

1-1-2011

Dr. Johnson's novel influence: Jane Austen illuminates Concordia Discors

Heather Ann Craig

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/td>

Recommended Citation

Craig, Heather Ann, "Dr. Johnson's novel influence: Jane Austen illuminates Concordia Discors" (2011).
Theses and Dissertations. 1573.
<https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/td/1573>

This Graduate Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.

DR. JOHNSON'S NOVEL INFLUENCE: JANE AUSTEN ILLUMINATES

CONCORDIA DISCORDS

By

Heather Ann Craig

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in English
in the Department of English

Mississippi State, Mississippi

December 2011

Copyright by
Heather Ann Craig
2011

DR. JOHNSON'S NOVEL INFLUENCE: JANE AUSTEN ILLUMINATES

CONCORDIA DISCORDS

By

Heather Ann Craig

Approved:

Richard Raymond
Professor and Head of English
(Director of Thesis)

Shalyn Claggett
Assistant Professor of English
(Committee Member)

Peter De Gabriele
Assistant Professor of English
(Committee Member)

Lara Dodds
Associate Professor of English
(Graduate Coordinator)

Gary Myers
Professor and Dean
College of Arts & Sciences

Name: Heather Ann Craig

Date of Degree: December 9, 2011

Institution: Mississippi State University

Major Field: English

Major Professor: Dr. Richard Raymond

Title of Study: DR. JOHNSON'S NOVEL INFLUENCE: JANE AUSTEN
ILLUMINATES *CONCORDIA DISCORS*

Pages in Study: 58

Candidate for Degree of Master of Arts

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate Jane Austen's illumination of Samuel Johnson's moral precepts in seeking harmony in choice of life. Austen explores the various decisions of her characters and the effects of those choices on happiness through the use of free indirect discourse. Austen and Johnson both contend that marriage is a potential source of great happiness in an individual's choice of life, and *concordia discors* between spouses offers the highest form of contentment in marriage. Johnson believed that the novelist had a moral duty to his or her reader to present characters with attainable virtue. Austen's illumination of Johnson's moral precepts and philosophies fulfills the standards Johnson set forth for the novel genre. This study traces the relationship between Johnson's precepts in Austen's *Emma*, *Persuasion*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Key words: Samuel Johnson, Jane Austen, concordia discors, free indirect discourse, novel, choice of life, Rasselas, Rambler, Emma, Persuasion, Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility

DEDICATION

For Bobby, my very own *concordia discors*, and Tucker, the evidence of our love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my committee members, who selflessly offered their time and energy in assisting me with this project. I am grateful to Dr. Rich Raymond for being both patient and encouraging, but most of all for helping me hear and believe in my own “voice.” I am also thankful to Dr. Peter De Gabriele for challenging me to explore the social implications of this research, rescuing it from being old-fashioned and irrelevant. I appreciate the time Dr. Shalyn Claggett devoted to the revision of this work. Without her assistance and discernment, this research would be verbose and evaluative. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Lara Dodds for leading me through the process of research in her course on the subject, and also for helping me complete the administrative aspects of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
CHAPTER	
I. DR. JOHNSON’S NOVEL INFLUENCE: JANE AUSTEN ILLUMINATES <i>CONCORDIA DISCORS</i>	1
Introduction.....	1
Marriage: The Most Impactful Choice of Life	3
Samuel Johnson and the Novel	5
Samuel Johnson on <i>Choice of Life</i> and <i>Concordia Discors</i>	7
The Importance of Marriage to <i>Choice of Life</i>	10
Marriage: <i>The Rambler’s</i> Vision	12
<i>The Rambler</i> Defines <i>Concordia Discors</i>	13
Austen Recreates Hymenaeus.....	14
Austen’s Authorial Pursuits	17
Marital Unhappiness Exemplified in Mr. and Mrs. Bennet.....	18
The Legacy of the Unhappy Marriage	23
Mr. Elliot’s Pursuit of Anne.....	24
Willoughby’s Libertinism	28
Impatience and Delay Revisited by Austen	30
The Dangers of Celibacy Considered	34
The Forced Compromise of Choice of Life in a Patriarchal Society: Marriage for Security	35
<i>Concordia Discors</i> : The Necessity of Similarity	37
The Appearance of <i>Concordia Discors</i> Among Austen’s Protagonists	41
Edward and Elinor Find <i>Concordia Discors</i>	49
Anne and Wentworth	51
Emma and Knightley	53
<i>Concordia Discors</i> Begets Community	56
WORKS CITED	58

CHAPTER I

DR. JOHNSON'S NOVEL INFLUENCE: JANE AUSTEN ILLUMINATES

CONCORDIA DISCORDS

Introduction

That Jane Austen's novels are steeped in the language and opinions of her "dear Dr. Johnson" is a fact little disputed among critics. Claudia Johnson takes stock of Austen's "direct or apparent references to Johnson" contending that by quoting Johnson, Austen "is not being derivative or passively influenced...but choosing to use him for her purposes" (24-5). Another scholar illuminates Austen's use of Johnson's precept of presenting "exactness of resemblance" while writing *Northanger Abbey*, while yet another lists Austen as the first in a subsequently rich heritage of authors who draw upon knowledge of Johnson in their own works (Banerjee 113, Meyers 32). Austen's biographers and critics unite on the point that she was fond of reading his works, especially in light of the fact that her brother cited Johnson and Cowper as her favorite "moral writers" and her own statement regarding the "harmless drudge" as her "dear Dr. Johnson" (Tomalin 67-8, Honan 242, Banerjee 113, Myers 39-40, C. Johnson 25).

Whereas many critics agree that Austen makes her knowledge of Johnson's works apparent in her novels, little has been written explicitly on the appearance of Johnson's precepts in *Emma*, *Persuasion*, *Pride and Prejudice*, or *Sense and Sensibility*. Claudia

Johnson, who writes the most often on Austen's use of Johnson's moral essays in her novels, mainly focuses on the direct allusions translated from Dr. Johnson's work into Austen's fiction, matching them subject for subject, i.e. Austen on advice, expectation, and praise cross-referenced with Johnson on advice, expectation, and praise. For example, Claudia Johnson asserts that Austen describes Elizabeth Bennet's reception of her Aunt Gardiner's advice on Wickham as being "a wonderful instance of advice being given on such a point, without being resented," which reflects a statement from Dr. Johnson's *Rambler No. 40*, where he states that "advice is resented because it wounds the pride and interrupts 'our enjoyment of our own approbation'" (29). While this scholarship is extremely useful in establishing an initial and very strong link between Johnson and Austen, it neglects Austen's ability to understand Johnson's works holistically and further apply them to her own ideas and observations. While Claudia Johnson asserts that *Pride and Prejudice* contains the most allusions to Johnson's works, she also claims that they are not of "pressing thematic importance" in this particular novel (28). This assertion limits the genius of Johnson and the understanding of Austen to the topical headings of *Rambler* and *Idler* essays; however, Johnson provided Austen far more than moral precepts. Indeed, his influence on the literary consciousness of Austen was so prominent that she was able to apply Johnson's principles to her own works, often while maintaining very similar semantics to Johnson's writing. Her ability to apply Johnson's ideas to the plot and characters in her novels appears in their most climactic moments, reinforcing her own themes and furthering Johnson's moral agenda.

Marriage: The Most Impactful Choice of Life

Two of Johnson's major themes appear in Austen's work, one from *Rasselas*, which is Johnson's idea of exploring various *choices of life* and how those choices affect happiness, and the other from *The Rambler* essays, the theme of discovering *concordia discors* in marriage. For Austen, marriage exemplifies the most conflicted choice of life¹, and it is uncertain whether the choice to marry results in happiness. In a revealing letter to her niece, Fanny Knight, Austen exposed the struggle between love, custom, and prudence that many women endured during her time:

There are such beings in the world -- perhaps one in a thousand -- as the creature you and I should think perfection; where grace and spirit are united to worth, where the manners are equal to the heart and understanding; but such a person may not come in your way, or, if he does, he may not be the eldest son of a man of fortune, the near relation of your particular friend, and belonging to your own county. (qtd. in Le Faye 280)

This letter serves as a profound statement of Austen's recurrent themes of marrying for love and the effects of primogeniture on her characters' choices of life. Fortunately for Austen's protagonists, the conflicting forces of primogeniture, limited society, and equality or inequality of hearts and minds find a harmonious and comedic ending in the marriage plot, although she is careful to demonstrate that these marriages are far from common. For Austen herself, this conflict was enough to prevent her from ever

¹ Claudia Johnson notes that "the general concern throughout *Pride and Prejudice* with surveying different choices of domestic life and with examining their success in promoting private happiness recalls the marriage debate in *Rasselas*" (31). This is a concept that I plan to explore more thoroughly than Johnson, as she limits her survey to this single statement on the relationship between *Rasselas* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

marrying, and while these personal reflections are all matters of serious influence on her writing, she never offers her opinions on the dominant culture as a wholly tragic matter; instead, she always keeps comedy on the surface, making the subjects of primogeniture and marriage appear as the irritating foibles of a flawed system in a world of flawed humanity rather than a subject of dangerous oppression. Austen once wrote, “I could no more write a [historical] romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter” (qtd. in LeFaye 312). It is within the parameters of this flawed system that Austen sets her stories, allowing her characters to make various choices of life in an attempt to find as much happiness as possible in an imperfect world. In this respect, Austen’s writing resembles Johnson’s themes in *Rasselas*: she offers her characters as living in a blemished world, one where so many people make very public mistakes that it would be an even worse mistake for a truly noble character not to learn from others’ choices of life. It is evident from her characters’ decisions and the effects of these decisions that Austen concerns herself with Johnson’s view that a person should make the very best choice of life available to him or herself in the world; moreover, as marriage is Austen’s primary subject, reaching *concordia discors* in a marital relationship is the key to finding happiness. As Ronald Blythe puts it, “Jane Austen can in fact get more drama out of morality than most other writers can get from shipwreck, battle, murder, or mayhem” (qtd. in “Jane Austen’s Writings” 1). For Austen’s characters, the dilemma is not the

circumstances themselves, but how they are handled within the bounds of morality, justice, and potential happiness.

Samuel Johnson and the Novel

Austen chooses to redirect her protagonists' dilemmas from struggling against circumstances to maintaining morality within those circumstances in order to meet the goals Samuel Johnson once called for in one of his *Rambler* essays on "The New Realistic Novel" (Johnson 175-6). In this essay on a relatively new type of work, Johnson praised the medium itself, but not the typical subject matter of the novel. He saw the novel as an opportunity to provide "an accurate observation of the living world" that could "serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life" for "the young, the ignorant, and the idle" (175-6). Johnson envisioned the novel as a unique opportunity to comment on everyday events because, prior to the "realistic novel," works that were considered "instructional" and "entertaining" found their subject matter in heroic tales² and other romantic stories³, whereas the emerging novel had everyday life for its setting. In Johnson's mind, this similarity to real life made the novel more influential on its

² Sir Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* is one such early heroic prose narrative, in which the protagonist, Basilia, attempts to protect his family from a bleak prophecy given to him by the Oracle at Delphi. The subsequent adventure is filled with episodes of trickery, disguise, and comic reversal. The story is presented as a mixture of prose and drama, thus creating a sort of hybrid pre-novel that is supposed to have been written as an entertainment for Sidney's sister.

³ Thomas Nash's *The Unfortunate Traveler, or the Life of Jack Wilton* is a picaresque that follows the misadventures of Wilton through his many disguises. In the same vein, Robert Greene published a series of pamphlets that included the "Defence of Conny-Catching," which serves as a defense of the everyday con-man by arguing that the respected classes perform worse crimes.

readers because a clear comparison between the two was immediately in view. *Rambler No. 4* served as a call for the then new form of artist, the novelist, to use the “liberty” he or she had to invent stories similar to real life events in order to instruct young people in making wise, circumspect decisions, and ultimately preventing bad behavior (177).

Johnson even goes so far as to claim that novelists had previously written about antiheroes⁴ whose bad behavior seemed to be outweighed by their lovable, charming qualities, which would only serve to pardon negative qualities in the mind of the young reader. In essence, Johnson very earnestly believed that novelists had a responsibility and opportunity unavailable to any other artist. In Johnson’s mind, the novelist could present to young readers true-to-life scenarios in which moral decisions are made by the protagonist that would vicariously instruct the young, ignorant, and idle in making upright life decisions. Johnson saw the role of the novelist as having the potential to be immeasurably noble—instructing those without experience into making correct decisions when the opportunity for experience arose. Although this argument of Johnson’s verges on a license for didacticism, it is ultimately as well-intended as James Boswell argues in his biography of Johnson, for Johnson demonstrates that he makes the argument out of love and faith in his fellow man:

I cannot discover why there should not be exhibited the most perfect idea of virtue; of virtue not angelical, nor above probability, for what we cannot credit we shall never imitate, but the highest and purest that humanity can reach, which, exercised in such trials as the various revolutions of things shall bring

⁴ *Tom Jones*, often considered the greatest work of Henry Fielding, is one work that Johnson reproached as a violation of the author’s duty to “instruct” the reader on the “highest and purest” morality that humans can obtain.

upon it, may, by conquering some calamities, and enduring others, teach us what we may hope, and what we can perform. (178)

Johnson believed that the novelist should create admirably moral characters, and by doing so, the novelist was doing a kindness to his or her readers by presenting an attainable goal. By concluding this in his argument for morality in the novel, Johnson is clearly concerned for the novelists' role in contributing to what he deemed the "hereditary aggregate of knowledge and happiness" (221). Johnson recognized the skill and understanding of humanity involved in writing a novel, and he also believed that the best of them (those that held no "deviation from exactness of resemblance") would make an unparalleled impact on the conduct of the increasingly literate youth⁵ (175).

Samuel Johnson on *Choice of Life* and *Concordia Discors*

As an observer of human nature, Johnson had a tendency to view the world as existing in natural opposites. In *Rasselas*, Johnson writes "[h]uman life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed," yet "we grow more happy as our minds take a wider range" (355). Johnson argued that it is the duty of the poet to assist in this effort by providing a realistic view of human life, with a hopeful look at what lies ahead. *Rasselas* himself is discontent and restless in the happy valley, where

⁵ Ian Watt discusses Samuel Johnson's "nation of readers" in Chapter 2 of *The Rise of the Novel*. He notes the situation Johnson had in mind "must not be taken literally: the increase in the reading public may have been sufficiently marked to justify hyperbole, but it was still on a very limited scale" (37). He goes on to describe the proliferation of the circulating library on the leisure time of the working class, saying that prior to the circulating library, "a substantial marginal section of the reading public was held back from the literary scene by the price of books" (43).

everyone is brainwashed into frivolity. His trip outside the gates affords him a view of the sufferings of the world, presented through circumstances in opposition to one another. Johnson arranges the story in these opposing situations to show that *no* extreme is able to provide the happiness that it seems to possess. In the words of Imlac, Johnson is attempting to

Observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and trace the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the spriteliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude. . . he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same.

(352-3)

Johnson's goal, explicitly stated in the words of his fictional poet, Imlac, is initially carried out in his representations of the hedonists and the stoic. When Rasselas and his crew reach Cairo, they find "every man happy" in his "choice of life" (362). This of course is ironic, as they soon find that the drunken carousing of their new friends merely results in "pleasures gross and sensual, in which their mind had no part" (365). After spending time with these hedonists, Rasselas determines that "[h]appiness must be something solid and permanent," and not a product of mere escapism (365). In contrast, the group from the happy valley encounters the stoic. Johnson wrote a great deal against the dangers of stoicism, and the account in *Rasselas* is brief but poignant. The stoic professor publically argues the "various precepts given from time to time for the conquest of passion, and displayed the happiness of those who had obtained the important victory"

as those who are “no longer the slave to fear, nor the fool of hope” (366). Not long after this rousing speech, the stoic is devastated by the unexpected death of his daughter, and cannot be comforted. Rasselas reminds the stoic of the fact that “death is always near, and it should always be expected,” but the stoic finds no consolation in his own philosophy, which in itself seems to cause him even further pain (367). Johnson furthers his “delightful instruction”⁶ by presenting the opposing states of pastoral life and wealth. Historically, the pastoral life was admired for its simplicity, and as Imlac says, “celebrated for its innocence and quiet” (367). Johnson demonstrates the opposite: just as Rasselas was discontent in the happy valley, looking for a more fulfilling lifestyle, the shepherds are perpetually complaining of their “condem[nation] to labor by the luxury of the rich” (368). Similarly, when Rasselas meets the prosperous ruler, he immediately feels that he has found utter happiness in the “harmless luxury” of the man’s estate (368). He soon finds that while wealth has the “appearance of happiness,” the ruler is truly a hunted man who cannot enjoy his treasures; he must hide them in another country and be “prepared to follow them” at any moment, as he is the envy of a very powerful man (369).

In other examinations of opposing worldviews, Johnson shows that the inventor, however successful in his previous innovations, inevitably fails at some hopeful invention or another, and the poet, however circumspect in his philosophy, rarely finds self-fulfillment. The inventor and the poet also serve another important role for Johnson’s

⁶ By pursuing the philosophy of “delightful instruction” in his writing, Johnson is following the tradition of John Dryden and Sir Philip Sidney, who also believed that literature should both delight and instruct the reader. See Sidney’s “Defense of Poesy” and Dryden’s “An Essay on Dramatic Poesy” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*.

theme: as thinking men, they both realize a danger of living in the world that the other characters do not: the general immorality of human existence. Although their respective encounters with this aspect of human nature are different, they discover in their different occupations the dangers of living within a community of fallen individuals. The inventor, who tries to find a way for man to fly, fails in his attempt after admitting that not all men are virtuous, and that it would therefore be a danger to teach all men to fly (345). Imlac, the poet, discovers his complaint with the general immorality of mankind when he is attacked by his own companions on a journey: “Is there such depravity in man that he should injure another without benefit to himself?” he asks (350). While Rasselas, Nekayah, and Pekuah do appear to “grow more happy” in their adventures, there is no true contentment for them in seeing these opposing representations of life: “[W]hatever be the general infelicity of man, one condition is more happy than another, and wisdom surely directs us to take the least evil in the *choice of life*” (364). After presenting his reader with the “various institutions” of life, the “transcendental truth” Johnson concludes with in *Rasselas* is found in the final statement made by Nekayah: “The choice of life becomes less important; I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity” (352-3, 418).

The Importance of Marriage to *Choice of Life*

Another source of wisdom on the *choice of life* rests in the debate about marriage between Rasselas and Nekayah. In an on-going debate in which little is settled, the two argue with increasing intensity about the subject that Rasselas argues “is one of the means of happiness” (380). In this discussion, Johnson takes the opportunity to show that

marriage can be the source of the worst discontent, and Nekayah and Rasselas both vacillate between marriage as a source of happiness and fulfillment, a pit of misery and resentfulness, or a necessary evil. The characters recognize their varying viewpoints on marriage and Nekayah is wise enough to recognize that

[t]o the mind, as to the eye, it is difficult to compare with exactness objects vast in their extent and various in their parts. Where we see or conceive the whole at once we readily note the discriminations and decide the preference but of two systems of which neither can be surveyed by any human being in its full compass of magnitude and multiplicity of complication, where is the wonder that judging of the whole by parts, I am alternately affected by one and the other as either presses on my memory or fancy? (380)

Nekayah and Rasselas's debate certainly covers varying circumstances of marriage: the blessings and hardships, the predispositions of extended family, the ideal timing for commitment, and the particulars of perfection in a spouse. In contrasting these variations, Johnson investigates every facet of the institution, but only one conclusion is drawn for certain about the matter: "Of the blessing set before you make your choice, and be content" (383).

Without Nekayah's comforting conclusion about resolving to "be content," the marriage discussion in *Rasselas* poses so many conundrums about the state of marriage, its necessity, and its benefits and evils, that the philosophy almost cripples itself in its own contradictions, much like Rasselas in his dreams of leaving the happy valley. Austen's considerations of the varying degrees of affection, motivation, and hopes for the marriage state are portraits reflecting Johnson's marriage debate in *Rasselas*; however,

Austen's works employ a different vehicle for addressing these issues than Johnson's: free indirect discourse. Austen's use of free indirect discourse gives her the opportunity to present the various parts of the picture of marriage through the actions, thoughts, hopes, and regrets of her characters. The use of free indirect discourse is a narrative way of compassing the "magnitude and multiplicity of complication" through the individual: i.e., the third person narration is filtered through the perspective of the characters' consciousness. Johnson's argument poses a philosophical problem which Austen scrutinizes through fictional case studies that allow her to imaginatively test the possible miseries and joys that a given marriage can bring. Austen's narration, the outlet for her astute, detailed observations on the workings of the human mind and heart, serves the purpose that her "dear Doctor Johnson" admired most in the novelist: realism through interiority.

Marriage: *The Rambler's* Vision

Before exploring Austen's realism in depicting marriage, one should consider the other Johnsonian work that shaped her thinking on marriage, *The Rambler*. While Johnson's interest in the most important affairs of humanity led him to moralize on every imaginable subject from stoicism to sadness, marriage is a frequent topic in his *Rambler* essays. Johnson's aspiration to "delightful instruction" is particularly evident in his commentary on the all-important and consuming subject of marriage, which he examines in many essays. In the first two marriage essays, he invents "friends who have been least successful in their connubial contracts" and divulges the mistakes and consequent sufferings of each (180). In the last two *Rambler* essays focusing on love and marriage,

Johnson creates the character “Hymenaeus” who communicates via letters to *The Rambler* his exploits in love and ultimately the discovery of his own *Concordia discors*, or “suitable disagreement” (245). By describing these “friends” and their personal missteps in courtship, Johnson cleverly communicates his own ideas on what makes marriage unsuccessful. Johnson covers a variety of mistakes in his essays, beginning with the man who marries for money in the haste of being settled (180). He also warns against the flirtatious woman, who can often be mistaken for witty and charming, but is ultimately unfaithful and shallow (181). In further warnings, Johnson gives examples of not knowing a person in varying social circles, marrying beneath a person’s social station, waiting too long to marry, and marrying a spouse with a bad reputation (182, 198). Many of the mistakes Johnson advises against are rooted in two central errors: impatience and delay (198-9). Johnson’s ultimate goal was to warn the young, inexperienced, and unmarried readers of the dangers of making the wrong decision in choosing a spouse.

The Rambler Defines Concordia Discors

That Johnson explicitly names his ideology of *concordia discors* in a *Rambler* essay on marriage demonstrates his philosophy that an admirable marriage has the potential to be the ideal representation of discordant harmony. Jean Hagstrum notes that Johnson preferred Horace’s doctrine of *concordia discors* above similar ones of other classical philosophers because “discordant harmony” privileges order over chaos, whereas the alternative *discordia concors* appears to attribute harmony to discord as only an incidental occurrence (Hagstrum 126). As Hagstrum notes, “[I]n the *concordia*

discors of life, [Johnson] would have welcomed the Romantic fusion of judgment and enthusiasm, emotion and order.... In art the mind of the reader or spectator is forever moving between the representation and its natural original” (137). By basing his defining philosophy on discovering a happy life in this essay on a successful marriage between Hymenaeus and Tranquilla, Johnson foregrounds the tension of opposites that he represents in the various choices of life in *Rasselas*; situating this ideal tension in the context of marriage makes a statement about the institution itself. By doing so, Johnson claims that it possesses the potential to be the highest state of felicity. In bestowing this privilege on the marriage state, Johnson shows that it certainly should be considered one of “the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences” which the poet has a responsibility to communicate to his or her reader (352-3).

Austen Recreates Hymenaeus

Most scholarship on Austen’s use of Johnson’s works upholds that the much-celebrated first line of *Pride and Prejudice* is an elaboration on a statement made in Johnson’s *Rambler No. 115*, in which Hymenaeus writes: “I was known to possess a fortune, and to want a wife” (Meyers 40). Austen’s use of Johnson’s moral essays, however, is not limited to this single allusion to the hunted wealthy bachelor. A careful study of her characters and their personal evolution through conflict shows that Austen takes Imlac’s charge seriously as a method for “delightful instruction” for the writer to “observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and trace the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of

climate or custom” (352-3). In fact, Austen takes this charge so seriously that she is willing to depart from agreement with her “dear Dr. Johnson” frequently enough to demonstrate that oftentimes women face the challenge not only of making a respectable and honorable choice of life, but are often faced with the inability to make any choice at all. To summarize the crux of the problem Austen noted in the aforementioned letter to Fanny Knight, just because a woman falls in love with a man, it does not necessarily follow that he has the means, or she the incentive, to marry him. As Austen explicitly states, even if one meets an amiable man, “he may not be the eldest son of a man of fortune”; moreover, a woman does not possess the freedom to afford her own way, so she must rely on the man she wishes to marry to be independently wealthy enough to make his own choice, *a la* Fitzwilliam Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice*.

For this reason, it is important to place Austen’s rephrasing of Hymenaeus’s declaration in context. As Claudia Johnson and Jeffrey Myers posit, Austen’s much-praised first line of *Pride and Prejudice* echoes Hymenaeus’s assertion, but Claudia Johnson states that this allusion is not “of pressing thematic importance” (25). What these scholars neglect to point out is that her revision recasts the assertion in irony: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” (3). By cleverly inserting the words “good” and “must” into Hymenaeus’s statement, Austen emphasizes the idea that the man “in want” of a wife is both an object of speculation, and perhaps a speculator himself. Austen insinuates that mothers of single daughters assume that the single man is eligible and thus “on the market” (as is evinced by Mrs. Bennet being the first to speak after the initial line of the novel), but the statement also suggests that the man himself may perhaps be able to

purchase his wife with his fortune. While this idea of speculation is not a far stretch from the assumptions of the marriage market of the time, the irony of Austen's much-praised opening line of *Pride and Prejudice* lies in the fact it serves as a rebuttal to Hymenaeus's supposition of his own superiority to the various types of women he encounters.

In *Rambler No. 113*, Hymenaeus declares that he is "one of those unhappy beings who have been marked out as husbands for many different women, and deliberated one hundred times on the brink of matrimony" (208). There is something in Hymenaeus's situation with which it is difficult to empathize, however. He goes on to say that he has "discussed all the nuptial preliminaries so often that [he] can repeat the forms in which jointures are settled, pin-money secured, and provisions for younger children ascertained; but [is] at last doomed by general consent to everlasting solitude" because he inevitably discovers some "irregularity" of the woman's conduct and is "offended by herself" (208). While it is admirable that Hymenaeus pursues a *concordia discors* match to the point that he is even willing to break off engagements, it is difficult to sympathize with his situation knowing that there are women everywhere whose hopes Hymenaeus has raised "only to embitter disappointment" (208). Although Hymenaeus argues that he "never yet professed love to a woman without sincere intentions of marriage," his progress through the different types of women he is warning his reader of serves as a one-dimensional presentation of the potential marriage traps that can befall an eligible bachelor. It is here that Austen's use of free indirect discourse brings depth to Johnson's types: her ability to demonstrate the thoughts and navigations of her characters within the boundaries of societal expectations and limitations allows her to explore the consciousness of these Johnsonian types. Austen's use of free indirect discourse in exploring the consciousness

of characters with “attainable virtue” thereby fulfills Johnson’s requirements for the “new realistic novel.” It is Austen’s masterful narration that enables her to bring the precepts of Johnson’s choice of life and *concordia discors* to life in her own work, while demonstrating the effects of politics and society on choice of life in a way that Johnson was unable to do in his episodic essays.

Austen’s Authorial Pursuits

Austen, like Johnson, focuses on personal choices and how they shape the long-term felicity of the individual. The journey outside the happy valley in Johnson’s *Rasselas* is directed toward finding which *choice of life* brings the most happiness to an individual character. Austen applies this concept to a different set of locales: the drawing rooms and assembly halls of the English gentry. While there already existed novels of instruction, such as Richardson’s *Pamela*, Austen’s instructive novels imitated Johnson’s attainable idea of virtue “not angelical, nor above probability” (Johnson 178). Austen’s protagonists, unlike Richardson’s, are legitimately and believably flawed. They are often well intentioned and uncompromising, but in great need of life lessons and their corresponding epiphanies in order to arrive at their own happiness and make the proper choice of life. Austen once wrote to Fanny Knight, who had communicated the censure of *Emma* from one Mr. Wildwood, that “[h]e and I should not in the least agree, of course, in our ideas of novels and heroines. *Pictures of perfection*, as you know, make me sick and wicked” (qtd. in LeFaye 335). She takes Johnson’s advice in making novels realistic and accessible, primarily through character development and free indirect discourse, communicating the motives, presuppositions, shortcomings, and reformations

of the characters. Austen provides an accurate portrait of human nature, not through characters who possess “virtue [...] above probability,” but through characters with timeless shortcomings that must be revealed and overcome through experience in the world. Austen treats her protagonists and antagonists alike in not “deviating from exactness of resemblance.” Her re-evaluation of Johnson’s suggested principles allows her to reach his final goal of “teach[ing] us what we may hope, and what we can perform” (Johnson 178).

As noted above, for Johnson’s characters Rasselas and Nekayah, escape from the happy valley (the boundaries where custom dictated that Abyssinian royalty were to reside) represents a break from social norms that then leads to the freedom to discover each individual’s own happiness in his or her choice of life. By the end of the tale, Nekayah makes the observation that it is not in earthly life, but eternal life where she plans to place her true contingencies of happiness: “To me [...] the choice of life is become less important. I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity” (418). This insight comes after observing many different choices of life: the life of study, the life of invention, the life of revelry, the life of stoicism, and the life of the disintegrated mind. Austen takes a similar approach to Johnson in her novels, presenting various choices of life, the paths that define them, the decisions that make them, and the resulting consequences.

Marital Unhappiness Exemplified in Mr. and Mrs. Bennet

Austen’s pursuit of “transcendental truths” concerning the marriage state appears within a spectrum of various levels of satisfaction in the marriage state: misery,

contentment, and the ultimate achievement of *concordia discors*. Unhappiness in marriage is the consequence of poor or hasty decision-making in courtship. Much as in *The Rambler* essays and the observations of Nekayah and Rasselas, Austen's novels depict myriads of misery in the marriage state. As mentioned above, critics like Claudia Johnson make a good initial connection between Samuel Johnson and Jane Austen as far as moral sentiments are concerned, especially concerning *Pride and Prejudice*. Scholarship generally focuses on Austen's use of specific maxims, such as Johnson's views on remembering the past and expectation (Claudia Johnson 30). When compared to the over-arching theme of marriage, these are minor instances that support the broader concept that Johnson and Austen's works share, which is discovering *concordia discors* in marriage as a way of bolstering true happiness in this major choice of life. In *Pride and Prejudice*, it is evident from the first chapter that Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are *not* a good match, and are not even close to finding satisfaction in their marriage. This dynamic of discord is epitomized in Mrs. Bennet complaining of her "nerves" and Mr. Bennet "teazing" her into a frenzy over their daughters. Austen assures the reader very early on that,

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develope. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news. (4)

Austen asserts from the first chapter that Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are not well-suited for one another because his quick understanding and complex personality make him a continual puzzle, and her lack of understanding and childish temper make her a source of irritation and embarrassment for him. Both individuals cope with their misfortune in choosing a partner differently: Mr. Bennet keeps to his library, while Mrs. Bennet gossips with her friends and competes for the attentions of eligible men on behalf of her daughters.

While Mr. and Mrs. Bennet appear in this description to have made peace with their matrimonial mistake, the action of the novel proves that their mistakes and their means of “solace” in their unsatisfying marriage affect their children negatively. Circumstances at the Netherfield ball look very bleak as Elizabeth not only witnesses her cousin Mr. Collins humiliate himself by introducing himself to Mr. Darcy, but also realizes that she cannot keep her mother from publicly speculating about Mr. Bingley and Jane. At first she avoids her mother “lest she hear too much,” but upon sitting down to dinner she finds Mrs. Bennet

talking to that one person (Lady Lucas) freely, openly, and of nothing else but her expectation that Jane would soon be married to Mr. Bingley.—It was an animating subject, and Mrs. Bennet seemed incapable of fatigue while enumerating the advantages of the match. His being such a charming young man, and so rich, and living but three miles from them, were the first points of self-gratulation [...] It was, moreover, such a promising thing for her younger daughters, as Jane’s marrying so greatly must throw them in the way of other rich men. (68)

This speech, which illustrates Mrs. Bennet's two greatest solaces in life, "visiting and news," is more than just an embarrassment to the family because of its impropriety; it is the near-ruination of Jane's hopes with Bingley. Later, Darcy alludes to Mrs. Bennet's gossip in his justification for laboring against loving Elizabeth in his proposals, but the more serious harm is that Bingley and Jane are separated by Darcy and his sisters as a result of Mrs. Bennet's surety of Bingley's love. Upon hearing of Darcy's interference, Elizabeth immediately thinks: "[*Darcy*] was the cause, his pride and caprice were the cause of all that Jane had suffered, and still continued to suffer. He had ruined for a while every hope of happiness for the most affectionate, generous heart in the world; and no one could say how lasting an evil he might have inflicted" (123). It is the static nature of the epistolary form that prevents Elizabeth from continuing in this belief about Darcy; his explanatory letter does more work for her self-discovery than any other action in the novel.

Mrs. Bennet's injurious imprudence comes to light when Darcy explains he was "desirous of believing" Jane to be indifferent to Bingley, but "did not believe [*Jane*] to be indifferent because he wished it" (130). He goes on to echo Charlotte Lucas's earlier observation that Jane's reserve guards her true feelings from the understanding of others rather *too* much, but admits "there were other causes of repugnance," not so much in Mrs. Bennet's family, which "was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by [*the younger Bennet sisters*], and occasionally even by [*Elizabeth's*] father" (130-1). While Darcy asserts that Elizabeth and Jane have done nothing to share in their family's "censure," it is little comfort considering the mistake her parents' indulgence in their own bad behavior has caused.

When Darcy defends his position in his explanatory letter to Elizabeth, it is clear that even though Elizabeth is admirably self-possessed, it is impossible for her separate herself from her family's behavior. Darcy alludes to Mrs. Bennet's constant speculation over potential husbands for her daughters as well as Mr. Bennet's embarrassment of Mary after her pretentious performance at the Netherfield ball, where he tells her, "That will do extremely well, child. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit" (69).

It seems unhappiness in the marriage state offers no less than a continuation of mistakes and a sharpening of faults, for Mrs. Bennet's penchant for gossip and evident indulgence of her own bad temper, and Mr. Bennet's withdrawal from acting as the family's patriarch both display the fact that both characters are not the best version of themselves. Their inability to reach their potential as human beings not only damages Darcy's opinion of the ladies' family connections, but also shapes his advice to Bingley to avoid an engagement to Jane. Beyond this, and even more serious, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marital discord later threatens the family reputation to a precarious degree in the elopement of Lydia. Mrs. Bennet's insistence that Lydia be allowed to go to Brighton with the Forsters is expected; Lydia's flamboyant behavior as a flirt is evidence for her mother's influence on her, but Mr. Bennet's lack of intervention when his observant nature has not blinded him to the "silliness" of his younger daughters, is difficult to overlook. As he admits: "Lydia will never be easy till she has exposed herself in some public place or the other, and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under the present circumstances" (151). Mr. Bennet repents of his behavior, though, while Mrs. Bennet is still nervously demanding attention

for her misfortunes in her dressing gown: ““Who should suffer but myself? This was my doing and I ought to feel it,”” he laments (194).

The Legacy of the Unhappy Marriage

While Claudia Johnson argues that “Austen did not share Johnson’s deep anxiety for the moral stability of readers, and [...] she relied more confidently on her audience’s ability to read properly,” it is clear that Austen does not wish to dismiss the effects of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet’s folly on their children as a potential anomaly. While Austen relies on her audience to “read properly,” it is made very clear that Lydia and Wickham are not making a wise choice. Following the course of the Bennet parents, Lydia enters into a union with Wickham that roots itself in impatience, much like many other of Austen and Johnson’s unhappy marriages. Lydia Bennet and George Wickham are a striking version of Johnson’s Zephyretta and Prudentius (Johnson 246). In the flirtatious, deceitful, and socially aspirant George Wickham, Austen presents the carelessness of a man looking for a quick and easy fortune to pay off his many gambling debts. While Wickham’s “manners were always engaging,” his motives are never pure, and he finds in Lydia Bennet an easy target for supplying his need for money. When Wickham discovers that Lydia’s family cannot provide much of a dowry, he refuses to marry her until the generosity of Mr. Darcy saves Lydia’s already tarnished reputation. Austen writes that “Wickham would never marry a woman without some money,” and he uses Lydia’s (and indeed *all* of the Bennet girls’ reputations) as a bargaining chip. Wickham is an extreme portrait of Johnson’s Prudentius, the man who seeks a marriage contract like a business settlement. Further, Lydia Bennet is the flirtatious Zephyretta that Johnson warns his

reader about: Elizabeth describes her as evolving into the “most determined flirt that ever made her family ridiculous,” maintaining that Lydia “has been allowed to dispose of her time in the most idle and frivolous manner” (183). Johnson, who was a hearty advocate of women’s education, is clearly heard in this complaint against one of Austen’s vainest characters.⁷

Mr. Elliot’s Pursuit of Anne

Persuasion’s Mr. Elliot bears a remarkable resemblance to Mr. Wickham, and while his attempts to woo Anne to secure his fortune fail, his past is not innocent of a similar transgression. His pursuit of Anne is flattering, yet she persistently acknowledges that something is amiss in his behavior—there is an inconsistency between Mr. Elliot’s past and present behavior to his cousins that unsettles Anne. In the first chapter, the narrator mentions that Mr. William Elliot had once been expected to marry Elizabeth, who had set her cap at marrying the heir presumptive “while a young girl, as soon as she had known him to be...and her father had always meant that she should” (6). Their hopes were disappointed, however: “instead of pushing his fortune in the line marked out for the heir of the house of Elliot, he had purchased independence by uniting himself to a rich woman of inferior birth” (6). Sir Walter and Elizabeth so resent this apparent slight that after many years’ interval, even though Mr. William Elliot is now a widower, there is no consideration of renewing the connection. Deepening the wound, Mr. Elliot is also rumored to have “spoken most disrespectfully of them all, most slightly and

⁷ “He [Johnson] maintained to me, contrary to the common notion, that a woman would not be the worse wife for being learned...I humbly differed from him,” (Boswell 406).

contemptuously of the blood he belonged to, and the honors which were hereafter to be his own. This could not be pardoned” (7).

Despite the long-held grudge, the Sir Walter and Elizabeth *do* forgive Mr. Elliot, much to Anne’s perplexity. Upon his return into their lives, “They had not a fault to find in him. He had explained away all the appearance of neglect on his own side [...] He had never had an idea of throwing himself off; he had feared that he himself had been thrown off, but knew not why; and delicacy had kept him silent” (91). Austen’s use of free indirect discourse, as in most of her descriptions of her villains, makes it difficult to say what the truth may be at this point, as the hopes of a union between Elizabeth and Mr. William Elliot may have been unfounded, and the division may have been a result of their resentfulness; however, their perceptions and knowledge of Mr. Elliot’s behaviors may have been absolutely correct. Anne has difficulties in discerning the truth of Mr. Elliot’s character, and thankfully, her old schoolmate, Mrs. Smith, has a clear insight into the truth of his behavior and character. At first Anne believes that Mr. Elliot’s motivations may be to pursue Elizabeth; she begins to believe that “[t]here might really have been a liking formerly, though convenience and accident had drawn him a different way, and now that he could afford to please himself, he might mean to pay his addresses to [Elizabeth]” (92). This theory is soon departed from, as Anne quickly sees that Mr. Elliot is more impressed with *her* than her sister.

Similar to Elizabeth Bennet’s initial impression of George Wickham, Anne Elliot is immediately flattered by Mr. Elliot’s attentions. She even goes so far as to compare him to Wentworth, her lost love: “[Mr. Elliot] was quite as good-looking as he had appeared at Lyme, his countenance improved by speaking, and his manners were exactly

what they ought to be, so polished, so easy, so particularly agreeable, that she could compare them in excellence to only one person's manners. They were not the same, but they were, perhaps, equally good" (94). Anne, perhaps from longer acquaintance with the world, is less trusting of appearances than Elizabeth Bennet. Mr. Elliot's interest in Anne continually burdens her feelings with confusion:

She felt a great deal of ill will towards him [...] she owed him flattery and regard, perhaps compassion. She could not help thinking much of the extraordinary circumstances attending the acquaintance; of the right which he seemed to have to interest her, by everything in situation, by his own sentiments, by his early prepossession. It was all extraordinary.—Flattering, but painful [...] How she would have felt had there been no Captain Wentworth in the case, was not worth enquiry; for there was a Captain Wentworth: and be the present suspense good or bad, her affection would be his forever. (127)

Anne has the advantage in this case of knowing the true character of the man she loves, but there is something to be said about the fact that Anne, ever-mindful of duty to her family to the point of willingly losing her beloved Wentworth eight years earlier, cannot make herself admire Mr. Elliot enough to feel comfortable in his addresses.

Upon learning the truth, Anne has no doubt in the veracity of the information Mrs. Smith willingly intimates, even though she is flattered by Mr. Elliot's attentions and is assured by Lady Russell, who previously persuaded her *not* to marry Wentworth, that they would be "happy together" (105). This departure from following Lady Russell's advice is not only assurance of Anne's maturity and steadfast love, but also that Anne's

intuition gives her notice that the character of Mr. Elliot, Wentworth's only competitor, is just as Mrs. Smith intimates:

Mr. Elliot is a man without heart or conscience; a designing, wary, cold-blooded being, who thinks only of himself; who, for his own interest or ease, would be guilty of any cruelty, or treachery, that could be perpetrated without risk to his general character. He has no feeling for others. Those whom he has been the chief cause of leading into ruin, he can neglect and desert without the smallest compunction. He is totally beyond the reach of any sentiment of justice or compassion. Oh! he is black at heart, hollow and black! (132)

This passage is indeed the harshest chastisement of any of Austen's villains, yet while the manner of Mrs. Smith's expressions astonishes Anne, the information is not a surprise: "there was something of his conduct then with regard to my father and sister, and afterwards in the circumstances of his marriage, which I could never quite reconcile with present times" (132). Anne makes this admission well before she knows all of the particulars of Mr. Elliot's life, and her frank concession that she had not felt comfortable with his character explains her ability to place her confidence in Mrs. Smith's communication. If Anne Elliot, who can endure all of her father and sisters' vanity and snobbery cannot, for the sake of family and duty, think well enough of the heir to the baronetcy to give him the benefit of the doubt, there must have truly been something "black" about his heart, as the progress of the action eventually reveals. While Mr. Elliot fails in his attempts to entrap Anne in his scheme of securing his fortune, it does not clear him from the guilt of marrying his first wife "without a difficulty or a scruple[...] on his side, with respect to her birth" (133). Even Anne, who had not been acquainted with Mr.

Elliot during his first marriage, knows that they were “not a happy couple,” which Mrs. Smith attributes to the fact that he married for money, just as Austen’s Wickham and Willoughby have done.

Willoughby’s Libertinism

Willoughby, of all of Austen’s villains, seems to receive the most mercy from the narrative in *Sense and Sensibility*. Despite the fact that he is a libertine, who impregnated Eliza Williams, Colonel Brandon’s ward, in addition to breaking an implicit trust with Marianne in order to marry Miss Grey and her 30,000 pounds, he is allowed the opportunity to defend his actions and even engage the sympathies of the rational, warm-hearted Elinor. There is one advantage of this defense—Willoughby’s most condemning evidence as a Prudentius figure comes from his own mouth: “Do not talk to me of my wife,” said he with an heavy sigh.—“She does not deserve your compassion.—She knew I had no regard for her when we married” (234). As a result of his hasty choice to throw off his unspoken commitment to Marianne, Willoughby finds his “[d]omestic happiness is out of the question” (235). Despite his confessed love for Marianne, Willoughby “had reason to believe himself secure of his present wife, if [he] chose to address her, and [he] persuaded himself to think that nothing else in common prudence remained for him to do” (229). While Willoughby is punished by his over-concern with money and reputation, his punishment is domestic unhappiness, the end of which is uncertain, but during his meeting with Elinor, he is already speculating about a “blessed chance at liberty again,” and Elinor is forced to be the conscience Willoughby appears not to

possess (235-6). It was a near miss for Marianne, but Willoughby admittedly will suffer for his “common prudence” just as Johnson’s Prudentius does.

In Austen’s novels, Willoughby, similar to Hymenaeus in *Rambler No. 113*, is remembered as the suitor “who raises hopes only to embitter disappointment, and makes offers only to seduce girls into a waste of that part of life in which they might gain advantageous matches, and become mistresses and mothers” (208). Fortunately, Marianne does not share the fate of Miss Williams, and is able to make a better match as a result of Willoughby’s selfishness. Whatever doubts the most skeptical reader may have of Marianne’s happiness with Colonel Brandon, it is Willoughby who does not follow Johnson’s advice that he “make his choice and be content,” as his visit and confession of regret to Elinor proves so thoroughly. Willoughby’s self-punishment is proof of Austen’s benevolence as a satirist, a trait she shares with Johnson. By not condemning Willoughby outright, Austen proves that her sharpest tool as a novelist is an understanding of human failings that many earlier prose writers did not find necessary, depriving their characters of any hope of epiphany of self. For example, Jonathan Swift “lacked something that is probably indispensable to the novelist, kindly regard or even sympathetic tolerance of his species [...] He could not have written a novel had it occurred to him to attempt it” (Baker 230).

Beyond this benevolence toward Willoughby also lies a knowledge of the woman’s plight that Johnson does not intimate in his accounts of Hymenaeus⁸, as Austen

⁸ This is not to say that Johnson is unfeeling or unaware of the plight of women in a patriarchal society. He renders a thorough account of violence against women in the form of prostitution in *Ramblers No. 170* and *171*, “*A Prostitute’s Story*,” which is a

is well aware that for women like Marianne and Miss Williams, the stakes are much higher. A man like Willoughby can be a libertine and still have a respectable marriage in his future; a woman in Miss Williams' situation is forever marked and removed from society. This regard for the situation of women in Austen's works demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the effects of the influence of patriarchal order, as well as an empathy for the situations both sexes find themselves in when negotiating a marriage partner (although it would be unwise not to acknowledge that women in Austen's time had fewer opportunities to make their own unrestricted choice of life).

Impatience and Delay Revisited by Austen

Like Johnson's warnings against the mistakes that result in connubial misery, Austen's warnings are often founded upon the same downfalls: impatience and delay. A mistaken decision in either direction unfailingly results in an unharmonious, unfulfilling community on some level. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are a couple not knowing each other well enough in "varying circles" (182). Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill in *Emma* have an almost word-for-word debate upon a similar topic during their near falling-out at Highbury, when Frank Churchill is publically cruel and harsh toward Jane Fairfax in order to hide their secret relationship. Speaking with an understood double meaning between them, Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax discuss Mr. and Mrs. Elton's good fortune in being such a "happy couple!" despite their "marrying as they did, upon an acquaintance formed only in a public place," knowing each other for only "a few

harrowing account of a young woman who is forced into prostitution by a cousin who professed his intention to take care of her as a young girl.

weeks in Bath,” without Mr. Elton having seen Mrs. Elton in her own home “among [her] own set” (244). This is a veiled insult to Jane, with whom he had quarreled the day before. In this speech, he accuses himself of an inability to discern *her* true character, to which she replies:

That though such unfortunate circumstances do sometimes occur both to men and women, I cannot imagine them to be very frequent. A hasty and imprudent attachment may arise—but there is generally time to recover from it afterwards. I would be understood to mean, that it can only be weak, irresolute characters, (whose happiness must always be at the mercy of chance,) who will suffer an unfortunate acquaintance to be an inconvenience, an oppression forever (244).

This speech implies that Jane, frustrated with Mr. Churchill’s insinuations about *her* character, is willing to allow him to break the engagement if he feels he would be miserable. *His* assertion matches sentiments expressed by Hymenaeus, who attributes Melissus’s marital dissatisfaction to the fact that he had “no other company” than Ianthe and soon “addressed her as lover” and “obtained her for his wife” (198). Ianthe, when moved into public life, turns out to be “expensive in her diversions, vehement in her passions, and insatiate of pleasure however dangerous to her reputation,” leaving Melissus unhappy in his choice. Frank Churchill may not be insinuating all of these things about Jane Fairfax, but the insinuation of not understanding her character fully demonstrates the same principle. Jane’s rebuttal offers him the wiser solution to his problem, in which she insinuates that he should be wise enough to use his misunderstanding of her character to break off their engagement, and like Johnson’s Florentius (whose plight is described just before the plight of Melissus), use his “better

knowledge of the world” to prevent lasting unhappiness. This is not to say that Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax are unable to ever find happiness in marriage or that they do not love one another, but the relationship itself is founded on dangerous principles—Mr. Churchill is a man of fortune, but not liberty, and Jane Fairfax carries a quiet passion that makes it difficult for her to face his hurtful triviality in hiding their relationship from others.

The secret engagement between Edward Ferrars and Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility* is another example of an undesirable relationship made under the influence of impatience and what Edward admits to be “idleness” (255). Their relationship is almost a worst-case scenario warning for young people who might find him or herself wanting to fall in love for love’s sake. Lucy is a silly, ignorant, jealous girl who knows Edward does not have a fortune to provide for her, yet she keeps him bound to their secret engagement out of her own vanity. Edward is honorable, loyal, and completely devoted to their promise, despite his hidden love for the infinitely preferable Elinor. It is a situation that could prove fatal to both their hopes for a fulfilling marriage on any level, be it pecuniary, emotional, or otherwise. The connection between Edward and Lucy is far from pleasant. They are both trapped in a limbo of not even knowing when they will be able to marry, which leads to somewhat of a social chaos as their communities expand. Edward falls in love with Elinor, and Lucy Steele takes great lengths to be introduced into Elinor’s social circle simply to stake her own claim. Lucy befriends the spiteful Mrs. Ferrars to curry favor for herself and hopefully gain the family’s approval for the match. The result is the painful impossibility of a marriage between Edward and Elinor, months of a forced “confidence” between Lucy and Elinor, public shame brought upon Lucy

Steele when she is publically sent away from Mrs. Ferrars' home. The match is described by Edward as being, "a foolish, idle inclination on my side [...] the consequence of ignorance of the world—and want of employment. Had my mother given me some active profession at eighteen [...] I think—nay, I am sure, it would never have happened" (255-6). Edward's confession resembles Nekayah's censure that "many fancied that they were in love when in truth they were only idle" (375). The recovery of Edward's heart from entrapment in an undesirable marriage seems almost the work of a miracle, yet it is a believable one as its origin resides in Lucy's faulty, vain character much like the continuation of the engagement had. As Austen describes the event, Robert had sought Lucy's acquaintance to "persuade her to give up the engagement [to Edward]," but "[i]nstead of talking of Edward, they came gradually to talk only of Robert [...] in short, it became speedily evident to both, that he had entirely supplanted his brother" (266). In this instance, Lucy resembles Johnson's Zephyretta more even than Lydia Bennet—her charms wear out on Edward, and nothing is left but "childish insipidity" and for her to "practice the same artifices" on other men. Of Lucy's unbecoming, adamant adherence to the engagement with Edward, the only conclusion anyone can draw is Elinor, who believes that Lucy felt that "it would be better to marry [Edward] than to be single" (260). This appears to be a digression from sharing Johnson's opinion, as the phrase certainly shares the meaning of Nekayah's claim that "[m]arriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures" (377). The fact that Austen would attribute Lucy's tenacity in maintaining her engagement to Edward despite their long-faded affection for one another demonstrates a case where certainly this maxim could not always be true. Lucy and Edward do not appear to have even the hope of

contentment, as he will lose his fortune and family upon marrying her and they will have nothing to live upon. Fortunately, the relationship between Edward and Lucy is one of the near misses for her admirable characters, demonstrating that literature can indeed “teach us what we may hope, and what we can perform” through the *concordia discors* relationship that Edward finds with Elinor.

The Dangers of Celibacy Considered

It should be noted that Austen deals further with this issue of celibacy vs. marriage in *Emma*, and in some ways shows a more thorough argument both for and against it. Where she may put a similar idea to Johnson’s forward in *Sense and Sensibility* as a manner of rationalizing Lucy’s irrational behavior, she considers the various sides of the argument in a deeper manner in *Emma*. In Miss Bates and Emma, Austen creates a comparison between choosing to marry for love in the liberty of fortune, and not marrying at all and finding oneself poverty-stricken. When Harriet cannot fathom why Emma is not and does not plan to marry, she laments that Emma will end an “old maid,” to which Emma memorably parlays, “Never mind, Harriet; I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public” (56). Emma sees the privileged position she holds as a woman of her day, but does not necessarily see the potential pain of Harriet’s situation as an illegitimate child and a young single girl. Harriet faces a more difficult fate even than Miss Bates, who never married and sinks further into poverty as her life progresses. Austen shows that Emma is astutely aware of the advantages of her own lifestyle—Emma declares that she would “be a fool to change a situation such as [her own]” (55). Painfully, Emma’s ignorance of the

potential disadvantages that marriage customs have on others endangers the future of Harriet—Emma persuades Harriet to refuse the proposal of her equal, while matching her with a man who seeks to improve his own situation in marriage, leaving Harriet fortunate that Mr. Martin renews his addresses at the end of the novel.

The Forced Compromise of Choice of Life in a Patriarchal Society: Marriage for Security

Austen's approaches the variations of contentment in the marriage state in a subtler manner than does Johnson; the contrasts between choices of life are not so black and white in Austen's works. For example, Austen also writes of some lesser offenses in the matrimonial state, such as the Charlotte Lucas-Mr. Collins debacle—an example of Johnson's woman who "put[s] on the bridal ornaments when they least become [her]" (198). Charlotte, an established old maid in Elizabeth's social circle, loses much of Elizabeth Bennet's respect in her unabashed pursuit of Mr. Collins's hand in marriage. It is impossible for Elizabeth to understand how a woman of seemingly good sense and self-possession would sink to marry a ridiculous sycophant such as Mr. Collins, but the answer is found in Charlotte's age (she is in her late twenties) and the fact that she desires the stable social situation that Collins can offer: "I am not romantic you know...I ask only a comfortable home; and [...] I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state" (85). Charlotte's decision renders her pitiful in the mind of Elizabeth, who imagines the flurried courtship and impending marriage between Charlotte and Collins to be "a most humiliating picture!" (86). By pairing this couple, Austen contrasts the Collinses with Johnson's

ideal—Charlotte is practical, frank, and generous while Collins is self-serving, obsequious, and ingratiating. In short, the two have more differences than similarities, which make it impossible for the couple to obtain the Johnsonian ideal of *concordia discors* (Hagstrum 127).

The account in *Pride and Prejudice* is bleak, but not despairing, as Charlotte and Collins seem to get along fine in their arrangement, but there is certainly something missing in their marriage that Austen contrasts with the Elizabeth and Darcy union. Although Elizabeth Bennet cannot reconcile herself to the choice of her friend, Charlotte Lucas is somewhat to be pitied for the position in which she is placed; a woman of her age and social situation would not have had any agreeable alternative. As Jane Bennet notes in a discussion with Elizabeth on Charlotte's situation, "Remember that she is one of a large family; that as to fortune it is a most eligible match, and be ready to believe, for every body's sake, that she may feel something like regard or esteem for our cousin" (91). As the novel progresses it becomes clear that a match of equal minds like Darcy and Elizabeth is infinitely preferable, but not always possible. Upon her visit to Kent, Elizabeth notices that, while not her style of contentment, the Collinses enjoy their situation more than she would have predicted:

[E]verything was fitted up and arranged with a neatness and consistency of which Elizabeth gave Charlotte all the credit. When Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really an air of comfort throughout, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must often be forgotten (105).

While this arrangement is not the material for a love story, the Collinses appear to get along to Elizabeth's satisfaction that her friend is at least able to navigate contentment in her choice:

Elizabeth at first had rather wondered that Charlotte should not prefer the dining parlour for common use; it was a better sized room, it had a pleasanter aspect; but she soon saw that her friend had an excellent reason for what she did, for Mr. Collins would undoubtedly have been much less in his own apartment, had they sat in one equally lively; and she gave Charlotte credit for the arrangement. (112)

While Elizabeth could never condone a marriage that was not a result of love, as is evidenced by her initial refusal of Mr. Darcy, she eventually comes to terms with her friend's situation, admiring the "command of countenance with which Charlotte talked of the healthfulness of [Mr. Collins' gardening], and owned that she encouraged it as much as possible" (104). It is in this type of commentary on the situations of young women that Austen surpasses Johnson's own portrayal of the hardships of the marriage market, as Austen does not neglect the inequality of agency that women possess in making their own choice of life. As Claudia Johnson states, "Austen's use of Johnson shows that she considered his aims and procedures complimentary to her own and that he opened up possibilities for her own inquiries into people's minds" (38).

Concordia Discors: The Necessity of Similarity

In a similar manner to *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen sets the romance between Emma and Mr. Knightley in the context of other content, but perhaps not ideal,

relationships. *Emma* has Mr. and Mrs. Elton to show that marriage among equals can *work*, even if it is not a *concordia discors* match. Although Mr. Elton marries Mrs. Elton after a flurried courtship in Bath, they appear to have enough similarities to be content. They join forces to snub Harriet and Emma, demonstrating that they share a similar spitefulness toward Emma's past mistake. Sadly, it is not an admirable quality that they share, but they appear to get along nonetheless. Ostensibly, they are an affectionate couple—Emma gets annoyed with how often Mrs. Elton talks of her “Mr. E,” or her “*cara sposo*” to the point that she declares her an “[i]nsufferable woman” with “airs of pert pretension and under-bred finery” (181). While Emma may know that Harriet is a superior woman and that she is “disgraced by any comparison” to Mrs. Elton, Mr. Elton seems content in his choice. The two apparently share opinions on everyone around them: decidedly “Knightley” is a favorite with them both, Emma is snubbed, and Jane Fairfax adored. Other characters outwardly admire them as being happy in their choice of one another; Frank Churchill declares them a “Happy couple,” and, as mentioned before, he discusses their luck in “How well they suit one another! [...] marrying as they did, upon an acquaintance formed only in a public place” (244). While Frank is using this statement as a veiled observation about the conflict he and Jane have recently had, he does have good reason to make this observation. The affection between Mr. Elton and his wife is at least shown publicly, even though there is no knowledge given of what they may be like at home. Just before Frank's statement, Mr. Elton refers to his wife as “Augusta,” her Christian name, rather than Mrs. Elton, which does not occur much between Austen's couples—while it may irritate Emma, it at least demonstrates a commitment to showing affection for one another (244).

Austen makes a similar match to Mr. and Mrs. Elton's in *Persuasion* between Louisa Musgrove and Captain Benwick. Louisa, who, until her concussion at Lyme was infatuated with Captain Wentworth, suddenly discovers a passion for Romantic poetry that she did not earlier possess. While there is no reason to suppose the two to be unhappy together, Austen provides adequate evidence that the two are more dissimilar than similar, removing them from the candidacy of having a Johnsonian *concordia discors* match, and making them a curiosity to the reflective characters of the novel. Upon learning of the engagement, Anne wonders that "the high-spirited, joyous, talking Louisa Musgrove and the dejecting, thinking, feeling, reading Captain Benwick" could fall in love. Very much in support of harmonious matches, Anne notes that "[t]heir minds are most dissimilar! Where could have been the attraction?" (110). She does not think ill of the match; she only discovers that Benwick was "not inconsolable" over the death of his earlier fiancée, and that "[h]e must love somebody" because "he had an affectionate heart" (110-1). The situation does not give the same general contentment that Mr. and Mrs. Elton's appears to; Captain Harville is left to lament the course that Benwick has chosen, wondering if his desire to love again so quickly is a mark of human nature, and declaring that his dear sister (Benwick's deceased fiancée) "would not have forgotten [Benwick] so soon" (155).

Mr. Palmer and Charlotte are a good example of a content, but not entirely happy, marriage in *Sense and Sensibility*. While it outwardly appears that Mr. Palmer is unhappy with Charlotte and she is too unobservant to realize it, Austen does provide some relief to Mr. Palmer's insensitivity when Elinor and Marianne visit the Palmer's home. After Charlotte shares that Mr. Palmer is running for Parliament and that he

doesn't like writing, he asserts, "I never said any thing so irrational. Don't palm all your abuses of language on me" (83). Unlike Darcy, Mr. Palmer is less forgiving toward his wife's silly mother, Mrs. Jenkins, whom he calls "ill bred" in front of Elinor and Marianne (82). It is not a promising account of their marriage, but Charlotte is expecting her first child and seems complacent enough to ignore his insulting behavior. Their relationship at home is not described much, but his behavior at Cleveland is strikingly different enough for Elinor to take note of it:

Elinor had seen so little of Mr. Palmer, and in that little had seen so much variety in his address to her sister and herself, that she knew not what to expect to find him in his own family. She found him, however, perfectly the gentleman in his behavior to all his visitors, and only occasionally rude to his wife and her mother; she found him very capable of being a pleasant companion, and only prevented from being so always, by too great an aptitude to fancy himself as much superior to people in general, as he must feel himself to be to Mrs.

Jennings and Charlotte. (215-6)

This observation of Elinor's indicates that Charlotte may be more discerning and knowledgeably forgiving of her husband's gruffness than given credit for previously. If he is "perfectly the gentleman" to his guests and concerned with the appearance of being "superior to people in general," he may behave gruffly to assert his superiority to those around him, at the cost of humiliating his wife and mother-in-law when they embarrass him. The fact that Charlotte previously stated that "he must make everyone like him" due to his campaign for Parliament, shows that she may have more insight into his character than she is given credit for; she knows her husband is concerned with appearances and

forgives his insults toward her out of understanding rather than ignorance. It is certainly not an ideal marriage, but the two are satisfied in their arrangement: Charlotte is at home in giving profuse, undeserved affection, and Mr. Palmer in appearing to undervalue it and her.

The Appearance of *Concordia Discors* Among Austen's Protagonists

By cleverly situating all of her love stories as foils against less-ideal ones, Austen brings Johnson's "choice of life" out of the pages of *Rasselas* and into the drawing rooms of the landed gentry, making happiness in the choice of life an accessible concept to the "young the ignorant, and the idle." Like Johnson's *Rasselas* and *Nekayah*, Austen's characters often find true happiness in their choice of life by gently stepping away from social pressures and norms (although outright rebellion often leads to unhappiness and near-exile, with little possibility of return to acceptable society). Like *Rasselas* and *Nekayah*, Austen's heroes and heroines are never far from the social norms, but often rise above the traditions and customs that would govern their lives into unhappiness. For *Rasselas* and *Nekayah* and the others, happiness is deferred to eternity beyond temporal existence and all choices of life are all potentially dangerous and unhappy; for Austen's characters, the choices are more particular, an effective demonstration of the fundamentals of Johnson's *concordia discors*.

Despite all their flaws and griefs, Austen's protagonists discover and seize their *concordia discors*. Most of them discover happiness in their choice of life through a growing, selective community of advisors and friends, who become the stable society within which their futures prove promising; sometimes these communities are made up of

those who do not share the protagonist's values, but certainly have practical insight to offer.

Austen further includes Johnson's ideas on marriage and premarital errors in Darcy's refusal to dance publicly until he is completely bewitched by Elizabeth. Where Johnson warns against allowing dancing to be the only shared form of pleasure, Austen denies her heroine of that opportunity with Darcy from the beginning of the novel. Elizabeth does not fall in love with her most suitable match in the same way that her sanguine sister Jane does. In fact, it is Darcy's refusal to dance with Elizabeth that causes her to be offended by him upon their first exposure to each other: "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*," Darcy abruptly refuses (9). It is not until Darcy loves Elizabeth and she absolutely abhors him that the two dance with one another. Although Darcy is described as being a "superior danc[er]," Elizabeth merely "talks by the rule" and chooses to find fault in Darcy's character by quizzing him on what she sees as his severely resentful nature. Darcy alone walks away from the dance with a sense of satisfaction because he held a "tolerable powerful feeling toward [Elizabeth]" (62-4). Austen carefully weaves this scene into the novel as a way of allowing Darcy and Elizabeth to converse freely with one another, but also to demonstrate that the two strong-willed and intelligent characters are, despite Darcy's attraction to Elizabeth's "fine eyes," above being pleased merely by the physical pleasure of dancing with a "superior partner"—the superiority of each other's minds is what creates the bond that Austen and Johnson agree to be most commendable—*concordia discors*.

Interestingly, Austen gleans many of Johnson's most succinct and insightful maxims out of their context and embeds them in her own work. In his essay on the novel, Johnson writes that

[P]ride, which produces a quickness of resentment, will obstruct gratitude, by unwillingness to admit that inferiority which obligation implies; and it is very unlikely that he who cannot think he receives a favor will acknowledge to repay it. (178).

This is wisdom that reappears in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* not only in theme but also in dialogue. Austen repeats various parts of this maxim at times of revelation for her protagonists, Elizabeth and Darcy. Early on, Darcy states that "pride—where there is real superiority of mind, pride will always be under good regulation," yet further admits to what Elizabeth calls "implacable resentment" in his inability to forgive when his good opinion is lost (39-40). Darcy seems to overlook the connection between the two as having a cause and effect relationship, but through the course of the novel, more of Johnson's significant aside is quoted in moments of conflict or crisis for the protagonists. Elizabeth, who suffers from pride herself, admits that until she realized her mistakenly biased sketch of Darcy's character, "she never knew herself" (137). Elizabeth has a more dramatic reformation than Darcy, as she had little self-knowledge of her own character defect, whereas Darcy merely has to adjust his viewpoint and behavior in order to properly "regulate" his own pride. Ultimately, the fulfillment of Johnson's portentous statement comes when Elizabeth finds herself feeling "[g]ratitude" that Darcy "love[s] her still well enough" despite all the pride that stood between them (172). At this point in the novel, Johnson's statement has been supported by many instances of "favors" both

given and received: Darcy receives the honor of Elizabeth's reading his letter and pardoning his supposed crimes, Elizabeth is forgiven for her presuppositions, and, above all, Darcy truly overcomes social differences and chooses a woman he loves rather than a monetarily prudent match.

Before Darcy and Elizabeth are united in their good opinions of each other, Austen depicts yet another subject of Johnson in one of the major themes of the novel—pride, resentment, and gratitude. In *Rambler No. 129*, which centers around “The Need for General Knowledge,” Johnson writes that he who “can only converse upon questions about which only a small part of mankind has knowledge...must lose his days in unsocial silence, and live in the crowd of life without a companion” (224). Darcy, who sees “disguise of every sort” as his “abhorrence,” rarely ventures to make himself pleasing to those around him (127). “I am ill qualified to recommend myself to strangers” Darcy says, pardoning himself (116). This is where much of the early dislike of Darcy originates, but he takes Elizabeth Bennet's Johnsonian advice that “a man of sense and education, who has lived in the world, is...qualified” and that it merely takes the “trouble of practicing” to do so (116-7). This Johnsonian precept has more effect on their relationship than the others, because Darcy's outward behavior displays his inward feelings toward Elizabeth upon meeting her at Pemberley: through his softened manners, Elizabeth sees that Darcy “was [still] very much in love with her” (171).

Austen takes great care to situate Darcy and Elizabeth's blossoming relationship within the framework of Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins's forced relationship. The protagonists' acquaintance is deepened upon their simultaneous visit to Kent, and it is in the sitting room of the parsonage that Darcy first declares his love for Elizabeth. It is no

coincidence on Austen's part that this is possibly the most passionate scene to take place in the home, as the narrator makes it clear that the room has been set aside by Charlotte as her sitting room so that she may avoid Mr. Collins for most of the daily tasks (112). Surprisingly, Charlotte is also one of the few to give Elizabeth some discerning hints on Darcy's infatuation and even offers some very wise love advice concerning both the eldest Bennet sisters' situations (15, 62, 119). Although Charlotte's rash decision to marry the ridiculous Mr. Collins is frustrating, Austen makes a point to give her the benefit of good sense and a practical understanding of the complexities human discourse. For example, Charlotte notices first that Jane shows little affection for Mr. Bingley, and advises Elizabeth that a woman "had better *shew* more affection than she feels" if she wishes to "secure" a man (15). Charlotte further discloses her wisdom at the point of telling Elizabeth that she would be foolish to disregard the admiration of a man like Mr. Darcy (62).

For Austen, Charlotte is not a cold, calculating stoic who marries out of necessity without knowledge or reason. She is a pitiable product of her time: an old maid with no alternative other than the possibility of growing poorer and less respected, in the fashion of *Emma's* Miss Bates; however, Austen presents Elizabeth with the opportunity for *concordia discors* with Mr. Darcy on Charlotte and Mr. Collins's territory in order to depict the ideal and the alternative, respectively. Unfortunately, Darcy's mid-novel proposal to Elizabeth is ill-timed: he is impatient in his pursuit, and she is taken aback by his conflicted declaration (125). This scene is the advent of a journey of forgiveness and a discovery of mutual respect that eventually leads to an enviable marriage between the two strong-willed protagonists. In the true spirit of *concordia discors*, Austen allows the

romance between Darcy and Elizabeth to reach its denouement under the watchful eye of a couple who themselves appear to have a grasp on a harmonious marriage—Elizabeth’s Aunt and Uncle Gardiner, who first encourage her to visit Pemberley on their tour, and offer opportunities to spend further time with the Darcys while in Lambton. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner are observant of the changes in Mr. Darcy’s character from Elizabeth’s own description of it, and Mrs. Gardiner gives her a look “expressive of her wonder,” as Mr. Gardiner comments “He is perfectly polite, well-behaved, and unassuming” (167). Her aunt assures her that “he is not so handsome as Wickham; or rather he has not Wickham’s countenance, for his features are perfectly good. But how came you to tell us he was so disagreeable?” (167) Elizabeth finds herself discovering Darcy’s true character not only through her own observations, but also through the information given by his housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, who says she has known Darcy since he was four years old, but has “never heard a cross word from him in [her] life” (161). Mrs. Reynolds also presents Darcy as the ideal brother: affectionate and attentive. He has “lately fitted up” a sitting room for Georgiana that she took a liking to on her last visit, and Mrs. Reynolds says that “[w]hatever can give his sister any pleasure, is sure to be done in a moment. There is nothing he would not do for her” (162). These unbiased glimpses into Darcy’s private life could only be afforded by a servant who has observed him closely with people of different social positions, making Mrs. Reynolds the most reliable, unbiased source of information on Darcy’s true character throughout the novel. As Claudia Johnson points out, Elizabeth’s “realization that a view of Darcy’s domestic life sheds light on his real character originates in Johnson’s advice to biographers (those other students of character) ‘to lead thoughts into domestick privacies’ and dramatizes his

claim that ‘more knowledge may be gained of a man’s real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral’ (Rambler 60)” (Claudia Johnson 30).

Elizabeth’s discovery of the true Darcy is furthered by her aunt and uncle’s speculations about Darcy’s character and admiration for her. After Elizabeth’s epiphany of her love for Darcy and her own mistaken pride, and her forfeit of all hope that Darcy would ever form an “alliance and relationship of the nearest kind [brother-in-law] with the man whom he so justly scorned [Wickham],” her hope is only rekindled through the kind intervention of her Aunt Gardiner’s letter, which explains Mr. Darcy’s role in Lydia and Wickham’s marriage, and insinuates that Darcy indeed had “*another interest*” (Elizabeth) in taking part in the resolution of the scandal. Without Mrs. Gardiner’s kind indulgence of Elizabeth’s need for information about the affair, Elizabeth may not have ever withstood Lady Catherine’s questioning with so much resolve, and Mr. Darcy may not have proposed after all:

[Elizabeth] soon learned that they were indebted for their present good understanding to the efforts of his aunt, who *did* call on him in her return through London, and there relate her journey to Longbourn, its motive, and the substance of her conversation with Elizabeth; dwelling emphatically on every expression of the latter, which in her ladyship’s apprehension, peculiarly denoted her perverseness and assurance, in the belief that such a relation must assist her endeavors to obtain that promise from her nephew which *she* refused to give. But, unluckily for her ladyship, its effect had been exactly contrariwise.

“It taught me to hope,” said [Darcy] “as I had scarcely allowed myself to hope before. I knew enough of your disposition to be certain, that, had you been absolutely, irrevocably decided against me, you would have acknowledged it to Lady Catherine, frankly and openly?” (239)

This pleasant compromise for Darcy and Elizabeth produces the most delightful “suitable disagreement” as Darcy’s seriousness is balanced by Elizabeth’s playfulness and *vice versa*. Johnson would have heartily approved of Austen’s marriage of two equal minds and hearts, and the friendship that results from their early hardship—they embody his Hymenaeus and Tranquilla in every aspect but one: their fortunes are not equal.

While this inequality of fortune is typically an enormous impediment to marriage for love, Austen navigates around this well. The strength of Darcy’s love is forced upon Elizabeth when she sees Pemberley; she reflects that, “of this place...I might have been mistress! With these rooms I might now have been familiarly acquainted! Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might now have been rejoiced in them as my own” (159). Austen, ever-careful of the readers assumptions, has given us a view of Elizabeth at another grand house—Rosings—of which there is no rapture of Elizabeth’s thoughts; thus, it can only be assumed that Elizabeth is not being selfishly materialistic, but rather realizing the legitimacy of Mr. Darcy’s pride and hesitation in asking for her hand in marriage, as well as the truth of his love for her. While Darcy has the freedom to marry anyone he chooses because of his fortune, it would be unwise for him to choose a woman in Elizabeth’s situation without love for her. If Darcy were only seeking to marry for the sake of producing an heir, he could marry any woman, and would more likely choose one, like Anne de Bourgh, with a fortune to add to his own.

Edward and Elinor Find *Concordia Discors*

Edward and Elinor of *Sense and Sensibility* also discover Johnson's ultimate happiness in a *concordia discors* match. They become an entity of their own at the end of the work; both so equally matched in mind and heart that their relationship could not be affected by outsiders. They are their own community of *concordia discors*, being more alike than different, yet drawing in others like them who help and provide for the differences that they lack themselves. By the end of the novel, there is a community between Colonel Brandon and Marianne and Edward and Elinor where all provide for someone where the other is lacking. Colonel Brandon provides a "living" for Edward (and enables him to marry Elinor despite the capricious Ferrars family), Elinor serves as a mediator between both the Colonel and Marianne and Marianne and her feelings, and Edward loves Elinor for her mind, despite her lack of sensibility, giving her a newfound self-worth. Like Austen's other heroes and heroines, however, it is not an easy road for Elinor and Edward to attain the fulfillment of their happiness in a harmonious marital relationship. From the beginning of her affections for Edward, Elinor "could not consider her partiality for Edward in so prosperous a state as Marianne had believed it" because she notices a "want of spirits about him, which, if it did not denote indifference, spoke a something almost as uncompromising" (19). Elinor attempts to attribute this to Edward's "dependent situation," but soon discovers through Lucy's self-protective confession of her engagement to Edward the true source of his reserve:

Had Edward been intentionally deceiving her? Had he feigned a regard for her which he did not feel? Was his engagement to Lucy, an engagement of the heart? No; whatever it might once have been, she could not believe it such at

present. His affection was all her own. She could not be deceived in that. Her mother, sisters, Fanny, all had been conscious of his regard for her at Norland; it was not an illusion of her own vanity. He certainly loved her. What a softener of the heart was this persuasion! How much could it not tempt her to forgive! He had been blameable, highly blameable, in remaining at Norland after he first felt her influence over him to be more than it ought to be. (99)

Of all of Austen's heroines, Elinor must be both the most blessed and cursed, as she never has reason to doubt the truth of Edward's affections, yet she is forbidden by a prior claim the opportunity to enjoy them herself in the marriage state. From the beginning of the novel, they appear well matched to all who know them, and it is this obvious naturalness of their attachment that causes Mrs. Ferrars to send Edward away and Lucy to force Elinor into a spiteful confidence of her secret engagement to Edward. Edward suffers as much as Elinor, as he confesses at the end of the novel: "It was simple enough to think, that because my *faith* was plighted to another, there could be no danger in my being with you; and the consciousness of my engagement was to keep my heart as safe as my honour. I felt that I admired you, but I told myself it was only friendship, and till I began to make comparisons between yourself and Lucy, I did not know how far I was got," and with this as his strength, he believed it was acceptable to spend time with Elinor on the basis of causing no injury "to anybody but [him]self" (260). The outcome of Elinor and Edward's hardship only adds to the affection they naturally felt in being so well-suited to one another. Austen writes "They were brought together by *mutual affection* with the warmest approbation of their real friends, their intimate knowledge of each other seemed to make their happiness certain" (261). That Edward has "more than

the ordinary triumph of accepted love to swell his heart, and raise his spirits” is undeniable—“He was released without any reproach to himself, from an entanglement which had long formed his misery, from a woman he had long ceased to love” (255). That Edward shares Florentius’s good fortune in escaping a capricious woman, is clear, and he goes on to be as fortunate as Hymenaeus in the pursuit and marriage to his own Tranquilla in Elinor.

Anne and Wentworth

Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth form the final *concordia discors* match in Austen’s novel *Persuasion*. The couple has a long-held understanding of each other’s character, but Anne’s refusal to marry Wentworth despite their love for one another has caused a bitter gap between them that only an exact and admirable portrait of love could overcome. Their being thrown back into each other’s company when Wentworth’s sister and brother-in-law rent Kellynch Hall, the Elliot estate, gives Austen the opportunity to demonstrate one of nature’s “transcendental truths,” that *love conquers all*. Like Elizabeth and Darcy, Anne and Wentworth have been torn from one another through misunderstanding, but their pride keeps them apart for seven years. The primary difference between *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice* is that Anne and Wentworth are given the opportunity to remember what they loved about each other to begin with, rather than discover why they love one another. Anne has little problem remembering what she admires about Wentworth, but he insists that he values firmness of character in a woman above all else, an obvious reaction to what he views as a feeble-minded persuasiveness on Anne’s part when she gave up their engagement out of “duty” to her family. Anne

watches a flirtation blossom between Wentworth and the young Louisa Musgrove, who appears to be the sort of girl the “idle” Captain Wentworth is searching for as a wife. When Louisa’s stubbornness leads to a dangerous concussion at Lyme, Wentworth witnesses the true superiority of Anne’s personality: she is the only character with presence of mind enough to produce smelling salts, command Benwick to assist Wentworth in reviving Louisa, and send for a surgeon (74). It is this presence of mind that leads Wentworth to see her true value, declaring that it must be Anne who stays behind and nurses Louisa, “no one so proper, so capable as Anne” (76). At this moment of realization that Anne is both the most practical and caring woman, Wentworth is “speaking with a glow, and yet a gentleness, which seemed almost restoring the past” (76). Through his hurt pride in being rejected by Anne years before, Wentworth cannot deny her claims as a woman superior to the others of his acquaintance in a time necessitating presence of mind and calmness of manner like Anne’s. From this point on in the novel, Wentworth is convinced that his and Anne’s temperaments are suited only for each other in marriage; he must only face the competition of Mr. William Elliot before he secures Anne’s hand. Theirs is not only a tale of forgiveness, but of true, acknowledged *concordia discors*. As Austen moralizes, “When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point, be they ever so poor, or ever so imprudent, or ever so little likely to be necessary to each other’s comfort [...] if such parties succeed, how should a Captain Wentworth and an Anne Elliot, with the advantage of maturity of mind, consciousness of right, and one independent fortune between them, fail of bearing down every opposition?” (165). The two are so well-suited that the only “alloy to happiness” their marriage contains is the

fact that Anne has “no family to receive and estimate him properly; nothing of respectability, of harmony, of good-will to offer in return for all the worth and all the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters” (167). Austen, like Johnson, understands the value of a community of like minds; thus she includes supportive, wise, affirming characters for her protagonists. At the conclusion of *Persuasion*, Anne feels all the regret that none of these characters are her gift to Wentworth; instead, her social circle is expanded exclusively through her marriage to him. This discrepancy is made up for in the fact that Wentworth understands and appreciates Anne in a way that no other man could; Austen writes: “Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of it in Wentworth’s affection” (168).

Emma and Knightley

The final couple to achieve *concordia discors* in Austen’s novels is Emma and Mr. Knightley. From the beginning of *Emma*, it is apparent that all who love Emma, with the exception of one, have a blind affection for her. Emma’s governess, Miss Taylor, has long since ceased in giving Emma any “restraint” and left Emma “directed chiefly by her own” judgment (1). “[T]he intimacy of sisters” resides between Emma and Miss Taylor, to the point that Austen writes “[t]he real evils 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” (1). Emma has been so used to Miss Taylor’s approving friendship that she feels “grief” at the marriage of her friend, despite the fact that Emma feels she had generously “wished and promoted the match” to Mr. Weston. Mr. Knightley’s appearance proves that Emma is most lively and playful when she is being challenged (1, 5). Emma

explains to her father that, “Mr. Knightley likes to find fault” with her and that the two “always say what they like to one another” (5). This early indication of freedom between them shows that they respect one another enough to forego ceremony and artifice in preference of an open and playful friendship. As Emma increasingly allows herself that same freedom with others by interfering in Harriet’s personal affairs with Mr. Martin, overtly flirting with Frank Churchill at Box Hill, and humiliating Miss Bates for talking too much, the tension between her and Mr. Knightley increases to the point that he almost takes on the fatherly role of censuring her behavior that Mr. Woodhouse does not fulfill. There is the language of a lover in his speech, though; he says that he “could not have thought it possible” of her to “be so unfeeling to Miss Bates,” but he notes that this sort of “remonstrance” on his part is something that has been “rather endured than allowed” by her, which indicates not only his fear that he is losing Emma to Frank Churchill’s influence, but also acknowledges that he (Knightley) had perhaps taken too much liberty in censuring her in the past, giving her a different view of his role to her than he would like for her to have.

Despite the tension in this conflict, Knightley confesses, “This is not pleasant to me; but I must, I will, --I will tell your truths *while I can*, satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now” (246, emphasis added). In the midst of his correction of Emma, Knightley betrays his own fears that he is going to lose her to someone else (Frank Churchill), and that he believes being truthful with her, even when it is painful, is the ultimate act of friendship. In this moment, Knightley proves that he knows Emma’s faults better than she knows her own, and more, that he is the only person

willing to tell her when she is wrong in the kindest possible way. Through the introduction of outsiders like Mrs. Elton, Frank Churchill, and Jane Fairfax, Emma and Knightley are forced out of their easy rapport with one another and into seeing each other's faults—Emma sees that Knightley censures her, but also that she values his esteem and approval because of his sincerity; Knightley sees that Emma is too easily influenced by the flattery of others, but in seeing her bad behavior, realizes what he valued in her character as a benefactress and a friend that he might not have seen without the risk of losing her to someone else. With the invasion of seemingly eligible outsiders into Highbury society, Emma and Knightley meet with the tension that encourages their feelings for one another—they both fear that the other is becoming attached to someone else, only to realize that they are best suited to each other. Emma, who declares that only love could induce her to change her situation, finds herself in the harsh situation of realizing “only when she is threatened with its loss...how much of her happiness depended on being *first* with Mr. Knightley—first in interest and affection” (55, 272). Much like Elizabeth's epiphany in *Pride and Prejudice*, Emma is awakened to her own true character through her love for Mr. Knightley: “She had been first with him for many years past. She had not deserved it; she had often been negligent or perverse, slighting his advice, or wilfully opposing him, insensible of half his merits, or quarreling with him because he would not acknowledge her false and insensible estimation of her own, but still [...] he had loved her [...] with an [...] anxiety of her doing right, which no other creature had at all shared” (272). It is at the point when Emma feels she is least likely to hold Mr. Knightley's affection that she realizes she has loved him all along, and undervalued him altogether. The love between Emma and Knightley is more difficult to

understand than Austen's other *concordia discors* matches because the conflict between them is not a result of misunderstanding or bad circumstances, but rather that Emma's character is too well known to Mr. Knightley, and that she takes *his* influence on her for granted. It is because of, rather than in spite of, the struggles that Mr. Knightley and Emma face that "the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends [that witnessed the marriage of Emma and Knightley], were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union" (319).

***Concordia Discors* Begets Community**

According to Hagstrum, Johnson's philosophy is more nuanced than it first appears; *concordia discors* is more than a happy medium or a balanced perception; it is a circumstance in which harmony and disharmony are united in a pleasant way, with the creation of community being the influence that makes circumstances and relationships agreeable and even happy. Johnson explored and defined this concept of *concordia discors* throughout his works. Hagstrum argues "it is necessary to draw a distinction between a subtle and nuanced idea like *concordia discors*, which can be flexibly and creatively applied to the phantasmagoria of human life, and a worthy yet somewhat rigid and limited idea like that of the golden mean, which can all too easily become formulaic" (124). It is clear that Austen ascribed to Johnson's concept in passionate support of it: the subject of *choice of life* is so prevalent in all of her works with such a variety of the possibilities of happiness and unhappiness laid out before the characters that it is easy to see that the "nuanced" *concordia discors* was a philosophy she adopted as well. For Austen, happiness is often found in minor violations in social norms, which create

unexpected friendships, marriages, and other forms of “community,” much like the plot of *Rasselas*. Like Johnson, Austen values contributing to the “hereditary aggregate of human knowledge.” Austen’s purpose as a novelist differs greatly from the popular English authors before her; she is as unlike Richardson as she is Fielding. It seems her purpose is clearly spelled out in Johnson’s essay on the “New Realistic Novel”: Austen writes believable, realistically flawed characters who function within a system of attainable morality in an imperfect society. In doing so, she joins with Johnson’s ideas that an individual can pursue happiness in his or her choice of life, and that the primary source of unhappiness, contentment, or joy can be found in the institution of marriage. Austen approaches Johnson’s ideal purpose for the novel as a genre; she presents an instructive myriad of mistakes and redemptions, the scenes of pain, honor, gratitude, and happiness standing as vicarious “record[s] of many sensations of pain, once severe, but now softened; and of some instances of relenting feeling, some breathings of friendship and reconciliation” (*Persuasion* 81).

WORKS CITED

- Austen, Jane. *Emma*. Ed. Stephen M. Parrish. New York: Norton, 2000.
- Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*. Ed. Patricia Meyer Spacks. New York: Norton, 1995.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Ed. Donald Gray. New York: Norton, 2001.
- Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Ed. Claudia L. Johnson. New York: Norton, 2002.
- Baker, Ernest Albert. *The History of the English Novel*. Vol. 3. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1929. Print.
- Banerjee, A. "Dr. Johnson's Daughter: Jane Austen and *Northanger Abbey*." *English Studies* 71.2 (1990): 113. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 16 July 2010.
- Hagstrum, Jean H. "Samuel Johnson and the 'Concordia Discors' of Human Relationships." *Eros and Vision: The Restoration to Romanticism*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989. 121-37.
- Honan, Park. *Jane Austen: Her Life*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987. Print.
- "Jane Austen's Writings." Pemberley.com. *Republic of Pemberley*. Web. 5 Sept 2011.
- Johnson, Claudia L. "The Operations of Time, and the Changes of the Human Mind: Jane Austen and Dr. Johnson Again." *Modern Language Quarterly* 44.1 (1983): 23. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 16 July 2010.
- Johnson, Samuel. *The Major Works: Including Rasselas*. Ed. Donald Greene. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.
- Le Faye, Deidre, ed. *Jane Austen's Letters*. Oxford; Oxford UP, 1995. Print.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. "Samuel Demands the Muse: Johnson's Stamp on Imaginative Literature." 39-49. *Antioch Review*, Inc., 2007. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 16 July 2010.
- Tomalin, Claire. *Jane Austen: A Life*. New York: Knopf, 1998. Print.
- Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957. Print.