

either James or Twain did, as well as more directly reported discourse. McKay nicely demonstrates Howells's mastery of middle-class, domestic conversation. But she also praises his indirectly reported discourse, which is imaginatively used to capture unobtrusive states of consciousness. However, the narrator of *Silas Lapham*, though in tight control of the storytelling, seems uneasy in this authoritative role. His voice mingles with the characters' without losing distance or detachment. This inconsistent presence in the text undercuts the illusion of life so richly created by the direct discourse. "Ultimately," McKay concludes, "the narrator of *Silas Lapham* seems to deny control but not to relinquish it," an inconsistency grounded in Howells's moralism and one which "contributes to a sense that these characters are 'small'; they remain types rather than growing into people" (pp. 134-35).

In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain succeeds where his two friends failed, though his is no unqualified triumph of narrative technique. By collapsing narrator and central character, he achieves at once control, intimacy, and detachment. Huck's manipulation of direct and indirect discourse achieves several powerful effects: a convincing identity between his roles as narrator and character; ironic distance between his naive self and Mark Twain's moral perspective; and dramatic distance between himself and other characters. Though Huck's is a retrospective account (like Ishmael's in *Moby Dick*), the effect of the boy's vernacular presentation is dramatic; "Huck tells his story as he lived it" (p. 146). Through Huck's discourse, Twain effectively communicates the "realistic" truth that humans can neither describe nor control the world authoritatively. The mixture of art and artlessness in the famous sunrise description of Chapter 19, for instance, displays the boy's knowledge of the natural world and his sense of mystery and ignorance. This narrative honesty falters, however, in the Evasion and McKay's final judgment is qualified. "As long as Huck controls the situation and his material is sufficiently demanding," she observes, "Twain maintains the flexibility and credibility of Huck's style. However, when the material does not demand that the basically simple style be innovative in order to capture complex and significant scenes and ideas, the temptations inherent in simplicity take over" (p. 162). This happens occasionally early in the narrative where Huck seems too obviously Twain's mouthpiece. Far more discordant, however, are the final eleven chapters at the Phelps farm. For McKay, as

for Hemingway and others, the Evasion displays at tedious length Huck's loss of narrative control and his creator's entrapment by burlesque. "Like Howells, Twain pulls back from his character just when he has portrayed him most sympathetically" (p. 188). Again, McKay reveals her never-fully-explained preference for sympathetic treatment of character as a necessary feature of realism. Other considerations besides narration and discourse (including childhood's grip on Twain's imagination, the "civilization" motif, and death's fascination for Huck) provide possible justifications for the Evasion—though *not* for its length.

McKay's significant achievement in this tightly argued book is to demonstrate carefully the shift away from interpretation towards dramatic enactments of reality. Realists like these three masters exploited early the discovery made by linguists—the paradoxical truth that in literary discourse the responsibility for directly reported discourse is assumed to be the speaker's alone, even though that speaker is a fictional creature. Alongside this psychological fact about the experience of realistic narration stand political, moral, and epistemological beliefs all realists—not just James, Howells, and Twain, but their descendants Crane and Dreiser—share: the convictions that "reality" is plural, relative, ambiguous, and that the reader must share in interpreting its fictional representations.

Albert E. Stone

## JAN FERGUS

*Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel: Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice.*

Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1983, Pp. ix + 162. \$26.50.

Studies of Jane Austen's sources have not, in general, been very rewarding. There is no denying that Austen was thoroughly imbued in the literature of the eighteenth century, particularly the novel. However, she

went so far beyond the achievement of her predecessors that scholars who examine her sources can do little more than either identify parallels—surely one of the most futile of all critical activities—or point out the ways in which Austen is more sophisticated than those who came before her.

Jan Fergus is acutely aware of these problems and speaks intelligently of the limitations of source criticism: "The distance between the frequent crudeness of form, style and substance in the second-rate novels Austen is known to have read (and even admired) and the mastery displayed in her own fiction is so immense that critics hardly know what to make of any parallels they do find. As a rule, either they consider the parallels sufficiently interesting in themselves or they ignore them, taking refuge in wonder at Austen's ability to transcend such limitations" (pp. 2-3). Unfortunately, awareness of the problem does not make it any less intractable and, to the extent that it is a study of Austen's relationship to her predecessors, Jan Fergus's book is no more successful than those that have considered this topic before.

Certainly *Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel* is never a mere tracing of sources. Indeed, in its early chapters which deal with the relationship of *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* to Gothic and Sentimental fiction, Fergus identifies few specific sources and concentrates instead on Austen's manipulation of the conventions of the two genres. Her thesis in both cases is that Austen mocks the formulas of Gothic and Sentimental fiction and yet also makes them work for her. Thus, *Northanger Abbey* is both an anti-Gothic novel and a much better Gothic novel than Mrs. Radcliffe ever wrote. This thesis is presented intelligently and modestly, and Fergus reveals throughout a sensitive appreciation of the texts of Austen's novels. Particularly good is her comparison of social convention and literary convention as guides to feeling in *Sense and Sensibility*. In the end, though, original as some of Fergus's argument may be, she can offer nothing fresher by way of conclusion than the old chestnut that Jane Austen is a better novelist than her predecessors.

Fergus's central chapters on *Pride and Prejudice*, focus on much more specific sources than do those on *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*, for her argument here is that Jane Austen's first mature novel owes much to Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* and Fanny Burney's *Cecilia*. The ex-

tended comparison by means of which Fergus seeks to make her case is thorough and judicious. But again the reader is left to wonder at the point of the critical exercise since, whatever Austen took from Burney and Richardson, she transformed to such an extent as to make it almost unrecognizable. Consequently, knowledge of the source teaches us little about Austen's specific achievement. Fergus more or less admits the redundancy of her carefully constructed comparison when she turns her attention more specifically to *Pride and Prejudice*. The techniques which she analyzes in detail in this chapter—use of parallel and contrast; linear irony; manners as mark of moral worth; wit and dialogue—are those which Austen supposedly learnt from Richardson and Burney. Yet, no further reference to their novels is made or needed, except to emphasize occasionally how differently and more subtly Austen handles a specific technique than did her predecessors.

Were *Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel* simply a study of Austen's sources, it would have little to commend it to the reader. Fergus does at least as much with the source material as Frank Bradbrook or Kenneth Moler, but her limitations are similar to theirs. Marilyn Butler's, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* remains the only analysis of Jane Austen's literary context which is genuinely fruitful. However, there is more to Fergus's book than its proclaimed topic. Not only is Fergus interested in putting Austen into her literary context, and particularly into the tradition of the didactic novel, but she is also interested in demonstrating the very sophisticated nature of Jane Austen's didacticism. Her argument is that rather than try to instruct the reader through presentation of exemplary characters or direct moralizing, Austen develops techniques that manipulate his responses, particularly sympathy and judgement, in such a way as not only to involve but also to educate them. The close readings by means of which Fergus demonstrates her thesis provide her with opportunities to say some very illuminating things about Austen's novels. Particularly striking is Fergus's analysis of the pattern of linear irony developed in *Pride and Prejudice* out of the novel's multiple examples of mistaken first impressions. Equally impressive is her discussion of the increasingly sophisticated ways in which Austen uses dialogue, which is eventually transformed in *Emma* into conversation, as a tool for educating her reader's responses and consciousness.

The reader leaves *Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel* wanting more of this kind of thing and less of the literary sources. The exhaustive analysis of *Grandison* and *Cecilia* could surely have been sacrificed for a fuller development of the final provocative but frustratingly short chapter on *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. Fergus's contention that, having firmly established Austen's direction by tracing her development through *Pride and Prejudice*, she need provide only a brief analysis of the three novels that follow is not borne out by the experience of reading the chapter. Where it is convincing, as in its treatment of the theme of judgement in *Mansfield Park*, the reader is left wanting more detail; where it appears to be skating on thin ice—as in its suggestion that Jane Austen excuses Mrs. Elton from moral judgement—the reader feels the need for more evidence.

Jan Fergus has a lot to say about Jane Austen, too much in fact for this short book. Her decision to emphasize Austen's literary roots and the development of her art rather than her mature achievement was not, in my view, the best way of accommodating her material to the length available to her. The book that results from this decision includes too much that is trivial or only tangentially illuminating, and too little of the close reading which produces almost all of its original material. Readers of Jane Austen should certainly not ignore *Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel*, but they may want to do some judicious skimming.

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*Reclams Science Fiction Führer*  
Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun.,  
1982. Pp. 504.

Science fiction is enjoying considerable popularity in the Federal Republic of Germany where nearly 500 new science fiction titles are published annually. *Reclams Science Fiction Führer* takes cognizance of that fact by providing an overall perspective on science fiction, by tracing its roots, determining its trends and offering an evaluative commentary. Such an encyclopedia should

be particularly useful to a reading public that relies for much of its material on translations from Anglo-American sources.

The format is straightforward and functional: authors are listed in alphabetical order and short bio-bibliographical notes are provided for most. Prominent writers receive closer attention: An initial overview of their oeuvres is followed by summaries of their most significant works, generally revealing insight and perspicaciousness. The appendix lists important science fiction magazines and provides a glossary of technical expressions, mostly English coinages, a short bibliography, and an index of authors and pseudonyms.

The *Science Fiction Führer* lists some 811 authors from 27 countries. Over 50% are U.S. writers, 16% are British, close to 9% are from the Federal Republic of Germany, 4% from the German Democratic Republic, and 2% from pre-1945 Germany. The rest of the world is represented by small percentages: the U.S.S.R. with 4.3%, France with 3.4%, Italy and Austria with 1.5% each, and numerous countries with a single entry. There are no representatives from Africa, one from Asia (Japan), two from South America and four from Australia. Not only do these percentages reflect the Anglo-American preponderance in the field of science fiction, they also point to science fiction as primarily a Western phenomenon that may be closely linked to the rise of Western technology. That German writers constitute the third largest group (nearly 15% if one includes East-, West- and pre-1945 Germany) does not indicate their relative importance in the scheme of science fiction; it is rather to be attributed to the fact that the authors of *Reclams Science Fiction Führer* have a special interest in and concern for science fiction developments in the Germanies.

All significant writers are represented. That includes such classical science fiction authors as Edward Bellamy, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Karel Čapek, Jack London, J. H. Rosny, Jules Verne, and H. G. Wells. It further encompasses the group of writers, now well established, who first reached prominence between the 1920's and 1950's, such as Isaac Asimov, Raymond Bradbury, John W. Campbell Jr., Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, Eric Frank Russell, Clifford Simak, Olaf Stapledon, and John Wyndham. And it comprises the host of authors who have made significant contributions to the genre since the 1960's, including Brian Aldiss, J. G. Ballard, Gregory Benford, James Blish, Benjamin Bova, John Brun-