvisability of seeking an introduction, she is not the less pleased at "that cousinly little interview" (107).

Identifying the causes of Anne's abandonment of resignation as a strategy for dealing with others is less important than recognizing that it happens. Anne begins to accept the risks inherent in emotional involvement with others in part because as she breaks out of the restrictive environment of Kellynch and moves first to Uppercross then to Lyme Regis, she encounters people who respond to her perfectionistic traits. The older Musgroves praise her and rely on her judgment; the worthy Crofts befriend her; the Harvilles include her in their extended family; Captain Benwick may even be falling in love with her. The Harvilles and Captain Benwick present object lessons to Anne: the Harvilles show her the necessity of living a full and open life in spite of loss; Benwick shows her the



essential self-destructiveness of disproportionate grief. Coupled with the reinforcement she receives from the naval characters, their examples provide the impetus for Anne's new openness. The sea breeze blowing on Anne's complexion and restoring her bloom is an apt metaphor for the influence that the sea characters have on Anne's psyche.

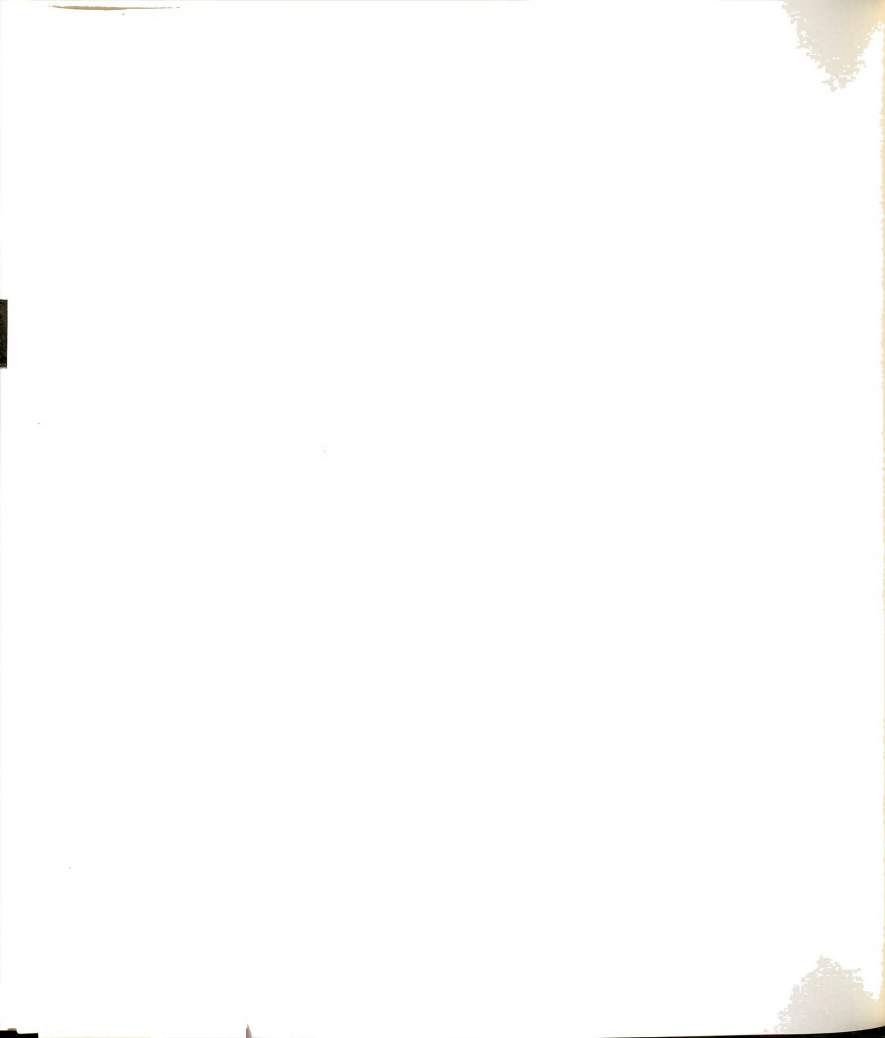
It is chiefly Wentworth's softening toward Anne that accounts for the change in her. Wentworth observes her attentiveness to little Charles, learns that she had rejected Musgrove's proposal, perceives her kindness to Benwick, and witnesses her strength, decisiveness, and cool-headedness following Louisa's accident at Lyme. Gradually, his attitude evolves into friendship and an earnest reliance upon her competence at Lyme.

Anne is aware of Wentworth's changing attitude toward her, although she never allows herself to hope that it will become love. His softening opinion of her is nonetheless vital to her abandonment of her restrictions upon emotional attachment. Wentworth's superior manners, virtues, and judgment make him a person whose esteem Anne solicits. His low opinion of her character has wounded her as deeply as the loss of his love. As she becomes aware of his increasing friendship toward her, she becomes more and more able to admit her feelings toward him. In doing so, Anne re-integrates her perfectionistic defensive strategies with perfectionism as a way of dealing with others. Her apparently irredeemable loss of Wentworth is accepted by her in a kind of romance of hopeless love, but she no longer sees her separation from him as an invalidation of her

"accounting system." Her reacquisition of his friendship and esteem restores her faith in her superior values as a basis upon which to gain reassurance of her individual worth from others of real understanding.

In the first seconds following Louisa's accident, Wentworth reveals his most deeply-felt and, perhaps, unconscious estimation of Anne. With all of his studied reserve and whatever remains of his hurt pride swept aside by the traumatic event, he exhibits his intuitive conviction of her knowledge of the proper course of action. Both he and Charles Musgrove "seemed to look to her for directions" (111), and Anne responds by supplying them. Wentworth's reliance upon Anne is revealed even more strongly when he suggests that she stay to nurse Louisa: "'no one so proper, so capable as Anne!'" (114).

Wentworth's entreaty moves Anne deeply--it "seemed almost restoring the past" (114). When he solicits her opinion on a related matter, Anne almost glows: "the remembrance of the appeal remained a pleasure to her--as a proof of friendship, and of deference for her judgment, a great pleasure" (117). Without attempting to prove to Wentworth that he has misjudged her, by simply being herself, Anne succeeds in winning back, if not his love, his respect, which is even more important to her. By deferring to her judgment he appeals precisely to that element in her character structure in which she invests all of her pride. It proves to her the validity of her perfectionism as a way of relating to others,

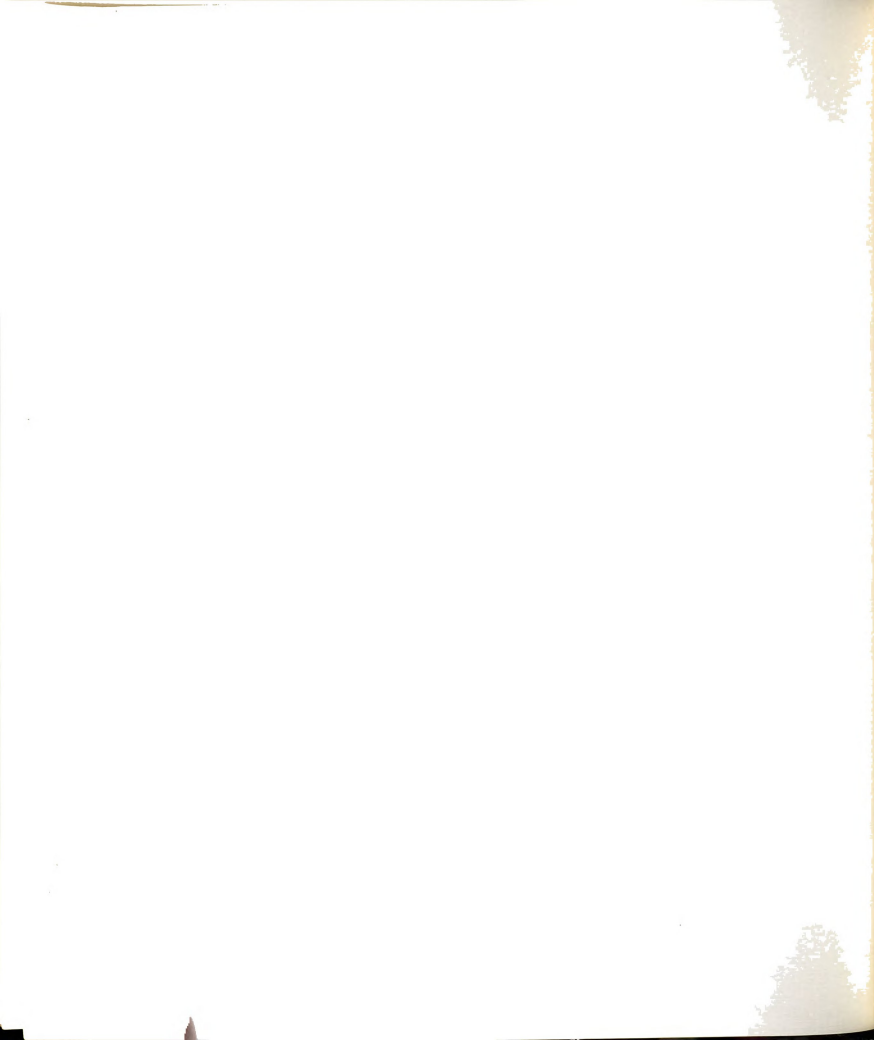


and she is ready at the end of Volume I to try her newly re-integrated strategies in the world.

By the time she returns to Kellynch to visit Lady Russell at her apartments there, Anne has completely abandoned her resigned strategies. Having had her pride restored by Wentworth's changed opinion of her and by the admiration of the Crofts, the Harvilles and Captain Benwick, Anne is ready to allow her proud self to re-emerge. The revival of her proud self is reflected in her improved appearance.

Anne's renewed receptivity to the risk of emotional attachment is expressed in her response to the news from Charles that Captain Benwick had shown an interest in her. Upon hearing so, "she boldly acknowledged herself flattered" (131). That is a new sentiment for Anne, especially in its suggestion of her openness to romance. But Benwick is never a serious contender for Anne's newly vulnerable heart. Admiral Croft once observes to Anne that Benwick "is rather too piano for me" (172), and she must certainly agree. It is William Elliot who first attracts Anne, and who displays some of those qualities Anne demands from those who would win her respect and love.

Anne's first impression of Mr. Elliot at Lyme is that he "was undoubtedly a gentleman, and had an air of good sense" (106). This estimation is re-inforced when she finally meets him in Bath, where she is even able to compare his manners to Wentworth's: "they were not the same, but they were, perhaps, equally good" (143). She also compares him favorably with Lady Russell in his earnest concern



about the accident at Lyme. In fact, Lady Russell becomes his advocate; she is the first to imagine that he would make a suitable husband for Anne. The qualities she admires in him are those which appeal to the high standards of both women:

Every thing united in him; good understanding, correct opinions, knowledge of the world, and a warm heart. He had strong feelings of family-attachment and family-honour, without pride or weakness; he lived with the liberality of a man of fortune, without display; he judged for himself in every thing essential, without defying public opinion in any point of worldly decorum. He was steady, observant, moderate, candid; never run away with by spirits or by selfishness, which fancied itself strong feeling; and yet, with a sensibility to what was amiable and lovely, and a value for all the felicities of domestic life, . . . (146-47).

To be sure, Anne is suspicious from the first of Mr. Elliot's desire for reconciliation, but she does not dispute that he really seems to possess those qualities that Lady Russell admires. In spite of her suspicions, Anne regards him as "without any question their pleasantest acquaintance in Bath; she saw nobody to equal him" (148).

In my preceding chapter, Anne's rejection of William Elliot's suit was examined in the context of the thematic structure of Persuasion. Because it is Anne who articulates the moral dimensions of her action, and because anything a character says contributes to our understanding of his personality, Anne's reasons for rejecting Mr. Elliot are equally significant from the point of view of her mimetic characterization. Anne's initial attraction to Mr. Elliot and her ultimate rejection of him can be understood psychologically as well as thematically.

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William Elliot really loves Anne, as even Mrs. Smith admits. He is not only attracted to her physically, but he genuinely admires her perfectionistic traits. In their friendly dispute over the family's efforts to renew the acquaintanceship with Lady Dalrymple, Mr. Elliot says to Anne, "'My dear cousin, you have a better right to be fastidious than almost any other woman I know; but will it answer? Will it make you happy?'" (150). He shames her with his flattery for her translation of an Italian song into English. To him Anne is "'one who is too modest, for the world in general to be aware of half her accomplishments, and too highly accomplished for modesty to be natural in any other woman'" (187).

William Elliot's flattery is highly gratifying to Anne. Fastidiousness is the very quality the narrator singled out as the basis for Anne's having remained unmarried all these years. Mr. Elliot's recognition of that quality in her attracts Anne to him in spite of her suspicions. His acknowledgment of her accomplishments and modesty is sufficiently flattering to her that her attention is momentarily diverted from Wentworth--at the very moment that she has decided that Wentworth must love her.

Becoming the next Lady Elliot represents to Anne becoming as much like her mother as is possible; and Anne's whole life has been an attempt to emulate her mother. Lady Russell confesses to her that Anne's "'occupying your dear mother's place . . . would give me more delight than is often felt at my time of life!'" (159-60). Pleasing Lady Russell, her one "truly sympathising friend," has likewise been no small object in Anne's life. And, certainly, becoming



the next mistress of Kellynch would represent the ultimate in vindictive triumph over Elizabeth, and would gain for her an admiration and gratitude she has never known from Sir Walter. Coupled with the facts that Mr. Elliot seems really to love Anne and that he is in a position to make her financially and socially secure, these other inducements are compelling, indeed.

But Anne will not make her mother's mistake by compromising her high standards for social position, or even for love. If Lady Elliot could be excused the youthful infatuation which made her Sir Walter's wife, Anne could never excuse such misjudgment in herself. Her moral sense is the basic element of her character structure, and that sense tells her that to marry William Elliot would be a violation of her responsibility to herself. Anne scolds Wentworth for not distinguishing between her having allowed herself to be persuaded by Lady Russell to break her engagement with him, which she had done in the name of duty, and her allowing herself to be persuaded to marry Mr. Elliot, whom she did not love. Anne does not love Mr. Elliot because she distrusts his character; and for Anne love and respect for one's character are very nearly the same thing.

Anne's suspicion of William Elliot's character seems insubstantial and priggish, the more so because his transgressions are never dramatized:

She distrusted the past, if not the present. The names which occasionally dropt of former associates, the allusions to former practices and pursuits, suggested suspicions not favourable of what he had been. She saw that Sunday-travelling had been a common thing; that there had been a period of his life (and probably not a short one)

when he had been, at least, careless on all serious matters; and, though he might now think very differently, who could answer for the true sentiments of a clever, cautious man, grown old enough to appreciate a fair character? How could it ever be ascertained that his mind was truly cleansed? (160-61).

This is hardly creditable as a basis for moral judgment, but it is crucial in Anne's strategy of perfectionism. Anne must ascertain the moral character not only of a man she might marry but of everyone she meets. Before she has Mrs. Smith's evidence about William Elliot, Anne's objections to him stem more from her inability to penetrate his social facade than from his actual violations of her private code of morality. Thus, he threatens a fundamental attribute in which she invests her pride, her discernment of the moral character of others, and she rejects him. Mrs. Smith's information is an unlooked-for corroboration.

Anne's rejection of William Elliot is based on his not letting slip evidence of his true feelings which might sabotage his mastery of social propriety. Comparing him with Wentworth, Anne finds Mr. Elliot wanting:

There was never any warm burst of feeling, any warmth of indignation or delight, at the evil or good of others. This, to Anne, was a decided imperfection. Her early impressions were incurable. She prized the frank, the open-hearted, the eager character beyond all others. Warmth and enthusiasm did captivate her still. She felt that she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless thing, than those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped (161).

Anne's tongue never slips; carelessness and hastiness are anathema to her code of personal conduct. The only "burst of feeling" she allows herself in the whole novel is in her conversation with



Captain Harville on the subject of constancy. Although Anne demands moral standards from others as high as her own, her need never to allow her emotions to overcome her decorous behavior is not a requirement she makes of others. In fact, her superiority is confirmed by her ability to maintain her poise in situations in which everyone else gives way to emotion and confusion, as the scene on the Cobb illustrates. Although she regards Mr. Elliot's ability to guard his emotions as "a decided imperfection," her own capacity for that kind of control is basic to her self-esteem.¹¹

It is Frederick Wentworth, not William Elliot, who combines high moral standards, aggressiveness, and open-heartedness to Anne's satisfaction. Although Anne once admits that "had there been no Captain Wentworth in the case" (192) she might have felt differently about Mr. Elliot, for as long as she is able to maintain her standards, she will resist the charm of William Elliot and the seduction of becoming the next Lady Elliot, even at the risk of an unfulfilled life. Her renewed openness does not come at the expense of her moral superiority.

By the time Anne arrives in Bath, she has had the efficacy of her perfectionistic strategies confirmed by the admiration she wins from the Crofts and the Harvilles. She has even regained Wentworth's respect. Although she still suffers from the loss of Wentworth's love (having been newly reminded of his great merit), she has learned to live with that regret and has no thought of winning back his love. But at Bath she finds a new virtue to try to develop



in herself. If her admiration of Mrs. Smith is any indication, she now appears ready to progress beyond mere fortitude and resignation to find what happiness she can in life in spite of her disappointment.

Anne's beginning to take responsibility for her own happiness becomes apparent following the revelation that Wentworth is once again eligible. Anne determines to discover if he is hurt by Louisa's engagement to Captain Benwick: "If she could only have a few minutes conversation with him again, she fancied she should be satisfied; and as to the power of addressing him she felt all over courage if the opportunity occurred" (180).

Of course, Anne is eager to learn of Wentworth's response to the engagement, but she is emboldened to create opportunities to talk with him by her recognition of and mortification at the slights presented to him by her family. When she first encounters him in Bath, Anne sees Wentworth's willingness to acknowledge his acquaintance with Elizabeth, "and she had the pain of seeing her sister turn away with unalterable coldness" (176). Because of Elizabeth's snub and because "Lady Russell overlooked him," Anne feels "that she owed him attention" (180). At the concert, therefore, she is more forward than she might otherwise have been. In spite of the presence of her "formidable father and sister in the background," Anne feels "equal to everything which she believed right to be done" (181). Her conviction of her knowledge of proper conduct, developed as a defense against her lovelessness at home, now serves her in her pursuit of

love. Anne engages Wentworth in a conversation from which she becomes convinced by what he says and does that he must love her.

Once Anne is certain that Wentworth loves her, she experiences emotions ranging from utter joy at the prospect of fulfillment, to anxiety over his jealousy of Mr. Elliot, to determination to provoke him into declaring himself, to disbelief in the liberties she takes with social decorum in creating opportunities for him to know her heart. As she perceives her reunion with Wentworth becoming increasingly likely she experiences a nearly overwhelming excitement.

To send Wentworth the right signals, Anne embarks upon a series of maneuvers to create situations and to engage in conversations in which she can make known her receptiveness to his love. The series of events in Volume I which returns Anne to her former self and which reveal to Wentworth the Anne with whom he first fell in love is paralleled in Volume II by a series of events in which Anne seeks to make her sentiments known to him so that he might declare his love for her.

At the concert, Anne endeavors to create a space beside her to entice Wentworth to sit with her and to continue a promising conversation. Later, at the White Hart Inn, Anne declares for Wentworth's benefit that she would rather attend a play with the Musgrove party (which includes Wentworth) than the reception for Lady Dalrymple given by her own family. She next encourages a conversation in which he alludes to the time of their first engagement.

All of these maneuvers by Anne produce in her feelings of great anxiety and confusion. After she protests her indifference to



the party for Lady Dalrymple, for instance, "she trembled . . . , conscious that her words were listened to, and daring not even to try to observe their effect" (225). There is always the possibility that she has misinterpreted Wentworth's feelings for her, and being wrong on that score would be especially traumatic to Anne, given her pride in her judgment, not to mention her disappointed feelings. But even if she is right, she is risking a great deal in being so forward in her attempts to draw Wentworth out. Anne has internalized many of the rules of propriety which govern women of her social class. Her strict adherence to her society's conception of decorum and elegant behavior is an important element in her perfectionistic demands upon herself. Yet she comes close to violating some of the articles in her code of conduct as she encourages Wentworth to become bolder. Throughout the time that she creates opportunities for Wentworth to know her feelings and to express his own, and even after they are finally reunited, Anne struggles to keep her forwardness and to contain her felicity within her principles of conduct.

To avoid letting her emotions override her sense of proper behavior, Anne often seeks or longs for intervals of solitude in which she might sort out her feelings. Instances of this behavior occur through the whole novel, but they become especially frequent following Wentworth's appearance in Bath. Following a short conversation with him at the concert, she anticipates that they will speak their love for each other that evening, so she is happy to be apart from him awhile: "it was as well to be asunder. She was in

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need of a little interval for recollection'" (185). After she declares her preference for the Musgroves' plan to see a play, in company with Wentworth, she is so drained by the tension of awaiting the outcome of her strategem that she excuses herself and returns to her room at Camden-place, "where she might be sure of being as silent as she chose" (227). When she finally reads Wentworth's letter declaring his love for her, she experiences such "an overpowering happiness" that she cannot attend to the conversation of those around her:

The absolute necessity of seeming like herself produced then an immediate struggle; but after a while she could do no more. She began not to understand a word they said, and was obliged to plead indisposition and excuse herself (238).

She feels the need for solitude: "Would they only have gone away, and left her in the quiet possession of that room, it would have been her cure" (238).

Of all the many scenes in Persuasion which render Anne's varied and tender feelings in such precise and sympathetic detail, I find these the most moving. Anne Elliot, who has always prided herself on her ability to control her life by her perfect understanding of how to act, is thrown into complete confusion by the fulfillment (or the anticipated fulfillment) of the one need that has gone unrequited in her life. The expectation that Wentworth will shortly declare his love causes her to mistrust her ability to maintain control over her own actions, or even to know how to act. Yet, she insists upon the "absolute necessity of seeming like herself," which I take to mean the necessity of maintaining her perfectionistic



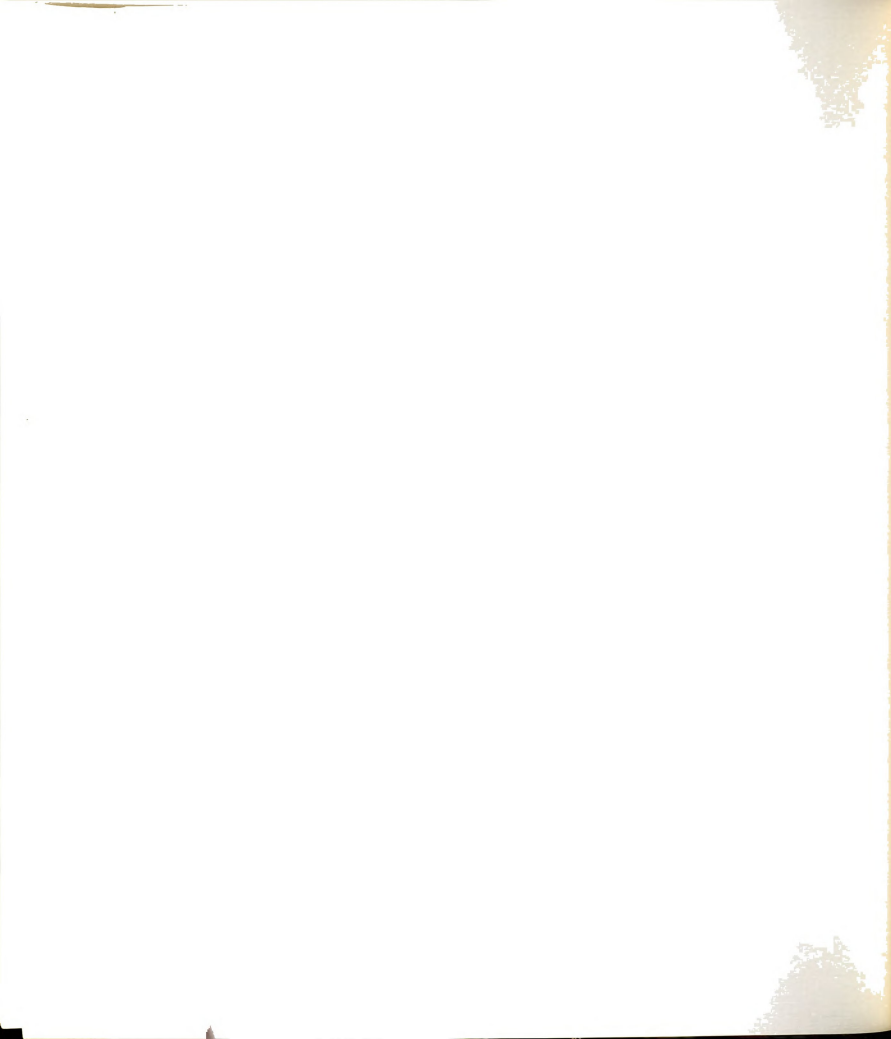
demands upon herself, the efficacy of which is proven by her imminent reunion with Wentworth. Under the circumstances, "seeming like herself" is an "absolute necessity" to Anne because her self-image as the embodiment of perfect goodness, perfect understanding in matters of principle, and perfect conduct is absolutely necessary to her belief in her ability to compel life.

In spite of the conflict she experiences between her principles of conduct and her emotions, Anne never betrays her excitement to the assembly at the White Hart. In fact, for all her anxiety over her deliberate attempts to signal Wentworth of her receptivity to his love, Anne never compromises her standards or society's standards of acceptable feminine behavior. Her maneuvers are not efforts to win his love; they follow her conviction that he already loves her. She merely endeavors to encourage him to say so. More importantly, the event which finally does embolden him to write his letter is not even a conscious maneuver on Anne's part. The debate with Captain Harville resembles not Anne's bold creation of a place beside herself at the concert but the scenes in Volume I in which Anne undesignedly reveals her real character to Wentworth. At the White Hart, she expresses her constancy and depth of feeling, the recognition of which at last moves Wentworth to declare himself.

In defending her belief to Harville in the greater constancy of women, Anne argues from experience. Her insistence that women love longest "'when existence or when hope is gone'" (235) is a thinly veiled expression of her own suffering because of her loss of Wentworth as well as her constancy to him. It is a highly emotional

scene--perhaps the most emotional in Jane Austen's whole canon. Certainly, Anne has never before come so close to an open admission of her continuing love for Wentworth. She is overcome with emotion herself after articulating her own suffering and hopelessness for the sake of the very person to whom she has once again become vulnerable: "She could not immediately have uttered another sentence; her heart was too full, her breath too much oppressed" (235).

Anne really does love Wentworth; she has genuinely suffered from having lost him; and she has despaired of ever being reunited with him. And it is especially true that Anne has been constant, although it is not quite true that she has been constant to Wentworth. The narrator revealed long ago that Anne has never loved another because "No second attachment . . . had been possible to the nice tone of her mind, the fastidiousness of her taste, in the small limits of the society around [her]" (28). Everything we have learned about Anne substantiates that judgment. It is not so much Wentworth to whom she has been constant as her own high standards. Her earlier rejection of Charles Musgrove and her more recent rejection of William Elliot are based upon their failure to measure up to the qualities Anne demands in those who would win her respect or affection. Her conviction that marriage to Wentworth "could not divide her more from other men, than their final separation" does not come until well after she is already sure that Wentworth loves her. Her admission that Lady Russell might have persuaded her to marry Mr. Elliot belies her insistence that she could marry only Wentworth.



Anne loves Wentworth now for the same reasons she fell in love with him eight years earlier. Only Wentworth embodies those ideals of perfect manners, a high sense of duty, "sympathy," "natural grace," "kindest consideration," "intelligence, spirit, and brilliancy," self-confidence, frankness and open-heartedness, and "warmth and enthusiasm" which Anne finds so bewitching. And it is still Wentworth whose aggressiveness and expansiveness complement Anne's perfectionism in her need for vindictive triumph over her father and his society. He appeals both to her overt perfectionism by his own high standards and to her covert self-effacing need to delegate the responsibility for her vindictive triumph. Marriage to William Elliot would have given her a measure of triumph over Elizabeth and would have proven to Sir Walter that he had misjudged Anne. But it would have been a triumph by Sir Walter's own standards at the expense of her own. Marriage to Wentworth gives triumph to Anne on her own terms with her lofty standards still intact. It finds Sir Walter irrelevant.

The high standards by which Anne measures the character of others have not changed since she was a persuadable girl of nineteen. Even more important, her sense of having maintained her principles underlies her sense of her own undiminished personal integrity. Not even in the flush of excitement and fulfillment that she experiences at being reunited with Wentworth is she prepared to question the validity of her demands upon herself or the justice of her breaking their first engagement: "'I was right, much as I

suffered from it . . . if I had done otherwise, . . . I should have suffered in my own conscience'" (246).

Anne's conscience--her sense of her superior moral judgment--is too basic to her defense system for her to question it. Her powerful need for self-justification compels her to solicit Wentworth's admission that she had been right and to insist on Lady Russell's admission that she had given Anne wrong advice and that she had misjudged both Wentworth and William Elliot: "There was nothing left for Lady Russell to do, than to admit that she had been completely wrong, and to take up a new set of opinions and of hopes" (249).

We have already examined from a thematic point of view the importance of the distinctions Anne makes to justify her having been persuaded by Lady Russell to break the first engagement. From a psychological point of view, what is impressive is the self-congratulatory casuistry in her final conversations with Wentworth. Anne needs to feel not only that her reunion with Wentworth betokens future happiness but that her happiness has been delayed because of the failure of others to appreciate her high standards, and that it has been earned by her suffering to maintain her standards.

Anne's constancy to her high standards, in both her demands upon herself and her expectations of others, is the key to her character. In being constant to her superior values, she keeps up her end of her bargain with life. She wins Wentworth's love and protection, she achieves status in the society which triumphs over her family, and she hears Lady Russell's acknowledgment of her superior



judgment, not because she has sought these things, but because she has been true to her moral code. The perfectionist's "conviction of an infallible justice operating in life" leads Anne to expect fair treatment from the world. She has been dutiful, has forsaken vindictiveness, has suffered, and above all has been constant to her high standards. At last the world fulfills her claims on it. With Wentworth's letter in her hand, Anne does not regard its contents as something earned by her pursuit of happiness or her efforts to win Wentworth's love. Convinced that she has played by the rules, Anne reads the letter to discover how well the world has kept its end of the bargain.

Anne's and Wentworth's reunion (on Union street) is the occasion for their discussion of his conduct since his arrival at Uppercross. That evening at the card party at Camden-place the subjects are Anne's conduct in breaking their first engagement and Wentworth's failure to attempt to renew the engagement after he had become financially secure. We have examined the nature of those conversations earlier; the significant point in this context is that Wentworth admits he has been wrong, and Anne insists that she was right. Wentworth concludes: "I must endeavour to subdue my mind to my fortune. I must learn to brook being happier than I deserve" (247). Anne has no such thoughts. She deserves what fortune has given her; or rather, what fortune has given her is evidence of the validity of her perfectionistic demands upon herself. She has

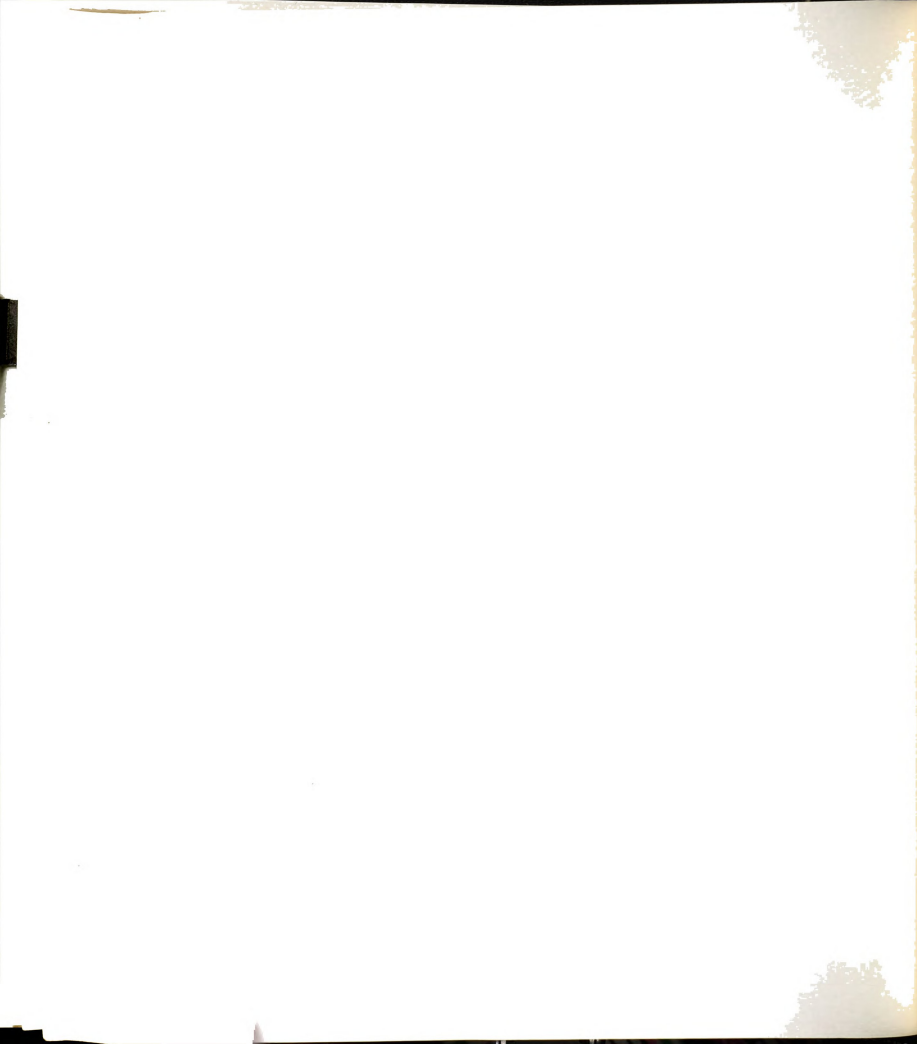
fulfilled her end of the bargain with life, and now, at last, life comes through for her. To William Elliot's question about whether her fastidiousness will make her happy, Anne can finally say with assurance, "Yes!"

NOTES: CHAPTER III

¹Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (London: Oxford University Press, 1966). Hereafter, references to this work will be included in my text following the quotation.

²Scholes and Kellogg reach their conclusion that mimetic characters are not susceptible to systems of psychological classification by means of an interesting non-sequitur. They admit to a division in representational portraiture between psychological and sociological values. Sociological representation, by its very nature of portraying an historical, geographical, or class milieu through characters, is somewhat of a self-contradiction. To claim that a character is a true portrait of a sociological type is to deny his individuality and to make him illustrative of values apart from his unique identity. Therefore, conclude Scholes and Kellogg, "the psychological is more mimetic than the sociological. Characterization by sociological type involves an inevitable generalizing process; it opens the way to illustrative characterization and allegory; whereas, characterization by presentation of thought process does not inevitably include reference to systems of psychological classification" (S & K, p. 101).

The non-sequitur is that there is nothing about sociological representation that necessarily refers to systems of classification of the discipline of sociology any more than psychological representation necessarily refers to systems of classification of the discipline of psychology. Scholes and Kellogg confuse their observation that sociological representation makes use of the same phenomena as does the discipline of sociology with the unwarranted assumption that the author must have intended his characters to represent the classifications formulated by sociologists. The creation of characters who are sociologically representational has nothing whatever to do with systems of sociological classification. The analysis of characters who are sociologically representational, however, may have a great deal to do with such systems of classification. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how a critic would go about analyzing the sociological portraits of a work without reference to one sort of system of classification or another. When the critic observes that Jane Austen's characters are representative of the country gentry in late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth century England, he makes reference to sociological classifications. If he attempts to demonstrate the validity of his generalization, he will be led inevitably to some historical or sociological study of the



mores and rituals, the taboos and customs, the sexual roles and the class distinctions which existed in specific social groups.

Similarly, as Scholes and Kellogg note, a character may be a highly accurate psychological portrait without the author's intending that the character represent a psychological type: "characterization by presentation of thought processes does not inevitably include reference to psychological classification." But it is also true that while the presentation of thought process does not require the artist to refer to a classification system, the analysis of those thought processes may well require the critic to refer to such a system. The artist as creator of psychological portraits and the psychologist as classifier and analyst of real human beings have a common subject matter: the "thought process" and the behavior of real people. Just as the critic makes use of the generalizations and classifications of sociologists to illuminate sociological representation in fiction, he can refer to the generalizations and classifications of psychologists to illuminate psychological representation in fiction. Scholes and Kellogg observe that the psychological impulse creates characters "whose motivation is not susceptible to rigid ethical interpretation." It does not follow, however, that the motivation of such characters is not susceptible to any kind of classification; the very fact that a character is the product of a "psychological impulse" suggests the susceptibility of his motivations to psychological understanding and classification.

³Paris, p. 4.

⁴E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1927; reprint ed., Harvest Books, n.d.), p. 66. This passage is cited in Paris, p. 11.

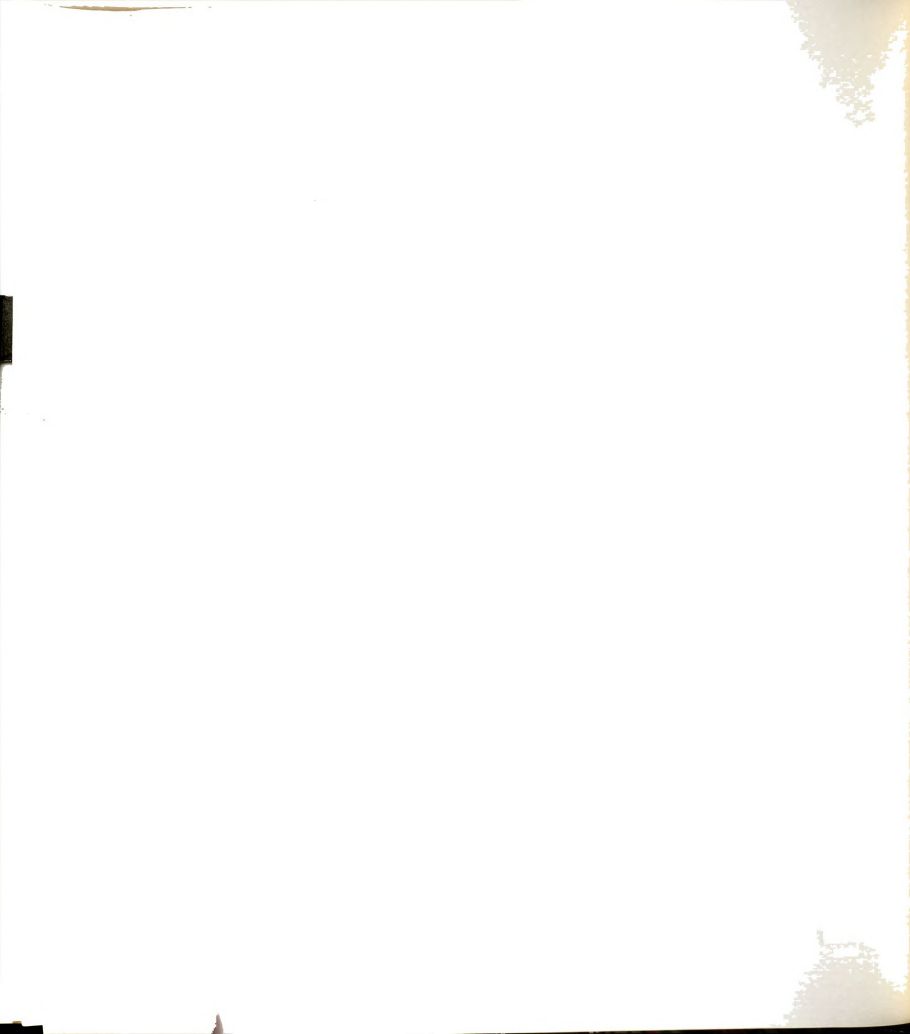
⁵Georg Lukács, Studies in European Realism (New York, 1964), p. 10. This passage is cited in Paris, p. 10.

⁶W. J. Harvey, Character and the Novel (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965; also in Cornell Paperbacks, 1968), p. 210. Hereafter, references to this work will be cited in my text following the quotation thus: (Harvey, p. 210).

⁷Frederick Crews, "Anaesthetic Criticism," Psychoanalysis and Literary Process, ed. by Crews (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1970), p. 19.

⁸Paris, p. 23.

⁹Because I will discuss only those features of Horneyan psychology which seem to me applicable to Persuasion, I omit much of what is compelling in her work. For a discussion of the relationship of Karen Horney to other Third Force psychologists and of Third Force psychology to other schools of psychology, see Paris's Chapter II: "The Psychology Used: Horney, Maslow and the Third Force."



¹⁰Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950), p. 17. Hereafter, references to this work will be cited in my text following the quotation thus: (Horney, p. 17).

¹¹Jane Nardin has also noticed that Anne does not possess the qualities she professes to admire in Wentworth:

"Anne never consciously reflects that she herself does not exhibit the spontaneity of manner she most admires, but in fact of all the characters, she alone is described as elegant: 'the elegant little woman of seven and twenty, with . . . manners as consciously right as they were invariably gentle' (p. 153 [Nardin's ellipsis]). And Anne never commits a real breach of propriety, in spite of the fact that her sufferings, as she bears slights and injustices with perfect decorum, are often severe."

Those Elegant Decorums: The Concept of Propriety in Jane Austen's Novels (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973), pp. 141-42.

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CHAPTER IV

SYNTHESIS: "THE NATURAL SEQUEL OF AN UNNATURAL BEGINNING"

The Ironic Narrator and the Implied Author

In the last chapter of Persuasion, the narrator addresses the reader directly to comment upon the inevitability of Anne's marriage to Wentworth once the couple is reconciled. Young people are pretty sure to marry once they make up their minds to do so, no matter how imprudent the match, she says. "This may be bad morality to conclude with, but I believe it to be the truth" (248), the narrator tells us; but she hastily adds that Anne's marriage to Wentworth, given the history of their relationship, cannot be thought imprudent. The observation marks the only occasion in the novel when the narrator refers directly to herself, but the ironic tone of the observation is characteristic of the narrator, especially in the introductory chapters.

In fact, only occasionally between the first chapters and the last chapter does the narrator insinuate her ironic point of view into the narrative. Much of Persuasion could have been related to us by Anne herself; we learn most things as Anne learns them, and usually we know only of Anne's internal responses to characters and events. Anne is, in effect, the narrator of most of her own story, because the story unfolds for us through Anne. As Wayne Booth



observes, the relationship between narrator and heroine is much different in Persuasion than the relationship which exists in Emma:

Anne Elliot's consciousness is sufficient, as Emma's is not, for most of the needs of the novel she dominates. Once the ethical and intellectual framework has been established by the narrator's introduction, we enter Anne's consciousness and remain bound to it much more rigorously than we are bound to Emma's. It is still true that whenever something must be shown that Anne's consciousness cannot show, we move to another center; but since her consciousness can do much more for us than Emma's, there need be few departures from it.¹

When the narrator does emerge as an identity distinct from Anne, it is often to express an ironic observation or a caustic judgment of which Anne would be incapable. The introduction of the characters at Kellynch and the history of events that brought them to their predicament are related to us in the mocking, ironic voice of the narrator. The introduction of Sir Walter is typical:

--Be it known, then, that Sir Walter, like a good father, (having met with one or two private disappointments in very unreasonable applications) prided himself on remaining single for his dear daughter's sake (5).

The narrator sabotages Sir Walter's posturing with the double-barrelled indictment that not only did his determination to remain single for Elizabeth's sake follow his failure to secure a second wife for himself, but his offers of marriage were probably made to women of significantly higher station. The narrator leaves no room for sympathy; we are required to laugh at every gesture Sir Walter makes on behalf of his own dignity.

The ironic narrator similarly intrudes to call attention to the self-delusion of a somewhat more sympathetically drawn character at Uppercross. Mrs. Musgrove's lamentations over her dead son,

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Richard, must be seen to be ridiculous if the reader is to be properly annoyed at her diverting Wentworth's attention from Anne to talk about her son and if he is to appreciate Wentworth's gesture of sympathy. The narrator, therefore, provides the background to Richard's having gone to sea in such a light that the reader is unlikely to waste much sympathy on Mrs. Musgrove:

The real circumstances of this pathetic piece of family history were, that the Musgroves had had the ill fortune of a very troublesome, hopeless son; and the good fortune to lose him before he reached his twentieth year; that he had been sent to sea, because he was stupid and unmanageable on shore; that he had been very little cared for at any time by his family, though quite as much as he deserved; seldom heard of, and scarcely at all regretted when the intelligence of his death abroad had worked its way to Uppercross two years before.

He had, in fact, though his sisters were now doing all they could for him, by calling him "poor Richard," been nothing better than a thick-headed, unfeeling, unprofitable Dick Musgrove, who had never done any thing to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name, living or dead (50-51).

The information that Richard had been "scarcely at all regretted" provides the reader with the necessary perspective from which Mrs. Musgrove's ostentatious grief becomes ironic. But the narrator does not merely mock Mrs. Musgrove's sentimentality, she derides her for being fat and for indulging her feelings. She declares Mrs. Musgrove's "large fat sighings" ridiculous because her bulk and her expressions of "deep affliction" constitute one of those "unbecoming conjunctions . . . which taste cannot tolerate" (68). She betrays utter disdain for a rather harmless foible in a rather innocuous character for no other apparent reason than that Mrs. Musgrove inadvertently sits between Anne and the man she loves.

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The narrator's impatience with characters who, however innocently, fail to promote Anne's reunion with Wentworth or who remain imperceptive of her virtues is apparent once again in a scene in Bath. Shortly after Anne determines that Wentworth must love her, her happiness is played off against that of Elizabeth, who basks in the reflected light of Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret. The sisters are about to parade into the concert room, each apparently at the zenith of her own individual fulfillment:

Very, very happy were both Elizabeth and Anne Elliot as they walked in. Elizabeth, arm in arm with Miss Carteret, and looking on the broad back of the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple before her, had nothing to wish for which did not seem within her reach; and Anne--but it would be an insult to the nature of Anne's felicity to draw any comparison between it and her sister's; the origin of one all selfish vanity, of the other all generous attachment (185).

Perhaps nowhere else in the novel does the narrator so clearly indicate, indeed demand, that her readers respond to the characters in such a prescribed manner. Not that there is ever much doubt about what is being held up for admiration and what for ridicule, but here is the narrator in her own voice expressing impatience with the very effort required to delineate the contrast between the two sisters, a contrast the scene seems intended to dramatize. Whatever distance existed between narrator and heroine collapses entirely here, and we discover a narrator completely identified with the interests of the heroine.

Marvin Mudrick, among others, has taken note of the emotional involvement of the narrator in the events of the novel:

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In Persuasion, Jane Austen's tone has acquired a sharp, personal edge. This edge, which she does not vindicate by any claim of aesthetic or social propriety, emerges in the novel as a compulsive exasperation, turned, at unpredictable moments against any character who fails--for whatever reason--to advance the interests of her heroine (Mudrick, p. 207).

Mudrick further notes that among all of Jane Austen's novels, "Only in Persuasion does the irony coarsen to sarcasm, the judgment become ardently personal" (Mudrick, p. 218). He attributes the sarcasm and the personal judgment to a "new element" in Persuasion, absent in the other novels: personal feeling. Anne's carefully delineated, precisely rendered emotional states are the core of the novel, according to Mudrick, and the deeply personal attachment Jane Austen betrays in her condemnation of the absurd characters is the "waste energy" of the creative effort required to produce the element of feeling in the heroine and in the novel. The animosity expressed towards Elizabeth (and Sir Walter, Mrs. Clay, and the Musgroves, as well) represents "a failure of technique and a misdirection of feeling" (Mudrick, p. 219) in Persuasion.

The "ardently personal" judgments Mudrick ascribes to Jane Austen are more verifiably attributable to the narrator of the novel. Mudrick's accounting for the narrator's sarcasm as a waste product of the creative effort that infused feeling into the characterization of the heroine, however poetic, fails to trace the sarcasm and the emotional involvement to its demonstrable source: the personality of the narrator, and through the narrator to the personality of the implied author.

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One of the functions of the narrator is to reinforce Anne's moral perspicacity, thus establishing the heroine's authority to pronounce upon the ethical implications of her story. For instance, the contrast between Anne's proposals for extracting the family from debt and the strategies adopted by Sir Walter and Elizabeth is one means by which Anne's superior moral judgment is established. The narrator's irony (and sarcasm) directed at Sir Walter and Elizabeth clearly indicate in which character the norms of the novel inhere. A similar contrast is resolved by the narrator's tone in the matter of Mary's and Anne's opinions on childrearing.

Both Anne and the narrator, then, embody the norms of the novel in the sense that both express views upon characters and incidents which represent how the reader is to regard those characters and incidents. Of course, because there is little distance between the narrator's moral perspective and Anne's there is little irony directed at Anne. Yet Anne and the narrator emerge as distinctly different and, in some ways, antithetical personalities. The narrator ridicules Mrs. Musgrove, castigates Sir Walter, and expresses exasperation with Elizabeth. In contrast, Anne merely smiles to herself at Mrs. Musgrove's self-delusion; she demands from herself a show of respect for her father; and she admits to no sentiment harsher than embarrassment and regret at Elizabeth's behavior. Anne displays qualities of patience and magnanimity which are decidedly uncharacteristic of the narrator.

For the reader fully to appreciate the depth of Anne's goodness and perfection he must share the narrator's caustic evaluation

of the characters who absorb the brunt of the narrator's irony. The narrator expresses the animosity and vituperation which such characters deserve when viewed from the perspective of the novel's norms. Anne's gentler, less worldly responses are all the more to be admired in contrast to the narrator's justifiable disdain for the characters. The reader who would judge Persuasion in terms of its own norms is required both to acquiesce to the narrator's caustic treatment of many of the characters and to admire Anne's benign--even unrealistic--response to those characters.²

The contrast between the narrator's clear-eyed, unsentimental treatment of characters and Anne's less worldly, benign response to them parallels an important contradictory element which Karen Horney identifies in the perfectionistic personality. The perfectionist's superior standards lead him to regard with contempt those who fail to live by his lofty principles. Yet those same high standards prevent him from acknowledging his contempt for most of his fellow men. He hides his "arrogant contempt for others . . . behind polished friendliness, because his very standards prohibit such 'irregular' feelings" (Horney, p. 196). In Persuasion the arrogance and contempt inherent in perfectionism are expressed by the narrator, leaving Anne to exhibit only those qualities consistent with her glorified image of herself. Together, Anne and the narrator display the full range of responses typical of perfectionism, but the less benevolent aspects of that strategy are expressed only by the narrator.

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Since Anne and the narrator reveal different and somewhat conflicting elements of perfectionism, yet equally incorporate the norms of the novel, it is clear that they may be regarded as manifestations of a personality in whom all of the norms of the novel inhere. That personality is, of course, the implied author of Persuasion. The implied author of a work, as the term is defined by Booth, is that personality, that "second self," whom we infer from the totality of the novel. The identity of the implied author is constituted by all of the conscious and unconscious choices that have gone into the creation of a novel. These choices are shaped not only by ethical impulses, but by psychological impulses. We can infer not only the moral structure of an implied author's personality, but the psychological structure, as well.

Anne is not simply a character created in the implied author's own image. We infer an author who is more worldly, less sentimental, more perceptive about others, and less introspective than is Anne. An indication that Anne is something other than a representative of the implied author is the fact that the narrator is permitted an occasional jibe at Anne in which the reader is invited to laugh (albeit sympathetically) at the romantic side of Anne's personality.³ For the most part, however, the implied author endorses Anne's perfectionism and vindicates her defensive strategies. If her psychological makeup is not identical with Anne's, it is one which is greatly attracted to and completely sympathetic to the way in which Anne responds to her world.

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The implied author's sympathy for Anne is demonstrated by the reliable narrator's warm and largely unironic descriptions of the heroine. In addition, the implied author's glorification of Anne's perfectionism is apparent in the way in which the events of the novel and the utterances of the sympathetically drawn characters are manipulated to vindicate her. Anne's rejection of the prospect of marrying William Elliot is the central decision she makes in the course of the novel. Events prove her intuitive suspicion of her cousin to have been correct. The series of coincidences which uncovers Mr. Elliot's duplicity, especially Mrs. Smith's fortuitous previous acquaintance with him, reveals the implied author's determination to vindicate Anne's judgment by marshaling the events of the novel to bear out Anne's intuition, even when those events are improbable. Likewise, for maintaining her high standards at the price of much personal unhappiness and for resisting the appeal of becoming the next Lady Elliot, Anne is rewarded by being reunited with Wentworth. The triumph which Anne enjoys is entirely a function of the implied author's determination to reward her. There is little about Anne's final happiness that can be said to develop causally from her character.

In a real sense, the implied author structures and manipulates the events of the novel to conform to the "deal" which Anne has made with life. In return for her goodness and rectitude, Anne is rewarded with marriage to a man who comes to recognize her full worth in her own terms. The implied author is completely sympathetic to the terms of Anne's "deal": she insists upon Anne's having



fulfilled her shoulds, glorifies her defensive responses, and finally grants her claims on life. From this perspective, Persuasion is a fantasy of the perfectionistic solution in which the heroine finally achieves all of the recognition and triumph which she has earned by her lonely adherence to her lofty standards. The perfectionism is Anne's but the fantasy is the implied author's.

Not only does the implied author manipulate events in the service of Anne's triumphs, but she absorbs the responsibility for the vindictiveness of these triumphs. When characters who opposed Anne are humiliated, the implied author allows (perhaps requires) the reader to feel vindictive triumph on Anne's behalf without ever permitting that emotion to be attributed to Anne. That strategy is apparent in the reconciliation scenes between Anne and Wentworth. His confession provides an occasion for Anne to feel vindictive triumph (in addition to vindication), but she never betrays it, except, perhaps in her insistence that he "should have distinguished" (244) between her having yielded to duty once and the violation of duty which would have been necessary to allow herself to be persuaded to marry a man she did not love. The sense of vindictive triumph which emerges from the scene is entirely between the implied author and the reader. It is never attributed to Anne.

The pattern of placing Anne in situations in which the reader can feel vindictive triumph on her behalf is a consistent one in Persuasion. For example, Louisa's fall on the Cobb not only teaches Wentworth to distinguish between heedlessness and steadfastness, with all the vindication of Anne which that implies, but

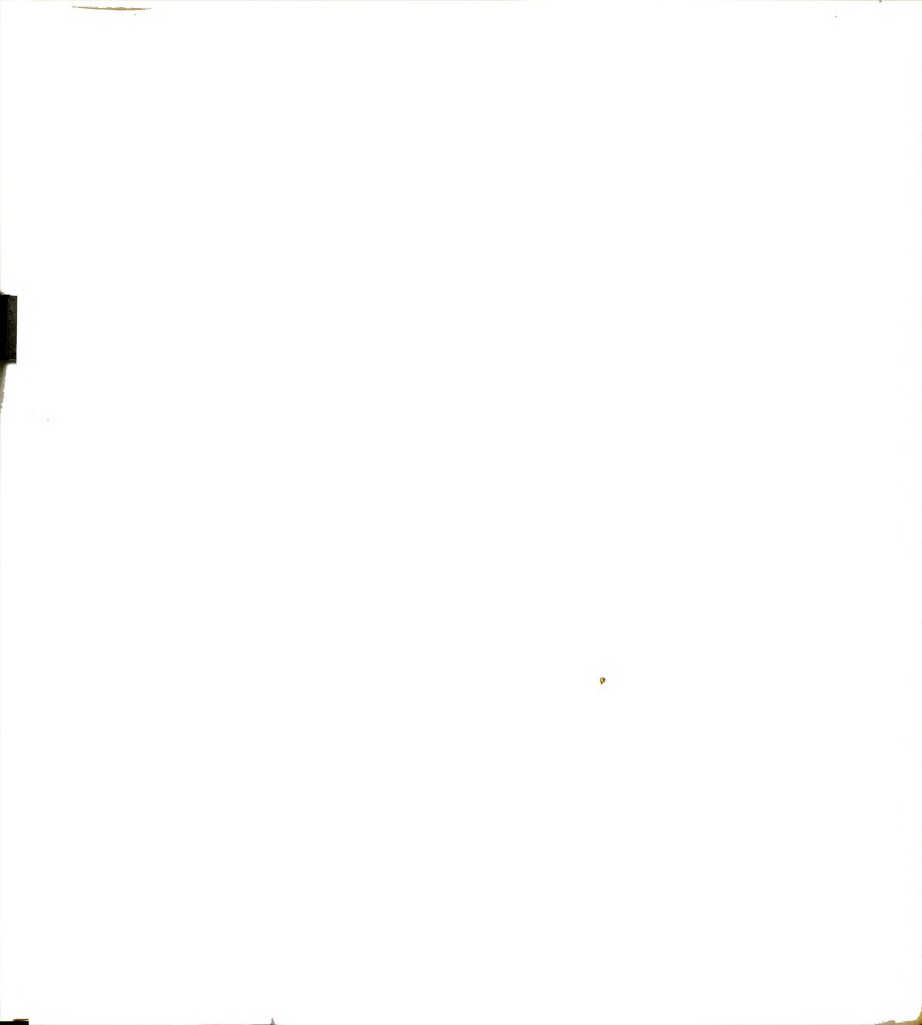


it also provides Anne with a measure of triumph over her major rival for Wentworth. William Elliot's liaison with Mrs. Clay vindicates Anne's earlier rejection of him because of her suspicions about his character; but it also humiliates Lady Russell, Sir Walter, and Elizabeth because they have been taken in by him.

At the end of the novel, with all of her claims fulfilled and all of her enemies defeated, Anne experiences only those emotions consistent with her self-image:

Glowing and lovely in sensibility and happiness, and more generally admired than she thought about or cared for, she had cheerful or forbearing feelings for every creature around her. Mr. Elliot was there; she avoided, but she could pity him. The Wallises; she had amusement in understanding them; Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret; they would soon be innoxious cousins to her. She cared not for Mrs. Clay, and had nothing to blush for in the public manners of her father and sister (245-46).

Nothing of vindictiveness in any of this. But in the concluding pages the narrator, as spokesman for the harsher judgments in the novel's norms, takes over once again to distribute the rewards and punishments. Sir Walter must admit Wentworth to be "quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish, spendthrift baronet, who had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him" (248). Lady Russell "must learn to feel that she had been mistaken" (249). Elizabeth "had soon the mortification of seeing Mr. Elliot withdraw" (250). And Mr. Elliot and Mrs. Clay, having undone each other's best schemes, now appear to be joined in mutual misery for the foreseeable future. By assuming to herself the responsibility for all of this vindictive triumph, or by ascribing it to the narrator,



or to events, the implied author permits Anne to keep intact her perfectionistic and self-effacing characteristics while at the same time allowing the vindictiveness to be expressed.⁴

The implied author not only grants Anne's vindictive triumphs, she enjoys them and expects the reader to enjoy them. This is especially apparent in the fact that Anne's triumphs constitute the substance of the comic conclusion of the novel. The mood of celebration which accompanies the defeat of the blocking characters in comedy works in Persuasion to enlist the reader's participation in the implied author's enjoyment of Anne's triumph over her adversaries. The perfectionist's vision is fulfilled in the triumph that Anne has never sought. Her triumph is presented as the natural development of the characters' being the kind of people they are. Good people triumph and bad people are humiliated. Even if the reverse seems true for a time, fate has a way of making it all come right in the end. Of course, in Persuasion, fate is the implied author, manipulating events to conform to her vision.

Another tactic by which the implied author glorifies Anne is to put into the mouths of sympathetically drawn characters words which reinforce for the reader the validity of Anne's defensive strategies, and the superiority of her character. Wentworth's admission of guilt for not having renewed his engagement to Anne when he was financially able to do so, and, therefore, his responsibility for Anne's unhappiness--and his own--is the most significant instance of a character's reinforcing Anne's own estimate of the superiority of her standards. Wentworth confesses that he had

misjudged Anne's reasons for breaking their engagement, and had tried to deny to himself the feelings he still held for her:

He had imagined himself indifferent, when he had only been angry; and he had been unjust to her merits, because he had been a sufferer from them. Her character was now fixed on his mind as perfection itself, maintaining the loveliest medium of fortitude and gentleness; but he was obliged to acknowledge that only at Uppercross had he learnt to do her justice, and only at Lyme had he begun to understand himself.

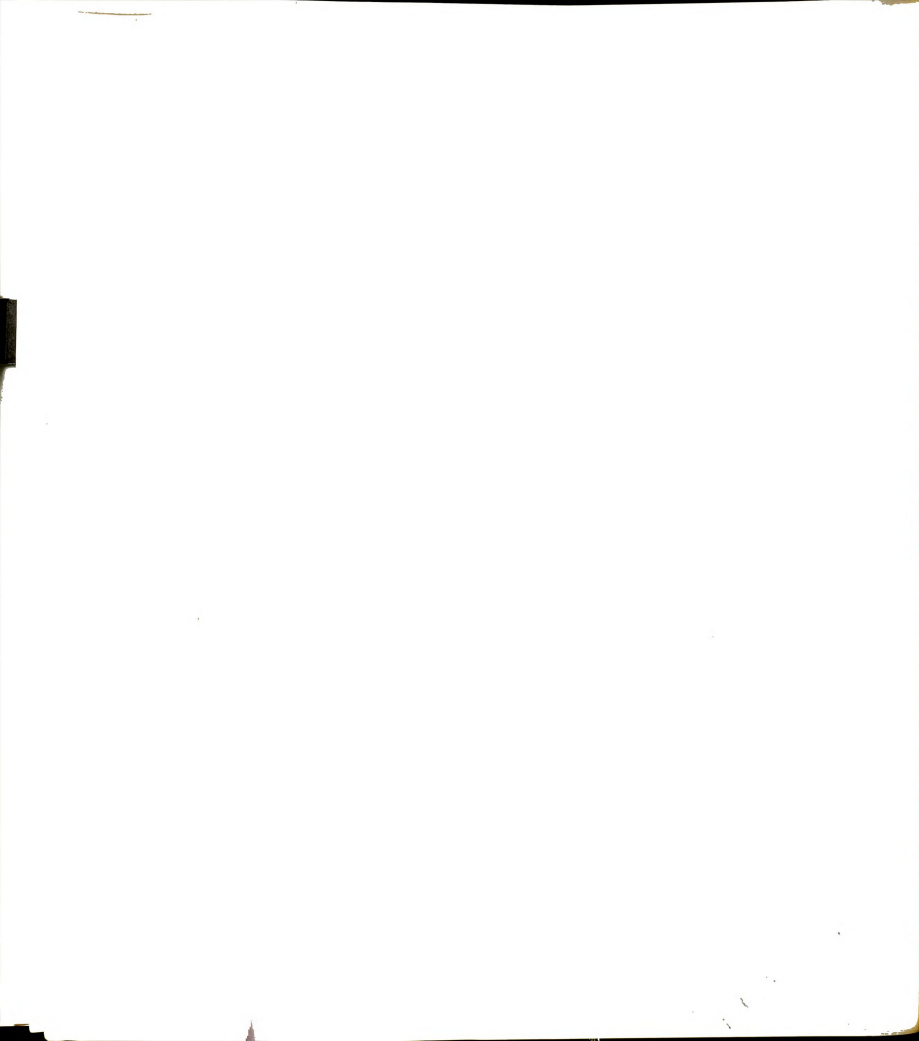
At Lyme he had received lessons of more than one sort. The passing admiration of Mr. Elliot had at least roused him, and the scenes on the Cobb, and at Captain Harville's, had fixed her superiority (241-42).

Furthermore, he continues, it was at Lyme that

he had seen every thing to exalt in his estimation the woman he had lost and there begun to deplore the pride, the folly, the madness of resentment, which had kept him from trying to regain her when thrown in his way (242).

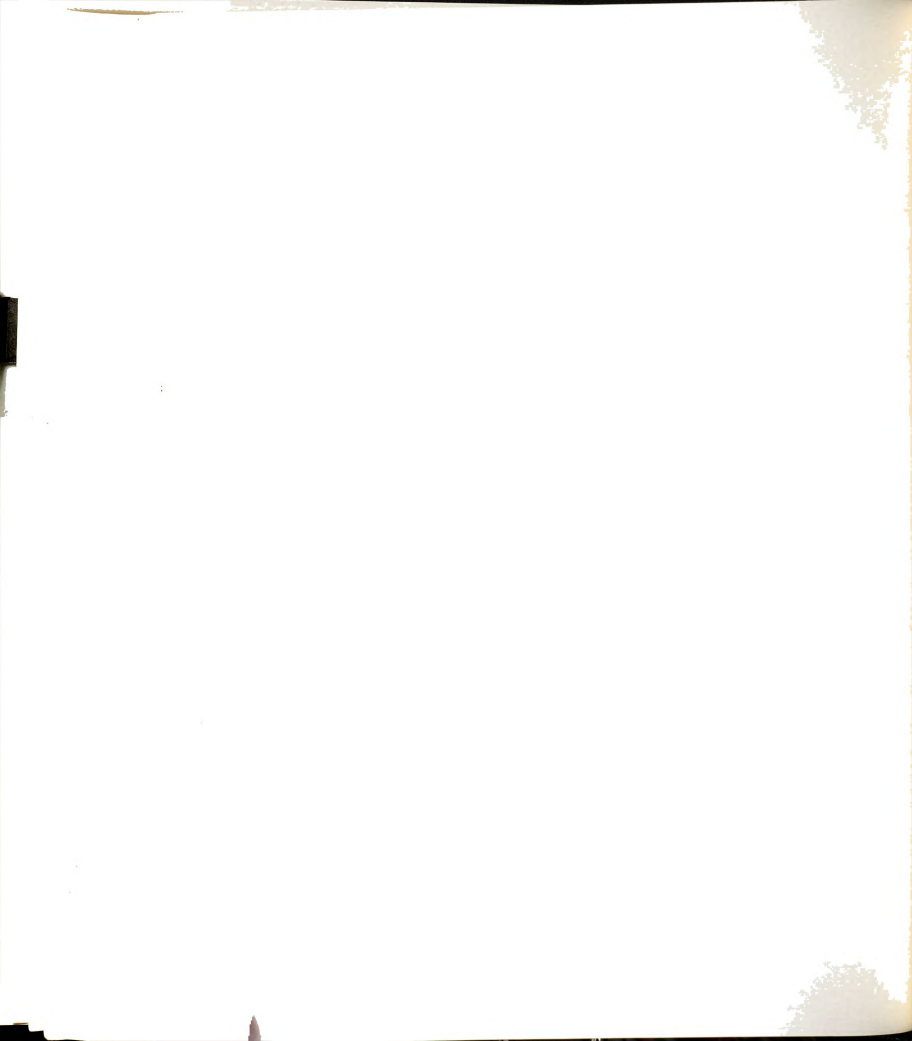
Wentworth's confession is a positive orgy of fulfillment of Anne's claims, a fantasy of the vindication of her shoulds. He praises her fortitude, her superior standards, her resolve, and her gentleness, and he assumes all of the guilt for their estrangement. The catalogue of perfectionistic and self-effacing shoulds which constitute Anne's glorified self is mirrored in Wentworth's catalogue of virtues to which he responds.

We infer the implied author of Persuasion largely from our perception of the norms which are embodied in the completely unexceptionable heroine and in the completely reliable, ironic narrator. No one character fully embodies our conception of the implied author. Our understanding of the social and ethical norms which constitute the moral identity of the implied author is shaped by those social



attributes which qualify the naval group for social prestige, and by those personal qualities for which Anne is rewarded with personal triumph. Additionally, the qualities which constitute social and personal evils in the universe of Persuasion contribute to our impression of the implied author by helping to define the dichotomies between which her moral impulse moves. Similarly, the psyche of the implied author is defined not only by the psychological constructs which are glorified in the characterization of Anne, but by the psychological patterns which are ridiculed or condescended to as they are embodied in other characters. Furthermore, the very fact that Anne's eventual triumph comes about through the beneficence of the author rather than because Anne sought it is itself revelatory of the psychological vision which informs the novel. The implied author is in complete sympathy with the perfectionist's interpretation of his relationship with the world--his "deal" with life. One's happiness is bestowed in recognition of one's virtue because, for the perfectionist, there is a system of "infallible justice operating in life." The implied author of Persuasion first presents a heroine who embodies all of the qualities which constitute her version of perfectionism, and then, with infallible justice, manipulates the events of the novel to engineer her vindication and her triumph.

From a psychological point of view, Persuasion is a fantasy in the mind of its implied author, a fantasy in which a heroine develops her perfectionistic tendencies in the constricting environment of an insensitive family. The heroine first suffers for her



strict adherence to her high standards, but eventually moves into a larger world in which her perfectionism is recognized and rewarded. The implied author does not perceive Anne with any irony or detachment because she identifies completely with her defensive strategies and her vision of her world.

Conflicts and Conclusions

The mimetic impulse is manifested in Persuasion in the rich characterization of Anne Elliot, whose complexity and depth far exceed the demands of her formal and thematic functions in the novel. As we have seen, the realistic dimension of Anne's portrayal introduces a whole new range of possibilities to our response to her, and it provides an entirely different set of criteria against which we measure both her character and her characterization. In fact, the fidelity to psychological actuality which we perceive in the portrait of Anne becomes the most compelling achievement of Persuasion: Anne's believability as a representation of an actual person overshadows the comic structure and the thematic interests of the novel. Yet the comic and the thematic impulses exert their force as well, and the relationship between them and the mimetic impulse is not always harmonious.

In my discussion in Chapter III of the mimetic element in Persuasion, I suggested that the idea of mimesis connoted a perception by the reader that his experience of the novel was analogous to his responses to people and situations in his own life. In his study of the realistic character in fiction, W. J. Harvey defines

four "constitutive categories" (Harvey, p. 21) of experience which are shared by realistic fiction. The categories are "Time, Identity, Causality and Freedom" (Harvey, p. 22). While each of these elements is certainly important to any theoretical consideration of mimesis, and each provides an interesting perspective from which Persuasion might be discussed, I will consider only the matter of causality. It is the lack of causality in the resolution of Persuasion which has troubled many readers, and I intend to examine whether causality is a factor in the conclusion of the novel, and, if it is not, whether readers are justified in objecting to its absence.

Our sense of the mimetic adequacy of a novel depends, in part, on our perception that the events develop because the characters make choices and take actions in situations in which alternatives are available. This is not to say that the action of novels must be seen as inevitable once a character chooses. Quite to the contrary, as Harvey observes, coincidence plays an important role in many realistic novels, just as it is a factor in our own lives. Nonetheless, our sense that a novel develops in ways which are analogous to the way in which the events of our own lives develop is related to the novel's establishing that what happens to a character is a logical consequence of the choices he makes.

In many important ways, Persuasion conforms to our expectation for causal development. The desolate state in which Anne is discovered early in the novel is causally related to her decision to break her engagement to Wentworth eight years before. That choice

colors not only her anxiety about confronting him again, but her general resignation from life because of the pain she has endured due to his misinterpretation of and anger at her decision. Indeed, the central interest of the novel is to see Wentworth realize his misjudgment of Anne's character and to accept the validity of her decision to break their engagement. In this sense, all of the action of Persuasion is causally related to Anne's having chosen as she once had.

In addition to the expectation that action will have its consequences, mimetic adequacy is contingent upon the reader's acceptance of the plausibility of the action, that is, upon his perception that action grows out of character. A good example of the cause-and-effect relationship between character and events is the series of incidents which characterize Louisa Musgrove, culminating in her fall on the Cobb. Wentworth's articulation of his preference for people who demonstrate determination to act upon their convictions without regard to the persuasions of others fixes in Louisa's mind the characteristics she must display if she is to impress him. We accept Louisa's impressionableness because everything we have learned about her up to that point suggests that, however good-natured, she is not very intelligent or introspective. She is concerned with enjoying herself and finding a suitable husband; one has the impression she would have been at home among the younger Bennet girls in Pride and Prejudice. When she insists to Wentworth that he jump her down from the Cobb a second time, in spite of his protestations of the danger involved, we accept her

willfulness as consistent with the character we have come to know. Her injury provides a convenient occasion for Wentworth to question his over-simple dichotomization of persuadability and determination, and it allows Anne an occasion for a little gloating; the scene is crucial to Wentworth's eventual reunion with Anne, but we are never troubled by its implausibility or its being inconsistent with the characters involved. The scene reinforces our sense of the mimetic adequacy of the novel.

Plausibility is not, however, a factor in Louisa's second important role in the novel. When Anne receives the news of Louisa's engagement to Benwick, her sense of shock and surprise is no greater than the reader's. The utter desirability of this "fortuitous circumstance" conceals for a time its unlikelihood. Nothing we know about Louisa (or Benwick, for that matter) has prepared us for the sudden turn of events. Anne's lame attempt to reconcile the engagement with the characters ("of course they had fallen in love over poetry") has no relevance whatever to the "high spirited, joyous-talking Louisa Musgrove" (166), met with in Volume I. The fortuity of this particular circumstance is not mitigated by any sense of its having developed out of the characters' personalities, however much Anne may try to make it so.

Although the development of the story of Persuasion from the choices which set it in motion is consistent with our expectations for plausibility and causality, the resolution of the story seems implausible and arbitrary. The clumsy introduction of Mrs. Smith to substantiate Anne's intuitive distrust of William Elliot, and the

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unlikely tryst between Mr. Elliot and Mrs. Clay are central to Anne's final vindication; but both developments reveal the author's arbitrary hand so blatantly that most readers find the episodes regrettable.

Of course, all the events in a novel are there because the author put them there, and they are in that sense, arbitrary. As Harvey notes:

in any work of fiction we know that . . . there is an omniscient hand--the author's--governing his imagined chessboard. Our feelings about mimetic adequacy of any novel will, therefore, depend in large part upon the tact with which the pieces are moved (Harvey, p. 132).

The lack of tact with which characters and events are manipulated to effect Anne's triumph compromises the mimetic adequacy of Persuasion by frustrating the reader's expectation for plausibility and a sense of causality in the development and resolution of the events of the novel.⁵

Wentworth's recognition that Anne still possesses the qualities for which he first fell in love with her, and his admission that he had misjudged her motives for breaking their engagement constitute the resolution of the central action of the novel. The basis for the transformation of Wentworth's attitude is the series of incidents at Uppercross and Lyme Regis in which he observes Anne's kindness, presence of mind, sense of duty--the entire range of perfectionistic and self-effacing virtues. The efficacy of the traits Anne displays in winning over Wentworth is less a function of his personality than an extension of the fantasy of perfectionism which governs Persuasion. We are never troubled by implausibility in

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Wentworth's falling in love again with Anne because his characterization rarely exceeds the comic and thematic requirements of the novel. He does not achieve much individual identity beyond his role as the dutifully responsive Prince Charming in this Cinderella fantasy of restored youth and overdue recognition. He is an agent of the novel's reward mechanism, a prize by whom Anne's virtue is recognized and articulated. He exists as the realization of the perfectionist's claims on the world; he reacts, not according to any laws of his own individually realized mimetic identity, but according to the expectations implicit in the strategies of perfectionism --Anne's and the implied author's.

The insubstantiality of Wentworth's characterization is consistent with the other comic conventions in Persuasion. So, for that matter, are the other arbitrary devices by which the comic resolution is effected. In fact, the comic structure itself is ideally congruent with the perfectionistic fantasy of reward and recognition which constitutes the essential vision of Persuasion. As Frye observes, it is desirability rather than plausibility which governs the resolution in the comic mythos. The resolution of Persuasion is entirely desirable from the perspective of Anne's interpretation of her relationship with her world. And to the extent that we are sympathetic with Anne, we also perceive the resolution as desirable. It is difficult to imagine a more rewarding or gratifying end to Anne's long years of isolation and sadness.

However satisfying the conclusion in terms of what we might desire for Anne, and however congruent the ending of Persuasion is



with the expectations generated by its comic structure, the novel frustrates other expectations generated by its mimetic elements. The comic and the mimetic impulses impose competing sets of expectations. The mimetic characterization of Anne, and the mimetic development of much of the early novel creates an expectation for causality and plausibility in the resolution which is not satisfied by the comic ending. There exists an unresolved tension between the archetypal structure and the mimetic characterization in Persuasion.⁶

Theoreticians of the novel have long observed that realistic characters do not accommodate themselves to archetypal structures. E. M. Forster attributes what he regards as the unsatisfactoriness of the endings of most novels to a conflict between plot and character: "In the losing battle that the plot fights with characters, it often takes a cowardly revenge. Nearly all novels are feeble at the end. This is because the plot requires to be wound up."⁷ Scholes and Kellogg suggest that "With respect to plot the mimetic is the antithesis of the mythic" (S & K, p. 229). They believe, as did Forster, that the "ultimate form of mimetic plot is the 'slice of life,' virtually an 'unplot'" (S & K, p. 232). In an essay later than Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye expresses a similar point of view, but insists that mimesis is always a matter of content, never of form:

fidelity to the credible is a feature of literature that can affect only content. Life presents a continuum, and a selection from it can only be what is called tranche de vie: plausibility is easy to sustain, but except for death life has little to suggest in the way of plausible conclusions. And even a plausible conclusion does not necessarily round out a shape. The realistic writer soon

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finds that the requirements of literary form and plausible content always fight against each other. Just as a poetic metaphor is always a logical absurdity, so every inherited convention of plot in literature is more or less mad. The king's rash promise, the cuckold's jealousy, the "lived happily ever after" tag to a concluding marriage, the manipulated happy endings of comedy in general, the equally manipulated endings of modern realism--none of these was suggested by any observation of human life or behavior: all exist as story-telling devices. Literary shape cannot come from life; it comes only from literary tradition, and so ultimately from myth.⁸

While many commentators have noted the conflict between archetypal structure and mimetic characterization, not all agree that the conflict is invariably destructive. Scholes and Kellogg express the belief that the great European novels (The Red and the Black, Madame Bovary, Crime and Punishment, Anna Karenina, Fathers and Sons) owe their greatness in part to just that conflict:

These great artistic novels generate their power by the tension they exploit between their mimetic and mythic characteristics. The characters are highly individualized versions of recognizable social types, and the patterns through which they move are woven out of the mythos of tragic drama (S & K, p. 234).

Whether or not these great European novels do, in fact, successfully exploit the tension between their mythic and mimetic impulses is beyond the scope of this study.⁹ But in Persuasion the mimetic characterization of Anne subverts the archetypal structure of the novel. Although the reader's perception of the realistic nature of the heroine leads him to expect events to develop causally and plausibly, the implied author instead develops events to glorify Anne's strategies and to fulfill her needs, and she does so within the conventions of comedy.

The fictional shape which is imposed upon life by the comic mythos is more congruent with the "vision of the world" of the implied author than are the mimetic demands for causal development. The neurotic's "deal" with life is an attempt to impose a fictional order upon his relationship with the contingencies of life with which he feels himself otherwise unable to cope. It is not surprising, then, that the neurotic vision manifests itself in an effort to effect the fulfillment of Anne's needs and claims through coincidence--really a kind of magic, or at least good luck. Jane Austen is writing comedy, and comedy provides her with the conventions by which she manipulates Anne's triumph. But the implied author's identification with Anne's solution prevents her from recognizing that Anne's mimetic characterization demands a causally developed resolution of the conflicts in the novel. It is only from the perspective of the implied author's own perfectionism that the contrived conclusion could appear consistent with the characterization.¹⁰

The mimetic characterization of Anne subverts not only the comic structure of Persuasion but the thematic structure, as well. Because the narrator is silent on the thematic implications of Anne's story, it is through Anne that the novel's norms are understood. As we have seen, the essence of Anne's position is that the wisdom of Lady Russell's advice to break her engagement was less an issue than the duty she owed to the woman "who had almost a mother's love, and mother's rights." Anne tells Wentworth after their reconciliation:

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"I was right in submitting to her, . . . if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience. I have now, as far as such a sentiment is allowable in human nature, nothing to reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion" (246).

Many readers have bridled at this self-serving justification with which Anne lectures Wentworth. In his often-quoted disparagement of Persuasion, Andor Gomme takes issue with Anne's interpretation of her duty:

To say (as, a little complacently, Anne does) that she now has nothing to reproach herself with implies that all her duty then lay away from the man she loved and towards obeying a person for whose judgment and discretion the reader is by this time likely to have scant respect. And it is one thing to take such advice at nineteen, quite another to congratulate oneself on it at twenty-seven. Wentworth's 'own good' has been entirely dismissed.¹¹

The issue is not really the relationship between Anne's duty and the quality of Lady Russell's advice, for, as I demonstrated in Chapter II, Anne carefully distinguishes between the correctness of Lady Russell's counsel and her own dutifulness. But Gomme's other quarrel with Anne, his objection to her complacent self-justification, is a genuine issue. Anne's reduction of her decision to break the engagement to a simple matter of duty contradicts not only the moral oppositions developed in the novel, but also another explanation offered earlier in the novel.

Anne says to Wentworth after they are reunited, "'When I yielded I thought it was to duty'" (244). But when the events of the engagement are first recounted early in the novel, the reliable narrator says that Anne "was persuaded to believe the engagement a

wrong thing--indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it" (27). Submitting to one to whom duty is owed and being convinced that another's arguments are valid are not the same thing. Anne sometimes seems to say she was wrong to have been convinced by Lady Russell and at other times to deny that she had been convinced at all, claiming that she merely submitted to the advice of the woman to whom she owed a duty. In either case, she now expresses the opinion that the advice was wrong--or, at least, that it was "good or bad only as the event decides" (246)--and that she would never give such counsel in a similar situation.

More important than Anne's vacillation about her reasons for having broken the engagement is the contradiction her evocation of duty presents to other moral dichotomies in the novel. Of course, it is true that the naval group earns its triumph by its dutifulness in wartime, and the implied author seems determined to equate Anne's dutifulness with that displayed by the navy, bestowing on both whatever triumph the novel can offer. But the navy's dutifulness is presented in a context of other virtues quite contrary to those from which Anne's dutifulness is derived. Among the virtues the naval characters display are cheerful confidence in futurity and trust in Providence (to adapt Anne's phrase), esteem based on merit and accomplishment, and a disregard and even contempt for archaic notions of propriety and dignity. In the context of these other virtues, the naval dutifulness is seen to be calculated acceptance of risk and responsibility for the sake of insuring a social order in which they believe, and, not incidentally, for the

opportunity for financial and social personal advancement. But, as Anne says herself, her action was a yielding to "'persuasion exerted on the side of safety, not risk'" (244). Her dutifulness must finally be seen to be based on prudence, after all--on a reluctance for risk-taking, on an abdication of responsibility.

In her evocation of duty in order to absolve herself of responsibility for the consequences of her actions, Anne echoes Lady Russell, whose "over-anxious caution" (30) she has repudiated, rather than Sophia Croft, whose confident acceptance of risk-taking and disregard for petty rules of propriety Anne admires. Blind dutifulness, without regard for the consequences of action taken in the name of duty, is a trait more appropriate to the society in which distinction is inherited than to the one in which it is earned. The society in which distinction is inherited cannot command the rational allegiance of intelligent individuals; it therefore requires the individual to subsume his sense of responsibility for the consequences of his actions to a rigid and unquestioning sense of the duty owed to those in whom authority is invested. The triumph of the naval characters seems to represent the novel's rejection of the social structure which absolves a person of responsibility for actions undertaken in the name of duty. Anne's citation of duty contradicts the novel's endorsement of the naval virtues.

Jane Nardin, among recent commentators on Persuasion, has noticed the apparent conflict between the values Anne endorses and those she exhibits. Nardin resolves the conflict by claiming that

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we are not to take Anne as completely representative of the norms of the novel:

Jane Austen does not, in Persuasion as a whole, endorse Anne's beliefs concerning the major rules of propriety as correct. Critics who, relying on the narrator's warm affection and approval toward Anne, have concurred wholeheartedly in Anne's final judgment that she was right in obeying the dictates of prudence and the major rules of propriety in breaking off her engagement with Capt. Wentworth, have been forced to be rather ingenious in justifying a decision which seems to pull in the opposite direction from the rest of the novel. A close examination of the complex way Persuasion treats how the major rules of propriety relate to and govern fallible individual judgments will, I think, clarify this point by showing that, whatever the narrator's tone toward Anne may imply, the heroine's opinion on this matter is not totally trustworthy.¹²

While Nardin's perception of the inherent contradiction in Anne's position is correct, her resolution of that contradiction is difficult to accept. Jane Austen certainly had at her disposal the means to indicate the novel's distance from the heroine's moral perspective, but the narrator's irony is never directed at Anne's moral judgments. The whole weight of comic convention, indeed, the entire array of evidence by which we infer the implied author--that conception by which we discover "where in the world of values . . . the author wants [us] to stand"--suggests that Anne's position and the novel's are identical.

The source of the contradiction in Anne's self-justification in the name of duty, on the one hand, and her admiration of the naval virtues, on the other, is to be understood psychologically rather than morally. Likewise, the failure of the novel to reconcile the contradictoriness of Anne's moralizations is a function of

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the implied author's identification with Anne's defensive strategies and her determination to vindicate those strategies in the course of the novel.¹³

The powerfully imagined fantasy of fulfillment which is the core of the structure of events in Persuasion is denied by Anne's moralizations. The need for defensiveness which existed in her small environment is lifted during the course of the novel. Anne's perfectionism achieves its recognition in a society with values more conducive to those which Anne cherishes. The self-protectiveness which she developed by her rigid adherence to narrowly defined dutifulness is no longer necessary among the naval characters who prize openness, frankness, and warm affection, and who value achievement and reward merit. But Anne falls back on her most defensive responses at the moment of her fulfillment; she defends her sense of worth from the attack which is implicit in her own admission that she may have been wrong in yielding to persuasion. In doing so she denies her capacity to accommodate herself fully to the society which most prizes her perfectionism, and she reveals that although the events of the novel have liberated her from a psychologically destructive world, she has not been able to liberate herself from the protective self-image she developed to defend herself in that world.

Because Anne is a mimetic character, readers may form judgments about her independent of the novel's moral perspective. It seems to me that the inevitable conclusion reached by a consideration of the mimetic character of Anne is that her evocation of duty

is not the final word on the subject of the broken engagement with Wentworth. We do not doubt that Anne would "have suffered in [her] conscience" had she defied Lady Russell, but her sense of duty must finally be seen as a psychological defense rather than a moral absolute.

To say that the psychological analysis of Anne and of the novel subverts the moral impulse in Persuasion is not to claim that mimetically conceived characters cannot behave from genuine moral principles. It is interesting to note in this respect that Karen Horney considered it "one of Freud's gravest errors to regard the inner dictates [shoulds] (some of the features of which he had seen and described as superego), as constituting morality in general" (Horney, pp. 72-73). The point is that from a psychological perspective one need not take at face value the moral perspective of the characters or even of the implied author. Moral choices, we might argue, are possible only when an individual has the capacity for genuine choice between realistically perceived alternatives. Decisions which are compelled by psychological needs, which are qualitatively indistinguishable from other attempts to glorify one's self-image or restore one's pride, are not genuinely based on morality. It is in this sense of the distinction between psychologically and morally inspired action that the mimetic characterization of Anne subverts the moral impulse of Persuasion.

The judgment made by Ian Watt and cited in my introduction that Jane Austen successfully combined realism of assessment (theme)

and realism of presentation (mimesis) into an harmonious unity is plainly wrong; at least, is wrong insofar as it was meant to apply to Persuasion. We are left to conclude that we understand Anne Elliot better than did Jane Austen, and that we even understand why the implied author failed to perceive her creation accurately.

Perhaps Watt asks too much of the novelist. He admires Fielding for the "responsible wisdom about human affairs" that he brings to Tom Jones, but he regrets that Fielding's characters are not rendered in greater depth, with more subtlety and complexity, that he did not approach characters internally, in the manner of Richardson. But the very convincingness of Fieldings' wisdom, it can be argued, is due in part to the fact that he gives us no mimetic characters about whom we can form independent judgments which might embarrass that wisdom. That Fielding's characters always exist as illustrations of his "wisdom" Watt recognizes; that they could not be given an identity in excess of that illustrative dimension without threatening to subvert that wisdom, he fails to consider.

Watt's judgment of Richardson is applicable to Jane Austen. Essentially, Watt claims that the success of Clarissa is its powerful mimetic portraiture, and that success survives even the constricted Puritan morality which was applied to the story and which it, in part, was intended to illustrate. No doubt Jane Austen's social and moral vision, as well as the irony with which much of her judgment is delivered, is more palatable and a good deal more entertaining to the modern reader than is Richardson's morality.

But it is nonetheless true that in Jane Austen as well as in Richardson the interest lies in the character, not in the author's morality, and that the characters tend to overflow and subvert that morality.

Watt claims that realism of presentation and realism of assessment are not

two opposite and irreconcilable kinds of novel, but merely rather clearly contrasted solutions of problems which pervade the whole tradition of the novel and whose apparent divergencies can in fact be harmoniously reconciled (Watt, p. 296).

But unless the novelist's wisdom is so complete that it transcends all of his most deeply rooted psychological predilections and survives all manner of later philosophical and moral inquiry, which factors inevitably come into play when assessing mimetic characters, realism of presentation and realism of assessment do indeed seem to be irreconcilable impulses in the novel. It can be said with some certainty, at least, that they are unreconciled in Persuasion.

Yet, I think Watt is correct about what Jane Austen intends. She attempts both an internal or phenomenological understanding of Anne Elliot by supplying details of her personal history, her emotional responses, her behavior, and her environment, and she attempts an external or judgmental understanding, especially in that Anne herself is made to draw out the implications of her story in terms of individual duty. The consummate success of the former subverts the adequacy of the latter. We realize that the implied author identifies too closely with the personality of her heroine,



and that she is therefore unable to generate a reliable judgment about her character's motives and behavior.

The major problems which readers have identified in Persuasion are ultimately functions of the implied author's lack of distance from Anne's defensive strategies. The narrator's brutal recapitulation of Dick Musgrove's life and death and her insensitive treatment of Mrs. Musgrove are expressions of the perfectionist's contempt for people who fail to measure up to his standards. The narrator's overt contempt for "inferior" characters is an extension of the perfectionism glorified in Anne. Clearly, Jane Austen miscalculated her reader's response to the narrator's expression of disdain for other characters, especially inasmuch as the novel celebrates Anne's sensitivity and her depth of feeling. The implied author fails to perceive the contradiction between the implicit and the explicit norms of the novel, between the narrator's failure of human sympathy and the novel's glorification of Anne's sensibility.

More destructive to the integrity of the novel is the subversive effect worked on the structure and the themes of Persuasion by the mimetic characterization of Anne. The realistic portrait of Anne raises expectations that the structure within which that portrait develops will be shaped according to principles of causality and probability. Instead, Jane Austen works out Anne's destiny according to the conventions of comedy. Anne's fulfillment comes as a result of the implied author's manipulation of fate rather than a realistically conceived development of events. The result is the



frustration of the reader's legitimate expectation for realism, leading to the conclusion that, at least in this novel, mimetic characters cannot be accommodated within the conventions of comedy. Likewise, the mimetic portrait of Anne undermines the moral themes which Jane Austen intends her story to illustrate. Anne's explanation of her actions in terms of her sense of duty, while wholly consistent with her perfectionism, is inadequate as a moral assessment of her behavior. The depth of characterization generates the expectation that if the moral dimension of Anne's story is to be articulated it will be done with attention to the complete psychological portrait of the protagonist provided by the novel. But it is Anne, not the narrator, who provides the novel's moral perspective, and Anne is still too trapped within her defensive strategies to be a reliable judge. Furthermore, Anne's psychologically motivated rationalizations contradict the moral perspective inherent in the novel's glorification of the naval virtues of cheerful self-confidence and responsibility for one's own actions. The reader's expectation for a thematic perspective consistent with the novel's depth of characterization is also frustrated. He is left to conclude that, in this novel at least, mimetic characters cannot successfully illustrate didactic themes.

Jane Austen's Persuasion is, finally, a flawed novel because it fails to reconcile the conflicting expectations it generates. And, as I have suggested, perhaps the conflicting demands of these elements are inherently irreconcilable. In spite of its failure to create an harmonious unity, there remains about

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Persuasion a powerful impression of the authenticity of the character of Anne Elliot. The truth which prevails in Persuasion is the truth of experience. We have come to know what it is like to be a sensitive woman among the early nineteenth-century English gentry facing her middle years in the likelihood that the only prospect for her is spinsterhood, because she chose to sacrifice her engagement to the man she loved to please those to whom she felt she owed a duty. And we have experienced with that woman the pain of having the only man she ever loved re-enter her life, the tenuous stirrings of hope that their love might be renewed, and, finally, the joy she feels at the fulfillment of her deepest wishes. That we cannot acquiesce in her own assessment of her experience, or that we balk at the framework within which her creator has revealed her character do not diminish the authenticity or the value of that creation. To have come to know phenomenologically what it is like to be a person like Anne Elliot is a very precious thing.



NOTES: CHAPTER IV

¹Booth, pp. 250-51.

²E. Rubenstein has also noted the division between the qualities glorified in Anne and those exhibited in the narrator, although Rubenstein assumes that the narrator is Jane Austen. Jane Austen fails, says Rubenstein,

"to evince precisely those qualities of 'sweetness of mind and elegance of temper' that she exhibits and praises in Anne. One example should serve to show the gulf between heroine and novelist: Anne manifests 'shock and mortification' when she sees the letter containing William Elliot's abusive repudiation of Sir Walter and the name of Elliot . . . , yet William's contempt for Sir Walter and his station is hardly greater than that which Jane Austen herself feels and clearly expects the reader to share. Beyond question, Anne demonstrates exemplary conduct for a person in her situation, but Jane Austen and the reader, being free of Anne's personal and familial obligations, are morally free to hold and express far more severe opinions."

The Metaphor of Rank, p. 185.

³Whenever the narrator expresses ironic distance from Anne, it is always a case of her being amused at Anne's romantic nature. Anne's moral superiority is never the object of the narrator's irony. When Anne engages in self-deception about her interest in Wentworth's arrival in Bath or when she experiences the exuberance of romantic triumph because of Wentworth's renewed affection, the narrator pokes fun at her:

"Prettier musings of high-wrought love and eternal constancy, could never have passed along the streets of Bath, than Anne was sporting with from Camden-place to Westgate-buildings. It was almost enough to spread purification and perfume all the way" (192).

Earlier the narrator says that among the reasons for Anne's first falling in love with Wentworth were that "he had nothing to do, and she had hardly any body to love" (26). These ironic observations indicate that Anne's romantic nature is taken less seriously by the narrator than by Anne. They further suggest that Anne's romantic nature is less central to the implied author's identification with her than is her moral superiority, about which the narrator is never ironic.

⁴The cancelled version of Chapter x of the second volume reveals Jane Austen's discomfort with vindictiveness and feelings of triumph attributable to Anne. As in the published version, the manuscript of the cancelled version of Chapter x begins with Anne's leaving Westgate Building, after learning from Mrs. Smith of William Elliot's real character. In the final version Anne is "concerned for the disappointment and pain Lady Russell would be feeling" (212) when she discovered William Elliot's real nature. In the cancelled version Anne is "pained for Lady Russell, whose confidence in him had been entire" (258). The alteration reveals Jane Austen's determination to eliminate any suggestion of Anne's sense of triumph over Lady Russell; the change eliminates Anne's consciousness of Lady Russell's mistaken judgment and reinforces her sensitivity to Lady Russell's feelings.

Chapman discovers an even more revealing passage in the manuscript. Following "Lady Russell" in the sentence just quoted from the cancelled version is an erased passage which Chapman transcribes thus:

"& glancing with composed Complacency & (possibly Lenient) Triumph upon the fact of her having been right and Lady R. wrong (herself above line) the most discriminating of the two. She had never been satisfied. Lady Russell's confidence had been entire." (Chapman's note to line 6, p. 258, the first page of the cancelled manuscript.)

To be sure erased passages in cancelled chapters do not constitute admissible evidence for the interpretation of published texts. It is perhaps fair, however, to note that Jane Austen's progressive elimination of vindictiveness and gloating in Anne is consistent with Anne's own taboos against such feelings.

See also B. C. Southam's analysis of the manuscript: Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts: A Study of the Novelist's Development Through the Surviving Manuscripts, Oxford English Monographs (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁵It can be argued, of course, that to demand cause-and-effect development in Persuasion is to impose standards upon the novel which were never intended by Jane Austen. In fact, Darrell Mansell takes just such a position. Incidents such as the coincidence of Mrs. Smith's acquaintance with Mr. Elliot occur in Persuasion, he argues, because Jane Austen's intellectual scheme for dramatizing the psychological process of her heroine requires them to occur:

"Jane Austen has never been particularly interested in making every episode in her novels seem to follow time-and-place logic of 'real life' or of a novel aiming at a very thoroughgoing representation of life. The strong governing 'plot' in the novels has always been the drama taking place in the heroine's mind as she becomes spiritually prepared to take her place in the world; and at certain crucial points Jane Austen has never hesitated to

influence the heroine's development by interfering in the plot, in veiled or open defiance of the laws of probability."

The Novels of Jane Austen: An Interpretation (London: The Macmillan Press, 1973), pp. 199-200.

It is no doubt accurate to observe that the incidents in Persuasion occur to reveal the drama which takes place in Anne's mind. But the larger point is that the mimetic characterization of Anne is evidence of Jane Austen's interest in a "thoroughgoing representation of life," and that characterization itself engenders the expectation that events in the novel will develop causally. The very fact that Anne's psychological defenses are so clearly related to the pathogenic environment in which she was raised and to the unhappy results of her first romance creates the expectation that the resolution will be plausible. Mansell merely begs the issue when he says:

"We simply have to accept that events in her fiction are often not 'caused' by whatever laws of cause and effect conceivably govern our real world and fiction which aims at some kind of painstakingly realistic imitation of the world" (Mansell, p. xi).

⁶Although he has a much different basis for saying so, I am in essential agreement with Wiesenfarth's general observation that the problems with Jane Austen's novels are "all of a piece": "They arise from the tension that exists between the demands of structural pattern and the demands of characters to be persons" (Errand of Form, p. viii). Wiesenfarth specifically identifies the unsatisfactoriness of the Dick Musgrove and Mrs. Smith episodes as a function of the tension between characterization and structure in Persuasion. His understanding of "the demands of characters to be persons," however, is entirely thematic.

⁷Forster, p. 95.

⁸Northrop Frye, "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement," Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Summer 1961). Reprinted in Frye's Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963). My text is the Harbinger Book paperback, p. 36.

⁹Professor Paris argues that the tension between form and mimetic character is rarely a constructive element in fiction. See especially his Chapter I, pp. 1-27.

¹⁰At least one critic has suggested that Jane Austen deliberately makes the "fortuitous circumstances" seem perfunctory in order to "drive home to the audience that the pleasing results are only the products of the writer's fantasy, designed to fulfill unrealistic human wishes." Paul N. Zietlow, "Luck and Fortuitous

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Circumstances in Persuasion," Journal of English Literary History 32 (June, 1965): 194. In Paul Zietlow's thinking, the comic resolution to the problems of a mimetically conceived character in Persuasion serves to highlight "the dark possibilities of human life--to emphasize them without actually bringing them about" (Zietlow, p. 195). It is all "Jane Austen's means for treating tragic effect while preserving comic form."

Zietlow's observation about the conclusion of Persuasion being a product of the writer's fantasy concurs with the argument I have been advancing here. We disagree about whether Jane Austen intended us to see the unrealistic nature of the conclusion. His argument is reinforced by the ironic tone of the narrator as she begins the final chapter in which the rewards and punishments are dispensed and the loose ends tied up: "Who can be in doubt of what followed?" (248). That irony suggests to Zietlow that Jane Austen intends that readers recognize that the happy conclusion is merely a literary device and probably not the fortune that would befall a person in Anne's situation in real life. The difficulty with Zietlow's argument is that the very real ironic tone with which the final chapter begins is not directed at the artificiality of the comic ending at all. It is directed at the way in which a declaration of love between young people inevitably leads to marriage, "be they ever so poor, or ever so imprudent, or ever so little unlikely to be necessary to each other's ultimate comfort" (248).

Far from regarding Anne's and Wentworth's marriage as a mere literary contrivance, the narrator insists upon the truth of the observation (whatever its morality) that couples generally do as they like, regardless of the counsel of others. Anne and Wentworth are exempted from the narrator's ironic observation, however, because they have "the advantage of maturity of mind, consciousness of right, and one independent fortune between them . . ." (248). Of course, they are further exempt because their history puts the lie to the narrator's observation that young people do not allow themselves to be persuaded from marriage once they have decided upon it. The fact that Anne once did allow herself to be so persuaded provides an additional dimension to the narrator's irony, an irony directed at human nature, not at literary convention.

Lloyd Brown has also concerned himself with the problem posed by the comic endings to Jane Austen's stories about realistic heroines. For Brown, "the principles of realism are confirmed rather than contradicted by the exaggerated mechanics of [Jane Austen's] happy endings." "The Comic Conclusion in Jane Austen's Novels," PMLA 84 (October 1969): 1582. Brown argues that

"the emphasis in Persuasion is on realism rather than on the schematic dispensation of rewards and punishment. Indeed, instead of arbitrarily imposing these idealistic conventions on her fictive societies, Jane Austen uses her comic conclusions to expose the prevailing norms that frequently undermine and replace traditional values" (Brown, p. 1584).

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Brown's evidence for this contention that realism is operative in the conclusion of Persuasion is the narrator's insistence that although both Anne and Mrs. Smith receive comic rewards, those rewards are not the source of their happiness. Rather, their happiness is a result of their being the kind of persons they are, just as the punishment of the antagonists (Sir Walter, Elizabeth, Mary, William Elliot, and Mrs. Clay) is in their remaining true to their characters. The narrator says of Mrs. Smith: "Her spring of felicity was in the glow of her spirits, just as her friend Anne's was in the warmth of her heart" (252).

If that narrative assertion were substantiated by dramatized illustration, one might have to concur with Brown that realism does indeed govern the conclusion of Persuasion. No such development exists, however; we have only the narrator's insistence that Anne's felicity had nothing to do with her vindication and triumph. And the reason for Jane Austen's wishing to renounce vindictiveness as part of her character's motivation is clear from a psychological understanding of Anne and the implied author.

Both Brown and Zietlow are misled by the ironic tone of the narrator at the conclusion of Persuasion. It is true that there is a note of mockery in the minimization of Mrs. Smith's being rewarded for having helped Anne:

"Mrs. Smith's enjoyments were not spoiled by this improvement of income, with some improvement of health, and the acquisition of such friends to be often with, for her cheerfulness and mental alacrity did not fail her; and while these prime supplies of good remained, she might have bid defiance even to greater accessions of worldly prosperity. She might have been absolutely rich and perfectly healthy, and yet be happy" (252).

This parody of literary convention does not extend to the rewards Anne receives or deservingness of them.

Brown finds in the opening statements of the final chapter of Persuasion a parallel to the mocking attitude taken by the narrator toward the end of Northanger Abbey:

"The anxiety which in their state of attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before him, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity" (Northanger Abbey, p. 250).

This is a parody of literary convention with a vengeance. But parody of the Gothic novel is a major theme in Northanger Abbey. There is no evidence that parody of literary convention is part of the design of Persuasion. Both Brown and Zietlow fail to distinguish the ironic tone of the narrator of Northanger Abbey, which is directed at literary convention, from the ironic tone of the narrator of Persuasion, which is directed at human nature.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and dates. The names are: John Doe, Jane Smith, and Bob Johnson. The dates are: 1990, 1991, and 1992. The list is as follows:

Name	Date
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Jane Smith	1991
Bob Johnson	1992

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John Doe	1990
Jane Smith	1991
Bob Johnson	1992

¹¹Andor Gomme, "On Not Being Persuaded," Essays in Criticism (Oxford) 16 (1966): 181. See also a rejoinder to Gomme's article by Brian Southam, 16: 480, and a reply to Southam by Gomme, 16: 481.

¹²Nardin, p. 144.

¹³Jane Nardin suggests a psychological motive for Anne's inability to completely relinquish her prudential value system:

"Anne, it is true, is a person of good feeling, fair and generous, but there are two important reasons, neither of them especially to her credit in a moral sense, why she has developed a deeply rooted habit of behaving with strict propriety however much the necessity galls her feelings--a habit which has become so automatic to her that she is scarcely even aware of its existence. First, Anne, despite her mental superiority, has been raised as an Elliot and though her more mature judgment has rejected most of the Elliot values, she has apparently found it more difficult to alter the habitually decorous demeanor which, presumably, she was taught as a child, than she has to reject the Elliot idea that status and beauty are the important elements of human nature. Second, and more importantly, Anne has just passed eight unhappy years during which she has been forced to conceal the deepest feelings of her heart for [sic] everyone around her. And in this concealment the minor rules of propriety have been a great aid to Anne, for they enabled her to interpose a conventional and impersonal mode of behavior between the world and the secret she must conceal" (Nardin, p. 142).

I would quarrel with Nardin only in insisting that Anne develops her knowledge of the rules of propriety as a means of restoring pride and of protecting herself from the insensitivity and lack of affection she experienced at Kellynch-hall. Nardin means something different from this when she says Anne developed her "decorous demeanor" because she was raised an Elliot. Anne's pride is invested in her moral and mental superiority. The important thing about the rules of propriety which govern Anne's behavior is that she has internalized those rules so thoroughly that her adherence to them is a basis of her sense of worth.

Nardin comes closer to my view of Anne's inability to reject her earlier reliance upon her prudential value system by suggesting that the complete repudiation of her defensive strategies represented too great a threat to her conception of her moral superiority:

"And surely Anne, at the end of the novel, would not at all like to accept the idea that her long unhappiness was her own fault, the result of a mistaken conception of duty. It is emotionally much easier and more satisfying for her to deny the individual the right to break a major

social law on his own discretion and to conclude that her own suffering was an unavoidable result of the fact that codified social wisdom must sometimes be mistaken in particular instances; the hard price that duty sometimes exacts" (Nardin, p. 151).

Anne's inability to confront the invalidity of her defensive strategies and her own responsibility for her unhappiness is paralleled by the implied author's similar unwillingness to admit such possibilities. The implied author's unreserved identification with Anne's defensive strategies, her lack of distance from Anne's perfectionism, accounts for her failure of distance from Anne's perspective on her life and her inattention to the contradiction of the novel's glorification of the naval values which is inherent in Anne's self-exoneration.

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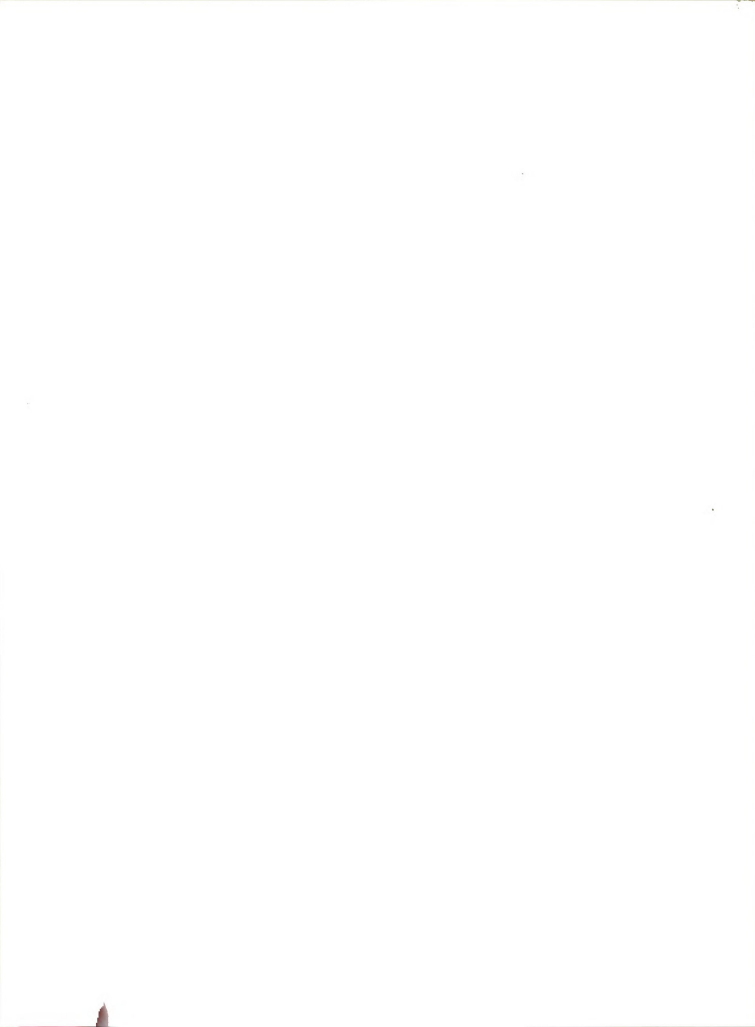
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