for oil power) by surreptitiously pro-
gramming into its system an act of criminal
fraud pointing to its director. Harlequin's
attempts to trace the deed back to Yanko
and to publicly discredit him initiate a
series of international intrigues, assassina-
tions, kidnappings, and stock-market fluc-
tuations in the best mystery-spy-thriller
vein. The profound changes in character
which West attempts to create in Harle-
quin and his friends as a result of their
deepeening confrontation with evil are not
convincing, mainly because the plot ex-
igencies of this fiction rush both readers
and characters on so swiftly that neither
can pause long enough for meditation
and suffering to unfold. In the end the
hero dispells the evil surrounding him by
an act of conjuration worthy both of his
comic ancestry and of the Hesse of the
magic theater episode in Steppenwolf. The
novel ends in a Christian symbolical feast,
all loose ends tied nicely into a final
harmony.

One cannot justify this attempt to mod-
ernize the romance-quest with its factiti-
ous accumulation of events from the cur-
rent political scene, its too patent Christ-
ian moralizing, its undistinguishable
characters who become mouthpieces to
outworn ideas by trite evocations of its
cleverly designed plot, its narrative skill
(“pure entertainment,” “a good yarn”).
Eventually, every work of fiction (if the
art is not to become wholly degraded or
dissipated) must stand up to the critical
question of how and to what degree it
manages the unity and synthesis of all its
parts, its own as well as those implied by
its form. Henry James's criteria for the
modern novel ensure that unity of charac-
ter and universe which is the indispensa-
tble requirement of any work of fiction by
identifying both with consciousness and
sensibility. The modern popular detective
novel with its focus on the fragmentary
nature of the institutionalized world es-
sentially dissociates the human spirit from
any meaningful relationship to that world
and turns its people into moral dwarfs
and puppets. Morris West, in spite of the
Christian sensibility he attempts to infuse
within his writing—indeed as a direct
result of his attempting to do so—cannot
bridge the gap between the hell without
and the peace within. He would have to
change his style and hence his vision to do
that.

Allen Bentley

STUART M. TAVE
Some Words of Jane Austen
Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

The modest accuracy of Stuart Tave's
title must have been designed. It exempli-
ifies in its subjugation of self-advertisement to self-effacing precision
that quality which the book goes on to
celebrate as the essential art of Jane Au-
sten: a delicate understanding of the
range and significance of common En-
lish words. What also seems designed is
the relative sumptuousness of the book's
physical makeup, so that the modesty of
its title is balanced by, among other de-
lights, the elegance of its jacket design,
the quality of its paper, the varying design
in silhouette that graces each new chapter.
Not much expense has been spared. Al-
though I would not want to crack the
wind of a reasonable analogy, the combi-
nation of the plain-speaking and the visu-
ally elegant has an obvious relevance to
Tave's argument. The common English
word he frequently uses to describe his
delight in Jane Austen's novels is "lovely."
How this loveliness is achieved, he goes
on to show, depends upon an exquisite
propriety in the use of English. In Jane
Austen, beauty is accuracy, and accuracy
beauty, and that is almost as much as we
need to know.

Tave begins his book with a lovely
analogy. Jane Austen, he tells us, "was
fond of dancing and excelled in it" (p. 1).
Such an avocation need not surprise us,
for it parallels her art as a writer, "that
enjoyment and ability in moving with
significant grace in good time in a re-
stricted space" (p. 1). It is worthwhile to
ponder this description, for it illustrates
what Tave has in common with the sub-
ject of his study, namely a proper rever-
ce for the elegant defining powers of
precise English, what Dr. Johnson called
the "beauty of propriety," expanded by
Tave as follows: "It is the graceful beautv
that comes from the delicate adjustment
of the minutest parts" (p. 222). It does
not matter where we turn in Jane Austen.
On every page we are struck by the
elegance of those lovely sentences where
each minute part is so delicately adjusted.
Although Tave does not offer this par-
ticular example, here is Emma
Woodhouse moralizing to herself Frank
Churchill's ostensibly absurd act in travel-
ling to London merely to get his hair cut:
"I do not know whether it ought to be so, but certainly silly things do cease to be silly if they are done by sensible people in an impudent way" (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966. P. 222).

I have chosen to discuss first Tave's awareness of the "graceful beauty" of Jane Austen as a writer because he himself makes only passing reference to it. Yet after reading such an elegantly written book on the most elegant novelist in English it would seem churlish not to record the principal effect of such a powerful combination. Mr. Tave, however, has more serious business in hand. We soon realize that beauty is by no means all we need to know for a proper appreciation of Jane Austen. He wants above all to show how her delicate handling of certain common English words has always a precise moral definition as its objective. In his pursuit of Jane Austen as moralist extraordinary, Mr. Tave demonstrates the appropriateness of the method of his book. Although each chapter (apart from the opening one) concentrates on a single novel, Tave is able to draw into the discussion, in a richly relevant manner, supporting uses from the other novels of the common words under scrutiny from that specific book. To take an obvious example, in his discussion of the deployment of the word "sensibility" in Sense and Sensibility, which constitutes Chapter 3, Tave makes good use of its appearances in Mansfield Park and Emma, in particular.

In the case of "sensibility," as in the case of all the other words he talks about—among others, "mortification," "amiability," "elegance," "propriety," "imagination"—the word has no absolute meaning from a moral point of view. Everything depends on context; who says it and how and in what circumstances. Consequently, "If there is a false sensibility that is vain and reductive there is also a true one unpretentious and valuable" (p. 76). In like manner, there is a salutary and a silly experience of mortification; there is a brittle and a lovely elegance; there is a restrictive and a liberating use of the imagination. In each case, it is the moral dimension of the term which is explored by Jane Austen.

In a very fine opening chapter, called, appropriately enough, "Limitations and Definitions," Tave introduces us to Jane Austen's way with words by placing it in a more general context. For Jane Austen, there is a clearly defined objective reality in which her characters have to make moral choices dependent on their ability to interpret correctly what goes on around them. A sure sign of moral fragility, for example, is a frivolous or complacent disregard for the realities of time and space. Those characters who fret because they are restricted to an unpromising locale, or those, who, like Maria Bertram, have contempt for the real time or for the correct distance between two points, those who, in a word, defy an obvious and inescapable reality, live only a half-life. As Tave puts it: "There are, then, coordinates mapping and timing the limits, setting the conditions, demanding action. There is a definable reality, not to be made or unmade, to which Jane Austen's men and women must bring themselves; and it is in proportion to their success that they make or unmakethat they make or unmake their own lives" (p. 18). At the end of this opening chapter, Mr. Tave returns to his analogy of the dance in order to help explain the effect upon us of our experience of these men and women who are restricted in their actions by realities which cannot be changed or evaded. In the dance, ecstasy and a sense of freedom come from the controlled poise of ordered movement. As Tave says, "The form of the dance does not suppress significant motion: by its order it sets free the dancer" (p. 34). Similarly, those characters in Jane Austen who come to understand, or who have always understood, the necessity of reality's restrictions are given an important freedom and have an impressive moral superiority. Not surprisingly, these are the people who understand the true meaning and proper use of those words of Jane Austen that Tave has shown in this book to be crucial to our own understanding and enjoyment of the subtleties of the moral imagination.

Michael Taylor