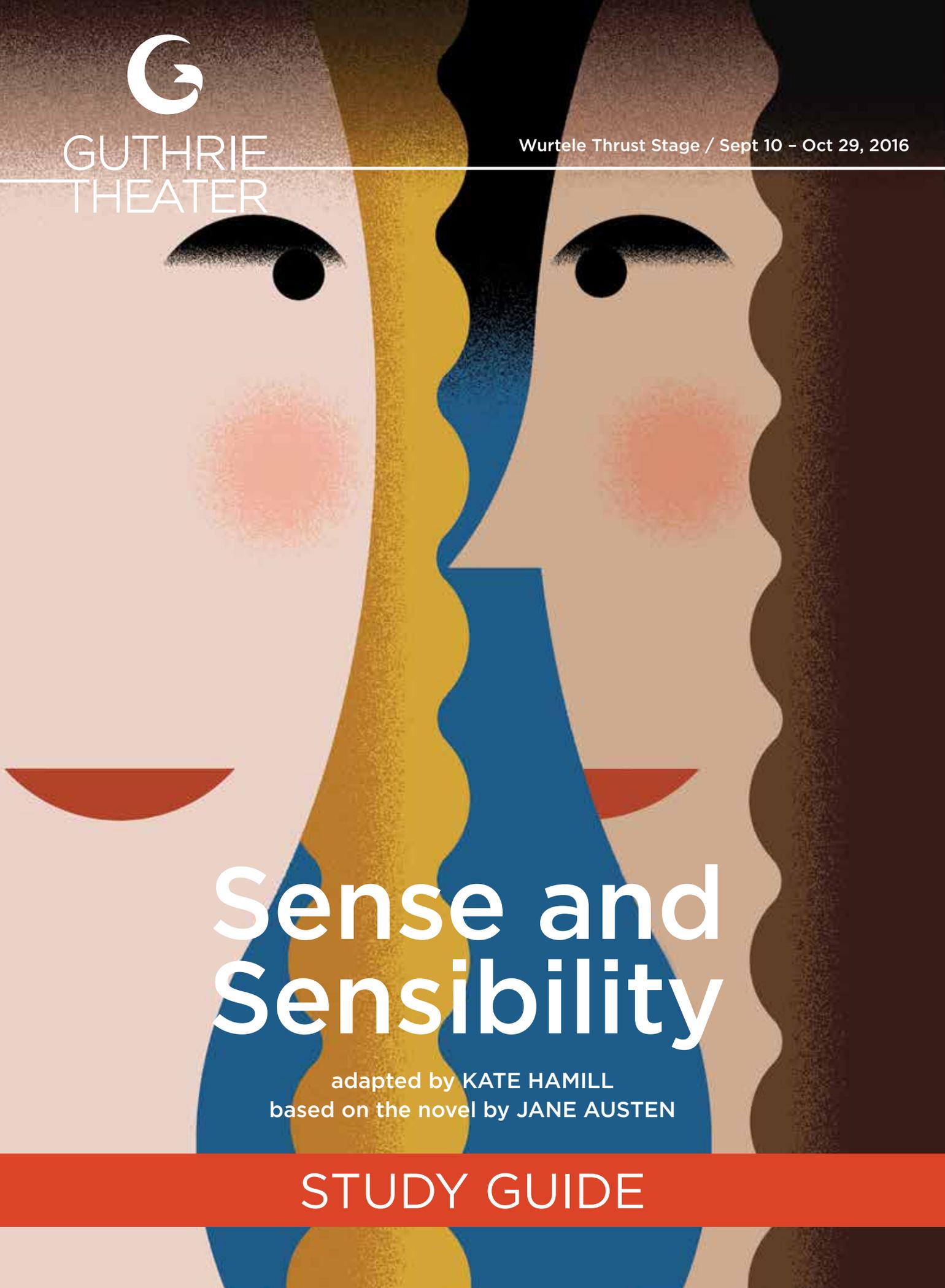




GUTHRIE
THEATER

Wurtele Thrust Stage / Sept 10 - Oct 29, 2016



Sense and Sensibility

adapted by KATE HAMILL
based on the novel by JANE AUSTEN

STUDY GUIDE

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The Guthrie Theater, founded in 1963, is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training. By presenting both classical literature and new work from diverse cultures, the Guthrie illuminates the common humanity connecting Minnesota to the peoples of the world.

Guthrie Theater Study Guide

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Synopsis

Upon the sudden death of Mr. Dashwood, his son John inherits his estate of Norland, and with it, a large fortune. John's father gives him one command, to "provide for your stepmother and her daughters." After John's wife Fanny convinces him otherwise, the Dashwood girls – sensible Elinor, romantic Marianne and the young Margaret – and their mother are left nearly destitute. However, their sister-in-law does have one redeeming quality: her handsome, if shy, brother Mr. Edward Ferrars. The eldest sister, Elinor, quickly captures his attention.

The Dashwood women are forced to leave their home at Norland for a cheaper cottage across England, generously provided by their boisterous cousin, Sir John.

He introduces them to their new neighbors, including Sir John's nosy but loving mother-in-law Mrs. Jennings, and the kind-hearted Colonel Brandon. It is evident to all that the Colonel is immediately taken with Marianne, but she does not share his affection because of his advanced age of 35.

After taking a fall during a walk, Marianne is rescued by Mr. John Willoughby, a suave and handsome young man. It is revealed that he is expected to inherit a large fortune from his aunt as well as her nearby estate. Willoughby begins to woo Marianne, much to her delight. Elinor keeps Willoughby and Marianne in check, cautious of her sister's sensibilities and Willoughby's smooth-talking manner. Then, just when every sign

points to an imminent proposal, Willoughby abruptly leaves for London on business for his aunt. The whole family – especially Marianne – is left confused and devastated. After a short visit from Edward Ferrars rekindles his and Elinor's affections, Mrs. Jennings introduces the sisters Lucy and Anne Steele. Lucy confides to her new "friend" Elinor that Mr. Edward Ferrars is actually her secret fiancé. Elinor must now keep Lucy's secret while also hiding her own love for Edward.

Mrs. Jennings offers to take the Dashwoods with her to London for the fashionable winter season. Marianne enthusiastically agrees, Elinor less so, but accompanies her sister to London anyway. Marianne finally finds Willoughby and discovers he is engaged to another, much richer, lady. While Marianne languishes, Colonel Brandon discloses the



PHOTO: DAN NORMAN

Members of the cast of *Sense & Sensibility*

truth to Elinor: Marianne is not the only woman Willoughby has deceived – Brandon's young ward, the daughter of his childhood sweetheart, received Willoughby's affections as well. Marianne chooses to look past her lover's misconduct and continues to pine for Willoughby.

John Dashwood visits his stepsisters in London. He invites the girls to a party with the Steeles, where they finally meet Fanny and Edward's mother, the formidable Mrs. Ferrars. During the party, Lucy again confides in Elinor about her feelings for Edward. Then, scandal erupts. While on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood, Anne Steele tells Fanny about Lucy and Edward's engagement. When Edward chooses to stand by the engagement, he is cast out from his family, and his inheritance is given to his younger brother

Robert. Edward is befriended by Colonel Brandon, who offers him the vicarage on his estate. Soon, it is time to leave London and return home, but Mrs. Jennings insists on a quick stop to visit her younger daughter's family, the Palmers. Marianne objects – she is not only anxious to be home, but the Palmers' home is much too close to Willoughby. Colonel Brandon obligingly accompanies them so that the girls can have a chance to continue their journey homeward with a chaperone.

While at the Palmers' home, though, Marianne is caught walking in a storm and falls dangerously ill. When Brandon leaves to retrieve her mother, a drunken Willoughby arrives to see Marianne. He is stopped just in time by Elinor. He confesses to her that he truly loved Marianne the whole time, but felt too pressured to marry for wealth

instead of for love. Elinor takes pity, but knows his very presence could shock her sister into even greater peril. Full of misery, Willoughby leaves the house and never sees Marianne again. Colonel Brandon arrives with Mrs. Dashwood and sees Marianne through her illness. Her feelings for Willoughby give way to affection for Brandon.

Edward arrives to reveal that, after his fortune was lost, Lucy Steele set her heart on his brother Robert and now the two are married. Edward is at last free to propose to Elinor, which she happily accepts. Marianne also accepts the Colonel's hand. 

Meet the Characters

As described by Jane Austen in *Sense and Sensibility*



Jolly Abraham and Alejandra Escalante

ELINOR DASHWOOD

Elinor, this eldest daughter, whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. She had an excellent heart;—her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn; and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.

MARIANNE DASHWOOD

Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever; but eager in everything: her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great.

MARGARET DASHWOOD

Margaret, the other sister, was a good-humored, well-disposed girl;

but as she had already imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance, without having much of her sense, she did not, at thirteen, bid fair to equal her sisters at a more advanced period of life.

MRS. DASHWOOD

So acutely did Mrs. Dashwood feel this ungracious behavior, and so earnestly did she despise her daughter-in-law for it, that, on the arrival of the latter, she would have quitted the house for ever, had not the entreaty of her eldest girl induced her first to reflect on the propriety of going, and her own tender love for all her three children determined her afterwards to stay, and for their sakes avoid a breach with their brother.

JOHN AND FANNY DASHWOOD

He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed: but he was, in general, well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was:—he might even have been made amiable himself; for he was very young when he married, and very fond of his wife. But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself;—more narrow-minded and selfish.

EDWARD FERRARS

Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person or address. He was

not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open, affectionate heart.

His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement. But he was neither fitted by abilities nor disposition to answer the wishes of his mother and sister, who longed to see him distinguished—as—they hardly knew what. They wanted him to make a fine figure in the world in some manner or other. His mother wished to interest him in political concerns, to get him into parliament, or to see him connected with some of the great men of the day. Mrs. John Dashwood wished it likewise; but in the mean while, till one of these superior blessings could be attained, it would have quieted her ambition to see him driving a barouche. But Edward had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life. Fortunately he had a younger brother who was more promising.

COLONEL BRANDON

Colonel Brandon, the friend of Sir John, seemed no more adapted by resemblance of manner to be his friend, than Lady Middleton was to be his wife, or Mrs. Jennings to be Lady Middleton's mother. He was silent and grave. His appearance however was not unpleasing, in spite of his being in the opinion of Marianne and Margaret an absolute old bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five and thirty; but

though his face was not handsome, his countenance was sensible, and his address was particularly gentlemanlike.

JOHN WILLOUGHBY

His manly beauty and more than common gracefulness were instantly the theme of general admiration, and the laugh which his gallantry raised against Marianne received particular spirit from his exterior attractions.— Marianne herself had seen less of his person than the rest, for the confusion which crimsoned over her face, on his lifting her up, had robbed her of the power of regarding him after their entering the house. But she had seen enough of him to join in all the admiration of the others, and with an energy which always adorned her praise. His person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story; and in his carrying her into the house with so little previous formality, there was a rapidity of thought which particularly recommended the action to her. Every circumstance belonging to him was interesting. His name was good, his residence was in their favourite village, and she soon found out that of all manly dresses a shooting-jacket was the most becoming.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON

Sir John Middleton was a good looking man about forty. He had formerly visited at Stanhill, but it was too long for his young cousins to remember him. His countenance was thoroughly good-humoured; and his manners were as friendly as the style of his letter.

MRS. JENNINGS

Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middleton's mother, was a good-humoured, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy, and rather vulgar. She was

full of jokes and laughter, and before dinner was over had said many witty things on the subject of lovers and husbands; hoped they had not left their hearts behind them in Sussex, and pretended to see them blush whether they did or not.

LADY MIDDLETON

Lady Middleton was not more than six or seven and twenty; her face was handsome, her figure tall and striking, and her address graceful. Her manners had all the elegance which her husband's wanted. But they would have been improved by some share of his frankness and warmth; and her visit was long enough to detract something from their first admiration, by shewing that, though perfectly well-bred, she was reserved, cold, and had nothing to say for herself beyond the most common-place inquiry or remark.

ANNE STEELE

This specimen of the Miss Steeles was enough. The vulgar freedom and folly of the eldest left her no recommendation, and as Elinor was not blinded by the beauty, or the shrewd look of the youngest, to her want of real elegance and artlessness, she left the house without any wish of knowing them better.

LUCY STEELE

Lucy was naturally clever; her remarks were often just and amusing; and as a companion for half an hour Elinor frequently found her agreeable; but her powers had received no aid from education: she was ignorant and illiterate; and her deficiency of all mental improvement, her want of information in the most common particulars, could not be concealed from Miss Dashwood, in spite of her constant endeavour to appear to advantage.

Characters

ELINOR DASHWOOD, the eldest Dashwood sister

MARIANNE DASHWOOD, the middle Dashwood sister

MARGARET DASHWOOD, the youngest Dashwood sister

MRS. DASHWOOD, their mother

JOHN DASHWOOD, half-brother to the Dashwood sisters

EDWARD FERRARS, a bachelor gentleman

FANNY (FERRARS) DASHWOOD, wife to John Dashwood and sister to Edward

COLONEL BRANDON, an older bachelor

JOHN WILLOUGHBY, an unusually handsome young man

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON, a country gentleman; distant relation to Mrs. Dashwood

MRS. JENNINGS, a good-natured, boisterous woman; mother-in-law to Sir John

LADY MIDDLETON, Mrs. Jennings' daughter; an over-bred lady

LUCY STEELE, a young girl from no fortune

ANNE STEELE, Lucy's older sister

ROBERT FERRARS, a callow young man; Edward Ferrars' younger brother

Comments on the Novel

No indeed, I am never too busy to think of S & S. I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her sucking child; & I am much obliged to you for your enquiries. I have had two sheets to correct, but the last only brings us to W[illoughby]'s first appearance. Mrs. K. regrets in the most flattering manner that she must wait till May, but I have scarcely a hope of its being out in June. –Henry says he will not neglect it; he has hurried the Printer, & says he will see him again today. –It will not stand still during his absence, it will be sent to Eliza. [...] I am very much gratified by Mrs. K.'s interest in it; & whatever may be the event of it as to my credit with her, sincerely wish her curiosity could be satisfied sooner than is now probable. I think she will like my Elinor, but cannot build on any thing else.

Jane Austen, in a letter to Cassandra Austen, Thursday, April 25, 1811

You will be glad to hear that every Copy of S. & S. is sold & that it was brought me £140 besides the Copyright, if that should ever be of any value. – I have now therefore written myself into £250 – which only makes me long for more. – I have something in hand – which I hope on the credit of [Pride and Prejudice] will sell well, tho not half so entertaining.

Jane Austen, in a letter to Francis Austen, Saturday, July 3, 1813

The lovers of novel reading can have but a very faint idea of the difficulty which we reviewers experience in varying the language with which we are to give our judgment on this species of writing. ... It reflects honour on the writer, who displays much know-ledge of character, and very happily blends a great deal of good sense with the lighter matter of the piece.[...] The characters of Ellen [Elinor] and Marianne are very nicely contrasted; the former possessing great good sense, with a *proper quantity of sensibility*, the latter an equal share of the sense which renders her sister so estimable, but blending it at the same time with an immoderate degree of sensibility...The wary prudence of John Dashwood and the good nature of Sir John Middleton, the volatile dissipation of Willoughby, and the steady feeling of Colonel Brandon, are all equally well conceived and well executed.

Unsigned Review, in *The Critical Review, or the Annals of Literature*, vol. one, London: J. Mawman, 1812

The object of the work is to represent the effects on the conduct, of life, of discreet quiet good sense on the one hand, and an over-refined and excessive susceptibility on the other. The characters are happily delineated and admirably sustained. Two sisters are placed before the reader, similarly circumstanced in point of education and accomplishments, exposed to similar trials, but the one by a sober exertion of prudence and judgment sustains

with fortitude, and overcomes with success, what plunges the other into an abyss of vexation, sorrow, and disappointment. ... We will, however, detain our female friends no longer than to allure them, that they may peruse these volumes not only with satisfaction but with real benefit, for they may learn from them, if they please, many sober and salutary maxims for the conduct of life, exemplified in a very pleasing and entertaining narrative.

Unsigned Review, in *The British Critic, for January, February, March, April, May, June, 1812*, London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1812

She makes you slip into easy acquaintance with the people of her books as if they lived next door, and would be pulling at your bell to-morrow, or to-night. And you never confound them; by the mere sound of their voices you know which is Elinor, and which is Marianne; and as for the disagreeable people in her stories, they are just as honestly and naturally disagreeable as any neighbor you could name — whether by talking too much, or making puns, or prying into your private affairs.

Donald G. Mitchell, *English Lands Letters and Kings, Queen Anne and the Georges*, 1895, in *The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors*, volume 4, edited by Charles Wells Moulton, Buffalo, N.Y.: Moulton Publishing Company, 1902

I think the title of the book is misleading to modern ears.



Torsten Johnson as Willoughby and
Alejandra Escalante as Marianne

Sensibility in Jane Austen's day meant warm, quick feeling, not exaggerated or over keen, as it really does now; and the object of the book, in my belief, is not to contrast the sensibility of Marianne with the sense of Elinor, but to show how with equally warm, tender feelings the one sister could control her sensibility by means of her sense when the other would not attempt it. ... There can be little doubt that in *Sense and Sensibility* we have the first of Jane Austen's revised and finished works, and in several respects it reveals an inexperienced author. ... [We] see that Jane Austen had not quite shaken off the turn for caricature, which in early youth she had possessed strongly.

Mrs. Charles Malden, *Jane Austen (Famous Women)*, 1889, in *The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors*, volume 4, edited by Charles Wells Moulton, Buffalo, N.Y.: Moulton Publishing Company, 1902

But no one, as far as we can remember, has ever put *Sense and Sensibility* first, nor can I believe that its author did so herself. And yet it is she herself who has furnished the standard by which we judge it, and it is by comparison with *Pride and Prejudice*, in which the leading characters are also two sisters, that we assess and depress its merit. The Elinor and Marianne of *Sense and Sensibility* are only inferior when they are contrasted with the Elizabeth and Jane of *Pride and Prejudice*; and even then, it is probably because we personally like the handsome and amiable Jane Bennet rather better than the obsolete survival of the sentimental novel represented by Marianne Dashwood. Darcy and Bingley again are inch more "likeable" (to use Lady Queensberry's word) than the colourless Edward Ferrars and the stiff-jointed Colonel Brandon.

Austin Dobson, *Sense and Sensibility, Introduction*, 1896, in *The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors*, volume 4, edited by Charles Wells Moulton, Buffalo, N.Y.: Moulton Publishing Company, 1902

After making money the subject of burlesque in *Love and Friendship*, after pursuing that theme amidst gothic exaggerations in *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen in her subsequent novels transforms the Almighty Pound into a powerful, even threatening, force. In *Sense and Sensibility*, it drives the plot that develops her characteristic theme of money and marriage. It initiates the action, motivates the characters, energizes the conflicts and determines the conclusion.

The Almighty Pound neatly divides Austen's characters between the "haves" and the "have-nots," all of whom are driven by money; the "haves" because they thrive on the power they derive from it and crave

more; the "have-nots" because they require it to avoid dependence on or exploitation by those who have it. ...

A few fortunate "haves" contradict their category insofar as in having wealth, they enjoy sharing it and assisting the "have-nots." These "givers" include John Middleton, who rescues the Dashwood ladies by providing residence on his estate; his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jennings, who entertains generously and freely disperses funds to the distressed; and Colonel Brandon, who quietly supports the abandoned Miss Williams and the disenfranchised Edward and who would love to take care of Marianne for the rest of her life.

Joy Lee Davis, *Jane Austen and the Almighty Pound: Money, Rank and Privilege in Jane Austen's Novels*, White Bear Lake, Minn.: Trade Press, 2005

[*Sense and Sensibility*] contains the same vivid characters, brilliant dialogues, and skillful plot as all Austen novels. Its unique focus on two heroines, even if at the expense of developing the heroes, gives Austen scope for her most thorough exploration of the relationships between sisters, a subject she knew intimately, since through her life she was far closer to her sister, Cassandra, than to any other person. Elinor and Marianne represent a superb picture of two sisters who are both united by profound affection and divided by profound differences of opinion. Moreover, with Marianne, Jane Austen has created her closest approximation to a true tragic heroine, someone of great abilities and virtues brought very low, to the point of death, by fatal flaws, and one whose story is capable of arousing both fear and pity in the reader. Finally, the novel offers a deeper and more sustained exploration of a controversial

intellectual issue than that seen in any other Austen novel. ... [T]he general dichotomy of emotion versus reason, self-expression versus moral and social duties are still matters of vital concern and contention. That the novel manages to combine a serious philosophical argument about such matters with a riveting and emotionally engaging human drama is a testament to its strength, and a good reason for its persistent appeal.

David M. Shapard, Introduction to the Annotated Sense and Sensibility, New York: Anchor Books, 2011

British politics rarely cause so much interest in the US. Last year's general election, for example, passed most Americans by. Brexit is different for a number of reasons. For one thing, it's more exciting to watch the world burn rather than to see the democratic process slowly chugging along. "British politics turns into a fast-paced TV drama," enthused CNN. Then there are the populist parallels with Trump's ascendancy and worries that the June result foreshadows a November Trumpocalypse. Finally, there's that schadenfreude again. A suspicion that the US has been sneered at for the past 240 years by an island that lost an empire but retained a superiority complex. A sense that the veil has been lifted and Britain has nothing left to feel superior about.

"In the Jane Austen novel of international life, we were supposed to be Marianne, the one with all the feelings," said the Washington Post, in a display of post-Brexit sensibility. "You were supposed to be Elinor, the sensible one ... *We read all these books of yours about people in the countryside drinking tea for*



PHOTO: DAN NORMAN

Members of the cast of *Sense & Sensibility*

hours on end because we thought you knew better than we did!"

Being British used to have a cachet in the US - which Brexit has now destroyed. We're no longer Elinor, the sensible one. In the Jane Austen novel of international life, we are Fanny Price: the throwback no one respects.

Arwa Mahdawi, "In the US, Brexit has become a shorthand for 'Sorry your country failed,'" The Guardian, July 11, 2016

Jane Austen: A Literary Context

No woman later has captured the complete common sense of Jane Austen. She could keep her head, while all the after women went about looking for their brains. She could describe a man coolly; which neither George Eliot nor Charlotte Brontë could do. She knew what she knew, like a sound dogmatist: she did not know what she did not know – like a sound agnostic.

G.K. Chesterton

The Victorian Age in Literature, London: Williams and Norgate, 1913

Jane Austen's novels are pure entertainment. If you happen to believe that to entertain should be the novelist's main endeavour, you must put her in a class by herself. Greater novels than hers have been written, War and Peace, for example, and the Brothers Karamazov, but you must be fresh and alert to read them with profit. No matter if you are tired and dispirited, Jane Austen's enchant. W. Somerset Maugham

Ten Novels and The Authors, London: Heinemann, 1954

[Austen's] greatest enthusiasm and her most devastating parodies,



Maria Edgeworth

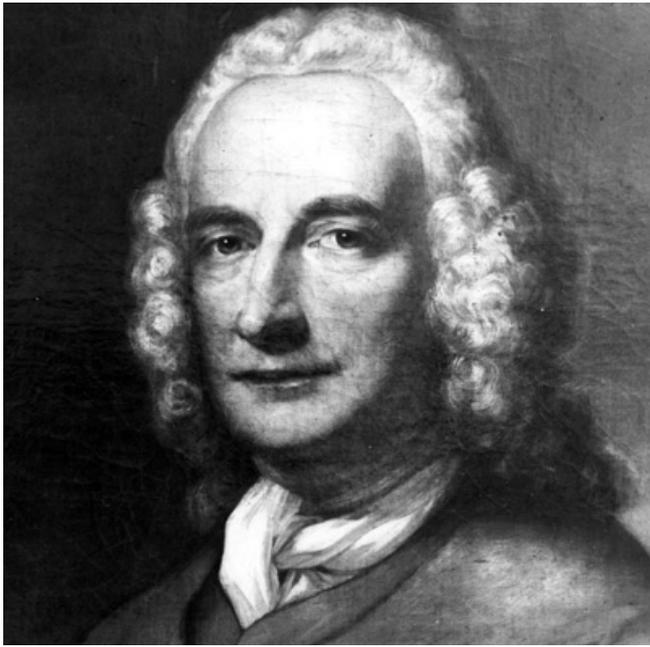


Frances Burney

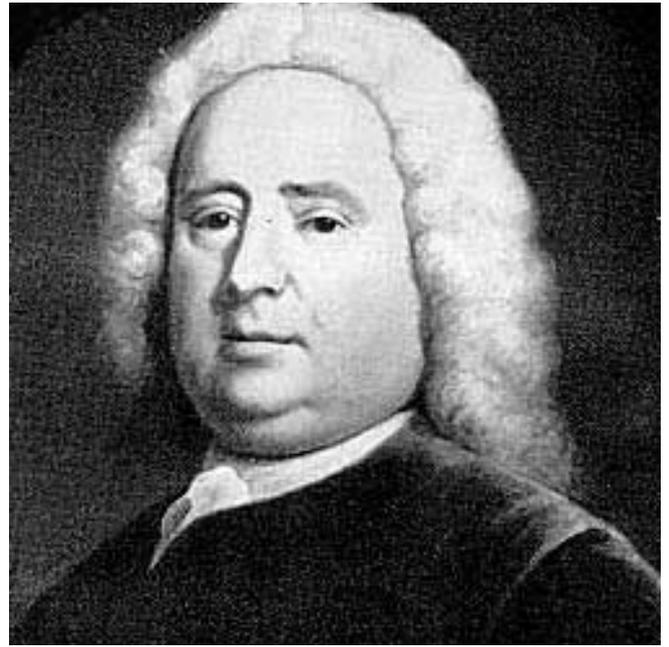
however, are reserved for the novel, a genre with which she was intimately familiar even before she began to write. Her family did not harbor the prejudice against novel-reading that was a fashionable intellectual stance at the time. Novels were widely regarded as being a cause for moral decay among the young and a source of foolish ideas about romantic love that ruined people, especially women, for the realities of marriage. The most criticized novels fell into two classes: romances, which taught readers to expect obstacles to true love such as parental opposition, or mismatched wealth, and which, it was thought, encouraged elopements and seductions; and Gothics, which were filled with superstition, exotic scenery, ominous villains, perjured priests, ghosts, and dark family secrets.

Austen gently parodied both forms. Sense and Sensibility pokes fun at novels of sentiment and romance. ... Northanger Abbey subverts the Gothic novel by demonstrating how far removed its dark plots were from everyday Regency life. Kirstin Olson

All Things Austen: An Encyclopedia of Austen's World, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005



Henry Fielding



Samuel Richardson

Why do the characters in Jane Austen give us a slightly new pleasure each time they come in, as opposed to the mere repetitive pleasure that is caused by a character in Dickens? The answer to this question can be put several ways: that unlike Dickens, she was a real artist, that she never stooped to caricature, etc. But the best reply is that her characters through smaller than his are more highly organised. They function all round, and even if her plot made greater demands on them than it does, they would still be adequate. Suppose that Louisa Musgrove had broken her neck on the Cobb. The description of her death would have been feeble and ladylike – physical violence is quite beyond Miss Austen’s powers – but the survivors would have reacted properly as soon as the corpse was carried away, they would have brought into view new sides of their characters, and though *Persuasion* would have been spoiled as a book, we should know more than we do about Captain Wentworth and Anne. All the Jane Austen characters are ready for an extended life, for a life which the scheme of her books seldom

requires them to lead, and that is why they lead their actual lives so satisfactorily.

E.M. Forster
Aspects of the Novel, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927

Where many aspiring writers begin by expressing their disgust with the adult world of their parents or by picturing a compensatory fantasy life, Jane Austen started with mimicry and parody, writing burlesques and pastiches of grown-up fiction and reading them aloud to her family. In the last year of her life she wrote to a niece that she wished she had written less and read more when a child, but the habit of close stylistic scrutiny which parody requires stood her in excellent stead. It is a measure of her present power that almost single-handedly she has made most of her contemporaries seem excessive, artificial, or absurd. ...

No one could intend to be a serious novelist in the late eighteenth century without being aware of the genre of fiction and without thinking of the great male forebears, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. As their successor,

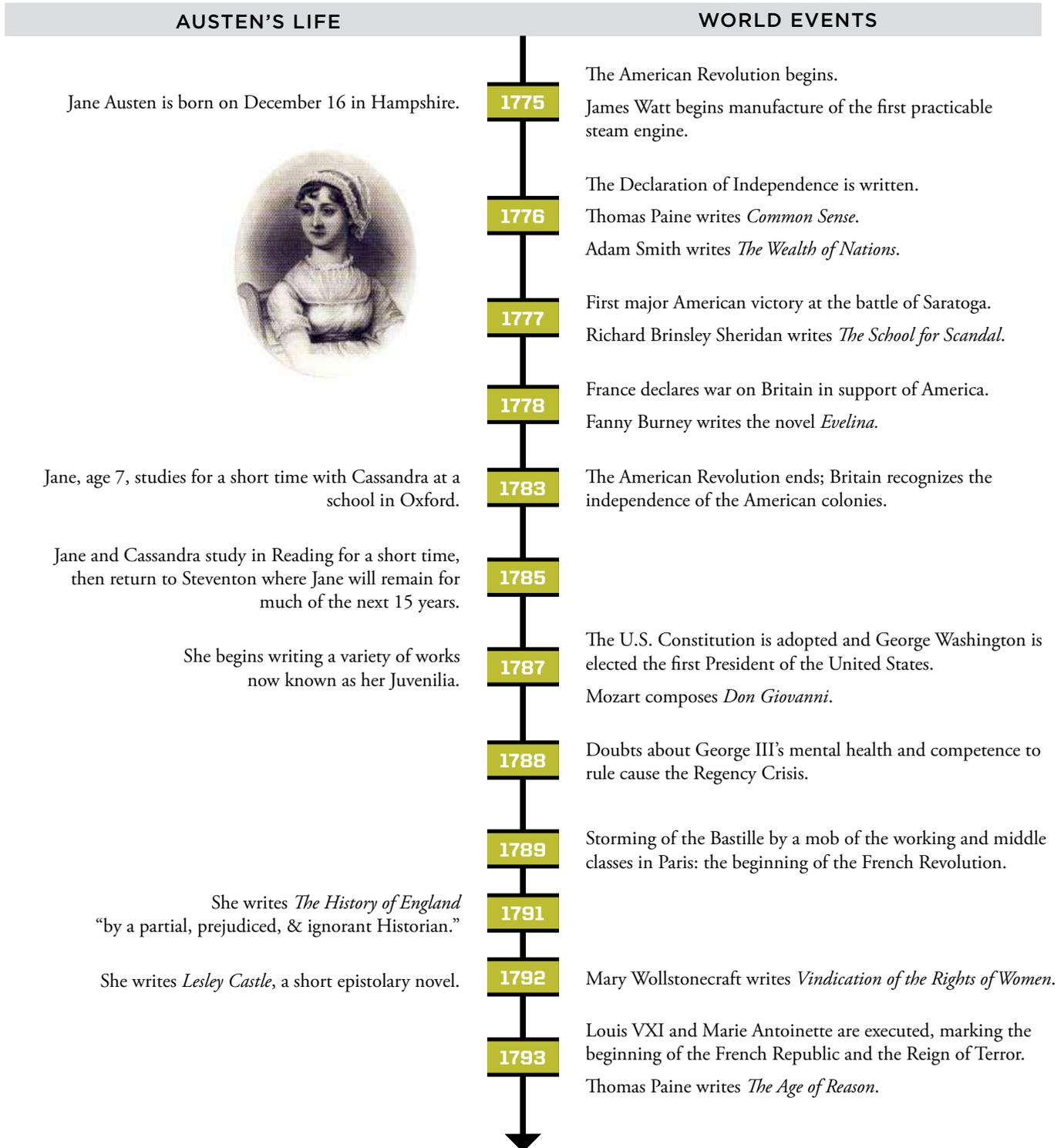
Jane Austen was ambivalent about their achievements. Richardson was considered the major originator of women’s fiction: his novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-8) have central female characters and much of the interest of Sir Charles Grandison (1753-4) inheres in the women. All three novels are written in letters so displaying not so much the inner consciousness of characters as their self-analyses, their sense of their own conscience and their self-projection. ...

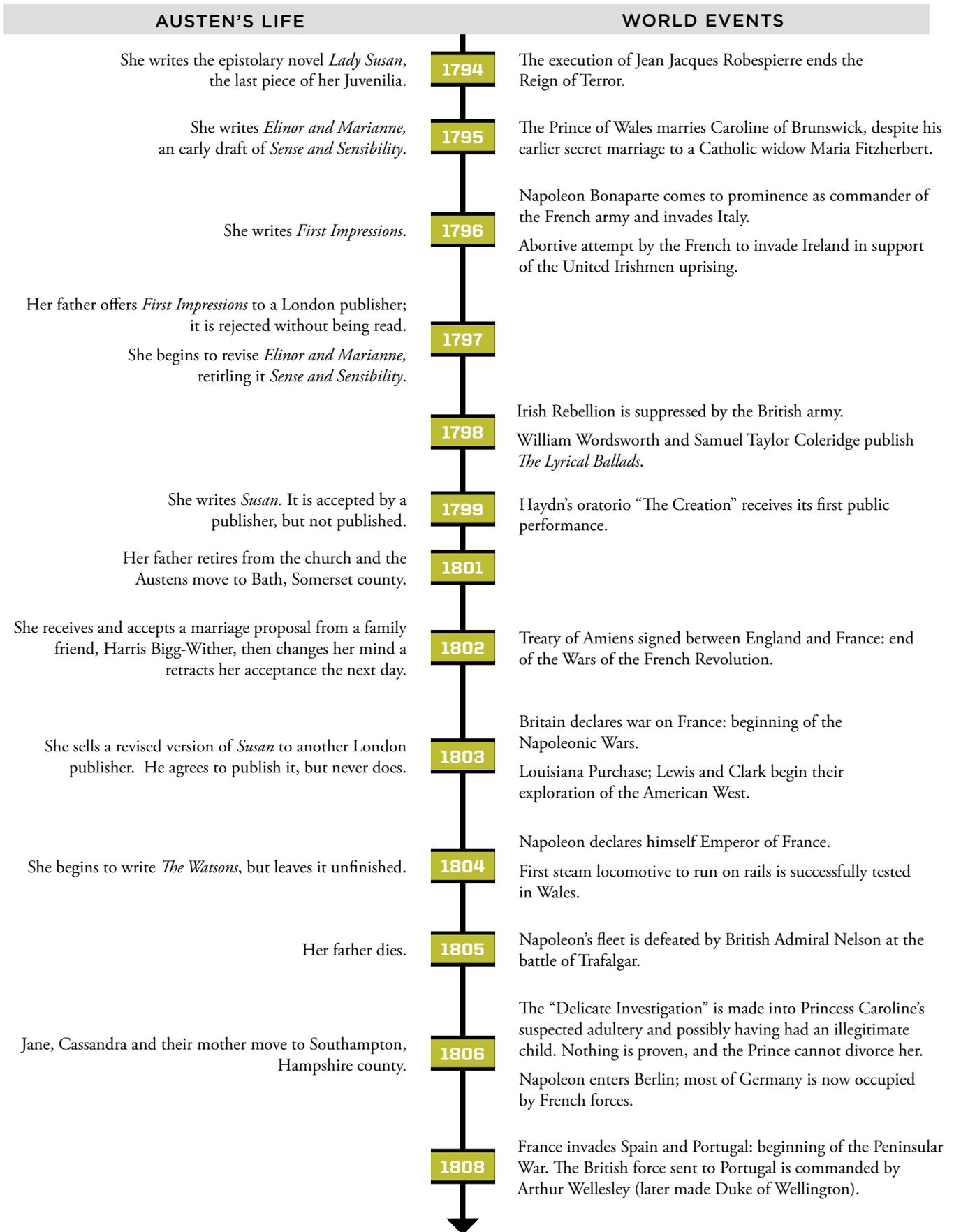
In the gendered critical structure of the eighteenth century Fielding was the masculine writer to Richardson’s feminine. In his novels, especially *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749), Fielding combined rollicking tales of manly sexual adventure with a self-consciousness about genre and a sense of the literariness of fiction.

Janet Todd
 “The Literary Context,” *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006

About the Author

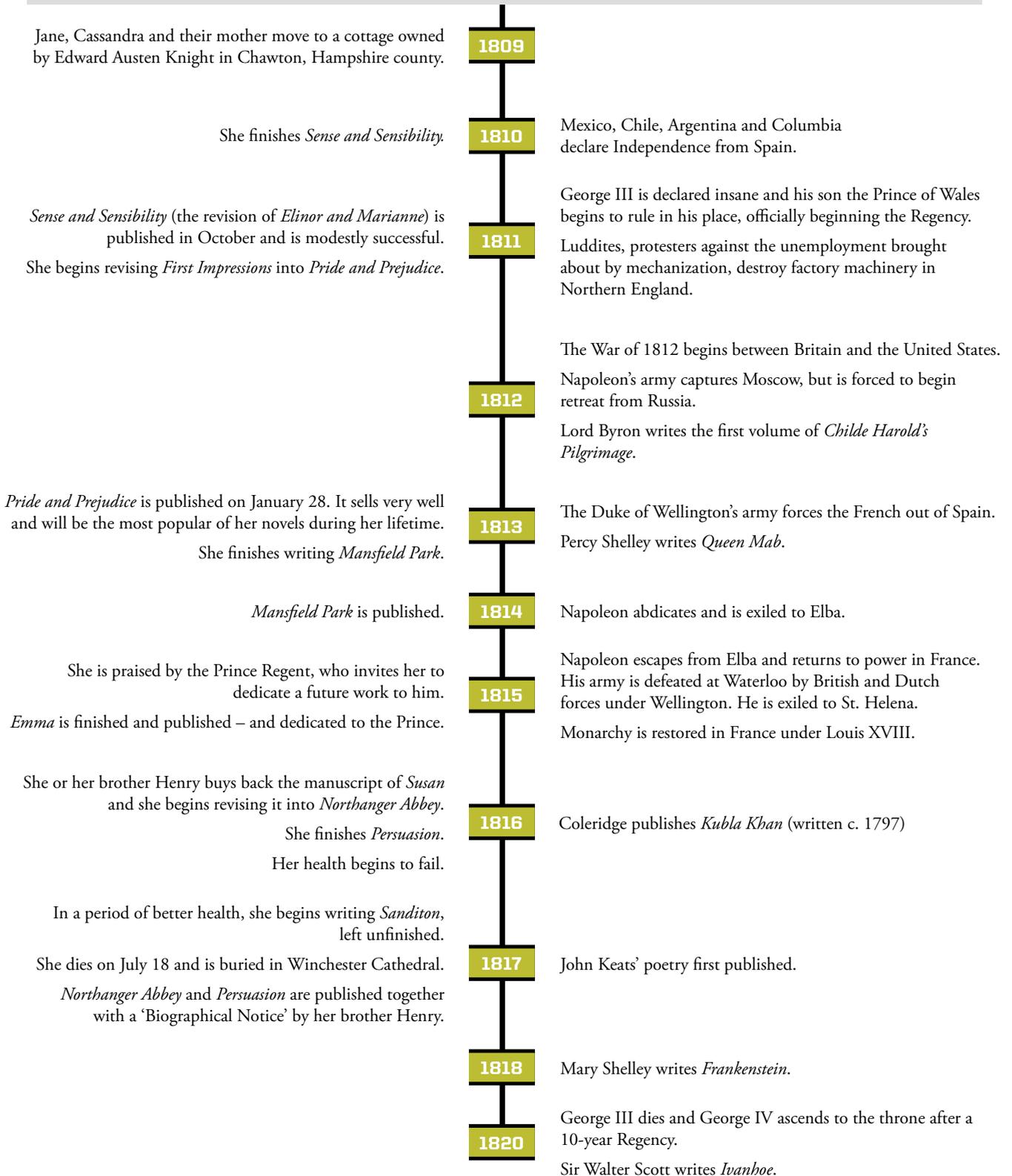
A SELECTED CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JANE AUSTEN





AUSTEN'S LIFE

WORLD EVENTS



Jane Austen in her own words

You show so little anxiety about my being murdered under Ash Park Copse by Mrs. Hulbert's servant, that I have a great mind not to tell you whether I was or not...

**J.A. letter to Cassandra
January 8, 1799**

I have received a very civil note from Mrs. Martin requesting my name as a Subscriber to her Library which opens the 14th of January, & my name, or rather Yours, is accordingly given. My Mother finds the money. ... As an inducement to subscribe Mrs. Martin tells us that her Collection is not to consist only of Novels, but of every kind of Literature, &c, &c - She might have spared this pretension to our family, who are great Novel-readers and not ashamed of being so; - but it was necessary I suppose to the self-consequence of half her Subscribers.

J.A. letter to Cassandra, December 18, 1798

There were more Dancers than the Room could conveniently hold, which is enough to constitute a good Ball at any time. - I do not think I was very much in request. People were rather apt not to ask me 'till they could not help it; - One's Consequence you know varies so much at times without any particular reason. There was one Gentleman, an officer of the Cheshire, a very good looking young Man, who I was told wanted very much to be introduced to me; - but as he did not want it quite

enough to take much trouble in effecting it, We never could bring it about. ... One of my gayest actions was sitting down two Dances in preference to having Lord Bolton's eldest son for my Partner, who danced too ill to be endured.

J.A. letter to Cassandra, January 9, 1799

Our grand walk to Weston was again fixed for Yesterday, & was accomplished in a very striking manner. ... It would have amused you to see our progress; - we went up by Sion Hill, & returned across the fields; in climbing a hill Mrs. Chamberlayne is very capital; I could with difficulty keep pace with her - yet would not flinch for the World. - on plain ground I was quite her equal - and so we posted away under a fine hot sun, She without any parasol or any shade to her hat, stopping at nothing, & crossing the Church Yard at Weston with as much expedition as if we were afraid of being buried alive. - After seeing what she is equal to, I cannot help feeling a regard for her.

J.A. letter to Cassandra, May 21, 1801

The St Albans perhaps may soon be off to help bring home what may remain by this time of our poor Army, whose state seems dreadfully critical. - The Regency seems to have been heard of only here, my most political Correspondents make no mention of it. Unlucky, that I should have wasted so much reflection on the subject!

J.A. letter to Cassandra, January 11, 1809

We had a very quiet evening, I believe Mary found it dull, but I thought it very pleasant. To sit in idleness over a good fire in a well-proportioned room is a luxurious sensation.

J.A. letter to Cassandra, November 8, 1800

I am reading a Society-Octavo, and Essay on the Military Police & Institutions of the British Empire, by Capt. Pasley of the Engineers, a book which I protested against at first, but which upon trial I find delightfully written & highly entertaining. I am as much in love with the Author as I ever was... The first soldier I ever sighed for; but he does write with extraordinary force & spirit.

**J.A. letter to Cassandra Austen
January 24, 1813**

I suppose all the World is sitting in Judgment upon the Princess of Wales's Letter. Poor Woman, I shall support her as long as I can, because she is a Woman, & because I hate her Husband - but I can hardly forgive her for calling herself "attached & affectionate" for a Man whom she must detest - and the intimacy said to subsist between her & Lady Oxford is bad. - I do not know what to do about it; - but if I must give up the Princess, I am resolved at least always to think that she would have been respectable, if the Prince had behaved only tolerably by her at first.

J.A. letter to Martha Lloyd February 9, 1813

On Jane Austen's work

Wars, earthquakes, tornadoes and disasters may overtake the world, but one fixed point remains – a light that never goes out, a center that always holds – to be invoked in happiness or in sorrow: Jane Austen.

Joan Austen-Leigh founder of the Jane Austen Society of North America, quoted in Jane Austen: A Celebration, 2000

Jane Austen reveals to us with merciless distinctness the secret springs that move a human heart. She has scant need to describe her characters, and she seldom takes that trouble. They betray themselves at every word, and stand convicted on their own evidence.

Agnes Repplier, *Essays in Miniature*, 1892

An author is as great for what she leaves out as for what she puts in; and Jane Austen shows her mastery in nothing more than her avoidance of moving accidents for her most moving effects. She seems to have known intuitively that character resides in habit, and that for a novelist to seek its expression in violent events would be as stupid as for the painter to expect an alarm of fire or burglary to startle his sitter into a valuable revelation of his qualities.

William Dean Howells,

***Heroines of Fiction*, 1901**

More than any other novelist, she fills every inch of her canvas with observation, fashions every sentence into meaning, stuffs up every chink and cranny of the fabric until each novel is a little living world. ... Her characters are so rounded and substantial that they have the power to move out of the scenes in which she placed them into other moods and circumstances.

[Jane Austen] possessed in a greater degree perhaps than any other English woman the sense of the significance of life apart from any personal liking or disliking; of the beauty and continuity which underlies its trivial stream. A little aloof, a little inscrutable and mysterious, she will always remain, but serene and beautiful also because of her greatness as an artist.

Virginia Woolf, *The Times Literary Supplement*, May 8, 1913

We do not go into society for the pleasure of conversation, but for the pleasure of sex, direct or indirect. Everything is arranged for this end: the dresses, the dances, the food, the wine, the music! Of this truth we are all conscious now, but should we have discovered it without Miss Austen's help? It was certainly she who perceived it, and her books are permeated with it...; and is it not this deep instinctive knowledge that makes her drawing-rooms seem more real than anybody else's?

George Moore, *Avowals*, 1919

Jane Austen was a comedian; her outlook was always humorous. And even when she penetrates into one of her characters with knife-edged clearness, she always does so with a smile on her lips.

Bruce Chatwin, writer, quoted in *Jane Austen: A Celebration*, 2000

Her acute sense of character, her bland irony, her exquisite powers of organization and presentation, turned the uneventful lives of well-fed people in quiet corners into enchanting novels.

J. B. Priestley, *Literature and Western Man*, 1962

All the vast anguish of her time is non-existent to Jane Austen, when once she has got pen in hand, to make us a new kingdom of refuge from the toils and frets of life. ... Fashions change, fads and fancies come and go, tyrannies and empires erupt and collapse; those who make events and contemporary ideas the matter of their work have their reward in instant appreciation of their topical value. And with their topical value they die. Art is a mysterious entity, outside and beyond daily life. ... [A] hundred thousand novels come and go, but Jane Austen can never be out of date, because she never was in any particular date (that is to say, never imprisoned in any), but is coextensive with human nature.

Reginald Farrer, "Jane Austen, obituary," *Quarterly Review*, 1917

Do you live in a cottage?

by Jillian Jensen
Literary Intern

For my own part, I am excessively fond of a cottage; there is always so much elegance in a cottage. If I had any money to spare, I should build a cottage, and have all my friends visit me. In my cottage.”

Robert Ferrars, act two

During the era of *Sense and Sensibility*, new philosophies centered on romanticism and sentimentality were championed by luminary poets such as Lord Byron, John Keats and William Wordsworth. One of the philosophies most highly encouraged was the urge to return to a simple, self-sufficient life, like a shepherd or a farmer. Many of these poets' works were pastoral pieces that idealized the rural life. As their literature and philosophy grew more popular and widely accepted, a new fashion swept across the homes of the English countryside – the cottage. Cottages were already an essential part of wealthy estates such as Barton Park, where Sir John, Mrs. Jennings and Lady Middleton live, but in the Regency Era they began to take on a whole new aesthetic meaning.

In previous times, cottages were small buildings about the size of a modern apartment. They housed farmers, gardeners, servants or other people of the poorest classes, who had barely enough

money to put food on the table, much less keep up their house. As tenants of these cottages came and went, the buildings fell into disrepair. The poor continued to live there, but the wealthy masters of the house began to take notice of how pretty the little buildings were. The exterior walls were covered in greenery from delicate moss to blooming vines, as well as lovely faded wood and artfully flaking paint or stucco, and most often topped off with a thatched roof. But more important than the looks – and looks were, indeed, very important – were the ideals the cottage represented. Many members of the gentry romanticized the life of a poor man or woman: they fantasized about a humble, simple life, where you did an honest day's work to earn your daily bread, and nothing more than this was necessary to have a happy and complete life. To achieve this ideal, estates across the country started to build small houses on their land. They carefully decorated these new buildings to make it seem like they had been there for decades. These new cottages, especially when they were actually to be lived in by members of the gentry, were often hardly cottages at all. They could be built with a second story, extra rooms and all the conveniences that came with being rich. These new houses were called the cottage ornée. The sentiments behind the country cottage still resonate even today: simply go on Pinterest for ways to achieve faded wood and flaking paint in your own home!

However, Barton Cottage is nothing like that. Jane Austen describes the



Dashwoods' new home in chapter 6 of *Sense and Sensibility*: “As a house, Barton Cottage, though small, was comfortable and compact; but as a cottage it was defective, for the building was regular, the roof was tiled, the window shutters were not painted green, nor were the walls covered with honeysuckles. ... [It] had not been built many years ago and was in good repair.”

The way Austen satirizes the overly romantic vision of the country cottage links back to the very spine of the story – practicality versus romanticism, or sense versus sensibility. In creating Barton Cottage, Austen gives the Dashwoods a house that actually functioned as a house and not just as a pretty pastoral spectacle, which earns Elinor's sensible approval. However, the passionate Marianne cannot help but be a little disappointed; especially after spending her life thus far at the handsome Norland Park, she would sorely miss a bit of beauty in her home, especially the type of beauty so incredibly fashionable in the girls' time. In other words, Marianne would wish that their new home would better fit the bill of the classic, more run-down country cottage.

The Sensibility Sensation

by Jillian Jensen



Cast of *Sense and Sensibility*.

Decades before Jane Austen ever put pen to paper, there were new ideas buzzing all over England. These ideas shaped not only her writing, but sparked an entire movement of philosophy and literature – the celebration of sensation, which was known as “sensibility.”

Nearly a century before Austen’s birth, England was rocked by the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The result of this revolution was the writing of the British Bill of Rights, which reinforced citizens’ rights to free speech and elections, as well as freedom of the press. The oppressive monarchy was also severely limited in their real power, and authority was given to an elected Parliament. The success of the Revolution brought about a renewed interest in politics and progress, especially among the radicals, or Dissenters. A middle class made up of merchants, lawyers, and small business owners was born – though this class was small, it was prominent in English society, and the people of the middle class thrived under the new government.

This part of the populace was given a new lease on life. Though many hardships remained, they now had a chance to not simply survive, but flourish. “Indeed,” says scholar of sensibility G.J. Barker-Bensfield, “[novels of] sensibility were the means whereby the middle class defined itself against a lower class still vulnerable to severe hardship.” Literacy rates skyrocketed across the country – but the community whose education grew most profoundly was women. Barker-Bensfield notes that when they were “[debarred] from the educational establishment and usually from a knowledge of the ancient languages, women turned their hand to a form and subject they could master by themselves.” Soon, women writers and readers dominated the literary scene in England, from the London metropolis to the small country towns. Their works were clearly influenced by the 18th century ideals of femininity which encouraged virtue, delicacy and elegance in manners and fashion – but also passion, kindness, humor and wit. The heroines encapsulated those

principles as they braved their way through doomed love, ruined reputation and misfortune galore. While these novels were not always very well written, they seized the attention of readers everywhere, and soon formed what was called the ‘cult of sensibility’.

But what is sensibility? In the simplest terms, sensibility is a person’s tendency for high emotions; it is how easily one’s temperament can rise and fall in extremes. “Appealing to the sensibility” means to evoke extravagant emotional responses – weeping, screaming, laughing, gasping. The most delicate lady readers often fainted, which led to the invention of fainting couches in wealthy homes. Men were also allowed and expected to have some degree of sensibility, which meant they were to have compassion, a capacity for sorrow and joy and an inclination for beauty in all things just as much as the women. In fact, professor Daniel Wickberg states that “[to] lack sensibility was to be a moral and/or social idiot, unable to discriminate right from wrong, good art from bad, things to be valued from those to be deplored.” The heroes and heroines in the novels of sensibility were known as “men and women of feeling.”

Part of being a man or woman of feeling was an instinctual tendency toward moral rightness. Philosophers of the time such as the Earl of Shaftesbury and Jean-Jacques Rousseau “argued that human beings possessed a moral sense and a sense of beauty,” Wickberg says, “by which moral and aesthetic judgments were rendered in response to immediate

perception of objects.” They hypothesized that to have a heightened sensibility was also to have an unwavering moral compass, one that was resolute and correct because it was natural and intuitive. When these characters came across any misfortune - whether it was to themselves or to another being - they took it personally, feeling their own emotions and those of others deep within their heart. The typical man or woman of feeling strove for all things right and beautiful in the world. This meant they were seeking to overcome any suffering or cruelty that they came across. G.J. Barker-Bensfield adds that “sensibility’s galvanizing of public opinion was fundamental to the remarkable legislative initiatives aimed at humanitarian reform and abolitionism during the last third of the century.” Their sense of rightness did not only apply to strictly moral matters, either. To have a high sensibility also meant that you were very sensitive to cultural civility and matters of propriety. These people were born to live in polite society and were well-learned in keeping within its boundaries - unless, of course, they were overcome by their emotions and accidentally made mistakes that could damage their reputations. This was exactly the predicament that the majority of literary heroines found themselves in, and their plots were always resolved in one of two ways: either “happily rewarded in marriage or elevated into redemptive death,” according to scholar of classic women’s fiction Janet Todd. However, by the turn of the 18th century - when Jane Austen was writing her novels - the cult of sensibility was going out of fashion. Critics of the previous novels - men and women alike - called out readers and writers for being silly, fanciful and overly dramatic. Even Austen herself condemned the

writers before her. Janet Todd says of Jane Austen’s works, “[in] her novels the clichés of sentimental fiction are overturned: mothers are vulgar and limited, sentimental friends are a sham, and orphans prove not noble but lower middle class. ... She parodies the ecstatic tone of sensibility, which finds the world either amazingly horrid or infinitely superior, and she mocks characters who are overwhelmed by their sensitive and palpitating bodies.” All of her characters most susceptible to high sensibility - Lydia Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*, Marianne Dashwood of *Sense and Sensibility* and Catherine Morland of *Northanger Abbey* - suffer greatly specifically because of how easily they succumb to their sensibilities. Much of her humor also stems from direct parodies of the older sentimental novels. Her most critically-acclaimed novel, *Emma*, can easily be seen as one such parody.

However, Austen was unique amongst the writers who lashed out against the earlier sentimentalists in that she also saw the literary and real-life benefits and attractions that emotional characters could have, and she encouraged some degree of sensibility in her readers. Her characters Elizabeth and Jane Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elinor Dashwood of *Sense and Sensibility*, and even Emma Woodhouse of *Emma* prove this fact. None of these characters can find real happiness in life with pure common sense and reason - they adapt their lives and relationships to include a healthy level of emotion and affection that complements their wisdom. Jane Austen was one of the first among many writers who advocated for sensibility. These writers encouraged readers to cultivate emotion by looking for beauty in their everyday lives.

Austen’s contemporaries included poets Lord Byron, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and John Keats, as well as novelists Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas, among many other writers of different genres and forms. Together, these men and women form what is known today as the Romantic Era of literature, an era that continues to captivate scholars and readers to this day.

Even though “sensibility” is a word that has long since gone out of fashion, its effects resound. Many of our culture’s most popular books and movies use the same methods as the novels that Jane Austen reacted to. That is to say, they play up emotion to an enormous degree; their characters face incredible obstacles that change their lives and the lives of those around them; audiences often respond with extreme emotion, such as tears and even the occasional scream. You will recognize all these symptoms of a sentimental novel when reading *The Fault in Our Stars* or *The Notebook*, or when you watch *Grey’s Anatomy* or even *Game of Thrones*.

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People, Places and Things in Sense and Sensibility

People

Cowper

[pronounced Cooper] William Cowper (1731-1800), English poet who was one of Jane Austen's favorites. He was descended from poet John Donne through his mother, and was known to have a mental illness, which resulting in at least one nervous breakdown and several suicide attempts. He recovered under the care of several friends and patrons, and thereafter spent the bulk of his adult life in "rustic retirement," though he had several more breakdowns until late in his life. He had a bit of gloomy outlook in general, a result of his religious mania and general feeling that he was irrevocably damned. Most of his significant writing happened or was published after 1780, including a series of essays in couplets, the heroic ballad "John Gilpin's Ride," the long poem "The Task," and a translation of Homer (in contrast with Pope's "artificial" version from an earlier generation. "His poems celebrate rural life and the beauties of nature in a way that influenced later Romantic poets, though he tended to be less fervent in his enthusiasm." He's also quoted in Austen's *Mansfield Park*. His 1,500-line poem "Hope," Marianne's favorite poem, was written during the 1870s and published in 1782 in *Poems by William Cowper*; it was one of a series of "verse discourses" that became known as the *Moral Satires*.

"Cowper!" "Yes. I daresay that Scott or Pope is a more serious-minded answer, but I am afraid that Cowper is my favorite poet of our time." (Marianne, *Willoughby*, act one)

curate

the lowest rung among the clergy, below a rector and a vicar (but all clergy were considered members of the gentry). Curates were often hired to assist the clergyman who held a living to do his duties within the parish, either because the clergyman has retired and the duties have become too much for him or because the clergy serves multiple parishes and needs assistance. They were usually poorly paid.

"He is the **curate** of the parish, I dare say?" (Mrs. Jennings, act one)

Honorable Miss Morton

"Honorable" is a courtesy title given to children of viscounts and barons, the lowest ranks among the peerage. With her fortune of £30,000, Miss Morton outranks everyone else in the play in status and money together.

"... his mother has determined she will give him his independence just as soon as he marries the **Honorable Miss Morton**." (John Dashwood, act two)

Pope

Alexander Pope (1688-1744), English poet and satirist, of a generation before Cowper. His works include "Rape of the Lock,"

translation of Homer's *Iliad*, the three-volume *Dunciad*, and three volumes of *Miscellanies*, published with fellow satirist Jonathan Swift. Pope really is not in line with Marianne's taste.

"Cowper!" "Yes. I daresay that Scott or Pope is a more serious-minded answer, but I am afraid that Cowper is my favorite poet of our time." (Marianne, *Willoughby*, act one)

Scott

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), Scottish novelist, poet, historian and another favorite of Jane Austen. He not only created the genre of historical novel, but his writings were so influential as to invent a national culture, history and identity, and his work was highly influential on almost all poets and novelists that followed him. Among his notable works are "The Lady of the Lake," (1810),

Robert Dorfman as Sir John with John Catron as Edward Ferrars



Waverley (1814) and *Ivanhoe* (1820). His work is also discussed and admired in Austen's *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*.

“Cowper!” “Yes. I daresay that Scott or Pope is a more serious-minded answer, but I am afraid that Cowper is my favorite poet of our time.” (Marianne, *Willoughby*, act one)

Sir John

A man with the title “Sir” is either a knight (an honor bestowed for his service and is not hereditary) or a baronet, the lowest rung on the British aristocratic ladder, which is hereditary. He is a member of the gentry, “a gentleman of consequence and property,” but not a peer/member of the nobility. When we meet Sir John Middleton’s wife, she is referred to as Lady Middleton, a title befitting the spouse of either a knight or baronet. It also means that she has gained the title through marriage; if she had the title through birth, she would be Lady “first name,” ala Lady Catherine in *Pride and Prejudice* or Lady Mary in “*Downton Abbey*.”

“I am writing to our cousin, **Sir John** Middleton. He may have a cottage available for us in **Devonshire**.” (Elinor, act one)

Places

Cleveland

The Palmers’ fictional estate in Somersetshire, about 30 miles from Willoughby’s estate.

“We will stop only for a visit with my daughter Charlotte at Cleveland...” (Mrs Jennings, act two)

Delafor

Delafor is the fictional parish in which Colonel Brandon

resides; as the wealthy local landowner, Brandon may appoint the clergyman. The clergyman needs to be ordained and receive the blessing of the bishop, but otherwise it’s at the landowner’s discretion. It also demonstrates why Edward being cut off from his family is so dire to his prospects, because such appointments are often made on a who-you-know basis.

“The living of **Delafor** is vacant, and mine to appoint. Would you be willing to tell him that I would name him as rector ...” (Colonel Brandon, act two)

Devonshire

a county in southwestern England. According to Annotated S&S editor David Shapard, Austen usually chooses locations in her novels for their usefulness to the plot, not necessarily for any specific characteristics of the people or the region itself. In this case, the long distance required to travel from London back to Devonshire plays into the plot later.

“I am writing to our cousin, Sir John Middleton. He may have a cottage available for us in **Devonshire**.” (Elinor, act one)

East Indies

The islands of Southeast Asia (the term may refer to just modern-day Indonesia, or the larger Malay Peninsula, or all of mainland Southeast Asia and India). The English East India Company received rights to trade in 1600, and its main objective was spices from the East Indies and, secondarily, cotton from India.

“That is to say he has told you that in the **East Indies** the climate is hot, and the mosquitoes are troublesome!” (Marianne, act one)

Exeter

Barton is four miles from Exeter – a relatively short drive by carriage if the roads are good.

“I met them on a morning’s excursion to **Exeter**, and discovered them to be my relations!” (Mrs. Jennings, act one)

Harley Street

John and Fanny take a house in Harley Street for three months for the London season.

“We spent such a terrible, wretched day at **Harley Street** yesterday, Edward!” (Marianne, act two)

Longstaple

a fictional place near Plymouth further southwest in Devonshire

“He was once a pupil with my uncle in **Longstaple**.” (Lucy, act two)

Norfolk

a county in eastern England

“told him even that she would settle on him the **Norfolk** estate, which brings in a good thousand a year.” (John Dashwood, act two)

Plymouth

It’s roughly 35 to 45 miles from Plymouth to Exeter (near Barton), which would probably take about a half day’s time, depending on how much rest he gave his horse.

“I have been visiting some friends near **Plymouth**.” (Edward, act one)

Portman Square

“an elegant part of London” — the novel notes Mrs. Jennings’ home in London is on Upper Berkeley Street, near Portman Square, and she has resided there since the death of her husband more than eight years ago; he was a successful man of trade, so part of the *nouveau riche*.

“Every winter, you know, I am in the habit of removing to a nice stomp in London, near **Portman Square**.” (Mrs. Jennings, act one)

St. James Street

A street in central London, running perpendicular to Pall Mall and The Mall, and running from Piccadilly into St. James' Palace and St. James' Park. It's the address for several gentlemen's clubs.

“The Colonel lodges, I think, on **St. James Street**.” (Edward, act two)

Sussex

a county south of London, where Norland is located; it's about 200 miles from Sussex to their new home in Devonshire.

“I am sure they have left many broken young gentlemen in Sussex!” (Mrs. Jennings, act one)

Things

banns

The Marriage Act of 1753 outlawed clandestine weddings in England (though not in Scotland) so engagements and the intention to marry were very public. Couples could be married in two ways: publishing the banns, which meant the local clergy would announce the couple's intention to marry on three successive Sundays or holy days, giving the community enough time to voice any objections, and the couple could marry within the next three months. The second option was to get a license, which came with an expense, either from a local clergyman which would allow you to marry in a parish where either member of the couple lived or a special license that allowed for a marriage any time any place.

“Mum's the word until the **banns** are read, 'ey?” (Mrs. Jennings, act two)

chaise

a four-wheeled carriage that had one forward-facing seat that could seat up the three people (as opposed to a coach, that had two three-person seats that faced each other).

(Thomas, act two)

Constantia wine

Wine from grapes grown on the Constantia farm near Cape Town, South Africa.

“I recollected that I had some fine old Constantia wine in the house ... My poor husband was fond of it whenever he had a touch of his gout.” (Mrs. Jennings, act two)

curricle

a two-person open carriage driven by two horses (as opposed to one) so it can go very fast

“It is Mr. Willoughby's **curricle** outside! I told you, he DID visit her!” (Margaret, act one)

fifty thousand pounds

Miss Gray's fifty thousand pounds is much larger than any other female character's fortune in Austen's novels. This suggests the Gray family fortune is not tied up in land or an estate, but may come from commerce. She can raise her own and her family's social standing by marrying into a family with an estate, which may be in need of ready cash on hand because of debts (in Willoughby's case) or because the wealth is all tied up in the estate. If Miss Gray herself was already part of the aristocracy, her wealth would land her someone of much higher status than Willoughby.

“The lady then — is very rich?”
“Fifty thousand pounds, my dear.”

(Elinor, Mrs. Jennings, act two)

gout

inflammation of joints, especially in the big toe, brought on by a diet overly rich in purines (uric acids); much more typically found in men than women

“Very gouty, poor fellow, and never comfortable in the least bit of damp.” (Mrs Jennings, act one)

guinea

a coin worth a pound plus a shilling; 50 guineas is a comparatively large sum – approximately what each of the Dashwood girls earn a year from interest on their £1,000.

“I would lay fifty guineas that Brandon invented this trick to get out of our gathering.” (Willoughby, act one)

living

a living is the position and property of a clergyman in the Church of England. Although some livings were awarded directly by the church, many were “in the gift” of private landowners or of royalty, meaning that those individuals could give those positions to whomever they chose. A living would include a house, a plot of land and revenue from tithes drawn from the income of all the agricultural land in the parish. The yearly value of a living could vary greatly depending on the size and richness of the parish. A clergyman's better income at the time would have probably been between £600 (Mr. Austen's living from two parishes circa 1801) and £1,000 (about James Austen's living from three parishes) a year.

“The **living** of Delaford is vacant, and mine to appoint. Would you be willing to tell him that I would name him as rector ...” (Colonel Brandon, act two)

parish

the smallest geographical subdivision within the Church of England which also served as a governmental unit. Each parish was part of a deanery, which was part of an archdeanery, which was part of a diocese headed by a bishop. A clergyman (perhaps assisted by a curate) would serve a parish, which could vary in size; some parishes had a series of “chapels of ease,” which would allow for local services within a parish. In its secular capacity, the parish collected and distributed local charity to the poor of that particular parish.

“He is the curate of the **parish**, I dare say?” (Mrs. Jennings, act one)

pianoforte

a piano, first brought to England in the late 18th century from Germany. Unlike in a harpsichord, strings on a piano are struck by a hammer rather than plucked, and therefore require less maintenance and create a louder sound. John Broadwood, a Scottish carpenter and joiner, held several early patents on mechanisms that improved the working of the pianoforte. By 1790, he was manufacturing 400 square and 100 grand pianos a years. He was acknowledged to be one of the best piano manufacturers in England, and English pianos were considered the best in the world. Most accomplished young ladies were taught to play the piano, music being perfectly suitable for women, but it wasn't considered gentlemanly for a man to know how to play.

“Next to my **pianoforte**. You may spy on the neighbors!” (Marianne, act one)

pointers

Before guns became lightweight enough for hunters to shoot birds on the fly, the tactic was for a pointer to find a sitting



PHOTO: DAN NORMAN

Alejandra Escalante as Marianne and Natalie Tran as Margaret Dashwood at the pianoforte

bird, terrify the bird enough to keep its position, and point it out to its master who would shoot the bird as it was sitting still. As guns became lighter, pointers were replaced with retrievers, to collect the birds flushed out from the brush and shot out of the air, though some pointers could be trained to retrieve as well.

“Thank you, ma'am, but my **pointers** are outside. A little more water will not melt me.” (Willoughby, act one)

Queen Mab

The horse Willoughby gives Marianne is from *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Mercutio has a long speech about Queen Mab, the fairies' midwife.

“But, Marianne! ... **Queen Mab** is still yours, Marianne. I shall keep her only till you can claim her for your more lasting home.” (Willoughby, act one)

rector

a rector is the clergyman who has exclusive rights to the tithes from his parish (as opposed to a vicar, who receives only some of the tithes, or a curate, who is employed by a rector to fulfill some or all of the clergy's duties.)

“The living of Delaford is vacant, and mine to appoint. Would you be willing to tell him that I would name him as **rector** ...” (Colonel Brandon, act two)

a thousand pounds

Women's fortunes (or lack thereof) are noted as lump sums; the thousand pounds John first proposes giving his sisters would be one thousand pounds each, invested with an approximate rate of return of 5% (or \$50 a year actual income). Men's fortunes in Austen novels are noted as annual incomes. Currency equivalencies can be tricky, but roughly speaking, a thousand pounds is about £30,000-£70,000 (\$40,000 - 90,000) in today's money.

“I think that I will give them **a thousand pounds** apiece to start their new life!” (John Dashwood, act one)

SOURCES

All Things Austen by Kirsten Olsen

Annotated Sense and Sensibility, edited by David M. Shapard

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew by Daniel Pool

Encyclopedia of World Biography

About the Adaptor and Director

Kate Hamill

Kate Hamill is a NYC-based actor and playwright. As playwright: recently wrote a new adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* (in which she originated the role of Marianne) that premiered off-Broadway with Bedlam Theater Company. *Sense and Sensibility* was named “Top 10 Theater of 2014” by Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* and by the Huffington Post, which called *Sense and Sensibility* “the greatest stage adaptation of this novel in history.” *Sense and Sensibility* (nominated for a Drama League and off-Broadway Alliance Award) was remounted off-Broadway in January 2016 and has been extended in that run three times - currently running until October 2016.

Kate is reprising her role in the NYC production. Other plays include *In the Mines* (2015 Sundance Theatre Lab semi-finalist, 2016 NEXT New Musical Festival), *EM* (Red Bull Theater New Play finalist), *Little Fellow* (2015 O’Neill semi-finalist), *Love Poem*, and new adaptations of *Vanity Fair* (HVSF2) and *Pride and Prejudice*. Recently produced at Dallas Theater Center, Kate’s *Sense and Sensibility* will open the Guthrie Theater’s and Folger Theatre’s 2016 seasons, while simultaneously continuing its off-Broadway run. *Vanity Fair* will have its world premiere off-Broadway with the Pearl Theatre Company in Spring 2017.



Sarah Rasmussen

Sarah Rasmussen was appointed artistic director of the Jungle Theater in Minneapolis in the summer of 2015. She directed the first show of the 2016 season, an all-female production of William Shakespeare’s *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. She was recently named Best New Face in Theater as part of the *Star Tribune* Best of MN 2016. Previously at the Jungle, Sarah directed *In the Next Room* in 2012, which won the Ivey Award for overall excellence. She most recently served as associate professor and head of the M.F.A. Directing Program at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the recipient of the 2011 Princess Grace Award, Drama League and Fulbright fellowships and is an alum of the Lincoln Center

Directors Lab. She served for three seasons as resident director for Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s Black Swan Lab, a new work development program.

Nationally, Sarah has directed and developed new work at the La Jolla Playhouse, Humana Festival, Marin Theatre Company, O’Neill Playwrights Conference, Hangar Theater, SoHo Rep Writer/Director Lab, PlayPenn, Women’s Project Theater, The Lark, and the Dallas Theater Center. Locally, Sarah has directed for Ten Thousand Things and Mixed Blood Theatre. She makes her Guthrie Theater directing debut with Kate Hamill’s adaptation of the Jane Austen classic *Sense and Sensibility*.

A Conversation with Kate Hamill and Sarah Rasmussen

by Madeline Kvale
Literary Intern

Madeline Kvale: What drew the two of you to *Sense and Sensibility*, as a playwright and as a director, respectively?

Kate Hamill: As an actor I was finding myself often frustrated by the kind of roles that women are called in for. A lot of the time you're auditioning for things that are, I would argue, "male gaze." It's a lot of auditioning to play someone's girlfriend, or someone's wife, or someone's prostitute or someone's mother.

I thought to myself, "Well, I love classic work. What if I could create a new classic that would pass the Bechdel test*, a new classic for women?" And I love Jane Austen, ever since high school when I used to sit at home, like the nerd I was, and cry over her work. It also particularly appealed to me because a lot of Austen adaptations are by men. So even though men love Austen and have a perfect right to that material, I did feel like I had a particular point of view to add as a young woman.

Sarah Rasmussen: I think Kate's writing just so beautifully investigates what's really at the heart of this story. Something that I go back to is: at what cost do we as women follow and break the rules? The way Kate frames it with the Gossips speaks to our current culture of how scrutinized women are; how the gossip mill of Regency England can tear apart a woman's life, but so can a Twitter feed or a Facebook post.

These women are really after finding themselves and finding what's true to them and what really

makes them happy. They're looking for a life that makes sense to them. And that's something I think we can all relate to – men, women, regardless.

MK: When I think of Jane Austen and *Sense and Sensibility*, I think "Those are beautiful love stories." But I love that you really were focusing on the relationship between sisters Marianne and Elinor.

KH: Of course the love stories are also very important, especially Edward and Elinor's. But for me it's the sisters; that's really the central relationship. That's what I love about Jane Austen – a lot of her stories have to do with very close female relationships. If you have a sister or a close female friend who really shapes you, those are very intense emotional relationships in life.

SR: I love what you brought up before about the Bechdel test. We just don't really see enough stories of women relating to other women – both the joys of that, and the reality of it, and the challenges and the thorniness of it.

KH: The very last moment of the play is between the two sisters; it's so beautiful to me that two people who are so different can learn from each other, and love each other and have a bond that strong.

MK: So, beyond those relationships, are there other aspects that you think you as female artists are bringing to this piece?

SR: I like getting to see women be funny. It's huge to me. It's actually a really political thing for me. We need equal opportunities for women, but women aren't going

to be equal until they get to be equally funny and equally unlikable onstage as men are.

KH: I used to get frustrated when I would read people's reactions to Austen or even critics' responses to her, because a lot of the time they focus exclusively on the romance, and she is so funny.

SR: So funny, so fantastic.

KH: If you read her letters to her sister, they are like acid. It's not polite. It's so mean and funny in the sort of way that you really want to go out for a drink with her.

MK: What else can Guthrie audiences look forward to in *Sense and Sensibility*?

SR: I think this story is absolutely mesmerizing, and you get totally swept up in the anticipation and the joy of the ride. I've seen it so many times, and I still find it such a satisfying story.

KH: I've seen grizzled, tough-looking men in the audience just weeping, because you have characters who struggle to articulate things, and struggle to get what they want and who are trying to follow the rules. And, by circumstance, or by happenstance or by good luck, they get what they're after. And, oh, that is so satisfying.

SR: These stories change our hearts, they crack them open a little more and make us go out in the world a little bit more brave or hopeful.

*Named for American cartoonist Alison Bechdel, the Bechdel test determines whether women are portrayed as actual human beings in a work of fiction. To pass the test, a story has to answer "yes" to the following three questions:

1. Are there more than two named female characters?
2. Do those two named characters have a conversation at any point?
3. Is that conversation about literally anything other than a man?



From the Director: Sarah Rasmussen

Something I always have to do as a director when I go back to a classic story is ask myself, “Why are we telling this story right now – in 2016 in Minneapolis?” There’re many questions that I’m interested in having the audience engage in with this work, and I try to put those questions under one umbrella – what is a core question that I’m really interested in us exploring? That core question illuminated both in Jane Austen’s novel and in Kate Hamill’s really incredible adaptation is this question about sense versus sensibility.

Marianne, who represents sensibility, is about leading with your heart, while Elinor leads with her head. And in this story, we learn that there’s a cost to playing by all of the rules and leading

with your head, just as there’s a cost to leading with your heart and breaking all the rules. What Kate does really beautifully in this adaptation is she says, “Okay. If there’s a cost to playing by all the rules and there’s a cost to breaking the rules, how is a woman to find her way in the world?” I don’t think I need to point out the parallels to let you know that this is still a really potent question in our society today. We ask women to stand up for themselves, and then when they do, we said “Well, not that loud, and don’t take up that much space!”

Of course, this question is really driven by society, by societal expectations both in Regency England and in our contemporary society. Kate does something really smart with this: she casts society

as a gaggle of Gossips. This is a brilliant narrative device because it moves the story along really quickly. Gossip in this play is really delicious, it’s really fun, but it’s also incredibly dangerous. At the time, in Regency England, gossip could completely take down a woman’s reputation. I see another parallel today in social media. The way a Twitter or Facebook feed can completely take down somebody’s world. That’s a parallel that young people especially will really understand.

In addition to the satire at work in the sense versus sensibility part of this story, there’s also a really sincere heart to what Austen is writing, and what Kate captures as an adaptor as well. The protagonists at the end of the day



PHOTO BY LAUREN MUELLER

Sarah Rasmussen in rehearsal for *Sense and Sensibility*.

do find love. And more importantly they each find a love that sees them as an equal. Elinor and Marianne hold out for that – and they ultimately find it in Edward and Colonel Brandon. The couples learn from the journey and find somebody who sees them for all their flaws and all their delightful quirks and all their humanness. One of the reasons we come back to Austen again and again is that her work feels refreshing, timely and like something we need as people – to know that one can go through really rough-and-tumble journeys of the heart or in one’s life and still come to a place of balance.

The real love story of this play, though, is the story between the two sisters. And another thing that Kate has done that’s really

smart here is to make clear that the sisters need to learn from each other: Elinor needs to figure out how to take risks and put herself out there and Marianne needs to learn how to think a couple steps further down the road. We see not one but two female protagonists onstage, which is so rare for a classic and, frankly, so rare for a new play. They are not without their flaws and their fights, and their real-life sister interactions, but at the end of the day they become closer through their support of each other, and through the way that they work with each other, and that is a rare and beautiful thing about this story.

Edited from comments made to the cast and staff on the first day of rehearsal

From the Costume Designer: Moria Clinton



Sketch of Elinor Dashwood.
illustration by Moria Clinton.



Moria Clinton

Sarah and I were both really touched by Kate's script after reading other adaptations. One of the lovely things is that it allows for you to understand that there are real stakes for these girls – that if they don't marry well, if they don't live by the societal expectations, that they could be destitute. Because their brother has forgotten about them after their father's death, they literally are living upon the kindness of strangers. Telling a story about women who are trying to find the limited amount of agency that they do have is a big deal! This chorus of Gossips comments on and moves the action along, which allows the heart of the play, like those awkward moments between Elinor and Edward, to just play out, to be what they are.

I think of the Dashwoods as the heart of the play; they and their love interests are that little nugget that this chorus is surrounding. In the next layer, we have Mrs. Jennings and Sir John who both get to be characters in the action but also have interactions with this other outer layer of the Gossips. One of the first key pieces of research that I looked at was portraits of Regency England, just the silhouettes, white paper, black image. That was a jumping off point for us for the Gossips, and all of

them are part of this outer sphere apart from the family. We've tied it all closely together with palette. There's a lot of imagery of people in this period wearing yellow, black and white. For the Gossips we cover up that yellow and have them all in black with little bits of white. They also have an outer layer on, that reflects the way that they get to be commenting from the outside in. They aren't actually in the middle of the stuff that they're propagating – they just get to be on the periphery of it. We're also able to have the Gossips use the windows and doors of Georgia's lovely set, so we see them being outside of the story, commenting in.

Because our two leading ladies barely leave the stage, we do a number of things, like layering on pieces, so there aren't big costume shifts from day to day. If you read any of Jane Austen's work, there's always this sequence where they dress up a hat or dress with ribbons or put them in their hair.

The clothes help denote whether characters are indoors or outdoors. Marianne and Elinor go out for a picnic and they have their bonnets on, so that helps earmark going in and out. For London, Cleveland and thereafter later in the play, we'll have dresses layered upon dresses. Marianne, because she's the type that wears her heart on her sleeve, has a little bit more pink, a little bit of that rosier disposition. Elinor has a cooler palette – more level-headed soft greens.

John Dashwood is the only who gets fancy trousers – he's not getting on a horse any time soon. For Fanny Dashwood, we are borrowing from our Dallas production, in that the actor playing Fanny there was very pregnant, and ours here will be, too.

It helps make clear that nobody is a villain in this play: Fanny is also concerned about her children's future, if John doesn't save this money for her family. It makes her a little more sympathetic person. Colonel Brandon is our regal upper statesman, so there's a carryover of his military uniform – he likes his clothes a certain way, and there's a graceful sort of elegance, a stoicism about it.

Sarah and I have had many conversations about the Steele sisters, Lucy and Anne, trying to get husbands. Anne is a little bit of Lucy's burden to bear. They both look at the fashion choices to make in the world, and Lucy makes more sensible ones than Anne does. Anne's sleeves are too big and she has too many ribbons in her hair. There are a number of caricature cartoons from the period with women wearing the most ridiculous feather accessories, like there's a separate box in the carriage for their hairpieces. So for the ball, we're going to play with that height, to heighten the drama and see the danger for Marianne. The ball takes place very quickly, but it does begin to unravel many of the things the sisters haven't been telling each other.

Edited from comments made to the cast and staff on the first day of rehearsal.

From the Set Designer: Georgia Lee



Jolly Abraham as Elinor Dashwood and Remy Auberjonois as Colonel Brandon

PHOTO: DAN NORMAN

This is the first time you've worked with director Sarah Rasmussen. How did you get involved in the project?

I designed a production of *Pride and Prejudice* down at PlayMakers Rep quite a few years ago. I think Joe Haj remembered that project, and that it was a similar approach. Obviously the script is actually quite different, but the visual approach and how you interpret the piece is quite similar. So, even though I hadn't met Sarah, I read the script and I kind of sensed that my experience with doing Jane Austen actually works better in this case than the previous one. How the play is laid out is quite

more active a dynamic among the actors – which is also the type of work I enjoy. So they introduced me to Sarah. She already had done a production down in Dallas, but this case is different – the setting, the venue is different, the size of the audience and the specs of the production is different.

I had to do my own survey yesterday of the Wurtele Thrust, because just seeing the drawing of the theater wasn't enough. I also saw Harvey, so I could see how the mechanics work in the space, the audience, the depth, distance and relationship and things like that. We had come up with some concrete ideas, because we knew what

basic elements we would need, to help the action and the flow of the play, but we actually weren't really sure where things would be. So our recent meetings – we actually were up on the deck most of the time and then we walk around and figure things out – were really really helpful.

Because the show does flow so quickly from scene to scene, different interiors and some exterior, how do you approach that and what are the challenges?

The challenges would be, as many plays face, is the location and location, without really describing the surroundings literally for each

scene, because we see the play as an interpretation of a personal experience. It's more of like a person's vision of the space and how they feel about it, rather than exterior of it. We have to state those differences of the country styles and then London, and going back to the country. So we're trying to figure out how we can build London, but even after we go to London it's very interior. In a way it's a very enclosed space, because when they're in the country there's a lot of walking, they can just, "I'm going to take a walk," they can go out. But in London, it's not like they can go outside by themselves. So we're trying to create without a big style change - we're trying to figure out London right now. There's going to be a lot of action using the furniture pieces. Is it London we see from the outside or is London how the girls are seeing in the room and then seeing the street view. So that is the stuff I have to figure out from now till next time. That's my project.

Do you know at this point if you would use something like a turntable?

We are using a turntable, and the turntable is actually going to be quite active. The first word that came out to figure out like how things flow was the carousel, without the riding part - you know how it turns and stops and turns and stops and then people would jump on and jump off, and the dynamic of the flow, and just the fun of it. So that was a main thing - so the floor configuration is going to be like the olden day carousel, but parquet.

We're going to have the double turntable, a donut shape, so they can counter each other. We're not just using the turntable for scene changes or for the people walking. There's a lot of segments in the

play, scenes in the play, where it's very dramatic, somebody having a shocking experience, for instance. The turntable will help convey a lot about these girls and the world surrounding, how to represent the gossips more than the body count that we have and the duplication of the body image and the voices. It's going to help move things in an interesting way.

How much of the period do you feel you need to sort of capture? I'm going to follow the proportion and the style - the furniture will be in the periodic style, but I'll just stripped a lot of elements away. That's so far what we have, the furniture will be in the period style - any fabric and color, and architectural structure that we're going to have is going to follow the sort of order of that period architecture design - there's a lot of things to study, on my end anyway, so we're going to try to do that.

Do you have a particular affinity for Jane Austen? You did *Pride and Prejudice*, now *Sense and Sensibility* ...

You know, it is very interesting that you ask me - it always has been like a burden to me, along with John Steinbeck! Because it was very difficult for me to approach the high school/freshman college English Literature material because when I was that age, I was actually learning English in a college level, which was the biggest gap as an art student because the gap was like a language gap actually. Now, it's fine, of course it requires more research and study for me because English is my second language. I actually didn't really understand it, when I read it. The cultural difference, you know ... Now, when I read the script, I feel the cynicism about who is right and all those things. Back when I first encountered it, I had none of those,

I'm from a place where we're still kind of working on it, so it's like it wasn't classical, it was more of a contemporary play! So Jane Austen always has been one of those things: "Augh, do I have to go through it again?" I'm joking, but John Steinbeck was almost the same, too, because I have a grandfather on my dad's side that was talking about when they were poor, and when I read it, it's not like that far away. So, I had to embrace it and that extra layer of effort.

I personally think that this production is actually very beautiful to watch. It's not too dedicated to Jane Austen, it's not following that too rigidly, but it's more of an investigation into characters, I think.

Edited from an interview conducted in May.



For Further Understanding

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