Jane Austen

Sense and Sensibility

Pride and Prejudice

Emma

ANNIKA BAUTZ

Consultant Editor: Nicolas Tredell

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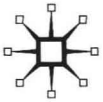

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Abbreviations and a Note on the Text

AugR	*The Augustan Review*
BC	*The British Critic*
BEM	*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*
BLM	*The British Lady's Magazine*
Champ	*The Champion*
CH	*The Critical Heritage*
Cornhill	*Cornhill Magazine*
CR	*The Critical Review*
E	*Emma*
EWDM	*The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*
GM	*The Gentleman's Magazine*
MR	*The Monthly Review*
NBR	*North British Review*
NR	*The New Review*
PP	*Pride and Prejudice*
QR	*The Quarterly Review*
SS	*Sense and Sensibility*
St Paul's	*St Paul's Magazine*

All page references to Austen's novels in this Guide, including those within critical extracts, refer to the Penguin Classics edition of 2003:

Sense and Sensibility, ed. and notes by Ros Ballaster (London: Penguin, 2003)

Pride and Prejudice, ed. and notes by Vivien Jones (London: Penguin, 2003)

Emma, ed. and notes by Fiona Stafford (London: Penguin, 2003)

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Introduction

For almost 200 years, readers at various times and in diverse places and circumstances have interpreted Jane Austen's novels – readers reading with different attitudes and differing widely in what they find appealing. Austen's works have continuously risen in popularity: from holding a position of relative obscurity in the Romantic period, they have come to achieve extraordinary critical and popular acclaim in the early twenty-first century. This Guide illustrates key examples of the many different responses to three of Austen's novels: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma*.

Sense and Sensibility was Jane Austen's first published novel, appearing in October 1811. The title page read 'SENSE AND SENSIBILITY: | A NOVEL. | IN THREE VOLUMES. | BY A LADY.' LONDON: | PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, | By C. Roworth, Bell-yard, Temple-bar, | AND PUBLISHED BY T. EGERTON, WHITEHALL'. As was to be the case with all her novels that appeared during her lifetime, *Sense and Sensibility* was thus already classified as a novel on the title page, in spite of the widespread practice among contemporary novelists, including popular and successful writers such as Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) or Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849),[1] of calling their works romances or tales, thus avoiding the negative connotations, at that time, of the term novel.[2] *Sense and Sensibility* was published by Thomas Egerton, on commission, which meant that both the risk and the profits were the author's. She covered her costs and made about £140 out of the first edition of about 750 to 1,000 copies, which cost fifteen shillings per three-volume set.[3] An average first edition of a novel consisted of 500 to 750 copies, so Austen's first novel was already more successful than that of an average novelist.[4] The edition was sold out by July 1813.[5] During her lifetime the novel went through a second edition, which appeared in October 1813.

Pride and Prejudice was even more successful. It was again published by Egerton, at the end of January 1813. Its title page read 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE': | A NOVEL. | IN THREE VOLUMES. | BY THE| AUTHOR OF 'SENSE AND SENSIBILITY.' | LONDON: | PRINTED FOR T. EGERTON, | Military Library, WHITEHALL'. | 1813. Again, it was thus classified as a novel on the title page, and was published anonymously. This time Egerton had bought the copyright, for £110, and as *Pride and Prejudice* went through three editions during Austen's lifetime he profited by it. The first edition consisted of

about 1,250 to 1,500 copies,[6] which must have been disposed of fairly quickly, as the second edition was issued in October 1813, at a price of eighteen shillings.[7] *Pride and Prejudice* was noticed by three contemporary Reviews, *The British Critic* in February 1813, *The Critical Review* in March 1813, and *The New Review* in April 1813. In terms of numbers of contemporary editions, then, *Pride and Prejudice* was Austen's most successful novel.

Although both *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* were not published until the 1810s, Austen had written earlier versions of both these novels in the 1790s. That of *Pride and Prejudice*, then called 'First Impressions', had even been offered to the publisher Thomas Cadell the younger (1773–1836), who refused even to look at the manuscript.[8] She revised both manuscripts considerably before she offered them again for publication.

Emma belongs in its entirety to this later period of Austen's life as a novelist. It was published by John Murray (1778–1843), who was also the publisher of the celebrated poet Lord Byron (1788–1824), and whose imprint was more prestigious than that of Egerton. *Emma* was again published on a commission of ten per cent, in December 1815. It was again published anonymously and dedicated by permission to the Prince Regent (George Augustus Frederick (1762–1830), Prince Regent 1811–20, reigned as King George IV 1820–30). The title read 'EMMA': | A NOVEL. | IN THREE VOLUMES. | BY THE| AUTHOR OF 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE', | &c.&c. | LONDON: | PRINTED FOR JOHN MURRAY | 1816. Of the first edition of 2,000 copies, 1,250 had been sold by October 1816, at twenty-one shillings (one guinea). The first edition of *Emma* brought Austen £221, but, as the second edition of *Mansfield Park* had involved a loss, Austen only received £38 and eighteen shillings for it.[9] *Emma* was reviewed in more contemporary Reviews than any other of her novels: in eight British periodicals and at least three foreign ones.[10]

The numbers of editions and reviews indicate that Austen was more successful with her contemporaries than most novelists were, but also that she was not in any way to be compared to the two literary giants of her day: Walter Scott, both as a poet and as a novelist, and Lord Byron as a poet. However, her popularity with both critics and the public was to increase steadily to make her one of the most celebrated authors of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

This Guide traces the most important criticisms that these three novels have inspired over the last 200 years. The first chapter begins by looking at the reviewing culture in the early nineteenth century, when reviewing periodicals were numerous and of unprecedented influence, and when to get discussed at all in a periodical was already an achievement. The chapter proceeds to consider contemporary reviews

of Austen's novels, which emerge as superior to most novels, amusing and morally unexceptional, but not works of innovation or genius Chapter 2 looks at Victorian Reviews, in the years between 1865 and 1870. Austen's works became increasingly popular in the course of the nineteenth century, and especially in the second half of the century. This chapter draws on articles in reviewing periodicals to analyse critical responses of readers such as the historian and essayist Thomas Babington Macaulay (1809–59), the critic Richard H. Hutton (1826–97), the novelist Julia Kavanagh (1824–77), the novelist and biographer Margaret Oliphant (1828–97), the critic and scholar Sir Leslie Stephen (1832–1904), the writer and scholar Richard Simpson (1820–76), the journalist, philosopher, scientist and critic G.H. Lewes (1817–78), and the writer Anne I. Thackeray (1837–1919). While individual articles on Austen's works had appeared in the preceding decades, more reviews were published now, largely in connection with the publication of the first biography of Austen: *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870), by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh (1798–1874). In early-nineteenth-century reviews, Austen's life and person had not played a part, since she published all three novels anonymously. However, her name was known to Victorians, and her character is emphasised by reviewers, most of whom take up the image of Austen that the *Memoir* gives, of a dutiful, kind, and domestic woman, who saw herself first and foremost as a daughter, aunt and sister rather than an author. Reviewers portray her novels as reflecting her sweet and essentially feminine character.

Chapter 3 discusses the emergence of 'Janeism' as well as the critical counter-reactions this phenomenon provoked. The term itself was coined by the literary scholar George Saintsbury (1845–1933), a great admirer of Austen's. The prevalent critical and public attitude to Austen in the early twentieth century was one of holding her in esteem and affection, and seeing in her the benevolent maiden aunt who regarded writing as a leisure pursuit. Foremost literati such as Henry James (1843–1916) praised her, but insisted that she had written without an artistic or technical consciousness – a natural genius and literary amateur. The American novelist, short-story writer and humorist Mark Twain (pseudonym of Samuel Longhome Clement, 1835–1910) famously deprecated her, while the English poet, novelist and short-story writer Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) wrote a short story about 'Janeites'. The early twentieth century also saw the beginnings of a serious critical approach to Austen's texts in the appreciations of critics such as A.C. Bradley (1851–1935), and Reginald Farrer, a view which was confirmed by R.W. Chapman's scholarly edition of Austen's texts (1923). The novelists E.M. Forster (1879–1970) and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) also admired Austen, as well as taking her seriously as a writer of literature. Arguably the most significant part in dispelling the

notion of Austen as an inartistic and amateurish writer was played by Mary Lascelles' 1939 study *Jane Austen and her Art*. A devout Janeite, Lascelles analysed the structure of the novels and showed their artistic complexities. The chapter goes on to discuss the views of critics such as D.W. Harding and Marvin Mudrick (1921–86) who insisted on Austen as an ungentle writer, critical of her society and readership. The studies of Q.D. Leavis (1906–81), F.R. Leavis (1895–1978), Lionel Trilling (1905–75) and his view of Austen as inherently moral, are also looked at. In spite of all the differences between the critics writing in the first half of the twentieth century, they all applied an a-historical approach. Also, they all contributed to Austen's place in the literary canon as a serious author no longer being disputed by the middle of the century.

Chapters 4 and 5 look at the second half of the twentieth century, when *SS, PP,* and *E* provoked more criticism than ever before. The chapter traces the developments of Austen criticism in the context of larger critical movements: from New Criticism, Formalism and Structuralism to New Historicism, Feminism and postcolonial readings. While critics in the 1960s and 1970s mostly focus on style and form, looking at a text as an aesthetic object, more recent discussions see the text within the political and social context of its genesis, and connect the text to the author's biography. Arguably the most influential study in the second half of the twentieth century was *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975) by Marilyn Butler (born 1937). She applied a textual approach in combination with an awareness of the author and her context: closely analysing the texts, Butler showed that, far from being ahistorical and apolitical, Austen's writings are full of signs that convey political opinion. While critics after Butler might disagree with her view of Austen as espousing Tory politics, the majority of them agree with Butler in seeing Austen as a writer deeply conscious of her political and social context, and the novels as reflecting this consciousness. While New Historicism and its concern with a text's historical, cultural, social and political context dominates criticism in the second half of the twentieth century, there are two distinct approaches within this larger movement (which are sometimes combined): the political–historical perspective outlined above, and a feminist perspective. The latter comprises studies of the role of women in Austen's fiction as well as of her own position as a woman writer in the early nineteenth century – or a combination of the two.

Chapter 6 considers trends in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It sees a continuation of the historicist trends described above, but it also produces studies that go back to an exclusive focus on the text, notably David Miller in his *Jane Austen or The Secret of Style* (2003), in which he argues that the text is absolutely impersonal in that it reveals nothing about gender, age, marital status, social position etc., which renders Austen's narrative a truly omniscient one. Many critics

combine a close reading of the texts with placing Austen and her novels in their historical context. An important example here is Peter Knox-Shaw's *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* (2004). His approach starts with Butler's view of a conservative Austen; he disagrees with this, since he views her as more in line with the Enlightenment. Arguably the most significant study in this decade is Kathryn Sutherland's *Jane Austen's Textual Lives* (2005). Sutherland here shows how Austen has been constructed, through biographies, portraits, films, editions of her novels, illustrations, into what each editor, biographer, etc, believes her to have been.

Chapter 7 discusses studies of the film adaptations of Austen's novels: in the late twentieth century, more people come to Austen through film versions of her novels than through the novels themselves. The chapter looks at the rise in adaptations from the mid-1990s onwards as well as at critics' attitudes towards these translations of Austen's plots.

As the above outline suggests, this Guide offers a chronological account of critical perspectives, which will make it possible to point up developments in criticism and see critics in their respective contexts. This presentation emphasises every reader's being part of an 'interpretive community'[11] and thereby heightens awareness of our own 'horizons of expectations'.[12]

CHAPTER ONE

Contemporary Reviews

REVIEWING IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

Reviewing periodicals were at their zenith in the early nineteenth century. Not only were they numerous but they also enjoyed an interest, and therefore a significance, that was new. Most reviewing periodicals appeared monthly, and consisted of a main part, which contained a small number of longer articles, and an end-section called the catalogue, which contained a larger number of short reviews, sometimes only consisting of one sentence. New publications that were regarded as less important but still worthy of inclusion were placed in the catalogue. The fact that a work was reviewed at all was an indication that it was considered to have some merit, and this was qualified by the length and location of the review. *The Critical Review* discussed *Sense and Sensibility*, the first publication by an anonymous female author, in the main part, whereas *The British Critic* noticed it in the catalogue, a difference reflected in the tenor of the overall verdicts on the novel in these two reviews.

The *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly Review* were the most influential periodicals. They appeared quarterly rather than monthly, which left them more time for careful selection and criticism. Their price of five or six shillings[1] was prohibitive for anyone below the middle classes – but not as expensive as books – and circulation numbers were high: in the 1810s, the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* each achieved print runs of between 12,000 and 14,000,[2] and there were several readers for each copy. By comparison, *The Critical Review* and *The British Critic*, the two periodicals that reviewed Austen's first published novel, achieved monthly print runs of 2,000 in 1813.[3]

Reviewers wrote anonymously, using a corporate 'we', while the editor was responsible for everything published in his Review. This method was supposed to make criticism easier. It also meant, however, that, of all contemporary articles on *Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, we know the author of only one by name: Walter Scott, who wrote a review of *Emma*. With very few exceptions, usually

in the more radical periodicals – such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–97) writing for *The Analytical Review* – reviewers were male.[4]

The novel as a genre was not highly regarded by reviews, in spite of its general popularity. With the exception of the eighteenth-century novels of Henry Fielding (1705–54), Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), and Laurence Sterne (1713–68), reviewers looked down on the genre. Articles on novels, therefore, comprised only a small part of any reviewing periodical. From its foundation in 1802 to the late 1820s *The Edinburgh Review* included just over thirty novels, while about sixty to eighty novels appeared each year in the first two decades of the nineteenth century and more than eighty in most years in the 1820s.[5] Where novels are reviewed, they are often not included in the main part of a periodical but considered in a short notice in the catalogue at the end of an issue. Articles frequently start off with a justification for reviewing novels at all, insisting on the inclusion of a novel being an exception and their 'not in general attend[ing] to works of this description'.[6] A novel's inclusion in a reviewing periodical, therefore, is already a sign of its being more highly regarded than most other novels.

The novel's low literary status was also influenced by the fact that it was regarded as a female-dominated genre, as regards readers as well as writers. The male reviewers saw themselves as protecting a female readership by selecting suitable novels for them. Authors of novels, too, were believed to be predominantly female, and, as Peter Garside has shown, novel authorship was indeed dominated by women in the 1810s.[7] This view of a female-dominated genre already determined an individual novel's status: even a good novel could not reach great literary significance because it belonged to an entertaining, but intellectually and morally limited, genre. Henry Austen, in the memoir of his sister prefaced to the 1833 'Standard Novels' edition of *Sense and Sensibility*, confirms contemporary expectations:

> ■ When 'Pride and Prejudice' made its appearance, a gentleman, celebrated for his literary attainments, advised a friend of the authoress to read it, adding, with more point than gallantry, 'I should like to know who i s the author, for it is much too clever to have been written by a woman.'[8] □

In spite of reviewers' attempts to present the novel as an entirely feminine genre, women were not the only readers of novels. Walter Scott in his review of Austen's *Emma* defends novel-reading, emphasises the variety of quality in novels, and believes the genre to appeal to both sexes.[9] He maintains that novels are useful even as light reading. Men as well as women read novels, though because of the genre's cultural

stigma they may not admit to it. While a bad novel is far beneath other genres, anyone, including the male members of the republic of letters, is justified in reading a good novel.

However, while novels were not exclusive to one sex, they were socially exclusive. Novels remained luxury items throughout the 1810s, especially at a time of war, when general inflation meant that members of the working classes were even less likely to spend their wages on fiction, and when material restrictions, especially paper shortage, pushed up book prices even further. While working-class men were earning between nine and, very exceptionally, forty shillings a week throughout the period,[10] *Sense and Sensibility* cost fifteen shillings in 1811. High prices meant, as Jane Austen lamented, that 'people are more ready to borrow & praise, than to buy',[11] but even through libraries novels are unlikely to have reached far below the middle class: the most successful circulating library, the Minerva library of William Lane (1745/6–1814), had a subscription fee of between two and five guineas in 1814,[12] well above a working man's means. The libraries open to working-class readers were those funded by benevolent donors, and generally did not include fiction.

While novels were primarily expected to provide amusement, contemporary reviewers could not accept those which provided nothing else. Reviewers in Jane Austen's time applied to novels the criteria formulated for poetry by the ancient Roman poet Horace (65–08 BC): poetry should both instruct and please, combine the sweet with the useful (*prodesse* [*et*] *delectare* [...] *miscuit utile dulci* (lines 333, 343, *Ars Poetica* [*The Art of Poetry*], also known as *Epistula Ad Pisones* [*Letter to the Pisons*])). The philosopher and novelist William Godwin (1756–1836) asserts that the 'first enquiry' he poses when faced with a non-factual work is 'Can I derive instruction from it?'[13] Because of the novel's perceived femininity reviewers did not deem intellectual instruction possible in novels; hence moral instruction became the main criterion a novel had to fulfil. It was not the only criterion for the assessment of novels, however. Apart from moral instruction, criteria that feature most often are amusement, realism in two senses (probable incidents as well as depiction of characters true to nature), storyline, and style. The more of these a novel fulfils, the more positive, usually, is the overall verdict. The criteria are largely content-based, with little or no attention being paid to aesthetic criteria. Literary merit to reviewers consists of a novel's contribution to society. This chapter considers which aspects of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* fit into reviewers' preconceptions about novels as well as where they see Austen's novels as presenting something new.

CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS OF JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

Sense and Sensibility

Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen's first published novel, came out in October 1811. Its title page specified both that this work was 'a novel' and that it was 'By a Lady'. Notices appeared in two contemporary reviewing periodicals, *The Critical Review* and *The British Critic*. The first to appear was an article of eight pages in *The Critical Review*, in February 1812, followed by a shorter notice of less than one page in *The British Critic* in May 1812.

The Critical Review's article is the first on any of Austen's novels, and gives a favourable judgement on *Sense and Sensibility*. The review starts off with a justification for having included this novel in its main part. Most novels are so similar to each other that it is very easy to predict both incidents and ending, which makes it difficult for reviewers to vary their articles. The reviewer in *The Critical Review* is 'no [enemy] to novels or novel writers, but [he] regrets, that in the multiplicity of them, there are so few worthy of any particular commendation. [... However,] 'Sense and Sensibility' is amongst the few'.[14]

From the start, Austen's novels are categorised as female, as regards authorship as well as content. Like many novels in the early nineteenth century, *Sense and Sensibility* was published anonymously, but, in contrast to most novels' anonymity, that of *Sense and Sensibility* was socially defined as well as gendered, since the title page stated that the novel was 'By a Lady'. Authorship therefore concurs with contemporary assumptions about novels: the genre as a whole was regarded as dominated by women, so that, concerning gender, Austen's novels entered the market as typical productions, which yet needed to distinguish themselves from others.

The criterion that contemporary reviewers of novels most emphasise is morality. It is not what the two reviewers of *Sense and Sensibility* alone are most concerned with, but it remains the most prevalent criterion for all contemporary articles on Austen's novels. Reviewers prefer a novel's moral message to manifest itself in concrete examples throughout the novel, rather than in a general concept. The reviewer in *The Critical Review* is pleased with the contrast between Elinor and Marianne, holding Elinor up as a model of female behaviour:

> ■ The characters of Elinor and Marianne are very nicely contrasted; the former possessing great good sense, with a *proper quantity of sensibility,* the latter an equal share of the sense which renders her sister so estimable, but blending it at the same time with an *immoderate* degree of sensibility

which renders her unhappy on every trifling occasion, and annoys everyone around her.[15] □

According to the reviewer, the moral lies in Marianne's move towards sense and away from her 'delirium of sensibility';[16] the more like Elinor she becomes the more he approves of her. Elinor is never questioned in the review; she is a model of female behaviour, adorned with sense, 'patience and tenderness'.[17] The reviewer understands a novel's morality as constituted in its attitude to love and marriage, which emphasises the author's femininity: she writes about what women should be concerned with, and therefore stays within the field of female propriety and morality. While this field is necessarily limited, reviewers view her writing within it positively as it enhances the novel's moral message. Marianne's and Willoughby's attachment will teach young ladies that such an unbounded sensibility will lead to 'misery [...] inconvenience and ridicule', while it will make young men see the 'folly and criminality'[18] of playing with a young woman's feelings. The underlying assumption is that readers will be of the same social class as the characters depicted, which renders the novel's lesson directly applicable, so that the reviewer highly praises the fact that the characters are 'in genteel life'.[19] Without apparently noticing it himself, the reviewer is attracted to the novel's new kind of realism in its depiction of ordinary – though 'genteel' – characters. The characters in general are highly commended, being 'in genteel life, naturally drawn, and judiciously supported',[20] including minor characters such as John Dashwood and Sir John Middleton. The reviewer praises the novel's realism, and finds the incidents 'probable and highly pleasing, and interesting; the conclusion such as the reader must wish it should be, and the whole [...] just long enough to interest without fatiguing.'[21] Although he therefore still defines the novel's realism as probable incidents, his applying *Sense and Sensibility*'s moral lesson directly to his readers shows that he perceives Austen's different kind of realism, though he does not comment on it. Horace's criteria of 'amusement and instruction' are met because the novel teaches without outright didacticism, and the reviewer can praise the novel as being '[amongst the few that] are worthy of any particular commendation'.[22] This judgment is indirectly based on the novel's realistic depiction of contemporary society, since it is this that makes its message immediately relevant to the reader.

The only negative point the reviewer mentions is brought forward in such a way as immediately to excuse it:

■ The story may be thought trifling by the readers of novels, who are insatiable after *something new.* But the excellent lesson which it holds up to view and the useful moral which may be derived from the perusal, are such