The Making of Jane Austen

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A Golden Age for Illustrated Austen

From Peacocks to Photoplays

If you say "bird" and "*Pride and Prejudice*," in a room full of Janeites, someone will surely exclaim, "Peacock!" You might think it's because pride is associated with the peacock, but it's also because of one famously decorated gilt-embossed book cover and title page. On it, the name of Austen's novel is entwined with illustrated peacock feathers. We can thank Austen's highest-profile celebrity illustrator, Hugh Thomson (1860–1920), for the enduring association. Thomson's Austen illustrations from the 1890s are probably among those you've seen most often and know best, whether you recognize they're by him or not. For more than a century, Thomson's illustrations have ended up on everything from Jane Austen House Museum postcards to silver-plated Birmingham Mint reproductions (1976), to "tea towels, mugs, cards, and other merchandise."[1] There's even a *Pride and Prejudice* Peacock shower curtain. More than a century after the fact, Thomson still seems to hold the record for the greatest number of published book illustrations depicting Austen's fiction.[2] His impact has been so great that it's difficult to imagine anyone surpassing him, ever, despite the fact that his images attract very little love from critics. Most seem to hold their noses as they describe his achievement.

Thomson was in the right place at the right time. No period was more vibrant and formative for illustrated Austen than the 1890s. In that decade, sometimes called book illustration's second golden age, the vogue for the illustrated gift book grew; it lasted until the First World War.[3] Before 1892, the largest number of Austen illustrations by any single known artist remained Pickering's, at ten. By the end of the 1920s, four artists had published more than one hundred Austen illustrations each over the course of their commissions and careers. One of the most significant things about this body of

illustrations, beyond its large quantity and wide circulation, is that it introduced new visual themes, including those iconic peacocks. More significant still is the introduction of gentle humor and sociality. What may surprise is that these artists also infused illustrated Austen with images of social criticism, overt physicality, war, and death. They pushed the envelope for what it meant to visualize Austen and her fiction. But, for the first time, the illustration of her novels also moved toward a set of common tropes. Collectively, these 1890s and 1900s images worked to shift the tone for characterizing Austen's fiction from feminine moral seriousness and suspense-filled domestic sensationalism to mild comedy and genial satire.[4] That shift transformed, too, how Austen was conceived of as an author and, especially, how she and her fictional characters were imagined as female role models. Of course, it's difficult to determine whether illustrators were leading or following trends. In either case, they bolstered them.

High-income readers of this period were courted by publishers marketing "Christmas books." Their content, despite the name, was usually not holiday related. These Christmas books were so called because publishers timed their release to the end of the year, marketing them as the season's hot gifts. By the 1890s, the illustrated book was a go-to present, a looked-for luxury item. As one critic puts it, "Many a Victorian aunt or godparent solved their Christmas present problems with a pretty volume for 4*s*. 6*d*."[5] Such books also began to be associated with particular publishers, signature artists, and classic novels. *Pride and Prejudice* was advertised as a Christmas gift book title especially suitable for girls.[6] Libraries acquired the titles for their collections. One finds many surviving copies with long inscriptions on title pages and endpapers, indicating that so-and-so has won such-and-such a school distinction or a prize and was given this gift of a book. That these books were also kept over the years suggests they may have functioned for their recipients as a kind of trophy, as material proof of an academic accomplishment.

Four publishers brought out major new illustrated Austen editions in the 1890s, with varying levels of lavishness—London-based J. M. Dent, Macmillan, and George Allen, and the Boston-based Roberts Brothers. (The London publishers usually marketed their editions simultaneously in New York as well.) Macmillan's and George Allen's Austen titles were especially visually transformative. These volumes not only had copious illustrations—sometimes by the dozens and hundreds—but gilt edges and gilt-embossed covers. The books themselves were works of art. A uniform set was a collectible. As

Dent put it in its advertisement, "A Set of a Standard Author" was "An Ideal Present." Wedding announcements of the era used to list the presents received by the bride and groom, and it was not uncommon to find a complete Austen edition given to the newlyweds. In addition to its Austen, Dent advertised sets for Brontë, Burney, Defoe, Dickens, Edgeworth, Fielding, Ferrier, Marryat, Peacock, Scott, and Sterne, among others.[7] Uniform novels had served as collectors' items long before this. Sir Walter Scott's titles were early examples. But, after the 1890s boom, Austen's novels stood unequivocally alongside them.

The outpouring of illustrated Austens during this period led to Henry James's 1905 grumbling about Austen's reputation being pushed over its natural high tide by "the stiff breeze of the commercial" and "the special bookselling spirit."[8] As we've seen, James's statement decrying Austen's early commercialization prominently imprecates her illustrators, painted with one brush as pandering opportunists. During this period, illustrations of Austen's fiction were widely described as spoiling readers' experiences. No doubt it was because, for the first time, there were so many of them to compare at once. Perhaps, too, it was because these images began to be describable as an illustrative type, something it was difficult to do during a period dominated by one illustrator (Pickering) or with the strange, disconnected Austen-inspired images that were prevalent before the 1890s. "Twaddle" is James's dismissive word for that new collection of images, but the word approving reviewers used most often was "charming."

To dismiss these illustrations with "twaddle" or "charming," however, is to ignore their significance and the landmark ways in which they shifted the tone for visualizing Austen and her fiction. One way the shift can be charted is by comparing J. M. Dent and Company's ten-volume edition of Austen's novels, edited by Reginald Brimley Johnson (1867–1932) and illustrated by William Cubitt Cooke (1866–1951), with those that came after it. The Dent Johnson/Cooke Austen edition was a milestone production in several ways. It also marked the endpoint of some previous trends. David Gilson identifies Dent's 1892 Austen edition as "the first, as far as I know, to have any editorial matter" and the first "to make any attempt at serious consideration of the text."[9] Claudia L. Johnson deems the effort "quasi-scholarly."[10] Illustrator Cooke's designs are described by Gilson as "sepia photogravure reproductions of almost monochrome grey-brown wash drawings" and "the first to attempt (however unsuccessfully) to represent characters in the dress and surroundings . . . of the dates of composition or first publication of each novel"

("Later Publishing" 138). Cooke's images move away from the flouncy Victorian dresses of Pickering and his imitators toward something resembling the empire-waisted simplicity of actual Regency fashion. Still, Cooke's images retain some hallmarks of 1890s fashionability, particularly in the characters' hairstyles.[11]

More remarkable is that the Dent Austen features thirty illustrations, the largest number produced by one artist to date. Cooke designed three plates per volume, with the four longer novels split into two volumes each. After Cooke, no single illustrator could count on his (and most were male) potential power to shape readers' experiences of reading Austen's fiction through his designs. The publication of more illustrations and the featuring of more illustrators meant that the competition for memorably depicting Austen's characters and scenes became fierce. Cooke didn't turn out to be a long-term winner in that contest. Dent's choice of Cooke for its Austen designs was not unlike Bentley's choice of Pickering to illustrate his 1833 Standard Novels. Both publishers plucked out an up-and-coming (and likely therefore cost-saving) rookie artist. Cooke's first published illustrations had appeared in 1892, the same year as his Austen edition. He worked in an artistic tradition that had proven a success with book buyers, in the mode of famed illustrators Randolph Caldecott and Kate Greenaway. Cooke's images are in that sense extraordinarily safe. They extend, rather than deviate from, previous trends in Austen illustration. Cooke's *Sense and Sensibility*, volume 2, presents precisely the same scene that Pickering chose, an illustration of Elinor at the bedside of a deathly ill Marianne. Its caption is, "A restless and feverish night."

Cooke's image is interesting to compare to Pickering's. Where Pickering incorporated a counterpane that overwhelmed the image with its undulant folds, the room that Cooke depicts is anchored instead by wall art. Pickering's frenzied fabrics gave way to Cooke's ordered rectangles. In Cooke's version, Elinor, not Marianne, is at the center of the frame. It is Elinor's eyes we can almost see, cast down, as she leans over in her chair, clearly wretched. Marianne lies in bed, only slightly visible beyond her bedcovers. Elinor stretches out her hand over her knee, but the two sisters don't touch. The illustration strips away both the Gothic suspense and the female intimacy notable in Pickering's version. Cooke emphasizes Elinor's solitary, contemplative fretting over her sister, not her sister's physical danger or their close relationship to each other. On the whole, Cooke, like Pickering before him, selects out small domestic scenes, primarily interiors—featuring just one male in six illustrations, one outdoor scene, and never more than two characters in

Figure 3.1. "A Restless and Feverish Night, Ch. 43," from Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, vol. 2 (London: J. M. Dent, 1892), 141, by William Cubitt Cooke.

the same image. He makes these the signature visual elements of the novel. Cooke's edition now looks like a transitional moment in Austen illustration, with one foot in the old and one in the new visual world. He was an inexperienced illustrator whose images fall within long-established patterns, but they also appear in larger numbers than ever before in a new sort of edition. Just two years later, another illustrator would change the tone and effectively wipe from memory the work of Cooke and his predecessors.

That innovator is the aforementioned Hugh Thomson, who might be called the Colin Firth of Austen-inspired book illustration. Once you've seen publisher George Allen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1894), it's easy to come to the conclusion that every other edition of the book must pale in comparison.

That book came to be known as Austen's "Peacock edition" because of its peacock-themed endpapers, title page, and gilt-embossed cover. It also features a total of 160 illustrations, counting headpieces, tailpieces, ornamental initials, and other decorations, including the drawn title page and dedication (Gilson, *Bibliography* 267). One reviewer describes the Peacock edition as "one of the richest, if not the very richest, reprints of the season in standard English fiction."[12] In the Austen canon, the Peacock edition remains among the most memorable and valuable of her illustrated titles. At this writing, well-preserved copies may fetch $500 or more.

Thomson's Austen edition is often called "Cranfordized," a term that deserves explanation. The word stems from Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Cranford* (1851). But when we call a book Cranfordized, it has nothing to do with Gaskell's story. It refers to the commercially successful style in which Gaskell's novel was famously produced in 1891 by Macmillan, illustrated by Hugh Thomson. The series in which it was published featured books with "three edges gilt, bound in dark green cloth, front and spine heavily stamped in gold," illustrated by Macmillan's impressive stable of artists.[13] Macmillan's Cranford Series would come to include twenty-four titles, eleven of which were illustrated by Thomson. The series and style were so popular that they created "legitimate offshoots and numerous imitators."[14] Even Macmillan itself continued to cash in, with its New Cranford Series and Illustrated Standard Novels.[15] The latter is the series in which all of Jane Austen's generously illustrated works ultimately appear, most of them illustrated by Thomson. But the first and most famous Cranford-looking Austen edition was the Peacock edition. It was published not by Macmillan but by its competitor and imitator, George Allen. (We'll return to the story of Thomson's temporarily switching publishers shortly.)

What made Thomson's Austen Peacock edition so visually groundbreaking was its pioneering infusion of gentle humor. Austenian humor had been depicted prior to Thomson, as we saw in chapter 1 with Pickering's occasional sly designs. But light humor was not Pickering's dominant visual mode. Thomson's humorous style and tone brought the potential to change, and arguably greatly change, what readers came to expect from and believe about Austen and her novels. Of course, it's difficult to prove Thomson's or any illustrator's influence on actual reader-viewers. We are sometimes able to marshal anecdotal evidence, like that of Sheila Kaye-Smith, discussed in the introduction to part 2 of this book. Kaye-Smith admits that the *Pride and Prejudice* illustrations she pored over in her childhood—likely Thomson's—imprinted

themselves on her psyche so that she unconsciously borrowed from them as an adult in making a "quaint" Austen-inspired costume. But, most often, when we consider an illustrator's influence on audiences, we're operating on the level of speculation and probable impact.

In Thomson's case, we also have the evidence of the edition's great commercial success, as well as its staying power. Its visual dominance—and its inspiration of so many copycat editions—suggests not just popularity but sway over readers' expectations. Thomson's illustrations would have encouraged viewers away from expecting to find female-focused moments of intimacy, conflict, or climax, as Pickering's had. Instead, Thomson repeatedly depicts groups of characters, four or five or more, arranging them in formal social situations (dances, musical performances, etc.), something previous artists rarely did but which many did after him, evidence of his impact. His Austen-inspired comic, social images may also have either paved the way or smoothed the waters for perceiving Austen's novels as more readily dramatized and cinematic.

Thomson's illustrations display a smirking sense of fun, appearing not to take themselves (or Austen?) nearly as seriously as his predecessors' had. There are many moments of levity, including multiple cupid figures placed throughout the text. Was Thomson serious with those, or were they tongue-in-cheek? It's indeterminate, which makes them fall somewhere between campy-amusing and condescendingly horrifying as Austenian commentary. Thomson clearly sets out to add whimsy, especially to his headpieces, which often consist of fantasy scenes not depicted in the novel itself. Characteristic of this visual pattern is the headpiece featuring the Bennets' status-conscious neighbor, Sir William Lucas, as he's being knighted. He is shown down on one knee before the king. The monarch's sword is raised over his bowed shoulders, reinforcing what the original text indicates about Sir William's obsequiousness. Another headpiece has two men holding and twirling a long laurel, as if it's a jump rope. At first glance, these images may seem juvenile ones better suited to children's books, but they speak to adults, too, with a knowing wink and a nod.

The most thought provoking and eye catching of these headpiece drawings precedes *Pride and Prejudice*'s chapter 15. In it, the five Bennet daughters are spaced evenly across the page. They sit in almost-unseen chairs, flanked on the left by their fussing mother. She arranges one daughter's hair, likely Lydia's. On the right is their more distant, bemused father. He stands, hand to chin, holding his hat and his walking stick. In the middle of the five sits

the daughter who is presumably Elizabeth. Over her head is a small sign reading "NOT FOR SALE"[16] This image resembles Thomson's other quirky illustrations and may be compared with his fanciful headpieces. But it's unlike the others, too, in making overt Austen's social criticism, even suggesting an endorsement of it. Providing visualized, political readings of Austen's novels, or providing commentary on the economics of marriage, was exceedingly rare before Thomson. He was taking a visual risk by making it prominent, although it benefits from being placed among his other whimsical images. It may seem more lightheartedly clever than politically invested when it's set among the others he produced. On its own, it's jarring.

Still, it's difficult to tell Thomson's Bennet sisters apart as female products. In the "NOT FOR SALE" illustration, the women are virtually identical. Thomson was, at least, equal opportunity in this sense. His characters of both sexes are rather undistinctive, running one into the next, making it difficult to tell which one matches up to which of Austen's. A few do stand out visually, including his Mrs. Bennet, depicted as older, wizened, often hunched over. She's also presented as physically bold, inserting herself into every situation, arms and torso shown lurching forward. Yet there is a cold detachment in Thomson's illustration of most adults. He offers up images of children, carriages, and horses with greater care and warmth. It would seem he feels a greater affinity for them as an artist. He almost seems to have selected his

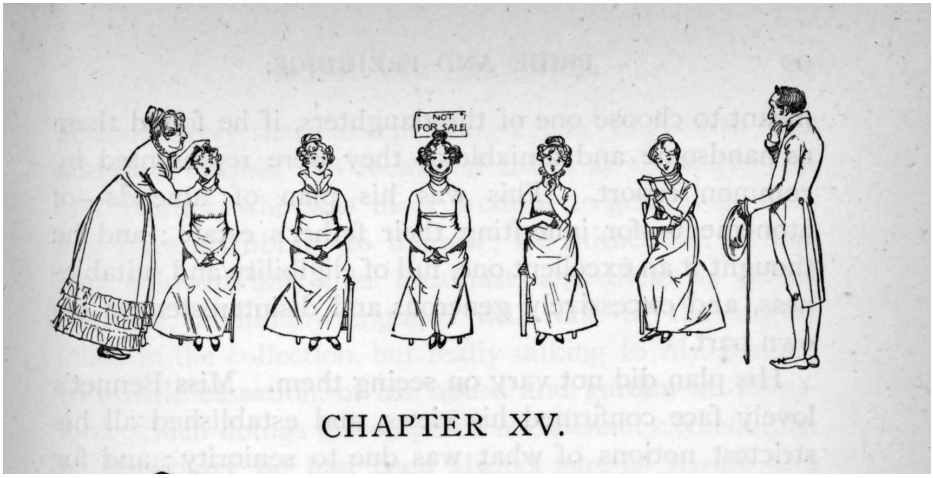

Figure 3.2. Headpiece from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (George Allen, 1894), Hugh Thomson. University of Michigan Special Collections.

favorite objects, working to shoehorn them into the contents on quasi-suitable pages of the novel. As one recent critic puts it, Thomson set out in his art not to "give readers a parallel visual narrative" but rather to create "a series of vignettes which stimulate the readers' own imagination."[17] In this way, we might say that it's as if Thomson has written his own Austen novel in illustrations, using his own symbolic economy, rather than setting out to better discern Austen's. Their packaging, as Kathryn Sutherland argues, suggests that "these were [Thomson's] books, not Austen's."[18] That fact makes both his humor and politics more difficult to pin down, a feature that his illustrations hold in common with Austen's prose. It's a quality that may have led to the wide appeal of each at particular historical moments.

Knowing more about the man may also help us make better sense of the images. Thomson was an unlikely celebrity illustrator. Born in Ireland to a tea merchant and shopkeeper father, he was not formally educated as an artist, starting his working life as a clerk for linen manufacturers (Fitzpatrick and Shorley 14). He next did work for printers and publishers, including one of the first commercial Christmas card companies, from whom he learned the trade and the craft. At the suggestion of a mentor, he moved to London to pursue a career in illustration, married (and had one son), and worked for the newly formed *English Illustrated Magazine*, published by Macmillan. There he did nostalgic, sentimental line drawings of Covent Garden and Regency Bath. These images set the stage for his style for decades to come. He is said to have enjoyed researching Georgian costumes and settings at the nearby National Gallery and museums (17).

Thomson benefited from new technologies for artists and book production. He's been credited with designing "the first illustrations to be reproduced by photomechanical means in commercial periodical publications," on photoengraved blocks, eliminating the need for an engraver (Fitzpatrick and Shorley 7). Thomson cemented his fame with his illustrated Macmillan edition of the earlier-discussed *Cranford* (1891), finding a prominent place among a group of artists now referred to as the Wig and Powder school.[19] He worked hard as an artist; his only hobby was said to be golf (Fitzpatrick and Shorley 8). His biographers repeatedly refer to him as "modest."[20] A surviving photo of him from 1894 suggests self-assured, confident intensity, as he sits near a body of water, before his easel, legs spread apart and focused on his canvas.

He was not described by biographers as having much business savvy, despite declaring himself interested in "golden shekels," but he made at least

Figure 3.3. "Hugh Thomson Sketching at Kilrea," 1894. Published in M. H. Spielmann and Walter Jerrold, *Hugh Thomson: His Art, His Letters, His Humour, and His Charm* (London: A. C. Black, 1931), 97. Arizona State University Libraries.

one shrewd decision (Spielmann and Jerrold 91). After having reportedly told his longtime employer Macmillan in the early 1890s that "he regarded Jane Austen's work as unsuitable material for illustration," he contracted with a rival publisher to illustrate just one Austen title. Thomson agreed to illustrate *Pride and Prejudice* for publisher George Allen. Macmillan was "understandably aggrieved" by this choice by its star illustrator, and Thomson was "predictably guilt-ridden" about his own defection (Fitzpatrick and Shorley 9). It was no doubt a change spurred on by financial considerations on the part of the illustrator.

Thomson's unpublished letters with Macmillan give us a sense of what he was previously paid for his work. At first, at Macmillan, Thomson's compensation wasn't that much more than Ferdinand Pickering's had been more than fifty years earlier—about five pounds per drawing. The difference is that Thomson was providing hundreds of them per book. For his edition of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, for instance, Thomson contracted with Macmillan to provide drawings at the rate of £5 for a full page, £3 for

a half page, and £2 for a tailpiece.[21] Sometimes the contract stipulated an amount for the edition as a whole, such as his agreement to be paid £400 for illustrating Mary Russell Mitford's *Our Village*.[22] That edition advertises itself as including one hundred illustrations, so Thomson would have been paid approximately £4 per drawing. He wasn't, however, getting a royalty from sales. Perhaps that became a sticking point for him.

The publisher Thomson fled to, George Allen, gave him more generous terms than Macmillan's by including a royalty percentage. Thomson was paid £500 for the *Pride and Prejudice* Peacock edition—on a par with Macmillan's previous lump payments—but he was also promised a royalty of seven pence on every copy sold after 10,000. One wonders whether George Allen anticipated how many copies would sell. In just one year, Thomson reached the threshold for receiving his royalties, with 11,605 copies sold, along with 3,500 sent to America. By 1907, a whopping 25,000 copies of the Peacock edition of *Pride and Prejudice* had been sold (Gilson, *Bibliography* 267). This was, as Kathryn Sutherland points out, more than the lifetime sales of all of Austen's books put together (*Jane Austen* 9).

But not long after his George Allen commission was completed, Thomson switched publishers again. According to his biographers, Thomson described himself as "compunctious" about having left Macmillan in the first place (Spielmann and Jerrold 86). He ended up returning to Macmillan to illustrate their editions of the remaining five Austen novels: *Emma* (1896), *Sense and Sensibility* (1896), *Mansfield Park* (1897), and *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (1897). Each Thomson Macmillan volume included a frontispiece and thirty-nine line drawings (almost all full page), for a total of 160 more Thomson-Austen illustrations produced. Macmillan had agreed to give Thomson a royalty percentage.[23] Surely this, along with his previous longstanding relationship with the firm, explains his return to Macmillan, although the slower pace of his completion of these illustrations has been chalked up to his "indifferent health" (Fitzpatrick and Shorley 9). It seems he had a severe case of influenza (Spielmann and Jerrold 85–86).

By all accounts, Thomson was ambitious and hardworking—a man with a sense of humor. But he was also continually dogged by money problems, even prior to the period of hardship most artists experienced during the war years. In 1912, he complains to his publisher that he's been working constantly, to the point of his drawings getting "stale," as he's not "been free from pencil and paper for a day, Sundays not excepted, for 2 years. Pathetic!

Almost Tragic!!"[24] Letters survive in which Thomson asks his publisher for advances, noting that his bank account balances have fallen very low.[25] Macmillan clearly felt concern for his financial plight, as it once sent him a "large sum of money" and later put in a "generous letter to the Prime Minister" to help him secure a Civil List pension of £75.[26] One surviving letter gives us some insight into an early financial blow in the year that Thomson temporarily switched publishers from Macmillan to Allen. That year he inherited from his recently deceased father a crushing £150 debt.[27] It may have motivated his switch.

Whatever Thomson's circumstances were, and from wherever they stemmed, his temporary defection from Macmillan put that publisher in a bind. Macmillan couldn't use Thomson's illustrations for its own edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, which it needed in order to have a complete Austen edition. So Macmillan commissioned one of Thomson's artist-competitors, Charles Brock, to undertake its illustrated *Pride and Prejudice*. It's why Thomson's and Brock's names both grace the Macmillan Austen edition's maroon covers. That does not explain, however, why Austen's own name (included on the spine) didn't make it to the front covers of Macmillan's editions of the novels at all. It's important to recognize that this was not a special dig at Austen. Macmillan regularly named the illustrator, rather than the author, below the work's title on its covers. Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* and *The Absentee* (1895), for example, includes "Illustrated by Chris. Hammond," rather than Edgeworth's name. The illustrators' names being placed on the covers of these books—seemingly more prominent than the authors'—shows the artists' stature and marketability in this genre and era. Thomson was at the pinnacle of his profession, but his name on Austen's novels doesn't indicate in this instance his unique, personal power to overshadow her.

Thomson's commercial success, and critics' longtime disparagement of it, leads to the detail still most cited about him in Austen scholarship: that novelist E. M. Forster once dubbed him "the lamentable Hugh Thompson [*sic*]."[28] Forster, in the course of reviewing the landmark scholarly Austen edition edited by R. W. Chapman in 1923, expresses his gratitude for its period illustrations. Forster is grateful not only for their accuracy but hopes they will "purge his mind" of Thomson's illustrations, "which illustrate nothing" (Forster n.p.). Thomson was, for Forster and others, representative of all that had gone wrong with visualizing Austen by the 1920s. Illustrated Austens had come to be perceived as fetish objects, de-emphasizing historical

authenticity and distracting from the author's own words. Chapman's edition, with its original period plates, was welcomed by Forster as a corrective. In Chapman, there wasn't a cupid or peacock to be found.

It is difficult to know just how widely held opinions like Forster's were. There is certainly a long history of intellectuals deriding popular things that sell well, especially when attached to material understood by some to be the rightful property of high-culture connoisseurs. For that reason, it's difficult to conclude that Forster's view was a majority one. Forster's "lamentable Thompson" insult had its greatest impact through its repetition in Austen reception histories, circulating after both the critic-novelist and the imprecated illustrator had died. The repetition has prevented our proper grasp of Thomson's mammoth contribution to the formation of Austen's twentieth-century image, putting us in Forster's shoes. Yet, depending on your vantage point, Thomson's illustrations may deserve some of the derision Forster doles out.

Most today describe Thomson's images as dainty, quaint, and sentimental, with the phrase "chocolate box" popping up frequently. Kathryn Sutherland puts it most succinctly: Thomson's Austen was "a whimsical, chocolate-box idyll, reflecting nostalgia for an idealized pre-industrial England just out of reach."[29] Claudia L. Johnson declares that Thomson's Peacock edition is "lavishly if inanely illustrated."[30] Claire Harman has disparaged him the most forcefully since Forster, accusing Thomson of "abducting *Pride and Prejudice* into the land of kitsch."[31] One sees in these assessments something that is both fair and unfair. It's fair in that Thomson's illustrations rarely prompt deep thinking or highlight interpretive complexity, qualities that many attribute to and value in Austen's fiction. But these dismissive assessments of his illustration are unfair in that, at the time, Thomson's Austen images were forward leaning in ways that have since become invisible to us. They propelled readers and future illustrators in new directions of emphasis, promoting an Austen more widely perceptible as fashionable rather than old fashioned, comic rather than serious, social rather than intimate, and gently satirical rather than gently sensational.

Thomson may have led the visual charge for updating Austen and expanding her popular base, but he had reinforcements. Other celebrity illustrators cobranding with Austen during this decade include the Brock brothers, Charles Edmund Brock (1870–1938) and Matthew Henry Brock (1875–1960). The number of Austen images the Brocks completed between them amounted to at least 212, in many formats and editions, over decades. Although it is

not possible to do their work justice in a brief discussion, among their important "firsts" was colored plates for Austen. There had been previous color illustrations of her fiction used on front boards of yellowback editions but not multiple interior color plates. Mass-produced color illustration, reproduced by lithography, was a novelty in the 1890s. A new ten-volume Austen edition by J. M. Dent, illustrated in color by the Brocks, was published in 1898, immediately overshadowing Dent's previous Cooke-illustrated edition of 1892. Dent seems to have undertaken the new Brock-illustrated edition specifically to have a cutting-edge illustrated Austen edition on the market, rather than through any particular dissatisfaction with its 1892 edition. Whatever Dent's motivations, the Brock-illustrated Austen had the effect of eclipsing, if not extinguishing, Cooke's.

The Brock brothers evenly shared the Dent Austen assignment—five volumes each, six plates per volume, for a total of sixty plates. The edition proved a success and was republished several times. A decade later, from 1907 to 1909, the Dents produced yet another new Austen edition, and Charles E. Brock singly produced more illustrations. His commission for this project included 144 watercolors, which were also reprinted, in various iterations, for years thereafter.[32] In terms of design and subject, they were often in Thomson's artistic shadow. The Brocks' work has become known as derivative of, and less original than, his.[33] The Brock brothers followed Thomson's "attention to historical detail," although one critic describes their illustrations as "distinct," finding Thomson's more artificial and allegorical and the Brocks' more attentive to relationships and secondary characters.[34] This seems accurate, though the Brock illustrations are—regardless of which brother produced which—altogether visually busier than Thomson's.

Their busier look isn't just a result of the new coloration technique. Previous Austen illustrations invited the eye to focus on characters more than vistas or interiors. Even Lydon's from 1875, with his lush landscapes, produced images in which the eye was drawn to the human figure dwarfed by the sublime natural world. Brock-brother illustrations were, instead, what C. M. Kelly calls "over-decoration, that desire to fill all available space with patterns of some sort" (43). It's a bit like studying a very busy wallpaper. When viewing the Brocks' illustrations, it's a challenge for the eye to know where to look. In their efforts to achieve historical accuracy, the Brocks seem as interested in the settings as the characters. Their illustrations are a feast for the eyes but provide little visual content to chew on in interpreting the six novels. The number of umbrellas, parasols, and muffs the Brocks

include borders on the absurd. They depict many of the same scenes that Pickering had, in a similar style to that of Thomson, but without sensationalism or smirking humor. Given the sheer number of images the Brocks created, however, there are exceptions to this general charge and even a few unexpected moments.

One startling image is C. E. Brock's version of Edward Ferrars and Elinor Dashwood's physical closeness in *Sense and Sensibility*. In a scene from late in the novel, the couple is shown next to each other on a love seat, knees touching. His arm is draped across her shoulder, with her hand reaching up to her own shoulder to touch his hand. Up to this point, Austen illustrations had not been nearly so bold in depicting physical intimacy or suggesting overt sexuality, even in the yellowback's Lydia-flirts-with-the-officers image discussed in chapter 2. In previous images rarely did opposite-sex characters touch each other beyond a hand on the arm. The captioned, quoted line, "The Enjoyment of Elinor's Company" prompts a less innocent interpretation of the original line, when paired with Brock's illustration. Brock's image makes us see the potential physicality of Edward Ferrars enjoying Elinor's company in this scene. Most of the Brocks' Austen images, however, are far less provocative.

The Brocks and Thomson had one more formidable 1890s Austen-illustration competitor: Chris. Hammond, born Christiana Mary Demain Hammond (1860–1900). One recent Austen reception study indexes her under "Hammond, Christopher," demonstrating how little known and how much in the shadow of Thomson and the Brocks she has become.[35] She was the first identifiably female illustrator of Jane Austen's novels, illustrating three Austen titles for two publishers.[36] Her first two were the heavily illustrated editions of *Emma* (1898) and *Sense and Sensibility* (1899) for George Allen, picking up where Thomson left off, after he reestablished his relationship with Macmillan. The last was a sparsely illustrated *Pride and Prejudice* for Gresham Publishing (1900), produced at the end of her life. An obituary of Hammond was accompanied by six of her Austen illustrations, showing how highly they were ranked among her artistic accomplishments.[37] The writer of the obituary, not wanting to label her art "woman's work," nevertheless celebrated its femininity, glamour, and sincerity. Of the three terms, "sincerity" seems most to apply to what she produced, especially in the images that deviated from Thomson and the Brocks.

Hammond's heavily illustrated editions emulate some aspects of her predecessors'. The hand-drawn title pages for both her *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility* are near replicas of Thomson's Peacock edition. Of the three

Austen volumes she illustrated, Hammond's first, *Emma*, is the most derivative of Thomson, perhaps more by publisher George Allen's direction than by her own inclination. Hammond's echoes of Thomson, when they occur, seem far too ham fisted to have been much more than an assignment. We can see this as well in her two interior cupids. Hammond also makes liberal use of parasols, horses, muffs, wall art, and people seated at desks. These elements seem directly Thomson-inspired, if not deliberately copied.

One illustration even seems a direct riff on Thomson's "NOT FOR SALE" Elizabeth Bennet: Hammond's bride-price Emma and her inferior rivals or knockoffs. Captioned "If Miss Woodhouse of Hartfield the heiress of £30,000 were not quite so easily obtained . . . he would soon try for Miss Somebody else with twenty or with ten."[38] The illustration shows Mr. Elton looking over three prospective brides, sitting under signs 1, 2, and 3, holding sacks of money labeled with their respective fortunes. The women are seated on a stage, as if at a fair or auction. Mr. Elton holds up his hand and a marker, ready to command one of them for his own, declaring her the "winner." Like Thomson's "NOT FOR SALE" illustration, Hammond's image could be read as broad-humored social criticism, lampooning the ways that marriage turns women into chattel. It could be read as even darker still—as in comparison to the sale of human flesh to which Jane Fairfax alluded in the novel. But it might also be read less politically, as commentary on Mr. Elton's hubris and greed, rather than as an indictment of marital economics or sexism. Perhaps the ambiguity was intentional.

Hammond's Austen illustrations are on the whole more serious, less whimsical, and more visually surprising than Thomson's or the Brocks'. She, too, emphasizes sexual desire and tension. Her illustrations for *Sense and Sensibility* (1899) include a handful of quirky departures. One is her image of Willoughby cutting off a lock of Marianne's hair. It emphasizes the intimacy of such an act, as he steps in close to touch her head from behind, her clenched hand poised very near his groin.[39] In her *Emma*, Hammond includes another scene that is shockingly serious and may also be seen as political commentary, directly taking viewers from romance to realism—or at least romanticized realism. Hammond illustrates the slain father of Jane Fairfax, with the caption from the text, "The melancholy remembrance of him dying in action abroad" (165). The deceased Lieutenant Fairfax, killed when Jane was a girl, is depicted on the battlefield as a corpse.

Of course, there are deaths—and wartime deaths—in Austen's fiction. *Persuasion*'s unsympathetic mention of the late Dick Musgrove is unforgettable.[40]

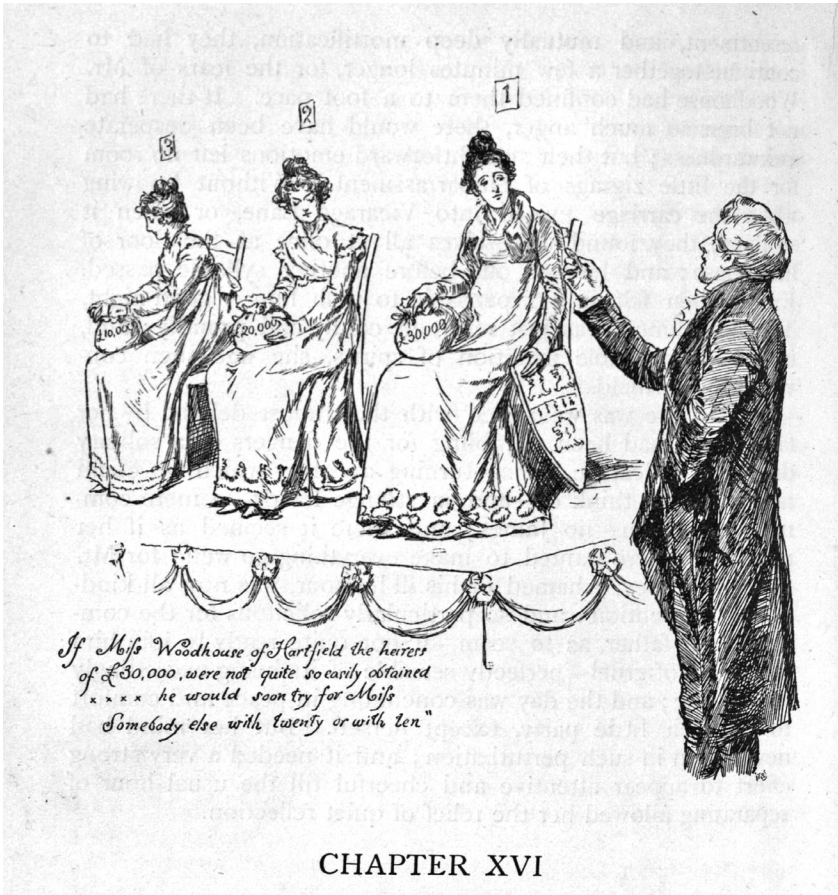

Figure 3.4. Headpiece from Jane Austen's *Emma*, ch. 16 (George Allen, 1898), 138, by Chris. Hammond.

But Hammond's illustration appears to be the first time that one of these scenes and characters is illustrated. Hammond's dead lieutenant is unsettling. It's indicative of her willing artistic foray into darker-toned, more weighty visual matters. Her corpse illustration may be in keeping with Pickering's gothic sensationalism, but it does more than shock. It foregrounds the tragedy that radically changed Jane Fairfax's economic circumstances and life prospects. Lieutenant Fairfax's corpse serves a function beyond shocking readers. It reminds them of the war dead who undergird Austen's story. This image may well even be Hammond's artistic response to the prominent critics then claiming that Austen's fiction was limited in its scope and

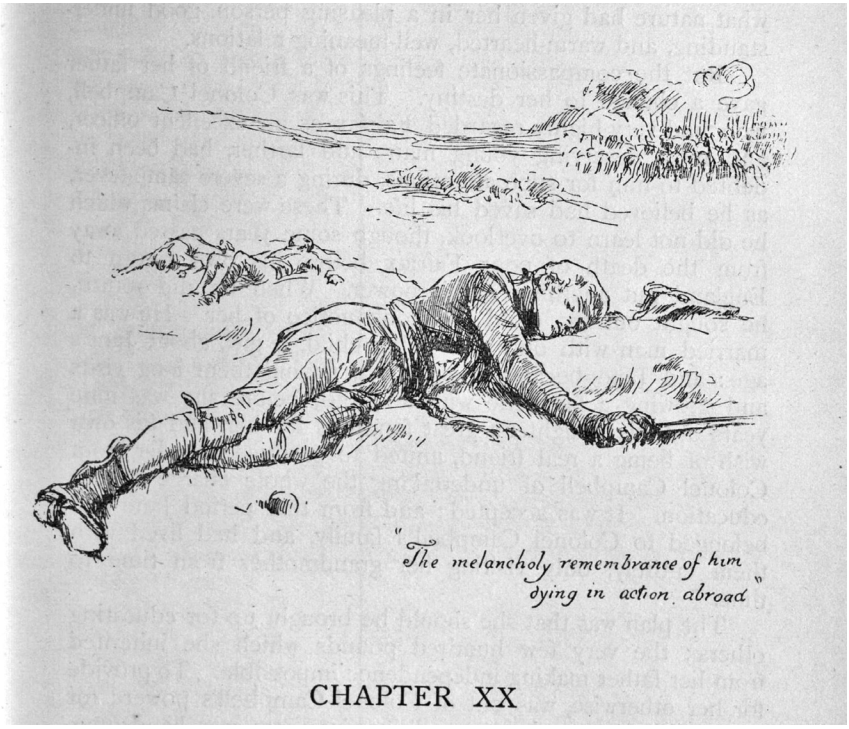

Figure 3.5. Headpiece from Jane Austen's *Emma*, ch. 20 (George Allen, 1898), 165, by Chris. Hammond.

place. Her image gives the lie to the then dominant critical view that Austen's fiction was "small," that it contained "no event," and that it never touched on politics or the wider world. Hammond's illustration *shows* such blanket statements to be false.

Hammond had her own share of event and hardship. She died at age thirty-nine, a single woman, in the same year that her illustrated *Pride and Prejudice* (1900) appeared. Hammond's rise to artistic prominence would not have been predicted by her family of origin. She was born of a bank clerk father, himself the son of a surgeon. Christiana, the eldest child, was one of three artist siblings. An obituary of "Miss Chris Hammond," gives us a sense of her artistic education. Her mother having died when she was young, Hammon received her first art lessons from a governess. Success in later formal study at the Lambeth School of Art resulted in three years' free instruction at the Royal Academy Schools. Women had been able to enroll at the Royal

Academy Schools since the late 1860s, but Hammond (and her sister, who also attended) would still have been, to some degree, female trailblazers there. It's odd to think that Hammond, too, may have had at least a passing knowledge of life-student Ferdinand Pickering in his late years.

Hammond's time at the Royal Academy Schools was not without its challenges. Even after the abolishment of the life studentship, she would have had an opportunity to continue her studies there, free, for three further years, had she not become ineligible. She had performed well in her examinations, but she had poor attendance at the required lectures. It disqualified her from continuing. Although her absences were a result, it is said, of poor health and disability, these circumstances were not recognized as extenuating (Forman, "Chris" 347). Denied further training, she turned from oil painting to book illustration. She excelled at illustration and was in high demand for it. Like many other artists we've seen thus far, her Austen commissions would become her most lasting artistic contribution, as "Jane Austen's novels showed the gifted artist to the greatest advantage" (Forman, "The Late" 194).

Hammond's obituary includes many moving details, including this description of the exhaustion caused by pressing (and economically necessary) illustration commissions: "Few probably can realize to themselves how great a strain, mental as well as in some measure physical, must be undergone by an artist who undertakes to deliver within a given time a long series of illustrations for a novel. Miss Hammond sometimes felt this." The writer also includes this pathetic story: "It is a little sad now to think that, only a few weeks before her death, Miss Hammond had inherited a small sum of money which would have enabled her to devote more time to portrait-painting," an art form that she preferred and found less exhausting (Forman, "Chris" 349). Hammond was the pioneering illustrator who first depicted death and war in Austen, reminding viewer-readers that Austen's female characters, too, were shaped by grand political events and the world beyond Britain.

By the end of Hammond's career as an artist, it had begun to matter not only whether one read Austen but from which edition one read her. Consuming fiction in a cheap newspaper format, versus reading it in a luxury illustrated edition (and which one), could determine a reader's experience of Austen and shape others' sense of her or him as a reader. A few were in a position to compare and contrast the editions. One even constructed his own wish list of Austen illustrators that never were. In *Pages from a Private Diary* (1898), in an essay originally published anonymously in *Cornhill Magazine*, poet and deacon H. C. Beeching (1859–1919) assesses Austen's illustrators.

"Miss Austen," he concludes, "has suffered more than most authors at the hands of her illustrators." "How delightful," he continues, "it would have been if her novels had first appeared in *Cornhill* [*Magazine*] with [Frederick] Walker's or [John Everett] Millais's pictures!"[41]

This may at first seem Beeching's exercise in visual nostalgia. Placing Austen in the *Cornhill Magazine* in the 1860s would replicate the serialized, illustrated reading experiences of his childhood, of which he had fond memories. It wasn't necessarily more exciting to read in this way, he notes, but it would be a trip down memory lane. He continues, "For though it is undoubtedly a bore to read a novel for the first time in sections, nothing is pleasanter than to go back upon it in this way tasting it like old wine" (Beeching 110). For Beeching, illustrators and illustration are central parts of nostalgic rereading. He seems to invest more emotional energy in Austen's illustrations than in her words.

Without the benefit of childhood nostalgia to sugarcoat his illustrated reading (or rereading) experiences, Beeching declares himself disappointed with the Austen illustrators of the 1890s: "Mr. Cooke's persons are devoid of any character whatever, almost of expression; Mr. Brock's are not much better; and Mr. Thomson's, though they are more like real people, are not Miss Austen's people. Look at the conceited boy for instance who does duty for Darcy; Darcy was thirty" (110). These assessments are significant because they show us that Beeching was conversant in the most notable Austen illustrations of the 1890s. He knew them all. He had *studied* them. It was meaningful for an educated reader to have and publish opinions on the illustrations. It signals the arrival of a new moment in the history of Austen's legacy. To know and read (or reread) her was to know, view, and judge the work of her illustrators.

Jane Austen entered the twentieth century as a proven, illustrated literary commodity. The bulk of the illustrations that had emerged in the 1890s continued to circulate in reprinted or new editions in the early 1900s, but there were naturally more publishers who wanted to try their hand at becoming the next Austen-derived financial success, just as Henry James had feared. Individual illustrated Austen titles continued to reach print, too, but a new "complete" Austen edition was published in 1908 by Chatto & Windus, in its St. Martin's Illustrated Library of Standard Authors.[42] It set out to rival—and in some ways to copy—the 1907–9 Austen illustrated edition by J. M. Dent. That edition was Dent's third Austen edition in fifteen years, this time with extensive watercolors by Charles E. Brock. In response, Chatto

& Windus chose as its Austen artist the *Punch* and *Humourist* cartoonist A. (Arthur) Wallis Mills (1878–1940). The Chatto & Windus edition features its illustrator's name in gold on the cover, adding a miniature-sized women's portrait in color above it. This was marketed as a set for the fashionable set and not just for girls.

Several factors worked together to make Austen and her fiction a safe subject for satire, including images aimed at adult audiences. Thomson's illustrations certainly made this possible, with their winking tone, opening the door to see Austen as comic. Just as important was Austen's rebirth as a political figure and as a comic stage presence, as we'll see in later parts of this book. Social criticism in illustration had been nascent in the designs of Thomson and Hammond from the 1890s, but a dozen years later, Wallis Mills went beyond either one in his depictions. Politics, cartoons, and illustrated Austen became, in the early twentieth century, not just a conceivable but a desirable, marketable mix. His Austen edition would turn out to be one of Mills's few literary book illustration commissions. In his work on Austen, Wallis Mills wears his politics lightly, unlike in *Punch*, the satirical magazine. But publisher Chatto & Windus indicated it was capitalizing on the confluence of the two publications. In their Austen advertisements, Chatto & Windus touted Mills as the "well-known artist of London *Punch*."[43]

For each of the edition's ten Austen volumes, Mills provided a frontispiece and nine other plates, as well as his designed endpapers, making him the fourth artist to complete a set of Austen illustrations that reached into the triple digits. Mills's Austen illustrations show a caricaturist's sensibilities. He especially excelled at making Austen's ridiculous minor characters seem laughably awful, from Mr. Hurst's gluttony in *Pride and Prejudice* to Miss Bates's garrulousness in *Emma*. Wallis Mills included many images of men and boys engaging in senseless, and risible, violence. He depicted Austen's snooty women with particular energy and aplomb. Wallis's images are pronounced "rather insipid" by David Gilson, which seems off the mark ("Later Publishing" 148). Mills communicates the ridiculousness of Austen's most absurd characters, especially her most hateful, privileged characters, quite well. He is far more in his visual element when producing a send-up of *Mansfield Park*'s wealthy, daft suitor Mr. Rushworth than he is with a straight-up hero, such as *Pride and Prejudice*'s Mr. Darcy.[44] Mills is less successful in presenting gripping images of the characters and scenes most readers would approach with seriousness. He seems more adept at capturing Austen's buffoons of both sexes than her heroes or heroines.

These images wear their class-based and gendered politics lightly, too, but after seeing Wallis Mills's later suffrage cartoons, his depictions of Austen's characters should be revisited. His Austen edition completed, Mills drew further famed political cartoons for *Punch*. The best known of them may be "The Suffragette That Knew Jiu-Jitsu" (1910). It was an homage to the martial arts instructor who trained the female bodyguard unit at the Women's Social and Political Union, Edith Margaret Garrud (1871–1972). Mills depicts her in a fighting stance, before a small army of police officers, with the subtitle "The Arrest." But the image suggests that any arresting that is going on is Garrud's of the officers. She has arrested them by stopping them in their tracks, so they are unable to arrest her. She's already physically bested several of them, their bodies depicted tossed aside, in various states of vanquishment. Some half-hang over an iron fence, apparently tossed there by the suffragette. The police have lost their hats in the process. Others have landed on the other side of the fence, rubbing their heads from the fall. Tied to the fence is a placard reading, "Votes for Women." A frightened, out-of-shape officer is the largest character in the image, cowering at the front, with several smaller fellow officers crouched behind him.

Looking at the *Punch* jiu-jitsu image in comparison to Wallis Mills's Austen, there are moments of visual overlap. His jiu-jitsu suffragette resembles to some degree his Elizabeth Bennet, with her similarly styled dark hair, toned upper body, and determined-placid expression on her face. Like the jiu-jitsu suffragette, Elizabeth is frequently depicted in Mills's edition with well-defined arms in motion. She, too, locks eyes with her enemies across the room. She also clenches her fists. Wallis Mills's arresting/arrested police officer looks most like his Mr. Woodhouse from *Emma*, with arms raised in fright. Mills's suffrage cartoons are not merely propaganda images. They poke fun at the suffragettes, but they do so while consistently highlighting female wit and strength of body and mind. That similarity seems in keeping with emerging understandings of Austen and her fiction in this turn-of-the-century period. Mills may have been less commercially successful than Thomson as an artist, but he took Thomson's comic innovations for Austen and pushed them further, moving her from the realm of the whimsically humorous to the visual territory of the broadly humorous and satirical. Book illustration helped make the author a different Jane Austen, her fiction a different fiction.

What proved a visual turning point—gradually moving illustrated Austen from a popular product to a fine-art medium—was the emergence of Austen in film and television. The book and film industries began to work

hand in hand to get Austen's name and image in front of new generations of readers and viewers, something that happened to many classic authors in this period, of course. In Austen's case, we might date the origins of this shift to 1931, when Grosset and Dunlap published its *Pride and Prejudice* edition, in a series called the Universal Library. That edition, like many books that would emerge over the decades to come, was otherwise unillustrated. It did feature a decorative book jacket cover meant to entice buyers, illustrated by the little-known Alfred Skrenda (1897–1978).[45] Today he might be most recognized for his cover illustration for Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, still well enough regarded to have ended up on T-shirts and tote bags.

Skrenda's *Pride and Prejudice* book jacket cover illustration would not seem poised to have had much impact. It isn't visually unusual, with its glamorous, Art Deco–meets-Regency heroine and hero shown from the torso up. The hero dominates the frame, his aquiline nose and curved elbow arched toward the heroine and his hand resting on his just-visible knee. The lily-white heroine, reddish hair worn up, long neck prominent, seems not to notice the hero, as she gazes beyond him and the viewer. The couple's eyes do not meet, and their bodies apparently do not touch, yet their precisely matching

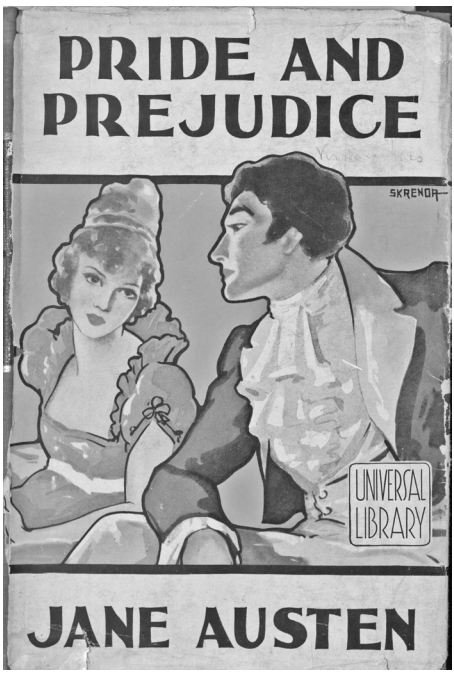

Figure 3.6. *Left*, book jacket cover, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Grosset and Dunlap, 1931), by Alfred Skrenda; *right*, official trailer still, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1940, Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

red lips seem on an inevitable crash course toward each other. Their lips are one of the few parts of Skrenda's image that are not encased in a dramatic black outline. The image doesn't break any illustration-history boundaries or explore new visual territory, for Austen or men and women. But it would end up being put before more eyes—gaining more "viewers"—than perhaps any book illustration before it. It was seen by millions when it was used in a film trailer, almost a decade after its first publication.

The Grosset and Dunlap edition was featured in the official trailer for Robert Z. Leonard's Metro Goldwyn Mayer film version of *Pride and Prejudice* (1940). The two-minute trailer's first image is of Skrenda's book cover, with its dashing man and movie-star beautiful woman. These characters even bear a coincidental passing resemblance to the film's actor-stars, Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson, down to their real-life hair color. After flashing on screen for a few moments, the book jacket image is covered over by a phrase: "One of the Most Famous Novels Ever Written!" Just how many people would have seen a film trailer at that time? One source estimates thirty-three million people in Britain were going to the movies on any given day in this period; in the United States, the estimate is that eighty to ninety million people went to the cinema each week in the 1930s and '40s.[46] That gives us a rough sense of how many millions would have seen this film trailer at their local cinema. The number jumps up further when we add the fact that MGM also used Skrenda's book jacket cover image in many of its print promotional materials for the film, posted in theaters and printed in newspapers.

Skrenda's *Pride and Prejudice* book jacket both died and was immortalized with its transition to film and film publicity. Grosset and Dunlap, the leading American publisher of film tie-in editions, was chosen as the imprint to publish the photoplay edition of *Pride and Prejudice* after the release of MGM's film. Photoplay editions were, as Deirdre Gilbert puts it, "advertised in the movie theaters during the film's run—right along with candy and gum."[47] After the film's release, Grosset and Dunlap almost immediately threw over Skrenda's image for a book jacket using a photo of the MGM film's stars, an oft-used formula at the time. At least ten photoplay editions were published for *Pride and Prejudice*, linking the movie and the book.[48] Most reproduced images from the film in their contents, although not necessarily on their book jackets. Two-dimensional Darcy was no longer represented only as drawn, engraved, or painted. He had also become a photograph.

One Grosset and Dunlap photoplay frontispiece is staged remarkably similarly to Skrenda's illustration, with Olivier's Darcy in almost precisely

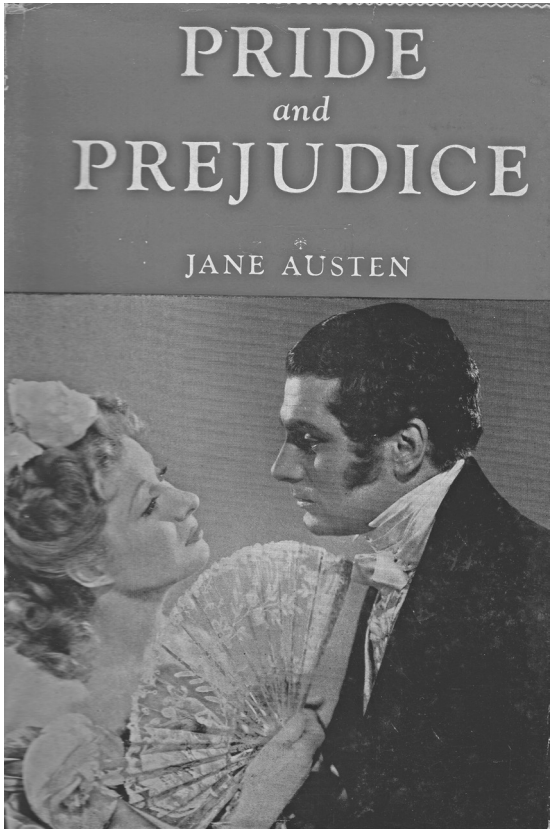

Figure 3.7. Book jacket cover, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1940?).

the same outfit, hairstyle, clothing, and position. Garson's Elizabeth differs from Skrenda's heroine in that she looks directly into Olivier's eyes, holding a fan up between them and preventing their bodies from touching. It allows her hands to rest inches away from his chest. The effect is a photographed human tableau that echoes, whether intentionally or not, Skrenda's *Pride and Prejudice* book jacket illustration from a decade earlier. It maintains the fiction (or fact?) that this is a novel that is both fresh and classic. The image puts its man and woman on an almost-level plane, as well as on track for coupledom. The big visual question seems to be whether their eyes and lips will meet.

Did Grosset and Dunlap, or MGM, set out to have the book that became a film, and the film trailer that featured a book cover, replicate that book cover seen on film as its photoplay? The dizzying visual traffic here, from

print to book illustration to print ad to celluloid and back and forth, is remarkable, whether these echoed visual images were ever intentional. The Skrenda book cover and book trailer appearance marked the end of one era and the beginning of another for Austen and book design. Moving images meant that book illustration would never again be looked to as the medium that would showcase the author at her most fashionable and contemporary.

By the mid-twentieth century, illustrated Austen titles had traveled far from the objects they'd been at the time of Richard Bentley's Standard Novels in the 1830s, published for "a middle to upper-class audience," with their sensational, intimate, female-dominated images by Ferdinand Pickering.[49] A few editions of the mid-twentieth century followed in the tradition of the 1890s Cranfordization craze in their high quality and prodigious number of illustrations, such as the collectible illustrated Austens published by the Heritage Press (1940; illustrated by Helen Sewell), the Book Society (1944; illustrated by John Austen), or the Folio Society (1957; illustrated by Joan Hassall). But the Austen illustrated book changed perceptibly as her fiction traveled into new media. Media beyond the printed page increasingly became the Austenian point of reference, even for the print illustrated edition. As odd as it may seem now, there was a radio tie-in print edition. In 1951, Hodder and Stoughton published a "shortened version" of *Pride and Prejudice*, advertised on its book jacket cover (as well as in its introduction) as "prepared by H. Oldfield Box, whose radio adaptation of this famous novel enthralled millions of listeners."[50]

The copious photoplay editions—and the radio tie-in edition—demonstrate how Austen's movement into new media has long piggybacked onto old media. Charting such shifts in illustrated Austen ought to make it difficult for us to take seriously today's residual claims about Austen's being "ruined" by graphic novels or by massively multiplayer online role-playing games like *Ever, Jane*. Artists' images of Austen's fiction have served to shape each generation's sense of her material and thrust, her tone and politics. These images inevitably propelled weightier conversations about her fiction and its legacy to wider audiences. In renovating her and her fiction for emerging visual media, book illustrators of a century and more ago carried Austen's image forward by degrees, making the old fashioned into something newfangled. In each case, a few loudly expressed the worry that, in making the leap, Austen would be ruined. Thus far such skeptics have proved unlamentably wrong.

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