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# ‘An Interesting and Well Written Tale’

## Narration, Irony and Gender in Jane Austen’s Juvenilia

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## **Abstract**

Jane Austen's juvenilia, though their originality and sophisticated irony make them fascinating objects of study, have seldom been allowed to be the focus of critical attention. One of the main concerns of Austen's early works is to deconstruct the workings of narration, but a narratological perspective has never before been applied to them in order to shed light upon their irony. This study investigates the relationships between the attitudes of different personae involved in the narration of Austen's juvenilia, such as narrators and implied authors, and analyses how the discovered 'gaps' between these attitudes contribute to the irony of the works. This is done with particular attention to gender-related issues, as a feminist viewpoint has proved to be a fruitful stance in interpreting the juvenilia. Thus combining one tried and one untried perspective, with focus on the latter, contributes to a deeper understanding of the irony in Austen's juvenilia.

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## Introduction

Three notebooks containing the manuscripts of some of the earliest literary works by Jane Austen were for over a hundred years after Austen's death in 1817 kept in the private possession of the descendants of her brothers. These notebooks were filled with texts composed when the author was between the ages of eleven and seventeen, and titled 'Volume the First', 'Volume the Second' and 'Volume the Third.' Prior to the publication of 'Volume the Second' in 1922, the only piece from Austen's juvenilia to have been made available to the public was a short play entitled 'The Mystery' printed in the second edition of James Edward Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870). Austen-Leigh apologetically reduces his aunt's achievement to 'a specimen of the kind of transitory amusement which Jane was continually supplying to the family party'.<sup>1</sup> This type of condescending attitude to the juvenilia has long deprived them of the critical attention they merit. R. W. Chapman, the first editor of Austen's juvenilia, even questions the advisability of publishing such 'scraps' at all, and calls them 'immature'.<sup>2</sup>

Among the first to recognise the juvenilia as works with an inherent value were G. K. Chesterton, who in his preface to the 1922 publication of 'Volume the Second' compared the youthful Austen to Rabelais and Dickens,<sup>3</sup> and Virginia Woolf, who found it 'incredible' that such an 'astonishing and unchildish story' as 'Love and Freindship' [sic]<sup>4</sup> had been 'written at the age of fifteen'.<sup>5</sup> In the 1970-80s, some of Austen's early works came to be highly regarded within feminist criticism, and during these last few decades there has been a general increasing demand for critical studies which pay attention to the juvenilia as literary works in

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Sabor, 'Introduction' in Austen, *Juvenilia* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 2006), xxxix.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Sabor, op. cit., li, xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> Doody, 'Introduction' in *Catherine and Other Writings*, ed. Doody & Murray (Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 1993), xxxiii.

<sup>4</sup> Christine Alexander questions the practice of preserving spelling mistakes in publications of juvenile writings, and points out that the spelling of adult writers, when faulty, is always corrected before a work is published ('Defining and Representing Literary Juvenilia', in *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*, ed. Alexander & McMaster (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 87). The preservation of the original spelling and punctuation in publications of Austen's juvenilia has probably given rise to the preconception that the stories are only childish attempts and contributed to many readers' and scholars' failure to recognise them as literary works meriting serious attention. Nevertheless, this study will follow the convention of not correcting spelling mistakes, and reproduce the orthography as rendered in the Cambridge edition of the juvenilia (ed. Sabor, 2006). Henceforth, erratic spelling will not be marked '[sic]'.

<sup>5</sup> Woolf, 'Jane Austen' (1925) in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, vol. IV, 1925-1928, ed. McNellie (London: Hogarth Press, 1994), 147. Austen was in fact only fourteen at the time of composition, 'Love and Freindship' being dated 13 June (Sabor, 'Introduction', 141) and her birthday being 16 December.

their own right, on a par with Austen's mature novels. Juliet McMaster plays with the idea of supposing that 'Love and Freindship' from 'Volume the Second' had been written by Byron and not by 'a 14-year-old girl'; had this been the case, she concludes, 'it would surely have been published in its own day, and read, and laughed over, and quoted, and become part of the canon.'<sup>6</sup> Margaret Anne Doody argues that Austen's published novels are not at all a natural continuation of her early career, but that Austen as an adult made the deliberate choice to turn radically away from the style she had during her adolescence devoted herself to in order to adopt the more conventional genre of the courtship novel, simply because the public and the publishers would find it more appealing.<sup>7</sup> Margaret Drabble, too, spots in the juvenilia 'another Jane Austen, a fiercer, wilder, more outspoken, more ruthless writer, with a dark vision of human motivation [...] and a breathless, almost manic energy'.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, there is still a scarcity of studies where the juvenilia are not seen as forerunners to the published novels. The autonomy of the works comprised in the juvenilia, therefore, will be a point of departure for this thesis.

The unorthodox genre and the fierce comedy of Austen's early texts, astoundingly mature and sophisticatedly crafted considering the writer's age – or even not considering it – make them intriguing objects of study. Their particular brand of irony, not gently satirising or self-righteously reproving but exultantly laughing, is difficult to grasp. There seems to be a 'gap', a relationship of distance or contrast, between the attitudes of personae operating on different narrative levels. But these attitudes are elusive – who is laughing, who is being laughed at, whose voice do we hear, whose side are we on, and where is the gap? Furthermore, these parodies deal overtly and self-referentially with the devices used in telling a story: not only do they mock the literary conventions of the time, but they deconstruct the narratorial apparatus. This seems to make narratology an uncommonly well-suited approach to these particular texts, but it is an approach which has never before been applied to them.

The central narratological concepts that will be used in this study are homodiegetic-intradiegetic narrator, heterodiegetic-extradiegetic narrator and implied author. The terms 'homodiegetic-intradiegetic' and 'heterodiegetic-extradiegetic' are preferred by narratologists

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<sup>6</sup> McMaster, 'Teaching "Love and Freindship"', in *Jane Austen's Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan*, ed. Grey (Ann Arbor & London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 139.

<sup>7</sup> Doody, 'Introduction', xxx-xxxviii.

Doody, 'Jane Austen, That Disconcerting "Child"' in *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*, ed. Alexander & McMaster (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 103, 105, 118.

<sup>8</sup> Drabble, 'Foreword' in *Jane Austen's Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan*, ed. Grey (Ann Arbor & London: UMI Research Press, 1989), xiv.

to the more widely used ‘first-person’ and ‘third-person’ narrator. A homodiegetic narrator tells a story about him-/herself, as opposed to a heterodiegetic narrator, who tells a story about someone else; an intradiegetic narrator tells the story from inside the story, as opposed to an extradiegetic narrator, who tells the story from outside the story. For the sake of convenience, ‘homodiegetic-intradiegetic narrator’ and ‘heterodiegetic-extradiegetic narrator’ will in this study be referred to as simply ‘intradiegetic narrator’ and ‘extradiegetic narrator’. The implied author is the image of the author generated by the text; every text has its own implied author, so there is a separate implied author for every one of Austen’s narratives. When the term ‘distance’ is used, it is intended in Wayne C. Booth’s sense of ‘moral’, ‘intellectual’ or ‘emotional’ distance between different personae involved in narration, such as the implied author, the narrator, the characters and the reader, and not in Gérard Genette’s sense, in which the narration is more distant from the narrative the more mediated it is.<sup>9</sup> Altogether, the three volumes of juvenilia encompass twenty-two narrative texts, three plays and one poem. Among the narratives, a little more than half have extradiegetic narrators, whereas the rest are written in epistolary form.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the relationships between the narrators’ attitudes, the implied authors’ attitudes and the characters’ attitudes in the different narrative situations contribute to the irony of the texts. This question will be looked into with particular reference to gender-related issues. The study will focus on the first two of the three volumes of the juvenilia, since the two texts in ‘Volume the Third’ have a more conventional novel format than the earlier texts. For the same reason, the study will exclude *Lady Susan*, which was written in 1795 and akin to the juvenilia in style, but not included in the three notebooks. The texts in ‘Volume the First’ and ‘Volume the Second’ form a part of Austen’s oeuvre that has seldom been studied in depth. The greater purpose in conducting a narratological study of the juvenilia is therefore to show them as a set of writings worth more thorough analysis than they have hitherto received.

## **Genre, Performance and Narrative Structure**

Austen humorously called her three notebooks ‘Volume the First’, ‘Volume the Second’ and ‘Volume the Third’ in reference to the popular format of the three-volume novel. However, the juvenilia do not form a novel but a collection of separate, independent works, most of

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<sup>9</sup> Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 155-159. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1980), 162-164. Henceforth referred to as *Narrative Discourse*.

which are mock-solemnly dedicated to Austen's family and friends and bear subheadings such as 'an interesting and well written Tale' ('Amelia Webster'), 'a comedy in 2 acts' ('The Visit'), 'an unfinished Novel in Letters' ('Lesley Castle'), or, most frequently, simply 'a novel'. Terry Eagleton defines 'novel' as 'a piece of prose fiction of a reasonable length'.<sup>10</sup> M. H. Abrams agrees with this definition and says that the term is 'applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of *fiction* written in prose'.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the one feature that most clearly distinguishes a novel from other prose narratives, such as short stories and novellas, is its length. The narratives contained in 'Volume the First' and 'Volume the Second' are very short, and so, contrary to what is suggested by the peritexts, that is to say the subheadings and dedications, they are not novels. 'The beautifull Cassandra', for instance, may comprise twelve chapters, but none of them is more than three sentences long – most chapters are limited to one single sentence. However, even though they are short works of prose fiction, the texts are not short stories: according to Abrams, the short story has a less complicated plot and fewer characters than the novel; it is also more likely to focus on only one theme and it usually begins near its climax.<sup>12</sup> Austen's stories do not fall into this category: their format is as compressed as that of a short story, but their plots are as rich and sprawling as those of novels.

The fact that a text which is not a 'novel' is presented as one by means of peritexts contributes to the irony of the work, as does the discrepancy between the high-flowing style of the dedications and the conscious triviality of the stories themselves. This can be seen for instance in 'The beautifull Cassandra' (the story of a reckless young lady who steals a bonnet and 'six ices', 'knock[s] down the Pastry Cook', 'place[s] her bonnet on [the coachman's] head and [runs] away' instead of paying her fare, and smugly finds it 'a day well spent'), which is preceded by the following dedication to Austen's sister, after whom the heroine of the story was named:

Madam

You are a Phoenix. Your taste is refined, Your Sentiments are noble, and your Virtues innumerable. Your Person is lovely, your Figure, elegant, and your Form, magestic. Your Manners, are polished, your Conversation is rational and your

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<sup>10</sup> Eagleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction* (Malden, Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell, 2005), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 195.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 195-196, 295-296.

appearance singular. If therefore the following Tale will afford one moment's amusement to you, every wish will be gratified of

your most obedient  
humble Servant  
The Author. (53)<sup>13</sup>

Although Austen's juvenilia frequently use and expose narratorial devices, they in many ways fit better into the context of performance than into that of narrative. The juvenilia met their first audience when the young Austen read them aloud to her family. This was how they were primarily intended to be experienced, and as the author was also the performer, the manuscripts do not contain any stage directions. It is therefore impossible to know to what extent the works are contained in the mere text and how substantial a part of them in fact lay in the performance. It should be remembered that reading aloud was the most common way of reading novels at the time – in that way, the novel can be said to have been a more intermedial genre in the eighteenth century than it is today, where similar crossing over can be found between narrative and performance in audio books and between poetry and performance in performance poetry, including poetry slam.

While novels in the eighteenth century were, unlike modern manifestations of performance literature, generally 'performed' by laymen, reading aloud was even in Austen's day considered an art that could be performed with greatly varying degrees of skill and talent. Her niece Caroline says of the adult Austen that '[s]he was considered to read aloud remarkably well. I did not often hear her, but *once* I knew her to take up a volume of *Evelina* and read a few pages [...] and I thought it was like going to a play'.<sup>14</sup> Caroline Austen further states that her aunt not only told her nephews and nieces elaborate improvised fairy tales<sup>15</sup> but also dramatised her own stories and 'amused [the children] in various ways' such as acting out dialogues; she particularly remembers her aunt on one occasion 'giving a conversation as between myself and my two cousins, supposed to be grown up, the day after a Ball'.<sup>16</sup> Paula Byrne mentions 'the systematic incorporation of quasi-theatrical techniques into [Austen's] mature novels',<sup>17</sup> and Frank W. Bradbrook notes that '[t]he importance of conversation in the

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<sup>13</sup> Page references in parentheses are to the Cambridge edition of Austen's juvenilia (ed. Sabor, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Austen, *My Aunt Jane Austen: A Memoir* (1867), 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Byrne, *op. cit.*, 71.



novels makes them naturally dramatic'.<sup>18</sup> In a letter to her sister Cassandra, Jane Austen expresses her displeasure with their mother's reading aloud from *Pride and Prejudice*, claiming that she did not do the voices in the right way.<sup>19</sup> This shows Austen's conception of her works as something meant for performance. We also know that the Austens mounted amateur theatrical productions in their home, most likely including plays from the juvenilia.<sup>20</sup> The first production took place when Jane Austen was six years old and featured her older brothers.<sup>21</sup> Byrne states that Austen's 'playlets', which she started writing at the age of twelve and acted in herself, 'were probably performed as afterpieces to the main play'.<sup>22</sup> Both her plays and her narrative texts, then, were written for performance, and there is a very fine line between dramatic texts written to be performed by the author and her family and narrative texts written for solo performance by the author.

It can of course be argued that the author's intentions are not relevant in deciding what a text does in fact do, and I am inclined to agree; however, my claim that Austen's juvenilia could be placed within the performing arts is not based foremost on biographical facts: there is performativity in the texts themselves, which can be seen for example in the including of songs. A song is, by definition, not something to read but something to perform, and singing is of course much more typically associated with the theatre than with narrative texts. Nevertheless, songs occur in several of the narratives as well as roughly half the text of 'The first Act of a Comedy' being sung. Regardless of whether Austen sang or recited these passages, it is not until the reader imagines them performed that they reach their full mocking effect: the pathos in the performance highlights the bathos in the text. It is the same kind of comedic effect that can be achieved by giving a solemn piece of music humorous or merely trivial lyrics. The songs in the juvenilia usually begin by building up towards a grand climax but end with a humorous anticlimax, sometimes by means of tautology or circular arguments, as in the following song:

That Damon was in love with me  
I once thought and believ'd

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<sup>18</sup> Bradbrook, *Jane Austen and her Predecessors* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 1966), 48. See also *ibid.*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 4 February 1813, in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Le Faye (Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 1995), 203.

<sup>20</sup> Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London: Penguin, 1997), 56 & *passim*.  
Byrne, *op. cit.*, 12 & *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> Byrne, *op. cit.*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

But now that he is not I see,  
I fear I was deceiv'd. ('Frederic and Elfrida', 5)

However, the bathos is more often achieved by a breach of style, for example the introduction of the dialect word 'fess' (meaning 'smart'<sup>23</sup>) at the end of another song ('Frederic and Elfrida', 11). The same thing happens in the juvenilia's only poem, 'Ode to Pity', which ends as follows:

Ah! then what Lovely Scenes appear,  
The hut, the Cot, the Grot, and Chapel queer,  
And eke the Abbey too a mouldering heap,  
Conceal'd by aged pines her head doth rear  
And quite invisible doth take a peep. (97)

Here, after a display of perfectly crafted iambic verse, archaisms such as 'eke' and 'doth', and the evocation of a sublime landscape, the gigantic bathos 'take a peep' turns the text around entirely. But it is the pathos with which the imagined performer pronounces the phrase 'doth take a peep' that makes the reader laugh, in the same way that an audience would laugh at an actual performance.

There is furthermore to my mind a striking resemblance between the juvenilia and the theatre of the absurd, notably Ionesco's *La cantatrice chauve* (1950). The juvenilia and *La cantatrice chauve* are both utterly absurdist and they both make fun of literary conventions. A clear example of this is the parallel between the first scene of *La cantatrice chauve* and the opening paragraph of 'Jack and Alice'. In *La cantatrice chauve*, Madame Smith's long opening speech (in which she informs her husband that their name is Smith, that they live in London, how many children they have, what their names and ages are, and what they all had for dinner) mocks the attempts of playwrights to weave information that the audience needs to be able to follow the story into the dialogue.<sup>24</sup> The beginning of 'Jack and Alice' in a similar way mocks the necessary but arbitrary choice of a particular point in story time as the beginning of a plot: 'Mr Johnson was once upon a time about 53; in a twelvemonth afterwards he was 54, which so much delighted him that he was determined to celebrate his next Birth day by giving a Masquerade' (13). An even more marked resemblance to Madame Smith's

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<sup>23</sup> Sabor, 'Explanatory Notes' in *Juvenilia* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 2006), 381.

<sup>24</sup> Ionesco, 'La cantatrice chauve' (1950), scene i, in *Théâtre*, 17-18.

speech can be found in ‘The first Act of a Comedy’, where Popgun incorporates a great deal of information that his daughter Pistoletta must already be familiar with into a simple answer to her question:

Pistoletta.) Pray papa how far is it to London?

Popgun) My Girl, my Darling, my favourite of all my Children, who art the picture of thy poor Mother who died two months ago, with whom I am going to Town to marry to Strephon, and to whom I mean to bequeath my whole Estate, it wants seven Miles. (219)

The dialogue between Sir Godfrey and Lady Marlow at the beginning of ‘Edgar and Emma’ also bears a strong resemblance to the dialogues between Madame Smith and Monsieur Smith and between Madame Martin and Monsieur Martin in the married couple’s tragicomic miscommunications. The juvenilia and *La cantatrice chauve* both deconstruct human relations and human communication, and break down the continuity of the story by interposing unexpected utterances that are unrelated to the rest of the plot.

It is also interesting to note that the juvenilia are often referred to as ‘sketches’. The word is of course intended in the sense of ‘unfinished effort’, but the texts do actually have more than a little in common with sketch comedy. The format of the juvenilia – a series of short, independent stories – resembles that of sketch comedy, and the elements of comedy and parody in the juvenilia further invite the comparison. In fact, Austen’s juvenilia have more than once been compared to Monty Python sketches,<sup>25</sup> and McMaster argues that they are ‘full of [...] slapstick’ and have ‘plots that [are] subordinated to the jokes’.<sup>26</sup> The claim that Austen’s juvenilia are comedic can hardly be disputed, and comedy is usually associated with the performing media.

Yet, with all these associations to performance, the juvenilia are, with the exceptions of the three plays and ‘Ode to Pity’, narrative texts. There is something of intermedial cross-over art about them in their blurring of narrative and performance, which is done in a similar way to how poetry and performance are blurred in performance poetry. Performance poetry differs from other kinds of poetry reading in that it is written specifically to be performed, and

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<sup>25</sup> See ‘A Panel of Experts’, ed. Schwartz, in *Jane Austen’s Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan*, ed. Grey (Ann Arbor & London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 238, and Doran, ‘Introduction’ in Thompson, *The Sense and Sensibility Screenplay & Diaries: Bringing Jane Austen’s Novel to Film* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1996), 9.

<sup>26</sup> McMaster, op. cit., 145.

*written specifically to be performed by the author.* Here, parallels can be drawn both to rap and to certain genres of comedy, notably stand-up comedy but also in many cases sketch comedy and revues. This is in accordance with Austen's juvenilia, but unlike the oral tradition within literature, where texts are memorised and recited or paraphrased by a multitude of different people throughout a culture, and also unlike most performing arts: the texts of a performance poet, a rapper, a comedian or the young Austen are not meant to be performed by anyone else in the way that for example there can be many different productions of a play. Reconstructing Austen as something between performance poet and stand-up comedian is certainly a tantalising idea, and one that willingly offers itself on considering performance aspects of her juvenilia.

The implied intermediality of Austen's early writings and their similarities to genres not usually thought of as literature or art, as well as their very status as 'juvenilia', lead to questions about what can be counted as literature, what genres should be included in the study of literature, and what happens to writings that fall outside the set literary genres. I would argue that it is usually neither necessary nor valuable to make sharp distinctions between different forms of writing such as published novels and manuscript juvenilia or prose fiction and sketch comedy. That does not mean, however, that it is undesirable to try to define the genre of a piece of writing, provided that the piece is not allowed to be defined by the restrictive set of established literary genres at hand. The problem of defining the genre of Austen's early narrative texts can rather easily be solved by calling them miniature mock-novels. But all of the juvenilia are not included in this genre. Peter Sabor aptly refers to the texts as being variously 'mock-romances', 'mock-epistolary fiction', 'mock-moral tales', 'mock-odes', 'mock-sentimental fiction' and 'mock-histories';<sup>27</sup> however, 'sketches' seems to be an appropriate comprehensive term, as it expresses the juvenilia's similarity to sketch comedy at the same time as the word can be understood in the context of 'a sketch of a novel' or 'a sketch of a play', that is a short outline of a novel or a couple of scenes from a play.

One factor that makes the genre of Austen's juvenilia difficult to determine is their unconventional narrative structure. In *Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Feminist Narratology*, Ruth E. Page discusses the attempts of second-wave feminist critics to find alternative, female narrative structures. In this theory, the conventional, linear plot structure leading up to one single climax and 'ending with a defined point of closure'<sup>28</sup> is construed as

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<sup>27</sup> Sabor, 'Introduction', lxxv.

<sup>28</sup> Page, *Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Feminist Narratology* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 22-23.

male, and so the female alternatives are based on non-linearity and multiple climaxes or the absence of climax. However, according to Page, these sexual analogies are problematic, as it is unclear in what precise way the ‘female-plot’ analyses are concerned with ‘elements of narrative structure’ and as ‘it is difficult to ascertain whether it is the form, thematics or both that is considered to be gendered’.<sup>29</sup> It is also difficult to find examples of women writers who follow this ‘alternative structure’. One example is Virginia Woolf, who tried in her fiction to ‘[break] the sequence’<sup>30</sup> and find alternatives to the restrictive forms of language and literature created by men, which effort expresses itself in both the syntax and the narrative structure of Woolf’s works. However, it would be impossible to argue empirically that Woolf’s narrative structure is the generically female structure. On a less academic level, though, the theory was successfully applied to comedy by Emma Thompson, who in her capacity as former comedian remarked in a panel discussion on comedy writing that ‘the male joke form is like the male orgasm’, infallibly ending in a ‘punch line’, while female comedy ‘goes in [...] circles, with little [...] moments’ of laughter.<sup>31</sup> It is certainly easier to think of female comedians who depart from the classic punch-line structure than it is to come up with female novelists whose fiction does not conform to the structure of a rising action followed by a climax and a brief falling action. The theory of linear versus non-linear structure thus seems to lend itself to sketch and stand-up comedy, but can probably seldom be applicable to writings outside those genres.

Austen’s juvenilia, however, actually fits very well into the category of female writings with a non-linear structure, especially when it comes to alternatives to the single climax. ‘Frederic and Elfrida’, for example, begins with a description of Frederic and Elfrida and their relationship. Then the story suddenly turns to Elfrida’s wish for her friend Charlotte to buy her a new bonnet; the situation is built up in such a way as to make the reader anticipate considerable obstacles in the quest for the bonnet, but the solution turns out simply to be that Charlotte gives the bonnet to Elfrida, and ‘so end[s] this little adventure, much to the satisfaction of all parties’ (5), within the paragraph. The characters then go for a walk, and after having ‘remained [scarcely] above 9 hours’ in a grove they hear a voice singing a song, after which the first chapter concludes: ‘No sooner were the lines finished than they beheld by a turning in the Grove 2 elegant young women leaning on each other’s arm, who immediately

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 23-25.

<sup>30</sup> Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (1928) (London: Penguin, 2004), 106.

<sup>31</sup> Sunday Times Web TV (South Africa) on YouTube:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdRst8cimQY> (1:30-2:20).

on perceiving them, took a different path and disappeared from their sight' (ibid.). This lack of causal links between events, the lack of rising action and the multiple miniature climaxes, or perhaps rather anticlimaxes, form an unconventional narrative structure, one that contrasts with the linear, 'male' structure.

A problem concerning the application of this particular variety of feminist theory to juvenilia is that second-wave feminism deals with notions of specifically female experience, and the theory of alternative narrative structures draws largely on similarities between 'female' structures and functions of the female body, such as the menstrual cycle, childbirth and lactation.<sup>32</sup> There are three main ways of interpreting the theory. Firstly, the theory may be construed as saying that physical experiences influence writers so that women write differently from men because their bodies give them different experiences. This would entail vast variation among women writers, as different women have very different experiences, which the theory does not take into account. Secondly, it could be argued that the female narrative model is an expression of something constitutionally female – that women are inherently cyclic, and that menstruation, female orgasm and the structure of narratives produced by women are three separate manifestations of this. The final interpretation is connected to Woolf's breaking of 'the sequence': the female-structure theory could be seen as a recognition of the arguable fact that many women writers feel restricted by the normative male-constructed narrative models, which are arbitrarily presumed to suit every writer, and so consciously strive to find alternatives. This interpretation is not connected to the female body in the way that the first two interpretations are: when Woolf says that '[t]he book has somehow to be adapted to the body, and at a venture one would say that women's books should be shorter',<sup>33</sup> she is only referring to the fact that, through history, women's living conditions have not afforded them the long periods of uninterrupted time that men have had at their disposal.

Considering that the earliest of the juvenilia, including 'Frederic and Elfrida', were written by a prepubescent girl, it is not easy to see in what way the idea of physical female experience could have any relevance for the narrative structure. Nevertheless, this structure does not conform to the traditional model, which is male in that it was established by men, regardless of any parallels that may be drawn between 'linear' and 'cyclic' structures and male and female bodies. The third interpretation of the female-structure theory has some

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<sup>32</sup> Page, op. cit., 24.

<sup>33</sup> Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 90.

relevance here. Writing that does not conform to male conventions has often been interpreted as flawed or inferior because it does not do what is expected of the genre in question. The role of gender studies is among other things to bring into the light alternatives to the male norm produced by minorities, and this could apply to children as well as other minority groups.

Having said that, however, the author of Austen's juvenilia is not a typical child. It might have been argued that hers is a child's natural and unfettered narrative structure; but her writings are on the contrary mature and sophisticated and based on a great deal of research. Her texts have the energy of a child, but a confidence that goes outside the traditional roles of both children and women. In her texts, she defies *all* authorities, patriarchy among them, but the texts are not 'Effusions of Fancy',<sup>34</sup> as her father called them: they are very much thought-through and planned. Woolf saw in the author of 'Love and Freindship' a 'girl of fifteen [...] laughing, in her corner, at the world',<sup>35</sup> but, as Claudia L. Johnson points out, Austen's juvenilia are 'more than a play pen where a precocious girl poked fun at silly fads and people': they are 'a workshop, where the would-be artist first set hand to the tools of her trade, identifying operative structures and motifs, and then turning them inside out in order to explore their artificiality and bring to light their hidden implications'.<sup>36</sup> Austen's unconventional narrative structure is probably not connected to the physical realities of being a woman. But nor is it unrelated to the idea of an alternative to the male structure: it exposes and mocks the normative narrative structure, without presenting itself as a better alternative.

### **Irony and the Implied Author**

The concept of the implied author was first introduced by Wayne C. Booth in his influential work *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth describes the implied author as someone who 'chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices'.<sup>37</sup> In *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Seymour Chatman elaborates further on Booth's concept and states that the implied author, who has to be 'reconstructed by the reader from the narrative',<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Doody, 'Introduction', xvi.

<sup>35</sup> Woolf, 'Jane Austen', 147.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 29.

<sup>37</sup> Booth, *op. cit.*, 74-75.

<sup>38</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 1978), 148. Henceforth referred to as *Story and Discourse*.

‘establishes the norms of the narrative’.<sup>39</sup> Disagreeing with ‘Booth’s insistence that these [norms] are moral’, however, Chatman sees ‘norms’ as referring to ‘general cultural codes that are relevant to the story’.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the implied author’s norms do not equal the real author’s norms or moral conceptions, as the implied author is not a person but a ‘structural principle’.<sup>41</sup> Gérard Genette interprets the implied author as ‘the author as I infer him from his text, [...] the image that the text suggests to me of its author’,<sup>42</sup> but thinks that ‘the question [...] of [the] existence’ of the implied author does not really lie within the field of narratology, as it goes ‘beyond the narrative situation’<sup>43</sup> and that the implied author is ‘*in general* [...] an imaginary [...] agent’.<sup>44</sup> Mieke Bal, though another non-supporter of the concept, significantly points out that the implied author is ‘the result of the investigation of the meaning of a text, and not the source of that meaning’.<sup>45</sup> This means that an interpretation of the text has to precede an analysis of the implied author.

The implied author is obviously a somewhat controversial concept. Many scholars, including narratologists, have questioned the value of speaking of an implied author at all; some have outright rejected the concept. The usefulness of the term, however, is demonstrated by Chatman in *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*, in which he argues that the implied author is ‘the locus of the work’s *intent*’.<sup>46</sup> ‘Intent’ is W. K. Wimsatt’s and Monroe Beardsley’s term, and Chatman prefers it to ‘intention’, as it denotes ‘a work’s [...] “overall” meaning, including its connotations, implications, [and] unspoken messages’.<sup>47</sup> An advantage of the term ‘intent’ is that it includes aspects of a work not premeditated by the real author and is therefore compatible with reader-response and other types of criticism striving to avoid the ‘intentional fallacy’. Chatman agrees with ‘reader-response and other constructivist theories’ that reading is a ‘creative act’ and that the reader plays an active part in the ‘actualization’ of the text, but he contends that the text already has a latent intent which

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1988), 141.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>45</sup> Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, trans. Van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 18.

<sup>46</sup> Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990), 74. Henceforth referred to as *Coming to Terms*.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



‘each reading [...] reconstructs’.<sup>48</sup> His defence of the implied author, he says, is ‘strictly pragmatic’:

[T]he question is not whether the implied author *exists* but what we *get* from positing such a concept. What we get is a way of naming and analyzing the textual intent of narrative fictions under a single term but without recourse to biographism. This is particularly important for texts that state one thing and imply another.<sup>49</sup>

Without considering the concept of the implied author, we run the risk of basing critical studies of literary works on biographical facts about the real author that have no relevance for the text; we also open for arbitrary interpretations not based on the text but entirely on the reader’s preconceptions or personal opinions.

Texts which ‘state one thing and imply another’, and to which, according to Chatman, the concept of the implied author is especially important to apply, are typically ironic texts. In *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Booth argues that the ironic meaning of a text has to be reconstructed by the reader. This reconstructive process has four steps: ‘reject[ing] the literal meaning’, testing ‘[a]lternative interpretations or explanations’ (for example the author’s having made a mistake), then deciding whether these interpretations are likely in view of what can be inferred from the text in general about the implied author, and, finally, choosing a meaning that, unlike the literal meaning, is in concurrence with the views of the implied author.<sup>50</sup> Hence, irony in literature is closely connected to the concept of the implied author, and more particularly to the communication between the implied author and the reader. While Booth concedes that part of enjoying irony may be ‘feeling superior’ to such ‘naïve victims’ as are unable to reconstruct the ironic intent of the text, reading irony is foremost about ‘finding and communing with kindred spirits’: ‘The author I infer behind the false words [...] grants me a kind of wisdom; he assumes that he does not have to spell out the shared and secret truths on which my reconstruction is to be built’.<sup>51</sup> In this way, every individual reader can feel special when reading an ironic text, as if s/he were the only person who understood the implied author’s true meaning, as if the two of them were secretly sharing a joke. When we fail to discover the ironic intent of an utterance or text, it is utterly mortifying: ‘If I am wrong about irony’, says Booth, ‘I am wrong at deeper levels than I like to have exposed. When I am

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 74-75.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>50</sup> Wayne, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 10-12.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 28.

“taken in,” my profoundest beliefs and my most deeply rooted intellectual habits are under judgment’.<sup>52</sup> It is, according to Booth, equally disturbing to have a text that you are convinced is not intended to be read as ironic reconstructed as such by someone else. Booth gives the example of Marvin Mudrick’s reading of Jane Austen’s *Emma*: ‘When Marvin Mudrick sees more ironies in *Emma* than I think the book invites, he attacks *my* book, in a sense, and I cannot help feeling that he is attacking me’.<sup>53</sup>

Mudrick’s *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (1952) was groundbreaking in its day for focusing on Austen as an ironic author and for offering an alternative to the prevalent image of her works as moral but light-hearted feel-good literature. Mudrick notices Austen’s tendency to be sometimes cruel in the service of good comedy, and remarks such as ‘[incongruity] delights her wherever she finds it’<sup>54</sup> are very apt. However, Mudrick’s views on the reasons for Austen’s ironic stance strike a dissonant chord, as he begins the chapter on the juvenilia by saying, ‘Distance – from her subject and from the reader – was Jane Austen’s first condition for writing. She would not commit herself’.<sup>55</sup> Austen’s irony, ‘at times almost inhumanly cold and penetrating’, is, according to Mudrick, her defence against the world and against her own feelings,<sup>56</sup> as ‘she keeps her distance and makes no final, personal choice’.<sup>57</sup> John Halperin agrees with Mudrick’s view on Austen, and infers from her juvenilia, which he does not consider to be very good but only interesting in so far as it provides clues to how Austen came to find the ‘literary voice’ of her ‘maturer productions’, that she must have been a ‘disconcerting teenager’ who obviously ‘had [...] things on her mind’.<sup>58</sup> Mudrick and Halperin do not distinguish between Austen as real and implied author – they seem to think both that aspects of her personality can be inferred with certainty from her texts and that these supposed personality traits can give clues to her authorship. Irony is a ‘compulsion’ with her, Mudrick says<sup>59</sup> – he speaks of her detachment, her ‘conscious shying from emotion’, her ‘defects and evasions of personality’, and claims that she had ‘common sense without

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Booth is referring to Mudrick’s aggressively misogynist reading of *Emma*, in which he accuses Emma of lacking the appropriate female qualities of ‘tenderness’ and susceptibility to male charms in addition to being a selfish exploiter. The irony of the story is for Mudrick that Emma is too fundamentally bad ever to be able to change permanently, and so there is no happy ending. Mudrick, *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1952), 181-206.

<sup>54</sup> Mudrick, op. cit., 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. & passim.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>58</sup> Halperin, ‘Unengaged Laughter: Jane Austen’s Juvenilia’ in *Jane Austen’s Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan*, ed. Grey (Ann Arbor & London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 30, 43.

<sup>59</sup> Mudrick, op. cit., 2, 24.

tenderness'.<sup>60</sup> The use of the past tense makes it clear that he is talking about the real and not the implied author, for example when he says, 'It was Jane Austen's first choice to treat life [...] as material for comedy'.<sup>61</sup>

Mudrick fails to distinguish not only between implied and real author (which is understandable considering that the notion of this distinction had yet to be introduced), but between the author and her characters. For example, he claims that a passage of a letter from one woman to another in 'Lesley Castle' reminds us 'that wise ironic young girls who deride sexual passion may nevertheless dote on other girls'.<sup>62</sup> It is clearly the young Jane Austen who is under attack here, but it is not she who 'dotes on [...] girls' in the letter – it is the fictional character Emma Marlowe, who is not a 'wise [...] young [girl]' but a married woman writing a letter to a friend whose fiancé has been killed in an accident. Unless Mudrick means that the mere ability to imagine affection between women is enough to merit his condescending attitude, it is difficult to see his point. It is ironic that Mudrick should turn for evidence of his views to the very letter where Mrs Marlowe speaks of the unfairness of the prevailing negative attitude towards women who pay each other compliments (171).

One aspect of the author of the juvenilia that Mudrick dwells on is her supposed ignorance about sexuality:

The bourgeois world is safe for Jane Austen, because – formalizing all personal relations – it makes no provision for feeling, which alone can override incongruity and dispose of distance. The illusionary world is unsafe, and must be dismantled, because it not only provides for, but tries to base itself upon, feeling; with an even more specific threat to the wise ironic child-author of "Love and Freindship," upon the great, unknown, adult commitment of sexual love.<sup>63</sup>

Doody, on the other hand, points out that the author of the juvenilia is 'sophisticated about sexual relations',<sup>64</sup> and that many of the characters have 'unorthodox sex lives'<sup>65</sup> and commit '[a]dultery and fornication'.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, 'lusts and desires – greed, curiosity and actual sexual

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>64</sup> Doody, 'Jane Austen, That Disconcerting "Child"', 106.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 116.

lust<sup>67</sup> are among the main themes of the juvenilia: ‘It is not a world of children’, says Doody, ‘but of adults, who invent sexual mores, [and] engage in sexual transgressions’.<sup>68</sup> In ‘Love and Freindship’, for example, Gustavus and Philander insouciantly tell Laura that ‘[their] mothers could neither of them exactly ascertain who were [their] fathers’ (138). According to Mudrick, the subject matter of the juvenilia is marriage,<sup>69</sup> but, as both Sabor and Doody point out, most of the marriages in the stories turn out not to be legally valid – Sabor goes as far as calling the juvenilia ‘a hotbed of illicit unions’.<sup>70</sup> Christine Alexander remarks that Austen deleted a passage referring to the greater risk women run of being taken sexual advantage of when inebriated from her manuscript, probably because it would have been considered improper if included in her performance of the text: “‘A woman in such a situation is particularly off her guard because her head is not strong enough to support intoxication’”.<sup>71</sup> Alexander further speculates that the true reason for the family’s initial reluctance to publish the juvenilia may simply have been that they were considered too bawdy.<sup>72</sup>

Sabor also comments on the seeming ‘sexual knowingness’<sup>73</sup> of the young Austen. In ‘Frederic and Elfrida’, Sabor sees ‘Elfrida’s pathological fear of the wedding night’ as a ‘running joke’,<sup>74</sup> and he claims that Austen was equally acquainted with the phenomenon of attraction between men.<sup>75</sup> As examples, he gives the ‘pathetic’ encounter in ‘L&F’ between Edward and Augustus, who ‘[fly] into each others arms’, ‘exclaim[ing]’, ‘My Life! my Soul!’ and ‘My Adorable Angel!’ (114), and a series of ‘homosexual jokes’ in ‘The History of England from the reign of Henry the 4<sup>th</sup> to the death of Charles the 1<sup>st</sup>. By a partial, prejudiced, and ignorant Historian’,<sup>76</sup> including a ‘fantasy’ to the effect that Lambert Simnel was Richard III’s widow (179) and an allusion to James I’s ‘keener penetration in Discovering Merit [in his male friends] than many other people’ (187).<sup>77</sup> The improbability of such jokes featuring in the works of a child writer brings us back to the question of the implied author: it is perhaps unlikely for a fourteen-year-old girl, let alone an eleven-year-old

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>69</sup> Mudrick, *op. cit.*, 31.

<sup>70</sup> Sabor, ‘Introduction’, lx-lxi.

Doody, ‘Introduction’, xxxiv-xxxv.

<sup>71</sup> Alexander, ‘Defining and Representing Literary Juvenilia’, 75.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>73</sup> Sabor, ‘Introduction’, lx.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., lxii.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., lxi.

<sup>76</sup> Henceforth referred to as ‘The History of England’.

<sup>77</sup> Sabor, ‘Introduction’, lxii.

Sabor, ‘Explanatory Notes’, 467.

girl, in the 1790s to have known a great deal about sexual relations – but the texts *imply* such knowledge, regardless of the historical likelihood or biographical facts.

What, then, is the nature of the irony used in Austen's juvenilia? Mudrick observes with accuracy that through irony Austen 'observes and defines, without moral or emotional engagement, the incongruities between pretense and essence'.<sup>78</sup> He asserts, however, that the 'purpose' of her irony is 'to clear her imagination of everything except the socially seen and heard, the actual, immediate, ironically vulnerable forms of the bourgeois world',<sup>79</sup> which does not seem very relevant. Marilyn Butler thinks that, with the exception of 'L&F', which satirises the 'sentimental system', it is difficult 'to see what, precisely, is being burlesqued' in Austen's early works, which, according to Butler, 'seem meant for nothing more ambitious than to raise a laugh in a fireside circle by that favourite eighteenth-century comic recourse, extreme verbal incongruity'.<sup>80</sup> To Halperin, the juvenilia 'expos[e] the false values and absurd conventions of sentimental fiction and the general flaws of bad writing'.<sup>81</sup> He further claims that Austen is, as any successful satirist must be, 'both serious and angry'.<sup>82</sup> The description of the author of Austen's juvenilia as 'serious and angry' is an unusual one. Far more common are references to her as laughing: Chesterton wrote that the inspiration for the juvenilia was 'the gigantic inspiration of laughter',<sup>83</sup> and Woolf that '[t]he girl of fifteen is laughing, in her corner, at the world'.<sup>84</sup>

Doody subscribes to the idea of the laughing author, but sees laughter in a female writer as being at odds with societal norms:

Female exuberance, a female 'buffoon' convulsed with laughter [...] – this is a disturbing idea indeed. The public is not ready for the 'female buffoon' inspired by gigantic and seemingly heartless laughter – not in the 1790s. Perhaps the public may hardly be ready for it in the 1990s.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Mudrick, *op. cit.*, 1.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>80</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 1975), 168-169.

<sup>81</sup> Halperin, *op. cit.*, 31.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Chesterton, preface for the publication of 'Volume the Second' under the title of *Love and Freindship* (1922), quoted in Doody, 'Introduction', xxxiii.

<sup>84</sup> Woolf, 'Jane Austen', 147.

<sup>85</sup> Doody, 'Introduction', xxxiv.

Doody further claims that Austen is an ‘immoralist’ in that she ‘seems to regard many moral truisms as clichés’.<sup>86</sup> Doody disagrees with the ‘moral approach’ to the juvenilia, according to which the young Austen is a ‘sensible conservative’ who satirises ‘the worst excesses of the French Revolution and of sentimental romanticism’.<sup>87</sup> To the author of the juvenilia, morals are, according to Doody, simply not the most important consideration when writing:

The young Austen did not worry about whether the reader ought to be taught correctly, or whether he or she [...] ought to be solemnly warned against giving admiration to persons whose actions would not bear serious inspection. Austen wished to observe what people want and what they do.<sup>88</sup>

This is indeed an apt analysis of the juvenilia; Austen’s texts do not preach – they observe. Doody defines the juvenilia as ‘non-realistic fables of desire, mocking the very formulations of both rational non-fiction and fiction in all their reassuring stagecraft’.<sup>89</sup> Mary Waldron, too, sees the formulations of the text as central to Austen’s satire, which according to her ‘identif[ies] popular narrative forms as hypnotic and thought-denying’<sup>90</sup> and exposes ‘the effects of a conventional, formulaic language’.<sup>91</sup> Waldron also argues for the immoralist view, and pertinently points out that ‘[p]opular reversals of current convention, such as contempt for the practicalities of life, for parental guidance and the ordinary demands of family and society, are thrown into ridicule more for their lack of pragmatic applicability than for their moral implications’.<sup>92</sup> This is the answer to why the juvenilia can be seen as unconcerned with morality even though immoral behaviour is one of the central objects of the texts’ mockery: while behaviour which goes against society’s moral code is mocked in the juvenilia, it is not so much for their immorality that the characters’ actions are rejected as for their impracticality. Failing to adhere to the moral code is satirised because it puts the characters in ridiculous and unnecessarily difficult situations, but, just as Doody remarks, the texts do not

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<sup>86</sup> Doody, ‘Jane Austen, That Disconcerting “Child”’, 118.

<sup>87</sup> Doody, ‘Introduction’, xxv. The question of Austen’s political stance is discussed by among others Butler in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* and Johnson in *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*. In her introduction to *Catherine and Other Writings*, Doody discusses the subversive elements of Austen’s politics in the juvenilia, xxv-xxviii.

<sup>88</sup> Doody, ‘Jane Austen, That Disconcerting “Child”’, 119.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>90</sup> Waldron, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of her Time* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 1999), 16.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

concern themselves with the effect, whether negative or positive, that they may have on the reader's moral conception.

The aspects of the juvenilia's irony which critics seem to agree most on is the irrelevance of morality to the purpose of the texts, and Chatman's theory that the norms of the implied author are not necessarily moral tie in well with this. Widely different standpoints are taken by Mudrick, for whom Austen's irony is a means of hiding and avoiding to confront her emotions, and Doody, who sees society's expectations on young girls as a restrictive force. However, the difference between approaches such as Mudrick's and Doody's is not only that the latter is more positive towards Austen and her juvenilia or that she applies gender perspectives to them, but that her views are directly applicable to the idea of the *implied* author – they are based on the texts of the juvenilia, not on personal opinions about a historical person. Mudrick's critical studies of Austen's works are an excellent example of the kind of phenomenon that can be avoided by embracing the concept of an implied author.

### **Stories Told from the Outside: Extradiegetic Narration**

Who are the narrators in Austen's narrative sketches? The extradiegetic narrators are not easily defined. Most of them tending towards the covert, they are ambiguous, moving targets. They are the channels through which the implied authors' ironic intents are realised, but are the narrators themselves aware of the irony? Do they and the implied authors mock the characters together, or are the narrators and the characters both mocked by the implied authors? The following section will look into the relationships between extradiegetic narrators, implied authors and characters, with examples from the narrative sketches 'Frederic and Elfrida', 'Jack and Alice', 'Edgar and Emma', 'Henry and Eliza' and 'The History of England'.

A narrator is defined by Bal as “that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the text” or the equivalent of that agent in other media’.<sup>93</sup> Bal further reminds us that ‘[t]he narrator of *Emma* is not Jane Austen’; though she states that it ‘hardly needs mentioning’ since this is one of the most basic principles of narratology, she finds the distinction between author and narrator so important to make that she decides to ‘refer to the narrator as “it”’.<sup>94</sup> An additional effect of this practice is a warning against what Kathy Mezei

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<sup>93</sup> Bal, op. cit., 18.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 16. The present study instead refers to the implied author as ‘it’ and to the narrator as ‘s/he’ when s/he does not coincide with a gendered character.

calls 'same-sex assumptions':<sup>95</sup> the gender of an extradiegetic narrator (for example the narrator of *Emma*) is usually not overtly stated in the text in the way that the gender of an intradiegetic narrator is (for example the narrator of *Jane Eyre*). Bal sees the narrator as 'the linguistic subject, a function and not a person, which expresses itself in the language that constitutes the text',<sup>96</sup> and her purpose in calling the narrator 'it' is to show that 'it' is not a person with human qualities. Mezei, however, claims that narrators, even extradiegetic narrators, do have genders, but that the extradiegetic narrator's gender does not have to be the same as the author's. While she reads the narrator of *Howards End* as male, she says that the gender of Austen's and Woolf's narrators is 'indeterminate and shifting'.<sup>97</sup> Here, Woolf's ideal that authors should be 'androgynous'<sup>98</sup> when they write springs to mind: perhaps it is Austen's and Woolf's narrators who are androgynous. Bal's and Mezei's views are not necessarily incompatible, if, like Mezei, we see gender as one quality which may '[express] itself in the language that constitutes the text'. Thus, we may conclude that Austen's narrators are gendered in so far as the language of her texts expresses a quality of gender, but that the gender of the narrators is not fixed or unequivocal.

A similar problem is whether implied authors have gender. The implied author is entirely text generated, but then the question is whether peritexts such as the author's name should be included in the 'text'. Cases where female authors, such as George Eliot or the Brontës, write under a male pseudonym raise the question of whether the name makes a difference for the reader's conception of the author. There are also cases where the gender of the author is the one thing the reader does know about her (for in such cases the author is invariably a woman), namely those literary works attributed, as Jane Austen's were, merely to 'a lady'. More common nowadays are authors, such as P. D. James, whose names are ambiguous as to gender. Is all this relevant to the concept of the implied author? Is 'George Eliot' male while Marian Evans was female? Were the implied authors of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* male for as long as the novels were believed by their readers to have been written by men, and did they become female when the novels were found out to have been written by women? Are Austen's implied authors female and do James's implied authors have ambiguous genders? In reality, the name of the author does of course influence the reader's

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<sup>95</sup> Mezei, 'Who Is Speaking Here? Free Indirect Discourse, Gender and Authority in *Emma*, *Howards End* and *Mrs Dalloway*' in *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers*, ed. Mezei (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 72.

<sup>96</sup> Bal, op. cit., 16.

<sup>97</sup> Mezei, op. cit., 77.

<sup>98</sup> Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 120.



conception of him/her – it will for example lead the reader to assumptions about his/her gender and ethnicity, which may or may not correspond to the real author's. But in reality all kinds of epitexts at readers' disposal influence their conception of the author, and pursuing the idea that paratexts should be taken into account when reconstructing the implied author might easily lead to a biographical approach. In reality, moreover, most readers make absolutely no distinction between real and implied author anyway, or between author and extradiegetic narrator for that matter.

Even narratologists do not agree on how or whether to distinguish between implied author and narrator in extradiegetic narration. In *Story and Discourse*, Chatman thinks that extradiegetic narratives do not always have a narrator in addition to the obligatory implied author,<sup>99</sup> but in *Coming to Terms*, he comes to the conclusion that 'every narrative is by definition narrated [...] and that narration [...] entails an agent even when the agent bears no signs of human personality'.<sup>100</sup> Chatman finds it important always to distinguish between the narrator and the implied author, while Mezei is of the opinion that the implied author sometimes coincides with the narrator.<sup>101</sup> Shlomith Rimmon chides Genette for not making the distinction between implied author and narrator,<sup>102</sup> but Genette retorts that he does not find the implied author a valuable or relevant concept to narratology.<sup>103</sup> If we accept Chatman's arguments for the usefulness of the concept of the implied author, the implied author needs its own definition rather than the concept being used interchangeably with that of the extradiegetic narrator. The best solution may be to make the distinction clearer by stressing the impersonality of the implied author and thinking of it as a non-gendered entity, not so much Booth's 'ideal [...] version of the real man' as Chatman's 'structural principle'. This, means, however, that while implied authors are perhaps not 'male' or 'female' they can still be for example 'feminist' or 'misogynist', as these are norms and not personal qualities.

If the question of age is seen in the light of the question of gender, this should mean that implied authors have no age while narrators do, or can have, as age is not a norm but a personal quality. Doody states that Austen 'was not a child as a writer' in writing the juvenilia,<sup>104</sup> and that while her characters seem childish, the author does not.<sup>105</sup> Doody is of

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<sup>99</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 150.

<sup>100</sup> Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 115.

<sup>101</sup> Mezei, op. cit., 69.

<sup>102</sup> Rimmon, 'A Comprehensive Theory of Narrative: G. Genette's *Figures III* and the Structuralist Study of Fiction' in *PTL* 1:1 (1976), quoted in Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 136-137.

<sup>103</sup> Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 137-145 passim.

<sup>104</sup> Doody, 'Introduction', xxxv.

course only speaking of Austen's remarkable talent as a young writer: hers is not a narratological study, so 'Austen' and 'writer' should not be interpreted as either equalling or being in opposition to any of the specific concepts of the real author, the implied author or the narrator. But if Doody's statements are transferred to a narratological approach, it may be inferred that the narrators of the juvenilia are adults, as it is the narrators who utter the language from which the unchildishness emanates.

The narrators thus have a mature language at their command, but it is not obvious whether they are aware of the irony which that language expresses. The narrators often sound very solemn and not ironic at all towards their subject, for example in the following passage from 'Frederic and Elfrida, where the narrator does not even seem to notice the ridiculous name of the village s/he mentions or the improbability of a 'purling Stream' crossing the English Channel by means of an underground 'passage':

On her return to Crankhumdunberry (of which sweet village her father was Rector), Charlotte was received with the greatest joy by Frederic and Elfrida, who, after pressing her alternately to their Bosoms, proposed to her to take a walk in a Grove of Poplars which led from the Parsonage to a verdant Lawn enamelled with a variety of variegated flowers and watered by a purling Stream, brought from the Valley of Tempé by a passage under ground. (5)

The question here is if this seriousness is feigned, or if the narrator is truly serious and is being mocked by the implied author. The narrators further solemnly account for the ridiculous and often unrealistic actions performed and sentiments expressed by the characters, for example in the following passage from the same sketch:

[E]'er they had been many minutes seated, the Wit and Charms which shone resplendent in the conversation of the amiable Rebecca, enchanted them so much that they all with one accord jumped up and exclaimed.

"Lovely and too charming Fair one, notwithstanding your forbidding Squint, your greasy tresses and your swelling Back, which are more frightfull than imagination can paint or pen describe, I cannot refrain from expressing my raptures at the engaging Qualities of your Mind, which so amply atone for the Horror, with which your first appearance must ever inspire the unwary visitor [---]." (6)

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<sup>105</sup> Doody, 'Jane Austen, That Disconcerting "Child"', 112.

An equally comically unrealistic scene occurs in 'Jack and Alice' when Alice and Lady Williams find Lucy lying 'apparently in great pain beneath a Citron tree' with her leg broken in a mantrap. Rather than assist her, they ask her to 'favour [them] with [her] Life and adventures', to which she answers 'Willingly Ladies, if you will be so kind as to be seated'. She then proceeds to tell her life's story at some length, still lying on the ground (22). In narrating such passages, the narrator is either being ironic, or s/he must understand neither how unrealistically the characters behave nor the comedic effect it has. This resembles Booth's four steps of reconstruction, but while we know that there is an ironic intent there are two senders of the text on different levels, the implied author and the narrator. The intent is the implied author's, but is the narrator 'in on it'?

Narratorial commentary can, according to Chatman, be either 'explicit' or 'implicit (that is, ironic)'.<sup>106</sup> The variety of irony that Chatman focuses on occurs when 'a speaker carries on a secret communication with his auditor at variance with the actual words he uses and at the expense of some other person or thing, the victim or "butt"'.<sup>107</sup> This victim can either be the narrator, in which case the communication is carried out between the implied author and the implied reader and the narrator is unreliable, or it can be the characters: 'If the communication is between the narrator and the narratee at the expense of a character, we can speak of an ironic narrator'.<sup>108</sup> However, if it is difficult to distinguish between the implied author and the extradiegetic narrator, distinguishing between the implied reader and the extradiegetic narratee is virtually impossible. Chatman claims that it is as important to distinguish between narratees and implied readers as it is between narrators and implied authors,<sup>109</sup> but according to Genette the extradiegetic narratee 'merges with the implied reader [...] with whom each real reader can identify'.<sup>110</sup> The pragmatic purpose of distinguishing between the implied author and the narrator has been demonstrated by Chatman, but there is no such purpose in distinguishing between the implied reader and the extradiegetic narratee. If we therefore identify the extradiegetic narratee with the implied reader, the receiver of the ironic communication is in both cases the same person, whereas the sender varies and can be either the narrator or the implied author. There seems to be little reason to suspect the extradiegetic narrators in Austen's juvenilia of being unreliable (as is generally the case with extradiegetic narrators), which should mean that the sender of the communication is the narrator.

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<sup>106</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 228.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 228-229.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>110</sup> Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 260. Cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 138.

Furthermore, it is the narrators who narrate the characters' behaviour in a way so as to make it comical. This means that the narrator must be aware of the irony, and therefore the gap is between the narrator and the story, that is between the discourse level and the story level.

Among the extradiegetic narrative sketches, a recurring theme in 'Frederic and Elfrida', 'Jack and Alice' and 'Edgar and Emma' is gender roles. Alexander speaks of the 'negotiation of gender boundaries' in the juvenilia as well as 'literary cross-dressing',<sup>111</sup> and Rachel M. Brownstein notes that 'class and gender distinctions' in the juvenilia 'are either ignored or inverted'.<sup>112</sup> Charles Adams is described by the typically feminine epithets 'amiable, accomplished and bewitching' ('Jack and Alice', 14) and is best friends with his cook (28 & passim), while Emma Marlow chooses the footman as her 'confidante' ('Edgar and Emma', 35). In both 'Jack and Alice' and 'Frederic and Elfrida', it is the heroine who takes the initiative towards her own wedding, Alice by asking her father to 'propose a union' between her and Charles Adams (28), and Elfrida by '[flying] to Frederic and in a manner truly heroick, splutter[ing] out to him her intention of being married the next Day' (12). The narrator continues,

To one in his predicament who possessed less personal Courage than Frederic was master of, such a speech would have been Death; but he not being the least terrified boldly replied,

“Damme Elfrida – *you* may be married tomorrow but *I* won't.”

This answer distressed her too much for her delicate Constitution. She accordingly fainted and was in such a hurry to have a succession of fainting fits, that she had scarcely patience enough to recover from one before she fell into another. (Ibid.)

Here, Elfrida crosses a gender boundary in being 'heroic' and taking command, while Frederic only has the traditionally female prerogative referred to by Henry Tilney as 'the power of refusal'.<sup>113</sup> Elfrida then turns to an extreme version of normative feminine behaviour. Doody elaborates further: 'An energetic passivity over-displays Elfrida's understanding of the traits of the feminine. After her improperly bold action in making the proposal herself, the resort to an ultra-femininity proves efficacious', as Frederic relents on

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<sup>111</sup> Alexander, 'Nineteenth-Century Juvenilia: A Survey', 22-23.

<sup>112</sup> Brownstein, 'Endless Imitation: Austen's and Byron's Juvenilia' in *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*, ed. Alexander & McMaster (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 130.

<sup>113</sup> *Northanger Abbey* (chapter 10), 65.

fearing for Elfrida's life.<sup>114</sup> This play with gender roles is part of the comedy of the juvenilia, but it can also be seen in a more serious light as subversive of fixed gender structures. The implied authors seem to have a non-normative attitude towards gender, and the narrators play an important part in the texts' treatment of gender roles, as it is they who choose language which defines the characters' behaviour as masculine or feminine.

The narrators of the juvenilia have a conventional novelistic manner of speaking and use literary stock phrases seemingly without considering their relevance to the context. In 'No sooner had Eliza entered her Dungeon than the first thought which occurred to her, was how to get out of it again' ('Henry and Eliza', 42), for example, the phrase 'No sooner [...] than' is not only redundant but makes the sentence nonsensical, since none but her first thought on entering the dungeon could have occurred to her 'no sooner' than entering. As Waldron puts it, '[c]ommon sentence patterns are constantly used either to create nonsense or to turn conventional moral expectation on its head';<sup>115</sup> Waldron gives an example of the latter function from 'Jack and Alice', where a family who lead an utterly dissipated life are, contrary to 'conventional moral expectation', described as pleasant people despite their vices: 'The Johnsons were a family of Love, and though a little addicted to the Bottle and the Dice, had many good Qualities' (14). An example of '[c]ommon sentence patterns' being 'used to create nonsense' is the description of Lady Williams, where synonyms are juxtaposed and put in opposition to each other: 'Tho' Benevolent and Candid, she was Generous and sincere; Tho' Pious and Good, she was Religious and amiable, and Tho' Elegant and Agreeable, she was Polished and Entertaining (ibid.).

Nonsense is also often created by comparing two disparate phenomena, for example in 'like the great Sir Charles Grandison [Lady Williams] scorned to deny herself when at Home, as she looked on that fashionable method of shutting out disagreeable Visitors as little less than downright Bigamy' ('Jack and Alice', 17). Pretending to be out in order to avoid unwelcome company may be regarded as despicable behaviour, but it is clearly not the same as bigamy, and so the narrator must be either utterly confused or having a laugh at Lady Williams' expense. On other occasions, the narrator presents two circumstances as conflicting when in fact they are not, for example in stating that Mr and Mrs Jones are 'very tall but [seem] in other respects to have many good qualities' (15). Unless the narrator has a particular aversion against height, this must be construed as an ironic statement. The implied authors of

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<sup>114</sup> Doody, 'Jane Austen: That Disconcerting "Child"', 108.

<sup>115</sup> Waldron, *op. cit.*, 16.

Austen's texts certainly tend to look on tallness favourably, at least relative tallness. Sabor states that 'the ideal height for a woman in [Austen's] fiction seems to be between medium and tall'.<sup>116</sup>

The passage of time is often rendered comical by the narrator: characters spend ridiculously large amounts of time taking recreational walks or travelling short distances, seven days is described as an interval in which characters grow a great deal older and more mature, and a newly-married couple is after only a matter of weeks ready to introduce their eighteen-year-old daughter ('Frederic and Elfrida', 11). Various properties that are numerically measurable, including age and size, are treated in much the same way. One character is described with ludicrous accuracy as being 'about 45 and a half' ('Henry and Eliza', 40), and another character does not allow her daughter to marry 'on account of the tender years of the young couple, Rebecca being but 36 and Captain Roger little more than 63' ('Frederic and Elfrida', 7). The size of the 'Drawing Room of Johnson Court' is described as 'not amounting to more than 3 quarters of a mile in length and half a one in breadth' ('Jack and Alice', 14), which Sabor calls 'preposterously outsized'.<sup>117</sup>

While it is sometimes difficult to decide whether the narrator is aware of the irony of the text, there are times when it is quite clear that s/he is. Such an instance is the narrator's referring to Frederic and Elfrida's threats against Mrs Fitzroy's life ('[...] if you refuse to join [Rebecca and Captain Roger's] hands in 3 days time, this dagger [...] shall be steeped in your hearts blood') as 'gentle and sweet persuasion' (10). Further, when the narrator of 'Jack and Alice' punningly remarks that Alice, '[i]n spite of the wine she had been drinking, [...] was uncommonly out of spirits' (17), it must be inferred that the narrator shares the implied author's ironic intent, since it is the narrator who creates the pun. In the same sketch, the narrator displays a blatantly ironic attitude towards the character Lucy, when s/he states that she 'dedicated five minutes in every day to the employment of driving [Charles Adams] from her remembrance' (29). When s/he then claims that Alice's sorrow at Lucy's death is understandable, Alice having 'a most sincere regard for her' since having 'spent a whole evening in her company and [...] never thought of her since' (31-32), the narrator's attitude is absolutely impossible to construe as anything but ironic.

However, despite the attitudinal gap being between the narrator and the characters rather than between the implied author and the narrator, there are also many similarities

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<sup>116</sup> Sabor, 'Explanatory Notes', 453.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

between how the extradiegetic narrators and the characters in ‘Volume the First’ and ‘Volume the Second’ express themselves. This is clear in the similar renderings of Lady Williams’s ambivalent, not to say contradictory, attitude in the narrator’s and her own voice respectively. The narrator says that ‘Lady Williams insisted on [Lucy’s] going [to Bath] – declared that she would never forgive her if she did not, and that she should never survive it if she did’ (‘Jack and Alice’, 27), shortly after the reader has heard Lady Williams utter her ‘persuasive arguments’ in her own voice: ‘I shall be miserable without you – t’will be a most pleasant tour to you – I hope you’ll go; if you do I am sure t’will be the Death of me’ (ibid.) – it is as if the narrator mimics Lady Williams. The narrators furthermore use the same rhetorical devices, such as syllepsis, and conscious stylistic incongruities, such as tautology, that are also used by the characters. Sabor refers to syllepsis as ‘a favourite rhetorical device of the young [Austen]’ and defines it as ‘a form of zeugma in which a verb takes two different and incongruous objects’.<sup>118</sup> According to Sabor, this occurs in the voice of Frederic and Elfrida (again speaking ‘with one accord’) in the following speech, even though the verb strictly speaking takes two different subjects instead of objects: ‘When the sweet Captain Roger first addressed the amiable Rebecca, you alone objected to their union on account of the tender years of the Parties. That plea can be no more, seven days being now expired, together with the lovely Charlotte [...]’ (10). Here, the word ‘expire’ means ‘pass’ when the subject is ‘seven days’ and ‘die’ when the subject is ‘Charlotte’. In ‘Jack and Alice’, Sabor finds a similar instance of syllepsis in the narrator’s voice when Caroline Simpson is ‘rais[ed] [...] to the rank of a Duchess’ and her sister Sukey ‘raised to the Gallows’ (32).

A very noticeable trait in both the narrators’ and the characters’ usage is the frequent breaches of style. Sentences are typically begun in a conventional literary manner, after which the register plummets to the colloquial. Sabor calls this ‘[Austen’s] deflationary technique’,<sup>119</sup> and gives an example from Frederic and Elfrida: ‘From this period, the intimacy between the Families of Fitzroy, Drummond, and Falknor, daily increased till at length it grew to such a pitch, that they did not scruple to kick one another out of the window on the slightest provocation’ (6). The bathetic breaches of style are one of the main hallmarks of the extradiegetic narrators in Austen’s juvenilia, but they are also performed by the characters. In ‘Jack and Alice’ this similarity is particularly prominent when the narrator and the character Lady Williams each end a conventionally begun sentence with the phrase ‘dead drunk’. The

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 381.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 377.

ironic tone and shifting register is almost identical in the narrator's 'The Masks were then all removed and the Company retired to another room, to partake of elegant and well managed Entertainment, after which the Bottle being pretty briskly pushed about by the three Johnsons, the whole party [...] were carried home, Dead Drunk' (15-16) and Lady Williams' 'My dear Girl don't vex yourself about the matter; I assure you I have entirely forgiven everything respecting it; indeed I was not angry at the time, because as I saw all along, you were nearly dead drunk' (21).

Furthermore, both narrators and characters show not a little self-admiration. Lady Williams, for example, states that she during her adolescence 'daily became more amiable' (18), Frederic, Elfrida and Charlotte profess 'with one accord' that they feel an 'admiration' for Rebecca 'of which I can alone give an adequate idea, by assuring you it is nearly equal to what I feel for myself' (6), and the narrator of 'Frederic and Elfrida' declares that 'These sweet lines, as pathetic as beautiful were never read by any one who passed that way, without a shower of tears, which if they should fail of exciting in you, Reader, your mind must be unworthy to peruse them' (9-10). The epitaph that the narrator is referring to was of course supposedly 'composed by Frederic Elfrida and Rebecca' (9), but as the narrator is in control of the narration and puts the story into words, s/he also congratulates him-/herself on the 'pathetic' epitaph.

This similarity in tone between the ironic narrators' voices and the voices of the characters poses a problem. If the characters are ironic they are consequently aware of the irony, and then it does not make sense to say that the narrators mock them. If, on the other hand, the characters are somehow able to express irony without being aware of it, how can we be sure that the narrators are aware of the irony? After all, the narrators often sound as serious as the characters, and the irony in the dialogues is as discernable as the irony in the narrative voice. The solution to this problem is partly that the narrator, who is the agent which puts the narrative, including dialogue, into words, functions as a mediator of the implied author's ironic intent. The characters are elements of the story, but cannot function as mediators between the implied author and the reader. When, at the end of 'Henry and Eliza', Lady Harcourt realises that Eliza, whom she and Sir George have adopted and raised, is in fact their biological daughter, she offers her husband the following explanation:

"You must remember Sir George that when you sailed for America, you left me breeding." [...] "Four months after you were gone, I was delivered of this Girl, but dreading your just resentment at her not proving the Boy you wished, I took her to



a Haycock and laid her down. A few weeks afterwards, you returned, and fortunately for me, made no enquiries on the subject. Satisfied within myself of the welfare of my Child, I soon forgot I had one, insomuch that when, we shortly after found her in the very Haycock, I had placed her, I had no more idea of her being my own, than you had, and nothing I will venture to say could have recalled the circumstance to my remembrance, but my thus accidentally hearing her voice which now strikes me as the very counterpart of my own Child's." (44)

As well as this speech being full of irony, Sir George's answer, 'The rational and convincing Account you have given of the whole affair [...] leaves no doubt of her being our Daughter' (ibid.), is clearly ironic, as Lady Harcourt's account is neither rational nor convincing. However, the words that must be reconstructed as ironic by the reader are spoken by a character who has no ironic intent: Sir George is indeed convinced of Eliza's being his daughter and '[a] mutual Reconciliation [...] [takes] place' (45). It is not self-evident that it should be possible for the characters' utterances to express irony while the characters do not themselves intend those utterances to be ironic. The ironic intent is the implied author's, and the characters can have no plausible motive for uttering the words in which the irony is realised. However, since the narrator mediates between the implied author and the characters, and between the characters and the reader, the narrator can allow the implied author's irony to shine through the non-ironic characters' speech and be reconstructed by the reader.

The other part of the solution to the problem of the similarities between the narrators' and the characters' voices is that Austen's irony is not of the type in which the implicit message is the opposite of what is explicitly stated. The narrator does not suggest that Lady Harcourt's story is untrue, and so there need be no obvious discrepancy between the serious Sir George's attitude and the attitude of the ironic narrator. The narrator is very close to the implied author, and they are both distant from the characters. This being so, it may seem incongruous to claim that the attitude of a character resembles the attitude of the narrator. But while the attitudes differ in that Sir George is unaware of the irony while the narrator is very much aware of it, neither of them is suspicious of, or even concerned with, the truth of Lady Harcourt's account of her behaviour. If the purpose of this passage had been to show Lady Harcourt as the unreliable narrator of an embedded narrative and her husband as a dupe, it would have been essential for there to be no irony in Sir George's statement. As it is, it is not a question of Lady Harcourt's reliability or Sir George's reliance in her, and so every opportunity to express irony may be ceased, regardless of who gives voice to it.

The reason that the ironic narrators sound perfectly serious is that they mimic the serious tone of sentimental narrators. This also has the additional effect of bringing the narrators' voices close to the characters', as neither narrators nor characters tend to be ironic in sentimental fiction. When, after the death of her profligate husband, Eliza finds herself penniless and friendless, she comes to the conclusion that she has no alternative but to sell her clothes to save the lives of herself and her two children:

With tears in her eyes, she parted with these last reliques of her former Glory, and with the money she got for them, bought others more usefull, some playthings for her Boys and a gold Watch for herself.

But scarcely was she provided with the above-mentioned necessaries, than she began to find herself rather hungry, and had reason to think, by their biting off two of her fingers, that her Children were much in the same situation. (42-43)

The beginning of this curiously brutal passage could have been taken directly from a sentimental novel – before the mention of toys and gold watches, there is nothing which indicates that the narrator is narrating anything but solemnly meant sentimental fiction. While the content of the narrative then makes it clear that the passage has to be read ironically, the narrator's tone remains that of a conventional and serious narrator speaking in the sentimental style that the text mocks. Doody refers to the narrators of the juvenilia as 'mock-narrators',<sup>120</sup> but she does not make it clear what she means by the phrase. It seems to imply that the narrators are mocked by someone else, possibly the implied author. But rather, the metanarrative qualities of the juvenilia allow the narrators to mock themselves, as they are aware that they are part of the narratorial apparatus that they are making fun of. For example, whereas the characters are earnest in their self-admiration, the narrators' attitudes are ironic both towards the characters and towards themselves.

An exception to the extradiegetic narrators' ironic attitude is constituted by the narrator of 'The History of England'. This narrator is significantly more overt than the other extradiegetic narrators. Notably, s/he freely expresses his/her political opinions: s/he is pro-Catholic, pro-Stuart, and a huge fan of Mary Stuart in particular. The Historian is more easily distinguishable from the implied author than the other extradiegetic narrators in the juvenilia. Only in certain passages is s/he reminiscent of the other, ironic extradiegetic narrators, for example when s/he states that Charles I was 'ever steadfast in his own support' (188), and that

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<sup>120</sup> Doody, 'Introduction', xxxiv.

Henry VIII, who was of course dead at the time, ‘happen[ed] to be of the [...] opinion’ that Edward VI was too young to govern (182). As a historian, the narrator is less than perfect: s/he trusts Shakespeare’s plays as historical sources (177, 178), uses vocabulary that is quite unsuitable for a historian, for example ‘thrashing’ about Henry V’s treatment of William Gascoigne (177), cannot recall why ‘Lord Cobham was burnt alive’ (177), and ‘[does] not perfectly recollect’ ‘the particulars of Henry VIII’s reign’ but neglects to look them up (180). The narrator further proclaims that ‘the recital of any Events (except what I make myself) is uninteresting for me’ (188) and expresses the opinion that ‘Truth’ is ‘very excusable in an Historian’ (186).

The ‘partial, prejudiced, and ignorant Historian’ is the narrator and not Jane Austen, despite Halperin’s claim that ‘the author confesses’ to being ‘partial, prejudiced, & ignorant’.<sup>121</sup> The implied author is clearly not as ignorant as the narrator, and is, unlike the narrator, objective. The narrator refers to some of Austen’s personal acquaintances (183, 184), which may tempt the reader to identify him/her with the real Austen, and ‘The History of England’ has sometimes been interpreted as political propaganda. But if Austen had wanted to write a political text she would surely have been able to argue much more convincingly than her narrator does. The real Jane Austen seems to have shared some of the narrator’s views, but not all,<sup>122</sup> which indicates that there is no political message embodied either by the opinions explicitly expressed by the narrator or by the direct opposite of those opinions. When writing, it has to be remembered, the vast majority of real authors are not themselves aware of the distinctions made in narratology between the various personae involved in narration, for instance between extradiegetic narrator and author, and it is not at all uncommon for narrators to refer to themselves as authors of the works they narrate. Thus Austen’s fictional narrator can be personally acquainted with Mrs Knight and Mrs Lefroy and refer to them in his/her History. Unlike the narrator, the implied author does not divulge its political stance. The text is not ironic in the sense of claiming the opposite of what it says, but it *is* ironic and so does not claim what it says either. The Historian’s attitude is more distant from the implied author’s than the other extradiegetic narrators’ attitudes are. For these reasons, this particular extradiegetic narrator is not ironic, but rather mocked by the implied author.

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<sup>121</sup> Halperin, *op. cit.*, 36.

<sup>122</sup> See Sabor, ‘Explanatory Notes’, 455-468.

Among the narratives with extradiegetic narrators in ‘Volume the First’ and ‘Volume the Second’, then, ‘The History of England’ is an exception with respect to the narrator’s attitude. In the other narratives, for example ‘Frederic and Elfrida’ and ‘Jack and Alice’, the narrator shares the implied author’s ironic stance. Using techniques such as imitating the characters and conventional sentimental narrators, the extradiegetic narrators mock their characters, thereby realising the implied authors’ ironic intents.

### **Stories Told from the Inside: Intradiegetic Narration**

The narrative sketches in the juvenilia that are not narrated by extradiegetic narrators are composed of letters, or in some cases of one single letter (‘A beautiful description of the different effects of Sensibility on different Minds’, ‘A Letter from a Young Lady, whose feelings being too Strong for her Judgement led her into the commission of Errors which her Heart disapproved’ and ‘The female philosopher’), written by characters from the stories. With its memorable two self-centred and self-deceptive heroines Laura and Sophia, the epistolary sketch ‘Love and Freindship’ is perhaps the best known out of all the juvenilia.

But who the narrators of the epistolary sketches are is not as straightforward a question as it may at first seem. Chatman claims in *Story and Discourse* that all narratives do not necessarily have narrators, but that there are cases of “‘pure” mimesis’ or ‘non- or minimally mediated narrative’, which consists only of the characters’ ‘speech’ and ‘verbalized thoughts’.<sup>123</sup> The ‘minimal case’, says Chatman, is ‘a copied text’, that is a series of ‘letters or a character’s diary’.<sup>124</sup> The next step away from pure mimesis and towards narration is ‘quoted dialogue’, where the act of transcribing the uttered words is ‘impli[ed]’ but ‘ignor[ed]’ by ‘convention’.<sup>125</sup> The third step involves ‘non-speech actions’, such as ‘bodily and other movements and internal processes’; the recording of these, unlike the recording of verbal expressions, presupposes some kind of interpretative process, as they have to be put ‘into linguistic form’ in order to be rendered in writing.<sup>126</sup>

Letter-writers in epistolary fiction, then, do not according to Chatman qualify as ‘genuine narrators’, as their letters ‘need not tell stories’, as ‘[t]he correspondent [...] cannot know how things will ultimately turn out’, and as ‘he [cannot] know whether something is

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<sup>123</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 166.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 168.

important or not'.<sup>127</sup> In *Coming to Terms*, as has already been mentioned, Chatman retracts his opinion that all narratives do not have narrators, but at the same time he claims that narrators do not have to have 'human personality',<sup>128</sup> which means that the narrator of an epistolary novel could be some other agent than the letter-writers. According to Bal's definition of the narrator as 'that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the text'<sup>129</sup>, the characters who write the letters that form an epistolary narrative have to be regarded as the narrators of the text. However, while I question the categorical stance which Chatman takes on letter-writers as narrators of epistolary fiction, I do not discard his ideas on the subject entirely. In certain cases of epistolary fiction, the narratorial subject can be said to be found in the selection and ordering of the letters rather than in any of the characters. None of the various letter-writers in 'Amelia Webster', 'The Three Sisters', 'Lesley Castle' or 'A Collection of Letters' comes across as the agent in charge of the narrative, and so they are not narrators in every sense of the word. For this reason I will refer to them not as narrators but as 'narrators' (within quotation marks) to indicate the arguable inadequacy of the term.

'Love and Freindship',<sup>130</sup> however, is a different matter. The narrative is, with the exception of the first brief letter from Isabel entreating Laura to tell the story of her 'Misfortunes and Adventures' (103), made up exclusively of letters composed by Laura, who narrates the entire story – there is no real correspondence, only Laura's narrative. As B. C. Southam points out, the epistolary format is used in 'L&F' 'merely [...] as a structural device to replace division by chapters' and the divisions are designed so as to '[interrupt] the narrative flow as little as possible'.<sup>131</sup> Laura tells a clearly defined story that occurred a long time ago. She is aware of the story's ending from the outset and is in control of how the narrative proceeds. There is no sense in which Laura is not the narrator of 'L&F', and she will therefore be treated as an intradiegetic narrator. However, it should be mentioned in this context that Laura the narrator (the older version of Laura, who writes a series of letters to her friend's daughter) is not identical with Laura the character (the young Laura in the story). They are two incarnations of the same person, two different personae residing on different narrative levels.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

<sup>128</sup> Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 115.

<sup>129</sup> Bal, op. cit., 18.

<sup>130</sup> Henceforth referred to as 'L&F'.

<sup>131</sup> Southam, *Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts: A Study of the Novelist's Development through the Surviving Papers* (Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 1964), 26.

As has been stated previously, Chatman speaks of two different types of ‘secret communication’ in implicit narratorial commentary: the secret communication between the narrator and narratee at the expense of a character, and the secret communication between the implied author and the implied reader at the expense of the narrator. In the latter case, ‘the implied author is ironic and [...] the narrator is unreliable’.<sup>132</sup> In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth explains the concept of the unreliable narrator as denoting a narrator whose ‘norms’ differ from those of the implied author.<sup>133</sup> Booth further states that many reliable narrators are ironic and in that sense ‘potentially deceptive’. This, however, does not qualify them as unreliable.<sup>134</sup>

The norms of the narrator of ‘L&F’ are to live for feeling and to be above all things mundane, but this way of life is not recommended by the implied author. Laura’s attitude is positive towards sensibility and negative towards sense, which is the opposite of the implied author’s attitude. Booth states that unreliable narrators often think they ‘have qualities which the author denies [them]’,<sup>135</sup> and Butler says of Laura that she ‘pretend[s] to a virtue which Jane Austen wishes to deny [her]’, namely ‘[t]he capacity to feel’.<sup>136</sup> Though the idea of sensibility is mocked in ‘L&F’ and though the attitude of the text towards sensibility is ironic, it is not the narrator who is ironic but the implied author. Unlike Austen’s extradiegetic narrators, Laura’s solemnity is not feigned when pronouncing obvious incongruities, such as Isabel’s having ‘passed 2 Years’ at a ‘Boarding-[school] in London’, ‘spent a fortnight in Bath’ and ‘supped one night in Southampton’ amounting to her having ‘seen the World’ (105). In a similar way, the narrator is sincere in her positive attitude towards the ideal of sensibility, though this attitude is not shared by the implied author; for this reason, the advisability of such an attitude is undermined. Laura is therefore an unreliable narrator, and the attitudinal gap is between the implied author and the narrator. Yet, it is not Laura’s account of the events that take place which is unreliable but rather her conception of how these events should be interpreted and evaluated. This is to do with the fact that Laura’s worldview differs drastically from the implied author’s.

Some of the characters side with the narrator and some with the implied author. McMaster divides the characters of ‘L&F’ into Sense (Sir Edward, Augusta, Macdonald, Graham, Lady Dorothea) and Sensibility (Laura, Sophia, Edward, Augustus, Philander,

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<sup>132</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 229.

<sup>133</sup> Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 158-159.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Butler, *op. cit.*, 168-169.

Gustavus). She further remarks that an important difference between these two groups is that whereas the Sense characters can handle irony the Sensibility characters cannot. However, ‘their speeches may [...] be ironic for the *reader*’.<sup>137</sup> In addition to this, it seems that Laura the narrator can no more handle irony than Laura the character. The implied author and the Sense characters are close to each other in attitude, and intend the text (in the case of the implied author the whole narrative, including the Sensibility characters’ speeches, and in the case of the Sense characters their respective utterances) to be construed as ironic, while the narrator and the Sensibility characters, who are close to each other in attitude but distant from the former group, have no such intent.

The similarity between the Sense characters’ and the implied author’s attitudes can be seen for instance in the dialogue between Edward and his sister Augusta near the beginning of the story:

“But do you think that my Father will ever be reconciled to this imprudent connection?” (said Augusta.)

“Augusta (replied the noble Youth) I thought you had a better opinion of me, than to imagine I would so abjectly degrade myself, as to consider my Father’s Concurrence in any of my Affairs [...]. [...] [D]id you ever know me consult his inclinations or follow his Advice in the least trifling Particular since the age of fifteen?”

“[...] [Y]ou are surely too diffident in your own praise –. Since you were fifteen only! – My Dear Brother since you were five years old, I entirely acquit you of ever having willingly contributed to the Satisfaction of you Father.” (110-111)

It is clear from this exchange that the reader is invited and expected to share Augusta’s norms rather than Edward’s: it was imprudent of Edward to marry Laura, and as a good son he should want to contribute to his father’s satisfaction. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the implied author has a categorically negative attitude towards people who want to decide whom to marry for themselves. But Edward marries Laura after literally five minutes’ acquaintance, having refused to marry Lady Dorothea even though he finds her ‘lovely and Engaging’ and ‘prefer[s] no woman to her’ (108) only because it is his father’s idea. The various personae’s similarities and differences in attitude grow even clearer as Augusta continues:

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<sup>137</sup> McMaster, op. cit., 144.

“But still I am not without apprehensions of your being shortly obliged to degrade yourself in your own eyes by seeking a Support for your Wife in the Generosity of Sir Edward.”

“Never, never Augusta will I so demean myself. (said Edward). Support! What support will Laura want which she can receive from him?”

“Only those very insignificant ones of Victuals and Drink.” (answered she.)

“Victuals and drink! (replied my Husband in a most nobly contemptuous Manner) and dost thou then imagine that there is no other support for an exalted Mind (such as is my Laura’s) than the mean and indelicate employment of Eating and Drinking?”

“None that I know of, so efficacious.” (111)

Augusta comes across as a sensible realist, but also as a clever and witty person. Her perspicacity links her closely to the ironic implied author, while Edward’s view of ideal life as imitating a novel of sensibility, his histrionic behaviour and the impracticality and misdirected idealism apparent in his reference to eating and drinking as ‘mean and indelicate employment’ are reminiscent of the narrator’s worldview.

The narratee of ‘L&F’ is Isabel’s daughter Marianne. Isabel writes to Laura to ask her to write down the story of her life as a moral example for Marianne, and Laura complies. But, as McMaster points out, ‘Isabel is far from admiring the youthful Laura’s conduct’ and ‘her scheme in eliciting Laura’s narrative is to provide her daughter Marianne with a *negative* example, not the positive one that Laura fondly assumes. Marianne as reader is to learn to *avoid* Laura’s sentimental excesses’.<sup>138</sup> Isabel’s attitude here resembles the implied author’s in her rejection of Laura’s ideals; Isabel and the implied author also both plan to let Laura unconsciously show through her unreliable narrative that her conduct is not morally sound and not to be imitated. However, while Isabel has the serious intention of setting a moral example, the implied author’s intention is to create comedy. The reader laughs at Laura, but her behaviour and her views are so extreme that ‘L&F’ cannot be seen as an instructive tale applicable to real-life situations.

Nevertheless, the implied author does display opinions on proper moral conduct, or at least pragmatic social competence. Laura informs Marianne that ‘Augustus and Sophia had on their first Entrance in the Neighbourhood, taken due care to inform the surrounding Families,

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<sup>138</sup> McMaster, op. cit., 142.



that as their Happiness centered wholly in themselves, they wished for no other society' (115). This sentiment is applauded by the narrator, but not shared by the implied author. The implied author disagrees with the attitude of Laura, Sophia and Augustus, who would rather spend all their time with a spouse or a special friend 'in mutual Protestations of Freindship, and in vows of unalterable Love' (ibid.) than occasionally finding time for a social life or useful employment. The implied author ironically lets the narrator present the rude conduct of Sophia and Augustus towards their neighbours as perfectly reasonable and refer to those polite visitors who do their social duty as 'intruding and disagreeable' (ibid.).

When Laura and Sophia meet the young girl Janetta, who is engaged to Graham and perfectly happy to be so (a happiness which is shared by both Graham and Janetta's father, Macdonald), they decide to rescue her, and persuade her that she does not love Graham at all but Captain M'Kenzie – she *must* be in love with someone else, they reason, or it would not be like a novel. The impressionable Janetta is easily convinced, with the result that she breaks off her engagement and elopes with Captain M'Kenzie, who is, according to Macdonald, 'an unprincipled Fortune-hunter' (127). While the narrator sees this event as one promoting Janetta's happiness and congratulates her friend and her young self on their judicious initiative, the implied author is critical of their behaviour, and thinks that they were wrong to act as they did, since it has very likely spoilt Janetta's future. More significantly, however, the implied author finds Laura and Sophia's attitude towards marriage ridiculous and comical. The implied author does not really show much concern for Janetta; it is passive in its critique, but active in its mockery.

Laura's criteria when judging other people are taken from the sentimental novels she has read, and her attitude towards those who do not share her sentimentalist ideal is merciless. Her reason for disliking Lady Dorothea is that she lacks 'Delicate Feeling, tender Sentiments, and refined Sensibility', which is obvious from the fact that she does not during her half-hour visit 'confid[e] to me any of her Secret thoughts, nor [request] me to confide in her, any of Mine' (112). Unlike Laura, the implied author is aware that the behaviour Lady Dorothea displays is perfectly normal and that the conduct which Laura proposes would have been seen as too forward by most people. When Sophia and Laura tell Macdonald about their 'Misfortunes', Laura judges from his response that he does not deserve to be called 'a tender and sympathetic Freind', though he is both helpful and generous to them, as he does not sigh or 'bestow one curse on [their] vindictive Stars' on hearing the story of their destiny (122). According to the implied author, practical help is more worth than sighs in difficult circumstances. The character Bridget is 'an Object of Contempt' for Laura, as no one with

such an unromantic name can 'be supposed to possess either exalted Ideas, Delicate Feelings or refined Sensibilities' (131). Further, Sophia and Laura judge Graham on his hair colour and taste in books, and infer that 'Janetta could feel no affection for him' (122). Laura believes Macdonald when he says that Graham is 'Sensible, well-informed, and Agreeable', but does not 'pretend to Judge of such trifles' (ibid.). The implied author, in contrast, sees 'Sensible, well-informed, and Agreeable' as good qualities that should certainly be considered when judging a person's character.

But Laura is critical not only of the Sense characters. Philippa enters into an imprudent marriage, which is normally a hallmark of sensibility in Laura's view, but the narrator calls her 'a ridiculous old Woman whose folly in marrying so young a Man ought to be punished' (137). Laura further believes that if a man snores, he must be 'capable of every bad Action' (138). This is not connected to the sentimentalist ideal in any way, but it is an unfounded opinion which is not shared by the implied author.

The narrator constantly expresses herself using words which subvert the value of the event or action she narrates. When she says that Augustus 'gracefully purloined', rather than stole, 'a considerable Sum of Money [...] from his Unworthy father's Escritoire' (116), the reference to the action as graceful and to the victim as unworthy turns Augustus into something of a noble hero rather than a mere thief, which is the implied author's view of him. Laura then declares that Sophia and Augustus, 'Exalted Creatures!', scorned to reflect a moment on their pecuniary Distresses and would have blushed at the idea of paying their Debts'; this is further referred to as 'disinterested Behaviour' (ibid.). The blatant reversal of conventional moral norms in this passage is strengthened when Laura states that it is 'unparalleled Barbarity' (117) and 'perfidious Treachery in the merciless perpetrators of the Deed' (116) to arrest Augustus as a debtor. In addition to this, Laura defines the 'overturning of a Gentleman's Phaeton' as 'lucky' and says that '[i]t was a most fortunate Accident as it diverted the Attention of Sophia from the melancholy reflections which she had been before indulging' (128-129). As it turns out, the accident is fatal for Edward and Augustus, and in the long term for Sophia too, as her fainting on the damp ground as a result of her husband's death proves to have negative consequences for her health. The accident can therefore not be called 'lucky' for Sophia in the implied author's book; yet, the narrator defines it as such as she is primarily concerned with Sophia's immediate distress of being subject to 'melancholy reflections'.

Though most of the Sensibility characters at one point or another steal, none of them is called a thief or a criminal by the narrator; acts of stealing are always referred to by some

name that disregards their immorality, usually accompanied by an approving modifier. When Macdonald discovers Sophia in his Library taking money from a drawer, she is, according to the implied author, taking advantage of her kind cousin's hospitality and stealing from him, instead of showing due remorse after having been an accessory to his daughter's elopement. According to the narrator, however, she is 'depriv[ing] him of Money, perhaps dishonestly gained', which is 'a proper treatment of so vile a Wretch' and a 'well-meant Plan' (125). Her manner of 'removing the 5th Bank-note from the Drawer to her own purse' is described as '[majestic]' (ibid.). The narrator does not see Macdonald as having the right to enter his own library or to question Sophia's being there – his act is an intrusion on her privacy, a violation of her integrity: 'she was most impertinently interrupted in her employment by the entrance of Macdonald himself, in a most abrupt and precipitate Manner' (125-126). This causes Sophia to 'call forth the Dignity of her Sex' and ask 'the undaunted Culprit [...] "Wherefore her retirement was thus insolently broken in on?"' (126). At this, '[t]he unblushing Macdonald without even endeavouring to exculpate himself from the crime he was charged with, meanly endeavoured to reproach Sophia with ignobly defrauding him of his Money' (ibid.). The opinion here vented by Macdonald is also the implied author's. The irony takes the form of a communication between the implied author and the implied reader at the narrator's expense. The implied author and the implied reader both know what is really going on, that Sophia has been stealing from Macdonald, that he is right to accuse her of it, and that she is wrong in calling him insolent. But according to the narrator Sophia is 'justly-offended', Macdonald 'malevolent and contemptible' and his accusations 'ill-grounded' (126) (which is nonsensical and shows the narrator's unreliability, as Laura knows perfectly well that Sophia was 'depriv[ing] him of Money', as she herself says). The narrator continues to refer to this event in terms that reflect favourably on Sophia's conduct and does the opposite to Macdonald, whose 'inhuman Behaviour, unaccountable suspicions and barbarous treatment of [Laura and Sophia]' is particularly shocking after 'the singular Service' they rendered Janetta when they advised her to elope. All this is the opposite of the implied author's opinion.

The characters' way of expressing themselves further highlights the difference in attitude between the Sense characters and the Sensibility characters. In the dialogue between Edward and Augusta the difference is clear between her everyday and his dramatic, archaic language. When Edward gets upset, he even starts calling his sister 'thou'. Laura does the same when speaking to Macdonald: 'Base Miscreant! (cried I) how canst thou thus undauntedly endeavour to sully the spotless reputation of such bright Excellence? Why dost thou not suspect *my* innocence as soon?' (126). Laura further calls a postilion 'Gentle Youth'

(118) and Augusta ‘cold and insensible Nymph’ (134); she also refers to Edward as ‘that luckless Swain’ (ibid.). Augusta, Macdonald and the other Sense characters’ language represents the norm in the characters’ society, while Laura and Edward use the same novelistic language as the narrator. Laura carries her literary language usage a step further when she gives her ‘mad’ speech, which, as McMaster remarks, is in iambic verse:<sup>139</sup>

“Talk not to me of Phaetons (said I, raving in a frantic, incoherent manner) – Give me a violin–. I’ll play to him and sooth him in his melancholy Hours – Beware ye gentle Nymphs of Cupid’s Thunderbolts, avoid the piercing Shafts of Jupiter – Look at that Grove of Firs – I see a Leg of Mutton – They told me Edward was not Dead; but they deceived me – they took him for a Cucumber –” [...] For two Hours did I rave thus madly [...]. (130)

Amazingly, Laura the narrator is able to observe Laura the character in her madness; she is able not only to remember what she said while delirious, but to perceive herself from the outside: ‘My Voice faltered, My Eyes assumed a vacant stare, My face became as pale as Death, and my Senses were considerably impaired’ (ibid.). The impossibility of a character, though functioning as two separate personae on two different narrative levels, being able to perceive herself wholly from the outside contributes to the irony of this passage, as does the improbability of someone in a severe state of shock expressing themselves in verse.

Laura’s unreliability as a narrator can sometimes be seen in other, more sensible characters’ reactions to her conduct. Philippa’s invitation for Edward and Laura to come and stay with her is answered with their assurance that ‘we would certainly avail ourselves of it, whenever we might have no other place to go to’ (114-115). Laura does not realise that this reply is rather impolite and does not think it ‘reasonable’ of Philippa ‘to be displeased’ with it (115). According to the implied author, however, Philippa’s reaction is perfectly reasonable – it is the couple’s answer to her invitation that is unreasonable. When Laura tells Isabel about everything that has happened since they last met, the latter’s face shows proof of ‘Pity and Surprise’ (135). Laura supposes that Isabel pities her for the many trials she has been through and is surprised at her wonderful adventures, but it is implied that Isabel really pities her misguided friend for being so unbelievably stupid. Laura then says that though her ‘Conduct’ had ‘certainly’ been ‘faultless’, Isabel ‘pretended to find fault’ with it, but since Laura herself knew that she ‘had always behaved in a manner which reflected Honour on [her] Feelings and

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<sup>139</sup> McMaster, op. cit., 144.

Refinement, [she] paid little attention to what [Isabel] said' (ibid.). Isabel's attitude here corresponds to the implied author's, and the narrator communicates it to the reader mechanically without herself realising its implications.

Another possible gap between narrative levels is presented by the embedded narratives in 'L&F'. McMaster claims that '[t]he many interpolated narratives within Laura's narrative suggest that the young [Austen] was meditating (though certainly not solemnly) on narratology' and that '[a]ll the characters, whether on the side of Sense or Sensibility' are fascinated by narrative.<sup>140</sup> The most extended embedded narrative is Gustavus's, near the end of the sketch. He is one of the Sensibility characters, and very close to the narrator in attitude. He too is an egocentric who thinks that he is 'remarkable' for 'an excess of Sensibility' (138) and that he is entitled to all the advantages he can grab. His life's story, which he tells Laura, is in many respects a summary of hers. Like Laura, Gustavus left home to pursue a life of adventure, lived extravagantly on stolen money and reacted to the news of his mother's death only by lamenting the absence of favourable financial consequences for him. This parallel story, in some ways a little more extreme than Laura's (Gustavus's and Philander's mothers starving to death as a consequence of having been robbed by their sons), highlights the theme of selfishness in the primary narrative. Part of the Sensibility characters' images of themselves is that they are selfless, but they are in fact deeply selfish. Similarly, they claim to be above money concerns, but the only way in which their unworldliness with respect to financial affairs manifests itself is that, instead of earning or saving money and paying their way, they steal and are in constant debt. The contrast between the characters' self-images and the image the reader gets from the implied author makes the characters', often self-congratulatory, references to themselves ironic.

The function of the irony, however, is not to present the Sensibility characters as a negative example. According to Butler, '[t]he intention in satirizing Laura is above all to expose the selfishness of the sentimental system'.<sup>141</sup> Laura is 'governed by self-admiration, and aware only of those others so similar in taste and temperament that she can think of them as extensions of herself'.<sup>142</sup> The main characters are, contrary to what the narrator claims, 'ruthlessly self-interested', but not 'insincere'<sup>143</sup> – they truly believe in the sentimental system and believe themselves to conform to it. Butler states that 'the contradiction is inherent in the

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<sup>140</sup> McMaster, op. cit., 142.

<sup>141</sup> Butler, op. cit., 169.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 169-170.

creed: [Austen] wants to show that the realization of self, an apparently idealistic goal, is in fact necessarily destructive and delusory'.<sup>144</sup> But, as has already been stated, the intent of 'L&F', as of Austen's other juvenilia, is not above all moral. Johnson touches on a central key to understanding the juvenilia when she says that '[i]t is important that we see Austen's early works as exercises in stylistic and generic self-consciousness and not principally as expressions of personal belief'.<sup>145</sup> As has previously been stated, the young Austen's implied authors are not primarily concerned with morals; the irony of the texts is not in any implication that the opposite of what is explicitly stated should be seen as 'right' or 'true'. While residing on the side of Sense and not on that of Sensibility, the implied author's point is not that the Sensibility characters' behaviour is immoral and should therefore not be imitated, but that their immorality is *funny*. 'L&F' is, according to Johnson, 'typically read as a fledgling *Sense and Sensibility*, a scathing satire on the unseemliness of excessive feeling'.<sup>146</sup> But Johnson does not agree with this understanding of either 'L&F' or *Sense and Sensibility*, as 'Austen's parody [...] is never so essentially prescriptive'. As Johnson perspicaciously points out, what 'L&F' 'parodies' is 'the destinies inscribed by sentimental fiction, not the perniciousness of sentiment, and to overlook this layer of detachment in the sketch is to miss many of its most hilarious jokes'.<sup>147</sup> Hence, it is not above all the characters that are mocked, but the system that they try to live by and the consequences of that attempt.

In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar read 'L&F' from a feminist viewpoint. They find a 'contradiction between the narrator's insistent ridicule of her heroines and their liveliness, their general willingness to get on with it'.<sup>148</sup> I would like to exchange 'narrator' for 'implied author', but the substance of the claim is valid. Laura and Sophia are not so much sentimental as energetic and ambitious. They take control over their own lives and try to get what they want rather than settling for the lot of heroines in conventional novels, to sit passively and wait. Gilbert and Gubar continue,

Laura and Sophia are really quite attractive in their exuberant assertiveness, their exploration and exploitation of the world, their curiously honest expression of their

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>145</sup> Johnson, op. cit., 31.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Gilbert & Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1984), 115.

needs, their rebellious rejection of their fathers' advice, their demands for autonomy, their sense of the significance and drama of their lives and adventures, their gullible delight in playing out the plots they have admired.<sup>149</sup>

This can be seen as the opposite of the effect that Booth mentions of having villains as narrators in intradiegetic narration. Because we see the story from the narrator's perspective, Booth says, we can feel sympathy for him/her no matter how execrable his/her character traits and actions are.<sup>150</sup> Laura, on the other hand, unwittingly presents herself as unsympathetic and the text does not invite the reader to side with her, but her qualities contrastingly are sympathetic, at least according to Gilbert and Gubar, who even find them 'attractive'. Regardless of whether or not we see Laura as an attractive character, however, it is true that the implied author does not condemn the characters whose views and choices it disagrees with. Though their behaviour is certainly destructive to themselves and to others, Laura and Sophia are products of society, not an evil force in themselves.

In Gilbert and Gubar's reading of 'L&F', the story 'attacks a society that trivializes female assertion by channeling it into the most ridiculous and unproductive forms of behaviour'<sup>151</sup> and reminds the reader that 'women have been tempted to forfeit their interiority and the freedom of self-definition for literary roles'.<sup>152</sup> It thus satirises the sentimental system not as an idealistic worldview that can be found in literature and is potentially destructive if applied outside the realms of the novel, but as a way of reinforcing restrictive gender roles in society through literature, as well as a secondary expression of those societal gender roles. Discarding the results of those critics who before them have attempted to interpret what the object of the irony in 'L&F' and the other juvenilia is, Gilbert and Gubar claim that

Austen demystifies the literature she has read neither because she believes it misrepresents reality, as Mary Lascelles argues, nor out of obsessive fear of emotional contact, as Marvin Mudrick claims, nor because she is writing Tory propaganda against the Jacobins, as Marilyn Butler speculates, but because she

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 115-116.

<sup>150</sup> Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 323.

<sup>151</sup> Gilbert & Gubar, op. cit., 117.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 119.

seeks to illustrate how such fictions are the alien creation of writers who contribute to the enfeebling of women.<sup>153</sup>

In this way, 'L&F' has something to say about prevailing structures in both literature and society, and the text uses literary satire as a means of getting this message across: 'By exploiting the very conventions she exposes as inadequate, [Austen] demonstrates the power of patriarchy as well as the ambivalence and confinement of the female writer'.<sup>154</sup> Though Gilbert and Gubar reject studies with a more or less biographical angle, such as Mudrick's and Butler's, their own approach is also biographical in that they speak of the real author's intent. However, their feminist reading of the juvenilia is not dependent on biography; the wording suggests that the intent is the real author's, but in essence the reading is not based on biographical facts. Allowing for the difference in terminology, Gilbert and Gubar's feminist reading of 'L&F' can prove useful within a narratological context, as long as care is taken to avoid the intentional fallacy. There is no evidence that the intent which Gilbert and Gubar ascribe to Austen was in fact the historical person Jane Austen's intention when writing 'L&F', but this is entirely beside the point; Gilbert and Gubar convincingly show that, through a feminist reading of 'L&F', the text can be constructed as having such an intent.

Doody's understanding of 'L&F' also follows the feminist tradition. Doody speaks of Sophia's attitude towards Macdonald when caught stealing from him as her 'proto-feminist assertion of her own virtuous integrity',<sup>155</sup> and sees in the juvenilia a 'refusal to accept the kind of morality usually presented in novels, hoping to remould [...] women [...] into a dutiful and fulfilling marriage'. The women in the juvenilia are 'not dedicated at all to the happiness of others' – they are busy 'trying to get everything they can for themselves'.<sup>156</sup> In this respect, the depiction of women in 'L&F' does not conform to the norm, and the story's lack of conventional morality in female characters contributes to the presentation of an alternative image of women, albeit not an entirely positive one. On the one hand, both male and female characters are presented as either adhering to or diverging from the conventional moral code, and the implied author sides with the moral characters; the story could therefore be seen as a moral tale. On the other hand, the implied author's moral stance is purely passive, and the immoral characters are not condemned for their actions or personalities; rather, they

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 120-121.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>155</sup> Doody, 'Jane Austen, That Disconcerting "Child"', 114.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 117.



are exploited for comedic purposes. Furthermore, female characters are given significantly more attention than male characters. As Doody says, Sophia employs a feminist discourse in her defence against Macdonald, and the main characters do conform to the feminist ideal of emancipation. A feminist approach to 'L&F', in short, proves more fruitful than a moral approach.

A key element in 'L&F' which facilitates feminist readings is the female intradiegetic narrator. Granted, the narrator is constantly mocked by the implied author and cannot be regarded as a female role model. A character who is mocked by a narrator or another character could be unjustly mocked, but anything that is mocked by the implied author is by definition in conflict with the norms of the text. Yet, while the heroine's conduct is depicted as ridiculous, the fact that the story is seen from her perspective reveals her feminist side. Laura does indeed deserve to be mocked as she embraces the sentimentalist ideal; however, she does not accept the implications of that ideal for women. As she remarks when still in her parents' confined cottage at the beginning of the story, 'Alas! [...] how am I to avoid those evils I shall never be exposed to?' (105). Laura goes far outside the traditional role of her gender as she takes initiatives, considers her own needs and wishes before those of her family, travels without male company, and loudly makes her opinion known when she thinks she has been badly treated by male authorities. In one respect especially does Laura go against the attitude prescribed for women: she will not content herself – she will not settle for less than completely satisfying her curiosity about and appetite for the world and everything in it. These qualities can be seen as amounting to selfishness, but also as amounting to independence, enterprise and courage. Because Laura is the narrator of the story, we see it from her perspective and can see her strength and everything that is positive in her attitude towards the world as well as what is misguided and ridiculous.

In a feminist-narratological study of *Persuasion*, Robyn Warhol comments on Claudia Johnson's discussion of the sentimental tradition of ailing or dying women as objects seen from the outside as treated in *Sense and Sensibility*. Sentimental novels, according to Johnson and Warhol, 'emphasize the emotions inspired in men [...] by the spectacle of the heroine's suffering body'.<sup>157</sup> In such narratives, women are completely passive when overcome by illness. In 'L&F', this convention is subverted, as Sophia and Laura's swoons and bouts of

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<sup>157</sup> Warhol, 'The Look, the Body and the Heroine of *Persuasion*: A Feminist-Narratological View of Jane Austen' in *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers*, ed. Mezei (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 26. Warhol paraphrases and discusses Johnson, 'A "Sweet Face as White as Death": Jane Austen and the Politics of Female Sensibility' in *Novel* 22.2 (1989).

madness are seen from the inside, from the women's point of view. In 'L&F', women act, they are not observed by men. Even fainting is described as active, as an act of will, which is obvious in Sophia's dying words to Laura warning her against too frequently indulging in purposeful fainting:

“My beloved Laura [...] take warning from my unhappy End and avoid the imprudent conduct which has occasioned it... Beware of fainting-fits... Though at the time they may be refreshing and Agreeable yet believe me they will in the end, if too often repeated and at improper seasons, prove destructive to your Constitution... [---] Run mad as often as you chuse; but do not faint--” (132-133)

This way of depicting women as active subjects is contrasted in 'A beautiful description of the different effects of Sensibility on different Minds', one of the shorter sketches with one single 'narrator'. The narrator status of these 'narrators' is doubtful for the same reasons that were given in connection with those epistolary sketches that have multiple narrators. The 'narrator' of 'A beautiful description...' is, in contrast to the narrator of 'L&F', male. In this narrative, the suffering woman is a passive object observed by a man. These two texts exemplify two different ways of revealing and questioning the norm: subverting it, and exaggerating it. Both techniques serve the purpose of making a phenomenon which is ordinarily taken for granted noticeable.

Two of the other sketches with one single 'narrator' also deserve some comment. In 'A Letter from a Young Lady, whose feelings being too Strong for her Judgement led her into the commission of Errors which her Heart disapproved', there is a discrepancy between the title and the content of the sketch. The title leads the reader to expect a moral tale where the heroine commits a mistake due to an excess of some emotion which would in moderation have been appropriate for a young lady to entertain and then repents. However, the 'Young Lady' is in fact a serial killer. According to her own testimony, '[t]here is scarcely a crime that [she] [has] not committed', including being 'a perjured witness in every public tryal for these last twelve Years' and 'forg[ing] [her] own Will' (222). Far from being about to reform, she concludes her letter with the words 'I am now going to murder my sister' (223). By thwarting the reader's expectations, the text creates a gap between the reader's attitude towards the story before and after having read it, with irony as the result.

In 'The female philosopher', the gap is instead between the 'narrator' and the narratee. The 'narrator', Arabella, writes a letter to her friend Louisa telling her of a visit she has

received from Mr Millar and his daughters. Despite Arabella's knowing that Louisa is already acquainted with the family, she describes the two Miss Millars' respective personal appearances and personalities to her. Arabella then relates what was said about Louisa during the visit:

“Louisa Clarke (said I) is in general a very pleasant Girl, yet sometimes her good humour is clouded by Peevishness, Envy and Spite. She neither wants understanding nor is without some pretensions to Beauty, but these are so very trifling, that the value she sets on her personal charms, and the adoration she expects them to be offered are at once a striking example of her vanity, her pride, and her folly.” So said I, and to my opinion every one added weight by the concurrence of their own. (217)

This poor opinion of Arabella's supposed intimate friend, so freely offered to the object of it herself, makes Arabella a fantastically rude and thoughtless, though remarkably honest, 'narrator'. We can only imagine what Louisa's response is on reading the letter, but it can be inferred that there is a gap between the attitudes of the letter-writer and her correspondent, similar to the gap between the narrator and the implied author in 'L&F'.

In intradiegetic narration, then, there is a gap between the ironic implied author and the unreliable narrator; the secret communication is thus between the implied author and the implied reader at the expense of the narrator. In 'L&F', there is a further gap between the characters who have sense as their ideal and the characters who prefer sensibility. The implied author is close to the Sense characters and the narrator is close to the Sensibility characters, but the implied author's purpose in mocking the immoral behaviour entailed in conforming to the sentimental system is not to set the reader a negative example, but to create comedy.

### **Narration by Correspondence: Multiple 'Narrators' in Epistolary Fiction**

There are four epistolary sketches with multiple 'narrators' in the juvenilia: 'Amelia Webster', 'A Collection of Letters', 'The Three Sisters' and 'Lesley Castle'. In these narratives, the gaps between the attitudes of the different letter-writers, towards each other and towards the subjects of their letters, is a potential source of irony, with the exception of 'A Collection of Letters', which is a collection of four separate letters which do not form a coherent story.

The short sketch 'Amelia Webster' is, together with 'Frederic and Elfrida' and 'Edgar and Emma', among the very earliest pieces in the juvenilia, probably written when Austen was as young as eleven years old.<sup>158</sup> The irony of this story lies in the self-deception and laziness of two of the 'narrators', Amelia Webster and Benjamin Bar. Amelia offers cheap excuses such as 'my Paper reminds me of concluding' (59) for ending her letters to her friend Maud, when her letter is in fact only a few lines long and she cannot be anywhere near running out of writing space. Benjamin deceives himself into thinking that he is concerned for his fiancée Sally's health when he chooses a tree which is situated one mile from his house and seven miles from hers as a hiding place for their secret letters: 'You may perhaps imagine that I might have made choice of a tree which would have divided the Distance more equally [...] but as I considered that the walk would be beneficial to you in your weak and uncertain state of Health, I preferred it to one nearer your House' (ibid.). It is implied here that Benjamin is in fact lazy and inconsiderate to let Sally, who is apparently seriously ill, risk her health taking long walks to obtain his letters to her. Though this sketch is much shorter than 'L&F', it is clear that here, too, the implied author is distant from and mocks the letter-writers.

In 'The Three Sisters', there are two 'narrators', Mary and Georgiana Stanhope. Mary is extremely mercenary and envious of her sisters, while her younger sister Georgiana is clear-sighted, sensible and observant. Still, Georgiana is not an entirely pleasant person, as she comes up with the plan to trick Mary into marrying Mr Watts, knowing that Mary dislikes him, in order to avoid for her other sister, Sophy, or herself to be obliged to marry him. She does have a slightly guilty conscience about it, but is satisfied that 'the circumstances [...] excuse' her behaviour (77). Georgiana's attitude is very negative and condescending towards Mary, whom she considers greedy and obsessed with fashion, but positive towards Sophy, who is presented as a conventionally good sister. Georgiana and Sophy repeatedly laugh at Mary behind her back, but they are still presented as infinitely more attractive and rational characters than Mary. The implied author is distant from Mary and close to her sisters. Georgiana resembles the implied author more than Sophy, though, because she is wittier and more ironic, while Sophy is a more conventionally perfect young lady.

The text thus invites the reader to side with Georgiana and accept her views. The implied author's opinion is that Mary deserves to be subjected to Georgiana's 'little deceit' (77), even though it ruins her life, because, as Georgiana says, 'Mary is resolved to do *that* to

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<sup>158</sup> Sabor, 'Introduction', xxviii.

prevent our supposed happiness which she would not have done to ensure it in reality' (80). When Mary declares that she hates her intended husband and her mother says it is improper of her, the implied author thinks that the situation is tragic, but humorous. It is clear that Georgiana is a reliable 'narrator' while Mary is an unreliable one in the Duttons' reaction to Mary's attempts to impress them with her forthcoming marriage. Mary wants to '[triumph] over' her neighbours (85), but Georgiana is ashamed of her behaviour, and it is confirmed that Georgiana's view of the situation is the more well-founded one, as the Duttons are only surprised that 'anyone who had Beauty and fortune (tho' small yet a provision)' should stoop so low as to marry Mr Watts (86). It is of course Georgiana who interprets the Duttons' reaction in this way, but the interpretation is supported by their conduct.

The possibilities that Mary sees in marriage are carriages, jewellery, servants, balls and all kinds of amusements, and her idea of a 'good husband' is someone who spoils her materially (82-83). Sophy, in contrast, gives voice to another ideal, which constitutes the norm of the text: 'I expect my Husband to be good tempered and Cheerful; to consult my Happiness in all his Actions, and to love me with Constancy and Sincerity' (83). Though the difference between the sisters' ideals is striking, however, most of the irony in 'The Three Sisters' lies in Mary and Georgiana's conflicting views on the events they narrate, and the fact that Mary, unlike the reader, is unaware of the trick Georgiana plays on her.

The epistolary sketch 'Lesley Castle' is a story about jealousy between women, but not jealousy over a man – men are largely absent from the plot, two of the most important male characters having died and emigrated respectively. Rather, 'Lesley Castle' deals with relationships between women – relationships between friends, between sisters, and between stepmother and stepdaughter. There is a larger number of 'narrators' than in the other epistolary sketches, and all the 'narrators' are women: Margaret Lesley, Charlotte Lutterell, Susan Lesley, Eloisa Lutterell and Emma Marlowe.

Margaret is the author of the first letter, which leads the reader, at least initially, to think of her as the main character. Self-knowledge and honest modesty are not virtues in Margaret's possession, but on the whole she is not presented as a bad person. There are some implications to the effect that she is perhaps not the most reliable narrator, as she talks about things she cannot know anything about, such as her sister-in-law Louisa's feelings. She is also sometimes terribly rude to her correspondent, Charlotte, without realising it, notably when she says, 'How often have I wished that I possessed as little personal Beauty as you do; that my figure were as inelegant; my face as unlovely; and my Appearance as unpleasing as yours!' (172), and 'Mrs Marlowe fatigues me to Death every time I see her by her tiresome

Conversations about You' (173). In addition to this, Margaret is self-deceptive, which can be seen for example in her reasoning concerning the family jewels. She first 'wonders how [her step-mother] can [...] delight in wearing them', as 'an elegant simplicity' is 'greatly superior' to 'the most studied apparel' – then it becomes obvious that she in fact resents her father's having presented his wife rather than his two daughters with the jewels: 'How becoming would Diamonds be on our fine majestic figures!' (174).

Margaret's friend Charlotte's most marked characteristic is her obsession with cooking. She is inadvertently very unfeeling towards her sister Eloisa when the latter's fiancé Henry Hervey is severely injured shortly before the intended wedding and Charlotte in a clumsy attempt to console her sister tries to explain why Henry's misfortune is a worse affliction for Charlotte herself than for Eloisa. The speech Charlotte makes on this occasion, though long, deserves to be quoted in full:

“Dear Eloisa (said I) there's no occasion for your crying so much about a trifle. (for I was willing to make light of it in order to comfort her) I beg you would not mind it–. You see it does not vex me in the least; though perhaps I may suffer most from it after all; for I shall not only be obliged to eat up all the Victuals I have dressed already [for the wedding dinner], but must, if Hervey should recover (which however is not very likely) dress as much for you again; or should he die (as I suppose he will) I shall still have to prepare a Dinner for you whenever you marry any one else. So you see that tho' perhaps for the present it may afflict you to think of Henry's sufferings, Yet I dare say he'll die soon, and then his pain will be over and you will be easy, whereas my Trouble will last much longer for work as I may, I am certain that the pantry cannot be cleared in less than a fortnight.”  
(147-148)

Despite Charlotte's low level of emotional intelligence, however, she is very encouraging towards her sister: when Eloisa plays the harpsichord she always takes care to cry '*Bravo, Bravissimo, Encora, Da Capro, allegretto, con espressioné, and Poco presto* with many other such outlandish words' (166).<sup>159</sup> This does show Charlotte as somewhat ignorant, as she obviously does not understand a word of Italian and is not at all knowledgeable about music,

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<sup>159</sup> Bravo = good. Bravissimo = very good. Ancora (It.) = more. Encore (Fr.) = more (used in English as a request for more music). Capro = goat. Da capo = from the beginning. Allegretto = somewhat briskly. Con espressione = with expression. Poco presto = a little very fast. 'Bravo', 'bravissimo' and 'encore' are appropriate interjections at the end of a musical performance, but the other four terms are the composer's instructions for the musician, some of them slightly misremembered by Charlotte.

but her intention is good nevertheless, and it shows evidence of her affection for her sister. Charlotte is also clear-sighted about Susan's shortcomings even though she is her friend, and she is presented as a reliable judge. Both Margaret and Charlotte have flaws, but neither is condemned for them by the implied author. Though the implied author is not particularly close to any of the characters, Charlotte's attitude is perhaps closer to the implied author's than the others' are, as both she and the implied author are 'satirical' – it is with delight that Charlotte remembers her 'witty' retort to her sister's wish that she would '[keep] [her] Admiration to [her]self' and not applaud Eloisa's musical performances so boisterously: 'I beg you would be quite at your Ease with respect to all such fears in future, for be assured that I shall always keep my Admiration to myself and my own pursuits and never extend it to yours' (ibid.).

Susan, on the other hand, is presented as thoroughly disagreeable, and is very distant from the implied author. She has bad taste and is biased and vain, without Charlotte's sense of humour or anything else to compensate for her bad qualities. She admits to thinking her husband ugly, as does the similarly disagreeable character Mary in 'The Three Sisters'; this appears to be an example of grave misconduct in the implied author's book. Furthermore, Susan is short and hates tall women, which the implied author seems to invite the reader to regard less favourably than the tall Margaret's speaking disparagingly of Susan's stature. Every 'narrator' in 'Lesley Castle' thinks that her own height is the only proper one, except Eloisa, who is too heartbroken to care.

The implied author's attitude to Eloisa is sympathetic, but she is presented as a bit boring. All the 'narrators' are more or less gossipy and preoccupied with the personal appearances of other women, but in comparison to the other characters, Eloisa and Emma are presented as good people. By the time their perspectives are introduced, however, Margaret and Charlotte are firmly established as the main characters. In addition, Margaret and Charlotte are much more interesting and funny – not funny in the sense of ridiculous, as is the case with Laura and Sophia in 'L&F', but in the sense of making intentional jokes. Similarly, they are not flawed in the sense of utterly bad, but in the sense of human. These less-than-perfect but attractive characters are not more distant from the implied author than characters such as Eloisa and Emma, though Eloisa and Emma's conduct and character are presented as of higher moral standard. As in many of the sketches, the question of distance from the implied author is not a question of morality for morality's sake.

The contrasts between the different letter-writers' narratives make the text ironic in its many incongruities, for example Margaret's telling Charlotte the story about Lesley's

marriage as if for the first time and then Charlotte's saying that she has heard it often before. The information given by different 'narrators' sometimes does not agree, for example when Charlotte tells Margaret that Susan 'rouges a good deal' (154), after which Susan says that Charlotte 'can witness how often I have protested against wearing Rouge, and how much I always told you I disliked it' (163). Charlotte astutely interprets the discrepancies between Margaret's and Susan's letters: they are both 'jealous of each others Beauty'. 'It is very odd', Charlotte says, 'that two pretty Women tho' actually Mother and Daughter cannot be in the same House without falling out about their faces. Do be convinced that you are both perfectly handsome and say no more of the Matter' (164). The comedy and the irony of 'Lesley Castle' lies in the discrepancy between the different points of view presented by the different 'narrators' on the events and characters of the story. Here, the sketch makes use of the epistolary genre's specific possibilities.

### **Dramatic Sketches**

Narratological perspectives are often applied to film, but seldom to drama. Nevertheless, Chatman finds that narrative 'in the broad sense' includes drama,<sup>160</sup> and that narratives in 'performative media', such as film and drama, have narrators, though such a narrator is not embodied by a person.<sup>161</sup> Chatman further contends that narrative can be either 'diegetic' (including novels and epics), which is the traditional view of narrative, or 'mimetic' (including plays and films).<sup>162</sup> Chatman focuses his discussion of narration in the performing media on film, and describes the 'cinematic narrator' as 'the composite of a large variety of communicating devices', including mise-en-scène, lighting, editing, the actors' appearance and performance, location, props, music, voices and many others.<sup>163</sup> An obvious difference between the cinema and the theatre is that while a film is a self-contained work with all its narratorial composites intrinsic to it, the text of a play is only a part of that play: in order to study a play narratologically on the same terms that a film or a novel can be studied, we would have to study a theatrical production, as the narrator of the play is not in the text.

How, then, does the irony in Austen's plays work when there is no narrator? Her three dramatic sketches, 'The Visit', 'The Mystery' and 'The first Act of a Comedy', which unlike the narrative texts are nominally comedies, are unquestionably ironic, but in this case the

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<sup>160</sup> Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 111.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-135.



origin of the irony cannot be imputed to the distance between the narrator and the implied author or the characters. There are, however, other kinds of gaps, or contrasts, in the plays.

In 'The Visit', there is a contrast between formality and informality. The host and hostess and their guests are all extremely polite to each other, but the beds are too short for the guests and there are not enough chairs for them all to sit on, so two of the gentlemen have to sit in the laps of two of the ladies. Even in this strange situation, the manner is kept formal: 'I beg his Lordship would be seated' (65), Sophy politely invites her host, Lord Fitzgerald, on offering her lap, as they all sit down on chairs 'set round in a row' (64). This arrangement of the chairs is, according to Sabor, 'a sign of the old-fashioned formality of the domestic arrangements in Lord Fitzgerald's house', but the formality is 'undercut by the short bed [and] lack of chairs'.<sup>164</sup> The food served at dinner (66) is not at all suitable for the occasion: 'fried Cowheel and Onion', 'Tripe' and 'Suet pudding' are all, according to Sabor, 'course dish[es] consumed by labourers', 'red herrings' are 'considered inferior to fresh fish', 'Liver and Crow' are 'food for the poor', and 'warm ale with a toast and nutmeg' is 'an invalid's drink'.<sup>165</sup> As Byrne puts it, '[t]he vulgarity of the food on offer is contrasted with the polite formality of the guests'.<sup>166</sup> There is also a gap between conventional conduct and the conduct of the characters on this visit, especially when it comes to gender-related norms. This is noticeable when, after dinner, the ladies do not retire into the drawing room, but stay and join Mr Willoughby in 'circulat[ing] the Bottle' (67). All the women, the young girl Sophy especially, are eager wine drinkers, while, as Sabor remarks, 'neither Stanly nor Sir Arthur "touches wine"'.<sup>167</sup> A further gap occurs between the subject matter of the main part of the play and its conclusion, as no less than three unforeseen proposals of marriage terminate the thitherto-uneventful dinner party.

In 'The Mystery', there is a gap between audience expectations and what turns out to happen in the play. A veritable meta-mystery, the play is, according to Austen's dedication to her father, 'tho' an unfinished [comedy], [...] as complete a *mystery* as any of its kind' (69). 'The Mystery' is a very short sketch, and introduces a number of characters talking to each other about a subject that is so secret and mysterious that the audience never finds out what it is. The first scene builds up the expectation that the mystery will be solved, or at least that it will be discovered what the mystery is, but this never happens. The characters talk secretly

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<sup>164</sup> Sabor, 'Explanatory Notes', 413.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 413-414.

<sup>166</sup> Byrne, *op. cit.*, 19.

<sup>167</sup> Sabor, 'Explanatory Notes', 414.

to each other in broken sentences, and all lines that could have shed some light on the mystery are whispered in another character's ear. The mystery in the play thus remains a mystery to the audience.

In 'The first Act of a Comedy', the contrast is between dramatic conventions and realism. This sketch is, as Sabor points out, a parody on the 'musical comedy or comic opera'.<sup>168</sup> Byrne states that Austen 'satirises the artificiality of the comic opera, its spontaneous outbursts of song, and distinctive lack of plot'.<sup>169</sup> The character Chloe does indeed burst into song without any apparent reason and without even having anything interesting to sing about. Chloe first enters the stage and says to herself, 'Where am I? At Hounslow. – Where go I? To London – What to do? To be married–. Unto whom? Unto Strephon. Who is he? A Youth. Then I will sing a song' (220). Then a chorus of ploughboys enter and join her in the song. No sooner has she finished her first song, read the 'bill of fare' and ordered a dish of 'a leg of beef' and 'a stinking partridge' than she says, 'And now I will sing another Song', the subject of which is her forthcoming dinner:

I am going to have my dinner,  
After which I shan't be thinner,  
I wish I had here Strephon  
For her would carve the partridge if it should be a tough one  
Chorus) Tough one, tough one, tough one,  
For he would carve the partridge if it should be a tough one. (ibid.)

In this way, 'The first Act of a Comedy' mocks the unrealistic practice in musical comedies of turning the most mundane sentiments and phenomena into songs, and humorously highlights the gap between artificiality and realism.

In all three plays, the most frequent gaps occur between different stylistic registers. This is also the main kind of gap contributing to the irony of the juvenilia's only poem, 'Ode to Pity'. The kinds of gap that are not between narrators and other narratorial personae, for example gaps involved in thwarting the audience's expectations or in breaches of style, occur in the narrative sketches as well as in the dramatic ones, and it contributes to the irony in both cases, but the irony of the dramatic sketches is based more entirely on these contrasts, for which reason they are more prominent here than in the narratives. However, Byrne observes

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 478.

<sup>169</sup> Byrne, op. cit., 23.

that Austen was influenced by dramatic satire not only in her plays, but in her narrative texts as well – not least in her childhood but also throughout her career: ‘Austen’s roots were in literary parody: she loved burlesque and never altogether abandoned it’.<sup>170</sup> Austen’s last, unfinished novel, *Sanditon*, is according to Byrne ‘extremely close in spirit to the juvenilia, a dying return to Austen’s natural medium of satire and her love of the ridiculous’.<sup>171</sup> The juvenilia are certainly imbued with this love, and all the texts hold elements of burlesque and satire, dramatic and narrative sketches alike.

## Concluding Remarks

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how the relationships between the narrators’, the implied authors’ and the characters’ attitudes in the different narrative situations found in the first two volumes of Austen’s juvenilia contribute to the irony of the sketches. Following Chatman’s model for implicit communication in narratorial commentary, it was found that the ironic situation differs between extradiegetic narration and intradiegetic narration. The extradiegetic narrators, with the exception of the Historian in ‘The History of England’, who resembles an intradiegetic narrator, are consciously ironic, close to the implied author and distant from the characters, while the intradiegetic narrator of ‘L&F’, which is the only extended intradiegetic narrative with only one narrator, is unreliable and distant from the implied author. Some of the characters in ‘L&F’ are close to the narrator, and others are close to the implied author. In both extradiegetic and intradiegetic narration, the implied author is ironic. Chatman’s concept of the implied author’s ironic intent proved a useful way of avoiding the notion of authorial intention while still being able to analyse irony, as irony must by definition have its origin in some sort of intent.

The extradiegetic narrators in Austen’s juvenilia employ the tone of a conventional sentimental narrator, and they are therefore not immediately recognisable as ironic. As the extradiegetic narrators imitate both conventional sentimental narrators and their own characters, the characters’ tone is not very different from the narrators’. The unrealistic and fundamentally ironic mode allows this – it is impossible to imagine the characters’ reason for speaking as they do, as it would have no purpose if not for the implied author’s ironic intent, but the ironic narrator is the linguistic medium that renders their speech and is therefore in charge of how the characters express themselves.

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<sup>170</sup> Byrne, op. cit., 86.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

The ironic extradiegetic narrators are in control of the comedy and aware of the humorous aspects of what they narrate, in contrast to intradiegetic narration, where the comedy is often in the narrator's unawareness of the implications of his/her own narrative. In 'L&F', the division of the characters into the contrasting ideals of Sense and Sensibility creates a chasm between two conflicting worldviews rather than just a gap between two individual personae. The fact that the narrator, who is the mediator between the story world and the reader, is on the side of Sensibility, creates a further gap between the narrator and the reader, as the text invites the reader to take the implied author's stance, that of Sense.

In the epistolary sketches with multiple 'narrators', the irony is largely based on the gaps between the attitudes of the different letter-writers, who are in varying degree close to or distant from the ironic implied author. The dramatic sketches and 'Ode to Pity' present other kinds of gaps, not related to the presence of a narrator, for example gaps between different stylistic registers. These gaps are also present in the narrative sketches, but they are more central to the irony in the dramatic sketches and the poetic sketch.

A recurring motif in the epistolary sketches is relationships between sisters. The vast majority of the letter-writers are women who write to their female friends, and in these letters their attitudes towards their sisters become apparent. The pairs of sisters also work as foils for each other and elucidate where each of the members of the pair stands with regard to the implied author. Characters such as Eloisa Lutterell and Sophy Stanhope may be 'good', but they are not closer to the implied author than their arguably less moral sisters Charlotte and Georgiana: the implied author is not itself that 'good', but values perspicacity higher than kindness and adherence to the prevailing moral code. That does not mean that the implied author does not consider it a good thing to be a good person, but the norms of these texts are not above all moral, and the irony of the texts is not prescriptive.

It also has to be pointed out that the really bad characters (Mary Stanhope and Susan Lesley) are more distant from the implied author than the good ones (Sophy Stanhope and Eloisa Lutterell); the implied author is, however, closest to the semi-good characters (Georgiana Stanhope and Charlotte Lutterell). The latter are not immoral in the way that Laura and Sophia are in 'L&F': rather than being completely depraved, they have a healthy balance between winning qualities and human flaws. Moreover, while the implied author reveals its attitude towards morality, its main concern is not morals but comedy; as long as the text is witty and entertaining, the implied author does not worry about the moral message it may be construed as putting across.

However, an area which the juvenilia can be seen as treating on some level seriously is gender. Austen's early stories, which are mostly focalised by female characters, subvert gender and class structures, and show women as active subjects rather than passive objects observed by men. Characters of both sexes cross gender boundaries, and the texts mock and defy the conventional social and literary patterns that reinforce restrictive gender roles. By showing women alternately as able to go outside and beyond their traditional roles and as stuck in their ridiculous normatively feminine behaviour, the texts use comedy to highlight the arbitrariness of gender roles.

The young Austen as feminist comedian is an implied performer as well as a writer, as the juvenilia have their original home in the performing medium of reading aloud. In performance, there is potential for more gaps than those found in the texts, as there is another sender in addition to the implied author and the narrator, namely the performer. The ironic note in the imagined performer's voice has in it both those differing attitudes which by the very contrast between them make the text ironic: the ironic implied author's mocking attitude and the unreliable narrator's self-centred attitude, or the self-centred attitude of the characters and the mocking attitude of the reliable but ironic narrator. Using these attitudinal gaps, the juvenilia observe human behaviour and present it in an absurdist and comedic form.

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