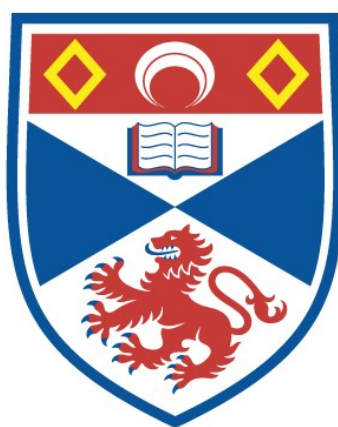


~~“THE LIGHT TOUCH OF A VERY FRIENDLY HAND”~~:
STYLE AND THE HAPTIC IN JANE AUSTEN’S MANUSCRIPTS

Fabien Jean-Jacques Troivoux

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
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~~“the light touch of a very friendly hand”~~:

Style and the Haptic in Jane Austen’s Manuscripts

Fabien Jean-Jacques Troivaux



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on Jane Austen's surviving manuscripts: those of her extant letters, of her early fiction, gathered in three handmade books (commonly called 'juvenilia'), of her later fiction, unpublished during her lifetime (commonly called 'later manuscripts'), and the early draft of two chapters of *Persuasion*. These autograph manuscripts, because they have not passed through a full editorial process, display Jane Austen's writing in its earliest stages, and permit an analysis of her writing process, and the development of her style.

After a survey of the scientific, philosophical and literary texts that informed the understanding of Austen's time, this thesis analyses occurrences of touch and the haptic in these writings, and argues that they are central to understanding her narrative and stylistic choices. Touch was an important element of her early writings and personal letters, which Austen gradually toned down in her fiction and correspondence, but which resurfaces in her final works, *Persuasion* and 'Sanditon'. Early drafts usually contain numerous haptic events, which are erased or minimised in revisions and corrections. The reader needs to infer these deletions in order fully to understand Austen's prose.

This thesis argues that references to the haptic are essential to understanding Austen's prose, because they are part of her writerly instinct, but only remain present in final drafts at critical moments, when they attain most narrative focus. It also argues that tactile and haptic instances inform Austen's very style. The grammatical, semantic and figural structures that Jane Austen uses call on ambiguity and syntagmatic suspense, which elicit in the reader a physical reaction akin to touch. Austen's style effects a mental dissonance or friction that stems from the seemingly irreconcilable elements she conjoins; these sensations are an integral part of the pleasure of the ideal reader, who is invited to be a participant in Jane Austen's creative process.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

JANE AUSTEN'S MANUSCRIPTS

BC	'The beautiful Cassandra'
CL	'A Collection of Letters'
E&E	'Edgar and Emma'
EoS	'A beautiful description of the different effects of Sensibility on different Minds'
F&E	'Frederic and Elfrida'
H&E	'Henry and Eliza'
J&A	'Jack and Alice'
<i>JAFM</i>	<i>Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts</i>
LC	'Lesley Castle'
L&F	'Love and Freindship'
<i>LM</i>	<i>Later Manuscripts</i>
LS	'Lady Susan'
LYL	'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.—'
S	'Sanditon'
T	'A Tale'
TW	'A Tour through Wales'
V	'The Visit'
W	'The Watsons'

JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

<i>E</i>	<i>Emma</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Mansfield Park</i>
<i>NA</i>	<i>Northanger Abbey</i>
<i>P</i>	<i>Persuasion</i>
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
<i>S&S</i>	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>

PERIODICALS

<i>ARIEL</i>	<i>A Review of International English Literature</i>
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>ESC</i>	<i>English Studies in Canada</i>
<i>SPELL</i>	<i>Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature</i>
<i>TLS</i>	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
COLETTE 'COCO' MIGNAL,
JANINE TROIVAUX,
NORA BARTLETT
AND BARBARA MURRAY.

INTRODUCTION

THE BODY

In August 2019, the first ever screen adaptation of Jane Austen's unfinished novel 'Sanditon' (S) was released.¹ The reviews were not unanimously positive. While screenwriter Andrew Davies (of *Pride and Prejudice* renown) respects the basic elements of the plot, the adaptation has a more Victorian than Regency feel, and therefore seems unduly modernised.² One scene in particular ('Episode 1', 29:20 - 29:50), and its revisitations ('Episode 1', 37:15 - 37:55 and 40:15 - 41:50), has caused controversy.³ Clara Brereton, one of the protagonists, refers to a recent *tête-à-tête* encounter with the rake Sir Edward Denham, in cryptic terms. In 'Sanditon', the pair are "sitting so near each other and appea[r] so closely engaged in gentle conversation, that ... Privacy [is] certainly their object".⁴ The transformation of the original scene into an overtly sexual one, though

¹ *Sanditon* (Oliver Blackburn, Lisa Clarke and Charles Sturridge, 2019). 'Sanditon', in Janet Todd and Linda Bree (eds.), Jane Austen, *Later Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 137-209. Hereafter *LM*.

² *Pride and Prejudice* (Simon Langton, 1995).

³ See Chitra Ramaswamy, 'Sanditon Review – Every Period Drama Box is Ticked', *The Guardian*, 25 August 2019, [accessed online, unpaginated]. She refers to Davies as the "grandfather of the sexed-up British period drama" and calls the scene in question "the deer-spotting that turns out to be the bounder Sir Edward Denham rutting with a girl of whom he is ruthlessly taking advantage".

⁴ *LM*, p. 208.

fascinating, does not seem warranted by the text.⁵ Clara's confidence that she "was obliged to do something [she] didn't want to do, to avoid something even worse", a thinly veiled reference to the erotic stimulation and release of Sir Edward, is a rather wild extrapolation on Davies' part. Its language, however, is congruent with Austen's narrative tendency to exclude physical, tactile details, which therefore become events *à-clefs* that the reader is left to restore. This thesis addresses a critical gap concerning Austen's use of the haptic, and the way she expresses occurrences of touch through her prose style, on the syntactic-syntagmatic level of the sentence.⁶

In the novels that formed Jane Austen's reading, everyday mentions of touch are plethoric. The novels of Samuel Richardson, Austen's favourite novelist, and those of Frances Burney, Laurence Sterne, Henry Fielding, Maria

⁵ Tony Tanner argues that this is likely to be a secret meeting, evidenced by the "mist", which ushers in a "change of atmosphere". He does not refer to sex, however. See *Jane Austen* (London, 1986), p. 281.

⁶ The words 'tactile' and 'haptic' have been, and are sometimes still, used interchangeably. This thesis, while reluctant to claim that there is a clear scientific consensus, requires a nuanced understanding that builds on the discrete definitions which can be found in Chapter I, Part I. It is useful at this point, however, to state that 'tactile', a restrictive term, is to be understood to refer to skin contact between the body and the world (objects or other bodies), while 'haptic', a broader term, refers to any sensation that stems from the body, and therefore includes the 'tactile' as well as other more diffuse sensations (such as internal pain, nausea, pressure, etc.). A useful but perhaps dated analogy can be found in the taxonomies of the sense itself, which oscillate between 'the sense of touch' (specific) and 'the sense of feeling' (generic).

Edgeworth and Ann Radcliffe, are particularly relevant.⁷ The literature of sensibility and gothic novels contain many such references, as they closely relate to the human interactions that create moments of affect and emotion.⁸ Many of Austen's successors also frequently refer to the haptic.⁹ Austen, therefore, has a unique place in the canon. Her major novels use touch only when it is absolutely inevitable, as in episodes of dancing or music-making, but this study will show that the haptic, in Austen, is entangled in language and style, not merely in memorable physical plot devices (like the climbing child incident, the fall on the Cobb, or the *dénouement* in *Persuasion* [P]).¹⁰

⁷ See Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Bristol, 1989); and Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford, 1982).

R.F. Brissenden explains that the need for realism in late eighteenth-century novels led female novelists like Austen to distance themselves from "rape" and socially unlikely marriages. See *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London, 1974), p. 88. Edgeworth, a near contemporary of Austen, and a novelist she admired, displays a style far removed from Austen's. Joanne Altieri argues that Edgeworth's concern with didacticism, after *Castle Rackrent*, led to a perfectly balanced prose style that was supplemented by footnotes, leaving the reader no interpretative freedom. See 'Style and Purpose in Maria Edgeworth's Fiction', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 23 (1968), 265-78.

⁸ See John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability* (Oxford, 1998); and Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge, 1993). See also Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge, 2002) and Angela Wright (ed.), *Gothic Fiction* (Basingstoke, 2007).

Albert J. Rivero argues that gothic fiction is sentimental, and that both genres are united by the importance they afford feelings, particularly those of the reader. See 'Jane Austen and the Sentimental Novel', in A.J. Rivero (ed.), *The Sentimental Novel in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 208-23 [pp. 210-11].

⁹ Victorian novelists recurrently refer to touch. See e.g. Katherine J. Anderson, 'The Sensory Citizen-Witness: Liturgies of Torture in Mid-Victorian Martyrological Novel', *Victorian Review* 41 (2005), 143-61; and Kimberly Cox, 'A Touch of the Hand: Manual Intercourse in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 72 (2017), 161-91.

¹⁰ Janet Todd and Antje Blank (eds.), Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2006). Kay Young analyses touch *per se* in the final chapter of *P*, in *Imagining Minds: The Neuro-Aesthetics of Austen, Eliot, and Hardy* (Columbus OH, 2010), pp. 60-6. Her *corpus*, however, is extremely reduced.

Since the 1990s, critics have been particularly concerned with the status of touch in literary history, and certain nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors are recognised for the tactility of their writings. Michael Greenstein, writing on Saul Bellow, explains that “the tactile is a hallmark of his fiction, as characters grope for higher meaning while exploring the sensory pleasures of the quotidian”.¹¹ His point is paradoxical: the trivial “grop[ing]” of touch leads to the “the higher reaches of thought”. Renu Bora, in “Outing Texture”, offers a queer reading of the haptic in Henry James.¹²

Texture and sexuality are both problems wrought with liminals. I would like to demonstrate just how and why the pleasures of these two realms are linked...¹³

“[M]aterials, art, clothing, bodies, furniture, and architecture”, tactile matters, are indissociable from “pleasure”. Austen’s descriptions of fabric, in particular in the *Letters*, show an interest in texture, which is often related to affect.¹⁴ Like James, Austen uses innuendo as a character-building and plot-provoking strategy.¹⁵

Rebecca Scherr, writing on Gertrude Stein, describes language as purely haptic.

¹¹ Michael Greenstein, ‘Bellow’s Hand Writing: The Tactile Imagination’, *ESC* 21 (1995), 457-69 [457].

¹² Renu Bora, ‘Outing Texture’, in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (ed.), *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (Durham NC, 1997), pp. 94-127.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.

¹⁴ Deirdre Le Faye (ed.), *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 4th edn. (Oxford, 2011), pp. 25, 32, 86-7, 123-4, 149, 173, 187, 211. Hereafter *Letters*.

¹⁵ The following segments contain indisputable innuendo: *Letters*, pp. 136, 220, 281; and Peter Sabor (ed.), *Jane Austen, Juvenilia* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 35, 107. Hereafter *Juvenilia*.

Stein's belief in the materiality of language, that is, in the "thingness" of language, inspired her to use words to mime what bodies and objects feel like, to get at the essence of what they do. In this way, Stein was very much concerned with the tactile quality of language, its textures and the expression of "touchability."¹⁶

Scherr argues that Stein's language has a mimetic "tactile quality"; it is a matter of "essence" and "texture". This thesis argues that Austen similarly understood and used the "thingness" of language *avant la lettre*, that through her style, she expressed the reality of the material world, something she found less easy to do in description or narrative. In a study of modernist fiction, Abbie Garrington gives a wider interpretation of the importance of the haptic, centring on discrete "topics" ("the impact of contemporary science, travel in the urban environment, understandings of the moment, and the limits of literary representation").¹⁷ Austen does not fit within "modernism", but Garrington's engagement of the haptic enlightens Austen's writings: through narrative indirection and the haptic as style (on which this thesis concentrates), Austen's "conceptual concerns and narrative experiments" relate to touch, and she addresses both the "understandings of the moment" and the "limits of representation" that Garrington mentions. These concepts are very close to what this analysis of Austen's prose argues: the replacement of narrated real-life moments by their indirected grammatical and stylistic expressions. Garrington later provides a

¹⁶ Rebecca Scherr, 'Tactile Erotics: Gertrude Stein and the Aesthetics of Touch', *Literature Interpretation Theory* 18 (2007), 193-212 [193].

¹⁷ Abbie Garrington, 'Touching Texts: The Haptic Sense in Modernist Literature', *Literature Compass* 7 (2010), 810-23 [814].

diachronic *précis* (“Histories”) of the haptic, as well as an appended lexicon, entitled “Tactile Terminologies”:

the following terms are central to contemporary scholarship addressing touch and the tactile and/or the haptic... All are fascinating ... in the conversations they establish about the touch-point between language and somatic experience itself.¹⁸

She confirms the importance of language as relating to “touch and the tactile and/or the haptic”, which was crucial in the writings of eighteenth-century conduct-book writers and prescriptivists (see Chapter I). Words such as “callous”, “exfoliation”, “grasp”, “prehension”, “tact” and “touched”, reconcile tactile action and language in their polysemy.

Milena Marinkova, focusing on Michael Ondaatje, highlights the strong connection between the haptic and “aesthetics”, as well as “affect and emotion”.¹⁹ Her analysis defines touch as “thriving on proximity, reciprocity, dispersal, and vulnerability”, concepts that were suspect to Enlightenment philosophers (see Chapter I), who generally valued “rationality” over “feelings”.²⁰ Trish McTighe, using Samuel Beckett, delineates the all-encompassing centrality of touch in human life:

Touch has always had deep significance in human cultures—religious, ethical rules and social conventions govern what can be touched and what (and who)

¹⁸ Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh, 2013), pp. 16-19; 183.

¹⁹ Milena Marinkova, *Michael Ondaatje: Haptic Aesthetics and Micropolitical Writing* (London, 2011), p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 6; 13.

David Hume is an exception. See Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford CA, 1996), pp. 17-50.

must never be touched. It is a vital and variable element in human interaction and intimacy, from before birth and up to death.²¹

McTighe posits the importance and remits of a study of touch, which she particularly locates in the skin:

a comparatively vast, haptic boundary between body and world, putting the body in touch with the world as well as putting the body in touch with itself... The skin is both physiological—a sensory apparatus—and imaginary: a containing border, which demarcates inner and outer, “I” and “you”.²²

These remarks underline the importance of selfhood (identity and integrity); they make skin the organ of self-definition, and touch its process. This thesis is concerned with what it means for the self to touch, and for the reader to find touch stylistically in Austen’s writings.

Following Bora’s example, Kristin M. Girten’s article on Charlotte Smith’s poetry uses a surprising focus for her exploration of the haptic: pleasure.²³

Smith’s tactile poetics conveys a version of experience that is ... associated with physical proximity in which touch coordinates with other senses to induce a highly palpable form of aesthetic transport... Smith establishes a type of aesthetic pleasure that radically reconfigures the self...²⁴

The full-body “transports” that Smith’s poetic voice creates differ greatly from the traditional aesthetic representations of experience. In this respect, she might be at the opposite end of the spectrum to Austen. Lesa Scholl addresses the haptic (and its relation to the sense of taste) in George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss*:

²¹ Trish McTighe, *The Haptic Aesthetic in Samuel Beckett’s Drama* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 2-3.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²³ This understanding of Smith’s poetry is ironic, but convincing. See Jacqueline M. Labbe, *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, Poetry and the Culture of Gender* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 91-115, on Smith’s tragic “poetic persona”.

²⁴ Kristin M. Girten, ‘Charlotte Smith’s Tactile Poetics’, *The Eighteenth Century* 54 (2013), 215-30.

“proximate sensory deprivation and the blurring of sensory boundaries” between touch and taste, she argues, “work as a means of social conditioning on the Dodson children... effectively constructing their adult identities”.²⁵ Scholl sees the “proximate” senses as interdependent, whose agency is central in the forming of “identities”. This thesis argues that touch is central in forming character and cosmogonic identities in Austen’s prose, within narrative and language.

Recently, Charlotte Brontë has come to the fore in critical discussions as another haptic writer. Writing on *Jane Eyre*, Kimberly Cox laments the lack of proper analyses of the tactile in the field, and her premises and analyses are helpful in determining a frame of reference for this study.²⁶ To ““feel””, she argues, is grounded “in touching”: Jane Eyre’s “emotional state” is rooted in “physical stimuli”.²⁷ The principle behind these haptic-centric ideas is applicable to Austen’s works, but it will yield different results:

The words that [Edward] cannot speak... are conveyed tactilely through the type, pressure, and duration of the gesture; in other words, haptic communication supplants verbal and visual communication.²⁸

This form of erotic manual touch is rarely included in Austen’s mature fiction.²⁹

Charlotte Brontë is therefore helpful as a posterior point of comparison to a study

²⁵ Lesa Scholl, “For the cake was so pretty’: Tactile Interventions in Taste; or, Having One’s Cake and Eating It in *The Mill on the Floss*’, 19 23 (2016), 1-16 [3].

²⁶ Kimberly Cox, “At least shake hands’: Tactile Relations in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*’, *Victorians, A Journal of Culture and Literature* 130 (2016), 195-215 [195].

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

²⁹ With the notable exception of *Persuasion*, see Chapter IV.

of Austen's style of economy and indirection. Cox's conclusions about Brontë highlight the otherness of Austen's prose:

I argue that the Brontës, and British women writers more widely, employ manual intercourse in intense moments of emotional passion or distress to allow their characters the opportunity to convey what language fails to represent adequately, to encourage us to explore the possibilities of such tactile excess...³⁰

Austen works in direct opposition to this "tactile excess": she usually shuns touch in favour of abstracted language, in which the haptic must be reclaimed. In this broad generalisation, Austen stands outside Cox's classification of "British women writers".

The literature of Austen's period (1780s to 1820s) is full of characters who do not conform to, and sometimes openly challenge, expectations of propriety, especially when relating to sex. In Austen's fiction, they might appear harder to find. In 1986, however, David Lodge argues that sex, in "the form of sexual misbehavior", is central to the plots of Austen's novels, and the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a growth in studies of Austen's materiality alongside a spate of television and film adaptations.³¹ Laura G. Mooneyham presents the specific sexuality of *Pride and Prejudice* (*P&P*) in a very positive light:

Where else in Austen's novels do we see a heroine's petticoats, muddied or clean?... [The protagonists'] give-and-take is charged with sexual energy, a rare quality in Austen's fiction.³²

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

³¹ David Lodge, 'Jane Austen's Novels: Form and Structure', in J.D. Grey (ed.), *The Jane Austen Companion* (New York NY, 1986), pp. 165-78.

³² Laura G. Mooneyham, *Romance, Language and Education in Jane Austen's Novels* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 63.

Mooneyham identifies and lauds the *hapax* quality of Elizabeth's sexuality in action, with Darcy as its object. Mooneyham's examples also often revolve around tactile incidents (in *Mansfield Park* [MP] and *P*).³³ One in *Emma* (*E*) particularly stands out: the heroine

remains silent in mortification even as [Mr. Elton] hands her into the carriage, and when she rouses herself, reaches out with 'voice and hand eager to show a difference'.³⁴

Mooneyham recognises "hand[ing]" as a meaningful moment, especially as the "difference" in "hand" must reflect an intention in touch, and therefore identifies, in Austen's writings, a language of tactility, which effects unusual but significant results, in the absence of outright description or action.³⁵ The implications of this point are, it will be argued, essential in understanding the description of the haptic in Austen's writings as a whole. Mooneyham makes particularly helpful comments about Austen's narrative choices.

The duel between Willoughby and Colonel Brandon ... is commented upon so briefly and placidly that a careless reader might fail to know it happened at all. Elopements and illegitimate children, harrowing sea-battles and naval disasters, can be found, but they are in the backorder of narrative business.³⁶

Mooneyham goes straight to the haptic. Fighting and sex are the core of the "underbelly" of the novels. Through Austen's indirection, they are hard to spot, but crucial, narrative and character-building elements in the novels. What is

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 71, 76, 78 and p. 171 respectively.
John Wiltshire (ed.), Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Cambridge, 2005).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³⁵ See Mullan on the "semantics of gesture" (*Sentiment and Sociability*, p. 68).

³⁶ Mooneyham, *Romance, Language and Education*, p. ix.

missing is relevant: the ‘action’ takes place offstage. “Austen no doubt considered a love scene between Fanny and Edmund an unnecessary effusion.”³⁷ Touch is subsumed in “effusion”, and its absence is revealing. This thesis argues that Austen found an idiosyncratic way of displaying the sexuality necessary to her plots, without compromising the new style she was defining.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in the groundbreaking article ‘Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl’, emphasises the violently negative response her research received, despite the twentieth-century medical consensus regarding masturbation.³⁸ She explains that “the disciplinary discourse around masturbation has been aimed at discovering or inventing proprietary traces”.³⁹ Sedgwick’s line of thinking has paved the way for a study of touch: while touch is not necessarily autoerotic (in either root of the adjective), it is a “traceless practice” that remains marginal to literary studies and threatens “propriety and property”. Using the *Sense and Sensibility* (*S&S*) episode in which Marianne asks Elinor not to question her about her romance with Willoughby, Sedgwick concentrates on what remains out of sight:

But who is in this bedroom scene? And, to put it vulgarly, what’s their scene? It is the naming of a man, the absent Willoughby, that both marks this as an unmistakably sexual scene, and by the same gesture seems to displace its

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³⁸ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl’, *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991), 818-37.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 820-1.

“sexuality” from the depicted bedroom space of same-sex tenderness, secrecy, longing, and frustration.⁴⁰

Sedgwick marks the scene as a “displace[d]” sexual one. Its absence of sex is characteristic of Austen’s diegetic patterns, but does not preclude its centrality.⁴¹

This study of touch builds on Sedgwick’s idea, but attempts to go further: it looks at manuscript source texts to find missing haptic instances and chart their narrative and stylistic mechanisms.⁴² In this respect, it works on a less abstract level than the recognition of symbolism. Sedgwick hints at the haptic physicality of horseback riding (a motif Jill Heydt-Stevenson later revisits, see below):

Marianne’s overresponsiveness to her tender “seat” as a node of delight, resistance, and surrender—and its crucial position, as well, between the homosocial and heterosocial avidities of the plot—is harnessed when Elinor manipulates Marianne into rejecting Willoughby’s gift of the horse: “Elinor thought it wisest to touch that point no more...” (SS, p. 89).⁴³

Sedgwick recognises the erotic connotations of “seat” and “horse” (and adds her own equine metaphor, “harness”), but does not comment on Elinor’s conclusion and her mention of the “point” she would no longer “touch”. The phrase

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 823.

See Edward Copeland (ed.), Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (Cambridge 2006), vol. II, chap. 7, p. 205.

⁴¹ The sex scene that opens Andrew Davies’ 2008 adaptation of *S&S* exemplifies this re-centring, common in recent screen adaptations. See *Sense & Sensibility* (John Alexander, 2008).

⁴² The word ‘manuscript’, for the purpose of this thesis, will refer to the texts (and corrections) they contain, rather than to the autograph objects in paper form. Recent circumstances have made archival work difficult, even impossible for many months, which has contributed to the reliance on facsimile or transcript sources, which were readily available in both digital and paper form. As this thesis concentrates on (word) content and style rather than the materiality of writing (with very few exceptions), however, the use of autograph materials was not central in the way that it was for Kathryn Sutherland in *Jane Austen’s Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood* (Oxford, 2007), or for her editorial project *Jane Austen’s Fiction Manuscripts*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 2018).

⁴³ Sedgwick, ‘Masturbating Girl’, p. 828.

contains sexual innuendo, which reinstates the indirect sexual tension between the sisters, channelled through the equine reference.⁴⁴ Sedgwick concludes that to make “the homoerotic longing” in *S&S* “narratively palpable again” is essential if one is to queer readings of Austen. Sedgwick’s approach is bold, but her own language is also interesting: it posits touch as a way of assessing what is diegetically present.⁴⁵ This thesis will demonstrate that beyond relations to desire or sexuality in Austen’s prose, the narrative is palpable, and the palpable is narrative.

In a close reading of the famous opening encounter scene in *S&S*, the first meeting of Marianne and Willoughby, G.J. Barker-Benfield delineates the importance of physicality:

Marianne and Willoughby’s first impressions of each other are literally physical. When Marianne falls, twisting her ankle, Willoughby had “taken her up in his arms ... and carried her down the hill.” Of “manly beauty,” his “person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story,” and Austen emphasizes Willoughby’s “manly” and “exterior attractions” to the excessively passionate Marianne. Holding the distressed but conscious Marianne against him, Willoughby, in turn, registered her “striking form” and her other physical charms. This is Austen’s version of the sexual expression of uncontrolled sensibility.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Jill Heydt-Stevenson’s segment on *S&S* does not analyse the language of Willoughby, Marianne or Elinor. See *Austen’s Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History* (New York NY, 2005), pp. 58-60.

⁴⁵ Since close reading is the main analytical tool that will be used in this study, the very language used in critical works will occasionally be questioned, as well as that of Austen’s source texts. The language used by critics becomes central if one is to understand the mimetic quality of the haptic style that is often latent in critical prose.

⁴⁶ G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago IL, 1992), p. 335.

For Barker-Benfield, the “physical”, however tactile or “sexual”, does not give rise to an analysis of touch *per se*, and “sensibility” seemingly has little to do with the senses. Elizabeth Newark’s more recent commentary evinces the “lasting effect” on Marianne of “Prolonged physical contact” with Willoughby: Marianne is characterised as an “untouched female”.⁴⁷ Nora Bartlett’s analysis of the same episode is also a good counterpoint, as it is full of haptic references: “touch her”, “pick her up”, “carry her”, “move her”, “lifts her”, “readiness to touch”, “strength and tenderness”, “male nursing”.⁴⁸

The integrity of the body in Austen’s fiction is one of John Wiltshire’s main concerns, who explains that “obvious restraints are put upon the discussion of bodily matters”, and that “bodily expression” is “severely curtailed” in the “novels of a polite society”.⁴⁹ Wiltshire addresses the body and its “expressions” in Austen’s works, making it a gendered issue. He generally sees the body only in isolation, as shown by his analysis of Marianne’s changing bodily signals throughout the novel.⁵⁰ But he does not address the haptic implications of the scenes he focuses on. He concentrates on body language rather than the significance of direct physical contact between characters and their surroundings (touching hands, touching objects, etc.). The following example, in which

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Newark, ‘Words Not Spoken: Courtship and Seduction in Jane Austen’s Novels’, in B. Stovel and L.W. Gregg (eds.), *The Talk in Jane Austen* (Edmonton AB, 2002), pp. 207-24 [p. 214].

⁴⁸ Nora Bartlett, *Jane Austen: Reflections of a Reader* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 98-9.

⁴⁹ John Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body: ‘The Picture of Health’* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 1.

⁵⁰ Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body*, pp. 34-5.

Wiltshire revisits the episode chosen by Sedgwick, is one of his few segments that does mention a tactile occurrence, but he does not take into account the haptic core of the interaction:

Marianne, overwhelmed with grief, ‘almost screamed with agony’. Elinor in these moments shares her sensibility. Moved by the sympathy for her sister... she ‘took her hand, kissed her affectionately several times, and then gave way to a burst of tears’ and it is Marianne who, Elinor-like, restrains herself, ‘covering her face with a handkerchief’ (182) so as to repress her screams of agony.⁵¹

Touch is a key narrative element in this episode, but Wiltshire’s analysis does not delve into the haptic ramifications of the scene, and the body remains in isolation. By focusing on illness, blushing and symbolism, Wiltshire usually stays clear of bodily interaction; neither touch nor other forms of hapticity are properly analysed.⁵² In his analysis of the dynamics of the main love triangle in *MP*, however, he comes close to expressing the importance of the haptic in diegesis:

The sentence that describes Edmund and Mary’s physical proximity is also describing Fanny’s increasingly aroused jealousy... the five observations included in the sentence progressively build up, as it accelerates with the increasing intimacy of the gestures she strains to catch sight of. ‘She saw it’: the sentence’s climax encloses Fanny’s excitement at the same time as it mimics the gesture – Edmund enclosing Mary’s hand – that is its provocation.⁵³

Exceptionally, Wiltshire here provides a precise analysis of correlated haptic and linguistic processes. This thesis will develop Wiltshire’s line of analysis in this

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵² Mary Ann O’Farrell’s *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth Century English Novel and the Blush* (Durham NC, 1997), and Katie Halsey’s ‘The Blush of Modesty or the Blush of Shame? Reading Jane Austen’s Blushes’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 42 (2006), 226-38, later revisit the importance of blushing.

⁵³ Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body*, p. 69.

marginal example in relation to similar instances of touch in Austen's works. Focusing on haptic occurrences will support the theory that Austen uses touch simultaneously as a (rare) significant event, and as a (recurrent) linguistic and diegetic resource.

Clara Tuite's study of sexual politics focuses on female friendship: she defines "romantic friendship" as "a respectable ideal of female homosociality and sociability". The fact that it also includes "sexual forms of intimacy between women – a whole range of platonic and sexual 'betweenities'" complicates the matter, however.⁵⁴ Tuite's description allows for the existence of regular tactile intercourse between women that verges on the sexual, and need not be expressed explicitly. Tuite is always sensitive to the sexual tension inherent in Austen's texts (see her analyses of 'Catharine' and 'Sanditon'), but she usually interprets scenes of touch symbolically rather than tactilely.⁵⁵

Margaret Doody (who agrees with Tuite on the deuterocanonicity of the early works) presents the famous exceptional moment of the "amber cross" episode in *MP* (a symbolic use of an object of touch) as a paragon occurrence.⁵⁶

Rarely hitherto in Austen's novels does a character pick out an unconventional physical object as an objective correlative for a state of mind or relationship... The amber cross received from William is an emblematic object to Fanny – and to Mary, a skilful reader of objects... In turn, Fanny

⁵⁴ Clara Tuite, *Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39 and 162 respectively.

⁵⁶ Compare Tuite, *Romantic Austen*, p. 27, and Margaret Anne Doody, 'Introduction' in Jane Austen, *Catharine and Other Writings* (Oxford, 1993), pp. ix-xxxviii.

feels that taking a chain which came from Henry is really chaining herself to him... All four characters are thus playing with an emblem of attachment.⁵⁷

The cross is an *Ersatz* of multiple types of touch, which binds the four characters together (in a brotherly, proto-sexual, unrequited, pseudo-sisterly, abusive catenation). Thing theory (see Chapter I) is here given the ascendancy over character analysis. As mentioned above, this thesis will endeavour to show that the haptic may occasionally manifest through symbolism, but that it needs to be analysed as an essential diegetic and stylistic feature.

⁵⁷ Doody, 'Turns of Speech and Figures of Mind', in C.L. Johnson and C. Tuite (eds.), *A Companion to Jane Austen* (Chichester, 2009), pp. 165-84 [pp. 176-7].

NARRATIVE

Since the 1980s, many critics have agreed that sex is central to understanding Austen's novels, but have not envisaged her narratives as systems that are defined by their connection with sexuality, and through sexuality, with touch. Austen criticism has, however, shown an interest in the way "perception" is dealt with in narrative. Laurel Brinton's article on "represented perception" is a good starting point.

'[R]epresented perception' ... blend[s] the external and internal worlds in a fictional text: the physical world, as expressed normally in authorial description, becomes sense perceptions in a character's consciousness.⁵⁸

She locates "represented perception" in the continuum of free indirect discourse and underlines its links with "consciousness", but also identifies the main epistemological issue this poses:

the author ... can directly verbalize the perceptions without implying that the character himself has verbalized them. Considered as a problem of mimesis, perceptions are, of course, not verbal or even potentially verbal. This consideration has relevance when translated into a linguistic problem: perceptions cannot occur in direct quotation.⁵⁹

This theoretical consideration is astute: perception is ontologically unrelated to words, and "quotation" is therefore impossible. This is particularly true of haptic perception, which cannot possess an external frame of reference.

⁵⁸ Laurel Brinton, "Represented Perception": A Study in Narrative Style', *Poetics* 9 (1980), 363-81 [363].

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

Mary Poovey's monograph envisages touch from a different angle.⁶⁰ She mentions "Austen's famous decorum and reserve", and points out that she had a "complex relationship to the values of her society", and used "irony and skilful manipulation of point of view" to address the "ideological contradictions" of her time, thus correlating social issues with stylistic and diegetic ones.⁶¹ Poovey explains that Austen "always tactfully and with ladylike restraint" is able to "criticize the way [the ideology of propriety] changed and deformed women's desires", thus reintroducing the topic of sexuality into the literature of the period.⁶² Indirection is crucial to Austen's diegetic flair; Poovey's analysis helps understand its workings:

In order to win the husband necessary to their social position, women must gratify both of men's desires by concealing whatever genuine emotions they feel so as to allow men to believe that *they* have all the power. Women must use indirection, in other words, the allure of "romantic refinements," and the subterfuges of manners and modesty in order to arouse male desires and assuage male anxieties.⁶³

In her prose, Austen uses indirection as a mimetic strategy, reproducing gender stereotypes and casting her characters in socially sanctioned roles. By displacing natural expressions of her own writerly motives, she also transfers the power of imagination and pursuit to the reader, thus placed in a dominant position. The

⁶⁰ Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago IL, 1984).

⁶¹ Poovey, *Proper Lady*, p. xvii.
Bettina Fischer-Starcke, in *Corpus Linguistics in Literary Analysis: Jane Austen and her Contemporaries* (London, 2010), uses *Northanger Abbey* (NA) for a corpus stylistics analysis that focuses on emotion and irony.

⁶² Poovey, *Proper Lady*, p. 47.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

topics that cannot be broached directly in her writings nevertheless remain indirectly present.⁶⁴

In her study of *Persuasion*, Austen's most overtly tactile novel, Poovey provides important analytical elements relating to narrative indirection.

Austen's dividing her fiction into public and private spheres means that all the potentially subversive content is relegated to the margins of the action or to a carefully confined arena... This separation is essential.⁶⁵

The subversive haptic part of the "private sphere" that is relegated to the margins.⁶⁶ For Poovey, this confinement is therefore "essential" not only in the impact it has on narrative, but also as a way of keeping romance realistic.

[I]ndirection also frequently appears as substitution, as resolutions blocked at one level of a narrative and then displaced by other subjects that are more amenable to symbolic transformation.⁶⁷

According to Poovey, the "indirection" to which touch is subject shifts the focus of the narrative, and the reader's attention. This phenomenon needs to be identified and analysed to define the "symbolic transformation" that is not available in directly expressed touch. The haptic is almost always "repressed" to a secret level that is not voiced, but influences the "public" level, especially through the agency of feelings. The intrusions of the secret narrative of touch are central to Austen's diegetic strategies, because they are always critical, and effect character and social

⁶⁴ The fact that Fenela Ann Childs' doctoral thesis on manners does not refer to touch is arresting. See 'Prescriptions for Manners in English Courtesy Literature, 1690-1760, and their Social Implications' (University of Oxford, 1984).

⁶⁵ Poovey, *Proper Lady*, p. 238.

⁶⁶ Poovey's argument looks forward to Claudia L. Johnson's, who made Austen's subversiveness central. See *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago IL, 1988).

⁶⁷ Poovey, *Proper Lady*, p. 242.

definition. Poovey further explains: “Indirection itself is a symbolic action, and, as such, it creates imaginative freedom where there would otherwise be only inhibition, restraint, and frustration”.⁶⁸ She thus points to a biographical as well as an artistic premise: Austen used indirection because romantic touch was largely unavailable to her and therefore could not be rendered realistically. This thesis argues that the haptic is latent in Austen’s mature narratives; touch is present but not expressed. Manifest instances are therefore exceptional narratorial interventions that crystallise key outbursts of feeling.

Marxist critic James Thompson argues that Austen’s indirection stems from the fact that the more they feel, the less her characters can express their feelings (Fanny Price is an extreme example).⁶⁹ He sees the agency of narration as allowing the transient emergence of both materiality and affect:

In Austen’s language and in her descriptive technique, we can discern a recurrent pattern in which the fundamental elements of the fictional world, material things as well as ideal sentiments, are indicated but not described—they are briefly exposed and then withdrawn from view again. The “inner life” of characters in general is both presented and protected by a pattern of privacy.⁷⁰

Thompson’s argument helps explain the complex strategy of indirection that goes on in Austen, and covers actions, including haptic ones, and not simply “material things” and “sentiments”. Thompson, for example, describes Austen’s romantic resolutions as a *locum* of indirection: Edward’s proposal in *S&S* “takes place in a

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁶⁹ James Thompson, *Between Self and World: The Novels of Jane Austen* (University Park PA, 1988).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

narrative hiatus, as Austen assertively refuses to gratify the reader's curiosity".⁷¹

This "narrative hiatus" is a discrete device of indirection, which covers what Thompson sees as an expressibility gap, allowing touch to remain untouched. He broaches the stylistics of sex, however:

True intimacy does not exist within the novel proper because Austen indicates that it cannot be portrayed... Language begins to falter in the proposal scene and thereafter is replaced by physicality—facial expression, looks, gestures, and touch, hints of sexuality—all extralinguistic forms of communication and union. True intimacy is quintessentially private, and so to represent it is to violate it, to provide just another false or partial intimacy.⁷²

Thompson posits a continuum of touch that includes intimacy and sexuality, which can never be expressed through words. In this reading, Austen represents life in ways that other novelists do not, when she leaves touch out of the picture. What Thompson fails to take into consideration is the possibility that touch might find other modes of expression through language itself, meta-diegetically and meta-linguistically.

Claudia Johnson also broaches the theme of indirection, which she sees as a subversive tool: marginal women writers

smuggle in their social criticism, as well as the mildest of reformist projects, through various means of indirection—irony, antithetical pairing, double plotting, the testing or subverting of overt, typically doctrinaire statement with contrasting dramatic incident.⁷³

Johnson thus describes indirection as a technique inherited from "marginal" and "unequivocally radical writers", opening the way for the explication of subtle

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁷² Thompson, *Between Self and World*, pp. 175-6.

⁷³ Johnson, *Women, Politics, and the Novel*, pp. xxiii-iv.

subversive elements in Austen's novels. While Johnson does include in this spectrum of indirection several large-scale narrative or symbolic elements ("double plotting", "dramatic incident" ...), she does not consider linguistic devices.

In comparison to that of her contemporaries, Austen's fiction is exceedingly discreet. Though she never excludes the illicit entirely, she displaces it onto the periphery of her plots. But from there it exercises considerable influence.⁷⁴

Johnson's description of Austen's fiction as "discreet" gestures to Austen's indirect strategies and their importance in her plots, as well as the wider meanings of these events. This thesis will look at the disruptive effects of smaller-scale haptic devices, and at their evolution in Austen's writing career. Her treatment of sexuality, firmly grounded in haptic incidents and language, is not "abstract".

Jill Heydt-Stevenson makes the interactive body central to discussions of Austen's fiction. She goes further than other critics interested in both the haptic and diegesis, stating that "[a]ll of Austen's works show her rules for female behaviour take form in the body and... make palpable what is often invisible".⁷⁵ Although Heydt-Stevenson claims that the "palpable body" is central in understanding Austen's politics, her work has not focused on touch: she has analysed the metaphorical body, the mind-body (the seat of the emotions), and the body in language, but she has not looked at the haptic body. Heydt-Stevenson's numerous references to sex are central to her argument. For example,

⁷⁴ Johnson, *Women, Politics, and the Novel*, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 207.

when Willoughby kisses the lock of Marianne's hair that his begging has secured, he "metonymically kisses [Marianne's] body and body parts", in the "grammar of sexual exploitation" present in *S&S*.⁷⁶ Heydt-Stevenson approaches this incident of touch through its metaphoric significance. She views its intrinsic eroticism only as part of a wider context. The *Ersatz* lock of hair is significant in the eroticism of the act, and also in Heydt-Stevenson's equation of sexuality with "grammar". By contrast, the interrelation of touch and language is exactly what this study will focus on. For Heydt-Stevenson, Mr. Collins' haptic interactions are particularly significant.

Charlotte's spontaneous "scheme," the couple's "accidental" meeting in the lane, and Mr. Collins's "fire and independence" when he "throws" his body at her feet, amuse because they employ the mechanical gestures of beings programmed to enact the ideology of romantic love. They ape dynamic sexual energy here in a robotic way—hilarious in its brittleness...⁷⁷

The haptic courtship Collins effects is risible because fake and "robotic": his body touches mechanically rather than sentiently, and touch does not lead to proper (self-) knowledge. Elizabeth Bennet's situation is worse: "her union with him disables her senses, shutting down at least three avenues of perception". She suffers from "perspectival and sensory deprivations".⁷⁸ Heydt-Stevenson's description of Elizabeth's dancing with Collins as an "inverted orgasm" is apt, as the evocative language and the haptic motions, both reminiscent of thwarted

⁷⁶ Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 39.
See *S&S*, vol. I, chap. 12, p. 71.

⁷⁷ Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 77.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-8.
See Scholl on "sensory deprivation", above.

love-making, converge. The intolerable length and awkwardness of the experience emphasise the need to parse explicit references to touch in order to explicate the intricacies of Austen's writings. In the parsing process, the reader needs to rise to Austen's challenge and become a co-creator of meaning.⁷⁹ Heydt-Stevenson's analyses extricate sexual connotations from now lost cultural references.⁸⁰ This study will go further by drawing out the haptic from the intrinsic style and grammatical structure of Austen's prose, beyond reference.⁸¹

While she does not (often) focus on the haptic, Heydt-Stevenson's argument helps reclaim the hapticity of laughter.⁸² In *P&P*,

Elizabeth's laugh arises from an aroused body-mind rather than a disembodied intellect. Jane's smile activates only the muscles of her face, and bespeaks a certain restraint; Elizabeth's laugh, like Lydia's, animates her whole system. A transporting mental and physical bliss belong to the heroine...⁸³

⁷⁹ Patricia H. Michaelson's study advocates the co-creative dramatic role of the reader, especially in the context of reading aloud. See *Speaking Volumes: Women, Reading, and Speech in the Age of Austen* (Stanford CA, 2002), pp. 180-215.

See also affect theorists E.M. Dadlez, 'Form Affects Content: Reading Jane Austen', *Philosophy and Literature* 32 (2008), 315-29; and Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca NY, 2004). Brennan helpfully connects psychology, feelings, language and the body (hormones are the body's physiological response to affect).

⁸⁰ Heydt-Stevenson's study of Austen's hidden meanings is therefore particularly helpful to contemporary readers, who might otherwise remain "dull Elves", and fail to understand the deeper stylistic layers of her prose (Austen's expression, see *Letters*, 29 January 1813, p. 210).

⁸¹ Heydt-Stevenson explained on 15 July 2021, in the course of a Q&A session at an online conference entitled 'Jane Austen and the Senses: A Symposium', that she was interested in elucidating the haptic nature of Austen's prose when she wrote *Unbecoming Conjunctions*.

⁸² Jan Fergus analyses the power of laughter (related to irony and prescriptivism) more specifically in 'The Power of Women's language and Laughter', in B. Stovel and L.W. Gregg (eds.), *The Talk in Jane Austen* (Edmonton AB, 2002), pp. 103-21.

⁸³ Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 100.

Heydt-Stevenson's comment explores the hapticity of "smiling" and "laughing", and emphasises the importance of the body in intellectual and emotional matters, which she calls the "body-mind", a useful compound. She further positively comments on the sexuality inherent in the haptic in *M*: "'To be driven by him, next to being dancing with him, was certainly the greatest happiness in the world'"'.⁸⁴ The sexual connotations in this sentence hinge on the comparison between Henry Tilney's gentle firmness and John Thorpe's rape-like coercion. The very grammatical form, a double progressive present ("being dancing"), focuses so intently on the instant and immediate pleasure of the tactile sensation that it supplants the external world, or obliterates it. This grammatical ecstasy, contrasted with Elizabeth's traumatic experience of dancing with Mr. Collins, highlights the eroticism of dancing. Through her analysis of displacement, Heydt-Stevenson makes violent sexual episodes central, like Thorpe's abduction of Catherine Morland:

Most of the sounds in this passage—Catherine's crying and Thorpe's lashing and smacking—are recognizable and distressing. His nonlinguistic discharges—his unspecified "odd noises" (are they grunts, grinding teeth, whistles?) are repulsive, though readers often nervously laugh at them. His nebulous emissions suggest the "unnarratab[ility]" of rape ... and in turn open the way for a reading of the episode as a scene of primal violence where noises become defamiliarised.⁸⁵

Actual touch (physical violence against Thorpe's horses), associated with the metaphorical rape of Catherine, is indeed realised in a haptic medium: the

⁸⁴ Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 122.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2.

emission of sounds.⁸⁶ The noises can be construed as bestial orgasmic ones, which are as incontrollable as they are involuntary, and far removed from language (but not communication).⁸⁷

Austen's conjunctions allow for the simultaneous apprehension of paradoxical responses when she presents courtship as comic and moving, as erotic and ridiculous, as satisfying and disturbing.⁸⁸

The “conjunctions” phenomenon can be expanded outwards to Austen's language itself, which conciliates this duality, via juxtaposition, metaphor and syntagm. Austen's prose is dual in essence, even outwith “conjunctions”, and takes on a social dimension, in the subversive machinations that co-engage author, text and reader. This study will focus on the coded pairing of touch and language, and will analyse some of the instances that even as attentive a reader as Heydt-Stevenson has overlooked. Austen's work is eloquently summarised at the end of the monograph:

Austen's unbecoming conjunctions ... multiply and problematize meanings by rendering each half of the conjunction absurd or indeterminate at the same time; by thus emphasizing context and point of view, they destabilize any ready access to firm judgements and tidy truths.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Jeffrey Herrle recognises the animal nature of Thorpe's communication. See ‘The Idiolects of the Idiots: The Language and Conversation of Jane Austen's Less-Than-Savoury Suitors’, in B. Stovel and L.W. Gregg (eds.), *The Talk in Jane Austen* (Edmonton AB, 2002), pp. 237-51 [p. 240]. By saying too much, and showing little sense, these men display a speech policy contrary to Austen's (and her heroines') canons, and are fundamentally opposed to euphemism, tact and finesse (see Chapter III).

⁸⁷ This displacement of deleterious touch into words prefigures the “inverted orgasm” discussed above (Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Connections*, pp. 77-8).

⁸⁸ Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, pp. 25-6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

Austen's creative choices are here neatly defined: they rely on 'both-and' readings of her connections. The "absurd and indeterminate" is more visible in the peripheral writings, but Heydt-Stevenson rightly perceives it in all the novels. She does not envisage "juxtapositions" in a stylistic sense, but this thesis will argue that they too are essential to Austen's style.

Occasionally, even Heydt-Stevenson misses some of Austen's crucial puns and linguistic allusions to indirected problems:

Charlotte's "home and her housekeeping, her parish and her poultry, and all their dependent concerns, had not *yet* lost their charms"... The alliteration here, rare in Austen, reinforces the grim puns inherent in parish (perish) and poultry (paltry), all of it inadequate compensation for the loss of plastic and responsive mindfulness.⁹⁰

One may disagree with Heydt-Stevenson's assessment of the recurrence of "alliteration". It is frequently present (especially in the *Juvenilia* and 'Sanditon', see Chapters II and IV), but often inconspicuously so, and it therefore goes undetected, like most of Austen's stylistic hallmarks. It might also be a case of redoubled figures of speech, as the juxtapositions and possible distributive syntax equate the absent 'flock' with "poultry", and the "housekeeping" with the absence of a true "home". "[D]ependent concerns" may also be a pun on the fear of sexual relations and pregnancy ('dependant') that intimacy with Mr. Collins would effect, and which rounds off the picture of Charlotte's anxiogenic haptic world. Heydt-Stevenson's focus on forgotten references and innuendos helps recognise the eroticism present in Austen's trove of reference. The

⁹⁰ Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 79.

conclusion of *Austen's Unbecoming Connections*, though it reiterates the centrality of the body in the Austen *corpus* (“not something incidental or anomalous”), still suggests that Heydt-Stevenson’s understanding of the word remains disembodied, in the same way as Wiltshire’s.⁹¹ This thesis will build on previous studies to read the body in the movement of the sentence.

Recent criticism on print culture offers another approach to the materiality of touch. In her analysis of the implications of working with manuscripts, Kathryn Sutherland occasionally reflects on the haptic aspects of Austen’s biographical life:

When Austen-Leigh equates Jane Austen’s literary creativity to her other forms of manual dexterity—her use of sealing wax, her games with cup and ball and spilkins—he delights the reader with the unaccustomed intimacy:

Jane Austen was successful in everything that she attempted with her fingers. None of us could throw spilkins in so perfect a circle, or take them off with so steady a hand. Her performances with cup and ball were marvellous. The one used at Chawton was an easy one, and she has been known to catch it on the point above an hundred times in succession, till her hand was weary...⁹²

Austen-Leigh evokes the tactile nature of Austen’s entertainment and skill in the context of familial, intimate information. Her “dexterity” and evident interest in these games make the haptic a documented part of Austen’s biography.⁹³

Sutherland glances at this on the way to a comment about the hapticity of writing:

Autograph manuscripts ... are highly individual, unique documentary witnesses... Working drafts provide the somatic clues to this unusual

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁹² Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, p. 86.

⁹³ For more information on ‘Toys and Games’, see David Selwyn, *Jane Austen and Leisure* (London, 1999), pp. 261-75.

specificity—the wayward spelling, irregular dashes, and erasures—the signs of the hand’s performance of the mind’s bidding, which are effaced by print.⁹⁴

Sutherland’s description of the writing process through attention to manuscripts emphasises the specifically corporeal, haptic nature of writing. “Working drafts” are the closest one can get to unmediated authorial intention and realisation. The writerly notebook is another object particularly worthy of attention: according to Sutherland, the “insertion” of revision patches

displays a particular feminine frugality in her craft as a writer, Austen appearing to have returned to her manuscript on one particular occasion and patched or mended it in much the same way as she might patch a smock or darn a stocking.⁹⁵

Sutherland’s presentation of textual evidence, found in the paper and Austen’s ministrations, brings the art of writing to a new tactile level. Sutherland gives particular attention to the importance of the writing process, arguing that autograph materials are essential in delineating Austen’s idiosyncrasies and intentions, less than evident in published texts, which have been ‘doctored’ in edition and printing. Sutherland does not, however, discern the haptic nature of the transition between idea and writing inherent in the authorial process. This thesis will use the manuscript notebooks to effect as close an analysis of the source texts as possible, as only these can give access to the earliest stages of Austen’s stylistic expression. Rowan Rose Boyson also comments on the haptic nature of reading and writing:

⁹⁴ Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, p. 119.

⁹⁵ Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, p. 147.

even silent reading requires a whole bodily repertoire of sensual practices: touching an embossed leather binding, squinting in candlelight, absorbing paper's sweet aroma... Shaping the emerging literary domain and participating in a broader culture preoccupied with sensation and perception, Enlightenment writers went so far as to ask whether literary language might provide the condition for having any sensual experience at all.⁹⁶

These comments accord perfectly with Austen's depictions of her own experience in the *Letters*.⁹⁷ The last remark in particular helps us understand Austen's worldview of touch: though it is present because essential and therefore inevitable, it finds its place in the linguistics and stylistics of her writings rather than in the fictional worlds she creates.⁹⁸

Through her focus on perception, and building on the work Brinton initiated, Pallarés-García dedicates an article and her doctoral thesis to the study of "narrated perception".⁹⁹ She briefly tackles "tactile experience", but her analysis remains centred on the other senses (mostly sight and hearing), and does not address the *minutiæ* of haptic perception. Her data, presented in two tables, shows that purely "tactile perception" is statistically more than negligible.¹⁰⁰

'Narrated perception' ... is ... used to render the sensory perceptions of a fictional character – visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and so on – without

⁹⁶ Rowan Rose Boyson, 'The Senses in Literature: Pleasures of Imagining in Poetry and Prose', in A.C. Villa (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 2014), pp. 155-78.

⁹⁷ See the following references to reading in the *Letters*: pp. 115, 157, 174, 215, 288.

⁹⁸ See Chapter I (Part I) for a discussion of the philosophical writings that shaped Austen's understanding and that of her contemporaries.

⁹⁹ Elena Pallarés-García, 'Narrated Perception Revisited: The Case of Jane Austen's *Emma*', *Language and Literature* 21 (2012), 170-88; and 'Narrated Perception and Point of View in the Novels of Jane Austen' (doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2014).

¹⁰⁰ Pallarés-García 2014, pp. 175-6; 201-2.

explicitly reporting an act of perception; instead, objects, people, events and phenomena (e.g. sounds, smells) are described as they are sensed by that character...¹⁰¹

This technique is related to discourse and its various forms (FIS, FIT...). Pallarés-García's "and so on" implies the existence of other objects of narrated perception, such as motion, temperature, pain or pleasure. Most of her direct mentions of touch concern *Persuasion*, Austen's most haptic novel:

NP [narrated perception] in *P* has a strong tactile component, rendering Anne's awareness of spaces and people around her, especially Captain Wentworth, with an element of desire and search for knowledge of other people's feelings.¹⁰²

The last novel is set apart from the rest in terms of tactility, which reveals the heroine's "desire" to know "other people". In the earlier novels, instances of touch are usually implicit, and deduced from the circumstances, rather than evidenced in description or emphasis. The margins are Austen's most common *locum* of tactile representation.

NP allows [Austen] to introduce a subtle, indirect way of representing a bodily dimension, sometimes suggesting tactile experience... in this regard it can be argued that her use of this technique is an innovative exploration of the sensory realm.¹⁰³

These instances of "physical sensation" are also manifestations of the haptic. But because she concentrates on desire rather than pain or pleasure, Pallarés-García remains somewhat removed from an actual study of the tactile. Even evident

¹⁰¹ Pallarés-García 2012, p. 171.

¹⁰² Pallarés-García 2014, p. 10.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

cases do not lead to a full haptic analysis, for example in *Emma*, when Mr. Knightley presses Emma's hand.¹⁰⁴

NP in sentences 3 and 5 represents tactile and visual perceptions ('He looked at her with a glow of regard', 'He took her hand, pressed it, and certainly was on the point of carrying it to his lips—when, from some fancy or other, he suddenly let it go'). Another epistemic modal is used here ('certainly'), and 'suddenly' suggests movement, absence of touch and perhaps also Emma's surprise and disappointment.¹⁰⁵

Pallarés-García paradoxically describes this episode, which displays indubitable tactile interaction, as “absence of touch”, because Mr. Knightley does not kiss Emma's hand.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan (eds.), Jane Austen, *Emma* (Cambridge, 2005), vol. III, chap. 9, p. 420.

¹⁰⁵ Pallarés-García 2014, p. 86.

STYLE

Austen's impersonal, discreet prose style has always interested critics. Mary Lascelles, in 1939, was the first to devote a monograph to it.¹⁰⁶ She took into account the whole of Austen's extant writings, thus allowing for a diachronic and trans-genre study of her stylistic development.¹⁰⁷

By what method did Jane Austen achieve this discreet use of idiosyncrasy in speech? The corrections in her rough drafts seem to have something to tell. Both in *The Watsons* and in *Sanditon* she can be seen sketching out first what her characters have to communicate, and then marking, by gradual little touches, the manner of communication...¹⁰⁸

Lascelles describes "corrections" as "touches", which here correspond to changes in register. She presents the manuscript evidence as a narrative of Austen's diegetic process, using haptic terms.¹⁰⁹ While Lascelles' focus was mostly on the linguistic idiosyncrasies of Austen's characters, and the psychological and social dimensions effected by Austen's realism, her monograph also helped later critics take into consideration Austen's peripheral works.¹¹⁰

K.C. Phillipps goes further than Lascelles in his description of Austen's boldness. He uses a technical analysis of Austen's lexis and grammar to comment on style, and explains that her predilection for the "Passive Voice" voluntarily

¹⁰⁶ Mary Lascelles, *Jane Austen and her Art* (Oxford, 1963).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁹ Sutherland revisited this correlation more recently. See *Textual Lives*, e.g. p. 173.

¹¹⁰ Lascelles rejoiced at the publication, in 1951, of the last missing pieces of the juvenilia (*Volume the Third*), as they help understand "the development of Jane Austen's art". See 'Review of *Volume the Third* by Jane Austen', *The Review of English Studies* 3 (1952), 183-5.

creates “dangling” prepositions, thus shifting focus and emphasis.¹¹¹ Austen’s use of proximity, pointing and stressing imply penetration on her part, which makes an analysis of her linguistic tricks all the more relevant. Phillipps’ section on “Grammatical conversion” also highlights instances when Austen transgresses word categories, and her propensity to create compounds.¹¹² He emphasises her “daring” in the “freedom” she takes with linguistic norms.

Norman Page sees Austen writing at her best in *Persuasion*, which he recurrently describes as *avant-garde*: Austen is an innovator who stands out (“like Virginia Woolf”) from her early nineteenth-century peers.¹¹³ He recognises in her style both semantic and syntactic mastery: “familiar word[s]” are her weapon of choice, because in her prose, they carry “unusual weight”.¹¹⁴ He commends its “versatility of calculated syntactical effects”, ultimately correlating, as Lascelles did, “stylistic interest and variety” with “characterization”.¹¹⁵ Page reiterates these points in a later essay, resurrecting his comparison to Woolf “in style and sensibility”, calling *Persuasion* an example of “experimental prose”.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ K.C. Phillipps, *Jane Austen’s English* (London, 1970), pp. 147-52.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 200-4.

¹¹³ Norman Page, *The Language of Jane Austen* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 48-9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

For Austen’s use of everyday words in the mature fiction to appeal to communal understanding, see Jonathan Farina, *Everyday Words and the Character of Prose in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 38-93.

¹¹⁵ Page 1972, pp. 91, 94.

¹¹⁶ Norman Page, ‘Jane Austen’s Language’, in J.D. Grey (ed.), *The Jane Austen Companion* (New York NY, 1986), pp. 261-70.

In a sense language, and the misuse and abuse of language, is the subject of much of her early work. The same attitude persists throughout her career...¹¹⁷

Page sees Austen's development as a writer as going from satire and the "misuse and abuse of language", to creating a style that could carry its self-referential parody in an original and unaffected way. Page presents the "freer form" of Austen's syntax in the later years as the fulfilment of the language of sensibility inherited from Sterne and Richardson: It can "reco[r]d, as if seismographically, the shocks and tremors of emotion", and with them, the haptic events that are not fully narrated.¹¹⁸ By bringing to the fore the systematic characteristics of Austen's "language", Page paved the way for a more in-depth understanding of her style.

Stuart Tave, in his Austen monograph, focuses on lexis. He uses "Some Words" as conceptual landmarks, to help the reader understand what matters in Austen.¹¹⁹ His analyses often revolve around instances of touch, in which several of the novels' protagonists are engaged (Emma and Mr. Knightley, Marianne and Elinor, Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram).¹²⁰ Tave uses instances of directly depicted touch as symbols of sensibility, reinforcing the prevalence of a haptic

¹¹⁷ Page 1986, p. 264.

¹¹⁸ Page 1986, pp. 266-7.

¹¹⁹ Stuart Tave, *Some Words of Jane Austen* (Chicago IL, 1973).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 247, 91, 171.

Myra Stokes, in *The Language of Jane Austen: A Study of Some Aspects of her Vocabulary* (Basingstoke, 1991), dissects lexical elements of Austen's language in order to elucidate meanings that have been 'lost' because of the passage of time (time itself, and character and moral considerations are central), but does not concentrate on any concepts relating to physicality or touch.

language related to emotions and the social world, but he does not analyse the symbolic and diegetic importance of these episodes. In 1978, Graham Hough introduced the important aspects of “delicacy” and “virtuosity”:

However serious her purpose, there is an element of sheer playfulness in Jane Austen’s narrative method. By playfulness I do not imply triviality, rather ... an unselfconscious delight in virtuosity, in exercising a skill with the utmost delicacy and variety of which it is capable.¹²¹

Hough understands Austen’s revelry (“art as play”), but he does not analyse it in depth, because he is mostly interested in narratology. A more stylistically inclined analysis will help this thesis demonstrate that minute word choices and arrangements are significant, and Chapters II to IV will analyse Austen’s semantic and syntactic strategies, and their development through time.

Ann Jessie Van Sant relates language to sensibility in the early parts of her 1993 monograph. She argues that the metaphors central to sensibility (“touching the heart”, “moving the passions”) must be questioned, because of the “fusion” in language of “literal internal systems and metaphor” (which stems from John Locke’s lexis of touch, see Chapter I).¹²² She argues that fictional characters and situations give rise to sensibility in the readers, who look to their own bodies, rather than to expressions of feeling from the authors, for traces of sensation, and that the “pressure toward touch” that sensibility elicits prevents words like “*feeling* and *touching*” from ever being neutral.¹²³

¹²¹ Graham Hough, ‘Narrative and Dialogue in Jane Austen’, in *Selected Essays* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 46-82 [pp. 58-9].

¹²² Van Sant, *Sensibility and the Novel*, pp. xiv, 11, 90.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-3.

Using a different nomenclature from Heydt-Stevenson's, Anthony Mandal's stylistic study revisits the question of juxtaposition:

Austen is able to utilise disjunction to subvert meaning and generate ironic gaps between appearance and reality, between the linguistic surface of statements and the moral substance of them. Austen's use of ironic disjunction can operate through the contrast between a seemingly unequivocal narrative statement and the comic disturbance of its authority...¹²⁴

Austen doubles back on many of her narratorial pronouncements through “disjunctions”, in which the second sentence member casts a doubt on the first.¹²⁵

Mandal says more:

Austen's use of irony once again correlates with a general thesis regarding the ambiguity of language: multiple meanings resonate at different levels, and the reader is consequently discouraged to read words at face value...¹²⁶

The multiplicity of “resonances” is immediate and synchronic, and draws attention to Austen's subversive linguistic tricks. The “ambiguity” of language is inherent in the chaotic and sometimes violent world of her heroines. Mandal's analyses demonstrate the importance of active reading, but he neither invites the reader to look for what is indirected, nor relates his findings to the haptic.

More recently, Massimiliano Morini revisits Austen's diegetics, using his “evaluative reticence” concept as framework. His analyses focus particularly on the authority of narrators and on their choices: “evaluation theory is used to

¹²⁴ Anthony Mandal, ‘Language’, in J. Todd (ed.), *Jane Austen in Context* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 23-32 [p. 29].

¹²⁵ Lisa Zunshine, in ‘Mind Plus: Sociocognitive Pleasures of Jane Austen's Novels’, *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 42 (2009), 103-23, uses *NA* and *MP* to argue that this phenomenon also happens narratively, through the integration of an extra intersubjective “mind” that requires the reader to “re-perceiv[e]” the scene (p. 106).

¹²⁶ Mandal, ‘Language’, p. 30.

understand which voices evaluate which events and characters, and how...” as well as “how narrators and characters interact”.¹²⁷ Morini uses these “tools of linguistics” to analyse Austen’s texts and create meaning through word-level analyses, but the structural basis of the premise (the relationships between author/narrators/characters) is not related to style, or Austen’s idiosyncratic syntactic arrangements and networks of meaning.

[T]he narrator does not explain why Elinor should feel compassionate when Lucy takes out her handkerchief, nor why Elinor does not feel as she perhaps should: the first, obvious, implicature, is that Lucy is crying...¹²⁸

Morini uses this episode from *S&S* as an instance of “evaluative reticence” on the narrator’s part, but it is also a perfect example of Austen’s strategy of indirection. Its “implicature” is the absence of direct reference to a non-ambiguous act, which would offer a single interpretation. By mentioning the “handkerchief” rather than Lucy’s feeling or action, Austen is putting the interpretative burden on the reader, who is left with “implicatures” rather than clarity. This thesis will study the implicatures of Austen’s stylistic development, and elucidate the role of the reader in discovering the haptic in her texts.

Andrew Elfenbein participates in this dialogue, through his focus on Austen’s narrative economy. Looking at a conversation between Elizabeth Bennet and Charlotte Lucas in *P&P*, he asks: “What is their physical relation to each

¹²⁷ Massimiliano Morini, *Jane Austen’s Narrative Techniques: A Stylistic and Pragmatic Analysis* (Farnham, 2009), p. 8.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

other? What are they doing during this conversation?”.¹²⁹ The episode synthesises Austen’s “vacuum”, which leaves out “what other writers would consider essential”. Elfenbein’s interest lies in the “skilled, odd omissions”, the moments of indirection that punctuate all of Austen’s writings.¹³⁰ From a cultural-historical point of view, Elfenbein argues that these “omissions” are surprising:

Austen refuses to give conventional descriptions because, from her perspective, they are fundamentally wrong. They endow places with a fixed, external appearance, rather than the shifting, flexible perceptions arising from multiple interactions and feelings.¹³¹

Elfenbein argues that, by not describing touch (“sensory detail”), Austen is catering to the universal individuality of “human perception” and pleasure, and its irreproducibility (“same”/“different”). By looking at the meta-linguistic, this thesis will investigate indirect ways in which Austen grounds her characters in the haptic, thus allowing readers to retain their individuality of perception, while ensuring that they are reading the same story.

Austen’s pronoun, ‘something’, is a triumph of her minimalism because it leaves tantalisingly vague just what ‘something’ is and spurs the imagination to grasp what it might be. Yet even as Austen’s wording crowds the mind with possibilities, ‘something’ is a stubbornly humdrum word, ending the paragraph somewhere between a liftoff and a thud. Rhapsodic, but not too rhapsodic, Austen’s minimalism staves off more sublime rhetoric.¹³²

¹²⁹ Andrew Elfenbein, ‘Austen’s Minimalism’, in J. Todd (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 109-21 [p. 109]. See *P&P*, vol. I, chap. 6.

¹³⁰ Elfenbein, pp. 109-10.

Jessica A. Volz comments on the “omissions between the sayable and the unsayable”, and the need to focus on Austen’s “visual vocabulary” and its relation to emotion. Her analysis, focused on another sense, runs parallel to that of this thesis. See *Visuality in the Novels of Austen, Radcliffe, Edgeworth and Burney* (London, 2017), p. 29.

¹³¹ Elfenbein, p. 114.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

As a single word, “something” is surprisingly rich, but its narrative and intellectual repercussions extend to the levels of the sentence and the text. It “crowds the mind with possibilities”, just as Austen’s sentence composition does: there is a multiplicity in the “rhapsodic” that cannot be achieved by Johnsonian and Blairian perfection (see Chapter I).

Cris Yelland’s recent study on Austen’s style focuses heavily on prescriptivism and Austen’s deviations from its rules.¹³³ He focuses on the (masculine) prescriptive tradition in the first part of his monograph, which he dialectically opposes to the (feminine) counterbalance afforded by dramatic readings in the family circle, which participated in Austen’s emancipation from normative discourses.¹³⁴ He analyses the examples of the great models of the period (Blair and Johnson in particular), and the way in which their precepts are at odds with Austen’s own set of rules, derived from the theatricality of reading aloud, and her penchant for free indirect thought.¹³⁵ Yelland’s work can be used as groundwork for an analysis of the sentence as a syntagmatic unit. Using an example from *Persuasion*, in which the narrator delineates Elizabeth Elliot’s character (*P*, vol. I, chap. 1, p. 9), Yelland shows the freedom of Austen’s later

¹³³ Cris Yelland, *Jane Austen: A Style in History* (Abingdon, 2018). Yelland devotes a whole chapter to the prescriptivist movement of the eighteenth century, delineating its influence on Austen’s writings. He mentions Johnson, Lowth and Priestley, and notes Blair’s special importance (pp. 11; 14). See Chapter I.

¹³⁴ Jocelyn Harris sees the editorial removal of Austen’s idiosyncratic dashes and italicisation present in the manuscripts as a great loss. See *A Revolution Almost beyond Expression: Jane Austen’s Persuasion* (Newark DE, 2007), pp. 70-2. See also Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, pp. 305-13.

¹³⁵ Michaelson’s study of “reading Austen” was a precursor of Yelland’s analysis. See *Speaking Volumes*, pp. 180-215.

idiosyncrasies: the maturation of her style makes her pull away from Samuel Johnson as a model.¹³⁶ Yelland explains:

If the material which a periodic sentence saves until the end is in some degree surprising when it arrives, then the effect of periodicity is supported and intensified. On the other hand, if the delayed ‘climax’ of a periodic sentence is not surprising at all, then the effect is not really ‘periodic’, but platitudinous.¹³⁷

This theory of sentence construction is useful: Austen recurrently uses suspense towards a “climax”, especially when she is building towards a bathetic or derailed conclusion. The theoretical “surprise”, in which the reader’s reaction is related to a haptic sensation (similar to a musical progression that would end in uncomfortable dissonance, rather than resolution), manifests in an Austenian syntagmatic shock. Yelland emphasises the “delicate” devices Austen uses, “like whether or not a verb is backshifted, or precisely how a relative clause is constructed”, which still cause “spectacular” effects.¹³⁸

While Poovey and Heydt-Stevenson have broached touch in Austen’s narratives, in a way that has put the haptic and style in contact, a systematic enquiry concerning touch at the sentence level remains necessary. In order to explicate the ramifications of Austen’s haptic style, this thesis will build on the preliminary perceptions of the critical *corpus* and look at Austen’s early, peripheral, and late writings: their manuscripts reveal the way in which her craft as a haptic writer developed.

¹³⁶ Yelland, p. 99.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

THESIS PLAN AND REMITS

Austen's six published novels are generally considered to be her 'canonical' fiction. Outside the Academy, the rest of her writings remain virtually unknown, with the exception of the filmic adaptation of 'Lady Susan' (LS), oddly re-titled *Love & Friendship*, and the inclusion of a few character-changing juvenile fragments in Rozema's *Mansfield Park*.¹³⁹ The *Letters*, *Juvenilia* and *Later Manuscripts*, however, while superficially disparate, are bound by multiple factors, and form a secondary *corpus*.

All these manuscript texts, whether personal or fictional, have many common attributes, and because they belong in the margins of the six novels, they offer a rich field of study for the haptic. Although more experimental, they have received less critical attention. Real life (in the letters), 'immature' projects (in the juvenilia) and corrected errors (in the later manuscripts) all contain, for discrete reasons, more references to the haptic, and more linguistic adventurousness, than the six canonical novels. They are liminal spaces in which Austen allows touch to flourish, textual corners in which she lets linguistic gems form: they are the natural objects of a study on the evolution of her style.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first one is concerned with Austen's intellectual context, and will introduce the historical aspect of haptic studies, that is, the philosophical and medical writings that defined the field, in

¹³⁹ See *Love & Friendship* (Whit Stillman, 2016), and *Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, 1999).

the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The theories they contain shaped the understanding of touch by the time Austen started to write. It will refer to Enlightenment philosophers and orthodox educators (and one dissenting voice, that of Mary Wollstonecraft, who offers a counter-model for education). It will also draw on the texts of the leading linguistic prescriptivists of the day, such as Hugh Blair and Samuel Johnson.

Chapter II will be concerned with Austen's early writings, her fair-copies of unpublished texts. It will delve into the specificities effected by the vigour and fearlessness of both plot and style, which resulted in an *assemblage* of texts infused with comedic violence and transgression, in which sex and death are regular narrative topics. The frictions experienced by the characters are also echoed in Austen's comical language: through *mimesis*, they take on a haptic dimension. In spite of their various levels of completion and maturity, the three *Volumes* of juvenile writings are blueprints for Austen's mature works, in particular the longer pieces, which ally style, humour and diegetic ingeniousness. Thematically and linguistically, because they are much closer to Austen's eighteenth-century models, they offer particularly helpful windows on her artistic development, a near continuous writerly spectrum, from plans and early drafts, to fully fleshed-out but unfinished pieces.

Chapter III will use close readings of Austen's extant letters to analyse significant occurrences of touch, and the way in which these shaped her style, making direct references almost unnecessary, because touch is subsumed in

language. It will examine metaphor, juxtaposition and polysemy, which all converge, and define Austen's haptic style. The letters span almost the entirety of Austen's life (apart from her childhood years), and despite Austen's sister Cassandra's destructions, they help biographical readers form an idea of the author's life and character, and of her unique style (albeit through a different genre). The coded prose, designed for one skilled reader, puts other readers at a disadvantage; Austen's narrative flair is instantly recognisable, however, as is her enjoyment of virtuosic style, with the difference that her subject matters are elicited by real life, rather than fiction.

Chapter IV will use the later manuscripts as a way of investigating Austen's writing process in relation to touch, and how the haptic shapes her very language. The four texts that constitute this *corpus* of Austen's writings will be analysed separately, because they are so different in nature. 'Lady Susan', a publication-worthy epistolary novella that relies on multiple character-narrator figures, centres on Austen's most villainous heroine. 'The Watsons' (W), an unfinished mature novel, is most closely related to Austen's six major fictions: it shares their genre, their language and their indirect ways of dealing with the haptic, which it subtly subsumes into language.¹⁴⁰ 'Sanditon', as Austen's final novelistic attempt, and because of its sometimes puzzling plot elements, characters and mordant satirical language, offers a completely different perspective on the

¹⁴⁰ Kathryn Sutherland describes W as "thoroughly grounded in social realism"; its "bleakness" is "uncompromising". See Sutherland (ed.), *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 2020), vol. IV, p. 5. Hereafter *JAFM*.

direction Austen's fiction might have taken in her unrealised subsequent works. Finally, the two chapters of *Persuasion*, because they contain multiple levels of corrections that may have belonged in the finished novel, allow readers to envisage the treatment of touch in the (now lost) manuscripts of the published novels.¹⁴¹ The editorially-named *Later Manuscripts*, because of their physical nature, present a form of unity. They all bear manuscript corrections, and therefore offer a singular opportunity for literary analysis, as they display the efforts of the writer at work, a dimension that is not relevant in the letters, and not existent in fair-copy texts. 'The Watsons' and 'Sanditon' are both unfinished, both heavily corrected, and both of the calibre of the six published novels, *non obstante* certain critics' assessments.¹⁴² Austen was experimenting, trying out new alleys of fiction, which is sensible in these texts. 'The Watsons' is the earliest example and prototype of the mature novels, and 'Sanditon' is often seen as a mature return to the energy and verve of the juvenile pieces. The cancelled chapters of *Persuasion* are, though minute in scope and ultimately rejected, the only extant manuscript of Austen's published fiction, and as such have a singular place in her writings.

¹⁴¹ See Sutherland on the unique status of the text. *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 190.

¹⁴² D.A. Miller argues that Austen's "style" has a life of its own, and that her final illness made 'Sanditon' not only a failure, but also a piece that is too incongruous to be considered truly hers. See *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style* (Princeton NJ, 2003). Sutherland, on the contrary, suggests that the manuscript displays the "working methods of a confident and experienced professional writer". See *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 4.

CHAPTER I — CONTEXTS

PART I

In the fourth book of his poetic work *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius is, amongst other things, concerned with the senses. He refers to touch in a dense verse, which defines the tactile sense:

touch... is the bodily sense, whether when a thing penetrates from without, or when hurt comes from something within the body, or when it gives pleasure in issuing forth by the creative acts of Venus, or when from a blow the seeds make riot in the body itself and confuse the sense by their turmoil...¹⁴³

The outside world, the body, the passions, religion, sex and language are all fleetingly evoked. Through his full-body understanding of “tactus”, Lucretius establishes its primacy and its proteiform nature. In a study of touch in the writings of Jane Austen, this passage is particularly helpful, as it creates a template for the study of the medical, philosophical, didactic and rhetorical traditions that informed Regency thought.

Following the areas that Lucretius identified, this chapter will analyse the core concepts of touch, and extricate the haptic from language itself. The first section will concentrate on the physiological processes involved in touch, that is, sensation, the outside world and the body. The following section will focus on the moral considerations that justify or condemn touch, particularly in a social

¹⁴³ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. by W.H.D. Rouse (Cambridge MA, 2002), p. 129. As demonstrated in Jonathan Cramnick’s chapter, Lucretius’ text was influential on eighteenth-century philosophers. See ‘Living with Lucretius’, in H. Deutsch and M. Terrall (eds.), *Vital Matter: Eighteenth-Century Views of Conception, Life, and Death* (Toronto ON, 2012), pp. 13-38.

context, as relating to the passions. The third section will analyse trends particular to conduct literature that relate touch to the place of women in society, education and the body.

THE BODY

Little recent literary criticism has focused on the haptic in the long eighteenth century. John Mullan's 1988 study *Sentiment and Sociability* highlighted the importance of the body in fiction, philosophy and medicine, but afforded few direct insights into touch. John Wiltshire's 1992 analysis of Jane Austen's novels, *Jane Austen and the Body*, demonstrated the centrality of the medical body in her fiction, but focused solely on its workings in isolation and its symbolic meanings. Adela Pinch examined the passions in philosophical, poetic and fictional texts of the period, and the transmission of feelings from person to person. However, the infrequent references to the haptic in Mullan's, Wiltshire's and Pinch's works do not allow for a comprehensive picture of the mechanics of sensation, and of touch specifically, on which the understanding and the vocabulary of the body, of sensibility, and of the passions heavily rely. The word 'feeling', for example, is used both to refer to one of the five senses (a synonym of touch), as well as to the emotions. The latter's physiological, and *a fortiori* tactile, nature is all but lost. Pinch regularly points out the near-identity of the term with "physical sensation", referencing Austen's novels, but does not analyse its haptic implications.¹⁴⁴ Naomi Segal compares different uses of the verb 'to feel':

I feel the velvet, I feel the sun on my face, I feel pretty

The "lower" senses are construed linguistically, then, as less readily differentiated, less accessible to the ordering processes of logic than the higher ones. The language by which we reason is infused with metaphors of seeing and hearing as equivalents of understanding; the lower senses appear

¹⁴⁴ Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits*, pp. 16, 18-19, 142, 143, 150-1.

to us in less finalized, more primitive but, precisely because of that, much more complex language-units which do more work, convey more variation, carry more weight.¹⁴⁵

The inevitability of the verb ‘feel’, which she opposes to the tripartite “look at”/ “watch”, “see” and “look”, allows for more flexibility, interpretation, and therefore ambiguity. The linguistic facility afforded by the haptic sense makes it easy for a playful stylist like Austen to seize on mischievous semantic opportunities and produce her own comedic, suspenseful idiolectic style, which relies on the syntagmatic aspect of sentence construction.¹⁴⁶

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers agree that sensation occurs in the connection of the mind and the outside world, through the body. The haptic is therefore a key dimension of consciousness. Individual writers have their own nomenclature, but as the object of this thesis is to analyse touch in the writings of Jane Austen, it will focus primarily on the prevailing consensus of haptic identity. Modern theorists have an understanding of the haptic that builds on the anatomical-sensational foundations of classical philosophers. Daniel Heller-Roazen argues that the Aristotelian model of the senses is fundamental, but flawed. Its very flaw, however, is what highlights the singularity of touch, that is, its multiplicity of organs and objects, and its pervasiveness. Later thinkers have

¹⁴⁵ Naomi Segal, “‘L’échange de deux fantaisies et le contact de deux épidermes’: Skin and Desire”, in S. Syrotinski and I. Maclachlan (eds.), *Sensual Reading: New Approaches to Reading in Its Relations to the Senses* (London, 2001), pp. 17-38 [p. 18].

¹⁴⁶ Tim Ingold calls the action of the pen “the letter line”. This “trail of continuous movement” is syntagm given haptic form. See ‘Touchlines: Manual Inscription and Haptic Perception’, in C.M. Johannessen and T. van Leeuwen (eds.), *The Materiality of Writing: A Trace-Making Perspective* (New York NY, 2018), pp. 30-45 [p. 37].

separated the tactile from the haptic, but touch is both, and more.¹⁴⁷ He also explains that touch is closely related to “feeling” (the lexical confusion present in both German [*Gefühl*] and English proves the near inseparability of the two concepts). The body is “perpetually touching”, that is, the sense of feeling/touch makes one (occasionally) aware of a constant process of perception that is muted, as most habitual processes are, by the conscious brain. The haptic is ever present, as expressed by its linguistic imprecision.¹⁴⁸ James Gibson presents a useful, precise nomenclature of touch (“cutaneous”, “haptic”, “dynamic”, “oriented” and “painful”). He envisages touch beyond the tactile, moving into the body and its organs beyond the skin. His work presents a unified (though still problematic) whole, as was first attempted by ancient philosophers.¹⁴⁹ Mark Paterson later defines his own taxonomy of touch, which departs from a purely tactile understanding, and ranges from “affective” to “metaphorical”, and ““deep’ touch””.¹⁵⁰ All their discussions relate to and build on John Locke’s perceptual epistemology, which was the foundation of Enlightenment thought on the senses.

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (published 1690), John Locke analyses perception in its relation to the mind and knowledge, and puts objects and their qualities at the centre of sensation, that is, the communication of

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archeology of a Sensation* (New York NY, 2007), pp. 29-30.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

¹⁴⁹ James Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (Westport CT, 1966), p. 109.

¹⁵⁰ Mark Paterson, *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (Oxford, 2007), p. 6.

information. He provides a useful shorthand: objects produce “Ideas of *sensible qualities*”.¹⁵¹ These are imprinted on the mind and retained. He also lists the essential “qualities” associated with touch: “Heat”, “Cold”, “Solidity”, “smooth and rough”, “hard and soft”, “tough and brittle”.¹⁵² Touch is dealt with succinctly, almost explained away, which corroborates both its import in perception, and its relative absence in many writings of the period: it requires little attention or explanation. Touch is singular in requiring direct interaction with its object: “That which ... hinders the approach of two Bodies, when they are moving one towards another, I call *Solidity*”.¹⁵³ “Solidity” is paramount: it defines the integrity of the body when it encounters external objects. Locke further presents sensation as a central intellectual process: “*Sensation* ... is such an Impression or Motion, made in some part of the Body, as produces some Perception in the Understanding”.¹⁵⁴ The mind, to acquire knowledge, turns sensation into idea.¹⁵⁵ Locke also introduces a crucial distinction between “passive” and active uses of the senses: “For in bare naked *Perception*, the Mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives, it cannot avoid

¹⁵¹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford, 2011), p. 106.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

In *Sensibility and the Novel*, Ann Jessie Van Sant explains that touch allows one to “move out of the mind ... because it is the necessarily reciprocal sense: one does not touch without being touched” (p. 87).

perceiving”.¹⁵⁶ Locke’s choice of words evinces a rawness, a primality of feeling, which takes precedence over inquisitiveness. Van Sant’s summary of Locke’s philosophy demonstrates the centrality of the language of touch:

Many of Locke’s touch terms are part of a traditional – often metaphorical – vocabulary for articulating the manner in which the mind receives information from the senses. Experience *stamps* or *imprints* itself on the mind, as if the mind were engravable stone or wax receiving *impressions* from a seal. As Locke uses them, however, these inherited metaphors operate not only metaphorically but also quasi-literally, enabling him to convey – without emphasizing – the physical processes of sensation... Thus, despite Locke’s deliberate avoidance of the physicality of sensation, he cannot do without its vocabulary.¹⁵⁷

Van Sant underlines the pregnancy of tactile words, which create ambiguous non-metaphors. The literal plane of meaning cannot be eradicated from Locke’s understanding, and investigating the philosophical, moral and fictional language of the period shows that the distinction between sensation and language can never be clearly made.

Eighteenth-century Philosophers and doctors agree on the paradoxical nature of touch: it

¹⁵⁶ Pinch comments on the passive facet of sensation: Anne Elliot’s sensory overload in *Persuasion*, which happens when Captain Wentworth is present, makes her consciousness more acute through a focalising psychosomatic factor. It opens a new sensory channel, and correlates feeling and bodily experience. Anne must learn to master these episodes. The opposite happens when she tries to catch Admiral Croft’s attention, which requires both auditory and haptic *stimuli* before she is successful (*Strange Fits*, pp. 155, 160). Peter Knox-Shaw also comments on the “physiological quality” of Anne’s “mental states” in *Persuasion*, which reinforces the idea that mind and body are inseparable in sensation and volition. See *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 235.

For an account of Fanny Price’s somatic expression of her feelings, which is described as “neurotic”, see Mooneyham, *Romance, Language and Education*, p. 78.

¹⁵⁷ Van Sant, p. 90.

participates of less Delicacy than the other Senses; but at the same Time surpasses them in point of Certainty... besides which good Property, it enjoys that of being the most general Sensation.¹⁵⁸

French surgeon and anatomist Claude-Nicolas Le Cat (1700-1768) refers to three essential qualities of touch: lack of refinement, certainty, and generality. Touch is therefore the fundamental sense. Again:

All the nervous Solids, animated by a Fluid, are endued with this general Sensation. But the Papillæ of the Skin, those of the Fingers for example, enjoy it to a Degree of Perfection; which adds to the first Sensation a Sort of Discernment of the Figure of the Body touched.¹⁵⁹

Le Cat effectively expresses the relationship between the fingers, other specialist organs, and the body in general: the first are ultimate haptic sensors, rather than organs of a separate kind. He provides an explanation that also centres on the nerves: dermic nerve endings are the “perfect” sensory cells, because highly sensitive.¹⁶⁰ So much so, that a form of dermic protection is necessary: “the Cuticle that invests the Papillæ... is very necessary to them, by softening the Impression of Objects; and rendering ... the Perception more distinct”.¹⁶¹ The idea that the insensitive outer layer of the skin allows for more discriminating sensation is paradoxical, but convincing.¹⁶² The crucial action of insensitive tissue may also be extended to include fabrics (clothing) or other types of ‘shells’ as

¹⁵⁸ Claude-Nicolas Le Cat, *A Physical Essay on the Senses* (London, 1750), p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁶² Erin Manning similarly defines the skin as both “our most efficient of protectors” and “a central organ system of the body” in *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis MN, 2007), p. 84.

participating in the process of perception.¹⁶³ Le Cat's descriptions show that his understanding of the haptic includes the whole body, in the form of feeling. Flesh tissues, secondary organs of touch, also contain "Nerves": "wherever we find Nerves and Life, there also subsists this Sort of Sensation".¹⁶⁴ Touch is all-encompassing: the body is the organ of feeling, and the fingertips those of touch; the whole provides haptic sensation.

In the eighteenth century, physicians developed a philosophical view of anatomy and its mechanics that built on and refined Locke's model. In *Observations on Man*, Christian philosopher David Hartley defines the concept of "Ideas" in a way that complicates Locke's understanding: "The Ideas which resemble Sensations, are called *Ideas of Sensation*: All the rest may therefore be called *Intellectual Ideas*".¹⁶⁵ The intermediate place and status of these "Ideas of Sensation" make them a bridge between sensation and knowledge. Hartley delineates how the organs of touch are used to their full potential:

It is customary, in endeavouring to feel exquisitely, to rub the Ends of the Fingers against the tangible Object... this Friction may ... increase their Sensibility.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ For a cogent analysis of the agency of clothing and hats, see Jillian Heydt-Stevenson, "Changing her gown and setting her head to right': New Shops, New Hats and New Identities', in J. Batchelor and C. Kaplan (eds.), *Women and Material Culture, 1660–1830* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 52-68.

¹⁶⁴ Le Cat, *Physical Essay*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations*, 2 vols. (London, 1749), vol. I, p. ii. Mullan gives an extensive description of the medical field, especially as relates to nerves and female disorders, and quotes eighteenth-century doctors such as Cheyne, Buchan, Hartley and members of the Edinburgh medical world. See *Sentiment and Sociability*, pp. 201-40.

¹⁶⁶ Hartley, vol. I, p. 116.

The “exquisite” use of the sense, however, refers to a single, restrictive process of touch. Royal physician and physiologist Erasmus Darwin later makes an identical point and further explains: “what we have termed sensation is a motion of the central parts, or of the whole sensorium, *beginning* at some of the extremities of it”.¹⁶⁷ Darwin’s definition of sensation is noteworthy, because it involves the whole of the sensory body (“sensorium”), and not simply the nerves of the organs in which sensation originates. The contemporary philosopher Edith Wyschogrod echoes this understanding:

if the primordial manner of being of the lived body is to be understood as tactile, then tactility cannot be included under a generic theory of sense but provides its ground. Thus the manner in which touch yields the world is the most primordial manner of our apprehension of it.¹⁶⁸

Wyschogrod anchors haptic sensation in the body. She argues that touch (as “the body”) is the sense of self and world, and that all perception therefore derives from the haptic.

Eighteenth-century scientists also created a taxonomy of *somatalgia* that helps understand how touch creates a coherent anatomical system in its dialectic relationship with ailments. Darwin explains in *Zoonomia* that the

susceptibility of the system to sensitive motions is termed sensibility, to distinguish it from sensation, which is the actual existence or exertion of pain or pleasure.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia*, 2 vols. (London, 1794), vol. I, p. 56.

¹⁶⁸ Edith Wyschogrod, ‘Empathy and Sympathy as Tactile Encounter’, *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 6 (1981), 25-43 [39].

¹⁶⁹ Darwin, vol. I, p. 59.

“Sensibility” is, then, according to Darwin, the body’s receptivity to sensation. He also includes clinical descriptions of discrete tactile ailment-related pains:

Tactus acrior. The irritative ideas of the nerves of touch excite our attention: hence our own pressure on the parts, we rest upon, becomes uneasy with universal soreness.¹⁷⁰

In the case of this disease of heightened touch, even rest causes “soreness”, which supports the idea that haptic sensation is conveyed without interruption, even while one is still or unconscious.

Against the undeniably haptic nature of bodily ailments, eighteenth-century physicians advocated cures that provide insights into the other side of touch, that is, paining and healing.¹⁷¹ Richard Russell’s *Dissertation* is particularly illuminating when one considers the section relating to the “remarkable mineral waters of Great Britain”.¹⁷² The efficacy of curative water inside the body is essentially tactile, as shown by his lexical choices of “thickening”, “cooling”, “Heat”, “cleansing”, “balsamic” and “Obstructions”.¹⁷³ The description of “*Bath Waters*” is strikingly long and specific: it is easy to understand the variety of symptoms

¹⁷⁰ Darwin, vol. II, p. 59.

¹⁷¹ These medical works give no place to women nurses, who are abundant in fiction. Wiltshire cites Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* as an example of the sexualised interaction of nursing (*Jane Austen and the Body*, p. 168). Male physicians are only preoccupied with the clinical aspect of medical care, not the intimate interaction with the patient. This situation is indirectly corroborated by the marginal figure of the medical male “accoucheur” that Pinch describes, who infringed on female territory (*Strange Fits*, p. 188).

¹⁷² Richard Russell, *A Dissertation on the Use of Sea Water in the Diseases of the Glands* (London, 1769), pp. 180-1.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-4.

compiled by fictional characters, and of the benefits they expect to receive from the waters they “bathe” in or “drink”.¹⁷⁴

Finally, two physicians advocate the existence of a different sense altogether, related in nature to both taste and touch: the erotic sense. Its most startling articulation can be found in Le Cat’s treatise, whose receptiveness to physical pleasure might seem unexpected, as he was a respected and devout Roman Catholic. He explains the existence of

another Kind of Sensation arising from the Touch, that is more perfect, more general, and essential to all Animals for the Propagation of their Species. This Sensation is a Sort of Taste for Immortality... [that] inflames us with a Desire of giving Being to others, and so to perpetuate our Race to the End of the Ages.¹⁷⁵

The editorial margin title given to this paragraph (“Sensation of Love”) further articulates Le Cat’s own definition. “Immortality” here is not to do with the soul, but with the body’s instinct for self-preservation and reproduction, with hunger and procreative desire, both associated with the sense of touch.

Tho’ this sensation be only an extreme Delicacy of the Touch... it has an undoubted Superiority over all the Senses, both by reason of its End, and of its Object, and the Nobleness of the Sensation itself. It is to this End all Beings endued with Life owe their Existence. The Objects of all the other Senses are material, foreign, Bodies; the Object of this Sensation is no less than another Sensation... Or rather, it is almost a general Commerce of all the Senses, and principally of all Kinds of the Sense of Feeling... To [it] is attached a Sensation, that entitles it to the Name of Pleasure, and that in an eminent Degree, connected with Affections that hold all Nature in the softest Chains; and the Sublimity and Delicacy of which is the most remarkable

¹⁷⁴ Clara Tuite describes the constant “self-doctoring” of the Parker siblings in ‘Sanditon’ as a form of addiction that is akin to masturbation. The sick body is incapable of entering into a tactile economy with the world of objects or persons (because painful), and therefore remains in sensual and sexual isolation. See *Romantic Austen*, p. 162.

¹⁷⁵ Le Cat, *Physical Essay*, p. 12.

Characteristic of Human Nature, and the most valuable Property of the Heart and Soul.¹⁷⁶

This description of the “Sensation of Love” is not merely technical: Le Cat places love-making at the centre of human life in the most approbatory terms. It is easier to understand in his description what it is not, or the ways in which it differs from other types of the sense of touch, than what it is. Le Cat does not side with the religious moralists of his age, and his vision is sensation-focused. The above paragraph (a single sentence in the original French) exemplifies haptic language: while the physician does not use any taboo words, the enthusiasm of his discourse, and its subject-matter, spill out into his syntax (difficult to untangle, despite the abundant punctuation), and into his style, in an *envolée lyrique*. The sentence has become haptic, even erotic, and supplants the required but impossible semantic candour.¹⁷⁷ The prevalence of tactility becomes especially clear when one reads Le Cat’s preface to the second edition, which explains that many errors and inconsistencies have been corrected, but that this paragraph was left untouched.

A Sensation, that is capable of being raised even to a Degree of Moral Purity, and sublime Metaphysics, might very well deserve to be expressly treated of in a Work of this Nature, which has on other Accounts a Prerogative to discuss Subjects of such Sort; and, perhaps, this might not be the least curious Province for real Naturalists. But there are so few of these, in respect of the prejudiced Part of Mankind, that, out of a Regard to the Infirmities of a great Number of People, we will leave it to intelligent Persons

¹⁷⁶ Le Cat, *Physical Essay*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁷⁷ While sensible in French, the lyricism of the passage is somewhat lost in translation. See C.-N. Le Cat, *Traité des Sens* (Amsterdam, 1744), pp. 15-17.

to apply to this Sense Part of what we shall advance concerning the Taste, and other Senses, that have the most considerable Connexion with it.¹⁷⁸

Le Cat's libertarian sentiments show panache and an indomitable faith in the intelligence of the reader. His postscript intimates that his treatise should have contained, in his opinion, a discrete chapter on sex. Modern critic Ashley Montagu argues that because it is seen mostly as a "prelude to sex", touch falls under the jurisdiction of "sexual taboos". It was already the case in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British society, which explains the near systematic exclusion of touch from polite discourse. As will be discussed, Austen only rarely uses recourses to touch as "intimations of sexual interest".¹⁷⁹ The *Juvenilia*, the cancelled chapters of *Persuasion* and 'Sanditon' are exceptional in being more tactile than the rest of Austen's writings (see Chapters II and IV).

In the medical part of his *Observations*, Hartley gives a detailed account of reproductive anatomy as it relates to the senses and touch: "the Lips, Nipples, and external Parts of Generation, have a more exquisite Sensibility, than the other external parts".¹⁸⁰ Sexual touch only receives cursory treatment, as eighteenth-century moral and social norms make further description impossible. Skin in general appears to encroach on dangerous ground. However, Hartley still places

¹⁷⁸ Le Cat, *Physical Essay*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁷⁹ Ashley Montagu, *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin* (New York NY, 1971), pp. 213-14.

¹⁸⁰ Hartley, *Observations*, vol. I, p. 117.

Nina Jablonski lists the "erogenous zones" that, together, make the "skin ...the largest sexual organ of the human body". See *Skin: A Natural History* (Berkeley CA, 2006), pp. 119-20. Her list echoes Hartley's.

the erotic sense at the centre of sensation and the understanding because, he argues, all sensation is imprinted with a measure of *eros*:

when a general pleasurable State is introduced into the Body... the Organs of Generation must sympathize with this general State... They must therefore be affected with Vibrations in their Nerves, which rise above Indifference into the Limits of Pleasure from Youth, Health, grateful Aliment, the Pleasures of Imagination, Ambition, and Sympathy, or any other Cause, which diffuses grateful Vibrations over the whole System.¹⁸¹

The reproductive organs play a surprising part in any pleasurable aspect of life, which they echo. Hartley implies that there is a sexual dimension to any positive emotion, activity, or event, but unlike Le Cat, he attaches to it a strong measure of reprobation: the omnipresence of sexual pleasure in his system creates a concomitant omnipresence of sin (“impure Desires”, “tainted with Lust”).¹⁸² The discussion of ailments affecting the (young) female body, even in absolute terms, makes medical professionals squeamish, reinforcing the idea that ethical concerns are at the centre of an analysis of somatic and haptic questions.¹⁸³

While eighteenth-century philosophers helped define the nature of touch, physicians created a system that explained how the haptic works, specifically with regard to anatomy, disease and reproduction. The last category in particular played an essential part in moral-religious responses to touch. It is therefore necessary to consider the ethical aspects of the haptic in the period, as evinced in philosophical writings.

¹⁸¹ Hartley, vol. I, p. 239.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹⁸³ For an enlightening remark on the gendering of ailments (“disease” vs. “illness”), see Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body*, p. 11.

ETHICS

The previous section was concerned with intrinsic acts of sensation, centred on the body. This next section will concentrate on the psychological processes that inform sensation, on the ethical consequences of touch, and on its meanings in Austen's era. According to Claudia Johnson, the fact that Austen refuses the direct "depiction of illicit sexual behaviour [that] was a possibility always open to" her, sets her apart from other writers. Johnson relates this notion to diegetic technique, and to the embedded narratives that dispose of touch and sex.¹⁸⁴ Pinch comments on the sensationalism and hapticity of courtship in *Persuasion*, and describes physical contact between the lovers as "impingements from the outside world".¹⁸⁵ Consequently, the philosophical and moral implications of touch need to be analysed in detail, in order to elucidate the collisions between the body, social norms, and the unique nature of narratives that invoke the haptic. This section will survey the writings of moral philosophers of the period, who defined the importance and *dangerosité* of the passions, and shaped the debate regarding touch.

In *An Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue*, Archibald Campbell, the Scottish clergyman and philosopher, uses "pleasure and pain" as the point of origin of his demonstration, through which he comes to explain the external

¹⁸⁴ Claudia L. Johnson, *Women, Politics, and the Novel*, pp. 55-6.

¹⁸⁵ Pinch, *Strange Fits*, pp. 152-3.

senses.¹⁸⁶ He also calls the “*Body*” the first “*external Object*” perceived by the mind. His views on the ‘direction’ of ideas are opposite to those of most of his contemporaries, who derive pain from sensation. In Archibald Campbell’s schematics, the passions are central.¹⁸⁷ The inherent danger is in great part due to the power of pleasure, which is more subversive than its counterpart, pain. Pleasure and touch are indeed recurrently associated. In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), David Hume, the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, made a major contribution to the field, in placing the passions above all other considerations.

The appetite of generation, when confin’d to a certain degree, is evidently of the pleasant kind, and has a strong connexion with all the agreeable emotions. Joy, mirth, vanity, and kindness are all incentives to this desire; as well as music, dancing, wine, and good cheer... From this quality ’tis easily conceiv’d why it shou’d be connected with a sense of beauty.¹⁸⁸

The “incentives” Hume describes ground sexual desire in the social *mores* depicted in Austen’s as well as other writings of the period. His work is possibly the most important context for an understanding of the social role of the haptic.¹⁸⁹ Pinch sees that the senses are crucial, and “puts the[m] at the centre of all human interaction in the context of the novel of manners”.¹⁹⁰ Desire is at the

¹⁸⁶ Archibald Campbell, *An Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue* (Edinburgh, 1733), p. 261.

¹⁸⁷ On the “relationships between persons and passions”, see Pinch (p. 3), who dedicated her *Strange Fits* to their study.

¹⁸⁸ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford, 2011), p. 253.

¹⁸⁹ John Mullan comments on the notoriety of Hume’s “polemical formula” regarding the “combat of passion and reason”, and calls it a “tactic”. He explains that the “calculated risk and hyperbole of its rhetoric” is what has made the pronouncement “puzzling”, particularly to his contemporaries, and that the scepticism it displays breaks with religious *doxa*. See *Sentiment and Sociability*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁹⁰ Pinch, *Strange Fits*, p. 140. Her references to Laplanche’s theories regarding desire and representation are enlightening (p. 91).

crux of the passions that excite the erotic sense. Adding to Hume's reflections, Hartley, who approaches the senses from a religious standpoint, also endeavours to present a comprehensive system of the passions: "The *Affections* have the Pleasures and Pains for their Object; as the *Understanding* has the mere Sensations and Ideas".¹⁹¹ In his lexis, the "*Affections*" (or passions) are sensations felt *for* an object, in the same way as impressions. His analysis explains, in non-religious terms, the pursuit of pleasure, and the centrality of the "sensual" body. "Sensible Joy" is described as the pleasure that the presence of the object of "Love" procures, and the sensory enjoyment it entails. It is therefore, with its obverse "grief", one of the main passions on which a study of touch must concentrate.¹⁹²

The religious discourse found in the second part of Hartley's *Enquiry* explains that "sensuality" is a facet of this life that can never be erased, in spite of all possible efforts: it is a central part of one's humanity. "It is evident, that unrestrained promiscuous Concubinage would produce the greatest Evils, public and private".¹⁹³ Hartley's outright condemnation of sins of the flesh (fornication, adultery and sodomy) follows the Judaeo-Christian norms of the time.¹⁹⁴ (Austen showed a more nuanced treatment of her characters associated with these actions, which is not as harsh as that awaiting those who have "produced the

¹⁹¹ Hartley, *Observations*, vol. I, p. iii.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 373.

¹⁹³ Hartley, vol. II, p. 229.

¹⁹⁴ Erin Manning argues that "touch" is intrinsically connected to the interdict associated with the "original sin" in Genesis. See *Politics of Touch*, p. 49.

greatest Evils”.)¹⁹⁵ To counter the influence of the passions, philosophers across the board advocate one solution: the attainment of virtue *via* abstinence.

Hartley’s *Observations* are illuminating on this count, as the medical treatise of the first volume turns into a theological one in the second:

The shameful, loathsome, and often fatal Disease, which particularly attends the Vice of Lewdness, may be considered as a most unquestionable Evidence of the Divine Will.¹⁹⁶

The fiery “Punishments” Hartley promises “the Wicked” in the afterlife, which were meant to inspire the fear of God, are as haptic as the crimes they chastise.¹⁹⁷

The concept of sympathy is also relevant in a study of the haptic, as it situates sensation beyond the body. Hume sees feelings as “contagious” in a positive way, because they create a sense of community that transcends traditional class distinctions and connects humans. Pinch explains that Hume sees feelings as “spread[ing] about freely and fluidly; they do not know the boundaries of individuals”.¹⁹⁸ She goes further than Mullan, and comments on the ambiguous nature of Hume’s vision: feeling in his system is at the same time “utopian” and conservative, because it transcends traditional patterns, but ultimately strengthens the *status quo* by eliciting admiration for the rich and

¹⁹⁵ Elizabeth and Lydia Bennet’s laughter symbolises their “transporting mental and physical bliss”, and shows that the body cannot be disregarded, but their respective fates are far from advocating retaliatory penitence (Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 100).

Claudia Johnson argues that “All the worst crimes pursuant upon female immodesty—illicit sex and adultery—come to pass in *Mansfield Park*” (*Women, Politics, and the Novel*, p. 105). *MP* is not, however, concerned with the description of the tactile realisations of those “crimes”.

¹⁹⁶ Hartley, vol. II, p. 229.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

¹⁹⁸ Pinch, *Strange Fits*, p. 1.

powerful.¹⁹⁹ Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Adam Smith, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (published 1759), further complicates the mechanics of sensation. He locates reality not only in the senses, but in the transitivity of sensory experience, that is, in “sympathy”: sensation is not intrinsic, limited to the self, but has an external trajectory:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.²⁰⁰

Sympathy is “not unlike” actual “sensations”: while the immediacy of the senses cannot be accessed outside the body of the sentient, Smith advocates a strong degree of sensory identification that would today be termed ‘empathy’.²⁰¹ Smith also relates desire to sympathy:

It is the same case with the passion by which nature unites the two sexes. Though naturally the most furious of all the passions, all strong expressions of it are, upon every occasion, indecent, even between persons in whom its most complete indulgence is acknowledged by all laws, both human and divine, to be perfectly innocent.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Pinch, pp. 24-5.

²⁰⁰ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 2 vols. (London, 1822), vol. I, p. 2. All citations are from vol. I.

²⁰¹ For a helpful summary of A. Smith’s theory and its relation to two literary works, see Katarzyna Bartoszyńska, ‘Adam Smith’s Problems: Sympathy in Owenson’s *Wild Irish Girl* and Edgeworth’s *Ennui*’, *New Hibernia Review* 17 (2013), 127-44.

²⁰² A. Smith, p. 31.

The impropriety of discussing sex in female-related genres in the eighteenth century is well-known, but Smith's explanation is worth parsing.²⁰³ He supports Hartley's position in stating that coition itself is "perfectly innocent" within marriage: because it is "the most furious of all the passions", it is natural and inevitable.²⁰⁴ While this is certainly true of hunger and sex, it by no means explains Austen's diffidence regarding touch, especially in more noble contexts that are usually unrelated to desire (socially sanctioned activities, such as nursing, comforting, etc.).

Eighteenth-century moral philosophers, countering the work of Hume, developed theoretical systems of touch that relied heavily on the religious understanding that the passions are nefarious, and jeopardise civil society. Touch, as the vehicle of pleasure, needs to be carefully monitored and regulated, in action and in speech, so as to maintain virtuous order. It is therefore necessary to analyse the specifics of practical morality, which the conduct literature of the period delineates.

²⁰³ Mary Wollstonecraft opposed the idea and supported the frank discussion of botanical reproduction in girls' education. See Vivien Jones, 'Advice and Enlightenment: Mary Wollstonecraft and Sex Education', in S. Knott and B. Taylor (eds.), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 140-55.

²⁰⁴ A lexical analysis of A. Smith's argument shows that he does not condemn sex *in se*. See pp. 197-8.

CONDUCT

Since the publication of Claudia Johnson's work on Austen, sensibility has been the aspect of sensation on which critics have usually focused. Sensibility in its primary acceptation is a haptic matter that has not yet been fully analysed. This thesis will therefore re-centre the discussion of sensibility on the haptic in Austen's narratives and style. Medical treatises explain how to cure ailments, whether internal or external, and thus defend the body. Educational works provide guidance regarding the social ills associated with touch, and the defence of the body in its societal environment. Ellen Messer-Davidow's summary of didactic literature is thorough:

the determinists advocate a female education that is narrow, superficial, and antiliterary. A good woman, they teach, enjoys her religion in silence, obeys its precepts, attends punctually to its duties, embraces its simple doctrines, and avoids speculation. Her virtues—piety, meekness, chastity, modest apparel, amiable reserve, sobriety of mind—insure softness and subservience. Her intellectual education is trivialized in every aspect: its purpose, subjects, rigor, duration, and degree of proficiency.²⁰⁵

The result is easily understood: the gendering of intellectual pursuits leads to conclusions, such as Thomas Gisborne's, that women "like bubbles" often "leave no trace of usefulness behind".²⁰⁶ Messer-Davidow's conclusion is helpful in that it presents the hard-line views of most (often male) conduct writers. It does not, however, account for the advocacy of more moderate (usually female) moralists,

²⁰⁵ Ellen Messer-Davidow, "'For Softness She': Gender Ideology and Aesthetics in Eighteenth-Century England", in F.M. Keener and S.E. Lorsch (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts* (Westport CT, 1988), pp. 45-55 [p. 47].

²⁰⁶ Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London, 1797), p. 202.

and one should not be led to underestimate the contributions (in didactic or literary works) of important late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century figures such as Hannah More, Jane West, Mary Brunton or Maria Edgeworth, who deemed the proper social and intellectual education of women to be essential, and therefore a worthy cause to defend, albeit within the confines of patriarchy-enforcing norms.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft, the radical English philosopher, novelist and women's rights advocate, shapes a direct reply to Rousseau's *Émile*, in which she contradicts or demystifies many of his assertions, and those of conduct literature in general, regarding women.²⁰⁷ Indeed, she denounces their oppression at the hands of men, and defends their right to equal education. If women received better instruction, Wollstonecraft argues, they would no longer be regarded as a social problem:

By individual education, I mean ... such an attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulate the passions as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work before the body arrives at maturity...²⁰⁸

Wollstonecraft's thesis is fully centred on the body, and presents development as the consequence of sensation. In this, Wollstonecraft concurs with Rousseau's ideas. She takes issue, however, with his discrimination between the sexes, which she unequivocally condemns:

²⁰⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia: or, A New System of Education*, 2 vols. (London, 1762). Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Oxford, 1994).

²⁰⁸ Wollstonecraft, p. 86.

I firmly believe, that all the writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners from Rousseau to Dr Gregory, have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and, consequently, more useless members of society.²⁰⁹

Her “objection” focuses on the “degradation” of women caused by conduct literature. “Solid virtue” is Wollstonecraft’s ultimate educative end, and her vocabulary (“weak”, “degrade”, “solid”) also possesses a material dimension, albeit different (less directly tactile) from that of the writers she contradicts. The fact that Rousseau’s end is to “render” women “pleasing”, rather than to inculcate knowledge, skill or wisdom, is her main point of contention.

Wollstonecraft’s demands focus on practical abilities:

In public schools women, to guard against the errors of ignorance, should be taught the elements of anatomy and medicine, not only to enable them to take proper care of their own health, but to make them rational nurses of their infants, parents, and husbands...²¹⁰

In this instance, the link between equal scientific education and practical action is given a haptic twist: the ability to “nurse” one’s family requires both theoretical knowledge and clinical skill.

Because they are not seen or educated as practical or intellectual persons, the senses are the only sphere of influence allocated to women: women are “intoxicated by the adoration [of] men”.²¹¹ While men are overpowered by their appetites, women’s consequent “intoxicat[ion]” rendered physicality inevitable, and deleterious. Wollstonecraft disregards assumptions about innate female

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

²¹⁰ Wollstonecraft, p. 264.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

weakness and locates the demise of chastity in male behaviour.²¹² Indeed, “cramping their understandings and sharpening their senses” is the process by which women are “enslaved”.²¹³ While the opposition of the “understanding” and the “senses” is not new, it is here described in intrinsically tactile terms. If the senses, as instruments, can be “sharpened”, in order to acquire exquisite impressions (which are nefarious), the “cramping” of the intellect adds a similarly haptic dimension to the process, as it is a form of oppression, both in its literal and metaphorical usage. The method by which women manage to acquire their meagre education (“by snatches”) further supports the haptic dimension of Wollstonecraft’s argument. Women’s “senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected”, they become the “prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility”, “unable to enjoy anything without the organs of sense”.²¹⁴ Wollstonecraft’s definition of sensibility ties together its cause (lack of education) and its consequence (excessive reliance on bodily pleasure). The powerlessness she describes is also expressed linguistically (use of passive, emphatic, phrasal verbs, and of the noun “prey”). She extends these damaging educational outcomes to some men, who are put in a feminised position:

officers are also particularly attentive to their persons, fond of dancing, crowded rooms, adventures, and ridicule. Like the *fair* sex, the business of their lives is gallantry.—²¹⁵

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 44-7.

²¹³ For a more detailed discussion of this idea, see Pinch, *Strange Fits*, p. 2.

²¹⁴ Wollstonecraft, pp. 130-1.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Officers are emulators of female accomplishments, and Wollstonecraft's list conforms precisely with the main points of (haptic) focus found in Austen's works, such as the contact between Lydia and the militia in the cross-dressing episode.²¹⁶

Wollstonecraft's vision of marital intercourse does not exalt "feeling":

A man, or a woman, of any feeling, must always wish to convince a beloved object that it is the caresses of the individual, not the sex, that are received and returned with pleasure; and, that the heart, rather than the senses, is moved. Without this natural delicacy, love becomes a selfish personal gratification that soon degrades the character.²¹⁷

Wollstonecraft's description of sexual intimacy may seem innocuous to a modern reader, and good advice, but the freedom with which she writes, regarding the superiority of love over lechery, is more than can be found in any conduct book of the period. The frank mention of mutual "caresses" and "pleasure" would be deemed out of place in a system of education that promotes modesty and chastity, rather than reason and equality. Wollstonecraft's system is ambiguous, however, as it condemns forms of intimacy and pleasure that she deems unchaste.²¹⁸ The most obvious example of these is masturbation:

In nurseries, and boarding-schools ... girls are first spoiled... A number of girls sleep in the same room, and wash together... I should be very anxious to prevent their acquiring nasty, or immodest habits; and as many girls have

²¹⁶ 'We dressed up Chamberlayne in woman's clothes, on purpose to pass for a lady,—only think what fun!' (see *P&P*, vol. II, chap. 16, p. 245).

²¹⁷ Wollstonecraft, p. 174.

²¹⁸ Secondary critics have examined Wollstonecraft's distrust of the body. *E.g.* Ashley Tauchert, 'Female Embodiment, Rape, and the *Vindications*', in *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Accent of the Feminine* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 55-80.

learned very nasty tricks, from ignorant servants, the mixing them thus indiscriminately together, is very improper.²¹⁹

The “nasty, or immodest habits” and “tricks” that can develop between girls refer to masturbatory discovery and sexual play, which are common in children.²²⁰

While Wollstonecraft’s subject-matter and opinion in this sentence are clear, the length and convolution of the structure point to a profound *malaise*, and an impossibility to name the condemned acts using her usual forthright language.

Finally, there is in *Vindication* an instance of direct reference to touch that sets this text apart from the rest of conduct literature.

When a man squeezes the hand of a pretty woman, handing her to a carriage, whom he has never seen before, she will consider such an impertinent freedom in the light of an insult, if she have any true delicacy, instead of being flattered by this unmeaning homage to beauty. These are the privileges of friendship, or the momentary homage which the heart pays to virtue, when it flashes suddenly on the notice—mere animal spirits have no claim to the kindnesses of a [*sic*] affection!²²¹

The tactile interaction of “handing” is a gateway into the codified haptic in Austen’s fiction. Wollstonecraft creates a nomenclature in which gallantry is the decorous (and therefore widely accepted) guise of desire (“animal spirits”), that leads to an act of invasive touch. To this she opposes “homage”, the true guise of

²¹⁹ Wollstonecraft, pp. 204-5.

Katie Halsey emphasises the deleterious effects of schools, and of the female accomplishments they teach. She uses the “home education” presented in eighteenth-century fiction (among which Austen’s) as a counterpoint to conduct literature. See “The Home Education of Girls in the Eighteenth-Century Novel: ‘the pernicious effects of an improper education’”, *Oxford Review of Education* 41 (2015), 430-46.

²²⁰ Tuite offers particularly relevant points regarding homoeroticism, “betweenities” and masturbation, as related to education and sociability. See *Romantic Austen*, pp. 34-6. See also Peter L. Allen, *The Wages of Sin: Sex and Disease, Past and Present* (Chicago IL, 2000), pp. 86, 115, 118.

²²¹ Wollstonecraft, p. 174.

“affection”, which leads to a “privileged” act of touch. The system she creates here helps explain the tenets of social and amorous haptic interaction, as well as the psychology of the characters involved, whose actions and reactions of touch can be easily interpreted. While Wollstonecraft’s demands are practical, and her broaching of indelicate matters is usually candid, her understanding of the politics of sex and touch is complex, and often ambiguous.

Conduct-book writers, usually educators and clergymen, published the most influential works on education in the period.²²² Thomas Gisborne, an Anglican clergyman and contemporary of Wollstonecraft, is a staunch advocate of the *doxa* regarding conduct. In *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, he presents “sensibility” as an essential quality and *apanage* of women:

Were we called upon to produce examples of the most amiable tendencies and affections implanted in human nature, of modesty, of delicacy, of sympathising sensibility, of prompt and active benevolence, of warmth and tenderness of attachment; whither should we at once turn our eyes? To the sister, to the daughter, to the wife.²²³

For Gisborne, the female character is endowed with a different type of haptic sensibility from the male: it is associated with comfort and tenderness, in the roles

²²² While their era of influence spanned several decades, their theses were in agreement, and chronology is not crucial.

Patricia Michaelson follows the standard progression (Chesterfield, Gregory, Fordyce, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft) to elucidate the relationship between gendered “civility” and language (which leads her to an analysis of *Emma*). See *Speaking Volumes*, pp. 48-63.

²²³ Gisborne, *Duties*, p. 23.

allocated to women throughout their lives.²²⁴ The consequence is devious, however, as it inculcates deception:

The female form ... He has enabled to fascinate; and has amply compensated the defect of muscular vigour by symmetry and expression, by elegance and grace.²²⁵

Gisborne's description of the female body and its function typifies the normative understanding of the age. Gisborne, however, acknowledges the excesses of sensibility: "nothing leads more directly to the breach of charity, and to the injury and molestation of our fellow-creatures, than the indulgence of an ill temper".²²⁶ The consequences of education are expressed through violent physical terms: "injury" and "molestation" are evidently haptic, and used metaphorically.

The correlation of female looks and education is another *topos* that most conduct-book writers broach. James Fordyce, the Scottish clergyman, in *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) of *P&P* fame, condemns beauty specialists as abettors of coquetry.²²⁷ He laments "the degradation" of being "under the confident hands of the meanest of mankind" (hairdressers and seamstresses), and is irate against

the arts commonly made use of to heighten and repair [beauty, which] only accelerate and increase its decay, while the complexion, the skin, and the hair, are all unnaturally disguised and tortured.²²⁸

²²⁴ Claudia Johnson argues that the "social codes" conduct books advocate go beyond "propriety" in these roles: they are a matter of survival. Modesty is "no guarantee" of safety and happiness, as exemplified in *S&S (Women, Politics, and the Novel)*, pp. 50; 60).

²²⁵ Gisborne, pp. 19-20.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

²²⁷ Mary Bennet reads and mentions his sermons. See *P&P*, vol. I, chap. 14, p. 76.

²²⁸ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 2 vols., 12th edn. (London, 1800), vol. I, pp. 48, 49-50.

The haptic description of beauty routines posits the skin and the hair as victims of constant manual attention. Women are in this context sacrificed to a social system that values female looks, and become the instruments of their own “torture”. Hester Chapone, the conduct-book writer, in *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), traces the mental effects of physical adornment:

How often have I seen a girl, preparing for a ball ...—unable to satisfy her own vanity—fret over every ornament she put on, quarrel with her maid, with her clothes, her hair; and growing still more unlovely as she grew more cross, be ready to fight with her looking-glass for not making her as handsome as she wished to be.—²²⁹

“Fret”, “quarrel” and “fight”, three verbs that carry varying degrees of violence, are here used in conjunction with objects, to denote concomitant haptic and emotional struggles, thus conflating the inner and outer spheres in a novel way. They elicit a “peevishness” that has direct tactile (and violent) repercussions in the physical world. Fordyce condemns “extreme gaiety and looseness of ... attire”, and advocates the “purest standard” on which young women’s appearance must be “regulated”. He deplores “the very free mode of dress, so generally affected by the sex at present”.²³⁰ “Gaiety and looseness” of clothing are correlated with “dispositions and deportment”, which are kinetic (sometimes haptic) occurrences. Looks and behaviour are intimately connected in eighteenth-century morality:

Would she choose to be intimate with those young ladies that seize every opportunity of exhibiting their charms to the public, and vie with one another who shall most liberally display what her honoured mother taught her more decently to veil?²³¹

²²⁹ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1773), p. 133.

²³⁰ Fordyce, vol. I, pp. 35-7.

²³¹ Fordyce, vol. I, p. 37.

Fordyce's appeal to "veil[ed] charms" is a plain reference to anatomical parts of the female body rather than qualities of a general nature. The consequence of this insistence on looks and wholesomeness is an omnipresent fear of contagion and disease, which influences a variety of aspects of female life.²³² Purity is indeed at the heart of the values Chapone wishes to inculcate in young women.²³³ "Corruption", "unsullied" and "contagion" are used to denote sin, while they really connote its bodily processes. Fordyce's version, while similar, is heated and therefore memorable:

Ah! ye mothers of this land, how can you expose so rashly those tender blossoms committed to your care? Have ye forgotten that every unkindly breath is ready to blast them? Are you ignorant, how soon the whitest innocence may be sullied; that it is possible even for the strictest principles to be corrupted? Is there nothing in your own minds that whispers the frailty of your sex?²³⁴

While this passage is mostly figurative, it conveys strong bodily connotations ("tender", "care", "blast", "sullied", and "frailty").²³⁵ "Breath" is a euphemism for an intimate bodily encounter, like a kiss or a caress.

²³² Knox-Shaw comments more generally on the "porousness" of the female self and relates it to "a heroine's defence of her chastity" (*Enlightenment*, p. 13).

²³³ Chapone, p. 108.

²³⁴ Fordyce, vol. I, p. 66.

²³⁵ Heydt-Stevenson argues that what allows Austen to go against the primacy of conduct-book "innocence" in her writings is her "hybrid, code-switching language" (*Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 27). Austen plays a subversive game in the equation between author, text and reader. The demands made on the knowing and discerning reader are essential because of this inherent complexity, and it is therefore crucial to understand touch and language as one of these "coded" pairs, making this study all the more necessary.

Conduct literature is also full of examples of damaging education, whether pitfalls to be guarded against, or sources of noxious influence.²³⁶ Parents, who should teach by example, are the first source of haptic risk:

A mother, who has personally experienced how slight the connection is between connubial happiness and the worldly advantages of wealth and grandeur, is yet seen training her children in the very paths which she has found rugged and strewed with thorns.²³⁷

The “path” to matrimony is painful and nocive, in a metaphorically haptic way. Relinquishing the care of a daughter is wrong: “She is thus in a great measure removed from your hands into the hands of others, who are not likely to be qualified for the office of guiding her”.²³⁸ Gisborne paints education as a ‘hands-on’ endeavour, and should the daughter lose confidence in her mother, she will fall into other “hands”. The same metaphor applies when a woman marries.

Hume’s views on female education stem from his understanding of the passions, and present a challenge to his time and the modern reader alike. His discussion exposes the assumptions concerning the female body that underlie conduct literature:

What restraint, therefore, shall we impose on women, in order to counter-balance so strong a temptation as they have to infidelity?

²³⁶ The Bertrams in *MP* provide little education to the heroine, but still (remarkably) enclose Fanny in the sphere of propriety. Poovey argues that this very propriety is what prevents Fanny Price from “expressing her sexuality”, while at the same time making her irresistible to Henry Crawford. See *Proper Lady*, p. 217.

²³⁷ Gisborne, p. 388.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

In order ... to impose a due restraint on the female sex, we must attach a peculiar degree of shame to their infidelity, above what arises merely from its injustice, and must bestow proportionable praises on their chastity.²³⁹

Hume indicates how Judaeo-Christian morality seeks to “restrain” female sexual appetite.²⁴⁰ In his system, women are in a central but vacuous position. Poovey argues that the need to “control” female desire “indicate[s] that female sexuality was still assertive enough to *require* control”.²⁴¹ Hume’s very vision of education is therefore punitive:

’Tis necessary, therefore, that, besides the infamy attending such licenses, there shou’d be some preceding backwardness or dread, which may prevent their first approaches, and may give the female sex a repugnance to all expressions, and postures, and liberties, that have an immediate relation to that enjoyment.²⁴²

Women are taught to fear sexual pleasure, even its temptation, and everything that surrounds it, including desires and words. Hume advocates a deep educational *Diktat* that epitomises the gendered diffidence centred on touch.

Purity, chastity, and modesty (the ramparts against haptic sin) are touchstones of conduct literature, but because they are typically described in

²³⁹ Hume, *Human Nature*, p. 365.

²⁴⁰ Poovey explains that “female nature” was often reduced to “sexual appetite”, which determined the way they were treated in society (*Proper Lady*, p. 19). Elizabeth Bennet, who is “blinded to the impropriety of this stranger’s intimacy” by Wickham’s beauty may be an example of this (p. 194). Poovey’s definition of “ideology”, which focuses on arbitrariness and scope, is particularly relevant here: “by living together, men and women establish priorities among their needs and desires and generate explanations that ratify these priorities by making them seem “natural”” (p. xiv).

Pinch similarly mentions the social “concern” that women could not “discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate objects” of desire (*Strange Fits*, p. 53).

²⁴¹ Poovey, *Proper Lady*, p. 21.

²⁴² Hume, *Human Nature*, p. 365.

relief form (against depictions of male assault), rather than independently defined, they remain enigmatic.

What pity, when, instead of being sheltered and cherished with care, [female chastity] is heedlessly exposed to the wanton gaze of every wandering eye, to the cruel hand of every rude, or of every sly invader!²⁴³

The “hand” of “rude” and “sly invaders” is here meant literally, and follows their “gaze”, another threat. Women are subjected to the reprehensible touch of undesirable men, on the dance floor as elsewhere.²⁴⁴ Unsanctioned erotic contact can never be dis severed from the idea of sin. Combining the definitions (or prohibitions) of several of these writers helps create a less vague picture of the rules. Gisborne insists on impropriety’s social point of origin: “Let not indiscriminate familiarity be shewn towards all partners; nor injudicious familiarity towards any”.²⁴⁵ These two types of “familiarity” are different in nature. The former refers to open manners, and the propensity to become acquainted with the wrong person. The latter, because it is “injudicious”, expresses the euphemistic meaning described in the *OED* as “Sexual or romantic intimacy, esp. of an inappropriate nature”. Gisborne advises against both tactile

²⁴³ Fordyce, vol. I, pp. 85-6.

²⁴⁴ “Darcy’s refusal to be introduced to Elizabeth denies not only her social but also her sexual presence.” “Elizabeth never has a mere placid prettiness; her unconventional beauty sparks sexual interest.” Mooneyham sets *P&P* apart as the only novel in which sexuality is “explicit”. Darcy goes beyond propriety and denies Elizabeth’s very person. His gaze is the only trace of his attraction for her. See *Romance, Language and Education*, p. 62.

²⁴⁵ Gisborne, p. 185.

familiarity and the sexual aspects of courtship to which dancing leads.²⁴⁶ John

Gregory makes it a matter of female virtue:

The many nameless charms and endearments of beauty should be reserved to bless the arms of the happy man to whom you give your heart, but who, if he has the least delicacy, will despise them, if he knows that they have been prostituted to fifty men before him.—The sentiment, that a woman may allow all innocent freedoms, provided her virtue is secure, is both grossly indelicate and dangerous, and has proved fatal to many of your sex.²⁴⁷

This passage is the most directly haptic part of Gregory's chapter on "Conduct & Behaviour", and gives essential information regarding touch in acceptable social and amorous conduct. "The many nameless charms and endearments of beauty" are in essence a visual concept, but as their recipient is pictured in "the arms" of a lover, tactile courtship is also included. The importance of touch here is further evidenced by its role in the "prostitution" of the body. "[I]nnocent freedoms", therefore, and lost "virtue", gloss haptic encounters, the former without, and the latter with sexual intercourse, and these sexual concerns are faced with social reprobation. The body, though central, vanishes, to be replaced by reputation.²⁴⁸

Fordyce's system is characterised by his usual vehemence:

²⁴⁶ Mooneyham argues that "the conditions of Austen's art require education to be linked to a sexual conflict" (*Romance, Language and Education*, p. 32), which makes Austen's writings the perfect subject-matter for a study of touch in courtship.

²⁴⁷ John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* ([n.p.], 1799), pp. 41-2.

²⁴⁸ "Sexual ruin" is Mooneyham's phrase to describe the loss of a woman's reputation. She connects it with "the loss of idealism" in the case of the Elizas in *S&S* (*Romance, Language and Education*, p. 35).

In a study focused on the seventeenth century, Laura Gowing explains that female interactions were "fraught with issues of social control; shame; fear; and erotic and sexual intimacy", and that "the notion of shame that did so much to define a woman's reputation was constructed by female, as much as male, opinion... the conditions of most women's daily lives ... compelled a close attention to touch and its meanings." See *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven CT, 2003), p. 65.

Is it enough for young women to be free from infamy, from crimes? Between the state of virgin purity and actual prostitution are there no intermediate degrees? Is it nothing to have the soul deflowered, the fancy polluted, the passions flung into a ferment?²⁴⁹

Fordyce's gradation of evils helps us to understand the position of touch in social concerns and condemnations. The body is the object of the most quantifiable "crimes", but these belong in a schematic that includes the "soul" and the "fancy", and in a spectrum that ranges from "purity" to "prostitution". The final sentence is particularly revealing: it mixes abstract objects ("soul", "fancy", "passions") and their physical fate, in past participle form ("deflowered", "polluted", "flung into a ferment"). For Fordyce, modesty is the outer layer of chastity:

How common is it to see young ladies, who pass for women of reputation, admitting into their company in public places, and with visible tokens of civility and pleasure, men, whom the moment before they saw herding with creatures of infamous name!... What a palpable encouragement to vice and dishonour! What a desperate attempt to pull down, in appearance, and with their own hands, the only partition that divides them from the most profligate of their sex!²⁵⁰

His language takes on a haptic dimension, which stems from his fiery words (as his choice of punctuation substantiates). The "tokens of civility and pleasure" may be tactile, the "palpable encouragement" certainly is. The nature and odious past of these culpable men is contained in the phrasal verb "herding with", the metaphoric gregariousness of which underlines the physical nature of relationships with (ambiguously) other promiscuous men and/or disreputable

²⁴⁹ Fordyce, vol. I, p. 71.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

women. The social “partition” is equally haptic, as it is “pulled down” by Fordyce’s young, female readership “with their own hands”. Again, Fordyce advocates a strong defence: “a peculiar strain of prudence and fortitude is required, to prevent a young person’s being betrayed into great inconveniences, and dangerous tenderesses”.²⁵¹ “Dangerous tenderesses” are instances of familiar touch, and this use of the concrete, plural form of an abstract noun denotes Fordyce’s reluctance to use more graphic descriptions. While this cautiousness is understandable in sermons—he does not wish to give young women any ideas—in Austen’s writings, tenderness begs analysis.²⁵² Dancing is a transaction in which modesty is particularly crucial:

when [morally improper men] propose themselves as partners in an assembly-room, a lady does not always find it easy to decline the offer. The good principles or the worldly prudence of the relations or the friends who accompany her, will, in many cases, guard her from falling, though but for a single evening, into such hands.²⁵³

The predatory behaviour of rakes at balls is made metaphorically haptic (“into such hands”), summarising the situation indirectly. The “hands” are both the power of the suitor over his partner and the tactile interaction that the dance

²⁵¹ Fordyce, vol. II, p. 186.

²⁵² Using *Persuasion*, Hermione Lee associates “tenderness” with “suffering, waiting, endurance”. She defines “tenderness” as a state of heart, which allows for the moral kind of taste, which she associates with Fanny Price, Anne Elliot and Elinor Dashwood. Although she does not precisely define the word, she does not understand it as a physical manifestation, but closely relates it to “affection”, which is mostly but not exclusively a non-physical feeling. See “‘Taste’ and ‘Tenderness’ as Moral Values in the Novels of Jane Austen”, in B.G. Beatty and R.T. Davies (eds.), *Literature of the Romantic Period: 1750-1850* (Liverpool, 1976), pp. 82-95 [p. 89].

²⁵³ Gisborne, p. 183.

elicits.²⁵⁴ Being in the wrong place, described in a rambling and hunting metaphor (“ranging”, “destroyers”, “lawful game”, “hunted down”) allows Fordyce to present committing one mistake as sufficient justification for losing one’s “reputation”, and for condemning a woman’s lack of care more than her aggressor’s licence.²⁵⁵ Nothing involving arms is “harmless”. What is elsewhere called “familiarity” or love is therefore reprehensible. Touch is almost taboo.

Building on the foundations laid by moral philosophers, and by Hume in particular, conduct literature writers delineate a system in which touch is central, and advocated against, but hardly ever directly mentioned, thus creating a coherent but euphemistic behavioural system. (‘Euphemism’, this thesis argues, is essential to Austen’s prose. See Chapter III.) This dual (practical and linguistic) propriety is the context that shaped Austen’s social world, providing the laws that ruled her writing, both in terms of subject-matter and of language. It is therefore crucial to analyse the stylistic norms that influenced her writing process both positively and negatively, by examining texts that deal with grammar and rhetoric, in order to discern the trends she emulated, and the idiosyncratic strategies she developed, to express the haptic.

²⁵⁴ Byron’s poem ‘The Waltz’ (1813), which describes the dance-form as being “lavish of her hands”, substantiates the tactile danger of the intimacy Fordyce condemns. See S.J. Wolfson and P.J. Manning (eds.), Lord Byron, *Selected Poems* (London, 1996), p. 161.

²⁵⁵ Fordyce, vol. I, p. 82.

PART II

Eighteenth-century conduct literature was a prescriptive genre (especially for women), which established acceptable behaviour through a series of rules.

Language, in the eighteenth century, was also heavily regulated, and theorists delineated its laws, in texts ranging from grammar-books and rhetorical treatises to philosophical tomes. The proponents of linguistic propriety were especially prescriptive when writings were meant for public consumption, as in literature or oratory, and their stringent rules were rarely put into practice in 'real' life. Jane Austen's prose draws on these diverse traditions, and both follows and subverts the rules they expound. This chapter is concerned with the connections between touch and language in the cultivation of style and narrative that stems from the vast literature dedicated to the 'good manners' essential to uphold social order.

This section will identify key concerns of eighteenth-century prescriptivism and relate them to contemporary discussions of touch and style. By way of an introduction, it is helpful to consider eighteenth-century theorists' pronouncements on writing, in order to locate Austen's stylistic traits, and see where and how she deviates from the norm and uses her own devices.

In *A System of Oratory* (1759), Baptist minister and educator John Ward comments on the stages of life:

THERE is ... a considerable difference in the stile of the same person, in several parts of his life. Young persons, whose invention is quick and lively, commonly run into a pompous and luxuriant stile... as their imagination gradually cools, and comes under the conduct of a more mature judgement... their stile becomes less willing and pompous, [but] more

correct and nervous. But as old age sinks the powers of the mind, chills the imagination, and weakens the judgement; the stile too in proportion usually grows dry and languid.²⁵⁶

While the description of the middle period is particularly appropriate in Austen's case, neither the juvenilia, nor the letters, nor the later fiction, fit. Austen was more experimental in both early and late texts, but never verbose, or lacking in energy. Lord Chesterfield, in *Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman* (published 1774) warns against peculiar originality: "Singularity is only pardonable in old age and retirement..."²⁵⁷ What was spurned then is now celebrated. Austen's "singularity" was effaced in the nineteenth century, but, since Lascelles' analysis, new aspects of its unique character continue to be discovered and vindicated.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ John Ward, *A System of Oratory*, 2 vols. (London, 1759), vol. II, pp. 112-13.

²⁵⁷ George Gregory (ed.), *The Elements of a Polite Education; Carefully Selected from the Letters of the Late Right Hon^{ble} Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to his Son* (London, 1800), p. 444.

²⁵⁸ Norman Page comments on the "eccentricity" associated with "individuality of style", which was instrumental in Austen's "achievement" being long underestimated (1972, pp. 9-10).

THE TEXT

The first part of this chapter delineated the importance of the passions, the body, and touch in particular, in conduct literature, as expounded in sermons and ‘textbooks’. Both are argumentative genres, and sermons are also forms of oratory. Touch and pleasure also feature in grammatical and rhetorical treatises, which give them a direct concordance in language. George Campbell, in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776), delineates the need for “euphemism”: it is not *in se* a trope, but a recourse to discrete tropes for a common goal.²⁵⁹ This phenomenon is particularly useful where references to sex are concerned, and euphemistic variations are found in conduct literature, and occasionally in medical texts.

Those things which it is indecent to express vividly are always such as are conceived to have some turpitude in them, either natural or moral... if it be necessary to avoid a vivid exhibition of what appears uncleanly to the external senses, it is much more necessary in whatever may have a tendency to pollute the mind... What the subjects are which are in this way dangerous, it is surely needless to explain.²⁶⁰

The sins of the flesh (and other related indecorous crimes) should not be mentioned, or even named, to avoid misleading the reader. The ensuing vagueness is inevitable. Campbell’s direct correlation of expression and the “external senses” proves the importance of the sensory body in euphemism. English theologian Joseph Priestley, in *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777), explains that individuals must “dissemble” to maintain decorum, and this idea

²⁵⁹ George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 2 vols. (London, 1776), vol. II, pp. 217-18. All citations are from vol. II.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-1.

ties in both with the importance of the circumstances of expression, and with the idea that touch somehow overflows, between the acts, into language, to relieve the socially imposed pressure. As a rhetorician, Priestley describes style as supplementary to grammar:

We have hitherto examined what we may call the bones, muscles, and nerves of composition; we now come to the covering of this body, to describe the external lineaments, the colour, complexion, and graceful attitude of it.²⁶¹

His description of “whatever is *ornamental*”, of “style” in “a composition”, he equates with a “body”, thus joining essence and aesthetics.²⁶² This analogy supports the argument that style is a part of the literary body that allows diegesis to go on when the bare bones of narrative fact cannot be expressed. The “ornamental” part of narration is therefore a supplement to its fabric.²⁶³

Hugh Blair, in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (published 1783), establishes a direct connection between language and emotion:

The signification of our sentiments, made by tones and gestures, has this advantage above that made by words, that it is the language of nature. It is that method of interpreting our mind which nature has dictated to all, and which is understood by all; whereas words are only arbitrary conventional

²⁶¹ Joseph Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (London, 1777), p. 72.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁶³ Hugh Blair conceives style in a vein similar to Priestley’s. In his definition of “figures of speech”, language is equated to a “body”, and tropes are a “dress” that “adorns” it. See *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 3 vols., 7th edn. (London, 1798), vol. I, p. 319. Austen has replaced one body with another, and expressed through the metaphorical one what she could not say about the literal one. She has transferred touch out of the body and into language. Sutherland correlates the “irregularities” of Austen’s language with a “strategy of defamiliarization”, which, she argues, would jeopardise Austen’s “high cultural status” if these were commonly known to her readership (*Textual Lives*, p. 282). Considering the special relationship that exists between Austen’s texts and her readers, this point is questionable. See the second part of Katie Halsey’s *Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786–1945* (London, 2012), especially pp. 135–52.

symbols of our ideas; and, by consequence, must make a more feeble impression.²⁶⁴

Blair posits a universal language of feeling, effected by the body, which cannot be misunderstood. Although he does not mention touch specifically, focusing on the body as a whole, the “language of nature” comprises the haptic as a form of communication. Because words are more “feeble” and ambiguous than acted-out emotions, they afford a stylist like Austen the desired freedom to misdirect meaning, and to play with interpretation. But “style” can also infuse emotion into language:

Figurative Language always imports some colouring of the imagination, or some emotion of passion, expressed in our Style: And, perhaps, Figures of the Imagination, and Figures of Passion, might be a more useful distinction of the subject.²⁶⁵

The “Imagination” and the “Passions” are described as the point of origin of literary figures. They are therefore central to any discussion of complex language, and Austen’s is hardly ever simple. Cris Yelland comments on Mary Lascelles’ remark that Austen “mistrust[ed] metaphor”, and questions the idea that it was “simply an expression of personality”.²⁶⁶ He is wrong, however, in saying that Lascelles missed the mark. When she refers to “figurative language”, she means idioms, expressions, and *dead* metaphors. She never implies that Austen does not

²⁶⁴ Blair, vol. II, p. 398.

Katrin Burlin sees this relation differently: she connects the “fictions” spun by the characters in *NA* to language, which is more convincing emotionally if it does not “parade sentiment”. See “The pen of the contriver’: The Four Fictions of *Northanger Abbey*”, in J. Halperin (ed.), *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 89-111.

²⁶⁵ Blair, vol. I, p. 320.

²⁶⁶ Cris Yelland, *A Style in History*, p. 4.

use *live* ones (see also Kames' nomenclature, below). Austen's extensive use of polysemy points to a subtle but omnipresent recourse to "figurative language" of a different kind, usually present in indecipherable contexts, rather than in direct similes. She avoids using images that are not original: hackneyed phrases usually carry the condemnation of morally questionable characters, with whom Lascelles associates double negatives and tortuous constructions.²⁶⁷ One should notice that Lascelles' language is often haptic: the "grain of the language", "touch" and "*stick*" bring in a tactile dimension to style, which is 'felt' by both writer and reader, and implies both skilful undertones, and malaise.²⁶⁸ Metaphor was the central literary trope according to eighteenth-century theorists, and the fact that contemporary critics also concentrate on it, often with opposed conclusions when it comes to Austen, points to a complexity of style that has not yet been elucidated, which attention to the haptic should help us to understand.

²⁶⁷ See Lascelles, *Jane Austen and her Art*, pp. 111-13. Page corroborates (1972, p. 160). Joe Bray explains that only in 'Sanditon' did Austen "emplo[y] figurative language creatively". See *The Language of Jane Austen* (Basingstoke, 2018), p. 153.

Page associates language with Austen's characters: "not only does the authorial voice draw the reader's attention to linguistic issues, but some of the characters observe themselves, and each other, in the act of using language" (1972, pp. 12-13). This description of Austen's writings highlights the self-reflexivity and humour of language, which are sometimes independent of character or plot.

Toshiro Tanaka calls double negation a "*detour*" that "weakens the mental energy of the hearer". See 'Double Negation in Jane Austen', *Poetica* 41 (1994), 137-48 [148].

²⁶⁸ Lascelles, *Jane Austen and her Art*, pp. 88-9, 94-6.

THE SENTENCE

An examination of Jane Austen's style needs to elucidate the figures of speech she made her own, and to assess them in the context of the theorists of her day. The typology that eighteenth-century rhetoricians inherited from the Greek and Latin traditions (especially via Cicero and Quintilian) is rich, and although it would have been part of the formal education of young men, it would not have been available to women. Jane Austen's style comes from her wide reading, and from the rhythms of the language she heard in church, such as the formal English of the *Book of Common Prayer*.²⁶⁹ Austen was immersed in language and imbibed its stylistic rules organically: to borrow a common phrase, she had 'an ear for language'.

In *The Mystery of Rhetorick Unveiled* (published before 1721), rhetorician John Smith collated a *précis* of tropes and figures, some of which accord with Austen's stylistic *penchants*. Smith mentions "*Parecbasis*", the Greek word for digression.²⁷⁰ While the narrative trope is self-explanatory, Austen uses it as an intra-sentence device: "*Parecbasis*" is a form of derailment, that is, a sentence in which the intended or evident end is not reached, and an unpredictable shift occurs, which creates surprise and puzzlement. Austen uses this trick recurrently, especially in

²⁶⁹ See Margaret Doody, 'Jane Austen's Reading', in J.D. Grey (ed.), *The Jane Austen Companion* (New York NY, 1986), pp. 347-63.

²⁷⁰ John Smith, *The Mystery of Rhetorick Unveiled*, 10th edn. (London, 1721), p. 177.

the early writings and the letters (see Chapters II and III). Her narrative voice thus performs a meta-commentary on that of conduct literature.²⁷¹

Conjunction is an essential part of formal syntax, and the basis of syntagm. Theorists advocate careful attention to it. In order better to understand Austen's use of syntagmatic constructions, one must understand the rules of conjunction, as enunciated in grammatical and oratorical works.²⁷² John Smith first comments on the absence of conjunction, and explains that "*Dialyton*" (or "*Asyndeton*") is a "Figure, when in a Heap or Pile of Words, a Conjunction Copulative is not only for Speed and Vehemency, but for Pathetical Emphasis sake left out".²⁷³ Austen's writings often use juxtaposed clauses or phrases to create her desired effects.²⁷⁴

Mandal argues that Austen uses

disjunction to subvert meaning and generate ironic gaps between appearance and reality, between the linguistic surface of statements and the moral substance of them.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ J.F. Burrows, in *Computation into Criticism: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels and an Experiment in Method* (Oxford, 1987), comments that "At crucial moments in Jane Austen's dialogue ... the words often call attention to themselves as words..." (p. 114), implying that diegesis can overflow into meta-fiction. Words often mean something to the author, which is subtly translated to the reader, on a separate but equally important plane from that of the narrators and characters.

²⁷² Bettina Fischer-Starcke's fascinating chapter on "Phraseology", in *Corpus Linguistics* (pp. 108-43), helps discern Austen's word order patterns in short (four word) units, but does not broach longer units, such as phrases, clauses or sentences.

²⁷³ J. Smith, pp. 136-7.

Kenneth L. Moler remarks on the importance of asyndeton in Fanny Price's "bookish" voice. See 'The Two Voices of Fanny Price', in J. Halperin (ed.), *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 172-9.

²⁷⁴ See Chapters II and III.

²⁷⁵ See Mandal, 'Language', p. 29.

His example from *P&P* (“Miss Lucas ... instantly set out to meet him accidentally in the lane”, vol. I, chap. 22, p. 137) illustrates the way Austen doubles back on many of her narratorial pronouncements, using a late clause to cast doubt on the preceding one. Yelland remarks on similar instances and concludes that these “would have been disapproved of by prescriptivist writers”.²⁷⁶

Grammarians Anne Fisher, in *A Practical New Grammar* (1759), offers an essential definition of “English *Concord*”.²⁷⁷

When two or more Names of different Numbers are in a Sentence, with a Disjunctive Conjunction between or among them, and equally relate to a common Verb, the Verb agrees best with the nearest...²⁷⁸

Distributive constructions, and the *dénouement* of singular/plural ambiguities, show that English is capable of unresolved “concord” in a sentence. The agreement, until the expression of the last possible subject, is suspended, and finally confirmed or nullified. This rule can be used for stylistic purposes to great effect. A second grammatical rule also relies on connection: “When two Clauses of a Sentence refer equally to what follows, they must be both properly connected to it...”.²⁷⁹ In this instance, a distributive construction is considered wrong, and the common part of the sentence, because it uses two different auxiliaries (“I have been”/“I have done”), is left hanging.

²⁷⁶ See Yelland, p. 104.

²⁷⁷ Anne Fisher, *A Practical New Grammar* (London, 1800), p. 91.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

English Clergyman and lexicographer Samuel Johnson, in the preface to his 1755 *Dictionary of the English Language*, explains:

I have ... attempted a dictionary of the English language, which, while it was employed in the cultivation of every species of literature, has itself been hitherto neglected; suffered to spread, under the direction of chance, into wild exuberance, resigned to the tyranny of time and fashion, and exposed to the corruptions of ignorance, and caprices of innovation.²⁸⁰

The triplet in the latter part of the sentence is complicated by extra members, which add a binary dimension to the ternary essence.²⁸¹ However, the dual and parallel subordinate clauses (“which, while...”) create a possibility of confusion that is supplemented by the semantic ambiguity of the verbs and nouns. They can refer both to the “English language” or Johnson’s “dictionary”. Johnson thereby creates a comedic prophesy regarding the fate of his lexicographic endeavour. Even stylists such as Johnson himself unwittingly use constructions that obstruct perspicuity, but with no comic end. Austen emulated Johnson’s language with mischievous intent in her burlesques.²⁸² Lascelles describes “coining pregnant abstractions” as a form of collocation Austen learned from Johnson (“Miss Bates’ *desultory good-will*”, “Mrs. Elton’s *apparatus of happiness*”).²⁸³ Knud Sørensen also comments on the “*the x-ness of y*”, or “abstract diction” of Austen’s language. It is Jane Austen’s originality in collocation, however, and its

²⁸⁰ Donald Greene (ed.), *Samuel Johnson: The Major Works* (Oxford, 2000), p. 307.

²⁸¹ For a recent analysis of the staples of Johnsonian English in Jane Austen, see Freya Johnston, ‘Johnson and Austen’, in G. Clingham and P. Smallwood (eds.), *Samuel Johnson after 300 Years* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 225-45.

²⁸² See Chapter II. The promiscuity effected by an ambiguous relative pronoun in ‘A Tale’ (*Juvenilia*, p. 226) is a good example of Austen’s perverted constructions.

²⁸³ See Lascelles, *Jane Austen and her Art*, p. 109.

disturbing incongruities, which show that she has made collocation her own device.²⁸⁴

Austen regularly resorts to syllepsis, which Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Henry Home, Lord Kames considers a failing, but Austen uses it to force the reader into questioning the connections between discrete members of her sentences.²⁸⁵ Austen's formal imbalances are in fact mimetic, in that they reproduce the (social, individual, etc.) flaws that prevent life from being a meaningful whole: "I cannot flourish in this east wind ... which is quite against my skin & conscience".²⁸⁶ But Kames has a compositional vision that mirrors Austen's social one:

It is ... offending against neatness, to crowd into one period entire thoughts requiring more than one; which is joining in language things that are separated in reality.²⁸⁷

Kames' examples of *non sequiturs* within one sentence include correlated clauses, but his judgement applies to any point at which the promiscuity of ideas becomes offending. Austen often effects disruption through juxtaposition, but also through nonsensical correlation. The correlative element of Austen's comedy creates a point of contact between two ideas, which effects friction in the reader's mind: two irreconcilable propositions are joined in a faulty subjacent syllogism. This

²⁸⁴ See Knud Sørensen, 'Johnsonese in *Northanger Abbey*: A Note on Jane Austen's Style', *English Studies* 50 (1969), 390-7.

²⁸⁵ See Chapters II and III.
Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (Indianapolis IN, 2005), p. 388.

²⁸⁶ *Letters*, p. 302 (early March 1815).

²⁸⁷ Kames, p. 392.

phenomenon, which Lascelles rightly calls the “interaction of idiosyncrasy and life”, is central in Austen’s style.²⁸⁸ Commenting further on this aspect of her style, Inger Thomsen argues that Austen intended to “instil ... distrust in her readers”.²⁸⁹ The “tension between words” is further included in a “rhetoric of silence” that allows the expression of suppressed meanings and phenomena.²⁹⁰

Returning to the eighteenth-century critical context, George Campbell’s strict advice about the use of conjunctions must be noted:

the less conspicuous they are, the more perfect will the union of the parts be, and the more easily will the hearer glide, as it were, from one word, clause, or member of a period into another. The more observable they are, the less perfect will the union be, and the more difficulty will the hearer pass on from member to member, from clause to clause, and from word to word.²⁹¹

The unity effected by conjunction creates a single object in the reader’s mind, and the identity of the assimilated elements is comical.²⁹² Austen’s linguistic genius resides in making her conjunctions smooth but suspect, rather than “conspicuous”. Readerly “glid[ing]” happens seamlessly until one reaches an

²⁸⁸ Lascelles references *Emma* (“You would not wish to disappoint and mortify the Coles ... who have been your neighbours these *ten* years”), and the *Juvenilia* (“Two Gentlemen most elegantly attired but weltering in their blood...”), *Jane Austen and her Art*, pp. 144-5.

²⁸⁹ Inger Sigrun Thomsen, ‘Words ‘Half-Dethroned’: Jane Austen’s Art of the Unspoken’, in J. McMaster and B. Stovel (eds.), *Jane Austen’s Business: Her World and her Profession* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 95-106 [p. 96].

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

On a more pragmatic level, J.F. Burrows comments on the importance of “deleted” words (*e.g.* the completive conjunction “that”, missing in Mrs. Bennet’s idiolect), whose meaning and significance can be “recover[ed]” (*Computation into Criticism*, p. 110).

Laura Dabundo makes a similar point. See ‘Jane Austen’s Opacities’, in *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and their Sisters* (Lanham MD, 2000), pp. 53-60.

²⁹¹ G. Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 377.

²⁹² See *e.g.* Lady Catherine and the pigs in *P&P*, vol. II, chap. 5, p. 179.

element that introduces doubt or imbalance, retrospectively, into the sentence.²⁹³

George Campbell explains that straightforward positioning is not always possible, however.²⁹⁴ His point applies to Austen's voluntary ambiguity when she uses a pronoun that could refer to multiple antecedents.²⁹⁵ Anne Toner, in *Jane Austen's Style* uses a passage from *S&S* as an example:

“We have neither of us anything to tell; you, because you communicate, and I, because I conceal nothing” (p. 193). Marianne's late negation (“nothing”) facilitates a syntactical tension in suggesting first that Elinor communicates and that she, Marianne, conceals (both the verbs capable of being understood in an intransitive sense), before “nothing” concludes her sense and changes the verbs to transitive forms.²⁹⁶

The grammatical suspense and resulting uncomfortable and partly unresolved imbalance Toner describes here (“nothing” being distributive), is a device that Austen uses in all her writings. This specific example is not haptic in content, but the temporary and mingled reversal of the sisters' roles points to an assimilation of the characters that results from distributive cross-contamination. For George Campbell, these tropes are mistakes that need to be corrected in order to comply

²⁹³ Anne Toner, in *Jane Austen's Style: Narrative Economy and the Novel's Growth* (Cambridge, 2020), comments on the retrospective action of some speech tags in *S&S* and *P&P*, which force the reader to double back (p. 132). This use of conjunctions achieves the same effect.

²⁹⁴ G. Campbell, p. 39.

²⁹⁵ The type of unconjugated element Lascelles calls “dislocated clause” is akin to apposition, or ablative absolute, and more of a latinism than a solecism, which might explain why it is not condemned by grammatical treatises, as they allow for a number of obsolete or forced constructions. These might not be “slips” at all (*Jane Austen and her Art*, p. 104). Lascelles' staunch defence of Austen's impeccable grammar seems unwarranted, as it does not take into account juxtaposition and other compositional tricks that effect precisely what she denies: Austen's style is full of purposeful “irregularities”.

²⁹⁶ Toner, *Jane Austen's Style*, p. 108.

with the rules of composition.²⁹⁷ The game Austen plays with antecedents and pronouns is efficient, because it is “impossible to discover” the relation with certainty, creating an imbalance or suspense with which the reader has to grapple.

Priestley describes conjunctions as a feature of elegance. On paper, Austen’s delight in unexpected twists, including grammatical and stylistic ones, would be “disgust[ing]” to Priestley.²⁹⁸ The sense of imbalance created by Austen’s distortions, however, is memorable, often comic, and ultimately perversely pleasing. Lindley Murray’s understanding of conjunctions, in his 1795 *English Grammar*, is a little different from that of other grammarians, and therefore helpful, as a form of *haute vulgarisation*:

Conjunctions very often unite sentences, when they appear to unite only words; as in the following instances: “Duty *and* interest forbid vicious indulgences; “wisdom *or* folly governs us.” Each of these forms of expression contains two sentences, namely; “duty forbids vicious indulgences; interest forbids vicious indulgences;” “Wisdom governs us, or folly governs us.”²⁹⁹

The parsed implication of the distributive use of these conjunctions is crucial. It occasions extensive ellipses, in which clauses are reduced to one word. The ensuing conflation, which effects a resolved discordance, is a form of haptic subsuming. Austen often uses this form of near-implied connectivity in her complex sentences.³⁰⁰ Murray relates imbalanced coordination to a bungled ellipsis:

²⁹⁷ G. Campbell, p. 39.

²⁹⁸ See Priestley, *Lectures on Oratory*, p. 34.

²⁹⁹ Lindley Murray, *English Grammar*, 5th edn. (York, 1799), p. 105.

³⁰⁰ See Chapter II.

To avoid disagreeable repetitions, and to express our ideas in a few words, an ellipsis, or omission of some words, is frequently admitted; but when this would obscure a sentence, weaken its force, or be attended with an impropriety, the ellipsis must be supplied... "A beautiful field and trees," is not proper language. It should be, "Beautiful fields and trees;" or, "A beautiful field and fine trees."³⁰¹

This discernment identifies the proper form of what early rhetoricians called zeugma: the distributed use of an adjective to two nouns of differing numbers is "improper", and the numeral balance must be restored.³⁰² While Austen occasionally produces this sort of zeugma, her preferred employment of the figure is the semantic one. The proper zeugma is therefore a grammatically dodgy ellipsis, whose poetic effect relies on an unexpected transgression of the rules.

Austen's narrative and grammatical succinctness are usually seen as the essence of her style. This thesis argues that the connective nature of conjunction and juxtaposition is a grammatical and semantic form of touch: the sometimes discordant contact between words, which requires concentration and reactivity from the reader, is haptic. Austen's supposed flaws (see Ward's categorisation of "dark tropes" below) have a palpable effect on the reader, whose body is often the *locum* of realisation of her stylistic humour.

³⁰¹ Murray, pp. 175-6.

³⁰² John Smith describes "*Zeugma*" and "*Syllepsis*" as purely grammatical, and relying on a disparity of constructions (gender, number, etc.), rather than of meaning (*Mystery of Rhetoric*, pp. 134-6). Austen uses semantic zeugmas and syllepses, which do not seem to possess a specific term in Smith's taxonomy.

THE WORD

The word, a smaller linguistic unit, is also essential to Austen's style. Rhetoricians associate tropes with words and the intellect, and one can use this correlation as the basis for an analysis of Austen's minute stylistics.³⁰³ Smith lists a number of rare and commonplace devices, some of which Austen recurrently deploys.

Metalepsis ... is ... [t]he multiplying of a Trope in one Word... It is the continuation of a Trope in one Word through the Succession of its Significations.³⁰⁴

Austen often exploits the polysemy of single words, to create global meanings and effects that go beyond singular metonymy or metaphor. This is one of her 'signature' tropes.³⁰⁵ Smith defines "Antanaclasis" as "a various Signification of the same Word. A Figure, when the same Word is repeated in a diverse, if not a contrary Signification...".³⁰⁶ Antanaclasis uses several occurrences of the same word in contexts that rely on its polysemy in variation. Austen may on occasion use it as such, but she mostly applies the polysemy directly, that is, in one single occurrence of the word which creates the imbalance of irresolution: "Nothing could be more delicious than your letter..." makes Fanny Knight's

³⁰³ Concision is an aspect of Austen's style on which contemporary critics agree, as substantiated by her genius for one-liners, and for polysemy-based comedy. The authorial word-choice attributed to Mr. Bennet in *P&P* ("delighted", "exhibit") to characterise Mary's playing (vol. I, chap. 18, p. 113), highlights the potency of single words, which can singly carry intense irony.

³⁰⁴ J. Smith, p. 37.

³⁰⁵ Specific examples can be found in Chapters II and III.

³⁰⁶ J. Smith, p. 79.

correspondence an expected culinary delicacy.³⁰⁷ Ward condemns antanaclasis

“in all serious discourses”, because it subverts linguistic propriety:

all ambiguity of expression is one cause of obscurity. This sometimes arises from the different senses, in which the word is capable of being taken... And this use of ambiguous words we sometimes meet with ... in prose, either for pleasantry or ridicule.³⁰⁸

“[P]leasantry or ridicule”, for the poet and the comic novelist, are licensed, as reasons for employing tropes that “obscure” one’s meaning are only in contravention of grammarians’ definition of “perspicuity” if the “intention” remains unclear. “THOSE [tropes] which relate to verbal figures, principally turn upon a double sense of the same word, or a similitude of sound in different words”.³⁰⁹ Ward’s definition describes the crux of Austen’s style, which relies on homophony as well as polysemy: “The joke consists in the double meaning of the words, which in the question refer to the mind, and in the answer to the body. This figure is called *antanaclasis*”.³¹⁰ Ward refers to the trope mentioned by John

³⁰⁷ *Letters*, p. 348 (13 March 1817).

Page sees the ambiguous simultaneity of “archaic and modern” meanings as a “halt”-inducing “ambiguity” (1972, p. 62). Anne Waldron Neumann associates the duality of synchronic meanings of “condescension” in *P&P*, which conveys both Collins’ positive and Lady Catherine’s negative denotations, with “double-voiced” direct writing. This narrative, attributive trick allows Austen to express her usual polysemic tendencies almost undetected, because she uses characters to express semantic ambiguity. See ‘Characterization and Comment in *Pride and Prejudice*: Free Indirect Discourse and “Double-voiced” Verbs of Speaking, Thinking, and Feeling’, *Style* 20 (1986), 364-94. See also Mandal, ‘Language’, p. 30.

³⁰⁸ Ward, *System of Oratory*, vol. I, pp. 327-8.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 203.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Smith, and relates it to humour.³¹¹ The fact that Ward associates it with outright jokes suggests the extent to which comedic writing is seen as differing from normal usage.³¹² Austen's would be deemed "dark tropes" by most eighteenth-century rhetoricians and grammarians.³¹³ Ward allows for the justification of "darkness" in certain circumstances, and stylistic design is certainly a defensible one. Ward is unique among prescriptivists, as he defines and endorses "dark" tropes, "*wit*" and "*humour*" (or "*continued wit*"), and devotes a large section to their analysis.³¹⁴

In the preface to his *Dictionary*, Samuel Johnson makes essential remarks regarding denotation, semantics, and synonymy.

The shades of meaning sometimes pass imperceptibly into each other, so that though on one side they apparently differ, yet it is impossible to mark the

³¹¹ Toner finds an example of "*antanaclasis*" in *Emma* (*Jane Austen's Style*, p. 182): "And when one considers the variety of hands, and of bad hands too, that are to be deciphered, it increases the wonder! Emma's hand is the strongest." The "wonder" expressed regarding the reliability of the postal system introduces a form of diegetic juxtaposition that is also a directional red herring. The "variety of hands" that the previous sentence initially implies refers to the various postal workers who are successively entrusted with the carriage of the letter. The subsequent destination of the sentence, however, comments on handwriting ("deciphered"), rather than the itinerary of the letter. The writer's train of phrase has been derailed by the polysemy of the word "hand". This phenomenon happens again when Mr. Knightley uses the word as a euphemistic metaphor for Emma's desirable body, thus voicing his attraction, in another linguistic derailment.

³¹² Lascelles separates the "turn of wit", which is present from the very beginning of Austen's writing career, from the "irregularity" of her compositional style (see *Jane Austen and her Art*, p. 105), but the two are indissociable. It is true however, in a reversed way, that the brilliancy of her early stylistic achievement is "half hidden" in her later works, because it has refined and become more subtle. Sutherland also comments on the *finesse* of the mature writings, and the "quiet devastation" and "internal parodic collapse" they effect (*Textual Lives*, p. 232).

³¹³ Ward, vol. I, p. 392.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 195-205.

point of contact... this uncertainty of terms, and commixture of ideas, is well known to those who have joined philosophy with grammar...³¹⁵

Johnson describes the inherent and implied processes of paradigmatic word-choices that Austen would soon explicate by design.³¹⁶ The collocation of near synonyms forces the reader to take stock of their contrasting meanings and usages, at the same time as it creates the discordant sensation in the mind of an unresolved chord or conundrum (“puzzled”, “crowding”).

Metaphor, the most common trope, receives extensive treatment from all theorists. There are good metaphors and bad metaphors, however, and deviations are a particularly hot topic. Kames explains simple metaphors:

in constructing a metaphor, the writer ought to make use of such words only as are applicable literally to the imagined nature of his subject: figurative words ought carefully to be avoided; for such complicated figures, instead of setting the principal subject in a strong light, involve it in a cloud...³¹⁷

The metaphorical “cloud” (a mixed metaphor), created by the addition of figurative language to a metaphor, perfectly describes Austen’s use of semantic connections, as she was fond of complicated references and identifications. In the famous letter dated 17 December 1816, Austen simultaneously describes the writing process as both a “Nest” and a “little bit ... of Ivory”, two *métaphores filées* that are conflated.³¹⁸ Kames is also singular in mentioning a trope that has

³¹⁵ Greene (ed.), *Major Works*, p. 317.

³¹⁶ J.F. Burrows brilliantly summarises Roman Jakobson’s argument regarding the “syntagmatic” and “paradigmatic” dimensions of sentence writing. See *Computation into Criticism*, p. 29.

³¹⁷ Kames, pp. 578-9.

³¹⁸ *Letters*, p. 323.

received little critical attention, but is often found in Austen's writings. The hypallage is "*A Figure, which, among related Objects, extends the Properties of one to another...*", and in which "the attributes of one subject are extended to another with which it is connected".³¹⁹ The transferred epithet was well known to classical and later rhetoricians, and it is surprising that Kames did not use its proper name. This transfer is a fascinating trope by which new relations are created between words: semantic truth is superseded by syntactic ambiguity. Haptic language similarly dissociates touch (a physical event) from reality and transfers it to the language of the diegesis (see Chapter IV on Mrs. Whitby's "literary recess" in 'Sanditon').³²⁰ Kames advocates caution, however, and argues that polysemy should not be pushed too far:

It is still worse to jumble together metaphorical and natural expression, so as that the period must be understood in part metaphorically in part literally; for the imagination cannot follow with sufficient ease changes so sudden and unprepared: a metaphor begun and not carried on, hath no beauty; and instead of light there is nothing but obscurity and confusion.³²¹

The epigrammatic quality of the collocation "obscurity and confusion" might successfully be applied to the stylistic shock tactics Austen occasionally uses, which most theorists would frown upon. In the letter dated 9 February 1807, Austen comments on the employment of "Lord Lansdown's Painter", using the

³¹⁹ Kames, p. 565.

³²⁰ *LM*, p. 167.

³²¹ Kames, p. 581.

implied verb both literally and metaphorically, as referring to the “walls” and “my Lady’s face” (see Chapter III).³²²

In another example of the way in which technical flaws become literary strengths, George Campbell evinces synæsthetic metaphor as the worst kind of catachresis. This ‘pouring out’ of sensory meaning into language is a phenomenon that needs analysis in Austen. George Campbell has the staunchest views regarding predictive style, which stem from the common prescriptive desire to improve the English language, and to expose the absurdities of its common form.³²³ Susan Manly comments on the politico-social need to amend the English language in order to make it fit better with the “polite culture” of the late eighteenth century. She points out the important role that George Campbell played in defining the necessity and importance of “custom” in this endeavour, which she sets against pure prescriptivism. In a different way, romantic poets (Manly focuses on Wordsworth) strove for the clarity that the “language of men” could bring to their art, which was representative of a different form of culture, but centred on an equal need for “purity”.³²⁴ Austen was not aiming for purity, but for a form of her own that could subvert, or at least be independent of, the language of men.

³²² *Letters*, p. 110.

³²³ G. Campbell explains that “nothing generally succeeds worse than metaphors that are only transferred from sense to sense”, of which the adjective “*soff*” is an example. See *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 225-6.

³²⁴ See Susan Manly, *Language, Custom and Nation in the 1790s: Locke, Tooke, Wordsworth, Edgeworth* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 72-9, 111-17.

These fascinating considerations elucidate the special connection of the senses and language, and although George Campbell condemns this practice, he admits that it has become commonly accepted. He describes the phenomenon as a historical linguist:

all the words [that] denote spiritual and intellectual things, are in their origin metaphors, taken from the objects of sense. This shows evidently, that the latter have made the earliest impressions, have by consequence first obtained names in every tongue, and are still, as it were, more present with us, and strike the imagination more forcibly than the former...³²⁵

This assertion, especially in the context of conduct literature, is helpful, because it explains why metaphoric language is omnipresent in the length and breadth of moral and sensory discussions, which invariably reduce these topics to “hands”, “hearts” and “contamination”. George Campbell explains that these have become “proper terms” rather than metaphors, because he relates them to “present use” rather than “etymology”.

³²⁵ G. Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 200-1.

CONCLUSION

Literary critics interested in the long eighteenth century have analysed manifestations of the senses in fiction as well as in words, but even in the works that provide the tools for an in-depth analysis of the body and the mind, little attention is given to touch as a discrete phenomenon, or to its modes of expression.

A re-examination of medical, philosophical and didactic texts of the eighteenth century shows that touch, while central in everyday life, as well as in the development of the understanding, is morally suspect, and correspondingly omitted from the discourse of propriety. Physicians can broach it in certain circumstances, but elsewhere, allusions remain vague and limited, particularly where women are concerned. There is a prevailing difficulty in translating the haptic from experience into words.

Eighteenth-century grammatical and rhetorical texts approach the theme of touch in various guises (the passions, lexicography, style), and often describe the experience of language as haptic, making the correlation of actions and words evident.³²⁶ But again, prescriptivist writers often make points of contact difficult to discern, as they try to deflect or prevent references to sex and sin. J.F. Burrows

³²⁶ Edith Wyschogrod recognised the metaphoric continuum created by the *glissement* from “feeling” as sensation to “feeling” as affect, in semantics (“touchy”, “touched”, “I feel for...”). She sees this phenomenon through the lenses of “sympathy” and “empathy” (‘Empathy and Sympathy’, p. 40).

argues that levels of correctness are significant markers of character, in a way that differs from the traditional understanding:

the social standing of Jane Austen's characters manifests itself in 'whose word it is and for whom it is meant' and, accordingly, has an influence on the whole shape of their idiolect. The patterns of dominance and submissiveness, to pursue that example, support the proposition more subtly and powerfully than overt contrasts between the 'correct' usage of one social class and the solecisms—comical or deplorable—of another.³²⁷

If Austen's style correlates with this communicational theory of addressees, it may be argued that her meta-style relies heavily on her own enjoyment of communication through words to the reader (which includes, but is not limited to, irony), outwith diegesis, most often to comedic effect.

In 1971, Ashley Montagu highlights the paradoxical "tangibility" of fiction:

The intelligibility of language is nothing more nor less than the unintelligibility of nature made artificially clear. But the language of touch is nature, and requires no artifice. It is characteristic of the best writing that it has an immediacy, a kind of tangibility which renders the scenes the author depicts, the characters he creates, as real as if we were palpably experiencing them.³²⁸

This study will analyse specific references to touch in Austen's writings, focusing on the letters, juvenilia, and later manuscripts, and elucidate the ways in which touch is represented, through actions and words, in order to discover the relationship between words themselves, and the reason why Austen's texts are reputed to contain few to no mentions of the body and touch. It will concentrate on the evolution of the grammatical and stylistic *penchants* Austen displays

³²⁷ J.F. Burrows, *Computation into Criticism*, p. 188.

³²⁸ Montagu, *Touching*, p. 314.

throughout her writing career, better to understand the (inter- and inner) workings of language and the haptic.

CHAPTER II — *JUVENILIA*

INTRODUCTION

The stories (“Novels”, “Tales”, “Letters”), poems and short dramatic works contained in *Volume the First*, *Volume the Second* and *Volume the Third* of Jane Austen’s *Juvenilia* are eclectic in terms of composition dates, genres and levels of completion, but they are unified in their comedy, their stylistic coherence and their foreshadowing of Austen’s mature fiction. Juliet McMaster boldly claims:

if you don’t know the juvenilia, you don’t know Austen. All that control, all that restraint in the service of exactness and the *mot juste*... are the more remarkable and the more valuable for growing out of the uninhibited gusto of youthful creativity. To the attentive reader of the juvenilia, Jane Austen’s beautifully conscious art is charged with the energy of her youthful exuberance, and the brilliant control and precision are informed by the vitality and free-rein prancing dynamism that have been harnessed and channeled into finely articulated narrative.³²⁹

McMaster argues that the perfection of Austen’s mature style stems from the tempering of the chaotic “energy” of the juvenilia. Tom Keymer goes further: “Austen’s manuscript works are striking achievements in their own right, and point to aspects of the published novels we might otherwise miss”.³³⁰ Keymer’s analysis is a great summary of what the juvenilia do and are: they differ from the rest of the fiction, and point to what is toned down in the novels. Touch is central in both, narratively and stylistically.

³²⁹ Juliet McMaster, ‘Young Jane Austen: Author’, in C.L. Johnson and C. Tuite (eds.), *A Companion to Jane Austen* (Chichester, 2009), pp. 81-90 [pp. 81-2].

³³⁰ Tom Keymer, *Jane Austen: Writing, Society, Politics* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 12-13.

This chapter will take a syntactically detailed look at the three *Volumes*, and examine Austen's treatment of touch, her use of haptic language, and how these relate to the *Letters* and the mature fiction.³³¹ It will argue that these early writings prefigure the haptic tendencies of their later counterparts, except in two respects. The first one is the presence (almost omnipresence) of violence, especially physical violence, which contributes in great part to the farcical humour deployed in the young Austen's writings. The second is the primacy of effect over substance or verisimilitude. Her development as a writer renders her stylistic choices in the mature fiction much less tactile, and elevates true-to-life narrative and character development over *bons mots*.³³²

In order to place the haptic in the broader context of Austen's writings, this chapter will first concentrate on the choices and effects intrinsic to the *Juvenilia*, that is, those concerning violence and the body. The second section will focus on the central role of objects and the physical world. The third section will analyse the intercourse between feelings and society, specifically as relating to language, grief, and affection. The final part will concentrate on the haptic in relation to dancing, courtship and innuendo.

³³¹ Anthony Mandal explains that “the rich and dynamic language [of the *Juvenilia*] is natural to Austen”, and that the “subject matter of these writings – illegitimacy, alcoholism, gambling, theft, violence and murder – is reflected in the raw unmediated language” (‘Language’, p. 23). Austen's language becomes “more nuanced” in the published novels, but does not fundamentally change.

³³² This development was identified in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven CT, 1979), p. 114.

VIOLENCE AND THE BODY

This first section focuses on the body, and its relation to violence, especially in *Volume the First*. The haptic, particularly when violent, is essential in Austen's juvenile comedic effects, and the violence differs widely in degree, and ranges from abrupt movement to murder.³³³ 'Frederic and Elfrida' (F&E) evidences banalised violent behaviour: the characters do "not scruple to kick one another out of the window on the slightest provocation".³³⁴ The matter-of-fact account of outrageous behaviour is devoid of realism, and purely there for effect. Margaret Doody describes Austen's characters as "engage[d] in an orgy of greed, lust, and violence". Her "clichés slip and split asunder to reveal comically shocking truths", making her early works striking.³³⁵ Enit Steiner's feminist reading counters Doody's by focusing on the fact that Austen depicts women as "enduring violence rather than exercising it".³³⁶ Things take a turn for the worse when Charlotte "thr[ows] herself into a deep stream".³³⁷ The character's solution to her dual engagement (a "folly"), is to commit suicide. The ensuing watery death is not described. Austen leaves the reader to supply their own narrative in the gap she

³³³This tendency may stem from Austen's early passion for the theatre. See Penny Gay, *Jane Austen and the Theatre* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1-25.

³³⁴ *Juvenilia*, p. 6.

³³⁵ Doody, 'Introduction', p. xxxiv.

³³⁶ Enit K. Steiner, 'Bodies Playing on the Boundaries in Jane Austen's *Juvenilia*', *Figurationen* 2 (2020), 61-72 [62].

³³⁷ *Juvenilia*, p. 9.

creates, an early instance of her demand for active readerly investment. Claudia Johnson argues that in the juvenilia, “narrative styles and devices ... are shown at their least innocent”. Austen “prohibits us from reading unthinkingly ... for her style persistently makes itself subject to doubt and invites sceptical reexamination”.³³⁸ Johnson’s focus on the juvenilia’s metafictional qualities, which evince Austen’s diegetic “genius”, opposes George Steiner’s vision that her fiction is apolitical. Johnson presents style as a sign of Austen’s manipulation of the reader through the questioning of “conventions”, which is “subversive”: they cannot read the *Juvenilia* “unthinkingly”, or unfeelingly.³³⁹ Johnson identifies the call on the reader to be always on their guard, to question both spirit and letter of Austen’s fiction: nothing is ever straightforward, and Austen’s agenda mingles deregulation of style and of social structures. These gaps effect an almost tactile feeling of discomfort, of unsettling ambiguity in the reader that is never resolved. Through polysemy and juxtaposition, Austen asks her readers to elucidate suspense themselves.³⁴⁰ Rachel Brownstein beautifully summarises Austen’s technique:

³³⁸ Claudia Johnson, “‘The Kingdom is at Sixes and Sevens’: Politics and the Juvenilia’, in J.D. Grey (ed.), *Jane Austen’s Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan* (Ann Arbor MI, 1989), pp. 45-58 [pp. 46-7].

³³⁹ Claudia Johnson justly questions George Steiner’s idea that Austen’s fiction is ahistorical and apolitical. His argument about its “radically linguistic” nature stands, however. He cogently delimits the excluded facets of “life in fiction”, through “vocabulary and grammar”. Johnson recognises that Austen deploys what Steiner calls a “language of the unspoken”, but she regards it as subversive, as it signals dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. See Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London, 1975), pp. 8-9.

³⁴⁰ See Chapter III.

Lulled by the sentence's rhythms, the unwary reader might not notice it makes no sense: the wary one will be delighted by the oversetting of expectations as well as the mockery of pompous formulations... the parody of magisterial prose is playful; the young author is mostly enjoying her power to yoke discrepant opposites, or – conversely – to show that some things absolutely must follow from others.³⁴¹

The essence of Austen's style is conjoining what cannot be assimilated ("yoke discrepant opposites") and creating false sequiturs ("must follow"). The reader's position is therefore central, because without sensible explication efforts, Austen's prose remains disconcerting.

Violence is often located within the social code: the characters "returned to Mrs Fitzroy's at whose feet they threw themselves with one accord".³⁴² The recurrence of "thr[owing] [one]self" is an expression of collective feeling (grief), given kinaesthetic form. The dynamic reaction works as an equaliser, all characters becoming devoid of personal feeling and individuality. The heroine's proposed alternative fates give a fairytale-like quality to Austen's story:

["this smelling Bottle ... I enclose in my right hand... But if you refuse to join their hands in 3 days time, this dagger which I enclose in my left shall be steeped in your hearts blood."³⁴³

The triple reference to "hands", a formulaic conjuration, is warranted by the zeugmatic juxtaposition (marriage and fists), and the stylistic decision to rely on

³⁴¹ Rachel M. Brownstein, 'Endless Imitation: Austen's and Byron's *Juvenilia*', in C. Alexander and J. McMaster (eds.), *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 122-37 [p. 131].

³⁴² *Juvenilia*, p. 10.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

violence for effect.³⁴⁴ The story's conclusion satirises Samuel Richardson's fiction, which relies on the sensibility of its heroines:

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.³⁴⁵

The satirical exaggeration is paradoxical: the emphasis is not on the "fits" but on their "succession", creating a cascading reaction, a *mise-en-abyme* that contradicts the "patience" (a conscious process) that Elfrida does not possess.³⁴⁶

'Jack and Alice' (J&A) displays remarkable coherence in terms of violence, focused on two incidents: a steel-trap mutilation and the intended brutal murder of the heroine. The first mention of the trap is unexpected in the long sentence, which culminates in traumatic event:

With a heart elated by the expected happiness of beholding him... I found myself suddenly seized by the leg and ... found that I was caught in one of the steel traps so common in gentlemen's grounds.³⁴⁷

Youthful optimism terminates in a violent physical device: a metal trap rather than a man's hand "seize[s]" the young woman. In J&A, Nikolina Hatton explains, objects and the violent hapticity they create are reduced to diegetic *formulae*. Touch is there because it is necessary, and though the nature of the

³⁴⁴ Eric Lindstrom, in his analysis of Austen's "philosophy", comments on the importance of zeugma. See 'Austen, Philosophy, and Comic Stylistics', in E. Goss (ed.), *Jane Austen and Comedy* (Lewisburg PA, 2021), pp. 21-41 [pp. 23-4].

³⁴⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 12.

³⁴⁶ On the heroine's motives and fainting fits in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, see Christiane Zschirnt, 'Fainting and Latency in the Eighteenth Century's Romantic Novel of Courtship', *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 74 (1999), 48-66 [49].

³⁴⁷ *Juvenilia*, p. 24.

necessity is different from that of the mature fiction, it is used as shrewdly in the juvenilia as elsewhere. Hatton's analyses call on the effects of the haptic on narrative and diegetic style, and on societal considerations.³⁴⁸ The same incident is soon revisited by the heroine:

[“]I screamed as you may easily imagine till the woods resounded again and till one of the inhuman Wretch's servants came to my assistance and released me from my dreadfull prison, but not before one of my legs was entirely broken.”³⁴⁹

The near-supernatural, uninterrupted primal scream fills the whole grove, evidencing the young woman's pain and stamina. Austen's juvenile humour is supported by the ambiguous syntax of the sentence. Its final part, which is subordinate to the introductory action “I screamed” (as evidenced by the punctuation and parallel but ultimately asymmetrical construction: “till”/“till”/“not before”), results in grammatical aporia, and narrative and algesic nonsense: screaming became a deliberate choice only after the heroine has made certain that her leg was “entirely broken”. The obligatory emotional charge of sensibility is provided:

At this melancholy recital the fair eyes of Lady Williams, were suffused in tears and Alice could not help exclaiming,
“Oh! cruel Charles to wound the hearts and legs of all the fair.”³⁵⁰

The “fair eyes” react perfunctorily, in hyperbolic weeping (“suffused”). Austen's use of syllepsis is comical, because the reported speech is problematic: whose legs

³⁴⁸ Nikolina Hatton, ““Very Conspicuous on One of His Fingers”: Generative Things in Austen's Juvenilia, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Emma*”, in *The Agency of Objects in English Prose, 1789–1832: Conspicuous Things* (Cham, 2020), pp. 91-136 [p. 102].

³⁴⁹ *Juvenilia*, p. 24.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

has Charles Adams “wound[ed]”? How many unmentioned suitresses has he maimed? The last sentence reinforces the premise that the juvenile Austen wrote for effect (in this case, poetic and rhetorical harmony) rather than substance. J.F. Burrows calls it an “absurd tur[n] of phrase”, whose “disjunction [is] a source of comic energy”.³⁵¹ Austen favours “disjunction”, which relies on the grammatical, compositional use of juxtaposition (asyndeton). Burrows’ examples (from the *Juvenilia*, *Emma* and ‘Sanditon’), which span the whole of Austen’s writing career, demonstrate the centrality of “disjunction”. The romantic conclusion of the story, though sensible, is dispensed nonsensically: “The recollection of what her Heart had formerly suffered by his charms and her Leg by his trap, enabled her to forget him with tolerable Ease”.³⁵² The apparent paradox is based on an analogy that sounds like a conceit; the parallelistic relative clause constitutes an enthymeme. The murder case is also given extensive treatment:

[“]I have reason to think that the admiration I have met with... has raised [Sukey Simpson’s] Hatred and Envy; for often has she threatened, and sometimes endeavoured to cutt my throat.—[”]³⁵³

The normalisation of (verbal and physical) violence is an integral part of the comical world Austen creates in her earliest works. While violence later becomes the subject of indirection, the surreal world of the *Juvenilia* both maximises and minimises it. Doody presents Austen’s topsy-turviness as social satire, which destabilises “assumptions”. In

³⁵¹ J.F. Burrows, *Computation into Criticism*, p. 171.

³⁵² *Juvenilia*, p. 29.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

the calm way in which the abnormal can be presented as normal, the criminal as the proper, the shameful as the excellent, Austen ... target[s] both individual lust and social assumptions.³⁵⁴

Austen's style allows her to display reality through unreality. The crime is presented matter-of-factly: Lucy "fell a sacrifice to the Envy and Malice of Sukey who jealous of her superior charms took her by poison from an admiring World at the age of seventeen".³⁵⁵ Austen creates emotion (through forced pathos) in the guise of a hyperbolic, religiously connoted noun ("sacrifice"), and a euphemistic phrasal verb ("took ... from"); the deed itself is not made explicit. Neither crime nor punishment show any emotional charge: Sukey's "barbarous Murder was discovered and ... she was speedily raised to the Gallows—".³⁵⁶ The presence of a split zeugma ("raised"/"gallows"/"rank of a Dutchess") is reinforced by the passive verb "exalted", which conveys the same meaning but has a Latin root. The adjective "barbarous" recalls the gory violence of mutilation.

In 'Henry and Eliza' (H&E), violence is militaristic and manducatory. The nobility are keen to administer unmeasured violence when offended:

Her Grace ... sent out after [Henry and Eliza] 300 armed Men, with orders not to return without their Bodies, dead or alive; intending that if they should be brought to her in the latter condition to have them put to Death in some torturelike manner, after a few years Confinement.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Margaret Doody, 'The Short Fiction', in E. Copeland and J. McMaster (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 84-99 [p. 91].

³⁵⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 31.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The discrepancy between crime and punishment is immense, as are the means put in place to effect the latter, and the violence of this piece is evidently haptic (“torturelike”). Indirection is already present in the vague wording of the atrocities, which are alluded to but not delineated (“some” and “[–]like”). More violence soon follows:

But no sooner had she stepped on Shore at Dover, with a Child in each hand, than she was seized by the officers of the Dutchess, and conducted by them to a snug little Newgate of their Lady’s...³⁵⁸

The passive verbs (“was seized”, “conducted”) underline the heroine’s powerlessness, and the ironic compactness of the final destination, a “snug” prison, implies oppression, as the walls confine the incarcerated heroine. The final example of violence in the piece is a gory one: “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”.³⁵⁹ Austen’s narratorial disregard for the hapticity of pain is manifest in this fragment. The focus is on Eliza’s nonsensical, though purely logical deductions; pain is not factored in, when in the context of amputation it should be of immediate concern. Instead, it is less considered than hunger, from which Eliza suffers as well.³⁶⁰ Austen has, by a rational but absurd mode of thinking, superseded the bodily (touch in particular), which has lost all reality. As McMaster explains,

³⁵⁸ *Juvenilia*, p. 42.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁶⁰ Maggie Lane, in *Jane Austen and Food* (London, 1995), comments on hunger and appetite. She makes them gendered concepts, and argues that Austen used more “delicacy” in the later works, as her writerly skills refined (pp. 77-100).

The focus on the physical is typical of the juvenilia, where bodies loom large, desire is unfettered, and the decorum that pertains in the novels is mainly there to be shattered... But as in slapstick or in cartoon sequences, the physical collisions and disasters are comic, and one's sympathies are hardly harrowed. The characters take them in stride, and we do too.³⁶¹

McMaster argues that “decorum”, paramount in Austen’s later fiction, is present in the early works, but consciously “shattered”. Austen’s parodic tendencies are present in the later fiction, but exacerbated in the *Juvenilia*. McMaster also argues that Austen’s violent and disturbing world invites her readers to internalise its rules, and identify with the characters’ unquestioning responses. The resulting parodic realism follows its own diegetic and stylistic conventions: narratorial and stylistic effects trump the realism associated with the senses. J.F. Burrows argues that

By placing a number of the more satirical and the more compositional remarks that are offered in Jane Austen’s authorial voice side by side, one gains an increased awareness of her willingness to disrupt the smooth surface of her fiction.³⁶²

This process is necessary with the mature fiction, but superfluous with the *Juvenilia*, in which Austen’s “disrupt[ions]” abound.

Haptic scenes allow the young Austen to experiment with narrative techniques, mostly to comical ends. One paratactic but strongly punctuated sentence, which takes on the aspect of logical reasoning, highlights these early compositional facilities: “Miss Arundel was cruel; she preferred a Mr Stanhope: Sir William shot Mr Stanhope; the lady had then no reason to refuse him”.³⁶³

³⁶¹ McMaster, ‘Young Jane Austen’, p. 86.

³⁶² J.F. Burrows, *Computation into Criticism*, p. 181.

³⁶³ ‘Sir William Mountague’, *Juvenilia*, p. 48.

Each asyndetic clause is logically independent of its assumed cause and consequence, but their quick, balanced and chronological succession gives them a *post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc* quality. They also display a conflation of temporal and causal relations that reinforces the logic of the pronouncements.³⁶⁴

Mentions of direct physical violence in both subsequent *Volumes* are rarer than in *Volume the First*, and point to Austen's already evolving style. Such instances, however, help us understand the centrality of the body in her writings. The violence inherent in (sometimes innocuous) gestures and actions is indicative of character, rather than narratively necessary. "I instantly sprang from the Carriage ... and ... threw myself on my knees before him and besought him to acknowledge me as his Grand-Child.—".³⁶⁵ This youthful display of energy contains two action verbs ("sprang" and "threw"), which, coupled with the adverb "instantly", create urgency and frenzy. Snoring on the coach subsequently prompts the heroine to berate her neighbour and pity her assaulted "senses": "What a total Want of delicate refinement must he have, who can thus shock our senses by such a brutal Noise!".³⁶⁶ Austen's use of hyperbole creates a synaesthetic conflation: the "Noise", rather than impacting the heroine's hearing,

³⁶⁴ Luis Sá mentions the importance of lists in the "paratactics" of Austen's novels, but his study does not include the *Juvenilia*, or go deep enough in syntagmatic analysis. See 'The List Effect in Jane Austen: Preambles', *Revista de Letras* 60 (2020), 93-106.

³⁶⁵ 'Love and Freindship' (L&F), *Juvenilia*, p. 120.

³⁶⁶ *Juvenilia*, p. 133.

produces palpable, near-haptic sensations.³⁶⁷ This reference to hearing and delicate (rather than bodily) feeling uses the language of sensibility. The juvenile narrator, however, also comedically implies that more of her sensorial organs are “shock[ed]”, thus including touch: deep loud sounds provoke vibrations that can be perceived by both skin and tissue, in a typical example of Austenian polysemic play.³⁶⁸

Accidents are recurrent (but less-than-realistic) plot devices in the early writings:

From this Dilemma I was most fortunately relieved by an accident truly apropos; it was the lucky overturning of a Gentleman’s Phaeton, on the road which ran murmuring behind us.³⁶⁹

This “accident” shows Austen’s stylistic mastery: it creates multiple paradoxes and defines discrete entities. The probable injury of the “Gentleman” is presented positively (“apropos”), making the accident tempestive, and therefore comedic. The incongruous harmony of the geographical surroundings causes a dissonant effect on the reader. The “road” is assimilated with the “stream”, and its sound presented as pleasant and quiet (“murmuring”). A realistic rendering would mention the rattle of carriages and travellers, and include the *brouhaha* of the accident’s aftermath. The characters’ response is in the same vein:

³⁶⁷ Sensory overload is used to great effect in ‘Sanditon’ (*LM*, chap. 5, p. 164), as will be discussed in Chapter IV.

³⁶⁸ For vibrations, see Nina Jablonski, *Skin*, p. 98.

³⁶⁹ L&F, *Juvenilia*, pp. 128-9.

We instantly quitted our seats and ran to the rescue of those who but a few moments before had been in so elevated a situation as a fashionably high Phaeton, but who were now laid low and sprawling in the Dust—. ³⁷⁰

The vision of an aristocrat “sprawling in the Dust” is haptic in two respects, and subversive: the characters are covered in “Dust”, and the the victims’ anticipated “rescue” involves helping them up, comforting them, and perhaps pansing their wounds. Similar manifestations of touch become unusual in the later fiction, in which road accidents are quite rare. ³⁷¹ The verticality of the scene is highlighted, equating social commentary with dynamic implications. ‘Lesley Castle’ (LC) also features a serious accident at the start of the narrative:

my Sister came running to me in the Store-room with her face as White as a Whipt syllabub, and told me that Hervey had been thrown from his Horse, had fractured his Scull and was pronounced by his Surgeon to be in the most emminent Danger. ³⁷²

These few lines perfectly exemplify Austen’s juvenile haptic language. The character’s physical *penchants* influence her speech, which is suffused with cooking references: “Whipt syllabub” has become the paragon of whiteness (orthographic similitude helps the identification). The spelling of “Scull”, still common in Austen’s time, references the homonymous basket and the scullery (in which the character’s activities have confined her), as well as the head injury. Even the references to the “Surgeon” and the “Danger” become compromised: the latter is imminent, and the spelling used here is attested as an often misused paronym (it is

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

³⁷¹ The exposition in ‘Sanditon’ contains a notable exception (*LM*, chap. 1, pp. 137). See Chapter IV.

³⁷² *Juvenilia*, p. 146.

also a sign of Austen's inconsistent orthography).³⁷³ The surgeon may be eminent, as well as the "Danger" itself: Austen presents pain and fear of death as glamorous.

'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. —' opens with a murder confession and closes with murderous intent:

I murdered my father at a very early period in my Life, I have since murdered my Mother, and I am now going to murder my Sister.³⁷⁴

These homicidal confessions have no logical explanation, and are discharged casually: early expressions of violence display constant disregard for death. Although 'Catharine' features characters which are much more fully formed than any other early work, and thus prefigures the later fiction, it introduces death just as casually:

["I declare it is quite a pity that [the Neighbours] should be suffered to live. I wish my Father would propose knocking all their Brains out, some day or other when he is in the House.["']³⁷⁵

This remark evidences Camilla Stanley's uncharitable character: she advocates patriarchal execution simply because she does not like her neighbours. This trait is reprised later in the story: "[["I hope she may fall down and break her neck, or sprain her Ankle.""]].³⁷⁶ Camilla's resentment at being disregarded socially is

³⁷³ On Austen's spelling, see Victorina González-Díaz, 'Round Brackets in Jane Austen', *English Text Construction* 5 (2012), 174-207.

³⁷⁴ *Juvenilia*, p. 222.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

expressed through a wish to harm others physically.³⁷⁷ While this tendency could be attributed solely to the juvenile writer in earlier stories, in ‘Catharine’ it becomes a censure of the character, as Austen is transitioning towards tempered, mature fiction.

Mentions of the body are numerous in the *Volumes*, usually in reference to health or physical comfort, and they often imply sinister social truths. Fatigue and rest are regularly mentioned. One instance in ‘A Tour through Wales’ (TW) creates a time-lapse which helps us to understand Austen’s strategy of indirection: “You may be sure that we were in a fine perspiration when we came to our place of resting”.³⁷⁸ This sentence is haptic, and contains two instances of polysemy: the “fine” sweat is both euphemistic and hyperbolic, because it refers at the same time to the smallness of the droplets, and their presumed nobility. The use of “place of resting”, which sounds archaic, elicits from the reader a correction with sombre connotations (‘resting place’). This linguistic play foreshadows both the probable (but unmentioned) fate of the pony, and that of the heroines’ shoes. The attributed “perspiration”, from a temporal perspective, dissociates the body’s reaction from its cause (running), and instead associates it with a conclusive event (rest). By doing this, Austen severs the event from the direct description of its effects on the body.

³⁷⁷ R.F. Brissenden arrestingly correlates Austen’s *Juvenilia* and Sade’s fiction, and argues that although the writings of the two authors are dissimilar, there is a common sadistic vein, displayed particularly in Austen’s juvenile characters, that is still tangible in the mature published fiction. See *Virtue in Distress*, pp. 272-83.

³⁷⁸ *Juvenilia*, p. 224.

Inebriation, a symptom of appetite and comedic counterpoint to health, is mentioned throughout *Volume the First*. In ‘The Visit’ (V), the antithesis between the otherwise superficially elevated interactions of the characters and their relation to drink creates efficient comedy: “Sir Arthur never touches wine; but Sophy will toss off a bumper I am sure to oblige your Lordship”.³⁷⁹ The word “touches” paves the way for the coarse haptic description of Sophy’s drinking. Peter Sabor comments on the fullness of the glass and the rapidity of the process, both of which emphasise the haptic dimensions of the action.³⁸⁰ Drinking is soon revisited:

Miss F. This, Ladies and Gentlemen is some of my dear Grandmother’s own manufacture. She excelled in Gooseberry Wine. Pray taste it Lady Hampton?
Lady H. How refreshing it is!³⁸¹

“[M]anufacture” emphasises the manual dimension of the winemaking process, and underscores the baseness of the comedy. Just as the members of the gentry eat like servants, they also perform servants’ jobs. The fact that the wine is “refreshing” highlights the connectedness of the senses: taste and touch translate into temperature and intellectualised emotional comfort.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ *Juvenilia*, p. 66.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 414 (note to p. 66).

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

³⁸² Two studies of taste are particularly relevant to Austen’s Regency world: Timothy Morton (ed.), *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism* (London, 2004); and Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven CT, 2005).

Instances of fainting in the *Juvenilia* are never free of comedic overtones, and they parody the narrative and stylistic conventions of sensibility.³⁸³

To compleat such unparaelled Barbarity we were informed that an Execution in the House would shortly take place. Ah! what could we do but what we did! We sighed and fainted on the Sofa.³⁸⁴

As Sabor mentions in the endnote, Austen uses suspense and polysemy to alarm the reader.³⁸⁵ If “in the House” were omitted (or delayed by a long pause in reading aloud), the alternative meaning of capital punishment would prevail in the reader’s mind. The conclusion of the letter indulges Austen’s humorous, if unpolished, fainting fantasy. The disclaimer (“what could we do...”) points to a reenactment of the Richardsonian trope. More soon follows:

[we] instantly fainted in each other’s arms. How long we remained in this situation I know not; but when we recovered we found ourselves alone, without either Gustavus, Philander, or the Bank-notes.³⁸⁶

What is omitted and assumed in this haptic sentence is more revealing than what is expressed: “in each other’s arms” is problematic, as it implies either locative or illative meanings. Austen does not explain how or when the young women “found” themselves in that embrace. The haptic action of the episode is indirected into its syntax and style: juxtaposition (and zeugma) is the only contactile evidence of the men’s theft. L&F conjures various types of fainting: “instantly fetching a Deep sigh, Expired—. Sophia immediately sunk again into a

³⁸³ Hilary Havens presents *S&S* as an early work, because sensibility is still a central focus. See *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Authorship from Manuscript to Print* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 93.

³⁸⁴ L&F, *Juvenilia*, p. 117.

³⁸⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 435 (note to p. 117).

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

swoon—... my Senses were considerably impaired—.”³⁸⁷ The failing bodies allow Austen to express her stylistic genius, in a manner that correlates semantics and phonology. Augustus’ death calls upon an etymological pun, in which “Expir[e]” echoes “sigh” (and its implied poetic doublet ‘suspire’). Sophia is the object of alliteration, while Laura is defined by anaphora (“my” is repeated five times), a conspicuous figure of speech that describes, through measure and structure, incoherence and ineptitude. The paradox in this case lies in the opposition between the spirit and the letter of the narration, in a delightful contradiction.

Illness, pain and dire circumstances in these stories are often the consequence of accidents, which banalise everyday violence.

The morning after our arrival at the Cottage, Sophia complained of a violent pain in her delicate limbs, accompanied with a disagreeable Head-ake. She attributed it to a cold caught by her continual fainting in the open Air as the Dew was falling the Evening before... the bodily Exertions I had undergone in my repeated fits of frenzy had so effectually circulated and warmed my Blood as to make me proof against the chilling Damps of Night, whereas, Sophia lying totally inactive on the Ground must have been exposed to all their Severity.³⁸⁸

In this medical *exposé*, Austen evidences the haptic causes of ill-health. The body reacts to extraneous factors, like heat and dampness, which explain how “cold[s]” are “caught”. The conclusion of the episode is brutal: “she was obliged to confine herself solely to ... Bed... Her disorder turned to a galloping Consumption and

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

³⁸⁸ L&F, *Juvenilia*, pp. 131-2.

in a few Days carried her off”.³⁸⁹ The volitional reflexive “confine herself” implies that the heroine has chosen to stay in bed. The submerged metaphor turns into an extended one, as the implied horse (“galloping”) resurfaces in “carried her off”. By mixing internally and externally haptic references (illness and motion), Austen reinforces the connection between the two, and makes the former more obvious.

In ‘Catharine’, Camilla’s judgements (as mentioned above) never disappoint: “I cannot bear Sir Peter—Horrid Wretch! He is *always* laid up with the Gout, which is exceedingly disagreeable to the Family”.³⁹⁰ The “Gout” only has social implications: Sir Peter’s pain and debility are disregarded. The ambiguous antecedent to the relative pronoun also implies that “the Gout” (rather than its effects on the character) is “disagreeable to the Family”, and that it has no bearing on the rest of the world. Camilla’s conclusions on toothaches are in the same vein:

I wish there were no such things as Teeth in the World; they are nothing but plagues to one, and I dare say that People might easily invent something to eat with instead of them... I declare I had rather undergo the greatest Tortures in the World than have a tooth drawn.³⁹¹

The toothache is an Austenian trope, as exemplified by references to dentistry in the *Letters*.³⁹² The desire for prosthetics displays Austen’s comic genius: it leaves

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁹⁰ *Juvenilia*, p. 255.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

³⁹² See *Letters*, pp. 122-3, 220, 223.

John Wiltshire comments on the hyperbolic treatment of teeth in the *Juvenilia* and *Letters* (*Jane Austen and the Body*, pp. 7; 211).

the reader wondering what Camilla would be willing to put in her mouth in *lieu* of teeth. The capitalisation furthers the identification of “Teeth” and “Torture”, both of which plague the echoed “World”. Brownstein explains:

In spite of their rowdiness and silliness, their unnerving combination of tidiness and wackiness, Austen’s juvenile stories seem... predictive of the author’s brilliance...³⁹³

Brownstein sees the dramatic perfection in the *Juvenilia* as premonitory of the later works, and mingling formal flair with comedy. The “unnerving combination” exemplifies the tension experienced by the reader: Austen’s prose, as well as her plots, is unresolvedly dual.

In *Volume the First*, Austen is more generous with references to touch than in her later writings, but they already conform stylistically to the canons of the latter and predict the language of indirection. In H&E, the following example is stylistically pregnant: “She went to the Door; but it was locked”.³⁹⁴ This short sentence encapsulates the essence of Austen’s haptic language. Word choices work by implication rather than description: touch is alluded to but not characterised. Eliza must have tried the door handle, pushed against the door, and manually investigated the lock, but none of this is mentioned. Instead, only the conclusion, the final product of the investigation is expressed: “it was locked”. The agency of punctuation is crucial in this example, as the semicolon symbolically represents the length of time necessary for the investigation, and

³⁹³ Brownstein, ‘Endless Imitation’, p. 126.

³⁹⁴ *Juvenilia*, p. 42.

semiotically implies its *diegesis*. A simple comma would not have conveyed the laborious haptic activity as successfully. A similar episode can be found in ‘The beautifull Cassandra’ (BC): “She searched her pockets over again and again; but every search was unsuccessfull. No money could she find”.³⁹⁵ The “searc[h]” for money is drawn out, repetitive and tactile. The verb itself implies thorough scrutiny, and is supplemented by the phrasal addition (“over”), the repeated adverbial collocation (“again and again”), and the intensifier (“every”). The implied haptic space seems more akin in scale to a cupboard than one’s “pockets”. The semicolon, Austen’s dramatic punctuation mark, further strengthens this impression.³⁹⁶ The unexpected word order of the conclusion gives the sentence a Germanic flavour, pushing the negation into a prominent place (“No money”). Austen would revisit the haptic nature of anxiogenic monetary transactions in *P&P*. Lydia wants to “treat” her sisters, who must “lend” her the funds, but her bankruptcy-inducing purchases will be manually torn “to pieces”. Money (or its absence) is the tangible, haptic *medium* between clothing and food.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁹⁶ On “performative” punctuation, see Kathryn Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, pp. 281-2.

OBJECTS AND THE WORLD

This section will concentrate on the discrete types of hapticity (and their varying degrees of detail and verisimilitude) that correlate the body and the world in the

Juvenilia. Nikolina Hatton explains:

objects in the juvenilia often provide the means of burlesquing the fictional nature of generic literary conventions. When an object appears in an unlikely setting, the object helps unveil the mechanisms and conventions of eighteenth-century sentimental fiction... they utilize incongruity to create humor by registering the distance between the mundane world of the everyday and the literary conventions they parody.³⁹⁷

She focuses on objects, while this thesis examines words (which can refer to objects), to come to a similar conclusion: the inclusion of *intrus* items elicits surprise and therefore both comedy and social critique. Juxtaposition of both objects and words is central to Austen's juvenile style.

The consumption of food is always haptic: "the two Ladies sat down to Supper on a young Leveret, a brace of Partridges, a leash of Pheasants and a Dozen of Pigeons".³⁹⁸ The gargantuan dinner is a reflection of appetite rather than realistic provisions. "Leveret" might be an obscure expression of physical desire, as one obsolete meaning of the word is 'mistress'. In LC, cooking even becomes a sort of mania:

after having laboured both by Night and by Day... after having roasted Beef, Broiled Mutton, and Stewed Soup... I had the mortification of finding that I

³⁹⁷ Hatton, pp. 95-6.

³⁹⁸ F&E, *Juvenilia*, p. 9.

had been Roasting, Broiling and Stewing both the Meat and Myself to no purpose.³⁹⁹

The satire relies on the nonsensical order of priorities (the practicalities of cooking over a broken-off engagement), but the main interest in the passage lies in the treatment of kitchen work, in which zeugma equates the agent and her object (“both the Meat and Myself”). Cooking is also seen through a social lens:

I always longed particularly to go to Vaux-hall, to see wether the cold Beef there is cut so thin as it is reported, for I have a sly suspicion that few people understand the act of cutting a slice of cold Beef as well as I do...⁴⁰⁰

The hyperbolic language, added to the mundane nature of Charlotte’s skills, pressing interests and self-aggrandising declaration, partakes of the satire. When discussing character in a more general sense later in the story, the reference to cooking resurfaces: “She loved drawing Pictures, and I drawing Pullets”.⁴⁰¹ The morbid nature of the latter compared to the artistic nature of the former introduces bathos, especially as both employments are haptic in nature. The skills required, though different, are related: both zeugmatically rely on discrete specialised meanings of the word ‘draw’, rather than its neutral usage, making this parallelism an antanaclasis (see Chapter I). Freya Johnston argues that Austen’s style

³⁹⁹ *Juvenilia*, p. 146.

⁴⁰⁰ *Juvenilia*, p. 164.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

The comparison between Charlotte and Eloisa foreshadows the comparison between Elinor and Marianne in *S&S*, if sense is to be understood as pure practicality. Glenda Hudson sees the sororal relationship in LC as a first draft for those in *S&S* and *P&P*. See *Sibling Love & Incest in Jane Austen’s Fiction* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 68-73.

combine[s] a love of Johnson with the desire to send up sonorous Johnsonese... She revels in creating the appearance of balance at the same time as nudging aphorism into bathos.⁴⁰²

Rewriting “aphorism” into “bathos” is what Austen does compositionally in a number of sentences: she derails their tone, and sometimes their syntax. One element is shifted into an unexpected other through friction, and both must stand together despite their irreconcilability.

Drawing, an accomplishment associated with young women, also receives special mention in *TW*, and hints at the commodification of women in the marriage economy:

Fanny has taken a great Many Drawings of the Country, which are very beautiful, tho' perhaps not such exact resemblances as might be wished, from their being taken as she ran along.⁴⁰³

These pictures are comical incongruities. Running makes the technical and haptic process of drawing impossible, and the results cannot be considered canonically “beautiful”. This nonsensical realisation is an indication of Austen’s social criticism of the expectations associated with marriageable young women.⁴⁰⁴ The situation is summarised in *LC*: “She plays, sings and Dances, but has no taste for either, and excels in none, tho’ she says she is passionately fond of all”.⁴⁰⁵ The three performative haptic activities are here referred to dialectically. The overall structure of the sentence exemplifies Austen’s play with formal articulation and

⁴⁰² Freya Johnston, ‘Johnson and Austen’, p. 240.

⁴⁰³ *Juvenilia*, p. 224.

⁴⁰⁴ In *PEP*, Mrs. Bennet’s machinations exemplify the desperation associated with matchmaking. See vol. I, chaps. 3, 12, 19, 20; vol. III, chaps. 5, 17.

⁴⁰⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 154.

paradox (“either” of three items), shedding light on the ridiculous conceits the women of her time are forced into.

Doody argues that Austen “suspected the moral-social traps that lie within novels... as they preach social and moral doctrines”.⁴⁰⁶ In the *Juvenilia*, one can see how Austen, in a near anarchic “resistance” against both conservative and subversive influences, creates a world of her own that needs to be tamed to become acceptable to a general readership. She includes opinions that directly contravene the laws of conduct literature.

Descriptions of activity (and idleness) reinforce gender expectations.

[N]ot an hour in the Day hangs heavy on our hands. We read, we work, we walk, and when fatigued with these Employments relive our spirits, either by a lively song, a graceful Dance, or by some smart bon-mot, and witty repartée.⁴⁰⁷

The idiom “hangs heavy on our hands” gives a palpable essence to time, which is felt through the body, and delineated in detail: this passage refers to various “Employments”, most of which have a physical dimension. The marked alliteration (especially if Austen parodied affected R-labialisation) is a phonological mockery of aristocratic discourse and accent.⁴⁰⁸ The heavy repetition reinforces the idea that these activities are socially prescribed and sanctioned, but not evaluated by these young women, who are simply conforming

⁴⁰⁶ Margaret Doody, ‘Jane Austen, that Disconcerting ‘Child’’, in C. Alexander and J. McMaster (eds.), *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 101-21 [p. 117].

⁴⁰⁷ LC, *Juvenilia*, p. 144.

⁴⁰⁸ “[R]ead”, “work”, “walk”, “when”, “relive”, “witty” and “repartée” all feature the same initial consonantic sound [v].

to the social *Diktat*. The issue of employment is revisited under another guise in ‘Catharine’:

Kitty found herself much sooner tired of Reading, Working, or Drawing, in Mrs Peterson’s parlour than in her own Arbour, where Mrs Peterson for fear of its being damp never accompanied her.⁴⁰⁹

These three types of haptic employment are symptomatic of the transience of Kitty’s state of mind, rather than of an immanent fault (as her aunt surmises). Indeed, she is able to apply herself and relish activity only when she is free to entertain her own thoughts. Haptic contentment can only be obtained in the context of comfortable outdoor freedom.⁴¹⁰ Mrs. Percival, who dreads the effects of the damp, is forever shielding herself from haptic meteorological assaults, just as she wants to shield her niece from the sexual advances of young men.⁴¹¹ For Brownstein,

Some of the wildly implausible sexually charged adventures in her youthful stories can be read as similar fantasies of an angry over-protected young woman.⁴¹²

Brownstein supports the idea that Austen’s early writings display an “ang[er]” that stems from social inexperience and insecurity, and calls the stories “sexually

⁴⁰⁹ *Juvenilia*, p. 247. For the sake of clarity, Mrs. Peterson/Percival will be referred to as Mrs. Percival.

⁴¹⁰ Doody connects ‘Catharine’ with *P&P* through mud. The “bower”, a product of earthly growth, is associated with tactile ecology. The repressive figure of the aunt wants to curb “affection” and “sexuality” even in their symbolic signifiers; she is cut off from nature and emotion. While Doody recognises the importance of touch, she does not focus on it. See *Jane Austen’s Names: Riddles, Persons, Places* (Chicago IL, 2015), p. 18.

⁴¹¹ Doody relates Mrs. Percival’s “chivalrously medieval or Arthurian” origins to “purity” (*Jane Austen’s Names*, p. 34). Onomastics reinforce Mrs. Percival’s hatred of courtship and non-normativity.

⁴¹² Brownstein, ‘Endless Imitation’, p. 125.

charged”, a central dynamic. Mrs. Percival is ultimately an embodiment of the failure of conduct prescriptivism. Her integrity is compromised when she is overwhelmed by anger:

How could I be so forgetful as to sit down out of doors at such a time of night? I shall certainly have a return of my rheumatism after it—I begin to feel very chill already.⁴¹³

She is easily distracted by mentions of her health, and her response is an eloquent instance of psychosomatic creativity and hypochondria, in which sensations are dictated by self-persuasion.⁴¹⁴

While *Volume the First* contains instances of direct (and gratuitous) violence, the instances present in the later *Volumes* generally revolve around the handling of objects, especially doors. L&F provides a good example: “we were on a sudden, greatly astonished, by hearing a violent knocking on the outward Door of our rustic Cot”.⁴¹⁵ The “violen[ce]” of the interruption is rendered comedic by the response it elicits. The family all agree on the nature of the knock and its vigorousness (“loud rapping”, “uncommon violence exerted against our unoffending Door”, “*does rap*”, “alarmed my Mother and me”, “A third more violent Rap than ever again assaulted our ears”), but no one intends to open it.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ *Juvenilia*, p. 288.

⁴¹⁴ Three of the protagonists in ‘Sanditon’ are notorious hypochondriacs. See Chapter IV.

⁴¹⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 106.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.

Keymer argues that Austen’s “narrative attention is forever being lavished on the wrong thing” (*Writing, Society, Politics*, p. 24), but the “wrong thing” is the right thing in Austen’s youthful style. If a suspenseful episode is interrupted by a seemingly useless digression, it is because Austen has decided to uphold the suspense beyond diegetic verisimilitude, to great effect.

Genre informs the importance of knocking: “we instantly walked to [that white Cottage]—we knocked at the door—it was opened by an old Woman”.⁴¹⁷ The casual mention of touch in this episode is reminiscent of fairy-tales. The “white Cottage” and the “old Woman” belong to a genre in which knocking is narratively crucial, and Austen therefore highlights it, while in other contexts it might have been grammatically indirected, as in ‘A Tale’ (T): “Wilhelminus alighted, and after knocking for some time without receiving any answer or hearing anyone stir within, he opened the door”.⁴¹⁸ The temporal choice in this example, which relies on subordinate anteriority expressed by “after” and a gerund, partakes of Austen’s strategy of indirection. By describing touch through the lens of a subsequent action, she places it on the lower end of syntactic hierarchy. Indirection occasionally extends to not describing the action at all:

Then giving one look at herself in the Glass, she walked with great impatience, tho’ trembling all the while from not knowing what to expect, down Stairs, and after pausing a moment at the door to gather Courage for opening it, she resolutely entered the room.⁴¹⁹

While the haptic is emotionally present (the mixed emotions Kitty experiences include “trembling”, a manifestation of anticipation and fear), narratorial choices suppress its direct expression. The final two clauses (the first denoting subordinate anteriority) centre on the action of opening the door, but neither expresses it. The

⁴¹⁷ *Juvenilia*, p. 130.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁴¹⁹ C, *Juvenilia*, p. 267.

“Courage” is gathered prior to “enter[ing]”, but the handle, the door and the gesture remain untouched.⁴²⁰

The appropriation of property is another context in which Austen indirectly references touch. Theft conjoins moral looseness and stylistic jubilation:

“Augustus had gracefully purloined [a considerable Sum of Money] from his Unworthy father’s Escritoire”.⁴²¹ The elegance of the theft makes the transaction

comedic, and the use of the French word creates an orthographic rhyme:

“purloined” and “Escritoire” (“-oine-”/“-oire”) are visually similar. Stylish malefaction is again at play later in the story:

Sophia happening one Day to open a private Drawer in Macdonald’s Library with one of her own keys... majestically remov[ed] the 5th Bank-note from the Drawer to her own purse...⁴²²

This episode reveals a juvenile interest in transgressive entry and theft. While the mechanical aspect of searching is haptic, the description of the act is surprising. The adverb “majestically” does not refer to Sophia’s attitude or appearance, but rather to the action itself, which implies a high degree of skill, and *sprezzatura*-like self-celebration. The autograph evidence (the “-j-” in “majestically” replaces a -g-) may indicate a prior decision to use ‘magistrally’, which would indicate superior technical skill, rather than queenly panache. Massimiliano Morini sees

⁴²⁰ Eleanor’s appearance in *NA* (vol. II, chap. 13, p. 230) uses similar language. The “noise of something moving”, “as if someone was touching the very doorway” and “a slight motion of the lock proved that someone’s hand must be on it” are all evasively haptic. Focalised auditory perception takes over the narrative, allowing for indirect description.

⁴²¹ L&F, *Juvenilia*, p. 116.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

“a single unforeseen epithet, a noun or a verb strangely misplaced” as the device that “jolt[s] the reader’s senses awake and warn[s] him/her and that something is amiss, that he/she might be in the presence of a crucial stylistic feature”.⁴²³

Austen’s shock tactics in the *Juvenilia* require the attentive reader, who is able to discern her style, to analyse these occurrences in every single sentence. The final instance of theft in the story is less glamorous:

This nine Hundred, they always kept in a Drawer in one of the Tables... for the Convenience of having it always at Hand... we took the Nine Hundred Pounds and ran away.⁴²⁴

Austen puts more emphasis on the practical contingencies of theft than on the ethical ramifications of the characters’ actions. “Drawer”, “at Hand” and “ran away” all point to the haptic exertion of stealing rather than the concept of larceny. The repeated episodes of purloined banknotes show Austen’s interest, at that stage in her (writing) life, in technical, dexterous feats.⁴²⁵ Austen’s interest in money and the anxiety it causes takes on a different form in the mature fiction, starting with ‘The Watsons’, in which the hardships associated with poverty are central to the plot, and possibly its unfinished nature.⁴²⁶

The restlessness of social anxiety in the *Juvenilia* regularly prompts hippomobile travel, in which carriages are haptic places of comfort or unsafety:

⁴²³ Massimiliano Morini, *Jane Austen’s Narrative Techniques*, pp. 64-5.

⁴²⁴ *Juvenilia*, p. 138.

⁴²⁵ This concurs with Austen’s interest in bilboes and spillikins mentioned in the *Letters* (pp. 125, 146, 156).

⁴²⁶ See Chapter IV.

they desired me to step into the Basket as we might there converse with greater ease. Accordingly I entered and whilst the rest of the party were devouring Green tea and buttered toast, we feasted ourselves in a more refined and Sentimental Manner by a confidential Conversation.⁴²⁷

The contradiction in the first sentence resides in the concurrent demands of society and comfort. While the “Basket” is deemed the place for “confidential Conversation”, it is a practically inappropriate space, hard of access, small and uncomfortable. The resulting (undescribed) set-up, on which the reader’s comedic visual imagination rests, is a crowded one: the three characters are compacted into an indistinguishable mass. The consumptive aspect of the passage likewise creates syntagmatic comedy.⁴²⁸ The fluctuation of “Sentimental[ity]”, represented by the line of words, accumulates paradox upon paradox. “[D]evouring” implies appetite, *gusto* and quantity but low manners; it is immediately counterpointed by “Green tea”, a costly delicacy with no nutritional value. “[B]uttered toast” redirects the sentence towards nursery food, while “feast[ing]”, which implies pomp and abundance, results in a banquet of words.

Finally, the haptic nature of the environment and climate is used to provide insight into the characters’ idiosyncrasies, and their socio-normative behaviour.

The paucity and inappropriate nature of shoes is a source of comedy in TW:

It would astonish you to see all the Shoes we wore out in our Tour... we were obliged to have them both capped and heelpeiced at Carmarthen, and at last when they were quite gone, Mama was so kind as to lend us a pair of blue

⁴²⁷ *Juvenilia*, p. 137.

⁴²⁸ Ruta Baublyté Kaufmann’s study of rooms and spaces is particularly enlightening when one connects it to the idea of crowding. See *The Architecture of Space-Time in the Novels of Jane Austen* (Cham, 2018).

Sattin Slippers, of which we each took one and hopped home from Hereford delightfully—⁴²⁹

Extreme wear and tear leads to the contactile destruction of objects: they are no longer a protective medium between the body and the world (the road in this case). Despite repair (“capp[ing] and heelpeic[ing]” are a haptic form of labour), the shoes do not survive the journey. The nonsensical conclusion of the letter (both in choice of footwear and mode of transport) brings the story to a crudely comedic but phonetically masterful close: “Sattin Slippers” start an alliterative trend picked up by “hopped home from Hereford”.⁴³⁰ At the other end of the spectrum, Lady Greville, in ‘A Collection of Letters’ (CL), is expert at using the weather to her advantage. Maria explains: “I went [to the Coach-door] and was obliged to stand there at her Ladyships pleasure though the Wind was extremely high and very cold”.⁴³¹ The oppression of the poor young woman is given a tactile manifestation. The cunning aristocrat uses both “Wind” and “cold” to impress Maria’s inferiority in her body, and soon iterates the point herself:

“Yes, it is an horrible East wind—said [she]—I assure you I can hardly bear the window down—But you are used to be blown about by the wind Miss Maria and that is what has made your Complexion so ruddy and coarse. You young Ladies who cannot often ride in a Carriage never mind what weather you trudge in, or how the wind shews your legs... But some sort of people have no feelings either of cold or Delicacy—”⁴³²

⁴²⁹ *Juvenilia*, p. 224.

⁴³⁰ Mary A. Favret mentions the “insistent materialism” of the early works, which makes the world of the juvenilia more evidently palpable. *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 148.

⁴³¹ *Juvenilia*, p. 201.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

This masterpiece of irony shows Lady Greville's true lack of "Delicacy", the very topic she is broaching.⁴³³ By misrepresenting necessity as deliberate coarseness, she presses her own claims to superiority. The accurately represented consequences of poverty are haptic, and show how the bodies of poor women are affected by the elements, to the point of changing their appearance and almost their nature: they are exposed to the point of humiliation and jeopardy.⁴³⁴ The comedy covers a brutal socio-economic truth: young women in Austen's fiction are at the mercy of power-wielding older females, who use their bodies against them in the marriage commerce.⁴³⁵ Rain, referenced by Lady Greville, is just as deleterious as wind: "[...]If it rains you may take an umbrella—" I could hardly help laughing at hearing her give me leave to keep myself dry—".⁴³⁶ By interfering with Maria's freedom, whose body is not her own, Lady Greville reinforces her own higher status. In 'Catharine', Mrs. Percival's fears (mentioned above) also include rain showers, and show her tendency to hyperbole, as her own situation only relates to the evening damp:

My particular freind ... staid out late one Evening in April, and got wet through for it rained very hard, and never changed her Cloathes when she

⁴³³ For a study of irony in Austen, see Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago IL, 1974), in which many of his examples are drawn from the *Juvenilia*.

⁴³⁴ Hatton offers a similar analysis in "Very Conspicuous", p. 107.

⁴³⁵ See Lady Catherine's treatment of Elizabeth Bennet, who must follow her to the "prettyish kind of a little wilderness" to be rebuked (*P&P*, vol. III, chap. 14, p. 391), and the aristocrat's packing and travel commands (vol. II, chap. 14).

⁴³⁶ *Juvenilia*, pp. 201-2.

came home—It is unknown how many people have died in consequence of catching Cold!⁴³⁷

Although ridiculous in this context, Mrs. Percival's cautionary tale highlights the true haptic nature of the weather, echoed in her irrepressible primal instincts.⁴³⁸

The frailty of the body reveals Mrs. Percival's fear of being caught off guard and touched. Her history does not expressly refer to her young years, but it may be inferred that she, like most Austenian heroines, is a victim of social prescriptivism.

Hatton argues that

The ambiguity of objects, the manner in which their meanings cannot be entirely circumscribed or controlled, allows the reader to entertain multiple possibilities at once, to weigh and consider various versions of events and potential outcomes of the novel. Although the majority of immediate questions may be resolved by the end of a work, these alternate possibilities remain in play, even if only as memories of a misunderstood thing.⁴³⁹

Hatton's conclusions highlights "suspense", "ambiguity" and "misunderstood" elements, corroborating the argument of this thesis. Objects are central, and particularly central to touch, but although Hatton sees the effects of ambiguity on the reader, she does not entertain the idea that style itself can be haptic.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 288-9.

⁴³⁸ Austen later uses torrential weather as a cautionary marker in *S&S* (vol. I, chap. 9, p. 49). The weather is also one of John Mullan's "problems" in *What Matters in Jane Austen? Twenty Crucial Puzzles Solved* (London, 2012), pp. 101-14.

⁴³⁹ Hatton, p. 127.

FEELINGS AND SOCIETY

Emotions, in Austen's *Juvenilia*, are revealed in context, as they emerge from the interaction between the self and social structures.⁴⁴⁰ In J&A, the haptic is often implied through emotions. “[“]I never saw her afterwards” continued Lady Williams wiping her eyes”.⁴⁴¹ Because the tears she sheds remain unspoken, the description focuses on “wiping”, the tactile conclusion of the process, and creates an occurrence of Austenian ellipsis. The two female characters, upon encountering a woman in distress, feel “simpathizing Tenderness”, two ambiguous lexemes.⁴⁴² “Tenderness” is benevolence or kindness, as there is as yet no interaction between the women that infers physical or emotional sensibility. But the seemingly redundant adjective “simpathizing” highlights the polysemic nature of the noun, and thus creates unresolved uncertainty in the reader:

“Tenderness” may actually be tactile. Brownstein explains that

Austen ... relies on the reader in the know to delight in getting the reference that will escape the uninitiated, to be pleased to know exactly what she means...⁴⁴³

The “delight” of reading Austen comes from scrutiny leading to discovery. The self-manifesto that she does not write for “dull Elves” is central to the experience of Austen's texts, and the diegetic treatment of the haptic in her prose

⁴⁴⁰ This correlation is explained in more detail by John Mullan (*Sentiment and Sociability*, p. 16), and Adela Pinch (*Strange Fits*, chap. 1).

⁴⁴¹ *Juvenilia*, p. 18.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁴³ Brownstein, pp. 135-6.

participates in this exchange.⁴⁴⁴ One passage in L&F provides a definition of the term “affectionate” that can be applied to Austen’s writings as a whole: Augusta’s

Language was neither warm, nor affectionate, her expressions of regard were neither animated nor cordial; her arms were not open to receive me to her Heart, tho’ my own were extended to press her to mine.⁴⁴⁵

This tripartite contextualisation of “affection” expresses what Austen otherwise expects her reader to understand without further explanation.⁴⁴⁶ She delineates affection through words, sentiment (including body language) and touch. She provides an unusual amount of detail because it allows her to indulge in stylistic revelry. The preceding few sentences are based on parallelisms and binary structures (“surprise”/“Cordiality”, “Disagreeable Coldness”/“Forbidding Reserve”, “Distressing”/“Unexpected”, “interesting Sensibility”/“amiable Simpathy”, “Manners”/“Address”). By switching to an overarching ternary structure, while maintaining oppositions, Austen is complicating her pattern, and amusing herself.⁴⁴⁷ If this triple explication may be considered a blueprint for all “affectionate” intercourse between (female) characters, tactile dealings are rarely expressed. In this case, the anticipated tactile encounter is a failure, as the heroine is left in suspense, arms outstretched for an embrace that never happens. This definition is corroborated in CL: ““My Sweet Girl (said Lady Scudamore

⁴⁴⁴ See *Letters*, p. 210 (29 January 1813).

⁴⁴⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 110.

⁴⁴⁶ Tripartite structures are Johnsonian emulations. See Claudia L. Johnson, ‘The “Operations of Time, and the Changes of the Human Mind”: Jane Austen and Dr. Johnson Again’, *Modern Language Quarterly* 44 (1983), 23-38 [25].

⁴⁴⁷ The triple structure comes back soon thereafter: Lady Dorothea is likened to Augusta, she has no “Delicate Feeling, tender Sentiments, [or] refined Sensibility” (*Juvenilia*, p. 112).

embracing me with great Affection)["]".⁴⁴⁸ The phrasing of this description presents "Affection" as palpable, a tactile aspect of "embracing", which implies that even when regard is present in Austen's prose, the haptic often remains implicit, and must be inferred from context by the reader.

'Edgar and Emma' (E&E) provides descriptions of acute emotion, which have sinister implications for the agency of young women:

When their Coach stopped at Sir Godfrey's door, the Miss Marlow's Hearts throbbd in the eager expectation of once more beholding a family so dear to them.⁴⁴⁹

The "throbb[ing] Hearts" and "anxious Hopes" (mentioned shortly thereafter) are an ostentatious display of emotion, with haptic consequences. But emotional progression is formulaic, as in the following example:

Emma began to tremble—...—Emma turned pale—. Their two youngest Girls were lifted from the Coach—Emma sunk breathless on a Sopha... her heart was too full to contain its afflictions.⁴⁵⁰

The punctuating comments on Emma's reaction to the arrival of the guests mock the canons of sensibility: there is no true emotion. "[T]rembl[ing]" and "turn[ing] pale" are bodily sensations, and the final instalment furthers the haptic continuum: while the body is failing and almost lifeless, it relies on the agency of prosthetic, life-preserving furniture. The story concludes in the same improbable vein: "having no check for the overflowings of her greif, she gave free vent to them, and retiring to her own room, continued in tears the remainder of her

⁴⁴⁸ *Juvenilia*, p. 210.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Life”.⁴⁵¹ This passage offers an example of Austen’s porous language of overwhelming feelings.⁴⁵² Their hyperbolic manifestation is typical of her juvenile comedy: the term “overflowings” is used sylleptically, and applies both to “greif” and “tears”, grammatically to the former, and semantically to the latter, creating an unstable compositional combination. The reader is asked to realise the ‘both-and’ quality of Austen’s zeugmatic writing by imagining the character’s tears visually, and relating to her feelings empathetically. This grammatic-semantic tension is felt haptically in reading.

Grief, whose physical dimension stems from its emotional core, is recurrent: Austen’s fictional world is a depressing one in the *Juvenilia*. In several instances, specific actions and attitudes are associated with feelings. References to weeping are common: “Tears rolled down his Cheeks as he spoke these words—”, a display that conforms to the canons of sensibility Austen often parodies.⁴⁵³ The active, tactile description is plain but explicit, and contrasts with Austen’s usual language of indirection. More “tears” are mentioned in CL: “Pardon these tears, continued Miss Jane wiping her eyes, I owe them to my Husband’s Memory”.⁴⁵⁴ This instance is peculiar in mentioning both tears and “wiping”, making it a tactile depiction of weeping (and a paronymic one: “wiping”/weeping). “[O]we” makes the “tears” a form of currency, used to repay a debt of “memory”. In

⁴⁵¹ *Juvenilia*, p. 37.

⁴⁵² On the contagion of affect, see Pinch (*Strange Fits*, pp. 1-16).

⁴⁵³ LC, *Juvenilia*, p. 143.

⁴⁵⁴ *Juvenilia*, p. 196.

‘Evelyn’, “Lady——could not support the mention of her Son, and left the room in tears”.⁴⁵⁵ Her response to grief is a physically intense one, as flight requires both decision and action. In contrast to these varied reactions, all of which are genuine, if hyperbolic, displays of feeling, Camilla’s physical reaction, as she laments her friend’s fate in ‘Catharine’, demonstrates her callousness: she “was more violent than ever in her lamentations over her Freind as she practised her scotch Steps about the room——.”⁴⁵⁶ The dichotomy between Camilla’s words and actions is paroxysmic. Her joy and anticipation of the dance cannot be reconciled with genuine concern, and her saltatory exercitation reveals Camilla’s true feelings, which are not affectionate but selfish: she values courtship over friendship. The language of grief itself is tinged with the haptic, which parallels the porosity of the body: “I do not doubt but that the healthy air of the Bristol-downs will intirely remove [your Sisters affliction], by erasing from her Mind the remembrance of Henry”.⁴⁵⁷ In this example from LC, Austen uses the polysemy of “erasing” to create ambiguity: one is meant to understand the deletion as both emotional and bodily. The “air” is a physical agent as well as a *poncif*. Grief paradoxically fits Austen’s love of nonsense, and the hyperbolic style of the *Juvenilia*.

⁴⁵⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 239.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Sophia shrieked and fainted on the Ground—I screamed and instantly ran mad—... For an Hour and a Quarter did we continue in this unfortunate Situation—Sophia fainting every moment and I running Mad as often—. ⁴⁵⁸

In L&F, the heroines' reactions, in the face of their husbands' probable but not yet proven deaths, are ridiculous. They indulge their grief before establishing its cause. Their reactions escalate the level of feeling: each wants to top the other's grief. The haptic dimension inherent in fainting (falling) is also present in running mad, which includes screaming, running, erratic movement, falling, and violence.

McMaster, commenting on this episode, argues that

Austen pounces on these statistics with considerable glee, suggesting an athletic competitiveness in her heroine... In the eighteenth-century novel the almost clinical chronicling of sighs, tears, fainting and insanity, the physical manifestations of passion, often became the means of conveying the passion itself. ⁴⁵⁹

McMaster highlights the parodic nature of L&F, which engages with novels of sensibility. It allows Austen to voice her social anxiety (McMaster mentions “women of sensibility as the victims of a mercenary code enforced by tyrannical fathers”), and circumvent the taboo aspect of certain passions. ⁴⁶⁰

Affection, which should carry positive associations, is suspect and illusory. In BC, it is presented through a grammatical/diegetic stratagem: “She entered ... and was pressed to her Mother's bosom by that worthy Woman”. ⁴⁶¹ The comedy lies in Austen's style, rather than the dramatic encounter. The passive voice (“was

⁴⁵⁸ *Juvenilia*, p. 129.

⁴⁵⁹ McMaster, ‘Young Jane Austen’, p. 84.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁴⁶¹ *Juvenilia*, p. 56.

pressed”) shows the daughter’s helplessness, but it is also an expression of narratorial agency: suspense causes paradigmatic doubt in the reader’s mind, who is left wondering who else could have “pressed” her, as though someone else were the agent.⁴⁶² As a result, the mother-daughter embrace creates uncertain feeling, through word order. In F&E, a familial greeting is equally complex: “Charlotte soon found herself in the arms of a fond Aunt”.⁴⁶³ In this episode, the niece is received by her aunt with an embrace, but the language it uses is an early expression of Austen’s tactile diffidence, as the action is described in passive and unaware terms (“found herself”). Intimacy is usually problematic, but comical: they were “seated as usual, in the most affectionate manner in one chair”.⁴⁶⁴ Depictions of both the familial and the amorous haptic in this scene are exaggerated. Hyperbolic affection, as well as practical arrangements, are used for effect, and evince societal critique. In V, sejant proximity gives rise to one of Austen’s slapstick comedic scenes, because the intimacy of touch is subversive:

Miss E.—Pray be seated... Bless me! there ought to be 8 Chairs and there are but 6. However, if your Ladyship will but take Sir Arthur in your Lap, and Sophy, my Brother in hers, I beleive we shall do pretty well.⁴⁶⁵

While the first pair who are asked to share seats are relatives, the tactility of the scheme is cavalier. Gender roles are reversed: the women support their male

⁴⁶² K.C. Phillipps explain that Austen’s predilection for the passive voice (which allowed her to modulate focus and emphasis) elicits “dangling” prepositions. See *Jane Austen’s English*, pp. 147-52.

⁴⁶³ *Juvenilia*, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

counterparts. Hatton sees chairs as narrative adjuvants to social and sexual subversion, and portrays courtship as a simple practical arrangement: when touch can be effected, marriage will follow.⁴⁶⁶ The paronymic play (“Sophy”/sofa) also makes this commerce aurally comedic. The sparseness of furniture is in this case the butt of a socially incisive farce. The (supposedly) decorous follow-up furthers the comedy:

Miss F. I am really shocked at crouding you in such a manner...
Sophy. I beg you will make no apologies. Your Brother is very light.⁴⁶⁷

The brother’s “light[ness]” is irrelevant, but the apology voices Austen’s social criticism. The weight of the person is felt and commented on, bringing the contactile nature of the interaction to the fore, which McMaster describes as a “conglomeration of bodies”, and a manifestation of Austen’s disregard for conventional decorum.⁴⁶⁸ When unusual physical displays of affection occasionally happen, as with Laura and Sophia and their male counterparts in L&F, they point to the hackneyed sensibility of greetings:

We flew into each others arms and after having exchanged vows of mutual Freindship for the rest of our Lives, instantly unfolded to each other the most inward Secrets of our Hearts—. We were interrupted in this Delightfull Employment by the entrance of Augustus, (Edward’s freind) who was just returned from a solitary ramble.

Never did I see such an affecting Scene as was the meeting of Edward and Augustus.

⁴⁶⁶ Hatton, p. 101.

⁴⁶⁷ *Juvenilia*, p. 65.

⁴⁶⁸ McMaster, ‘Young Jane Austen’, p. 86.

“My Life! my Soul!” (exclaimed the former). “My Adorable Angel!” (replied the latter) as they flew into each other’s arms.—It was too pathetic for the feelings of Sophia and myself—We fainted Alternately on a Sofa.⁴⁶⁹

This hyperbolic display of friendship invites a homoerotic reading, further reinforced by Sophia’s height, which contributes to her beauty in Laura’s eyes and informs her attraction. Multiple embraces are presented as norm, as is the contactility of the “Sofa”.⁴⁷⁰

He started, and ... raised me from the Ground and thr[ew] his Grand-fatherly arms around my Neck... While he was thus tenderly embracing me... He folded her in his arms, and whilst they were tenderly embracing...⁴⁷¹

The quick succession of family reunions (four in total), proves that Austen’s early style of touch is formulaic: “tenderly embracing” is a word-for-word repetition, after only ten lines. Similarly, the first episode uses “throwing”, and the second “folded”, two hackneyed lexemes. At this early stage of Austen’s career, her haptic style has not yet been refined. Sentimental fiction relied on tear-jerking narrative elements such as reunions, which, in Austen’s parodic re-imaginings, become bathetic rather than pathetic. By shifting the diegetic focus, she makes hyperbolic feelings hyperbolically comical.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁹ *Juvenilia*, p. 114.

⁴⁷⁰ Sedgwick’s reading of *S&S* recurrently refers to the homosocial and homoerotic dimension of the sisterly bond. See ‘Masturbating Girl’, pp. 823, 824, 826, 828.

⁴⁷¹ *Juvenilia*, p. 120.

⁴⁷² Margaret Doody comments that Austen was “entirely aware of the thematic patterns and plot structures, or paradigms that could be familiar only to a reader of a multitude of books—and of a *re-reader*”: “she was familiar with the workings of fiction as a watchmaker with the interior movements and structures of the clock” (‘Introduction’, p. xv). She evinces Austen’s prodigious and early mastery of diegetics; the same could be said of her ease with grammatical and semantic mechanics.

While mutual displays of affection are often haptic, affectionate feelings may be experienced by the body in isolation. These are haptic in a different way: they involve physical sensations that are akin to touch and/or expressed through haptic language, which relies on stylistic choices that create contact between the words themselves. “Sensation” is indeed at the heart of affection: “A most severe and unexpected Blow at once destroyed every Sensation of Pleasure”.⁴⁷³ The joys of friendship are hedonistic and reinforce the particularity of the two couples’ relationships. The interruption of the “Blow” is as violent as the *status quo* is blissful. In LC, “Freindship” is given a similar treatment:

that two such tender Hearts, so closely linked together by the ties of simpathy and Freindship, should be so widely removed from each other, is vastly moving.⁴⁷⁴

This pronouncement sounds like a conceit, but is more importantly an expression of the haptic entanglements that feelings often elicit. While the touch is metaphorical, the language is tactile (“linked”, “ties”; see Chapter I). A more practical, but still ambiguous, use of “attach[ment]” can be found in CL: “she appeared equally pleased with me, attaching herself to me during the remainder of the day”.⁴⁷⁵ While the “attaching” is meant mostly metaphorically, the euphemised bodily aspect is also relevant. It refers to a physical closeness, common in social contexts, between young women.⁴⁷⁶ Austen is famous for not

⁴⁷³ L&F, *Juvenilia*, p. 115.

⁴⁷⁴ *Juvenilia*, p. 145.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴⁷⁶ See the “turn about the room” episode in *P&P*, vol. I, chap. 11, p. 61.

depicting the exclusive intimacy of men; she focuses, conversely, on the importance of female intimacy, which is both protocolary (spending time together in prescribed contexts), and haptically privileged (same-sex touch is mostly unproblematic).

She therefore attached herself to Camilla from the first day of her arrival, and from being the only young People in the house, they were by inclination constant Companions.⁴⁷⁷

The companionship described in ‘Catharine’ is superficial, and therefore essentially spatial, as corroborated by the conversations on taste that shortly follow. The space of “Companions[hip]” remains undefined, but it is alternately the intimacy of being alone in the same room, and the haptic intimacy of walking together. Mutual feeling is subsequently taken to extremes:

[“]Lady Bridget became a Widow like myself, and ... though we had never met, we determined to live together. We wrote to one another on the same subject by the same post, so exactly did our feelings and our Actions coincide! We both eagerly embraced the proposals we gave and received of becoming one family, and have from that time lived together in the greatest affection.”⁴⁷⁸

This passage turns Miss Jane’s homo-social *penchant* into action.⁴⁷⁹ The *rapprochement* of the two women (“one family”) carries a haptic component (“greatest affection”), clarified by the preceding implied zeugma, which relies on Austenian contextual suspense. An anticipated meeting should elicit a physical “embrace”, but the physical dimension is subsumed in the contractual one, creating a clever diversion. Using similar linguistic synaesthesia, ‘Evelyn’ conflates

⁴⁷⁷ *Juvenilia*, pp. 248-9.

⁴⁷⁸ CL, *Juvenilia*, p. 197.

⁴⁷⁹ Homoeroticism is also present in CL, and will be analysed in the final section of this chapter.

metaphor and literal meaning: “the freindly balm of Comfort and Assistance shall not be wanting”.⁴⁸⁰ The metaphoric “balm” points out that Austen’s worlds of feeling and touch are always closely related.

⁴⁸⁰ *Juvenilia*, p. 231.

HANDS AND SEX

In these volumes of *Juvenilia*, hands are referenced in two discrete contexts: departures and dancing, both of which relate to flouted parental authority and juvenile desire: Edward “took my hand and ... led me from the Parlour to his Father’s Carriage”.⁴⁸¹ This instance of touch is dictated by the conventions of Gothic fiction, in which abrupt flight is often necessary and brings characters closer together.⁴⁸² Because the situation is not threatening, however, but a result of Edward’s cowardice, the effect is comical, rather than romantic. In ‘Catharine’, Stanley’s manhandling is symbolic of the game he is playing: “[“]But come, the Carriage is ready; so, do not keep me waiting.” And so saying he took her by the hand, and led her out of the room”.⁴⁸³ The character’s tone and his actions become increasingly bold and inappropriate. The plain depiction of touch stands out, because it contravenes Austen’s usual strategy of indirection. This instance does not denote courtship but disregard and force.

Dancing, a codified and sanctioned occasion for touch in social contexts, is referenced on several occasions.

I had not been long in the room before I was engaged to dance by Mr Bernard, but just as we were going to stand up, he recollected that his Servant had got his white Gloves; and immediately ran out to fetch them.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸¹ L&F, *Juvenilia*, p. 113.

⁴⁸² See Jacqueline Green’s doctoral thesis, ‘Coming Upon the Town: Whores and Fallen Women in the Works of Jane Austen’ (University of Loughborough, 2018), p. 221.

⁴⁸³ *Juvenilia*, p. 271.

⁴⁸⁴ CL, *Juvenilia*, p. 199.

Sabor's note explains that "white Gloves" are required for specific dances (usually at the beginning of a ball).⁴⁸⁵ Social norm is therefore constraining the heroine's enjoyment of the occasion, and preventing tactility in dancing at that point, even though she has secured a partner's immediate preferment ("not ... long"). The use of the passive voice and the introduction of the agent ("by") leave no doubt as to the *mores* of asking a lady to dance, corroborated by the subsequent "leading me to the Dancers".⁴⁸⁶ There is at that point contact with the gentleman's "Gloves". The concluding remark is rich in social and emotional meaning: "I soon forgot all my vexations in the pleasure of dancing and of having the most agreeable partner in the room".⁴⁸⁷ The dissociation of "dancing" and "having" expresses two concomitant but discrete forms of "pleasure": the physical exertion of the dance itself, and the enjoyable contact with an attractive partner, whose desirability is based on looks and amiability.

Courtship, central in Austen's treatment of the marriage problem, is a recurrent plot device in the *Juvenilia*.⁴⁸⁸ Indeed, courtship is often fraught with anxiety and impropriety. Happy marriage is described only once in these *Volumes*, in 'Evelyn':

⁴⁸⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 472 (note to p. 199).

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ For a better understanding of sex and sexuality in Austen, see Juliet McMaster, 'Sex and the Senses', in *Persuasions* 34 (2012), 42-56; and Jan S. Fergus, 'Sex and Social Life in Jane Austen's Novels', in D.M. Monaghan (ed.), *Jane Austen in a Social Context* (London, 1981), pp. 66-85.

one day as [Gower] was walking in the Shrubbery with Maria leaning on his arm, they observed a rose full-blown lying on the gravel... Maria stooped to pick up the beautiful flower, and with all her Family Generosity presented it to her Husband.⁴⁸⁹

The contact with the rose is unproblematic *in se*, but interesting as an example of haptic language: as Normandin argues, “in this story, whose plot hinges on the pun “rose”/“rose,” the verb “rose” is significant”.⁴⁹⁰ The permeation he describes, however, is not analysed in depth. “[L]eaning on his arm” is an occurrence of intimacy between husband and wife in the context of a walk “in the Shrubbery”. Similar walks in comparable circumstances are therefore likely to also include “leaning” (*e.g.* between two friends, two sisters, a couple).⁴⁹¹

In F&E, “the eldest Miss Fitzroy ran off with the Coachman”.⁴⁹² The reference to elopement (“ran off”) is attested at the time, but the phrasal verb of movement, and the association with the “Coachman”, insist on the sportive and rapid nature of the endeavour. The ensuing liaison is not mentioned, which anticipates the euphemistic indirection of Austen’s mature style. Male suitors are often negatively portrayed:

the Door suddenly opened and an aged gentleman with a sallow face and old pink Coat, partly by intention and partly thro’ weakness was at the feet of the lovely Charlotte, declaring his attachment to her and beseeching her pity in the most moving manner.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁹ *Juvenilia*, pp. 234-5.

⁴⁹⁰ Shawn Normandin, ‘Jane Austen’s “Evelyn” and The “Impossibility of The Gift”’, *Criticism* 60 (2018), 27-46 [33].

⁴⁹¹ This is a blueprint for the interaction between Edmund and Mary Crawford, among others, in *MP* (vol. I, chap. 9, p. 110).

⁴⁹² *Juvenilia*, p. 7.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The suitor's *entrée* and behaviour are used for effect: his immediate collapse at his paramour's feet is a trope, here satirised in the juxtaposition of his motives. The "most moving manner" is euphemistic and shies from verisimilitude rather than from touch: Austen avoids describing an impossibility (the "aged gentleman" is laughable rather than "moving"), and therefore protects her narratorial integrity while destabilising the reader. The internal focalisation allows the narrator to explain that Elfrida "had actually the horror of perceiving a growing passion in the Bosom of Frederic for the Daughter of the amiable Rebecca".⁴⁹⁴ The description of the protagonist's infatuation is anatomical to the point of comedy: the mention of what is visible within his "Bosom" implies that the "passion" he feels is a growth, a medical anomaly. In a dense aside, Austen depicts female predatory behaviour: "The servant, She kept to herself".⁴⁹⁵ Both maid and heroine display proprietary behaviours. Austen uses innuendo to inform the parallel situation of the heroine, and the nature of her urges. On a diegetic level, Austen is using a shortcut, by which she leaves the reader to imagine what goes on behind closed doors, with little chance of misunderstanding. Ownership is soon mentioned again:

[“]my Adorable Laura (continued he taking my Hand) when may I hope to receive that reward of all the painfull sufferings I have undergone during the course of my Attachment to you, to which I have ever aspired? Oh! when will you reward me with Yourself?”⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ *Juvenilia*, p. 11.

⁴⁹⁵ L&F, *Juvenilia*, p. 107.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

The language of love is formulaic and ludicrous, especially considering the timeframe (the space of a few moments). The description of “taking” Laura’s “Hand” in courtship puts the haptic at the centre of the the intrigue, but also of Austen’s linguistic style: the physical manifestation of desire and feeling is immediately followed by “Attachment”, a concrete word used metaphorically, and finally “united” (married), which conjures a religious bond. The semantic proximity of these three expressions echoes the physical promiscuity of the characters’ behaviour, in a haptic contamination of language. Laura is also described as a “reward” for her suitor’s “sufferings”, which categorises her as an object. She is a commodity, and his right desert. Pseudo-courtly love creates a tactile economy not unlike ambition: after the ‘hero’ has proven himself, he can claim his prize. The physical gratification of the suitor’s “Attachment” is not questioned, except in its temporality (“When ...?”). The “Adorable Laura” becomes suspect through the syntagmatic proximity of the proprietary gesture. A similar idea is economically expressed in LC: “as neither Eloisa nor I could catch him I hope You or Matilda may have better Luck”.⁴⁹⁷ “Catch[ing]” evinces the tactile dynamic of successful courtship and the notion that men too can be prey.⁴⁹⁸ Stanley’s behaviour in ‘Catharine’ evidences his claims over the heroine:

Stanley was too much engaged in handing her out of [the Carriage], to wait for an answer, or to remember that what he had said required one... forcibly seizing her arm within his, [he] overpowered her voice with the rapidity of

⁴⁹⁷ *Juvenilia*, p. 167.

⁴⁹⁸ See the “setting your cap at him” episode in *S&S*, vol. I, chap. 9, pp. 52-4; and Heydt-Stevenson’s comments on Miss Bingley’s courtship of Darcy in *P&P* (*Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 82).

his own, and Kitty half angry, and half laughing was obliged to go with him up stairs, and could even with difficulty prevail on him to relinquish her hand before they entered the room.⁴⁹⁹

The nature of the “engage[ment]” is not stated, but easily deduced: men are used to “handing” ladies into and out of carriages, and the process requires no thought. Stanley is therefore occupied in predatory sensual pleasure. The rest of the episode expresses his ascendancy over Kitty, whom he silences and manipulates (literally and metaphorically). The jump from “arm” to “voice” is synaesthetic in its zeugmatism: the reader can see Kitty being physically “overpowered”. The “engage[ment]” is therefore not simply a marker of intensity, but also a play on words on Austen’s part.

Controlling husbands-to-be are difficult to avoid and harder to live with, and their haptic language points to the inevitability of female submission. Their control is embodied in both semantics and narrative. Configurations vary, but in courtship, most types of intercourse include a haptic dimension. Elfrida “flew to Frederic and in a manner truly heroick, spluttered out to him her intention of being married the next Day”.⁵⁰⁰ The bathetic juxtaposition “heroick”/ “spluttered” expresses the hapticity of speech. It indicates the faltering of the body despite strong resolution, and introduces saliva, which splashes as spittle (“spluttered” is onomatopoeic).⁵⁰¹ The innuendo in E&E is easy to decipher:

⁴⁹⁹ *Juvenilia*, p. 273.

⁵⁰⁰ F&E, *Juvenilia*, p. 12.

⁵⁰¹ For an analysis of the importance of the sounds of language (onomatopoeia, among other phenomena), see Megan Quinn, ‘The Sensation of Language in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 30 (2018), 243-63.

“Thomas was the only one at Hand. To him she unbosomed herself without restraint”.⁵⁰² The proximity of terms leads to promiscuity in the form of contaminating semantics. The footman’s “Hand” and “unbosomed” are used metaphorically (“-bosom-” is subsumed in a derivational verb), but sharing one’s emotions with a male servant is transgressive, and implies a reference to the physical implication of these terms (“without restraint” is also a foretaste of the subsequent elopement). The young lady’s trust is related to an indiscreet form of intimacy with a male (who should be a) stranger.

In the *Juvenilia*, Austen never portrays desire positively. “[“]Did he never gaze on you with Admiration—tenderly press your hand—drop an involuntary tear—and leave the room abruptly?””⁵⁰³ This blueprint of courtship, imagined by the heroines, delineates what Austen’s female protagonists expect, and what such scenes should contain. The fact that “tenderly press[ing one’s] hand” is on the list proves that such actions were common, even in casual acquaintances such as Janetta’s and M’Kenzie’s. The relative absence of hands in Austen’s later fiction therefore indicates a change of style. The “involuntary tear” makes the affair stereotypical, effects Austen’s satire, but also validates its received meaning.

The sentimental streak goes on:

The amiable M’Kenzie... on receiving this Billet flew on the wings of Love to Macdonald-Hall, and so powerfully pleaded his Attachment to her who inspired it, that after a few more private interviews...⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² *Juvenilia*, p. 35.

⁵⁰³ L&F, *Juvenilia*, p. 123.

⁵⁰⁴ *Juvenilia*, p. 124.

The literal feel of the metaphor (“wings of Love”), given by the specification of a destination, introduces a haptic dimension. “Love” is M’Kenzie’s steed. The “private interviews” reference encounters during which “gaz[ing]”, “press[ing] hand[s]” and “tear[s]” are expected, but now that these have become reality rather than the heroines’ suppositions, they have become an object of indirection.

In LC, Austen uses an amorous idiom with a twist: “In a very few Days, he was falling in love, shortly after actually fell, and before he had known her a Month, he had married her”.⁵⁰⁵ The first part of this paratactic sentence uses a latent zeugma, in which the idiomatic quality of “falling” (“in love”) is contrasted with the (apparently) intransitive haptic polyseme. Because there is no discernible physical incident, it is a tense trick that indicates the perfection of the action (“fell”), and the rest of the phrase is elided. The result creates a deeper imbalance in the reader’s mind than with typical zeugma: it is an antanaclasis that doubles back on itself. The second part of the sentence employs two consecutive pluperfects, when a syntactic construction would use one pluperfect and one perfect (‘married’ rather than “had married”). The implication is that the result was performed without regard to tense concordance, and perhaps even before its prerequisite condition (which already denotes anteriority). The overall effect is to introduce a general grammatical topsy-turviness that emulates the social transgressions it denotes. Marriage is a grammatically foregrounded matter of course, which does not require female acquiescence: the temporal linguistic

⁵⁰⁵ *Juvenilia*, p. 152.

agency of the male character preempts any objection or obstacle, making marriage a *fait accompli*.

Young ladies' reflections on their courtships, as in CL, are hyperbolic and haptic:

I am not conscious of being more sincerely attached to Willoughby than I was to Neville, Fitzowen, or either of the Crawfords, for all of whom I once felt the most lasting affection that ever warmed a Woman's heart.⁵⁰⁶

Austen's diegetic mastery is manifest: the character is unaware of the nonsensical contradictions she professes. As it is not a form of "attachment", "affection" must be physical desire, and its recurrent and brief nature, associated with multiple and supposedly permanent superlatives (the list makes the character a flirt), creates the need to move on to a new object. That the heroine's desire is professedly "lasting" refers to the unconscious need, for a woman aware of propriety (as the first letter suggests), to give her desires a socially acceptable veneer. The character is deluding even herself through her choice of words, to conform to social norms. The hapticity of language enables her to legitimise her fallacious feelings: desire becomes paradoxically acceptable because it is portrayed as routine. The narrator and reader, however, relish the irony of this socio-linguistic stratagem.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ *Juvenilia*, p. 194.

⁵⁰⁷ This self-deception foreshadows the character of Lady Susan. See Chapter IV.

Austen is usually thought to steer clear of (clinical or graphic) sex in her fiction, but the *Juvenilia* contains several instances of amorous misconduct.⁵⁰⁸

Mrs. Percival, the proper but paranoid aunt in ‘Catharine’, allows Austen to broach impropriety directly and comedically:

[“]you will oblige me very much by desiring your Son to leave Chetwynde, or I cannot be answerable for what may happen between him and my Neice... Kitty is one of the most impudent Girls that ever existed. I assure you Sir, that I have seen her sit and laugh and whisper with a young Man whom she has not seen above half a dozen times. Her behaviour indeed is scandalous... [”] Mr Stanley ... had scarcely known to what length her insinuations of Kitty’s impudence were meant to extend...⁵⁰⁹

The open fear of “what may happen” is worrying in the context of the superlative (“one of the most impudent Girls...”). Mr. Stanley’s rebuttal confirms that sexual misconduct is indeed likely in this spectrum of possibilities. An actual love-making scene soon follows, “witnessed by [Mrs. Percival] to whom all gallantry [is] odious”: Edward

suddenly seized hold of [Kitty’s] hand, and exclaiming with great emotion, “Upon my honour you are entirely mistaken,” pressed it passionately to his lips, and ran out of the arbour.⁵¹⁰

This *hapax* is the missing connection between pre- and post-Austen fiction, between the violent juvenilia and the indirected style of the mature novels: it centres on amorous passion in action. Austen does not normally describe tactile courtship *in se*, but here she uses an amorous act of touch without any indirection.

The active verbs “seized” and “pressed”, the latter qualified by the un-Austenian

⁵⁰⁸ On sex in Austen, see Alice Chandler, “A Pair of Fine Eyes”: Jane Austen’s Treatment of Sex’, *Studies in the Novel* 51 (2019), 36-50.

⁵⁰⁹ *Juvenilia*, p. 282.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

adverb “passionately”, bring the focus to the male character’s “lips”, the ultimate beneficiaries of his “emotion” and desire. Another erotically charged episode, in T, exemplifies Austen’s youthful humour:

Robertus accompanied [Wilhelminus], with his Lady the amiable Cecilia and her two lovely Sisters Arabella and Marina to whom Wilhelminus was tenderly attached... [He] gave orders for the immediate erection of two noble Tents in an open Spot in the Forest adjoining to the house.⁵¹¹

The distributive construction allows Austen to introduce doubt and promiscuity into her sentence. It is unclear (through lack of punctuation) whether Wilhelminus is “tenderly attached” to Marina or to both “lovely Sisters”. This potential is realised when the narrator describes the supposed architectural and geographical situation. The “erection” of the “Tents” is a thinly veiled reference to the heroes’ male organs, while the “open Spot” and the “Forest” refer to the heroines’. Critics are sometimes loath to delve into sexual references, but Keymer points out that

Overall, there’s too much sexual innuendo to explain away as chance, and some of it points in unexpected directions... Beyond these deft touches of obscene periphrasis... [Austen] takes [delight] in each rush of incongruous nouns... She revels in jarring mismatches between polite and demotic language... Throughout the volumes... it’s as though she’s seeking out the worst-chosen language.⁵¹²

Keymer’s comments evidence not the “worst-chosen language”, but the language of extremes, used for bathetic, comedic effect. The “demotic” usually terminates each sequence, an effect Austen must have found particularly funny. “[S]exual innuendo”, already remarked by Jill Heydt-Stevenson, is indeed much more

⁵¹¹ *Juvenilia*, p. 226.

⁵¹² Keymer, *Writing, Society, Politics*, pp. 21-3.

present in the early works than in the novels. A cryptic exchange between two female characters, in CL, is difficult to explain, unless it references homoerotic desire:

“Do you ride as much as you used to do?” said she—. “I am advised to ride by my Physician, We have delightful Rides round us, I have a Charming horse, am uncommonly fond of the Amusement,” replied I quite recovered from my Confusion, “and in short I ride a great deal.” ...
“Ride where you may, Be Candid where You can...” “I have not ridden, continued she fixing her Eyes on my face, since I was married.”⁵¹³

Riding horses is a symbol of female homoeroticism. The state of the narrator (“confused—distressed—... bewildered”), and the non-verbal communication (“having exposed Yourself—”, when nothing has been said explicitly) that stems from “Admiration”, point to an intimate relationship between the heroines.⁵¹⁴ Their vocabulary denotes pleasure in no uncertain terms (“delightful”, “Charming”, “uncommonly fond”). The maxim-like conclusion, given by the older Miss Jane, advocates “riding” when possible, and deception when necessary. Her terms of endearment (“my Love”) and her staring at her younger friend’s face, as she is delineating the incompatibility of marriage and “riding”, further indicate same-sex commerce.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹³ *Juvenilia*, p. 195.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

The horse-riding euphemism, used in similar circumstances in *MP*, also brings together a young *ingénue* and a worldly older woman. See Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, pp. 117-24.

⁵¹⁵ William Nelles sees this scene as a precursor of Elinor and Lucy Steele’s “people reading”, but he does not offer any insight as to what is happening in the characters’ minds. See ‘Austen’s *Juvenilia* and Sciences of the Mind’, in Beth Lau (ed.), *Jane Austen and the Sciences of the Mind* (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 14-36 [23].

Love affairs, in the *Juvenilia*, end in disappointment: “He vainly flatters himself that change of Air will heal the Wounds of a broken Heart!”⁵¹⁶ The “Heart”, “broken”, is at the centre of metaphoric touch, violent in this case (“wounded”), which mixes negative metaphors. The adverb “vainly” expresses the irreversibility of the condition. Less permanent but more subversive is the conclusion in CL:

Why should I feel [this last disappointment] more, why should it wound me deeper than those I have experienced before? Can it be that I have a greater affection for Willoughby than I had for his amiable predecessors—? Or is it that our feelings become more acute from being often wounded?⁵¹⁷

Austen often refers to people or manners being “affectionate”, and those references imply touch. In this case, however, the use of the noun “affection” points to sexual desire. “[D]isappointment” is a form of frustration associated with unsuccessful courtship.⁵¹⁸ This interpretation is supported by the use of the name Willoughby, whose out-of-wedlock physical relationships populate the narrative underbelly of *S&S*.⁵¹⁹ The heartbreak this Willoughby causes gestures to the increasing difficulty of protecting oneself in the marriage game, which becomes more dangerous with age.⁵²⁰ The female character’s rhetoric is one of

⁵¹⁶ LC, *Juvenilia*, p. 145.

⁵¹⁷ *Juvenilia*, p. 193.

⁵¹⁸ In her article on affect theory, Carmen Faye Mathes defines disappointment as a physical experience (“stumbling, falling”). See ‘Reading and the Sociality of Disappointing Affects in Jane Austen’, in S. Ahem (ed.), *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice: A Feel for the Text* (London, 2019), pp. 85-103 [p. 85].

⁵¹⁹ See vol. II, chap. 9, pp. 233-9.

⁵²⁰ Age is central to the plot of *Persuasion*. See vol. I, chap. 1, and vol. II, chap. 11.

uncertainty. She cannot control her disappointed feelings because she cannot control her looks, and no longer enjoys the arrogance of youth. Her language fails, being devoid of self-assurance, and mirrors her waning beauty and social status.

CONCLUSION

Jane Austen's *Juvenilia* are a large and disparate *corpus* of texts. It contains one recurring type of touch that is absent from the rest of her writings: gratuitous voluntary violence. Other references to the haptic are early expressions of themes and strategies that Austen would continually refine in her prose, both in her correspondence and her later fiction. This refinement is already sensible within the *Juvenilia*, as the stories of *Volume the First* are markedly less polished than those of the later two, both in terms of subject-matter and style.

Although difficult to date, these manuscripts are indubitably associated with Austen's earliest productive years. In this sense, they are contained and separate from the rest of her fiction (even if 'Lady Susan' somewhat bridges the gap, see Chapter IV). The seeds of Austen's stylism are already present, however, and even some of the earliest pieces display advanced referential humour and compositional mastery. 'Catharine' is not very different from 'The Watsons', which itself contains many links with *Persuasion*. As Doody argues,

if the shorter works are not treated as childish effusions, they begin to loom very large indeed in Austen's *oeuvre*, pointing to the alternative Austen who might have been a different writer...⁵²¹

Austen's "alternative" mature fiction, however, remains subjunctive, and the six novels differ widely from the "crazed" juvenilia. Doody's conclusion also posits that this alternative mature fiction would be much more similar to the early writings, and therefore rationalises Austen's tremendous efforts of stylistic and

⁵²¹ Doody, 'Introduction', p. 92.

diegetic adaptation in order to publish.⁵²² This may help understand why ‘Sanditon’ did not suffer the same “conformity”: Austen may have known she would never be able to complete it, and therefore did not try to make it similar to her published novels.⁵²³

This is a very frightening philosophic production on the part of a young woman. The disconcerting elements in Austen’s fiction (even in the six novels) are sometimes very palpable obstacles to our smooth approbation... The Regency is a tight time. Regency fashions may have been sexy – but they hampered women’s movement in tight skirts, and left men strangulated in neckcloths.⁵²⁴

Doody moves from the “frightening” quality of Austen’s writings, which is “palpable”, to a description of clothing that centres on discomfort and pain. She makes Austen’s era haptic, both socially and individually.⁵²⁵ Doody further argues that the “masquerade” in J&A leads to one “in language... in which the historical continuities of a pageant are broken up in kaleidoscopic fury”.⁵²⁶ This reference highlights the self-reflexivity of Austen’s language: when referring to a “masquerade”, Austen’s style becomes “kaleidoscopic”. When referring to touch, Austen’s style becomes haptic. When referring to violence, Austen’s style becomes forcible. Her prose, as meta-commentary, accords form and content in a truly

⁵²² Doody, ‘Introduction’, p. 98.

⁵²³ Keymer argues that “Austen’s satirical genius still lurk[s] beneath the surface of her novels, occasionally breaking that surface in startling ways” (*Writing, Society, Politics*, p. 29). In ‘Sanditon’, it could be argued not to “lurk”, but to be manifest once again. See Chapter IV.

⁵²⁴ Doody, ‘Introduction’, p. 93.

⁵²⁵ James Thompson presents a more traditional view of clothing in ‘Jane Austen’s Clothing: Things, Property, and Materialism in Her Novels’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 13 (1984), 217-31. He focuses on the moral, economic and courtship issues associated with these superficial objects.

⁵²⁶ Doody, *Jane Austen’s Names*, p. 388.

remarkable way. Austen's correspondence, another peripheral corpus, is different in nature from her fiction, but its time-scale overlaps with both those of the early works and the later fiction. The *Letters* are the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III — *LETTERS*

INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen writes on most subjects of daily life, chiefly to her sister, otherwise to family members and close friends, in the intimate tone and manner only possible in private confidential correspondence. The surviving letters span the whole of her adult life.⁵²⁷ Because the *Letters* are inherently different from Jane Austen's literary creations, it is useful to investigate the haptic references they contain, which follow a diverging standard. The sense of touch is, in the *Letters*, a cornerstone on which many aspects of Austen's life and writings rest.

This chapter could multiply references to the haptic in everyday life. It could investigate the 'social haptic' through Austen's treatment of crowded spaces, family interactions (especially with children), and courtship. It could examine the 'material haptic', that is, the intercession of objects (carriages, furniture and garments), the importance of the body (through the weather, cleanliness and accidents), and the dynamics of leisure and labour.⁵²⁸ It could put forward the idea of a 'neurological haptic', which creates a coherent but complex sensory paradigm, as relating touch to ailment (and nursing), food and emotion.

⁵²⁷ Deirdre Le Faye (ed.), *Jane Austen's Letters*, 4th edn. (Oxford, 2011). Austen's first surviving letter is dated 9-10 January 1796, the year of her twenty-first birthday, and her last one 28-29 May 1817, about two months before her death.

⁵²⁸ Penny Gay's chapter on leisure is helpful: 'Pastimes', in J. Todd (ed.), *Jane Austen in Context* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 337-45.

For reasons of space and coherence, this chapter will focus on the linguistic aspects of touch, and will be structured not thematically, but stylistically.

As previously explained, the perceived absence of the haptic in Austen's writings is a misconception.⁵²⁹ Focusing on four aspects of Austen's letters, this chapter will demonstrate that touch is not only present (albeit in indirection), but that it is at the core of Austen's literary preoccupations, and shapes her chosen topics, her references to her own prose, and the essence of her style. The first section will be concerned with references to the physical process of writing. This will include analyses of the technical and literary aspects of correspondence and fiction, and cover pens and penmanship, the exertion of the writing process, and the production of novels. The second one will concentrate on juxtaposition, a syntactic and literary device prominent in the *Letters*.⁵³⁰ It will broach the stylistic ways in which Austen uses grammatical and compositional structures to create unexpected and often comical linguistic connections, and while the examples chosen will often have touch as their content, particular emphasis will be given to

⁵²⁹ Paula Byrne's biography of Jane Austen highlights the importance of objects and touch. See *The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things* (London, 2013). Byrne argues the centrality of "small things" in Austen's life, and connects real objects and their literary counterparts. Barbara Hardy argues that objects, although central, only appear when essential, and gradually disappear after *NA*. See 'The Objects in *Mansfield Park*', in J. Halperin (ed.), *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 180-96.

⁵³⁰ Norman Page puts language (lexis and syntax) at the heart of Austen's skill. His chapter 'The Epistolary Art', mostly concerned with the use of letters in the novels, argues that in the *Letters*, Austen "habitually endows social and domestic trivialities with a sense of style", which gives "these passages an interest which transcends that of their subject matter" (1972, p. 171). Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade's chapter on grammar highlights the complexity of Austen's syntactic patterns in the *Letters*, which evolved over time and changed with correspondents. See *In Search of Jane Austen: The Language of the Letters* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 186-207.

the haptic nature of Austenian juxtaposition, arguing that the resulting *synthesis* (etymologically, ‘putting together’) is itself a form of touch.⁵³¹

The penultimate section will describe the polysemic nature of Austen’s lexis, and the ways in which one carefully chosen word can create a semiotic (and syntactically haptic) friction comparable to dissonance in musical composition, through a close analysis of the following commonplace topics: looks, health, births and children.

The final part of this chapter will concentrate on Austen’s use of euphemism, in order to show that eating, the body, intimacy and desire systematically and designedly conceal their haptic nature, and that euphemistic touch is essential not only in Austen’s apprehension of the world, but also in her style.⁵³²

⁵³¹ Vladimir Nabokov’s lecture on *MP* describes automatic association as a comedic process. One in particular is relevant to this argument: he describes “Lady Bertram and her Pug” as one such connection. See *Lectures on Literature* (London, 1982), p. 56. This thesis would describe the connection as a physical juxtaposition, and almost a collocation.

⁵³² John Wiltshire (in *Jane Austen and the Body*) sees the body and its “display” through the lenses of health, social norm and gender. This chapter will correlate the body and its surroundings (humans, objects, etc.) through touch.

WRITING

Jane Austen's letters often reference writing as a technical, stylistic and literary endeavour.⁵³³ Penmanship is the practical expression of composition. Austen is critical of her own handwriting: "I am quite angry with myself for not writing closer; why is my alphabet so much more sprawly than Yours?"⁵³⁴ The act of tracing letters on paper is questioned in an existential way. Austen condemns her lack of dexterity, because there is a monetary imperative to trace economically: paper is expensive.⁵³⁵ There is also an artistic dimension to penmanship, evoked as a familial matter:

We have reason to suppose the change of name has taken place, as we have to forward a Letter to Edward Knight Esq^{re} from the Lawyer who has the management of the business. I must learn to make a better K.—⁵³⁶

Austen's brother's change of name is given a tactile response: Austen criticises the quality of her calligraphy, as the new name will require her to improve one

⁵³³ Joseph Kestner comments at length on the presence of these self-critical or practical references to Austen's own letter-writing, but does not apprehend their haptic nature. See 'The Letters of Jane Austen: The Writer as *Émetteur/Récepteur*', *Papers on Language & Literature* 14 (1978), 249-68 [257-9].

⁵³⁴ *Letters*, p. 18 (27-28 October 1798). See also p. 79 (21-22 January 1801).

⁵³⁵ On the price and contingencies of paper, see Miranda Burgess, 'Jane Austen on Paper', *European Romantic Review* 29 (2018), 365-75.

Kathryn Sutherland argues that "the authenticity of a letter, unlike a novel, is bound inextricably to its original material form... Words alone provide an incomplete account of a form in which the manner of their disposition on paper, the handwriting and the pressure of the hand, even the paper itself, its folds, and the method of sealing, may all offer eloquent clues to the writer's identity and state of mind" (*Textual Lives*, p. 82). Sutherland's comments on the materiality and therefore the tactility of letters and letter-writing is astute. Austen herself referred to these processes: seals are mentioned on several occasions, and pen pressure or irregular tracing might give, like italicisation and dashes, insights into the authorial significance of specific words.

⁵³⁶ *Letters*, p. 205 (29-30 November 1812).

capital letter.⁵³⁷ Tracing with reverence and affection is presented as the natural consequence of sisterly love and regard. The physicality of writing can sometimes take on a whimsical quality, as in a letter dated 14-16 January 1801:

James dined with us yesterday, wrote to Edward in the Evening, filled three sides of paper, every line inclining too much towards the North-East, & the very first line of all scratched out...⁵³⁸

The minute account of James's handwriting is telling of Austen's priorities, her brother's penmanship is depicted as copious and careless, lacking deftness: because the words are slanting, they are described as physically faulty through the use of geographical, nautical lexis.⁵³⁹ The importance of tracing properly is especially relevant when Austen addresses children, like Caroline Austen: "I think you very much improved in your writing, & in the way to write a very pretty hand. I wish you could practise your fingering oftener.—"⁵⁴⁰ The technicality of handwriting is a necessary accomplishment for a twelve-year-old girl.⁵⁴¹ Austen attaches great importance to the aesthetics of tracing: both the internal object "a

⁵³⁷ Margaret Doody comments on Austen's pun on the meaning of the name 'Knight' (*Jane Austen's Names*, p. 5). Austen's calligraphy is rendered necessary by the armorial connotations of her brother's new status-conferring name.

⁵³⁸ *Letters*, p. 75.

⁵³⁹ On the importance of the navy in Austen's life, see Brian C. Southam, *Jane Austen and the Navy* (London, 2005). The first chapter ('The Novelist and the Navy', pp. 3-17) focuses on the translation of the nautical from life experience into literary subject matter.

⁵⁴⁰ *Letters*, p. 353 (26 March 1817).

⁵⁴¹ For a precise description of Austen's relationship with children, see David Selwyn, *Jane Austen and Children* (London, 2010), pp. 59-94.

very pretty hand”, and the choice of the gerund “fingering” evoke the lexis of music-making.⁵⁴²

Austen often ironically berates her letter-writing ability: “There!—I may now finish my letter, & go & hang myself, for I am sure I can neither write nor do anything which will not appear insipid to you after this.—”.⁵⁴³ She sets up an epistolary contest, and finds herself lacking. The vocabulary describing her shortcomings is that of gustatory pleasure (“insipid”), and her self-disappointment that of violent touch, as suicide is presented as the only course of action. The existential quality of her autographic skill anchors it deeply into the physical realm. This joking epistolary feud with Cassandra is revisited through the years:

I took up your Letter again to refresh me, being somewhat tired; & was struck with the prettiness of the hand; it is really a very pretty hand now & then—so small & so neat!—I wish I could get as much into a sheet of paper.—Another time I will take two days to make a Letter in; it is fatiguing to write a whole long one at once.⁵⁴⁴

By 1813, the reference to penmanship has become habitual, but there is here more playfulness in the imagery than in other instances. It implies that ink-words are a liquid that finds in paper its container, and that Austen herself is deficient in using the space. It is also presented as physical labour (“fatiguing”, “make”), which implies craftsmanship rather than penmanship. Finally, the “hand” that “struck” Austen is a reference to her own feeling of inferiority in comparison to

⁵⁴² Abigail Williams comments on the practical aspects of reading (“using books”). See *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven CT, 2017), pp. 64-94.

⁵⁴³ *Letters*, p. 29 (24-26 December 1798).

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259 (3 November 1813).

her sister, and a blow to her self-esteem. Pens and the impediments associated with, and the exertion caused by, writing determine Austen's scriptorial tasks:

I must get a softer pen.—This is harder.—I am in agonies.— ...
I am going to write nothing but short Sentences. There shall be two full stops
in every Line.⁵⁴⁵

Her brother's comfort immediately makes Austen think of her own, which is described, at the same time as effected, in an epistolary live performance: the ink is the result of both action and commentary, which the haptic realities of epistle-writing make tangible. The difficulty is then translated for comedic purposes into a theorised grammatical ratio ("short Sentences", "two full stops"). The writer's instruments appear to have a will of their own: "as my pen seems inclined to write large I will put my Lines very close together.—"; "The day seems to improve. I wish my pen would too.—".⁵⁴⁶ In 1813, Austen was at the height of her literary powers, but she remained attentive to the materiality of calligraphic instruments.⁵⁴⁷ The manual process of writing presents instruments as purely

⁵⁴⁵ *Letters*, p. 227 (15-16 September 1813).

For a study of writing instruments, see Michael Finlay, *Western Writing Implements in the Age of the Quill Pen* (Carlisle, 1990). See also Deirdre Lynch, 'The Art of the Letter', in Kathryn Sutherland (ed.), *Jane Austen: Writer in the World* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 77-93.

Deborah Kaplan argues, in 'Representing Two Cultures: Jane Austen's Letters', in Shari Benstock (ed.), *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings* (London, 1988), pp. 211-29, that the comparison between the siblings' productions stems from an acceptance of male social superiority. Austen's letters, according to Kaplan, both internalise and challenge the *status quo*. Female anxieties explain why women as well as men, in Austen's writings, remain "physically insubstantial" and "inhabit a kind of limbo" (p. 225).

⁵⁴⁶ *Letters*, pp. 257, 259 (3 November 1813)

⁵⁴⁷ The importance of the physical and material contingencies of writing is also delineated in Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2014, pp. 26-50.

technical contingencies that dictate Austen's tactile relationship with paper.⁵⁴⁸ On one occasion, the writing instrument allows for a self-referential play on words: "I am quite out of heart. I am sick of myself, & my bad pens.—"⁵⁴⁹ Austen makes a pun (about puns) as she mentions her paronymic bad "pens", an everyday topic (making one's own pens was not always a successful operation) that becomes an example of Austen's wit for wit's sake.⁵⁵⁰ Bodily ailments, a recurrent topic in both Austen's fiction and letters, often interfere with writing:

I have had a cold & weakness in one of my eyes for some days, which makes Writing neither very pleasant nor very profitable, & which will probably prevent my finishing this letter myself.—⁵⁵¹

"Writing" is a form of exertion that requires eye-hand coordination, which bad health renders arduous.⁵⁵² But Austen cannot bear to relinquish her instrument: "The more I write, the better my Eye gets, so I shall at least keep on till it is quite well, before I give up my pen to my Mother.—"⁵⁵³ The subtle emphasis ("my

⁵⁴⁸ Susan Whealler argues that Austen's control over her penmanship is meant to counterbalance the powerlessness and poverty associated with being a woman. See 'Prose and Power in Two Letters by Jane Austen', in A.T. McKenzie (ed.), *Sent as a Gift: Eight Correspondences from the Eighteenth Century* (Athens GA, 1993), pp. 173-200 [p. 193].

⁵⁴⁹ *Letters*, p. 136 (20-22 June 1808).

⁵⁵⁰ On the status of puns throughout English history, and Austen's own delight in them, see Doody (*Jane Austen's Names*, p. 7). J.F. Burrows sees in the *Letters* evidence of Austen's "ability to play her usual verbal games when she is not on 'high-literary' duty" (*Computation into Criticism*, p. 115). He recognises that the *Letters* are stylistically akin to Austen's fiction, despite their non-literary nature.

⁵⁵¹ *Letters*, pp. 34-5 (8-9 January 1799).

⁵⁵² Emily Auerbach's article focuses on the less salubrious aspects of Austen's world, and their comical effects. See 'Searching for Jane Austen: Restoring the "Fleas" and "Bad Breath"', *Persuasions* 27 (2005), 31-8.

⁵⁵³ *Letters*, p. 36.

pen” when ‘the pen’ might suffice) demonstrates Austen’s attachment. She writes about the physical and psychological distress of wielding the pen (“agonies” was cited above): “Distribute the affect^{te} Love of a Heart not so tired as the right hand belonging to it.—”.⁵⁵⁴ The fatiguing consequences of writing are here mentioned in correlation to affection. They imply that Austen sees her “Love” as exhaustible, and letter-writing as depleting her emotional energies.

Henry Austen’s singular inability to write requires his sister Jane to scribe for him: “Severe Illness has confined me to my Bed ever since I received Yours of ye 15th—I cannot yet hold a pen, & employ an Amuensis.—”.⁵⁵⁵ The description of “Illness” is self-evident, but its implications on writing are interesting. The striking *acte manqué* on Austen’s part manifests a repression of the haptic. The word *amanuensis* is truncated, and appears in the letter as “Amuensis”, which goes beyond matters of orthography and is not attested elsewhere. This phenomenon reveals Austen’s resistance to expressions of the intermediacy of hands (“-manu-”), which are removed from the very word that describes them. Reduced to a clerk, Austen loses herself and her dignity as an author: by becoming a truncated hand, she ironically loses her writerly voice, when her brother, acting as literary agent, is writing to her publisher about her work.

The judgement Austen the author (though still unpublished in 1809) occasionally passes on fellow writers makes literary criticism haptic:

⁵⁵⁴ *Letters*, p. 165 (9 December 1808).

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 306 (20-21 October 1815).

If the warmth of [Miss Owenson's] Language could affect the Body, it might be worth reading in this weather.—Adeiu—I must leave off to stir the fire & call on Miss Murden. Evenḡ. I have done them both, the first very often.—⁵⁵⁶

Reading is correlated (conditionally, and unsuccessfully) to the body and the weather, making it an activity that elicits physically stirring emotional reactions.

This manifesto expounds Austen's views on good writing.⁵⁵⁷ The need for warmth created by the cold weather would be fulfilled by a superior work of literature (which Owenson's is not): a good novel would call on the emotions and passions.

But Austen's reaction, and her need to tend the fire entail that her reading has not, in this case, helped her lose consciousness of her body. If writing is not meant to warm bodies, however, it might explain Austen's own reluctance to refer to the body in her writings, prompting the use of indirect references to the haptic in her prose. Sutherland highlights the importance of physical space for both sender and recipient:

these letters create a picture of the writer which is intended to overcome distance and in which her body, her situation as she writes and reads, is essential to the effect...⁵⁵⁸

The letter is a haptic *Ersatz* that enables remote physical intimacy. Paul Rodaway concurs, referring to the mind in a general sense: "rich touch imagination permits us to experience an intimacy with people and places which may be a great distance from our present location, in time and/or space".⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁶ *Letters*, p. 174 (17-18 January 1809).

⁵⁵⁷ For other instances of Austen's literary criticism, see later 'Polysemy' section.

⁵⁵⁸ Kathryn Sutherland, 'Jane Austen's Life and Letters', in C.L. Johnson and C. Tuite (eds.), *A Companion to Jane Austen* (Chichester, 2009), pp. 13-30 [p. 22].

⁵⁵⁹ Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (Abingdon, 1994), p. 54.

When Austen mentions her novels and authorial status, she uses tactile lexis:

I am never too busy to think of S&S. I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her sucking child... I have had two sheets to correct, but the last only brings us to W.s first appearance.⁵⁶⁰

This first mention of her published works happens in a haptic guise: that of a mother nursing her “child”.⁵⁶¹ The “correct[ions]” describe this relationship as work and obligation, but the phrase “never too busy” evidences Austen’s loving care towards her novel. “I was previously aware of what I sh^d be laying myself open to—... I am trying to harden myself.—”.⁵⁶² Austen’s reaction to the notoriety elicited by *P&P* is to create a metaphorical shell: she sees the intrusions caused by fame as intimate attacks on her physical person. Her self-confessed “aware[ness]”, however, and the tentative nature of the “harden[ing]”, also imply a form of pleasure and complicity to the intrusion, and though Austen remains private, she accepts that form of contact with her readership.⁵⁶³

Her identity as a writer becomes more and more secure with experience:

I could not sit seriously down to write a serious Romance under any other motive than to save my Life, & if it were indispensable for me to keep it up & never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first Chapter.—No—I must keep to my own style...⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁰ *Letters*, p. 190 (25 April 1811).

⁵⁶¹ For more information regarding the publication of Austen’s first novel, see E.J. Clery, *Jane Austen: The Banker’s Sister* (London, 2017), pp. 127-31.

⁵⁶² *Letters*, p. 241 (25 September 1813).

⁵⁶³ For a familial account of Austen’s attitudes to fame, see J.E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 9-20.

⁵⁶⁴ *Letters*, p. 326 (1 April 1816).

Austen's insistence on literary freedom is comic, and recalls the dark humour of the *Juvenilia*. She describes death as the only possible outcome of not writing in her "own style": saving her life would cause her to "be hung". Whether suicide is implied, in which case the passive is euphemistic, or she is anticipating retribution, as the subversiveness of her writings would cause her to be hanged, her answer is a wonderful conceit. The desire to "relax into laughing" associates social anxiety and its release with non-"serious" writing. Laughter is a liberating instance of the neurological haptic: the intensity of seriousness accumulates in the body, which therefore seeks psycho-somatic release.⁵⁶⁵ Muscular involvement breaks the mental tension, as the diaphragm expresses the air out of the lungs at a higher rate than in speech.⁵⁶⁶

Austen iconically describes her own style and remits as the negative (in the photographic sense) of another writer's work:

two strong twigs & a half towards a Nest of my own, would have been something.— ... How could I possibly join them on to the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour?⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁵ For a feminist depiction of laughter, see Jan Fergus, 'The Power of Women's Language and Laughter', pp. 103-21. Fergus argues that laughing provides release because it counteracts the moralising of male discourse by challenging it.

On laughter in *P&P*, see also Susan Morgan, 'Intelligence in *Pride and Prejudice*', *Modern Philology* 73 (1975), 54-68.

⁵⁶⁶ For a (partial) modern medical understanding of laughter, see e.g. Timothy Curran, Anastacia Janovec and Kimberly Olsen, 'Making Others Laugh is the Best Medicine: Humor Orientation, Health Outcomes, and the Moderating Role of Cognitive Flexibility', *Health Communication* 36 (2021), 468-75; and Zülfünaz Özer and Sebahat Ateş, 'Effects of Laughter Yoga on Hemodialysis Patients' Plasma-Beta Endorphin Levels, Pain Levels and Sleep Quality: A Randomized Controlled Trial', *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice* 43 (2021) 101382, 1-7.

⁵⁶⁷ *Letters*, p. 337 (16-17 December 1816).

Both metaphors present the writing process as physical and dynamic, because they insist on the writer's craft, and as particularly palpable both in the architectural building of the "Nest", and in the minuteness of "Ivory" painting. Confident in her unique style, Austen possesses the authority to correct aspiring young writers.⁵⁶⁸ Her advice to her niece focuses on character realism and diegesis: "I should like to have had more of Devereux. I do not feel enough acquainted with him.—You were afraid of meddling with him I dare say.—".⁵⁶⁹ Austen's comments imply that Anna did not want to spoil her character by stretching him too much and causing him to lose his essence. On a connotative level, however, they also indicate that the older Austen remains flirtatious in spirit. "[H]av[ing] more" of him makes her enjoyment akin to appetitive satisfaction; "meddling" suggests a form of man-handling. In her later letters, Austen only refers to sexual desire indirectly, as she does in her fiction: she is reticent about direct references to bodily desire (see below).

Finally, one specific reference to Austen's health, if it could be mapped against a precise and accurate writing schedule, would yield tremendously exciting results:

I have had a good deal of fever at times & indifferent nights, but am considerably better now, & recovering my Looks a little, which have been bad enough, black & white & every wrong colour. I must not depend upon being

⁵⁶⁸ Katie Gemmill argues that Austen, by revising the end of *P* (see Chapter IV), followed the advice she gave in the *Letters*. See 'Jane Austen as Editor: Letters on Fiction and the Cancelled Chapters of *Persuasion*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 24 (2011), 105-22.

⁵⁶⁹ *Letters*, p. 281.

Deirdre Le Faye, in *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (Cambridge, 2004), comments on Caroline Austen's early writing endeavours in more detail (pp. 238-9).

ever very blooming again. Sickness is a dangerous Indulgence at my time of Life.—⁵⁷⁰

The “fever” mentioned in this letter coincides chronologically with the “literary ardour” described in the previous surviving one. Could Austen’s use of metaphor have been influenced by the ailment she was experiencing at the same time? If so, the burning heat may have effected both her desire to write and her lexical choices.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ *Letters*, p. 351 (23-25 March 1817).

⁵⁷¹ For an investigation of the correlation of writing and illness, see Kay R. Jamison, *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York NY, 1994). Although most of her concerns are more severe than can be relevant to Austen’s health (manic-depressive illness, cyclothymia, mania, depression, suicide), her second chapter on the history of psychological disease categorisation investigates literary evidence of clinical symptoms (pp. 11-48).

Michael D. Sanders and Elizabeth M. Graham, in “Black and white and every wrong colour’: The Medical History of Jane Austen and the Possibility of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus’, *Lupus* 30 (2021), 549-53, investigate Austen’s final illness more directly.

JUXTAPOSITION

This second section will concentrate on several kinds of juxtaposition, one of Austen's most characteristic devices, which creates connections between otherwise unrelated people, objects or ideas, most of the time to comical effect. It will be argued that the enthymematical negation of the gap between discrete elements, and the elliptic nature of juxtaposition, make it a haptic literary device.

In its simplest guise, juxtaposition is akin to listing, in which all members are connected by punctuation or proximity. In the following example, Austen writes about her stint as mistress of the house and ties together cooking and the neighbourhood, evincing latent social critique:

I have had some ragout veal, and I mean to have some haricot mutton tomorrow. We are to kill a pig soon. There is to be a ball at Basingstoke next Thursday.⁵⁷²

She lists her favourite dishes, which prompts her to mention her indirect involvement, as "housekeeper", in the slaughter of farmyard animals.⁵⁷³ She is the embodiment of the household, and the wielder of the aristocratic "We". The apparent *non-sequitur* that introduces the last member of the juxtaposition entails a social tie. Austen metaphorically progresses from herself to her family to her neighbourhood. The transition from the farmyard to the assembly room is brusque, and posits a link between butchery and social festivity. Inexperienced

⁵⁷² *Letters*, p. 20 (17-18 November 1798).

⁵⁷³ The social connection to animals (through food) is mentioned in Barbara K. Seeber, *Jane Austen and Animals* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 91-114.

young men and women are brought together, perhaps for the first time, and the expectations of the social *mores* force them into the marriage market, in which they become sacrificial victims.⁵⁷⁴ Austen's delicate (usually literary, but in the following instance manual) skill is a source of pride, but the comparison it leads to evidences gender disparity:

We are very busy making Edward's shirts, and I am proud to say that I am the neatest worker of the party. They say that there are a prodigious number of birds hereabouts this year, so that perhaps I may kill a few.⁵⁷⁵

A rapid but relatable transition happens, in which needlework is directly followed by the expression of a desire to escape the female domestic realm and join the men, who hunt.⁵⁷⁶ The realisation of that fantasy, however, is uncertain ("perhaps"), and Austen is aware that her person ("I") does not belong in the same sphere as her male counterparts, despite her aspirations. This instance of the subversive nature of her social aspirations relies on her use of stream-of-consciousness juxtaposition, which creates an indirect *sequitur* through asyndeton.

Austen's understanding of the self shows the inseparability of physiology and psychology: "But seven years I suppose are enough to change every pore of one's

⁵⁷⁴ Coming out is a common topic in novels. See Austen's *Juvenilia* (e.g. CL, p. 193), and the works of Frances Burney, e.g. *Evelina or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (Oxford, 2002); and *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress* (Oxford, 1988). On the correlation of balls and sex, see Jill Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, pp. 77-9.

⁵⁷⁵ *Letters*, p. 7 (1 September 1796).

⁵⁷⁶ Constance Classen lists the types of "handiwork" associated with women: "sewing, cleaning, and caring for the family". See *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield IL, 2012), p. 133. Austen, as a professional writer, may have suppressed these feminine associations from her fiction to make it more gender-neutral, and thus more easily accepted in the male-dominated publishing world.

skin, & every feeling of one's mind.—”⁵⁷⁷ In this example of juxtaposition, the second parallel part resembles a prose *rejet*. The effects of time on beauty are a *topos*, but Austen connects the skin (as the organ of touch) and the feelings of the heart, implying that both change in unison. Commenting on this letter, William Nelles presents “mind reading” as a haptic process:

Theory of Mind allows us to read minds, in part, by reading bodies, and for Austen every brain is imagined in a particular body. Austen's interest in biology and the embodied brain is evident in a letter to her sister Cassandra in which she compares biological and psychological changes...⁵⁷⁸

Austen, he argues, anchors character psychology in the body (“pore”, “feeling”). The body cannot be severed from the mind.

In a letter to Cassandra dated 9 December 1808, Austen makes aesthetic propriety central: “the melancholy part was to see so many dozen young Women standing by without partners, & each of them with two ugly naked shoulders! —”⁵⁷⁹ Austen's censure relies on the implied correlation between the lack of partners and the display of “ugly naked” collar-bones. She sees decorous clothing as the natural barrier between the intimate body (part) and the public sphere, and the realisation of the propriety required at balls and in polite society at large.⁵⁸⁰ The prepositional antithesis (“without”/“with”) also correlates the absent men

⁵⁷⁷ *Letters*, p. 103 (8-11 April 1805).

⁵⁷⁸ William Nelles, ‘Austen's Juvenilia and Sciences of the Mind’, p. 26.

⁵⁷⁹ *Letters*, p. 163.

⁵⁸⁰ For an analysis of clothing and the body, see Laura Engel, *Austen, Actresses, and Accessories: Much Ado About Muffs* (Basingstoke, 2015), who argues that “Through her depiction of accessories, Austen invites readers to interrogate the distinction between secrets and revelation, private and public realms, and the boundaries between bodies and things” (p. 44).

and the present “shoulders”, as though the latter had become silent dance partners. “[S]houlders” should be covered, not because they are alluring, but simply because they should not be seen. This literary stratagem allows Austen to express causality without being explicit or direct.

Austen uses parallelisms, a more structured form of juxtaposition, to express praise or criticism: the identical structures of each parallel part effect a comedic alignment. Shooting, a masculine outdoor pursuit, is the object of satirical comments:

Edward & Fly went out yesterday very early in a couple of Shooting Jackets, and came home like a couple of Bad Shots, for they killed nothing at all...

They are just come home; Edward with his two Brace, Frank with his Two and a half. What amiable Young Men!⁵⁸¹

Shooting is correlated to clothing and desirability, in Austen’s mocking definition of manliness. The men are but “Shooting Jackets”, “Bad Shots”, while they are unsuccessful: they are not hunters, but empty shells. When they have killed their prey, they become “amiable Young Men”. The killing has made them praiseworthy masculine figures, but this understanding is simultaneously cancelled by Austen’s sarcastic wit. Music (a feminine pursuit), on the other hand, is a deep source of pleasure:

Miss H[arding] is an elegant, pleasing, pretty looking girl, about 19 I suppose, or 19 & ½, or 19 & ¼, with flowers in her head, & Music at her fingers ends.—She plays very well indeed. I have seldom heard anybody with more pleasure.—⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ *Letters*, pp. 10-11 (15-16 September 1796).

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 197 (29 May 1811).

The importance of music in Austen’s writings is analysed in Gillian Dooley, Kristine Moffat and John Wiltshire, ‘Music and Class in Jane Austen’, *Persuasions On-Line* 38 (2018), [n.p.].

While the overprecise counting of young years is meant in jest, the expression of feelings is earnest, and high praise coming from Austen, whose aesthetic judgements are often harsh. The language of the intermediate phrases is infused with tactility. One would expect the flowers to be in the girl's hair, but instead, they are "in her head", in a metonymic description of her character and temper, as well as her fashion.⁵⁸³ The continuum created by the mention of her "fingers ends" conflates the tactile and the aural, and indicates an almost magical undertone to Miss Harding's skill.⁵⁸⁴ Comedy also ensues when Austen uses collocation to create absurd conjunctions and cast doubt on idyllic romance, as in the letter dated 14-16 January 1801: "this morning [James] joins his Lady in the fields of Elysium & Ibthrop".⁵⁸⁵ The correlation creates irony: Ibthrop, apart from the possibility of spending time with one's beloved there, can only have little in common with the Elysian Fields.⁵⁸⁶ The youth of the day is further disparaged in a collocation typical of Austen's style, if not of her tone:

What is become of all the Shyness in the World?—Moral as well as Natural Diseases disappear in the progress of time, & new ones take their place.—Shyness & the Sweating Sickness have given way to Confidence & Paralytic complaints.—⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸³ An analysis of Austen's involvement in fashion can be found in Penelope Byrde, *Jane Austen Fashion: Fashion and Needlework in the Works of Jane Austen* (Ludlow, 1999).

⁵⁸⁴ David Selwyn focuses on three aspects of Austen's music: her family's lack of musical background, the music she knew and played, and the instances of musical language she used in her writings (*Jane Austen and Leisure*, pp. 115-43).

⁵⁸⁵ *Letters*, p. 75.

⁵⁸⁶ Marvin Mudrick's study of Austen's works focuses on irony, which he sees as central in her writings. See *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Berkeley CA, 1968).

⁵⁸⁷ *Letters*, p. 124 (8-9 February 1807).

This discourse is an ironic *sententia*, a (pseudo-) general truth, uncommon in the *Letters*. Austen connects social manners and personality with physical ailments in two parallel collocations, and presents both sides of the personality divide negatively. Personified faults have invaded the public sphere, a new cohort is waiting to be ushered in (“take their place”, “have given way to”), as the old one is shown out.

Austen’s collocations normatively define her world, a phenomenon that is particularly visible in her use of category-defining juxtaposition, which will now be investigated. The “Gout” (already present in the *Juvenilia*, see Chapter II) features in a letter dated 3 November 1813 (mentioned above), in a juxtaposition that derides Bath’s social circles:

I bought a Concert Ticket & a sprig of flowers for my old age. To vary the subject from Gay to Grave with inimitable address I shall now tell you something of the Bath party—& still a Bath party they are, for a fit of the Gout came on last week.— The accounts of Lady B. are as good as can be under such a circumstance, Dr P— says it appears a good sort of Gout, & her spirits are better than usual...⁵⁸⁸

Austen masterfully mixes juxtaposition and polysemy (the “inimitable address” she boasts of is not an overstatement), multiplying categories of meaning and tones.⁵⁸⁹ The “sprig of flowers” (nose-“Gay”) leads to the perfect end that follows illness (the “Grave”), while simultaneously qualifying the implications of her topics (joyous to sombre), and transitioning from the celebration of a birthday to anticipated demise (“old age”). The punning on “Bath” (toponym/therapeutic

⁵⁸⁸ *Letters*, p. 258 (3 November 1813).

⁵⁸⁹ See below.

tool) further underlies the multiple levels of meaning Austen uses, which humorously centre on the body. The “Grave” is a suppressed reference to bodily decay and interment (the end of sensation and integrity), and the “Bath party”, taken literally and out of context, conjures a crowded aquatic space filled with contiguous bodies.⁵⁹⁰ The “good Gout” is echoed by “better spirits”, in which the comparative adjective has subsumed its positive form, in a meta-morphological metamorphosis.⁵⁹¹

One of Austen’s most vitriolic turns of phrase also relies on juxtapositional categorisation, which effects character assassination:

Our Dressing-Table is constructing on the spot, out of a large Kitchen Table belonging to the House, for doing which we have the permission of Mr Husket Lord Lansdown’s Painter... I suppose whenever the Walls want no touching up, he is employed about my Lady’s face.—⁵⁹²

The odd, agent-less construction avoids both active and passive voices, and denies the manual character of *ébénisterie*, but uses “touching up” to describe make-up, an equally manual, if more delicate, operation. The juxtaposition works through analogy: the lady’s face is similar to a wall that must be plastered or painted. The description would be commonplace if it did not imply indelicacy (the skin is no better than a wall, and the painting job therefore colossal), or possibly outright sarcastic rudeness (as occasionally happens in the *Juvenilia*).

⁵⁹⁰ See Giles Foster’s 1987 screen adaptation of *NA* (21:40-24:00).

⁵⁹¹ Wiltshire often describes illness in Austen’s novels as “illness and social manipulation” (see *Jane Austen and the Body*, pp. 6, 19-21, 53-5, 72, 73, 113, 120-1, 122, 140, 169, 197-8).

⁵⁹² *Letters*, p. 124 (8-9 February 1807).

Austen's introduction of objects into social dynamics can also be nonsensical and disturbing.⁵⁹³ Austen and her brother declined the help of a Mrs. Lance, a distant acquaintance, in being introduced into Southampton's social circles. Austen comments: "whether she boasts any offspring besides a grand pianoforte did not appear".⁵⁹⁴ "[O]ffspring" is an example of Austenian wit, which relies on the insertion of (haptic) literality in an otherwise figurative comment: one can imagine Mrs. Lance giving birth to the pianoforte, which is an instance of nonsense, physical comedy, and character satire. As objects assume a personal importance, the boundaries between them and humans break down.⁵⁹⁵ Austen's vitriolic humour can make her use of colliding categories even more pointed by using zeugma, a grammatical juxtapositional figure of speech in which syntax is loosened: "We shall have pease soon—I mean to have them with a couple of Ducks from Wood Barn & Maria Middleton towards the end of next week.—".⁵⁹⁶ Having food and having guests are different semantic uses of the verb which, in this sylleptic twist, create a mental image of the host ingesting the aliment-guests,

⁵⁹³ For an introduction to thing theory, see Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', in B. Brown (ed.), *Things* (Chicago IL, 2004), pp. 1-22, which delves into the significance of material "things", their relationship to ideas, humans, history, and their pervasiveness.

See also W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Romanticism and the Life of Things: Fossils, Totems, and Images', in B. Brown (ed.), *Things* (Chicago IL, 2004), pp. 227-44, on the "physical" aspects of Romanticism and the "life of objects".

⁵⁹⁴ *Letters*, p. 122 (7-8 January 1807).

⁵⁹⁵ For a philosophical investigation of "matter", especially in opposition to human interpretation ("the subject, the image, the word"), see Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham NC, 2010), pp. 1-19.

⁵⁹⁶ *Letters*, p. 199 (31 May 1811).

Zeugma/syllepsis is often associated with Alexander Pope. See Gareth B. Matthews, 'Dualism and Solecism', *The Philosophical Review* 80 (1971), 85-95 [86-7].

in a comedic association that highlights the tactility of cannibalism.⁵⁹⁷

Juxtaposition can also suppress boundaries altogether, by uniting discrete parts in phrasal idioms. In a letter dated 16 September 1813, Austen advocates the use of medicinal food: “Henry is not quite well.—His Stomach is rather deranged. You must keep him in Rhubarb & give him plenty of Port & Water.—”.⁵⁹⁸ The advocated remedy for a “deranged Stomach” is straightforward, but its delivery elicits a humorous visual interpretation. The collocation of “Port & Water” is an echo of the naval culture shared by the Austen family (see above). The idea that Henry should be “kept in Rhubarb”, however, implies that he should be preserved or pickled in it, rather than taking it as physic.⁵⁹⁹

Austen’s personal anxiety regarding her social and economic fate is expressed in her disappointed desire to receive an offer of marriage from Tom Lefroy:

At length the Day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy, & when you receive this it will be over——My tears flow as I write, at the melancholy idea.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁷ Maggie Lane, in *Jane Austen and Food*, explains that appetites were expected to respond to gender normativity, which demanded that women eat little, because of “the incompatibility of fine feeling and a normal intake of food” (‘Greed and Gender’, pp. 77-100 [p. 84]). While some of Austen’s heroines comply with this norm, the author’s depiction of her own desires and behaviours shows a direct *contrepied*.

⁵⁹⁸ *Letters*, p. 232.

⁵⁹⁹ Heydt-Stevenson argues that clothing has “a performative impact that blurs the boundaries between the material and the human”. For a description of hats and their relationship with the body and society, see “Changing her gown”, pp. 52-68. The “Rhubarb” in this context plays a similar role.

⁶⁰⁰ *Letters*, p. 4 (14-15 January 1796).

This romantic episode is treated in Austen’s biographies. See Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London, 1998), pp. 115-22; and David Nokes, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London, 1997), pp. 157-61. It is also the subject of Julian Jarrold’s film *Becoming Jane* (2007).

The verb “flirt” is here part of an unstable colloquial turn of phrase. The expected idiom ‘breathe my last’ is thwarted, compressed into a new, comic, fictitious phrase. As the “melancholy idea” makes Austen weep, the final moments of flirting will kill her. The quasi-phrasal coinage amalgamates disparate expressions to create one completely her own.

Juxtaposition of a distributive type becomes recurrent towards the end of Austen’s correspondence (it will be analysed in more depth in the next section, which focuses on polysemy). In the following sentence, the ambiguous antecedent of the adjective “palateable” produces latent comedy: Louisa’s mother “does not get better, & Dr Parry talks of her beginning the Waters again; this will be keeping them longer in Bath, & of course is not palateable”.⁶⁰¹ The “Waters” are both a reference to therapeutic bathing and drinking, but Austen also connects gustatory taste (unsavoury water) and societal contingencies (distasteful social circles in Bath).⁶⁰² Whether the “Waters” interact with the taste buds or the skin, the haptic is implied on multiple levels in both parallel parts. Austen’s criticism of repeated pregnancies follows a similar pattern:

Anna has not a chance of escape; her husband called here the other day, & said she was pretty well but not equal to so long a walk; she must come in her Donkey Carriage.—Poor Animal, she will be worn out before she is thirty.—I am very sorry for her.—⁶⁰³

⁶⁰¹ *Letters*, p. 271 (5-8 March 1814).

⁶⁰² For a better understanding of Austen’s connection with cities, and Bath in particular, see Jane Stabler, ‘Cities’, in J. Todd (ed.), *Jane Austen in Context* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 204-14.

⁶⁰³ *Letters*, p. 351 (23-25 March 1817).

Juxtaposition, superadded with analogy, creates comedy: Anna must bear her life's exhausting gravi(-di-)ty, which results in her being mistaken for an "Animal". The analogy is strengthened by the initial homophony and visual resemblance of the name "Anna" and the noun "Animal", and the use of the verb "escape". The phrasal past participle "worn out" contains the haptic dimension of the equation: the beast of burden is physically depleted by its routine task, which points to Anna's similar (implied) plight as a wife and a mother, whose bodies are habitually, in Austen's description, tested to their limits by pregnancy, childbirth and mothering.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁴ See below.

Livia Arndal Woods dedicates an article to pregnancy in Austen's novels, but does not address the *Letters*. See 'Generations in, Generations of: Pregnancy in Jane Austen', *Women's Writing* 26 (2019), 132-48.

POLYSEMY

In the *Letters*, Austen recurrently uses polysemy, that is, a contextual ambiguity regarding the correct and relevant meaning of a lexical item, to comedic ends. This device is symptomatic of something more pervasive in her fiction than bantering exchanges with Cassandra, and reveals an ambiguous outlook on important topics. Casual, mundane aspects of life are given grandeur by the ambiguity that surrounds them. As Mary Poovey explains:

the letters ... convey contradictory opinions and, what is perhaps even more confusing, almost always employ a decidedly ambiguous tone... the incompleteness and opacity of Austen's personal record often compound the notorious instability of her novelistic irony, thus leading us further into confusing (if delightful) ambiguity... it is difficult to determine exactly how much of her self-depreciation is genuine, how much is simply encouragement for the young writer, and how much is the mock vanity of a self-confident miniaturist.⁶⁰⁵

“[A]mbiguity” is central to Austen’s style (and subject-matter), and this section will study the place and specificity of touch in the context of irony and ambivalence more closely.

Carriages are equivocal, liminal spaces:

There is now something like an engagement between us & the Phaeton, which to confess my frailty I have a great desire to go out in;—whether it will come to anything must remain with him.—⁶⁰⁶

The introduction of “an engagement” at the beginning of the sentence (“There is”) is ambiguously delayed (“something like”), and creates the expectation that

⁶⁰⁵ Poovey, *Proper Lady*, p. 173.

⁶⁰⁶ *Letters*, pp. 94-5 (26-27 May 1801).

One of the chapters of Paula Byrne’s biography of Austen is dedicated to carriages and transportation, in which she makes clear the danger and sexuality associated with them. See *The Real Jane Austen*, pp. 109-21.

one of Austen's suitors has proposed marriage, which is then comically annulled by "& the Phaeton". Austen's "frailty" refers to a desire to be taken for a ride, but the carriage, after a *rejet*-like delay, becomes the point of focus. Her non-existent feelings lead the reader to infer a more serious courtship than she realistically envisaged.

Hat-making is also described in loaded terms, which explicate the relation between activity, representation (clothing) and marriage: "I bought some Japan Ink ... & next week shall begin my operations on my hat, on which You know my principal hopes of happiness depend.—"⁶⁰⁷ "[O]perations" is both a medical and military term, whose polysemy is meaningful: the hat is simultaneously a diseased entity that needs doctoring to regain its functionality, a battlefield where fighting will occur without certainty of success, and a weapon that will seal Austen's fate. The transition into "happiness" alludes to proposals and marriage: Austen needs to render herself attractive by following the canons of self-presentation in order to secure a place in landed society. These stakes are summarised in one polysemic word.⁶⁰⁸ Looks in a stricter sense inform distancing polysemy, in a pert comment about Austen's niece: "Cassandra I find handsomer than I expected, though at present disguised by such a violent breaking-out that

⁶⁰⁷ *Letters*, p. 17 (27-28 October 1798).

In 'Fashioning the Body', a chapter that focuses on *NA*, Heydt-Stevenson connects clothing and the sexual body. She argues that the realities of masculinity and femininity are especially tied to the adherence to clothing norms. In a quasi-Austenian juxtaposition and pun, she also relates garments ('dressing') to equestrianism ('dressage'). See *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, pp. 103-36.

⁶⁰⁸ Hilary Davidson, *Dress in the Age of Jane Austen: Regency Fashion* (New Haven CT, 2019) refers to the economy of hats in Austen (pp. 225-6).

she does not come down after dinner”.⁶⁰⁹ Young Cassandra’s disfigurement is due to a skin condition, which alters not only her face, but also her ability to appear in society. The effect on the skin is not only bacillary, but self-inflicted, as make-up may have been applied as a temporary measure. The word “disguised” therefore elicits a *double-entendre*. Austen’s ambivalence is evidenced in her use of sarcasm, which could be a formal manifestation of lack of feeling, or conversely an instance of self-preserving ironic tact, stemming from regard for the girl.

Austen’s description of herself towards the end of her life creates the impression that health and illness are crucial but difficult matters, that need to be made light of through humorous polysemy:

I am actually going [to Winchester]—...—And as this is only two days off you will be convinced that I am now really a very genteel, portable sort of an Invalid.—⁶¹⁰

Austen presents elegance (“genteel”) and mood (“portable”, in this context, is synonymous with ‘tolerable’) as signs of recovery and amendment. Both are pragmatic words, used in instant polysemy, whose etymological and synchronic meanings are intended simultaneously. The adjective “portable” reduces Austen to a thing that has lost its liveliness and motility, and must be carried. The nomenclatural connotations associated with “a sort” further this impression.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁹ *Letters*, p. 131 (15-17 June 1808).

⁶¹⁰ *Letters*, p. 356 (22 May 1817).

⁶¹¹ See Jan Fergus, “My sore-throats, you know, are always worse than anybody’s’: Mary Musgrove and Jane Austen’s Art of Whining”, in J. McMaster and B. Stovel (eds.), *Jane Austen’s Business: Her World and Her Profession* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 69-80.

The birth of a child, although related to matters of health, was suspect to Austen, and her references rely on uneasy polysemy. One cryptic mention of a woman having an “Accident” requires elucidation:

I am happy to hear of Mrs Knight’s amendment, whatever might be her complaint. I cannot think so ill of her however inspite of your insinuations as to suspect her of having lain-in.—I do not think she would be betrayed beyond an Accident at the utmost.—⁶¹²

Whether this situation be a miscarriage, the birth of an illegitimate child, or abuse (“whatever”), the focus on the “amendment” and “complaint” is a sign that such situations were common and generally accepted despite their problematic nature. These vague descriptors allow for great detachment on Austen’s part, who is therefore free to concentrate on the social dimension of the affair rather than the human one. Austen’s flippancy regarding childbirth goes further:

at seven o’clock... Visitors... walked in; & our Labour was not a great deal shorter than poor Elizabeth’s, for it was past eleven before we were delivered.
—⁶¹³

The “Labour” metaphor creates a disturbing parallel between the pains and length of childbirth and entertaining guests. It calls on the haptic: the social constraint is akin to imprisonment (as implied by “delivered”). Austen’s own comfort and ease are paramount.⁶¹⁴ Mothers have been dealt with harshly earlier in the letter: “Mrs Tilson’s remembrance gratifies me...—but poor Woman! how

⁶¹² *Letters*, p. 79 (21-22 January 1801).

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 146 (1-2 October 1808).

⁶¹⁴ For an introduction to the social duties of Austen’s time, especially hosting, see Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven CT, 1998), and David Selwyn, *Jane Austen and Leisure* (pp. 1-22).

can she be honestly breeding again?—”.⁶¹⁵ The derogatory term “breeding” carries a condemnation both in its animal connotation, and in the moral judgement passed on the causes of the condition.⁶¹⁶ Austen even sarcastically equates procreation and disease:

M^{rs} F.A. has had a much shorter confinement than I have—with a Baby to produce into the bargain. We were put to bed nearly at the same time, & she has been quite recovered this great while.—⁶¹⁷

The comparison of pregnancy and illness, both qualified by the umbrella term “confinement”, demonstrates Austen’s self-irony. The appearance of a child (“into the bargain”) in the case of pregnancy makes the analogy comical, but Austen’s euphemism glosses over the pains of travail and the physiological consequences of giving birth.⁶¹⁸

The presence of Austen’s younger relatives is dealt with ambivalently in the *Letters*. Austen’s semantically confusing description of her nephew, in a letter dated 13 March 1817, delineates her conceptions:

⁶¹⁵ *Letters*, p. 146.

⁶¹⁶ For a particularly savage example of Austen’s humour, see the story of Mrs. Hall, *Letters*, p. 17 (28 October 1798).

See also Belisa Monteiro’s doctoral dissertation, ‘The Pleasures of Comic Mischief in Jane Austen’s Novels’ (Boston University, 2008), who argues that Austen’s mischievous humour is central.

⁶¹⁷ *Letters*, p. 356 (22 May 1817).

⁶¹⁸ Laura Gowing highlights the importance of touch in the social control of women (by women) in the seventeenth century. While “shar[ing] beds” is common in Austen’s letters as well as in her fiction, “push[ing] and nudg[ing]” are not, and touching “breasts” and “bellies” (*Common Bodies*, p. 6), possible in other social spheres in Austen’s time, were not likely to be included in her narratives. There is no doubt, however, that these were facts of life. They were simply facts that did not need to be voiced, and that, if they were part of the sisterly correspondence, did not survive Cassandra Austen’s selection.

W^m & I are the best of friends. I love him very much.—Everything is so natural about him, his affections, his Manners & his Drollery.—He entertains & interests us extremely.—⁶¹⁹

Her praise of the nineteen-year-old shows that she considers him an adult, but the qualification of their intimacy still retains descriptors usually associated with children, especially the mention of his “natural ... affections”. The etymological meanings of these two terms are oxymoronic. Nature is innate, while “affections” are acquired. The layers of diachronic polysemy reconcile them, and give insight into Austen’s views on fondness, and its haptic displays: “affections”, described with wonder as “natural” in her nephew, draw attention to a lack in herself that is filled from the outside. Feelings and actions that are unnatural to her do not find idiomatic expression in her language, and are mostly absent from her idiolect.⁶²⁰

Austen’s maternal instinct towards her writings has been mentioned above, and the pleasure she associates with them is complex, and in terms usually reserved for living beings. In the same way, writing to the young Anna Austen about her juvenile compositions enables some of Austen’s cleverest turns:

Devereux Forester’s being ruined by his Vanity is extremely good; but I wish you would not let him plunge into a “vortex of Dissipation”. I do not object to the Thing, but I cannot bear the expression; it is such thorough novel slang—and so old, that I dare say Adam met with it in the first novel he opened.
—⁶²¹

⁶¹⁹ *Letters*, p. 348.

⁶²⁰ This point is indirectly corroborated by Myra Stokes’s lexical study of Austen’s writings. While the themes Stokes has selected revolve around the person, there is no reference in her analysis to the body or the senses. See *The Language of Jane Austen*.

⁶²¹ *Letters*, p. 289 (28 September 1814).

The lexis of touch is present in metaphor. The “plunge” implies an immersion that resonates with Austen’s own involvement in her creation. The haptic nature of fiction is further reinforced by the “opening” of a novel by Adam, which puts the physical act of reading at the forefront of the experience. Polysemic juxtaposition, used to great humorous success, becomes a meta-literary device: “novel” and “old” are not antonyms, as “novel slang” is a compound noun rather than an adjective-noun phrase. This figure of speech causes semantic contamination, through verbal contact. The contactile quality of Austen’s linguistic idiosyncrasies creates a crunching or grating similar to that found in dissonant musical chords. Resolution is necessary for harmony to be achieved, but irresolution, though more demanding on the reader, can be beautiful.⁶²²

⁶²² For insights into the conjunctions between language and music, see Robert K. Wallace, *Jane Austen and Mozart: Classical Equilibrium in Fiction and Music* (Athens GA, 1983). The first chapter, which maps out and defines the terms associated with, and similitudes between, the two art forms is particularly illuminating, especially regarding “ambiguity” and “wit” (pp. 27-34).

EUPHEMISM

Euphemism, that is, using veiled or vague terms, understatement and near-coded language, is the device that most profoundly shapes Austen's writings, both in spirit and form.⁶²³ It becomes a blueprint for understanding all aspects of her writing, and particularly of writing touch, which has a particular resonance in her idiosyncratic lexis and style. The birth of children has already been mentioned.⁶²⁴ It is worth revisiting it briefly in the context of euphemism, which is present in a congratulatory poem: "My dearest Frank, I wish you Joy / Of Mary's safety with a Boy, / Whose birth has given little pain, / Compared with that of Mary Jane. —".⁶²⁵ "[S]afety" is a euphemism for giving birth, which focuses on the favourable result rather than the process, and thus glosses over the lengthy and deep pains of childbirth. The word "birth" is used in the poem, but it refers only to the "Boy" and not to the mother. A later occurrence is less straightforward: "Mrs F.A. seldom either looks or appears quite well.—Little Embryo is troublesome I suppose.—".⁶²⁶ The insistence on looks, and the graphic, almost disturbing, personification of the unborn child (as demonstrated by the absence

⁶²³ Sutherland presents the early letters as a ciphered corpus that betrays latent haptic contents; she sees this tendency as inherent in Austen's style and purpose ('Life and Letters', p. 20). Selwyn refers to several instances of coded language, but he associates this with childhood and games (*Jane Austen and Children*, p. 63). This thesis argues that this was also an essential part of the life-long communication between the sisters.

⁶²⁴ See also Selwyn on birth, *Jane Austen and Children*, pp. 15-29.

⁶²⁵ *Letters*, p. 185 (26 July 1809).

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 334 (8-9 September 1816).

of article) doubly negate the physiological and anatomical effects of pregnancy.⁶²⁷

The focus is taken away from the mother, who almost disappears.⁶²⁸ The prominence of the unborn child nullifies her experience. In this example of Austenian euphemism, pain is what is indirected away.

Nutrition is an important aspect of the mechanics of the body (see Chapter II), and eating is associated with pleasure. Austen explains that “Caroline, Anna & I have just been devouring some cold Souse, & it would be difficult to say which enjoyed it most—”.⁶²⁹ The use of the long dash (“—”), not preceded or followed by a full stop, symbolises the continuation of eating into ineffable physical pleasure, which is euphemised. The consumption of the “Souse” does not end, just as the sentence does not (the dash leaves the paragraph suspended). Pleasure is carried into the realm of imagination, fantasy and the taboo.⁶³⁰ Food is comforting, and associated with the pleasures of home: “I am very glad the new Cook begins so well. Good apple pies are a considerable part of our domestic happiness.—”.⁶³¹ “[D]omestic happiness”, an abstract concept, is in this context

⁶²⁷ Mark Smith delineates the regendering of midwifery as a male profession in *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting and Touching in History* (Berkeley CA, 2007), pp. 100-1.

⁶²⁸ This sudden shift is reminiscent of the way in which Nabokov describes Fanny Price’s behaviour in *Mansfield Park*. He argues that the sudden swerve in an unexpected direction which informs many of Fanny’s feelings is comparable to a “knight’s move” in chess. Austen is here doing the same thing with the focus of her descriptions (See *Lectures on Literature*, pp. 57-8).

⁶²⁹ *Letters*, p. 4 (14-15 January 1796).

⁶³⁰ Sutherland, using a long example from *Persuasion*, argues that Austen’s long dashes “contribute to the reader’s sense of the mental processes of the writer” and “give body to the text and contribute a visual and aural component to its meaning” (*Textual Lives*, pp. 159-60).

⁶³¹ *Letters*, p. 303 (17-18 October 1815).

euphemistic, because it describes in covert terms a bodily phenomenon:

pleasurable eating is more closely connected to sensory satisfaction than peace and harmony in the household.

Euphemistic representations of the body in conjunction are recurrent in the *Letters*; they link the material (signified) and the spiritual (signifier): “at 6, Miss Clewes, Fanny & I draved away. We had a beautiful night for our frisks.—”.⁶³² In this rare description of sportive exercise, in which horseback riding is covertly referred to, there is no mention of pleasure *in se*. The adjective “beautiful” is the only indication, which refers to the weather and the aesthetically pleasing nature of the night. The noun “frisks” is used for the first time in the *Letters*. While the euphemistic and laconic description is typical of the novel-writing Austen, the barbarism “draved” is unexpected.⁶³³ ‘Drave’ remained a common preterite form of the verb quite late on in the north of England, but the redoubled past tense form is an *acte manqué*. What could not be expressed overtly—the pleasure of riding—overflows into the conjugation of the verb, because it cannot be successfully contained lexically.⁶³⁴

Austen’s skill as a satirist also evinces her diffidence of direct language on unsavoury topics:

⁶³² *Letters*, p. 262 (6-7 November 1813).

The OED gives “horsemanship” or “dancing” as the original activities associated with “frisks”, but a carriage ride is also possible.

⁶³³ Ticken-Boon van Ostade argues that this occurrence is a regionalism (2014, p. 186).

⁶³⁴ See Heydt-Stevenson on horses (*Unbecoming Conjunctions*, pp. 117-24).

the appearance of the [Draws] room, so totally un-school-like, amused me very much. It was full of all the modern Elegancies—& if it had not been for some naked Cupids over the Mantlepeice, which must be a fine study for Girls, one should never have Smelt Instruction.⁶³⁵

This sarcastic passage is *risqué*. Austen is adding to her critique of young women's education the impropriety of sexual discovery (see Chapter I). The most striking aspect of this blunt description is the capitalisation of the verb "Smelt", which is rare in the *Letters* (it is common with nouns and occasional with adjectives).⁶³⁶

Through this visual sign, Austen subtly draws attention not to the *risqué* nature of the object, but to its active sensual nature. She is substituting smell for sight and touch in synaesthetic discovery.

Austen's description of the hapticity of her relationship with her brother is an unusual display of familial love and intimacy: she and Edward "paid no other visits—only walked about snugly together & shopp'd.—".⁶³⁷ This account of a siblings' day out uses the adverb "snugly", which in this instance cannot imply the vague comfort that Austen usually associates with it. In the context of "walking about", it refers to a physical proximity and emotional *complicité* that exclude the outside world and its inhabitants. This type of description is what one would expect to find in the novels when siblings are engaged in activity together, but it is

⁶³⁵ *Letters*, p. 220 (20 May 1813).

⁶³⁶ On capitalisation in Austen, see Victorina González-Díaz, 'Round brackets'.

⁶³⁷ *Letters*, p. 258 (3 November 1813).

The "snug walk" motif is present in *Persuasion* (vol. II, chap. 6, p. 184), and though the context is different, Admiral Croft not being Anne Elliot's relative, the emotional connivance and secrecy implied by the tactile proximity is identical. This type of locative snugness is a way of shutting out the outside world.

hardly ever present. The desire to cultivate vagueness is found in the *Letters* too, however, which implies that Austen is using a euphemistic language to express touch as a narrative void. Indeed, a letter to Cassandra dated 8-9 September 1816 exemplifies Austen's awareness of her own reluctance to display and express emotion and proximity: "I have borne the arrival of your Letter today extremely well; anybody might have thought it was giving me pleasure.—".⁶³⁸ In her previous letter, Austen explains that she anticipates hearing from Cassandra again the following Tuesday. The expected letter contains a description of what Cassandra did and saw in Cheltenham, and does not imply anything out of the ordinary. The antiphrastic (self-abasing) overtones of this opening sentence, therefore, are unwarranted, unless stemming from true feeling. Austen's display of emotion makes her way of broaching delicate topics, in this case pleasure, explicit.⁶³⁹ Touch is similarly often evoked in elliptic and euphemistic terms. Austen's expression of her unfulfilled desire and difficulty as recipient hinges on the polysemic connotations of the word "borne", and is metaphorically haptic. Waiting is seen as strain, from which Austen is released upon receiving her sister's missive. Austen's modesty is here presented as an emotional shield against the

⁶³⁸ *Letters*, p. 333.

For a description of the sisters' affection for each other, see Tomalin (*A Life*, p. 197).

⁶³⁹ For a summary of the historical context that both informed and emanated from Austen's writings, see Roger Sales, *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* (London, 1996). Sales explains that the privacy inherent in letter writing almost "forced" their writers to be "abusive" and hyperbolic, as correspondence did not require, and created an outlet from, socially "acceptable masks" (pp. 32-3).

outside world, and only Cassandra (and perhaps the attentive reader) can access what it protects.

Finally, courtship is an important *locum* of euphemism. While flirting is a recurrent theme in the early letters, the later ones contain noticeably fewer references, and instead focus on atypical forms of desire and attraction. Their language, however, is never neutral. Balls remain the starting point of most interaction with strange males: “The Manydown Ball was a smaller thing than I expected, but it seems to have made Anna very happy. At her age it would not have done for me.—”.⁶⁴⁰ Austen’s use of diacritics in this statement implies more than she is saying. A purely social understanding is possible (‘the ball was too poorly attended for my enjoyment’), but it is likely that Austen is evoking more sensuous disappointment: were she younger, the men would not be numerous enough for her to have her choice of dancing and flirting partners. Similarly deceptive is her dance-card strategy:

I propose being asked to dance by our acquaintance Mr Smith, now Captⁿ Smith, who has lately re-appeared in Southampton—but I shall decline it.
—⁶⁴¹

This declaration to Cassandra is too puzzling to be taken uncritically. It must be an instance of coded communication between the sisters, in which “danc[ing]” is

⁶⁴⁰ *Letters*, p. 172 (10-11 January 1809).

For a discussion of the surviving manuscripts of Austen’s writings, see Brian C. Southam, *Jane Austen’s Literary Manuscripts: A Study of the Novelist’s Development through the Surviving Papers* (Oxford, 1964). Although the *Letters* are not included in Southam’s study, Le Faye’s and Sutherland’s editorial policies maintain Austen’s emphases and original punctuation within the limits of contemporary rules.

⁶⁴¹ *Letters*, p. 175 (17-18 January 1809).

a cipher. Austen desires a pleasant evening of flirtation with her acquaintance, but knowing that it will not go further, dancing is ultimately not worth the effort. When Austen mentions direct physical attraction, it is veiled by wit and drowned in irrelevant information:

You will not expect to hear that I was asked to dance—but I was—by the Gentleman whom we met that Sunday with Captⁿ D’auvergne. We have always kept up a Bowing acquaintance since, & being pleased with his black eyes, I spoke to him at the Ball, which brought on me this civility; but I do not know his name,—& he seems so little at home in the English Language that I believe his black eyes may be the best of him.—⁶⁴²

Austen’s account of this encounter is different in tenor from those of her early years. While there is physical interest (“black eyes”), social and conversational skills are looked for and found wanting. Austen’s partner’s inability to converse with her (to the point that she does not know his name) makes him unsuitable, but he is not mocked as other projected suitors are (like Mr. Papillon in this same letter); rather, he comes out unscathed, like a wasted but real opportunity. His asking Austen to dance can only remain “civility”.⁶⁴³

In 1813, Jane Austen declares her “love” for male writers, which, through its impossibility, evidences her desire to avoid male haptic attention, manufacturing it in the realm of fantasy:

I am reading a Society-Octavo, an Essay on the Military Police & Institutions of the British Empire, by Capt. Pasley of the Engineers, a book which I protested against at first, but which upon trial I find delightfully written &

⁶⁴² *Letters*, pp. 163-4 (9 December 1808).

⁶⁴³ For an analysis of ellipsis, see Elizabeth Newark, ‘Words Not Spoken’, pp. 207-24. Newark focuses on missing speech (offstage, reported, ancient), and its impact on the reader. This type of euphemism, or elision, works in a similar fashion to that of touch. Newark also argues that the use of christian names, which is always a sign of overfamiliarity in courtship, comes as a shock and breaks that elision, by forcing female characters to face the advances of their suitors.

highly entertaining. I am as much in love with the Author as I ever was with Clarkson or Buchanan, or even the two Mr Smiths of the city. The first soldier I ever sighed for; but he does write with extraordinary force & spirit.⁶⁴⁴

Austen mocks her own desires, using the language of affection in a comedic way, by referring to idealised authors rather than real male suitors. The implications of her sighing, however, if not the direct physiological ones inherent in actual infatuation, are nevertheless worth noting: she remarks on her interest in a military man, which places her in a similar position to the silly young women she derides, and their obsession with redcoats.⁶⁴⁵ The interest is soon revisited:

I detest a Quarto.—Capt. Pasley’s Book is too good for th[e] society [of Ladies who read those enormous great stupid thick Quarto Volumes]. They will not understand a Man who condenses his Thoughts into an Octavo.⁶⁴⁶

The handling of books is metaphorical of Austen’s admiration for the opposite sex. By equating the man with the size of the books he publishes, Austen creates a picture of refinement and gentility that is absent with “Quarto” writers.⁶⁴⁷ She

⁶⁴⁴ *Letters*, p. 207 (24 January 1813).

⁶⁴⁵ *P&P* contains several such references (pp. 31, 33, 100, 297), which are highlighted visually in Wright’s film adaptation. See *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005), 18:30-19:15 and 28:25-29:05.

⁶⁴⁶ *Letters*, p. 215 (9 February 1813).

⁶⁴⁷ Austen, Mary Favret explains, “tells us that Fanny [Price] reads more into the form and the handwriting of a note than we, her readers, ever could” (*Romantic Correspondences*, p. 148). She underlines the fallacy of the letter as artefact in a novel: it has no reality, and therefore cannot truly be represented in words. This point indirectly highlights the importance of manuscript texts (see Sutherland’s argument in *Textual Lives*) and their interpretation, which stands for both personal letters, fiction, and personal (characters’) letters in fiction.

also makes her own desires more explicit by giving her love interests a corporeal form that she can touch and feel physically close to.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁸ A broad definition of “sex” can be found in Jan S. Fergus, ‘Sex and Social Life in Jane Austen’s Novels’, in D.M. Monaghan (ed.), *Jane Austen in a Social Context* (London, 1981), pp. 66-85. She explains that Austen “is more interested in dramatising sex in everyday social life—in the drawing room rather than the bedroom” (p. 66). If “good looks and charm inevitably create favourable responses and biased judgement” (p. 71), a “Quarto” writer is a handsome man.

CONCLUSION

Through an analysis of the essential stylistic elements found in Jane Austen's *Letters*, this chapter has clarified the connections between social intercourse and the haptic. Sensuous interactions are central in making sense not only of Austen's world and her idiosyncrasies, but also of her understanding. The pleasurable, sexual and taboo dimensions of intimate touch are an integral part of the correspondence, and evidence a discrepancy between Austen's private and public texts (the latter contains fewer references to touch). Julia Epstein describes letter-writing as enabling women to use "a "natural" voice, a voice unconstrained by expectation or apology or, often, conventional femininity".⁶⁴⁹ Austen's voice is somewhat but not radically different in her letters and in her fiction. Her novels may display a language that is more polished, but it is no less natural. Her style is not compromised by publication but refined into essentials.

The careful study of writing, juxtaposition, polysemy and euphemism, the four aspects that shape Austen's composition on the deepest level, has made certain patterns emerge. Touch is a constant object of interest in the *Letters*, both in the rich examples afforded by everyday life and vivid imagination, and in the writerly consciousness that Austen's stylistic choices evidence. Touch in Austen has its own language, the language of correlation and contamination, a language in which words, ideas and images constantly come in contact with each other, and

⁶⁴⁹ Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, p. 48.

which the reader has to navigate carefully to follow the author's often comical semiotic processes. In a tautological way, Austen writes touch as euphemism, and euphemism as touch. Stylistic contactility echoes her subject matter, and touch can be found in, and extrapolated from, the fabric of Austen's language.

CHAPTER IV — *LATER MANUSCRIPTS*

INTRODUCTION

The three pieces commonly called Austen's "later manuscripts" are all novels that remained unpublished during her lifetime. 'Lady Susan' is a finished, early piece, whose autograph fair-copy has survived, but despite its differences with the other unfinished works, it is editorially grouped with 'The Watsons' and 'Sanditon'.⁶⁵⁰

The former is very similar in theme and form to the six novels, and contains references to touch that suggest what their earlier, less polished, drafts might have contained ('First Impressions', for example).⁶⁵¹ Austen died while 'Sanditon' was still at an early stage of development.⁶⁵² It is stylistically different from Austen's complete novels, in that its playfulness resembles that of the early works, rather

⁶⁵⁰ Jay Arnold Levine explains that LS's in-between nature has "consigned [it] to a solitary limbo between early parodies and the mature novels". He sees Lady Susan as a parody of the "merry widow" trope. See 'Lady Susan: Jane Austen's Character of the Merry Widow', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 1 (1961), 23-34 [23].

Christine Alexander and David Owen comment on the few corrections present in the manuscript, and explain that the recourse to the epistolary form was not a regression, but a way of exploring its potential in a mature work. See 'Lady Susan: A Re-evaluation of Jane Austen's Epistolary Novel', *Persuasions* 27 (2005), 54-68.

⁶⁵¹ Joseph Wiesenfarth argues that "Almost everything that we have in *The Watsons* as a fragment ... makes its appearance in Jane Austen's canon in some finished fashion", in 'The Watsons as Pretext', *Persuasions* 8 (1986), 101-11 [109]. He sees elements of W rewritten into *S&S*, *P&P*, *E* and *P*, and his comment that W is central to "the economy of Jane Austen's art" (p. 108) shows that it should be classed with the mature fiction, and that Austen's *corpus* of novels presents a unity of style and content. He further comments on Austen's "economy", which he describes as her "refusal to repeat herself and her refusal to abandon what could still be used" (pp. 110-11).

⁶⁵² Critics speculate but do not agree on the nature and degree of completion of 'Sanditon'. See John Wiltshire, 'Sickness and Silliness in *Sanditon*', *Persuasions* 19 (1997), 93-102; and Anne Toner, 'Jane Austen Jotting: The Manuscript of *Sanditon* and the Question of Style', *Persuasions On-Line* 38 (2018), [n.p.].

than what critics see as her mature style.⁶⁵³ The two cancelled chapters of *Persuasion*, because they are the only rejected manuscript segments of Austen's published novels, are in a sense a *corpus* of their own.⁶⁵⁴ The texts of these manuscripts (excluding *Persuasion*) will therefore be analysed for their idiosyncratic treatments of touch, manifest in social ties (both in their positive and negative manifestations), references to the body, and style (particularly the workings of wit and narrative).⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵³ See Katie Halsey, "‘The Certain Corrective’: *Sanditon*, Students and Strategies of Defamiliarisation', *Persuasions On-Line* 38 (2018), [n.p.].

⁶⁵⁴ Jocelyn Harris' introduction to the two manuscript chapters highlights their uniqueness (*A Revolution Almost beyond Expression*, pp. 36-9).

⁶⁵⁵ Ingrid Ticken-Boon van Ostade explains that W and 'Sanditon', like *Emma*, display Austen's "linguistic footprint" (2014, pp. 160-6). Her analysis builds on that of Janine Barchas, 'Very Austen: Accounting for the Language of *Emma*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 62 (2007), 303-38.

'LADY SUSAN'

Because it revolves around an epistolary heroine (who is also the 'villain' of the piece) and her journeys round a wide circle of acquaintances, 'Lady Susan' contains a large number of references to social ties, with various degrees of hapticity.⁶⁵⁶ Partings, for example, are an acceptable occasion for touch: "Good bye, he added shaking my hand with earnestness—I do not know when you will see me again".⁶⁵⁷ The narratorial inclusion of the haptic makes Reginald's farewell to his sister ominous. When Mrs. Vernon refers to the heroine's "particular attachment to Mrs. Manwaring", she does not yet suspect that Lady Susan is involved with the lady's husband, but the visual proximity of 'Mr.' and "Mrs." bridges the gap in the reader's mind, to comical effect. The "attachment" is therefore a euphemised sexual liaison, subsumed in a term suggestive of emotional and physical involvement.⁶⁵⁸ Affectionate touch, however, can be expressed directly, in exhortation: "Kiss the dear Children for me.—Your affect: Mother".⁶⁵⁹ Lady De Courcy is displaying natural signs of love to her grandchildren, and the imperative "Kiss" is similar to those occasionally found in

⁶⁵⁶ On the epistolary novel's "potential for ironic humour", see Deborah Kaplan, 'Female Friendship and Epistolary Form: *Lady Susan* and the Development of Jane Austen's Fiction', *Criticism* 29 (1987), 163-78 [163].

⁶⁵⁷ *LM*, p. 46.

⁶⁵⁸ "Detach" (*LM*, p. 38) conveys similarly haptic overtones, reinforcing the sentimental identification of touch in metaphor and reality.

⁶⁵⁹ *LM*, p. 24.

Austen's letters.⁶⁶⁰ However, few interactions are straightforward where Lady Susan is concerned. Signs of affection, particularly, are a cause for doubt, if not concern:

You must not question me however my dear Sister, too minutely on this point —continued she, taking me affectionately by the hand.—I honestly own that there is something to conceal.—⁶⁶¹

The adverbs give away the truth, in a manoeuvre orchestrated by Austen. Lady Susan can think on her feet, but “minut[e]” examination will require recourse to details, in which she might entangle herself. The act of touch appears genuine, but the “affection” that prompts it is wholly feigned. The concealment of her plans is admitted, but it contains no “honest” design. The presence of unusual haptic intercourse alerts the reader to the necessity of caution and close reading to tease out the truth, which is hidden in the style of writing. “[H]onestly conceal[ing]” is a fitting conceit, because it questions the legibility of words, and also of tactile communication, neither of which can be trusted. Lady Susan effects complete deception, both instinctual and intellectual, upon her interlocutors. In fact, most of her word choices, to a careful reader (which Lady Susan's correspondents are not), reveal her nature and her intentions. “It would indeed give me most painful sensations to know that it were not in your power to receive me.—”⁶⁶² Lady Susan's forceful nature comes out here after her equivocations, and it relies on a physicality (“painful sensations”) that validates

⁶⁶⁰ See *Letters*, pp. 15, 18, 155, 238, 250.

⁶⁶¹ *LM*, p. 53.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

the visual image of her relationship with her friends, and grounds her sexual nature in the body from the very start.⁶⁶³

I have admitted no one's attentions but Manwaring's, I have avoided all general flirtation whatever, I have distinguished no Creature besides of all the Numbers resorting hither, except Sir James Martin, on whom I bestowed a little notice in order to detach him from Miss Manwaring.⁶⁶⁴

A virtuous widow would terminate the first sentence after “no one's attentions”, but the subsequent qualifications (“but” and “except”) show increasingly improper behaviour, and the violation of Lady Susan's mourning.⁶⁶⁵ The resulting snowball effect creates a direct parallel between the loosening, extending sentence and flouted morality. By surreptitiously including exceptions (“but”) and special cases (“except”), Lady Susan undermines her initial claim of integrity.

Morals are indeed the matter at hand:

she does not confine herself to that sort of honest flirtation which satisfies most people, but aspires to the more delicious gratification of making a whole family miserable.—⁶⁶⁶

The qualifier in “honest flirtation” is an accurate description of social goings-on of the time, in which a certain level of flirtation was tolerated. In “delicious gratification”, however, the ironically charged adjective is too sensuous and verges

⁶⁶³ Considering LS's “facetious experimentation with sexual subjects”, Kathryn Sutherland explains that it may be an “earlier drafted work”. See *JAFM*, vol. III, pp. 297-8. Roger Gard, contrarily, argues that “what her contemporaries did include, silently disappears. A lot of the vivid clatter of novels – violent dramatic action, rapes, escapes, midnight episodes, duels, low life comedy – is nowhere”. He thus separates LS from the early writings completely, because his list of exclusively haptic elements posits LS as a mature and singular work. See ‘*Lady Susan* and the Single Effect’, *Essays in Criticism* 39 (1989), 305-25 [308].

⁶⁶⁴ *LM*, p. 4.

⁶⁶⁵ James Mulvihill argues that LS is an ““anti-conduct book””. See ‘*Lady Susan*: Jane Austen's Machiavellian Moment’, *Studies in Romanticism* 50 (2011), 619-37 [621].

⁶⁶⁶ *LM*, p. 8.

on self-indulgence. Indeed, the disastrous consequences of Lady Susan's intrigues ("family miserable") are correlated with her delight, rather than amorous acts of courtship *in se*, which indicates Lady Susan's psychological sadism. Her "bewitching powers", as well as the delineation that follows ("captivating deceit") perfectly convey the animal magnetism Lady Susan possesses, which even extends to men who have never met her.⁶⁶⁷ Contrary to Lady De Courcy, whose motives are honourable, Lady Susan's relationship with children does not stem from benevolent instincts:

I mean to win my Sister in law's heart through her Children; I know all their names already, & am going to attach myself with the greatest sensibility to one in particular, a young Frederic, whom I take on my lap & sigh over for his dear uncle's sake.⁶⁶⁸

Winning her host's "heart" introduces the concept of homo-erotic seduction, and the plan to "attach" herself to her nephew, whom she will often keep "on her lap" creates a near-sexual dynamic, fuelled by the boy's resemblance to his uncle, her late husband. While Austen's autobiographical and fictional references to children are often haptic, they are usually sexless, and this occurrence consequently stands out.

Lady Susan's enjoyment is rooted in her power over inferiors:

when I have inspired him with greater respect for me than his sister's kind offices have implanted, he may be an agreeable Flirt.—There is exquisite

⁶⁶⁷ *LM*, pp. 8-9.

Hilary Havens sees in Lady Susan a blueprint of *MP*'s Mary Crawford (*Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, pp. 107-10).

⁶⁶⁸ *LM*, p. 10.

pleasure in subduing an insolent spirit, in making a person pre-determined to dislike, acknowledge one's superiority.—⁶⁶⁹

The use of “Flirt” in this acceptance is interesting, as it furthers Lady Susan's dominance over Reginald, by categorising him as a passive object. The “implant[ation]” of respect, a haptic process, similarly diminishes his agency.⁶⁷⁰ There is even a genesic quality to her process (“inspiring”, “making”): she ‘moulds’ the man in a parody of Creation, and while her influence and control are certain, the suitability of her chosen victim is not (“he may be”). The gender dynamics of seduction subvert those of patriarchal power, and Lady Susan's defiance and spirit are made all the more manifest (“inspired”, “subduing”, “insolent”, “superiority” and “fascination”).⁶⁷¹ The mention of “exquisite pleasure”, once again, characterises the heroine as a *jouisseuse*.

It has been delightful to me to watch his advances towards intimacy, especially to observe his altered manner in consequence of my repressing by the calm dignity of my deportment, his insolent approach to direct familiarity.—... He is less polished, less insinuating than Manwaring, & is comparatively deficient in the power of saying those delightful things which put one in good humour with oneself & all the world.⁶⁷²

Lady Susan's account implies that she is withholding the physical, haptic contact that Reginald is claiming as part of their courtship (“repressing”). The use of the adjective “insinuating” contains a mild *double-entendre* that underlines the fact that Reginald (unlike her other lover) is not as yet able to provide her with pleasures of

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁷⁰ Lady Susan sees “Flexibility of Mind” as “Weakness”, as the substitution in Austen's corrections evidences. See *JAFM*, vol. III, p. 549.

⁶⁷¹ *LM*, p. 15.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

various kinds (social and physical). Her philosophy of courtship is clear:

Manwaring

has been teizing me to allow of his coming into this country, & lodging somewhere near me *incog*—but I forbid every thing of the kind.—Those women are inexcusable who forget what is due to themselves & the opinion of the World.—⁶⁷³

Lady Susan understands that the only sex-related crime is being caught, and she is above being caught. More interesting, however, is the indirect delineation of her power. Her physical and verbal hold over men indicates an irresistibility, a sort of gravitational pull that draws men near (“somewhere”), a witching charm that manifests through invisible haptic attraction and control. The end of the story will disprove her confidence, as her plans fail:

Frederica runs much in my thoughts, & when Reginald has recovered his usual good spirits, (as I trust he soon will) we will try to rob him of his heart once more, and I am full of hopes of seeing their hands joined at no great distance.⁶⁷⁴

“[S]pirits”, “heart” and “hands”, on the traditional continuum of sensibility, correlate feelings and marriage. The heroine’s sadistic tendencies, however, shine through in the adverbs (“once more”) and choice of pronoun (“we”), and they also allow Austen to display her wit. The last member of the sentence creates a paradox, which relies on the use of “distance” to refer to time, which spatially would render the “joining” of “hands” impossible.

In ‘Lady Susan’, direct references to the body are few and far between (unlike in ‘Sanditon’), but they still offer useful insights into the haptic. “I am so

⁶⁷³ *LM*, pp. 30-1.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

much agitated by Delight that I can scarcely hold a pen”.⁶⁷⁵ Mrs. Vernon’s expression of pleasure is a very intense “agitation”, which nearly prevents her from writing. It is a reversal of the trope often voiced in the *Letters*, that writing is made difficult by illness and fatigue.⁶⁷⁶ While the cause of Mrs. Vernon’s joy is simply good news, the bodily, haptic nature of her reaction is clear. The influence of Lady Susan’s body on Mrs. Vernon, however, by the latter’s own admission, indicates more dangerous qualities: “I cannot help feeling that she possesses an uncommon union of Symmetry, Brilliancy and Grace.—”.⁶⁷⁷ Mrs. Vernon’s reaction to the heroine’s beauty and manners shows that their appeal is universal, and even imply mild homoerotic desire. At the other end of the spectrum, the heroine’s maleficent designs make the ailing body an opportunity to be seized:

It is such an abominable trick, to be ill here, instead of at Bath, that I can scarcely command myself at all.—At Bath, his old Aunts would have nursed him, but here it all falls upon me—and he bears pain with such patience that I have not the common excuse for losing my temper.⁶⁷⁸

Nursing, a positive haptic interaction in the *Letters*, is given a parodic treatment here, stemming from the hateful characters of Lady Susan and Mrs. Johnson.⁶⁷⁹ The systematic association of convalescence with Bath makes being ill in London risible, and the husband’s noble quality of resilience comedically prevents any

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶⁷⁶ See *Letters*, e.g. pp. 34-6, and Chapter II. *Persuasion* is the exception, as usual. See the White Hart episode, in which Wentworth’s pen falls down because of his agitation (vol. II, chap. 11, p. 254).

⁶⁷⁷ *LM*, p. 11.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶⁷⁹ See *Letters*, pp. 3, 19, 22, 42, 97, 100, 146, 334-5, 344, 355-6.

outlet for Lady Susan's frustration. Manwaring's matrimonial designs also rely on exploiting feeling and mood:

This Event, if his wife live with you, it may be in your power to hasten. The violence of her feelings, which must wear her out, may be easily kept in irritation.—I rely on your friendship for this.—⁶⁸⁰

Lady Susan is plotting (indirectly) to kill her rival, her lover's wife. The means is sensibility, an overindulgence of strong feelings that she hopes may "hasten" death.⁶⁸¹

Under the cover of Lady Susan's pen, Austen's wit creates her usual collusion with the reader.

Her feelings are tolerably lively, & she is so charmingly artless in their display, as to afford the most reasonable hope of her being ridiculed & despised by every man who sees her.—
Artlessness will never do in Love matters, & that girl is born a simpleton who has it either by nature or affectation.—⁶⁸²

This pronouncement shows that Lady Susan's cleverness does not extend to psychology or wisdom, and contains two paradoxes. If a girl is "artless", she cannot have become so through "affectation". If she is affected, she cannot be a simpleton, as dissembling requires ingeniousness. Above all, the idea that innocence is unattractive is widely disproved in Austen's fiction, and in most fiction concerned with courtship. Lady Susan's own feelings are problematic:

"This is insufferable!—My dearest friend, I was never so enraged before, & must

⁶⁸⁰ *LM*, p. 72.

⁶⁸¹ Patricia Meyer Spacks describes Lady Susan's abhorrence of "sensibility": "Real feeling must be denied, suppressed, disguised". See 'Female Resources: Epistles, Plot, and Power', *Persuasions* 9 (1987), 88-98.

⁶⁸² *LM*, p. 36.

relieve myself by writing to you, who I know will enter into all my feelings.—”⁶⁸³

“Insufferable” and “enraged” express (disproportionately) heightened feelings, but the verbs that follow them draw on a haptic vocabulary. “[R]elieve” conjures the image of humours and pressure literally let out, as in bleeding. “[E]nter” points to the interior space of feelings, which can be penetrated and shared in intimacy. The Vernons are similarly used by Austen: “[“]Do you think that your Uncle & I should not have espoused your cause as warmly as my Brother?”—”⁶⁸⁴

The polysemy of the word “espouse” creates a comedic *double-entendre*, as it represents both Mrs. Vernon’s commitment to thwarting Lady Susan (she hopes that marrying another woman will save her brother from her clutches), and the predicament in which Frederica finds herself with Sir James, her supposed suitor.

Lady Susan’s vitriolic sentences echo the tone of Austen’s most acerbic letters.⁶⁸⁵

Mr. Johnson leaves London next Tuesday. He is going for his health to Bath, where if the waters are favourable to his constitution & my wishes, he will be laid up with the Gout many weeks.—⁶⁸⁶

Austen is using two stylistic tricks at once here. A zeugmatic construction correlates “his constitution & my wishes”, which have no common ground but antithetical pain and relief. A paradox also presents medical treatment as the development of an ailment. It must be understood that Mrs. Johnson’s husband

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶⁸⁴ *LM*, p. 49.

⁶⁸⁵ *E.g. Letters*, p. 17 (27-28 October 1798).

⁶⁸⁶ *LM*, p. 59.

does not as yet suffer from the gout, but will contract it in Bath. While plain lies, immediately evident to the reader (but not to the other characters), are the least ‘artistic’ part of Lady Susan’s arsenal, other pronouncements are masterpieces of stylistic deception: “Ought he not to have felt assured that I must have unanswerable Motives for all that I had done!—”.⁶⁸⁷ The modality of this sentence (“ought”, “felt”, “assured”, “must”), its double negation, and the double-facedness of its speaker show Lady Susan’s power lies in her command of language and prevarication. Behind both, we see Austen’s mastery as a sentence and dialogue stylist.⁶⁸⁸ The adjective “unanswerable” displays the revolutionary polysemy found in Austen’s language. It refers both to the peremptoriness of the manipulator, and to the psychological compulsion that dictates her actions.⁶⁸⁹ Polysemy creates a discrepancy between the word’s meaning to its speaker and its reader.⁶⁹⁰ The interrogative sentence ends with an exclamation mark, which adds a level of “unanswerab[ility]” to the whole. A final zeugma helps the reader understand the heroine’s ultimate situation: “She had nothing against her, but her

⁶⁸⁷ *LM*, p. 44.

Every single one of the “professions” listed by Lady Susan is false. See *LM*, p. 40.

⁶⁸⁸ Mulvihill comments on the fact that Lady Susan’s identity is grounded in her mastery of language, and at the same time relates it to Austen’s “utter investment in her own rhetorical manipulations” (*Lady Susan*, p. 630).

⁶⁸⁹ The *OED* attests a 1884 occurrence of “unanswerable” to mean ‘irresponsible’, and both the use of “Motives” and the mention of poison (*LM*, p. 42) add a criminal dimension to the affair.

⁶⁹⁰ Betsy Winakur Tontiplaphol argues that the heroine’s “obsession with manipulating” language makes her a “legislator”, and allows her to change the “perceptions of the less enlightened”. See ‘Justice in Epistolary Matters: Revised Rights and Deconstructed Duties in Austen’s *Lady Susan*’, *Persuasions On-Line* 27 (2006), [n.p.].

Husband & her Conscience”.⁶⁹¹ The coordination of these two unrelated factors rationally proves Lady Susan’s unhappiness, despite the narrator’s professions of uncertainty.⁶⁹² Had she been unaffected by either men or guilt, however, she might in fact have lived happily. But Lady Susan has also been lying to herself.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ *LM*, p. 77.

⁶⁹² Levine argues that the “juxtaposition” of “Lady Susan’s letters with those of her sister-in-law” is an “unsubtle device” (*Merry Widow*, p. 30). The comedy of the piece, however, lies in the masterful treatment of contradictory information, and the contrasted expressions of character and motive.

⁶⁹³ This is a sign of the maturity of the novella, according to Levine (*ibid.*, p. 32).

'THE WATSONS'

In 'The Watsons', poverty, and the ensuing lack of happy marital prospects, heavily influence references to the haptic, and condition all forms of social interaction.⁶⁹⁴ Sutherland sees

a particular energy at work in the fragment by which spaces, objects, physical things are given precision in order to confine the ideas they house, to check thought with material limits.⁶⁹⁵

She argues that the insertion of "limits" (and though she does not specifically mention touch, it is inherent in the physicality she describes) has an effect on both ideas and language, and creates a "meanness" in Austen's writing.

Positive haptic instances, such as balls, are few and short-lived, mere distractions from the harsh realities of life. "Emma was shewn to a very comfortable apartment, and ... the happy occupation, the first bliss of a ball began.—"⁶⁹⁶ Hyperbolic pleasure resides in the haptic process of putting on fine clothes and dressing one's hair, which act as a prelude to dancing and love-making.

Emma did not think, or reflect;—she felt and acted—. "I shall be very happy to dance with you Sir, if you like it," said she, holding out her hand with the most unaffected good humour.—⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁴ This selfsame poverty, some critics argue, is autobiographical, and prevented Austen from finishing the novel. See 'Introduction', in *LM*, p. lxxii.

⁶⁹⁵ Kathryn Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, p. 137.

⁶⁹⁶ *LM*, p. 89.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Emma is offering to dance with the young child in the Osborne company, who has been slighted by Miss Osborne. This gesture, which anticipates touch, is “unaffected” and generous, and posits Emma as a character of sensibility.⁶⁹⁸ The pattern of farewells at the end of the evening is therefore predictable:

Emma & Mrs. Blake parted as old acquaintance, & Charles shook her by the hand & wished her “good bye” at least a dozen times. From Miss Osborne & Miss Carr she received something ~~of~~ like a jerking curtsey as they passed her; even Ly. Osborne gave her a look of complacency – & his Lordship actually came back after the others were out of the room, to “beg her pardon”, & look ~~in~~ in the window seat behind her for the gloves which were visibly compressed ~~at the same moment~~ in his hand.—⁶⁹⁹

As we have seen in ‘Lady Susan’, partings often involve a measure of touch.

“[O]ld acquaintance” keeps it silent but obvious, and “shaking” hands probably happened, distributively, “at least a dozen times” (the ambiguous recurrence may only refer only to the “good bye[s]”). Lord Osborne, in looking for his gloves, is “actually” relishing a final look at the young woman who caught his eye, wishing to have her “compressed in his hand” or enfolded in his arms (the addition of “behind her” makes his physical presence more forceful). These displaced haptic references are markers of ineffable desired intimacy. Lord Osborne’s later remarks on mud are in the same vein:

[“]Do not you like Half-Boots? “Yes – but unless they are so stout as to ~~be~~ injure their beauty, they ~~have not advantage in the deep dirt of~~ are not fit for

⁶⁹⁸ Juliet McMaster presents the fact that Emma “surprises” her circle and does things “spontaneously” as a break in routine and monotony. It is interesting that such breaks concern instances of touch (“dance”, “flirt”, “ride”). Austen’s parsimonious recourse to the haptic is a perturbation of her usual narrative world. See “‘God Gave Us Our Relations’: The Watson Family”, *Persuasions* 8 (1986), 60-72 [66].

⁶⁹⁹ *JAFM*, vol. IV, pp. 90-1. The quotations from Sutherland’s edition used in this thesis are poor representations of the actual autography of the manuscripts, and of Sutherland’s editorial work. The originals should be consulted for clarity.

Country walking. —” “Ladies should ride in dirty weather. — Do you ride?”⁷⁰⁰

The handling of “dirt” here exemplifies Austen’s correction of references to touch, resulting in the indirect haptic. Her first sentence includes Emma’s reference to “deep dirt”. While “dirty weather” reappears in Lord Osborne’s words, it is now metaphorical. The original thought is subsumed in “Country walking”, by then a euphemism (through a change of scope), and the original contact with mud is no longer expressed.⁷⁰¹

Everyday instances of social touch are treated as a matter of course, but discretely, whether they concern homosocial or heteroerotic interactions. The fact that Tom Musgrave “shook hands with Robert” is not problematic, but Emma’s words (“as they were taking their seats.—”), are.⁷⁰² The implied haptic is evident here. The “seats” around the card table must be handled and adjusted, and this also involves an added dimension of gallantry, in which the gentlemen must help to settle the ladies in their places. None of this, however, is directly described by Austen, beyond the continuous form of the verb (“were taking” rather than

⁷⁰⁰ *LM*, p. 125.

⁷⁰¹ Hilary Havens describes Austen’s revisions as “remov[ing] superfluous language”: “Austen’s deletion of these unnecessary descriptions demonstrates that she recognized that she had already expressed her meaning in simpler and more direct terms” (*Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 113). If this comment on revisions can be extrapolated into a *modus operandi* (and other instances, like in *P* or ‘Sanditon’ would support this generalisation), the economy of Austen’s language is a second, refining thought. She whittles down her text into a concentrated version, often to the exclusion of references to the haptic.

⁷⁰² *LM*, pp. 127, 131.

‘took’), which indicates a process rather than the work of an instant. The opposite occurrence is actually delineated earlier in the novel:

On rising from tea, there was again a scramble for the pleasure of being first out of the room, which happened to be increased by one or two of the card parties having just broken up and the players being disposed to move exactly the different way. Among these was Mr. Howard—his sister leaning on his arm—and no sooner were they within reach of Emma, than Mrs. Blake, calling her notice by friendly touch, said...⁷⁰³

The bustle of a dispersing party adds to the claustrophobia of the scene, and is reminiscent of Frances Burney’s *Cecilia*.⁷⁰⁴ It gives rise to two proximal instances of touch, one fraternal and one amical: “leaning” and “friendly touch” are welcome reliefs from the intrusive proximity of the crowd (“increased”), and help establish Emma’s nascent intimacy with the lower Osborne set. “[S]cramble” particularly highlights the unpleasant iterativeness of inescapable, oppressive social touch.

The daily lives of the Watsons, however, are not glamorous. “As they splashed along the dirty lane Miss Watson thus instructed and cautioned her inexperienced sister.—”.⁷⁰⁵ “Splashed along” and “dirty” indicate contact with the muddy surface of the roads, introducing the haptic dimension of poverty

⁷⁰³ *LM*, p. 100.

⁷⁰⁴ See Frances Burney, *Cecilia*, pp. 31 and 285. Sir Thomas’ return in *MP* also causes a similar “scramble”. See vol. II, chap. 1, pp. 205-6.

⁷⁰⁵ *LM*, p. 79.

associated with the Watson family.⁷⁰⁶ The practical difficulties of attending balls are further explicated by Elizabeth:

[“]If it was but a good day with my father, I would wrap myself up, and James should drive me over, as soon as I had made tea for him, and I should be with you by the time the dancing began.”⁷⁰⁷

Lack of physical comfort is inevitable for poorer women who still wish to partake in the social scene. Elizabeth Watson must occasionally brave the cold and lack of a proper carriage to go dancing. But men are the greatest source of trouble: Tom Musgrave “[“]is always ~~philandering with~~ behaving in a particular way to one or another.””⁷⁰⁸ The depiction of his amorous attention at balls is corrected in favour of a more oblique Austenian reference (“particular way”). This move away from direct language is consistent with Austen’s later tendency to indirect mentions of touch in courtship.⁷⁰⁹

~~“We were very much attached to each other~~ A sigh accompanied these words”⁷¹⁰

Elizabeth’s grief is given corporeal, haptic expression: the lovers’ attachment is reduced to the emission of a disappointed breath.⁷¹¹ Indeed, Elizabeth is

⁷⁰⁶ This explains Elizabeth Bennet’s reception at Netherfield, and other instances where “dirt” is discussed. The whole Portsmouth episode in *MP* also relies on this dynamic. See *P&P*, vol. I, chap. 8, p. 39; and *MP*, vol. III, chaps. 7-15, pp. 435-517.

⁷⁰⁷ *LM*, pp. 84-5.

⁷⁰⁸ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 13.

⁷⁰⁹ The adjective “particular” is also a loaded term in the *Letters*. See p. 1 (9-10 January 1796).

⁷¹⁰ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 13.

⁷¹¹ Havens recognises that “Elizabeth’s feelings can be discerned in her physical responses and in her indirect way of cloaking her desires within the expressions of others”. She describes Austen’s revisions in *W* as the removal of “redundant” language, thus creating a definite stylistic improvement. In the first case, however, it includes an addition of physical detail, rather than a removal, which she sees as the norm (*Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 112).

recurrently associated with the body, in contrast to her sister Emma. Austen's selection and use of appropriate clothing also underlines the social and bodily restraint put on the sisters:

Mrs. Edwards, carefully guarding her own dress, while she attended with yet greater solicitude to the proper security of her young charges' shoulders and throats, led the way up the wide staircase...⁷¹²

While the older lady takes material care of her dress to prevent tearing and sully, her charges' lighter and scantier dresses put their health at risk. The physical dimension of clothing is brought to the fore, drawing attention to the sexual risks of courtship: one must display enough skin to be admired, but not to catch cold. "The party passed on—Mrs. Edwards's satin gown swept along the clean floor of the ball-room, to the fireplace at the upper end".⁷¹³ The phrasal "swept along" indicates varying hem lengths: the younger women's garments do not reach the floor, and their ankles might be visible. A discarded adverb, in reference to clothing, also points to the dangers faced by women: "Mrs. E. was sitting ~~safely~~ ^{respectably} attired in one of the two Sattin gowns which went thro' the winter".⁷¹⁴ There are many possible reasons for the original selection of the suppressed "~~safely~~". It might be an idiosyncratic use of the word by the character, judged unnecessary. But it might also refer to the cold, which is often an important consideration in Austen's descriptions of garments (in both the *Letters*

⁷¹² *LM*, p. 93.

This process is also reminiscent of Mrs. Allen's fear of tears in *NA* (vol. I, chap. 3, p. 20).

⁷¹³ *LM*, p. 94.

⁷¹⁴ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 45.

and fiction), or be a comment on the *mores* of the time, as hinted at by its replacement, “respectably”.⁷¹⁵ Less appropriate garments might lead to courtship *débordements*, from which the matronly figure is immune, and which Austen might have been wary of foreshadowing.⁷¹⁶

Dancing is never safe. When the latter is asked to dance, “Emma ... saw [Miss Edwards] looking ~~rather shy than~~ rather distressed, but by no means ~~displeas~~ed”.⁷¹⁷ Her turbulent feelings are heightened in the correction. “[D]istres[s]” evidences the excitement of desire, which is confirmed with the intensifier “by no means”, whose double negative connects the character with pleasure.

“I shall be very happy to dance with you Sir, if you like it.” said she, holding out her hand with the most unaffected good humour. — The Boy ~~was again all made of~~ in one moment restored to all his first delight — ~~wanted no farther solicitation; & with a Thank you, as honest as his Smiles, held out his hand in a hurry to~~ looked joyfully at his Mother; and ~~instantly~~ stepping forward with an honest & simple “Thank you Maam” was instantly ready to attend his new acquaintance. —⁷¹⁸

The accepted invitation to dance contains an act of touch, as the partners prepare to join the set. Austen’s corrections, however, show that only one mention of “holding/~~held out~~ her/~~his hand~~” is required. Austen is loath to labour the haptic point. The gallant gesture of the young boy becomes a gracious one in Emma, making it a different kind of tactile interplay. “Charles being provided

⁷¹⁵ See *Letters*, e.g. pp. 147, 156, 174, 205, 211.

⁷¹⁶ Kathleen James-Cavan uses the manuscript and the revisions of W to highlight Austen’s attention to “word choice”, which she sees as a way of delineating character. See ‘Closure and Disclosure: The Significance of Conversation in Jane Austen’s *The Watsons*’, in *Studies in the Novel* 29 (1997), 437-52 [439].

⁷¹⁷ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 61.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

with his gloves and charged to keep them on, they joined the set which was now rapidly forming”.⁷¹⁹ The mere possibility of sexual tension is diffused by the express instruction (only necessary to a child) to “keep on” his gloves.⁷²⁰ The “danger” embodied by eager suitors is a part of social interaction that young women must constantly navigate:

“Tom Musgrave’s curiosity was appeased, ~~by seeing~~ on seeing Mr. Howard ~~come to claim his partner~~ come forward & claim Emma’s hand... & he was continually at Howard’s Elbow during the two dances.—”.⁷²¹

The change from “partner” to “hand” points to a purposely heightened hapticity, and a move towards eroticism. The slighted partner, however, sees no danger in Howard, or in his “claiming” and touching Emma’s hand, but still seeks to assert dominance over his rival by effecting coercive physical proximity (“elbow”).

“[“]Believe me—” added he lowering his voice—“*You* are quite safe, the danger is only *mine*.”—Emma was not more disposed to oblige him for all this.—”.⁷²² These two discrete categorisations of safety rely on the shared understanding that courtship is commonly described as “dangerous” to the one whose feelings are exposed. In order to remain safe and in control of her situation, Emma pretexts a fear of Musgrave’s curricule and unknown horses to avoid the obligation his offer

⁷¹⁹ *LM*, p. 98.

⁷²⁰ Descriptions of Charles ambiguously make him appear like an adult: he “[“]was very fond of riding, and had a horse of his own given him by Lord Osborne; and ... he had been out once already with Lord Osborne’s hounds.”—” (*LM*, p. 99).

Constance Classen underlines the instrumentality of gloves in the gradual “waning importance of touch”. Gloves marked “elegance, cleanliness, delicacy, and social status”, and “served to mark the social transition from a hands-on to a hands-off way of life” (*The Deepest Sense*, p. 155).

⁷²¹ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 87.

⁷²² *LM*, p. 108.

would create. His tone (effected through emphatic italics) indicates that he is trying to gain on Emma, but giving voice to his sexual desire is more likely to alarm than appease her. Elizabeth is well aware of the predicament in which she put her sister: “He seemed so eager to fetch you, that I could not say no, though it rather went against me to be throwing you together, so well as I knew his tricks; —”.⁷²³ Elizabeth’s acquiescence to Tom Musgrave’s wishes shows her carelessness. Her opinions on marriage and intimacy differ both from those of Austen and society, and might have led to ruin if Emma had not shown better judgement. “[T]ricks” and “throwing” people “together” show both Elizabeth’s ill-use of language, and the violence and deception inherent in the *manœuvre*.

Labour requires a different form of touch, and it is understood that Elizabeth will to do all the work in preparation for her brother’s arrival: “It was an expectation to fill the thoughts of the Sisters at ~~hom~~ Stanton, & to employ busy the Corporeal powers ~~time~~ hours of one of them at least —”.⁷²⁴ Elizabeth is originally endowed with “Corporeal powers” to “employ”, but these are reduced to “hours” to “busy” in the correction. Austen chooses to downplay the bodily and haptic nature of her characters, in favour of abstraction. The visit itself is no more agreeable than the preparations: “it was better to look at her Sister in law’s finery, than listen to ~~her brother~~. Robert, who had equally mortified, irritated and greived her. —”.⁷²⁵

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁷²⁴ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 137.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Emma's reaction to her brother's indelicacy is grounded in the body. The suppressed "~~mortified~~" and its correction ("irritated") both contain sensory elements, which echo the heroine's choice of "look[ing]" at his wife. The revised version is much milder than the original.

[T]he general opinion of the day must be ~~enquired into~~, understood, before Robert could ~~yield~~ let his attention be yielded to the less national, ~~more domestic enquiries~~ & of important demands of the Women. —726

The "~~domestic~~" is pushed out of the conversation, because it is less "important". By indirecting the haptic nature of everyday life, Austen conforms to the norms of polite discourse, and her language becomes broader and more abstract in its corrected version, making it more suitable for mixed society.

Direct expressions of familial and comforting pleasure (regardless of their sincerity) are also diminished in corrections. "'You may imagine, said Marg^t. in a sort of Whisper, ~~how great my enjoyment~~ what are my Sensations in finding myself once more at Stanton, ~~in the bosom of my Family.~~["?"]'.⁷²⁷ The hyperbolic exclamative "~~how great~~" becomes a simple positive "what", and "~~enjoyment~~" becomes "Sensations", a neutral noun replacing a meliorative one. The locative adverb, which added an extra layer of tactility, is simply discarded. The simplest expressions of metaphorical touch and familial feeling are sublimated into polite expression. Emma's conclusions are close to splenetic:

She ^{still} suffered from [the dreadful ~~Evils~~ mortifications of unequal Society, & family Discord] ~~only in~~ in the Contemplation of their existence; in memory & in

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁷²⁷ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 165.

prospect, but for the moment, she ~~had a pause~~ = ceased to be tortured by their
~~effusions~~ effects. —728

Emma's state of quiet pensiveness can only be achieved far away from family-inflicted wounds, but it is relative. It is incomplete ("still"), even when their nature is dimmed ("effects" replaces "~~effusions~~"). Austen's mode of revision always places the actions and reflexions of her narrative at one further remove from the body than her first draft intimates.

'The Watsons' contains several references to the body of health and ailment that will become central in 'Sanditon'.⁷²⁹ The first mention concerns a psychosomatic reaction, which is understood as a social signal: "Emma drew her hand across her eyes—and Mrs. Edwards, on perceiving it, changed the subject to one of less anxiety to all.—".⁷³⁰ Emma's "anxiety" is here given a direct haptic expression.⁷³¹ All four characters partake in the social discomfort of courtship as either parents, spouses, or daughters. The haptic is therefore a subtle mode of communication, akin to a form of instinctive sign language, universally

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁷²⁹ Further details of ailments and their expression can be found in Jan Fergus, "My sore-throats...", pp. 69-80. Fergus focuses on one of Austen's most risible characters and analyses the speech patterns and lexical associations Austen has created for Anne Elliot's sister, and their relation to (overstated) ill-health.

⁷³⁰ *LM*, p. 93.

⁷³¹ James-Cavan comments on this episode: Emma "signals her physical discomfort (*MW*, p. 326). In a setting in which she is expected to converse with ease she is rendered mute: language fails, and gestures take the place of words" ('Closure and Disclosure', p. 447). The "gesture" is in fact and act of self-touch. Emma's sensitive body is making itself seen and felt.

understood (here self-directed and subconscious).⁷³² The second mention focuses on comfort:

in a very few minutes, the party were transported from the quiet warmth of a snug parlour, to the bustle, noise and draughts of air of the broad entrance-passage of an inn.—⁷³³

The particulars of the “transport” are not mentioned, which only highlights the stark contrast between the Edwards’ house and the “inn”. The “air” in particular is given a strong haptic dimension (“snug”, “draughts”), which creates health concerns (see above).⁷³⁴

‘The Watsons’ contains several examples typical of Austen’s unique style, which often relies on the polysemy of pivotal words.⁷³⁵ Emma Watson is unaware that her sister was trying to court Dr. Harding in Chichester: ““No indeed, I had not the smallest suspicion of it. I considered her engagement to Mrs. Shaw just at that time as very unfortunate for me[”]”.⁷³⁶ The mention of a (prior) “engagement” with a friend is comedic. It resolves the tension (as a musical cadence would), and allows the sisters to move on. This is also a displaced

⁷³² In a letter dated 27-28 December 1808, Austen mentions talking to an acquaintance “with my fingers” (*Letters*, p. 167). She knew some form of sign language, which she also used to communicate with her brother George Austen.

⁷³³ *LM*, p. 93.

⁷³⁴ See also ‘Sanditon’, *LM*, p. 141.

⁷³⁵ James Heldman argues that Austen’s “voice—a voice of wit, irony, grace, perception, discrimination, judgment, and above all clarity” is missing from *W*. This chapter argues that it is, on the contrary, very present. See ‘Where Is Jane Austen in *The Watsons?*’, *Persuasions* 8 (1986), 84-91 & 111 [84].

⁷³⁶ *LM*, p. 82.

expression of the difficulties of all impoverished women, one of Austen's recurrent concerns.⁷³⁷

The Tea room was a small room within the Card room, & in passing thro' the latter, where the passage was straitened by Tables, M^{rs}. E. & her party were for a few moments ~~unable to proceed~~ hemmed in. ~~Emma saw herself~~ It happened close by Lady Osborne's Cassino table...⁷³⁸

The polysemy and repetition in this passage show the discomfort caused by crowdedness. “[H]emmed in” is a physical, haptic sensation, rather than a simple inability to attain one's goal (“~~proceed~~”). The passive construction implied in the uncertain sensations (“~~saw herself~~”) also effects a fleeting feeling of powerlessness. The terms “straite[n]” and “he[m]” both refer to sewing as well as social space, and the ladies, who probably feel quite ill-at-ease in the direct proximity of unknown men, experience a form of claustrophobic discomfort. This is further highlighted by the repetition of “room” (three times), and “passing”/“passage”.

The idea that women can be trapped is soon expressed much more urgently:

[“]My reward is to be the indulgence of conveying you to Stanton in my curricule.—...” Emma felt distressed; she did not like the proposal—she did not wish to be on terms of intimacy with the proposer[.]—⁷³⁹

Tom Musgrave's “proposal”, again, is a polysemic play on words, as he is expressing his desire to court Emma. Her reaction exemplifies the trope that defines the “intimacy” and danger of being in a carriage with a man unchaperoned. Emma's judgement of Tom Musgrave shows the importance of

⁷³⁷ The aphoristic “[“]I would rather be teacher at school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a man I did not like.—”” (*LM*, p. 83) conveys a point of social commentary that delineates Austen's views on matrimony.

⁷³⁸ *LM*, p. 99.

⁷³⁹ *LM*, p. 107.

lexis as defining character.⁷⁴⁰ “[T]here is a ridiculousness about him that entertains me — but his company gives me no ~~other pleasure~~ other agreeable Emotion.” —⁷⁴¹ While “~~pleasure~~” is constantly on Lady Susan’s lips, it does not fit in Emma’s idiolect. The “agreeable Emotion” she extracts from absurdity looks forward to Elizabeth Bennet. Further instances of polysemy confirm that this stratagem resides with the narrator, the mouthpiece of the author: “Emma expressed her gratitude, and for a few minutes they jogged on in silence.— Elizabeth first spoke.—”⁷⁴² The phrasal verb “jo[g] on” must here be understood in its polysemy. It contains both a reference to the movement of the carriage (one sister is driving the other to a ball), and to time.

Miss E. gave [Emma] a caution to be at hand, in a manner which convinced her of Mrs. Edwards’s holding it very important to have them both ~~within a yard~~ ^{view of her} ~~close to her~~, when she moved into the Tearoom; & Emma was accordingly on the alert to gain ~~the~~ ^{her} proper station.⁷⁴³

The double correction (“~~within a yard~~” becomes “~~within view~~” becomes “close to her”) shows Austen’s conception that distance is felt rather than observed. While “close” is less precise, it effects a complete reversal. “Station” is here both geographical and social. Emma has been separated from her set, and temporarily catapulted into the higher spheres of the nobility. While this ambiguity passes

⁷⁴⁰ James Thompson comments on the dangerous physicality of this scene (*Between Self and World*, p. 163), and on the frequency of the word “intimacy” (“eighty-four times”, p. 162).

⁷⁴¹ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 113.

⁷⁴² *LM*, p. 86.

⁷⁴³ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 75.

unnoticed by the characters, the author, narrator and reader revel in the imaginative possibilities created by the irresolution.

'SANDITON'

In Austen's published fiction, social ties are not usually described through the prism of physical interaction, but 'Sanditon' offers a different perspective.⁷⁴⁴ When Sir Edward Denham "stations himself close by her", in order "to detach her as much as possible from" her friends, Charlotte Heywood and the reader become very aware of personal spaces, and the use of the verb "detach" (an echo of Lady Susan's lexis) connotes the solidity of social ties, which Sir Edward is trying to breach.⁷⁴⁵ This idea is soon revisited when Sir Edward displays "looks of very gallant despair in tearing himself away" from Charlotte.⁷⁴⁶ When Lady Denham "tak[es] hold of Charlotte's arm", she bestows touch as an "honour", and this interaction qualifies the tactile economy of the time, a complex network of significance. The widow also explains that she takes her "*young folks* very much by the hand", which is a mark of ownership and an impression of her own authority over all her friends and neighbours.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁴ Janet Todd and Linda Bree (eds.), Jane Austen, 'Sanditon', in *Later Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 2008).

John Wiltshire argues that the characters in 'Sanditon' "live in their bodies much more vividly than the characters of earlier novels. There is something in Jane Austen's writing here that, perhaps, wants to celebrate the physical, however oddly achieved" (*Jane Austen and the Body*, p. 98).

⁷⁴⁵ *LM*, p. 174.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

Austen uses "tear" in similar ways in both 'Sanditon' and *P*. See below.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Austen's narrative economy is well evidenced in the following example:

““Well – said Mr. P. – ~~having finished and refolded his letter~~ – as he ~~concluded~~ finished it –”⁷⁴⁸. The omission of the haptic detail (“~~refolded~~”) in the correction continues

to show that Austen does not see the *minutiae* of such actions as necessary, and she therefore discards them, strengthening the economy of the piece (even as she writes). The haptic connotations of objects are also sometimes removed in correction: “as soon as Miss Whitby could be hurried down from her Toilette, with all her glossy Curls & ~~ornamented Combs~~ smart Trinkets ...”⁷⁴⁹ Two parallel processes of revision are apparent here. The “~~Combs~~”, haptic accessories that belong to the art of the “Toilette”, become “Trinkets”, thus removing their tactile specificity.⁷⁵⁰ At the same time, the former are specific commodities with an *idoiné* purpose, while the latter are hypernyms. Austen's process of abstraction is therefore correlated to her indirection of touch.

Even Sir Edward's fantasies (which parody the conventions of gothic fiction) are coloured by the inherently haptic metaphors of the genre, when he plans to “carry off” Clara Brereton if she cannot “be won by affection”.⁷⁵¹ He aims to surpass Lovelace, Wickham and Willoughby. Sisterly display of affection is often glossed over in the novels, even in extreme cases like those of the Dashwoods and

⁷⁴⁸ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 125.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁷⁵⁰ Sandie Byrne, in *Jane Austen's Possessions and Dispossessions: The Significance of Objects* (London, 2014), highlights the practical, haptic nature of the objects in ‘Sanditon’ (pp. 205-12), thus corroborating Kathryn Sutherland's remarks (*Textual Lives*, pp. 193-4).

⁷⁵¹ *LM*, p. 184.

Bennets, but it is explicit in ‘Sanditon’: “Here Mr. Parker drew his chair still nearer to his sister, and took her hand again most affectionately”.⁷⁵² The display of “affection” is relatable, but the “again”, which refers to a previous occurrence of his “taking her hand”, has in fact no referent in the chapter. Austen expects the reader to infer that the event has taken place: the evident earlier tactile interaction simply needs to be extrapolated, and the narrator need not interfere. Austen’s scarce use of touch means that every mention is noteworthy.⁷⁵³

In the final (extant) scene, Charlotte spies

Miss Brereton seated, apparently very composedly—and Sir Edward Denham by her side.— They were sitting so near each other and appeared so closely engaged in gentle conversation, that ... Privacy was certainly their object.—⁷⁵⁴

The “secret lovers” are enjoying a moment of conversation away from Lady Denham, and the intensity (“so near”, “so closely”), nature (“gentle”), and modality (“apparently”, “appeared”, “certainly”) of their intimacy may point to the tactile.⁷⁵⁵ It remains impossible, however, to determine the exact nature of their commerce in the scene.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵² *LM*, p. 187.

⁷⁵³ Kate Singer argues that “Moments of agitation” are relatively rare, but central to understanding Austen’s theory of emotions. Touch is in that way similar: it forces the acquisition of knowledge through the body (“embodied consciousness”), and all its occurrences require notice. See ‘Austen Agitated: Feeling Emotions in Mixed Media’, in Beth Lau (ed.), *Jane Austen and Sciences of the Mind* (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 95-114 [p. 95].

⁷⁵⁴ *LM*, p. 208.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁶ Andrew Davies (*Sanditon*, 2019) chose to give it a rather graphic sexual flavour. See Introduction.

The core of ‘Sanditon’ revolves around ailments and cures, and the politics of the therapeutic seaside resorts that emerged in the early nineteenth century.⁷⁵⁷ The novel opens as the yet unnamed protagonist “sprains his foot”, “scramble[s] out” of his carriage, “overturned in toiling up [a] long ascent half rock, half sand. —”.⁷⁵⁸ The late inclusion of the revetment of the road implies an increase of haptic detail, and stronger grounding in the material world. The parallel structures of the phrases create near-collocations: “scrambled out and helped out”, and “shaken and bruised”. The former uses redoubled phrasal verbs, which draw attention to the difficulty and hapticity of the process, both characters being trapped in the carriage. The latter describes their mental state and their bodily condition simultaneously. The noun “extrication” summarises the process in a typically Austenian abstraction. Mr. Parker explains: “There is this something wrong here,” said he—putting his hand to his ankle—”.⁷⁵⁹ The natural reaction of the invalid is to rub his “ankle”, which expresses his expected “relief” and “remedy”, but the use of “something” underlines the alterity of the pain and disturbance.⁷⁶⁰ What is bothering the character is mysterious, and therefore only

⁷⁵⁷ Wiltshire sees a parallel with Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*, in which the “medical” cannot be separated from the “sexual” (*Jane Austen and the Body*, pp. 101-2).

Peter Knox-Shaw also argues that the seaside is “sensuous and erotic” by nature (*Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*, p. 249).

⁷⁵⁸ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 17.

Referring to this episode, Tony Tanner underlines the ambivalent social nature of carriages (*Jane Austen*, p. 251).

⁷⁵⁹ *LM*, p. 138.

⁷⁶⁰ On the importance of the word “something” in Austen’s language, see Jonathan Farina, *Everyday Words*, pp. 137-77.

available through haptic exploration. The “surgeon” they expect to meet is reduced to a “cure”, in a shortcut characteristic of Parker’s speech.

[W]hen once at home, we have our remedy at hand you know.—A little of our own bracing sea air will soon set me on my feet again.—Depend upon it my dear, it is exactly a case for the sea. Saline air and immersion will be the very thing. My sensations tell me so already...⁷⁶¹

Parker’s aching body (“leg”, “pain”, “sensations”) is correlated with the treatment preconised at the time (“bracing sea air”, “saline air and immersion”), through haptic idioms (“at hand”, “on my feet”) that must also be understood literally.

Even the description of the place, which Parker soon provides, is haptic:

“bathing”, “sand”, “deep waters”, “mud”, “weeds”, “slimy rocks” and “palpably”

all point to its sensual, tactile nature.⁷⁶² It is almost a miraculous place: “~~no cure~~,”

~~the most obstinate Cougher retain a cough there 4 & 20 hours.~~ Nobody wanted Spirits.

Nobody wanted Strength. —”⁷⁶³ Parker is trying to sound scientific, but his language

remains providential: “where Bathing disagreed, the Sea Breeze alone was

~~palpably~~ ^{evidently} designed by Nature for the cure. —”⁷⁶⁴ The adverb “~~palpably~~” is

not common in Austen’s idiolect, and was likely changed because it was too

overtly haptic; it also avoids a word-for-word repetition.⁷⁶⁵ It does, however,

indicate that Parker associates the elements with the body and sensation.

⁷⁶¹ *LM*, p. 141.

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁷⁶³ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 59.

The deletion of “the most obstinate Cougher” suppresses an echo of Kitty Bennet in *P&P* (vol. I, chap. 2, p. 6).

⁷⁶⁴ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 59.

⁷⁶⁵ See *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The character of Diana Parker is at the same time an invalid and a fascinating mixture of paradoxes, determined by her bodily deprivations and extravagances. She declares to her brother:

if you had not described yourself as fallen into such very good hands, I should have been with you at all hazards the day after the receipt of your letter, though it found me suffering under a more severe attack than usual of my old grievance, spasmodic bile, and hardly able to crawl from my bed to the sofa.—⁷⁶⁶

There is an obvious contradiction in Diana's description of her abilities.

Travelling would be impossible to someone actually “hardly able to crawl from ... bed to ... sofa”. Her “grievance” results in general weakness, which makes her plight even more haptic by increasing surface contact. Diana Parker's past is also full of surprising medical ministrations:

Two years ago I happened to be calling on M^{rs} Sheldon when her Coachman sprained his foot as he was cleaning the Carriage & c^d. hardly limp into the House — but by the immediate ~~application~~ ^{use} of Friction alone, ~~well~~ ^{steadily} persevered in, (& I rubbed his Ankle with my own hand for 4 ^{six} – Hours without Intermission) – he was well in three days. —⁷⁶⁷

Diana's assistance was meant to be haptic from the start, but the correction makes it more extreme. Even the duration is augmented by half, to render the whole scene ridiculous. The parenthetical addition reads like a stage direction as much as a confession. Diana's specialist skill appears excessive, impractical, and verging on sexual impropriety. It is difficult to conceive of an invalid woman of the gentry “rubbing” a servant's ankle “for 4 ^{six} – Hours without Intermission”.

Their sister Susan is in no better shape: she

⁷⁶⁶ *LM*, pp. 162-3.

⁷⁶⁷ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 163.

has been suffering much from the Headache, and Six Leaches a day for ~~the last week have~~ ^{10 days together} relieved her a ^{so} little that we thought it right to change our measures – and being convinced on examination that much of the Evil lay in her Gum, I persuaded her to attack the disorder there. She has ^{accordingly} had 3 Teeth drawn ~~accordingly~~, & is decidedly better, but her Nerves are a good deal deranged. She can only speak in a whisper – and fainted away twice this morning on poor Arthur’s ~~sneezing~~ ^{trying to suppress} ~~coughing~~ a cough.⁷⁶⁸

“Six Leaches a day” starts a string of risible health and grammatical mishaps.⁷⁶⁹

It is first understood (syntagmatically) as the correlated object of “suffering from”, but the later part of the sentence proves it to be the subject of the verb “relieved”. The result is comical, and causes the “Gum” or “Teeth” ailment to be understood in the same vein. The remedy is doing more harm than the complaint, and Susan is “deranged” as a consequence, and not only in her “Nerves”. The descending scale of noise (“~~sneezing~~”, “~~coughing~~”, “trying to suppress a cough”) shows Austen’s commitment to making ‘Sanditon’ a work of incongruous and laughable characters. Arthur might indeed have been louder in his attempt than in an actual cough. Susan’s acute psychological trauma makes even the softest disturbance unbearable, but the construction of the sentence leaves the effect open to interpretation. If the attempt to “suppress” it made her “fain[t] away”, one is left to wonder whether an unsuppressed cough would have been less detrimental, or killed her. Diana’s conclusions, however, are surprisingly astute and modern:

⁷⁶⁸ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 164.

⁷⁶⁹ Joe Bray comments on the ambiguous nature of Austen’s grammar (“preposition”/“conjunction”): it is one of Austen’s trademarks, but it is not elsewhere remarked on by Bray or other critics (*The Language of Jane Austen*, p. 162).

My sister's complaints and mine are happily not often of a nature, to threaten existence *immediately*—and as long as we *can* exert ourselves to be of use to others, I am convinced that the body is the better for the refreshments the mind receives in doing its duty.—While I have been travelling, with this object in view, I have been perfectly well.⁷⁷⁰

Diana's "panegyric" ends with these reflexions, which prove that nothing is clinically wrong with the sisters' bodies.⁷⁷¹ The description of the psychosomatic element of their ailments is apt: the physical discomfort of travelling can be overcome by their busy minds. Through Charlotte, Austen is able comically to resolve the three invalid siblings' cases:

excepting that [Susan] sat with salts in her hand, took drops two or three times from one, out of the several phials already at home on the mantelpiece, and made a great many odd faces and contortions, Charlotte could perceive no symptoms of illness which she, in the boldness of her own good health, would not have undertaken to cure, by putting out the fire, opening the window, and disposing of the drops and the salts by means of one or the other.⁷⁷²

Austen creates a picture of domestic medical life, in which all is arranged for Susan's detriment, from the furniture to the "fire", to the paraphernalia of the *malade imaginaire*. The passage is brought to a close in a near apocalyptic parody, in which Charlotte's good sense makes all problematic elements destroy each other, thus restoring goodly order. If one understands expressions of touch in Austen's writings as always relating to a "*petit fait significatif*", 'Sanditon' seems a paradox.⁷⁷³ The plethoric mentions of the body and of touch most often do not

⁷⁷⁰ *LM*, p. 190.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁷⁷³ Richard Jenkyns borrows the expression from Stendhal. See *A Fine Brush on Ivory: An Appreciation of Jane Austen* (Oxford, 2004), p. 22.

refer to a physical cause, but to imagined ones, or none. However, because the body is the *locum* of the action, it is only natural that Austen should have given it a predominant place, befitting her mimetic style. Although there is no physical root to the characters' symptoms, those still take bodily, and therefore haptic, form. The signifier becomes the signified.⁷⁷⁴

Beyond the depiction of touch, there is in Austen's language, throughout her writings, a haptic dimension that resides in the relationship between words, mostly in syntagm or syntax, but occasionally in paradigm.⁷⁷⁵ The first example to be found in 'Sanditon' is of the latter kind. When the narrator mentions the "hayfield", "haymakers" and "Mr. Heywood", the recurrence of the lexeme 'hay' in compounds (one a family name), cannot be coincidental, and, according to Miller, is in bad taste, and a symptom of Austen's incapacity.⁷⁷⁶ It is also a manifestation of Austen's reliance on the comicality of names.⁷⁷⁷ The triple repetition of "Willingden", fairytale-like, reproduces the effect, by echoing in words Parker's eagerness.⁷⁷⁸ More common is the use of distributive (parallelistic

⁷⁷⁴ Cheryl Ann Weissman sees this instability in 'Sanditon' as a mark of the "new direction" in Austen's style. 'Narrative Lurches and the Nature of Knowing: Coincidence and Perception in Jane Austen's *Sanditon*', *The American Journal of Semiotics* 6 (1989), 239-49 [248-9].

⁷⁷⁵ See especially Chapter II.

⁷⁷⁶ *LM*, p. 138.
See Miller, pp. 86-7.

⁷⁷⁷ On names in 'Sanditon', see Margaret Doody (*Jane Austen's Names*, pp. 198-212).

⁷⁷⁸ *LM*, p. 139.
Weissman sees the "convergence of Willingdens and the divergence of Mrs. Griffithses" as "expressions of a more mature author's interest in the mystery and imprecision of human perception". She comments on the intangibility of reality in 'Sanditon', in which appearances are everything, since nothing is solid or long-established ('Narrative Lurches', p. 242).

or elliptic) constructions: “With all my heart Sir—apply any verses you like to [Brinshore]—but I want to see something applied to your leg...—”.⁷⁷⁹ Despite the repetition of the verb “apply”, the humorous dimension of its parallel objects creates a zeugmatic relation (the “verses” are disconnected from an unnamed remedy). The reader’s initial impulse is to attribute it to the character’s ignorance (perhaps siding with Parker), but he does not in fact misunderstand his guest. The comedy must therefore be imputed to Austen, who relishes this form of purposeful confusion. The wilful misuse of narratorial voice effects similar ambiguity: “(two or three genteel looking young women, followed by as many maid servants, were now seen issuing from the house)”.⁷⁸⁰ The passive, agentless construction points to direct but non-omniscient (and perhaps unreliable) narratorial intervention. Austen is playing with the opportunity afforded by distance to cast doubt, stylistically, on the number and quality of the approaching women. The extra “genteel looking” woman could imply one fewer “maid servant”, and vice versa. This discordant note follows the pattern affectioned by Austen, in which suspense is not always resolved, providing delayed gratification, or humorous frustration, to the reader. The Heywoods being a large family, it is also a reference to the innumerability of lower gentry daughters in need of a husband, a collective of genteel-looking women who are reduced to bland

⁷⁷⁹ *LM*, p. 145.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

anonymity through their socially induced lack of individuality.⁷⁸¹ Sutherland argues that

Sanditon reads like an experiment in testing the social basis of perception. Because in this village of eccentrics consensual reality cannot be assumed, sensory perceptions are both more acute channels of perception and also more fallible... The underlying grammar of resemblances—a kind of conversation of the senses—on which we depend for the organization and intelligible processing of the sights and sounds we encounter, is here called into question.⁷⁸²

Sutherland emphasises the importance of sensation, but her analysis is somehow truncated, as she references “solid things” but does not mention touch as a sense. This might indicate that in ‘Sanditon’, Austen purposefully shuns references to touch, because they would render “things” too tangible and therefore defeat the purposeful uncertainty she is creating. Austen’s characteristic humour is used by the narrator, with Mrs. Parker as the butt of their joke: she was “so entirely waiting to be guided on every occasion, that whether [her husband] were risking his fortune or spraining his ankle, she remained equally useless.—”⁷⁸³ “[S]praining his ankle” is presented as a deliberate pursuit, a danger not dissimilar to that inherent in speculation, which is (not so) hyperbolically

⁷⁸¹ Anne Toner sees the “rawness of drafting” as “coterminous with [Austen’s] most significant stylistic innovations”. She describes her “new thematics and stylistics of disconnection” as a sign of a “new, fragmentary, elliptical style”, which “accentuate[s] verbosity and extend[s] characters’ propensity towards paratactic accumulation”. Austen’s “fragmented prose” in ‘Sanditon’ is the result of a “long develop[ment]” (‘Jane Austen Jotting’, n.p.).

⁷⁸² Kathryn Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, p. 191.

⁷⁸³ *LM*, p. 148.

described as “risking [one’s] fortune”.⁷⁸⁴ The character’s intellectual powers are therefore reduced at the same time as the writer’s comic ones become apparent.

Charlotte’s characterisation of the Parker sisters relies on Austen’s use of polysemy to create connivance between certain protagonists, the narrator and the reader:

“I am sure they must be very extraordinary [women],”—said Charlotte. “Oh!—they are so used to the operation—to every operation—and have such fortitude!—” “Your sisters know what they are about, I dare say, but their measures seem to touch on extremes.—[”]⁷⁸⁵

“[E]xtraordinary” and “extremes” perfectly summarise the sisters’ personalities and behaviours. Charlotte is expressing disbelief and disapproval, while Parker understands reverence and sympathy. Charlotte’s comment that they know “what they are about”, can similarly be understood in contrary ways. To her, it means that their own logic and self-persuasion of hypochondria has driven them to madness, and that they use surgical procedures to calm their psychological neuroses. To Parker, it means that they are highly competent. The related, subjacent concept of ‘extremities’ reinforces the idea that the sisters are killing themselves (“extremes” is final) by attending to their limbs. Charlotte’s wit (in focalisation) also allows her to create Austenian conjunctions: the phrase “literary recess”, which she applies to the librarian Mrs. Whi-l/t-by, encapsulates Austen’s

⁷⁸⁴ Sarah Comyn focuses on the various economic aspects of ‘Sanditon’, and argues that hypochondria is another form of speculation: the latter produces immaterial wealth out of nothing, while the abundance of symptoms in the former is groundless. See ‘The Speculative World of *Sanditon*’, in *Political Economy and the Novel: A Literary History of “Homo Economicus”* (Cham, 2018), pp. 63-92.

⁷⁸⁵ *LM*, p. 165.

stylistic flair.⁷⁸⁶ It gives the place and the person a semblance of importance, but adding a grand adjective to a mundane noun creates a hypallage, which is much more vivid than ‘the recess where she read’ would be. It also has the added advantage of providing meta-commentary on circulating libraries and librarians, and on social standing, which Parker does in a different way when he assesses the list of names in the “library subscription book”.⁷⁸⁷

The line between signs and reality is soon breached further in Charlotte’s mind:

Perhaps it might be partly owing to her having just issued from a circulating library—but she could not separate the idea of a complete heroine from Clara Brereton.⁷⁸⁸

The porosity of characters and real persons (who in this case are also characters in the story) is here simultaneously expressed in two discrete ways. The conscious one resides in Charlotte’s voicing her own confusion as to Clara’s real nature. There is also an unconscious one (which is therefore really Austen’s stylistic intervention), which places the pronoun “her” so as to allow for it to refer to either Charlotte (through anaphora) or Clara (through cataphora), creating a level of ambiguity that is further developed in the verb “issued”. If one still has Clara in mind, the “heroine” has just “issued from a circulating library” as would a book, thus literally placing her in the realm of fiction and fantasy.

⁷⁸⁶ *LM*, p. 167.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

Poets and poetry allow for an intertwined use of puns and lexical fields:

“Burns is always on fire. His soul was the altar in which lovely woman sat enshrined, his spirits truly breathed the immortal incense which is her due.—”.⁷⁸⁹
Through clever word associations (unbeknownst to their speaker Sir Edward), Austen creates a sliding lexical field that starts with flames, moves on to air and ends with the sacred: “Burns”, “fire”, “soul”, “altar”, “enshrined”, “breathed”, “incense” (and later, “ardour”, “genius”, “coruscations”, “impassioned”, “impulses”).⁷⁹⁰

Innuendo of a sexual nature, originally present, is downplayed in revision:

“It was the last Building of ~~old erection~~ former Days in the line of the parish”.⁷⁹¹

Beyond the bawdy humour, “~~old erection~~” denotes the haptic process of building, while “former Days” is an idea, a representation of times past in the mind.

Susan ... had no hysterics of consequence till we came within sight of poor old Sanditon—and the attack was not very violent—... so that we got her

⁷⁸⁹ *LM*, p. 175.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Katie Halsey elucidates the subversive literary allusions Sir Edward’s readings contain, arguing that Austen’s referential comedy culminates in ‘Sanditon’. See ‘The Books Sir Edward Denham Doesn’t Read: Jane Austen’s Literary Jokes’, *Textus* 3 (2017), 53-70.

Weissman analyses the correlation of character and style in Sir Edward: “The overweening Sir Edward Denham ... cranks out enthusiasm and sentiment with a comparably tireless vitality. His dense profusion of polysyllabic and inventively compounded words testifies to an amazing generative energy, but one which is directionless and senseless... But the disjointedness of his discourse and the aggressive thrust of his enthusiasm make verbal assaults of his speeches... His purposes, like his syntax, are convolutedly sinuous, yet pointless” (‘Narrative Lurches’, pp. 243-4). Austen uses Sir Edward as a diegetic and stylistic instrument. His “generative energy” is “pointless”, except in that it serves the author’s creativity and daring, in this her last and most original mature work, both in “syntax” and morphology (“polysyllabic and inventively compounded words”).

⁷⁹¹ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 111.

out of the carriage extremely well, with only Mr. Woodcock's assistance[.]
—⁷⁹²

Austen's playfulness is here made apparent, as she is introducing a ribald semantic network. "[H]ysterics" and "Woodcock" are thinly veiled (medical/slang) references to the female and male organs. The close physical contact with a servant echoes Diana's six-hour-long 'therapeutic' massage. There is even an instance of body-shaming humour:

Charlotte's place was by Arthur, who was sitting next to the fire with a degree of enjoyment which gave a good deal of merit to his civility in wishing her to take his chair.—There was nothing dubious in her manner of declining it, and he sat down again with much satisfaction. She drew back her chair to have all the advantage of his person as a screen, and was very thankful for every inch of back and shoulders beyond her pre-conceived idea.⁷⁹³

Arthur's "enjoyment" of and "satisfaction" with the fire show a penchant for haptic pleasure: heat and food are his only sources of bodily gratification. The comedy of the scene is brought to its climax by the poised but vitriolic description of his size, which also contains a degree of ambiguity.⁷⁹⁴ That he should be used as a "screen" is risible, and the minutiae of his girth make it even more so ("every inch of back and shoulder"). What is unclear is whether "beyond her pre-conceived ideas" refers to Charlotte's multiplying "thankful[ness]", or the number of unsuspected extra "inches" Arthur possesses. If the latter, Arthur is mocked through the impression that he is expanding in the heat (a theory that the

⁷⁹² *LM*, p. 186.

⁷⁹³ *LM*, pp. 194-5.

⁷⁹⁴ This reference to size is similar to that of the "broad back of the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple" in *P*, which blocks Elizabeth's line of sight in the concert episode (vol. II, chap. 8, p. 201).

laws of physics would support). Later in the novel, Austen's revisions highlight the importance of Arthur's bulk: "[~~as for Arthur, he is much more likely to eat~~^{eats} ~~enormously. We eat too much than too little we~~ is only too much disposed for food. We are often obliged to check him."].⁷⁹⁵ Arthur's overeating problem is dealt with much more subtly in correction, thus showing that Austen made a point of creating sympathetic, if eccentric, characters, rather than fall into crass caricature (which in this case would have easily been achieved, and made Arthur an ogre *cliché*).

The description of the two Misses Beaufort, Miss Lambe's companions, allows Austen to revel in her most complex game of linguistically haptic interactions in the piece:

long before they had suited themselves with an instrument, or with drawing paper, they had, by the frequency of their appearance at the low windows upstairs, in order to close the blinds, open the blinds, to arrange a flower pot on the balcony, or look at nothing through a telescope, attracted many an eye upwards, and made many a gazer gaze again.—⁷⁹⁶

The self-reflexivity of the sentence is made sensible by its showiness (all activities described here are haptic). Even as it draws attention to the artifice engineered by the young ladies, which makes them ridiculous, Austen's style puts on ornaments. "[S]uited" and "appearance" are delineated both by the "instrument" and "paper" that could clothe the young women, and by the "blinds" that paradoxically make their exhibition easy.⁷⁹⁷ Other paradoxes include the

⁷⁹⁵ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 225.

⁷⁹⁶ *LM*, p. 203.

⁷⁹⁷ Wiltshire sees this "posing" as a sign that the rest of the novel would include "sexual intrigue" and have a "strong erotic dimension" ("Sickness and Silliness in *Sanditon*", pp. 100-1).

“windows” which are at the same time “low” and “upstairs”, and the telescope that draws attention to their navel gazing.⁷⁹⁸ Finally, “made many a gazer gaze again”, through alliteration and assonance, sounds strange, almost forceful, in the reader’s (mind’s) ear.

Mary Favret describes ‘Sanditon’ as containing

incompatible languages – of advertising, Byronic romance, hypochondria and economics – [that] clash on the shifting sands of the seaside resort. The fragment offers little hope that anyone with an ounce of sense, such as the heroine, can make any impact upon this world, or glean any meaning from its babble.⁷⁹⁹

Favret’s fleeting remark correlates the language(s) of the piece (“meaning”, “babble”) with a form of haptic struggle (“burst”, “impact”), thus commenting on their inter-penetrability. She reiterates the strong connection between touch and language, and Austen’s slide from representations of the former to realisations in the latter. ‘Sanditon’, as Austen’s last novel, features the haptic in general, and the tactile in particular, more prominently than the rest of Austen’s mature fiction. It may seem extravagant in comparison with *Persuasion*, which directly precedes it, but John Wiltshire explains:

Some readers have claimed that *Sanditon* shows a return to the style of Jane Austen’s satirical and parodic juvenilia, but this, I’d argue, is a misreading for two reasons. One is that however extraordinary the characters are, they are kept within the limits of plausibility and the framework of realism (except

⁷⁹⁸ Diana Parker is doing exactly the same thing, without the “telescope”, because she has no marital prospects or desires. Her own person is not a desirable body, so she creates her own eroto-phylactic interest.

⁷⁹⁹ Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, p. 175.

perhaps Sir Edward Denham). The other is that technically the novel shows remarkable innovation.⁸⁰⁰

The dynamic qualities of the juvenilia are sublimated in ‘Sanditon’, in which Austen’s mature stylistic and diegetic powers are successfully pushed to their limits.⁸⁰¹ It effects further variations on the forays introduced in *Persuasion*. Even in its final published form, Austen’s last novel *Persuasion* also displays similar qualities, notably the carefully crafted sentences, and the recurrent recourse to the haptic. Because it is finished, because an early draft of the two final chapters subsists, and because it shows strong affinities with the haptic, it is the exceptional case in Austen’s later manuscripts.

⁸⁰⁰ Wiltshire (whose vision echoes Tanner’s) argues that the language of ‘Sanditon’ is perfectly appropriate for its content, rather than an early form that Austen would need to revise (‘Sickness and Silliness in *Sanditon*’, p. 284).

⁸⁰¹ Tom Keymer sees “bravura” in ‘Sanditon’: Austen is “striking boldly out in fresh directions” while maintaining “numerous thematic continuities with the existing novels” (*Writing, Society, Politics*, p. 144).

PERSUASION

The cancelled chapters of *Persuasion* are an anomaly in the Austenian *corpus*. They are both finished and nullified, because there is a later canonical published version.⁸⁰² As much of this material was reused in the final version (mostly in the second chapter), however, the chapters offer a fascinating example of what Austen's working drafts of other novels might have looked like.⁸⁰³

Peter Knox-Shaw sees *Persuasion* as a novel with a difference in the Austen canon:

much of the action is filtered through Anne... Many of the intensest scenes pass with few words, and a notation of bodily signs doubles with – at times almost displacing – the summary of mental states.⁸⁰⁴

“[F]ew words” are necessary when “mental states” are replaced by sensations.

The later part of Knox-Shaw's *Persuasion* chapter further singles it out as haptic. It contains many references to touch, most notably about nursing and children. He also notes “Mrs Croft's robust presence and physical vigour (she walks until her feet blister)”, which make her a haptic character.⁸⁰⁵ Knox-Shaw suggests that Austen, in her mature writing years, was going in a new, more tactile, direction.

⁸⁰² Jocelyn Harris argues that *Persuasion*, as Austen's masterpiece, can dispel the myth of Austen's “limitation”, perpetuated even by her advocates (*A Revolution Almost beyond Expression*, pp. 11-19).

⁸⁰³ Jenny Davidson makes passing remarks on the difference between the manuscript and printed versions of these two chapters of *Persuasion*. She does not go into detail, however. See ‘Revision’, in *Reading Jane Austen* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 36-55. Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade explains that the spelling in these chapters is consistent with that of the *Letters* (2014, pp. 211-14, 266), which therefore corroborates Sutherland's argument that editorial intervention was heavy.

⁸⁰⁴ Knox-Shaw, *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*, p. 235.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

Both in terms of content and style, these chapters contain many ties to the haptic. Firstly, clothing and dramatic events elicit references to activities and objects, which anchor the characters in physicality. Comfort, pain and pleasure, are also central, which call on the senses and thus bridge the gap between the mind and the body, demonstrating that *Persuasion*, more than the other five novels, focuses on the imposition of the world on the self. Finally, love and courtship, presented here as both positively and negatively climactic, exemplify Austen's mature indirection skills.

When Admiral Croft explains to Anne that his wife is “quite alone— Nobody but her Mantuamaker with her, & they have been shut up together this half hour, so it must be over soon”, he is indirectly referring to the haptic process of designing and fashioning a gown, which is lengthy and intimate (“this half hour”).⁸⁰⁶ Anne therefore sees her presence as intrusive (“most inconvenient” follows an exclamatory repetition). The implied touch is reduced to a neuter pronoun (“it”), a sign of the closeness shared by Admiral and Mrs. Croft. That she is “quite alone”, however, is revealing of the primacy of social engagements, which causes intimate moments to be minimised. The male character, particularly, does not regard the process as either significant or sensitive, and is quite happy for his wife to be interrupted and intruded upon. The female perspective offered shortly thereafter by Mrs. Croft, however, shows the delicacy of the situation: “it was hardly possible for a woman of her description to wish

⁸⁰⁶ *Persuasion*, p. 314.

the Mantuamaker had imprisoned her longer...”.⁸⁰⁷ Her comment upon reappearance that she was “imprisoned” points to her nature, and to the demands of dressmaking: standing still for long periods of time, and being prodded (and perhaps pricked) are unpleasant. The physicality associated with clothing also gives rise to multiple instances of movement and contact, and the chapters are filled with action, described in the mode of stage directions. Admiral Croft explains:

[“]you will find nobody to disturb you—there is nobody but Frederick here —” opening the door as he spoke.—Such a person to be passed over as a Nobody to *her!*—⁸⁰⁸

“Nobody” is an echo of “alone”, which this time refers to male parallel play. Wentworth is classed as a nonentity, especially to a female guest. The “*slapstick*” quality of this chapter is reinforced in these stage directions, which indicate Admiral Croft’s interplay with the fabric of the building (“opening the door as he spoke”).⁸⁰⁹ The comedic aspect is soon added to: “Anne *was* sitting down, but now she arose again—to entreat him not to interrupt M^{RS}. C—”.⁸¹⁰ The piston-like heroine also takes on a physical dimension in this scene, in which her emotions, and her social resolutions, are represented as physical, haptic reactions. She is

⁸⁰⁷ *Persuasion*, p. 318.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁸⁰⁹ See Nora Bartlett, *Reflections of a Reader*, who comments on Admiral Croft’s “*slapstick* style” of “unit[ing]” the couple (p. 200). See also Harris, *A Revolution Almost beyond Expression*, pp. 44-5.

⁸¹⁰ *Persuasion*, p. 315.

acting and doing (“*was sitting down*”, “*arose again*”), while Admiral Croft is gesturing, and Wentworth is posturing (“*pretending to read*”).

Here the door was very firmly closed; she could guess by which of the two... but ... the Adm^l. on the strength of the Door’s being shut was speaking without any management of voice, tho’ she c^d. hear his companion trying to check him.—⁸¹¹

The shutting doors render this scene almost farcical, and Wentworth’s physicality, through which he expresses his feelings for Anne, is represented directly (“*firmly*”, “*strength*”, “*check*”). This handling of the courtship *dénouement* is more haptic than customary for Austen, and it is not surprising that she should ultimately have minimised this dimension, being dissatisfied with both the tenor and language of the scene.⁸¹²

The second important haptic aspect present in these chapters is the spectrum that includes comfort, pleasure and pain. Anne “*longed to be able to speak of the weather or the Concert — but she could only secure* ~~& sought~~ but could only compass the relief of taking a Newspaper in her hand”.⁸¹³ The confusion and discomfort of the situation is alleviated on Anne’s side, by “*taking a Newspaper in her hand*”. Words have failed her (“*longed to be able to speak*”), and she finds

⁸¹¹ *Persuasion*, p. 316.

⁸¹² Harris dedicates two chapters to the manuscript segments of *Persuasion* (*A Revolution Almost beyond Expression*, pp. 36-72), and offers astute close-readings of Austen’s corrections. While drawing on their unsatisfactory and juvenile nature, Harris does not take into account the haptic nature of the original sketches, or the fact that it is suppressed.

⁸¹³ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 239.

Marcia McClintock Folsom does not comment on the revisions of the final chapters *in se*, but on the diegetic benefits of the new ending (which include Anne’s new-found agency and the physicality of the White Hart Inn scene). See ‘The Final Chapters of *Persuasion*: Austen’s Passionate Revision’, *Persuasions* 40 (2018), 15-31.

solace in haptic “releif”, as Wentworth has only just done. The agitation and quest for comfort are reflected in Austen’s writerly indecision. The first instinct to use “~~secure~~” reinforced the importance of the haptic as safety net, but the balancing act of corrections makes it less suitable than the more deliberate and composed “compass”.

He had been standing by a chair — ~~feeling~~ enjoying the ~~comfort~~ releif of leaning on it — or of playing with it; — he now sat down — drew a little nearer to her — ... Still, a little nearer — and a hand taken and pressed — And “Anne, my own dear Anne!” — bursting forth in the fullness of exquisite feeling —⁸¹⁴

This moment of mutual understanding and pledge is fully haptic, from its premises to its conclusion. Wentworth’s weakness and fidgeting (“releif of leaning”, “playing”) is resolved through ecstatic touch (“a hand taken and pressed”, “exquisite feeling”), which also parallels the lovers’ spacial *rapprochement* (“a little nearer”, “Still, a little nearer”).⁸¹⁵ Austen’s tendency to check her haptic instincts is demonstrated clearly here. Instead of “~~feeling the comfort~~”, she substitutes “enjoying the releif”, which, though still haptic, puts more emphasis on Wentworth’s troubled state of mind than on the physical remedy he needs.

Pleasure and pain draw on the same semantic resources as comfort, but in a heightened degree. “~~It agitated her very much.~~ she was very much distressed”⁸¹⁶ The original “~~agitated~~” contains a physical aspect, which may have resulted in

⁸¹⁴ *JAFM*, vol. IV, pp. 245-7.

⁸¹⁵ Havens, without broaching the haptic, points out the physicality of the courtship (*Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 119).

⁸¹⁶ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 237.

fidgiting. The replacement “distressed” removes this element, making Anne more outwardly composed.

[“]That *I* should be the person commissioned on this subject is extraordinary!—and beleive me Madam, it is no less painful,—A very few words however will put an end to the awkwardness & distress we may *both* be feeling.”⁸¹⁷

Although mistaken about the situation (and Anne’s feelings), Wentworth is right in describing himself and Anne as similarly embarrassed. Indeed, her behaviour and subsequent reaction fully mirror his, and the “*both*” evidences the correctness of his intuition. Wentworth’s “painful” message expresses Austen’s deceptive irony: the pain does not in fact concern the communication, but the essence, of his disappointment.

There was time ~~was~~ for all this to ~~be said~~ pass, — & with such Interruptions only as enhanced the charm of ~~conversation~~ the communication — and Bath c^d. scarcely contain any ~~more~~ other two Beings ~~more~~ at once so rationally & so rapturously happy as during that even^g. occupied the Sopha of ~~of~~ Mrs Croft’s Drawing room in Gay St.⁸¹⁸

This passage contains several of Austen’s quintessential stylistic hallmarks. The pair are “occupy[ing]” the “Sopha” in a spatial sense, which allows Austen to indirect their new physical intimacy. At the same time, it is a play on words, which brings in a military connotation to the description: the lovers are both victors in their amorous campaign. The possibility that the city should “contain” another couple is therefore about volume, as well as location. Their ecstasy fills it, so as to exclude the rest of the world. “[R]ationally and rapturously happy”

⁸¹⁷ *Persuasion*, p. 317.

⁸¹⁸ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 257.

further adds to their all-encompassing bliss, which is rooted both in the mind and the senses, and almost in cosmogony: their universe has become the Universe, in which onomastic *mimesis* the Crofts' address can only be "Gay St.". The idea that "contain" is spatial is reinforced in the original draft by the use and repetition of "more", which Austen refined in the correction. The characters' ecstasy seeps into the language, which becomes hyperbolic and haptic. Pain, however, is often present too: "He was quite concerned lest he might have been giving her pain by touching a tender part".⁸¹⁹ Admiral Croft's delicacy increases as the day goes on (his assumption was indeed indelicate, as were the sexual connotations of his phrase), and his figurative language, in Austen's system of values, shows that he is not a man of delicate feeling, at the same time as it roots the couple's pleasure in the body.⁸²⁰ Pleasure and pain become somewhat indistinguishable:

It was necessary to sit up half the Night & lie awake the remainder to comprehend with composure her present state, & pay for the overplus of Bliss, by Headake & Fatigue.—⁸²¹

This curious conclusion to the chapter brings in an economy of sensation and feeling that systematises the physiology of Austen's characters in a dynamic exchange. The ecstatic feeling ("Bliss") must be redeemed in the body "by Headake & Fatigue". The two sides of the equation cannot be separated, and

⁸¹⁹ *Persuasion*, p. 321.

⁸²⁰ Lascelles (*Jane Austen and her Art*, p. 194) and Havens (p. 118) point out Admiral Croft's "indelicate", but neither comments on the sexual undertones of his words.

⁸²¹ *Persuasion*, p. 322.

prove that Austen's wholistic view of the body correlates the haptic with the emotional.⁸²²

[Mary Musgrove] had something to suffer perhaps when they came ~~to be together~~ ^{into contact} again, and seeing Anne restored to the rights of Seniority & the Mistress of a very pretty Landaulet ———⁸²³

Mary's character is dispatched in a poetically just manner: her haptic hypochondria ("suffer", "contact") is associated with her bathetic materialistic desires ("Seniority", "Landaulet"). The use of "contact" in the correction, rather than "together", adds a dimension of friction, which supports Mary's loss ("suffer"). The narrator's conclusion is precise because haptic.

References to pain at the end of the novel, however, accentuate the tactile dimension of terminal courtship. Wentworth recalls "the moment of Mr. E's ~~appearance & of her being instantly lost to him~~ ^{appearing & dividing her from him. tearing her away}".⁸²⁴ His reunion with Anne is represented as a frustrated haptic process, in which Mr. Elliot is cast in the role of the violent villain ("tearing"), at the same time as Wentworth's sensational desires are expressed (the verb implies that he was at unity with her).⁸²⁵ Two successive revisions create a crescendo of violence and tactility in the expression of Wentworth's feelings regarding Anne's loss.

⁸²² Kate Singer highlights the physical-physiological effects of emotion. Emotion becomes haptic when it is processed by the body: "as perceptions of embodied emotion ... change the body's physiology, they literally change its material contents and sometimes those of the world at large" ('Austen Agitated', p. 97).

⁸²³ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 271.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁸²⁵ The verb "tear" is echoed in 'Sanditon', and also recalls Lady Denham's "detach". Both point to the hapticity (and violence) of social ties. See above.

“[L]est” becomes “~~dividing~~” becomes “tearing ... away”, reinforcing the indication that Wentworth saw her as a physical being who filled him with desire. “How could I look on without ~~feeling my extreme danger?~~ agony? —”.⁸²⁶ Rather than instinct and fear (“~~danger~~”), Austen finally settles for intense physical pain (“agony”), which is more revealing of Wentworth’s inner sensations. It also participates in Austen’s general lexical economy, as the hyperbolic noun subsumes the adjective.⁸²⁷ Even outside the realms of pleasure and pain, amorous and erotic feelings draw on the haptic. Captain Wentworth refers to “his own sensations”, grounding his love in perception.⁸²⁸ His past romantic attachments are also expressed in haptic terms:

He found, too late, that he had entangled himself—and that precisely as he became thoroughly satisfied of his not *caring* for Louisa at all, he must regard himself as bound to her, if her feelings for him, were what the Harvilles supposed.—⁸²⁹

Delineating Wentworth’s attachment for Louisa, Austen uses two evocative haptic metaphors: “entangled” and “bound” both highlight the hero’s painful predicament, and his need to escape the Musgroves. His final release, and embracing of Anne’s love, is exalted: he is “now, more happy than Language could express, or any heart but his own be capable of”.⁸³⁰ Feeling is not

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁸²⁷ On the economy of Austen’s prose, see Lascelles, *Jane Austen and her Art*, pp. 135-6.

⁸²⁸ *Persuasion*, p. 319.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-20.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

commensurate to “Language”, and when the “heart” becomes the subject of dramatic resolution, Austen withdraws behind and between words.⁸³¹

But Wentworth’s feelings are not always indelible: his knowledge of Anne’s character “was overwhelmed, buried, lost in those earlier feelings, which [he] had been smarting under Year after Year.—... The Admirals news indeed, was a revulsion”.⁸³² Wentworth’s self-narrative emphasises the haptic nature of the pain caused by his “feelings” (“smarting”). His own reaction (“revulsion”) anticipates the somatisation of all feelings prevalent in ‘Sanditon’.

These chapters are also more vocal about sexual immorality than is common for Austen:

Mrs. Clay’s affections had overpowered her Interest, & she had sacrificed for the young Man’s sake, the ~~power~~ possibility of scheming longer for Sir Walter;—she has Abilities however as well as Affections, and it is now a doubtful point whether his ~~finesse~~ cunning or hers may ~~ultimately~~ finally carry the day, ~~There are Bets of her being still Lady Elliot at last~~ whether, after preventing her from being the wife of Sir Walter, he may not be ~~teized~~ wheedled & caressed at last into making her the wife of Sir William.—⁸³³

“[A]ffections” in this context sounds like a euphemism for sexual desire, and added to Mrs. Clay’s “Abilities”, and the idea that Mr. Elliot might be “wheedled & caressed” into compliance make her sound more morally corrupt than most of Austen’s characters, including her fallen women. The successive emendations move towards short, unassuming words (“cunning” and “finally” rather than

⁸³¹ This example supports Toner’s point about Austen’s recourse to apophasis (see *Jane Austen’s Style*, pp. 81-130), and Joel Faflak’s comments on the narrative conclusion of *MP*. See ‘Jane Austen and the Persuasion of Happiness’, in J. Faflak and R. Sha (eds.), *Romanticism and the Emotions* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 98-123 [pp. 112-17].

⁸³² *Persuasion*, p. 321.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

“finesse” and “ultimately”), a shift that parallels Mr. Elliot’s and Mrs. Clay’s low motives.

The depiction of Anne’s affection in action uses a pun that would have found its perfect place in ‘Sanditon’: Mrs. Smith’s

spring of Felicity was in the glow of her spirits — as her friend Anne’s was in the warmth of her Heart. — Anne’s was Tenderness itself; — and she had all the full worth of it in Capt:ⁿ- Wentworth’s affection.⁸³⁴

While both “Tenderness” and “affection” are ambiguous terms, grounded in feeling and action at the same time, the idea that they have and exchange “worth” recalls the physical exchange of feelings and pains expressed earlier, and echoes the hero’s name.

⁸³⁴ *JAFM*, vol. IV, p. 283.

MP affords a similar pun, when Sir Thomas describes the “sterling good of principle and manner”, referring to Fanny Price (vol. III, chap. 17, p. 545).

CONCLUSION

Compared with Austen's early works and letters, the later manuscripts are a short *corpus*. But because of their nature, certain trends in Austen's mature style become apparent, which help discern the surprising coherence that unifies her prose.

They contain regular and significant references to touch, which ground the novels in the real world, and dispel the myth that Austen was a purely abstract, disconnected writer, whose novels contain little detail about things and actions.

With few notable exceptions, Austen's revisions steer her prose away from direct references to the body, in favour of carefully crafted, indirect references to sensations and feelings that need to be decoded by the reader. Through careful reading, one can re-envisage the acts of embodied affection that are, most of the time, subsumed in language.⁸³⁵

Contrary to D.A. Miller's argument, the early drafts of *Persuasion* point forward to 'Sanditon' stylistically, supporting the idea that Austen was going in a new but related direction with her last novel. A more playful realisation than her published work, 'Sanditon' allies the stylistic revelry of the *Juvenilia* with Austen's mature experimental style; rather than evidencing the loss of her writerly

⁸³⁵ This process questions Rita Felski's claim that there is no pleasure in reading literature critically in *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago IL, 2015), p. 188. See Conclusion.

faculties, ‘Sanditon’ looks forward and backward simultaneously, and furthers Austen’s experiments with the mind and the body.⁸³⁶

⁸³⁶ Knox-Shaw argues that *Persuasion* and ‘Sanditon’ are similar in “pushing on the bounds of expression” and “attempt[ing] ... to convey the feel of physical sensation” (*Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*, p. 252).

CONCLUSION

LOVE & FRIENDSHIP

Love & Friendship (2016), Whit Stillman's filmic version of 'Lady Susan', is Austen's earliest work of fiction to have been adapted for the screen.⁸³⁷ Its epistolary nature, which involves large amounts of confidential communication, has led Stillman to multiply *tête-à-tête* meetings. This trend, added to Lady Susan's restlessness, effects a number of greeting scenes, which contain an element of touch. When Lady Susan and Mrs. Cross arrive at Churchill (07:20-07:40) they are handed out of their carriage by liveried servants. Vernon greets the heroine by taking her hands in his, he then shakes hands with her companion. Lady Susan extends one hand to each of the children, as her brother-in-law has done to her. These differing degrees of intimacy are registered haptically. Lady Susan's formality with the children already shows that she has no true affection for them and is performing a perfunctory task. This haptic coding is immediately understandable to the viewer. When Lady Susan and Reginald meet, they bow and curtsy but do not touch (11:35-11:40). The discrete forms of greeting reveal both status and intimacy: the formality and absence of touch may already be a

⁸³⁷ Various segments of the *Juvenilia* (particularly 'The History of England', pp. 176-89) serve to demonstrate Fanny's vivacious imagination and spirit in Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* (1:35-2:25; 12:10-14:05; 1:03:20-1:03:35; 1:42:15-1:43:40), but they are not adapted for the screen *stricto sensu*. They heavily reference the hapticity of writing (instruments, paper, finished *cahiers*, inky fingers), and are tied to Rozema's vision of Fanny's development from a despondent uprooted girl to a blossoming authoress.

combination of wariness and budding desire on Reginald's part, who has just admitted to being titillated by the idea of meeting Lady Susan, supposedly to detect her deceitfulness. Frederica later encounters Reginald on her way home from church (51:20-51:30), and discovering that he is completely rain-soaked, she sympathetically touches his arm and entreats him to go and change. Her friendly gesture indicates their growing intimacy and their mutual discovery as bodily beings, and hints at a possible courtship. The look Reginald gives her demonstrates his surprise, and his understanding that as her action is a breach of decorum, it might be pregnant with meaning. It may also indicate that Lady Susan's are the only tactile attentions he wishes to receive (which is later confirmed by the fact that they have contracted a secret engagement). Frederica's response to his look is to apologise and flee.⁸³⁸

The only melodramatic scene in the film ironically centres on the reception of a letter (59:05-1:00:45). Lady Manwaring snatches Lady Susan's letter from Mrs. Johnson's hands and opens it. Reginald recuperates it in the same way, and proceeds to fold it back. Lady Manwaring soon grabs it back from Reginald, opens it and reads it aloud, shaking. Mr. Johnson takes it from her hand. This intense haptic-dramatic episode highlights the importance of the information contained in Lady Susan's correspondence: unveiling the contents of a letter in

⁸³⁸ In 'Sexuality', Fiona Brideoake relates the description of the imagined biographical tactile embrace in *Becoming Jane* to the "lack" of touch in Austen's novels, which does not prevent the "corporeality of her fictional courtships". This "corporeality" is palpable to all, but unevicenced in the texts *per se*, and the passions themselves are "elided". See 'Sexuality', in C.L. Johnson and C. Tuite (eds.), *A Companion To Jane Austen* (Chichester, 2009), pp. 456-66 [p. 464].

public will precipitate the exposure of Lady Susan's character. There is a certain violence to the scene (both letter-snatchers are aristocrats), conveyed visually through gestures, and verbally through imperatives and tone ("Return that letter, Madam!", "Excuse me!", "No, Stop!"), which verges on farce, associating it with Austen's *Juvenilia*.⁸³⁹

Stillman's direction of a later episode of daughterly affection perfectly summarises the stylistic importance of the haptic for the screen, in emulating Austen's style. Mrs. Vernon places her hand on her mother's, off camera; only the movement of her arm is visible (1:06:10-1:06:35). This gesture indicates both trust and sympathy. Mrs. Vernon knows better than her mother and feels sorry for her shortsightedness, while at the same time celebrating her goodness (which makes her inept but lovable). The framing of the shot places touch in the periphery of the dialogue and action, while also making it affectively significant. This single shot shows that Stillman understands, and is able to replicate, Austen's strategies of indirection. He makes an act of touch vital to the scene, while simultaneously keeping it from the spectator's view.

⁸³⁹ Marcie Frank argues that melodrama is occasionally present in Austen's fiction, and stems from her love of the theatre. *The Novel Stage: Narrative Form from the Restoration to Jane Austen* (Lewisburg PA, 2020), pp. 144-54.

THE READER AND THE MIND

In *Equivocal Beings*, Claudia Johnson argues that Austen's novels

proceed by exclusion and decrescendo. Notably absent from her plots are the ostentatious affectivity, the frantic contentiousness over suffering, and the sexual equivocality generated by male sentimentality...⁸⁴⁰

She highlights Austen's singularity, which consists in showing less than others.

What Austen chiefly withholds is emotion and sex. This "decrescendo" is already present in the later volumes of the *Juvenilia*, and accentuates throughout Austen's career. It is not simply that Austen says less than her predecessors, she says less differently. Roger Gard summarises what is missing in Austen:

in the page-by-page texture of the fictional world, there is an absence of the ordinary life of the body – eating, running, sleeping, sweating. They are marginal in the novels for themselves, if there at all, and only present when, with a typical economy, they are significant of something else as well... But the real interesting – the crucial – places where boundaries can be detected require a little more attention.⁸⁴¹

This thesis has focused on the "boundaries" in Austen's prose and has examined the "absence[s]" that reveal something about the "ordinary life of the body".

Gard's certainty about Austen's titular "clarity" is questionable, however: "There is no *ambiguity* in Jane Austen: the reader is never long unsure about what has happened, and never finally unsure as to how to take it".⁸⁴² His reading may be correct on the macro-level, in the most superficial aspect of Austen's plots and

⁸⁴⁰ Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality; Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago IL, 1995), p. 18.

⁸⁴¹ Roger Gard, *Jane Austen's Novels: The Art of Clarity* (New Haven CT, 1992), p. 12.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*

characters, but it is not consistent with the level of “ambiguity” that is present in her style. Laurie Kaplan’s focus on the “Uncommon Reader” provides an answer:

What *do* we need to know to read Jane Austen’s novels well? What is our relation to the text? Are we active or passive readers?... The Uncommon Reader today must necessarily excavate the gardens and explore the estates of Jane Austen’s landscapes to decode certain enigmas related to the literary conventions, the social context, the formalities of style of the compositions. The Uncommon Reader’s attention should focus both on what Austen includes in her text and on what she leaves out... The good reader’s role is to engage the text in active enquiry.⁸⁴³

Calling on Samuel Johnson’s and Virginia Woolf’s ideas, Kaplan makes readerly participation essential to Austen’s prose. In a dialectic way, reading style reveals Austen’s reality, and reading reality reveals her style. E.M. Dadlez goes further, by focusing on symbols and forms:

Like a conductor, the author orchestrates our attention. In literature, unlike life, inessentials are eliminated and relevant considerations are cast into sharp relief. The author decides which facets of an experience to bring within our purview, which aspects of a character’s thinking will be foregrounded, which circumstances are crucial or significant.⁸⁴⁴

Dadlez uses a new metaphor to explain strategies of indirection, central to Austen’s purpose. The reader is “conduct[ed]” like a musician, they have to play a part in the meaning-making whole:

There is a kind of active, imaginative participation involved in our response to figures of speech and symbols and imagery that turns reading into a collaboration.⁸⁴⁵

Dadlez presents symbols like musical *leitmotifs* (e.g. Robert Ferrars’ toothpick case in *S&S*), like catalysts that need to be identified and extrapolated by the reader,

⁸⁴³ Laurie Kaplan, ‘Jane Austen and the Uncommon Reader’, in J.D. Grey (ed.), *Jane Austen’s Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan* (Ann Arbor MI, 1989), pp. 73-82 [pp. 80-1].

⁸⁴⁴ E.M. Dadlez, ‘Form Affects Content’, p. 315.

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

thus effecting readerly “collaboration” with the author. The music of language plays a large part in that process:

poetic devices may, one assumes, produce still different expectancies based ... on expectations regarding rhythm, concordance and metrics, perhaps not unlike expectations aroused in the course of listening to music.⁸⁴⁶

By relating music, meter and narrative “expectations”, Dadlez approaches (but does not expressly describe) the reader’s delighted frustration in unusual syntagmatic compositions that end with an imperfect cadence, that is, textual irresolution. Austen raises “expectations” in order to leave them unfulfilled. The sentence and the plot do not align with the reader’s desires, in a pleasurable disharmony, until their conclusion, if harmony is restored at all.⁸⁴⁷ Austen resorts to this stratagem both on macro- and micro-levels, both in diegesis and in style. In this sense, her prose is never “expository”, because it always demands that the reader accept, and grapple with, the unknown, the ambiguous and the *Unheimlich*.

In *The Limits of Critique*, Rita Felski presents a convincing case against Ricoeur’s “hermeneutics of suspicion”.⁸⁴⁸ She questions the idea that literature must be “decipher[ed] and decode[d]”.⁸⁴⁹ Her conclusion reproaches “Critique” with multiple shortcomings:

⁸⁴⁶ Dadlez, p. 324.

⁸⁴⁷ In *Tristan und Isolde*, Richard Wagner avoids perfect cadences, and only allows the listener to find cadential peace in the final chord. Similarly, the main musical motif in Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake* remains in the minor until the conclusion of the piece. In both cases, the listener is left in a state of pleasurable tension until the final notes, when it is finally alleviated.

⁸⁴⁸ Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, pp. 30-2.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

It is conspicuously silent... on the many other reasons why we are drawn to works of art: aesthetic pleasure, increased self-understanding, moral reflection, perceptual reinvigoration, ecstatic self-loss, emotional consolation, or heightened sensation—to name just a few. Its conception of the uses and values of literature is simply too thin.⁸⁵⁰

The attractions of “art” listed here have to do with affective perception, which, she argues, is impossible within “Critique”. If she is right, this thesis is not a critical work. It strives to reclaim the text *in se, per se*, to facilitate aesthetic pleasure in the stylistic. It centres on reading perception, specifically haptic perception, as a means to reinstate the joy of understanding sensation, always latent in Austen’s manuscripts. They are complex, sometimes puzzling texts, whose facetiousness is made pleasurable in knowing more, in looking beyond. Because they use indirection so intensely in order to ask more of the reader, they invite “demystifying”, but never questioning. Austen’s prose is perfect because perfected; it contains its mysteries but does not invite suspicion. There are no “limits and insufficiencies” in the Austenian corpus, but there is resistance, a resistance that has prevented readers (and critics among them) from finding their “ecstatic self-loss”. Felski says more:

Critique ... results in a mind-set—vigilant, wary, mistrustful—that blocks receptivity and inhibits generosity. We are shielded from the risks, but also the rewards, of aesthetic experience. I have tried to show that a fuller engagement with such experience does not require a surrender of thoughtfulness or intellectual rigor: that, in spite of warnings to the contrary, the alternative to critique does not have to take the form of “belle-lettrism” or mindless effusion.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁵⁰ Felski, p. 188.

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*

While “detection” is at the core of close reading, it should not preclude the experience of the reality and uniqueness of the text, or lead to an explication that is necessarily reductive or “mistrustful”. Putting the reader back in the centre of experience when reading Austen is precisely a way of avoiding the “limits of critique”.

Perception in another form is central to Lisa Zunshine’s argument about the import of “intersubjectivity” in Austen’s fiction. “We are intensely aware of the body language and facial expressions of other people, even if the full extent and significance of such awareness escapes us”.⁸⁵² Zunshine explains that our brains are activated by witnessing an action by a third party in the same way as if we were performing that action ourselves. She also argues that “mind-reading” is a way for humans to make sense of the behaviour of others by attributing to them emotions and motives. Austen’s haptic language may similarly be enough for the reader to perceive touch without it being mentioned.⁸⁵³ This corroborates the theory that only an active reader can fully appreciate Austen’s prose. Zunshine uses Austen’s heroines to support her argument:

neither Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility* nor Fanny in *Mansfield Park* are explicitly characterized as being over-sensitive to other people’s body language, even though it is precisely their heightened sensitivity that makes possible the intersubjective moments present in those novels.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵² Lisa Zunshine, ‘Why Jane Austen Was Different, And Why We May Need Cognitive Science to See It’, *Narrative and Self-Knowledge* 41 (2007), 275-98 [277].

⁸⁵³ Jillian Heydt-Stevenson explains that some read Austen’s prose “flat” while others are able to discern and “touch” its “haptic quality”, which is “a kind of stroke on the skin of something else happening” (‘Jane Austen and the Senses: A Symposium’ [Online, 15 July 2021, Q&A Session]).

⁸⁵⁴ Zunshine, ‘Why Jane Austen Was Different’, p. 282.

“Intersubjective moments” rely on “body language”, one of the manifestations of the haptic. If the heroines are discerning of these other forms of communication, so is the narrator, who is not therefore required to make haptic *stimuli* explicit.

Austen, Zunshine comments, is unusual in multiplying levels of “deep intersubjectivity”, which is “organic” to her prose: “eliminate one or two levels of mental embedment, and you lose the meaning”.⁸⁵⁵ Austen’s “intersubjective passages” cannot be simplified. Zunshine highlights the complexity of Austen’s diegetic craft, implied in the dialectic interactions of her characters, but also abetted by her ability to experiment with syntagm, without which such advanced manoeuvres would be impossible. The multiplied intersubjective levels inherent in Austen’s diegetic contrariness complicate the emotional narrative:

Austen knew (intuitively, of course) that readers would try to downgrade that level from the challenging fourth to the easier third or even second, and she crafted prose that would resist that simplifying impulse.⁸⁵⁶

Zunshine refers to the following pattern: “Anne knows that Wentworth knows that Elizabeth knows, etc.”, arguing that “incomprehensibility” may elsewhere create pleasure, but that Austen “encourage[s] us to identify emotionally with the heroines who can decipher the complex social situations but cannot keep from losing the men they love”.⁸⁵⁷ Two layers of intersubjectivity are easy to deal with, three if one pays close attention. A fourth level (and anything beyond) requires particular caution and emotional awareness, and Austen’s readers, Zunshine

⁸⁵⁵ Zunshine, ‘Why Jane Austen Was Different’, p. 286.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 293-4.

argues, have no choice but to keep up with her narrative and linguistic machinations, and with what those do not say. Austen will not allow the reader to misunderstand or flatten her emotional narratives: they demand to be read as they are. Austen's use of polysemy is similar to her intersubjective play: by creating a compact with the active reader, the narrator expresses contradictory meanings by using the same word. In *P&P* (vol. III, chap. 15), Mr. Collins reports on Lady Catherine's reaction to the prospect of Elizabeth's marriage.

"[C]ondescension" is Lady Catherine's combined kindness/haughtiness:

After mentioning the likelihood of this marriage to her ladyship last night, she immediately, with her usual condescension, expressed what she felt on the occasion...⁸⁵⁸

The narrator makes each character understand the word discretely (Mr. Collins is all admiration at such largesse, but Elizabeth Bennet recognises his understanding, while also feeling the insufferable patronisation of the aristocrat), knowing that the reader understands both meanings simultaneously, as well as the narrator's intention. The author relies on the reader knowing that the narrator created the ambiguity purposefully.⁸⁵⁹

What exactly is achieved when the writer does manage to pack four or five levels of recursive mental embedment into a scene yet makes this difficult embedment feel natural—that is, not funny, forced, or incomprehensible? Perhaps we can speak here about some form of subconscious pleasure experienced by readers who thus are enabled to sail smoothly through a clearly demanding cognitive construction. It is as if we are made to feel that

⁸⁵⁸ *P&P*, p. 403.

⁸⁵⁹ Myra Stokes argues that polysemy is likely to "confuse the judgement" (*The Language of Jane Austen*, p. 52), and gives "affable" as one such example (see p. 109).

we are dealing with a genuinely complex, nay, almost intractable, social situation, but we are navigating it beautifully.⁸⁶⁰

Zunshine here perfectly summarises the beauty of active readership. Her pleasure lies with the navigation of “embedments” and “intersubjectivity”. This thesis argues that zeugma and juxtaposition prompt a similar delight: its case studies build on Zunshine’s argument and its findings engage with Felski’s worries about critical activity.

⁸⁶⁰ Zunshine, ‘Why Jane Austen Was Different’, p. 295.

STYLE AND THE HAPTIC

This thesis has concentrated on the *corpus* of Jane Austen's fiction manuscripts and personal letters to investigate the haptic in those parts of her *œuvre*, and its relation to style. Because they contain her unedited first, and self-corrected second (and sometimes subsequent) authorial intentions, Austen's manuscripts offer unique materials for enquiry that the novels cannot yield, because they were heavily revised by other hands, and subsequently corrected by Austen herself.⁸⁶¹ The autograph texts allow modern readers to get as close to Austen's writerly hand and writerly mind as physically and intellectually possible.

Chapter I surveyed the theoretical (con-)texts that directly and indirectly influenced Austen's writings. Eighteenth-century philosophy and medicine offer correlated points of view on the body and the processes of perception; they shaped and informed the understanding of Austen's time. In conduct literature, touch, allied with the passions, was seen as a deleterious, if not dangerous, sense: by warning against the social and personal evils of pleasure, moralists sought to prepare young women for a life of restraint. What they saw as a (Christian) public duty, however, created a repressive climate that forced women to uphold polite patriarchal hegemony.

⁸⁶¹ Sutherland argues that the first and second editions of *MP*, both published during Jane Austen's lifetime (1814 and 1816), evidence the impact of editorial policies on the text, which becomes more and more removed from the author's original intentions, especially as regards "sentence structure, punctuation and meaning". R.W. Chapman's classic twentieth-century edition, Sutherland argues, further obscures Austen's style. See *Textual Lives*, pp. 279-313.

Language was also affected by prescriptivist tendencies, which led thinkers and belle-lettrists to strive for the standardisation of linguistic norms, both in grammar and style. By redefining key syntactic and semantic terms (*e.g.* “conjunction” and “antanaclasis”), new canons of relationship between words were established, whose purpose was to effect a conservative *dictum* that subjected the body to the mind.

The essential nature of touch, however, which shapes both life and language, renders this repressive endeavour always already impractical in fictional literature, particularly the literature of sensibility. There can be no metaphor without touch, without the contiguity and friction of forced semantic contact. The language of the moralists of sensibility relies on tactile connotations, and cannot dispense with them. This haptic quality of prose predates Austen’s fiction. The tear-jerking meritocracy of sensibility and sentimentality caressed and cajoled those readers who were able to respond to the fine feelings such literature displayed, but moral sensibility, beyond genre, is not possible without the sense of touch.⁸⁶² Austen’s style is less hackneyed, more cerebral than that of sensitivist writers, and calls on the metonymic and metaphoric facets of etymology, semantics and phonetics to create successive shades of meaning which keep the reading mind on the alert, constantly navigating new challenges.

In Chapter II, Austen’s *Juvenilia* was analysed for its haptic and stylistic potential. Her early writings contain many instances of unbridled touch,

⁸⁶² Adela Pinch argues that the “tears-on-hand” trope “foregrounds the physicality of emotional exchange, the hand representing the body as a whole” (*Strange Fits*, p. 128).

especially in courtship situations, the violence of which voices Austen's parodic anxiety. The early writings allow for narrative and linguistic experimentation, and their deregulation of the canons of fiction use the haptic as a *locum* for subversion. Austen portrays young characters whose resistance to social structures leads them to hurt (sometimes kill) each other, and whose sexual appetites find an outlet in the realisation of fantasies and in language. Female characters are central, as they are the first victims of abuse and repression: their difficult or narcissistic life narratives proliferate references to touch in language, a trend that Austen would pursue in all her later writings, both in her private letters and in fiction.

Austen's personal letters were the *corpus* of Chapter III, which concentrated on style. By analysing Austen's references to her own writing, and her use of juxtaposition, polysemy and euphemism, the haptic nature of her style became apparent. In these private writings, meant for discrete readerships of one, Austen is not bound by the regulations of her novels, and although the subject matter of the letters is usually quotidian (except when Austen discusses fiction), their style is just as polished and idiosyncratic as that of the published texts, and displays Austen's stylistic hallmarks. Touch is present in everyday life situations, but more importantly in style, as a realisation of Austen's strategy of indirection, which develops over time. Tactile courtship, present in the early letters, becomes the subject of euphemism, and is gradually subsumed in language. The haptic does not disappear, but penetrates Austen's syntagmatic and paradigmatic writing

tools: word order and word choices effect an often discordant feeling of touch in the reader, which echoes that of the letter-writer.

Finally, Chapter IV concentrated on Austen's mature manuscripts, a disparate group that has been analysed piece by piece, as their natures, genres and composition dates differ. What they have in common is a similarity with the rest of Austen's writings, especially with the published novels, in that they are the stylistic and diegetic achievement of Austen's genius. They exemplify her most advanced stylistic expression of haptic touch, while also displaying her gradual creative process. Because 'Lady Susan' remained an unpublished epistolary novella, because 'The Watsons' was never finished, because 'Sanditon' is heavily corrected, and because the *Persuasion* chapters were rejected, they allow a conscientious reader to exhume the haptic from the stylistic recesses in which it has been confined, and to recognise how it shapes Austen's plots, language, and thoughts.

Narrated perception may seem to be the perfect forum for an analysis of touch, but the critical studies that concentrate on the senses, whether relating to Austen or not, contain noticeably few references to touch, because the tactile sense proves to be challenging to represent in language. Narrated perception does not, therefore, afford many forays into an analysis of the haptic. Affect theory and thing theory both focus on bodies and objects, but they do not yet afford a suitable platform to elucidate the haptic. Because it is transactional, anatomical, physiological, emotional and linguistic, the haptic cannot be limited to one field

of study, and needs to be envisioned as a discrete but integral object of enquiry, which originates in the body, and, through varied forms of contact, is expressed on the page.

~~“THE LIGHT TOUCH OF A VERY FRIENDLY HAND”~~

En route to Sanditon, Parker graces Charlotte Heywood with a portrait of Lady Denham. The manuscript segment contains extensive corrections, in which Austen suppresses two haptic references:

some further particulars of ~~names & places~~ her history, & ~~some hints of~~ her Character (~~though given with the light touch of a very friendly hand~~) were served to lighten the tediousness of a long ~~Pull~~ Hill, or a heavy bit of road...⁸⁶³

The road to Sanditon includes a “Pull” that becomes a “Hill”: the effort, difficulty and consequent discomfort for the passengers are discarded in favour of a geographical feature. The arduous terrain, whose “tediousness” requires solace, strains both horses and passengers. The grinding of the wheels calls for humorous, comforting words, and Parker’s engrossment in speculation makes the portrait of his business partner agreeable. The ~~“light touch of [his] very friendly hand”~~ is a painting metaphor; ~~“touch”~~ is in Austen’s idiolect an expression of style in which “hands” find their place.⁸⁶⁴ But the “particulars” of Lady Denham’s “history” and “Character” do not intimate an intimate relationship. Delineating someone’s strengths and foibles to a stranger is a delicate matter that

⁸⁶³ *JAFM*, vol. V, p. 65.

⁸⁶⁴ Tom Keymer draws a thought-provoking parallel between Austen’s prose and Cassandra’s watercolour sketch of 1804: the latter “catches something important about Austen, her narrative style, and the authorial stance she adopts: poised yet also informal, even intimate to some degree, but with no interest at all in showing her face” (*Writing, Society, Politics*, p. 148). Keymer uses Austen’s physical presence in Cassandra’s portrait to draw conclusions about the paradoxical and indirect nature of her prose.

requires literal tact and “so fine a Brush”.⁸⁶⁵ Austen’s first draft, driven by her narrative instinct, included a number of tactile lexical items that were common in the *Juvenilia*, sublimated in the *Letters*, repressed in the later fiction, and briefly reappear in ‘Sanditon’. Her narrative and stylistic maturity exercises control over her first impulses, however, and through corrections, Austen subdues her haptic tendencies: references to hands and to touch disappear, and although the haptic core of the scene remains, it is so skilfully indirected that the reader, unaware of the corrections, could not assume that feeling, in the physical sense, was so prominent in the original draft.

This thesis has used close reading to analyse instances of touch in Austen’s manuscripts, and has related them to stylistic occurrences in which Austen’s style becomes palpable, in order to show that the haptic is doubly vital to Austen’s writing process. By bringing this little-commented-on but essential aspect of her prose to the fore, this thesis has demonstrated the contrariness of Austen’s demands on the reader, who is drawn to reading and rereading, interpreting and reinterpreting, placing and displacing bodies and objects in the realistic universe of her writings, and words and ideas in the syntagmatic confines of her prose.

Austen’s works of fiction are often adapted for the screen, and her prose is surprisingly hospitable to such transposition, because the haptic is hiding in plain sight in her language. Screenwriters have learnt to tease touch out of her texts, and to make it an integral part of their adaptations, like Andrew Davies’ 1995

⁸⁶⁵ See *Letters*, p. 337 (16-17 December 1816).

dramatisation of *Pride and Prejudice*, starring Colin Firth, on which Sutherland remarks:

Whole scenes were added to the ... miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* to enhance Darcy's (Colin Firth's) barely restrained eroticism: he plays billiards, fences, and, memorably, swims.⁸⁶⁶

On screen, Darcy becomes an undeniably haptic protagonist. Davies delineates his character and his appeal (“eroticism”) in the way he moves and acts. Austen achieves this more subtly, through style, and the process of adaptation, therefore, might be seen as the reversal of her stylistic development that counterfeits less indirect ways of depicting subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

This analysis has focused on the Austen's peripheral *corpus*, but its premise could easily be extended to a study of the six published novels, which have been mentioned only briefly and in passing: *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* all have their place in a study of Austen's haptic style in print, and their multiple adaptations in a study of Austenian touch on the screen.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶⁶ Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, p. 348.

⁸⁶⁷ Lesley H. Willis, in ‘Object Association and Minor Characters in Jane Austen's Novels’, *Studies in the Novel* 7 (1975), 104-19, focuses on the association of “minor character” with objects in *P&P* and *MP*. Though quite old, this study would make a good starting point for an analysis of the haptic in the novels.

Recent critical output has focused on Austen's influence on the screen (both cinema and television). See John Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen* (Cambridge, 2001); Gina Macdonald and Andrew F. Macdonald (eds.), *Jane Austen on Screen* (Cambridge, 2003); Paula Byrne, *The Genius of Jane Austen: Her Love of Theatre and Why She Works in Hollywood* (New York NY, 2017); and Lisa Hopkins (ed.), *After Austen: Reinventions, Rewritings, Revisitings* (Cham, 2018).

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