JANE AUSTEN'S FREE INDIRECT STYLE:
A LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the relationship between the diffusion of free indirect discourse and the decline of the British epistolary novel in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Studying the works of a single stylist, Jane Austen, and her engagement with the mobility of the letter genre at the turn of the century, it synthesizes literary-historical, linguistic, and narratological perspectives on discourse representation in order to evaluate claims that Austen was the "pioneer" of this free indirect style, and to comment on how her simultaneous shift in genre from the first-person epistolary mode to third-person classical realism informs that style's development.

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Could a linguist, could a grammarian, could even a mathematician have seen what she did, have witnessed their appearance together, and heard their history of it, without feeling that circumstances had been at work to make them peculiarly interesting to each other?
—Jane Austen, *Emma*

INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on Austen has been troubled by duality in much the same way that Emma Woodhouse was. Divided along fault lines of period (Neoclassial or Romantic?), genre (Satire or Realism?), politics (Whig or Tory?), gender (Conventionalist or Proto-feminist?), and more, Austen scholarship *seems* to unite the best blessings of existence, at least for academics: her novels provide a continuous source of re-examination and debate. Whereas Emma's keen eye for match-making is eventually turned on herself, resolving her divided heart and the courtship plot staked upon it, the fates of those who study Emma and her fellow heroines have yet to find a resolution of such steady aplomb. No turkey bandits have come to their rescue. Not yet.

And, if Austen has her way, not ever. Anonymity was important to this writer (Chapman 1949: 130–139), who published first under the handle "a Lady," and later as "the Author" of her previous works. So central to her art is this desire for concealment that D. A. Miller (2003) chose to describe her style as that of an "escape artist" (7). "Austen Style," as he also refers to it, "fundamentally consists in *de-materializing* the voice that speaks it" (6–7; emphasis in original): its narration projects the voice of "No One," a genderless and godlike figure, who, despite floating above the fray of its novel's inhabitants, nevertheless possesses full command over their patterns of speech and manners of thought. Miller's central argument claims that Austen's interest in this neuter deity—the secret of her style—is its ability to obfuscate the "feminizing shame of Style" (7): as even now we recognize the antipode of "style" and "substance" in

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popular thought, Miller suggests that Austen was acutely aware of the fears projected onto "the extreme, exclusive, emptying, ecstatic character of *any* serious experience of Style" (8); perhaps for this reason, he goes on, we find almost nowhere in Austen's writings the existence of a character with the exact social coordinates of its author: the spinstered genius.[1] This paper looks past the culture of shame potentially underwriting Austen Style, however, to another facet that Miller attributes to it: how Austen's detached narrator imposes on the reader "a peremptory language that can only be refused at the price of extreme isolation . . . and can only be accepted through a slavish identification with its source of emission" (97). It is this beckoning sociality of her narration, in counterpoint to its style of self-abnegation, that I feel has prompted a perpetual movement toward "pinning" Austen down into one of two contradistinctive categories—after all, in the closed system of Austen Style, faced with an "overorganized" equilibrium of "matched-up oppositions" (Miller 84)[2] and caught in the gravitational pull of irony, readers have unsurprisingly sought to borrow the seeming tools of that system in an effort to make sense of it.

Perhaps falling prey to this same strategy (as well as the same unfettered imagination that yolks Emma's sense of fantasy and reality), my approach to Austen is one that seeks to bridge interpretations of her individual style with questions of its broader social context—an approach which focuses on the sociality of style and brings to bear the disciplinary boundaries between, and epistemological assumptions of, the often indifferent fields of literature and linguistics. Literary-historian William Galperin (2003), for instance, rejects the argument that "epistolary silence"—a reference to Ian Watt's (1957) hypothesis that Austen's omniscient narration derives from "filling" the silence that existed between points of view in the letter—was the antecedent of

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[1] Miller (68–76) does explore the notable exception: *Persuasion*'s Mrs. Smith.
[2] Just in the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, Miller isolates the following: "universal/single; man/wife; possession/want" (84).

Austen's free indirect style (22), but offers no formal account of his own to support this claim; instead, Galperin cites as his authority Ann Banfield's (1982) model of free indirect discourse, overlooking both Monika Fludernik's (1993) critique of this model as well as the tumultuous changes to the field of generative linguistics since the early 1980s that render Banfield's methodology obsolete. Perhaps with a similar thought process, Deidre Lynch (1998) remarks (in passing) that "declarative sentences do not suit a heroine" in turn-of-the-century novels because "they say too much" (154), but likewise draws out no formal analysis to sustain her assertion. With this disciplinary division in mind, I position my work as a line of communication.

In doing so, I hope to also escape the trend of reproducing mutually exclusive binaries in my investigation, and interpretation, of Austen Style. For this reason, I would like to address here the problem of defining free indirect representations of speech and thought (and sometimes writing). I rely on the phenomenon's most periphrastic appellation for a reason: of its many names since its first formulation in the early twentieth century,[3] two now emerge in contemporary literatures as the most symbolic (by this reader's humble judgment): free indirect *discourse*, a mainstay of linguistic inquiries into the subject (which typically support, or invent, a highly specialized formalism for general descriptive purposes) and free indirect *style*, a term chosen largely by literary critics (and sometimes used as a catch-all for other modes of indicating point of view, such as indirect discourse and psychonarration). To disambiguate my own usage of this compound noun, I offer the reader the following definitions to serve as Rosetta Stone: the modifier *free indirect* refers consistently to representations of point of view that are inflected by the language of the narrator; when *style* heads the compound, it references a collection of

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[3] Among them, "independent form of indirect discourse" (Curme 1905); "style indirect libre" (Bally 1912); "represented speech" (Jespersen 1924); "quasi-direct discourse" (Volosinov 1929); "substitutionary narration" (Fehr 1938); "narrated monologue" (Cohn 1966); "represented speech and thought" (Banfield 1982).

linguistic forms[4] selected to serve a specific function in a given text or group of texts, within an immediate generic context; when *discourse*, to the linguistic forms which have accrued over time within these styles and which now serve to categorize the phenomenon more generally.[5] In Chapter 2, I elaborate on my choice to foreground a functionalist perspective in compiling a stylistic profile of the linguistic features recruited by Austen to express her free indirect style.

To connect Austen's stylistic profile to its immediate (and, as I will explain, unstable) generic context, my thesis suggests ways in which an analysis of style can be adapted to the actuation problem of historical sociolinguistics. The problem that actuation poses to theories of language change was first described by Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968): "Why do changes in a structural feature take place in a particular language at a given time, but not in other languages with the same feature, or in the same language at other times?" (102). This line of inquiry has persisted in discussions of grammaticalization and even lexicalization (Brinton and Traugott 2005: 147), with no clear solution reached. One possibility, proposed by Milroy (1992), is the "social network" model of language change: placing an emphasis on individual rather than system-based interaction and change (22), Milroy reformulates the actuation question to ask "what . . . [social] conditions favouring or preventing [a] change might have been" (21). Milroy organizes these conditions into networks of speaker relationships, which reveal certain trends about linguistic innovation and diffusion: innovators, Milroy shows, tend to have weaker ties to a community, while early adopters will have stronger ties. The study of actuation,

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[4] My declension of the word *form*, in its inflection for number, reveals—usually—a difference in meaning: the plural declension refers to particles of language as listed by Volosinov above ("words, morphological and syntactic structures, sounds, and intonation"); the singular more often refers to the organizational structures of a text.
[5] The forms most canonically associated with free indirect discourse are third-person pronouns, back-shifted tenses (in relation to the regular tense of narration), and proximal adverbs (such as *here* or *now*).

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therefore, becomes one that examines the conditions by which changing linguistic structures move from the periphery of a speech community to the centre.

Where I find myself at odds with Milroy is in his dismissal of written language as a medium for the study of actuation (1992: 45) and, I thus infer, for social network theory itself. Perhaps this view is valid for the enterprise of phonology, the focus of his book, but I will contend that it is not the case at all levels of language. My work explores to what extent the conditions of actuation can be applied to literary style. Specifically, I evaluate Austen's status as "innovator" of free indirect discourse (Lips 1926) and its relation to her status in the literary canon. If free indirect discourse is indeed already present in epistolary fiction, as Bray (2003) argues it is, then in Milroy's terms it would be more accurate to label Austen an "early adopter" of the style—and perhaps her status as innovator could then be better understood as a narrative of convenience. By analyzing this instance of genre change, I thus use the language of actuation to weigh in on enduring debates about whether Austen's writings were "safe" or "radical"—whether her style marks her as central or peripheral in her community of writers. From this perspective, my close comparison of Austen's epistolary and third-person styles will suggest in what ways her shift of form may be complicit in the ideological alignment she enacts. Does she lean left and cultivate the epistolary's radical Romantic function and rupture traditional models of narrative, or does she lean right and preserve (and perpetuate) the continuity of an already-established hierarchy of literary form? I do, however, suspect that Austen's ironization of these writing practices complicates the formal opposition entirely.

I also choose Austen as my subject because she wrote at an important juncture in the history of the English novel, at a time when the novel underwent a considerable change from the epistolary form, or novel in letters, of the eighteenth century to the classic realism of the

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nineteenth century. Her early novella, *Lady Susan* (c1794), was written in the epistolary mode, and later novels *Sense and Sensibility* (c1795) and *Pride and Prejudice* (c1797) were also likely drafted as such (Southam 1964); in preparation for their publication almost a decade later, however, Austen chose to transform the latter into third-person narratives. The timing of these revisions is no coincidence, but (I will argue) a response to an exigence that was producing new practices among other writers. Graphing the transition of novelistic forms of this period quantitatively, Moretti (2005) observes the popularity of the epistolary form to have declined significantly by 1790 (14), and free indirect discourse appears to have entered the English novel around 1800 (81), with Austen considered its pioneer.

    With these factors in mind, I present a brief outline of the three chapters contained herein and how they engage with the questions motivating my study. Chapter 1 employs genre theory as the theoretical foundation for my socio-historical approach to Austen's style; in particular, it surveys and attempts to denaturalize narratives of epistolarity which have subordinated the genre, aesthetically, as a space of domesticity. With this foundation in place, Chapter 2 makes an argument for how investigations of linguistic style can bear directly on questions of the literary canon and British nationalism; it also reviews models of language standardization and considers their possible application to studying free indirect styles in relation to the ideological activities of genres. Finally, Chapter 3 brings these two strands together in a close comparative analysis of Austen's free indirect style in *Lady Susan* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

CHAPTER 1: A Genre, a History

1.1   Genre, mimesis, action

"History is a genre and genre has a history," writes Ralph Cohen (1986: 203). They intermingle.

Resisting the essentialism that confined genre studies to classification by formal features, Cohen

describes a way of historicizing those groupings of features by considering their purpose instead:

"different authors, readers, critics have different reasons for identifying texts as they do" (205).

As such, he advocates the view that participating in generic practices "expresses diverse

communal (or ideological) values" (213). If the study of genre must then account for (and be an

account of) these values, the genre theorist must consider how "an author in making a generic

choice involves [themself] in an ideological choice," and how even "the critic in reconsidering

the generic choices he [or she] attributes to a text involves [themself] in certain ideological,

social, and literary commitments" (214).[6] It is, hence, insupportable to disassociate historical

assumptions from the study of generic forms, for (I reiterate on Cohen's behalf) they intermingle.

In this chapter, I will follow Cohen's philosophy, one he shares with fellow genre theorists, and

engage in the histories surrounding the epistolary novel, in effect contributing to the way our

interpretation of its function is understood and valued. In particular, I will focus attention on

competing narratives of epistolarity and how the genre's various interpreters have shaped our

understanding of its legacy within the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

Cohen's line of thought further iterates upon approaches to genre emerging at a similar

moment from rhetorical studies. Carolyn Miller's (1984) work on "Genre as Social Action"

likewise contextualizes the phenomenon, not in the vastness of ideology, however, but always

within a recurrent "rhetorical situation"—which she defines, citing Bitzer (1968), "as a 'complex

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[6] As I have just shown through my interpolation of Cohen's reported writing.

of persons, events, objects, and relations' presenting an 'exigence' that can be allayed through the mediation of discourse" (152). Genre, for Miller, becomes a way of "acting together" (163), a means of organizing form to meet shared expectations for how to "participate in the actions of a community" (165). David Russell (2002) nicely re-articulates this function: "a genre, put in simplest terms, is a form of words that worked once and might work again" (240). Action thus becomes the force that organizes form into typified genres.

The importance of historically situated action bears directly on a question integral to my discussion of the epistolary novel, namely the question of mimesis and genre: how are literary genres related to the other genres they draw on, such as the letter? Mieke Bal (1982) summarizes two sides of the debate surrounding this relationship: "those who claim realism to be the consequence of mimetic thinking, and those who claim the *creation* of new objects to be the real meaning of the concept, and hence the autonomy of literature to be crucial" (171; emphasis in original)—the aphorism of art imitating life, on the one hand, or Oscar Wilde's equally aphoristic reversal on the other. On the subject of genre, this opposition fuels questions about the extent to which a supposedly mimetic genre can be said to not only correspond to but also shape the exigence that defines its counterpart. Helpful in answering such questions is Bakhtin's (c1953/1986) parallel distinction between "primary" and "secondary" speech genres.[7] Whereas Bal sees mimesis not as "an aesthetic, but a cognitive event" and "thus logically independent of qualitative transformation" (174), Bakhtin sees the distinction between primary and secondary speech genres to be one precisely of transformation, with secondary speech genres arising out of

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[7] "Parallel" in that secondary speech genres—"novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific research, major genres of commentary, and so forth"—"absorb and digest primary (simple) genres" (Bakhtin 1986: 62), along similar lines that mimetic genres represent their sources; "parallel" is perhaps importantly not "equivalent," as Bal (1982) observes that art and science are already distinguished through "fictionality" while art and *reality* are distinguished through "representation" or mimesis (172).

"complex and highly developed and organized cultural communication" (62). By this definition, both the letter and the epistolary novel would qualify as a secondary speech genre, and any stratification between them would be the result of cultural practices, not cognitive events.

In the process of transformation, however, "primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones" (62); they "lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others" (62). For this reason, Bakhtin explains, it becomes necessary to study form in addition to genre in the context of their mutual histories:

> Literary language is a complex, dynamic system of linguistic styles. . . . In order to puzzle out the complex historical dynamics of these systems [of literary language] and move from a simple (and, in the majority of cases, superficial) description of styles, which are always in evidence and alternating with each other, to a historical explanation of these changes, one must develop a special history of speech genres (and not only secondary, but also primary ones) that reflects more directly, clearly, and flexibly all the changes taking place in social life. . . . There is not a single new phenomenon (phonetic, lexical, or grammatical) that can enter the system of language without having traversed the long and complicated path of generic-stylistic testing and modification. (65)

Bakhtin, like Cohen, thus calls for a historiography of genres that stresses their interrelatedness with changing social structures or, in Miller's terms, in the context of varying social exigencies. The question of genre and mimesis can thereby be reframed as a question of how secondary speech genres come to be sites where primary speech genres undergo "testing and modification."

If genres, as Peter Medway (2002) understands them,[8] "remove the need to treat each exigence as a distinct problem that requires the time and effort of fresh invention for its solution" (125), and a history of genres thus becomes a history of shared expectations (cf. Jauss 1970/1982), then a "mimetic" genre is not a means of duplicating or replicating those expectations, but rather a means of reconsidering (or enforcing) the purpose of a genre whose form has already stabilized (or become "moribund" and dysfunctional) by making it "fresh" (or "stale") once more. What we think of as mimetic genres are less a representation, therefore, than a re-presentation of the accepted response to an exigence that has been temporarily allayed by another genre. The role of the genre critic, then, who similarly (as Cohen indicates) re-presents the genres he or she studies, is in this sense also a mimetic one. The exigence of genre research is to draw attention to the exigencies of other genres in order to test or modify our shared expectations, and it is from this perspective that my research delves into the expectations surrounding epistolary narratives.

1.2   *The epistolary novel*

An important precursor to my study is the work of Joe Bray. Bray's (2003) stylistic analysis of eighteenth-century epistolary novels serves to remind scholars of the genre's influence on later styles of representing the mind in fiction. Seeking to retrieve this influence from the genre's reputation "as an isolated, digressive episode in the history of the novel" (1), Bray positions the epistolary novel instead as a response to the exigence of Enlightenment philosophy of mind and its effects on literary representations of consciousness. Navigating Georg Lukács's and Mikhail Bakhtin's opposing views on the rise of an autonomous interiority in the history of the novel—

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[8] Medway, incidentally, also concludes that "all notions of *textual* regularity, such as would be revealed by linguistic analysis at the sentence level, and rhetorical discourse analysis over larger units, have to be abandoned at the most general level of the theory" (142). Medway's focus on contemporary descriptions of genres, I believe, belies the importance of textual regularity for historical genre studies, where direct access to writers is impossible.

Lukács laments "a search for inner self in a world which no longer offers external totality" where Bakhtin celebrates "the multiplicity of languages and meanings that arise from the disintegration of 'wholeness'" (Bray 4)—Bray stresses the influence of, in particular, Lockean philosophy on eighteenth-century imaginings of the individual's consciousness, a revolutionary view taken for granted even in current thought (Fox 1988). Bray thus aligns his critical framework with the knowledge that, for Locke and his contemporaries, "'consciousness' is more like our 'self-consciousness'" (15): it is based on perceiving perception, on making the subject the object.

Guided by these philosophies, Bray's analysis considers one instantiation of this self-consciousness—the narratological distinction between "narrating self" and "experiencing self," a figurative distinction made more palatable in a culture accepting of a Lockean division of mind. What's more, Bray shows how these selves can be superimposed onto a dichotomy between (respectively) reason and feeling, a common opposition in the eighteenth-century epistolary tradition, but one which he argues is false. Whereas, Bray acknowledges, there exists tension between "the fevered passion of [a narrator's] experiencing self and the calm reason of their narrating self" (81), he considers first-person free indirect style in the epistolary a means of negotiating that divide:[9] "The mixture of time frames in first-person free indirect thought allows it to represent a balance between feeling and reason, as 'past time-bound bewilderments and vacillations' are transformed into reasoned debate and coherent thought, and frantic initial impressions are replaced by sustained and developed ideas" (104). In this way, Bray makes the case that the free indirect usage in the nineteenth-century novel, particularly in the works of Austen, represents a continuance of the epistolary genre's "struggles of subjectivity" (108). For Austen, he concludes that this interaction between narration and experience "is transferred in her

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[9] The very existence of first-person free indirect discourse is not without controversy. I elaborate on the issue in my third chapter, where I also provide examples attesting the phenomenon.

novels to the dynamic between the narrator and the character" (109), thus elaborating on Dorrit

Cohn's belief that "in her narrated monologues Austen seems precisely to cast the spirit of

epistolary fiction into the mold of third-person narration" (1978: 113). Third-person free indirect

style—the form by which Austen purportedly transports this epistolary spirit—thus implies a

continued response to the exigence that Lockean philosophy presented to eighteenth-century

imaginings of the mind. Bray's generic work, in sum, explores the "sedimentation" (Cohen 217)

of the epistolary genre's function of portraying feeling and reason "in constant negotiation and

interaction" (Bray 107), a function he concludes, based on the import of free indirect style, was

still expected of nineteenth-century realist novels, a judgment I later assess.

Acknowledging my debt to Bray and other narratologists for their work on excavating the

legacy of the epistolary genre in third-person narratives, I remain committed to my estimation

that further historicization of Austen's adoption of third-person free indirect style is needed. If,

as Bray claims, the psychological tensions of representing consciousness were merely shifted,

wholesale, from a first-person to a third-person configuration, then the basis of that shift remains

yet unexplored, and other possible motivations hence obscured. Why, within a period of less

than twenty years, did the first-person letter suddenly become an inadequate form for

representing interiority? How did third-person free indirect style, with its ostensibly centralizing

narrator, present a viable alternative, given the similarities Bray underscores? And what formal

features enabled Austen and her contemporaries to realize the potential of this new style? To

answer these questions, I contend that the analysis must extend beyond the reason/feeling

dichotomy into the arena of social order and systems of circulation, forces which not only

intervene between the individual's representation of their narrating and experiencing selves but

which also bind those individuals to their speech communities—in Bakhtin's terms, an approach

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which considers "the long and complicated path of generic-stylistic testing and modification" upon which free indirect style comes to be expected as an appropriate style of interiority. Bray's study remains mostly silent on the relationship of the epistolary novel to the social exigencies affecting non-literary letter-writing in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, but as my belief outlined above suggests, I consider the topic crucial to an account of the changing expectations that give rise to new genres of novel writing, which in turn repurpose linguistic forms such as the ones recruited to free indirect style.

1.3   Revolutionary letters

The letter-writing practices of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Europe provide a touchstone for this discussion. Scholarship on this period has emphasized the politically unstable context surrounding letter-writing at the turn of the nineteenth century, when broad social change drew attention to the unregulated circulation of letters and their consequent potential for radical thought or treason, exemplified best perhaps by the corresponding societies criticized by Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790/1969). Attention to the shifting reception of letters observed by these scholars will better situate the complex dynamic of the letter's changing generic function in response to the exigencies of the Revolutionary Period.

First, it is vital to identify what sort of letter-writing I will discuss. Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook (1996) lists the numerous uses of the capacious letter genre in the eighteenth century:

> there were poetical epistles, letters on botany, and monthly newsletters on literature, fashion, and business conditions. . . . There were travel letters, letter-writing manuals, and letters "from the dead to the living." There were editions of the letters of classical authors and of a few modern and literary figures, though it

was not yet considered acceptable to publish one's own correspondence during

one's life. Particularly toward the end of the century, letters became identified

with a radical political agenda[.] (17)

In particular, Cook amasses this list to underscore the "blurring of fact and fiction" that the

genre's indeterminedness elicited, offering a transactional space where specialists and

nonspecialists could engage in scientific discussions while at the same time affording Samuel

Richardson's audience a medium with which to communicate directly to both the author and his

characters (17–19). In her efforts to reconstruct epistolary narratives in the aftermath of the

Enlightenment Republic of Letters, Cook also indicates the emergence of "personal letters, very

often those of women," via these narratives into the public sphere (12), where they underwrite

the authoritative political realm of the white upper-class males who share this space. Comprising

the majority of letters discussed in my study, it is these personal narratives, and their fluctuating

median between public and private spheres of discourse, that come into focus; where Cook

examines the emergence of epistolarity in the wake of the Enlightenment ideal of a Republic of

Letters, I now turn to consider the status of these personal letter narratives during the decline of

epistolarity at the outset of the Romantic Period.

Mary Favret (1993) attends to this opposition between public and private in her

discussion of Romantic correspondence. In the fictionalized letters of that time, Favret likewise

remarks on the movement of these letters away from their previously expected register of

domesticity: "The letter [of the eighteenth century] typically registered private, interiorized

moments—domestic details, closed circles of family and friends, the inner workings of the mind.

In the Romantic period, however, we 'discover' that the epistolary novel no longer seemed

viable, and these typically feminine spaces appeared suddenly to dissolve" (12). These domestic

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or "feminine" domains of private correspondence become "dismantled in [Romantic] novels, the epistolary form . . . acquiring a public voice: the stories of these fictional individuals and others were the topics of public debate; epistolary characters entered the discourse of the age and became the property of cultural history" (13). It thus appears, from this vantage, that the private function of eighteenth-century letters to present familiar subjects ("domestic details") to familiar audiences ("closed circles of family and friends") made available a comfortable medium in which to translate "the inner workings of the mind" to public spheres of activity.

Following this argument to its ends, however, as Favret has, we find that the domestic register which leant itself in the first place to the letter's centrality imported more than the familiarity of social interaction. Favret calls attention to the analogy, common in literary criticism, that links letters and the newly public characters who write them to a shared narrative of epistolarity, "wherein the letter lives out the tragic destiny of the epistolary heroine: the innocent letter ventures out into the world, where she falls victim to manipulation, violation and finally, to literal or metaphorical death" (22). The public circulation of letters, in this narrative, takes on the value of sentiment and tragedy. Resisting the typified reception of the letter as such a "virginal genre," however, Favret explores how "the fiction of its respectability, or of its ability to coordinate friendly discussion, disintegrates in [Romantic] novels and elsewhere. The letter's private life and representative power, having become public property, remain suspect in nineteenth-century literature. No longer would the letter inscribe the individual within a secure social order," Favret observes: no longer would it be cast as "an open, innocent and decorous mode of expression" (34). It would appear, then, that the register of closeness, or domesticity, often attributed to the formal properties of the letter genre in truth functions to reinscribe this narrative of epistolarity onto it.

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1.4   *The work of writing*

The changing dimension of letter-writing during the Revolution speaks to broader concerns over the proliferation of writing across the eighteenth century and the incumbent response to allay a nation's anxiety. As Clifford Siskin (1998) argues, writing emerged, especially in the form of the periodical, as "a powerful part of the everyday life" of the Britain nation (2), and a potentially threatening one, at that. The new productivity of periodicals, which could now be "launched and sustained with very little capital" (4), gave rise not only to increased publication rates but also to a dispersal of control over publication: anyone capable of producing these texts were summarily thought to be capable of influencing behaviour on a heretofore incomparable scale. It was not just the proliferation of periodicals, however, that drew attention to the scope of writing's influence. In relation especially to the genre of conduct books, novels—and more importantly the question of mimesis—became central objects of concern as well. Siskin outlines the shifting expectations for novel writing thusly: "'What can writing do?' became 'Can the novel imitate real life?'; 'With what consequences?' became, reversing the previous question, 'Does real life imitate the novel?'; and 'In whose hands?' became 'Whom should novelists imitate?'" (178). The mimetic action of novel writing quickly took on moral overtones, with *Pamela/Shamela*, Siskin points out by example, serving as a "normative binary" for how the novel "negotiates the relationship between 'truth' and 'what may morally be believed'" (183). Morality interweaved with nationalism, moreover, because many of these forms of writing were not merely subversive, but foreign, often French—accordingly, they threatened to induce foreign behaviours, of the kind found in romance (180), for instance. For early English novelists like Richardson and Fielding, then, what was at stake in writing the novel was more than a means of reasserting control over a morality endangered by unprincipled publication; it was also a means

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of reasserting English identity in order to combat the threat posed by what were said to be un-English genres of writing.

With this nationalist drive recollected, we can begin to see out of what state of mind the narrative of epistolarity, as it still currently reaches us, was formed. A narrative of political neutrality and familiar private life conveniently tames the act of novel writing. Indeed, Siskin emphasizes how novels (and, under his theorizing, "novelism") became in the eighteenth century a way to make writing appear less threatening, to make the technology less strange: the imitative quality of novels, especially in the private correspondence of the epistolary, functioned to "domesticate writing" through familiarization (184), while also thus functioning to position novel writing within a history of British nationalism. Instrumental to this "rise" of the English novel but also a victim of it, the epistolary novel, by that point in decline, does not appear to reflect a common ground between private and public, a fulcrum on which to pivot comfortably from one to the other, as the narrative of epistolarity suggests is one of its central functions. Rather, its popularity hinged on the growing pangs of a nation newly terrified by but fascinated with the work of writing, and its decline was precipitated by this gradual comfort.

1.5   Jane Austen: safe or radical or?

Amid the political strife of the Revolution and the threats to British nationalism lie Jane Austen and the seemingly endless attempts to pin her to one side or the other. Does she belong with the English novel's founding fathers or its revolutionary mothers? Ian Watt (1957) suggests the former, arguing that Austen "owes her eminence in the tradition of the English novel" to a "reconciliation" of Fielding's and Richardson's styles (296); like Frances Burney, Austen follows Richardson in his "minute presentation of daily life" and Fielding in his "detached

attitude to their narrative material" which gives a "sense of society as a whole" (297). Austen's

genius, then, lies in how she "dispensed with the participating narrator" of the memoir or the

letter, "probably because both of those roles make freedom to comment and evaluate more

difficult to arrange" (296–7)—in doing so, she solves the narrative "problems" of "realism of

presentation" and "realism of assessment" (297). Her use of women's point of view, moreover,

"suggests that the feminine sensibility was in some ways better equipped to reveal the intricacies

of personal relationships and was therefore a real advantage in the realm of the novel" (298).

The resemblance of Watt's argument to the narrative of epistolary is clear, so much that Watt

contextualizes the transition between these two dominant narrative modes through his "epistolary

silence" hypothesis: he claims that Austen's style of omniscient narration derived from "filling"

the silence that existed between points of view in the letter, previously described only in

retrospect in other letters. Austen, in this interpretation, likewise fills the silence between

epistolary and realist forms of novel writing. Unsurprisingly, Siskin takes issue.

For Siskin, the question of Austen's "eminence" in the literary canon is not one of

stylistics, but of security. Reinscribing Austen into the context of other women writers of her

time—who would, one imagines, be equally capable of presenting the "feminine sensibility" of

the domestic register—Siskin asks of the canon why one was remembered, and made eminent,

when others were forgotten. Looking away from Austen as an individual stylist and instead at

her reception by contemporaries, he stresses the importance of Walter Scott's favourable

discussion of her work in *The Quarterly Review* (1815), both for being the breakthrough of her

career and for the peculiar language of Scott's "negative appreciation": "Austen's virtues came

to be articulated habitually in terms of what she lacks—Shakespearean in some ways, but *not*

Shakespeare. Scott's recurrent focus is on the 'ordinary' nature of her subject matter, the degree

to which she attends to the 'daily,' 'common,' and 'middling'" (201; emphasis in original). On *Emma*, Scott remarks that, upon reading it, one may return "to the ordinary business of life, without any chance of having [one's] head turned" (qtd. in Siskin 202). Indeed, Siskin figures this review as the "initial chorus" of Austen's reception: "this sense of *safety* echoes throughout the remarkably repetitive vocabulary of the other initial reviews of the novel," which receive Austen "not only as pleasurable, but as *comfortable*" (202; emphasis in original). The source of this comfort, Siskin argues, is also the source of Austen's enigmatic eminence in the literary canon: Austen's novels were the solution to the threat posed by writing (204), and how they solved it was through Austen's resistance of "simplistic cause-and-effect analysis" of moral judgments—by adopting a more complex mode of moralizing (in novels, remember, that are imitative of reality and thus considered to have influence over it), Austen's response "signals a change in the status of writing from a worrisome new technology to a more trusted tool" (204). Austen's reception, therefore, is one which conscripts her in the drive to domesticate writing as a means of asserting national identity—to have a British literary canon, after all, is to have developed a standard for Britain.

Whether Austen's work indeed falls inside these lines, or on the outside them (Burgess 2000; Galperin 2003), I argue in the proceeding chapters that her debated relationship to epistolarity can be approached through the study of style. For Austen to have re-presented the generic practices of the epistolary novel—for instance, to agree with Bray's claim that she participated in the same sphere of activity as other novelists who responded to the exigence of Enlightenment philosophy of mind—there must be evidence of a selection, or translation, of the object in the first place. In agreement with Bray, my stylistic analysis in the final chapter takes up free indirect style as the locus of this imaginable translation, as evidence of her response to

these generic practices; my next chapter hence surveys the potential difficulties of applying that rhetorical-stylistic framework amid conflicting models of language standardization and change, which conceive of written language as a less malleable substance than I do.

CHAPTER 2: Approaching Free Indirect Forms

2.1   Diversity and/in writing

In the previous chapter, I introduced the relationship between genre and form as being one

founded on expectation: a genre organizes form to meet the shared expectations of a local speech

community.[10] To put it another way, I consider genres to be one among many practices studied

by metapragmatics—"the lens through which any specific community of language users

reflexively understand—and culturally rationalize—their own (and thence, others') habits of

semiotic form and function" (Silverstein 2010: 338). For this reason, analysis of genre must

inevitably be (and do) historical work, but by extension, so must analysis of form. This chapter

will consider the challenges inherent to transposing a rhetorically motivated understanding of

genre and form onto theories of language change derived from functional linguistics, where

communal expectations are more frequently considered through processes of standardization

(e.g. Stein and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1994) than rhetorical genre theory. As well, the chapter

foregrounds and attempts to resolve biases in discourses on language change which treat speech

as the locus of change and writing as the perpetuation of the standard (e.g. Milroy 1992) or, at

best, consider only the written genres "closest" to spoken language as sources of innovation

(Fitzmaurice and Taavitsainen 2007: 18). These discourses establish a hierarchy between the

two that my next chapter seeks to disturb, but I lay the groundwork here. The reason why I

argue it is important to consult the implicit understanding of semiotic habits embodied by genres

is because free indirect discourse, prior to its "discovery" by twentieth-century language

scholars, lacked explicit standards of organization, yet nevertheless cohered as a style of writing

for centuries beforehand, even while changing drastically from its origins in oral storytelling.

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[10] A "speech community," as I will soon emphasize, is not a term meant to exclude or undervalue writing.

First, I offer an explanation for why an appeal to standardization offers functional linguistics only a narrow window into the shared expectations for linguistic form at a given time, and why theories of genre are needed to expand the view. Dieter Stein (1994) summarizes three major uses of the term *standardization* in the literature: to refer to the "supra-local," where "a speech community will gradually agree on some common norms of usage that are functional outside the close community" (Milroy 1994: 19), often carrying prestige (Stein 2); to refer to "standard variety," a selection of language norms related to the "educated elite" which become codified and elaborated (Bartsch 1987 in Stein 2–3); and to refer to "local dialectal norms," which share some features with the standard variety, "such as group defining," but which "do not carry a notion of correctness" or "go through a process of codification or functional elaboration" (3). These definitions, Stein stresses, are meant to be taken prototypically, not categorically.

Stein identifies the second definition as the dominant meaning of *standard* in much historical linguistic inquiry, foregrounding three additional criteria found in discussions of standard varieties: *standardization*, here, comes to mean a focus on a selection of variants that is "imposed from above," "involves legislation," and "contains an ideology of standardization" (4). That ideology of standardization, he emphasizes, is moreover an essential component to the establishment of a common written language. Resisting the "prestigious image of the written language as the trendsetter for selectional mechanisms" (5), Stein, paraphrasing Bartsch again, notes that "the absence of nonlinguistic, gestural and situational context information [in written language] necessitates the support of the conventionalized and socially controlled organization principles" of an imposed, legislated standard variety (6). The "decontextualized, autonomous language" of writing (13), in other words, requires the establishment of a linguistic norm, usually of a dominant social group. Through this selection of one variant over another in writing—the

other becoming "dialectal," "vulgar," or plain "incorrect" by comparison (5)—"written language becomes one of the criteria for selecting as correct variants of the spoken standard language" (6), particularly at the levels of morphology, syntax, and semantics. Writing, in this view, functions as the arbiter and exemplar of the standard, whose effect on speech, and the speaker, is the "the suppression of natural tendencies" toward variety and change (11). Some historical linguists (Stein cites Cheshire [1994] as an example) have thus questioned the extent to which the history of any language's written system is really a history of its standard and the privileged population who it benefits. Their consequent attention to nonstandard varieties and subordination of written language when alternatives are available can be understood as efforts to amend this exclusion.

Those efforts, though well-intentioned, I want to show have created an unnecessary opposition between the study of written language and the inclusion of nonstandard varieties in accounts of changing linguistic systems. I thus want to remove the bias against writing which fixes it, in Bakhtin's terms, as monologic—in service to the standard, and the standard alone. Janet Giltrow (2003) offers a "de-centered" (363) perspective on the relation of these systems to linguistic diversity by bringing into the discussion a notion of a language-user's "*intersubjective consciousness*," wherein "speakers' and listeners' [consciousnesses] not only recognize typical situations but also recognize one another's mutual awareness" (363). Such linguistic consciousness sheds light on how form becomes organized locally by genre—"regularities in situation, form, and content" become typified, in "local contexts" (363), by mutual recognition— but more important, for the moment, is its application in this debate over the authority of the standard. Summarizing Milroy and Milroy's (1985) observations on speech variety, Giltrow excerpts one point in particular: "Most forcefully, they note first that standardization, in the presence of variety, ordains one form, and second that the prescription is not equal to the task,

for variety persists. So," Giltrow concludes, "standardization is not to be viewed as accomplishing actual uniformity in speech, but as inducing widespread consciousness of the standard, and of companion variety" (365). In this sense, she contends that the Milroys, among other historical or sociolinguists she cites, in fact address "the forces Bakhtin describes as *centripetal* (roughly, centralizing and homogenizing) and *centrifugal* (roughly, decentralizing and diversifying)" (364), except, I add, with a definition of *standardization* (as referenced above) that appears to refer only to the centripetal—and even there, only to what is both centripetal as well as explicit: the imposed, legislated, elaborated, and *written* rules of the standard.

How rhetorical genre theory can intervene in this discussion is by offering it a new direction, by means of linguistic consciousness, toward the centrifugal. Centralization is a force external to language, Giltrow points out through Bourdieu—"that unification [of the linguistic marketplace is] itself a dimension of modernity" (365)—a point on which Stein has previously agreed (Gerritsen and Stein 1992), so there is already common ground amid perspectives on the complex interaction of internal and external factors to language change. Giltrow articulates why those perspectives should agree to look past the forces of standardization which overtly impose unity—forces which have henceforth dominated the discussion, as Stein has indicated—to the individual language-user's consciousness of their own and each other's language. She writes,

> Crossing this threshold, we take linguistic consciousness (ideas about one's speech in relation to others' speech) into the realm of ideas about one's self as rendered or positioned in negotiation with the words of others, these negotiations involving contacts, citations, worldviews, intentions. It is these resources that centripetal forces attempt to manage. In fact, their busyness with dictionaries, style-guides and copy-editing may be only a distracter. (368)

Informed by Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia," Giltrow contends that the codified standard which operates against—but ultimately fails to suppress—linguistic variation is not where our attention should be trained. Rather than fix our gaze on this explicit, ineffectual, and singular standard, we must look instead to the multiple: the centrifugal forces that establish local genres, where each in turn forms expectations for what is central and variant. Though these expectations can be made explicit, they need not be: "Tacitness explains discrepancies between what language-users do and what they say about what they do, and explains the inadequacy of rule-giving and direct instruction in speakers' learning of a genre new to them" (Giltrow 364). Because this definition of *standard* designates local, implicit knowledge of genre—rather than imposed, explicit prescription—as the setting of diversity in language, even written language can be reclaimed as a site of linguistic variation.

2.2   *Canonicity and the standard*

My chapter will now bring this definition of the standard to bear on free indirect styles in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Stein (1994) identifies the middle of the eighteenth century as the period when standardization, in the sense he means it above, took shape in Britain "as a transcendental norm, with concomitant codification, legislation and a conscious ideology" (5). The creation of the Empire meant "the need for a stable, variation-free tool to govern it" (7)—a need fulfilled by writing. That ideology of standardization is, however, tangled up in fears over the proliferation of writing and its potential threat to English nationalism, as discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, Siskin comments on the importance of form at this time, citing a similar idiom:

emphasis on content [in work on nationalism in this period] misses the point

because it is the means of communication itself which is crucial: "the

pervasiveness and importance of abstract, centralized, standardized, one to many

communication, which itself automatically engenders the core idea of nationalism,

quite irrespective to what in particular is being put into the specific messages

transmitted" (Gellner qtd. in Siskin 1998: 182).

Where Siskin questions the singular identities of "which 'one' and how 'many'" in this

communicative model (182), referring to the exponential rise of the novel as an opposing

multiplicity (183), I similarly question Stein's confidence that writing exhibited the stability he

attributes to it. His certainty is problematic on two grounds: first, it overlooks the

"undisciplined" publication practices of the period, a massive centrifugal force; and second, it

considers relevant only the codified standards of a centripetal, or "transcendental," norm, which,

as discussed, continually fail to suppress variation. On both grounds, his assertion is monologic.

A key position on which to challenge these grounds is in the relationship posited between

the linguistic standard and the literary canon. Barstch (1987) argues that a standard language

emerges when "a variety has a history of literature and 'great' authors" (qtd. in Stein 7). Though

Stein himself undervalues this stipulation, believing that, in the eighteenth century, the spoken

language of prestige groups took precedence (7), he nevertheless admits it as a possibility: "It

could well be argued that inherent in the written printed language of the time there was a

codifying effect *per se*, coupled with an increasing view, based on the prestigious function of this

authoritative medium, of written language as the best language, long before . . . a prescriptivism

based on codification proper set in" (14). However, it is clear that Stein is reluctant to abandon

his model of standardization centred on prestige and explicit prescription, so I turn away from

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him now to face Bakhtin once more, who also comments on the role of literary languages in relation to the centre. He writes,

> At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic) but also . . . into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so forth. From this point of view, literary language itself is only one of these heteroglot languages (generic, period-bound and others). (1930/1981: 271–272)

The apparent behaviour of standard languages to develop, in their emergence, a canon of "great" authors who already exemplify that standard can be reframed, using Bakhtin, as the selection, in retrospect, of a language already present amid a variety of other languages to reflect that new standard. Indeed, by "naming the standard the 'literary language,'" comments Giltrow (2003: 366), Bakhtin observes "the historical complicity of literary studies and canonical appreciations in producing the center and the notion of common cultural resources." Abstract, centralized, standardized, one-to-many communication, then, has been taken to be synonymous with "literary language," but always is that colonization a retrospective one. Standardized national languages with standard literary canons do not develop "in a natural way" (Stein paraphrasing Bartsch [7]), but through a process of excluding the heteroglot of languages with which that literary language was once in dialogue.

This discussion of the linguistic standard resembles Siskin's assessment of Austen's place in the English literary canon in many ways. In his account of her reception, Siskin

concludes that the "comfort" reviewers like Scott attributed to her work in their efforts to establish a nationalist canon had very little (perhaps nothing) to do with Austen's own style:

> By linking Austen to such a weighty phenomenon as the taming of writing, I am not trying to repeat, but to explain in a different key, the standard story of her important position within a developing Great Tradition. The problem, that is, is not whether, in aesthetic or other terms, she deserves to be valorized within the "rise" of the novel and of Literature, but the fact that *she has been* and continues to be. (205)

Siskin therefore historicizes how Austen's works have "gained and maintained such a privileged position" (205), then and even now: it has been through a process of deliberate "forgetting" that excludes other writers, often women, who challenge the ideologies of the Great Tradition. I consider the equally nationalist composition of a standard English to be a related forgetting, in the manner I describe above. Indeed, Carol Percy (2010) argues that eighteenth-century book reviewers became the guardians of expected language usage, a synecdoche of a work's value, implying these parallel endeavours were not only on the same track but also that language-users were conscious of their relationship. Pursuing this implication, I discount Siskin's abandonment of Austen's style, and in turn her language use, as a topic of her placement in the literary canon. Siskin, who challenges Margaret Doody's (1993) judgment that Austen's revisions of earlier works after their rejection by booksellers hence reflected a "domestication" of her writing, asserts that "readers could not have been threatened by what remained unpublished and thus unread" (203). However, given the changes speculated to have occurred in Austen's revisions (Southam 1964), the least of which involved a move from first-person epistolary narration to third-person realism, Siskin perhaps overeagerly subtracts any consideration of Austen's own

status as reader and her consciousness as language-user of changing expectations for form, although his (1988) work attends to the subject.

Bringing the threads of this conversation together, I weave the following tapestry: if Bartsch, Bakhtin, and others are to be believed, then the establishment of dominant literary genres entails the simultaneous establishment of dominant "literary languages" meant to serve as standards; these genres, moreover, each possess peculiar expectations for form, a selection of "great" authors, and (especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) nationalist agendas. Siskin addresses Austen's status in relation to the latter two categories; however, based in a historicization of reception, his analysis appears allergic to form and thus dismissive of language. Absorbing the antihistamine of linguistic consciousness, I am inured to these symptoms because I see language as developing through a process of mutual recognition, where reception is tied inextricably to production (as speaker is to audience). Austen's revisions, occurring at an important shift between epistolary and realist modes, suggest her consciousness of a changing standard—whether her novels are in service to that standard, the Great Tradition, remains in question. Perhaps, though, it isn't the right question: I have just chided Siskin for only considering Austen in relation to a centre which he seeks to rupture—a mode of inquiry which further enforces, if implicitly, her allegiance to that centre—so I would be remiss to do the same. Rather than dwell on the centripetal forces which Austen must have navigated (and *did* navigate, at least in relation to booksellers and, eventually, editors), I will seek out the centrifugal forces ostensible in her work, indicative of her dialogue with the multiplicity of genres produced amid untethered publication practices. Accepting the gauntlet of language, I thus consider how free indirect discourse, a linguistic formation to which Austen is attributed status as pioneer (Lips 1926), becomes informed by the different generic expectations she discerns between revisions.

In this way, I seek to "remember" Austen by situating her works within their local sociolinguistic contexts. I also thereby challenge assumptions that literary languages develop only in service to the standard and that written language cannot be a site of variation; what's more, I reject an approach to a history of reception that excludes a discussion of form. But for the rest of the chapter, I concentrate on my needlework: a brief assessment of free indirect discourse.

2.3   *A form, also a history*

To say that free indirect discourse arises locally in the eighteenth century is to lay claim to controversy. Monika Fludernik (1993) has dedicated a substantial amount of scholarship to refuting the hypothesis that situates the phenomenon's origins in the eighteenth-century novel, a view made especially popular by Banfield (1982). Fludernik places herself in an opposing camp, arguing that "free indirect discourse is an oral phenomenon and that its rarity in pre-eighteenth-century texts is accounted for by its original reliance on intonation to indicate a 'voice'" (93), not syntactic markers of expressivity. Whereas Fludernik posits the emergence of free indirect discourse in the traditions of oral storytelling, she makes a point of avoiding a study of periods or selected corpora (9). Such studies, she claims, "would have to choose very specific historical and typological corpora rather than aiming at the comprehensiveness that I have attempted in these pages" (10). By *comprehensiveness*, she immediately refers to a collection of examples from literary and non-literary prose that she has "read over the past eight or ten years," primarily in British and American variants of English (10); more distantly, she refers to the paramount concern of her book: extracting the study of free indirect discourse from a taxonomy of formal features found in written texts, with the aim instead of considering it as a pragmatic phenomenon, a mode of representation endemic to the mind rather than fictionality (463).

My work does not contend with Fludernik's reanalysis, but with her rejection of the more situated approach as a complementary method of enquiry. Indeed, she discards the potential productivity of a situated study, indicating her belief that free indirect discourse "is not a linguistic form that could be aligned with a specific function or meaning" (11–12). As evinced by her citation of, alongside English variants, non-Germanic and even non–Indo European data (100–104), as well as evidence from across a diachronic range of several centuries, Fludernik intends for free indirect discourse to be understood only as a linguistic universal, not as a local style of representation. Moreover, she concludes that it belongs to a still-more abstract grouping, "narrative discourse," which is "a uniform one-levelled linguistic entity" that subsumes the categories of direct, indirect, and free indirect representation—categories, she decides, that must then be a "linguistic hallucination" (453). Fludernik thereby distances the study of narrative discourse not only from function and meaning, but from form as well.

Though I remain ambivalent toward this conclusion, I am yet certain that free indirect discourse can only lack form, function, or meaning when it is considered outside context and outside genre. While Fludernik's argument attempts to transcend an opposition between *langue* and *parole* by focusing our attention on *langage*, what she (paraphrasing Charles Bally [1914]) describes as the "psychology of language" (454), it is her *a priori* dismissal of a situated approach that leads her, unflinchingly, to this exclusion of both. In many ways, Fludernik arrives at the same conclusion that Bakhtin does, namely that "consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language" (1930/1981: 295; emphasis removed). However, whereas Bakhtin urges readers to study this choice of language "amidst heteroglossia"—to consider *langue* and *parole* together as utterance—Fludernik takes the opposite track, developing in a subsequent work a theory of narrativity based in cognitive

parameters of storytelling (1996). Though she there encourages a "fruitful exchange between critical theory and historical developments" (236), the beneficiary of such an exchange, at least in her efforts, remains these parameters of narrativity—individual narrative forms and structures become a means to an end, a way to test the limits of the parameters, "hallucinations."

The antihistamines I've taken must also be hallucinogenic, then, because I again follow Bakhtin's instruction. Rather than see the linguistic forms associated with free indirect discourse as the superficial representations of an underlying, and (implicitly) more interesting, object of study, I see them as historical artifacts indicative of the linguistic choices available to language-users in a given context, worthy of study in their own right. My emphasis on the local development of free indirect discourse in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel is not, then, to claim this site as the originator of a pragmatic, or narrative, phenomenon—Bakhtin, especially, warns us of the myth of the original utterance (Morson and Emerson 1989: 65). Acknowledging its preceding history in oral storytelling, perhaps even its status as a linguistic or cognitive universal, I instead question why free indirect *style* becomes a prominent mode of representation in the European novel at this time, and why Jane Austen is among its first and most successful exponents. In the following chapter, I attempt to answer these questions by considering which forms (among the many described in taxonomies of the free indirect) Austen recruits, what functions they serve, in what contexts they appear, and with what content. This situated analysis will shed light on how a quasi-grammatical form such as free indirect discourse could develop in writing, not speech (which, as Fludernik points out, relies on intonation rather than syntax to convey similar effects), despite a seeming lack of ostensible guidelines or standards for its usage—"*le style indirect libre*," after all, was only given a name by Charles Bally, in 1912, long after its famed entrance into English and French literature. By focusing on

the transition between the epistolary mode and classical realism in a comparison of the stylistic differences between Austen's *Lady Susan* and *Sense and Sensibility*, I therefore embed a study of language within a study of genre and politics and, as such, give form a history. Before I do that, however, I must address competing methodologies in the study of free indirect discourse.

2.4   Form and function

Contemporary approaches to historical pragmatics oscillate between two methods of enquiry: the onomasiological, which maps function to form, and the semasiological, which maps form to function. Approaches to free indirect discourse, whether overtly historical or pragmatic or not, have likewise been caught in the magnetism of these poles: proponents of the former method largely centre their work on the "dual voice" hypothesis—the idea that free indirect styles mix the "voices" of narrator and character—while the latter focus on a heterogeneous collection of linguistic features used to express characters' speech or thought in a way that differs from (yet is usually understood to combine) direct or indirect modes of discourse presentation. For further discussion of these approaches and their epistemological differences, I turn to Fitzmaurice and Taavitsainen (2007), who provide an account of their contrasting methods. The semasiological approach, they elaborate, "studies for example how the communicative functions of linguistic features like pragmatic particles, interjections or intensifiers have changed over time" while the "opposite, function-to-form mappings trace the changing linguistic realisations of pragmatic phenomena over time, for example, the various ways in which speech acts are realised across time" (14). Form-to-function mapping therefore asks, "What are the constraints on ways in which meaning can change while form remains constant?" while function-to-form mapping asks, "What constraints are there on recruitment of extant terms to express a semantic category?" (15).

Perhaps already evident from my previous discussion, the approach I take to the study of free

indirect discourse is that of function to form—a study of the linguistic features recruited, at a

given historical moment, for the expression of this pragmatic phenomenon. However, I hold

some reservations toward Fitzmaurice and Taavitsainen's emphasis on this approach's interest in

the constraints (or "rules" [13]) of linguistic communication. My choice of method is meant not

only to circumvent the unfeasibility, stressed by Fludernik, of cataloguing free indirect discourse

through taxonomies of form—by placing the emphasis, instead, on the dual voice function which

induces those forms—but also to escape a constraint-based model of language change: my study

is more attentive, in other words, to the changes that *did* occur, rather than the ones that couldn't.

To get a sense of the dual voice and its pragmatic function, I consult a range of literary

pragmatists, philosophers of language, narratologists, and other researchers who have addressed

this function in relation to its formal counterpart, discourse representation. Concerning the

English (as well as French) novel, Roy Pascal (1977) appears as the first figure to foreground the

relationship of *le style indirect libre* with "a dual voice" that, "through vocabulary, sentence

structure, and intonation[,] subtly fuses the two voices of the character and the narrator" (26),

often for the purposes of conveying irony or sympathy (17). Since Pascal, perspectives on the

dual voice's function have moved away from this earlier emphasis on a fusion of voices toward

another interpretation: a discontinuity of voices. Kathy Mezei (1996), for instance, explores (in

Austen's work, among others) how the indeterminacy of the dual voice "offers a coded structure

within the text to reveal authors' discomfort with conventional gender roles and forms of gender

polarization" (71)—that indeterminacy, she argues, renders free indirect style a "site of struggle"

between the competing voices of narrator and character (67), a way to present those voices not in

harmony, as Pascal suggests, but in discord. Jacob Mey (1998) represents the middle ground: he

explains that an utterance has a voice in a similar way that a sentence has a grammatical subject, that voicing is simply a pragmatic phenomenon which authors invoke to convey to readers "ownership" over language. Informed by Bakhtinian dialogism and what Mey calls the "internal dialogicity" of language (109), he recognizes that all words are inherently multi-vocal (in that they are continually produced in dialogue between addresser and addressee), but underscores, like Mezei, a subset of these dialogues that produce a "voice clash." Borrowing the term from Toolan (1994), he defines a "voice clash" as occurring "whenever voices don't match: either the character and a voice that is attributed to that character are out of sync, or two or more of the voices heard in the story are perceived as disharmonious" (189). Unlike Mezei, who emphasizes the ideological jockeying at work between character and narrator, Mey stresses the reader's involvement in identifying clashes of voice. "In a successful narrative situation," he writes, "the reader's point of view jibes with the author/narrator's. As a result, the narrative blend of voices forms a dialogic consensus: the reader's and the author/narrator's voices sound in harmony with the voices of the characters, in unison or counterpoint" (110). Mey thus amends the site of struggle to include not only the indeterminate space between character and narrator but also the reader's expectations for voice. The dual voice not only activates its function of revealing ideological tensions "when there are two or more voices competing for uttering privileges," then, but also "when the voice we hear is not the voice we expect to hear" (108).

Before endorsing Mey's analysis, I must raise concerns I have over his model of the "narrative situation," and how it might be modified by a more situated analysis of reading practices. Mey contends that "in order to be accepted by the readership as depicting a possible (and interesting!) world, fiction has to be believable. That is, while it need not be *real*, it should be *realistic*, in the sense that characters must be consistent (189; emphasis in original). We can

thereby see how Mey is spooling his description of voice together with his model of narrative realism; "the readership must be 'seduced' to participate in the narrative," he observes earlier, "or they will refuse to read on" (109). I would venture that this estimation of readers' interest or ability is a highly contingent one which overlooks numerous other possible expectations. Deidre Lynch's (1998) historicization of character in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature offers just one alternative model for how voice may have been perceived around the time of Austen's writing. Provoked by the realism debates of twentieth-century structuralism, Lynch shares their suspicion of humanism's "fetishistic assumption that character *exceeded* the formal means of its representation"—an assumption that Mey seems also to hold—"whereas character was not, in the structuralist schemes, a referent that would pre-exist its representation but was a signified instead" (15; emphasis in original). Freeing the description of character from this essentialism, Lynch proceeds to historicize the "conditions of legibility" (16) surrounding character from the eighteenth century and on, particularly in relation to the marketplace and consumerism.

Lynch observes that, in a culture of growing mass consumption, the search for inner meaning within character represented, for readers, a means of transacting their own inward identities. This "fleshing out" of character, she argues, differs greatly from earlier practices, which underlined the outward materiality of characterization: often, the word *character* referred interchangeably to "individuals" as well as to the printed symbols that convey their stories (31). In Austen, Lynch speaks directly to the topic of voice: Austen, realizing the paradox within "the perturbing sociability of the act of private consumption" (209), asks her audience to consider the "public-spirited"-ness of the act of identifying with mass-produced literary characters. As such, Austen creates characters "who are rarely alone with their thoughts—characters who are instead perpetually anxious about keeping the lines of communication open and the wheels of

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conversation turning" (210). Her manner of representing character, Lynch further argues, is marked by this anxiety: Austen's narration is divided between giving voice to private feelings and to the language of the crowd (231). Though I will not fully adopt Lynch's materialist model of criticism in my next chapter, it is this duality of characterization that I will keep in mind when considering the function of Austen's free indirect style in mediating between the voices of the crowd and the individual. Amidst that site of struggle between system and self, I will thus explore what forms are produced in the action of fleshing out character at this historical moment.

CHAPTER 3: A Linguistic Ethnography

3.1   The epistolary novel: representations of consciousness

As previously outlined, Joe Bray (2003) contends that the influence of the epistolary genre

survives the decline in popularity (and publication) of the novel-in-letters. Rather, the genre's

interest in representing psychological interiority lives on, finding new modes of expression in

nineteenth-century novels. For Jane Austen, it was in her use of free indirect style: "the

interaction between the narrating and experiencing selves of the eighteenth-century letter-writers

is transferred in her novels to the dynamic between the narrator and character," whose

"perspectives . . . jostle for prominence" in passages of free indirect discourse (109). Bray

explores the influence of one epistolary narrative in particular on the formation of Austen's style.

Samuel Richardson's *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), he argues, had a tremendous

impact on a young Austen. Citing evidence of her familiarity with the novel from a memoir by

her nephew, as well as from a short play she wrote by the same title (c1800), Bray credits

Richardson for introducing to Austen a number of themes and character types which would recur

in her work (110), but his interest lies primarily in Richardson's stylistic influence. The "roots of

Austen's third-person free indirect thought," he claims, "can be traced back to the first-person

letters of Harriet Byron, Richardson's most reflective, retrospecting heroine. Her switching

between her narrating and experiencing selves leads directly to the interaction between the

narrator's voice and the character's consciousness in Austen's fiction" (110). Bray interprets the

frequent present-tense interludes amidst past-tense narration within Richardson's epistolary

narrative as evidence of the tension between narrating and experiencing consciousnesses, an

opposition between reason and feeling which he claims is central to the eighteenth-century

epistolary genre.

In Austen's fictionalized letters, however, he finds this opposition to be absent. In *Lady Susan*, he maintains that "no attempts to explore consciousness are made" (123), a claim which he delimits in terms of depth of interiority. Indeed, with the support of observations by other Austen scholars (Epstein 1985; Gard 1989; Watson 1994), Bray makes the claim that "None of the letters in her novels contain much of psychological interest" (131), again by the standard of interiority. Rather, he notices that the function letters used to serve, of offering characters a space for introspection, migrates elsewhere in Austen's novels: "though the letters themselves are empty of psychological content[,] . . . the feelings of those who read them are often elaborated in detail" (127), frequently in passages of free indirect discourse (129). Letters are thus used to "prompt" such reflection, or re-reading, moving this marker of depth from letter-writer to letter-reader. This account of the development of letters accords with explanations by literary historians. Mary Favret (1993) emphasizes the "look of letters," drawing attention to the expectation that they had to "*look* appealing to the reader, who would have to purchase the pleasure of consuming them before viewing their contents" (136; emphasis in original); Nicola Watson (1994) observes that *Sense and Sensibility* "largely erase[s] the expression of private feeling . . . by considering the letter solely as it physically enters social circulation" (90). Both insist that the materiality of letters outweighed their capacity to signify interiority.

While Bray's narratological insight finds common ground with these literary histories, his conception of psychological depth and its relationship to representations of interiority warrants further inspection. Bray suggests that Austen, when choosing to deploy interiority elsewhere than in her fictionalized letters, may have been "intimidated" by the psychological complexity of Richardson's letter writers (123). I reference this point of speculation not in an effort to attribute undue importance to this passing observation, but to reveal a potentially uncultivated area of

Bray's analysis, which I might nurture. In consultation with Deidre Lynch's (1998)

historicization of character in this period, I find an alternative explanation, rooted in changing

expectations for psychological depth within Austen's chosen genres, for her inclusion of free

indirect style to fulfill this representational function. Where Bray sees a distinction between

narrating and experiencing selves as a marker of depth, Lynch instead recognizes a different, yet

no less psychologically complex, configuration at work. She claims that "Austen's novels

position interiority at a relay point that articulates the personal with the mass-produced" (210).

Rather than consider Austen's free indirect style an import of the epistolary opposition between

past and present experience, Lynch configures the private thoughts of Austen's characters

instead in relation to public opinion: "In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Persuasion* especially, Austen

handles point of view so that listening in on the self-confirming language of depth that endows a

heroine with an inner life consistently involves hearing in the background the murmurs of a

crowd" (210). The dynamic between narrator and character, instead of representing an

internalized struggle between reason and feeling, appears now to redirect that tension outward to

this newly constructed opposition between the individual and the crowd.[11]

Bray is part right, then, in agreeing with Dorrit Cohn that "the spirit of epistolary fiction"

lives on in Austen's work (Bray 108), but his emphasis on interior narratological levels

overlooks the trajectory of the letter as a genre that was increasingly concerned with the public

sphere and how a shifting expectancy for characters to be similarly consumable in the public

(Favret 1993; Lynch 1998) may have influenced Austen's delineation of free indirect style.

Approaching this topic from a linguistic-ethnographic perspective means engaging with both the

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[11] Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook (1996), though, argues that the modern division between private and public spheres emerged out of the letter genre and became naturalized over the course of the eighteenth century, so the novelty of this opposition is precarious.

formal and the metalinguistic components of Austen's decision to translate the "spirit" of the letter into her free indirect style. This chapter thus begins by surveying the different linguistic forms employed by Austen in her epistolary and third-person work to achieve that style. By reverse engineering the horizon of expectation implicit in these forms and relating it to the functioning of Austen's free indirect style, this approach will help to better understand the migratory potential this pragmatic phenomenon offered Austen at this moment of transition between the epistolary novel and classical realism, and her outlook on those generic traditions.

3.2   First-person free indirect discourse, a controversy

Bray takes a decidedly narratological, rather than formal linguistic, perspective on free indirect discourse and its proposed origins in the epistolary novel. His monograph compares the narratological strata of experiencing and narrating selves through close readings of passages he designates as free indirect thought, but his analysis rarely attends to the continuity (or lack thereof) of linguistic forms recruited to accomplish this fusion of voices.[12] In order to mobilize my own analysis of Austen's style, it is first necessary to engage with Bray's definition of free indirect discourse, a cornerstone of his argument about Austen and epistolarity, and compare it with definitions that have appeared elsewhere in the literature. In particular, I will draw attention to his claims about first-person free indirect discourse, which, like most topics related to this phenomenon, is nowhere near critical consensus.

Like Monika Fludernik, Bray disavows approaches to free indirect discourse that seek a taxonomy of "characteristic features" (22), agreeing with her observation that "only the *content*

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[12] Early in his text (20–21) and in Bray (2007: 39–40), he does review the "canonical" forms of free indirect discourse, which include "co-temporality of narrative past tense with present and future time deictics (now . . . hoped)" and "the presence of lexical items which express a character's emotions, attitudes, judgements, evaluations and beliefs" (Brinton 1980: 367).

and the *context* of a passage allow the construction of SPEAKER and SELF" (Fludernik 1993: 198;

emphasis in original). Bray hence aligns himself with a growing contingent of scholars who

examine the cognitive resources at work when presenting viewpoint in language (Bray 2007;

Dancygier and Sweetser 2012; Fludernik 1996; Vandelanotte 2004, 2009). One of the features

Bray is most interested in dislodging from its canonical position in descriptions of free indirect

discourse is the presence of the third-person subject. Emphasis on the third person dates back to

an earlier effort at distinguishing the language of narrative fundamentally from that of statements

or speech acts. Indeed, Käte Hamburger (1957/1973) claims the first person to be incompatible

with what she terms "epic fiction," a quality shared by many narratives where first-person

subjectivity becomes transferred to third-person narration, as is common in free indirect styles.

First-person narratives like the epistolary novel, she argues, make use of "a genuine statement-

subject" (316), not an epic one, and are therefore incompatible with free indirect discourse. A

similar perspective can be found in Ann Banfield's *Unspeakable Sentences* (1982), whose

position (summarized by Fludernik) is that "Narrative itself [in contrast with actual or fictional

speech acts] . . . has no expressivity at all" (1993: 361)—that is, they are "texts with a deictic

centre but no SELF aligned with it" (360). First-person narratives, which possess clear deictic

reference, do not fall under this definition of narrative language either.

  Fludernik rejects the "empty centre" hypothesis that forms the basis of Banfield's

"unspeakable sentences" for reasons that it circumvents narratological communicational

structure (361), overlooks oral narratives (362), avoids Derrida's theorization of *écriture* (379),

excludes second-person free indirect discourse (380), relies overly on the Modernist canon (381),

and places too much emphasis on the presentation of consciousness, not utterances (381–382).

In search of a pragmatic account of the phenomenon, her own study does salvage parts of

Banfield's: "all that would be required by way of modification of Banfield's principles would be a distinction between the deictic centre of the reporting instance—the communicatory level between narrator and narratee—and the deictic centre of the reported instance" (380; emphasis in original). Deictic anchoring—the indexing of a deictic centre to specific grammatical, temporo-spatial, or social coordinates—therefore becomes a crucial sticking point in Fludernik's assessment, though, like Suzanne Fleischman (1990), she acknowledges the importance of expressive elements, seeing them instead "as signals deployed intentionally to evoke subjectivity rather than a mere surface structure of underlying actual self-consciousness or SELF" (398; emphasis in original). Expressive features therefore function as anchors that relate the deictic centres of reported discourse to the voices of individual characters.[13]

Recently, Lieven Vandelanotte (2004) has similarly foregrounded the importance of considering deixis and grounding in describing the range of categories for speech and thought representation available in, at the least, contemporary English. For direct forms of speech and thought representation, in which the narrator "dramatically yields the floor" to the reported speaker (491), Vandelanotte argues that there must be two deictic centres in operation: one (the narrator's) in the reporting clause, another (the reported speaker's) in the represented clause. In indirect speech and thought representation, however, "the vantage point remains that of the [narrator] throughout, and all deictic categories are normally related to the [narrator]'s deictic centre" (491). The reported speaker's deictic centre still exists (through the presence, especially, of conflicting adverbial deictics—the *was-now* paradox), but the represented clause remains otherwise largely implied in indirect speech and thought. This difference, he describes, is

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[13] Fludernik details the extensive range of pragmatic and syntactic means of expressing subjectivity (227–254), including (as examples) absolute and relative adverbial deixis ("today" versus "three days ago"), quotation marks, sentence modifiers and interjections, prepositioning ("This book you should read"), and many more.

therefore a "deictic shift" occurring in direct discourse from the narrator's deictic centre to the reported speaker's, a shift which does not occur in indirect discourse because of the absence of the latter (491). For free indirect discourse, Vandelanotte argues that the phenomenon does not merely combine the expressivity of one (direct discourse) with the deixis of the other (indirect), as traditional accounts have often explained it (493). Rather, free indirect discourse reveals the presence of two deictic centres, as direct discourse does, however qualified: the second deictic centre is "not fully operational: tense choice and grammatical person are related to the 'actual' [narrator's] deictic centre, and not to this 'surrogate' [reported speaker's] centre" (494)—but the second deictic centre is still present, evident (for example) in the reported clause not giving scope over the narrator's reporting clause.[14]

This current focus on deictic structure as the mediator of discourse representation types, rather than on a theory of specialized narrative language, has opened the door for theorizations of first-person free indirect discourse. Sylvia Adamson (1994) has explored its use in non-fictional autobiography from seventeenth century "proto-novels" (64), for one. Adamson (2001) has hence continued her work historicizing the development of "empathetic deixis" into "empathetic narrative" in English Puritan discourses, but, like Bray, agrees with Dorrit Cohn's observation that this narrative type blossomed in the nineteenth century (84–85). Vandelanotte (2004) posits a fourth representational category, in addition to direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse: what he calls "distancing indirect speech and thought representation," where the first person is also prototypical (501–502). In this mode, there is only one deictic centre, akin to indirect

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[14] Vandelanotte cites evidence from Brinton (1995) that "grammatical person is inevitably determined from the vantage point of the [reporter], but the very use of a non-anaphoric reflexive . . . hints at the high degree of 'involvement' on the part of the [reported speaker]" (Vandelanotte 494). For instance, from Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*: "Wild and frail and beautiful she looked, and thus the women of the Greeks were, Jacob thought; and this was life; and *himself* a man and Florinda chaste" (Brinton 189; emphasis added by Bray).

discourse, except here the reporter and reportee can be considered one and the same entity. The

purpose of the reporting clause, then, is "to indicate the fact that the [reporter] puts his or her

own proposition up for debate by indicating explicitly that he or she does not ultimately take the

responsibility for the claim contained in the initiating clause or, in the case of first person DIST,

that he or she at least nuances it as a personal opinion" (496).

Bray himself presents as evidence of the first person a number of examples from novels

across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though he sometimes appears to confuse first-

person free indirect discourse with the historical present.[15] In his study, Bray accepts Cohn's

assertion that "free indirect thought in first-person narratives involves the expression of 'the

experiencing self'" (Bray 2003: 26), a dualism which results in a kind of "empathy with the past

self." Bray further articulates the relationship between past and present selves conjured by first-

person free indirect discourse as a distinct phenomenon from that of the third-person variety: "In

first-person narrative the narrating self can thus never completely hand over the narrative to the

past, experiencing self. The two must remain yoked, however strong the tensions trying to pull

them apart" (27).[16] Bray therefore finds common ground with Vandelanotte's belief that the

function of distancing representations is to divide a reporter's mind between two states, hinting

that the approaches may be closely related. My next section will consider this possibility, but

focus on evaluating whether first-person free indirect discourse appears in Austen's only major

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[15] Such as his example from Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*: "Looking back, as I was saying, into the blank of my infancy, the first objects I *can* remember as standing out by themselves from a confusion of things, *are* my mother and Peggorty. What else *do* I remember? *Let* me see" (qtd. in Bray 25; emphasis added by me). Bray considers the front-shifting of tense from past to present in this first-person narrative, in italics, as indicative of free indirect discourse, but this foregrounding function is more typical of the historical present (Brinton 1992).
[16] In distinguishing the potentialities of first- and third-person free indirect discourse, Bray cites the influence of Franz Stanzel's (1979/1984) discussion of the distinction, based in embodiment, between first and third persons.

epistolary work, as Bray suggests it shouldn't (since her fictional letters lack that complexity), and whether it takes the form (or performs the function) of any of the above descriptions.

3.3   Lady Susan *and I*

Much has been made of Austen's decision to abandon the epistolary mode soon after the completion of *Lady Susan*. Nothing has incited critics more, in fact, than the conclusion of the novella itself, where Austen discards the framework of first-person letters that had supported the narrative until then in exchange for an ostensibly omniscient third-person narrator. A number of scholars have claimed this development represents a turning-point in Austen's writing, where she outwardly deserts the epistolary form and its conventions (Epstein 1985; Lascelles 1939; Southam 1964). On the other hand, Nicola Watson (1994) claims that, at the outset of the nineteenth century, the unsecure letter form became replaced by "more socially responsible, constitutive, and regulatory discourses" (17). This movement, she later argues, is enacted by Austen's choice to close the book with an authoritarian third-person narrator who enforces this regulatory interpretation (83): the exchange between the Vernons and Frederica, Lady Susan's daughter (and frequent object of scorn), end because Mrs. Vernon "perceive[s] by the style of Frederica's letters, that they were written under her mother's inspection" (Austen 101). Watson perhaps underestimates the ironic tone of this coda—with the "lucky alarm of influenza" suddenly awakening "Lady Susan's maternal fears" (102), the order this narrator establishes proves to be deeply anticlimactic—yet Bray (2003) takes issue with another dimension of this interpretation. Namely, he disagrees with its implicit acceptance of the third-person free indirect narrator as an authoritarian figure, a configuration which would align with Mezei's (1996) argument that Austen's free indirect style reveals a site of struggle, conveys a discontinuity of

voices—an argument that opposes his belief that it instead carries on the epistolary novel's spirit

of psychological reflexivity. However, since none of these researchers addresses the topic in

Lady Susan itself, I will now fill in the knowledge gap.

In the book's conclusion, there appear glimpses of third-person free indirect discourse in

the narrator's focalization of Lady Susan. Here are the sentences:

> (1) and in all her [Lady Susan] conversation she was solicitous only for the welfare
> and improvement of her daughter, acknowledging in terms of grateful delight that
> Frederica *was now* growing *every day* more and more what a parent could desire.

> (2) The first hope of anything better was derived from Lady Susan's asking her [Mrs.
> Vernon] whether she thought Frederica looked quite as well as she had done at
> Churchill, as she must confess *herself* to have sometimes an anxious doubt of
> London's *perfectly* agreeing with her. (Austen 102; emphasis added)

The first sentence mixes the voices of the narrator and Lady Susan with a few identifiable

linguistic features: the collocation of the past-tense verb "was" with the present-time adverbial

"now" reveals the presence of two distinct deictic centres; contributing to this effect is the

relative deixis of the adverbial expression "every day," denoting a period of time relative to Lady

Susan's deictic centre and not the narrator's, although such a locution is more common

connected to standard accounts of indirect discourse (Fludernik 1993: 228). The second sentence

makes use of expressive features to convey the mixing of voices, namely through the emphatic

reflexive "herself" (although emphatic reflexives can be used equally in indirect discourse, as

well [Fludernik 128]) and the adverb "perfectly" which indexes Lady Susan's subjective

evaluation. What is important to observe in these two examples is that they reflect what Bray

and other critics have said about the *letters* of *Lady Susan*, or about the materiality of letter-

writing in this period more broadly (Favret 1993). Patricia Spacks (1989) remarks on their superficiality: "Lady Susan speaks and writes always of feeling but seldom claims the emotion she really experiences" (64). And Bray, I reiterate, argues that the "internal struggles and debates of earlier epistolary novels are absent in *Lady Susan*, as the letter appears exaggerated and dishonest" (122). In these segments of free indirect style, however, we see little more than the artifice of Lady Susan, little else than what her letters already convey.

With just these two examples at hand, I would be reluctant to dismiss Bray's claims. The great ironist, perhaps Austen is slyly gesturing toward her belief that Lady Susan, exemplary of the epistolary form at large, is no more than a flat surface. Even her more candid letters to confidante Mrs. Johnson reveal only the attention she focuses on designing schemes, after all. There remain two instances of free indirect style earlier in the text, both from Mrs. Vernon:

> (3) She [Lady Susan] thanked me however most affectionately for *my kind concern* in the welfare of *herself* and her daughter. (72; emphasis added)

> (4) Sir James invited himself with great composure to remain here a few days; *hoped we would not think it odd*, *was aware of its being very impertinent*, but he took the liberty of relation. (73; emphasis added)

In this third sentence, Lady Susan is again focalized in what is a clear example of first-person free indirect style: the personal pronoun "my" collocates with the reflexive pronoun "herself" rather than the expected anaphoric pronoun "her," revealing the presence of two deictic centres; additionally, the phrase "kind concern" can be construed as Mrs. Vernon giving voice to Lady Susan's emotive language. The fourth example combines the first-person, past-tense deixis of the narrator ("we would") with the expressivity of incomplete clauses (the predicates beginning with "hoped" and "was" lack overt subjects), which function in imitation of oral language

(Fludernik 236). What these passages tell us is that Bray remains correct in his assessment that

the first-person free indirect mode occurs in epistolary narratives, but where he is wrong is in

claiming that it serves the function of exploring a letter-writer's interior depth. Elsewhere this

may be the case, but in both instances cited above, the writers are focalizing another person's

voice, not their own past selves; these passages do not represent moments of distancing indirect

discourse either, then, for they also portray two distinct deictic centres each.

Austen's first-person free indirect style therefore performs a different function here. Like

the letters themselves, which centre on reporting the whereabouts and machinations of Lady

Susan, both of these passages (as well as the third-person ones) offer a similar kind of report,

always to a third party. It would appear that, among all the critics cited above, Deidre Lynch's

assessment of Austen's style is most pertinent. In *Lady Susan*, we see Austen's nascent interest

in employing free indirect style as a means of consulting the public on their opinion of this

heroine's character. A question remains, then: if Austen was able to explore the relationship of

the individual and the crowd within the conventions of the epistolary genre, deploying both

letters and free indirect style to this effect, what changes were introduced when translating this

focus into third-person realism? and what paratexual developments occurred in the three

intervening years between *Lady Susan*'s completion and the revision of *Sense and Sensibility* to

encourage this shift? My next two sections will attempt to deal with these questions.

3.4   Sense and Sensibility *and genre*

The notion that Austen eradicated any memory of the novel-in-letters in her shift to third-person

realism is a familiar one. As glimpsed above, the words "abandonment," "replacement," or

"rejection" are commonplace; Watson (1994), for one, claims that *Sense and Sensibility* attempts

"the total suppression of the epistolary" (90). However, influenced by Anne Freadman's (2002) discussion of genre uptake, I feel compelled to "show where the seam is" in the seemingly seamless narratives which shape our knowledge of these generic boundaries (90). In Chapter 1, I reviewed the narratives that have circulated about epistolarity and how they have become instrumental in founding a "rise" of the British novel which elevated some novelists, like Walter Scott, to the height of the literary canon, while obscuring others. In Chapter 2, I suggested ways in which stylistic analysis, as guided by Bakhtin, could intervene in these narratives and denaturalize the seamlessness with which scholars like Ian Watt have rendered the history of the novel. With my analysis of free indirect style in *Lady Susan* complete, I am now at a stage where I can examine, at the level of form, how Austen has mediated the boundary between her epistolary and realist work, and how she has responded to conditions of epistolarity and translated them into her first major novel.

First, I take a moment to reflect on my methodology. Because my definition of free indirect discourse, as explained in the previous chapter, is a functional one, I am united with Fludernik and Bray in their belief that the phenomenon depends on "content and context"— identifying passages of free indirect discourse requires interpretation. Accordingly, I have sought each of the examples below (see Table 1) by eye, without the aid of a tagged corpus. No doubt, I am missing a great deal. However, because my goal here is a stylistic profile and not a taxonomy of forms, I make no claims of it being a complete or exhaustive account. My interest instead lies in whether different linguistic forms are made salient here in comparison to those recruited in *Lady Susan*, and whether the relationship between narrator and focalizer speaks to the dynamic argued for by Bray (the exploration of interiority) or Lynch (the individual indexing the opinion of the crowd).

Table 1: Free Indirect Discourse in *Sense and Sensibility*

Focalizer	Sentence[17]	Linguistic Features
John Dashwood	'Yes, **he would** give them three thousand pounds: it would be liberal and handsome!' (5)	F: direct quotation N: past-tense, third-person deixis
John Dashwood	It was very well known that no affection was ever supposed to exist between the children of any man by different marriages; and *why* **was he** *to ruin* himself, and their *poor little Harry*, by giving away all his money to his half sisters? (7)	F: emotive language (*ruin*, *poor little*); non-subordinated question (Fludernik 149) N: past-tense, third-person deixis
John Middleton	It was enough to secure his good opinion; *for to be unaffected* **was** *all that a pretty girl could want to make her mind as captivating as her person*. (26)	F: clause-initial coordination (Fludernik 241); gnomic expression N: past-tense, third-person deixis
John Willoughby	and her face was so lovely, that *when in the common cant of praise she* **was** *called beautiful, truth* **was** *less violently outraged than usually happens*. (36)	F: gnomic, evaluative language N: past-tense deixis
Elinor Dashwood	Elinor thought this generosity overstrained, consider her sister's youth, and urged the matter forward, but in vain; *common sense, common care, common prudence,* **were** all sunk in Mrs. Dashwood's *romantic delicacy*. (64)	F: complement-preposing (Fludernik 250); evaluative language (*romantic delicacy*) N: past-tense deixis
Mrs. Dashwood	*Indeed a man* **could** not very well be in love with either of **her** daughters, without extending the passion to **her**. (68)	F: clause-initial adjunct (Fludernik 238); indefinite generic (*a man*) substituted endophorically (138) N: past-tense, third-person deixis
Marianne Dashwood	*That* **her** *sister's affections* <u>**were**</u> *calm*, she dared not deny, though she blushed to acknowledge it. (79)	F: that-topicalization (Fludernik 253); emphasis by italics N: past-tense, third-person deixis
Elinor Dashwood	If in the supposition of his seeking to marry *herself*, his difficulties from his mother **had seemed** great, how much greater **were** they *now* likely to be, when the object of his engagement **was** *undoubtedly* inferior in connections, and probably inferior in fortune to *herself*. (104)	F: reflexive pronoun in place of expected anaphoric pronoun; evaluative adverb (*undoubtedly*); was-now paradox N: past-tense, third-person deixis
Elinor Dashwood	These difficulties, *indeed*, with an heart so alienated from Lucy, might not press very hard upon his patience; *but* melancholy **was** the state of the person, by whom the expectation of family opposition and unkindness, **could** be felt as a relief*!* (104)	F: argumentative adverbial (Fludernik 243); clause-initial coordination; gnomic expression; exclamation mark N: past-tense deixis

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[17] All emphasis mine, unless underlined; bold conveys features of the narrator's deictic centre; italics the focalizer's.

Focalizer	Sentence	Linguistic Features
Elinor Dashwood	but that he had not even the chance of being *tolerably* happy in marriage, which *sincere* affection on <u>*her*</u> side would have given, *for self-interest alone* **could** *induce a woman to keep a man to an engagement*, of which she seemed so *thoroughly* aware that he was weary. (113)	F: evaluative and emotive language (*tolerably*, *sincere*, *thoroughly*); gnomic expression; emphasis by italics N: past-tense, third-person deixis
Marianne Dashwood	But 'no, **she would** go down; **she could** bear it very well, and the bustle about **her would** be less.' (143–144)	F: direct quotation N: past-tense, third-person deixis
John Middleton	'A man of whom **he had** always **had** such reason to think well! Such a good-natured fellow! **He did** not believe there was a bolder rider in England!' (160–161)	F: direct quotation N: past-tense, pluperfect-aspect, third-person deixis
Mrs. Palmer	'**She was** determined to drop his acquaintance immediately, and **she was** very thankful that she had never been acquainted with him at all.' (161)	F: direct quotation N: past-tense, third-person deixis
Lady Middleton	*Because* they neither flattered *her*self nor **her** children, **she could** not believe them good-natured; and *because* they were fond of reading, **she fancied** them satirical: perhaps without exactly knowing what it **was** to be satirical; but <u>*that*</u> **did** not signify. *It* **was** *censure in common use, and easily given.* (184)	F: clause-initial subordinating conjunction (Fludernik 241); repetition of sentence constituents (Fludernik 236); emphasis by italics; gnomic expression N: past-tense, third-person deixis
Anne Steele	she [Marianne] was almost sure of being told that upon '**her** word she **looked** vastly smart, and **she dared** to say would make a great many conquests.' (187)	F: direct quotation N: past-tense, third-person deixis
Elinor Dashwood	The Colonel too*!*—*perhaps scarcely less an object of pity!*—Oh!—*how slow* **was** the progress of time which yet **kept them** in ignorance*!* (238)	F: exclamation marks; incomplete sentences; clause-initial adjunct; complement preposing (*how slow*) N: past-tense, third-person deixis
Elinor Dashwood	The attachment, from which *against* honour, *against* feeling, *against* every better interest he **had** outwardly **torn** himself, *now*, when no longer allowable, **governed** every thought; and the connection, for the sake of which he **had**, *with little scruple*, **left her** sister to *misery*, **was** *likely* to prove a source of unhappiness to himself of a far more *incurable* nature. (251)	F: repetition of sentence constituents; was-now paradox; evaluative and emotive language (*little scruple*, *misery*, *incurable*); argumentative adverbial (*likely*) N: past-tense, pluperfect-aspect, third-person deixis
Elinor Dashwood	*This* **was** gaining *something*, *something* to look forward to. Colonel Brandon <u>*must*</u> have some information to give. (271)	F: endophoric reference (*This*); repetition of sentence-constituents; emphasis by italics N: past-tense deixis

Besides these eighteen examples of free indirect discourse, there are also a great many instances

of indirect discourse, psychonarration, and represented perception (Brinton 1980) that contribute

to the tapestry of Austen's reporting practices, as well as numerous uses of direct speech, a few

appearances of direct thought, and a handful of letters.[18]

These eighteen passages reveal that free indirect style in *Sense and Sensibility* rarely

functions to elaborate the feelings of letter-readers, as Bray insists happens, since most of the

examples above do not occur in close proximity to letters or select them as a topic. Neither is

personal reflection, or empathy with the past self, the motivating function here: indeed, the most

self-reflexive examples are those of John Dashwood and Lady Middleton, whose concern is for

their own well-being and coated with satire. While many of Elinor's feelings *are* explored, her

point of view is always directed outward toward her mother, her sister, Colonel Brandon, or

Edward. This pattern has been noticed by other commentators on point of view in *Sense and

Sensibility*, who likewise reference this tension in Elinor between interiority and exteriority:

Favret (1993) observes that Elinor is misled into assuming her sister is engaged because she sees

but cannot access the content of a letter of her sister's; without access to Marianne's mind, only

to the exterior of her letter, Favret stresses that "the letter alone speaks" (147). Eve Kosofsky

Sedgwick (1993), drawing on the language of sexual retention, makes a similar observation:

"Elinor's pupils, those less tractable sphincters of the soul, won't close against the hapless

hemorrhaging of her visual attention flow toward Marianne; it is this, indeed, that renders her

consciousness, in turn, habitable, inviting, and formative to readers as 'point of view'" (124).

Through her varied reporting practices, Austen gives us access to Elinor's opinion on everything

except her own emotions: "But Elinor—How are *her* feelings to be described?" (Austen 275).

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[18] Indirect discourse and psychonarration appear to be the most prevalent means of report employed by Austen.

Moreover, the linguistic forms recruited to these eighteen passages speak to Austen's interest in indexing public opinion, as argued by Lynch. Where in *Lady Susan* the public's consumption of the title character takes place in the foreground of the text, *Sense and Sensibility*'s more retentive heroine draws our attention to the background. Let me focus your attention on a few examples:

> (3) It was enough to secure his good opinion; for to be unaffected was all that a pretty girl could want to make her mind as captivating as her person. (26)

> (4) and her face was so lovely, that when in the common cant of praise she was called beautiful, truth was less violently outraged than usually happens. (36)

> (5) but melancholy was the state of the person, by whom the expectation of family opposition and unkindness, could be felt as a relief! (104)

What the above all have in common is that each uses free indirect style to focalize an individual's recitation of a gnomic expression or "general truth": about pretty girls, about truth and beauty, about melancholy. In other words, each example references the clichés or ready-made language of the public, a central feature of quotation practices of the time (Lynch 1998: 223). Crucial here is the tense in which these expressions are presented: because they are focalized through free indirect style and possess the characteristic back-shifted tense of the narrator's deictic centre, they do not occur in the expected habitual aspect associated with the simple present tense.[19] Fludernik (1993) claims that such usage is usually a key exception:

> Exempted from the tense shift in its traditional version are clauses of 'current relevance' for the context of the reporting, either because the reported discourse is

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[19] Indeed, contemporary English commonly has two habitual aspectual forms in the past (Comrie 1976: 98–99), both using auxiliary constructions *used to* or *would*: "I used to know that," "Last month we would smile every day."

one about generally valid propositions in the gnomic present tense . . . or because

the state of affairs referred to is still valid or lies in the anticipated future. (179)

Austen's usage is exceptional.[20] Similar expressions found in *Lady Susan*, however, occur with

the expected tense-aspect of the habitual present and outside the margins of free indirect style:

> (6) Where pride and stupidity unite, there *can* be no dissimulation worthy notice (47)
>
> (7) when a man has once got his name in a banking house he *rolls* in money (49)
>
> (8) that woman *is* fool indeed who while insulted by accusation, *can* be worked on
>
> by compliments (76; emphasis added).

Comparing these variations, I argue, begins to reveal where Austen's mediation of the generic

boundary between the novel-in-letters and third-person realism is enacted. More than a mere

translation of a first-person narrative into the third person, or the wholesale migration of

psychological tensions to a new medium, these subtle differences demonstrate the permeability

of that boundary and the gradual adjustment taking place in Austen's style to mediate it.

It is not to say that the expected habitual present forms disappear from her work, though.

We find them still in *Sense and Sensibility*, often from the narrator alone: "a fond mother,

though, in pursuit of praise for her children, the most rapacious of human beings, is likewise the

most credulous; her demands are exorbitant; but she will swallow any thing" (91); "Every

qualification is raised at times, by the circumstances of the moment, to more than its real value"

(161). And we need to look no further than the famous opening of Austen's next novel to see

that these anonymous truisms remain central to her work.[21] Thus, within the explosion of forms

recruited to portray free indirect style in the transition (and translation) of *Sense and Sensibility*

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[20] Keeping in mind Bakhtin's caution against the original utterance, I mean *exceptional* at its most literal: that this instance is an exception to the linguistic trends I have cited.

[21] And that, you can trust, is a truth universally acknowledged.

from epistolary to realist narrative, we discover one of Austen's motivating concerns: her desire to triangulate the voices of her characters with the murmurs of the crowd.

3.5   Universally acknowledged

When Austen took up the epistolary novel, she had already moved beyond, and parodied, the strategies of interiority Bray argues were central to the genre. In *Sense and Sensibility*, we see her replace that interest in the inner lives of characters with an index of their relationship to an invading public, a strategy already nascent in *Lady Susan*. Here, I attempt to characterize the tone through which Austen renders this relationship, focusing on the gnomic expressions which I believe exemplify it best. Occurring in nearly a third of the free indirect passages, these five expressions can be distinguished not only by their unique linguistic form, but by an absence of the concision normally expected of adages such as these. The sentence "melancholy was the state of the person, by whom the expectation of family opposition and unkindness, could be felt as a relief!" is hardly a pithy one—in fact, its syntax makes it quite the mouthful. Another expression, moreover, appears rather particular to the situation of the character who thinks or speaks them; Elinor's lament over Edward's engagement, I regret to say, is not likely to catch on: "self-interest alone could induce a woman to keep a man to an engagement, of which she seemed so thoroughly aware that he was weary." A third example also fails to capture the exaggeration common to the type of aphorism on which it is modeled: "when in the common cant of praise she was called beautiful, truth was less violently outraged than usually happens." It would appear, then, that Austen Style is once again tempting its reader with a lingering identification with the social realm it eschews. These expressions, like their narrator, are no more than simulacra: they share a superficial likeness with the entities they emulate, but lack their content.

There is perhaps one exception, however—the earliest of these examples: "to be unaffected was all that a pretty girl could want to make her mind as captivating as her person." This expression likely matches the reader's expectations for concision, tone, and generality. Like the famed opening of *Pride and Prejudice*, this sentence as well finds itself organized (or "overorganized") into neat binary columns: unaffected/captivating, pretty/want, mind/person. It could very well be imagined as a truth universally acknowledged by Mrs. Bennett herself. The centrality of its subject matter to Austen's novels does not go without notice, either. Whereas Austen Style continually makes a mockery of the marriage market and its didacticism—Mrs. Bennett's universal ideas do not even hold in the fictional town of Meryton—we see here, through the comparative legibility of this free indirect adage, Austen's interest in extending her parody to the tokenism inherent in the mass production of both "pretty girls" and "universal truths." The index of the crowd, in other words, is equally the subject of her irony as interiority was.

3.6   Some conclusions

By yoking the private thoughts of her characters with the ready-made expressions of the crowd, Austen, through her handling of free indirect style, can thus be understood as responding to demands on the marketability of her own writing. It is not the case, I conclude, that she abandons the epistolary genre because its conventions cannot support this direction of her art. As I have shown, the configuration of public opinion in relation to private thought is already present in *Lady Susan*—largely through letter-writing, but also in the appearance of "general truths" and even first- and third-person free indirect style. Rather, Austen's shift to third-person realism, and the exponential increase in volume of free indirect discourse and the variety of

forms recruited to it, reveal her implicit negotiation of these standards and *their* rejection of the

letter as a medium, not her own. The letter was, for Austen, a means of exploring, and

parodying, the relationship between individual and crowd, and indeed that spirit lives on.

CONCLUSION

I have argued here for an approach to style that engages with the social history of linguistic forms, and I have investigated the compatibility of genres to serve as the possible site of inquiry. I owe a debt of gratitude to Jane Austen for enabling me to experiment with this approach on her works. In my first chapter, drawing on genre theory as a critical framework, particularly its emphasis on genre as social action, I attempted to outline the exigence that the epistolary novel has traditionally been interpreted as allaying, as well as more recent re-presentations of the genre, all in an effort to historically situate Austen's place in relation to its audience and conventions; I stressed how the letter's supposed versatility across the public and private spheres was a product of its changing reception, not an inherent virtue of its form. As a way of linking this historicization of genre to Austen's free indirect style, my second chapter addressed the importance of consulting the implicit and explicit standards which organize language-users' expectations for form. In my last chapter, I reasoned that a mediation of genre would consequently prompt a corresponding mediation of form; I tested this theorization in a stylistic comparison of *Lady Susan* and *Sense and Sensibility*, and found that the transition from first-person epistolary to third-person realist narratives was not a radical departure for Austen's use of free indirect style, but it did reveal an important difference in the recruitment of the simple past tense to convey habitual aspect and index general truths. The free indirect passages expressing these truths, I concluded, indicated Austen's ironized attention to the increasingly public consumption of character and quotation, two foci of a greater movement toward the establishment of a national British unity.

At the outset of this paper, I indicated that this analysis would also suggest ways in which generic-stylistic analysis could collaborate with the social network theory of language change, as

explained by Milroy, and help to resolve the actuation question. Future research can henceforth

employ the results of my stylistic comparison of Austen's novels, in particular its discovery of

the exceptional form used by Austen to convey habitual aspect, to trace within a network of

writers whether she is indeed the "innovator" of this narrowly defined form or whether her

adoption of it, ironic in usage, aligns her work ideologically with another faction. If this research

proves fruitful, it could demonstrate the need for a new alliance between historical linguistics

and genre theory, and a revived impulse to consider language as a social phenomenon,

unceasingly inflected by style.

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