

**SUBVERSION AND ACCOMODATION IN THE SELECTED
NOVELS OFJANE AUSTEN: A NEW HISTORICIST READING**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this Thesis entitled “Subversion and Accommodation in the Selected Novels of Jane Austen: A New Historicist Reading, has been carried out by me in the Department of English and Literary Studies. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this thesis was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any other institution.

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled “SUBVERSION AND ACCOMMODATION IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN: A NEW HISTORICIST READING, meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated, in all humility to my late mother, Rabi'atu Hashim Abbas, who taught me, right from infancy, the value of knowledge and scholarship, and struggled to see that her only daughter is properly educated and always sang “Yaran University Samaru” for my younger brother and I. May you and my dad rest in eternal peace!

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ABSTRACT

This work studies three novels namely; *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* written by the nineteenth century English woman writer, Jane Austen and seeks to interpret them in the light of the new historicist critical analysis. New historicism is premised on the argument that the literary text is inseparable from the history and culture in which it was written. In other words, the theory views history as text and the text itself as derived from history, hence the New Historicist credo, “the historicity of text and the textuality of history”. From this perspective, the theory calls for a synchronic reading of both literary and non-literary texts in order to arrive at a critical interpretation. The study therefore examines the selected literary texts alongside their historical counterparts. GWF Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Mind* is the critical resource used to interpret Jane Austen’s biography titled *Jane Austen: A Life* by Claire Tomalin. While *History of England* by David Hume serves as a co-text used in interpreting *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is read side by side with Austen’s last text, *Persuasion*. The central problem of this study is how Jane Austen’s texts, namely; *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* are amenable to a critical discerning interpretation in the light of the new historicists’ conceptualization of the problematic relationship between text and context, between an author, in this case, Jane Austen and the non-textual elements that have informed the tenor of her textual practices as a novelist. While the objectives of the study among others include, a demonstration that the selected novels for the research on one hand accommodate the prevailing ideologies of nineteenth century England and on the other they subvert them. There is then an attempt to explore the aporia, gaps and absences in Austen’s texts that elucidate the texts’ social relevance as well as an illustration of the feasibility of the chosen theoretical framework. At the end of the research we are able to conclude that Jane Austen tried through her novels to negotiate an internal personal conflict between puritan ethics which reluctantly discarded the claims of politics and a cultural nationalism which insisted upon art’s participation in the struggle against imperial domination. In these novels the writer also examines the complications of personal identity within the array of social discourses. In the end the reader is able to see the writer’s mixed feelings about the emerging complex political situation.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

This study attempts to read Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (2008), *Emma* (1994) and *Persuasion* (1992) from the new historicist perspective. New historicism is a theory which evolved in the 1980's as a reaction to those theories that mainly view the text as an independent entity and has little to do with the cultural artefacts around which it is produced. The theory gained wide recognition/influence in the 1980's through the work of the American critic, Stephen Greenblatt. The central argument within new historicism is the view that literature or the text must be studied and interpreted within the socio-historical context in order to ascertain how the time of its composition influences its production. To the new historicist the text should be seen as a product of time, place and circumstances of its composition, rather than as an independent entity. It is therefore a reaction to new criticism which dwells mainly on the formal analysis of texts and disregards any other extrinsic information. Another significant feature of new historicism is its attempt to understand the text through its historical context and to understand the cultural and intellectual history through literature. Basically, the theory is concerned with social and cultural forces that create a community. Like its counterparts, post-colonialism and American multiculturalism, new historicism encompasses many other theories like Marxism, feminism, racial and ethnic studies popular culture e.t.c and draws largely from

other forms of criticism, particularly the work of Michel Foucault. In this sense, the theory views all written materials as texts. It recognises all texts, whether literary or non-literary, as cultural artefacts. In a way, new historicism has made a return to history in literary criticism, seeing history as text and the historian himself trapped within his own historicity. Thus the famous phrase "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history" which points to the fact that in a new historicist reading of a literary text, it is essential to understand the culture and society that produced it. In essence, the new historicist reading has given scholars/researchers the right to cross the boundaries that separate literature from say, history, anthropology, politics and economics. In other words, it has clearly deleted the question of non-interference that forbade humanists from indulging on questions of power, politics e.t.c

In view of this, contemporary interest in the work of Jane Austen, especially in European societies is growing significantly. This ranges from the continuous, almost persistent critical essays on her works, re-writing the novels in a different fashion, writing sequels to some of the novels as well as annual celebration of her works , national and international festivals to commemorate the writer/her writing, book clubs organised to discuss her works, and in some cases, centenary celebration of the individual texts such as the just concluded Jane Austen Festival Australia (JAFA) which took place between the 10th and 13th April 2014, at the university house, Canberra, Australia to celebrate 200years of Jane Austen, her life and times, and the publication of *Mansfield Park*.

In relation to the above, this PhD thesis aims to apply the new historicist method to read Jane Austen's selected novels in both their biographical and historical contexts alongside the historical and philosophical writings written at the period in which Austen composed these novels. That was a period of Romanticism, Imperialism and Colonialism in Western Europe and the world at large. The study therefore attempts to show the relationship between Austen's novels and her life, between the novels and the period in which they were written, and between the novels and the non-literary texts written in the same period. In this way, the study enables us to understand Jane Austen's approach to the pervasive ideology of the 19th century, thus we can determine the extent to which Austen's texts are the products of the ideology of the time i.e. romanticism, colonialism and imperialism and, the extent to which they are against it.

As a process through which the values and principles of a particular system are contradicted or reversed, subversion here implies the various ways by which a writer, in this case, Jane Austen, attempted in her novels, particularly the three novels selected in this research, to subdue/supplement some of those prevailing ideologies of nineteenth century England. Again and again the writer frowns at colonialist/imperialist sensibilities with a view to transforming them. Similarly, Austen's attempt to adapt ideologies like romanticism, is seen as an accommodation. She tried to harmonize these ideals to suit her fictional creation, seen particularly in her paragon, in most cases the female ones.

Jane Austen (1775-1817) grew up in a highly stratified non-industrialised society. The Eighteenth Century Europe was a period when the demarcation between the

landed gentry and the lower class was intense. She grew up amidst her family and funny neighbours and began writing at the tender age of fourteen when she wrote "*Love and Friendship*" a short story. Austen happened to be very well educated at home, she used her family and neighbours as the raw materials in her writings.

Austen's selected novels for this research, namely: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* are all marked by autobiographical elements and the history in which they were written. The texts' relevance to the political and historical elements such as romanticism, colonialism and imperialism will allow us to consider reading them in a new historicist perspective, a method which tries to understand the relationship between the texts and the author's history and the world history. From one angle, we will consider reading the novels in the biographical context in order to establish the extent to which Austen reflected her own experiences as a female writer and an intellectual, to what extent she used the impressions from real life and the impressions she gained through hearsay and reading, so as to see the relationship between her life and her work. From another angle, the novels will be read in their historical contexts to view the extent to which Austen reflected the pervasive ideology of the time and to see the relationship between history and the texts. The novels written when colonialism and imperialism prevailed, have characters and incidents that all reflect this ideology.

Pride and Prejudice delicately explores the nineteenth century society in which mobility from one class to another is seriously frowned at. In the character of Mr Darcy, who is from the landed gentry, one is able to see an 'incurable pride' which makes him look down upon everyone else except people who happen to be

of his social status. Darcy's pride clashes with Elizer Bennet's (who is from the middle class) utter prejudice against him, though at the end they were able to subdue their '*Pride*' and '*Prejudice*'.

Emma tells the story of a young Lady about whom Austen said she was going to create "a heroine whom no one but myself will much like". This authorial voice seems to point right from the beginning, the autobiographical correlation between the author and Emma, for, as we are led through the story, Emma becomes like the historical Jane Austen irresistible and clever though handsome and rich.

Persuasion comes forth as a novel whose characters and incidents were drawn partly from actual people and events. The book narrates the sympathetic story of Anne Elliot, who is persuaded by an elderly Lady Russell, to cut off her engagement with Captain Wentworth. Anne passively submits to Lady Russell's whims but at the end regrets her action in passivity and when Captain Wentworth returns they are re-united.

An intent look at these novels reveals the fact that they all revolve around the ideals of romanticism, imperialism and colonialism, as such, the historical context in which they were written is of significance to a study of this nature. To set the texts in their historical contexts requires a knowledge of how romanticism, colonialism and imperialism were viewed in the time they were composed. While to put them in their socio-cultural contexts requires an overview of the extent to which Austen's thinking on these issues (if any) was influenced by writings which centre on the emergence of colonialism and imperialism. Thus to construct the biographical context GWF Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807) is read

alongside Jane Austen's biographical record drawn from different sources, particularly Claire Tomalin's *Jane Austen: A Life* (1997). To construct the historical and cultural contexts for *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* David Hume's *The History of England (1754)* is read side by side with the novels. While *Persuasion*, Austen's last novel, will be set in its historical and cultural contexts by being read alongside Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1790). Reading the socio-historical texts written in an almost entirely English imperial culture will give us an insight on how colonialism and imperialism were perceived in the 19th century. Along the line we also attempt to see how Jane Austen views/represents these issues in her texts and whether there are areas in which her texts converge or differ from these historical documents. In this sense, the work aims to show the subversion and accommodation (as the thesis' title suggests) of the ideology in Austen's texts.

Austen has been read and re-read, interpreted and re-interpreted, even reincarnated, in the last two centuries to the extent that she becomes immortalized and in some cases illusive, that one has to go through the writings to explore whether it is the Janeites or the Austenian ideology. In this research, there is an attempt, through the new historicist key terms and phrases; historicity of texts, textuality of history, contextuality, intertextuality, to find a new Jane Austen.

1.0.1 A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Primary Author

Jane Austen (1775-1817)

Jane Austen was born on December 16th, 1775 at Steventon parish, Hampshire, England. She was the seventh child and second daughter of Reverend George Austen and Cassandra Leigh Austen. Jane was devoted to her elder sister, Cassandra- Elizabeth, to whom she eventually wrote a great many letters. When Cassandra aged ten she was sent away to school in Oxford, Jane begged to be sent along with her even though she was too young. Mr Austen however couldn't afford their schooling and the girls were back home after less than three years. Apart from this, Jane never lived outside of her family circle again. She ended up very well educated for a female, though. Her eldest brother James helped her out by organising reading lists for her, and Jane acquired good knowledge of history, a little Latin, Italian and musical training. (Austen Leigh and Le Faye 1989:xii).

In 1787, Jane decided to devote all her spare time to writing. This early work made three volumes of *Juvenilia*. In 1791, she wrote a parody of Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England*. A Few years later, when she was just about nineteen, she started work on *Lady Susan*, an epistolary novel which was Jane's first attempt at a serious theme. It didn't work well in the format she used, but it was good enough to encourage her to keep going on. She began another epistolary novel in 1795, which was titled *Elinor and Marianne*, and 1796 saw the beginning of *First Impressions*. In August of 1797 Jane submitted *First Impressions*, as it was still known, for publication and it was turned down vehemently. She spent the next two years re-writing *Elinor and Marianne* into *Sense and Sensibility* and she

began to work on *Susan*. In 1800, she took a break and went to visit an in-law, she returned home to learn that her home was moving to Bath. Though naturally a bit disconcerted, Jane soon adjusted to the idea of moving, especially since it was probably meant to improve her parents' health. Also around this time, Jane paid her first visit to the Bigg-Wither family and met the reasonably young, moderately wealthy Harris Bigg-Wither. About a year later, when Jane visited the family again in early December, 1802, Harris proposed to Jane and she accepted the proposal only to change her mind the very next morning. Now this was something of a scandal. Jane and Cassandra, who was also visiting, fled to their brother, James' house (actually their old house) and demanded to be escorted to Bath immediately. (Tomalin 1997:6-7 and Austen-Leigh and Le Faye 1989:xiii).

Somewhere around early 1804, Jane started another novel, *The Watsons*, but when her father died on 21 January 1805, she set the novel aside in her grief and never returned to it. Jane and her mother became exceedingly poor. Three of the boys in the family chipped in to arrange an annual income and lodgings for the ladies, but Jane's letters of the time hint that she was depressed at the restrictions of her finance. So it was probably out of desperation that she sent out her manuscripts to a publisher. In 1810, *Sense and Sensibility* was accepted for publication on commission, the printing cost was to be paid by the author. Jane, expecting to lose money only agreed reluctantly, but the novel sold very well and gave the author a profit of about £140. Thereafter, she started work on *Mansfield Park* and sold *Pride and Prejudice* for publication in 1812. By the next year, it was the

fashionable novel in England, and *Mansfield Park* was published and selling right along (Tucker 1988:33).

In November of 1815, Jane discovered she had fans in high places, people had finally discovered who she was. Thanks to her brother Henry, who had begun sharing her identity with his friends and acquaintances, until even the prince Regent, who owned enough copies of each of Jane's novels to stock all his residences, knew who she was. He sent Jane through his chief librarian, royal permission to dedicate any forthcoming novel to his Royal highness. Jane, like the majority of the British population at the time greatly disapproved of the prince regent and made up her mind to ignore this permission. Fortunately, several of her relatives rightly interpreted this permission as a command, and *Emma*, published in 1815, was duly dedicated to the "spoiled, spend thrift prince" see among others (Tomalin 1997, Tucker 1983 and Cecil 1978).

Jane's health was beginning to fail. In her attempt to make ends meet, she purchased the manuscripts of *Susan (Northanger Abbey)* from the publishers who had bought it for 10 pounds back in 1803 and then ignored it. Once the purchase, conducted through an intermediary, was complete, Jane took great pleasure in informing the publishers that the manuscript was by the renowned author of *Pride and Prejudice*, e.t.c. There is fortunately no record of the publishers' reactions to this news.

Though she began another novel during a period of remission, Jane's health was very poor. She, probably had the then unnamed Addison's disease, which attacks the adrenal glands and was then incurable. In April of 1817, Jane quietly made her

will, guessing in spite of all the doctors' reassurances that she would not live long, and left everything, except two small bequests, to her beloved Cassandra. She died early on the morning of 18th July 1817, with Cassandra at her side. In December of that year her brother Henry arranged the publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, which she had finished in August 1816, with the first official acknowledgement of Jane's authorship on the title page. The heroine of *Persuasion*, incidentally, was Anne Elliot, who many of her relatives, friends and acquaintances seemed to think was most like Jane herself in temperament. "Just didn't want to leave you wondering about the nickname" says Tucker.

1.0.2 A Brief on the Primary Texts

Jane Austen's legacy according to her famous biographer, Claire Tomalin, lies on six completed novels namely;

-Sense and Sensibility (1811)

-*Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

-*Mansfield park* (1814)

-*Emma* (1815)

-*Northanger Abbey* (1818)

-*Persuasion* (1818)

A number of short stories which includes:

- *Love and Friendship*

-*Frederick and Elfrida*

-*Jack and Alice*

- Edgar and Emma*
- Henry and Eliza*
- The adventures of Mr Harley*
- Sir William Montague*
- Memoirs of Mr Clifford*
- The Beautiful Cassandra*
- Amelia Webstar*
- The visit*
- The mystery*
- The three sisters*
- A fragment*
- The generous curate*
- Ode to pity*
- Lesley castle*
- The History of England*
- A collection of letters*
- Scraps*
- Evelyn*
- Catherine or the Bower, e.t.c*

Austen has also written or left some of her writings as fragments. These include:

- Sanditon*
- The Watsons*
- Lady Susan*

Finally, the writer has composed verses and prayers, which are classified under "minor works." These include:

-To the memory of Mrs Lefroy

-Mock penegyric on a young friend

-Mr Gell and Miss Gill

-A middle-aged Flirt

- Verses given with a needlework Bag to Mrs Jane Austen

- Lines to Martha Lloyd

-Verses to Rhyme with Rose

-On Sir Howe Popham's sentence, April 1807 e.t.c

Despite such a prolific literature, our major concern in this study is with three of the primary texts outlined at the beginning of this section though occasional references to the other texts abound.

Pride and Prejudice (1813)

Pride and Prejudice recounts the story of Mr. and Mrs Bennet with their five unmarried daughters in search of husbands. A Mr. Bingley comes to stay in Longbourn and happens to fall in love with the eldest Bennet daughter, Jane to the dissatisfaction of his sisters. His friend Mr, Darcy is interested in the second daughter Elizabeth though he is deterred by the unethical behaviour of Mrs Bennet and the younger Bennet girls among whom is Lydia who in the middle of the story eloped with a militia officer, Mr Wickham.

Mr Collins, who is a relative of Mr Bennet, comes to seek the hand of Elizabeth in marriage who however outrightly rejects him so he proposes and marries her

friend Charlotte. His patronese Lady Catherine de Bourgh who is also the aunt of Mr Darcy wants Mr Darcy to marry her daughter Anne but eventually Darcy returns to Elizabeth Bennet and marries her while his friend Bingley marries Jane.

***Emma*(1815)**

Published in December 1815 and dedicated reluctantly, but by the invitation of the prince regent, *Emma* appears as an accomplished work by a woman living in a society where marriage is the expected occupation of a woman, any woman. The novel tells the story of Emma Woodhouse "Handsome, clever and rich, with a comfortable home and a happy disposition ..." (p1) though Emma happens to be the leading lady at Highbury, her attributes invite comparison with someone of much lower standings, Miss Bates, who " enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married" p13

In a nutshell, *Emma* empathetically rehearses the favourite Jane Austen theme, the society is hierarchical, characters and places are ranked as formally as possible. Emma's status is thus established through a series of analogues, first with Miss Bates, then Mrs. Weston, with her own sister Isabella, and her niece, Jane Fairfax, who excels Emma by so many standards but lacks her wealth and warmth.

In a similar fashion, Mr Knightley at Donwell heads Highbury's most distinguished family. Mr Elton must maintain his leaving as a clergyman and upgrade his status by marriage to a wealthy woman. Mr Cole, a prosperous tradesman has to think twice before inviting Miss Woodhouse, while Mr Robert Martin is of a yeoman stock, Mr Weston, formally Captain Weston of the militia

has earned his ease. in essence, the people of Highbury and its neighbouring places fall neatly into "Gentlemen and half Gentlemen" (p140).

Persuasion (1818)

Published post-humously in 1818, Jane Austen's last completed novel, *Persuasion* according to Cassandra's memorandum, begun on 8 August 1815 and by 16 August 1816 Austen had made some serious revisions but the novel could not be published until 1818.

The novel begins when Anne Elliot is twenty seven years, we learn through a flashback that she is persuaded by Lady Russell to break her engagement to Frederick Wentworth. At Kellynch hall, the home of the Elliots, Elizabeth, Anne's elder sister is now mistress and is her father's favourite, as lady Elliot had died thirteen years earlier. As for Anne, "her word had no weight". "She was only Anne" (p5) despite her "elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding " .p(5).

In this novel, Austen's main concern like in the previous novels is the moral development of her heroine. At the beginning of all the novels we have seen so far, the heroine is confronted with an obstacle that prevents her from seeing the world as it is, here, we have seen the general state of mind of Elliots family. According to Mansell 1973:190, "Kellynch Hall is the home, the place of egotism in the novel. Sir Walter Elliot is the presiding spirit of the place; and the first chapter sets him up as nothing short of caricature of vanity."

This perhaps is due to the kind of living he is subjected to, for the authorial voice tells us that "vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character,

vanity of person and situation"(p4). From this, we are able to deduce that such irresponsibility in a father, is enough to destroy Anne and all her capabilities for "she has no choice and no word, all she could do is to endure", though despite all these alongside Lady Russell's Persuasion from the beginning, Anne could finally choose what is right for herself, she is re-united with Captain Wentworth and at the end they were married.

1.1 Problem Statement

Jane Austen is seen as "a woman about the 1800's writing without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching" but one who refuses to succumb to the ideology of her age, as such she "possessed a mind that consumes all impediments" (Woolf 1929, 1993:62). These deeply flawed and ambivalent postulations are the problems that this study seeks to disentangle. For rather than possessing a mind that "consumes all impediments ", one is able to detect in Austen's benign temper, gentle irony and humorous satire the convergence of conformity and revolt. In other words, subversion an accommodation,as such the central problem of this study is how Jane Austen's works such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*, which are the primary texts for this study, are amenable to a critical, discerning interpretation in the light of the New Historicist's conceptualization of the problematic relationship between texts and their contexts, between an author, in this case Jane Austen, and the non-textual determinations that have shaped the tenor of her textual practices within her novels.

1.2 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions

- In what ways would the study call for greater literary socio-historical representation of Jane Austen's novels
- What are the salient features that elucidate the social relevance of Austen's novels?
- To what extent do the novels of Jane Austen subvert or accommodate the prevailing ideologies
- How is "New Historicism", the theory chosen for this research, relevant to the study?

1.3 Aim and Objectives

Aim

The aim of this study is to situate Jane Austen's selected novels; *Pride and prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*, in their socio-historical contexts in order to interpret them from the new historicist perspective.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To examine Jane Austen's selected novels for this research, namely *Pride and prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* alongside their socio-historical co-text in order to illustrate their socio-cultural relevance.
- To explore the aporia, gaps, absences and lacunae in Austen's texts that elucidate clearly the texts' social relevance

- To demonstrate that the selected novels for this research, situated in their socio-historical contexts, on one hand accommodate the prevailing ideologies of nineteenth century England, romanticism, colonialism and imperialism and on the other they subvert them.
- To illustrate the feasibility of the chosen theoretical framework “New Historicism” and see whether it can justify the topic of the proposed study.

1.4 Scope and Delimitations

Jane Austen has written six completed novels, more than thirty short stories, a few fragmentary novellas, and a number of poems, verses and prayers. To assume an analysis of all her works in a research of this nature will be a futile attempt and would look even absurd, largely because of their divergent genres that require different conceptual tools of enquiry. For this reason, the research will restrict itself to the study of Austen's three completed novels namely; *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) *Emma* (1815) *Persuasion* (1818) alongside David Hume's *The History of England* (1754), GWF Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807, 2001) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1790, 2010) as social and historical documents, even though occasional references from other writings is expedient.

Even though the study would in no way try to conduct a sustainable critique of some currently popular explanations of the socio-political stance of Austen's contemporary women writers in post-renaissance England, inter textual references is expected to form major part of the research, but the principal focus of the study is on the interpretation of the primary texts from the new historicist perspective. It

will look critically at the author's background and the formative experience in her life including any significant influence from the people or other texts that affected her writing. The study will also try to investigate the public role which the writer assumed as well as the narratorial voice that runs through her writing.

From the social perspective, the research would attempt to see the major historical events of the period and their connections to the texts under discussion. It would also show the resistance, if any, to these events as well as the controversies of the period. Finally, the study is hoped to conclude by outlining the researcher's self positioning whether or not it conforms to previous stance or is politically and ethically independent.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative research. It concentrates mainly on textual analysis. It is mainly an assemblage of data through content analysis of related literature which is sought from libraries and other electronic sources like the internet. There is hardly any interviews, questionnaire or sampling technique, though in some cases informal discussions from learned colleagues or correspondents is involved and this has been fully acknowledged.

1.6 Justification for, and Significance of, the Study

Most of Jane Austen's novels are romantic in nature and concern the sexual mores, courtship relationship between men and women, hence materials on social and family history is appropriate as such the choice of the co-texts. In David Humes' *History of England (1954)*, volume I, Chapter I contains topics like

‘The First Inhabitants of Britain’, ‘Their Manners and Government’, ‘Introduction of Christianity by Gregory the Great’. Chapter II relates topics like ‘Encouragement of Learning’, Chapter III ‘Hands in England’, Chapter VIII ‘State of Europe, Chapter IX ‘Disorders in England’, Chapter X ‘The Origin of Feudal Law, Progress of the Feudal Law’, ‘The Feudal Government of England’, ‘The Commons’, ‘The Feudal Parliament’, ‘Commerce’, etc.

While in *Phenomenology of Mind (1807)* Hegel centrally focuses on human experiences derived from the senses. He discussed related topics like ‘A Consciousness at the Level of Sense-Experience-this and meaning’, ‘Perception or things and their Deceptiveness’, ‘Observation of the Relation of Self Consciousness in its pure form and its Relation to External Reality’, ‘The Ethical World: Law Human and Devine, Men and Women’.

In *A Vindication on the Rights of Woman (1792)*, Wollstonecraft clearly illustrates the prevailing opinion about sexual differences in chapter II. While chapter IV exposes ‘The State of Degradation to which Woman is Reduced by Various Causes’, Chapter IX records the ‘Pernicious Effects of the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society’. Looking at the nature of the primary texts (narratives that depict the lives of the upper class and that of the aspiring middle classes) published historical data and social history of this kind provide accessible source of co-texts to vindicate our aim.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This section of the research is aimed to review what has been written about the Renaissance ideology and how it influenced women writers particularly in the days of Jane Austen. It considers past literature and apply it to suit the purposes of this research. In addition, the review is carried out in the following format: *Section I*. A brief overview of Renaissance ideology and its effects on the writings of women, *Section II* A review of critical works on the primary texts. *Section III*. A review of contemporary interest in the works of Jane Austen.

2.1 A Brief Overview of Renaissance Ideology and its Effects on the Writings of Women

As our central tool of enquiry, namely New historicism, believes in using the past as “an impetus for political struggle in the present and making it clear that the discipline of literary studies is not removed from the sphere of politics, (Brannigan, 1990:6) this chapter begins with an overview on the influence of Renaissance ideology on the writings of women during and after the Renaissance. From about the 1500-1600, the world underwent a rebirth or reformation which marked the end of the Middle Ages. This rebirth was a period of remarkable socio-political change in Europe that affected socio-historical and literary outlooks. The period was said to have begun in Italy in the late fourteenth century and continued throughout Western Europe through the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries. During this period, the European arts of architecture, painting, sculpture and literature reached an eminence not exceeded in any age. The development came late to England in the sixteenth century and reached its peak during the Elizabethan and Jacobian periods. (See Marcus, 1992, Dobie, 2012).

In addition, the Renaissance period in particular affected English literature and helped towards a orientation of the European mind and, as the Reformation was to show, the religious viewpoint. Contrary to classical tradition however, this period created “liberty of thought”, “the rise of humanism” and “the assertion of the individual at the expense of the community”. However, the classical interest in politics, art, science, criticism and philosophy in contradistinction to the medieval dominant interest in stories and theology, is carried along in the Renaissance, though in a reorganized and refined manner.

On the other hand, an important distinguishing feature of New historicism is its view of culture and cultural artefacts whose views ideas, acts, values and emotions are cultural products created out of tendencies, capacities and dispositions with which they were born, but shaped by culture.

According to Geertz (1973:49) there is no such a thing as “a human nature independent of culture...without men, no culture certainly; but equally and more significantly, without culture, no men”. He goes further to exemplify that:

Chartress is made of stone and glass. But it is not just stone and glass: It is a cathedral, but a particular cathedral built at a particular time by Certain members of a particular society. To understand what it means, to perceive what it is, you need to know rather more than generic Properties of stone and glass and rather more than what is common to all

Cathedrals (...) it is no different with men: they too, every last one of them, are cultural artifacts (Geertz,1973:51).

This shows that instead of seeing culture as an additional trait acquired after a biological essence, culture should be considered as an important ingredient, nay, one of the nucleus in forming human beings and for them to function fully, they in turn require to be cultural signs and symbols.

In relation to the above, English literature was influenced by different socio-historical and institutional traditions and its subjects were by and large confined to specific areas such as religion, war, personal experience etc. (Carter, 1996:2-3).

The earliest writings came from the Christian monks in the monasteries (who were the only literate class then) and made every effort to guard culture and religion. In this sense, literature was considered as a moral weapon and a sensitive preoccupation with life or “moral ideology for the modern age” and apart from the working class, literature also became a suitable subject for women as a distinctive class.

Even though early English society was an age of military aristocracy with some territorial base, early modern women (renaissance women) were actively involved in diverse areas of English public life despite some hostile cultural attitudes to such intrusion. Before the Renaissance, women were directed to confine their literary aspirations to what can be described as “socially acceptable genres” like religion, parables and translation of texts authored by men. These areas corresponded to traditional female moral virtues of chastity and obedience and within the traditional literary hierarchies, these genres are viewed as subordinate

to masculine public genres like Epic poetry, tragedy and history. (Cited in Martin 1997:5-6). This double critical standard had seriously affected the socio-political outlook and many modern English women often wrote in the hope of attracting patronage, although not usually for financial gain. (See Sage 1999:377-8).

A distinctive feature of the Renaissance women's writing is their concern with pre-and post-natal care. Modern women like Lincoln, Margaret lady Hoby, Grace Lady Mildway, wrote treatise in the areas of child-birth and infant care, based on real life experience and acquired female wisdom. This is significant as it distinguishes them from the male writers who repeatedly documented non-empirical theories handed down by classical authorities.

In essence, a good number of anthologies show clearly how women from early modern English society were, despite some restrictions on form, actively involved in producing what can be described as "Women exclusive literature"/feminine literature e.g. Germaine Greer et al's *Kissing the Rod* (1988) presents a wide range of seventeenth century verses with accompanying notes. There is also *The Norton Anthology of literature by Women: The Tradition in English* (1985) edited by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Though the image of modern women we have in these anthologies and many others is, as Ezell (1993) observes, one of "modern women as pathetically isolated eccentrics crying in the patriarchal wilderness".

Nevertheless, Renaissance women writers unlike their successors, the nineteenth century women writers did not adopt pseudonyms. They wrote in their own names, though some of their works appeared with initials only, while others

preferred anonymity. As for title page identification, there was no difference between those of men and those of women.

Finally, despite their significant efforts at creative challenges, these early modern women continued to have no access to institutional secondary learning, though in some cases daughters were sent away to serve in socially superior households and possibly learn languages other than English from private tutors. (Sage 1984, Warnicke 1983).

The rise of English however, gave rise to the admission of women in England into the higher institution to study what was considered “women’s discipline”, i.e. literature, as opposed to science, medicine and law, which were viewed as more serious subjects and as such masculine. The era in which English was established as an academic discipline coincides with the era of high imperialism in England. English is believed to be a convenient non subject, as such suitable for the ladies as it was then an upstart, amateurish and not fully recognizable a subject and unable to compete with the rigors of great subjects, in other words, masculine ones. (See Eagleton 1983, 2010; 20-25).

2.2 A Review of Critical Works on the Primary Texts

Jane Austen’s texts like those of many other scholars have since their earliest publication, been undergoing critical reviews which range from romantic idolatry, stern criticism, objective assessment and unsympathetic condemnation. Significant among her earliest reviewers include Chapman (1923), Lascelles 1939, 1979), Kingsley (1975). Duckworth (1971) and Mansell (1973). While more

recent studies include Tomalin (1997), Miles (2003), Eagleton (2005) and Mullan (2013) to name a select few. Each of these studies tries to look at Austen's novels from a particular ideological stance, though in few of them there seems to be overlap in some instances.

Robert William Chapman has, for years, been regarded as one of the famous reviewers of Jane Austen's texts. This resulted from his earliest publication of *The Novels of Jane Austen in six Volumes* (1923), to the later *Jane Austen: Facts and Problems* (1949). As a British recognized editor of Jane Austen and Samuel Johnson among others, Chapman had in 1923 produced an edition of the five novels of Jane Austen. Later, Austen's miscellanea were published separately in the 1920s and 1930s before being collected together as a sixth volume minor works of the *Novels of Jane Austen*. He edited (1932) Austen's correspondences, though this involved him in some controversy with other Austen critics. While 1948 saw Chapman's ultimate rejection of "The Rice Portrait of Jane Austen" based on costume evidence.

In his analysis of the uncertainty of the situation in which Austen's heroines find themselves, Chapman sees them as characters that are emotionally and socially estranged. In *Pride and prejudice*, though the Bennets are not evicted from Longbourn, they live according to Chapman "in some danger of social dislocation" because "their estate, in default of a male heir, is entailed upon the egregious Mr. Collins, and should their improvident father die, the income of the five sisters will be quite insufficient to keep them in the comfort which they are accustomed" (1923:54).

Similarly, in *Emma* present security becomes total isolation, residence “in the centre of their property” in the enjoyment of “the general good opinion of their surrounding acquaintance” maybe exchanged for life “in lodgings” without money even to afford--- the comfort of a servant”, (*Emma*:p44). For, the Dashwoods long settled, for many generations, at their large estate in Sussex are required to leave the protective confines of Norland park and to travel into Devonshire, “so far from hence” (*Emma*:25) where they exist, in the manner of dependents, in a cottage at some distance from the great house. Finally, in *Persuasion*, Jane Austen’s last novel, Chapman analyses the question of estrangement in a more significant manner. Indeed he sees it as the central theme in the novel as the Kellynch estate is rented by its self-centered owner Sir Walter Elliot, and Anne is forced to leave the cherished space of her home. She becomes entirely unsupported and reduced to bare existence without husband, society or friends. See (Duckworth 1971 and Lascelless 1970).

In all these studies, Chapman appears as a versatile scholar of Austen’s work, who does not depend on a single item, say language, style or theme, rather he makes a comprehensive analysis of Jane Austen’s corpus. In his focus on her subject matter, Chapman shows how exceptionally dependent upon reality the writer is, in her imaginary construction in the novels. Perhaps for fear of unlimited imaginative freedom. He sees the writer as being careful enough to ground her world in a precise temporal and spatial frame. The chronology and geography of her novels he sees as exact, as she uses almanacs and road blocks in their

construction and ignorant of Northamptonshire, she enquires of her sister if it is “a country of hedgerows’.

On the other hand, Mary Lascelles’ study of Jane Austen mainly centres on style. In *Jane Austen and her Art (1979)*, she concentrates on an analysis of Austen’s linguistic and stylistic strategy. The writer views Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* as highly accomplished despite its being one of the earliest compositions of Jane Austen. Thus, she points out that:-

Pride and Prejudice is no less deliberately shaped; its pattern shows an equal delight in the symmetry of correspondence and antithesis; but there is a notable difference in the contrivance. This pattern is formed by diverging and converging lines, by the movement of two people who are impelled apart until they reach a climax of mutual hostility and there after bend their courses towards mutual understanding and amity. It is a pattern very common in fiction, but by no means easy to describe. (P160).

Of the two courses outlined above we find that Elizabeth’s earlier misconception of Darcy is encouraged by Wickham’s account of him. Her misunderstanding of Darcy is thus much less simple, more like the given condition of an invented problem and her initial impulse towards this misunderstanding comes from Darcy himself, in his rudeness which seems to be somewhat out of place, when the calm and gentle Mr. Bingley points out to him that there is a single lady “Elizabeth,” sitting behind him (Mr. Darcy) and is not yet occupied. Darcy’s reply seems too hard for Elizabeth to bear. He says:-

Which do you mean? And turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, “She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me, (Chp3:P9).

Darcy's opinion of Elizabeth has completely encouraged the young lady to dismiss him as unscrupulous and unworthy. Meanwhile his own ill opinion of the Bennets has been growing under the influence of first Miss Bingley's insolent interference which on the other hand rouses Elizabeth's pride and clouds her judgment, and secondly, Mr. Wickham, by associating Darcy in her mind with the idol of his worship, strengthens every ill impression. Thirdly, Charlotte Lucas causes her to misinterpret her own prejudice as generous sentiment and finally Lady Catherine de Bourgh, by answering to Wickham's description, confirms part of his story and by her praise of Darcy fixes some of its implications. The story has been going along this line until the climax of the ungracious proposal and refusal is reached.

In a similar fashion, Lascelles's study of *Emma* focuses on Austen's narrative technique. As series of letters permeate the novel, Lascelles sees that as a tactful method of conveying information. This "information is conveyed to us unobtrusively in the shape of such a trifle of family news as might while still fresh find place in a letter". (1979:175). This mode of conveying information to the reader is interpreted by Lascelles as a kind of tactful manipulation of the reader's attention to suit the purposes of the writer. For example, in presenting a particular train of events so that the reader may realize their intricate interplay of character and circumstances, their common pattern dwells on a ground of everyday life, without in the least suspecting that the reader's attention is "being manipulated". Lascelles cited the quarrel between Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. In that

situation, Jane's caution and Churchills's recklessness are bound to strain their relationship. His reference at Hartfield to a piece of local gossip (which has reached him through one of her letters) appears as a blunder which is mischievously enjoyed. This prompts Miss Bates to admit that her household has been the source of information, even going to the extent of revealing an unlucky comment thus:-

I will not positively answer for my having never dropped a hint, because I know I do sometimes pop out a thing before I am aware. I am a talker, you know; I am rather a talker; and now and then I have let a thing escape me which I should not. I am not like Jane; I wish I were. I will answer for it she never betrays the least thing in the world (*Emma*: 346).

Nevertheless, similar issues are treated in *Persuasion* though with a slight drift from purely stylistic analysis to an inclusion of thematic and biographical aspects. Lascelles views with correctness, Austen's corrections and alterations in rewritten part, conjecture as to change of plan with regard to apparent climax as well as to actual climax. She also illustrated Austen's treatment of place and significance of the point of view.

In essence, Lascelles' study reveals to the reader Austen's mastery over her plots, characters and dialogue through a careful analogy between reading and response, the narrator and his material, the narrator and his reader, the means of communication and the relationship that is carefully established, as well as the substance and handling. In the end, she sums up Jane Austen's art as:

A close and genial relationship with the familiar, daylight world, a Johnsonian belief in the value of 'those parallel circumstances, and kindred images to which we readily

conform our minds, and a scrupulous fidelity to the evidence at her disposal, mastery, moreover, of her chosen methods of representation, wise use of all the resources she can command, of her own powers and her reader's capacity for response. (Lascelles 1979:218).

On another level, David Mansell's study of Jane Austen's novels differs from those of the other two scholars discussed earlier in this chapter in the sense that he radically deviates from the age-long traditional mode of critical analysis to a more theoretically focused one. In his *The Novels of Jane Austen: An Interpretation* (1973, 1974) Mansell picked up a concept for each of the six completed novels of Jane Austen and analyses it in relation to the story. So, rather than bothering the reader with questions of theme, language, style etc, the writer discusses concepts like "Active imagination in the Novels", "Facts in the Novels", "character in the Novels", "The Scourging of irony", "Reality" and "Romanticism".

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the concept of irony, which modern criticism has seen as a response to experience which provides a means for unifying the apparent contradictions of experience in the ambiguities of the ironic mode, is treated by means of comparison between the author and the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet. To Mansell, Elizabeth, like her creature:

Is often unwilling to commit herself to a truth, and she too is capable of withdrawing into the relativism of a variety of view. Likewise Elizabeth's lively mind comes into play best when she can put aesthetic distance enough between herself and her subjects so as to regard it with ironic detachment. (1978:80).

This can be discerned during their visit to Rosings in chapter twenty eight when Mr. Collins abruptly began to explain everything about Rosings right from

Rosings park. The authorial voice tells us that Elizabeth loves “absurdities”, and “she has a lively, playful disposition which delights in anything ridiculous”, she even admits that “follies and nonsense...do divert me...and I caught at them whenever I can”. *Pride and Prejudice* (P54).

Secondly, Elizabeth’s irony is seen to have been caricatured in her father, who happens also to love absurd characters in the story, chief among them his wife Mrs. Bennet. He too is diverted by “folly”, he sees the foibles of his family and is contented with laughing at them. Whenever his wife messed up he merely takes solace in his study or make fun of the situation no matter how serious. On one occasion his youngest daughter, Lydia run off with a militia officer, Mr. Wickham, all Mr. Bennet could say was “Oh Mrs. Bennet, if your daughter should die it must be recalled that it is in pursuit of one of the officers”. (P212) unabashedly distancing himself from the situation.

Irony is seen as the beginning and end of Mr. Bennet’s character. In the opening chapter of *Pride and Prejudice* he introduces Elizabeth with a sort of special personal attachment. Referring to his five daughters he says: “they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Elizabeth has something more of quickness than her sisters” (P3). According to Mansell what happens to the two of them (Elizabeth and her father) in the course of the story, is what seems to have happened to the ironic Jane Austen in the course of it as well, to him in the persons of Mr. Bennet and Elizabeth, Jane Austen herself seems to be occupied with the question of just what part irony should play in her own fiction (1974:81).

A significant feature of the concept of irony discussed by Mansell is that such a concept requires a certain detachment. No doubt we find Elizabeth Bennet seems to live above her status or assume a position superior to her surroundings. Her character can be both “pride” and “prejudice”, as recollected by Caroline Bingley that in Elizer Bennet there is “a little something bordering on conceit and impertinence...(P52) which later in the story Elizabeth herself admits. (P285). She meets Mr. Bingley’s sisters at Netherfield and emits an instant air of dislike for them. When their solicitude for her indisposed sister disappears, she rekindles her earlier dislike. (P34). She categorically stated “the more I see of the world, the more am I dissatisfied with it”.

Similarly, Elizabeth’s sense of superiority is discernible in her relationship to her immediate family. She felt greatly mortified when her sister Mary sings at Neitherfield Ball. She also blushed with shame and regret at her own mother (P102). We also learn from the authorial recollection that whenever her family is in company her ‘sense of shame’ is severe. She trembles “lest her mother should be exposing herself again” (P41). In essence Elizabeth’s pride can be partly justifiable. She seems to be the only sensible member of the Bennet family apart from Mr. Bennet himself. At Netherfield Ball, the Bennet’s individual characters are carefully displayed. Indeed, they are described by Mansell as “five embodiments of one deadly sin to exhibit their particular vanities”. First Mrs. Bennet talks at length about her pride in Jane’s prospects of getting a husband. Then Mary with her coarse voice sings badly to the embarrassment of Elizabeth. Later, the callous Mr. Collins confidently comes forth and presents it no less

worse than Mary's to the dissatisfaction of almost everyone. While Mr. Bennet sits in silence "enjoying the scene" (P98). Here Mr. Bennet's pride is to be detached from his family's foolishness. By the end of the novel however, he will have paid a price for this. Elizabeth happens to be the final exhibitor at the ball, in fact all events there are almost seen through her own eyes. Her pride, like that of Mr. Bennet, is her apparent detachment and illusion that she doesn't belong to the Bennets, her shame as she watches them "Expose" themselves, her pride in being mortified by theirs. In the end, she will have to acknowledge that she too is part of the family she so despised. She has to acknowledge that her last name is Bennet before it can become Darcy.

In addition, the second novel selected for this thesis is *Emma*, which on the other hand has also been interpreted by Mansell. Mansell's analysis tries to interpret the concept of "Reality" in Jane Austen's *Emma*. To him, there is a general shift in Austen's concern with conventional plots in the earlier novels and unless read as an abstraction of the previous novels, the novel will have little or no significance. (Mansell 1974:147).

Like Elizer Bennet, Emma is enveloped in an illusion about the world, but unlike in the previous novel, Jane Austen seems to be uninterested in giving specific causes of the illusion. Here, Emma's illusion is broader. It appears to be the causeless state of the mind as a human being moves from his first parental house, close to the heart, out into the world. Initially, Emma's mind is supreme over matter. She likes to be above serious facts. Her mind is one "delighted with its own ideas". So she commits what Jane Austen calls "error of imagination".

Whenever she thought up an idea she tries to subdue reality to that idea. (pp24,37,134). Emma is not in essence coupled with another character that is her equal. There is hardly anyone to introduce into her personal illusion in terms of intellectual ability only Mr. Knightly could well equal the heroine. Indeed, according to (J.F. Burrows, cited in Mansell: 148) “Emma comes close to creating the novel. “ in the sense that almost all the events are seriously limited to mostly what passes through her consciousness. In sum, Emma appears almost above any contradiction. Her Hartfield holds itself apart from the village of Highbury to which it belongs, and all the villagers, look up to the Woodhouses. Mr. Woodhouse himself is a polite old gentleman who turns to his daughter on any crucial matter. Even her sister, Isabella is not in any sense distinguished for her intelligence (p91).

In *Emma* therefore the events are compressed in the small world of Emma, the heroine. It is a narrative which seems to go through and then out of the central controlling consciousness of the heroine. The bulk of the story is made up of the private illusions of Emma, with little or no reference to any hypothetical or objective reality outside herself. Her imaginative consciousness is so pervasive that it seems to have overshadowed the possibility of objectivity. In *Emma* one discovers a heroine that appears to be above the world and exists only within herself. Indeed the story could be summed up as self sufficient and self referential. In other words, it is a story of indexicality.

Finally, in *Persuasion* the concept of romanticism has been carefully explored in Mansell’s account of Austen’s novel as “ a movement to end all movements”, to

borrow Stephen Bann's phrase, Romanticism has been interpreted from many different angles. It is seen as "a movement which defies any specific agenda", "a remarkable enhancement of the consciousness of history", "a movement to establish connections with the deepest levels of western religion and philosophy," etc. in essence, historical consciousness, when the whole range of contemporary concerns with the past first became accessible to representation, seems to be at the centre of Romanticism.

In this sense, Mansell tries to see the novel in its historical epoch, he began by pin-pointing Jane Austen's own personal view of the novels. *Emma* is described as her "profoundest novel", *Pride and Prejudice* her "most brilliant", and *Persuasion* the "most beautiful". The categorization rightly flows through *Pride and Prejudice* which precedes *Emma*, one can no doubt agree with Mansell that *Persuasion* can bear the appellation "most beautiful" in the sense that the novel is quite serene, dream like, and highly less concerned with the particularities of plot than the previous ones.

The novel is seen to have grown out of the preceding novels of Austen, and at the same time looking back on them with "an achieved serenity that could only have come after great trials" (Mansell 1974, 186). In the novel, one gets the impression that it is written by some quiet, reserved, resigned and intelligent personality. The novel's beauty might have been linked with its maturity "it is the last novel before Austen passed away." in Mansell's recollection, *Persuasion* is mature, confident and autumnal. The bloom is off the world now and the heroine too. The story

begins in autumn, and Anne walks the fields enjoying the beauty of the evening, thus'

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 exhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness..... (P84).

The novel begins in a flashback, Anne Elliot, aged twenty seven, had seven or eight years earlier, been persuaded by Lady Russell to break off her engagement with Frederick Wentworth, which she naively does. In this sense it is perceptible that the heroine has already passed through the sensitive romantic experience (which seems to be the driving force in the previous novels). When the story begins, Anne and Mr. Wentworth have already found each other but have been unnaturally separated. However, nature through the supervision of the author, reasserts itself in a slow natural way. The destined couples finally met in the second to the last chapter, and regretted their action of separating while simultaneously looking at a display of greenhouse plants (p 246).

In conclusion, it is clear that Anne is presented in the novel as an embodiment of patience. From the onset of the story we learn that in her father's house Anne has neither choice nor voice, "all she could do is to endure. Like Mr. Knightly, while waiting for his apples in *Emma*, Anne has to exercise patience throughout the novel. At upper cross cottage she is described as displaying a "little farther perseverance in patience" while submitting to her sister's querulousness. One by one the Musgroves impose their troubles on her, but she mildly resolves to "listen patiently, soften every grievance, and excuse each to the other." (pp 39, 46). In the

final analysis, Mansell's stance here differs from earlier views by scholars and readers alike that Anne did not go through any character development, that she did not grow morally in the story, that her purpose in the novel is simply to suffer, without changing, and wait for the happy end, because to these earlier presuppositions *Persuasion* has no "middle" at all, no plot development to lead from the beginning to the end. To Mansell, this is far from the truth because to him Jane Austen always "had a careful plan for the psychological reformation of her heroine." Therefore, Anne has changed, and she is meant to be a better mate for Frederick Wentworth in the last chapter than she is in the first.

Nevertheless, as stated earlier in this section, Jane Austen's later or in some cases, more recent reviewers include Tomalin (1997), Miles (2003), Eagleton (2005) and Mullan (2013). These and other scholars stand to look at the work of Austen from various ideological perspectives which include biographical, post-colonial, Marxist and post-feminist. For convenience, discussion on Tomalin's (1997) study on Jane Austen has been left out of this section, and is employed later in chapter four. Therefore, the research tries to explore the views of Robert Miles in his *Writers and their Work: Jane Austen (2003)*, and Eagleton (2005) in *the English Novel: An Introduction*. These two critics try to see Jane Austen's work from an entirely different direction. Coming from different ideological positions, each of them attempt to present to us a fresh study of Austen's work which not only questions the validity of earlier studies but actively undermines them. In *Writers and their Work: Jane Austen (2003)* Miles' central argument centers on querying the veracity of those earlier studies that try to view Austen's work as an accurate

uncontaminated portrayal of English society. In doing this, the writer first of all positions the work of Jane Austen within her period. In other words within history and the currents of Georgian change and situate it within the history and theory of nationalism advanced by Ernest Gellner, in *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) and *Nationalism* (1998).

According to Gellner (1983), cited in Miles (2003:110) Nationalism can be seen as “a theory of political legitimacy”, which comes to fill in the gap created by the erasure of the divine, which had “underwritten earlier versions of state legitimacy”. This he sees as a modern ideological construction which points to the fact that nationalism is nothing but an expression of “false consciousness” and that “getting its history wrong is part of being a nation”. He also sees the aim of nationalist ideology as the ability to create a myth of unitary national origin, whereby the “present congruent polity is understood to be the manifestation of an ancient culture”. Another significant feature of nationalism outlined by Miles is its effort to see itself as “the antecedent expression of an ancient ‘low’ or present culture”, while in reality it is the imposition of high culture on the low, at the expense of the latter. In this view then nationalism is not only a profound version of false consciousness as argued by Gellner, but also a kind of total overturning of reality.

In view of this, Miles criticizes Austen’s critics who sought to insert her into her time, demonstrating her engagement with the traditional English society and as a quintessential English author either through her positive involvement in debates about religious renewal, Tory politics, the Regency crisis and the changing literary

scene brought about by the advent of the professional woman writer, or negatively by voicing visible silences, about, for instance, slave trade, or the scandal of her own relatives dangerously near the turbulent centres of power. In this sense Miles begins by questioning the form of her art. The pastoral, he argues, is a highly ideological mode, and in Austen's use of it she revealed herself to be alert to the changing political scene, as in for example, the difference between *Emma* and *Persuasion*. He then drew attention to the writer's "strong sense of attention to the luxury and consumption" which in the 18th century had been the stock language for "expressing anxiety over modernity". Finally, he referred to "the density of Austen's semiological observation, her deployment of 'manners' as a form of anthropological thick description".

According to Lynch (1998) "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political principle, and the national should be congruent" and that the, transition from agrarianism to industrialism gave rise to the principle. In view of this, Miles tries in his study, to provide a connection between Austen's work and the ideals of nationalism through this he presents a clear picture of Austen's historical moment. A moment in which Austen appeared as an "observer of the permanent challenge" and a "recorder of the minutiae of life". In other words, her texts swarm with contemporary reference which according to Frederick Harrison, are carefully selected. In a letter to Thomas Hardy (1913) cited in "*The Critical Heritage* (P87-88) referring to Jane Austen, Harrison claims that:

A heartless little cynic was Jane, penning satires about her neighbors while the Dynasts were tearing the world to pieces, and consigning millions to their graves. A relation of

hers even was guillotined in 1793, her brother was in the fleet that fought at Trafalgar - and not a breath from the whirlwind around her even touched her *Chippendale Chiffonier or Escritoire*.

In line with the above postulation, Miles's account of Austen's work shows a clear romanticization of nationalist ideology. Her characters he sees as idle, which may seem remote to the modern reader. Many of her personages have nothing to do, their identities are not shaped by work rather by rank and caste and certainly not by professional activity, but by leisure. Here we think of Mr. Wickham and his likes. Further, Miles alludes to a couple of nineteenth century American commentators who, with some asperity, point out that in an Austen novel:

The normal activity of human beings is virtually excluded and all the characters are parasitical beings subsisting upon the labour of others in a cloistered and subdued lotus-land free from the gusts of hunger and passion. *The Critical Heritage II 77* (cited in Miles 2003, P111)

In conformity to the above, Miles argues that Austen presents to the reader, a picture of the old agrarian order, "one thrown into historical chiaroscuro through the presence of telltale signs of the new growth economy". In other words, the identities of her characters may be largely fixed within the old agrarian economy, though they are identities under stress. For example, her gentlemen are described as "parasitical", though they only represent one aspect, as Austen always supplies the reader with contrasts. The society she represents is certainly not fixed rather, it is depicted in a state of crisis and change.

Nevertheless, the Clergymen in Jane Austen's work are clearly contrasted with the aristocratic values which she elsewhere repudiates. Her positive depiction of the

clergymen heroes can be seen as historically inflected as they are part of a general country conservatism that was typical of much of English life during the 1790s. In her expression of the tension between the middle class and the aristocrats, Austen seems to share the general contempt of the landed gentry for the aristocracy, usually regarded by the gentry as “improvident, snobbish and socially irresponsible”. In view of this, it is clear that Austen includes only a handful of aristocrats in her novels. Most of her characters are from the middle class and gentry though a few aristocrats are included.

In conclusion, Miles’ study of Jane Austen and her work appears as a clear voice to counteract earlier assumptions that try to interpret Austen’s work as an accurate depiction of traditional English society. He actually sets out to establish her difference, her distance from the “heritage Austen”. He argues persuasively that the construction of Austen as an English cultural icon are to be found in the works’ formal qualities and in her most innovative techniques. On the other hand, he considers her creative use of the comic structures, her achievement of personality, her development of the novel of education, her balance between realism and the pastoral, novel and romance, and her novel use of free indirect speech as highly commendable.

On the other hand, the radical Marxist literary theorist, Terry Eagleton has, in his *The English Novel; An Introduction* (2005) devoted a chapter on Jane Austen. Chapter five of the book is devoted to a comparative study of Walter Scott and Jane Austen. As if to stress his view in his earlier *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983:28) where he states that; “Dismissive of mere ‘literary’ values,

Scrutiny insisted that how one evaluated literary works was deeply bound up with deeper judgments about the nature of history and society as a whole". In view of this Eagleton appears in that study not only dismissive of Jane Austen as an artist, but of other critics who interpreted the works of Austen mostly by looking at the works' formal properties.

He begins by questioning the idea that Jane Austen's concern with the portrayal of everyday life and common place happenings, which qualifies her as a realist novelist, is faulty in the sense that the great realist novel is:

A response to the French Revolution. In its preoccupation with the solidity of the everyday world, its shyness of absolute crises or ruptures, its nervousness of the political, its fascination with the individual, its preference for the normative over the extreme, its concern for settlement and integration. In all these ways, the realist novel can be seen as a cultural solution to a political problem. (Eagleton, 2005:99).

Yet, in Jane Austen, Eagleton sees realism as a moral and literary stance, to the world. For as "a classical moralist", he believes that, Austen's view of the ethical life is mainly about action, and not feelings, intuitions, inner states or intentions. This, he shows to have coupled with her opposition to romanticism and her distaste for the subjectivism and individualism she saw around her. In Jane Austen therefore, realism is identical to an expression of deeper moral belief" as she believes that the foundation of all right conduct is true judgment, which depends solely on being able to see things for what they are. This is in contrast to Scott who, despite his romantic identification and aversion to the exotic and outlandish, believes in reason, good sense and the rule of law. And as one who belongs to the

Scottish enlightenment, he rejected dogma, fanaticism and social revolution in the name of civility.

In the end Eagleton shows clearly that Austen's depiction as a realist by some critics is nothing but an illusion: "for all her aversions to fantasy" he posits,

Austen is not a rationalist in the sense of one who trusts in the supremacy of reason. For one thing, her Tory Christian pessimism, with its sense of the irreparably flawed condition of humanity, would hardly allow her to be so. (Eagleton 2005:114).

Secondly, the formal properties in Austen's work further jeopardizes her with Eagleton. Her strenuous use of irony he sees as "both worldly and unworldly" because she seems to have accommodated every evil in the sense that she finds nothing surprising in human immorality, which Eagleton explained as "a fairly low view of humanity, only befitting a conservative Christian moralist author". To Eagleton, Austen's irony is meant to "defend a traditional way of life against outside interlopers and inside subversives which is in contrast to the 'scabrous virulent satire of a Pope or Swift'".

In *The Event of Literature* Terry Eagleton stands to question the classification of novels into the canonical and non-canonical. To him, there is an urgent need to challenge this unjustifiable tradition. He argues that:

There is an assumption among many champions of the canon, for example, that an authentic work of art must always and everywhere forge unity out of complexity –a prejudice that survived with astonishing tendency from the age of Aristotle to the early twentieth century, when modernists and avant-gardists dared to query what political ends were served by this fetishistic obsession with integrity. Why should art works never have a hair out of place? Why should every one of their features be slotted precisely into

place, organically related to every other? Can nothing ever simply free-wheel? Is there no virtue in dispersion, dislocation, contradiction, open-endedness? (2012:57).

He concludes his assertions with the declaration that “this compulsion to coherence is by no means beyond the reach of criticism” and as if to confirm this assertion, elsewhere he states that “the canonical had its roots in the non-canonical” and goes further to undermine Jane Austen who featured in F.R. Leavis’ (1946) the Great Tradition among the canonical writers. He points out that:-

Maria Edgeworth and others were intensively involved in fiction about national and cultural identity and its complex relations to gender, in a way which gives the lie to the prejudice that while the expansively “masculine” Sir Walter wrote novels about the public world, female writers were all as domestically restricted as a Jane Austen. (Eagleton 2005:96).

In conclusion, it is arguable that earlier studies on Jane Austen’s work seem to concentrate mainly on the formal properties of the works as we have seen in the case of her three famous reviewers R.W. Chapman (1923), Duckworth (1971) and Mary Lascelles (1979). While later critics like Miles (2003) and Eagleton (2005) tend to view the works from their different ideological stance. While the former shows in his study that there is little that is in every respect so completely and so profoundly English and outlines the national features of English art, points out that to understand the cultural geography of a nation it is necessary to examine its polarities and that only through the apparent contradictions can one discover what is specifically English in a particular work of art. In Eagleton’s case, Jane Austen does not think in historical terms because “her novels have few comments passed

on the great social and political events of the day”. To him, the novels concentrate on the social history of the landed gentry and contrary to earlier studies that stated the fact that Austen wrote about the family only, here Eagleton clarifies the fact that she did not write about the family rather than the society, because the family in her days was society.

In view of the foregoing, my point within the argument of this writing is to some extent in line with Miles’ postulation. Jane Austen ‘s writing can be seen as a discourse of national geography as well as a diversified art as we shall come to see in our analysis of the individual texts in chapter four. .

2.3 A Review of Contemporary Interest in the Works of Jane Austen

It is quite astonishing how Jane Austen has been receiving attention in this century, perhaps more than she received in the last two centuries and certainly not during her life time. These include book reviews, re-writing the novels from different perspectives, book clubs organized purposely to meet and discuss her work, centenary celebrations of the individual texts, Television and Audio adaptations of the texts etc. as if to confirm her view in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) when she wrote “how much sooner one tires of anything than of a book”. Austen indeed has left a great deal of memory to her fans which may have probably been due to her early death (at age 42) or perhaps the social seclusion she has subjected herself to. Which ever is the case, through her writing, she has created another life that has out ran her own, in other words, a literary life through which she has been reincarnated.

Fay Weldon, born 1931, is one of the British authors who found Jane Austen's work worthy of consideration. As a playwright and essayist, she has written a number of books on different subjects which include a book on Jane Austen.

Letters to Alice (1984) is an epistolary fictional creation which consists of series of short essays to Alice, the supposed author's niece, aged 18, who is on a college course in English literature and happened to find Jane Austen somewhat "boring, pretty and irrelevant". In this brilliant collection of letters to her young niece, Weldon introduces Alice to the world of the Austen novels and to the bases of literature as a whole. The book serves not only to endear the writing of Jane Austen to the author's fictional niece, but also anybody interested in literature. Even though all the chapters begin "my dear Alice", the content actually goes beyond that.

The book begins with an insight into the life of Jane Austen right from her family through to her literary life even going to the extent of explicating to the reader how Austen learnt the art of writing/story telling and how she utilized that:-

And this-the mental presence of an audience-is another reason for the peculiarly dramatic scene-setting of which Jane Austen is so fond. She knows how to end a scene, an episode, a chapter, before beginning the next. When to allow the audience to rest. When to and how to underline a statement. When to mark time with idle paragraphs, allowing what went before to settle, before requiring it to inform what comes next. (Weldon 1984:80).

In the end Fay Weldon's *Letters to Alice* which depicts her thoughts on the "city of invention" and the craft of writing that begins with a "training in docility" that mature to become a novel as in "oh! It's a Novel", is a very wise, sharp and

informative writing, though “shrewd and funny” in the words of A.S. Byatt, it is a useful book to any aspiring novelist and to all readers of fiction.

Another significant prolific writer who has written on Jane Austen and her art and is almost indispensable as far as this researcher is concerned is the famous British novelist and editor, Emma Tennant, who was born into the aristocracy on October 20, 1937. Tennant's books include: “Sylvia and Ted”, “Thornfield Hall;”, “The Autobiography of the Queen”, “Elinor and Marianne”, “Emma in Love”, “The Bad Sister”, “The Women of London”, etc. alongside these, she has written two significant books on Jane Austen. *Pemberley or Pride and Prejudice Continued* (1993) announces itself as a sequel to Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, right from the opening sentence, which in a way tends to mimic its predecessor: “it is a truth universally acknowledged that a reader who has finished reading *Pride and Prejudice* must be in want of more” (P1). Indeed, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* ends with the engagement of Elizer Bennet and Mr. Darcy, so Emma Tennant's pledge to continue the story giving insight into the marital life of the duo. In *pemberley* Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are now about a year old in marriage and longed for an heir. They now have one in the person of Master Edward Darcy, sixteen years old and a worry to his parents. Jane, Elizabeth's sister is yet to conceive for Mr. Bingley. Now in the case of Elizer – Darcy affair, the question is, could the heir be a source of comfort to them or only a means of compounding problems.

As far as *Pemberley* is concerned, Tennant received severe censure from readers.

For example, one reader wrote:-

None of the characters are Austen's. Elizabeth is suddenly an impossibly perfect Mary sue; Darcy is suddenly a classist snob. The entire plot centres around a pathetic big misunderstanding that wouldn't even be possible if every character didn't act like Austen's. (Charlene Vickers).

Another reader goes to the extent of undermining Emma Tennant as any serious scholar of Jane Austen, as she wrote;-

Shelves: sequels and prequels, waste-of-time. I seriously doubt this author had read the actual *PrideandPrejudice* or any other Austen's work. If she has, maybe she might have been thinking about another galaxy when she did or may be she got the original idea from Ms. Bingley and lady Catherine--- (Amalie)

Another reader whose name is simply given as VC wrote:-

Emma Tennant is too depressing for me...I believe that Elizabeth is smarter than this and that Mr. Darcy would share a bit more info with the love of his life

In a way, Emma Tennant's sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* did not receive any significant positive attention. Rather, it serves to relegate its author to a position far below anything Austen.

Similarly, the second book written by Emma Tennant on Jane Austen's work is a kind of rewriting. Tennant pledged to rewrite Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* from her own perspective in *Pride and Prejudice Twenty Years Later*. (1993), Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy are now the parents of a son and daughter. Mrs. Darcy here struggles to communicate with her husband concerning their children and their own relationship. At the same time, Elizabeth must deal with all the guests at Pemberley who came for the marriage of Darcy's cousin Col. Fitzwilliam to Lady Sophia.

During the marriage ceremony, Elizabeth is embarrassed by attention from Mr. Gresham, the son of the estate manager who is in love with her. Mr. Darcy is called to London suddenly, as their son and heir to Pemberley, Edward, has left school at Eton and gambled away some of the family property in Wales. Meanwhile, Elizabeth's mother, Mrs. Bennet has been notified of a lady Harcourt in London who invites her to a wedding. Mrs. Bennet is horrified to learn that lady Harcourt is the owner of a gambling house, and the wedding that takes place marries Edward Darcy and a woman with an undesirable background.

Later, Elizabeth learnt from her husband that their son is safe and the land in Wales has been recovered but discovers from Col. Fitzwilliam and his wife that Edward has been disinherited by his father. Owing to this, the couple quarrelled and Mr. Darcy insults her. Mrs. Darcy is further surprised by Mr. Roper's (future heir to Pemberley) proposal to her daughter Miranda. In all these, Elizer becomes estranged from her husband and felt miserable about her life. On one occasion, Jane's husband, Mr. Bingley saw her wandering in the village and escorts her home. She confides in her sister Jane all that has happened between Darcy and her. In the end Darcy returns, seeks for her forgiveness and informs her that Edward will not be disinherited and that Miranda, who is not going to marry Mr. Roper will become the new estate manager of Pemberley.

While this book did not receive much critical attention from readers, it is clear that the content is also further away from anything Austen. Indeed, it is uncommon to find wayward characters like Tennant's Edward in an Austen novel. In actual sense, the reader expects to see Elizer's son having the most excellent character,

especially coupled with his father's good breeding and social status. Perhaps Emma Tennant shares something in common with the reknown erotic publisher, Total-E-Bound, who on July 17th 2012 announced his desire to publish the new story of *Pride and Prejudice* soon. Thus:- *Fifty Shades of Grey* meets *Pride and prejudice*: Classics Get Erotic Rewrites, in it Jane Austen's attempt to leave the intimate details of Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship behind a closed door has been unravelled. According to E-Bound:

There is no doubting the fact that the classics remain an inspiration to writers, even today, with many complex and thought-provoking storylines. But if we are honest to ourselves, haven't we heard the same reserved tale told time and time again? We'll show you the scenes that you always wanted to see but were never allowed... the old fashioned pleasantries and timidity have all been stripped away, quite literally. You didn't really think that these much loved characters only held hands and pecked cheeks did you? (London Review of Books, 17th July, 2012 16:08PM).

According to E-bound, the sexual tension Austen creates between Elizabeth and Darcy is given its release by Amy Armstrong in "please take me", she whispered. "I need it. I ache for it" likewise Mitzi Szereto's *Pride and Prejudice: Hidden lusts*, looks at the ensuing fun when "Mr. Bingley and his sister both have designs on Mr. Darcy's manhood" and when "Lady Catherine de Bourgh takes the disciplining of those in the parish very seriously". Notwithstanding, Martin Amis still in the London Review paper referred to earlier, has expressed a desire to learn more about the details of the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy:

I wouldn't have minded a rather more detailed conclusion-say, a 20 page sex scene featuring the two principal characters with Mr. Darcy furthermore acquitting himself uncommonly well, such a scene would take place, of course,

not in a country inn or a louche lodging house in town but amid all the comfort and elegance of Pemberley, with its parklands and its vistas and its ten grand a year.

In conclusion, it is very common now to find these erotic re-writes of mostly, European novels. In fact, most famous European novels have undergone such rewrites. For example, *Northanger Abbey*, *Jane Eyre*, *A study in Scarlet* etc. In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Mooreland is introduced to “a whole new world of eroticism...where sex knows no boundaries”, by Henry.

In “*A study in Scarlet*”, Watson falls in love with Holmes and finds himself “having his sexual needs attended to in a way he had only previously dreamed about”. And in *Jane Eyre*-(also subjected to an erotic rewrite by Eve Sindair,) as Jane Eyre laid bare, nothing is left to the imagination, as the timid governess is told in no uncertain terms: “my penis is hard, Jane. That is what kissing you does to me. My body is filled with desire”. (P.64). now the question is, has this been the intention of the writers to leave these inexplicable details for others to fill in later, or is it just the creation of modern day writers/publisher to insert these passages or even indirectly impose them upon the original writers of such stories?

On the other hand, book clubs are also literally organized to discuss Jane Austen’s books. These book clubs sometimes develop into books like the well known book titled *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2005) written by Karen Joy Fawler. The book club is structured in form of a novel in which the characters (six people) meet once a month to discuss the novels of Jane Austen. These people are depicted as ordinary people, “neither happy nor unhappy, but all wounded in different ways”. They are all mixed up about their lives and their relationships. Over the time they

meet (six months), marriages are tested, affairs begin, unsuitable arrangements become suitable, and some of them, earlier on disappointed with life, even fall in love.

It is however discoverable in the book club that each of the characters has a different view of Jane Austen or of her writing, as each seems to come from a different stand point. For example, Jocelyn's Austen wrote wonderful novels about love and courtship, but never married". (P1). While to Bernadette Austen "was a comic genius", whose characters and dialogue are genuinely funny. Sylvia's Austen was 'a daughter, a sister, an aunt". (p2). Prudie's "was the Austen whose books changed every time you read them". (P4). For Allegra (a lesbian) and Gregg (a man) no independent view of Austen has been expressed, as they are drawn into the book club by Sylvia, the only person they know in the group and the only one who knows them. At the end of the book club the reader is able to detect the discussant's personal attachment to the work of Jane Austen which they generally view as elegant, witty, so delicately wonderful and seem to have gone into their bloodstream.

Nevertheless, on the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which took place in January 2013, writers from PD James, Bharat Tandon, John Mullan, Paula Byrne, Janet Todd and Lucy Mangan looked afresh at that classic novel and offered new readings. To Bharat Tandon, Austen's art is an:

Extraordinary aesthetic response to a whole set of contemporary constraints and pressures, whether these pressures be sexual, economic, or simply the claustrophobic atmosphere of populated social spaces. (London Review of Books, 28 January 2013 07:58 GMT).

In other words, she sees Austen's work as a kind of literary response to social pressures or as Terry Eagleton puts it "cultural solutions to political problems", because the Regency society that Jane Austen wrote about was a highly codified system, "a game system", just like in a role-playing adventure, where certain classes of enemies can only be effectively fought after the required power-ups have been discovered. For example, Austen's heroines faced a rigidly hierarchical environment in which every interaction was governed by status. Social engagements were arranged through calling cards, and rituals of acceptance and avoidance were developed to make sure everyone knew their place. Making friends and potential marriage partners was a question of understanding the etiquettes.

According to Paula Byrne, Austen "allows some of her characters to be free from repentance". She cited the case of Lydia Bennet, who at 16, eloped with the dangerously romantic Wickham and is left scot free by Austen and the moral touch light shone on the odious Mr. Collins when he advises Mr. Bennet to "throw off your unworthy child from your affection forever and leave her to repay the fruits of her own heinous offence" in *Pride and Prejudice*. Here Lydia does not share the fate of another fallen woman in *Sense and Sensibility* when Eliza Williams falls pregnant with Willoughby's child and is abandoned by him. Lydia is not punished for her disgrace, as was typical in the novels of the age, but is rewarded with marriage to the handsome, charming man she loves. In this sense Austen is seen to have "despised pictures of perfection", i.e. flawless heroines.

Another significant attention that Austen received in this century is her fans' personal identification with her which led to the creation of what is conveniently described as "cultism" as described by Claudia Johnson, an expert in Austen and professor of English literature at Princeton University. According to Johnson, the author was widely regarded well into the 20th century not as a romantic novelist but as "a steely, tough-minded, sardonic social critic". Austen's admirers are widely regarded as "Janeites" a term coined by the male literary critic George Sainsbury. While Rudyard Kipling's 1926 short story describes a group of soldiers brought together by their passion for the works of Austen, Johnson draws a distinction between the "extravagant amateur Janeites and their "more academic counterparts" whom she terms Austenians. She however acknowledges that attempting to remake Austen in the reader's own image is a valid exercise. She points out that "Janeites at least in the US regard their excesses with a curious mixture of irony and seriousness", because they know its absurd to throw tea parties, but the fundamental drive here, an attempt to be somehow connected with the world and life of a beloved author, is not absurd.

Johnson further explained that the term Janeite has been both "embraced by devotees of the works of Jane Austen and used as a term of opprobrium". She sees Janeitism as 'the self consciously idolatrous enthusiasm for 'Jane' and every detail relative to her" and that to criticize Janeites is akin to criticizing Austen herself. Janeitism did not begin until after the publication of J.E. Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1870, when the literary elite felt that they had to separate their appreciation of Austen from that of the masses. In the early

20th century, Janeitism was principally a male enthusiasm shared among publishers, professors and the literatti, while during the 1930s and 1940s, when Austen's work were canonized and accepted within the academy, the term began to change meaning. It was used to signify those who appreciated Austen in the 'wrong' way and the term according to Lynch, is "now used almost exclusively about and against other people.

On another level, it is very common to hear appellations like the Jane Austen Centre UK or US, Jane Austen Society, Jane Austen's House Museum and so on. On Monday September 23 2013 16:33 The Guardian, UK posted an interesting story about a "Ring" that once belonged to Jane Austen. The gold and turquois ring was put on auction and an American idol winner Kelly Clarkson's attempt to buy the ring was thwarted as the museum raised enough cash to buy the ring and saved it as "a national treasure" for the public in the UK. When Clarkson bought the ring in 2012 she was not able to take it out of the UK as a temporary export ban gave the museum enough time to raise money. After beginning a fund raising appeal in August, the museum received donation of £100,000 from an anonymous benefactor, while Austen's fans around the world chipped in donations, which enabled the museum to reach its target of £152,450 and matched Clarkson's bid ahead of the deadline of 30th September.

Mary Guyatt, curator of Jane Austen's House Museum, excitedly announced:

"We have been stunned by the generosity and light-footedness of all those who have supported our campaign to meet the costs of acquiring Jane Austen's ring for our permanent collection. Visitors come from all around the world to see the

house where she once lived, and we will now take great pleasure in displaying this pretty ring for their appreciation.

Similarly, on June 25 2013, 12:26 BBC relates UK's decision for Jane Austen to feature in its £10 note. Indeed, Austen has been a candidate for UK banknotes for two years and the author may replace Charles Darwin on the £10 note, outgoing governor of the Bank of England, Sir Mervyn King has said speaking at the end of his final appearance as governor. BBC quoted Sir Mervyn saying the author was "quietly waiting in the wings" to replace Darwin, though he said the final decision would be down to his successor, Mark Carney. The bank is said to have faced criticism for its decision to replace Elizabeth Fry on the £5 note with Sir Winston Churchill, so campaigners complained that this would mean no women would be represented on UK banknotes, though Sir Mervyn pointed out that Jane Austen was the leading candidate to become the next figure on the £10 note, having been a reserve choice previously. He further explained that the overlap would mean there would always be women on UK banknotes. If Jane Austen is confirmed as the next face of the £10 note, she would become only the third woman to be featured on UK banknotes-apart from the queen, following Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Fry. If this succeeds, the glorious face of the literary genius will shine on the face of UK's £10 note by 2017.

However, the feminist campaigner for Jane Austen to feature on UK's £10 note, Caroline Criado-Perez received death threats after the author is put on \$10 note and British police have arrested a 21 year old man over series of abusive tweets, including one threatening rape to the campaigner who fought for Jane Austen to

appear on banknotes. Metropolitan police confirmed they had arrested the man in Manchester, northwest England “on suspicion of harassment offences”. Caroline is said to have been bothered with abusive messages after successfully lobbying for the author to replace Charles Darwin on Britain’s 10-pound notes from 2017. She confirmed that the abusive tweets she received began on Wednesday, the day the bank of England announced its decision.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy, the way Jane Austen after two centuries, has been receiving attention both through her books and through her literary life. As far as organizations and groups on Jane Austen’s works are concerned, you have to have a certain level of awareness of her books before qualifying to serve as a member. In almost all the groups, the central figure is not even the books but Austen as a person. For instance, the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA), The Jane Austen Society of Australia, (JASA) and Jane Austen Festival Australia (JAFa) all centre on the writer first then the writing, and in the case of the latter, during annual celebrations, the costume to be worn and the general setting of the festival must represent everything Regency. In essence Austen has been fully reincarnated, even immortalized in this century more than in any other; she is now the immortal sister of her fans across the globe.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

As far as the development of critical theory is concerned, new historicism focuses on new concerns with the socio-historical and political conditions and consequences of literary productions and reproductions. The writing and reading

of texts and the process by which they are circulated, categorised, analysed and taught are being reconstructed as historically determining modes of cultural work. The theory emerged as a challenge to the traditional historical studies, which is concerned with a given time and place and attempt to establish the factual accuracy of an event. To the new historicist, the assumption and goals of traditional historicism are banal. For example, they reject the idea that anyone can know what happen precisely at a given time and place. Schwarz,(1994:150) argues that "something important was lost from literary studies; historical consciousness," because works of art came to be seen in isolation as merely objects to be read and appreciated in their own terms, disregarding the fact that they are caught in a web of historical conditions, relationships and influences. So, the major thrust of the new historicalist analysis is to rethink this presupposition as such they focus on new concerns with the socio-historical and political conditions and consequences of literary productions and reproductions. From this perspective, a work of literature is no longer read as an autonomous entity " a static reflective artefact of a definable culture" Rather, all texts are to be seen as social documents which reflect and at the same time affect the world that produce them. That is to say literature can be seen as an active participant in a dynamic changeable culture.

Moreover, new historicism combats earlier schools like formalism by pulling historical consciousness to the centre stage of literary analysis. The new

historicists evolved a method of describing culture in action and believe in these assumptions that continually bind them together that;

- every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices;
- every act of unmasking, critique and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risk falling prey to the practice it exposes;
- literary and non-literary "texts" circulate inseparably;
- no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature;
- Finally, that a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe.

Cited in Veenser (1989:XI)

According to Greenblatt (1980:46) a scholar most closely associated with new historicism in renaissance literary studies, the theory:

Embraces a variety of critical practices at its core, it is new in its refusal of unproblematised distinctions between "literature" and "history", between "text" and "context", new in resisting a prevalent tendency to posit and privilege a unified and autonomous individual-whether an author or a work- to be against a social or literary background.

This indeed conforms to the post-structuralism's orientation to history now emerging in literary studies which may be characterised as a reciprocal concern with "the historicity of text and the textuality of history", seen as a kind of social embodiment of all modes of writing and on another level, a dire inaccessibility to a full and authentic past independent of textual traces of the society in question. In a way, this prefiguring of the relationship between the verbal and the social,

between the text and the world, involves re-problematization or explicit rejection of some basic alternative conceptions of literature, as an "autonomous aesthetic order that transcends the shifting pressure and particularity of material needs and interests, as a collection of records of " real events" as a reflection of economic base (Hamilton 1996:17).

Cultural analysis cannot be seen as an extrinsic analysis as opposed to an internal formal analysis of works of art, though it must be opposed on principle to the rigid distinction between that which is within a text and that which is outside it. Hence, culture can be seen as inclusive of knowledge, belief, art, customs, morals, law and other habits acquired by members of the society. In view of this, the term culture can be seen to have been incorporated into the study of literature over a period of time, as western culture "has been one of the great institutions for the enforcement of cultural boundaries through praise and blame." cited in Lentricchia and McLaughlin (1995:227). See among others (Todd 1984:74).

Another significant practice in new historicism is its emphasis on autonomy and specific discourses and their capacity to impact upon the social formation to "make things happen by shaping the subjectivities of social beings." Thus to speak of the social production of literature or of any particular text is to signify that it is both socially produced and socially productive, seen as the product of work in the process of being written, enacted or read.

In an essay, "Towards the poetics of culture", cited in *Southern Review* (1987:3-15) Stephen Greenblatt remarks that "one of the peculiar characteristics of the new historicism in literary studies is precisely how unresolved and in some ways

disingenuous it has been about its relationship to literary theory." However throughout the essay, there is hardly a demonstration of the writer's explicit theoretical position, rather a solemn resistance to theory. He went further to categorically posit that he wants "to speculate on why this should be by trying to situate myself in relation to Marxism on the one hand, and post-structuralism on the other" (P3).

From the foregoing it is evident that Greenblatt's argument goes on to situate him as a new-pragmatist, who suggests that the practice of cultural poetics involves a repudiation of cultural politics, which major new historicist critics like White (1973), Veenser (1989), and Hamilton (1996) would outrightly accept. These writers argue persuasively that the referent of a linguistic sign cannot be fixed, that the meaning of a text can not be stabilized. At the same time, reading and writing are always historically and socially constructed as determinate events, performed in the world by gendered individuals and collective human agents.

In "Foucault's Legacy - A new historicism," Frank Lentricchia posits that Foucauldian transposition of an apparent Marxist perspective shows that in order to grasp the pattern of the relations of artistic and other social practices, we "must be particularly sensitive to similitude", for they are the "most well-travelled pathways of exchange". These are, according to him, various social practices like those of the theatre and exorcism, the renaissance self fashioning such as the institutions of the patriarchy, family, church, and colonial administration, as well as the characteristic modes of expression from every day communication to high literary narrative. See Veenser (1989:235-7).

Lentricchia's argument points to the fact that history is available to us only in textual form and it can be approached only by a way of re-textualization. To re-emphasize the active way in which the text re-organizes its subjects in order presumably to reach the conclusion that the "referent" does not exist, or on the other hand, to stress the imaginary status of the symbolic act.

In relation to the foregoing discussion, the new historicist method of analysis would be applied to read Jane Austen's selected texts/novels in both their biographical and historical contexts along side the socio-historical writings, written in the period in which these novels were written. That was a period in which Romanticism and Colonialism prevailed. This method will enable us to see the relationship between Jane Austen's novels and her life, between the novels and the non-literary texts written in the same period. In this way, the research would be expected to enable us to understand the writer's approach to the prevailing ideology of the 19th century England. In other words, it would point out the extent to which Austen's texts conform to the pervasive ideology of the time, namely Romanticism, Colonialism and Imperialism or their abhorrence there from.

CHAPTER THREE:

LIVING ON THE STAGE OF THE WORLD

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections, thus, an overview of pre-nineteenth century socio-historical and philosophical ideas that influenced Jane Austen's writings, the nineteenth century literary tradition and its influence on women writers of the Victorian age; and a detailed examination of Jane Austen, the writer, and any biographical influence that must have informed her writing. (Reading Austen's biography alongside George William Frederick Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807).

3.1 An Overview of Pre-nineteenth Century Socio-Historical and Philosophical Ideas that Influenced Jane Austen's Writings

As the restoration period of English literature was significantly permeated by Drama/Theatrical performance which ranges from comedies of manners/intrigues, restoration ideas, sentimental comedies, the heroic plays which mostly illustrate very clearly the rise and decline of a deliberately induced Pseudo-courtly ideal in England or at least London, despite the puritan governments' halt on performance of plays in September 1642, the Augustan age which serves to resolve the conflicts and enthusiasm of the mid seventeenth century settled down into a period of relative stability until political revolution in France and industrial revolution in England produced another era of more rapid change and more violent conflict of ideas.

During the Augustan age, London became the center of the literary and intellectual life of the country and writers came to look upon “polite London society” as their chief audience. Aristocracy has been transformed into gentility and wealth became the major motivating power in society. The old idealism by which men had lived and over which they had fought and died, appeared to have gone forever, only writers appeared as the most civilized class, perhaps more calculating, more complacent, more rational and respectable.

Those who lack the minimum of income to allow them to mingle in urban society remain out of sight and out of mind so far as the majority of writers and thinkers are concerned. In a way economics and ethics are finally separated. The new economists seem to focus on “political arithmetic” a prove to their own satisfaction that the individual desire to make money can produce nothing in the long run, but good, and poverty can only be the result of idleness. Society refused to take responsibility of its members who couldn’t rise to expectation. In London, for example, the coffee house replaced the court as the meeting place of men of culture, gossip and news found way into print, and poetry became familiar and social though it worked within relatively narrow limits, as it was viewed to be a civilized activity, and civilization demanded a certain perspective in looking at things, a kind of polish and elegance as well as consciousness of good society, wit, restraint, good taste and the subordination of personal idiosyncrasies to social norm.

It must be remembered at this point that during the Augustan age there was a correlation between social class and education, between elegance and learning

which had hitherto been unnoticed in subsequent periods, and if poets were to use a fairly standardized body of references to the Latin and Greek Classics as well as to the events in the contemporary world of learning, they had to consider themselves addressing a very limited audience, contrary to the view expressed by William Wordsworth in his *Prelude to the Lyrical Ballads* where he argues that poetry should be written in a “language really used by men”, which implies that the language of poetry should in no way be obscure, rather it should be transparent. In this regard, it could be observed that during the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14) poets like Alexander Pope, whose poetry expresses delicate satire and somewhat obscure wisdom, found the atmosphere congenial. Writers during this time were encouraged to write for a civilized urban group whose education could be taken for granted, whose attitudes were understood and whose standards of wit and elegance coincided with those of the writers.

Furthermore, the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, when James II was replaced by William of Orange and his wife Mary in a movement largely engineered by the middle-class, protestant heart of England, represented a victory of the town over the court, though by no means pointing at the triumph of the gentility over the aristocracy. Throughout the century the merchants and tradesmen of the town came to play a more and more important part in the life of the country by the steady rise in influence and numbers of the urban middle classes, yet they were not the actual rulers of the country. The political rulers were the landed aristocracy, the country gentlemen and big estate owners. In a way, the middle class’s protest did not take any significant shape until the close of the eighteenth

century and the beginning of the nineteenth after the historical and philosophical ideas of great thinkers of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries like George Berkeley (1685-1753), John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1711-76), GWF Hegel (1770-1831) and many others.

An intent look at the ideas and philosophies proposed by these thinkers points to the fact that our primary object of inquiry, namely, Jane Austen and her work, has close affinity to some of the ideas, thoughts and philosophical views expressed by those scholars. To begin with, John Locke (1632-1704) was a renowned philosopher and political theorist who contributed immensely to modern political discourse and the foundations of empiricism, indeed, he was considered one of the great British empiricists and his writing served as the foundation of the empiricists' school of thought. Locke made a distinction between simple ideas like colour sensations, tastes, sounds, shapes, which in a way is what David Hume described as impressions and complex ideas such as cause and effects identity, mathematics and any abstract concept.

In essence, Locke's political philosophy was based on the idea of inalienable rights. To him, these rights came from God as the creator of human beings. Human beings were the property of God, and Locke claimed that the denial of the rights of human beings that God had given them was "an affront to God." In this way, he had established "negative rights" for all human beings. Human had the inalienable rights of life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of their own goals. This is in contrast to "positive rights" such as the right to equality, health care, or a living wage that have been claimed as rights by political philosophers.

In view of this, it is arguable that Locke's ideas have greatly helped to shape Jane Austen's thought about the existence of "an essential nature" and his claim that "everything that a human is comes from the senses". It should be realized that Austen's character Fanny price in *Mansfield Park*, for all her passivity, is clever, she is mocked by her cousins on first arriving from her humble home because she does not know certain things that they know, but she does not know them because she has not yet been taught them. It is clear from the novel that Fanny read a great deal, had taste and discernment in literature and was in fact positively highbrow, still she never fools herself with any kind of sentimental delusion. The description of her visit to her own family in Portsmouth and showing how the continuous noise, lack of order, and her original poverty-stricken home unnerved her and caused her to long for the peace and order of Mansfield Park, is somewhat anti-sentimental and help to reveal the real nature of Fanny's character.

Furthermore, Locke's concept of "inalienable rights" is also employed significantly in an Austen novel. We have seen this first of all in *Pride and Prejudice*, when the Bennets' estate is entailed by a distant cousin, Mr. Collins, to the detriment of the five Bennet daughters. Though Mr. Collins decides to compensate the family by marrying one of Mr. Bennet's daughters, none of them seems to be interested in him despite their financial status, at the end however, the two elder sisters are rewarded with convenient marriages to two of the most influential figures in the country which symbolizes a rise in social and financial status for the whole Bennet family, whose entailed estate is nothing compared to

the sophistication, elegance and wealth that awaits them in their matrimonial houses.

Similarly, *Mansfield Park's* calm opening with its insistence on the financial position of the family in whose mid the action is set, has its own irony:-

About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park, in the country of Northampton and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income. All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match, and her uncle, the lawyer, himself, allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it (P1).

As it is common, in almost all Austen's novels, everybody's income is dealt with minutely. The landowning and financial basis of the social order is explicitly realized and disparity between the social position given by wealth and landed property, as well as the qualifications provided by personal character and intelligence provides a source of irony. Though Austen accepted such disparities as inevitable in any social structure, she however repudiates them since their presence seems to alter the ideal "inalienable rights" of human beings.

Secondly, the Scottish philosopher, David Hume (1711-76) had also significantly influenced Austen's writing. Like John Locke, he believed empiricism to be the foundation of human knowledge, but unlike Locke, he carried the analysis of causation much further. He argued that "our idea of cause is based on nothing more than previous experience of one phenomenon being followed by another: all we really know is a succession of events (either in the sensible world or in our minds)." (Daiches 1975:772).

Thus to Hume, to infer the operations of laws of cause and effect from observed sequences or clusters of events or ideas, or even to infer the existence of a rational personality from groups and sequences of impressions and ideas in the individual mind is illogical. In essence, he believed that most of the things that people believe cannot be verified by reason, rather pure reason is applicable only to an investigation of the relations between ideas, just as in pure logic and pure mathematics. In addition, Hume developed his views on man, on ethics, on epistemology, and kindred subjects in two volumes of essay, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). He finds, like Jeremy Bentham in his theory of utilitarianism, that what is morally good is simply what is esteemed, and proceeds to show why certain qualities have been generally esteemed depends on how useful and agreeable they are personally or socially.

Moreover, much of Hume's argument about morality is in tune with the prevalent ideas of the eighteenth century European society, such as that of the moral sense, while the basis of his philosophical operations radically differs from that of the age. His sharpest attack on the beliefs of his age was his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* published posthumously in (1779). In this book Hume challenges the view that "evidence of design in nature proves the existence of a designing God" His central argument being that the analogy between the universe (which is unique) and humanly designed objects in it, is a false one, but even if we were to accept it and infer from the natural world the existence of a designer, such an inference will tell nothing about his attributes and might well suggest that he

was “a novice and a blunderer” it is further observed that Deism rested so heavily on the argument from design, and natural theology flourished so copiously in the eighteenth century, that could be the reason perhaps why Hume declined to publish his book during his life time.

In relation to the above discussion, Hume’s view of morality is also reincarnated to a significant degree in Jane Austen who seems to absorb many of his ideas.

According to Terry Eagleton in his *The English Novel: An Introduction*:

For Austen, the foundation for all right conduct is true judgment which depends in turn on being able to see things for what they are; and she is far from underestimating the extreme difficulty of this achievement. In a world of secrecy, self-deception and manipulation, few projects could be more fraught. Realism in the literary sense is in Austen’s eyes an expression of this deeper moral belief, and her fear is that to violate literary realism can then involve you in a more fundamental kind of transgression. (2005:106).

In line with Eagleton’s argument, many feminists admire the critical intelligence with which Austen’s heroines view and judge the world. They regard the sense of self-reliance and having a potential in life to develop that Elizabeth and Emma, and Elinor and Anne display as having contributed to the struggle for women’s right that grew during the nineteenth century and began to produce results in the twentieth. Austen’s view of marriage however was not uncritical. Among the propertied classes in Britain at that time, a marriageable young woman was advertised along with a sum of money, “a dowry” settled on her by her father that would become her husband’s property. Thus in *Sense and Sensibility* reference is made to the “Honorable Miss Morton, with thirty thousand pounds,” but the lump

sum to be spared on behalf of Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* is frowned at, since it goes against the traditions of moral accuracy.

Austen's moral vision and critical intelligence are further manifested chiefly in satire. At the expense of various kinds of human folly, the writer employed satire to criticize hypocrisy, snobbery, pride, sycophancy, pomposity and excessive sentimentality. The reader could not but adore the exposure of these evils because they have always been present in every human society. In *Pride and prejudice*, for example it could be said that Austen achieves a solution to the problems presented in the action of the novel by the didactic demands reflected in what (Hale 2006:152) called "Johnson's rule". This is done by creating a morally impeccable, yet entirely natural hero and heroine who are first separated from each other by significant misjudgments not amounting to moral error, defects deriving from appropriate strengths of their characters. Darcy's pride in his inherited fortune and Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy which arises from a proper pride in herself. Austen for one, seems to support this original rift by means of the protagonists' relationships as characters whose qualities and actions are themselves morally problematic, though at the end she was able to achieve a novelistic action which is fully and honestly edifying and completely delightful.

Looking back at the concept of empiricism referred to earlier in this section, it could be argued that Austen's fidelity to David Hume's view about empiricism is hardly unnoticed in almost all her novels, from the earliest, *Pride and Prejudice* through to the latest, *Persuasion*. Jane Austen has been described by many critics as an ardent observer of "human nature", "human personality" and "human

follies”, and no doubt reflected them in her novels. She captured daily life in eighteenth century England as well as human nature in the middle and upper classes so accurately that the novels seem to have a global appeal. Unlike her contemporary Charlotte Bronte, Austen had no supernatural elements in her writing but she had the ability to relate to the reader with wit and humour, her curious intelligent perception of human nature.

In her effort to present a detailed picture of Georgian era, Austen showed the lives of the aspiring middle class and the wealthy. Her characters are initially defined by their financial worth. Mr. Darcy in *Pride and prejudice* for instance has an annual income of £10,000 however, his reserve and pride make him disagreeable among the Bennet’s and their social circles. While his friend, Mr. Bingley worth only £4,500 a year, in comparison glows with his good looks, agreeable nature and his ability to please. The wealthy in Austen’s time are those who are independently wealthy. Females rarely had the opportunity to earn. Jane Austen herself, together with her elder sister, Cassandra had £450 a year to live on following their father’s death. The daughter of a vicar, Austen was from a middle class background just like the Bennet and Dashwood sisters she pictured. Similarly, in tune with the eighteenth century society, servants in an Austen novel were mainly seen and not heard. Apart from Mr. Darcy’s house keeper, Mrs. Reynolds, in a part of the book where she recounts her masters’ virtues to a surprised Elizabeth Bennet, servants are only mentioned in Jane Austen’s world. While on another level, Lady Catherine, de Bourgh, another minor character in *Pride and prejudice* whose conceit represents the behavior of the upper classes of

the time, speaks as much as she could (her speech covers almost two pages when she meets Elizabeth at Longbourn). As part of the same social hierarchy satirized in her novels, Austen herself could not intimately know the servants (the lower classes), as such her novels did not have fleshed out servant characters, a factor which caused her severe censure from many reviewers.

Samul Johnson (1709-84) is another significant figure who wrote extensively during the eighteenth century. Indeed, his versatile ideas illustrated in his life and work earned him the title “one of the most vigorous literary minds in English history”. A poet, critic, essayist, editor, journalist and great literary figure, Johnson was tory whose Toryism was based on a profound pessimism, and his devotion to the church of England sprang from his conviction that Christianity must be true if the universe is not a meaningless horror and since he thought “all Christians whether Baptists or protestants, agree in the essential articles, and that their differences, are trivial and rather political than religious (Daiches 1975:775). He considered the order, authority and tradition of his native church the most proper for an Englishman. Authority and tradition, with their accompanying ritual and ranking, he believed in seriously, but as means rather than ends as human society needed them. His pessimism about man in general, his contempt for reformers and innovators, his conservatism in politics and religion went side by side with great personal charity and generosity. His public character as the great critic of literature developed much later and reminds one of his “talking for victory”.

Johnson's literary career in London began with miscellaneous writing for Edward care, publisher of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. His first important published work was his poem *London*, which is said to appear anonymously in 1738, its companion piece, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, appeared with Johnson's name eleven years later in 1749. In 1747, he published *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language*, addressed to Lord Chesterfield. While working on the dictionary Johnson turned to the periodical essay (that curious eighteenth century literary form). Between 1750 and 1752 he produced *the Rambler*, which appeared twice weekly for upto 208 times, each serial consisting of a single essay. Most of the essays in *The Rambler* have moral themes, presented in a somewhat abstract and Latin form of English which combines weight and wit. The morality preached by Johnson in *The Rambler* is seen to be practical not theoretical in the sense that he is concerned to advise his readers on how to cultivate a proper state of mind and to employ their time and their energies properly. Thus, "the folly of mis-spending time", "Disadvantages of a bad education", "idleness an anxious and miserable state," are typical themes featured.

Johnson had always been interested in biography, he had a curiosity about people which could be related to his view of the function of literature as the "rendering of universal human experience with liveliness and originality". He maintained that poets and dramatists write to please and survive by pleasing. The character of the writer as well as that of the audience is of interest to him, though the latter can be discussed generally while the former can be inquired into with some particularity. For Johnson, genius did not consist in some highly specialized aptitude, true

genius to him “is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined in some particular directions”. So, a discussion of a poets’ mind and character is not simply the analysis of the uniquely poetic mind and character, but discussion of the degree to which he possessed general human intellectual and imaginative powers. Poetry for him was essentially an activity rather than a series of works of art existing timelessly and anonymously. How well it can be done can best be measured by observing the total poetic scene, and making comparisons, thus, “in the productions of genius, nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind”. See Johnson’s (*preface to Shakespeare*), while he pointed out in *The Rambler* essay that “no man performs much but in proportion to what others accomplish, or to the time and opportunities which have been allowed him”.

In relation to Johnson’s view of literature discussed above (Rader, cited in Hale 2006:113) maintained that since genres are modified according to time, there is the need to add a literary historical dimension to neo-Aristotelianism, arguing that to write a novel in the eighteenth century is substantially different from writing a novel in the next. This imperative goes beyond the work itself to take into account the dominant cultural values that, in any given period, help to define literature as an activity worth pursuing in the eighteenth century, this value is epitomized by what Rader calls “Johnson’s Rule”, namely, Samuel Johnson’s belief that the new form of imitation inaugurated by Samul Richardson and Henry Fielding should be used to model “the highest and purest” behaviour that “humanity can reach”. In other words, the English novel is both in the belief that it should strive to represent

morally superior actions that are themselves imitable, accomplished as they are by model but not ideal protagonists.

In line with the above argument, Jane Austen's novels have fully epitomized the eighteenth century novel's engagement with moral outlook that have personal and social consequences outside the aesthetic realm. For example, *Pride and Prejudice* finds a kind of innovative resolution as it succeeds in creating moral paragons who fill the novel's generic requirement of autonomy by making the protagonists highly responsible for their actions. Indeed, Austen made representational choice that effectively involve the reader of each work in the incremental process of emotionalized judgement, leaving her at the end satisfied that the protagonists' fate and dessert are properly aligned. Austen had succeeded in advancing the genre by her competitive effort to improve on novels like *Tom Jones*. She thus succeeds in representing morally superior actions by giving her protagonists "imperfections" rather than "moral faults" (which *Tom Jones* has been accused of having). In a way, her solution to Johnson's Rule is at the same time advanced by outdoing fielding's narrative strategies for the representation of characters. Austen's innovative mode in the representation of character's point of view supplies a relative closeness of what is seen as "psychological transcription" that is capable of maintaining moral interest and significance without endangering the sacred status of the paragons.

From another angle, coming from the same Tory Christian background as Samuel Johnson, Austen found it convenient to absorb many of his ideas and beliefs. Her affirmation and contribution to the development of Johnson's rule in the

nineteenth century novel has been significant enough to run through almost all her novels. In *Northanger, Abbey*, the Thorpes in concert with Catherine's brother have renewed plans to visit Blaize Castle but discover that Catherine has engaged herself (for a second time) to walk with Miss Tilney. Her friends urge her to cancel the engagement for the sake of their collective pleasure, thus:

She must and should retract, was instantly the eager cry of both the Thorps, they must go to Clifton tomorrow, they would not go without her, it would be nothing to put off a mere walk for one day longer, and they would not hear of a refusal. (P.97)

But Catherine would not be moved, "do not urge me, Isabella. I am engaged to Miss Tilney, I cannot go", still her friends press her, making every selfish and unfair appeal and her brother joins them. "I did not think you had been so obstinate, Catherine ... you once were the kindest, best tempered of my sisters". (Pp99-100). "I hope I am not less so now", she replied objectively "but indeed I cannot go, if I am wrong, I am doing what I believe is right".

In sum, it can be deduced that Austen in most of her novels achieves a solution to the problems presented in the action of the novels by the didactic demands of what Ralph Wilson Rader, quoted earlier called Johnson's Rule. Like their counterpart, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey* depict episodes which result from conflicts between the action structure and the didactic elements though not in the strict Johnsonian rule as in the previous novel discussed earlier. The writers creative display in *Northanger Abbey* for example, was not to parody the gothic novel, rather to incorporate in a comic action a reference to it that would define a defect in the heroine's understanding of the world so as to measure

the realistic or confrontational fantasy of the Austen's novel against the deceptive and indulgent fantasy of the gothic mode.

HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

Another significant figure whose philosophy and ideas are easily discernible in Jane Austen's writing is Hegel. Born in Stuttgart in 1770, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had a very middle-class life. He was first a newspaper editor, then a headmaster before he became an academic professor who ascended the academic tree and reached the topmost branch, he became head of the University of Berlin in 1830 when he was 60 years and died the following year. Hegel is believed to have a terrible influence on philosophy as he wrote horribly. He was confusing and unnecessarily complicating when he should be direct and clear. Hegel believed that the mark of reading deep thought is that one cannot quite understand what is going on. This has made philosophy much weaker in the world than it should be. As for communication, the world had to pay another heavy price for Hegel's problems with communication. It has made it harder to hear the valuable things he had to say to his audience. Despite this, a number of lessons stand out.

3.1.1 Important Parts of Ourselves can be found in History

Hegel happened to be one of the few philosophers who took history seriously. In those days, a standard European way of looking at the past was to consider it as "primitive" – and to feel proud of how much progress had been made to get us to the modern age. In contrast, Hegel believed that every era can be looked at as a

preservation of a particular kind of wisdom which in turn show certain very useful attitudes and ideas which then become submerged, unavailable more confused in later periods. To him, we need to go back to a time in history to recover those things that have disappeared, even in the so-called advanced era". For example, we might need to mine the history of ancient Greece to fully grasp the idea of what community could be, the middle ages can teach us, as no other era can, about the role of honour, an inspiring vision of how money can pay for art is to be found in the Florence of the 14th century, despite the fact that some unfavourable attitudes to children and the rights of money are discoverable in those ages.

In sum, Hegel shows us in this regard that, progress is never linear, that there is wisdom in every stage, which in a way implies that the role of the historian is to recover those ideas most needed to counterbalance the blind spots of the present.

3.1.2 Learn from Ideas You Dislike

Central to Hegel's belief system is learning from one's (intellectual) enemies. In other words one should struggle to learn from the point of view of the other, their alter ego, especially those ideas that seem alien or outrageous. This is because, he thought that there could be bits and pieces of truth beneath those unappealing places, so we should dig them out by always trying to find out what sense and reason might be contained in somewhat foreign phenomena. For example, Nationalism has had many unpleasant manifestations even in those days when Hegel lived. So, the temptation of thoughtful people is to give up entirely on this field. But Hegel's move was to ask what underlying good idea or important need

might be hiding within the bloody history of nationalism. To Hegel, people need to be proud of where they come from, to identify, with something beyond their own mere achievements, to relate their identities beyond the ego which he saw as “fruitful and unavoidable requirement”, that is, something which remains valuable even when some awful movements and politicians have exploited this need and driven it in disastrous directions.

3.1.3 Progress is Messy

The world according to Hegel makes progress only by some unsteady movement from one extreme to another, as it always seeks to overcompensate for a previous mistake. He argued that it generally takes three moves before the right balance on any issue can be found, which he called the “dialectic”. He saw in his own age that governments had improved in some indirect ways. The flawed, shifting, unfair 18th century system of inherited traditional monarchy had been abolished by the French Revolution whose founding fathers had wanted to give proper voice to the majority of people, but what should have been the peaceful birth of representative government had ended up in the anarchy and chaos of the Terror, which in turn led to the emergence of Napoleon, who had restored order and ensured opportunity for talent and ability, but who had also over reached himself and had become a military brute tyrannizing the rest of Europe and trampling on the liberty he had professed to love. Hegel insisted that progress will always be slow and troubled. What will happen in History he added, will occur in individuals too as we also learn slowly and with massive over corrections.

3.1.4 Art has a Purpose

Hegel was among the philosophers who rejects the idea of “art for arts sake”. To these scholars, music, painting, architecture, literature and design all have a major job to do. We need them so that important insights become powerful and helpful in our lives. Art is “the sensuous presentation of ideas”. The point of art, Hegel realized is not so much to come up with startlingly new or strange ideas, but to make the good, important helpful thoughts we often already know and make them stick in our minds.

3.1.5 We Need New Institutions

Hegel had a very favourable view of institutions and the power they can exert. He believed that “the power of an individual might be profound”, but it will be “transient and ineffective unless it gets embodied in an institution”. He cited the case of Freud’s ideas about the complexity of childhood which only become properly constructive force when they are organized, extended and institutionalized at the Tailstock Clinic in London. The point we infer from the argument is that for any ideas to be active and effective in the world, a lot more is needed apart from the fact that they are correct. In other words, for an idea to be important in a society it needs employees and buildings, training programmes and legal advisors much longer than the maturity of just one individual. This is because the central function of an institution is to make the majority truths powerful in society and it loses respect when it ceases to have a profound mission.

In sum, it can be argued that Hegel's view of History and the Humanity has a significant influence on modern life where we always long for progress and improvement yet we are continually hunted by conflict and evidence of set backs. His insight is that growth requires the clash of divergent ideas and therefore will be painful and slow. So, his ideas help to prepare our minds that once we know this, we don't have to compound our troubles by thinking them abnormal. In essence, this scholar had given us a more accurate and more manageable view of ourselves, our difficulties and our place in history.

On another level, Hegel was dismissive of the novel form in an attempt to exclude it from the highest achievement, to implicitly link it with the "death of art" as expression of religion and philosophy came next in his thesis. In *phenomenology of spirit* (1807) while discussing "the Beautiful Soul" and "The Unhappy Consciousness", Hegel looks at the dangers of attempting to find a pure inner subjectivity. This issue is dealt with in various other places including his *Aesthetics* and *the Philosophy of Right* but most significant for the purpose of this research will be his dismissive comments on the novel in general as recounted by

Terry Eagleton:

Hegel saw the novel as the epic of a prosaic modern world. It has all the range and populousness of the epic without, for the most part, its supernatural dimension. The novel resembles the classical epic in its consuming interest in narrative, dramatic action and the material world. It differs from it however, in being a discourse of the present rather than of the past. (Eagleton 2005:6)

This view of the novel no doubt regards it as a secondary literary genre engaged in a kind of insubstantial playfulness. It was never part of the role that literature

had in representing absolute spirit for Hegel, and never will since he believed that philosophy and religion could express white spirit without resort to aesthetics and literary representation of any kind. This perhaps is the basis of Hegel's "end of art" thesis which is not a liberal end but the end of the possibility of art matching religion and philosophy in representing "absolute spirit", that is, the activity of consciousness moving towards absolute knowledge of itself, both self-directed knowledge, knowledge of history and knowledge of nature.

In a way, Hegel simply represents a limitation of the importance of the novel, though he provided a basis for thinking about the novel as what is beyond the end of some metaphysical ambitions for art. He may be right in seeing the novel as less suited than some other literary genres to a representation of an absolute ordered world, but wrong to not think about how this itself might provide the basis for expanded understanding of the possibilities of knowledge and aesthetic form, since for him, truth is not a question of the whole, as there was no whole, in the same manner, he rejected the proposition that truth might be one sided, which means that truth and partiality are closely linked. In other words, for Hegel, truth meant a "disinterested view of the whole". (Eagleton, 2005:202).

3.1.6 The Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences

Translated from the German Enzyklopadie der philosophischen Wissenschaften Grundrisse (1817) presents an alternated version of Hegel's systemic philosophy in it's entirety and is the only form in which Hegel published his entire mature philosophical system. In it one discovers his "absolute idealism", which is an

“ontologically monistic philosophy chiefly associated with GWF Hegel and Friedrich Schelling”, both of them German idealist philosophers of the 19th century, though it is in entirety believed to be Hegel’s brain child. It encompasses his account of how being is ultimately comprehensible as an all-inclusive whole (das absolute). He asserted that in order for the thinking subject (human reason or consciousness) to be able to know its object (the world) at all, there must be in some sense identity of thought and being. Otherwise, the subject would never have access to the object and we would have no certainty about any of our knowledge of the world.

To account for the differences between thought and being, however, as well as the richness and diversity of each, the unity of thought and being cannot be expressed as the abstract identity “A=A”. Absolute idealism is the attempt to demonstrate this unity using a new “speculative” philosophical method, which requires new concepts and rules of logic. For, Hegel, the absolute grand of being is essentially a dynamic, historical form of increasingly complex forms of being and of consciousness, ultimately giving rise to all the diversity in the world and in the concepts with which we think and make sense of the world.

In sum, the absolute idealist position became dominant in nineteenth century England and Germany while having significantly less influence in the United States. In addition, the absolute idealist position is evidently distinguishable from the subjective idealism of Berkeley, the transcendental idealism of Kant, or the post-Kantian transcendental idealism of Fichte and early Schelling.

3.2 The Nineteenth Century Literary Tradition and its Influence on Women Writers of the Victorian Period

The English novel, as the most popular and prolific of all English literary forms, is believed to be the product of the middle class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a clearly realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behaviour from agreed public attitudes. Scholars like Ian Watt (1987) see its origin in the eighteenth century due to the human desire for invention, self assertion and theoretical curiosity as a reaction to the Middle Age's total submission to, and dependence on, divinity alone. In view of this, the novel went through certain developmental stages with peculiar features, from its inception to the contemporary times. (See Daiches 1975, Martin 1987 and Watts 1987).

After the French Revolution of 1789, the Agrarian Revolution (which forced the movement of the laboring class in England from the countryside to the towns and cities) and the Industrial Revolution (which caused changes in living conditions in urban areas), the general socio-political outlook changed, the nation's literature also was affected. The order, harmony, objectivity, restraint and logicity of the neo-classical approach to literature were displaced by variety, contrast, immediately, disharmony, subjectivity, and imaginative freedom. Fiction of the early Victorian period was classified according to sub-genres which included sensational novels, the historical novel, the school novel, the fantasy and the religious novel, than in the works of major novelists; as such, "the values, *Prejudices* and assumptions of the middle classes are often reflected more deeply

in these specialized sub-genres”. (Wheeler, 1985:14, cited in Abubakar, U 2005).

In essence, what was important in these genres was what altered a social relationship. For example, love followed by marriage, quarrelling and reconciliation, gain or loss of money or of social status.

On the other hand, the Victorian period is often classified by scholars as the “longest” and “greatest” in the history of English literature. This may be due to the richness and variety of fiction that was produced in it. Significant English novelists like Dickens, who is seen as “the greatest novelist in the language”. Thackeray, “a brilliant satirist and realist”. The Two Bronte sisters, Emily and Charlotte, who wrote two famous modern romances in English. George Elliot, whose works according to Wheeler, “marks the high point of an English realist tradition in which Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell and Gissing also figure”. George Meredith, known mostly for his innovation and experiment and finally, Thomas Hardy, a “challenging and controversial novelist”, all featured and contributed immensely to the development of fiction during the Victorian period.

On another level, the early and mid-Victorian novel was the product of a sense of community and of shared interest and ideals among publishers, circulating librarians, book sellers, authors and readers. That was guaranteed both by similarities in background and experience and by widespread acceptance of certain ideas about fiction and life. This in a way, led the government to strengthen copyright protections and to repeal taxes that inhibited literary free trade and led readers, writers and publishers both to equate popularity, economic success and literary quality and to value novels that themselves reinforced that

belief by ultimately meting out to their characters the appropriate rewards and punishments.

In relation to the above, the development of nineteenth century literary tradition has been extensively discussed in the works of Buckley ed (1975), Cunningham (1978) and Brantlinger and Thesing ed, (2005). These works provide a comprehensive ground on the nature, uniqueness and effect of fiction of the age in relation to that of its predecessors. According to Cunningham the class consciousness shown by the nineteenth century novel, the importance of social and financial status, and the use of the rise or fall from one class to another as reflecting critical developments in characters and fortune, which indicate the middle class origin of the novel, all combined to shape the Victorian age writers' attempt to deal with people living in the social world known to them (Cunningham 1978:84-6).

Firstly, as the nineteenth century prides itself in the stratification of members of its society, its literature is also bound to be coloured by such belief. British society during that era was a very stratified society. People were classified according to wealth, income, social status, occupation, or power. This categorization is not only limited to complex state-based societies, but also present in simple tribal or feudal societies composed of nobility-to peasant relations. In this sense the Victorian literary writers/novelists seem to absorb this in their writings as stated by Frierson in his *The English Novel in Transition* that "the Victorian novel was Tory-Omitting Dickens, of course". He went further to highlight that by Tory he meant:

Socially conservative, but I mean more than this. I mean that the dear and proper gradations of society are treated with respect and mostly with admiration; that the institutions of the realm are expected, as altogether fitting; that pride of race and imperialism occasionally obtrude, but are always latently present. (1942:3)

In this sense it is also clear that a feudal criterion prevailed which tend to equate inherent worth with the gradations of a highly stratified society, in which members live and remain in the same class from which they are born. In this sense we can cite Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Mary Barton* as a case in point. As a representative Victorian novel, the book recalls the story of John Burton, his daughter Mary and their friends, the Wilsons. The realism of the novel right from the outset of the story is clearly displayed. It depicts the life of the working class, which represents the grey masses of the alien class as a group of unique individuals different from one another just as members of higher social groups are. Her portrayal of the wealthy, Mill-owning Carson family is somewhat stereotyped. In a way, the life of the major characters in the story seem to engage the sympathy of the reader.

Typically, Jane Austen's texts from *Pride and Prejudice*(1813) to the post-humously published *Persuasion* (1818) through to the fragmentary novellas, all abound in instances of this social stratification, *Pride and Prejudice* being the most striking. All the major characters in that novel have pride either about their noble birth as in the case of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mr. Darcy, or about their social status as in the case of Mr. Bingley's sisters or even snobbishly because of

an attachment to someone of higher social status, as in the way Mr. Collins seems to portray himself because of his connection to the odious Lady Catherine.

Secondly, the economy of money or financial status has also been greatly upheld during the nineteenth century as a pointer to one's social status. This has been summed up in this piece:

That which is for me through the medium of money-that for which I can pay (i.e. which money can buy) that am I, the possessor of the money. The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my properties and essential powers... what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women: therefore I am not ugly. For the effect of ugliness-its deterrent power-is nullified by money. I, in my character as an individual, am lame, but money furnishes me with twenty-four-feet. Therefore, I am not lame. I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honored, and therefore so its predecessor... I am stupid but money is the real mind of all things and how then should its possessor be stupid? Besides he can buy talented people for himself, and is he who has power over the talented not more talented than the talented? Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money therefore transform all my in-capabilities into their contrary? (Marx and Engels 1978: 103-4, cited in Brantlinger and Thesing eds 2005: 50-51).

In this piece one is able to discern an attempt to transform or even neutralize all human and natural properties into their super egos, the contraries. Money is seen as the unmediated creative power to which everything else is indefinitely subjected. Elsewhere, money has been described as "frozen desire", because it has the ability to fulfill any purpose and convey any desire.

In addition, Regenia Gagnier further explained the crucial importance of money as the ultimate good, below which all other goods must be subjected, to her other goods can satisfy only one wish and one need. For example, “food for the hungry”, “wine for the healthy”, medicine for the young etc which all serve a particular purpose and are good only in that respect, but money alone is the ultimate good.

Similarly, in *The Philosophy of Money* (1900), the philosopher George Simmel described money as “the historical symbol of relative character of existence”, which characterizes the relativism of modernity. To him, no symbol could describe the dynamic character of the modern world than money, it is therefore seen as the alpha and omega, the ultimate and absolute.

In this regard, it is easily discovered in the Victorian novel that money occupies a central position in their literature, because it is attached with both romantic and financial aspects. In Austen’s famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Bennet goes mad the moment she learnt that a wealthy unmarried Youngman arrives the neighborhood. Without trying to find out his background or character she impulsively and hastily rattles: “A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!. (P1). And when her husband, the more sensible Mr. Bennet queried her instant indulgence. “How so? How can it affect them?”

She further tries to justify her belief “My dear Mr. Bennet,...”how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them” and when he asks whether that was the reason for Mr. Bingley’s arrival at Longbourn

Mrs. Bennet replies that “it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them and therefore you must visit him” (P2).

In all these, Mrs. Bennet’s central concern is for one of her five daughters to catch the attention of the newly arrived wealthy young man and in all she says, she could see reason in anything but in the fulfillment of her wish at least to have one daughter well married. Likewise, Austen’s last novel *Persuasion* echoes the nineteenth century’s view of money and marriage and the association between the two, when Anne refused to honour her engagement with Frederick Wentworth who has no title.

Finally, on the question of freedom, nineteenth century seems to have placed certain restraints on women. If we compare modern women/renaissance women writers and Victorian women writers we find that the former enjoy full freedom as far as creative writing is concerned. Renaissance women like the countess of Pembroke, Lady Mary Worth, Amelia Lanyer and Lady Whitney all wrote under their name. (See Todd 1984:54-7) while some Victorian women writers have had to employ pen names. For example, Marianne Anne Evans wrote under the masculine name “George Elliot”, while the three famous Bronte’ sisters Emily, Charlotte and Anne, all had to employ the sexually ambiguous names Ellis, Currer and Acton Bell respectively in order to get published.

In conclusion, the nineteenth century literary tradition has indeed affected women writers of especially the mid Victorian period. The ideology of the period is fully reflected in their creative pieces especially as far as the socio-economic and literary outlook is concerned as explained above.

3.3 Jane Austen's Biography and Other Related Writings

(Reading Austen's biography alongside George William Fredrick Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807,2010). New historicists believe that a literary text is inseparable from its author's life because it is not solely the author's creation, but the culture and society which shape both the author and the text, in other words, both of them are recognized as cultural artefacts. For this reason, in a new historicist reading of a literary text, the author's biography is indispensable in order to buttress the idea that the text, like its author, is a cultural production.

This section of the study attempts to provide a biographical context in which Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* will be put in the interpretation of these texts from the New historicist perspective. According to New historicism there is always a correlation between text and knowledge of author's life which is viewed as indispensable so as to explain the relationship between the text and the author's biography. To provide an insight into the thesis, Jane Austen's life will begin below, she will be presented living on the stage of the world.

One of the famous nineteenth century English women novelists, Jane Austen was born on 16th December,1775, at the rectory in the village of Steventon, near Basingstoke, in Hampshire, England. She happened to be the seventh of eight children of the reverend George Austen and his wife Cassandra, and she was educated mainly at home and never lived outside her family. She had a happy childhood among all her brothers and the other boys who lodged with the family and whom Mr. Austen tutored. Jane was almost inseparable from her older sister,

Cassandra. In their leisure the children wrote and performed plays and charades, and even as a little girl, Jane was encouraged to write. Owing to her incessant reading of the books in her father's extensive library, she drew numerous materials for the short satirical sketches she wrote as a girl.

At the age of fourteen Jane wrote her first novel, more properly, a short story, titled *Love and Friendship*, followed by *A History of England by a Partial, Prejudiced and ignorant historian*, together with other amusing Juvenilia. In her early twenties she wrote the novels that were later to be reworked and published as *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*. She also began a novel entitled *The Watson's* which remains to date, as fragment.

As a young woman Jane enjoyed dancing (an activity which frequently features in her novels) and she attended balls in many of the great houses of the neighborhood. She loved the country, enjoyed long country walks, and she had many friends in Hampshire. The decision of her family to move away to Bath in 1801 therefore came to Jane as a shock. Mr. Austen gave the Steventon living to his son James and quietly retired with his wife and two daughters to Bath. Jane found the next four years difficult and unnerving as she disliked the confines of a busy town and missed her Steventon life. After her father's death in 1805, his widow and daughters suffered financial difficulties and were forced to rely on the charity of the Austen sons. It was also at this time, while on holiday in the West Country, that Jane fell in love, and when the Youngman died, she was deeply upset. Later she accepted a proposal of marriage from Harris Bigg-Wither, a

wealthy landowner and the brother of some of her closest friends, but she changed her mind the very next morning and was greatly upset by the whole episode.

After the death of Mr. Austen, the Austen ladies moved to Southampton to stay with their naval brother Frank and his wife Mary, though they paid occasional visits to London, where Jane stayed with her favorite brother Henry, at that time a prosperous banker, and where she also enjoyed visits to the theatre and art exhibitions. However she wrote little in Bath and nothing at all in Southampton. Henry built for his mother and sisters a permanent home on his Chawton estate, which the Austen ladies found quite comfortable with a pretty garden, and most importantly a library in which to read and write. In the seven and a half years that Austen lived in this house she published *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* in 1811 and 1813 respectively and then embarked on concluding *Mansfield Park* which was published in 1814 and *Emma* in 1816. Later she completed *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* which were post humously published in 1818. Likewise in the winter of 1816 she started *Sanditon* which, like its counterpart, *The Watson's* remains a fragmentary novella.

Eventually, Jane Austen had contracted the unnamed Addison's disease, a tubercular disease of the kidneys which affected the adrenal glands and was then incurable. No longer able to walk far, she used to drive out in a little donkey carriage, which according to her biographer, can still be seen at the Jane Austen museum at Chawton. By May 1817 she was so ill that she and Cassandra rented rooms in Winchester to be near Jane's physician. Jane however died in her sister's

rooms in the early hours of 18 July, 1817. She was buried in Winchester cathedral. (see among others, Tomalin 1997 and Fullerton, 1964).

On the other hand, Austen's mother was born a Leigh and, down-to-earth and practical, she was proud of her family history and links with the aristocracy. The Leighs were descended from the lord Mayor of London who proclaimed Elizabeth queen. Since then, some had been ennobled and become owners of Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, others had married aristocrats. Her curious name of Cassandra, shared with several cousins, owed itself to the fact that a Cassandra Willoughby had been the wife of a great uncle who became the first Duke of Chandos, and a ducal connection was some worth celebrating and signaling. There were brains in the family too, her uncle Theophilis Leigh was a master of Balliol for fifty years. Her father Thomas Leigh, was a more modest parish priest at Harpsden, near Henley-on-Thames, where she was reared. She was a clever child who wrote poetry and impressed her uncle Theophilis, but it was her brother James who came into a fortune through another great uncle, adding a Perrot to his Leigh in the process, despite that, there was no fortune for her, only a modest inheritance worth less than £2,000.

Nevertheless, the Austen's had no aristocratic connections. They were family who prided themselves on writing. George's grandmother, Elizabeth Austen, had written along document entitled "Memorandum for Mine and My Children's Reading Being My Own Thots on Our Affairs 1706, 1707" she explained that she was making this "rough drafts in a retired hour" as a help to her memory and for

her own satisfaction. It was also intended to encourage her children in the belief that intelligence and expressive ability could count more than an inherited fortune. Jane must have inherited well the art of writing. According to Claire Tomalin (1997:112) the earliest of Jane's letters to survive was addressed to Cassandra, wishing her a happy birthday. Jane wrote it sitting at home in her father's personage on Saturday, 9 January 1796, which is viewed as "a remarkable document" everyone in the family view Jane's letter as neat and fluent. Austen's letter not intended for any eyes but those of the recipient, later becomes "as enjoyable as the first page of a novel" a familiar novel in which two young women will exchange news of their adventures and flirtations and gradually work their way towards the crowning point of their lives, which is marriage.

On the other hand, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* (1807) takes its title from the root word "phenomena" which refers to appearances. It is a Greek word used by the famous Greek philosopher, Plato to distinguish mere temporal appearance from the eternal "Noumena" of the ideal realm. To Plato, appearances were largely taken for realities. While in Hegel's view reality is unique only in western philosophy. We can know reality when we have mastered the appearances (phenomena) partially hidden and partially revealed. Hegel's idea originates from the fact that there can be degrees of truth in propositions and various phenomena fall within degrees of reality. Phenomenology, the study of phenomena, deals with mental phenomena/perception, as such Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* focuses on such an important phenomena, the mind.

The Phenomenology of Mind discusses the study of appearances, images, illusions throughout the history of human consciousness, in it therefore we read the evolution of human consciousness. Though not a chronological history or account of the evolution of life, the book shows the phenomena of mind to have started when human beings begin to think. In other words, when they become conscious as beings, Hegel traces the evolution of consciousness from savages and barbaric forms. The first kind being sensory consciousness which is infantile. In this sense reality has impact on the infant, teaching it that different things, different values and a knowledge of these differences become the most valuable possession of those experiences. The growing infant's sensory consciousness evolve into perceptual consciousness which Aristotle explains as the "carefully observed and recorded manner in which all things, animals, minerals and places are classified in an orderly system of natural sciences". When a person looks now, he perceives the natural relationship between objects. One comes to grasp cause and effect relations but there is a kind of "gnawing feeling" according to Hegel that natural science enough is not sufficient, this is because to him one dimension of reality continually escapes our minds. So how do we classify a mind? How is it constructed in and for itself? The final stage identified by Hegel in his book is the "understanding consciousness which resulted from the fact that increased sciences transcend perception and evolved into such understanding. In this stage he cited Emmanuel Kant whose theory of the pure understanding provides a guiding light. Kant is quoted as having outlined the basic phenomena of the human mind, and showed to consciousness its own image of itself. The understanding consciousness

sees itself as a greater “unifying principle where the multiplicity of the worlds myriad things are unified under the singleness (sic) of the greater self”.

3.4 The Science of Logic

In his *The Science of Logic*, said to have been published between (1812-1816) Hegel outlined his vision of logic as a “system of dialectics”, i.e. a dialectical; metaphysics which discusses a development of the principles that thought and being constitute a single and active unity. The book also incorporates the traditional Aristotelian Syllogism, concerned with a phase of the “original unity of thought and being” rather than as a detached, formal instrument of influence. For Hegel, the most important achievement of German idealism, starting with Emmanuel Kant, and culminating in his own philosophy was the argument that reality (being) is shaped by thought and is, in a strong sense, identical to thought. Thus, ultimately the structures of thought and being, subject and object, are identical. Since for Hegel, the underlying structure of all reality is ultimately rational, logic is not merely about reasoning or argument, rather it is also the rational structural core of all reality and every dimension of it. Thus, Hegel’s *Science of Logic* includes among other things analysis of being, nothingness, becoming, existence, reality, essence, reflection, concept and method. In short, it included the fullest description of his dialectic.

Hegel considered *Science of logic* as one of his major works and therefore kept it upto date through frequent revision. The work is sometimes referred to as “the Greater Logic” to distinguish it from the “lesser logic”, the monikor given to the

condensed version Hegel presented as the “logic” section of his Encyclopaedia of the philosophical science.

3.4.1 Phenomenology of Spirit (1807)

Various translated as “*The Philosophy of Spirit*” or “*The Philosophy of Mind*”, the work was in its first publication identified as part one of a projected “system of science”, of which the “*Science of logic*” was the second part. The book’s working title which also appeared in the first edition was *Science of the Experience of Consciousness* because the German word “Geist” has both meanings. Hegel’s phenomenology is seen as the basis of his later philosophy and marked a significant development in German idealism after Kant. Focusing on topics in Metaphysics, Epistemology, Physics, Ethics, History, Religion and Consciousness and Political Philosophy, the Phenomenology is where Hegel develops his concepts of dialectic (including the master-slave dialectic), absolute idealism, ethical life, and Aufhebung. The book indeed had a profound effect on Western Philosophy and has been praised and blamed for the development of existentialism, communism, fascism, death of God theory and historicist nihilism.

3.4.2 Historical Context of the *Phenomenology of Mind*

Hegel was about to conclude his book when Napoleon engaged Prussian troops on October 14, 1806, in the battle of Jena (the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt were fought on 14 October 1806 on the Plateau west of the river Saale in today’s Germany between the forces of Napoleon 1 of France and Frederick William III of Prussia. The decisive defeat suffered by the Prussian army subjugated the

Kingdom of Prussia to the French Empire until the sixth coalition was formed in 1812). On the day before the battle, Napoleon entered the city of Jene. Hegel recounted his impressions in a letter to his friend Friedrich Niethammer:

I saw the emperor – this world-soul riding out of the city on reconnaissance. It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse reaches out over the world and masters it ... this extraordinary man, whom it is impossible not to admire.

3.4.3 Jane Austen and the Hegelian Dialectics

The Hegelian dialectics is seen as an interpretive method, originally used to relate specific entities or events to the absolute idea in which some accessible proposition (thesis) is necessarily opposed by an equally assertible and apparently contradictory proposition (antithesis), the mutual contradiction being reconciled on a higher level of truth by a third proposition (synthesis).

Jane Austen might perhaps be the only counterpart to Hegel in literature. Her contemporaries like the three Bronte sisters (Emily, Charlotte and Anne), mostly preoccupied with their concern for the flight of women in a male supremacist patriarchal society. Mary Ann Evans (famously known as George Elliot) with her Zionist ideology, Charles Dickens, whose focus centered on the depiction of industrialized England. Walter Scott and his concern with the historical novel etc. Austen's famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice* can be seen as the counterpart of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, *Mansfield Park* that of the *Science of Logic* and *Emma*, *The Encyclopaedia of Science*.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, we find the typical case of the dialect of truth arising from misrecognition. Although the two paragons belong to different social classes – he

is from an extremely rich aristocratic family, she from the impoverished middle class, Elizabeth and Darcy feel a strong mutual attraction. Because of his pride, his love appears to Elizabeth as something unworthy, when he asks for Elizabeth's hand, he confesses openly his contempt for her social class and expects her to accept his proposal as an unheard of honour, nay privilege, but because of her *Prejudice*, Elizabeth sees him as ostentatious, arrogant, and vain, his condescending proposal disgraces her, therefore she outrightly rejects him.

This mutual misrecognition possesses a structure of a double movement of communication where each subject receives from the other its own message in the opposite form. Elizabeth wants to present herself to Darcy as a young cultivated woman, full of wit, and she gets from him the message "you are nothing but a poor empty minded creature, full of false finesse". Darcy on his own part wants to present himself to her (typical of his class) as a proud gentle man with inherited fortune and he gets from her the message, "your pride is nothing but contemptible arrogance". After the break in their relationship each discovers through a series of incidents, the true nature of the other. She, the sensitive and kindheartedness of Darcy, he, her real dignity and wit (which he confused and conflated with those of her younger sisters) and the novel ends as it should, with their marriage.

The theoretical focus of this story lies in the fact that the failure of their first encounter, the double misrecognition concerning the real nature of the other, functions as a positive condition of the final outcome. We cannot go directly for the truth, we cannot say "if, from the very beginning, she had recognized his real nature and he hers, their story could have ended at once with their marriage". If

we are to make a comical assumption that the first encounter of the future lovers was successful, that Elizabeth had accepted Darcy's first proposal, what would have happen? We come to the conclusion that instead of being bound together in true love they would became a common/uncouth everyday couple, a typical example of an arrogant man and a pretentious, empty-minded young girl (as Darcy had earlier on conceived). But to spare ourselves the painstaking circuit through the misrecognition, we miss the truth itself, only the "working through" of the misrecognition allows us to approach the true nature of the other and at the same time to overcome our own deficiency for Elizabeth, to get rid of her *Prejudice*.

These two movements are interconnected because Elizabeth encounters in Darcy's pride, the opposite image of her *Prejudice*, and Darcy in Elizabeth's vanity, the reverse image of his own false pride. In other words, Darcy's pride is not a simple, positive state of nature, it takes place, it seems, only from the perspective of her *Prejudices* and vice versa. Elizabeth is the pretentious empty-minded girl only in Darcy's conceited view. To express things in Hegelian terms, in the perceived deficiency of the other, each perceives, without knowing it, the fantasy of his/her own subjective position. The deficiency of the other is thus simply an objectification of the distortion of our own point of views.

In addition, *Pride and Prejudice*, approaches the theme of illusion and ideology that is mistakenly supposed to be a consciously prepared image of the world. It would be wrong to assume that we are free from misconceptions and try to live in the post-ideological times. (Times of truth), and assume that we are not vulnerable

to manipulation, while in fact, everything that we see as truth, all our knowledge about the world, about ourselves and our systems of arranging the world is an ideology at its best. People are led by their unconscious desire to set the world in order, to look for truth. This desire makes them create an illusion of humans, being dividable into good and bad, of their being definitive personalities. In fact, no one can be so easily described and those images of ourselves and others created by us (or to some extent imposed on us by our families and others) are the very ideology we think we are free from.

The idea of the misrecognition of the truth assumes that the truth that becomes recognized already exists in us. For example, people who believe in God can give many reasons for His existence, but no number of proofs will change the mind of an atheist. A naturally talented person can suddenly become a great artist, but no number of lessons will make for a genius. And the truth can be recognized only by accident, since only an accident can make us look at ourselves from the outside.

So, in essence neither Darcy nor Elizabeth learn something new from each other, but thanks to the class division, they recognize the truth that was already in them, though it also means that none of them would ever be happy with themselves if they never met each other, because they would struggle to live according to their mistaken and misperceived false images of themselves that they used to believe to be true.

In line with the above, numerous passages in Hegel's phenomenology unequivocally correlated not only to Jane Austen's literary life, but also to her biography. In the analysis of concrete mind and its functions, Reason is given as

the first stage through which consciousness can be analysed. It is seen as not merely a function of minds, but a stage of mind to whom the conscious mind:

Possesses its own peculiar content and operates in processes peculiar to Itself. Its aim is to become completely conscious of its own nature; and to acquire this it must develop itself through various phases. The first step therefore is reason as immediate—where universal self is simply and directly aware of itself in the universal object. The operation of concrete mind at this stage is found where reason observes. (Hegel 2010:81).

Taking this into consideration, there is an indelible echo of Austen's conformity to such a philosophy in her biography as well as in her works. Tomalin's *Jane Austen; a Life*, recollects the experiences of Jane Austen in Bath where she wrote four letters during their first few weeks there. The letters suggest "a mind struggling against two spirits". She saw Bath itself as a "vapor, shadow, smoke and confusion" and therefore non-conducive a place to stay in. Though her uncle and aunt were kind and welcoming, the hustling and bustling of old acquaintances and funny neighbors seem to create a distressing feeling in her.

Taken to the Assembly Rooms, she amused herself watching a drunken wife chase her drunken husband round the rooms, and picking out a notorious adulteress. Then: another stupid party last night; perhaps if larger they might be less intolerable. But "I cannot any how continue to find people agreeable. (Tomalin 1997:172)

This, of course cannot be taken as a Light-hearted remark but a desolately despicable one, even frightening like her character Elizabeth Bennet's (in *Pride and Prejudice*) "The more I see of the world the more I am dissatisfied with it" her opinion of people was not raised by the "old foughs" who came to play with her uncle, or by Miss Bingley, who is "like any other girl with a broad nose and wide mouth, fashionable dress and exposed bosoms". Austen may have had

another, more serious reason for disliking Bath if she suspected her parents intentions in choosing Bath, which as we learn in *Sanditon*, Austen's last fragmentary novel, was a fashionable place, with a garden, flowers and a seaside resort. It is also a place for husband-hunting. As we learn that Mrs. Austen on reaching retirement age had moved to Bath in just the same way, taking their two unmarried daughters both in their mid twenties, with them: and in Bath Cassandra Leigh had married George Austen, and Jane Leigh had found her husband too. In all these, Austen was capable to draw the parallel, and felt a "stinging sense of humiliation" at the idea of being paraded in the "marriage market" or husband hunting.

In addition, in "The Ethical World: Low Human and Divine: Man and Woman" Hegel outlines the major step in the analysis of spirit as a realized actual social order, immediately given as a historical fact, and presented directly the minds of the individuals composing it. This is explained as:

an established routine of human adjustments, where the natural characteristics and constitution of its moral individuals are absorbed and built into the single substance of the living social whole (p158).

It is noteworthy however that such a complete kind of experience takes various levels to be realized. It cannot exist except perhaps through the convergence of opposing elements, and the central principle of all experience, self-consciousness, has abundant material on which to exercise its function of creating a uniting distinction.

This, to Jane Austen can be realized by the fact that the substance of social life is constituted out of the natural phenomena of human species, race and nationality

on the one hand, and the purely natural element of specialized individual on the other. This has been clearly reflected in her fiction where every character seems to perform a sort of natural function, and to Jane Austen, who finds nothing to be surprised at in human behavior or vices, the two forms of social order, conformity and deviation, are inseparable in the life of a community. No doubt then some times she appears to reward evil with good as in the case of Lydia Bennet who at sixteen, eloped with Wickham and in the end is rewarded with a successful marriage or Mr. Collins, who has nothing else to do apart from his income that comes from a parish, at the end Mr. Bennet is forced to surrender his estate to him. Likewise the chattering Mrs. Bennet and her silly daughters. Sir Walter Elliot in *Persuasion* who is persistently idle apart from his study of the Baronetage, as well as the excitedly romantic Catherine Mooreland in *Northanger Abbey*, are all presented as social artifacts whose individual behaviors conform to the opposing ways through which people are classified in the community.

In conclusion, it is arguable that Jane Austen's reputation advanced slowly in her life time. Even though some critics opine that her Tory Christian background could have been the basis of her morality (see Tomalin 1997:276), it is also clear that as someone who came from a learned family and seemed to have had a considerable interest in studies in contrast to anything else, Austen must have acquired the vast of her knowledge through readings and quiet meditation and as such inviolable ability to create amazing characters and situations in her novels.

CHAPTER FOUR:

A NEW HISTORICIST READING OF THE SELECTED TEXTS FOR THE THESIS

4.0 Introduction

As stated earlier in the introduction, this section of the research focuses on the interpretation of the selected texts from the new historicist perspective. This entails reading the selected literary texts, namely, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Emma* (1816) and *Persuasion* (1818) along side their non-literary or more precisely, historical counterparts. Thus while *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* are read side by side with David Hume's *History of England* (1754), *Persuasion* is read together with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1790).

The whole research is based on the argument that the work of Jane Austen (1775-1817) can be located within the socio-historical and cultural conditions of nineteenth century England. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said argues that Jane Austen's work can be read as "part of the structure of an expanding imperialist venture" (P.114). Citing examples from Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), he strenuously maintains that the novel opens up a broad expanse of domestic imperialist culture, without which Britain's subsequent acquisition of territory would not have been possible. He shows how ideas about dependent races and territories were held both by military strategists, colonial bureaucrats, foreign-office executives and by intelligent novel readers, trying to educate themselves in terms of moral evaluation and literary balance.

Said's definition of imperialism/colonialism is perhaps the most comprehensive this research considers. It is seen as:-

The practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory, 'colonialism', which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlement on distant territory. (1993:8).

Though the term appears to be so controversial, as it encompasses all sorts of questions, doubts, polemics and ideological promises, yet it is clear that there existed a geographical and social demarcation between western metropolitan world and their counterparts in the third or colonized world, and this demarcation was founded upon the idea of an imperium-a dominion, state or sovereignty that supposed the pre-existence of a subordinate province or domain and would expand in population and territory and increase in power and strength. In other words, an empire, also defined by Said as:

a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social or cultural dependence. (1993:8).

By the late nineteenth century in England, imperialism was considered vital to the well-being of British survival in general and motherhood in particular. Many writings seemed to dwell on attempt to establish connections between empire and its subdued territory. There are hardly any exceptions to the otherwise overwhelming prevalence of ideas suggesting and often implementing imperial rule. According to Said cited above, "on the fundamental ontological distinction between the west and the rest of the world there is no disagreement. So strongly

felt and perceived are the geographical and cultural boundaries between the West and its non-western peripheries...” (Said:129).

To illustrate how ardently Austen portrays the importance of an empire to the situation at home, Said draws references from *Mansfield Park* (one of Jane Austen’s novels). He points out that, no matter how isolated and insulated the English place is, as in the case of Mansfield Park, it undoubtedly requires overseas sustenance. Her portrayal of Antigua in *Mansfield Park*, is seen by Said as an attempt by the writer to force the reader to establish its correlation to history. While Sir Thomas’s property in the Caribbean would have had to be a sugar plantation maintained by slave labour, which are all more than fictional, but evident historical realities. In essence, through Said’s explication of the novel, one realizes that though novels are generally thought to be pure invention, their affiliation with a sordid history may not be irrelevant or transcended.

4.1 *Pride and Prejudice*: The Anecdote of Political Liberty

The first section of this new historicist reading of *Pride and Prejudice* is aimed to focus on the biographical elements embedded in the novel, this shapes our understanding of Austen’s past in order to uncover some certain psychoanalytic elements. The study then tries to discover the novel’s historical allusions which entails references to actual people and events in order to locate the novel as a historical element. Finally, to understand how a historical moment produce a particular literary work, it is expedient to discover the historical forces that shaped

it. However, before we begin our analysis it would be helpful to give a brief plot summary of the novel.

The chief setting of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* is the village of Longbourn, north of London, where Mr. and Mrs. Bennet live with their five unmarried daughters. A love affair begins between the eldest, Jane and a rich young man who comes into the neighbourhood with his sisters, Mr. Charles Bingley. Elizabeth, the second daughter is attracted to Mr. Bingley's friend, Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, and he to her, but initially she finds him too proud and aloof while he despises her ill-bred mother and younger sisters.

A Mr. Collins comes to seek the hand of one of the daughters. He is a clergyman and a relative of Mr. Bennet and will inherit the latter's estate at his death. Failing to secure the hand of Elizabeth, he marries her intimate friend, Charlotte. His patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, to whom he is excessively deferential, happens to be the aunt of Mr. Darcy and hopes that Mr. Darcy, a big land owner, will marry her daughter, Anne.

Meanwhile, a regiment of militia has been stationed in the neighbourhood to the great delight of younger Bennet girls, Lydia and Kitty. Among the officers is a Mr. Wickham, who was a childhood friend of Mr. Darcy and the son of his steward. Elizabeth as well as her sisters found him immensely attractive, Mr. Darcy however has come to regard him as dishonest and the two of them are not on speaking terms. Elizabeth's liking for Mr. Wickham increases her dislike of Mr. Darcy and it increases further when Mr. Bingley and his sisters leave the neighbourhood and have nothing more to do with Jane. Elizabeth rightly suspects

Mr. Darcy of being the cause. When Mr. Darcy suddenly proposes marriage to her, she therefore angrily rejects him, while secretly being flattered. In a letter to her, he defends himself against her reproaches, especially the charge of having ill-treated Wickham. Elizabeth begins to think differently of him, especially when while on a visit to Derbyshire with her uncle and aunt, Mr. And Mrs. Gardener, she accidentally meets him at his magnificent country seat, Pemberly and is introduced to his sisters.

However, there is a turn of events, Lydia goes to Brighton to stay with her friend, the captain's wife, news suddenly reaches Longbourn that she has run off with Wickham. Elizabeth for one fears that they may not get married because they have no money. Fortunately, apparently through the efforts of her uncle and aunt, they are tracked down and do get married. Mrs. Gardener reveals that it was Mr. Darcy who put up the money to make this possible. Mr. Bingley returns and with renewed love for Jane, marries her. Finally, the engagement of Mr. Darcy and Elizer is also announced. Lady Catherine in vain tries to stop the marriage.

Here is a portrayal of English society two hundred years ago, especially the position of women. In England of those days, it was the women who paid the dowry. Therefore, a man may not be so interested in a woman if she does not have decent dowry coming along with her. Secondly, traditionally in European societies, women can inherit property, but one of the problems faced by the Bennet daughters in *Pride and Prejudice* is that their father's estate is entailed. There is a legal condition which says the "property can only pass to a man instead of his daughters." So, the fact that they are not going to inherit their father's estate

makes them less attractive. For this reason, Mr. Collins, the heir apparent decides to compensate the family by marrying one of the daughters.

To determine the context in which Austen wrote this book, a look at her own biography is quite important as far as new historicist analysis is concerned, as this will show the reader the relationship between the author and her actual experiences. Austen's own life as a woman living in a small locality among funny neighbours and friends was full of adventure and excitement, this provided her with the experiences she required for the events in her novels.

Austen's biography centres around two important areas. Firstly, at home, she read, wrote and followed her own imagination. Secondly, when she happened to be outside, among the neighbours, she entered another world that sprang its own surprises and dramas. It is recollected that the society in which the young Austen's found much of their entertainment was made up of the households of clergymen, squires, aristocrats, members of parliament, entrepreneurs, doctors and lawyers, mostly living within a range of fifteen miles. See (Tomalin 1997: 85).

Austen's biographer also shows that *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the books she so much liked and we can hardly overlook its autobiographical element. Elizabeth Bennet resembles her creature as a very sensible, critical forthright and observant young woman. In the novel under consideration, we found so many instances where Elizer through authorial interruption echoes Austen's own views. For instance, towards the end of chapter nineteen, when Mr. Collins proposes to marry her and she rejects him, which he however fails to understand and thought it "the

usual practise of all elegant female” in order to increase his “love by suspense”.

Elizabeth, with definitive disinterestedness, unequivocally laments thus:-

I do assure you, Sir, that I have no pretensions whatsoever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man. I would be paid the compliment of being believed sincere. I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart. (p107).

Similarly, we learn from Austen’s biographer that when Austen and her sister, Cassandra visited their friends, the Biggs, at Manydown, Harris Bigg Wither, the friends’ brother proposed to her, though she had accepted the proposal, she changed her mind the next morning and flatly declined despite the rosy promising life of having a perfectly decent well-bred young husband, of becoming the mistress of a large Hampshire house and estate giving directives to the estate workers, the prospects of giving home to her sister Cassandra or having children of her own. Austen brushed away all these sophistications and decided to follow her own mind and feelings. See (Tomalin 1997: 180 – 2).

Jane Austen is often described as a writer who delicately observes human nature and personality. She was known among her acquaintances as a keen observer of human vulgarity, affectation, hypocrisy and foibles of people around her and used such only as materials for her novels. Her niece Caroline remarks that Austen never in her life “said a sharp thing” among her acquaintances. While her brother, Henry clearly points out that Jane “never uttered a hasty, a silly, a severe

expression. In short, her temper was as polished as her wit”. Cited in (Raizada 2008; pp ix-x). This is precisely the kind of heroine Austen created in *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth Bennet attends to any circumstance in an amiable manner though sometimes with gentle irony and humorous sarcasm embedded in her matter of fact statements. She addresses serious issues in a genial manner and never gets upset no matter the intensity of a situation. When Lady Catherine de Bourgh warns her to desist from having any connection with her nephew, the gorgeous Mr. Darcy, and entreated Elizabeth to promise not to ever attempt to enter into an engagement with him, the latter gently but forthrightly replies that “I will make no promise of the kind”. Lady Catherine rudely insists “I shall not go away, till you have given me the assurance i require”. To this, Elizabeth further responds thus:

And I certainly never shall give it. I am not to be intimidated into anything so wholly unreasonable. Your ladyship wants Mr. Darcy to marry your daughter; but would my giving you the wished – for promise, make their marriage at all more probable? Supposing him to be attached to me, would my refusing to accept his hand, make him wish to bestow it on his cousin?” (p345)

Now if we compare the two view points, one from an aristocrat who is believed to be highly accomplished with good taste and manners and the other from an ordinary person with nothing but her looks to recommend her, we find that the former ironically lacks decorum, honour, prudence and civility while the latter is fully loaded with these concepts that everyone feels at home with, which also represents the writer’s own viewpoint.

In similar manner, Jane, the eldest Bennet daughter is also cast in the author's image. Austen believed that human beings are inherently non-evil, that there is nothing evil in human nature and all fellow humans are equally good and well-meaning. This distorted idealism is reincarnated in Jane Bennet who hardly finds anyone to be blameworthy no matter the circumstance. When Caroline Bingley and her sisters try by all means to put an end to Jane's relationship with their brother, Bingley, she couldn't believe their action to be folly until her sister Elizabeth did. In chapter four of the novel, Elizabeth's censure against her sister's character explains this:-

Oh! You are a great deal too apt you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life (p12)

Likewise in the event of their younger sister's elopement with Wickham, Jane accepted the situation as it came, not worried at all about the embarrassment she might brought to the family, just as Jane Austen's belief in "Let everything take its natural course". While all the other sisters became worried and hoped/prayed for their sister's return and getting married accordingly.

On another level, the thesis pledges to look for historical allusions or references to real people or events (if any) in order to locate them as historical elements. From this angle, Tomalin provides us with instances in her study of Jane Austen's life. We learnt that the Austen's became acquainted with the Lloyd's. Mrs. Austen in particular boasted of her connections with Mrs. Lloyd, the widow of a clergyman,

with aristocratic background, whom she viewed as a welcome addition to the congenial local society. (Tomalin 1997; 75)

This clearly reminds us of the opening chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, when Mrs. Long informed Mrs. Bennet of the arrival at Neighbourfield, of a young man of large fortune from the north of England. In her excitement Mrs. Bennet informed her husband of such a development who in turn asked whether the new comer is married or single. Mrs. Bennet's response to her husband echoes Mrs. Austen's view of getting connected with someone from a higher social class cited above, she said:-

Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls! you must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them. (p1-2).

Again, the casting of Mr. Bennet's family of five unmarried daughters is similar to that of the historical Bigg Wither's. Tomalin relates that the Bigg Wither had "a family of three unmarried daughters, Catherine, Elizabeth and Alethea Bigg", who "inherited Many down, a large manor house four miles beyond Deane". (1997: 75). The only difference between the two families is that Bigg Wither happened to be a well-to-do land-owner and the daughters were heiresses in a small way. While the fictional Mr. Bennet's daughters came from a middle class background and could not inherit their father at his death because his estate is entailed to a nearest cousin, Mr. Collins.

Additionally, Lydia's elopement with a militia can also be explained in historical terms with Jane Austen at the centre though not from a purely biographical angle.

When Jane Austen was sixteen years old and happened to be the youngest member of the family, her biographer recalled that “she witnessed her elder brothers and sister engaging in romances beyond her reach”. This in turn necessitated sequence of hope, despair, and revived hope, just in the same way that Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice* watched her sisters engaged in romance one after the other. Jane is engaged to Charles Bingley, Elizabeth is admired by Mr. Darcy, Catherine is preoccupied with her piano while Mary is a studious character who has pleasure in nothing other than books. Lydia as the only unoccupied daughter resorted to running off with Wickham.

Now to put *Pride and Prejudice* in its historical and cultural contexts it would be proper to explore its place in the imperial culture that characterized the age, the nineteenth century England. In this way, we try to see the extent to which Jane Austen accommodated the imperial culture in the text and how far she has subverted it. This segment therefore focuses on an investigation of the writer’s character presentation and the main thrust “theme” of the novel. Before then, it would be wise to have a glimpse of Austen’s view about fiction and history. In her “*Plan of A Novel, According to Hints from Various Quarters*”, the writer’s interest in history is implied in her desire to present a character, a father, “to be induced at his daughter’s earnest request, to relate to her the past events of his life”. This father at the same time should be “of a very literary turn, an Enthusiast in literature, yet most zealous in the discharge of his pastoral duties, the mode of an exemplary parish priest”. (cited in Washington, P. 1996:475).

In these few lines we discern an attempt by Austen to fuse fiction and history together but at the same time implying that true reality is discernible in fiction rather than history. To examine how this true reality is presented in *Pride and Prejudice* the novel is read from the new historicist perspective. In this sense, the characters, actions, settings and theme(s) are studied in the light of history, the history in which Jane Austen wrote.

To begin with, Jane Austen used incidents from the real life to create the environment in which her characters live and perform. Through this it is observed that the novel is partly based on real life events.

As far as the setting is concerned we discover in this text a rural and agricultural society, a world without modern amenities, no light, water etc. it is as if industrialization did not begin. The chief setting of the novel is the village of Longbourn, north of London where Mr. and Mrs. Bennet live with their five unmarried daughters. In addition, most of the places mentioned in the story are real places for example, **Brighton**, is a seaside town on the south coast that had recently come into fashion at that time **Derbyshire**, (the place where Mr. Bingley went after he left Longbourn and deserted Jane Bennet at the beginning) is said to be a district (county) in the centre of England that has some fine scenery, **Gracechurch Street** is also a real place situated in the business quarter of England. **Gretna Green** (where Mr. Wickham and Lydia took shelter during their elopement), is a village over the Scottish border, where runaway pairs of lovers frequently went to get married without formality or delay because Scottish laws are simpler than the English ones. **Hertfordshire** (also mentioned several times in

the story) is a pleasant English district (county) north of London. **Kent** is a district (county) to the south east of London. **Lake District** (or the Lakes) is a beautiful district of mountains, Lakes, streams and water falls in the north-west of England. In this place the famous eighteenth century English romantic poet, William Wordsworth lived the greater part of his life, among the Lake poets. **Ramsgate** is said to be a healthy seaside town on the east coast of Kent. These references to real historical places and events may be a reflection of Austen's intellectual development, her ability to fuse them together to create a fictional reality. The references are also combined with the theme of satire through the action of the characters.

To reconstruct the parallels between the events in *Pride and Prejudice* and what obtains in history from pre-nineteenth century England onwards, we take a look at David Hume's *History of England* (1754, 2007) along side a brief biography of Hume. Born in Edinburgh on 7th May, 1711, David Hume was a Scottish philosopher, Economist, Diplomat and Essayist known mostly for his radical philosophical empiricism and skepticism. Influenced by the works of George Berkeley, Cicero, Thomas Hobbes and Francis Hutcheson, the writer focused on genres like Philosophy, Science, Religion and Spirituality, History, Non-fiction and the Classics. *History of England* is among his early works out of the over three hundred distinct works he wrote. The book comprises two volumes where the first one focuses on the era from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1686, while the second volume continued from the reign of William

and Mary to the Death of frontispiece portrait of Hume. The last discussion at the end of volume two is a summary of Hume's most developed thoughts.

Among all the writers of his age, David Hume had so wide a range of worldly and intellectual interests that he is in a class of himself that is as a philosopher whose focus traversed across disciplines. His philosophy is contained first in his youthful *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) *Principles of Morals* (1751) and the *Natural History of Religion* (1757). His theory of causation, the most revolutionary of his doctrines, struck at the root of all religion, whether revealed or the result of deduction, which in fact saw all knowledge as empirical. To him cause and effect were but names for conjoined phenomena.

We know that, in fact, heat is a constant attendant of flame; but what is the connexion between them, we have no room, so much as to conjecture or imagine... experience only teaches us, how one event consequently follows another, without instructing us in the secret connexion which binds them together and renders them inseparable... but there is nothing in a number of instances, different from any single instance, which is supposed to be exactly similar; except only, that after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant. This connexion, therefore, that we *feel* in the mind... is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea, of power or necessary connexion. Nothing further is in the case. (Williams 1939:404).

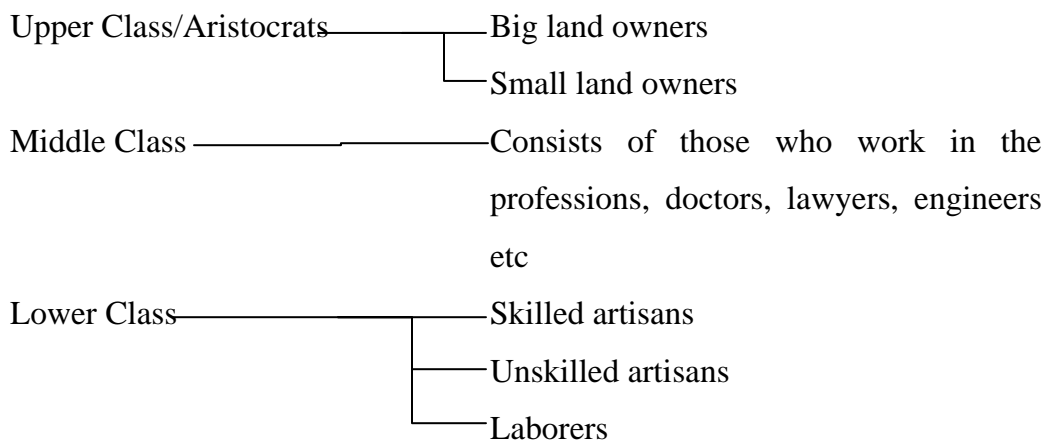
In addition, Hume did not believe in the short cut to knowledge of causes by the postulate of a Deity. He said "we have no idea of a Supreme Being but what we learn by reflection on our own faculties", as such he was labelled and abused as an atheist, and constructive theories based on the fundamental causes of events or phenomena were to a large extent abandoned thereafter in eighteenth century England.

On the other hand, Hume set the example in his other writings of a reasonable empirical examination of facts that he proved a pioneer in both history and economics. As Thomas Carlyle, cited in Williams 1939 said, he has in his *Histories of Great Britain and of England*, “the methodizing, comprehensive eye” essential for the historian, and “something of an epic clearness and method, as in his delineation of the commonwealth Wars”. Hume was so great an influence in English history that his courage and industry, his pretence or affectation were already giving him that magisterial place in the world of letters before his death on August 25th, 1776, exactly a year after the birth of Jane Austen.

Jane Austen began writing towards the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the 1790's, as such her writing to a significant degree reflected the ideology of the age. Set in some rural villages of England, her novels feature rural and agrarian society in a purely pre-industrial world. In about the 1800's when industrial revolution began most writers set their works against that background for example, Charles Dicken's *Hard Times* (1850) is set in an industrialized England but not Austen. Longbourn, the major setting in *Pride and Prejudice* is a village twenty miles away from London, about seven hours horse back journey in those days. The next major feature discernible in an Austen novel is the division of social class. In about the 1800's when Jane Austen was writing, British society was a highly stratified society. Hume 2007:145-9 maintains that social stratification describes the relative social position of persons in a given social group, category, geographical region or other social unit which shows

society's categorization of its people into rankings of socio-economic tiers based on factors like wealth, income, occupation, social status and power.

During the nineteenth century this stratification is carried further thus, the upper, middle and lower classes have further divisions which are forbidden to mix due to inaccessibility of resources and lack of social mobility. For example, the working classes are unlikely to advance socio-economically, while the wealthy tend to hold power which they use to exploit the proletariat (labouring class) that resulted in an enlarged middle class in western societies because any system where there is little or no mobility even on an intergenerational bases is considered "closed stratification system", because all aspects of social status are ascribed to the extent that one's social position at birth is the position one holds for a life time. Thus, the division of social classes in Britain just as in many other western societies is as follows:



The upper class, which is at the top of the ladder owns more than half of the nation's economy and they made up just about two percent of the total population.

For example, a person may own a very big land, while the masses will be paying

him to use just a portion of the land. See among others (Williams 1939, Hume 1754, 2007). In *Pride and Prejudice* Austen's characters are drawn from the first two categories, that is the upper and middle classes. Lady Catherine de Bourgh is an aristocrat who thinks highly of herself and even thought it an abomination to have an inter - class marriage, this created an excessive feeling of complacency in her to the extent that she flatly asked Miss Elizabeth Bennet to cut off any relationship with Mr. Darcy who, according to her is descended from the same noble line as her daughter, Anne and are therefore intended for each other from infancy. Mr. Darcy is also from the same class as Lady Catherine, the aristocrat, as a result of this he looks down upon everyone in the story. When his friend Mr. Bingley asked him, at the beginning of the story, to dance with Elizabeth Bennet at the ball, he disdainfully replies "she is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men". (P9).

Jane Austen's point of view in this novel, far from telling us how young people fall in love and get married, is giving account of how people grow morally in character through both experiences of life and through other people's experiences. With the exception of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, other people do not grow at all in the novel. For example, Mrs. Bennet who is only after money and uses it as a yardstick for happiness. While Mr. Bennet is presented as convincing in his inadequacy to cope with his matrimonial conflicts. He always remains cynical and ironic in order to address his marital problems, his main source of solace being his library.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, appears as a highly educated heroine, though educated at home not in the university because in those days, the universities, Oxford and Cambridge were only meant for men not women. The world of *Pride and Prejudice* is to a great extent presented to us through the eyes of Elizabeth Bennet, who is too eager to judge people. In her ardent judgment she sees Wickham as an embodiment of goodness while she sees Mr. Darcy as bad and evil until the truth unfolds at the end, and her judgment is reversed.

Nevertheless, apart from giving account of how people grow morally in character, Jane Austen appears also as an accomplished satirist in *Pride and Prejudice*. In almost all the major characters that appear in the story we find a major social ill that Austen tracked down, identified and satirised. For example, due to Mr. Collins snobbery, Lady Catherine has an excessive pride, which makes her downgrade people from a lower social class than herself. Mr. Darcy has an excessive pride about the circumstances of his birth, upbringing and present social rank, though at the end he is properly humbled as he recounts to Elizabeth Bennet:

Dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! What do I not owe you! You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of my reception. You showed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased. (p 357- 8).

Obsession with money and marriage is another social evil Austen satirises. This is depicted as we have seen earlier, first in the character of Mrs. Bennet who does not care who marries her daughters, her main concern is getting them well married, that is, to successful men with or without good breeding. The series of

marriages that appears in the novel is enough to convince us of the nineteenth century's view of women, whose potential occupation is marriage. When Mr. Collins failed to get Elizabeth's acceptance of his offer of marriage he hastily turns to her intimate friend, Charlotte Lucas, who however accepts him outrightly. Jane gets married to Mr. Bingley and Elizabeth is engaged to Mr. Darcy, whom Miss De Bourgh fails to attract. Lydia on the other hand sheepishly elopes with Wickham though at the end they get married.

In Catherine, one of Austen's short stories, her view about marriage is clearly stated where she says:-

There is no knowing what might be the consequence of it, if he were to continue here, for girls nowadays will always give a handsome youngman the preference before any other, tho' for why, I never could discover, for what after all is youth and Beauty? Why in fact it is but a poor substitute for real worth and merit; believe me cousin that, whatever people may say to the contrary, there is certainly nothing like virtue for making us what we ought to be, and as to a young man's being young & handsomer & having an agreeable person, it is nothing at all to the purpose for he had much better be respectable. (p168)

There is then the question of parental irresponsibility displayed mostly in the character of Mr. Bennet. In early English society, upto the nineteenth century, women were not allowed to travel alone, they must be accompanied by an elderly woman, a chaperon, who supervises them during social occasions in order to prevent some types of social or sexual interactions or illegal and unacceptable behaviour. In *Pride and Prejudice*, what we see is a daring contrast to the accepted norms and traditions of the era. Just like Austen and her sister, Cassandra

on many occasions travelled alone, so are the characters created in this novel. At the beginning Jane and her sister Elizabeth Bennet are allowed to travel to Mr. Bingley's house supposing to visit his sisters. Jane falls ill during the trip and narrowly escaped serious injury on their way. Charlotte also travels to see lady Catherine's grand estate without bothering about what befalls her on her way. While Lydia, at the tender age of sixteen is allowed to go to Brighton to visit her friend which eventually resulted in her flirtatious elopement with a militia officer, Mr. Wickham.

In conclusion, it can be said that *Pride and Prejudice*, with different points of view of characters who appear in the action of the novel, makes the reader engaged in an interpretative process. What Austen does in depicting human relationships and human follies and how these follies can be rectified is first of all the employment of the major character, Elizabeth Bennet, as someone who voices out the writer's thoughts and views as such creating a connection between narrator and character mostly through free indirect speech that permeates the novel. Secondly, the reader himself seems to appear as a character who identifies with a particular character, though not a literary one. Finally, the reader is placed into a particular time and place, as such he becomes historically situated. However, by means of a shift in the nature of the narrative, employing different perspectives like the interpersonal, free indirect or authorial interruption, which supplement and enrich one another, Austen subverts the established manners and conventions of narration, which implies that there is no single truth to be reached, rather truth is always subjective or as Jane Austen puts it in *Emma*: "Seldom, very seldom

does complete truth belongs to any human disclosure. Seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised or a little mistaken,”

4.2 A *Emma*: The Rhetoric of Self Complacency

Jane Austen produced her six novels in two separate periods divided by a long interval. Of the first period, *Pride and Prejudice* has been universally acclaimed as the most pressing to many readers. In the second period from 1811 until her death in 1817, *Emma* appears to excel in brilliance, wit and intricate craftsmanship. Since its publication in December 1815 and dedicated (reluctantly, but by invitation) to the prince Regent, the novel appears as an accomplished work; written by a forty-year-old unmarried woman of limited means of living in a society where marriage, and not a writer's career, is every woman's expected path to success. Indeed, *Emma* has taken place among Austen's masterpieces as “a panoramic novel of revolution and a profound meditation on history and the effects of material interests on human destiny”. As New historicism proposes a synchronic reading of text and context, in this new historicist reading of *Emma*, the research attempts to put the novel in both biographical and historical context. This tries to show the interaction between *Emma* and the culture in which it was produced, because the new historicist reading is highly based on the assumption that both authors and cultural texts are the products of the historical and cultural contexts in which the authors lived and their texts were produced.

Emma (1816) narrates the story of a clever and overconfident girl, whose supposed understanding of people coupled with well-meaning desire to

manipulate the lives of her social inferiors as well as some of her equals, involved her in a number of delusions, the unfolding of which makes her realize her false beliefs and attain a greater degree of self knowledge. The attainment of that self knowledge at last makes Emma to realize that the man she has for quite a long time took for a casual friend (her elder sister's husbands' brother, Mr. Knightley), is the man she truly loves. Though Emma lacks the obvious charms of Elizabeth Bennet, (her self deception and condescension sometimes, make her a laughing stock among her social circle), she never altogether loses the reader's sympathy. Throughout the novel she is treated with an affectionate irony, as she is never vicious, only spoilt by good fortune as we have learnt at the opening of the story. Emma's vanity and self complacency appeared to be enveloped in some traps which she falls into. She thought to have every protection in Harriet Smith who is described in the novel as "the natural daughter of nobody knows who" and decides to arrange a suitable marriage for her which means breaking off emerging love affair with Mr. Martin, the farmer, despite his being worthy and suitable, and trying to insistently connect her to the vicar, Mr. Elton, but to her disgust and annoyance, Mr. Elton, being vain and somewhat foolish, misunderstands Emma's intention and proposes to her instead of her friend, Harriet. Failing to secure Emma's hand, Mr. Elton marries a wife who happens to be sillier than himself. In her second attempt to find Harriet another more suitable gentleman, Emma gets involved in a more serious problem, in an attempt to persuade Harriet fall for the handsome and eligible Frank Churchill, Harriet, misunderstanding Emma's hints, thinks the referent is Mr. Knightley and sheepishly falls in love with him.

Shocked by this, Emma feels no one should marry Mr. Knightley but herself. The moral outlook is carefully unfolded as Emma's attempt to play superhuman involved her in unfavorable situations all of which eventually lead to her self knowledge.

On the other hand, Frank Churchill whom Emma wants to necessarily connect with Harriet is so much attracted to Emma herself, and there appears to be a tension between her admiration of his wit and her partly realized love for Mr. Knightley, her advisor and supervisor, who forth rightly tells Emma of his disapproval of her schemes for Harriet, Indeed "one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse" While Emma is scheming for Frank and Harriet to Marry, Mr. Knightley thought that she is falling in love with Frank herself. The irony of the situation is intensified however with the introduction of Jane Fairfax, niece of the genteel poor spinster and daughter of a clergyman, Miss Bates. Jane Fairfax, staying with her aunt and connected to Emma, is believed to be secretly in love with Mr. Dixon, who lives in Ireland, and expectantly, Emma's conjecture becomes a reality, Jane on her part has no fortune, though she is equally talented as Emma, even more so at music, which in a way arouses Emma's unconscious jealousy. Emma finds pleasure in writing and speculating about Jane's relationship with Mr. Dixon. In like manner Frank and Emma are having a lot of fun at Jane's expense, though on Emma's part the fun is not altogether innocent, there seems to be an air of spite and jealousy in it, again Jane's lack of fortune implies that if she does not marry soon she may end up taking position as a governess, and the fears and degradation of that kind of job are quite evident,

particularly through Mrs. Elton's patronizing efforts of help in getting her a job. In a way, Emma has no right to laugh at either Jane or her well-meaning aunt, a worthy but boring character on whom Emma vents irritation to be castigated for her lack of generosity. At last, it happens that the relation between Jane and Mr. Dixon which Emma has imagined and about which she has joked frequently with Frank has no real basis, and all the time Jane and Frank were secretly engaged. Emma suddenly realizes that so far from being a fellow conspirator with Frank, Jane has been his dupe. In any sense, Emma's intelligence and wit have involved her in humiliating situations, with Mr. Knightley, always present to give gentle and caring reproof. It is the relief of discovering that Emma was never in love with Frank (as everyone erroneously believed) that hastens his declarations. The whole employment seems brilliant, and the exploration of different kinds of selfishness which the unfolding of the action makes possible, as well as the sharply ironic character sketches of such characters as the Eltons and Miss Bates, give the novel real depth far from the surface brilliance. The character of Mr. Woodhouse, Emma's father, whose concern for other people is a way of implementing a profound selfishness, opens and closes the story. It is indeed an accurate picture of combined gentility and vanity, flourishing on the kind and tyrannical assumption that what is bad for him must be bad for others as such is prohibited to them. It symbolizes the ambiguities of selfishness, which is one of the primary concerns of the novel. In a way. It could be seen here that the moral pattern in *Emma* is spelt out more clearly than in its predecessor, *Pride and Prejudice*, though in some sense is less sharply drawn.

Through the construction of a biographical context in which Austen's text is intended to be put, it is anticipated to show the extent to which the writer used her own experiences and of the actual events and places and the things she heard or read in the writing of the novel. It also tries to show how Austen combined the particular histories of the particular characters with the history of the world. The writer took the subject matter and characters from her own time and dealt with the socio-economic issues of the time in the novel. The text nevertheless has an artistic integrity by approaching history in a realist sense and by means of an engaging narrative technique. Therefore, towards the end of this section, Austen's narrative technique employed in the novel is pinpointed. Through the construction of historical and cultural context, it is aimed to show how the writer reflected the major ideas pervasive in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and subverted them in the novel by employing both symbolic and ironic tone.

The *Emma* plot, the humbling of a pretty self satisfied girl, centres around youthful pride and the danger of misconstrued romance. As in her other novels, particularly *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion*, Austen explored the concerns and difficulties of genteel women living in Georgian Regency England. She also creates a lively comedy of manners among her characters. The plot of this novel appears to be regulated in part by its division into three parts. Firstly, Emma deceives herself about Mr. Elton and that deception reaches its climax in his declaration in the carriage. Secondly, she is shown to be deceiving herself about Frank Churchill and getting over it in a much less climactic way. Thirdly, she continues her self deception about people but reaches its major climax in the

ultimate revelation about herself and George Knightley. Obviously, many other developments are involved, but briefly these are the three major stages of rising and falling action in the novel, though the last one may appear to be the final as Emma throughout the story becomes more and more self-deceived though she is at the same time moving towards self knowledge which will let her come to terms with herself and her situation.

In *Emma*, the seeming tripartite plot division indicates three kinds of conflict. The force of man against man, man against the environment or man against himself. The first one, man against man happens to be at the centre of the satirical element in this novel and can be seen in the social manoeuvrings of various characters. The force of man against the environment is seen primarily in terms of Emma versus her social milieu. She goes against the accepted manners and social ranks in her attempt to manipulate Harriet either from or into the social and personal lives of others. While the most consistent plot in the novel is man against himself. Emma is constantly deceiving herself and is thus in conflict with herself. She is ironically against herself because she is against her environment. Though she has accepted the conventions of her society, she, at the same time due to her imbalance of imagination and reason, wants to go against it.

In essence, we can conclude that the overall pattern of plot movement is rather classic in nature. Emma's conflict begins when her wilful imagination is released by the loss of Miss Taylor, her situation becomes like a vacuum to be filled – and fulfilled- in accordance with her nature. The result is a continuous suspense for the reader as Emma's self deception realises and manifests itself. The major climax,

comes in chapter eleven, twelve and thirteen followed by a denouement. On a final note we can say the plot structure in this novel is complex in the sense that we usually find so many elements often working at once. For example there is the plot pattern of contrast which help to juxtapose significantly different characters, for example Frank and George.

According to James Edward in Austen-Leigh "*A memoir of Jane Austen*" cited in Chapman (1926: 157), before she began the novel, Jane Austen wrote "I am going to create a heroine whom no one but myself will much like". In the opening sentence, she introduces the title character as "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever and rich". Emma is spoiled, headstrong and self satisfied, she greatly overestimates her own match making abilities and is blind to the danger of meddling in other people's lives and her imagination and perceptions often lead her astray. Although she sees the signs of romance all around her, she thinks she will never be married.

Like her creator, who accepted an offer of marriage but changed her mind the next morning, Emma is not ready for a male suitor because she does not want anyone to intrude on a position which allows her to queen it over the little society in which she lives. She half falls in love with Harriet because her life is becoming dull and she needs something to occupy her, she is thus enveloped in an illusion that is eventually penetrated by facts. Though we are not told of the actual causes of Emma's illusion, Mr. Knightley makes a few remarks on Emma's early reading in chapter three. Her illusions are conceived in the broadest terms as the causeless state of the mind itself as a human being moves from his first parental home, close

to the heart and then out into the world. Thus, Emma Woodhouse of Hartfield enters the world.

At the beginning of the novel, Emma's mind is supreme over matter. The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself. (p1) This appears to be the illusion that Emma subjected herself into because she likes to overlook "sober facts" Mr. Knightley says she will never submit to "a subjection of the fancy to the understanding". Hers is a mind delighted with its own ideas; as such she commits "errors of imagination".

In contrast to Jane Austen however, Emma wants to take up an idea and make reality bend to it. While Austen is viewed as an ardent observer of human nature and human experiences and used same as the raw material of her work, she has installed her heroine in surroundings almost free from intruding facts that would threaten her illusions. Except for Mr. Knightley, Emma has no intellectual equal. She is presented as someone above contradiction. Her Hartfield stands quite apart from the village of Highbury to which it belongs, and the villagers all look up to the-wood- houses.

In this novel, Emma stands unique in the sense that she is not paired with anyone, not even a sister. Her father, Mr. Woodhouse, himself a polite gentleman refers to his daughter on all important matters. Miss Taylor, pliable and deferential has just been removed from Hartfield by marriage. Even Emma's sister, Isabella is not distinguished in any way for her intelligence (p92). At Hartfield Emma is the "fair mistress of the mansion" (p22) and of the world, despite the "great danger of

suffering from intellectual solitude” (p2) after Miss Taylor, now Mrs. Weston, got married. In short, the novel depicts an epitomized little world with Emma at its centre. A world largely made up of the private illusions of the heroine without much reference to any objective reality.

On another level, we read at the end of the novel that Emma is no longer creating her own world. Now like Jane Austen, whose life was permeated by neighbours and friends among whom were “clergymen, squires, aristocrats, members of parliament, entrepreneurs, doctors and lawyers, mostly living within a range of about five miles” (Tomalin 1997:85), the heroine is forced to take a place in the outside world. She therefore takes her place in that “real” world. To enter this world Emma must move from her father’s side, heart and house to Mr. Knightley’s (p6) because it is perceived that Mr. Woodhouse represents the danger of detachment from reality by way of egotism that Emma is liable to. He is conceived as the extreme case of Emma’s own state of mind. He and his daughter lead imaginative lives divorced from their surroundings. The marriage of Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor that Emma has “made” in her own mind (p11) Mr. Woodhouse has unmade in his. She is still ‘Miss Taylor’ to him. He also unconsciously attributes many of his own “feelings and expressions” to his friend Mr. Perry. He is “never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself”(pp 107-8). In conclusion Emma’s pulling away from her father and getting into the world falls into three episodes, each ending into a fact. She is forced to accept and adjust to. First, Mr. Elton’s proposal to Emma herself rather

than to Harrert Smith, then the news of Frank Churchill's engagement and finally the revelation of Harrert's true parentage.

On the other hand, the next focus on this text is an attempt to interpret not merely the world of the novel, but that of its social and historical contexts. It is read alongside Hume's philosophy prophesied in his magisterial work *The History of England* (1754). The Stanford Encyclopaedia of philosophy describes Hume as "the third of the great triumvirate of British Empiricists", along with John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, though differs from the other two in the sense that Hobbes' "politics are fitted only to promote tyranny and his ethics to encourage licentiousness" while Locke, along with Algernon Sydney and Benjamin Hoadley are seen as authors whose compositions "the most despicable both for style and matter, have been extolled and propagated, and read, as if they had equalled the most celebrated remains of antiquity". Hume's *History of England* has, since its publication been accused of historical revisionism intending to promote tourism. It is gathered from the Stanford Encyclopaedia cited above, that Thomas Jefferson considered it a "poison" and was so critical of the work that he censored it from the University of Virginia Library. In a letter to William Duance Jefferson, dated 12th August 1810, Jefferson wrote "it is this book which has undermined the free principles of the English government". And in another letter of 25th November 1816, addressed to John Adams, he wrote "This single book has done more to sap the free principles of the English constitution than the largest standing army". As if in response to the above criticism, at the end of his life Hume is said to have written:

Though I had been taught by experience, that the whig party were in possession of bestowing all places, both in the state and in literature, I was so little inclined to yield to their senseless clamour, that in above a hundred alterations, which farther study, reading or reflection engaged me to make in the reigns of the two first stUARTS, I have made all of them invariably to the Tory side. It is ridiculous to consider the English Constitution before that period as a regular plan of liberty.

[link <http://www.humesphilosophy.co>]

As if to confirm his last statement in the quotation above, Hume began his *History of England* with a stern criticism of the first inhabitants of Great Britain, their manner and government as well as the authority and superstitions of the Druids. He states that the history of remote ages has always been involved in obscurity, uncertainty, regret and contradiction. (p1). He later explored the exploitation of the masses as a result of war which he entitled “ The kings method of raising money”.

The rumour was spread that the king had issued orders to massacre all jews; a command so agreeable was executed in an instant on such as fell into the hands of the populace; those who had kept at home were exposed to equal danger; the people, moved by rapacity and zeal, broke into their houses which they plundered, after having murdered the owners..... (pp366 – 7)

Throughout the book Hume appears to be against the whole system of monarchy. He sees it as akin to murder and public exploitation. In the quotation above, the feudal means of survival depends upon the murderous elimination of the populace. Thus, towards the end of his book, in a section titled “the king’s quarrel with the pop”, Hume outlines how the English monarchs subject even the church to their

whims. “The hierarchy protected by the Romans pointiff, had already carried to an enormous height its usurpation upon the civil power”, and in order to extend them further, and render them useful to the court of Rome, it became necessary to reduce the ecclesiastics themselves under an absolute monarchy, and to make them entirely dependent on their spiritual leader which involves even imposition of taxes on the clergy at will. (pp 409-12)

In view of the foregoing discussion, we would conclude that Jane Austen’s *Emma* borrowed/adapted significantly from Hume’s ideas in his *History of England*. Despite her fidelity to details, Austen presents to us a picture beyond the superficial world of the novel.

In *Emma* we come across a world of shifting socio-economic structures which suggest the possibilities of radical change as we have seen particularly in the heroine’s life; whose “days of insignificance and evil were over”. (p290). Meaning, those days that are glossed over by the dominant patriarchal ideology of Austen’s days, since she would “soon be well, and happy and prosperous”.

Similarly, Jane Austen refers playfully to William Shakespeare’s (both a historical and literary figure) *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. She also appeals to play with the literary excesses of Gothic Romance, ridiculously in the “elopement scene” conducted between Mr. Elton and Emma in the carriage at walking pace half a mile from home. In Robert Martins proposal, we can see twined-down echoes of epistolary form, likewise in Frank Churchill’s explanatory letter as well as in Jane Fairfax’s reckless walking through the rain to collect her mail. Mrs. Elton’s name

is a clichéd quotation from poetry and prose, which denotes allusion to Gay's *Fables* by the way she reveals her knowledge.

Let us be discreet – quite on our good behaviour. Hush! You remember those lines I forget the poem at this moment; for when a lady's in the case, you know all other things give place.
(p328)

The ranking of social status, which was prevalent in 19th century England is another characteristic feature of *Emma*. Though it has been there centuries before then, as we have read in Hume's *History of England*, it has been carried forward there. In the novel, Emma's status is established through a series of analogues, with poor Miss Taylor, now Mrs. Weston who lead the way to matrimony even before the opening of the novel, and with her own sister, Isabella, married to Mr. John Knightley, with the spinster, Miss Bates, and her niece, Jane Fairfax, who excels Emma in so many accomplishments, though lacks the latter's wealth and her ready warmth. Again, with little Harriet Smith, ripe for patronage, and the awful Mrs. Elton, eager to patronise. It is through these series of comparisons that Emma's qualities, especially those fitting her for marriage, are both highlighted and evaluated.

At Highbury, Emma is shown as the leading lady. Although "handsome, clever and rich" (p1) her attributes call for comparison with someone of much lower social standing, Miss Bates, who however "enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married." (p13). Here we can understand the author's stance, though she picks up the pattern of societal hierarchy throughout the novel, up to the end her attitude is that of rejection rather

than endorsement. She criticises it the same way she did in *Pride and Prejudice* with Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr. Darcy and the Bingley sisters.

Nevertheless, among the men in the novel, Mr. Knightley at Donwell heads Highbury's most distinguished family. Though Mr. Woodhouse's wealth is not of such lineage, his gentility is assured in his retirement from the world at 70. Mr. Weston, formerly Captain Weston of the militia, has earned his ease. Mr. Elton must maintain his living as a clergyman and boost his standing by marriage to a wealthy woman. Mr. Cole prospered in his trade, yet must "pause before inviting Miss Woodhouse to dinner". Mr. Robert Martin is of Yeoman stock. So Austen tells us clearly that the "populous of Highbury and its environs falls neatly into gentlemen and half gentlemen". Yeomen, tradesmen and those beneath the social notice of the privileged. (p140). This implies that in the book it is the business of marriage to negotiate social distinctions appropriately and also indicates the book's social relevance, as no one lives independent of his social context.

As indicated earlier at the beginning, the section concludes by looking briefly at Austen's narrative technique in *Emma*. Austen is known mostly for her epistolary style of narration in the style of Samuel Richardson, as we observe in most of her juvenilia and early adult experiments like *Love and Friendship* and *Lady Susan*. Though entertaining, it is observable that the sequence of irony she presented in her work, the epistolary method would have been ineffective as such she discovered the "free indirect style" of Fanny Burney or Maria Edgeworth.

According to Lodge (2002: 27-8) Jane Austen was a master of this (free indirect style) device. He maintained that in *Emma*, the heroine tries to promote a match

between the vicar, Mr. Elton, and her protégée Harriet Smith, but is dismayed when Mr. Eliot takes opportunity of a carriage ride to make a declaration to Emma herself, later:

The hair was curled, and the maid sent away, and Emma sat down to think and be miserable – it was wretched business, indeed! – such an overthrow of everything she had been wishing for! – such a development of everything most unwelcome! – such a blow for Harriet – that was the worst of all.

There is a kind of objective narrative description in the beginning of the first sentence “the hair” not her hair. “The maid” not her maid. But “to think and be miserable” moves the focus of the narrative on to Emma’s state of mind and the succeeding sentence gives the reader access to her consciousness. Emma’s thoughts seem to be heard by the reader “it is s wretched business – such an overthrow of everything I have been wishing for”. It is also difficult to separate the author’s voice from the character’s which allows a smooth transmission to a more anticipated description of Emma’s state of mind, in which the authorial narrative voice mingles with Emma’s.

Every part of it brought pain and humiliation, of some sort or other; but composed with the evil to Harriet, all was light; and she would gladly have submitted to feel yet more mistaken – more in error – more disgraced by mis-judgement, than she actually was, could the effect of her blunders have been confined to herself. (Vol. I. Chp 16). Cited in Lodge 2002-48.

Here, in contrast to the great Victorian novelists who rarely focus their narrative through a single character, Austen, in *Emma* focalized her narrative through the titled character. The story is told almost entirely from her point of view. There are only a few places where Emma is not present. But one tricky thing is the way

Emma is shown to be mistaking the true state of affairs, this perhaps may be the effect of telling the story through the consciousness of characters whose understanding of events is “partial, mistaken, deceived or self-deceiving”.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that as a result of Austen’s source study for *Emma*, the writer used details taken from many different sources and brought them together in her novel to create a convincing story with a convincing situation and history. *History of England* could be one of the significant books she has read, and even parodied it with her fictional text of the same title. Moreover, Austen’s psychology may be viewed as the genesis of her pessimistic world view in the novel as history is cyclical. Individuals are impenetrable and human values are relativistic and irrational. This pessimism may be related to Austen’s historical condition in the general history, and recognise her personal standing as a “genteel woman of Tory Christian background, deeply committed to English conservatism”. Considering individual psychology as a social product, we can recognise Austen’s psychology as a product of the Western imperial culture which she has observed throughout her life.

Thus by putting *Emma* into its historical context we have explored the relationship between the text and the history in which it was written. What we have reached in the end can be summarized as: when we situate *Emma* in the history in which it was written, we have seen that Jane Austen was very much conscious of the collapse of the ideologies of the eighteenth century England which transformed into the nineteenth century at the time she was writing the novel. Through *Emma* Austen explores the immeasurability between ideological identifications and the

activities they legislate. The text therefore can be seen as her own response to the indifference and immorality of the age.

4.3 *Persuasion*: The Poetics of Feminist Fetishism

Persuasion (1818) is emplotted in a Cindrella like manner, Anne Elliot, the second daughter of the vain and silly widower, Sir Walter Elliot, is imposed upon and condescended to by her family, though not in so miserable a manner. When the novel opens, she is twenty seven years old, faded and resigned, after having allowed herself eight years earlier, to be persuaded by her friend and substitute Mother, Lady Russell to give up her lover, Frederick Wentworth. Circumstances brought Wentworth back, now a naval commander with some fortune, and after undergoing some adventures that educated both Anne and Wentworth in the real state of their hearts, they marry at last, Anne is far from the Vivacious and witty Elizabeth Bennet or Emma, rather like Fanny she has “an elegance of mind and sweetness of character and cheerfully allows her self to be made use of by others, Though she appears to be strong-minded when she decides to be so, highly intelligent and able to penetrate superficialities of behavior to see or at least to guess at real character. it can be said that Jane Austen in this novel, allowed many of her characters to be seen through Anne’s eyes, though not quite consistent in this regard, the novel provides us with some ironic undertones, especially in the writer’s depiction of Sir Walter Elliot who is summed up as “Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage “ His main characteristic feature was vanity,

a quality markedly different (as his daughter, Anne discovered) from true pride, in which he was disgustingly deficient, for he would prostrate himself before a superior title, however worthless its possessor. In Sir Walter Elliot one clearly discerns the novelist's dislike of snobbery and her distinct portrayal of true and false notions of social rank, just as we have seen in her portrayal of Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, who appears as nothing but a comic caricature of the social rank she seems to be proud of.

It is clear in an Austen novel that a character must possess intelligence and goodwill in order to be worthy of the writer's respect. The Characters in *Persuasion* reflect a great variety of each. Mary Musgrove, Anne's younger married sister, "though better endowed than the elder sister ... had not Anne understands or temper," and the other members of the Musgrove family in the novel reflect various dispositions all tolerable but each in different ways. The part played by Musgrove family in the novel shows different kinds of ordinariness in character, which include Vanity, self-will, lack of imagination, silliness and kindness. The quality of ordinary daily living among reasonably propertied people in the country is admirably shown in the various places in which they are involved. It is to be assumed that despite the writer's fidelity to the traditional plot pattern of having her paragons marry in the end, she is quite aware of the unromantic nature of daily life and has no illusions about people being sharply divided into black and white. Even the acclaimed Villain, the unscrupulous William Elliot, Sir Walter's nephew and heir, is not a vain character, but a man of charm and intelligence who, like the Crowfords, in *Mansfield Park*, lacks

fundamental principle. True married love is shown by Admiral and Mrs. Croft, as unromantic but genuinely affectionate couple that would be pleasing to everyone. In *Persuasion*, we are not confronted with so many complex issues that need to be conquered as we have seen in *Emma*, and the subdued second thoughts which lead to the hero's proposal of marriage to the heroine eight years after he has been rejected is a symbol of expectation. Anne had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older, but this meant that romance was something different from what it used to be.

Though *Persuasion* has the air of only moderate expectations from life, it does not mean to show that Jane Austen is more tolerant of vanity, folly, or selfishness. When Mrs. Musgrove, as a purely social exercise, works herself up into an emotional state about the death some years before, of a sailor son, the author comments coldly:-

The real Circumstance of this pathetic piece of family history were, that the Musgrove 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 at 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 anything to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name living or dead.

This could be seen as the author's response to the hypocrisy of the wretched Youngman's surviving relatives in using his death as a means of claiming sympathy for themselves on various social occasions. The writer has no time to laugh at or make fun of Sir Walter Elliot as she did for Mr. Collins or Mrs. Elton, his vanity makes him so absurd as to be quite despicable.

In *Persuasion*, both Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth are concerned with the true state of their own feelings. What was Anne going to feel like when she met her rejected lover for the first time after eight years. It is a time that she and the reader await anxiously, but it comes and goes finally with amazing insignificance:

... a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over. And it was soon over. In two minutes after Charles's preparations, the others appeared; they were in the drawing-room. Her eyes half met captain Wentworths; a bow, a courtesy passed; she heard his voice- he talked to Mary, said all that was right; said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing; the room seemed full-full of persons and voices- but a few minutes ended it. Charles showed himself at the windows, all was ready, their visitor had vowed and was gone too, suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen: the room was cleared and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could.

This is an anticlimax. As usual with Jane Austen, she often times appears to be hasty about the actual moment of declaration of passion between her paragons, she then summarizes the climactic scene in just a few words. "There they exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once before seemed to secure everything, 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;

... “people are not interested in the incoherent utterances with which the articulation of passion takes place. It is a false romanticism to dwell on the actual professions of love rather than on the developments of character and action that lead up to them. This is true at least in the moral and psychological world in which Jane Austen lived, the nineteenth century English society.

Nevertheless, the moral vision is always evident in Jane Austen. In *Persuasion* the gradations of character and deployment of the action are such as to create a background of moral feeling that is rich yet subdued. From the “goodness of heart and simplicity of character “of Admiral Croft through Captain Benwicks “affectionate heart: he must love everybody” to the more cultivated and discriminating intelligence and generosity of Anne Elliot, a whole sense of morality is spread out as there is also, on the other side between the intermittent selfishness of Mary Musgrove through the selfish Vanity of Sir Walter Elliot to the intelligent scheming of his nephew. Lady Russel’s character is interestingly intermediate, obviously she is a “good” person, yet her original advice to Anne had been wrong and she is blind to the full character of sir Walter Elliot. The complexity of the moral picture is illustrated by Anne’s final summing up of Lady Russell’s earlier behavior to Captain Wentworth:-

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. 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. But I mean, that I was right in submitting to her, and that 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...

This is a heroine who can admit after eight years of a bitter regret at having to part with a man whom she loved and who loved her, that the person who parted them may have been right after all. Indeed, she is an uncommon sort of heroine in English fiction, terribly unique. In like manner, Austen could be seen as uncommon also, as a novelist of manners with brilliant ironic wit, a caring understanding of the ordinariness of human life, a lively often subtle sense of character, and a moral universe within which to set her novels. Confining herself to that limited area of English social life which she was conversant with, Jane Austen produced novels with ironic tone, sarcastic humor that depict her unprecedented knowledge of the differing claims of personality and society.

Robert Miles begins *WRITERS AND THEIR WORK: Jane Austen* (2003) with the statement “it is one of the clichés of Austen criticism that no other English writer is quite so English as Jane Austen”, because for many readers she is “the quintessential English author” (P1) the book tries to explore the history of this identification with Englishness in the context of a tradition of criticism that tried to achieve the reverse, that is, to establish her difference, her distance from us. In other words to historicise. Taking this as our point of departure, Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* is studied to ascertain the relationship between Austen’s life and the novel, between the historical context of the novel and its content. In this way, the research aims to emphasize history as its focal point of this new historicist reading

of *Persuasion*, and so to determine the categories which governed the novel as an artistic production.

This source study is threefold. Firstly, investigating the novel's references to biographical elements (if any), which would enable us to describe Austen as having a past made up of certain significant events, and in the light of that past, to discover the underlying psychoanalytic narrative. Secondly, the study aims to, identify the novel's references to history. In the novel therefore, specific references to actual people and events will be investigated to locate the text as a historical phenomenon, a material cultural artefact. Finally, to understand how a historical moment produced a particular literary work, the historical forces that shaped it are discovered further. This third part in a way is also considered to show the historical process itself as the instigator that influenced the novel, that is to say, both the origin and composition of the text, since new historicism assumes that a historical moment "being enormously complex in its diverse representations produces the factors that shape a particular work of literature".

In the light of this, Jane Austen's contemporary, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) serves as our historical co-text. Though considered as one of the earliest works of feminist philosophy, her ambiguous statements regarding the equality of the sexes have since made it difficult to classify Wollstonecraft as a feminist. In the book, the writer responds to those educational and political theories of the eighteenth century especially during the French revolution which did not believe that women should be educated. She argues that women should have education equal to their position in

society, claiming that women are essential to the nation because they could be companions to their husbands, rather than mere wives. In the book, Wollstonecraft dispelled the format of traditional style of writing and employed in its place, the major topics in the opening chapter and then repeatedly returned to them from different points of view. The major topics in this book include rational education, sensibility, republicanism, class and to some extent, feminism.

In a section titled “Dedicatory Letter’ which precedes the introduction, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote:

Having read with great pleasure a pamphlet on National Education that you recently published, I dedicate this volume to you, to induce you to reconsider the subject and maturely weigh what I shall say about the rights of woman and national education; (p1).

This is the topic she explains in the chapter “National Education” which started on page 93 of the book. In it she begins by a sterling censure on private education and its negative outcome. Until education becomes a Grand National concern, there would be problems all the time. She moves on to discuss the importance of teaching virtue to children and allowing them freedom “if children are to be openly enquiring they need time with their peers rather than with their parents who stand – however wisely – in authority over them”. (p93-4).

Secondly, she argues that Rational Education should be taught to women in order to have opportunity to contribute to the society. It is a known fact that in the eighteenth century, it was assumed by both educational philosophers and conduct book writers that women were incapable of rational or abstract thought. In *A Vindication*..... Wollstonecraft maintained that women were indeed capable of

thinking rationally and deserved to be educated. On this note, she specifically attacks writers like James Fordyce and John Gregory as well as educational philosophers such as Jean Jaccques Rousseau, who argue that women should be educated for the pleasure of men. Infuriated by this argument, Wollstonecraft criticises not only the argument but Rousseau himself, to illustrate the limitations that educational theory placed upon women. So in chapter 5 of her book, entitled “Writers who have rendered women objects of pity, bordering on contempt” she classed those philosophers and answered them flatly one after the other beginning with Rousseau.

Sophie, says Rousseau, should be as perfect a woman as Emile is a man, and to make her so he has to examine the character that nature has given to the female sex.

She then proceeds to elaborate on his argument that woman ought to be weak and passive because she has less bodily strength than man; from which man infers that she was formed to please him, and that making herself agreeable to her master is the grand purpose of her existence. Still to give a little mock dignity to her, he insists that when a man goes to a woman for pleasure he should not use his strength and should depend on her will.

In her rage, Wollstonecraft argues that the fact that women are taught from infancy that “beauty is a woman’s sceptre”. The mind shapes itself to the body, and “roaming round its cage, only seeks to adorn its prison.” Which implies that without this damaging ideology, which encourages young women to focus their attention on beauty and outward accomplishments, they could achieve much more.

Wives could therefore be “companions” to their husbands and even pursue careers should they choose to do so. They “might certainly study the art of healing, and be physicians as well as nurses. And as for midwifery, that’s their rightful field. They might also study politics and business of various kinds.

Moreover, another scathing criticism in *A Vindication* is that against false and excessive sensibility, particularly in women, Wollstonecraft argues that women who succumb to sensibility are “blown about by every momentary gust of feeling”. Because these women are “the prey of their senses”., they cannot think rationally, as such they do harm not only to themselves but they do harm to civilisation in general, because they cannot be considered to refine civilisation but rather destroy it. But like the eighteenth century philosopher, David Hume, Wollstonecraft believes that reason and feeling are not independent, that they should inform each other as passion underpins all reason. (p 103-4).

According to Claudia Jameson, a famous Wollstonecraft scholar, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* can be considered “a republican manifesto” she contends that the writer is “hearkening back to the commonwealth tradition of the seventeenth century and attempting to re-establish a republican ethos”. To Wollstonecraft there should be strong though separate roles between males and females. In Johnson’s view Wollstonecraft “denounces the collapse of proper sexual distinction as the leading feature of her age, and as the grievous consequence of sentimentality itself” and in her view the problem undermining society is “feminized men”. If men feel free to adopt both the masculine position and the sentimental feminine one, she argues that women have no position open to

them in a society. She therefore concludes that Wollstonecraft can be considered as a critic in both “Rights of Man” and “The Rights of Woman”. [Cited in Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia]

In view of the theory proposed by Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, this study tries to see the correlation between Austen’s *Persuasion* and the theory discussed above, though a brief summary of the plot structure will precede our analysis. *Persuasion* narrates the story of Anne Elliot, who when the novel begins, is already twenty seven years. She is “faded and Thin”; her “bloom had vanished early”. Seven years ago, the heroine, Anne and Frederick Wentworth had fallen deeply in love, but Anne had been persuaded by Lady Russell, a family acquaintance, to break off the engagement, so they separated. The story has already passed through the romantic experience which is to make up the main action in the novel, as Anne and Wentworth have already found each other, but have been unnaturally separated.

At Kellynch Hall, the Elliots, a family of minor nobility happens to be in financial difficulties though their self complacency is higher than their status. So they decide to move out of their ancestral home, rent it out to someone at least to increase their fortune. While the Elliots move out, the nouveau rich, Admiral Croft (who happens to be Wentworth’s brother, though unknown to the Elliots) move in with his wife. At first, Anne seems weak at Kellynch, she is condemned to passivity. As a result of her father’s and sister’s extravagance, she must leave the home she loves, having seen her own good advice ignored. She has no voice and no choice. All she can do is endure (p5). When she hears that the new tenant of

Kellynch Hall is related to her former lover, she has to leave the room and seek the “comfort of the cool air, in a favourite grove”.

Anne’s snobbish father, Sir Walter Elliot and her older sister, Elizabeth move to the fashionable Bath where they can show more pretentious life than at home. The fundamental order of his little world is changing fast. Anne goes to stay first with Lady Russell and later with Mrs. Musgrove, the youngest Elliot daughter, Mary. In the meantime, Frederick Wentworth reappears. Together with Anne and the Musgroves, Wentworth went to the nearby seaside village of Lyme Regis to visit his friend, captain Harville.

Meanwhile, Anne goes with Lady Russell to see her father and sister at Bath. The latter have established connections with one William Elliot, who is their relation and is going to inherit Kellynch Hall and the family title when Sir Walter dies. Elizabeth happens to be in love with William Walter who however is not interested in her in any sense, despising her, he loves Anne.

Louisa who falls in love with Wentworth and hopes to marry him is now getting married to Captain Benwick. Wentworth therefore had to look elsewhere for a wife, he turns to Bath. When she runs into him one rainy morning while she is out shopping with Elizabeth, Mrs. Clay and Mr. Elliot, Anne meets Wentworth, They crossed paths again at a concert, that is when she realises that Wentworth is still deeply in love with her and at the same time terribly jealous of Mr. Eliot. Anne later learns from her old friend, now Mrs. Smith that Mr. Elliot is a “selfish hypocrite” that has ruined her own life. This revelation is quite timely as she

would explain her stand to her family if they so insist upon her marrying William Elliot.

Finally, the last time Anne meets Wentworth and the two have exchanged glances, Anne seems to signal to him that it was time to propose to her. It seems apparent that he understood the sign language and he soon leaves her a note which basically says: "I like you. Do you like me? Check yes or no". Eventually their misunderstandings are settled and so they got married.

To put the text *Persuasion* in its biographical context, the situation of Jane Austen and that of her character Anne would be investigated. The historical Jane Austen, according to her biographer, Claire Tomalin, had on her twenty fifth birthday, three novels to her credit, which professed her unarguable road to "success, fame, riches, happiness all within easy reach". Despite expectations from friends and well-wishers, for another novel to appear from Austen, she fell silent for a decade, not until she was thirty five in the summer of 1809. Though no explanation is given from Tomalin's account, since according to her, Austen's family provided no explanation, neither did the writer left any, apart from the view expressed by her nephew biographer, Henry Leigh James Austen, who thought that "it might rather have been expected that fresh scenes and new acquaintances would have called her power", which however did not happen. This period of silence corresponds to the period when Anne Elliot cuts off her engagement to Fredrick Wentworth. The proximity of the time, in Austen ten years of silence, and in Anne more than seven years of inactivity, which is even recounted as a flashback have

great parallels, for as Austen produced no work throughout that period Anne also has been dormant, unknown to the reader until the story unfolds in *Persuasion*.

On another level, Jane Austen's parents decided to leave their home of over thirty years, taking their daughters with them, which came as a surprise to Jane Austen, as no one in the family had been aware of the decision in advance. The parents encouraged their children one after the other, pointing out the possibilities of and pleasures of a new life, and agreed to cast off the habits and responsibilities of four decades. They planned to leave Steventon without reference to anyone else, and decided to move to Bath so as to get some relief from their long years of labour (Pp167 – 8).

From these accounts, we can clearly discern the parallels between Jane Austen's biography and the story of Walter Elliot's family in *Persuasion*. Anne is presented as Jane Austen's alter ego. In *Persuasion* Sir Walter Elliot makes the rash decision to leave Kellynch Hall over night and move to fashionable town of Bath in the same way that the historical Austen's family did. And like Anne Elliot who "has no voice and no choice. All she can do is endure", Jane Austen was not consulted either. We learnt that in the style of the Elliots, Jane was told immediately and boldly, that the move was settled as she walked into the house, on her return from Ithroe. "Well girls, it is all settled, we have decided to leave Steventon in such a week and go to Bath"

To this decision Jane Austen is said to be greatly distressed, according to Mary Austen she even fainted, because the experience was a painful shock, in the same

manner that the fictional Anne is not happy of the migration though she cannot do otherwise. (See Tomalin 1997:169).

Now to put the novel in its historical and political context, we would first look at the theory expressed by Mary Wollstonecraft in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Wollstonecraft believes that the world is structured in an unnatural manner to the extent that one class is subjected at the expense of the other. The book is of course inflicted by a bourgeois world view and appears to be addressed to the middle class, which she calls “the most natural state”. Again and again, she praises modesty and industry, virtues which at the time were associated with the middle class, for as a middle class writer, arguing for a middle class fundamental values, Wollstonecraft also criticises the wealthy, using the same arguments she employs against women, she points out that the “false refinement, immorality and vanity of the rich”, the weak and artificial beings in her view, is raised against the common wants and affections of their race, in a premature, unnatural manner. (who) undermine the very foundation of virtue, and spread corruption through the whole mass of society. (p85-9).

In line with the above postulation, Miles (2008:23) maintains that in most nineteenth century novels, there is the tension between the aristocrats and the middle class, and Austen’s own position as a writer appears to be the “criticism of the unreformed upper classes who imperil the country through their moral laxiness, their conspicuous consumption and the dereliction of the duties that came with their class privileges”

Here, we can argue that in *Persuasion* Jane Austen is concerned with the criticism of these upper classes particularly in the lamentable form of Sir Walter Elliot, “a vain autocratic, selfish, incompetent boob of a baronet”, who we learn, “for his amusement, never took up any book but the baronetage”. (p3).

Walter Elliot left his estate mismanaged and then aspires to surround himself in Bath where he has been forced to retire through his own carelessness and extravagance, by other, equally worthless members of Debrett’s Baronetage. As a class, the Landed gentry come off a distinct second best to the seafaring self-made men, Admiral Croft and Captain Wentworth. To compare *Persuasion* with *Emma*, the landed gentry in the latter appears to be the pillar of the community, but in the former, the pillar has collapsed. In *Persuasion*, Lady Russell is the only possible, positive representative of the class that Mr. Knightley represents in *Emma*, despite the narrow view we usually place on her on first reading the novel. Russell is Anne’s one “truly sympathising friend”, and through associated with the wrong group, she is described as a woman of “strict integrity, benevolent, charitable, good...correct...cultivated” with one or two reservations, the description appears truly complimentary. She values Anne as others do not, loves her with “almost a mother’s love”. Even her Persuasion of Anne to break up the engagement is forgiven, as Anne later points out that it is “one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides (p67), because Anne herself initially sacrifices Wentworth on a matter of principle, in other words not to the actual opposition of her family but to the idea of it as such the novel may be said to have become self reflective about its own generic origins.

Like in its predecessor, *Pride and Prejudice*, reversals of opinion is noticed in the two principal characters, Anne and Wentworth, that they were wrong in their separate ways, but it is part of the vision of the novel that acceptance of such revisions of oneself which is mediated through one's knowledge of the self as a social being, though involving ideologies of rank and situation in life, of class – is in a way difficult.

It is observable that Jane Austen's works with the most gloomy tone are those that stress the difficulties young women face in a society where kinship practices are a mainstay of the patriarchal order. These difficulties sometimes manifest with a potentially tragic force as in *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park* where the "paternal figure" cross over into gothic territory. Sir Walter Elliot's "moral monstrosity" is neutralized through consistent ridicule.

It is arguable that *Persuasion* can be considered as the work touched much by history. In the previous novels, the author's focus is more or less pastoral. Here however, there is a spirit of domestic realism. Rather than repeating the usual happy family life, the domestic space is particularized in terms of new architectural and domestic fashions we hear of French Doors, Sofas and carpets. Upper cross cottage, inhabited by Mary and Charles Musgrove, is presented in sharp contrast to the old-fashioned austerities of Kellynch Hall, which has none of these modern comforts. Again, the Musgrove home signifies the deep penetration of commerce, fashion and consumption. Though Austen represented the world of contemporary luxury, it is here as in *Northanger Abbey*, restricted to towns such as Bath or to the great houses that are closely linked with the city. When the

power of commerce reach deep into the country, like the power of history, it disrupts the ideal setting and vision of the people.

In relation to the above, Miles (2008:58) argues that *Persuasion* can be considered as a nostalgic text, “gripped by a sense of the pastness of the past, and one alive to the inevitabilities of historical change”. To him, the departure of the Elliots from Kellynch Hall, and the arrival of the Crofts, although presented as a renewal, is yet suffused with a sense of a changing order. Croft’s new wealth, like Wentworth’s is a sign of the times, representing the profits to be had from the continental war, for able captains willing to risk danger in order to ward off enemy ships. In essence, the particular vision of this novel, as in others by Austen, is in response to the pressure that weighs upon the question posed by salient historical events of the period, of how one is supposed to shape the community. We therefore see the author presenting it with constant sets of variables, a notion of social hierarchy, landed wealth, new money, commerce, personal merit, a sense of the pressure imposed by history like leisure, vocation and marriage.

In *Persuasion*, just as in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Mansfield Park*, Austen emphasizes her censure of the upper classes who are depicted as irrational beings. Lady Catherine de Bourge in *Pride and Prejudice* and Lady Dalrymple and her daughter along with Lady Russel from *Persuasion* all belong to the same class, the upper class. While Sir Walter Elliot, as a baronet, appears as a borderline case between upper gentry and aristocracy, which is why he defers to Lady Russel’s judgment, and fawns on the Dalrymples. In a way, Austen’s aristocrats appear as objects of her contempt, sometimes mild at other times hard.

Darcy can be viewed as an ambiguous case. A relative of Lady Catherine, he has aristocratic connections on his mother's side, but as his father is from an untitled family, so he is. In *Persuasion* also, Sir Walter's situation in life is similar to Darcy's, though without the latter's inherited wealth and position. Austen shows us that what appears to be missing from the elites' sense of its own identity is that rank or station had much to do with occupation, with one's profession, with "work". Hence, Sir Walter Elliot's devotion to the book of books, the *Baronetage*, is a record of kinship exchange. On the one hand, the status attached to the exchange of kin, (in Sir Walter's terms, the portion of glory merited by his daughter's marriages and carefully noted in the book) is registered through wealth, on the other, it is independent of it. Hence, Sir Walter's confusion. According to him, Admiral Croft derives small benefit from either his distinguished profession or his new found wealth, as a successful admiral grown rich upon "enemy prizes in war against France". Similarly, Anne's marriage to captain Wentworth brings only a small increase in status, despite Wentworth's recent prosperity. In this sense, status, in Sir Walter's view is independent of wealth. And yet Sir Walter is equally conscious that his own status has been placed in jeopardy by his relative poverty. In other words, he appears as someone who suffers from the ideological confusions of his class.

In *Persuasion*, almost all the upper class are strikingly conscious and possessive of their life status. At the beginning of the novel, during a conversation between Mrs. Clay and Miss. Elliot, Anne. The latter refers to Frederick Wentworth as a gentleman, which Mrs. Clay see as an abominable act.

Wentworth? Oh! Ay,-Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term gentleman. I thought you were speaking of some man of property; Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Stafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility become so common. (P22).

On the other hand, Austen's clergy men are in clear contrast with the aristocratic values she repudiates, which can be understood as an expression of the tension between the middle class and the aristocrats. Her positive depictions of her clergy men heroes, then, are historically inflected, so they happen to be part of a general, country conservatism typical of much of English life during the 1790s. Borderline cases like Mr. Collins, however, seem to identify with the condemnable upper class values, what Lionel Trilling, cited in Miles 2008:115 refers to as "historical solecism", in the sense that these borderline characters lack a "class mentality", what they have rather is a consciousness of rank and status.

In addition, Austen tries in this novel to contrast aristocracy with innate behaviour. If we return to Mr. Knightley in *Emma*, we can see that he represents masculine ideals because he put his Tory ideology to work, just like Mr. Darcy does in *Pride and Prejudice*. These characters learn through experience and at the end are forced to accept the conventions of the society. Sir Walter, on the other hand, fails. He is a failure as he represents feminine ideals, a quality expressed as an excessive interest in his looks. His boast that his face discloses a more youthful appearance than admiral Croft's, because, not scorched and leathered by the sun, betokens his antipathy to work, to professing his "class", to undertaking the management of his estate as a socially responsible vacation.

In conclusion, this new historicist reading of *Persuasion* ends by revisiting the views of Wollstonecraft and how these views influenced Austen's novel. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft, after discussing how these rights ought to be shared, concludes by pointing out that the middle class should in no way subject themselves to the whims of the upper class. For her, the poor are fortunate because they will never be trapped by the snares of wealth. "Happy is it when people have the cares of life to struggle with, for these struggles prevent their becoming a prey to enervating vices, merely from idleness". She again contends that charity has only negative consequence because she sees it as sustaining an unequal society while giving the appearance of virtue to the rich". In line with this postulation, Austen also shares the general contempt of the landed gentry for the aristocracy, in the same way Wollstonecraft did. Throughout her writing we find Austen's view of the aristocrats as improvident. Sir Walter, snobbish, Mr. Collins Oddious and socially irresponsible. Henry Tilney's father is also presented as a snob and proud gentleman in the same way that Mr. Darcy and the Bingley sisters are. Indeed, Austen's novels are full of characters from the landed gentry and includes only a few aristocrats who appear as objects of ridicule in the society in which they live.

As far as Austen's character deployment is concerned, we have observed in all the novels we have studied so far that the characters project to us not only a story to be entertained, but specific socio-cultural roles representative of the social system. Her first novel *Pride and Prejudice* distinctly projects the class character of early Victorian England along with its hypocrisy and sham, as well as the essentially

male-dominated nature of the society. *Sense and sensibility* explores the tension that exists in every community between the needs of the individual and the demands of the society. This is clearly presented in the characters of the two strikingly different sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. In *Mansfield Park* we are introduced to Fanny Price, a timid and sickly young woman in striking contrast to the heroines in the previous novels. Fanny's worth is discovered when she happens to live at Mansfield Park, where her uncle and Aunt Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram observe her honesty and instinctive goodness. Other characters like Maria, Julia, Tom and Edmund all make grievous mistakes in their lives, only Fanny, the unaccomplished young woman with neither beauty or wit, and poor relation of the Bertrams, waits patiently for her life to unfold. *Northanger Abbey* is in similar manner a delightful and humorous love story in which Austen makes gentle fun of her heroine's weakness for popular and melodramatic tales of mystery as in the style of the Elizabeth-Darcy affair in *Pride and Prejudice*. Thus while Catherine Morland is introduced to the fashionable town of Bath and as a result of a misunderstanding, she is believed to be a wealthy heiress who falls in love with the handsome Henry Tilney, whose father however discovers that Catherine has no corresponding wealthy background to be engaged to his son, she is "only one of the ten children of a comparatively poor country vicar". While *Emma* is a novel that portrays the adventure of a young woman full of self complacency, but who, like Elizabeth Bennet learns from experience and rectifies her mistakes, the last novel *Persuasion*, like Austen's uncompleted novel, *Sanditon*, reveals the deep sense in which Austen's social comedy is rooted in her

sense of life's painful realities. Despite its richness in "Shadows and intimations of darkness" *Persuasion* at the end shows the heroine's ability to come to terms with life's realities. In a way we can conclude that almost all the characters in an Austen novel play different social roles as members of a particular class in the society, with a view to clearly depicting to us how that society is structured.

4.4 The Fusion of the Selected Texts

This study, which involves a new historicist reading of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* can be seen as a parallel reading of these novels with the history in which they were written and with the historical and cultural events at the time of their composition. New historicism focuses on the contextual and inter-textual reading in order to interpret the literary text. It is a theory that arose in the 1980s and pioneered by the work of Stephen Greenblatt, developed with the works of critics like Louis Montrose, Catherine Basley in the 1990s.

The emergence of New historicism is a response to new criticism, a theory which focuses on the formal properties of a literary work rather than the biographical, historical and cultural context to interpret the text, New historicism differs from new criticism in the sense that it sees a literary work as inseparable from its author's history, the world history and the culture that gives shape to the text. Thus, to interpret a work of literature it is essential to understand the circumstances of its composition. To this theory, all cultural texts, whether literary or non-literary, are the products of historical and cultural circumstances in which they are produced. As texts are products of several contexts, they do not have

fixed meaning and universal significance in themselves, rather, their meanings change through time and context. New historicism in a way separates itself from old historicism with respect to its focus on the textuality of history. To the new historicist, history is not a unitary past, a background to be reflected in a work of art, it is a text because history is known through written texts. So what makes new historicism stand unique is its ability to recognize “the historicity of texts” and “the textuality of history”

In a new historicist reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, the new historicists believe that a literary text like all other cultural texts, was shaped by the history and culture in which it was written, has been the major point of departure. Considering that the novel's structure and meaning are closely related we seem to learn in the story that we know each other through their manners, though manners do mislead as much as they inform. Thus Elizabeth and Darcy stare at each other, in initial incomprehension, across a class difference in which Darcy's manners show an unspeakable pride in rank to Elizabeth, while Elizabeth's are *Prejudiced* by the uncouth family surroundings in which they appear. Darcy and Elizabeth learn to understand each other better, and this is precisely what gives the novel a sense of progress. It is this progression that shows the author's interest in moral education, though the learning process, while undergone by both protagonists, is disclosed to us solely through Elizabeth's point of view where free indirect speech is involved. Whereas Darcy's learning produces effects observable through Elizabeth's consciousness as we live through her own worldview.

On the other hand, *Pride and Prejudice* is structured around Darcy's two proposals. After his first attempt and rejection, he writes a long letter to Elizabeth justifying his actions with regards to Wickham, Bingley, Jane and the unethical behavior of some members of her family. Elizabeth finds his explanations compelling, though his manners still proud and repulsive. Through the narrative the reader is able to disclose that self-knowledge is not a simple matter. First, Elizabeth comes to know herself through knowing Darcy and vice versa, which points to the fact that the soul does not exist independently of its social relations. Secondly, the self that Elizabeth comes to know is not fixed, but changeable. The self she knows at the end of the book is different from the one she would have known at the beginning. And thirdly, the self is, in any sense, fictional, looking at David Hume's skeptical remarks on the fictional nature of subjectivity. Hume argues in his *History of England* that there were no necessary connection between the causes and effects we habitually linked together. That such links were convenient fictions in the sense that the self, the bundle of causal narratives we recognise, collectively as a unitary self are fictive, for they rest on imaginary connections. Additionally, the self was no more than "a discontinuous series of discrete sense impressions", such a proper understanding is the "peculiar province of skeptical philosophers," while the rest take recourse to the mythic unity of subjective agency that nature and culture furnish them with. It is therefore probable that Austen might have come into contact with Hume's ideas, in the event she did not, she certainly understood their substance.

Through an inter textual study involving a parallel reading of *Pride and Prejudice* and Hume's *History of England*, it has been observed that Jane Austen was affected by Hume's philosophy, a factual document relating the philosopher's commitment to an exploration of individual nature, the relationship between *Pride and Prejudice* and *History of England* has been constructed by the scenes in both texts and the conclusion we reached through such reading are that the self-mutability, manifested first in Elizabeth Bennet, when she first saw Darcy's letter, happens to be the major turning point in her life (p175). Elizabeth's self has already shift its ground, in ways she does not yet understand, she has developed affections, the first object of attachment, to Darcy, which here free indirect speech reveals to us, mainly through the direction of her thoughts. She is mortified by her younger sisters' unsteadiness. They were ignorant, idle and vain (p175). Anxiety on behalf of Jane is another prevailing concern, as her sister has been deprived of an advantageous situation in life "by the folly and indecorum of her own family!" The reader may reasonably infer that Elizabeth is also thinking, unconsciously of the even more advantageous position she has been deprived of through the same means. Unknown to her, her desire and its motivations are already altered.

Finally, in the new historicist reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, the narrative technique employed has been explored to indicate how Austen subverted the ideology of the time. The form of the novel as well as the events described provide us with the meaning and have to be taken into consideration, the conclusion this research has drawn include first, that *Pride and Prejudice* requires the reader to think actively about what is related rather than merely accepting it

passively. Secondly, the novel should be viewed not as a mere reflection of a known reality, but as an exploration of different types of reality. And finally, that by means of the narrative technique, mostly free indirect speech in her text, the writer detached it from other cultural artifacts whose function is just to reflect reality.

Now looking at the second novel selected for this study, *Emma*, we find that in the new historicist reading of the novel, it has been put in the biographical context to determine the extent to which Austen made use of her experiences as a woman writer, writing in the nineteenth century, as well as references from the real life events and impression gained through reading in order to create the characters and incidents in the novel. What the study observed here is that, in the creation of her character, Emma, Austen utilized her own experiences, she projected her repressed feelings in Emma's character, to the extent that so much is hidden [this reminds one of John Mullan's Essay "Noticing and Not Noticing": The Hidden Jane Austen", published by the London Review of Books, 20th November, 2014] in *Emma*, Jane Austen appears to hide lots of information somewhat in plain sight. One hardly notices on first reading *Emma* that Mr. Perry, the apothecary, reliable source of news and advice, and quoted so often by the novel's main characters, never speak in the novel. We only have recollection like "Perry tells me –", "Mr Perry said....", he is always being cited without actually speaking in the real sense of the word, as such no one knows what he said, his business is reflecting back the *Prejudice* of his neurotic clients. Mr. Perry is doing so well that he appears as the surest sign of affluence in provincial Regency England.

Emma, of all Austen novels can be considered as being dominated by the writer's point of view. Through free indirect style, Austen renders the heroine's deluded view of her little world. So the reader should always be ready to be suspicious of what he or she is being told. Though despite this, we keep being tricked. The narrator follows so closely the progress of the heroine's attention that all the clues as to character's real motives can easily be missed by the reader as they have been by Emma herself. At the dinner party at Cole's, Emma thinks Frank Churchill seems to be expressing his amorous interest in her. Distracted by Mrs. Weston, she loses sight of him for a while, until she finds Mr. Cole entreating her to lay his piano, Frank, who had found a seat by Miss Fairfax adds his own "very pressing entreaties". He is in fact using the gathering to find a precious moment or two of closeness to Jane Fairfax. Much of the time he can only exchange looks with her, but as Mullan observes, the clue is "slipped into a sentence shaped as if to appear to reaffirm Frank's courtship of Emma". In essence, we can observe that this novel appears to manage our own attention in somewhat extraordinary ways, as Emma is busy noticing things and not noticing them, and the reader has the chance to share what she notices and to notice what she doesn't because in life, more than one thing is happening at any given moment, so this novel comes closest to representing this.

Through the parallel reading of *Emma* and Hume's *History of England*, however, it has been observed that Austen reflected the ideological views of the nineteenth century only to subvert them. Austen's novels are believed to "reveal a proto-tension" between the traditional values of the aristocracy and the ideology of an

emerging middle class, a kind of overlapping particularly evident in the ideology of the “gentry” with its multiple affiliations to both poles of this tension, which points to the fact that her novels are not suspended in a historical vacuum, but on the contrary, they are eloquent about the historical moment. *Emma* is seen by some scholars as a conservative novel that fully articulates Tory ideology that has been put to work and made to work. As such, this novel adopts a grudging attitude towards new money, either accepting it on its own conservative terms (as in the case of the Coles), or through the contemptible figure of Mrs. Elton which appears to be beyond the all inclusive capacities of Tory ideology. In John Knightley, *Emma* displays a rare example of a second son who “does not pursue the red or black but follows a profession that both looks back to another ancient profession, the law”. As a serious man of law demonstrating professionalism, we would expect John Knightley to be presented to us as masculine, but in his fretfulness and ill temper, he falls some way short of the masculine ideal realized in the stoical manner of his older brother. John Knightley is not purely effeminate, neither is he a specimen of manliness. At times, he is just like Mr. Woodhouse who, although treated respectfully in the novel, is clearly effeminate.

Nevertheless, Austen’s male characters suffer the pressures placed upon gender by the changing world, where as her heroines exist in an apparent rationality. This is because her subjective normalcy appears only in her heroines, except perhaps, Catherine Moorland of *Northanger Abbey*. This state of clear-cut rationality is indeed apparent in the sense that her heroines do find their subjectivity, that is, their desire to make room in the world for their egos. On a final note, it is

observed that the great calamity that haunts Austen's heroines is the threat of spinsterhood that Austen herself suffered. Marriage was indeed the great, constraining institution that shaped the lives of young women of Austen's place and time. As comedies of manners, marriage is also what her books are principally about.

As far as *Persuasion* is concerned, Austen's central focus is seen as marriage that cross emerging class divisions. Through social miscegenation she presents to the reader instances of cross class marriages though with a clearly different focus on the heroine's consciousness. After the opening of a few chapters, we are almost in Anne Elliot's head, this is why we often hear only fragments of conversations, not just because she is marginalized by the other characters, but because "her own feelings impede or intercept the incoming communications". Anne is always "keeping her thought to herself". Like her creator, Jane Austen, Anne's life is mostly a private one, though unlike Austen we learn that Anne is marginalized. At one point, she is condemned to play the Musgrove's grand piano while others dance or talk, she is used to "giving pleasure to herself". The fond tasteless Musgrove parents listen only to their daughter's playing even though Anne plays much better. "except one short period of her life, she had never, since the age of 14, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste".

Miles' view in *Jane Austen* (2008:124) that the narrowness of Austen's social miscegenation, the fact that she mixes classes only subtly distinct from each other, may blind readers to the fact that she embraces the historical tide of

“embourgeoisification” that she does indeed do so is most evident in her support for companionate marriage. In this sense, we find that the linkage between the two things, “companionate marriage”, and a new, “middle class professionalism”, is indeed evident in Austen’s depiction of the crofts in their carriage in *Persuasion*. Whereas the vulgar Eltons “Whiz around in their cabriolet” as an intrusive show of wealth (where display appears the only bond cementing the happy couple), the crofts are more interested in the mutual pleasure they derive from their common pursuits. Their driving style is also drawn to our attention. The crofts have met Anne and Captain Wentworth on a walk, and are “now driving the young people home in their gig”. (P83).

In addition, Austen’s heroines represent her sense of rational norm, which can be seen as default subjectivity. In her heroines we can identify on one hand those who are in possession of their faculties, and the surrounding ficelles, who bear the mark of the social pressures that define them. In another sense, we can say her heroines appear to rise above history where as the minor characters are overwhelmed by it. For example, when Emma accompanies Harriet to Fords, Harriet is busied in shopping tempted by everything, she was always very long at a purchase and while she was still hanging over Muslins and changing her mind Emma went to the door for amusement (P.192). Through her ficelles and female grotesques, Austen embellished the pressures that deformed the female characters. As for marriage, figures like Charlotte Lucas, Lucy Steele, and Mrs. Dashwood Symbolise the legal and personal danger that attend upon a system of ancestors. While as for sensibility, Isabella Thorpe, Lydia Bennet and Marianne Dashwood

illustrate the connections between fashion, consumerism and the treats of conventional femininity.

Cultural historians believe that the chivalrous attitude towards women such as that praised by Bealtie, was preliminary to a new formation that hardened during the Victorian period. It is referred to variously as a new domestic ideology, or as the cult of the “angel in the house”. According to this ideology, women were not just men’s equals, but their superiors as regards sensibility, the capacity to nurture and the potential for domestic virtue. In other words, it was an ideology that praises women only to make them more domesticated.

Although this emerging ideology was prevalent during the Georgian period, Austen doesn’t seem to subscribe to it. In any case, if we compare her to her contemporaries like Charles Dickens, Walter Scott or Anne Bronte, one will not encounter heroines who redeem the house like Emma in Bronte’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The closest Austen comes to subscribe to such a view of gender is her portrayal of Fanny price, even though Fanny’s virtues are not specifically domestic. One extraordinary thing about Jane Austen is her resistance of the overwhelming cultural pressures of her time to imagine feminine subjectivity in terms that were both gendered and narrowly defined. Before Austen, it is believed that female characters derive their characterization from “gendered templates”. In “Romance” female figures tend to be treated as extremes, as either “impossibly pure” or “utterly wicked” what the eighteenth century refers to as “probable depictions of contemporary life”. So, female characterization before Austen was generally done through these romance and novel stereotypes.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis titled “Subversion and Accommodation in the Novels of Jane Austen: A New Historicist Reading”, has attempted to read Jane Austen’s three novels, namely; *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* from the perspective of New Historicism. It began by a brief explication of Edward Said’s view on Empire in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and went on to situate the novels in both their biographical and socio-historical contexts through a parallel reading of the selected novels and their historical co-texts. Thus, while GWF Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* (1807, 2001) provided the biographical context through which Austen’s biography *Jane Austen: A Life* (1997) by Claire Tomalin has been interpreted, David Hume’s *History of England* (1754) served as the co-text for Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813, 2001) and *Emma* (1815, 1994). The last novel, *Persuasion* is interpreted alongside Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792, 2010).

Through the new historicist readings of these novels, the study tried to indicate that Jane Austen tried through her novels to negotiate an inner personal conflict between puritan ethics which reluctantly disregarded the claims of politics, and a cultural nationalism which required that art participated in the struggle against imperial domination, this is seen in her allegiance to the concept of inalienable rights developed by John Locke (1632-1704) in his political philosophy. According to this philosophy, the denial of those inalienable rights (rights which came directly from God) was an affront to God. In Jane Austen’s novels we found

that the landowning and financial basis of the social order is explicitly realized and disparity between the social positions given by wealth and landed property, as well as the qualifications provided by personal character and intelligence, provides a source of irony. Though, Austen accepted such disparities as inevitable in any social structure, she however discarded them since their existence seems to alter the ideal inalienable rights of human beings.

Secondly, in these novels, the writer scrutinized the intricacies of personal identity within the array of social discourses. In Austen's effort to present a detailed picture of Georgian era, she showed the lives of the aspiring middle class and the wealthy. Her characters are first of all defined by their financial value. Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, has an annual income of £10,000, however, his reserve, pride and caprice make him quite disagreeable among the Bennets and their social circles. While his friend, the dashing Mr. Bingley, worth only £4,500 a year, in comparison, glows with his good looks and obliging, gratifying and complaisant nature. The wealthy in Austen's time are those who are independently wealthy. Females hardly had the opportunity to earn. Jane Austen herself, together with her sister Cassandra had only £450 a year to live on following their father's death, just as we have read from her biographer, Claire Tomalin.

Similarly, in tune with the 18th century English society, servants in an Austen novel were mainly seen and not heard. Apart from Mr. Darcy's house keeper, Mrs. Reynolds in *Pride and Prejudice*, in a part of the book where she narrates her master's moral excellence to a startled Elizabeth Bennet, servants are only mentioned in Jane Austen's world. While on another level, Lady Catherine de

Bourgh, another minor character in *Pride and Prejudice*, whose conceit represents the behavior of the upper classes of the time, speaks as much as she could (infact, her speech covers almost two pages when she meets Miss Bennet in a garden at Longbourn). As part of the same social hierarchy satirized in her novels, Austen herself could not closely know the servant characters, a factor for which she had been severely criticized by many reviewers.

Thirdly, in these novels, the reader is able to see Jane Austen's mixed feelings about the emerging complex political situation. Her view of marriage was not uncritical. Among the propertied classes in Britain at that time, marriage had both romantic as well as financial aspects such that a marriageable young woman was advertised along with a sum of money, a 'dowry' settled on her by her father that would become her husband's possession. Thus, in *Sense and Sensibility* "Honourable Miss Morton with £30,000". While in *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Bennet, not knowing that Mr. Darcy has already settled Lydia's dowry to get her marry Mr. Wickham, became appalled when he heard that Lydia and Wickham had eloped and the only way to avoid embarrassment is to settle a significant amount of money to get them married accordingly.

In similar manner, Austen showed that power is not exercised in physical shows of authority, but that it also rests in dominant representational discourses. In all the novels we have studied in this research Austen appears to observe people, read them properly, understand them and attend to their secret meanings, which makes her writing hermeneutic rather than therapeutic which according to the German

theologian, Frederick Schleimacher in his “Academy Address, 1829”, referred to as ‘significant conversation’.

Austen’s understanding of the political situation of her days was also characterized by a sophistication valued by new historicist critics. She did not view England in terms of “we” and “the others” perhaps this is why her novels appear to have a universal appeal and are quite ahead of their time.

Lastly, in Jane Austen’s writing it is clear that Literature is not independent of history and politics. As a result of her socio-political awareness, the relation of history to the literary life stands as the nucleus of her fiction. As we have seen in our analysis, the novels are intricately linked with the history and culture around which they were written.

Going by Edward Said’s postulation in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), that nineteenth century English novels are of utmost importance in the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences, we come to the conclusion that all the three concepts explored in this study, namely; colonialism, imperialism and romanticism have been significantly employed by Jane Austen, though the first two have been severely subsumed, only romanticism has been fully accommodated. This is done by the creation of fabulous, rhapsodical paragons, mostly in her female heroines who stand unique from the other people in the novel by their inward nature through which they could speak to themselves, read themselves and read others.

In the final analysis, through the new historicist readings of these novels by Jane Austen, the study has attempted to indicate that there is always a close relation

between *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Persuasion* and the history of the author, between these literary texts and the non-literary texts written in the same period, between the texts and the history in which they were written. In the new historicist reading of Austen's texts, the researcher attempted to indicate these relationships and thus we have observed firstly that Austen developed herself as a writer during the ten year period when she wrote her first three novels, and another seven years (after a silence of almost a decade) when she wrote the last three. The novels, in a way, are not against her developing character, that is the development of her world view can be observed by means of the specificity of her novels. Secondly, that the novels on one hand, participated in the ideologies of the time, and on the other, resisted the ideology by means of numerous subversions of the orthodox ideas that prevailed in the nineteenth century, thus, subversions and accommodation in the novels of Jane Austen.

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APPENDIX

AN IMAGE FOR THE CONCEPT DESIGN FOR THE REVERSE OF THE NEW £10 NOTE FEATURING AUTHOR JANE AUSTEN



The Bank of England's draft of the new 10-pound note featuring British author Jane Austen. *Source: AFP*

**IMAGE OF NEW £10 NOTE FEATURING AUTHOR JANE AUSTEN,
WHICH BEGAN CIRCULATION IN ENGLAND ON THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2017**



JANE AUSTEN’S NEWLY DISCOVERED GOLD AND TURQUOISE RING PUT TO AUCTION IN 2013, THE AMERICAN IDOL WINNER, KELLY CLARKSON’S ATTEMPT TO BUY THE RING WAS THWARTED WHEN THE JANE AUSTEN’S MUSEUM RAISED ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY IT AND SAVE IT AS A “NATIONAL TREASURE”

