

Dancing Through Life

Symmetry and Balance within Dance and the Form of Jane Austen's Novels

A Thesis Submitted to

The Faculty of the School of Communication

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts in English

By

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April 2011

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	4
Chapter 1: For Love of the Dance.....	5
Chapter 2: Separation and Reunion .....	37
Chapter 3: Emotion and Technique .....	80
Chapter 4: Motion and Repetition.....	111
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	132
Works Cited .....	138

Liberty University  
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## Abstract

This thesis looks at the presence of symmetry and balance in Jane Austen's novels, especially as it is realized through period dance. In the Georgian period, the ideas of symmetry were an important aspect of both the political and aesthetic culture. Likewise, dance, often used as metaphor for courtship, reflected this societal emphasis on order and balance. As such, symmetry and its related principles, namely balance, repetition and order, are all principle themes expressed through patterns of dance in Austen's novels.

The first chapter briefly addresses Jane Austen's social position within the Regency era and her view of daily life and period dance. Austen's contributions to the literary field through plot formations similar to Aristotle's relates to the definitions of minute differences between symmetry and balance and how they relate to such terms as order and repetition. Some specific occurrences within Jane Austen's literary canon, and demonstrating how an action like dancing can embody the very essence of symmetry are also observed. Because of this connection between Austen's sense of balance and her development of a plot structure analogous to Aristotle's model, the next two chapters of this thesis looks at the balance of theme and the symmetrical patterns of dance as well as the presence of mirror characters and circumstances in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. In keeping with Aristotle's comments on rhythm, the last chapter explores the purpose of repetition and shows how essential it is in *Persuasion*. This thesis also includes some insights as to how occurrences such as travelling and music relate to the idea of symmetry.

## Chapter One

### For Love of the Dance

Jane Austen (1775-1817) lived during the late Georgian period, also known as the Regency era, in a society that she perceived to hold a stylized approach to life. Deirdre Le Faye comments on how her father's position as a clergyman and a gentleman and her mother's connections as the daughter of landed gentry helped to shape Austen's world. At that time, the clergy generally consisted of the younger sons of upper class or noblemen who did not have or expect a title or inheritance to come their way. Instead their more well-to-do relatives, generally parents, would fund their studies at seminary, generally at a college like Oxford, and the younger sons would continue on to make a moderate living from their parishes. George Austen, though an orphan was fortunate enough to have aunts and uncles willing to finance his education at Oxford, but the living he made in Steventon, Hampshire would not have been enough to support a lifestyle similar to that of the upper classes (11). Claire Tomalin in her biography of Jane Austen mentions that although George had to rely on his more distant relations and what scholarships he could scrape together through demonstrations of intelligent, his two sons, James and Henry, who attended Oxford were able to do so with scholarships provided because of their mother's connections (26). Another of Jane Austen's brothers, Edward, was adopted by the Knights, distant cousins who needed an heir because of their own childlessness. Jane's own education at a boarding school was covered by her family renting her room to two male students (33). Because of her father's situation and her mother's childhood, Austen was brought up in a house where the manners and traditions of the upper classes were practiced, and she was considered to be a "gentleman's

daughter;” however, neither she nor those in her immediate family were financially able to be an integral part of the higher society in Britain. David Spring says that the landed aristocracy and the gentry (the gentry being upper class landowners who only possessed country homes and were more or less not present in city society for long periods of time), “made their money the same way — mainly by letting land to tenant farmers...where the aristocracy and gentry chiefly differed was in what ... Jane Austen called ‘style of living,’ that is, in their status, in how they spent their money” (393-4). Spring also asserts that although some in her family were definitely part of the aristocracy, “socially she stood closer to the gentry than the aristocracy, especially the smaller-incomed gentry” (395). David Nokes claims their financial restrictions forced the Austen’s to take in boarders and raise their own eggs and dairy and prevented the Austens from owning any property in the city (58). The perspective that Austen had of the Georgian period grew out of this peripheral view she had of society. Both she and her family were recognized as good, respectable, upper class people, yet they were simultaneously distanced by the limitations of their finances and by the location of their home away from the centers of fashionable society, with only visits to London, Bath, and Southampton for balls and plays. Once all of their children were grown and gone from home (save for Jane), George Austen and his wife decided to move to Bath, an action that shocked Jane greatly (220). While there however, she was able to see up close the society of Bath and, in some measures, to participate in it.

Austen's novels reflect a world undergirded by manners and etiquette. Evolving from the Medieval Ages, feudalism codified social strata and proper behavior for nearly every situation based on class: such as the rules surrounding introductions to strangers,

behavior in the presence of one's superiors, responsibilities and connotations of courtship, introduction, and gender roles, which preserved the order of life. Something significant to any discussion of Austen's perception of etiquette and hierarchy is the institution of courtship: mainly because of the prominence that subject has within her literature. Some of the obligations that courtship imposes upon those within Austen's world dictate where and when a couple can meet and converse, the prominence of the family within the relationship, and the implication of dance within this schema. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, even though she is simply dying to persuade Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy to dance with her girls, Mrs. Bennet is not allowed to speak to either until she is properly introduced, with her husband, by the host. Likewise, Charlotte Lucas and Elizabeth comment about the brevity of conversation between Jane and Mr. Bingley as they only meet in company and must not speak only between themselves. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne is supposed to be engaged because she writes letters to Mr. Willoughby before she had received any. At the ball in London, Marianne was too loud and emotional when she realizes that Willoughby is courting Miss Grey, and Elinor tries to prevent her sister from embarrassing herself. Another example of the expectations that were placed upon those looking to marry, especially young women, occurs in *Persuasion* when Anne Elliot is so often pressured into refusing her suitors (she rejects both Captain Wentworth and Charles) based on the opinion of Lady Russel and the fear of her family's reaction. Family approval was in this case, and most cases, more important than romantic feelings. The presence of these behavioral precepts served in some ways to constrict those within the scope of Austen's world and yet to still allow a kind of artistic pattern for life. As

choreography, though at times restrictive, shaped dance into art, so these rules of conduct guided many upper and noble class people into an aesthetic existence.

By honoring tradition and ritual, the etiquette in Austen's world preserved the principles of hierarchy and the social caste and reinforced the idealization of the noble class. Not only did the upper classes respond to such a choreographed mode of living, but most of the people were also influenced by such media as architecture and dance.

Similarly, Jane Austen used this insistence on rules and structure as a basis for her own writings. Cheryl Wilson remarks about “Jane Austen’s predilection for neat schemes and geometrical arrangements” (196) and how they show her own perception of the world through her literature. Throughout her society (that idealized picture of the upper class), the underlying foundation for this stylization of culture came from the principles of symmetry and balance. The conventions of the late Georgian period were adhered to and embodied through dance by means of symmetry and balance, although in a closely regulated manner, in such a way that seemed to bleed over into Austen’s use of what would come to be known as Aristotelian Formalism within her novels, although it is unlikely that Austen ever read any of Aristotle’s works. Similar principles instead come from her own personality and perception of symmetry and balance (Brann 817). All of Austen’s novels incorporated specific patterns found in period dance as a part of both language and plot. *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Persuasion* all display a number of these patterns and exemplify both Austen’s connection to symmetry and balance and the importance of dance in society.

The presence of the class system, so important in the world and mindset of Austen, was a catalyst for controversy. Her view of class structure in her novels, and

presumably influenced by her concept of society, is reminiscent of Marxist philosophy. Because of Austen's focus on class dynamics and social expectations, there is a great deal of Marxist criticism written about her novels. Beth Fowkes Tobin in her essay "Aiding Impoverished Gentlewomen: Power and Class in Emma," looks at the way "Austen portrays the economic and social conditions of a surprisingly large number of female characters ... mostly of that 'middling ranks' of society" (474). In the book *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*, Jibhesh Bhattacharyya echoes David Daiches when he says that "Austen is the only English novelist who is, in a sense, a Marxist before Marx. She exposes the economic basis of social behavior with an ironic smile... The theme of Austen's novel is marriage into an economically superior society" (75). Paul Delany claims that "Austen's world is one of continuous 'status struggle'" (511). *A Companion to Jane Austen Studies* references critics such as Edward Copeland, David Holbrook and Edward J. Ahearn who have talked about the class issues and materialist standpoints within Austen, especially as pertains to the bourgeois (Lambdin and Lambdin 50). Austen was aware of the distinctions between class and, as David Spring points out in his essay about the influence of her personal status on her work, in her novels, the settings reveal the "hybrid nature of Jane Austen's society, of the world of neighborhood," and set up a kind of "rural elite" that would have been very in keeping with Austen's own view of society (393). However, although the most rigid execution of period dance was reserved for the upper classes, and while such a study about a specific class would generally utilize Marxist criticism, the focus on symmetry and balance looks more at the depiction of courtship than some of the more traditional aspects of Marxism.

However, the differences between Austen's world and society and the pluralistic nature of the Georgian society are fundamental in exploring her use of Aristotelian principles as well as the development of the fictional world within her novels. During the Georgian period, although many people, generally within upper class or nobility, responded to the French Revolution (and the literal destruction of the upper class) by clinging more vigorously to the British hierarchy, there were others that encouraged a move away from such class ideology. This controversy was prominently verbalized within Edmond Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and Mary Wollstonecraft rebuttal in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*. In his essay, Burke's defense of the British system claims that "no name, no power, no function, no artificial institution whatsoever can make the men of whom any system of authority is composed any other than God, and nature, and education, and their habits of life have made them" (58). He is connecting the infrastructure of Britain's government and hierarchy to the principles of God. He blames the loss of this infrastructure on the French Revolution, and celebrates England's retention of the same: "In England we have not yet been completely embowelled of our natural entrails... We fear God; we look up with awe to kings, with affection to parliaments, with duty to magistrates, with reverence to priests, and with respect to nobility" (128) However, according to Wollstonecraft, this argument states "that we are to reverence the rust of antiquity, and term the unnatural customs, which ignorance and mistaken self-interest have consolidated, the sage fruit of experience: nay, that, if we do discover some errors, our *feelings* should lead us to excuse, with blind love, or unprincipled filial affection, the venerable vestiges of ancient days" (18). In her definition, the connection between right and truth reveals the nature of God, instead of

some nebulous concept connected to the rigidity of the British government and social system (17). Burke's position is in some ways similar to Austen's values, and Burke is in fact heralded by Fredrick S. Tory as "one of the last powerful exponents of the Aristotelian tradition in the modern world" (618). The difference comes from Austen's acceptance of the propriety and beauty of the structure and order of society.

Also under dispute was the practice of governing emotions. Austen, possible because she had been raised with decorum and manners in a small and quiet town, had respect for the control of emotions and the prevalence of reason. While some amount of emotion was a good thing, and William Wordsworth even said in his *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" (26), the more excessive displays of emotion or passion, seen in poets such as Lord Byron, were not in keeping with Austen's preferences. The regulation, not suppression, of emotion was what Austen promoted, most especially within *Sense and Sensibility*. She looked for the tranquility that she thought should accompany emotion.

This idea, together with her perception of society and how it should be, allowed her to be a perfect conduit for Aristotelian Formalism. Troy stresses that "the Aristotelian ethic is a strenuous one: it is concerned with the gap between the actual and the potential, between what is and what ought to be, and life is a kind of quest engaging man's will and intellect in the search for deeper self-knowledge and self-command and both practical and contemplative wisdom" (619-20). Austen created a fictional world that allowed her heroines to participate in such a quest and to learn important lessons about their own natures. The fact that Austen wrote in a manner evocative of Aristotle is both surprising

and observable. Eva Brann, in her discussion of this connection, says clearly, “Jane Austen is an Aristotelian, not derivatively ... but directly and naturally” (817). Brann certainly does not think that Austen was imitating Aristotle deliberately. Not only was Austen apparently “philosophically unlearned” but she was also quite “distant in time and condition” (817) from Aristotle. However, Aristotle wrote about the same principles of moderation that were so important during Austen’s time, and his depiction of plot and story is founded upon order and balance. David Gallop, though he looks at her connection to both Aristotle and Plato, notes that “her fiction embodies an Aristotelian, rather than a Platonic, aesthetic” (96). She employs the very exact method for writing literature that Aristotle elaborated on in *Poetics*. He claims that “all six of her novels achieve, with incomparable beauty and subtlety, exactly the purpose that Aristotle assigned to fiction” (97). Both plot and characterization in her works bring forth the element of order that Aristotle hoped to convey. For both authors, “moderation and self-control become the virtues” (Brann 818), a concept that would have been readily accepted by the elite of Austen’s society. In fact, “Aristotle’s ethics can be read as an uncanny anticipation of hers” (Gallop 98). The fact that Austen used both the form and the values of Aristotelian Formalism bring to light the aspects of her writing that coincide with period dance. Just as symmetry and balance are greatly significant with her society as a whole and in dance specifically, they can be found within the format of her novels and linked to the references of dance in her stories.

By employing some of the Aristotelian principles for literature and virtue, Austen was able to draw the novel from the somewhat disreputable reputation that surrounded that type of writing. A. Walton Litz claims that many novels were seen having a

“pernicious moral influence” (264) and, as a result, few authors wished their works to be categorized as novel. Many of these writers included an apology for the shape of their work (if it was in novel form) because of the stigma that surrounded this form. Instead, “Jane Austen challenges the established view of how morality gets into fiction” (266) and managed to open the door for realistic portrayal of life without the repulsiveness or vulgarity that was before prevalent in novels. According to Ian P. Watt, she was also able to make some significant changes in the form of the novel such as eliminating the “participating narrator” (296). Furthermore, “[s]he was able to combine into a harmonious unity the advantages both of realism of presentation and realism of assessment, of the internal and of the external approaches to character” (Watt 297). She is able to bring together all of Aristotle’s points about plot and virtue and moderation without becoming pedantic or overly philosophical.

One of the most significant connections between Austen and Aristotle is her use of rhythm and her references to music within her novels. Aristotle himself wrote about the link between the rhythm of dance and literature in his *Poetics*: “for even dancing imitates character, emotion, and action, by rhythmical movement” (2). In his article “Aristotle’s Definition of Poetry,” Robert J. Yanal demonstrates how Aristotle connected the ideas of “rhythm and meter” with those of “beautiful writing or style” (501). He also presents this idea because the “human voice... has three species: melody, rhythm, and speech” (510). The aspect of rhythm within the spoken word also translates through literature and music. By using rhythm within certain art forms new connections and implications are revealed: “Music imitates (artistic kinds? plots?) by means of melody and rhythm... Dance imitates (artistic kinds? plots?) by means of rhythm alone” (Yanal

510). In this passage, Yanal is connecting the natural and necessary rhythm of music and dance to plot structure. However, not every novel would match a kind of musical rhythm. Epistolary fiction, for example, does not always have a discernable or repeatable form. However, a more structured plot, first discussed by Aristotle and then exemplified by Austen, does fit this structure well. There is a rhythm and almost musicality to Austen's works. References to music can be found in all of Austen's novels, usually in connection to dancing, but Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* and Anne in *Persuasion* both are proficient musicians, and the significance of their musicality helps to further the development of their characters. Such an aspect is not surprising considering the fact that Austen herself was a musician and apparently could play the pianoforte with some amount of skill (Tomalin 101-102) and reportedly practiced every day (Nokes 369). Austen was able to take this skill and love for music and transpose it into her writing. The rhythm of both Aristotle's ideal text and Austen's literature allows form to be beautiful and content to convey truth: "Jane Austen demonstrated that fiction could be true and genuine in the same way that Aristotle in his day had argued that tragedy and epic were true" (Mathison 152). By using this combination of truth and beauty (rhythm and musicality), Austen was able to shape stories "where the traditional view of human character as a genuine unity is superbly unfolded in her narratives and where the inwardness and power of the virtues, especially the virtues of integrity and constancy, are vividly shown as the source and the condition of human happiness" (Troy 622). Aside from the explicit references to music in Austen's works, the principle of rhythm is grounded in the idea of symmetry and balance. The fact that Austen's novels are full of

order and hierarchy and balanced emotions and choreography solidifies the connection between her plot structures and Aristotle's concept of rhythm.

Symmetry and balance formed an important part of this idyllic culture and figured significantly into both the political and aesthetic spheres of Austen's world. Although symmetry and balance are two closely interwoven ideas, symmetry refers more often to strict, visual reflections, mirror images or exact replications, while balance contains the suggestion of moderation, proportion, and order. Hermann Weyl, in his book titled *Symmetry*, defines the former term as "bilateral symmetry, the symmetry of left and right, which is so conspicuous in ... the human body" (4). As often as possible, true symmetry was practiced in the various spheres of influence found in that period, landscaping, portraiture, and architecture being the most obvious examples. However, such rigidity was seldom practical in day to day life (it was much more frequent in artistic and formal settings. The heroic couplet is an example of this sense of "high" symmetry although it was considered too restrictive, almost cliché, and thus not very popular in poetry by the end of the Georgian period). Balance was a much simpler idea to implement on a regular basis.

To fully understand the concept of balance and what role it plays within Austen's world, it is important to understand the variations of that idea in terms relevant to both that time period and the present. Moderation, as an aspect of this idea, refers to propriety. While not everyone would have practiced this type of decorum, the denotation of moderation would have been understood by all. Not necessarily the opposite of excess, it is temperance and self-control that keep all unruly desires in check. Food and dance and all kinds of merriment were considered wonderful in their proper place, but one was not

supposed to overindulge in any pleasure. In keeping with this idea, even work and serious studies were to be alleviated with periods of amusement. This way of life, of course, is very Aristotelian; after all, Aristotle wrote: “The virtue of justice consists in moderation, as regulated by wisdom” (qtd. in Southgate 328). The emphasis on balance and moderation was something inherent within Austen’s literature and could be seen as another connection between her and Aristotle.

Proportion also is an aspect of balance. While moderation seems to imply a consistently even path through life, proportion allows more for extreme emotions or action. Elaine Scarry in her book *On Beauty and Being Just*, claims that the balance and proportion within images and objects draw the eye to their beauty (29) thus encouraging the concept of aesthetics to be addressed together with proportion. Weyl considers his aforementioned description of bilateral symmetry to be a secondary definition of the term. He asserts about the first definition, one more closely related to term balance, that in “one sense symmetric means something like well-proportioned, well-balanced, and [balance] denotes that sort of concordance of several parts by which they integrate into a whole. Beauty is bound up with symmetry” (3). This implication that beauty is tied to balance is generally connected to the idea of proportion. That word is often used to refer to art or faces or other objects that might have a visual beauty. Nevertheless, there is another part of proportion that concerns those things which are both separated and connected, opposites and equals. There is a proportion, a balance, to the dispute between two opposing yet equal forces, ideas, or themes. Rachel Sutton-Spence and Michiko Kanako, in their work on symmetry in sign language poetry, claim that such polarities are integral to the principles of symmetry and balance:

With symmetry comes the closely related, yet paradoxical, concept of opposing duality. ... Duality and opposition are deeply embedded in our cultural heritage, producing ideas such as good and evil, rich and poor, war and peace, and light and darkness. Where seemingly opposing concepts are balanced, there is symmetry and consequently harmony. For this reason, within a discussion of symmetry we frequently find ideas of duality, opposition, and contrast. (286)

Contrast certainly plays a large part in the definition of proportion. Sutton-Spence and Kanako continue to say “the overall sense [of] symmetry is that of a bound whole, yet that very concept also implies the existence of opposing parts” (286). Austen also viewed emotions (balanced accordingly with intellect) in connection to the concept of proportion, and this impression of proportion was prevalent in most artwork and many of the buildings.

A third aspect of balance is order. This term allows for things like hierarchy and the class system of Austen’s world to exist. At first glance, neither system seems to possess any association with symmetry at all. However, both have a strict set of rules; they operate on a set and knowable foundation. The traditions and expectations that circle around aspects of social position and deportment (such as those that governed courtship) gave regularity to behavior and emotion. They also seem to have something in common with the idea of proportion. Both systems allow for a few powerful aristocrats to be over a greater number of less powerful and less affluent people. Austen and those like her were aware of and accepted the concepts as well as the reality of these class distinctions. The devastation of the French Revolution only solidified the upper class’s dependency on

a sense of order and normality within Britain. Thus order, in this sense, is structure and familiarity.

In general and according to Austen, the Georgian period incorporated the principles of symmetry and balance into tradition and convention almost completely. In the more political spheres, hierarchy and social class displayed connections to the idea of balance, particularly order and proportion. Rules of etiquette also played a very important role in the society and were indicative of how integrated balance was in these areas. One of the most explicit examples of these roles would be courtship and its place and purpose during the late 1700s. In terms of more visual representations of symmetry and balance, both architecture and art were fashioned around those two principles.

Hierarchy and social class were two of the foundational values that the people in the Regency era held. The country prided itself on its monarchy and believed the royal family to be instigated by God and upheld by a “fixed rule of succession” (Burke 19). Beyond that, most nobility were so because of their blood lines and family positions. The upper or noble class were comprised of aristocrats and landed gentry: nobles who held high titles, such as duke, earl or the like, while a squire was an honorary title for gentry who were landowners but not otherwise part of the peerage. In its simplest form, English nobility consisted of this caste, in descending order of ranking prestige and honour: duke/duchess, marquess/marchioness, earl/countess, viscount/viscountess, and baron/baroness. The eldest son of any peer held an honorary title of the next-highest rank until he inherited his “real” title from his father. Because of this method of succession, a duke’s first son would be considered a marquess and awarded all the privileges of that position. Because England only had access to a limited landmass (due to the confines of

the ocean and the presence of Scotland), historically ownership and wise management of the land had to be controlled. Thus by law, only a few families were allowed to own the land, with progenitor laws ensuring that the land could not be divided at death, but that estates had to be bequeathed, intact, to the eldest male son or some other male relative. Based on medieval feudalism, those within this class received money from renting out their land and expected vassal or loyalty from the tenants. In exchange, certain things were expected of the nobles, such as providing protection from marauders and serving as the justice of the peace, and in Austen's time, granting medical care and help to the poor as demonstrated by Emma. Their manor homes included their personal manor house, as well as lodging for their bailiff, and farms and villages for the laborers who worked the land (Spring 394). These landed estates with their tenantry were the socially acceptable source of income for gentlemen during this times period who were not expected to work. The great estates also provided a fashionable country home outside of the city in which to escape the noise, smell from pollution, excessive heat or cold, and fevers. However, the aristocracy, while retaining their country homes for certain times of the year, also had residences in town, in order to more conveniently attend to any Parliamentary business that they had. Being "in town" was also important for "the season," during which time the aristocrats attended the theatre and balls, not only to socialize, but to find appropriate partners. Keeping two or more homes was a sign of status and not necessarily voluntary. For the landed gentry, such opulence was less important and sometimes impossible. Therefore, the gentry (generally called squires) retained a close connection with the land and the people who worked there. The squires were considered a lesser nobility, gentlemen rather than aristocracy, but their local influence was much greater than that of

their often absent peers. Even the small distinctions between higher and lower nobility helped to preserve the order and hierarchy of the time. These distinctions were almost sacred and were upheld diligently.

In order to preserve the social hierarchy, issues such as inheritance, occupation and address were very important to the nobility. Unlike in other countries in which children of nobility automatically kept their father's title (on the Continent, all of the sons of a duke would then also be dukes even before the death of their father), in England, it was only after the death of the father that the eldest son would inherit the title and have a place in the House of Lords. This manner of passing on the peerage meant that second and third sons (really, any males who were not firstborn) had to procure other means in order to remain in the aristocracy. These younger sons, while being released from the expectations of land owners, were faced with a new set of responsibilities. There were a few respectable occupations that these young men could choose from, such as the military or navy, law, and the church. Within these professions, it was possible to make a decent living and be regarded as gentlemen by the upper classes.

Aside from issues of inheritance, how a person was addressed and by whom was indicative of social standing. Titled nobles would be addressed by their title (or Lord and Lady) followed by their last name, while other nobility would be referred to as Mr. or Mrs. or Miss. The eldest son would be Mr. and his last name, while each son after him would have the honorific Mr. before their first name. The same kind of distinction in address would be true for any daughters. In *Pride and Prejudice*, therefore, Jane is referred to as Miss Bennet because she is the eldest daughter, and Elizabeth is referred to as Miss Elizabeth. Once Lydia is married and becomes a "Mrs.," she has surpassed Jane

in the “chain of being.” That is why, in Chapter 51, Lydia says, “Ah! Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman” (205). This method of address helped indicate the position in the hierarchy that a person filled and allowed the birth order of their children to be immediately apparent. There were other traditions that indicated this aspect (such as the seating position or the order in which they entered a room) but verbal address was hierarchy imbedded into language: a way to linguistically preserve a sense of order and balance.

The aristocracy and gentry were not the only ones who clung to and respected the ideas of hierarchy. Clergy, also, used this policy within the church. Unfortunately, the Anglican Church (the Church of England) was sometimes more interested in the money that it could get from the parishioners than it was about their spiritual health. However, because the church was one of the few respectable occupations for the younger sons of nobility, many of the clergy were not truly devout; they sometimes sought wealth and position rather than any spiritual benefits (Mitton 34-35). In England’s official church, the idea of hierarchy was immediately apparent: the Anglican hierarchy included bishops, parsons, clerks, churchwardens, and curates. Here, wealth and social status helped determine promotions and positions within the church (Le Faye 10). The culture that surrounded the church was very inundated with the concept of this order and balance. In addition, where people were allowed to sit in churches was based on class status. Even when Wesley began the Methodist Movement, he continued the practice of pew hierarchy. Although some might not have considered this preoccupation to be positive, it was certainly in keeping with the presence of symmetry and balance throughout the rest of the society.

Traditions and rule of etiquette dictated the behavior of the upper and middle classes. Although there were modes of behavior for all classes, for the purpose of this discussion, only the rules of etiquette that applied to gentlemen and ladies of leisure, those who did not have to work for their living and were not in trade, will be looked at in depth. Many of these rules governed the interaction between people of opposite gender or rank. Certain procedures had to be followed just for someone to be introduced to a stranger. Courtship itself was infinitely confusing and constraining. There was very little room for individuality or variation. These limitations formed part of the order that was demanded of society. The presence of balance can be seen in the way people behaved towards each other.

Everyone in the upper class was expected to behave in accordance with his or her stature. Both men and women had exacting and specific mannerisms that they were supposed to embody. Men were to act as gentlemen and women as ladies. The rules for their behavior included strictures on manners, money, fashion, and emotion. Manners and etiquette were clearly laid out. Gentlemen were to be respectful to women, trustworthy, dependable, and ethical (Davidoff and Hall 13). They were expected to put others before themselves and be more interested in assisting the country and community than in their own personal profit. Money was not supposed to be a concern for them and certainly not a motive or obsession. Fashion also was to be a lesser concern. Although both fashion and money were very necessary to being a gentleman, the proper gentleman was to employ a “concept of disinterestedness” about both issues. This expectation leads into the idea of emotion within proper society. Gentlemen were to have suitable emotional reserve and were not to call attention to their own cleverness or hard work, nor were they

to show too much eagerness about any given subject. While emotions were more openly expressed in the Late Georgian period than in the Victorian era, most of the same principles held true for both times. Even Byron was harshly criticized for the publicity of his passions (especially those that ended in open affairs). All of these restrictions for men supported the balance of society and preservation of the social classes.

Men were not the only ones to have harsh behavioral regulations. Women were perhaps more restricted than men. While most of the men had the freedom to choose their occupation and residence, women had considerably less control over their location and position. A woman's status came from her husband, father, brother or some other male in her life. She was expected to marry well and be a proper wife and mother. During the day, a woman might make visits, read, play or listen to music or do needlework. She might also walk or ride as exercise and perhaps do some social welfare work (Wells 99). However limited her choice of daily occupation might be, she would also be expected to act in a certain way. Again there was a certain amount of emotional control (not the subjugation of emotion, just the moderation of sensibilities in public) that was expected of women in order to preserve their reputation as ladies. All of the control and scripted conduct that was expected of the noble class served to protect the principles of moderation and balance that were so important to the people at that time.

Apart from the observations of hierarchy and moderation within the actions of the people, in both architecture and some types of art such as paintings, the intricacies of symmetry and balance can be seen quite clearly. Buildings in the Georgian period were boxy and strictly symmetrical. There was a great deal of emphasis placed on mathematical ratios, as well as proportion and balance. During that time, sameness and

regularity were prized, and any structures that deviated from the almost formulaic normality that the Georgian Era required were considered to be defective and unattractive. These buildings were often made of red brick or stone. The permanency inherent in these materials and the order and similarity found in such homes speaks very loudly about the priorities of that period. The Regency era clung to these visual depictions of stability, order and cleanliness. The regularity and repetitiveness of certain structures ensured that this underlying principle of that time endured in a concrete, tangible necessity of life, the very homes and shops that the people lived and worked in. This concept was especially important within the Georgian period because of the growing plurality within philosophy, the threat of the kind of revolution that France and America were experiencing, and the growth of the middle class infringing upon the upper classes. Yet, there was a kind of reassurance in the harsh symmetry found in the buildings, such as the Royal Crescent in Bath. This structure consists of many apartments, tall and stately, made of grey stone, each with the same number of windows and the same imposing facade. They all run together and their similarities and the repetition of the buildings (which by themselves are not immediately attractive) create an impressive monument to the beauty and stability of Georgian architecture. The strength and daunting front and the drabness that they embody are not traditionally beautiful; however, the repetition and scope of the Royal Crescent give an almost sublime quality to something potentially average.

As an extension of the architecture of the day, landscapes became very important, especially for the nobility. At the time, this practice of landscaping became a balance between the formerly overworked gardens that had been planted and the wilderness. The

concept of finding order within nature was not unique to this time, as even Aristotle proposed to follow the “order of nature” (I). Aristotle acknowledges that a natural order exists and that such an order is the easiest and most rational pattern to follow. This idea relates to landscaping in that the most fashionable kinds of landscaping mimicked nature at its best yet seemed somehow tamed. Lancelot, or Capability, Brown and Humphry Repton were two of the most respected and sought after landscapers of the time. Brown constructed what he referred to as “grammatical” landscapes. In his own words, he used grammar as the order for his creations: “‘Now there’ said he, pointing his finger, ‘I make a comma, and there’ pointing to another spot, ‘where a more decided turn is proper, I make a colon; at another part, where an interruption is desirable to break the view, a parenthesis; now a full stop, and then I begin another subject’” (qtd. in Willis 158). Yet he has also been criticized for replicating nature too closely. Repton followed Brown and often remade or polished his work. He also created landscapes more conservatively and on a smaller scale. However, both men upheld the balance between nature and civilization, and Austen was aware of their reputation. The work of famous landscapers such as Repton is mentioned by Austen in *Mansfield Park*. Mr. Rushworth, as he is discussing whom he will hire to work on the grounds of his manor house, says, “Smith’s place is the admiration of all the country; and it was a mere nothing before Repton took it in hand. I think I shall have Repton” (48). During the conversation about landscaping, Repton is brought up several times, as are names like Cowper and Gilpin who were also well-known for their work.

The paintings of the day also reflected symmetry and balance. However, with this more expressive form of art, symmetry was more often shown through balance and

proportion. Portraits and landscapes were some of the most common subjects for artists such as Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds to copy. Portraits, because they are close depictions of human faces, have symmetry in their content. The person or people to be painted were centered in the frame or placed proportionately in the scene. Symmetry was considered a major component in aesthetics and nearly all of the portraits from this time period possessed strong hints of bilateral symmetry and regularity. The reason that so many portraits were made was that they were often commissioned by the wealthy and the aristocracy and were a primary source of income for the artists. Sir Joshua Reynolds and others like him painted primarily portraits and became known for doing so. Other artists like Thomas Gainsborough preferred nature as a subject. Gainsborough claimed to favor painting landscapes even though he was one of the most renowned portrait painters in England at the time. Within landscapes (just like in paintings of people) there is a natural portrayal of symmetry and balance that lends its aesthetic appeal to the painting. Landscapes find this appeal in the balance and placement of the figures within them as well as in the symmetry inherent in many natural things such as flowers and other plants. The shape of the countryside shows proportion and order, and most of the landscapes tried to catch that balance between wilderness and civility. By keeping balance and order in art, the artist could produce a work that would be accepted and delighted in by the very symmetrically minded people of the late 1700s and early 1800s.

Not only were symmetry and balance significant within the aforementioned parts of society, but dance also held a very important place within the culture of that time. Dance, itself, was considered a necessary accomplishment, and someone who danced

poorly, or not at all, was an embarrassment. Balls were one of the few permissible interactions allowed between courting couples, and they often became meeting places where gentlemen could be introduced to young ladies in an orderly and acceptable manner. Dancing was also an energetic activity and, within a controlled environment, expressed emotion and exuberance. The Georgian period was exemplified by its balance of order and wildness (as is seen in the various tensions displayed by Burke, Wollstonecraft, Wordsworth, Byron and others), and dance was a perfect extension of that attitude.

Because there were such strict expectations of behavior, especially for young people in Austen's world, balls, and thus dancing, were necessary in order to have a socially acceptable occurrence for interaction between the genders for the purpose of meeting and initiating courtship. These balls were more than just casual meetings. They were miniature depictions of larger cultural practices, and "the country dance was a social microcosm, replicating and reinforcing the social hierarchy" (Stovel 30). The dance itself mirrored the principles so ingrained in the larger society. G. E. Mitton commented on this adherence to structure in her book *Jane Austen and Her Times*, saying "Everything was to be performed in proper order" (223). There was a specific hierarchy that dancers had to follow, as well as types of dances that were danced in certain venues. The leading couple was often the highest ranking couple and would open the ball and choose the dances. Some dances like the minuet (a dance that required skill and coordination) would be danced in high society balls in Bath and London, while line dances and "romps" would be common in country dances where socialization was the main focus. All of these dances, no matter the skill level, ensured the changing of partners and the lack of close

and intimate holds. The purpose of partner changes was to preserve propriety and ensure a brief connection with as many people as possible, in the hopes of furthering the chances of a favorable marriage.

However, there were other styles of dance, such as the newly emerging waltz that did not use those techniques. In 1825, the waltz was defined as “a riotous and indecent German dance” (qtd in the *Oxford Etymological Dictionary Online*), because a couple would spend the dance clasped in each other’s arms and with no other parties or partner changes to prevent the dance from being an image of marriage. The very fact that dance was seen as a reflection or even metaphor of courtship and dancing itself as indicative of society is an example of the symmetry that was so prevalent in the culture. The balls and country dances mirrored reality, created a picture of life, and in doing so, reinforced the necessity and dependence on symmetry to form metaphor for the social order and the pursuit of matrimony.

Dance itself, beyond being an image of life and a mode of courtship, was an indispensable method for young people to express themselves in a safe and approved manner. Both genders were expected to be relatively self-contained and reticent as a part of their outward portrayal of themselves and yet still show intelligent and interesting personalities; “a girl who can talk wittily, dance well, and who is bright and sweet-tempered must always be in demand” (Mitton 123). However, not everyone is naturally of this temperament. Dance allowed for emotion and even flirtation to occur in a way that kept the young people from bottling up vivaciousness and exuberance. In his chapter “On Amusements in General,” Thomas Gisborne wrote about this expression of emotion:

Another class of public diversions comprehends those meetings in which the professed amusement is dancing: an amusement in itself both innocent and salubrious and therefore by no means improper, under suitable regulations, to constitute the occasional entertainment of youth. In the ballroom, however, a young woman has more temptations to encounter than she has experienced at the public or at the private concert. (180-81)

Dancing became a way to express emotion (in moderation) without having to repress everything that might not be acceptable in other situations.

Specific dances and forms of dance also showed the principles of symmetry and balance and allowed opportunity for people to participate in an artistic expression. Part of this aesthetic quality came from the symmetry within the dances. Men and women mirrored each other, each couple imitated the couple next to them (or every other couple, depending on the dance), and the motions of couples were bilaterally symmetrical. Dances consisted of variations upon several basic movements joined together in different ways. These actions had names like “honor” or acknowledge the other person in a couple; “cast” or separate to move out; “strip the willow,” which meant a person would link arms with someone and then with his or her partner and repeat down the line of the dancers; and “balance,” sometimes a small step forward and then back. Each name referred to a very specific motion that the dancer would make. Some country dances might even have a caller who would verbalize the combination of movements in unfamiliar or new dances. The regularity of these movements helped to form a basis for the sense of order and similarity that contributed to the symmetry of the dances.

Period dances also established patterns of motion that were consistent from dance to dance. Such patterns include the concept of separation and reunion, changing partners, emotion and technique, followers and leaders, and motion and repetition. These patterns might then be applied to a piece of literature, such as the works by Austen. All of these patterns are linked somehow, yet they still have significance in and of themselves. The technique of separation and reunion has two possible connotations. The first meaning would denote the changing of partners with a return to the original person at the end of the dance. The second, equally common, implication would signify a portion of the dance in which the couple would cast off and move away from each other, sometimes even with other couples in between them, before moving back together without having a different partner. This separation is similar to the concept of proportion in art. Instead of spending the entire dance together in one straight line, the period of separation introduces flow and grace into the dance. The conclusion of this separation then carries for the dancer a feeling of falling, like water over a cliff, a tangible unleashing of kinetic energy, swift and inescapable. The dancers are reunited and the dance continues with more energy than before. However, though this pattern brings movement and even emotion to the dance, it does not break the line of symmetry. Any dancers that cross the center line are countered by the rest of the dancers who cross back and keep the proportion flawless.

Just as separation and reunion can reference the flow of the dance, it can also allude to the pattern of changing partners. Partner changes were very common within period dance. Sometimes though, changes occurred when couples were split and each person would dance with a new partner, sometimes several times during a dance. Other times, dancers would begin in a quartet, with two couples to each section, and the couples

as a whole would move to different quartets so two people would always stay together. Either way, this technique is similar to the action of casting on a broader scale. The changing of partners mirrors the search for a proper spouse, and the variety brings the sense of proportion to the dance. Because everyone changes at the same time, there is symmetry to the motion, yet the action itself is excessive enough to balance out the otherwise overtly bilateral nature of a line dance.

Another pattern that surfaces is the juxtaposition of emotion and technique. Dance was a very cathartic action, and as such the release of emotion was necessary for any dancer to be truly accomplished. Although the emotions of the dancers were often light and easy, the performance of these dances was “very formal” and “every motion was regulated” (Mitton 121). Nevertheless, knowledge of the dances was extremely important. Someone who was ignorant or incapable of dancing well was not considered to be worthy of a position in the upper classes. Poor dancers were avoided and often snubbed at balls. Yet even if someone was a precise dancer, if that person lacked the emotion that was expected of these dances, he or she would have been seen as less accomplished than a more emotive, less talented dancer. The emotions of someone who danced for the joy of dancing were contagious and spread the excitement and elation to the other dancers. A person who danced well out of obligation would not inspire the same delight in others. A proper balance between these two concepts is essential. Someone too outgoing or ecstatic is as unseemly as one unable to move smoothly through the dances. In this pattern, moderation is the key for being a good dancer.

The intrinsic hierarchy of period dance lent itself well to the formation of followers and leaders. This pattern is another that can be separated into two possible

approaches, the first being the hierarchy of the dance in which the head couple led and the others followed. This hierarchy can also refer to gender roles within the dance, as women followed their male partners. In order to understand the pattern of the head couple being the leader, it is important to remember the position of that couple, both spatially and in society. In period dance, the head couple stood at the front of the line, closest to the band, and called both the dance and the music. They decided when and what to dance. Once the dance had begun, the head couple often went through the steps first before stepping aside to let the others follow. Although they were very obviously leaders in the dance, another way that they might be considered such is the fact that head couples were often the most socially prominent dancers at a certain gathering. The lady with the highest rank led the dancing (Mitton 126). Such a position was indicative of her influential position in society and upon fashion.

Gender roles also played a huge part in how dances were executed. Although both parties would know the steps of the dance, the woman was expected to follow the man's lead as he directed her through the dance. Even though this practice was not as visible as it would be in close-hold ballroom dances like the waltz or foxtrot, there were indications of the female's position in the movements of the dance. Some of these signals were the placement of the hand. Men were expected to ask the women to dance and escort them to and from the floor. In dances that required handholding, the woman's hand was always be on top, a weaker position, and the man guided her into position with hand grasps or body positions. It was also the man's job to be aware of the arrangement of other couples on the dance floor and move his partner into the proper positions. The use of leaders and

followers allows for a natural hierarchy to grow out of the dances but also preserves the order and balance that was so important at that time.

Motion and repetition make up another ubiquitous tendency in period dance. Obviously dance requires motion to be dance at all. However, the type of motion found within period dance is very important. Period dance is characterized by smooth, simple movements where everyone in the line is moving in unison. There are no sharp or harsh actions, and the flow of the dance is almost more important than its complexity. Regularity is more valued in these dances than uniqueness. Therefore the movement is expected amongst couples, when changing partners, and in the structure of the dance. Repetition plays into this pattern a great deal. Movements are often repeated; dances sometimes begin and end the same way. Often there are a certain number of steps that are repeated over and over throughout the dance, with different partners or places in the line. Because repetition bring the symmetry to even irregular motions, these two concepts are very important to the aesthetics and foundations of period dance.

In order to fully understand just how period dance serves as a representation of courtship and the metaphoric qualities thereof, the diverse nature of metaphor and the broad and far-reaching scope of study dedicated to that literary device should be addressed. There are several types of metaphor, and although there was not much critical study done on metaphor until the modern age, John Middleton Murry's seminal essay, "Metaphor" was among the first article to seriously look at the nature of the metaphor. In that text, he explores similarities between the study of metaphor and the study on the consciousness, thus creating in some way a metaphor stating the difficulty of adequately labeling such an elusive linguistic element (1). From that point on, this field of study has

become almost impossibly complex. Zoltán Kövecses, Réka Benczes, and Szilvia Csábi say in their book *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, “There are many ways with which to perceive metaphors. Within speech and literature, metaphors may have different cultural connections as well as being closely linked to similes, idioms and metonymy” (13). Even within relatively traditional ways of approaching metaphors, Max I. Baym claims “there operate two semantic movements, one of which issues from analogies of fact and the other from analogies of value and that there are affective metaphors for subjective qualities and explicative ones for objective quantities” (215). William Bedell Stanford thinks that a metaphor “is the stereoscope of ideas. By presenting two different points of view on one idea, it gives the illusion and conviction of solidarity and reality. Thus metaphor adds a new dimension to language” (105). In his book appropriately titled *Metaphor*, David Punter elaborates on the variety of uses for metaphor: “Metaphor is the common substratum of the representation of institutions, corporations, public bodies” (42). Such a claim would expand the nature of a metaphor and thus enlarge the study of it. This ever-widening branch of linguistic study includes some “recent concern with metaphor in anthropology, linguistics, literary aesthetics, psychology, and philosophy, categories which often merge” (Baym 215). Wayne C. Booth offers the opinion that “[m]etaphor has by now been defined in so many ways that there is no human expression, whether in language or any other medium, that would not be metaphoric in someone's definition” (50). However ambiguous and varied the definitions of metaphor are, for the purpose of looking at dance and courtship within Austen’s novel a traditional Western definition of the word metaphor proves to be acceptable. As Punter puts it, this type of metaphor is one “whereby two discrete objects or ideas become linked, but in a very

particular way, such that, for the duration of the metaphor, one the items actually becomes the other, and vice versa” (Punter 26-7). For Austen, the dance was a kind of courtship, and the intricacies of courtship a dance. Therefore, a straightforward definition of metaphor is the most appropriate for this study.

All such patterns within dance are replicated within Austen’s novels. This deep connection to order as well as to dance may stem from her unique and revolutionary work with the developing novel. In *The Novels of Jane Austen: An Interpretation*, Darrell Mansell remarks on the similarities of Austen’s fiction to dance:

Her novels are more like ballroom dances than like anyone’s conception of life in the raw. They present the relationship between the sexes in a graceful, restrained and highly recurrent form of art that has developed in polite society.... In dancing the sexual passions are celebrated in a ceremony that hints at their power while keeping them safely contained in art. The order of social precedence is celebrated, and carefully preserved. There is room for slight innovation and the cautious expression of one’s individuality, but again the conventional form of the art is always preserved. There is nothing that could be called “suspense” concerning the final disposition of the couples who began; only a gentle tension as they threaten to deviate from traditional patterns, but finally do not. The destined couples thread their way through an intricate design, to be united at the close. (8-9)

By following patterns present in period dance, Austen, whether consciously or otherwise, followed the classic Aristotelian format of creating literature; she created a plot structure

(the choreography of literature), rising to a climax and falling to dénouement. This template was the design of all of her novels. By following this order as she constructed her books, Austen inherently incorporated elements that are also essential within period dance.

Jane Austen's perception of the Late Georgian period showed a time characterized by structure and tradition, power and control, symmetry and balance. This time illuminated the beauty of regularity and the propriety of decorum. Moderation and order were exalted and dance became a legitimate way to express emotion and excitement. Dance became therapeutic, a controlled chaos that everyone needed in order to maintain the demureness that was expected, yet even within the dance, symmetry and proportion were present to guide the dancers. Austen's novels reveal this reliance on order through the very format of her books and the relationship of the characters within them. Looking at the prevalence of dance and the utilization of the patterns of period dance in her texts can help enlighten the purpose behind her novels.

## Chapter Two

### Separation and Reunion

Within Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the structure of dance connects principles innate within period dance to portions of plot and personalities of characters. This connection relies heavily on the foundation of symmetry and balance that runs beneath nearly everything in that culture. Because period dance has such a strong relationship to courtship, it is inevitable that *Pride and Prejudice*, arguably one of the most romantic novels of the Georgian era, includes both the act of dancing and a correlation between dance and the courtship plot. The occurrence of separation and reunion, as well as the connection between individual characters and their division from family and friends during significant plot points, shows a parallel between the types of courtship in *Pride and Prejudice* and the configuration of period dance.

#### Separation and Reunion within Dance and Courtship

During the Late Georgian period, Jane Austen's view of society was one that held a very stylized view of courtship in general. Because most marriages among the upper classes were arranged for reasons other than love and affection, such as family line, property, and social standing (Stone 42), there was a romanticized concept of marriage. For women especially, marriage was almost a necessity of life, although males were also required to marry to produce an heir who would inherit the property (Kloester 48), and it was often considered "morally obligatory [for] the landed class to marry off their daughters" (43). Many women saw it not only as a duty to their families, "the inevitability of marriage as the only viable future for the single female" (Kennard 17), but also as a chance at a better life if they could marry into money. While reality was often

different from these expectations (Kennard 11), the lure of romance was still very strong, as seen in many of the novels from that time period, including Jane Austen's works.

However, English society still operated in a very structured and regulated manner. Joseph Duffy in his article about structure and order in Jane Austen's works emphasizes the strict mores of society, hierarchy and "established order" that abounded during her lifetime (276). The reliance on symmetry and balance was such that even something as chaotic and unrestrained as emotions (specifically love) was still expected to be dealt with in a prescribed way. Together with many of her peers, Cheryl Wilson acknowledges that most of the unbending rules surrounding courtship applied to the upper or noble classes, but even those individuals in the growing middle class tried to implement them whenever practical, and this kind of refined courtship often was shown through the "culture of dance" that abounded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (2). Within the overarching classification of courtship, there was a very specific code of conduct and etiquette. Some of these rules coincided with the principle of separation and reunion that was so significant in the dance of that era. Because decorum and privacy were very important in preserving both the pride of the gentleman and the reputation of the lady, the couple was often apart for most of the courting period. There were also very clear expectations of behavior for both men and women: "In elite social circles a man was expected to be elegant in both dress and manner when in public and pay due deference to women and his social superiors" (Kloester 47). As a suitor, he was expected to know that "open shows of affection were considered inappropriate," especially those toward women in the middle to upper classes. Visits (in which the gentleman would call upon the lady) lasted no more than half an hour (97), and innocence in a woman was considered to be a

virtue (63). During this period, the lady would almost always remain at her parents' house and would have a chaperone present throughout her suitor's visits. In such circumstances, the separation would generally be from her suitor and not from her family or friends. All of these characteristics and expectations of courting couples were ingrained into the mentality of the people. These qualifications stemmed partly from the concept of symmetry and balance within society.

In the context of courtship, dance served as a mirror for, and a metaphor of, that larger institution. As Dow Adams moralizes, "When we realize how frequently dancing and courtship are connected in [Austin's] novels, we begin to see the terrible importance of getting a partner both for the dance and for life" (57). In light of this fact, many of the dances were supposed to mimic the act and idea of courtship and marriage (the action of getting married and not the state of matrimony), and Austen herself writes that "[t]o be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love" (*Pride and Prejudice* 7) and goes even farther than that in *Northanger Abby*, when Henry Tilney says, "I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage" (51). Dance itself was a symbol of courtship, and "courtship patterns still underlie the formal etiquette of the ritual [of dance]" (Stovel 30). The steps imitated the process and structure that surrounded the development of romance:

Dance mediates between courtship and marriage, involving both qualities of exclusivity and qualities of unparticularity amongst status peers. At a ball, there is an acceptable means of becoming introduced to strangers.

Wanting to dance with someone is considered good enough reason to find

out his or her name or to arrange for a mutual acquaintance to make an introduction. (Segal and Handler 326)

Concerning the act of dancing as a whole, balls and country dances held certain expectations and requirements for the people attending. Formality and rigidity existed in the traditions that surrounded these gatherings. As for the dances themselves, they always followed the strict, unchanging choreography that all of the dancers were expected to already know. These dances were often brief, and partners rarely danced more than two or three dances with the same person, which increased the pattern of separation greatly. In fact, for a gentleman to dance with the same lady more than once was a great sign of his interest or affection, a detail which Mrs. Bennet points out with satisfaction when Mr. Bingley asks Jane to dance with him twice (9). Therefore, by dancing well, a gentleman's pride might be satisfied and a lady's reputation secured or even improved if she became known as a good dancer because "proficiency in dancing suggested that a woman possessed social graces and personal charm" (Wilson 33). A person's deportment during these dances was considered indicative of character and personality, and balls and less formal dances were the primary method for introducing and securing a partner in life.

Just as courtships must of necessity begin with an introduction, so all period dances began with the dancers honoring their partners. This consistent movement was simply a slight bow or curtsy in the direction of the person opposite on the last count before the dance began and again at its close, though it was sometimes employed in the middle of the dance, especially after partner changes. Because a gentleman was required to lead the lady onto and off of the floor, this minor obeisance indicated the beginning and end of a dance. The lines of dancers were formed according to gender (and social

position), and a couple would have little close contact, any intentional touch mostly being hand grabs or linked arms. This contact seems to represent the closeness of the girl and her family, while highlighting the separation that would exist between her and her suitor. Within the choreography of the dances, this same principle of separation and reunion is apparent. Nora Stovel comments on this practice in her description of period dance: “Couples lined up facing one another, as in a Virginia Reel, and danced up and down the line, separating and reuniting...” (34). Because each line acts in tandem, the line is almost more closely related than couples. However, the focus of each dancer is on that person’s partner, which gives them a connection despite the frequent physical separation and provides the steps that bring them together with an emotional quality. During the dances, the connection between partners would also be broken with the implementation of moves like casting off or holding during still portions of the dance. Such motions would also be indicative of spatial constructs within courtship. Throughout this aspect of courtship and dance, the principle of symmetry and balance remains strong.

#### The Four Courtships of *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen was well aware of the importance of dance within a courtship. As her novels are centered on the courtship and eventual marriage of her protagonists, dances and balls also figure heavily into the plots of her novels. Langdon Elsbree asserts that of “the six novels, *Pride and Prejudice* is the one in which the dance is most important in revealing a character’s class origins and values and in helping to create the initial rhythm—the pattern of the dramatic movement—of the relationships among the main characters” (121). Although all of her texts employ this dramatic movement, in the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, one aspect of symmetry and balance connected to both period

dance and courtship that can be clearly seen is the principle of separation and reunion. Because this pattern is so imbedded into society mores as she saw them, Austen elaborated on that facet of romance in her description of the courtship of Elizabeth Bennet. Two components of this type of balance, specifically separation and reunion, are explored in detail: separation within courtship and the impact of the eventual reunion as well as the idea of individual separation and the growth of the character and plot. Although this amount of detail seems restrictive, “Austen choreographs her novels cleverly, using dancing to parallel courtship patterns” (Wilson 33). In general, the idea of symmetry and balance can also be seen in how characters are often expected to balance each other, and the less extreme that balance is (the closer they come to moderation themselves), the more respected and well-liked the characters are. While there are, of course, other instances of both symmetry and balance within this novel, in order to accurately analyze its presence at all, there must be a focus. The presence of separation and reunion is clearer in this book than it is in the other texts which favor other facets of both dance and symmetry.

The most apparent and important segment of this pattern relates to the presence and purpose of separation within the several courtships in *Pride and Prejudice*. This novel depicts “active courtships between the principal couples that are represented by dancing” (Wilson 36). The interaction between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy is the main courtship in this novel, and within it, the aspect of dance, as well as that of balance, is unmistakably present. However, this relationship is certainly not the only one. The first part of this novel seems to be a “series of dances that choreographs the complex courtship of Darcy and Elizabeth and contrasts the smooth sailing of Charles Bingley’s courtship of

her sister Jane Bennet” (39). Mr. Bingley’s pursuit of Jane Bennet also follows the form of period dance and is in some way more comparable to such choreography. One might even describe this courtship as almost ideal because of the glorified characterization of the two people in question. On a somewhat similar note, Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins also adhere to the principles of dance and likewise go through some kind of separation followed by reunion, and they also represent the standard progression of courtship and matrimony in the upper middle and noble classes. If Jane and Mr. Bingley are the ideal couple, then Charlotte and Mr. Collins are the realistic one. Distinct from these three good examples, the relationship of Lydia and Mr. Wickham does not represent the pattern set within period dance, nor does it follow any overt symmetry of its own (except for the similarity these circumstances have to an earlier situation with Miss Darcy). Clearly, when Lydia breaks with tradition so violently by running off with Mr. Wickham, the parallel to a tradition of dance is similarly broken. However, this departure from the pattern of courtship only serves to show the benefits of abiding by the constraints and traditions of courtship and illuminate the connections linking courtship and dancing which create a layer of meaning throughout *Pride and Prejudice*.

All of the courtship and marriage relationships in *Pride and Prejudice* have short periods of meeting interrupted by, often, quite long period of absence. While in reality, such a distant courtship would not have been uncommon, Austen uses this mode in order to develop characters as well as to illustrate the significance of dance within this novel. In fact, there seem to be two distinct segments of this relationship. This first part does not contain the necessary components of a proper courtship. There is very little dancing on the part of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, and the idea of dance is often scorned or belittled by

those two characters. However, after Mr. Darcy's first unsuccessful proposal, the tone of his interaction with Elizabeth changes. While the action of dancing is less prevalent in this portion of the story, "Austen employs the metaphor established through the four dance scenes that comprise Volume One as a model for marriage in Volumes Two and Three" (44). After his change of approach, Mr. Darcy's actions are more indicative of the patterns employed within period dance than his awkward attempts to actually dance with Elizabeth.

The courtship of Elizabeth Bennet by Mr. Darcy certainly has a rocky beginning and is positively riddled with long absences and abrupt reunions. During the very beginning of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy's acquaintance, there is little interaction between the two of them. While Mr. Darcy does speak to Elizabeth at the Lucases, perhaps the closest contact that the two of them have before the ball at Netherfield occurs when Jane falls ill and is required to remain at Netherfield Park. Although Elizabeth goes to Netherfield in order to nurse her sister, she is still required to observe the social niceties, including sitting with the others and dining with them. During some of these forced interactions, she speaks briefly with him; however, it is the physical proximity for such a long period of time that is unusual. By the time she is to leave with Jane, Mr. Darcy feels that "Elizabeth had been at Netherfield long enough" (41). In fact, "the separation, so agreeable to almost all" (40-41) left only Mr. Bingley openly sorry about it (Jane being too lady-like to fully express her feelings). In spite of these few days, for the short period of time at the beginning of their association, Elizabeth only sees Mr. Darcy during meetings followed by longer separations, neither of which are excessively long.

At Netherfield Ball, Elizabeth does have a very significant interaction with Mr. Darcy. Up until this point, she has actively avoided any deep conversations or invitations to dance with him. However, at this gathering, she is unable to continue to do so. Not only is she compelled to dance with him at one point but most of her conversations and observations are about Mr. Darcy himself. Not even the loquaciousness of Mr. Collins prevents Elizabeth from being aware of Mr. Darcy because of Mr. Collins connection to Mr. Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. This meeting between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy does show some indications of Mr. Darcy's interest in courting Elizabeth; unfortunately, his aloofness and her attitude do not help develop this desire to any noticeable extent. Not only does Elizabeth have a strong connection to Mr. Darcy, but Austen herself uses words like "parted" and "separated" to increase the sense of distance between the two, especially after the somewhat disastrous dances. The language of the text as well as the actions of the characters display a very obvious relationship between this connection and separation as it pertains to courtship.

When the entire party from Netherfield Park abruptly returns to London, Elizabeth expects that she and her family will never meet with any of them again. She is at this point unaware of Mr. Darcy's growing regard for her. This obliviousness would not have been uncommon; indeed, Myrtle Reed, in her book detailing proper etiquette and deportment (1907), mentions that "[a] girl never knows whether a courtship is in progress or not, unless a man tells her... It is only in the comic papers that a stern parent waits upon the continuous caller and demands to know his 'intentions,' so a girl must, perforce, be her own guide" (87). Elizabeth is only distressed for Jane's sake; she does not see this separation as a bad thing at all; in fact, she does not expect it ever to end.

When she is surprisingly reunited with Mr. Darcy at Rosings Park, Elizabeth is no more aware of Mr. Darcy's feelings for her than she was before. However, unfortunately for him, this period of separation did not endear him to her. His proposal is met with a great deal of negative emotion. This encounter ends the first half of their courtship on a decidedly sour note.

During the second section of this romance, Mr. Darcy, though he professes to be doing nothing of the sort, does carry on his pursuit of Elizabeth when he delivers his explanatory letter. Letters were often used as a means of communication between separated lovers and were a significant part of most courtships. Even though both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are present at Rosings, their emotional distance and the antagonism that she holds for him make the sending of a letter very appropriate. The information within the letter attempts to lessen the emotional detachment even though the physical distance is soon after greatly increased. Mr. Darcy's heartfelt confessions within the letter do fulfill the function that the act of letter writing was intended to accomplish during courtships.

After Elizabeth leaves Rosings, there is a long period of separation to which Elizabeth does not foresee an end. This severance is concluded when, through an unanticipated series of events, Elizabeth is given the opportunity to visit Pemberley, and Darcy unexpectedly arrives there in time to greet her. This reunion has the greatest impact on their relationship because of the impression that the letter had upon Elizabeth's perception of Mr. Darcy. In fact, her opinion of him has completely changed, and the new information that she learns at Pemberley only helps to destroy her first impressions of him. However, Lydia's elopement abruptly ends this time at Pemberley, and Elizabeth's

knowledge of Mr. Darcy's character leads her to believe again that they will never meet or that his feelings for her will not endure this scandal. However, after the long period of uncertainty when no one knows whether Lydia will even be found, although Mr. Darcy is still absent, the information Elizabeth gets first from Mr. Collins and then Lady Catherine de Bourgh is enough to give her hope. At the end, when Mr. Darcy finally does come back, he first sees that her sister is engaged (placing family and friends above himself). By assisting her family, together with everything that he did for Lydia, Mr. Darcy reveals his affection for Elizabeth. Such actions would have been extremely romantic gestures in the Late Georgian period. Even after Elizabeth accepts Mr. Darcy's proposal, there is still limited contact between the two of them. They do go on long walks by themselves, but there still is no significant physical closeness once they are engaged, and family is still very involved in the last stages of this courtship. If the letter is the opening of this proper courtship, then the engagement and subsequent wedding are the culmination.

The presence of dance plays a significant role throughout this whole process, and is indeed very connected to the long periods of absence. The attitude of each character toward dance directly correlates with that person's relationship toward courtship. During the first part of this novel, the awkwardness surrounding Mr. Darcy and sometimes Elizabeth concerning dance is quite indicative of the struggles that they are having in their relationship. As time progresses, while the action of dancing becomes less frequent, both characters begin to follow the formula for courtship that is laid out within the choreography of period dance.

The importance of dance can first be seen as it relates to Mr. Darcy's feelings on the matter of courtship. In fact, "Darcy's dislike of dancing suggests his resistance to marriage" (Wilson 30). When the people of the town first meet Mr. Darcy, at a country dance shortly after he arrives in the neighborhood, he does not behave as anticipated of a gentleman at a dance. As all capable gentlemen, married or not, were expected to dance and to mingle with others, Mr. Darcy's reticence caused "[h]is character [to be] decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again" (8). In fact, his seeming rudeness "gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from ... being unworthy to be compared with his friend" (8). Manners and deportment were just as important for gentlemen as they were for ladies. Because of the great significance placed on even the most informal of country dances, and the rigidity of the acceptable mannerisms to be seen in such a place, Mr. Darcy's behavior (while not entirely deplorable) is poor enough to weaken his position in society. In fact, because he "decline[s] being introduced to any other lady" (8), he is in essence refusing to dance with anyone with whom he is not already acquainted. This, coupled with the fact that there are so few gentlemen that Elizabeth Bennet, a "reputed beauty" (176), was "obliged ... to sit down for two dances" (8), produces the antagonism between himself and the people of the town. Mr. Darcy is not acting like a gentleman, and therefore the people refuse to treat him like one. By refusing to participate in the dancing, Mr. Darcy is turning his back in the institution of courtship: "Darcy's refusal to dance ... not only earns him a reputation for arrogance, but undermines his later attempts to use dance as a

convention... for initiating a courtship. When Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance on subsequent occasions, she refuses him, in part because his earlier comments cause her to doubt his interest, and in part to return his snub” (Segal and Handler 327). He is showing his unreadiness to consider beginning a relationship or the unworthiness of the girls at the dance to be his potential life partner. This disdain for the establishment and for the company is what increases the others’ opinion of his pride and haughtiness.

Elizabeth Bennet shows a similar attitude toward Mr. Darcy from this brief interaction that they have at the dance. She does not scorn the institution of courtship or refuse to take part in the dancing (as Mary does), but she is also not terribly affronted by Mr. Darcy’s comment that “[s]he is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humor at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men” (9). Mrs. Bennet, on the other hand, is so aggravated by Mr. Darcy’s noninterest that she exclaims to Elizabeth, “I would not dance with him, if I were you” (14). Her ire comes not only from the observation of Mr. Darcy’s supposed pride and lack of manners, but also from one of Austen’s cleverest and most well-known statements in this novel: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters” (3). Mrs. Bennet, upon first hearing of Mr. Bingley and his friend, decided in her own mind that one, if not both, of them should marry into her family. Mr. Darcy’s rejection of the institution of courtship is, to her, a rejection of her family. Elizabeth, however, does not seem to harbor this hurt. Because of the strong

correlation between courtship and dance (something Austen, and through her Elizabeth Bennet, would have been aware of), Elizabeth's determination not to dance with Mr. Darcy can be seen as indicative of her utter lack of interest in him as a husband. Her response to her mother's comment, "I believe, ma'am, I may safely promise you never to dance with him" (14), shows the reader that Elizabeth has mentally eliminated Mr. Darcy from her list of potential suitors. In general, Elizabeth is happy to dance and enjoys seeing Jane admired, but Mr. Darcy's reticence only increases her own where he is concerned.

The first indication about Mr. Darcy's changing attitude concerning Elizabeth occurs at the Lucases' dinner party. While he seems to still hold some contempt for the action of dancing and its connection to courtship, Mr. Darcy does express some amount of admiration for Elizabeth's appearance and intelligence. Interesting enough is how he describes his observations: "Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness" (16). His reference to the symmetry of her face is just another small indicator as to the great value placed upon things and actions that fell within the category of symmetry and balance. Both her appearance and her mannerisms are within this sphere; her looks are made "uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes" and her intelligence is balanced by her personality. However, although it seems that Elizabeth is growing on Mr. Darcy, the same cannot be said about the accomplishment of dancing. This rejection is consistent with his attitude at the first dance and contrasts with Sir William Lucas's opinion of

dancing which is very in keeping with the time period. Sir William believes, “There is nothing like dancing after all. I consider’ it as one of the first refinements of polished societies” (18). On the other hand, Mr. Darcy remarks that “it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world. Every savage can dance.” This somewhat dry statement shows his disillusion with courtship in general and dancing specifically. He certainly sees the necessity of it but is disinclined to partake of it himself. This conversation further reveals that it is not just the location (though Darcy is certainly not comfortable at the Lucas’s) but the action in general that he avoids; “[Dancing] is a compliment which I never pay to any place if I can avoid it.” After this conversation, the purpose of which is perhaps to highlight Mr. Darcy’s reticence to enter into a relationship at that time, he does “with grave propriety” (18) request to dance with Elizabeth. However, because of Sir William’s interference and the position that Mr. Darcy is placed in, this offer to stand up with Elizabeth (partner her in the dance) may be seen as being made under duress. In Sir William’s own words, Mr. Darcy “cannot refuse to dance.” Still, considering the topic of Mr. Darcy’s previous contemplation, one might assume that, while he might not be voluntarily asking Elizabeth to dance, he is not completely upset about being maneuvered into doing so. Another point of interest comes when Elizabeth refuses to accept his offer; “Her resistance had not injured her with the gentleman.” This opinion of her may spring from two points; first, Mr. Darcy did not have to dance after all, something he is still wary of, and secondly, his conversation with her gives him the opportunity to experience firsthand her wit and her “fine eyes” (19). Altogether, the dinner party at Lucas Lodge is the beginning of a different internal

position for Mr. Darcy, one which still rejects the conventions of dance and courtship in general, but makes an exception of Elizabeth in some ways.

On the other hand, the gathering at the Lucas's simply continues to reveal Elizabeth's attitude and actions concerning Mr. Darcy. At the beginning of the evening, Mr. Darcy is simply observing Elizabeth, and while he is thinking positively about her, she perceives his looks to be "satirical" (17). This inference furthers her opinion about his pride and aloofness and when Sir William does try to present her to Mr. Darcy, she replies quickly, "Indeed, sir, I have not the least intention of dancing. I entreat you not to suppose that I moved this way in order to beg for a partner" (18). In this case, Elizabeth is in a situation with, as she sees it, no eligible young men; therefore, her refusal to dance is a direct rejection of Mr. Darcy as a partner. During this interaction, though, she does misread Mr. Darcy several times. The first occurs when she mistakes his admiration for criticism and the second when "Mr. Darcy, with grave propriety, requested to be allowed the honor of her hand" (18). It is quite possible that he is perfectly sincere about wanting to dance with her in this instance, but "Elizabeth was determined" that she would never dance with him and in fact that he would always see her as not "handsome enough to dance with" (16). Yet she does agree that in this instance he is "all politeness" (18), and she has no new grievances to add to those she already possesses. Throughout this party, Elizabeth shows a new reluctance to dance, but coupled with the fact that Mr. Darcy was, perhaps the only, partner that offered for her hand, this attitude indicates only a continuation of her resolve never to dance with him, and in extension, never to become romantically involved with him.

When Jane is ill, both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are sequestered at Netherfield Park. When the other Bennets come by for a visit, they bring with them some talk of balls and dancing but most of that conversation is between Lydia and Mr. Bingley. However, at one point during her stay, Elizabeth is in the drawing room while Miss Bingley plays on the pianoforte and Mr. Darcy asks her, “Do you not feel a great inclination, Miss Bennet, to seize such an opportunity of dancing a reel?”(35). This seemingly abrupt invitation to dance is very unexpected from Mr. Darcy, especially because of the disapproval he vocalized earlier. Elizabeth herself is uncertain about his motives and believes that he is mocking her. Her response is a bit short and she expects to insult him with the manner of her refusal. However, she is “amazed at his gallantry” when he is not at all offended. This scene allows a small insight into the changing feelings of Mr. Darcy; unfortunately, his outward manners still hold just enough pride and self-containment to keep Elizabeth in the dark as to his intentions.

At the Netherfield Ball, Mr. Darcy continues to single Elizabeth out as a person of interest, and Elizabeth persists in her misunderstanding and dislike of him. After Elizabeth is forced to dance to very uncomfortable dances with Mr. Collins, “she found herself suddenly addressed by Mr. Darcy, who took her so much by surprise in his application for her hand, that, without knowing what she did, she accepted him” (62). She is not very happy about this turn of events and refuses to be comforted by Charlotte Lucas. Elizabeth does not want to enjoy herself with someone “whom [she] is determined to hate,” At this point, Elizabeth does not really hate Mr. Darcy, but her own sense of pride is pulling her to either believe that she does or at least act as though it is true. On Mr. Darcy’s part, his attitude is still against dance in general, so much so that when

Elizabeth “took her place in the set, [she was] amazed at the dignity to which she was arrived in being allowed to stand opposite to Mr. Darcy, and reading in her neighbors’ looks, their equal amazement in beholding it” (62). Even though Mr. Darcy is making an effort with Elizabeth, he is still not following all of the proper patterns for dance and courtship. When Elizabeth tries to start a conversation, Mr. Darcy does not hold up his end of the exchange without prompting; “—It is your turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy. I talked about the dance, and you ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples” (62). While conversation was not always required or even expected during dances, the foundation of courtship was largely verbal, and “[i]n this passage, Elizabeth emphasizes the formality of the conventions of dancing in order to create a distance between herself and Darcy. By commenting upon the social prescriptions for dancing partners, Elizabeth expresses her unwillingness to engage in the conventional first steps of courtship” (ApRoberts 329). Mr. Darcy’s silence, here and on other occasions, shows a disinterest in proper courtship. The conversation does not go very well and at the end, though Sir William comments that “such very superior dancing is not often seen” (63), both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy “went down the other dance and parted in silence” (64), angry about comments that have been made. This dance does nothing to further their courtship, even Mr. Darcy is upset at the end, and Elizabeth has his coldness toward her to feed her suspicions about his treatment of Mr. Wickham. The rest of the time at the ball serves only to drive them farther apart; the actions of Elizabeth’s family and the haughty countenance that Mr. Darcy employs in reaction to their folly enforces the pair’s disconnect from the proper patterns that a courting couple should be following.

After the confusion of Netherfield Ball and the long period of separation that follows it, Mr. Darcy continues his awkward courtship at Rosings Park. However, his manners are no better that they were before, perhaps worse, for “Colonel Fitzwilliam’s occasionally laughing at his stupidity, proved that he was generally different” (120). In fact, Mr. Darcy seems to still have contempt for the pattern of courtship. Instead of trying to engage in conversation with Elizabeth during his visits, “he frequently sat there ten minutes together without opening his lips; and when he did speak, it seemed the effect of necessity rather than of choice—a sacrifice to propriety, not a pleasure to himself” (120). Yet after all of this half-hearted wooing, When Mr. Darcy does bring himself to confess his feelings, he does so in an insulting and improper way: “He spoke well; but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed, and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation—of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to” (125). Elizabeth, of course, does not respond well to this mode of declaration: “She, again according to the pattern established earlier on the dance floor, rejects his proposal” (44). In her response, she says, “You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner” (127). He is so rude and unthinking about how he comes across that he only serves to further alienate Elizabeth. Such an attitude only encourages Elizabeth to continue her tirade:

From the very beginning—from the first moment, I may almost say—of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others,

were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry. (127-8)

In this speech, she addresses Mr. Darcy's attitude towards the institution of courtship, of which he had been so disdainful, and blatantly criticizes his behavior concerning her and her family and his dismissal of the patterns of dance and deportment. Mr. Darcy's ill-formed and poorly executed proposal signals the end of his first relatively disinterested attempt at courting Elizabeth. Because of the lack of attention shown to the proper methods of courtship as well as the disregard for the place and purpose of dance, the ending of this courtship is disastrous.

Although the outcome of Mr. Darcy's inelegant proposal seems to indicate the end of any cordial association between him and Elizabeth, the accusations that she made against him prompt Mr. Darcy to respond by way of a letter, thus beginning a new stage in their relationship that more closely follows the patterns of period dance. Instead of trying to hold a long and involved conversation, Mr. Darcy places all of his words within a letter and, after handing it over to Elizabeth, "with a slight bow" (129), he takes his leave. This very action is reminiscent of the motion that occurs at the beginning of all period dances, when both dancers honor their partners with a shallow obeisance. Mr. Darcy also makes very clear that he is not attempting to continue his former incorrect courtship even though writing letters was a very popular method of communication for couples. His first words within the letter state, "Be not alarmed, madam, on receiving this letter, by the apprehension of its containing any repetition of those sentiments or renewal

of those offers which were last night so disgusting to you” (129). His unambiguous statement about the ending of his pursuit of Elizabeth makes it evident that this is the beginning of some new connection and not simply a continuation of the old and erroneous. The content of the letter also has significance, both in the plot of the story and when seen in the context of period dance. Mr. Darcy writes on two matters: “The first-mentioned was, that, regardless of the sentiments of either, I had detached Mr. Bingley from your sister,—and the other, that I had, in defiance of various claims, in defiance of honor and humanity, ruined the immediate prosperity and blasted the prospects of Mr. Wickham” (129). This letter, for the sake of the story, stirs up a “contrariety of emotion” (134) within Elizabeth. Although she does not wish to believe Mr. Darcy’s account of the two situations, when she begins to “read with somewhat clearer attention a relation of events which, if true, must overthrow every cherished opinion of his worth, and which bore so alarming an affinity to his own history of himself,—her feelings were yet more acutely painful and more difficult of definition” (134-5). This instance, then, is the first turning point in Elizabeth’s attitude toward Mr. Darcy. It is the start of something new, the evacuation of the old resentments and the clearing of a place for new affections. However, the letter also has importance as it relates to the issue of dance and courtship. Just as Mr. Darcy has rejected true courtship and spurned the idea of dance, with slight exceptions for Elizabeth, so Elizabeth has rejected and sometimes deliberately misunderstood Mr. Darcy. The letter forces Elizabeth to realize something about herself. She suddenly recognizes that she was “offended by the neglect of [Mr. Darcy], on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned” (137). So while she was not pushing

away the idea of courtship like Mr. Darcy was, she was courting her prejudice rather than Mr. Darcy or another suitor. This sudden tumult of emotion and introspection has another result; it focuses her attention even more firmly upon its sender, and she finds that “she could think only of her letter” (138). This occurrence commences a fresh relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, one with a proper and suitable introduction, and the utilization of a letter almost reserves the possibility of romance at some point in the future because of the prevalence of letters in courtship.

After this missive, Elizabeth spends several months away from Mr. Darcy, with no communication and no expectation of any, before her visit to Pemberley again changes the tone of their acquaintance. Even the appearance of Pemberley indicates the type of person that might live there; Elizabeth “had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. ... [A]t that moment she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!” (159). The balance of nature and civilization was a quality that was greatly valued during the Regency. It showed visibly the connection with symmetry and balance that was so important to the ideal of that time. Pemberley reveals part of Mr. Darcy’s character by possessing such a perfect balance within itself and its grounds. The housekeeper that shows Elizabeth and the Gardiners around also speaks so highly of Mr. Darcy that Elizabeth is convinced of her sincerity. The culmination of these ideas occurs as Elizabeth looks on a portrait of Mr. Darcy: “Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favorable to his character, and as she stood before the canvas on which he was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembered its

warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression” (162). Such an event is another point of departure from her earlier more hostile thoughts about Mr. Darcy.

Furthermore, Elizabeth is not the only one who is learning to be more adaptable to a new pattern. Mr. Darcy himself, who happens upon them shortly afterward, is quite different in his manners; the word “civil” or any of its derivatives is used to describe him almost incessantly. Some examples of this begin with his first address to Elizabeth; although somewhat awkward, he still acts with “perfect civility” and makes “civil inquiries after her family.” Elizabeth is “amazed at the alteration of his manner since they last parted. [For him] to speak with such civility, to inquire after her family! ... What a contrast did it offer to his last address in Rosings Park, when he put his letter into her hand!” (163). Even after his short retreat to the house, upon his again meeting them by the lake, “he had lost none of his recent civility” and even “asked [Elizabeth] if she would do him the honor of introducing him to her friends. This was a stroke of civility for which she was quite unprepared” (165). Elizabeth, knowing his previous consideration of her family, expects him to recoil once he is aware of who was accompanying her and is surprised at the continuation of his good manners. Even later in their visit, Mr. Darcy offers, “with the greatest civility,” to let Mr. Gardiner fish on his property. When Mr. Darcy asks permission to introduce his sister to Elizabeth, he is again changing his manners about the progression of a courting relationship. Before, Mr. Darcy had as little to do with Elizabeth’s family as possible, with the exception of Jane, and probably would not have been so eager to present his sister. Now, having reflected on how he was in error, Mr. Darcy not only is attentive to her aunt and uncle, but wishes to strengthen her connection to his family.

The relationship between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth continues for a short time at and around Pemberley and is much closer to being a correct picture of courtship than any of their previous encounters. In fact, both parties behave in such a manner that it is not long before the Gardiners suspect Mr. Darcy's "partiality for their niece" (169). Indeed, they soon realized that "it was evident that he was very much in love with her" (171). In continuation of the desire to connect Elizabeth to his family, "he was anxious for his sister and [Elizabeth] to get acquainted, and forwarded as much as possible, every attempt at conversation on either side" (174). However, this short period of time is soon broken by Jane's unfortunate letter, and the peace cannot last after that.

Lydia's elopement with Mr. Wickham firmly convinces Elizabeth that both she and Jane have completely lost any chance of recovering the affections of their respective suitors. Because during this time marriage was so inherently "a collective decision of family and kin" (Stone 87), the disgrace of one daughter might forever shame the rest of her family. Mr. Darcy's reaction to the news of the letter reinforces this idea; "[Elizabeth's] power was sinking; everything *must* sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace. ... and never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain" (180). When he finally leaves her, "Elizabeth felt how improbable it was that they should ever see each other again on such terms of cordiality as had marked their several meetings in Derbyshire; and as she threw a retrospective glance over the whole of their acquaintance, ... sighed at ... those feelings which would now have promoted its continuance, and would formerly have rejoiced in its termination" (180-1). Throughout the whole shameful business of locating and forcing Mr. Wickham to marry Lydia, Elizabeth despaired of

Mr. Darcy ever reinstating any kind of affection for her again: “The wish of procuring her regard, which she had assured herself of his feeling in Derbyshire, could not in rational expectation survive such a blow as this” (202). It is during this time of separation that Elizabeth realizes that “[i]t was a union that must have been to the advantage of both: by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved; and from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance”. However, Elizabeth believes such a marriage is now beyond her reach and resolve to put it out of her mind.

Elizabeth’s belief about Mr. Darcy’s disinterest is first shaken by her knowledge of his part in the recovery of her sister, the communications from both Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and finally his appearance in the neighborhood with Mr. Bingley. When Elizabeth learns everything that Mr. Darcy has done for her sister, including the money that he must have paid out, she is astonished. Although she would like to believe that it was connected to his affections for her, she is still not certain that he will renew his courtship. However, Mr. Darcy later confides, “That the wish of giving happiness to you might add force to the other inducements which led me on, I shall not attempt to deny. But your family owes me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe I thought only of you” (238-9). He is still respecting her family and has offered them great aid, but his emotional focus is more specifically upon Elizabeth. Not long after that, Lady Catherine’s visit, and her insistence that Mr. Darcy might forget himself and propose, pricks Elizabeth’s ire and her hope and she refuses to promise never to marry Mr. Darcy. Mr. Collins’ letter is only a confirmation of Lady Catherine’s visit and Elizabeth has something to encourage her hope.

When Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley do come back into the neighborhood, Elizabeth is not surprised when Mr. Bingley is the first to pursue and propose to one of the Bennet sisters because she has never expected Mr. Darcy to renew his attentions. Mr. Darcy's encouragement is the final set in putting things to right and the last aspect of his reformation from a person who rejected the form of civility and refused the pattern of dance and courtship to someone who embraced it. In this final action, Mr. Darcy, as he wished Elizabeth to do with his sister, is connected with and assisting Elizabeth's family. Such a connection is another part of his character that is attractive to her, and this time his proposal is met with a much pleasanter response.

The engagement and marriage of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are the final steps of their courtship. As opposed to the lengthy discourse that he offered at Rosings, Mr. Darcy's second proposal is relatively brief: "You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. *My* affections and wishes are unchanged; but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever" (239). Throughout the second part of his courtship, Mr. Darcy attitude and approach to relationships in general has been so improved that Elizabeth's rely is quite favorable for him; she "immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances." In fact, Mr. Darcy's proposal is given "in a manner prefigured by the dance patterns of Volume One" (Stovel 44). As it progresses from his letter at Rosings Park, the faithful repetition of the pattern set out for proper courtship concludes at last in one of the more romantic stories of British literature.

Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet's courtship also shows the typical pattern of separation and reunion that would have been expected during that period. In other ways as well, these two may be considered an ideal couple, charming and obedient to the expectations of the day. On Mr. Bingley's part, he is considered a true gentleman (even though he comes from new money) because his impeccable manners and exuberant attitude toward dancing place him within the noble class: "Mr. Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners" (7). As for Jane, she is sweet and beautiful, and not even Mr. Darcy can say a bad word against her. Their courtship proceeds more naturally and in keeping with the pattern of such things.

At the first assembly which he attends, his manner is completely different from Mr. Darcy's aloofness: "Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room; he was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early, and talked of giving one himself at Netherfield" (8). While Mr. Darcy is taciturn and aloof, Mr. Bingley is genial and enthusiastic about everything. This openness is considered to be a good sign for the ladies of Meryton; "To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr. Bingley's heart were entertained" (7). By the end of the night, Mr. Bingley has already begun his courtship of Jane, not only by his dancing with her but also by her gaining the approval of his sisters: "Mr. Bingley had danced with her twice, and she had been distinguished by his sisters" (9). Both Jane and Mr. Bingley show an acceptance of the standard mode of courtship and a budding affection for each other. Their behavior is perfectly in keeping with the accepted manner of the day and their actions with their

courtship are without fault: “he inquired who she was, and got introduced, and asked her for the two next.” He is respecting the customs of the day and enacting the initial steps of courtship.

By the time the Bennets attend the dinner party at the Lucas’s, the pattern of separation and reunion is already set. Charlotte comments on this fact when she encourages Elizabeth to influence Jane’s manner: “though Bingley and Jane meet tolerably often, it is never for many hours together; and as they always see each other in large mixed parties, it is impossible that every moment should be employed in conversing together” (16). In Elizabeth’s rebuttal, the exact nature of their meetings is elaborated on: “She has known him only a fortnight. She danced four dances with him at Meryton; she saw him one morning at his own house, and has since dined in company with him four times.” Although both Jane and Mr. Bingley are attracted to each other, the small number of their meetings as well as the uncertain nature of their own feelings is indicative of the early stages of their courtship. During this party, they do talk together for most of the time.

When Jane is ill and must stay at Netherfield, the relationship between her and Mr. Bingley grows stronger. It is Mrs. Bennet’s fault that Jane is ill in the first place, and although it was very improper for her to deliberately try to strand Jane at Netherfield in the rain, Jane is not to blame and her obedience is one of her virtues. During that stay, he is very attentive, and “[t]he master of the house heard with real sorrow that they were to go so soon” (40-1). His behavior is very kind and he never has harsh words to say about Elizabeth, though the rest of the inhabitants are openly critical.

At the Netherfield Ball, there seems to be a consensus among most of the guests that Mr. Bingley will soon be making an offer for Jane. Sir Lucas remarks on this connection after he interrupts Elizabeth's dance with Mr. Darcy. His comment is the first time Darcy becomes completely aware of the depth of affection that Mr. Bingley has for Jane when he observes "Bingley and Jane, who were dancing together" (63). In his letter to Elizabeth later on, he says, "I saw, in common with others, that Bingley preferred your elder sister to any other young woman in the country. But it was not till the evening of the dance at Netherfield that I had any apprehension of his feeling a serious attachment" (130). Although the rest of the ball is a disaster, Bingley does not notice the foibles of the rest of the Bennet clan because of his attention to Jane.

The enforced separation that follows this promising occasion are still within the realm of a proper courtship. Darcy is sincerely convinced that Jane is not in love with Bingley and he seeks to spare his friend from a mercenary marriage: "Her look and manners were open, cheerful, and engaging as ever, but without any symptom of peculiar regard, and I remained convinced from the evening's scrutiny, that though she received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment" (130). In this, Bingley defers to his friend and sisters. His connection to his family and his trust in their observations is specifically a trait that is required within proper courtships.

When Bingley finally meets Elizabeth again, his personality and manners are unchanged, and his inclination for Jane is still apparent. Although Elizabeth is mildly upset that Bingley has been so persuaded against Jane, her feelings cannot remain in the face of "the unaffected cordiality with which he expressed himself on seeing her again.

He inquired in a friendly, though general way, after her family, and looked and spoke with the same good-humored ease that he had ever done” (169). In response to Elizabeth comment about their long separation, Bingley’s reply, “It is above eight months. We have not met since the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, when we were all dancing together at Netherfield,” shows his close attention to both the passing time and the atmosphere of dance (read courtship) that had then surrounded at least him and Jane. His attitude and attention to Elizabeth show a desire to continue his pursuit of Jane by being affable toward Jane’s sister.

The end of this interrupted courtship comes when Darcy is repairing his mistakes with Elizabeth and the two of them return to Netherfield Park. Bingley does not have much time together with Jane and no time alone, but when he knows that he has Darcy’s blessing, and Mrs. Bennet forces them together, he does propose and is happily accepted. Mr. Bennet’s wry approval of the match results in his comment that “[y]our tempers are by no means unlike. You are each of you so complying, that nothing will ever be resolved on; so easy, that every servant will cheat you; and so generous, that you will always exceed your income” (227). Such a pairing must be as close to an ideal partnership as is possible for realistic characters to be.

Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins have a very short courtship, but their married relationship survives on the space created by their daily separations and reunions. To begin with, Charlotte is not as young or as pretty as she might have hoped to be, and her feelings lead her to be more practical and less romantic than either Jane or Elizabeth: “I am not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home” (85). Mr. Collins, also, is a poor partner in dance as well as in life. When Elizabeth is obliged to

dance with him at Netherfield, “[t]he two first dances, however, brought a return of distress; they were dances of mortification. Mr. Collins, awkward and solemn, apologizing instead of attending, and often moving wrong without being aware of it, gave her all the shame and misery which a disagreeable partner for a couple of dances can give” (61-2). His conversation and manners make him a ridiculous figure and he says himself, “that as to dancing, he was perfectly indifferent to it” (62). Unfortunately for him, “[h]is poor performance as a dance partner symbolizes his unsuitability as a marriage partner” (Stovel 44). Mr. Collins is more interested in finding a wife that he is in courting one. Charlotte’s married life is full of separation, for Mr. Collins likes to work in the gardens and walk to Rosings almost every day (both activities that Charlotte encourages) and she prefers to remain in her parlor. Although she does not have the most fulfilling of relationships, Charlotte seems to be quite content in her life. So although this relationship is not as close to the ideal as Jane’s or even Elizabeth’s, Charlotte and Mr. Collins do have a marriage that functions within the boundaries of accepted practice.

Completely at odds with this method of courtship and matrimony, Lydia and Mr. Wickham’s interactions break with the dance altogether. Instead of maintaining for a time a close relationship with family and attempting to bring those two spheres together in an orderly and scripted manner, they experience a period of closeness when they are removed from family and society before their marriage which rebounds back as intolerance and unhappiness in their marriage.

As for the two persons involved in this indiscretion, neither Lydia nor Wickham begin the story with exemplary character traits. Both Lydia and Kitty (and sometimes Mary) are disregarded by their father for being excessively “silly” and compared to

Elizabeth and Jane, “their minds were more vacant than their sisters” (20). Coupled with this capricious nature, Lydia possesses “a fine complexion and good-humored countenance.... She had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence, which the attentions of the officers, to whom her uncle’s good dinners and her own easy manners recommended her, had increased into assurance” (31). Unfortunately, her “easy” manners have not been tempered by natural or parental restraint and this imbalance in her personality often lead to her public disgrace. Elizabeth is keenly aware of all “the improprieties of Lydia’s general behavior” (151), and speaks out against Lydia going to Brighton because of the uncontrolled personality that feeds these actions:

[S]he will soon be beyond the reach of amendment. Her character will be fixed, and she will, at sixteen, be the most determined flirt that ever made herself and her family ridiculous;—a flirt, too, in the worst and meanest degree of flirtation; without any attraction beyond youth and a tolerable person; and, from the ignorance and emptiness of her mind, wholly unable to ward off any portion of that universal contempt which her rage for admiration will excite. (151)

Unfortunately, her father is not prepared to listen to this censure of Lydia’s character, however true it may be. His response, though equally as insightful, shows his indifference to any minor indiscretions that might come from Lydia’s being unsupervised: “Lydia will never be easy till she has exposed herself in some public place or other, and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under the present circumstances” (152). Her temperament intrinsically wars with the very environment of the 1800s; she has no restraint, no internal balance.

Likewise Mr. Wickham also displays these qualities. Mr. Darcy says of him in his letter to Elizabeth, “I thought too ill of him to invite him to Pemberley, or admit his society in town. In town I believe he chiefly lived, but his studying the law was a mere pretense, and being now free from all restraint, his life was a life of idleness and dissipation” (132). His character is lazy, grasping and deceptive. One cannot assume that he merely reacted to bad situations; he clearly planned and enacted ways to further himself, with no concern for others: “[T]hither also went Mr. Wickham, undoubtedly by design; for there proved to have been a prior acquaintance between him and Mrs. Younge, . . . and by her connivance and aid, he so far recommended himself to Georgiana, . . . that she was persuaded to believe herself in love, and to consent to an elopement” (133). In this situation, Wickham also acted with somewhat of a vengeful spirit, for Mr. Darcy is sure that, although “Mr. Wickham’s chief object was unquestionably my sister’s fortune, which is thirty thousand pounds,” he also wished to be revenged on Darcy for refusing to reinstate the living that Wickham had previously refused and been compensated for. Upon this recitation, Elizabeth remembers clearly Wickham’s “impropriety,” “indelicacy,” and “inconsistency” (136) during their early acquaintance. However, in contrast to Lydia’s more visible flaws, Jane and Elizabeth say, “there is such an expression of goodness in [Wickham’s] countenance! Such an openness and gentleness in his manner!’ ‘There certainly was some great mismanagement in the education of [Darcy and Wickham]. One has got all the goodness, and the other all the appearance of it” (147). Wickham’s imperfections stem from both a wildness of emotion (and the unwillingness to tame it) as well as a propensity to deceive others where it might

serve himself. Like Lydia's, his personality is also at odds with the prevailing desire for symmetry and balance.

Within their short and improper courtship, Lydia and Wickham refuse to follow the proper patterns of separation and reunion. Instead of remaining with their family and friends and enduring separations from each other, Lydia and Wickham withdraw from all acquaintances and relatives and stay together away from all mitigating forces. Elizabeth learns of this through Jane's letters which relate that Lydia "was gone off to Scotland with one of his officers; to own the truth, with Wickham!" (179). However, at first, though eloping would have still been a travesty against the society norms of the day, Jane believes that is all Wickham is guilty of. However, his former mercenary tendencies concern Elizabeth:

[S]he was all surprise—all astonishment that Wickham should marry a girl whom it was impossible he could marry for money; and how Lydia could ever have attached him had appeared incomprehensible. . . . though she did not suppose Lydia to be deliberately engaging in an elopement without the intention of marriage, she had no difficulty in believing that neither her virtue nor her understanding would preserve her from falling an easy prey" (181).

These fears are realized when Jane writes, "Imprudent as a marriage between Mr. Wickham and our poor Lydia would be, we are now anxious to be assured it has taken place, for there is but too much reason to fear they are not gone to Scotland . . . W. never intended to go there, or to marry Lydia at all" (177). All such accusations reflect largely upon Mr. Wickham, but Lydia is also not without some blame. Her free spirited nature

and limited understanding made her an attractive target for the selfishness of Mr. Wickham. Elizabeth understands that while “[s]he had never perceived, while the regiment was in Hertfordshire, that Lydia had any partiality for him; but she was convinced that Lydia had wanted only encouragement to attach herself to anybody. . . . Her affections had been continually fluctuating, but never without an object” (181). This display of their inner characteristics is no great surprise. Their long separation from family and society serves merely to make them both ill-qualified to rejoin it. While both Elizabeth and Jane manage to redeem their family from the depths into which Lydia has cast it, “As for Wickham and Lydia, their characters suffered no revolution from the marriage of her sisters” (252). In fact, they remained “two persons so extravagant in their wants, and heedless of the future” (253) that they are always in need of monetary assistance. Their joint seclusion has done nothing to prolong their affections or happiness: “His affection for her soon sunk into indifference; hers lasted a little longer; and in spite of her youth and her manners, she retained all the claims to reputation which her marriage had given her.” This woefully aberrant mockery of a courtship serves as an example against disregarding the pattern set out within period dance and the expectations of society therein.

#### Individual Separations

As stated before, one of the essential components of period dance is the principle of separation and reunion. *Pride and Prejudice* displays this principle with nearly every main character. Of course, this pattern of separation and reunion can be connected to the courtship plot, but it is not limited to that only. The courtship plot utilizes the separation of a courting or emotionally attached couple in order to strengthen the characters’

feelings, of love or of uncertainty, and to draw in the readers. The reunion then brings a clash of said emotion that determines the further course of the plot. Conversely, separation can occur outside of courtship. By separating a character from his or her friends or family, the author can change the direction of that character's maturation or alter the course of the plot. Each time such a separation occurs, it allows for one character to perform an action or develop an uninfluenced idea while the other is unaware or otherwise occupied. In dance, this kind of separation serves to showcase the talent of a dancer apart from the others in the line. While not as common in period dance, there are sequences that allow for a single dancer to leave the line and dance separately or with a partner from the opposite line for a short time before that person rejoins the original line. When that dancer reenters the line, it is a signal for the dance to carry on again with all of the dancers. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the disconnection of individual characters ensures the movement of the plot and serves to shape the direction of the story.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane and Elizabeth are separated several times. When Elizabeth is away from Jane, each sister has to act by herself and trust her own judgments instead of relying on her usual confidant. The first period of separation comes when Jane visits London with their Aunt and Uncle Gardiner. Jane is expecting to meet up with Miss Bingley and her brother; however, she is soon made aware of Miss Bingley's true feelings about her: "she could no longer be blind to Miss Bingley's inattention" (99). In this instance, Jane is the person who, away from all her immediate family and friends, comes to a realization or discovery on her own and with no support. Had Elizabeth been with her, or had Jane not gone, Jane's hope of Mr. Bingley's attentions might not have been as entirely severed as it was. Likewise, Elizabeth makes her own surprising

discoveries, both about Mr. Darcy and about herself, during a period of separation from Jane. While at Rosings, Elizabeth uncovers the truth about Mr. Darcy's part in the seeming end of Jane's courtship as well as his begrudging feelings for her. Later, by way of the letter that Mr. Darcy writes to her, she learns of his true motives and actions concerning Jane and Wickham. However, perhaps the most startling revelation that she has is about her own behavior: "She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (137). With the sheer volume of information that she has to process and the introspection that she suffers through, Elizabeth is keenly aware of the absence of Jane: "And with no one to speak to of what I felt, no Jane to comfort me and say that I had not been so very weak and vain and nonsensical as I knew I had! Oh! How I wanted you!" (148). Although Elizabeth does have some time after this to spend with Jane, she is soon after that again separated from her sister for the duration of her trip to Derbyshire. While there, and by way of her visit to Pemberley, Elizabeth again experiences the awakening of her new, gentler feelings for Mr. Darcy, prompted by his civility towards her and her family.

Charlotte and Elizabeth also experience a separation, and their reunion is what causes Elizabeth to be thrown into Darcy's path again. While Elizabeth, upon the instigation of their separation, is uncertain as to her eagerness to reunite with Charlotte, considering the company that her friend will now, of necessity, be keeping, "absence had increased her desire of seeing Charlotte again.. a little change was not unwelcome for its own sake" (101). Without the departure of Charlotte, Elizabeth would have had little reason to travel to Kent. In this situation, it is not the separation that provides that

alienated character with new insight, but rather the reunion that provides Elizabeth with new information.

Lydia's separation from all of her friends and relations threatens to bring disgrace to the family. Lydia, although wild enough in Meryton, does not contemplate eloping (nor would she have been such an easy target) until she is away from the rest of her family in Brighton. Her original separation, while it would almost definitely have provided the outlet for some social disgrace, affords Wickham the perfect opportunity to increase this separation by removing Lydia to London. By taking Lydia when she is already in a period of separation, Wickham is further breaking the pattern when he refuses to let her return to her family, as must be done within both societal norms and period dance.

All such instances only reflect the influence of dance on the novel. The consequences of this pattern of separation and reunion are very clear even outside of the courtship plot. As each character grows because of a time spent apart, so also does the rejoining of characters and family have meaning. All such actions are mirrored in the form of dance and significant in the way they deliberately represent the concepts of symmetry and balance.

#### The Balance of Characters

Throughout the novel, characters often function as balances of each other. Jane and Elizabeth, Darcy and Bingley embody a positive equilibrium as they all, for the most part, possess different aspects of socially acceptable traits. However, this principle of balance between characters carries over to the more scurrilous characters, creating wider gaps between the two opposite persons. Examples of this juxtaposition include the

differences between Jane and Lydia and Darcy and Wickham, as well as Lady Catherine and Mr. Collins, which comparisons all display opposing traits that must be seen in conjunction with each other.

In the case of Jane and Elizabeth, though both girls conform to the expectations of an exacting society, there are points of their personality that are quite different from the other's. On these points, Jane and Elizabeth balance each other out. It is important to note that this sense of balance is an overwhelmingly positive one. The two sisters are very similar in most ways, in virtue and respectability and therefore this balance is closer to the moderation of both siblings, than an extreme comparison of one or both characters. Elizabeth is reassured that by her father that "[w]herever you and Jane are known you must be respected and valued" (152), and Darcy himself, though he speaks disdainfully of "the defects of [her] nearest relations," considers Elizabeth to have "conducted [herself] so as to avoid any share of the like censure, is praise no less generally bestowed on you and your eldest sister, than it is honorable to the sense and disposition of both" (131). Since both family and friends (of the most fastidious kind) declare that both Jane and Elizabeth are decorous and respectable, the differences in their behavior come only from personality and are not at all faults of intelligence or ethics. Elizabeth herself sees these distinctions and comments on them to Jane: "But that is one great difference between us. Compliments always take *you* by surprise, and *me* never" (10). She goes on to say, "[Y]ou are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life". However, Elizabeth in no way thinks that her sister is lacking in judgment, merely overflowing with goodwill and forgiveness: "With

*your* good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others!” (10-1). In opposition to this sweet nature that Jane consistently has, Elizabeth possesses “more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, and with a judgment too unassailed by any attention to herself” (11). Because of her inability to see herself as she really is, Elizabeth’s prime defect, as Mr. Darcy realizes, and especially in the case of Mr. Darcy, “is willfully to misunderstand” others (40). Beyond this foundational difference, the expression of deep emotions is also a place in which Elizabeth varies from Jane quite a bit. Charlotte Lucas, Mr. Darcy, and even Elizabeth herself comment on the reticence Jane shows toward revealing her innermost emotions, especially concerning her feelings about Mr. Bingley. Elizabeth realizes that she could not “deny the justice of [Mr. Darcy’s] description of Jane. She felt that Jane’s feelings, though fervent, were little displayed, and that there was a constant complacency in her air and manner not often united with great sensibility” (130). Elizabeth’s manner of communicating her emotions, though not so extravagant as to be improper, is much more apparent than her sister’s. Darcy says of this, “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). He certainly does not expect for Elizabeth to be without sign of her emotions, and even mentions “the turn of her countenance” in referring to his previous failed proposal and how it communicated her real feelings. Although these are just some minor differences between Elizabeth and Jane, they serve both to hold a standard of acceptable behavior and to be a foil for their other sisters to develop their individual personalities in a positive and contained way.

While Jane and Elizabeth are a positive and easy contrast, the discrepancies between Jane and Lydia are so great that no true proportionate comparison can be made. The existence of the connection between Jane and Elizabeth simply throws the excessive nature of Lydia into stark relief, especially when compared with Jane. Where Jane is sweet and reserved, Lydia is outspoken and flirtatious, even ridiculous at times, with not concept of propriety. Austen, by making the first positive comparison, shows the problems that surround Lydia with the lack of a true opposite.

Just as Jane and Elizabeth have a positive and enlightening balance of personality, so Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley also show this relationship of character in a constructive manner. From the very beginning, at the first assembly, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley become known for the very juxtaposition of their behavior and reputation. Just as Elizabeth and Jane are sister and intimate confidants, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley share a “very steady friendship, in spite of great opposition of character” (12). Darcy likes Bingley’s “easiness, openness, and ductility of his temper, though no disposition could offer a greater contrast to his own, and though with his own he never appeared dissatisfied”. Jane and Elizabeth see this welcoming nature of Bingley’s and Jane comments, “‘He is just what a young man ought to be...sensible, good-humored, lively, and I never saw such happy manners!—so much ease, with such perfect good-breeding!’ ‘He is also handsome’ replied Elizabeth; ‘which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete’” (10). As for Mr. Darcy, Bingley has in him “the firmest reliance, and of his judgment the highest opinion. In understanding, Darcy was the superior. Bingley was by no means deficient, but Darcy was clever. He was at the same time haughty, reserved, and fastidious, and his manners, though well-

bred, were not inviting” (12). Elizabeth, with her perpetual misunderstanding of Mr. Darcy, sees his somewhat spiteful temper as “a propensity to hate everyone” (40). However, although both men are wealthy, well-bred and respected, “Bingley was sure of being liked wherever he appeared, Darcy was continually giving offense” (12). This balance between the two gentlemen is very interesting, and perhaps more obvious than the connection between Elizabeth and Jane, even though, intrinsically, both men are very much equal.

On the other hand, Wickham, being more of the villain of this story, does not share a favorable comparison with Darcy. Wickham is always balanced against Mr. Darcy. At the beginning, Elizabeth sees him as the poor soldier suffering under the injustice of the harsh and uncaring nobleman. However, after she receives the letter from Mr. Darcy, Wickham becomes from of a contemptible rogue to Darcy’s proud but wounded gentlemen. After Lydia, the transformation is complete: Wickham is one of the most despicable characters and Darcy is the object of Elizabeth’s intense affection. By the end of the story, Wickham’s comparison to Darcy is almost as disproportionate as Lydia’s is to Jane. However, throughout the course of the story, Wickham serves as a more useful foil than Bingley for Darcy’s character to develop.

Although many of the characters who balance each other are either very similar or show more moderation than intense opposition, Lady Catherine and Mr. Collins have very proportionate balance as well as a comical one. For example, Mr. Collins’ self-abasement and misplaced vanity can only be tolerated by Lady Catherine and her corresponding pride and self-importance. Her nosiness and need to control and dictate the lives of other is met with his utter gratitude for her attention and pleasure in being

dictated to. Because this pair of character has both persons displaying extreme and equivalent traits, they still have an odd and stretched type of symmetry. There is something perfect about the relationship between Lady Catherine and Mr. Collins; although such a rapport would work with very few others, the two involved are very happy with their symbiotic relationship.

The study of *Pride and Prejudice* reveals the central role of symmetry and balance, especially concerning period dance as a representation of courtship. Although *Pride and Prejudice* has many examples of period dance in everything from emotion to hierarchy, by focusing on only on aspect, separation and reunion, one may appreciate the intricacies of both courtship and individual growth as they pertain to dance and balance. By identifying the pattern of dance as an embodiment of the principles of symmetry and balance, one can see its relevance in Jane Austen's work.

## Chapter Three

### Emotion and Technique

Just as *Pride and Prejudice* demonstrates a close link between dance and courtship as well as employing the pattern of separation and reunion, so *Sense and Sensibility* displays several other premises that correlate to the principles of symmetry and balance in period dance. As the title suggests, *Sense and Sensibility* explores the necessary equilibrium that exists between a person's intellect and emotions. Such a concept was intrinsic within Austen's view of the Regency, and she presents her own view upon this subject in the form of Elinor and Marianne. Similarly, there is a harmony between the juxtaposing components of technique and emotion that is essential to the proper execution of period dances. However, emotion and intelligence are not the only aspects of symmetry and dance that are addressed in this novel. Jane Austen deals with the concept of changing partners, the issue of proper taste, as well as the internal moderation expected of each character. Each individual topic that Austen writes about is centered in both period dance and the societal expressions of symmetry and balance.

### Partner Changes

The practice within some period dances of changing partners and the relationship in dance between the men as leaders and the women as followers likewise maintain associations to the plot and the characters in *Sense and Sensibility*. There are several reasons for the changing of partners, not the least of which is the metaphoric nature of dance during the Regency: "[D]ancing, both as an activity and as a topic of conversation, can serve as a way to play at and explore being marriage-like (that is, being a couple) without the serious attachment of matrimony. Because dance is marriage-like without itself being marriage, it can serve as part of the process of producing marriages, that is, a

process of selecting and rejecting possible partners” (Segal and Handler 325). Courtships relied heavily upon dancing because of the “marriage-like” quality of that activity and all of the social implications associated with it. This connection between courtship and dance intrinsically possesses an internal balance; because each convention is an image of the other, there is an obvious symmetry between metaphor and reality: “Thus courtship and dance combine qualities of the two social relations between which they mediate. They serve as the media in which marriages are made not simply because they are marriage-like, but because they are marriage-like without being marriage itself” (325). Dance is representative of marriage without being as binding as that institution; therefore, dancers are not constrained to one single partner. The practice of changing partners can be seen in many of the period dances and, as Cheryl Wilson notes, does have some relevance to most instances of dance literature within this period and specifically to *Sense and Sensibility* (5). In *Northanger Abbey*, Henry Tilney “points out that during the time they are engaged to dance, a man and woman are a couple, but Catherine notes that over time, these couples separate and regroup” (Segal and Handler 325) both during the course of a specific dance and after. Some dances had people beginning with one partner, switching to another in the middle of the dance, and returning to their first partner at the end. Others had the dancers switching partners several times during the course of the dance, without anyone returning to his or her original partner. This pattern allowed for a wider association of people at the balls and dances and therefore provided young men and women with a greater chance of finding a prospective mate.

The courtship plots in *Sense and Sensibility* imitate this practice. Cheryl Wilson, in her close study on the connection between period dance and the literature that

addresses it, have noticed that “Austen does favor those rules of courtship that adhere to the rules of dance” (78). Both Marianne and Elinor are courted by men who either leave them for another woman or spend a period of time romantically distant from the sisters. Elinor begins the novel by seeming to be in a courtship with Edward Ferris. Because she is unaware of his previous affiliations, Elinor does not expect him to be separated by anything other than space. However, he is soon obliged to abandon his pursuit of her when Lucy Steele enters the narrative. Although Edward was originally engaged to Lucy, chronologically that does not take place within the time of the story; therefore, it does not significantly alter the form of the novel and might be considered a separate dance. It should be considered so because of the format of most dances. A couple would begin together, change partners in the middle and return to their original partner at the end of the dance. Edward fulfills this pattern when he proposes to Elinor at the end of the novel. In Marianne’s case, she begins with a certain partner, Mr. Willoughby, and finishes with another, Colonel Brandon. This pattern does exist in period dance but is slightly less common. Lucy Steele also changes partners, switching her affections between the two Ferris brothers. However, this choice is not indicative of her power as a woman but as a reaction to Edward’s changed status.

#### Emotion as a Reaction

The book *Sense and Sensibility* certainly encourages the balance of emotion and intelligence and addresses the necessity for moderation between these two characteristics. Gilbert Ryle remarks about this theme when he says, “It is not for nothing that these titles are composed of abstract nouns. *Sense and Sensibility* really is about the relations between Sense and Sensibility or, as we might put it, between Head and Heart, Thought

and Feeling, Judgment and Emotion” (106-7). This topic is displayed in the duality of the sisters and the portrayal of certain qualities as either beneficial or unnecessary. Both emotion and intelligence display certain links to the expectations of men and women. According to Ruth ApRoberts, during this time “the most current philosophical dichotomy was the intellect-emotion one, preeminently the Sense and Sensibility of Jane Austen” (354). This discussion led to the examination of language, even creating and defining “a set of words with widely divergent uses ...[such as] the Austen pair of sense-reason, and sensibility-responsiveness.” As facts and logic are instrumental in decision making, the mind and intellect can be seen as a component of action, a mental exercise that looks into the future and plans what will be done. Conversely, the emotions are caused by circumstances. They are a reaction to the people, places and consequences that impact them. In some ways then, the intellect is a more active quality, while emotion shows more reactive attributes. This dichotomy was the subject of much discussion and an appropriate balance between the two was continually being looked for. However, ApRoberts claims that “Austen would have us beat out dichotomies into pluralities, as more closely adapted to what will be felt to be the variety of reality” (357). Instead of elevating one quality above of other, or constraining everyone to the most rigidly symmetrical amount of each, Austen seems to be promoting a fluid and beneficial balance of the two characteristics dependent on circumstance and personality. This balance can be seen in how “Austen, too, refuses us the generalization” of these terms within her characters. Throughout the novel, “Elinor, though obviously representing sense, has feelings that are strong, and Marianne, though obviously representing

sensibility, has a distinguished intellect” (355). Yet all of these examples do indicate how both intellect and emotion were viewed by Austen in that society.

Although both genders were supposed to have deep and profound feelings, neither was supposed to show them openly in any great or drastic manner. Jennifer Kloester examines the intricacies of Regency etiquette and behavior, and she remarks that in both men and women, “Overt displays of emotion were generally considered ill-bred” (99). Also, as Austen points out in *Persuasion*, the kind of life that women had allowed them to reflect more upon their emotions than men: “We [women] live at home, quiet, confined; and our feelings prey upon us. [Men] are forced on exertion” (155). Although there was apparently some disagreement about the constancy of these emotions, women did not have the escapes that men did. Anne Elliot claims that men might just have a more rational approach to emotion:

I believe you equal to every important exertion and to every domestic forbearance, so long as — if I may be allowed the expression — so long as you have an object. I mean, while the woman you love lives, and lives for you. All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it) is that of loving longest when existence or when hope is gone. (157)

Anne thinks that men love logically. Their need for an object suggests this practicality in men. On the other hand, the hopeless love of a woman is inherently emotional and has no connection to the intellect.

Throughout this time period, there was a prominent conflict between the Romantic philosophy of powerful emotions and their benefits as promoted by the

Romantics' poetry, prose, and lifestyle versus the counter pressure of morality and religion which stated that society should not rely on or be strongly influenced by emotions. Claire Knowles discusses this duality of opinion in the Regency: "Both sensibility and sentimentality exploit hyperbole, their rhetoric evoking emotional experience. Sensibility sometimes challenges societal conventions by emphasizing individual action, but sentimentality tempers individualism by deferring to authoritative meta-discourses [morality and religion]" (202). Some believed that emotion "valorized individualism and self-expression and, in its most radical eighteenth-century forms, implied that powerful emotion had the potential to re-shape the world" (202). Those who promoted sentimentality were the Romantics, and they communicated these ideas through their poetry, philosophy, and other discourses. On the other side of this argument were those who valued the intellect more and saw the damaging aspects of an emotion driven society; sensibility's "dark side...came under attack" near the end of the Regency Era, spurred by such occurrences as the French Revolution and the writings of people like Wollstonecraft (204-205). Such a strong reaction against the emotionalism of the Romantics was "arguably a reaction to the disappointments of the French Revolution and its uncontrolled emotion" (203). Austen was very aware of these two philosophies, and it should be noted that "Austen rejects the simple black and white view [held by both sides and] sees the good in the evil and the evil even in the good, and all this in perceived in action" (ApRoberts 356). Austen's promotion of balance and proportion lends itself to a more moderate view of emotion.

This abundance of emotion is prevalent in *Sense and Sensibility*. Austen's desire to portray the proper manner in which to balance emotion and intellect requires that both

characteristics be evident within the novel. Grief is one such emotion that is much touched upon. As the death of Mr. Dashwood is the circumstance that thrusts the women into their new life, it is not surprising that it should also raise such enduring emotions as they all are plagued by. For Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne, “The agony of grief which overpowered them at first was voluntarily renewed, was sought for, was created again and again. They gave themselves up wholly to their sorrow, seeking increase of wretchedness in every reflection that could afford it, and resolved against ever admitting consolation in future” (8). As they both possess very emotional personalities, this adherence to the grief caused by Mr. Dashwood’s death is not unexpected. None of the women has any power to change her circumstances, and the most they can do is demonstrate their sorrow. However, Austen does not seem to agree with this rash emotionalism. Elinor, who is held up as an example of womanhood, responds to this differently: “Elinor, too, was deeply afflicted; but still she could struggle, she could exert herself. She could consult with her brother, could receive her sister-in-law on her arrival, and treat her with proper attention; and could strive to rouse her mother to similar exertion, and encourage her to similar forbearance” (8). Elinor is able to exert some sense upon her grief and manage to still carry on with life. Marianne’s grief is not confined to her father’s death, and her manner of dealing with loss does improve throughout the course of the book. When she learns about Willoughby’s desertion, she is forced to observe both circumstances and places that remind her of his absence:

As they approached Barton, indeed, and entered on scenes, of which every field and every tree brought some peculiar, some painful recollection, she grew silent and thoughtful, and turning away her face from their notice, sat

earnestly gazing through the window. But here, Elinor could neither wonder nor blame; and when she saw, as she assisted Marianne from the carriage, that she had been crying, she saw only an emotion too natural in itself to raise any thing less tender, than pity, and in its unobtrusiveness entitled to praise. (242)

Marianne still feels the depth of emotion that is evident within her nature, but she has learned to govern her reactions and to behave in an irreproachable manner. Her restraint is seen as a virtue, and she becomes a more sympathetic character.

The symmetry that is endorsed in *Sense and Sensibility* can be seen in the execution of dance. A dancer who has no emotional investment in his or her actions, who contains no drive, no passion for the art, even if he or she is technically flawless, will be incapable of doing more than robotically imitate a series of movements. The dance will be flat, unattractive and mechanical. On the other hand, someone who danced for the love of dancing, for the excitement of motion and with affection for his or her partner, yet was untaught in the use of technique or unable to follow the steps with precision would have no control within the dance and might end up preventing others from dancing. This type of dance would be enjoyed more by the dancer, might be more pleasant to watch, but would, in all probability, be more dangerous for the observers and less artistically valid. Yet even in this balance, emotion comes as a reaction, secondary to knowledge of the choreography. To be unskilled in dance was an embarrassing flaw, and to be only adequate forced the attention of the dancer onto the technique and not only the atmosphere of the dance because “[p]rofiency in dancing suggested that a woman possessed social graces and personal charm” (Wilson 33). Therefore, only a good dancer

might be free to experience and express emotion, creating a balance between the choreography and the emotion.

### Courtship

As always in one of Austen's novels, the courtship plot is highly relevant, and especially in *Sense and Sensibility*, the balance of emotion and technique within romantic relationships is tied to the titular theme. The balance is also shown in how some of the courtships are portrayed. While mercenary marriages, like Lucy Steele's first engagement as well as her actual marriage, are generally not encouraged in Austen, excessively emotional engagements, similar to the one that Marianne believes she is or will soon be in with Mr. Willoughby, do not appear to be any more desirable. There is evidence of extremism within both types of courtships that is contrary to the theme of restraint and balance that is promoted in this novel.

In the Regency era, many people felt some ambivalence towards the subject of emotion. They were expected to feel emotion and even express it through language and actions; however, strong emotions were to be strictly managed and repressed in polite society. No one was to be overcome by sentiment or persuaded by passion, but rather all emotional responses were to be guided by logic and articulated more through restrained verbal communication than through more overt expressions of feeling. Nevertheless, suitors were supposed to possess these strong emotions, and courtship, being a physically distant relationship, was almost entirely an emotional experience. Daniel A. Segal and Richard Handler claim that not only were courtship and dance emotionally charged, but they were more so because of their idealistic nature; a single dance was quite different than the actuality of marriage, no matter how significant as metaphor it was:

Courtship and dance are more romantic than marriage itself, precisely because they are less domestic: ideally suited for initiating the process of attachment (that is, for “falling in love”), they are neither the state of marriage itself, nor, fully, the state of love. Nonetheless, courting conventions are often unreflectively accepted as love itself, that is, as the state they are meant to produce-but which they fundamentally are not.

(330)

Although writing some fifty years after Austen’s time, George Routledge (the famed publisher), produced an instructional book for young men titled *Etiquette of Courtship*, with advice that would have been just as apropos during the Regency, especially for Austen’s characters. In it he addresses the continuation of emotionalism connected to courtship as a good and necessary occurrence. By keeping a couple apart and by censoring the subjects upon which they might converse (including the revelation of romantic feelings, “both parties are kept needlessly on the fret, until the long-looked-for opportunity unexpectedly arrives, when the flood-gates of feeling are loosened, and the full tide of mutual affection gushes forth uncontrolled” (120). He also states that a gentleman must be “a person of good breeding and right feeling” in order for him to be ready to court someone. Another interpretation of the rigid structure and etiquette that surrounded the courtship process might depict the male suitor is “as removed from passionate pursuit as from peaceful possession” (Blanchard 513). However, in either case, it is clear that these emotions were expected to be controlled by the intellect and by good breeding, even dictating when and how a proposal might be made.

Both Elinor and Marianne have to navigate the complexities of their respective courtships, but because of the unusual circumstances surrounding both gentlemen in question, neither courtship goes as smoothly as it might have. Some of the aspects of dance that were connected to courtship in *Pride and Prejudice* are employed in this novel, particularly in the case of Elinor as “Austen...[continues to employ] a country dance motif through the depiction of interpersonal relationships”(Wilson 77). As for Marianne, she experiences two courtships and the differences between those are addressed. The balance between emotion and technique, as seen within dance as an expression of the intellect is also shown in how some of the courtships are represented.

While Elinor’s courtship does not have any overt references to dance, it follows the pattern of period dance by beginning quietly and without overt and dynamic expressions of affections but with enough tempered emotion to ground a proper courtship. Edward is introduced in a roundabout way. By the time he begins to appear in the text, he has already been at Longwood for several weeks. However, once Mrs. Dashwood notices the “growing attachment between her eldest girl and the brother of Mrs. John Dashwood” (13), Edward becomes much more of a person of interest. Although courtships in the Regency era were sparked by both money and emotion, and although some “mothers might have encouraged the intimacy from motives of interest, for Edward Ferras was the eldest son of a man who had died very rich; and some might have repressed it from motives of prudence, for except a trifling sum, the whole of his fortune depended on the will of his mother” (14), Mrs. Dashwood is completely unconcerned about Edward’s financial status. Because of this, “Mrs. Dashwood was alike uninfluenced by either consideration. It was enough for her that he appeared to be

amiable, that he loved her daughter, and that Elinor returned the partiality. It was contrary to every doctrine of hers that difference of fortune should keep any couple asunder who were attracted by resemblance of disposition” (14). Edward’s money has no sway on Elinor’s family; his emotion and amiableness, his “open, affectionate heart,” are the qualities that they approve of. In several places, this aspect of Edward’s character is mentioned: “the persuasion of his regard for Elinor perhaps assisted [Mrs. Dashwood’s] penetration; but she really felt assured of his worth . . . when she knew his heart to be warm and his temper affectionate” (15). Elinor “stud[ies] his sentiments” and understands that, although he is a quiet person, his emotions are deep and appropriate. Of her own feeling, she tells Marianne that she “esteems” and “likes” Edward. Because there is no understanding between her and Edward yet, it would be improper for her to profess more than that, but she does add that she was “speaking, in so quiet a way, of my own feelings. Believe them to be stronger than I have declared; believe them, in short, to be such as his merit, and the suspicion—the hope of his affection for me may warrant, without imprudence or folly” (18). The foundation of this courtship is emotion, just as partners in a dance need an intangible connection; both Elinor and Edward feel strongly about each other, and while their feelings are not confessed yet, these sentiments serve to enforce the growing bond between them.

Unfortunately, circumstances soon intervene in this romance, and Elinor’s courtship is faced with some mishaps. The intensity of feeling that both Elinor and Edward experience serves as a barometer for the path of their relationship. As the Dashwoods are required to leave Longwood, Edward does not see them go without an expression of emotion. He remarks on their departure in a “voice of surprise and

concern” (20), which is unusual for his generally peaceful disposition. However, Marianne, who cannot understand the decorum with which Edward is conducting his pursuit of Elinor, comments on his behavior: “In Edward’s farewell there was no distinction between Elinor and me: it was the good wishes of an affectionate brother to both. Twice did I leave them purposely together in the course of the last morning, and each time did he most unaccountably follow me out of the room” (31). Marianne, at this point, expects a more obvious display of the emotion which she equates with love and courtship, and as she has no information about any circumstances that might hinder this relationship, she is bewildered by his reticence. However, she is also confused by Elinor’s behavior and the control her sister has over her emotions: “And Elinor, in quitting Norland and Edward, cried not as I did. Even now her self-command is invariable. When is she dejected or melancholy? When does she try to avoid society, or appear restless and dissatisfied in it?” (31). In their parting, both Edward, because of his previous engagement, and Elinor, because of her prudence, restrain and conceal their feelings. Later, when Edward comes to visit the Dashwoods, his aloofness and emotional withdrawal indicate his inability (because of Miss Steele) to continue his pursuit of Elinor. Edward acts then with “unaccountable coldness” and “seemed scarcely sensible of pleasure in seeing them, looked neither rapturous nor gay... and distinguished Elinor by no mark of affection” (64). The continuation of this distance from his courtship of Elinor is seen when Marianne questions him about the lock of hair in his ring. At her first mention of it, Edward is quite embarrassed and for some time after that is “particularly grave” (72). Because the hair does not belong to Fanny or to Elinor, this ring is a tangible sign that Edward is not planning to continue his relationship with Elinor. The further

expression of negative emotion connected to this estrangement is seen in Elinor when Lucy Steele confides about her secret engagement to Edward. Elinor immediately feels “astonishment, that would have been as painful as it was strong, had not an immediate disbelief of the assertion attended it” (94). This emotion is coupled with “silent amazement,” disbelief, and shock. However, she maintains “a calmness of manner which tolerably well concealed her surprise and solicitude.” However, her anticipation of Edward’s affection is so destroyed that “Elinor...could not witness the rapture of delightful expectation which filled the whole soul and beamed in the eyes of Marianne without feeling how blank was her own prospect, how cheerless her own state of mind in the comparison, and how gladly she would engage in the solicitude of Marianne’s situation to have the same animating object in view, the same possibility of hope” (113). Therefore, Elinor’s loss of hope and emotional connection signals the end of her matrimonial prospects.

Once Elinor has learned of Edward’s unavailability, she tries to suppress the emotions that kept her connected to Edward by focusing on the truth of his situation. However, although she maintains a calm and collected façade, all of Elinor’s sense is not able to prevent her from feeling deeply. In fact, the reserve of her character is more conducive to enduring emotions than if she had little intelligence or propriety. Throughout the stretch of time in which she believes every hope of a life with Edward gone, Elinor does try to cling more to the rational side of her nature; “She was very far from wishing to dwell on her own feelings, or to represent herself as suffering much, any otherwise than as the self-command she had practiced since her first knowledge of Edward’s engagement” (184). Much more so than Marianne, Elinor keeps a good hold

upon her emotions and the expression of them without purging them from her system entirely: “Her narration was clear and simple; and though it could not be given without emotion, it was not accompanied by violent agitation, nor impetuous grief” (184).

Unfortunately, Marianne cannot understand that quiet sentiments may be just as strong as wildly vocal and physical emotions. Her words of criticism spark Elinor to verbalize just how affected she is by this turn of events:

If you can think me capable of ever feeling, surely you may suppose that I have suffered *now*. The composure of mind with which I have brought myself at present to consider the matter, the consolation that I have been willing to admit, have been the effect of constant and painful exertion; they did not spring up of themselves; they did not occur to relieve my spirits at first. No, Marianne. *Then*, if I had not been bound to silence, perhaps nothing could have kept me entirely — not even what I owed to my dearest friends — from openly showing that I was *very* unhappy. (186)

Even in this outburst, the balance of emotion and technique is very clear and profoundly connected to Elinor’s personality. Because only the expression of emotion was subject to scrutiny by people in society, the strength of Elinor’s affections is both a credit to her character and an example of her excellent self-control.

The last segment of Elinor’s courtship closely mirrors the pattern established for period dances. This pattern sets up the strict control of emotion, except in certain circumstances. Young women and men were not to be overt in their affections during normal interactions, yet they were encouraged and even expected to take pleasure and enjoyment in the dance and their partners. This prescription for the display of emotion is

mimicked in the tradition of reticence throughout courtship and strongly expressed emotions at the time of a proposal. Although both Elinor and Edward were aware that they could never be more than friends, when Elinor is asked to pass on the news that Edward might claim a living from Colonel Brandon, their interaction is a mix of emotion and the knowledge of reality. During this conversation, “Her astonishment and confusion were very great ... He, too, was much distressed; and they sat down together in a most promising state of embarrassment” (203), but they both knew what his position was and managed to endure the meeting without compromising themselves. For the duration of this novel, Elinor preserves within herself the proper balance of emotion and intelligence. This balance can be seen in how the other characters respond to her as a respectable person and how positively Austen describes her and her emotional control. However, when it is acceptable, she does allow her emotions to surface noticeably. When Edward comes to see the Dashwoods after everything has happened, Elinor does try to retain her control by saying to herself, “I will be calm, — I will be mistress of myself” (253). He displays the expected anxiety of a nervous suitor: “His countenance, as he entered the room, was not too happy, even for Elinor. His complexion was white with agitation; and he looked as if fearful of his reception, and conscious that he merited no kind one” (253) and she imitates his unrest: “Elinor, who sat, with her head leaning over her work, in a state of such agitation as made her hardly know where she was” (254). When she learns that Edward is not married, that he is free to pursue her again, and has perhaps come to her home to do so, she can no longer hide her feelings: “She almost ran out of the room; and, as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy ... Edward, who had till then looked any where, rather than at her, saw her hurry away, and perhaps saw, or even

heard, her emotion; for immediately afterwards he fell into a reverie, which no remarks, no enquiries, no affectionate address of Mrs. Dashwood could penetrate” (254). All of the descriptions of both of them are related to the emotions. The feelings they possess are vital to the implications that their courtship will soon be concluded satisfactorily. As suspected, Edward soon “secured his lady, engaged her mother’s consent, and was not only in the rapturous profession of the lover, but, in the reality of reason and truth, one of the happiest of men” (255). His placid nature is, in this moment, overcome with the right and proper emotion that all accepted suitors were supposed to enjoy: “His situation indeed was more than commonly joyful. He had more than the ordinary triumph of accepted love to swell his heart, and raise his spirits.” Edward has been saved from “an entanglement which had long formed his misery, from a woman whom he had long ceased to love” and is now “brought, not from doubt or suspense, but from misery to happiness; and the change was openly spoken in such a genuine, flowing, grateful cheerfulness, as his friends had never witnessed in him before” (255). The outburst of emotion in both Edward and Elinor provides a suitable conclusion to the pattern of emotion and intelligence that shaped their courtship into a natural mirror of period dance.

At the beginning of and throughout most of the story, Marianne, with her excessive and outgoing nature, does not quite allow the balance of emotion and intelligence to guide her courtships. Not only does her effusiveness include grief for her father and affection for her sisters, but her love of the outdoors is both emphatic in nature and indicative of her desire for romantic attachments. During the Regency era, “[l]ove of the arts and music [was considered] one of the signs and inspirations of a passionate lover” (Devereux 16). Marianne’s obsession with taste as a quality of a suitor is drawn from this

concept. However, the love of the outdoors was representative of an innocent and energetic “love-making” ... (Devereux 16-17), and Marianne is as demonstrative in her appreciation of natural beauty and the picturesque as she is in her affection for Willoughby. An example of this is seen when Edward’s “fresh admiration of the surrounding country...ensured Marianne’s attention” (70). She believes that the strength of her emotions gives them a more noble quality and declares, “sometimes I have kept my feelings to myself, because I could find no language to describe them in but what was worn and hackneyed out of all sense of meaning” (71). Marianne’s view of the world is almost arrogant at times; she sees herself as a reference point for taste, emotions and love. Her expressions about the beauty of nature are as grandiose as every other sensation; she exclaims, “with what transporting sensations have I formerly seen them fall! How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind! What feelings have they, the season, the air altogether inspired ! Now there is no one to regard them. They are seen only as a nuisance, swept hastily off, and driven as much as possible from the sight.” Elinor’s response to this exclamation is more controlled; she remarks to Marianne, “It is not every one ... who has your passion for dead leaves” (65). Because of Marianne’s pride in her own feelings, she is more resistant to the pattern of courtship that Elinor is so willing to follow. Marianne’s excuse for this deviation from the balance of emotion and intelligence is summed up in her own words: “I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings: the same books, the same music must charm us both” (15). Because Marianne does not realize that she is lacking in any way, she measures her potential romantic partners against her own emotional status.

Willoughby is the first suitor that manages to capture the attention and affection of Marianne, and his own nature is so extravagant and demonstrative that she is persuaded that he would be a good match for her, regardless of protocol and decorum. The first mention of Willoughby allows that his “manner so frank and so graceful, that his person, which was uncommonly handsome, received additional charms from his voice and expression ... the influence of youth, beauty, and elegance” (33) ensured that he was a fast favorite of Marianne. She wishes even that “his pursuits, his eagerness in them should know no moderation, and leave him no sense of fatigue” (34) and is more attached to him when she sees that he “united frankness and vivacity, and above all ... that of music and dancing he was passionately fond” (36). Because of his appearance and taste, “He was exactly formed to engage Marianne’s heart; for with all this, he joined not only a captivating person, but a natural ardour of mind which was now roused and increased by the example of her own, and which recommended him to her affection beyond every thing else.” Unfortunately, although he does not temper the expression of his emotions, Willoughby cares more about his situation in life and soon leaves Marianne with little explanation, although “his countenance showed that he strongly partook of the emotion which overpowered Marianne” (56), and pursues Miss Grey and her fortune instead of accepting a lowered position in society. In London, Marianne’s one-sided correspondence is improper because Willoughby had not proposed to her, but she can see nothing wrong with wanting to communicate with him. When Willoughby and Marianne meet again at the ball in London, a traditionally romantic setting, his determination to end his courtship of her is very evident. He tries to repress his emotions, not merely control them, and she still projects her feelings without caring who sees them. When he is confronted by the

two sisters, he tries to speak only to Elinor, “[b]ut the feelings of [Marianne] were instantly expressed. Her face was crimsoned over, and she exclaimed, in a voice of the greatest emotion, ““Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this? Have you not received my letters? Will you not shake hands with me?”” (125). Willoughby does struggle some with his emotions: “He could not then avoid it; but her touch seemed painful to him, and he held her hand only for a moment. During all this time he was evidently struggling for composure. Elinor watched his countenance and saw its expression becoming more tranquil. After a moment’s pause, he spoke with calmness” and later, “his complexion changed, and all his embarrassment returned” (125). Marianne, on the other hand, does not even try to hide her distress, and for Elinor “to persuade her to check her agitation, to wait, at least, with the appearance of composure till she might speak to him with more privacy and more effect, was impossible, for Marianne continued incessantly to give way in a low voice to the misery of her feelings, by exclamations of wretchedness” (126). Much later, after the first violence of Marianne’s emotion has died away and Willoughby is married, he confides to Elinor that “Marianne’s note, by assuring me that I was still as dear to her as in former days, — that in spite of the many, many weeks we had been separated, she was as constant in her own feelings, and as full of faith in the constancy of mine as ever, — awakened all my remorse” (231). He claimed that he “had been growing a fine hardened villain, fancying myself indifferent to her, and choosing to fancy that she too must have become indifferent to me; talking to myself of our past attachment as a mere idle, trifling, business.” This confession seems to indicate the decision to stop courting Marianne. By forcing his memory and emotions of her to change, he is altering his own path through

life. Of his wife, Willoughby says, “She knew I had no regard for her when we married. Well, married we were, and came down to Combe Magna to be happy, and afterwards returned to town to be gay” (233-4). He has no emotion for her, and although they traveled to be “happy” and “gay,” it does not sound like they succeeded.

Colonel Brandon, to whom Willoughby is set up as a foil, does maintain that inner balance that Marianne lacks at the beginning of this novel, and his affection and courtship of her follow the pattern of balance and dance. Both his character and his courtship of Marianne can be summarized into one statement that Mrs. Dashwood makes:

[Colonel Brandon’s] regard for [Marianne], infinitely surpassing any thing that Willoughby ever felt or feigned, as much more warm, as more sincere or constant, whichever we are to call it, has subsisted through all the knowledge of dear Marianne’s unhappy prepossession for that worthless young man! And without selfishness, without encouraging a hope ! could he have seen her happy with another. Such a noble mind! Such openness, such sincerity! (239)

He has a deep and sincere affection for Marianne, and although his outward expression of emotion was not nearly as vehement as Willoughby’s, the strength of his attachment is perhaps greater because of its consistency. After their engagement and marriage,

Colonel Brandon was now as happy as all those who best loved him believed he deserved to be: in Marianne he was consoled for every past affliction: her regard and her society restored his mind to animation, and his spirits to cheerfulness; and that Marianne found her own happiness in forming his, was equally the persuasion and delight of each observing

friend. Marianne could never love by halves; and her whole heart became, in time, as much devoted to her husband as it had once been to Willoughby. (268)

When Marianne finally accepts the purpose of the internal balance and outer control, she is able to make a much more logical and intelligent decision about marriage. By allowing her emotions to follow her intellect, she is able to enter into a stable and happy future.

Lucy Steele's courtship and marriage are much less emotional and, in some ways, less restrained, than either Elinor's or Marianne's. She has more in common with a technical dancer, able to travel through the steps of a dance, but not connected in her partners on a deeper level. Her deviation from the pattern of period dance begins when she agrees to be part of a secret engagement with Edward. Also, her actions often seem manipulative and her emotions jealous. When she confides in Elinor, "[s]he looked down as she said this, amiably bashful, with only, one side glance at her companion to observe its effect on her" (94). This interest in Elinor's reaction is not an earnest desire to share a confidence but almost a morbid interest in wounding her rival. Lucy often uses such significant glances and she is described as having "little sharp eyes full of meaning" (104). She asks Elinor about her reaction, and says, "There seemed to me to be a coldness and displeasure in your manner, that made me quite uncomfortable. I felt sure that you was angry with me; and have been quarrelling with myself ever since, for having took such a liberty as to trouble you with my affairs." She tells Elinor, "I can safely say that he has never gave me one moment's alarm on that account from the first," yet she feels it necessary to also say, "I am rather of a jealous temper, too, by nature; and ... I was enough inclined for suspicion" that she would have known if Edward's feelings had

changed (105). Even after this confession, Lucy continues to test Elinor's character by begging Elinor to advise her about her engagement, promising to forsake it on Elinor's word. However, "Elinor blushed for the insincerity of Edward's future wife" and refused to answer as an "indifferent person" (107). Lucy, "with some pique, and laying a particular stress on those words," seeks some kind of reassurance that Elinor will remain so indifferent, or if all else failed, "hoped at least to be an object of irrepressible envy to Elinor" (107). Elinor's view of Lucy Steele is not very favorable. She asks herself, "Was [Edward's] 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" (99). She does not see how he could "ever be tolerably happy with Lucy Steele; could he, were his affection for herself out of the question, with his integrity, his delicacy, and well-informed mind, be satisfied with a wife like her — illiterate, artful, and selfish?" When Elinor confirms Lucy's claim on Edward to Marianne, she says, "It was told me, — it was in a manner forced on me by the very person herself, whose prior engagement ruined all my prospects; and told me, as I thought, with triumph" (186). Elinor, who perhaps has the most trustworthy judgment of any woman in this novel, sees the shallow and often negative nature of Lucy's emotions. This characteristic is further expressed in her rejection of him once he loses his inheritance. Lucy's attachment for Edward is then revealed as an affection for his money, and when that money is secured to Robert, Lucy finds that brother just as attractive as her erstwhile fiancé.

In all three of these courtships, the expression of emotion is indicative of the direction of the relationship. When there is a proper and decorous balance between emotion and intellect, the characters have a more solid and lasting romantic connection.

On the occasions that that pattern is broken, the characters are unable or unwilling to nurture their relationship to fruition.

#### Moderation in Individual Characters

Within each character, the balance of emotion and intellect is important. As in a dance, it is not enough that the dance as a whole be symmetrical; each dancer must have a sense of balance and control. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the inner balance of a person is considered to be of the utmost importance: “not only must the heart be ‘kept’—protected, guided, disciplined—but also the mind must be ‘supplied’—fed, exercised, and developed” (ApRoberts 357). Elinor embodies this sense of moderation; she holds her emotions in check, and though she feels deeply, she is not overrun by sentiment. At the beginning of the book, Marianne is not balanced and has no desire to become so. She exults in her passions and the extravagances of her emotion. However, as the novel progresses, she learns the purpose and importance of restraint. Lucy Steele is the exact opposite. Her emotions are more shallow and manipulative, and her approach to matrimony is more conniving than genuine. Edward and Colonel Brandon both show the same admirable internal balance that Elinor possesses, while Willoughby is too expressive and too shallow to have any kind of symmetry within his character. The balance that is inherent within a character is indicative of the actions that that person does.

Austen sets Elinor up as a role model and uses her as an example of the proper balance of individual qualities. Her first description of Elinor says that “Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counselor of

her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence” (8). Not only is Elinor in good control of her own emotion, but she is able to offer positive guidance to those around her. This stability displays the strength of her character: “She had an excellent heart; — her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them” (8). Her ability to govern her emotions is seen after the death of her father, and also when she first learns of Edward’s engagement to Lucy Steele. Even though Lucy is trying to produce a reaction, and “though her complexion varied, she stood firm in incredulity, and felt in no danger of an hysterical fit, or a swoon” (94) She is able to prevent her feelings from dictating her actions. When Marianne begins to recover from her serious illness, “Mrs. Jennings, ... admitted, with unfeigned joy, and soon with unequivocal cheerfulness, the probability of an entire recovery” (223). Yet Elinor, who had perhaps the most cause for an emotional reaction, does not become uncontrolled:

Elinor could not be cheerful. Her joy was of a different kind, and led to any thing rather than to gaiety. Marianne, restored to life, health, friends ... was an idea to fill her heart with sensations of exquisite comfort, and expand it in fervent gratitude; but it led to no outward demonstrations of joy, no words, no smiles. All within Elinor’s breast was satisfaction, silent and strong. (223)

Elinor’s inner balance and emotional symmetry makes her the ideal heroine and an example of how people, especially women, should behave.

At the beginning of this novel, Marianne, although she possesses the ability to temper her emotions, does not want to find any balance in her personality. Both Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood have a predilection for over-sentimentality, a quality that was not necessarily positive as “open shows of affection were considered inappropriate” (Kloester 47). Elinor notes that emotional control “was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught” (8). While Marianne has the same intelligence that Elinor does, she revels in the feelings and excesses that come from her extremes of emotion: “Marianne’s abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor’s. She was sensible and clever; but eager in every thing: her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was every thing but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great.” Elinor tries to offer some restraint for Marianne: “Elinor saw, with concern, the excess of her sister’s sensibility; but by Mrs. Dashwood it was valued and cherished” (8). However, Marianne does not keep this effusiveness of spirit throughout this novel. After Willoughby leaves her, Marianne starts to reevaluate her mode of living: “My illness ... has given me leisure and calmness for serious recollection... I considered the past: I saw in my own behavior ... nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself, and want of kindness to others. I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave” (244). She makes a commitment to be more balanced in her mind and emotions: “The future must be my proof. I have laid down my plan, and if I am capable of adhering to it, my feelings shall be governed and my temper improved. They shall no longer worry others, nor torture myself” (245). This is the turning point in the story for Marianne. It enables her to form a

more conscious and more enduring connection to Colonel Brandon than she would have before:

Marianne Dashwood was born ... to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another! — and *that* other, a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event of a former attachment, whom, two years before, she had considered too old to be married, — and who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat! (268-9)

Austen demonstrates Marianne's change of heart as a necessary and positive step in the further meant of her characters. Without her newfound moderation, Marianne's prospects as a wife and perhaps mother would have been bleak after the first blush of emotion faded.

Miss Lucy Steele has less natural ability than either Elinor or Marianne, and she adds no internal moderation to this lack of proper sensibilities and intelligence. Elinor immediately picks up on this deficiency in Lucy: "Lucy was naturally clever; her remarks were often just and amusing ... but her powers had received no aid from education: she was ignorant and illiterate; and her deficiency of all mental improvement, her want of information in the most common particulars, could not be concealed from Miss Dashwood" (92). Unfortunately, Lucy is more concerned with her own "constant endeavour to appear to advantage" and less with a true desire to be more educated and

balanced. In the desire to be admired, she reveals “the thorough want of delicacy, of rectitude, and integrity of mind ... her attentions, her assiduities, her flatteries.” Instead of having a proper balance of emotion and intelligence, Lucy “joined insincerity with ignorance; [her] want of instruction prevented [her] meeting [Elinor] in conversation on terms of equality, and whose conduct towards others made every show of attention and deference towards herself perfectly valueless” (93). However, for all of her deficiencies, “Lucy does not want sense,” but her “defects of education” and “more frivolous pursuits” (100) have led her to this position. The imbalance in her personality is part of the reason that she is such an unsympathetic character.

Edward, like Elinor, is a good example of a person who demonstrates a proper inner balance. While he is not as expressive or well-spoken as Colonel Brandon, “his behavior gave every indication of an open, affectionate heart. His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement... All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life” (14). When he speaks to Marianne, Edward reveals that he does have some appreciation for nature, an extension of taste, but he is also grounded in reality: “‘It is a beautiful country,’ he replied; ‘but these bottoms must be dirty in winter’” (65). Marianne is not very impressed by Edward’s expression of taste, and she complains about it very vocally:

His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence. And besides all this, I am afraid, mamma, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him; and, though he admires Elinor’s drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. It is evident, in spite of his frequent attention to

her while she draws, that, in fact, he knows nothing of the matter. He admires as a lover, not as a connoisseur. (15)

Elinor, on the other hand, not only knows Edward's character better, but as a balanced person herself, is in a more accurate position to judge it than Marianne. Elinor finds that Edward possesses that symmetry of nature that she does:

The excellence of his understanding and his principles can be concealed only by that shyness which too often keeps him silent. You know enough of him to do justice to his solid worth. . . . I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure. (17)

Because of this credibility of Elinor's judgment and the continuation of this assessment throughout the book, Edward is one of the two men in this book that Austen wrote as role models and examples of the balanced nature.

Colonel Brandon is another male character in which the beautiful symmetry of a balanced mind can be seen. He displays both taste and feeling and yet manages his life in an orderly and rational way. When he first hears Marianne play, he "alone, of all the party, heard her without being in raptures. He paid her only the compliment of attention; and she felt a respect for him on the occasion, which the others had reasonably forfeited by their shameless want of taste" (28). Donald Callen, in his article "The Sentiment in Musical Sensibility," remarks upon this issue of taste saying, "Undoubtedly we rightly expect a good deal of pleasure from music. But the uncritical cultivation and enjoyment

of sentiment is sentimentality, a far cry from sensibility” (390). Although Marianne is very critical of Edward and his lack of passionate responses to the sublime, she is more forgiving of Colonel Brandon: “His pleasure in music, though it amounted not to that ecstatic delight which alone could sympathise with her own, was estimable when contrasted against the horrible insensibility of the others; and she was reasonable enough to allow that a man of five-and-thirty might well have outlived all acuteness of feeling, and every exquisite power of enjoyment” (28). Colonel Brandon is a man who has suffered greatly throughout all of his life, especially as concerns romantic attachments, but who still retains enough sensibility to be “on every occasion mindful of the feelings of others” (47). Elinor, as a good judge of character, approves of the kind of person that he is. She feels that “[i]n Colonel Brandon alone, of all her new acquaintance, did Elinor find a person who could, in any degree, claim the respect of abilities, excite the interest of friendship, or give pleasure as a companion” (42). By the end of the novel, “Colonel Brandon was now as happy as all those who best loved him believed he deserved to be: in Marianne he was consoled for every past affliction: her regard and her society restored his mind to animation, and his spirits to cheerfulness” (268). Colonel Brandon is a stable and gentlemanly person; he provides an anchor for Marianne and reveals the strength of his spirit through the balance of his personality.

Willoughby, for all his intelligence and high feelings, is unable to control either part and is consequently lacking in both. Upon their first meeting, the Dashwoods take an immediate liking to Willoughby and believes that he “was a young man of good abilities, quick imagination, lively spirits, and open, affectionate manners” (37). However, his nature soon becomes apparent. He is “expensive, dissipated, and worse than both.” (148)

In fact, his nature is so irrational and sporadic that when he comes to see if Marianne is recovered from her illness, Elinor “began to think that he must be in liquor; — the strangeness of such a visit, and of such manners, seemed no otherwise intelligible” (225). At this point, he is intoxicated and the inexcusability of appearing to a lady in that state is an indicator of his emotional disability. While Colonel Brandon and Edward are more grounded in their natures, Willoughby embodies a “liveliness, often artificial, and often ill-timed” (240) that is not a positive marker of his personality.

Through this whole novel, although the mentions of dance are few, the principles of period dance that have an impact upon the lives and courtships of that era are present and significant. Gender roles and partner changes give a place to the Dashwoods within their society and the implications of emotions and the expression of feelings are also addressed in detail. Courtship and the approach to romance, be it with logic or emotion, is perhaps the most defining theme of the book, excepting the concept of personal balance. Within each character, the balance, or lack of balance, of emotion and intelligence is a pivotal point in the growth and development of the characters.

## Chapter Four

### Motion and Repetition

Although the previous two novels shared many common themes that pertain to period dance, *Persuasion* focuses more on movement and repetition, as well as being the novel that utilizes language itself as a mirror of the principles of dance. Throughout both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, the integration of dance and dance patterns is significant not only in terms of plot and character development but also as a mode for theme. The concept of repetition or symmetrical doubling occurs both in plot, with the repetition of actions and circumstances, and in language, with significant words and phrases often repeated in nearly identical terms. This repetitiveness serves to unify the story as well as to provide the text with an almost musical meter, important because of the stress placed on dance music more than on dance itself. The emphasis on movement has an obvious connection to dance, but there is a further connection. In her other novels, Austen uses dance as the image of courtship and marriage; in *Persuasion*, travel (the reflection of dance) serves as an image of life in marriage, a more thoughtful and mature metaphor. Both of these patterns reflect the maturity of both the main characters in this novel as well as Austen's development as a writer.

### Symmetry and Repetition

Repetition and mirror images are key components of the concept of symmetry. Hermann Weyl, in his book *Symmetry* which looks at the mathematical definitions of symmetry as they are represented in art and nature, speaks of the importance of both aspects. After all, bilateral symmetry is formed when one half of an object is the mirror image of the other half (29). He continues to say that there are "some special groups of

symmetry which are important in art or nature. ... bilateral symmetry, mirror reflection” (47). Anatomy, architecture, and art all rely heavily on this principle. Thus, the idea of repetition is very important to the study of symmetry and to its application to *Persuasion*. Although Weyl does not address the part symmetry plays within literature, he does focus on architecture, among other things. His observations about the repetition of physical structures as they relate to symmetry are demonstrated in his comments about the Romanesque cathedral in Mainz, Germany: “bilateral symmetry rules the structure as a whole as well as almost every detail” (57). He sees the occurrence of repetition, not as a deterrent to the symmetry of the whole, but as an additive and an enhancement.

The repetition of circumstances is another part of this principle. In this way, there is repetition not only in the tangible but in the intangible and the circumstantial.

Throughout *Persuasion*, many circumstances are repeated, and this balance of motion (the forward continuance of time) and repetition are joined. However, the principle of repetition does not require these similar circumstances to be exactly the same or to have the same outcome. A strong similarity is enough for the reflection to be apparent and the differences are more indicative of a mirror image than of a completely unrelated circumstance. Characters may also imitate each other or carry on the peculiarities of the previous generations.

Period dance employs repetition as a staple of its choreography. Nearly every dance begins with a few measures that are repeated at the end of the dance. Not only are there specific moves or combinations within each specific dance that are repeated, but the patterns of period dance are consistent throughout all of them. Introduction and invitation, separation and reunion, partner changes, along with a host of other patterns

including the honoring of a partner with a short bow as the beginning and end of every dance, all are repeated within all of the period dances. Because of these necessary repetitions within dance, and in connection to the obvious recurrences that appear in the novel, there exists a very strong correlation between period dance and *Persuasion*.

#### Repetition in *Persuasion*

Within the language, romances and characters that are found in *Persuasion*, reoccurrence and repetition are two of the major themes. Almost every significant event is duplicated in some form later in the novel, and in some cases, this pattern of repetition begins in the past and continues through the course of the novel. Although not every repeated circumstance reaches its former conclusion, there is enough similarity for the parallels to be obvious. Anne's two proposals from Captain Wentworth, Lady Russell's continuous interference in Anne's life, and the similarity between little Charles's fall from the tree and Louisa's accident at Lyme are just a few of these parallel occurrences. Every character faces some amount of repetition. In several instances, the wording shows this inherent dependence on repetition. Further than that, Anne's courtship is riddled with repetition, and she constantly has to deal with occurrences that she had dealt with as long as eight years ago. Her courtship is also woven together with the romantic ventures of several of the other characters who exhibit the same pattern of repetition. Many characters, outside of the patterns of courtship, also show some repetitiveness, or seem to be reflections of other characters.

Within the text of *Persuasion*, the words themselves reflect the significance of the element of repetition. Although there is some word play in a few of the other novels, it is mostly circumstantial, such as Henry Tilney's conversation with Catherine about dance

that takes place during their dance in *Northanger Abbey*. However, in *Persuasion*, the parallel between the patterns of period dance and the plot and themes of the novel are much more closely connected. Langdon Elsbree makes several important observations about this connection within *Persuasion*, especially as is seen within the climactic meeting between Anne and Captain Wentworth, when their reunion is finally complete. That passage in *Persuasion* not only elaborates upon the repetition of circumstances, but also repeats the sentence structure and wording in a beautiful and melodic way:

There could not be an objection. There could be only a most proper alacrity, a most obliging compliance for public view; and smiles reined in and spirits dancing in private rapture ... There they exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once before seemed to secure every thing, but which had been followed by so many, many years of division and estrangement. There they returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when it had been first projected; more tender, more tried, more fixed in a knowledge of each other's character, truth, and attachment; more equal to act, more justified in acting. And there, as they slowly paced the gradual ascent, heedless of every group around them ... they could indulge in those retrospections and acknowledgments, and especially in those explanations of what had directly preceded the present moment, which were so poignant and so ceaseless in interest. All the little variations of the last week were gone through; and of yesterday and to-day there could scarcely be an end. (160)

This passage in the novel is central to many of the themes and patterns that circle through the story. The language reflects the pattern of repetition, the words themselves describe the reoccurring of circumstances, and the fact that they are walking shows the presence of movement and travel. Some of the words also demonstrate a connection to dance: “they slowly paced the gradual ascent,” ascent being a term for a couple who moved up the dance; “heedless of every group,” these groups possibly indicative of the other couples within a dance line. Elsbree not only makes the connection to the pattern of repetition in this passage, but mentions the allusions to dance:

Form and content are exquisitely joined in this reunion and dance of spirits; each there sentence pinpoints a moment in time—the exchange in the present, the return to the past, and the ascent into a symbolic future—and each there sentence builds up intensity through the increasing number of phrases and the increasing length of each phrase. The dancelike movement of these sentences is one of an ever-growing expansion away from and a returning to the source of joy. (135)

In the selection from *Persuasion*, the repeating sentence structure which begins with the word “there” demonstrates the thorough and thoughtful manner in which Austen handled the themes and modes within this novel. Several patterns commonly found in period dance, not the least of which is the pattern of separation and reunion, can be seen in this section, but the previous prominence on repetition and the language of this scene shows which pattern is necessarily emphasized here. *Persuasion* is the only Austen novel in which the heroine does not dance. However, both music and dancing are mentioned, and in the aforementioned scene,

The reconciliation of Anne and Wentworth, which comes only after many complications, is the one other place where dancing figures prominently, and here it is used as a metaphor which is made rhythmic by Jane Austen's use of parallel structure among and within the sentences. The prose rhythms begin slowly, then gain in intensity until they duplicate the joy of Anne and Wentworth. (Weissman 134)

Obviously, there is a great prominence placed upon language; as a metaphor, as repetition, even as a musical meter, the words of this novel are both significant and patterned.

However, although the language of this novel plays a very important role in the connection of form and content, it is by no means the only area in which the pattern of repetition is displayed. Cheryl Ann Weissman comments about this abundance of repetition in symmetry within Austen's work. She explains that the presence of symmetry and order in Austen's novels reveals a belief in a constant, logical order to the world, thereby making "symmetric doubling" an occurrence that is not unusual in her writing (87). This doubleness is reflected in both language and plot: "The wistful tone of *Persuasion* [sic] is informed by a bizarre and implacable emphasis on doubleness and refrains in diction, plot, themes, and even syntax" (87). This appearance of repetition and doubleness is not unique to *Persuasion* or even to Austen. The philosophies of the Regency era, and the significance of symmetry and balance within that culture, ensure that these themes were often found within literature: "Symmetric doubling is not intrinsically remarkable in Austen's fiction, of course. The titles *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* reflect the harmoniously epigrammatic rhythm of eighteenth-

century prose” (87). However, Austen does use this mode in a slightly different way than in her previous novels. Austen’s writing is somewhat more mature and intricate in this novel than in her other books. Her characters also display this “maturity and discernment” (91) and live within a world that is more realistic and more grounded in the movement of life and time. Weissman explains that in the literary convention of eighteenth-century prose, which includes Austen’s, the use of repetition “suggests the dependable order of a stable, rational world. In *Persuasion*, names and events recur in a disturbingly irrational way, reflecting a transient, uneasy one” (87). This sense of motion prevents the repeating circumstances from being exact replicas of earlier times. Anne’s life and courtships, both past and present, reflect this phenomenon most clearly throughout the book. Although she is the center of these repetitions, the rest of the book is studded with references to them: “In the plot, the dramatic turning point is foreshadowed by an earlier, strikingly similar contrivance. And both the narrator’s and characters’ diction are studded with arresting refrains. Presented from its outset as a sequel to an implicitly meaningful, unwritten earlier story, this novel is a puzzling play on the notion of doubleness” (88). These circumstances sometimes appear in the lives of the side characters and are seen as they interact with Anne. For example, Mary’s hypochondria, which makes her constantly want Anne to visit, is one of the repeating events that continues from before the beginning of the novel: “Mary, often a little unwell, and always thinking a great deal of her own complaints, and always in the habit of claiming Anne when anything was the matter, was indisposed” (23). Charles further reveals the extent of her mindset when he tells Anne, “I wish you could persuade Mary

not to be always fancying herself ill” (30). In situations like this one, minor characters and situations enhance the natural repetition and rhythm of the novel.

The more peripheral parts of this novel are not the only places where this pattern is evident. As for Anne, “The problematic options of sameness and difference do not double her vision; she recognizes the opportunity for authentically changing the bleakness of her life by remaining faithful to Wentworth, her original and only lover” (Weissman 88). Anne is at first content to remain within the unchanging pattern, but the return of Captain Wentworth pushes her out of her exacting circle of happenstance. She begins to change things, she grows more confident within herself, and she embraces the opportunity to prevent the exact repetition of the past. One of the ways in which she subtly makes these changes is by choosing her own path and not constantly relying on the advice of Lady Russell. The readers are informed that in Anne’s first courtship with Captain Wentworth, Anne was persuaded to refuse him because “Lady Russell, though with more tempered and pardonable pride, received it as a most unfortunate [match]” (18). Furthermore, even knowing that Anne dislikes Bath and associates it with the death of her mother, “Lady Russell felt obliged to oppose her dear Anne’s known wishes” (2) and succeeds in convincing the Elliots to move to Bath. Lady Russell is always very interested in guiding Anne’s choices. She wishes for Anne to marry Mr. Elliot, even though Anne is not in love with him: “Lady Russell ...could not imagine a man more exactly what he ought to be than Mr. Elliot; nor did she ever enjoy a sweeter feeling than the hope of seeing him receive the hand of her beloved Anne in Kellynch church” (107). However, Anne begins to make her own choices. At the beginning of the novel, Anne is already starting to view the advice of Lady Russell, if not differently, then at least within

the context of her own judgment: “Anne at seven-and-twenty thought very differently from what she had been made to think at nineteen. She did not blame Lady Russell, she did not blame herself for having been guided by her; but ...[s]he was persuaded that ... she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement, than she had been in the sacrifice of it” (20). Her reflection upon her past relationship with Captain Wentworth demonstrates the change that is happening within Anne herself throughout this novel. By the end of the novel, although Anne still respects Lady Russell as a friend, she is not taking her cues solely from her guidance. In fact, it is the exact opposite: “The only one among them whose opposition of feeling could excite any serious anxiety was Lady Russell. Anne knew that Lady Russell must be suffering some pain in understanding and relinquishing Mr. Elliot, and be making some struggles to become truly acquainted with, and do justice to Captain Wentworth” (323). Anne’s decision to act by herself in this instance allows her to move beyond the repeating patterns caused by her reliance upon Lady Russell.

The concept of time, and thus the concept of repeating circumstances, is something very important to the pattern of repetition within *Persuasion*. The language itself reflects this emphasis on the passage of time and the monotony of the years. When the story begins, nothing new seems to have happened in years, and “patterns of doubleness and refrain have taken the place of progressive momentum” (Weissman 91). When Anne’s sister Elizabeth is first introduced, one can see in the text the repetitiveness of Elizabeth’s life to this point:

Thirteen years had seen her mistress of Kellynch Hall, presiding and directing ... For thirteen years had she been doing the honors, and laying

down the domestic law at home, and leading the way to the chaise and four, ... Thirteen winters' revolving frosts had seen her opening every ball of credit which a scanty neighborhood afforded; and thirteen springs shown their blossoms, as she travelled up to London with her father, for a few weeks' annual enjoyment of the great world. (5-6)

There is almost a sense of time passing and the years repeating. This tangible feeling of time is one of the most significant themes within the novel. Joseph Duffy observes that one of the “forces in *Persuasion* that move all the characters to action or reaction” is this sensation of time (274-5). An example of the pressing nature of time is the recurrence of the word “autumnal” or other conjugations of the same. There is also the fact that this book covers the longest courtship of any of the Austen heroines. Anne has known and been in love with Captain Wentworth for more than eight years, and she has had that time to firm up her own opinions and mind in such a manner that she can now break out of the repeating circumstances that the years have created. Weissman sees a similar trend within the time of the novel: “Implicit in the novel’s premise is a doubleness of time, for *Persuasion* [sic] is constructed like a palimpsest, an overlay through which we must decipher an original” (89). Each event occurs in sequence often repeating some previous incident. Right before Anne is reunited with Captain Wentworth, little Charles is injured falling out of a tree. This instance is the first in a pair of falls: “with a thud that is uncannily familiar, the turning point of the novel will occur when the boy’s aunt, Louisa Musgrove, falls on the Cobb at Lyme. The symmetry is as significant as the similarity; as the child’s fall heralds a courteous and cold reacquaintanceship, Louisa’s precipitates Wentworth’s recognition of love and his return to Anne” (88). Again, the language of the

novel reflects the content and the repeatability of time. When the party travels to Lyme, they “soon found themselves on the sea shore, and lingering only, as all must linger and gaze on a first return to the sea, who ever deserve to look on it at all, proceeded towards the Cobb” (117). This passage sets up one of the modes of the book. The word choice informs the readers that “Anne’s first view of the sea is paradoxically not her first view, it is a ‘first return.’ And all of the radical patterning in *Persuasion*’s [sic] plot structure and diction emphasizes this tremulous union of beginnings and returns” (90). This concept adds to the many examples of repetition, and thus symmetry, within the novel. The story of *Persuasion* mimics an earlier, untold courtship: “The motif of first returns opens the apparently closed story of Anne’s life. It suggests the possibility for recovery of what was thought to have been irrevocably lost” (90). Anne’s renewed courtship with Captain Wentworth is the greatest example. Because the previous relationship is not described within the boundaries of this novel, Captain Wentworth’s introduction to the plot and his subsequent part within the story is for the readers a first meeting, while for Anne, it is a first return. Anne’s new perspective on life keeps these first returns from becoming perfect copies of the times that came before. This pattern of both repetition and new endings is very deliberate: “It is the nature of storytelling to etch patterns and simultaneously to violate them. In *Persuasion* [sic] this aesthetic conflict is brought into the foreground; the will to conserve the patterns of the past inviolate abrades against the impulse to disrupt and reform them” (90). This abrasion of time and symmetry that meets at the point of repetition is the very exemplification of Anne’s growing maturity.

#### Motion in Dance and Travel

Both motion and movement occur with regularity as portions of the plot and theme of *Persuasion*. As the story progresses, the characters move about the country in a series of events that further the development of this novel; however, the themes of maturity and the substitution of travel for dance also rely heavily on this same movement. The balance found within such movement helps cultivate the principles of symmetry within *Persuasion*. In the late Georgian period, it would have been very unusual for a woman, especially an unmarried woman, to travel at all; a fact noted by Hannah More (a contemporary of Austen's), as well as modern critics Lawrence Stone, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, and many other scholars who wrote about this period. Oddly enough, Anne spends most of her time in the book traveling from one location to another. She is constantly in motion, a particularly interesting development because she does not seem to have had any kind of movement in the eight years that precede the novel. It is the retrenching of her family that forces her into motion, and then her own sense of personal growth that keeps her there. Surprisingly, while there is plenty of dancing mentioned, Anne does not dance at all in this book. However, the fluidity of her character, her adaptability, and her physical movement during her travels more than provide her with the sense of motion than she would have received were she to have danced. In this novel, as Austen is demonstrating her maturity and subtlety, the action of travel takes the place of dance and becomes itself dance-like.

The idea of symmetry and balance within motion relies heavily upon the concept of repetition and order as well as its connection to dance. Movement within period dance contains the symmetry that is born of any human motion. David Mason and John Fredrick Nims verbalize this idea in their defense of poetic rhyme: "The supreme

experience of bilateral symmetry is the human body, with its almost perfect correspondence of right and left. When we walk, our two sides swing forward not only in rhythm but in something very like rhyme” (178). They speak at some length about the naturalness of both rhythm and rhyme and their place, both in a person’s generic and symmetrical understanding of the world and within the language of a piece of good literature. This idea of repetitive motions such as walking or dancing creating a symmetrical and natural type of movement is the way “an authority on the dance has said, we reunite ourselves with the ecstasy and terror of a moving universe” (200). Period dance needs rhythm, that connection between symmetry and motion, in order to create a visual and physical balance. Those watching the dance can see the consistency of the motion, as partners step together and apart evenly down the line of dancers. For those participating in the activity, the motions are familiar and repetitious, and many dances have the same structure and patterns of movement.

In *Persuasion*, there is little dancing at all and none by the heroine; however, the language in many passages and the references to previous dances are enough to show the importance of that action. Although all of Austen’s novels reference dance in some way, “Of her six novels, *Persuasion* [sic] is the least dependent upon the dance (or singing) as a recurrent fully developed event to define groups, dramatize the ritual of courtship and marriage, and modify the novel’s rhythm” (Elsbree 132). Instead of using dance as part of the plot or theme, Austen employs a more subtle expression of that action “and makes it purely symbolic of hopeful youthfulness and marital expectations” (132). Another indication of the importance of dance and the progression from dance to a more mature type of movement is found in the references to music in the novel. Elsbree studies the

purpose of music as Anne, who does not sing and refuses to dance, facilitates the music and dancing of others without completely dissolving into the background (unlike the character of Fanny Price) and while maintaining her own spirit and “vitality” (which Elinor Dashwood does not). Elsbree continues this thought with the explanation for Anne’s musical performance: “In the nonverbal, nonsocial world of music which excludes her from actual dancing and singing, she can find a comforting alternative to the human world around her” (133). These references to Anne’s musical abilities are “brief, symbolic and moving” (132). Probably the most significant of them occurs at Uppercross when Anne’s role as musician rather than dancer is first discussed with Mary and the Musgroves and then later observed when she takes Wentworth’s place at the instrument to play for the party. Anne’s own thoughts about her position are indicative of her state of mind and that of her relatives: “She knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation. Excepting one short period of her life, she had never, since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste” (32). The phrase “excepting one short period in her life,” which implies the nature of her relationship with Wentworth, “heightens the contrast between Anne’s behavior at dances and her relatives’ behavior” (133). The connection of repetition and motion that is found in period dance also comes into play during that passage. The pattern of time and repeating circumstances helps to fuse past and present; “the music, the instrument, and the seat which for ‘one short period in her life’ gave her pleasure by giving pleasure to another and which since then have been her pleasure alone are now her fate, her exile” (Elsbree 134). Anne is still caught in the cycle that her life has always followed. The only

time previous to this instance that she deviated at all from that pattern was during her first courtship with Wentworth. Now she is again stuck within the unvarying rhythm of her life by the expectations of her family and her own dedication to both them and to the memory of Wentworth.

Although the references to music, specifically to Anne as the musician, indicate that Anne is not seeking to reinitiate her courtship, the other characters who dance show that the dance is representative of courtship and the language of the novel displays a more subtle and less public dance than Wentworth and Anne tread together. Once Anne and Wentworth have reconciled their feelings and desires by way of the letter that Wentworth writes, their walk back to Anne's residence in Bath is as much a dance as any choreographed piece tread any of Austen's other novels. In fact, Cheryl Wilson, in her book about dance in literature specifically mentions this scene as an example of dance. She says, "Anne Elliot and Captain Fredrick Wentworth do not dance together, but the final scene of their reconciliation employs the language and imagery of dance in a way that encourages readers to see Anne and Wentworth walking side by side as an event equally momentous and sexually charged as the dancing of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy" (5). Although Anne and Wentworth experience a physically quieter moment, it is perhaps more significant because of the years between them and their own newfound confidence and maturity. Sodeman comments, "Their 'spirits' are 'dancing in private rapture'... What matters is within, and no fiction can embody it. The movement of the two now toward a quiet and retired gravel walk is a mere public, fictive ceremony... a fine, delicate, slight outward show of an 'action' which has all but disappeared inward, where spirits are dancing in private rapture" (207). In this manner, the action or

implication of dance is just as important to *Persuasion* as it is to *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma*.

Dance is not the only expression of movement within *Persuasion*; the issue of travel is also addressed as a further extension of the metaphor of dance. However, although Anne travels a great deal within the novel and Mrs. Croft likewise not only travels during the time of the story, but also tells of her journeys with her husband, the concept of women travelling in the late eighteenth century was not completely socially acceptable. In her criticism of society written in 1799, Hannah More adamantly rebukes both men and women for displaying the “inability of staying home” (145). However, she is much more severe on women who travel. This reaction came from the growing number of people who began to travel in England and Europe for pleasure and education. More and others feared that this trend meant that people, and especially women, had “abandoned their domestic responsibilities” in their desire for travel (140-1). While the dangers of travelling are a legitimate concern in some people (Mary constantly neglects her duties as a mother, especially when little Charles is injured), More does not take into account those capable of responsible and educational travel like Mrs. Croft and Anne. Neither of these women neglect their duties, Anne because she has no household to tend (although she often assists those like Mary who are unable or unwilling to take responsibility of their own domestic circles) and Mrs. Croft because she carries her household (in the form of her husband) with her. Furthermore, Mrs. Croft’s lack of children enables her to travel without neglecting or endangering them in her ventures especially during the wars. Although the educational nature of travel is not always readily apparent, Anne’s maturation displays the growing self-knowledge that her movement has

helped to develop. Besides learning more about herself, Anne learns more about society and human nature by visiting new places and seeing people in many walks of life. Anne's visit to Lyme opens her eyes to the devastation of grief in Captain Benwick and to the consequences of both reticence (Captain Benwick's decision to postpone his wedding for monetary reasons is bitterly regretted) or impetuosity (Lousia's injurious fall is caused by her lack of a moderate spirit). Although critics such as More and Stone observed the disinclination of some parts of society to allow women to travel, particularly alone or unmarried, Austen does not treat the subject of travel as controversial. It is instead natural, even beneficial, for Anne to travel throughout the novel and healthier for her than the previous wasted years spent unmoving in her father's house. This benefit of travelling is noticed by her father; "he began to compliment her on her improved looks" and is astonished to find she is not using any product to bring about such a change (96). As for Mrs. Croft, she and her husband are one of the most admirable married couples in any of Austen's novels. In fact, they are seemingly an ideal, the goal one should strive for within a happy and contented marriage. The fact that their friendship and communication is fostered by the long travels they undertake together is an interesting window into the way Austen viewed travel.

It is possible that, as *Persuasion* is arguably Austen's most mature novel, so travel is the more mature expression of movement. Although there is some traveling in other works by Austen, in *Persuasion* the action is more than just transportation or the means to an end. Not only does Anne travel more freely and spontaneously than many of Austen's other heroines (as when the party from Uppercross goes to Lyme with little warning or preparation), but the journeys Anne undertakes mirror her inner growth and

maturity. Travel then becomes as much of a metaphor as dance. Sodeman comments on the idea that *Persuasion* is a mature work; she says, “Indeed *Persuasion* seems to belong last; it seems to have grown out of the previous novels, and to be looking back on them with an achieved serenity that could only have come after great trials” (189). All of Austen’s novels are beautiful and well-crafted; however, “[t]artness must be the characteristic taste of Jane Austen’s fruit; *Persuasion* alone is mellow and ripe” (189). As *Persuasion* is Austen’s “last, mature novel” (201), it is reasonable to expect a maturation of the themes and patterns that were present in her earlier works. Wilson points out that dance, as a favorite pattern of Austen’s, is as much of a metaphor for travel as it is for courtship: “the floor patterns followed by the participants in these dances became models for the geographic mobility of fictional characters. Or, the intricacies of a marriage plot paralleled the prescribed exchange of partners in a dance formation” (4). Travel then becomes almost synonymous with dance; the movement within the dances paralleling the movement within travel, creating a broader, more subtle pattern for the heroine to follow. This subtlety is indicative of the growth of Austen as a writer as well as the development of Anne as a character: “As her vision of human experience deepened, Jane Austen seems to have gradually moved beyond the use of the dance motif as a symbol of an individual’s and group’s social sense and sensibility to the use of the dance motif as a symbol of an individual’s capacity for personal growth and the record of this growth” (Elsbree 135). In *Persuasion*, the dance, as well as the references to dance and travel, reveals Anne’s transition from solitary musician to loved wife. This picture of period dance, as a reflection of the inner growth of characters, shows how Austen was “moving beyond what individuals are to what life is” (136). Not only that, but taking “account of the

cultural significance and textuality of dance allows certain geographical journeys to take on additional significance” (Wilson 37-38). While the concept of travel may be connected to dance, just as all dance is not performed out of pure and right motives, not all movement is above reproach. Some characters in the book, such as Louisa, do not engage in travel with the necessary maturity, and there are consequences to these actions. However, even in Louisa’s situation, when she is gravely injured due to her reckless mobility, the patterns of period dance are still guiding the plot. Louisa’s accident actually brings her closer to a proper marriage by introducing her to Benwick’s close company and removing her from the less invested Captain Wentworth. Therefore, the conclusion that travel is a more mature form of dance is not only a reasonable conclusion, but a necessary one as well.

As the heroine, Anne is the character who most embodies this pattern of travel and movement as it pertains not only to courtship but to the expression of life and marriage. All of Austen’s heroines are somehow placed within settings and domestic situations that lend themselves to movement and mobility (Sodeman 788). In her previous novels, this mobility expressed itself physically, through dance and travel, emotionally, or socially. However, Anne is “Austen’s most mobile heroine” (792) and Wentworth arguably the most mobile hero, and even Elizabeth Bennet “has little of Anne’s range of movement” (790). Movement in *Persuasion* is not merely a plot point, as it might be seen in some of Austen’s other novels, but it is representative of Anne’s maturity and growth. Darrel Mancell claims that by linking the action of travel to the development of Anne’s character, “*Persuasion* licenses female mobility by associating it...with virtue” (792), thus eliminating the moral issues some in society would have with

the idea of a woman traveling so extensively. This virtue in travelling is personified in Mrs. Croft, who is perhaps the most respectable and likeable older, married woman in any of Austen's novels. Many of the married women are depicted as ridiculous or disagreeable, like Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. John Dashwood; however, Mrs. Croft is both wise and kind: an interesting fact in light of the frequency and duration of her travels. Anne is older than any of Austen's other heroines and, compared to Elizabeth Bennet, she shows much more discernment, not regulating everything into first impressions and wounded vanity: "Anne Elliot begins her narrative journey with maturity and discernment, and in her world such phenomenological distinctions [Elizabeth] are no longer possible" (Weissman 91). A very significant portion of this journey is Anne's departure from her father's home. Although the entire family leaves Kellynch Hall, Anne's further separation from her family makes her removal especially momentous. This part in the plot indicates the real change in Anne and her opinion of herself: "At home Anne was indeed 'only Anne'. When she leaves she becomes somebody at last, and thus begins the journey 'home' toward the satisfactions of self-consequence" (Mancell 194). This internal journey might be compared to the changes that take place within Emma. However, there are some important differences; Anne "is taking leave of a grand home ... there can be no return home in the novel ... she must complete the movement that the heroine of *Emma* was still not quite able to endure at the conclusion: the removal forever from the paternal abode." (189). In this way as Anne leaves her father and moves toward Captain Wentworth and his life of movement, She is actually traveling toward her proper "home" (194). Along the way, Anne is offered several places to end this journey. It seems quite possible that Mary would be happy to put up Anne for an indefinite period

of time, if only to have a willing listener and someone upon which to dump the more unpleasant tasks. Anne likewise comments that “[a]s for herself, she might always command a home with Lady Russell” (96). Lady Russell also urges Anne to accept the proposal of Mr. Elliot, to marry and live within at Kellynch Hall; however, “[i]f Anne had accepted Mr. Elliot, she would have ended her journey where she began it: at Kellynch Hall. However, her rejection of him allows her to continue in her movement toward maturity and a loving marriage” (Mancell 196). Anne’s immersion in the world of travel and change prepares her for the letter from Wentworth. She grows into the maturity of her years and learns how to assert herself in a proper and beneficial way. It is through Anne’s travels that she becomes the person that could be happy with Wentworth, just as the Admiral and Mrs. Croft are happy.

*Persuasion* is such a different book, mature and beautiful, that it cannot be treated exactly as the other novels are. The concept of dance is more subtle, more metaphoric, and the pattern of movement is more bound up in travel than in balls and parties. Through the use of repetition and language, the symmetry of this book is clearly sculpted, and within the gentle growth of the characters, both inner and outer mobility is displayed.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

The principles of symmetry and balance as well as the patterns of period dance were all interwoven in the fabric of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The social mores that required the utilization of symmetry and order are evident in many portions of that culture. Within the literary sector, Jane Austen incorporates both balance and dance into her body of work. Although all of her novels mention the act of dancing and follow the patterns of period dance in language and form, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Persuasion* are probably the best examples of the different ways in which Austen joins these two ideas.

The study of the role of period dance within the category of symmetry and balance necessitates an understanding of the purpose of both symmetry and dance within the Georgian era. The class structure of that time was dependent upon the order and hierarchy that tradition and money enforced. In courtship, the rituals of each class, expectations and etiquette, were repeated and solidified by emotions and marriages. Period dance, by replicating the structure of courtship and class, helped to strengthen the natural balance of that time period. Austen's contributions to the canon of literature and her use of an Aristotelian format (plot and unity) bring both order and dance to life. As one of the first novelists to use an Aristotelian plot structure, a cohesive "arrangement of the incidents" with a beginning, middle or climax, and end also known as the *dénouement* (*Poetics* 11-12), Austen played a significant role not only in the development of the burgeoning literary form but also aided in bringing respectability to the novel. Watt claims that "her novels have authenticity without diffuseness or trickery, wisdom of the

social comment without a garrulous essayist, and a sense of the social order which is not achieved at the expense of the individuality and autonomy of the characters” (297).

Austen and her use structure and order helped to shape the novel into the prestigious art form it is today perhaps in a greater way than any other novelist did.

Within *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen takes the action of dance and its inevitable separations and reunions and shapes it into one of the most beautiful and recognizable plots in English literature. The significance of dance within the courtship plot is evident as period dance was practically a metaphor for courtship and marriage. Dancing plays a very important role in Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy’s relationship, and only when the pattern of the dance is respected and freely followed by both characters is Mr. Darcy’s proposal accepted.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, the pattern that Austen focuses on demonstrates the balance between emotion and technique. By defining technique as choreography, a fixed, knowable order of steps, technique can be related to facts or intelligence. The duality between the two heroines is exemplified within their personality. Elinor’s sense and Marianne’s sensibility are personifications of the struggle within dance of emotion and technique. Austen refuses to take a side of this opposition and instead honors the moderation of both characteristics. She also weaves the pattern of partner changes into the plot. Partner changes were very common in period dances and were even considered an essential part of the courtship process. Austen’s use of this pattern further reveals the tension between emotion and common sense.

The pattern in *Persuasion* is more mature and subtle than those in the other novels. Repetition is just one of the important themes of the novel. The recurrence of

circumstances or the repetition of actions and attitudes allow for mirror images and the predictability of characters. The sense of time that the novel provides allows for a long series of these repetitions to have occurred, and many of them are referenced in the book. Language here plays a very important role and the words themselves often reflect the repetition that is happening in the plot. Motion and movement are a second pattern that helps to shape the novel. Dance is only mentioned a few times, but the patterns of dance are carried over into travel. Mrs. Croft sets an example for Anne by being in the one truly respectable and imitable older couple. Anne's personal travels and her eventual marriage to a traveling man provide movement along the patterns of the dance. This pattern is the equivalent of dance and is a more subtle way of incorporating dance into the novel.

Throughout all of these books and the other three novels, Austen creates a world in which the principles of symmetry and balance play off of the metaphor and action of dance. The patterns of dance give a sense of direction to the plot which revolutionized the way novels would be constructed from thenceforth. In her books, Austen uses language and story to reveal the importance of symmetry and balance, and through dance, she is able to show the significance of courtship and order. Courtship is one of Austen's more universal themes, and it is fitting that it is the most interconnected with dance and symmetry.

Just as in the society of the time, in Austen's novels, dance is the perfect demonstration of balance and courtship, and these patterns are not just seen within *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Persuasion*. The remainder of the novels in Austen's canon offer opportunities for further study. Especially in *Emma*, about which so much criticism has been written concerning the social hierarchy, the significance of order

and hierarchy within both symmetry and dance would be a fascinating possibility for research. The patterns of dance in *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park*, in light of their preponderance of satire, in ways already discussed with her other novels, but also in ways not yet explored.

Many modern movie adaptations have placed a great emphasis on the importance of dance, and looking at the director's motivation as well as Austen's purpose in including those dances scenes might reveal just how close or distant those patterns of dance are to the twenty-first century. For instance, in the 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice*, there is a highly stylized depiction of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth's dance at the Netherfield Ball. The emotionalism inherent within this scene is still guided by the choreography of the dance. In this manner, it is very reliant on the pattern of emotion and technique. While the novel does display parts of that pattern, the movie version places more emphasis on emotion than most people read into the book. So while the patterns still exist, modern culture has promoted the importance of some of them in a way that might alter the perception of a viewer. A close look at the implication behind the emphasis of dance in general and this dance in particular might highlight either the loss of specific patterns of symmetry in today's society, or subdued or altered patterns. The absence of other people in that scene compared to the presence of them in the book shows initially the separation between the two. Yet the significance of such an action (possibly meant to heighten emotion or portray the characters inner conflict) would be a good place to begin studying the differences between novel and movie. In instances like this, in which differences in culture and media might change the inherent patterns of the dance,

there are some opportunities for scholars to see how much the perception of dance has changed through time.

Furthermore, Austen was one of the first to really bring Aristotelian structure and plot formation to the developing novel. Therefore, if scholars were interested in looking for common patterns of symmetry and dance in other novels of that period, they might not find those patterns so visibly represented. However, because Austen does epitomize the attitude of the Regency toward both symmetry and dance so clearly, it is possible that portions of these patterns could exist in novels prior to, during, and after the Regency. Such attention to patterns also carries over into the Victorian era, as has been studied by critics Daniel Segal, Cheryl Weissman and Cheryl Wilson. However, order itself was different in the Victorian Era as opposed to during the Regency. The stronger connections to at least a nominal morality (although the Victorians were known for both evangelism and strict morality, the Victorian period also had one of the highest percentages of prostitutes in history) as well as the different conception of the structure of the family as the nuclear family became the center of social structure might have all caused some of these changes. Also scholars might be interested to look into how the metaphor of dance shaped the culture and morality of the Victorian period. Even those not interested in dance specifically might be intrigued by use of dance as a socially engineered metaphor. The aristocracy during the Regency was perfectly aware of the resemblance of dance and courtship, and they used that concept to further ensure desirable social relationships, including the formation of marriage alliances. Also, although symmetry and balance can be seen quite clearly within period dance, there are other aspects of society that reveal

those principles through literature (such as architecture and landscaping) and which also lend some opportunities for further scholarship.

Although some would no longer consider dance of any kind to be a widely understood social metaphor for courtship and matrimony such as it was during Austen's time, the patterns of dance and symmetry can still be seen through the literature and history of earlier times. In each era, dance had a unique place within culture and society. Each type and style of dance held different meanings and connotations for those familiar with it. It is also possible that those same patterns not only shaped the world in the past, thus creating the world as it is today, but they might also still be in play in parts of culture (taking into account the deliberate lack of patterns within most postmodern dances as well as the popularity of ball-room dancing) within the Western World.

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