Speculations about the obsession with mastery in Jane Austen and Jacques Derrida

Thomas Dutoit

▶ **To cite this version:**

Thomas Dutoit. Speculations about the obsession with mastery in Jane Austen and Jacques Derrida. Claire Fabre, Marc Amfreville. Les formes de l'obsession dans la fiction anglaise et américaine, Editions Michel Houdiard, pp.74-94, 2007, 2-912673-70-4. hal-01588694

HAL Id: hal-01588694
https://hal.univ-lille.fr/hal-01588694

Submitted on 16 Oct 2017

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Open licence - etalab

know something she dares not ask about. The forbidden is the *chief wish*; the frustration would be that it is not public information. So a private space is opened in a public space, and the mouthpiece of mischief is thereby enabled to speak: "Mr. Wickham was at leisure to talk to Elizabeth, and she was very willing to hear him, though what she chiefly wished to hear she could not hope to be told, the history of his acquaintance with Mr. Darcy" *(PP* 52). Here, the chief is the mischief, in the sense that one wants to know what mischief Mr. Darcy, the Chief, was involved in, and the purveyor of truth, the one who can fulfill her chief wish, and who therefore is in the position of the Chief, is The Mischief of the book, Mr. Wickham.

When Elizabeth traipses over to Netherfield, and installs herself as in charge of her sister's health, the first instance of the word "chief" in the book occurs: "Elizabeth passed the chief of the night in her sister's room" *(PP* 28) Elizabeth spends the "chief" of the night in the room of her ailing sister, and is rewarded by the "pleasure" of the morning (Jane's better health). What the text does not say is where she spent the mischief, or the minor, part of the night. Obviously, she must have found a few minutes or hours somewhere, we assume in her own bed, but the text leaves this open. Where was Elizabeth for the "mischief" portion of the night? It's left to the reader's imagination. *Pace* Foucault, can we really (and where would we say it from?) say that Jane Austen does not want readers to wonder about this unsaid implication?

What is "chief" is also associated with a thwarted expression of "animal spirits," thwarted vigor. After Mr. Collins is rejected by Elizabeth Bennet, "chief" qualifies his petrified manner: "As for the gentleman himself, *his* feelings were chiefly expressed, not by embarrassment or dejection, or by trying to avoid her, but by stiffness of manner and resentful silence" *(PP* 78). When the sickly Miss De Bourgh – who is more or less rejected by Darcy as potential spouse – is described, collapsing health is contiguous with "chief": "Mrs. Jenkinson was chiefly employed in watching how little Miss De Bourgh ate, pressing her to try some other dish, and fearing she were indisposed" *(PP* 109). "Chief" turns up when Mr. Collins, now married to Charlotte Lucas, is described as having his entire 'libido' mobilized by physical exertion, manual tasks or the prospect of Rosings all of which entirely satisfy him so that he has no idea of bothering his wife: "Elizabeth was thankful to find that they did not see more of her cousin [Mr. Collins] by the alteration [in his schedule], for the chief of the time between breakfast and dinner was now passed by him either at work in the garden, or in reading and writing, and looking out of window in his own book room, which fronted the road" *(PP* 111). It is therefore no surprise that Kitty, when subsumed back under the governance of her two elder sisters – this follows her separation from Lydia – is restored to the chiefdom, to a certain sovereignty that explicitly is defined as non-contact with physical exuberance: "Kitty, to her very material advantage, spent the chief of her time with her two elder sisters"; "she was not of so ungovernable a temper as Lydia, and, removed from the influence of Lydia's example, she became, by proper attention and management, less irritable, less ignorant, and less insipid" *(PP* 252). The governor is the Chief, and what is under the rule of "chief" is governable. Whence the equation, "ungovernable" = mischief. Hence, it is also no surprise that Elizabeth characterizes Lydia as someone who would "attach herself to any body", no matter what the body as long as it was close enough to her; Elizabeth's word for Lydia's utter attachability is "mischief". Mischief is the fact that Lydia was not governed; in other words, the door was left open, and she was given free reign: "the mischief of neglect and mistaken indulgence towards such a girl.– Oh! How acutely did she [Elizabeth] now feel it" *(PP* 181).

In Jacques Derrida's seminar given in 2002-2003, entitled *La bête et le souverain*, in the eighth session devoted to Paul Celan's important meta-poetic statement, "The Meridian", Derridian poetic sovereignty cleaves political sovereignty and phallocracy: "Et si c'était le propre du souverain, ledit phallus, serait-ce pour autant le propre de l'homme?" He continues, "La souveraineté est la puissance absolue et perpétuelle d'une République" which we call "majesty", meaning the great: "Cette grandeur dressée, érigée, augmentée … n'est pas seulement un trope, … une façon sensible de représenter le souverain. … Ce n'est donc pas une figure mais un trait essentiel du pouvoir souverain, un attribut essentiel de la souveraineté, son érection absolue, sans faiblesse ou sans détumescence…. Et concrètement, cela se traduit … par une toute-puissance de l'État sur la vie la mort, le droit de grâce, la génération, la naissance, la puissance sexuelle … mais aussi la hauteur depuis laquelle l'État est en puissance de tout voir, de voir le tout, ayant littéralement, en puissance, un droit de regard sur tout".[13] One thinks of Darcy, when he is mounted on Elizabeth on Oakham Mount, with a view over her that he had never before seen, at the precise climactic moment of her consenting to marry him, silently. But Derrida, not Darcy, will develop sovereignty by seeing it as a marionnette, as a simulacrum device. When Derrida does so by taking issue with Marion, Jean-Luc Marion, there is something mischievous going on.

Mr. Bennet tells Elizabeth concerning Lydia who wants to go to Brighton and be surrounded by testosterone-rich young soldiers: "Let her go then. Colonel Forster [the husband of the woman she'll stay with] is a sensible man, and will keep her out of any real mischief" (*PP* 152). Lydia's trip of course turns into the elopement with Wickham.

Les Formes de l'obsession dans la littérature anglaise et américaine

© MICHEL HOUDIARD ÉDITEUR, 2007
11, rue Monticelli, 75014 Paris,
1re édition.
ISBN 2-912673-70-4

Les Formes de l'obsession dans la littérature anglaise et américaine

Textes réunis par Marc Amfreville et Claire Fabre

Ouvrage publié avec la collaboration des équipes de recherche IMAGER (EA 3958) et Poétiques et échanges interculturels (EA 3483) de l'Université Paris XII-Val de Marne.

Michel Houdiard Éditeur

SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE OBSESSION WITH MASTERY IN JANE AUSTEN AND JACQUES DERRIDA

Thomas Dutoit
Université Lille III

"I think it is a much better game than Speculation.
I cannot say. I am very fond of Speculation."
Tom Musgrave in Jane Austen's *The Watsons*.[1]

Jane Austen's much-vaunted obsession with control[2] has been singled out as what accounts for her being a true master of the art of the novel, the *chef* of her *œuvre*, and its *chef opérateur/rice*, the center and thereby the circumference of her networks. Obsession however implies a play between competing narratives, that of the sovereign and of the foreign: the subject who reigns supreme (sovereign), yet is subjected to a liminal opening, a doorway ("foreign", as a certain reign or story of the door, from *fores*, "door," and "reign"). Obsession is the seat, or site, where sovereignty and non-sovereignty (or the foreign), mastery and non-mastery, interact. At issue is the besieged question of the practice of writing and reading, in other words the pedagogical imperative: what are we (supposed to be) doing when we teach reading and writing? In order to attest how the teacher's chair is the seat of a contest between, on the one hand, reading Jane Austen as conservative, and, by metonymy, in control and in the control of a conservative reading,[3] or, on the other, reading her as radical, open to foreignness and giving free reign to dislocated writing and reading, different witnesses will be convoked. One is Jacques Derrida's essay "Spéculer – sur Freud", the seminar from the latter half of the 1970s, published in *La Carte postale,* in particular his discussion there of Freud's essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, especially of the mastery of the "pleasure principle", and the alternative mastery or anti-mastery associated with a certain power and postal power. The other voice to be called to witness is the work of Jane Austen: especially her last text, her "Ozymandias" or testament if you will, namely *Sanditon*, written from January to March 1817 as she was gradually losing the physical strength to hold a stylus and finally even a pencil; but also her novel *Pride and Prejudice*, her masterpiece in terms of popularity. At stake in

this binding of Derrida and Austen is the question of what makes a *chef-d'œuvre*, what constitutes or destitutes a masterwork, the work of a master?

Sandbag or ballast in this excursion is, however, Michel Foucault's charge laid upon Derrida's teaching or a Derridean-inspired teaching: for Foucault, the possibility of an other reading (that Derrida sought to maintain open and to come) itself instanced mastery and sovereignty! Of Derrida's work, Foucault wrote that it was a "pédagogie qui enseigne à l'élève qu'il n'y a rien hors du texte, mais qu'en lui, en ses interstices, dans ses blancs et ses non-dits, règne la réserve de l'origine; [...] pédagogie qui inversement donne à la voix des maîtres cette souveraineté sans limites qui lui permet indéfiniment de redire le texte."[4] Anarchic reign insofar as reign before the apparent order or reign (*arkhe*, rule; *arkhein*, to begin), the virtual possibilities in a text developed by a reader would be what Foucault sees "this sovereignty without limits" to consist in. It would require a separate study fully to confront Foucault's charge[5], yet what can be said here is that what Derrida sought to do (and what made Foucault uneasy) was to pry open political sovereignty by dint of a poetic sovereignty, as for example in his reading of Paul Celan's essay, "Der Meridian": "There is the sovereign majesty of the sovereign, of the King, and there is, more majestic or otherwise majestic, more sovereign and otherwise sovereign, the majesty of poetry, or the majesty of the absurd" insofar as it testifies to life.[6] Derrida specifies that "this hyper-majesty of poetry", "this latter majesty, this latter sovereignty, poetic sovereignty is not, Celan says, the political sovereignty of the monarch" (*SQ* 122). Poetic sovereignty for Celan is the sovereignty of the present, of presence, but as such it is divided by dint of the 'presence' of an other, of simulacrum, of death. In this paper, I attempt to show that an other sovereignty, a non-sovereignty preceding sovereignty, is at work in Jane Austen, something she calls "mischief", which challenges what is "chief", and therefore "master" or sovereign in her text, be this mastery taken at the level of the characters in the diegesis or of the narrator as *chef opérateur* of the story. A certain mischief, or poetic sovereignty, renders problematic those readings of Jane Austen that reinforce her status as conservative. Implicit, therefore, is a refusal of those shackles Foucault would put on teaching.

The *œuvre* of Jane Austen is structured by the relation of mastery and non-mastery. At the level of narration, Jane Austen is seen to have contributed to English literature by introducing free indirect style. Free indirect style is when the narrator gives the thoughts of a character almost as if the narrator were omniscient, were in the character's mind. Yet in free indirect style, the narrator remains master of him- or herself, distinct from the character, all the while transmitting the character's thoughts. Through this contribution to

English literature, Jane Austen raised prose fiction to the status of art, to *belles lettres*. It turned her work into a *chef-d'œuvre* (*Emma* being the apex). To follow the argument of D. A. Miller, Jane Austen the author is an artistic master in the sense that, as writer, she espoused nothing but her art, refusing to become like one of her novels' heroines or even anti-heroines: Jane Austen refused to marry, to become a producer of babies, in order instead to develop as artist. Yet precisely as artist and woman, she occupied the position of a non-position: in her time and context, women did not live from their pen. Whence the interest in the fact of her choice to become a stylothète, to become a stylist, a writer. The mark of Jane Austen's artistic mastery – recognized in her lifetime by Walter Scott – resides at once in free indirect style and what accompagnies it, namely that degree of naturalism and realism her writing attained. Her artistic mastery consists in the fact that one does not "see" her art. If it is naturalistic, realistic, it means that she succeeded in erasing the appearance of her art, language. Hence, one recognizes a *chef-d'œuvre* of Jane Austen first from the fact that the narrator never collapses into a character, that the author always remains master, never giving into psychology, and second, from how the writing erases itself as writing, giving thereby the impression of being alive, oral. For these reasons, there is a relative absence of wordplay in her texts: wordplay would draw attention to the means of representation, that is, to words, which, as such, must not appear.

In this manner, the narrator remains master, is never a character or in society, because Style is the aim, and not psychology or sociology. Style dominates, is sovereign, and is constructed to resist against another breakdown, which would be the breakdown of such Style into Language, that is to say into a system of differences and relays. Were there wordplay, it would be a challenge to the *chef d(e l)'œuvre*, indication of mischief underfoot. Yet if there is wordplay, mischief, and anti-mastery or alternative mastery, then it remains of the order of speculation, for were it to be recorded on the rolls of proof (as control), then it would be just another modality of what it seeks to elude the grasp of.

Let's begin with a quotation from "Spéculer – sur Freud", in which Derrida seeks less for what Freud says about speculation in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and more for how speculation is a mode of writing, and all writing, speculation:

> Dans son écrit quelque chose doit relever de la spéculation dont il parle. … Je prétends que la spéculation n'est pas seulement un mode de recherche nommé par Freud…, c'est aussi l'opération de son écriture, la scène (de ce) qu'il fait en écrivant ce qu'il écrit ici, ce qui le lui fait faire et ce qu'il fait faire, ce qui le fait écrire et qu'il fait – ou laisse – écrire.[7]

What would speculative writing be?[8] The fourth chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* begins with the following statement: "What follows is speculation, often far-fetched speculation, which the reader will consider or dismiss according to his individual predilection".[9] If Freud is somehow or other the mastermind of psychoanalysis, if Freud has some claim to some mastery of psychoanalysis, then what happens when speculation comes to govern his investigation into what the mastery of the pleasure principle and what the beyond the pleasure principle consist in or of? If what follows in *Beyond…* is far-flung speculation, then the speculator has abandoned the position of authority, of mastery, and this entails that speculation is without an author. Speculative writing in a sense would never be able to be a masterwork, insofar as it would be an œuvre in which the *chef* or chief were missing, were *amiss*:

> Autrement dit, l'"auteur" déjà n'est plus là, plus responsable. Il s'est absenté d'avance en vous laissant le document entre les mains. C'est du moins ce qu'il déclare. Il ne cherche pas à vous convaincre d'une vérité. Il ne veut rien soustraire au pouvoir, aux investissements propres, voire aux associations et projections de chacun. L'association est libre, ce qui vaut aussi pour le contrat entre l'écriture et la lecture de ce texte avec les échanges, les engagements, les dons, avec tout ce dont la performance se tente…. Le propos spéculatif aurait la valeur de ce qui se performe en analyse ou dans le champ dit "littéraire": vous en faites ce que vous voulez ou ce que vous pouvez, ça ne me regarde plus, c'est sans loi, surtout sans loi "scientifique"…. La dernière volonté en personne (le signataire du testament) n'y est plus pour rien ni pour personne. Vous portez son nom. En cortège. Sur vos épaules…. *CP* 366

Speculation is where authority is abandoned; speculative writing is without author, which is another way of saying that its heirs, its readers, are all the more engaged by it. The final will of speculation falls fully upon the readers, who must then bear it, as one bears the coffin to the grave.

Jane Austen's final text, *Sanditon*, broke from all else she had previously written, because for the first time, she represented not landed wealth, but wealth associated with financial speculation. Although speculation obtains also in *Persuasion* and *Emma*, it is rampant in *Sanditon*. Financial speculation however is also speculation about the illness and the pleasure industries. People set up health and tourist resorts near Brighton, hoping to make money by renting the resorts to ill and/or leisurely visitors. Her final text, broken off after fifty pages (*Emma* is close to four hundred), is an explicit exploration of sickness, of invalidism, of *illness*. Her final will ("Will" [*S* 333]), her testament as author, is also remarkable because it is an explicit

representation of her own absence, her own death, which is her death as Jane Austen, physical body bearing that name, but also as "Jane Austen", who, as D. A. Miller describes her, is the Master of Style, the Stylothète whose novels were immediately recognized in her own lifetime as *chef-d'œuvres* on account of the Style and in particular the free indirect style that she originated, almost like Freud himself was the inventor of psychoanalysis.

Sanditon is a text about sickness, invalidism and hypochondria. The problem of sickness has to do with seeing and speculating about signs and symptoms (of illness) where there may be none, and financial speculators see signs of "growth" or economic development where there are none or very little. Such speculation has its counterpart at the level of reading: we start to see letters proliferating, metastasizing, splitting apart, growing monstrous. The reader of Austen no longer recognizes the writing of Austen, because it is no longer the writing of Austen. Similarly, Lady Denham in *Sanditon* no longer will recognize and control traditional English economy if money made in the West Indian plantations is injected into local commerce. Mischief is the name for this unrecognizability, this monstrosity resultant from an absence of intentionality: "they who scatter their Money so freely, never think of whether they may not be doing mischeif [sic] by raising the price of Things".[10] Free scattering is thoughtless, headless, out of the reign of the chief. Like the mutating English society disenfranchising Lady Denham, in *Sanditon* the orderly Austenian linguistic composition has been undone. D. A. Miller describes the Ozymandias-like future of the Austenian Style in these terms: "the granite of the Sentence crumbles before our incredulous eyes into a grit of sounds, senses, letters, that scatter themselves across the text into patterns that seem neither entirely intentional, nor entirely random" (*JA* 91-92). "Mischeif" takes over, so that in a sentence one can read "Asses milk", "milch asses", and "little Misses", as if the stasis of Austenian style were breaking down into the metastasizing and metatheses of "Mi-lch A-sses" into "l-itt-le Mi-sses" (*S* 348).

Similarly, when a person "issues" out of a library, she is carrying a kind of writing, a book, called a "vapid tissue." "Issue" and "Tissue" thus yoke people and books. The people at Sanditon, and the books read, coincide in wordplay, at the beginning of Chapter VIII. The chapter begins with the sentence, "The Two Ladies continued walking together till rejoined by the others, who as they *issued* from the Library were followed by young Whitby running off with five volumes under his arm to Sir Edward's Gig" (*S* 326). By this point in the text, we the readers have learned that the Lady with whom Charlotte walks with is despicable, and that "the others" are a pitiful lot of people. After this first sentence, Sir Edward describes his tastes in novel-reading. His taste is not at all for the novels checked out from circulating libraries (Austen's were frequently borrowed, but not bought):

> 'I am no indiscriminate Novel-Reader. The mere Trash of the common Circulating Library, I hold in the highest contempt. You will never hear me advocating those puerile Emanations which detail nothing but discordant principles incapable of Amalgamation, or those vapid *tissues* of ordinary Occurrences from which no useful Deductions can be drawn. – In vain may we put them into a literary Alembic; – we distil nothing which can add to Science. – You understand me I am sure?' 'I am not quite certain that I do'. *S* 327

Charlotte, the character who is more or less doubled by the narrator and by the author, understands fairly well what Edward has just said. Austen's novels were devoted to ordinary Occurrences: reviews of her time complained that nothing extraordinary ever occurred in them, that they described simply people talking about everyday occurrences like the kind of porridge one ate (*Mansfield Park*). Austen's novels indeed detail nothing but discordant principles incapable of Amalgamation, because she describes how incompatible people ("discordant principles") find themselves in marriages that are sour, bitter, dry and sterile ("incapable of Amalgamation"). What links these two quotations are the words "issued" and "tissues": the first word "issued" refers to the other people that Charlotte has come to know at Sanditon, the second word refers to the texts read by the "Novel-Readers." The people issue from the library; the library tissues have the coherence of such people. The wordplay on issue/tissue yokes these people to the texts.

Similar to this slippage is how words, perhaps, split apart and graft onto others. Sir Edward compliments here Charlotte for being the "loveliest" at the same time as he says that, as a woman, she can never be in an adequate position to judge a man (the sovereign):

> 'nor can you, loveliest Miss Heywood (speaking with an air of deep sentiment) – nor can any Woman be a fair Judge of what a Man may be propelled to say, write or do, by the sovereign impulses of illimitable Ardour'. This was very fine; – but if Charlotte understood it at all, not very moral – and being moreover by no means pleased with his extraordinary stile of compliment, she gravely answered 'I really know nothing of the matter. – This is a charming day. The Wind I fancy must be Southerly.' 'Happy, happy wind, to engage Miss Heywood's Thoughts! –' She began to think him downright silly. *S* 352

In the context of Sir Edward's dubious identification of ardor as truth in the poetry of Walter Scott, James Montgomery and Robert

Burns, the narrator wryly records the type of logic operating, when "moral" and "moreover" are jammed here together, as if what were really becoming sovereign were random phonetic similarity masquerading as semantic and ontological certainty. Her adding that "[t]his is a charming day" is a comment on the fact that he is trying to charm her vanity. Her remark, "[t]he Wind I fancy must be Southerly", seems to equate what he says not only with hot air, but perhaps also with the sentimentalizing poet Robert Southey. Sir Edward chooses, facetiously, to identify himself with the Wind that would have penetrated into the realm of Charlotte's thinking: "Happy, happy Wind, to engage Miss Heywood's Thoughts!"

Decisive is also the distinction graphically, throughout *Sanditon*, between "Character" and "Charlotte" ("Miss Denham's Character was pretty well decided with Charlotte" [*S* 350]; "'I have read [...] Burns' Poems [...]' said Char[-] lotte, 'but I am not poetic enough to separate a Man's Poetry entirely from his Char[-]acter'" [*S* 352]). Charlotte is incisive on others' "Character"; yet she is not poet enough to separate poetic production from the man producing it. The comment might apply to Jane Austen, writer, if not poet, neutral and not male writer.

Can Writing fully separate itself from its writer? Can the writer throw off her mortal coil and salvage oneself in Style? Charlotte here expresses doubt about the possibility of Style as being a perpetual Monumentalization of Writer-in-Writing: "I am not poetic enough to separate a Man's Poetry entirely from his Character" (*S* 352). Applied to Jane Austen, the statement is rather complex. It says we cannot separate her writing from who she was. But the statement is said by Charlotte Heywood, who probably in part represents Austen's extra-social, that is, narratorial, position, yet Charlotte Heywood is also not that giant of eighteenth century romance writing, Eliza Heywood: not (yet) a writer (even if she is, as heroine of the narration, the privileged locus of view and assessment). Charlotte's statement, applied to Jane Austen, might instead read, "I am writerly enough to separate a Woman's writing from her Character," especially since I refuse to be a Character in one of my novels, and since to occupy the non-position of woman writing I must dissociate myself from any position tenable by woman in society.

Sanditon is where Jane Austen's Style however disintegrates, not by collapsing into Character or Psychology (pitfalls avoided in *Emma* and *Persuasion*). Rather, *Sanditon* is where Style fragments into Language. Perhaps, had Austen been healthy and not agitatedly speculating about what was beyond Style (that non-being no Style could control), she would have salvaged her theme of morbidity into a marriage plot where speculation would not have burst into nothingness. *Sanditon* might have become the story of Charlotte Heywood marrying some unforeseen worthy man of the financial world. The marriage plot is Austen's pleasure principle: it is the control into which her textual vitality absconds with the "end" of the text; however, the stylothète Austen operated always outside that principle and that economy, always exploring life as only that existence which precedes married "life".

That rosy outlook, though, is beyond the pale. Agitated by the pure passivity or poetic inaction of speculation and of the "Mischeif", the ill writing, as Miller illustrates, of *Sanditon* instances the passing away of the stylothète, of the author. Unlike in her published masterpieces, the narrator who was in them no identifiable or localizable entity is in *Sanditon* becoming nothing at all, a sort of writing without Style, without agency, a writing without a writer. This last will of her person, this last signed testament of Austen, is gone, as breath leaves the letter of the text. In a text where the characters are named "Heywood", "Mr. and Mrs H" (*S* 330), "Miss H" (*S* 332), Reverend M. *H*anking; William *H*eeley, shoemaker at Sanditon; Sir *H*arry D., Thomas *Hill*ier (*S* 335), Mr. *H*ollis, where action departs from a place called *Hailsham* (*S* 324), filled with unbuilt Houses, Hotel, and Hospital, the most repeated word is "hill", as "a long Hill" (*S* 331), "one other Hill brings us to S." (*S* 336); "at first it is Uphill work" (*S* 337); "they were now approaching ... the foot of the Hill" (*S* 338); "if the *Village* could attract, the Hill might nearly be full" (*S* 339); "now, for our Hill, our health-breathing Hill" (*S* 339). The "Hill" (*S* 369) is the place of "perspiration" (respiration), resulting from "the ascent of the Hill" (*S* 375). The "H" (breathing, aspiration, life) comes to have a "life" of its own, more precisely a death of its own, as it separates from the next three letters: "H-ill". H/ill, this split between life and death, breathing and sickness, loosens "ill" and then it proliferates like metastasizing cancerous cells throughout the text: "Bills" at the window (*S* 339), the M*ill*iner's Shop (*S* 340), the B*ill*iard Room (*S* 340), the unfinished Bu-il-dings. Or "Mullin's" (*S* 375). It is in the two *Will*ingden's, the Sanditon *V-ill*age, the heroine refers to Cam-*ill*-a (*S* 345). The "H" however disappears in the apocalyptic wind, leaving all 'ill'. This is Speculation where the last will of the person is no longer responsible, is no longer evidence of authority or of the author. This is where "mischeif" has become sovereign, the absolute other of that sovereignty characteristic of the *chef-d'œuvre*. This is what Derrida calls "Ce lieu de défaite pour le maître" (*CP* 367).

Another way of expressing this is to ponder why the obsession with Jane Austen ("Janeites") never, or almost never,[11] has linked her to Derrida, why has there never been a deconstruction of Austen? Is it not owing to her austerity and lack of ostentation? To her Style, that is Chief, that is the specificity of her *chef-d'œuvres*? What is the other absolute chief, operating within or beyond, what is the Mischief, that

chief we are missing who might be not an Old Maid, not an old Miss Austen, but somehow still a Miss Chief?

There is another voice inside the narrative voice, a devil's voice within it: "Quand Freud parle de démonique au sujet de l'obstacle thérapeutique", writes Derrida in "Spéculer", "on peut aussi le rapporter au rapport qu'une tradition ... psychanalytique entretient avec elle-même, avec l'archive de son propre démon. Mais le démonique n'est plus ou moins hérité, comme tel ou tel autre contenu. Il appartient à la structure de testament. Une scène d'héritage lui confère *a priori* son ascendant" (*CP* 375). The other voice undoing narrative control – this being how we have read the disarray of *Sanditon* – is not absent from her masterpieces of narration.

About four years before *Sanditon* was written, Austen published *Pride and Prejudice*, probably still her most popular work, even if *Emma* is considered to be the chief of her *chef-d'œuvres.* Consider, in *Pride and Prejudice*, him who goes by the name of "Wickham". He is the supplement of the character named Darcy. Darcy, the wealthy good guy, is the master of the book and the master of other people's actions. He is explicitly a "Master", as his housekeeper Mrs Reynolds does not hesitate reminding Elizabeth Bennet when she visits his stately home at Pemberley (*PP* 161). When the narrator in *Pride and Prejudice* tells us that her or his or its book is not about kings and counselors, i.e., not about places where English kings won or lost battles, when the narrator thus tells us that the work is not about the State or about the State's National History (thereby affirming what Walter Scott affirmed about Jane Austen, hers is not the "bow-wow strain"), it is because he-she-or-it – the narrator, the neutral or neuter Stylothète – has displaced the State onto the estate, of which Darcy is the master, and therefore the sovereign. Darcy is the pleasure principle in *Pride and Prejudice*, in any case the alliance of the Pleasure Principle (PP) with the Reality Principle (PR) positioned over the primary processes (pp). In "Spéculer" (*CP 327*) the following formulation represents, for Derrida, Darcy:

$$\frac{PP\ (+\ PR)}{PP} = \text{telle est la } \textit{génération du maître} \text{ et la condition de bon plaisir}$$

If Darcy is basically the mastery of the pleasure principle translated into a male character, the female counterpart is Elizabeth Bennet. Together, they are correlated by the Narrator, more or less as the achievement of Style, of Austyle, of Austenstyle. Austyle is represented obliquely by Elizabeth Bennet jumping over the stiles ("stiles" spelled with an 'i' but Austen spelled 'Style' with a 'y' in fact also with an 'i': "they live quite in stile," Elizabeth Watson tells her sister Emma, in *The Watsons*[12]) when she crosses fields on her transgressive romp to Netherfield. It is a style that consists in movement and border-crossing, and is not to be equated with some extra-textual position supposedly deducible from a happy end and restored order beyond the narrated times. If Darcy, if Elizabeth, if narrative voice, all instance sovereignty or mastery in the text, then who or what is Wickham? As said, Wickham is the supplement. He belongs to the structure of the will, of the testament. Wickham was raised by the father of Darcy at the death of Wickham's father, who was the right-hand man of old man Darcy. Old man Darcy's will stipulated that Wickham should be looked after by young Darcy, who therefore inherits Wickham. Wickham is less a descendant than an ascendant for Darcy.

Wickham is there, in the family structure, from the start, but as originary repetition. That Wickham is wicked, that he is evil, that he is the Wicked, that he is the Mischief, any reader will have understood. ("The Mischief" in the seventeenth century meant the Devil.) As D.A. Miller has put it, noting how Austen eschews punning or onomastics, Austen had to hold off the equation of Wickham with wickedness until very late in the book (after his having eloped with Elizabeth's utterly positive, purely libidinal, and peculiarly idiotic sister, Lydia) (*JA* 87). Diabolic Wickham is not only a character in the diegesis, but has mythic proportions insofar as he incarnates impossible and secret knowledge throughout the book. Partner of her of whom we might say that she becomes the possibility of herself, lydia-able, therefore as her partner or *le diable*/devil, Wickham knows all the plot elements before any other of the characters, and his only counterpart in the book are the three weird sisters, the three sisters of fate, Mrs. Bennet, Mrs Gardiner and Lady Catherine. No happy end would have been attainable by Jane Austen without the contribution of Wickham and jubilant Lydia. Furthermore, Wickham's actions always anticipate what diegetically is only known subsequently. He knows for example that Elizabeth and Darcy are in love, and that they will marry and so he elopes with Lydia because he knows that Darcy can easily by this means be blackmailed into giving him a very good inheritance, and even assure him of being *posted* to a very good position in the military, a commission which Darcy pays for. Wickham turns up in the book in the mode of return (indeed the very first mention of him is, "Mr. Wickham, who had returned" [*PP* 49]), he is the return of what Darcy thought he had repressed for good. Wickham repeatedly seduces girls when they have good financial prospects (Elizabeth when her sister is likely to marry wealthy Bingley; Miss King – whose name is chief evidence of her wealth; and Lydia as said). Wickham's return indeed persecutes Darcy also at the level of how Wickham predisposes Elizabeth against Darcy so that she turns down the latter's first marriage proposal:

À vrai dire, il n'y a pas retour *du* démonique. Le démon est cela même qui *revient* sans être appelé par le PP. Il est la revenance qui répète son entrée en scène, revenant on ne sait d'où [...] hérité d'on ne sait qui, mais persécutant déjà par la simple forme de son retour, inlassablement répétitive, indépendante de tout désir apparent, *automatique* [...]. [C]et automate revient sans revenir à personne, il produit des effets de ventriloquie sans origine, sans émission et sans destinataire. Il est posté seulement, la poste à l'état 'pur', une sorte de facteur sans destination. Télé – sans telos. Finalité sans fin, la beauté du diable. Il n'obéit plus au sujet qu'il persécute de son retour. Il n'obéit plus au maître, qu'on donne ce nom du maître au sujet construit selon l'économie du PP ou au PP lui-même. *CP* 362-63

Indeed, Wickham does not obey Darcy; rather, it is Darcy who in order to maintain his own position as master must obey and incline to Wickham's conditions. Wickham, not Darcy, calls the shots, but it is a calling through ventriloquism whereby it appears that Darcy is the mastermind.

If Darcy is what holds society together, as a master who commands all relations, Wickham on the contrary is a joker in the deck. In a system of relations where one is otherwise always defined by relations to others (overseen by the sovereign), Wickham is a wild-card without relation, and therefore ungoverned: "It was not known that Wickham had a single relation, with whom he kept up any connection, and it was certain that he had no near one living" (*PP* 193). Wickham's only relations are therefore faraway and dead; Wickham operates extra-temporally and extra-spatially, insofar as he is outside any system of relations, save that obtaining among the defunct.

Darcy may appear to be the *chef d'opérations*, yet Mr. Wickham, as his name indicates, is he by whom evil operates. Wick-(h)am, Wick, I am, *I am Wicked*. If Darcy appears as chief, it is thanks to an effect created by his double, Wickham, the *mischief*. The English word *mischief* comes from Old French, *mesch(t)ef*, from *meschever*, comprised of *mis* and *chef*, with the obvious meaning of the bad chief. The word *mischief* in the seventeenth century had the meaning of "Wickedness". If Darcy, as chief, without being God, is sovereign in the book (his acts of bounty, his deciding the behavior of others), Wickham is associated with the devil. "Mischief", another word for "the devil" (OED).

These two kinds of sovereign, the chief and the anti-chief, *stand* for two kinds of phallus. Darcy asks Elizabeth to marry him when they are on the hill that is called *Oakham Mount*. Elizabeth's mother had sent them both there on a walk, "I advise Mr. Darcy, and Lizzy ... to walk to Oakham Mount this morning", adding that "Mr. Darcy has never seen the view" (*PP* 245). Darcy is very excited at the prospect of such a commanding view from above: "Darcy professed a great curiosity to see the view from the Mount, and Elizabeth silently consented" (*PP* 245). Darcy had not had the pleasure of seeing what can be seen from the position of this *Mount* ("'Mr. Darcy has never seen the view'" [*PP* 245]). On Oakham Mount the two lovers agree to marry. *Oakham Mount* is where the sovereign acts: Mr. Darcy, of venerable fortune, is associated with oak, the hardest and noblest wood native to England. Oak is not only noble because hard and unknotted, for it also lives a long time. Obviously, to be opposed to the oak in Oakham: Wickham. Not only vicious, *wicked* or bad (because he tries to seduce women), Wickham is also the wick. A wick is bendable, soft, saturated with liquid, like a wick in an oil lamp. A wick is not straight and hard, by itself (only when enveloped in the wax of a candle). What is more, a wick does not last hundreds of years. There is, furthermore, also the homonym "wick" that derives from the Greek *oikos* and which means a "hamlet", several grouped modest houses. Often, the "wick" was the farm of a large home, of a mansion. The father of Wickham worked for Darcy's father who was the owner of *Pemberley House*. It is conceivable that Wickham's started out in the "wick," in the farm. If Darcy is associated with the oak, with what burns very slowly, if Darcy represents thus the long-lasting ember, as in "P[-]emberley," if, *Pride and Prejudice* erects the letter "P" as *capital*, if Darcy is Pemberley, then Darcy is the classical sovereign, while Wickham, who comes from the farm appended to the house, and only has a wick as bendable as its life is short, figures the anti-sovereign, the chief without head, a certain *mis-chief*, who more than any character in the book (except for the three weird sisters, Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. Gardiner, and Lady Catherine, those mothers of the novel) is in cahoots with the Miss who is otherwise the chief author of the book, Miss Jane Austen.

In those ways, Austen is evoking something other than phallocracy, penmanship and the *ancien régime*.

This, despite the way *Pride and Prejudice* represents and talks about the diabolical as if it, the book, did so from a position of mastery. Wickham does not seem to be the chief hero, just as Lydia does not seem to be the chief heroine. However, the scene is more complicated. Lydia, who is the incarnation of wildness and of laughter in the book, ventriloquizes Elizabeth throughout, the main example being Lydia's beneficial or bennet-official laughter that is the veritable salvation of Elizabeth who rediscovers laughter thanks to Lydia, the fact that Lydia marries before Elizabeth and makes Elizabeth's marriage possible, and precedes and exceeds in wildness anything Elizabeth can aspire to. Contrary to the egregious mis-readings that would have Darcy controlling and forcing Wickham to marry, Wickham entirely programs, ventriloquizes, Darcy's actions in all of Volume III, that include guaranteeing a life-time revenue for Wickham. Wickham and Lydia, supplemental characters, are the free energy that makes possible

any pleasure principle, that makes possible any binding process of the primary processes, are the absolutely other, the other absolute, the free energy that makes possible the so-called absolute sovereignty of the pleasure principle. "Ce qui intéresse, c'est l'indice d'un pouvoir débordant le PP [et le PP c'est le principe de plaisir, autrement dit *Pride and Prejudice*. T.D.]. Et pourtant celui-ci n'est pas encore excédé ou, s'il l'est, c'est par lui-même en lui-même. La ventriloquie n'est pas un exemple ou un objet d'*Au-delà*..., c'est la structure du PP en *rapporté* dans la scène d'écriture ou d'héritage de *Au-delà*. Ce livre est travaillé par le démonique dont il dit parler et qui parle avant lui, comme il dit lui-même que parle le démonique, qu'il arrive en faisant retour, *c'est-à-dire* en précédant son arrivée (c'est-à-dire c'est-à-dire) en se précédant de son annonce auprès de qui tient lieu prêt pour sa revenue: comme une lettre ..., un contrat ou un testament qu'on envoie à soi-même avant de partir pour un long voyage, plus ou moins long, avec le risque toujours ouvert de mourir en route, en voie, avec l'espoir aussi que cela arrive et que le message fasse archive, voire monument indestructible" (*CP* 363).

Jane Austen's art's chief accomplishment was its non-appearance as art, which implied also concision in expression and an elision of anything so mischievously ostentatious as one would find in a writer like Laurence Sterne. The correlative at the diegetic level would be the marriage plot, the binding of primary processes in an alliance of the pleasure principle and reality principle as instances of mastery. Evidence in the few existent manuscripts indicates that she ferreted out wordplay from her texts as they went to publication. *Sanditon* would however stand as the last will, in which Style and the Narrator collapses and disappears, not into Story and Character, but rather into Language, dissemination, the inscription of hypogram. In *Pride and Prejudice*, a rather frequent word is the word "chief": as noun, as adjective or as adverb, around fifteen times. It is used with Elizabeth the most (not surprising since most words are used with her most), but also by the obsequious Mr. Collins, once by Mr. Darcy, a few times in relation to Wickham. Usually it has a sort of partitive function: the "chief" of a scene, or the "chief" of information, means the main part, the most important part. Its usage has to do with the transmission of information, in particular important information.

At the start of Volume II, Jane Bennet learns from a letter from Miss Bingley that her hopes for union with M. Bingley are over. We read "Miss Darcy's praise occupied the chief of [Miss Bingley's letter]", and then how Elizabeth learns about the letter, "Elizabeth, to whom Jane very soon communicated the chief of all this, heard it in silent indignation" (*PP* 89). Miss Darcy is the rival to Jane for the hand of Mr. Bingley, so the chief of the letter is that Jane will not be mistress of Mr. Bingley. The mistress, the chief, will be the other. This "chief" part of the letter is then conferred to Elizabeth. Instances such as these set up the theme of the "chief" or master in the narrative, and therefore create the eventual possibility of an upsetting, of upheaval, that will indeed come forth. Mastery is there in order for a disruption of mastery to be possible.

When Mr. Collins, the Anglican priest who plots to marry Elizabeth Bennet because she is the daughter of the house he is to inherit at the death of her father, he has a brief exchange with Mr. Bennet, and it concerns Mr. Collins's way of talking to other people, notably his way of flattering others. Does he prepare his flattery, or does he do it spontaneously? Mr. Collins answers, "'They arise chiefly from what is passing at the time" (*PP* 47), yet goes on to contradict himself, saying that he plans them. If "chief" here attests the relative headlessness of Mr. Collins, the word "chief" operates in the text also to suggest that the head of the house is not the head of the house, or that the head of the house is having his, or her, head taken off, is losing or has lost his or her head. When Mrs. Gardiner visits Mrs. Bennet, the former is told information from the latter that the former in fact already knows: "Mrs. Gardiner, to whom the chief of this news had been given before, made her sister a slight answer, and in compassion to her nieces turned the conversation" (*PP* 94). The chief position has been lost: the mother may be the female chief of the house, but this head of the house is not the center, the seat, of information.

This expression of the "chief wish" – the chief wish being the wish for mischief, to be the miss of the chief, or to hear what the chief misses or was failing – returns in the third volume, when Mr. Bennet realizes that his daughter Lydia's fiasco has been paid for, he thinks, by his brother-in-law, Mr. Gardiner. At first, Mr. Bennet feels bad about this, but he quickly gets over this feeling: "That it should be done with such trifling exertion on his side, too, was another very welcome surprise; for his chief wish at present, was to have as little trouble in the business as possible" (*PP* 200). Mr. Bennet's chief desire to not head the operations. In Derbyshire, Wickham is not held in esteem because it is known that he left many debts there unpaid which Darcy afterwards "discharged," yet the locals do not know about "the chief of his concerns with the son of his patron" (*PP* 172). Wickham's "chief concerns" with Darcy – the inheritance, and his attempt on Miss Darcy – are unknown. The Derbyshire inhabitants know not the chief concern of their master, Wickham's attempted mischief.

The entire central plot or plot relation of the Chief and the Mischief, of Darcy and Wickham, is conveyed by the word "chief". Elizabeth and Wickham find themselves alone together in a crowd as others play cards. They can speak *tête à tête* because everyone else is absorbed by card playing. The tension of the scene has to do with forbidden questions, and censored information. Elizabeth wants to

Elizabeth Bennet, herself, accepts to go to Darcy's estate, Pemberley, when he is not there, accompanied by her aunt and uncle. She imagines there can be no harm in her doing so, in her "entering his country with impunity, and robbing it of a few petrified spars without his perceiving me" (*PP* 157). Spars are, apparently, not long sticks, but rocks, crystallized minerals. Darcy is not going to get his rocks off; rather, Elizabeth plans stealthily to take his rocks off him. Whence her blushing when inadvertently she runs into Darcy on his grounds: stammering praise of his property, she interrupts herself and blushes when "she fancied that praise of Pemberley from her, might be mischievously construed" (*PP* 165). Praise of Pemberley, Pride and Prejudice.

Can we miss mischief, this undercurrent of energies, the suppression of which by the chief or sovereign pleasure principle is the generation of the master, and of good pleasure? Is mischief not the foreign, the hostile, support of Austen Style? Whose story is hers? The story of the sovereign? The story of the so foreign?

Coda

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and M. Hyde* begins with a chapter entitled, "Story of the Door". A lawyer, Mr. Utterson, meets up with an old friend, Mr. Enfield, for their Sunday walk. The two men are bachelors, and belong to a circle of bachelors who see each regularly, for evening dinners and drinks. At the start of the chapter, Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield take their Sunday walk, as usual. Nothing can explain why these two men like each other and never miss their Sunday get-together. No one knows why they spend time together, since nothing links them and they have nothing to say to each other. Nonetheless, "for all that, the two men put the greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted".[14] Note the *chief jewel* that is more important than all pleasure and all reality ("business"). For these two men, their excursions are the chief jewel of the week. During one walk, the two men pass in front of a door, and Mr. Enfield recounts the "story of the door". Once, returning home from no one knows where at three in morning, Mr. Enfield says he saw a man "trample" a young girl to the ground. The man did not stop, but Mr. Enfield stopped him, dragging him back to the scene where the girl was still on the ground. The street filled up with people who come out of their houses. Everyone became very violent towards the man who (is said to have) "trampled" the girl: it turns out that he is Mr. Hyde, namely he who Dr Jekyll becomes after drinking a drug he has made. Mr. Hyde is the evil that resides in each of us, but Dr Jekyll is the only one to have found the drug that lets this evil out. No one in the text, during most of the narrated time, knows what the real relationship between Jekyll and Hyde is (they all know that Jekyll and Hyde associate with each other), that Hyde is Jekyll turned into uncontrollable drives. Throughout the book, this group of bachelor men to whom otherwise Dr Jekyll belongs, start to find that the ambiguous relationship between Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is unacceptable. No one knows what the two do together, but the reader is not unable to imagine what the men think. These bachelor men without sexual lives do not like that what should remain entirely hidden is shown in the person of Mr. Hyde, who of course is seen as the demonstration of monstrous, "hence" homosexual, sexuality.

When the man who "tramples" (or is said to have done so) the girl is grabbed by the crowd, he risks being lynched. The men want to string up right away ("the desire to kill him" [*JH* 7]). The women are transformed into "harpies"; one man among them even behaves as "Satan" (*JH* 7). Since the crowd knows that lynching is not possible, it threatens to ruin the man's reputation ("make such a scandal out of this, as should make his name stink" [*JH* 7]). Mr. Hyde saves himself by offering a tremendous sum of money to the girl's family, and members of the crowd take him to the door of which this is the story, door that happens to be that of Dr Jekyll's house. This fact disgusts both Mr. Utterson who listens to the story and Mr. Enfield who tells it. A quotation here will display the figures that were attended to in the previous one, to wit, the head and the master:

> 'If you choose to make capital out of this accident', said he, 'I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene', says he. 'Name your figure'. Well, we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child's family; he would have clearly like to stick out; but there was something about the lot of us that meant mischief, and at last he struck. The next thing to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door? – whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the balance on Coutts's [...]. The figure was stif; but the signature was good for more than that [...]. I took the liberty of pointing out [...] that a man does not [...] come out of [a cellar door] with another man's cheque. *JH* 7-8

From these two passages, we can argue that the "chief jewel" and the "mischief" concern the value and the visibility of a certain kind of order. Mr. Hyde seems to have been caught in a double *flagrante delicto*: having "trampled" the girl, and having gone to get money from a very respectable man in town, known for his philanthropy (Dr Jekyll). Yet perhaps Mr. Hyde never even touched the girl (precisely), for she bears no mark of an aggression: it is possible that

Mr. Enfield has a penchant for exaggeration. Perhaps the real scandal is that Mr. Hyde does not like girls, which has been turned into an act of blackmail against him: he must give money if he wants his preferences to remain hidden. Mr. Hyde also takes the money from Dr Jekyll's house to which he possesses the key. The expression "whipped out" is used for exhibitionist behavior. The crowd would have cut his head off, but decides to settle for another form of the head, "capital". Hyde, insofar as a "gentleman", saves his head by accepting a form of sodomization by the crowd: "we screwed him up". He would protest phallically, "stick out," but knows he has no chance with a crowd so full of "mischief". Thus, against a crowd that accepts no problem the "chief jewel" of two men who stroll in full daylight every "Sunday", a "chief jewel" that is worth more than all pleasure and all reality as long as it remains exposed, that is to say, exposable, the crowd signifying "mischief" has to be contrasted. In other terms, one should not ignore girls and one should not pull out one's key like that, so as to return with the "cheque" of another man. The "cheque," as the word indicates, comes from the sovereign, from the "shah", the Persian word for the sovereign or chief. This "cheque" is so "stiff" ("the figure was stiff"), hard and unbending, that the crowd so full of "mischief" accepts it. The cheque is accompanied by "gold," the material of jewels.

In this scene, Mr. Hyde would have been lynched or at least scandalized, branded, if he did not have capital jewels. If we read "mischief" in this scene against the "chief jewel" of the previous scene, it is to suggest the relationship between two forms of sociability and of two forms of mastery. The first, which is that of day, of the sun, is represented by two men who would not miss their meeting for anything in the world, even if no one understands why they are together. The second, which is that of night, of darkness, is represented by two men who are obliged to show themselves against their will so as not to be simply eliminated, even though everyone guesses as a consequence the nature of their relationship. The first is homosociality, perhaps a homosexuality perfectly masked: the "chief jewel" is shown in full light but remains perfectly obscure. The second is a rejection of heterosexuality and the revelation of a homosexuality that unleashes at once "mischief" and a hyperbolic expression of authenticity so as to repress the lie, the scandal and the violence. Given that the girl has nothing at all indicating mistreatment, the "capital" that Mr. Hyde has to give is only demanded because Mr. Hyde does not resemble others, the heterosexual crowd. In the first, the mastery of Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield remains perfectly unmastered by those who see it; in the second, the uncontrolled crowd is perfectly pacified, for now and until the next incident, by those who must pay for an unwished-for visibility.

Notes

1. In Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. John Davie, Oxford World's Classics, 1971, 314. Hereafter *W* and page number.

2. From Walter Scott to D.A. Miller, readers of Jane Austen have singled her out as a master of style and the rules of representation. When Walter Scott wrote of her that "[t] he author's knowledge of the world, and the peculiar tact with which she presents characters that the reader cannot fail to recognize, reminds us something of the merits of the Flemish school of painting", he meant her artistic mastery in matters of verisimilar representation (*Quarterly Review* 14 [1815], qtd. in *Jane Austen, The Critical Heritage*, 67), a view generalized by Richard Whately: "We know not whether Miss Austin [sic] ever had access to the precepts of Aristotle, but there are few, if any, writers of fiction who have illustrated them more successfully" (*Quarterly Review* 24 [1821], qtd. in Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Norton, 291. D.A. Miller extends this mastery to majesty: "Of that godlike authority which we think of as the default mode of narration in the traditional novel, Jane Austen may well be the only English example", *Jane Austen, or the Secret of Style*, Princeton University Press, 2005 [2003], 31. Hereafter *JA* with page.

3. In their recent public lectures at the Université de Lille 3 (February 15, 2007), Jean-Jacques Lecercle and Catherine Bernard, who can be called with confidence the two finest Marxist critics in our field, unequivocally argue both that Jane Austen was a conservative, even of the Burkean ilk, and that her text is constructed in such a controlled way that one must read it as advocating and rewarding conservative behavior. The present paper is arguing on the contrary that neither the text, the narrator nor Jane Austen can be made to be isomorphic with its "happy end" or its characters ostensibly benefited.

4. Michel Foucault, "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu", in *Dits et écrits*, vol. II, Gallimard, 1994, 267.

5. And to confront it with Derrida's lifelong obsession with the problem of sovereignty (from early studies on Bataille in *L'écriture et la différence* to late works like *Voyous* and *Le 'concept' du 11 septembre*).

6. *Sovereignties in Question*, Fordham University Press, 2005, 117. Hereafter *SQ* with page number.

7. *La carte postale, de Socrate à Freud et au-delà*, Flammarion, 1980, 304. Hereafter *CP* and page number.

8. Not in the Hegelian sense of speculative dialectics, which were being written in the same period as Jane Austen's work, Hegel only five years her senior.

9. *The Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, Hogarth Press, 1955, 18:24.

10. *Sanditon*, in Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, op. cit., 347. Hereafter *S* plus number.

11. Which is why D.A. Miller is so inspiring, especially when he

postulates that the phenomenon of Deconstruction in Austen would be what in other words "most needs to be understood: the originality of her literary achievement as such" (*JA* 107 N.43).

12. *The Watsons*, in *Northanger Abbey*, *op. cit.*, 282.

13. This passage is from Jacques Derrida's forthcoming *La bête et le souverain*, Galilée, 2007.

14. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and M. Hyde*, ed. Roger Luckhurst, Oxford World's Classics, 2006, 5-6. Hereafter *JH* with number.