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SIBLING JEALOUSY AND AESTHETIC AMBIGUITY IN AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

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Jane Austen's most popular novel, Pride and Prejudice *(1813), illuminates and is illuminated by psychoanalytic aesthetics. When Austen dramatizes unconscious oedipal/sibling rivalries, irony acts as a type of aesthetic ambiguity (E. Kris 1952). A psychoanalytic perspective shows that Austen uses a grammar of negatives (negation, denial, minimization) to achieve the dual meanings of irony, engaging the reader's unconscious instinctual satisfactions, while at the same time protecting the reader from unpleasant affects. Austen's plot, which portrays regressions driven by sibling jealousy, reveals that a new tolerance of remorse and depression in her heroine and hero leads to psychic growth.*

Keywords: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, oedipal/sibling jealousy, aesthetic ambiguity, irony, negation, unconscious satisfaction.

IRONY, AESTHETIC AMBIGUITY, AND THE NEGATIVE

This psychoanalytic exploration of Jane Austen's most popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), focuses on the author's acclaimed use of irony, in order to show its effect on the reader's unconscious fantasies of oedipal/sibling jealousy. Austen's irony (Jenkyns 2004; Mudrick 1952) can be more deeply appreciated with the application of a psychoana-

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lytic perspective that shows precisely how her irony works to engage the reader's unconscious instinctual satisfactions (Arlow 1969; E. Kris 1952), and at the same time to provide "an inherent defensive potential that can protect the beholder from the unpleasant affects that arise with the mobilization of his unconscious infantile fantasies" (Balter 1999, p. 1303). Irony can be understood as a form of aesthetic ambiguity: "The understanding of irony . . . involves the recognition of two distinct (indeed opposed) meanings, which are, however, responded to conjointly" (E. Kris 1952, p. 247).

In order to give expression to unconscious fantasy satisfactions and to respect defenses against impulses, Austen uses a grammar of negatives (negation, denial, and minimization) to accomplish the irony that functions to permit a primary process tolerance of contradiction. This paper proposes that when representations of repressed, unconscious oedipal/sibling conflicts are dramatized in her narratives, Austen's irony, with its grammar of negatives, comes prominently into play. The great novelist employs negation or denial when conflicts are heated, for instance, bringing an idea into the conscious awareness of both character and reader while at the same time introducing the "no" or "not," in order to render painful affect unconscious by permitting a contending idea to be fantasied, simultaneously or alternatively (Freud 1925).

Austen's enormous popularity with literary critics and with the general public (Deresiewicz 2004; Galperin 2003; Harding 1940; Knox-Shaw 2004; Tanner 1985; Trilling 1957; Watt 1981; Wiltshire 1992) shows that her language powerfully engages the reader's unconscious. Psychoanalytic theory has attempted to understand "the language of art per se" and "the laws governing its structure, to grasp what sets it apart from other modes of communication, and to disclose the secret of its effect" on the reader (Noy 1969, p. 623). One psychoanalytic insight is that artistic representations "contain elements which correspond to features already present in the preformed unconscious fantasies" (Arlow 1969, p. 9).

Another analyst's view is that the way in which people approach works of art has a special aim:

> The contents of *conscious perception*, of *conscious fantasizing*, and of *unconscious fantasizing* are all aligned in a harmonious

> and mutually-reinforcing configuration. A state of intense psychic dynamism and tight functional integration thus occurs, a state otherwise quite rare in waking mental life (Freud, 1915, pp. 194-195). The work of art . . . becomes, for the time being, the organizer and regulator of the beholder's emotional-instinctual life. [Balter 1999, p. 1302, italics in original]

I propose a new psychoanalytic insight: that the use of a grammar of negatives within Austen's irony is a form of aesthetic ambiguity that permits her language to connect with the reader's unconscious fantasies of triumphs and satisfactions in oedipal/sibling rivalries.

Freud articulates the mechanisms of negation:

> The manner in which our patients bring forward their associations during the work of analysis gives us an opportunity for making some interesting observations. "Now you'll think I mean to say something insulting, but really I've no such intention" [says the patient]. We realize that this is a repudiation, by projection, of an idea that has just come up. Or: "You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's *not* my mother." We emend this to: "So it *is* his mother." In our interpretation, we take the liberty of disregarding the negation and of picking out the subject-matter alone of the association. [Freud 1925, p. 235, italics in original]

E. Kris (1952) elaborated Freud's insight, observing that the language of great art maintains both the "subject matter"—*my mother*—and its negation—*not my mother*---in achieving the aesthetic ambiguity (multiple meanings) necessary to sustain aesthetic pleasure while provoking disruptive affect. E. Kris underlines that with aesthetic ambiguity, "we have reference not necessarily to uncertainty of meaning but to its multiplicity" (p. 245):

> We call an ambiguity disjunctive when the separate meanings function in the process of interpretation as alternatives . . . . Freud (1905c, p. 79) has spoken of these as switch-words:
>
> > In a line of associations ambiguous words (or as we may call them "switch-words") act like points at a junction. If the points are switched across from the position in which they

> appear to lie in the dream [narration], then we find ourselves upon another set of rails and along this track run the thoughts which we are in search of and which still lie concealed behind the dream [surface narrative].
>
> The separate set of rails characterizes the ambiguity between the manifest and latent content as disjunctive . . . . An ambiguity is conjunctive when the separate meanings are jointly effective in the interpretation. [E. Kris 1952, pp. 245-246]

Utilizing conjunctive ambiguity, Austen conveys her ironic meaning through a "pair of aphorisms" (Jenkyns 2004, p. 1), a narrative statement and a balancing contradiction, in the famous opening lines of *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen 1813): "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife," and:

> However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. [p. 1]

In the first statement, the desire of the single man who possesses a good fortune is asserted to be the "want of a wife." In the second statement, "however little known the feelings or views of such a man may be," there is a comic acknowledgment that the "want" may be located not so much in the single man's consciousness as in the "surrounding families" who consider him their "rightful property." Austen thus opens her novel with ironic reference both to sexual desire "in want" and to the powerful rivalries between a neighborhood's families for the advancement and pleasure of their daughters.

CHARACTER CHANGE, ASSOCIATIONISM, AND PRIMARY PROCESS IN AUSTEN'S FICTION

Austen's fiction expanded the bildungsroman tradition, for her technique of *free indirect discourse* (Tuite 2002) put the reader in sympa-

thetic contact with the primary process associations of her heroines, as they gain the greater range and depth of emotion needed for character development and moral growth (Knox-Shaw 2004; Trilling 1957). In key passages of *Pride and Prejudice*, in Austen's depictions of character change, Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy suffer painfully conflicted feelings that they have never endured before.

Austen was influenced by the Romantic poets' ideas on the creative process and psychological growth (Deresiewicz 2004; Tuite 2002), as was Freud nearly a century later. Coleridge's definition of imagination (his London lectures were printed while Austen composed her first novels) articulated a need for regression in the service of free association, for a psychic disorganization to achieve a more inclusive psychic organization (see Abrams 1953). In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud (1900) quoted the German Romantic poet Schiller's ideas on associative processes that so influenced Coleridge (see Coburn 1957) as giving access to primary process thought.

E. Kris (1952) elaborates Freud's ideas: "Configurations which bear the imprint of primary process tend to be ambiguous, allowing for more than one interpretation" (p. 104). In art, the primary processes continue to be active in a secondary-process narrative, and so "they are permitted to go on being active" (Noy 1969, p. 638). This characteristic of primary process thought—that it allows "for more than one interpretation"—is essential to Austen's linked portrayals of oedipal/sibling conflict and character change.

Keats's conceptual variation on the theory of associationism, *negative capability,* has been taken up by psychoanalysts (see Grinberg 1990, p. 119) because the term condenses the poetic methods of retrieving and representing derivatives of unconscious scenes (while keeping painful affects repressed), as they emerge in displacements and through negation, denial, and minimization. Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819), with its famous negation, "'Tis not through envy," depicts the "perilous seas" of this retrieval, which can facilitate psychic growth or lead to paralysis and despair "in fairy lands forlorn" (pp. 525-530). Thus, Austen's fiction is rooted in the genius of her period when the dramatic course of her plots leads the heroines to regress in the service of psychic change.

Austen's implicit view of psychic change is that such change involves the elaboration and working through of oedipal/sibling jealousies among her characters. Austen worked on psychic change in the context of a highly charged and complex period literature on female submission and rebellion in family life, on female sexual desire, independence of mind, and object choice (Hudson 1992; Johnson 1988). In *Pride and Prejudice,* Austen's narrative ironies permitted her to dramatize serious conflicts between her heroines' survival, their sexual desires, and their oedipal/sibling conflicts, while keeping the tone "light" and "sparkling" (Chapman 1952, p. 229).

AUSTEN'S OEDIPAL / SIBLING RIVALRY, ENVY, AND JEALOUSY

Pride and Prejudice dramatizes the "family complex" (Freud 1914, p. 61) in a plot that hinges on a problem of survival, with the prospective loss of the Bennet family's Longbourn estate. Because the estate is entailed through the male line, Mrs. Bennet and any unmarried daughters will be left destitute at the time of Mr. Bennet's death. Thus, "Mrs. Bennet . . . continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about" (p. 46).

Mrs. Bennet universalizes her hatred of Mr. Collins (the cousin on whom the estate is entailed) in the face of the threat to her survival and the well-being of her daughters. Uncertain of her right to hate and dismiss the interloper, she projects her feeling about him as someone "whom nobody cared anything about." Behind the universalizing negative "nobody cared," Mrs. Bennet keeps her personal envy from her consciousness, and Austen adds an ironic meaning retrospectively when Mrs. Bennet so desperately wants Elizabeth to care enough about Mr. Collins to marry him in order to secure Longbourn estate for herself.

The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* is perfectly constructed to expose the dynamics of oedipal/sibling rivalries. Mrs. Bennet (mother of five daughters, wife of the sardonic Mr. Bennet) has heard that Mr. Bingley, a single man of good fortune, has let Netherfield Hall. Accompanied

by his two jealous sisters and the rich Mr. Darcy, Bingley arrives in the neighborhood and attends the Meryton ball, where a proud Darcy rejects Elizabeth as a dance partner, and a pleasing Bingley falls in love with Jane Bennet. Mr. Collins arrives at Longbourn ready to marry whichever of the Bennet daughters will have him—but is turned down by Elizabeth. Mrs. Bennet's anger is provoked when Elizabeth's best friend, Charlotte Lucas, agrees to marry him the next day.

Mr. Wickham, a handsome, insinuating young man, raised almost as a brother to Darcy, arrives in Meryton with his regiment. Wickham maligns Darcy to Elizabeth and charms her with his soft attentions. Mr. Bingley is persuaded by Mr. Darcy (who has plans for him to marry his sister) that Jane does not love him, and the Netherfield party returns to London. Elizabeth visits her friend Charlotte, now Mrs. Collins, in the parsonage, which is connected to the Rosings estate of Darcy's Aunt, Lady Catherine De Bourgh. Darcy and his cousin pay a visit to Rosings; he falls further in love with Elizabeth and proposes without success.

In the summer, Elizabeth travels to Derbyshire with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner and meets Mr. Darcy at his great estate of Pemberley. Darcy is now "polite and unassuming," "really attentive" (p. 195), and invites them all to dinner, but Elizabeth receives news from Jane that their youngest sister, Lydia Bennet—"vain, ignorant, idle, and absolutely uncontrouled" (p. 177)—has run off with Wickham. Elizabeth begins to understand Darcy's character and now fears that Lydia's reckless abandon of her family and good name will cost her, Elizabeth, Darcy's love, "for who . . . will connect themselves with such a family" (p. 225), as Lady Catherine puts it. However, Darcy pays Wickham to marry Lydia, takes care of his debts, and sets him up in a northern post, so that Bingley can marry Jane and he himself can win Elizabeth's love and hand.

In late adolescence, Austen's heroines must work through their oedipal/sibling jealousies sufficiently to make good marriages. Too much guilt over unresolved oedipal/sibling conflicts, resulting in destructive rivalries and poor judgment, could ruin them (Colonna and Newman 1983; Kernberg and Richards 1988; M. Kris and S. Ritvo 1983; Neubauer 1982, 1983; Pao 1969; Provence and Solnit 1983; Rosiers 1993; Sharpe and Rosenblatt 1994).

In psychoanalytic theory, the oedipal/sibling conflicts in the family complex (Freud 1914, p. 61) are important, though somewhat underrepresented in the literature.

> No child fails to feel betrayed at the birth of a younger sibling. The earliest and most violent forms of envy and jealousy occur at this early stage of childhood, the rivalry for mother's nurturing love, the wish for complete possession. When these wishes have for one reason or another been poorly mastered, they leave tendencies for reactions of violent jealousy at later levels of development, the oedipal level. [Kligerman 1962, pp. 741-742]

Freud (1916) wrote that the child's

> . . . sense of injury gives grounds for receiving the new brothers or sisters with repugnance and for unhesitatingly getting rid of them by a wish . . . . It is even true that as a rule children are far readier to give verbal expression to these feelings of hate [toward siblings] than to those arising from the parental complex. [p. 334, italics in original]

Indeed, it has been noted that "negative affects are safer when not experienced as directed toward the parents on whom the child must depend" (Kernberg and Richards 1988, p. 56). In *Pride and Prejudice,* Mrs. Bennet's anxiety over survival is treated ironically by Austen to modulate the intensity of affect evoked in the reader by the rivalries of the family-complex plot.

Neubauer (1983) makes several essential points that can illuminate the context of survival fears and oedipal/sibling conflicts in *Pride and Prejudice.* Since rivalry, envy, and jealousy are evoked in a child who has no siblings, Neubauer asks how the sibling experience adds to or modifies the outcome of these powerful affects, and he makes three profound inferences:

> 1. Envy and jealousy are basically related to the feeling of conflict and dissatisfaction the child experiences with the primary psychological parent . . . . 2. The child's need to experience the parent as omnipotent and omniscient is at the same time universally expressed in those residues of infantile wishes and expectations that we observe as rivalry, envy and jealousy . . . .

> 3. The need for acquisition and possession underly [sic] rivalry, envy and jealousy. [1983, p. 333]

Rivalry over the "need for acquisition and possession" of goods and resources, over love, sex, wealth, and houses, produces conflicts among the characters in the many triangular relationships in *Pride and Prejudice:* Elizabeth competes with her mother for her father's love and approval; Elizabeth is her sister Lydia's rival for the attentions of Wickham; Mrs. Bennet competes with Charlotte Lucas's mother for Mr. Collins as a son-in-law, given his future possession of the Longbourn estate; Darcy and Wickham are rivals for the love and property of their mutual provider, old Mr. Darcy; Darcy competes silently with Wickham for Elizabeth; and Caroline Bingley becomes self-destructively jealous of Elizabeth as Darcy's love for her grows. These are just the major love triangles in *Pride and Prejudice,* whose central subject is sibling jealousy and whose central technique is Austen's irony, with its softening grammar of negatives.

OEDIPAL VICTORY AND GUILT: ELIZABETH AS "PARTNER" IN HER FATHER'S "PLEASURE"

The maligned Mr. Collins arrives at Longbourn holding out an olive branch, ready to marry one of the Bennet daughters. Mr. Bennet is bent on bringing out Mr. Collins's sycophantic side, and Elizabeth joins in the fun. Mrs. Bennet, desperate for Mr. Collins to marry one of her daughters, earnestly encourages her guest. Austen's narrator comments dryly:

> Mr. Bennet's expectations were fully answered. His cousin was as absurd as he had hoped, and he listened to him with the keenest enjoyment, maintaining at the same time the most resolute composure of countenance, and except in an occasional glance at Elizabeth, requiring no partner in his pleasure. [p. 51]

"Except in an occasional glance at Elizabeth," her father requires "no partner in his pleasure" (p. 51). Under cover of a minimization ("occasional") and a negation ("no"), fragments of the sentence can lead the reader to form the idea that Elizabeth has become a "partner" in her father's "pleasure"—an idea that can pass psychic censorship to stir

up pleasurable fantasies in the reader's unconscious. "Our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds" (Freud 1908, p. 153). Narrative fragments get reworked in the unconscious:

> Art is one gestalt in which primary and secondary processes are sublimely integrated without contradicting each other . . . . The unconscious perception, though not restricted to such limitations, is able to "understand" those contents even if they are communicated in a converse, piecemeal and disordered fashion. [Noy 1969, pp. 638, 640]

Austen's narration goes on to portray Mr. Bennet's contempt for his wife and Elizabeth's conflict over that contempt:

> To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement . . . . Elizabeth, however, had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband. She had always seen it with pain; but respecting his abilities, and grateful for his affectionate treatment of herself, she endeavoured to forget what she could not overlook, and to banish from her thoughts that continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum which, in exposing his wife to the contempt of her own children, was so highly reprehensible. [pp. 180-181]

In the indirect discourse through which the narrator enters Elizabeth's inner thoughts, Austen's grammar of negatives thickens as "switch words" (Freud 1905, p. 79) both reveal and veil the suggestive oedipal situation for Elizabeth: "Elizabeth had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour . . . . She endeavoured to forget." Had she "never been blind"? Or is she somehow still "blind"? Elizabeth can "banish it [her father's impropriety] from her thoughts." But can she banish her unconscious satisfaction in and attachment to the oedipal father, which her father's contempt for her mother heightens?

In this play of disjunctive ambiguities, *blind* and *never blind, propriety* and *impropriety*, the reader's unconscious can find satisfaction in, and defend against, incestuous fantasies provoked by the language of the narrative. Austen will proceed to create a set of variations on "impropriety" in

a conjunctive ambiguity that will build up an interpretive understanding, differentiating the characters of Darcy, Wickham, and Mr. Bennet as Elizabeth comes to understand each of them better.

Austen creates a "past" for Mr. Bennet in his favoritism toward Elizabeth and Jane, which exacerbates sibling rivalry. From Mr. Collins's letter, the reader learns that there has been a long "disagreement" between Mr. Bennet and Mr. Collins's late father. Mr. Collins writes:

> I have frequently wished to heal the breach; but for some time I was kept back by my own doubts, fearing lest it might seem disrespectful to his memory for me to be on good terms with any one, with whom it had always pleased him to be at variance. [p. 47]

With one sentence in a letter, Austen portrays a background of unresolved rivalry in Mr. Bennet's life, transmitted from the prior generation into the main plot of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Mrs. Bennet also shows (not unusual) envious competitiveness in her maternal search for husbands for her daughters and safety for her own old age. Mrs. Bennet thus becomes enraged with her neighbor and rival, Lady Lucas, when she finds out that this woman's daughter, Charlotte, is to marry Mr. Collins after Elizabeth has turned him down. The idea that Charlotte will inherit Longbourn launches Mrs. Bennet on a comic rant that is rich in primary process contradictions and concludes with a destruction of the match:

> In the first place, she persisted in disbelieving the whole of the matter; secondly, she was very sure that Mr. Collins had been taken in; thirdly, she trusted that they would never be happy together; and fourthly, that the match might be broken off. [pp. 97-98]

Thus, Mrs. Bennet, with irreconcilable negatives, manages simultaneously to "disbelieve" the matter, to judge that the man was duped, to trust that the couple would never be happy, and to maintain that the match "might be broken off." Unconscious oedipal responses to the parental couple find a perfect displacement. And I propose that it is this kind of language—heard in all its primary process, instinctually moti-

vated, and contradictory meanings—that deeply bonds Austen's millions of devoted fans to her works.

ENVY AND JEALOUSY BETWEEN RIVAL "BROTHERS": DARCY AND WICKHAM

Viewed through the lens of the family complex in *Pride and Prejudice*, the language of many episodes yields a sharper meaning. The main lines of the plot involve Wickham's envy of Darcy's wealth, Darcy's jealousy of Wickham over Elizabeth, and Wickham's revenge on Darcy in his attempted and actual seductions—first of Darcy's sister Georgiana, and then of Elizabeth's sister Lydia. The dark consequences that can attend on oedipal/sibling rivalry are articulated in Austen's narrative with a complex irony. A "shocking" sibling rivalry is imagined and projected by Wickham onto Darcy as an accusation. And Austen's irony, with its grammar of negatives, comes into play to reach the reader's unconscious and keep the novel sparkling. The long dialogue that forms the heart of chapter seven contains Wickham's slander of Darcy, in which the oedipal/sibling conflicts are thoroughly elaborated.

In the drawing room of Elizabeth's aunt, Wickham tells Elizabeth that he grew up with Darcy, as son of the steward on old Mr. Darcy's great estate, and that he was godson to Darcy's wealthy father. Wickham lies outright to Elizabeth, maintaining that Darcy was so jealous that his father preferred his godson to his own son, and that after his father's death, Darcy deprived Wickham of the living he was promised. Elizabeth responds:

> "I had not thought Mr. Darcy so bad as this—though I have never liked him, I had not thought so very ill of him—I had supposed him to be despising his fellow-creatures in general, but did not suspect him of descending to such malicious revenge, such injustice, such inhumanity as this!" [p. 61]

Wickham includes in his long attack on Darcy a declaration that, out of respect for old Mr. Darcy, he will never expose his son.

Wickham takes pleasure in accusing Darcy to Elizabeth, projecting his own envy and jealousy onto Darcy, who had inherited the great Pem-

berley estate, and only later does Elizabeth see the "impropriety" and duplicity inherent in Wickham's story. Darcy wounded Elizabeth's pride at the Meryton ball, when she overheard him saying she was "not handsome enough to tempt" him to dance (p. 7), and so she is motivated to believe the worst, even though puzzled at the cruelty:

> "But what . . . can have been his motive? [interjects Elizabeth]—what can have induced him to behave so cruelly?" "A thorough, determined dislike of me [replies Wickham]—a dislike which I cannot but attribute in some measure to jealousy . . . . He had not a temper to bear the sort of competition in which we stood—the sort of preference which was often given me." [pp. 60-61]

Wickham could not "but attribute" to Darcy the jealousy and cruel behavior that were actually his own. Austen's most elaborate articulation of the destructivity that can result from sibling "competition" for the father's love and property is placed in the context of projected acts that turn out not to have happened.

Freud (1922) describes the destructive impulses between siblings that required Austen's use of projection to soften the idea of such cruelty.

> Although we may call it normal, this jealousy is by no means completely rational . . . for it is rooted deep in the unconscious, it is a continuation of the earliest stirrings of the child's affective life, and it originates in the Oedipus or brother-and-sister complex of the first sexual period. [1922, p. 223]

> [There are] cases in which during early childhood impulses of jealousy, derived from the mother-complex and of very great intensity, arose . . . against rivals, usually older brothers. This jealousy led to an exceedingly hostile and aggressive attitude . . . which might sometimes reach the pitch of actual death-wishes. [1922, p. 231]

Indeed, Wickham's "repudiation, by projection" onto Darcy of "malicious revenge," "injustice," and "inhumanity" motivated by sibling jealousy accords with Freud's (1925) description of negation, one that

mutes the reader's fear of like impulses and allows the ideas presented to reach the reader's unconscious.

DARCY AND ELIZABETH: REGRESSIONS IN THE SERVICE OF PSYCHIC CHANGE

The oedipal/sibling triangles that Austen sets up for her heroine and hero help distinguish variations not only of pride, prejudice, and jealousy, but also of "improprieties" as acts resulting in injury or hurt to others. Elizabeth and Darcy must come to terms with injuries done to each other as well as to them by others.

Elizabeth goes to visit her friend Charlotte, now married to Mr. Collins and living very near his patroness Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Darcy's aunt. Darcy and his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam pay a visit to their Aunt at the same time, and find themselves in the company of Elizabeth for two weeks of regular evening visits in the great country house of Rosings and daytime visits to the parsonage: "The two cousins found a temptation from this period of walking thither almost every day" (p. 138). "In [Mrs. Collins's] kind schemes for Elizabeth, she sometimes planned her marrying Colonel Fitzwilliam. He was beyond comparison the pleasantest man; he certainly admired her, and his situation in life was most eligible" (p. 139).

Darcy is pushed—perhaps by this added "sibling" rivalry with his cousin—into making a rash proposal to Elizabeth. Darcy's timing is bad, for Fitzwilliam has just unwittingly revealed to Elizabeth that Darcy has taken pains to separate his friend Bingley from an undeserving woman (Elizabeth's sister Jane). Elizabeth is anxiously rereading Jane's letters, realizing how unhappy she has been without Bingley, when Darcy arrives to propose to her. "He spoke well, but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed . . . . His sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation—of family obstacles . . . were dwelt on with . . . warmth" (p. 145).

Elizabeth "lost all compassion in anger" (p. 145): "'Your character was unfolded in the recital which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham . . . .' 'You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns,' said Darcy . . . with a heightened colour." Elizabeth continues, "'You have

reduced him to his present state of poverty . . . . You have deprived the best years of his life, of that independence that was . . . his due . . . and yet you can treat the mention of his misfortunes with contempt and ridicule'" (p. 147).

With intense anger, Elizabeth utters the famous lines that torture Darcy in the following months: "'The mode of your declaration . . . spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner'"; and "'You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it'" (p. 148). Of this strong denial (which suggests the opposite to the reader's unconscious), Elizabeth herself will later say to Darcy, "'Oh! do not repeat what I then said'" (p. 281).

Darcy writes a letter of reply to her "bitter accusations." Austen's use of negatives in the passage describing Elizabeth's change of mind is striking: "She grew absolutely ashamed of herself.—Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (p. 159). When she reviews things in her mind,

> . . . she perfectly remembered everything that had passed in conversation between Wickham and herself . . . . She was *now* struck with the impropriety of such communications to a stranger . . . . He had then no reserves, no scruples in sinking Mr. Darcy's character, though he had assured her that respect for the father, would always prevent his exposing the son. [p. 158; italics in original]

Elizabeth now sees Wickham's destructive envy of Darcy, sees how important reserves and scruples can be, and goes through a painful change of heart, separating further from her family and especially from her father. About Darcy's reflections on her family, "she . . . reflected on how materially the credit of both [Jane and herself] must be hurt by such impropriety of conduct," and "she felt depressed beyond anything she had ever known before" (p. 160).

An implicit point in Austen's narrative is that, as Darcy and Elizabeth experience sibling rivalries, thus displacing negative affects from parents onto siblings (Freud 1916), they also separate from their oedipal parents. Darcy becomes uncomfortable with his mother's sister, Lady

Catherine—"a little ashamed" of her "ill-breeding"—and rejects what she calls "the favorite wish of *his* mother" (p. 271, italics in original) that he marry his sickly cousin. Darcy eventually marries Elizabeth despite his aunt's outraged disapproval. And Elizabeth comes to feel the danger of her father's improprieties toward her mother and younger sisters, becoming depressed before she comes to love Darcy more intelligently.

CAROLINE BINGLEY: JEALOUSY AND THE NEED FOR PUNISHMENT

Austen's comic characterization of Caroline Bingley demonstrates a regression into a sibling jealousy that does not resolve into a new organization of character. From the first scenes at Netherfield to the drawing room scene at Pemberley, Caroline projects her own shrewish attitude onto Elizabeth in a way that fools no one.

Elizabeth accompanies her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner (a couple representing the proprieties of intelligent love and realism) on a summer holiday to Derbyshire, childhood home of Mrs. Gardiner. The Gardiners express a wish to see Darcy's estate at Pemberley, knowing nothing of his proposal to Elizabeth. Darcy is said to be away from home but arrives unexpectedly. Still in love with Elizabeth and now chastened by her reproofs, he inquires twice after Elizabeth's family, behaves with warm attentions to the Gardiners, and then visits their inn to invite them all to dine at Pemberley.

Elizabeth and Mrs. Gardiner return the courtesy on an afternoon visit to Pemberley the next day, and Caroline's hostile jealousy toward Elizabeth forms the basis of one of the novel's finest comic scenes. Caroline desires Darcy's love and his property, and wants her brother to marry Darcy's sister to bring the families and their wealth together. "Convinced as Elizabeth now was that Miss Bingley's dislike of her had originated in jealousy, she could not help feeling how very unwelcome her appearance at Pemberley must be to her" (p. 202).

In the drawing room at Pemberley, Caroline tries to discover what Darcy is feeling for Elizabeth:

> In no countenance was attentive curiosity so strongly marked as in Miss Bingley's, in spite of the smiles which overspread her

> face whenever she spoke to one of its objects [Darcy]; for jealousy had not yet made her desperate, and her attentions to Mr. Darcy were by no means over. [p. 203]

Austen introduces a language of negatives just at the moment that the reader might find too much satisfaction in sibling revenge. "In no countenance was attentive curiosity so strongly marked," but "jealousy had not yet made her desperate." (The reader's unconscious recalls the child's attentive curiosity in discerning which sibling is winning most of the parents' love.) Caroline tries to lower Elizabeth in Darcy's esteem by indirectly bringing up Wickham and, in describing this attack by a rival "sister," Austen uses minimization. Caroline "had merely intended to discompose Elizabeth by bringing forward the idea of a man to whom she believed her partial, to make her betray a sensibility which might injure her in Darcy's opinion" (p. 204). The narrative minimizations "merely intended" and "might injure" permit Caroline's intent to harm to reach the reader's unconscious in softened form. And this strategy only succeeds in providing Elizabeth with a chance to show her indifference to Wickham by replying in a "disengaged tone."

As Caroline comes to suspect Darcy's growing love for Elizabeth, jealousy *does* make her "desperate," and she attacks Elizabeth in every way she can, showing the intense hatred that jealousy breeds. "Her face is too thin . . . . Her nose wants character . . . . Her eyes . . . have a sharp, shrewish look" (p. 205). Caroline sees that Darcy is "nettled," but continues, "I particularly recollect your saying one night, after they had been dining at Netherfield, '*She* a beauty!—I should as soon call her mother a wit'"; she concludes, "I believe you thought her rather pretty at one time" (p. 205, italics in original). Darcy can contain himself no longer, and he replies, "'But . . . it is many months since I have considered her as one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance'" (p. 205).

Austen's narrator reflects, "Miss Bingley was left to all the satisfaction of having forced him to say what gave no one any pain but herself" (p. 206). The dynamic of a child's jealous hatred of a sibling is dramatized and shown to be unconsciously ridden with guilt, for Caroline evokes a punishing rebuke from the one whose love and attention she most wants. The reader can unconsciously delight in her suffering as a sib-

ling triumphed over. Or, through Austen's disjunctive ambiguity (E. Kris 1952), the reader's unconscious can undo the guilty satisfaction, picking out the phrase "gave no one any pain."

The next morning, Elizabeth receives a letter from Jane saying that Lydia has run off with Wickham, and Austen initiates the action in the plot that most fully dramatizes destructive sibling envy in *Pride and Prejudice.*

LYDIA'S RIVALRY, ENVY, AND GLOATING

Austen's portrayal of the destructiveness of Lydia's running away with Wickham may have been underappreciated by critics at times. Elizabeth's and Jane's chances to marry could have been utterly ruined, except that Darcy loves Elizabeth enough to pay Wickham to marry Lydia.

Lydia's rivalry with her sisters is intense and prolonged. Mr. Bennet's open preference for Elizabeth makes her the object of envy. "The response of siblings to the preferred child highlights this important aspect [the influence of parents] because rivalry, envy and jealousy are increased" (Neubauer 1983, p. 329). "Rivalry is characterized by increased longing for the object and by acts to eliminate the other person who wishes to share the primary object" (p. 327).

Lydia's instinctual energy, both libidinal and aggressive, unchecked by her father, intensifies the envy she has for her older sisters, which unconsciously motivates her to destroy her family's good name. Mrs. Bennet's indulgent preference for her youngest child adds rivalry for the mother's love to Lydia's motivations. "The earliest and most violent forms of envy and jealousy occur at this early stage of childhood, the rivalry for mother's nurturing love, the wish for complete possession" (Kligerman 1962, p. 741).

In a minor incident, Lydia and another sister, Kitty, intercept Elizabeth on her journey home from the Collins's home near Rosings, and Lydia exposes a perverse entitlement: "'And we mean to treat you all,' added Lydia; 'but you must lend us the money, for we have just spent ours'" (p. 167). She exposes her rivalry with Elizabeth over Wickham, adding, "I have got . . . capital news, and about a certain person that we all like . . . . There is no danger of Wickham's marrying Mary King" (pp. 167-168).

Lydia triumphs over her sister in gaining possession of Wickham, the "person that we all like," who becomes a father substitute in the displaced oedipal/sibling triangle. When Lydia arrives at Longbourn, Elizabeth believes she has lost Darcy through Lydia's public disgrace. The Bennets do not yet know that Darcy has paid Wickham to marry Lydia, and the text is rich in "background negatives" that prepare the reader's unconscious to hear—and defend against hearing—infantile sibling passions:

> Nothing of the past was recollected with pain; and Lydia led voluntarily to subjects, which her sisters would not have alluded to for the world. "Only think of its being three months," she cried . . . ."I am sure I had no more idea of being married till I came back again! though I thought it would be very good fun if I was." Her father lifted up his eyes. Jane was distressed. Elizabeth looked expressively at Lydia; but she, who never heard nor saw anything of which she chose to be insensible, gaily continued, . . ."We overtook William Goulding in his curricle, . . . and so I . . . let my hand just rest upon the window frame, so that he might see the ring". . . . Elizabeth could bear it no longer. She got up, and ran out of the room . . . . She then joined them soon enough to see Lydia . . . walk up to her mother's right hand, and hear her say to her eldest sister, "Ah! Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman." [p. 240]

The negatives proliferate in the brief sentences: "Nothing of the past was recollected with pain"; "subjects . . . her sisters would not have alluded to"; "Lydia . . . who never heard nor saw anything of which she chose to be insensible"; "Elizabeth could bear it no longer." Elizabeth believes that she has lost Darcy's love and that Jane has lost Bingley because of Lydia's envy-driven recklessness. Through the negatives in this passage, there emerge phrases that can reach the reader's infantile unconscious and touch on primal fantasies. The reader's "unconscious perception" of contents "communicated in a converse, piecemeal . . . fashion" (Noy 1969, p. 640), occurs through contradictions in Austen's irony, which soften the raw sibling rivalry.

"Nothing [or everything] of the past was recollected with pain." The oedipal rivalries with their incestuous loves are "subjects which her sisters

would not have alluded to for the world"—but which their unconscious memories allude to constantly. Lydia taunts her eldest sister Jane as she takes over first place next to the mother, as both a married woman and a new baby would do: "Ah! Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower" (p. 240). The "insolent" Lydia concludes, "'Well, mamma'. . .'and what do you think of my husband? Is he not a charming man? I am sure my sisters must all envy me'" (p. 241).

In the psychology of Austen's time, "inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem; . . . rude treatment of others; insolent exultation" were Samuel Johnson's definitions of *pride* in his famous eighteenth-century dictionary (Armstrong 1990, p. xii). Austen's presentation of the insolent exultation in Lydia's homecoming constitutes one of the remarkable passages on sibling jealousy in the history of the novel. Lydia's gloating portrays a common affect in early sibling relationships.

Whitman and Alexander (psychoanalysts) explored the dynamics of gloating in four clinical cases:

> The patients had . . . envious relationships with a younger sibling who had, in fact, been more successful in many ways than they. This initial oral envy led to competitive feelings which were so intense that there was invariably malicious satisfaction at any failure by their rivals. This gloating response led to secondary shame and remorse and occasional ensuing self-punishing behaviour which, however, was never sufficient to impede the gloating response. [1968, p. 737]

As Lydia's regressed infantile affects, impulses, and fantasies are dramatized in the novel, Austen's narrative engages "two modes of perception": a surface perception and an unconscious depth perception, which has been elaborated by Ehrenzweig as "an unconscious perception which is not bound by the conscious gestalt (the surface gestalt) and which perceives competing form combinations such as background negatives" (quoted in Noy 1969, p. 634).

DENIAL, MINIMIZATION, AND THE PAINS OF PSYCHIC CHANGE

As Elizabeth and Darcy walk together in the closing pages of *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy proposes again, saying quietly and in the negative:

"*My* affections and wishes are unchanged" (p. 280, italics in original). Darcy is grateful to Elizabeth, who has inspired him to change, but as the reader hears the depth of his remorse and sense of shame at his past behavior, the reader's conscious and unconscious perceptions must be tempered by a host of negatives and a disjunctive ambiguity so as to "think only of the past as its remembrance gives . . . pleasure" (p. 282). For Darcy's progress or regress into character change involves being tortured by remorse:

> "What did you say of me, that I did not deserve? For, though your accusations were ill-founded, formed on mistaken premises, my behaviour to you at the time, had merited the severest reproof. It was unpardonable. I cannot think of it without abhorrence." [p. 281]

Elizabeth is lighter of heart: "We will not quarrel for the greater share of blame." But Darcy continues, "Your reproof, so well applied, I shall never forget: 'Had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner.' Those were your words. You know not, you can scarcely conceive, how they have tortured me" (p. 281). Elizabeth consoles him:

> "But think no more of the letter. The feelings of the person who wrote, and the person who received it, are now so widely different from what they were then, that every unpleasant circumstance attending it, ought to be forgotten. You must learn some of my philosophy. Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure." [p. 282]

In her passages on sibling jealousy and on the pains of depression, remorse, and even torture that lead to change, Austen engages her reader with satisfactions of primitive fantasy. Through the use of denial, negation, and minimization, the novel sustains the aesthetic pleasure that lies at the heart of its lasting appeal.

Sibling jealousy, as it is transformed into positive bonds—as in Elizabeth and Jane's relationship with each other (Balsam 1988), or as it motivates Darcy to gain Elizabeth's esteem and love—has the potential to promote character change, as many psychoanalytic studies suggest (Kernberg and Richards 1988; E. Kris and M. Ritvo 1983; Neubauer

1983). "The question has been raised whether this displacement [of the relationship with the parents to the sibling] presents advantages which allow the working through of conflicts or under what conditions they burden the already existing conflicts by intensifying them" (Neubauer 1983, p. 331). Aesthetic pleasure is achieved not only through the satisfactions permitted by the contradictions of irony, but also because *Pride and Prejudice,* as great art, is a template for the resolution of intrapsychic conflict (Balter 1999).

CONCLUSION

The psychoanalytic study of Austen's irony gives further precision, through its brilliant exemplification in this novel, to the dynamics explored by psychoanalytic aesthetics, which describe readers as appropriating a great work of art as their own daydream. Thus, regressive daydreaming creates an area in which "preformed unconscious fantasies" (Arlow 1969, p. 9) are perceived in a state of controlled regression (see E. Kris 1952).

Austen's most popular novel illuminates, and can be still further illuminated by, psychoanalytic aesthetics. First, Austen's technical genius with irony, which can be understood as a variation of aesthetic ambiguity (E. Kris 1952), was to use negatives to portray forbidden unconscious fantasies as satisfied in her characters. Good analytic technique includes being ever attentive to the grammar of negatives (denial, negation, and minimization) when listening to the associations of patients.

Second, Austen's dramatization of character change portrays her heroines' internal experience, with regressions to previously unconscious oedipal/sibling rivalries that lead to a tolerance of depression and ultimately to psychic growth—especially growth in the capacity to risk feeling sexual desire and to make a new sexual object choice.

Third, Austen's ironic style in constructing multiple contradictory meanings through the use of negatives allows the reader's conscious and unconscious to play with proscribed pleasures and to deny them, while dramatizing her heroines' classic struggles in the oedipal/sibling dynamics of the family complex.

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