PRIDE AND PREJUDICE & THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE -
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PICTURESQUE TO THE NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

The pastoral landscape - Jane Austen's choice of setting in her novel *Pride and Prejudice* - serves to define characterization and examine social perceptions in late 18th/early 19th Century England. In order to explain Austen’s use of setting to achieve her goals, this thesis first examines the influence of Austen’s upbringing on her writing; in particular, the influence of her family and friends upon her characters, and the impact of her relationships on the development of the characters in her novels. Next, the beginnings of the Picturesque Movement, and its founder, William Gilpin, will be discussed to demonstrate that the social changes in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries in England allowed the lower gentry and affluent tradesmen to explore the English countryside. Austen’s exploration and admiration for Gilpin’s teachings encouraged her to incorporate the same principals into her fictional works. Specifically, Austen integrated her love for the pastoral into the characteristics of her heroines. Of all of her heroines, Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice*, is the character Austen most closely identifies with, and she shares the same love for the English landscape as Austen. Austen’s metaphorical use of pastoral scenes to describe a subject’s character and identity will be examined. Then Austen’s use of the pastoral to restore feelings of tranquility, peace, and freedom in her heroine, Elizabeth, will be discussed. In
addition to her use of the pastoral as a method to develop characterization, Austen also uses it to demonstrate a change in the social perception of her characters. Finally, this thesis will conclude with an examination of the significant role that the selection of landscape plays in an adaptation of the novel into film. Two screen adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* will be examined to illustrate the identity, character development, and the changes in social perception that Austen artistically provides in the details of her writing.
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Jennifer Michele Vuong
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DEDICATION

To all of my family and friends:
Thank you for the encouragement, humor, and
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Jane Austin is one of the great writers of English literature. Although she wrote only six complete novels, they have been reprinted in countless editions, translated into twenty-nine different languages, and adapted into films and plays worldwide. One of the most widely analyzed and adapted of her novels is *Pride and Prejudice*. At first glance, it is difficult to understand why a novel about a family with five unmarried daughters and their mother’s attempts to marry them to eligible and prosperous gentleman would garner widespread acclaim. However, it is not the plot that captivates the reader’s attention; rather, it is the complex issues Austen disguises behind her witty writing about prospective gentleman suitors, balls, shopping, and other feminine pursuits that resonate with her reader. Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* addresses the lack of opportunities for women (other than pursuing an advantageous marriage), the lack of educational opportunities for women separate from learning activities involving the arts, and the general lack of social mobility for both men and women during the Regency period. Without the emphasis Austen places on the pastoral, these themes would not resonate as clearly as they do with her audience. Austen’s style of writing has set her apart from other authors because she judiciously uses her knowledge and appreciation of the English landscape to assist in the development of her stories.

First, in order to understand why Austen uses the pastoral in her writing, I shall discuss in Chapter II the development of Austen’s love and appreciation for the English landscape as a byproduct of her upbringing. From a young age, Austen was surrounded
by a caring family who provided her the encouragement and support that made it possible for her to develop her writing. Her family’s daily responsibilities with managing a farm in the English countryside, her father’s position as a local clergyman, and her family’s connections to the gentry allowed Austen to observe the interactions between the varieties of classes in her social sphere. She then used her observations to craft characters and actions that are influenced by the people she met, the events in which she participated, and the experiences that defined her as a writer and human being.

As I shall show in Chapter III, in addition to using her own life experiences from which to draw for her writing, Austen also made great efforts to study and learn as much as possible about the English countryside in order to use the pastoral as a literary tool to emphasize the themes of her stories. During Austen’s youth, a new movement called the Picturesque was gaining popularity. The Picturesque, founded by William Gilpin, is an idea in which the concepts applied to observing paintings is used to view the English landscape. As the English countryside became more accessible, and the lower gentry and affluent tradesmen were able to afford tours to other areas of England, Gilpin’s teachings provided study guides to those people who wished to learn more about their natural surroundings. Austen was one of the many people who followed the works of Gilpin. She was so enthralled with the pastoral that she read not only Gilpin’s works, but other authors who invested their time in studying the English landscape. Further, Austen is just one of many literary artists of her time who used the pastoral as a tool to describe the emotions of a character or the ambiance of a place for the purpose of illustrating the themes of their novels. For Austen, Gilpin’s works encouraged her to incorporate the
English landscape as a way to express the identities and develop characterization among the heroines in her novels, particularly Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* who was her favorite. As such, Austen took great care to analyze and understand the various areas of England that she mentions in her novels. She meticulously focused on places to which she had traveled and seen firsthand. When this was not possible, she ensured that she read extensively about the areas she wrote about or learned from people who could provide firsthand accounts on the topography and culture of the area.

In Chapter IV, I shall examine specific examples of how Austen metaphorically uses the pastoral to describe a subject’s character and identity for the purpose of illustrating the lack of opportunities (aside from marriage) for women in the late 18\(^{th}\)/early 19\(^{th}\) Centuries. In particular, Austen’s heroine, Elizabeth, will be compared to other members of her family, including her mother and younger sisters, Lydia and Kitty. With Elizabeth, Austen uses the pastoral and her heroine’s response to it as a way to demonstrate the positive condition of her character. At the same time, Austen also uses a negative response to the pastoral as a way to demonstrate the ill nature of her other characters. Further, Austen uses Elizabeth’s love and appreciation of the English landscape to illustrate values that are important to her heroine. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth’s love for walking in the parks and groves is a way for Austen to show that her heroine values her independence and wish for freedom - one of the major themes of her most important work.

In Chapter V, I shall explore Austen’s ability to use the pastoral to illustrate the restoration of feelings of tranquility, peace, and freedom in her heroine, Elizabeth.
Nature is often a place where people seek refuge and solace when they are feeling conflicted, and Austen’s description of the pastoral demonstrates that Elizabeth’s admiration of the English landscape, made clear in her daily walks, provides her a space to sort through her emotions and contemplate the issues which conflict her. During her many solitary hours walking outside her home of Longbourn, visiting Jane at Netherfield, and wandering around the parks between Hunsford and Rosings, Elizabeth is afforded the opportunity to ponder the events that have occurred and to reconsider previously held prejudices.

In Chapter VI, I shall explore Austen’s continued use of the pastoral to show character development and, further, demonstrate a change in the social perception of her heroine. In this chapter, Elizabeth’s opinions will change regarding two characters and their situation in life based on events that transpire. The first change in social perception pertains to Charlotte and her feelings regarding Charlotte’s marriage to Mr. Collins, whom Elizabeth thinks is ridiculous. The second social change is towards Mr. Darcy. The change, in Elizabeth’s opinion, is aided by information she gains from Mr. Darcy, Colonel Fitzwilliam, and Mrs. Reynolds, a long time servant of the Darcy family. Austen once again relies on the pastoral setting (in which Elizabeth receives the information) to emphasize these changes in perception.

Finally, in Chapter VII, I shall explore two film adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and the important role that the selection of landscape plays in adapting the novel into a visual medium. The two film productions that I shall use for comparison are the 1995 six part television mini-series adapted by Andrew Davies, starring Jennifer Ehle
and Colin Firth, and the 2005 motion picture, starring Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen. I shall discuss the director’s selection and use of landscape to illustrate what has been discussed in this thesis - how character, identity, and social perception are shaped and illustrated by the pastoral. I will choose specific scenes from both the television mini-series and film to illustrate the influence of the pastoral on a person’s character, her values, and the change in her social perception of other people.
CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF AUSTEN’S LIFE ON HER WRITING

Jane Austen’s writing, like that of her contemporaries, was influenced by personal experience. While in today’s culture, there are many modes in which people can travel from one place to another using cars, trains, boats, and planes, in Austen’s era, the mode of transportation was limited to walking, and if a family was fortunate, they would have access to horses and a carriage. In Austen’s time period, there were also no phones available and the only means of communication were limited to letters. As a result of the limited modes of transportation and communication available, the world that Austen lived in contained a much more confined social sphere that was generally limited to members of her family and friends and neighbors who lived in her village. However, the activities of every day English life provided her ample material to weave into witty and charming stories. What she did not learn firsthand, Austen researched about extensively before including in her novels. In a letter to her niece, Austen counseled Anna, who was also an aspiring novelist, not to write about areas that were unfamiliar to her. She writes, “Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the Manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations. Stick to Bath and the Foresters. There you will be quite at home.”¹ Austen’s advice, which she followed in her own writing, was sound because it ensured she did not erroneously write about things that she did not have knowledge of or experience herself, and thus, misrepresenting her subjects. In this chapter, I will examine the influence of Austen’s

upbringing on her writing, how her family and friends shaped her characters, and the impact of her relationships on the development of the characters in her novels.

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, in Steventon, England. She was the second youngest in a family of eight children, who were born to Reverend George Austen and his wife, Cassandra Leigh. Her father was the rector of Steventon Village, which was located in Hampshire. The Steventon rectory, situated just outside of the village, was arable farm land. Austen’s parents maintained their farm as well as their own dairy, brewhouse, and poultry yard. Each member of the Austen family took great interest and care of their property. They determined and evaluated the state of their crops and understood the market price for their cattle. In this way, the family wanted and enjoyed being involved with the farming community. However, they also enjoyed the simple pleasures and entertainment that could only be found on a farm, such as ploughing matches.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Jane, like the rest of her family, enjoyed the outdoors and spent as much time as possible in the open air. Even without a chore or a particular aspect of the farming business to learn, Jane enjoyed physical exercise and was known to be an avid walker. Whether by herself or with a companion, she could spend hours on end outdoors, just enjoying the view and the freedom. As a result, it is easy for

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3 Batey, *Jane Austen*, 16.

4 Ibid., 16-17.
readers to see why Jane would later incorporate the English countryside as a feature beloved by all the heroines in her novels.

They were described as a “…lively, devoted and literary family who delighted in each other’s company.”\textsuperscript{5} A biography on Jane Austen’s family, the \textit{Memoir}, written by a nephew of Austen describes a home life replete with “…the flow of native wit, with all the fun and nonsense of a large and clever family.”\textsuperscript{6}

Austen’s nephew’s comments remind the reader of Austen’s description of Elizabeth and her enjoyment for laughter. During an evening at Netherfield, while Elizabeth is staying there to care for her sister, she and Mr. Darcy enter a discussion as to what are appropriate subjects in which to find humor. Elizabeth intends only to tease Mr. Darcy following his comments about the purposes for which Miss Bingley and Miss Bennet stroll around the room. However, Miss Bingley informs Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy is not a person to whom they can laugh at, which disappoints Elizabeth as she loves to laugh. Mr. Darcy declares, “The wisest and the best of men, nay, the wisest and best of their actions, may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke.”\textsuperscript{7} However, Elizabeth declares that it is not her intent. She responds, “I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own and I laugh at them whenever I can.”\textsuperscript{8} Clearly, Austen’s description for

\begin{itemize}
\item[5] Ibid., 11.
\item[6] Ibid.
\item[8] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Elizabeth was mirrored after her own family, who appeared to be a family full of "Elizabths." Austen’s nephew demonstrated that they enjoyed a good laugh, recognized their follies, and were able to find humor in the smallest things. However, they were also a family blessed with both intelligence and wit.

**Similarity between Austen’s Family and her Characters**

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the Bennet family members’ interpersonal relationships are similar to those of Austen’s own in a variety of ways. First, the Bennet family, like Austen’s, was part of a social class that, while educated and well-connected, was not wealthy. However, they had enough relations that were either part of the landed gentry, served in the military, or were in respected professions that allowed them membership in the upper class. This membership forded them opportunities to associate outside of their sphere. For example, two of Austen’s brothers were in the Navy, one of whom rose to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet. During Austen’s formative years, the French Revolution erupted; later, Britain was at war with France. As a result, Austen heard many stories from her brothers about the military life. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen writes about the militia and the younger Bennet daughters’ obsession with visiting them in Meryton whenever they had free time. While *Pride and Prejudice* does not specifically mention any of the wars that occurred during her lifetime, Austen’s subtle inclusion of the whereabouts of the militia and which village they occupied was a reference to the tumultuous time in which she lived and set her novel. It also illustrates war’s impact on Austen’s own family.

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9 Ibid., ix.
Another of Austen’s brothers, Edward, was adopted as a young child by wealthy relatives related to Reverend Austen. The Knights were childless and eventually Edward inherited their estates which included Godmersham in Kent and Chawton and Steventon in Hampshire. Edward’s adoption provided him with opportunities that Jane did not experience, such as a grand tour of the Lake District. However, Austen uses Edward’s shared experiences, incorporating them into the characters of her novels.

A fourth brother, Henry, lived and worked in London as a banker. Austen visited him often. She took full advantage of the cultural opportunities London offered, including the theater, exhibitions at the museums, and fashionable shops. This, in turn, also allowed her access to information about the various trades and professions of city folk which she then used to describe her characters. Her familiarity with London is not unlike what Elizabeth and the other Bennet sisters experienced with their Aunt and Uncle Gardiner in *Pride and Prejudice*. Mrs. Bennet’s brother, Edward Gardiner, lived and worked in London, and it is through him and his family that the Bennet family is kept apprised of the latest fashions and trends of English life. Each time the Gardiners visited the Bennets, the Bennet sisters were given presents by their aunt, Mrs. Edward Gardiner. Also, both Jane and Elizabeth are provided opportunities to visit the Gardiners in London; Elizabeth is even invited to tour the English countryside with her relatives.

While Jane Austen was careful not to model any of her characters after any specific family member or neighbor, there are often some characteristics, habits, or

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11 Ibid., 21.
opinions of her family woven into the characters of her novels. For example, Austen’s own father encouraged her writing, and had such faith in his daughter’s ability that he advocated on her behalf and submitted for publication *First Impressions*, the precursor title to *Pride and Prejudice*. Perhaps in acknowledgment and appreciation of her father, the character of Mr. Bennet illustrates the fondness and affection that Reverend Austen felt for his own daughter. Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth and her father enjoy a close relationship; Mr. Bennet clearly favors Elizabeth over his other daughters because he does not think there is anything to recommend his other daughters. Mr. Bennet explains, “…they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters.”\(^{12}\) For example, when Mrs. Bennet learns that Netherfield has been bought and occupied by a young man of good fortune, she encourages Mr. Bennet to visit Mr. Bingley and make his acquaintance. His response – to give his “…hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chuses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy”\(^{13}\) – is one of the first early indicators of his favoritism for one of his daughters. Clearly, Elizabeth is his favorite. While Jane may not necessarily have been the clear preference among Reverend Austen’s children in real life, her father provided her great encouragement and affection, which is reflected in how she fondly describes Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. Doubtless, Mr. Bennet was modeled in part after Austen’s own loving father.


\(^{13}\) Ibid., 6.
Another person with whom Jane was particularly close was her sister Cassandra, whom she referred to as her “other self.”\textsuperscript{14} While Cassandra was only three years senior to Jane, she was very protective of Jane, and she did everything possible to make her life easier. For example, Cassandra often did her younger’s sister share of housework (aside from breakfast duty) so that Jane could spend more time writing. Cassandra’s attitude towards Jane reminded their family members of the sense that the character Elinor had in the novel \textit{Sense and Sensibility}.\textsuperscript{15} Also, the relationship between Cassandra and Jane is reminiscent of the closeness between Jane and Elizabeth Bennet. Throughout the novel, it is clear that the two eldest Bennet daughters have a particularly strong bond which is the result of closeness in age, similar intelligence and wit, and sensibility for the social decorum of their time. In \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, Jane Bennet takes on the role of caretaker in the family. By virtue of her being the eldest, she is seen as the responsible, patient daughter, who is level-headed and someone whom the family can rely on when things are chaotic. For example, the eldest Miss Bennet is the person that cares for the Gardiner’s children when her aunt and uncle visit Derbyshire with Elizabeth because her “steady sense and sweetness of temper exactly adapted her for attending to them in every way – teaching them, playing with them, and loving them.”\textsuperscript{16} It is Jane who keeps the Bennet household together after Lydia runs away with Mr. Wickham. Mr. Bennet travels to London to find them, and Mrs. Bennet is too distraught to do anything other than stay in

\textsuperscript{14} Batey, \textit{Jane Austen}, 12.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Austen, \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, 231.
her room all day, leaving Jane to the role of caretaker. Clearly, Austen had her sister Cassandra in mind when she created the character of Jane Bennet.

**Jane and the Resemblance to her Heroines**

In addition to the similarities between Austen’s characters and members of her own family, her family likewise saw attributes of Jane Austen in the characters she created in her novels. For example, all of the heroines in Austen’s novels possess a love for the country. In *Northanger Abby*, Austen’s description of the lead female character, Catherine Moreland, reminded Austen’s family of Jane and their own Steventon property. Catherine enjoys “…the pleasure of walking and breathing fresh air” and “…loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house.”

Like Catherine’s home, Austen’s family home in Steventon also had a grassy slope that was described by Austen’s nephew in the *Memoir* as follows:

> North of the house, the road from Deane to Popham Lane ran at a sufficient distance from the front to allow a carriage drive, through turf and tress. On the south side the ground rose gently and was occupied by one of those old-fashioned gardens in which vegetables and flowers are combined, flanked and protected on the east by one of the thatched mud walls common in that country, and overshadowed by fine elms. Along the upper or southern side of their garden, ran a terrace of the finest turf.

Austen’s nephew continues in the biography to describe the double hedgerows that ran along a particular walkway Jane and her sister, Cassandra, used to walk to their father’s

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18 Ibid.
church in Deane. These same double hedgerows were featured in another of Austen’s books, *Persuasion*.\(^{19}\)

Austen often commented that Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* was her favorite to write, perhaps because she most closely identified with her than she did with all her other heroines. Like Elizabeth, Jane was known to have had a “…lively, playful disposition, which delights in anything ridiculous.”\(^{20}\) Also, Jane, like Elizabeth, had a passion for the outdoors. Elizabeth enjoys walks in the parks and among the grounds surrounding her family’s estate. She visits the neighboring villages, such as Meryton, which is only a mile from the village of Longbourn. Her sisters, Kitty and Lydia, favor walking because it allows them to visit the militia posted to Meryton or to frequent places like the local milliner shop; Elizabeth simply enjoyed the walk and the fresh air. Elizabeth’s favor for walking was not unlike Jane’s, who would spend hours on end by herself or with family and friends, outside.

Further, like the close friendship between the Bennet and Lucas family in *Pride and Prejudice*, the Austen family was intimately acquainted with the Lloyd family. The Lloyds lived nearby in Deane, a property that belonged to Reverend Austen, but to whom the parsonage was let to the Lloyds. Jane was very close to two of the daughters, Martha and Mary, and the Austen/Lloyd relationship mirrors the close relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Charlotte Lucas. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte marries Mr. Collins, a cousin of the Bennet family; while in real life, Martha and Mary Lloyd married

\(^{19}\) *Ibid.*

Frank and James, respectively, two of Jane’s brothers. In both cases, two close families are united. 21

Familial Influence and Encouragement of Austen’s Writing

As stated, Reverend George Austen was credited with encouraging his daughter’s writing. In her early teens, Austen began to write her own stories. When Austen was introduced into society, her writing matured. It allowed Austen more opportunities to observe the people surrounding her, to include her father’s parishioners, the houses of the landed gentry in Hampshire, and the various assembly balls. This allowed her to add to what she already knew through the observation of her close family and friends. 22

Austen’s family enjoyed Jane’s stories, and while the characters were not about any one particular person, they too could see the resemblance to their lives. The experiences, opinions, family habits, and idiosyncrasies of the Austen family were in play throughout her novels. Like Austen’s future readers, Austen’s family always wanted to hear more details about Jane’s characters and to continue the story even after the novel was finished. 23 For decades, many books were published that continued the story of Pride and Prejudice and chronicled the lives of the Bennet, Bingley, and Darcy families. Would the other Austen daughters, Lydia and Mary, find love? What was the relationship like between George and Lydia Wickham? How would Lady Catherine interact with Elizabeth after the scathing last encounter between the two ladies? Austen’s

21 Ibid., 16.
22 Ibid., 11, 16.
23 Ibid., 11-12.
own family undoubtedly discussed and contemplated these same questions and encouraged Jane to write sequels.

In addition to the conversations among Austen’s family members about the plot and details of her stories, more details about Austen’s writing techniques were revealed through her comments to her niece, Anna, to whom she provided advice on the art of writing. In a review of one of Anna’s manuscripts, Austen, along with several other family members, noted that one of the journeys described should have taken only two days. It is details like the distance between two real places that Jane and the entire Austen family would contemplate, debate, and stay attuned to for accuracy. In writing her own novels, Austen carefully consulted almanacs, roadbooks, and other guides to ensure that the locations she chose were geographically realistic. While locations such as Rosings, home of Lady Catherine De Bourgh, are fictitious, Austen ensured they would fit into the areas they are supposed to be near, such as Kent. She also ensured the travel time between any real places she mentioned in relation to her fictitious place were always accurate, such as the travel from Rosings to London and London to Longbourn.

Austen expended considerable effort in the creation of setting in her novels. She gave every site, whether it was the village of Longbourn, Meryton, or Netherfield, a realistic name. But, for Austen, each site was also more than just a name. She carefully thought about each place and had a picture in her mind of what a place as infamous as Rosings or as grand as Pemberley would resemble. She then carefully wrote a

\[24\] Ibid., 13.

\[25\] Ibid.
description that allowed her readers to conjure the image she wanted them to have of the location and the characters in it. In the next chapter, the discussion will be focused on how Austen was often influenced by what she had seen herself or heard from the travels of others. But, if she did not have either of these experiences, she dedicated time to read and study the English landscape in order to create that air of authenticity.
CHAPTER III
THE IMPACT OF THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE ON AUSTEN’S WRITING

Many great writers have found inspiration in the beauty of nature; Jane Austen is one of the greatest. But Austen had an advantage that many do not: access to the profoundly enchanting English landscape. This landscape is still one of Great Britain’s greatest draws for tourism today. However, Austen’s attraction to the Picturesque was attributed to several changes that occurred in England during her formative years. In this chapter, I will discuss the beginnings of the Picturesque Movement, its founder, William Gilpin, and how social changes in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries in England allowed the lower gentry and affluent tradesmen to explore the English countryside. I will also discuss how Austen incorporated the teachings of Gilpin into Pride and Prejudice.

In the late 18th Century, a literary movement called the Picturesque began. It was based on a painterly concept, where the principals for painting were applied by people to view and study the beauty of the English landscape. The pioneer of the Picturesque Movement was Reverend William Gilpin, who first developed his ideas on the Picturesque while he served as a schoolmaster at Cheam School for Boys in Surrey, England. While teaching a student how to read a descriptive passage in the classics, he suggested that his student try to cultivate a “picture-making faculty.”1 Gilpin’s concept of using the principals of painting to understand prints led to his compilation of an instructional manual titled, Essay on Print. His manual taught the public, in layman’s

terms, how to appreciate matters such as “...design, disposition, keeping and the
distribution of light.”\(^2\)

Gilpin decided to use the same artistic principals to study landscape. In the
1770s, during school holidays at Cheam, he traveled to Wye, the Lakes, the Highlands,
and other rugged picturesque regions of England, and he recorded his experiences
through vivid description. Gilpin also sketched pencil drawings to accompany his
descriptions of the areas he found particularly attractive. Later, he was persuaded and
encouraged by his friends, William Mason and Horace Warpole, to publish his writings
and drawings about his English tours. These publications became popular very quickly
with the general public. When Gilpin’s first edition of his *Lakes Tour* was published in
1786, it sold out within a few days.\(^3\) Eventually, all his publications were in high demand
and were read by aspiring artists as well as tourists.

As Gilpin did not publish his writing until he settled in Hampshire, he was well-
known to the Austen family, who also resided there. Further, since he was a fellow
clergyman, Reverend Austen and his family were naturally interested in hearing about his
cravels and reading about his works. However, in terms of his research and studies,
William Gilpin dismissed the area of Steventon during his Picturesque tours and did not
find much excitement in the rural landscape. On the other hand, William Cobbett,
another author who wrote on the Picturesque, declared it to be his favorite landscape to
live. In his writings *Rural Rides*, he found pleasure in “the size and the form of the

\(^2\) Ibid., 52.

\(^3\) Ibid., 52, 69.
fields, in the woods, the hedgerows, the sainfoin, the young wheat, the turnips, the tares, the fallows, the sheepfolds, and the flocks.”

Gilpin’s opinions about Steventon did not detract from his appeal. He was known to be a modest and unpretentious person, characteristics which appealed to the Austen family as a whole, who had no pretensions to anything grand. In particular, Jane Austen was enamored with William Gilpin’s writing on the Picturesque. Throughout her novels, specifically, *Pride and Prejudice* there are many examples that indicate Austen read, studied, and appreciated Gilpin’s works. In particular, she was guided by Gilpin’s teachings when she created the fictitious places in her novel such as Netherfield, Rosings, and Pemberley.

One example that demonstrates Austen’s knowledge of Gilpin’s works appears in *Pride and Prejudice*. While Elizabeth is staying at Netherfield to tend to Jane after she becomes ill, she relaxes one afternoon by taking a walk in the gardens surrounding the Netherfield house. In the course of her wanderings, she encounters Miss Bingley, Mrs. Hurst, and Mr. Darcy, who are also on a stroll about the grounds. When Mr. Darcy invites Elizabeth to join their group, she replies, “No, no stay where you are, you are charmingly grouped and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting the fourth. Goodbye.” Elizabeth’s response is evidence of Austen’s

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4 Ibid., 16.
5 Ibid., 52.
6 Ibid., 8.
7 Ibid., 65.
familiarity with Gilpin’s book, *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, made in the year 1772, on several parts of England; particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland* (1786). In his book, Gilpin provides instructions on how a person can picturesquely group cows. He commented that “Two will hardly combine…but with three, you are almost sure of a good group…four introduce a new difficulty in grouping…The only way in which they will group well is to unite three…and to remove the fourth.”

Austen’s words for Elizabeth illustrate her knowledge of one of the techniques Gilpin advocated when advising a person on how to create a picturesque view.

Another example in *Pride and Prejudice* that illustrates Austen’s familiarity with Gilpin’s works is the character of Mr. Collins. He speaks a phrase that is similar to one in the preface Gilpin wrote in his *Lakes Tour*. In the preface, Gilpin expresses hope that his readers will not find the work “…inconsistent with the profession of a clergyman.”

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen gives Mr. Collins a similar line when he discusses his pleasure for song and music. At the Netherfield ball, following the completion of Mary Bennet’s musical performance, Mr. Collins turns to his table companions and comments that he considers “…music as a very innocent diversion, and perfectly compatible with the profession of a clergyman.”

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While Gilpin’s writings on the Picturesque were popular in their own right, the changes during the time period in which they were published also aided in his success. The country roads that led to remote parts of Britain had improved during the late 18th Century and allowed more people access to travel to the countryside. Even when people could not afford to venture on a Grand Tour that the aristocrats enjoyed, the minor gentry and affluent tradesmen could learn to appreciate the lands surrounding their homes. As a result, Gilpin’s writings and sketches of the British countryside encouraged people to visit the same places he had and to try to identify the characteristics that he described in his guidebooks. More people were soon able to admire the beauty of nature and understand what made the pastoral worth visiting.

Austen illustrates the accessibility of the countryside to the minor gentry and affluent tradesmen when she describes Elizabeth’s tour to Derbyshire with her Uncle and Aunt Gardiner in *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen describes Mr. Gardiner as a “…sensible, gentlemanlike man…” observing that “the Netherfield ladies would have difficulty in believing that a man who lived by trade, and within view of his own warehouses, could have been so well bred and agreeable.”\(^\text{11}\) Austen also describes Mrs. Gardiner as “… an amiable, intelligent, elegant woman….\(^\text{12}\) Up until the Gardiner’s visit to Longbourn at Christmas, Austen introduced very few characters in the novel that would have the intelligence and appreciation for the Picturesque as well as the wealth to afford such a

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 137.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
Austen’s description of these travels reflects the changes among the social classes in Britain in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries.

Further, Austen included her own life experience in this particular plot development of *Pride and Prejudice*. In the novel, Austen’s character Elizabeth intends to visit the Lakes with Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, but Elizabeth and the Gardiners are unable to travel as far as they had planned. Unfortunately, Mr. Gardiner is required to return to work sooner than they had anticipated. As a result, the group does not have sufficient time to visit the Lakes, and they decide to travel only as far as Derbyshire, where Mrs. Gardiner spent her youth. Derbyshire is also in close proximity to Pemberley, the home of Mr. Darcy. Similarly, in real life, Austen herself was denied a Lakes tour, but in the summer of 1806, while staying with her cousins, she had the opportunity to tour Derbyshire. It is from her own experience that she can sympathize with and describe Elizabeth’s disappointment in not being able to travel to the Lakes, while at the same time intimately describe the countryside that her characters enjoy en route to and during their visit to Derbyshire.13

Initially, when Gilpin’s works were first published, tourists used his writings as a guide to look for unusual markings in the scenery. However, later tourists, specifically people who were already familiar with the region, used his publications to learn about and more fully appreciate the Picturesque. They studied Gilpin’s writings to understand how “…variously Nature works up the scenery…”14 in different regions of Britain. One

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14 Ibid., 57.
example that Gilpin provided was his description of the Wye, where he encouraged the traveler to note particularly “…the steepness of its bank, its mazy courses, the grounds, woods and rocks which are its native ornaments and the buildings which still further adorn its course.”

To aid his readers in comprehending his meaning, Gilpin sketched the areas that he traveled to and emphasized those characteristics that made the view Picturesque. His readers often would use his sketches as maps to guide them and find the same locations that Gilpin saw during his travels. Unfortunately for his readers, his drawings were not generally topographically correct. Rather, Gilpin paid particular attention to the character of the region and focused instead on drawing an accurate character representation of the area. As a result, Gilpin would often rearrange the scene in his drawings so that it would fit the Picturesque principals he wrote about and wanted to teach his readers. Travelers who used Gilpin’s guide to try to visit the same places that he described were often disappointed that they could not find the exact locations he mentioned in his writings. However, his drawings were not intended to ever be accurate representations of the scenery he visited during his travels. His goal for his sketches was to provide drawings that were a “…pleasing arrangement of ideas taken from the general face of the country….” Gilpin believed that in sketching the Picturesque, the artist was at liberty to

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15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 57-58.
17 Ibid., 58.
add and detract to suit his needs. He maintained, “We must ever recollect that Nature is most defective in composition and must be a little assisted.”

Further, Gilpin’s advice to amateur artists was simple and straightforward. He focused on the following terms for composition:

Foreground, middle distance, and background; perspective by means of side-screens; attention to light and shade and grouping; the picturesque viewpoint was not panoramic but the preferred ‘station’ was somewhere half way up the hill; mists were more atmospheric than blue skies and were also useful in the landscape, not only to give an idea of scale but for ‘distinguishing roads from rivers’.

Another reason that the Picturesque Movement gained popularity in the 19th Century was because Gilpin focused on subjects that he believed were exclusively British. Such subjects included ruined abbeys, verdure, parks, ancient oaks, mists, and cloudy skies. In this way, Gilpin proved Britain was Picturesque and worthy of being painted as landscape as opposed to just being used to depict topographical representations of the land. Prior to Gilpin’s publications, the Picturesque was often left to the Italians and their paintings and sculptures. Gilpin’s studies brought a new competitor to the foreground.

Austen was a judicious admirer of Gilpin’s writings, and his analyses of the Picturesque were clearly on her mind when she described various locations of the English countryside in her novels. Jane Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice* at the end of the 18th Century while a controversy on what was considered beautiful in country house

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18 Ibid., 57-58.

19 Ibid.
landscapes was raging. Previously, gardens that included fountains or terraces were popular in country estates, but as Austen was writing this novel, people were beginning to build their gardens to model beautiful nature. Batey noted that beautiful nature was best described by Palladian Isaac Ware in 1750, who stated “What we propose now in Gardens is to collect the beauties of Nature and to separate them from those rude views in which her blemishes are seen, to bring them nearer the eye, and to dispose them in the most pleasing order and create an universal harmony.”\textsuperscript{20} For Austen, this type of nature was best represented by Gilpin’s theories on the Picturesque; she did not forget it when she was imagining the locations, such as Pemberley, in her novel.

When Austen described the estate of Pemberley, she referred to Gilpin’s theory of the Picturesque to capture what she envisioned. She drew inspiration from Gilpin in describing a place where nature’s “rude views”\textsuperscript{21} would still be appreciated. Austen dedicates far more time to describing Pemberley than she does to any other place in \textit{Pride and Prejudice}. She states, “The park was very large, and contained great variety of ground. They entered it in one of its lowest points, and drove for some time through a beautiful wood, stretching over a wide extent.”\textsuperscript{22} The reader feels the same feelings of anticipation as Elizabeth and the Gardiners feel as they approach the park. Austen’s description of their ascent into the park from the lowest point and through a long stretch of woods creates the same feeling of wonderment that the characters feel as their

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{22} Austen, \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, 253.
attention is captured by their surroundings. It also allows them to admire every tree, branch, and bush from all possible angles.

Further, while Gilpin advocated improving the natural scenery of the landscape, he condemned any improvement that was not “...in keeping with the character of the region; any ostentatious structure, planting, or artificial piece of water, out of place in natural scenery.” 23 In Gilpin’s *Lakes Tour*, published in 1786, he noted that while he understood that landowners who situated their homes amidst the rugged landscape would need to make improvements that allowed the owners to inhabit the area, he commented that “…the business of the embellished scenes is to make everything convenient and comfortable around the house – to remove offensive objects, and to add a pleasing foreground to the distance.” 24

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen describes Elizabeth’s first views of the ascent through Pemberley woods and to the house itself; Gilpin’s teaching is clear.

They gradually ascended for half a mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; - and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adored…She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. 25


24 Ibid., 70-72.

Austen’s description of the Pemberley grounds and its house reflect Gilpin’s theory on the Picturesque. First, the long road on which Elizabeth and the Gardiners travel to reach the house provides a pleasing foreground. Second, while the house is a manmade structure, the fact that it is comprised of stone, a component found naturally, assists in creating a handsome picture for any tourist. Also, Pemberley Estate was built to fit into its natural surroundings with as little disruption as possible to the surrounding scenery, and that goal is supported by the house being backed by high woods. Third, a stream flows nearby and fits naturally on the estate; it does not appear awkward or out of place on the grounds. Gilpin had noted that some landowners during this time period created manmade streams to make their estates appear more Picturesque, but which did not fit into their surroundings. Austen clearly took note and made sure to describe a stream that would appeal to Gilpin.

However, Gilpin did not advocate for creating Picturesque effects in a garden. Rather, he encouraged landowners to highlight what was already considered naturally Picturesque in the scene. In his book, *Forest Scenery*, Gilpin praises a circuit walk that was found at Exbury and belonged to a patron and former pupil at Cheam, William Mitford. The circuit walk overlooked the Beaulieu River and the Isle of Wight, which, according to Gilpin, took advantage of its natural surroundings. Further, another friend and patron of Gilpin, William Lock of Norbury, had a circuit walk on his estate that Gilpin praised in his writings about his Western Tour in 1798. Gilpin “…described how along the walk of the panoramic views over the Surrey Hills, including the ‘celebrated

Box Hill’, were made into peephole scenes through framed planting and shown to picturesque advantage.”

Austen had clearly read Gilpin’s guidance on how to landscape a garden picturesquely and studied what he thought to be an excellent circuit walk. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy’s estate has a circuitous walk that surrounds Pemberley ten miles round. Austen describes an area where Elizabeth and the Gardiners leave behind the river and travel to higher ground where openings in the trees gave way to “…charming views of the valley, the opposite hills, with the long range of woods overspreading many, and occasionally part of the stream.” This is reminiscent of Gilpin’s description of Surrey Hills, which included peepholes in the trees that framed the view of the other side to Picturesque advantage.

Austen’s novels incorporated her admiration and love for the Picturesque. In particular, her study of what was considered Picturesque was shown in her description of Pemberley Estate with its grounds, house, and gardens. Austen’s knowledge of the Picturesque was owed in large part to the writings and sketches of the founder of the Picturesque Movement, William Gilpin. The schoolmaster-cum pastor used painterly concepts to teach his students how to read the classics and in turn used the same ideas to teach people in layman’s terms what was considered to be Picturesque. Coupled with changes in English society and the expansion of roads that allowed the lower gentry to

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27 Ibid.

visit the countryside, more people like Austen were afforded the opportunity to explore the Picturesque. Austen not only incorporated Picturesque concepts as a setting for her stories, but she also used the Picturesque as a literary metaphor for the development of her characters. In the next chapter, I will explore how Austen used Gilpin’s teachings to apply them to the creation and development of her characters and to illustrate the changes in the relationships between her heroes and heroines.
CHAPTER IV

LANDSCAPE’S LITERARY INFLUENCE ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY IN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Jane Austen’s appreciation for the beauty of the English landscape was so great that a relative wrote, “She had such a love of natural scenery that she would sometimes say that she thought it must form one of the delights of heaven.”¹ Perhaps Austen’s love for nature is one of the reasons that almost all of the heroines in her novels enjoy the outdoors. Her admiration for the English landscape was not only incorporated into her stories, but as in Pride and Prejudice, Austen used landscape in the service of characterization. In this chapter, Austen’s metaphorical use of pastoral scenes in her novels to describe a subject’s character and identity will be examined.

Rosemarie Bodenheimer commented that in Austen’s early novels, such as Pride and Prejudice, “…the picturesque is treated not as an idea, but as a vocabulary which can be well or badly used.”² How does Austen seek to accomplish this endeavor? First, I will compare the heroine in the novel, Elizabeth Bennet, with several members of her family.

One of Austen’s earliest uses of landscape to describe Elizabeth occurs when her sister Jane becomes ill following a visit to Netherfield Estate to dine with Mr. Bingley’s sisters - Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst. Austen’s description of Elizabeth’s relationship to the landscape as she walks to Netherfield reveals, as we shall see, some essential


elements of her characters. Elizabeth decides to visit Jane on foot despite Mrs. Bennet’s protests that she will be covered in dirt by the time she arrives at Netherfield and “…not be fit to be seen.” Although Mrs. Bennet calls Elizabeth silly, Elizabeth does not mind becoming dirty, nor does she care what other people may think of her appearance when she arrives at her destination. She cares only for the well-being of her sister. Mary, the third eldest Bennet sister, then remarks on Elizabeth’s intent to walk to Netherfield: “…every impulse of feeling should be guided by reason; and in my opinion, exertion should always be in proportion to what is required.” For Elizabeth, her feelings of love for her sister are reason enough to exert the energy required to visit her.

Mrs. Bennet and Mary’s remarks highlight Elizabeth’s clear affection for Jane, but they also illustrate the differences in character between Elizabeth and most of the other members of her family. We see the difference in their characters illustrated by what each person considers reasonable. First, Jane would not have become ill if Mrs. Bennet had not refused Jane the use of the family’s carriage to carry her to Netherfield. Jane is clearly aware of the social mores to appear presentable in public, especially in the company of people who are above her family’s station in life. Jane is reasonable in her request, as she declares to her mother that Netherfield is too far to walk. Judging from the later reaction by Mrs. Bennet towards Elizabeth when she requests to walk to Netherfield to visit her sister, Jane’s request is reasonable and should have been granted by Mrs. Bennet. However, Mrs. Bennet thinks otherwise because she has other plans in

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4 Ibid., 33.
mind for Jane. She believes it is entirely reasonable for her eldest daughter to become dirty and wet as the result of her travel to Netherfield in the rain, even if it is not on foot but on horseback. She reasons that the possibility of Jane being asked to stay beyond the initial invitation for dinner and encounter Mr. Bingley outweighs any risks, whether it is social improprieties or endangering her daughter’s health. Her priorities clearly are seeking opportunities and creating marriage prospects for her daughters. For Mrs. Bennet, any physical exertion is commensurate with that goal in mind.

Further, following Mary’s comments, Elizabeth’s two youngest sisters, Kitty and Lydia, offer to walk with her for part of her journey to visit Jane. The three Bennet sisters part ways at Meryton, where Kitty and Lydia will visit some officers who are posted in the village as part of the regiment stationed there; Elizabeth will continue her walk to Netherfield. Mary’s comment also sheds light for the reader on the different purposes for walking between Elizabeth and her younger sisters, which illustrates their different characters and priorities. Like Elizabeth, Kitty and Lydia are active and enthusiastic about walking, but their goals for the physical activity are vastly different from Elizabeth’s purpose. For the two youngest sisters, their sole goal for walking anywhere is to flirt with the officers camped at Meryton. Throughout the novel, Kitty and Lydia are rarely seen engaging in any amusements that do not involve men. As a result, Kitty and Lydia are often referred to as silly or ridiculous by Mr. Bennet, or they are reprimanded for their behavior by either Jane or Elizabeth.

For example, when Mrs. Bennet first learns of Mr. Bingley’s arrival to Netherfield, she encourages Mr. Bennet to visit him. Mr. Bennet responds that he will
send to Mr. Bingley a letter of introduction and include a few good words for his “little Lizzy.” Mrs. Bennet declares that he should not give any preference to Elizabeth because she is not any better than any of her sisters. Mr. Bennet’s response, though, is that his other daughters are “…silly and ignorant like other girls…” Another example that illustrates Lydia and Kitty’s behavior is seen when Lydia is invited by Colonel Forster’s wife to accompany her to Brighton, where the regiment are to be relocated from Meryton. Elizabeth tries to persuade Mr. Bennet to not allow Lydia to accept Mrs. Forster’s invitation. Elizabeth declares:

If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her exuberant spirits, and of teaching her that her present pursuits are not to be the business of her life, she will soon be beyond the reach of amendment. Her character will be fixed, and she will, at sixteen, be the most determined flirt that ever made herself and her family ridiculous. A flirt too, in the worst and meanest degree of flirtation; without any attraction beyond youth and a tolerable person; and from the ignorance and emptiness of her mind, wholly unable to ward off any portion of that universal contempt which her rage for admiration will excite. In this danger Kitty is also comprehended. She will follow wherever Lydia leads. Vain, ignorant, idle, and absolutely uncontrouled!

Later, Kitty and Lydia are not highly spoken or thought of by Mr. Darcy, Miss Bingley, and Mrs. Hurst because of their general behavior. Neither Kitty nor Lydia is an admirable character, and at times, we feel the embarrassment of their behavior.

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5 Ibid., 6.
6 Ibid., 7.
7 Ibid., 223.
In comparison, Austen uses Elizabeth’s love for the landscape to highlight a very different character. Austen describes Elizabeth’s journey to Netherfield:

Elizabeth continued her walk alone, crossing field and after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity, and finding herself at last within view of the house, with weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise.  

First, this description illustrates one of the earliest uses of the pastoral as a metaphor for Elizabeth’s independence. Typically, during Austen’s time period, young ladies did not travel anywhere by themselves, as it was considered dangerous and socially unacceptable because a woman’s virtue needed to be protected. The Regency time period was marked by strict propriety between men and women, which would later become even more restricted in the Victorian era that followed it. Yet, Elizabeth defies the social conventions. Second, this description also illustrates that Elizabeth is a woman who knows her own mind and is confident in her words and decisions. Lastly, Elizabeth’s quickness of pace and her demonstrated agility with crossing over fields, stiles, and puddles imply that Elizabeth’s walk is more than a stroll in the park but instead closer to a hike. This is important because her lightness in foot demonstrates that she does not find the exercise difficult or an inconvenience. Austen’s description of Elizabeth’s glowing face indicates that she is a woman who enjoys walking and the fresh air of the country. The time that she is able to spend by herself in the woods demonstrates her independent nature and how she values her freedom.

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8 Ibid., 33.
Bodenheimer argues that Austen’s “…treatment of characters in landscapes” focuses on “…the language of response to nature as it reflects a condition of character.”

This particular interaction demonstrates Elizabeth’s love for the landscape, and her positive response to nature is a reflection of her positive character. She has great love and affection for her sister to travel the three miles on foot, but she also uses the opportunity, as we will later discuss, to reflect on more serious issues. She uses the time she spends in nature to contemplate her choices, the world around her, and life in general. In the case of her sisters, Kitty and Lydia, and her mother, Mrs. Bennet, the same event serves to illustrate their negative characters because their purpose for walking and pastoral pursuits are only endeavored with the one goal of flirting and interacting with gentlemen. They do not use the time for walking to improve their minds or think of anything that does not concern men and marriage. In general, they only think about themselves and how the events or issues of the day impact or change their lives.

Elizabeth’s first visit to Netherfield then illustrates her independence and desire for freedom. Curry states “Of all the Austen heroines, Elizabeth Bennet thinks most about that part of nature that is unbounded; where boundaries exist, she crosses them.”

In this example, Elizabeth does not see a three mile walk to Netherfield as a challenge; it is merely an opportunity to exhibit her independent, intrepid nature. While it should be a boundary for her, preventing her from visiting her sister, she does not allow it to prevent

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her. Miss Bingley exclaims to Mrs. Hurst, Mr. Bingley, and Mr. Darcy soon after Elizabeth’s arrival at Netherfield:

To walk three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone, quite alone! what could she mean by it? It seems to me to shew an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country town indifference to decorum. ¹¹

While Elizabeth, and we as the readers, would hardly agree that it shows any conceitedness on her part, her actions do demonstrate her independent nature and highlights a wish to not be confined and dictated by what society deems to be proper behavior, especially when her purpose is an honorable one.

A second example of Elizabeth’s ability to cross boundaries in nature that are metaphorically linked to her independence and freedom is her visit to the Collins’s at Hunsford:

Her favourite walk, and where she frequently went while the others were calling on Lady Catherine, was along the open grove which edged that side of the park, where there was a nice sheltered path, which no one seemed to value but herself, and where she felt beyond the reach of Lady Catherine’s curiosity.” ¹²

Regardless of where Elizabeth is located, she will always seek refuge and solace and experience some sense of freedom, even if it is only for a short period in the natural world. In this private place she creates for herself, she can wander, be free to think, and not have to impress or satisfy anyone’s wishes but her own. She can avoid people like Lady Catherine, who will ask her questions and then judge her response or not listen at all to what she has to say.

¹¹ Austen, Pride and Prejudice, 36.

¹² Ibid., 165.
In addition to Austen’s use of landscape to illustrate her heroine’s character,

Curry also argues that serious pastoral is a way for Austen’s heroines to establish their identities:

Serious pastoral implies that country life, if enriched by intellectual and aesthetic pursuits, is better than city life; Austen’s novels imply that such a country life is better for young women than city life. For her main characters, nature is a source of comfort and freedom as well as beauty.\textsuperscript{13}

Throughout the novel, there are several examples that illustrate the opinion of the gentry and upper classes that country life is not as advantageous as city life, and that the people who are from the country are not as intellectual. In the eyes of the upper classes, people from the country are not as desirable for social company because in their eyes, they are not as well-bred or cultured.

For example, Mr. Bingley, Miss Bingley, the Hursts, and Mr. Darcy are introduced to the people at an assembly ball in Hertfordshire and Meryton. When Mr. Bingley sees Mr. Darcy standing by himself, he encourages him to dance. However, Mr. Darcy believes the company is beneath him and responds:

I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room, whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with.\textsuperscript{14}

Mr. Darcy’s words demonstrate his arrogance, snobbery, and disagreeable manner. They also show to the reader that he thinks the company around him is beneath him because

\textsuperscript{13} Curry, “Not a Day Went by Without a Solitary Walk,” 48.

\textsuperscript{14} Austen, \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, 13.
they are from the country; therefore, the people from the country are not as worldly as he and his companions.

On another occasion, Miss Bingley is at a gathering hosted by Sir William Lucas approximately a month after their arrival at Netherfield. She comes upon Mr. Darcy shortly after Elizabeth refuses to dance with him. When Sir Lucas encourages Mr. Darcy to dance with Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy is willing to comply, Elizabeth politely but wittily rebukes him. Instead of injuring Mr. Darcy’s feelings, Elizabeth’s response begins to change Mr. Darcy’s impression of her, and he begins to feel pleased with her wittiness. He also begins to admire her for demonstrating her independent nature. Elizabeth stands out from the other women in the room because she does not fawn over any man. She also will speak her mind regardless of the rank or social position of her audience. Someone like Mr. Darcy, who belongs to a higher social class than herself, does not intimidate her.

As Mr. Darcy is contemplating this interaction with Elizabeth and the changes in his feelings towards her, Miss Bingley walks towards him and interrupts his thoughts. Miss Bingley assumes that, like her, he is annoyed with the company that they are surrounded by and declares:

You are considering how insupportable it would be to pass many evenings in this manner – in such society; and indeed I am quite of your opinion. I was never more annoyed! The insipidity and yet the noise; the nothingness and yet the self-importance of all these people!"\textsuperscript{15}

Miss Bingley alludes to the fact that she does not believe any of the people at the gathering have much to recommend themselves, whether it is wealth, connection, or

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 27.
talents, and yet, they seem to think they are equals to the Bingleys, Hursts and Mr. Darcy. She also thinks that they are beneath her and the rest of her party who are from the city, and thus, more refined and cultured. However, Mr. Darcy is beginning to realize that just because a person is from the country, this fact alone does not mean that he or she is not as intellectual or worthy of association. Elizabeth’s wittiness and cleverness causes him to pause and reconsider his beliefs. Elizabeth does not have very good connections: the people with whom she is connected are in trade and law, professions which, at the time, were looked down upon by the upper gentry. She was also not educated in the city and as accomplished as he desired a woman to be in her artistic abilities and manners. However, her personality and quick mind captivates his attention and admiration. He wages any internal war between his opinions on decorum and his feelings.

Later in the novel when Elizabeth visits the Collins’s at Hunsford and is first acquainted with Lady Catherine, the latter also alludes to the disadvantages of the country. Lady Catherine inquires whether Elizabeth and her sisters play piano or sing, and Elizabeth responds that only one of her sisters plays, to which Lady Catherine is surprised. When she inquires whether any of the Bennets draw, Elizabeth answers that not one of them draws, to which Lady Catherine responds, “Your mother should have taken you to town every spring for the benefit of the masters.”\(^\text{16}\) When Elizabeth responds that her mother would not have minded, but that her father hates London, Lady Catherine is even more astonished by both Elizabeth’s words and the outspoken manner in which she gives her answers. Lady Catherine believes the only way a proper education

\(^\text{16}\) Ibid., 161.
for women can be gained is by either visiting the city or through people who are hired, like a governess, from London. Lady Catherine assumes that since the Bennets have no governess, the ladies are neglected in their education. However, Elizabeth responds:

Compared with some families, I believe we were; but such of us as wished to learn, never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who chose to be idle, certainly might.\footnote{ibid.}

As the reader has seen throughout the novel, the Bennet family demonstrates clearly the accuracy of Elizabeth’s words. The three eldest Bennets are more intellectually focused, particularly Elizabeth, who likes to read and ponder the world around her. The two youngest daughters choose to be idle and pursue less intellectual activities such as shopping, gossiping about their neighbors, and planning for the next assembly or ball.

During Austen’s time, the popularity of writing about the pastoral in other literary forms, such as poetry, grew, so Austen had plenty of opportunity to read other writers’ works on nature. As a result, Austen’s use of the pastoral in \textit{Pride and Prejudice} to emphasize Elizabeth’s identity was partly influenced by the works of poets like William Cowper. For example, Cowper writes of his pastoral appreciation of nature in Book I of \textit{The Task}:

\begin{quote}
For I have loved the rural walk through the lanes
Of grassy swath, close cropp’d by nibbling sheep,
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs; have loved the rural walk
O’er hills, through valleys, and by river’s brink
E’er since, a truant boy, I pass’d my bounds,
To enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames.\footnote{Curry, "Not a Day Went by Without a Solitary Walk," 49.}
\end{quote}

\footnote{Ibid.}
Curry notes the similarity between Cowper’s pastoral appreciation of nature and Elizabeth’s Bennet’s stroll through Pemberley Estate.\textsuperscript{19} During Elizabeth’s tour of Pemberley with the Gardiners, she also sees many “…charming views of the valley, the opposite hills, with the long range of woods overspreading many, and occasionally part of the stream.”\textsuperscript{20} No doubt Austen read Cowper and drew inspiration from his description of nature and how he felt when he was walking through it to create heroines, like Elizabeth, who possess the same love for the pastoral.

Throughout \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, Austen uses pastoral scenes to describe the character and identity of her characters. In order to illustrate a positive character, she incorporates a love for nature in the heroine of her story, Elizabeth Bennet. To imply a negative character, Austen described a lack of appreciation for nature in her characters to illustrate the point, as in the case of Lydia and Kitty Bennet. In the next chapter, Austen’s use of the pastoral to restore a character’s sense of calm and peace when he or she is feeling conflicted will be examined.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

CHAPTER V

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND THE POWERS OF THE PASTORAL TO RESTORE SERENITY AND UNDERSTANDING

Many people seek solace in safe places in times of conflict. Whatever location they choose will typically be a place wherein they can restore their sense of peace. For many people, that place is an escape from their troubles, a place that will allow them to feel free. Nature has often been that type of place for many people, and in many literary works, the pastoral world is depicted as a refuge. In Austen’s novels, the pastoral is frequently used as a place for her heroines to seek solace. In this chapter, I will examine how Austen uses the pastoral to restore feelings of tranquility, peace, and freedom in her character, Elizabeth Bennet, and to reveal Elizabeth’s ability to overcome obstacles and come to an understanding of her previously held prejudices.

In an article, Mary Jane Curry declares that Austen “…attributes the protagonist’s self-understanding to a calming freedom produced by viewing the non-human physical world.”¹ In Pride and Prejudice, numerous scenes depict Elizabeth spending time by herself walking outdoors. During these hours of solitude, she enjoys the freedom to think and do as she pleases. Elizabeth’s time spent walking in parks and gardens allows her to commune with nature and appreciate its beauty; the calming effects of nature allow her to contemplate the personal conflicts and issues that plague her. Her strolls in the woods and groves contribute to her ability to come to an understanding of the issues she is facing.

One example of Elizabeth’s strolls through nature to restore her sense of calm and peace is her walks at Rosings. Soon after her arrival at Hunsford, she finds a sheltered path that she “…felt beyond the reach of Lady Catherine’s curiosity.”\(^2\) By this time in the novel, Elizabeth has been at Rosings for approximately a fortnight, and she has witnessed Lady Catherine’s involvement with every minute concern of her parish. Elizabeth notices that on most days Mr. Collins walks to Rosings to visit with Lady Catherine. Occasionally, Lady Catherine also visits the Collins’s, and when she does, she scrutinizes everything in their household.

She examined into their employments, looked at their work, and advised them to do it differently; found fault with the arrangement of the furniture, or detected the housemaid in negligence; and if she accepted any refreshment, seemed to do it only for the sake of finding out that Mrs. Collins’s joints of meat were too large for her family.\(^3\)

This description of Lady Catherine’s attention to detail would likely try anyone’s patience. She finds fault in everything, and Lady Catherine gladly provides her opinion to anyone, regardless of whether or not he or she is interested in hearing it. She does not provide much opportunity for anyone to disagree or do anything differently. Elizabeth, an independent woman, feels suffocated and overwhelmed by the meddling of someone like Lady Catherine. Therefore, she spends her time outdoors walking in the grove, sheltered from her criticism. In the park, she regains her sense of calm and peace and feels free.


\(^3\) Ibid., 165.
Another example of Elizabeth’s ability to find solace in nature is evident in the walks she takes during her stay at Netherfield. When Jane becomes ill there, Elizabeth nurses her back to health. Elizabeth feels suffocated by the company there, primarily Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley, and, to a lesser extent, Mr. and Mrs. Hurst. Elizabeth bears witness to their snobbery and elitism during a number of discussions.

One example is the occasion which they discuss what is required to describe a woman as an accomplished individual and how Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley only know of a half dozen women who truly fit the definition. Miss Bingley declares:

A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.  

Mr. Darcy agrees. “All this she must possess,” added Darcy, “and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.”

Elizabeth is incredulous of their opinion and highlights their severe definition by declaring that she is “…surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any.” Mr. Darcy questions the severity of Elizabeth’s comments, to which she replies, “I never saw such a woman, I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united.”

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4 Ibid., 39.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
Bingley declares that Elizabeth is one of those women who recommend themselves to the opposite sex by disparaging her own gender, which is not Elizabeth’s intent. Elizabeth’s point is that the high standard to which Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley hold an accomplished woman is wholly unrealistic and unattainable. When Elizabeth points this out to her company, she reveals the snobbery and arrogance of Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy.

Another example of the arrogance and snobbery of the group at Netherfield is illustrated when Elizabeth visits the party downstairs after staying and comforting her sister for most of an evening after supper. When Jane falls asleep, Elizabeth decides that it would be “…rather right than pleasant that she should go down stairs herself.” When she arrives, she is invited to join the group who are playing loo, a card game similar to whist. Elizabeth declines because she suspects they are playing higher than she can afford monetarily; she uses her sister as an excuse, saying that she needs to return to her soon. However, her decline of the invitation sparks a rebuke from Mr. Hurst and Miss Bingley. Mr. Hurst asks Elizabeth, “‘Do you prefer reading to cards?’” said he; “‘that is rather singular.’” Before Elizabeth can respond, Miss Bingley comments, “‘Miss Eliza Bennet,’” said Miss Bingley, “‘despises cards. She is a great reader and has no pleasure in any thing else.’” Mr. Hurst’s comment implies that Elizabeth is rather rude and not social. Miss Bingley’s comments also serve to highlight these perceived ill qualities,

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8 Ibid., 37.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
which Miss Bingley often points out in an attempt to provoke Mr. Darcy. Miss Bingley instigates him partly out of her disdain for the company that they have been associating with in the country, but also because she is becoming jealous of Elizabeth. Miss Bingley sees that Mr. Darcy is intrigued and interested in Elizabeth. Miss Bingley, unfortunately, has not been able to capture his attention. This scene exemplifies the snobbery and elitism of the Hurst’s and Miss Bingley and highlights Elizabeth’s membership in a different social class with very different priorities.

It is no wonder that after evenings like these two Elizabeth is ready to depart Netherfield and is counting the minutes to when Jane will be well enough to travel. During an afternoon at Netherfield, Elizabeth has an opportunity to finally experience some freedom and peace by herself. Initially, though, she is trapped with Mrs. Hurst, but an encounter with Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy relieves her of their presence for a few hours. That afternoon, Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy are walking in the Netherfield gardens, and Miss Bingley is provoking Mr. Darcy to dislike Elizabeth. She is speaking about a possible marriage between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth and remarks on the excellent connections he will gain through his marriage to Elizabeth. As Miss Bingley delivers her remarks, Elizabeth and Mrs. Hurst encounter them in the gardens. Mrs. Hurst abandons Elizabeth to walk with Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy, and she takes Mr. Darcy’s free arm to join with them. When Mr. Darcy attempts to rectify the ladies’ rudeness by asking Elizabeth to join them, Elizabeth laughingly declines and replies, “No, no; stay where you are. – You are charmingly group’d and appear to uncommon advantage. The
picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth.”11 Elizabeth then happily runs away from the group and rejoices that she is on her own. By this point in her visit at Netherfield, she has reached her tolerance level for the company of the Bingley sisters and Mr. Darcy. Her stroll outside is a chance to escape the confinement of being indoors with people she dislikes, and when she has the opportunity to disengage from their company outdoors, she rejoices in the freedom. She can now escape their snobbery and elitism.

In general, Elizabeth often walks by herself in order to achieve feelings of serenity and freedom. However, Curry also argues that Elizabeth’s solitary walks at Rosings and Longbourn provide her with the opportunity to address the personal issues which conflict her throughout the novel.12 One significant example follows after her contentious encounter with Mr. Darcy while she is still at Hunsford, where he declares his love for Elizabeth and proposes marriage to her. Elizabeth refuses Mr. Darcy’s proposal, and he becomes angry and confused as to why she would refuse him. He angrily responds, “And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavour at civility, I am thus rejected. But it is of small importance.”13

11 Ibid., 52.
12 Curry, “Not a Day Went by Without a Solitary Walk,” 49.
13 Austen, Pride and Prejudice, 186.
Elizabeth responds angrily:

‘I might as well enquire,’ replied she, ‘why with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I was uncivil? But I have other provocation. You know I have.’

Elizabeth continues to explain the two circumstances that set her against Mr. Darcy. One circumstance is his interference in the blossoming relationship between Mr. Bingley and her sister, Jane. She accuses him of ruining the happiness of her sister, explaining that he acts by “…dividing them from each other, of exposing one of the censure of the world for caprice and instability, the other to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind.”

The other circumstance which influences her opinion of him is his treatment of Mr. Wickham. She declares:

You have reduced him to his present state of poverty, comparative poverty. You have withheld the advantages, which you must know to have been designed for him. You have deprived the best years of his life, of that independence which was no less his due than his desert. You have done all this! and yet you can treat the mention of his misfortunes with contempt and ridicule.

The next day, Elizabeth is still reeling over what has transpired between Mr. Darcy and herself, and she decides to take her favorite walk. However, she recalls that, occasionally, Mr. Darcy walks in the same park and that she had previously encountered him numerous times over the several weeks she has resided at Hunsford. Instead, Elizabeth “…turned up the lane, which led her farther from the turnpike road. The park paling was still the boundary on one side, and she soon passed one of the gates into the

\[14\] Ibid.  
\[15\] Ibid., 187.  
\[16\] Ibid.
ground.” She walks for a while in that part of the lane, mulling over what has transpired the day before, but because of the “…pleasantness of the morning…” she is tempted to enter the park. Elizabeth thinks, “The five weeks which she had now passed in Kent, had made a great difference in the country, and every day was adding to the verdure of the early trees.” As Elizabeth ponders her surroundings, she sees Mr. Darcy. Before she is able to escape his notice, he sees her and hands her a letter that contains information which explain his actions in regards to the issues that have caused her to decline his marriage proposal. In the letter, Mr. Darcy informs her of his reasons for his interference regarding the relationship between Mr. Bingley and Jane. He also addresses the perceived misfortunes of Mr. Wickham. As she walks through the park reading the letter, Elizabeth reevaluates her opinions of Mr. Darcy and changes her perception of him and her own reactions to him in the second half of the novel. Her walk among nature is no longer a place for just freedom and serenity; it is a place where she comes to a self-understanding of the prejudices that she has previously held against Mr. Darcy.

Once Mr. Darcy hands her the letter, she continues her walk along the lane in the park and reads the letter. Mr. Darcy first explains his interference in the blossoming relationship between Mr. Bingley and Jane. He explains that he has watched the interaction between her sister and his friend, and while she “…received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment…however,

\footnotesize
\begin{enumerate}
\item[Ibid., 190.]
\item[Ibid.]
\item[Ibid.]
\end{enumerate}
amiable her temper, her heart was not likely to be easily touched...I did not believe her to be indifferent because I wished it; I believed it on impartial conviction, as truly as I wished it in reason.”

When Elizabeth reads his explanation, she is reminded of an earlier discussion that she had with Charlotte regarding Jane. During a gathering at Lucas Lodge, Charlotte comments to Elizabeth that if Jane does not show some encouragement to Mr. Bingley, he may never grow to love her. She declares:

We can all being freely – a slight preference is natural enough; but there are very few of us who have heart enough to be really in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better shew more affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on.

Charlotte also feels that Jane’s reserved nature does not encourage her suitor, and it is not difficult to see how Mr. Darcy can arrive at the same conclusion. Elizabeth cannot deny the accuracy of his description of Jane in the letter: “She felt that Jane’s feelings, though fervent, were little displayed, and that there was constant complacency in her air and manner, not often united with great sensibility.” Initially, when Elizabeth first read Mr. Darcy’s letter, she thought that his explanation for his intrusion is insufficient. Upon a second reading of the letter, she could see why he would be unaware of his sister’s attachment to Mr. Bingley. If Jane’s closest friends and family, such as Charlotte and

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20 Ibid., 192.
21 Ibid., 23.
22 Ibid., 202.
Elizabeth, only recognize her attachment because they know her well, then an acquaintance was unlikely to see the same feelings.

Mr. Darcy further explains that it is not only Jane’s complacency that causes him concern in a possible marriage between her and Mr. Bingley, but rather the behavior of her family. He explains, “The situation of your mother’s family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even your father.” When Elizabeth reads and contemplates his words, she is mortified as she remembers the events that Mr. Darcy alludes to that occurred at the Nethfield ball. She remembers the silliness of her younger sisters, her father’s censure of Mary’s performance at the ball, and her mother’s boast that Jane would soon be well-married, thus forging an alliance that would benefit her younger sisters by allowing them access to wealthier gentlemen suitors. Elizabeth is overcome with severe shame and is further disappointed and upset that Jane’s unhappiness is caused by her own family.

In response to Elizabeth’s accusation that he has mistreated Mr. Wickham, Mr. Darcy explains Mr. Wickham’s connection to his family, his refusal to take orders and enter the church as a clergyman, and his pursuance of his younger sister, Georgiana, who is to inherit thirty thousand pounds. Elizabeth understands from Mr. Darcy’s description of the actions of Mr. Wickham that the latter is not a man to be trusted and he has made himself out to be a victim when he is the one with the unscrupulous intentions. She recalls his interactions with herself when they first met at the Philips’s. “She was now

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23 Ibid., 193.
struck with the impropriety of such communications to a stranger, and wondered it had escaped her before. She saw the indelicacy of putting himself forward as he had done, and the inconsistency of his professions with his conduct.”24 She remembers how Mr. Wickham boasted of not fearing seeing Mr. Darcy, but then he later admitted he avoided attending the Netherfield ball for the same reason. She also realizes that he had not told his story to anyone but herself until the company at Netherfield departed Hertfordshire. She also remembers how it is only after Mr. Darcy quits the country that Mr. Wickham unscrupulously defames Mr. Darcy’s character to anyone who will listen, even though he had previously said to Elizabeth that he would never conduct himself in such a manner.

Following the delivery of the letter, Elizabeth wanders “…the lane for two hours, giving way to every variety of thought; re-considering events, determining probabilities, and reconciling herself as well as she could, to a change so sudden and so important, fatigue, and a recollection of her long absence, made her at length return home....”25 Elizabeth’s time spent walking in nature provides her the solitude and freedom to contemplate all that has transpired and how her prejudices prevented her from seeing the truth of the situation. In the case of her sister, her love and affection for Jane prevented her from seeing not only what Mr. Darcy explains in his letter, but what Charlotte previously confirmed. In the instance of Mr. Wickham, her own affection for the man and her dislike for Mr. Darcy prevented her from seeing the truth about Mr. Wickham’s character until Mr. Darcy’s letter. Amidst beauty’s nature and calming atmosphere, her

24 Ibid., 200.
25 Ibid., 203.
feelings of serenity and tranquility are restored, and she can now see clearly the errors in her judgment.

Austen is not the only writer of her time who uses nature to show the calming effects on a person. Curry compares the poems of William Wordsworth, a poet who was only five years older than Austen, with Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. In Wordsworth’s poem, *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, he comments that his memories of nature’s beauty restore his feelings of tranquility when he experiences conflict:

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration:--feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love.26

Like Wordsworth, Austen uses the pastoral in her novel to restore the tranquility and peace in her character Elizabeth after she is faced with personal turmoil. Nature’s beauty has a calming effect on her, and she is able to think through the issues plaguing her, and the prejudices she has before are lifted as she is able to see more clearly. It is as if the clouds have disappeared and the sun is now shining clearly. Mr. Darcy’s delivery of his

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explanatory letter serves as the turning point for how Elizabeth perceives Mr. Darcy. In the second half of the novel, she is no longer as prejudiced against him and is willing to understand his opinions on the same issues.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen uses the pastoral to demonstrate nature’s beauty and power to restore feelings of tranquility, peace, and a sense of freedom in Elizabeth Bennet when she is conflicted over the personal issues that arise in her life. Austen uses Elizabeth’s love for walking in nature to demonstrate her restoration of serenity, her achievements of small moments of freedom, and her place to seek solace when needed. She also uses the pastoral to demonstrate Elizabeth’s time communing with nature to come away with a better understanding of the issues that she is struggling with, such as her feelings towards Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wickham. In the next chapter, the pastoral scenes in *Pride and Prejudice* and their influence on a character’s social perceptions of other people will be examined.
CHAPTER VI
AUSTEN’S PASTORAL SCENES AND
SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS IN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Austen earned high praise from Sir Walter Scott, who, after reading Austen’s novels, commented “That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I have ever met with.”

Austen’s novel Pride and Prejudice is an example of the talent Scott describes. As has been discussed in the previous chapters, Austen’s gift for describing her characters’ disposition, identity, and feelings are the result of her effective use of the pastoral. In her writing, nature is used in the service of characterization. However, Austen takes it a step further and uses the pastoral to also illustrate a change in the social perception of her characters. In this chapter, Austen’s use of the pastoral in changing the social perception of the characters in Pride and Prejudice will be explored.

In Pride and Prejudice, Austen “…calls on the metaphorical resources of pictorial values, wittily echoing her large concern with correct social perception.”

She uses landscape to illustrate the change in the opinion of specific characters and their situation in life with two events that transpire in the novel. The first change occurs when Elizabeth visits Charlotte at Hunsford after she marries Mr. Collins; the second change is her perception of Mr. Darcy, which also begins during her visit to Hunsford and later is cemented when she travels to Derbyshire and Pemberley, home to Mr. Darcy.


In the first example, Elizabeth and Charlotte’s relationship changes significantly after Charlotte agrees to marry Mr. Collins. Earlier in the novel, Charlotte is described as a “…sensible, intelligent young woman…” with whom Elizabeth is intimately acquainted. However, Elizabeth is disappointed when she hears of Charlotte’s engagement to Mr. Collins. Her friend’s esteem is lowered in her eyes by her consent to marry a person whom she thinks is ridiculous. Elizabeth believes Charlotte disgraces herself by such a decision; any chance for happiness is lost forever. Charlotte tries to explain to Elizabeth that she has never been romantic and declares, “I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.” However, her words do not allay Elizabeth’s disappointment in her, and Elizabeth is convinced that there will no longer be any real confidence between the two friends.

Yet Elizabeth soon understands her friend’s position. After Charlotte marries and before she leaves permanently for the Parsonage in Hunsford, she issues an invitation to Elizabeth to visit her with her father, Sir William Lucas and her younger sister, Maria. Elizabeth consents to the arrangement, but she has little expectation that her opinion will change about Charlotte’s situation in life and what she considers to be an unhappy match. However, not too long after her arrival at Hunsford, she has the opportunity to observe

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4 Ibid., 123.
both Mr. Collins and Charlotte’s interactions with each other and their humble abode at Hunsford Parsonage. Elizabeth’s social perceptions slowly start to change.

Upon first seeing the Parsonage, Elizabeth sees the comfortable level in which Charlotte is settled and thinks:

“It was rather small, but well built and convenient; and every thing was fitted up and arranged with a neatness and consistency of which Elizabeth gave Charlotte all the credit. When Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really a great air of comfort throughout, and by Charlotte’s evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten."

The description of the house and how it is arranged seems logical and practical, which suits and matches Charlotte’s personality. Based on her earlier comments to Elizabeth that she only asks for a comfortable home, Elizabeth’s initial tour of Hunsford illustrates this particular value of Charlotte’s.

During the tour, Elizabeth also realizes that what may not constitute happiness for one person may be just what is needed for another person. When Mr. Collins first welcomes the guests to the Collins’ home, Elizabeth is:

“…prepared to see him in his glory; and she could not help fancying that in displaying the good proportions of the room, its aspect and its furniture, he addressed himself particularly to her, as if wishing to make her feel what she had lost in refusing him. But though every thing seemed neat and comfortable, she was not able to gratify him by any sigh of repentance; and rather looked with wonder at her friend that she could have so cheerful an air, with such a companion.”

Elizabeth does not regret declining Mr. Collins’s marriage offer despite the comfortable living that he is able to afford his wife, but she understands why these types of comforts

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5 Ibid., 155.
6 Ibid., 154.
would suit her friend’s needs in a relationship. However, she still initially wonders at Charlotte’s seeming acceptance of her husband’s quirks. Whenever he says anything that may cause Charlotte to feel ashamed, Elizabeth involuntarily turns to watch Charlotte’s reaction. Although Charlotte blushes, Elizabeth notices that she chooses wisely to ignore Mr. Collins’ comments. Elizabeth is then introduced by Mr. Collins to a garden that is “…large and well laid out, to the cultivation of which he attended himself.”

She observes that the Collins’ discuss “To work in his garden was one of his most respectable pleasures; and Elizabeth admired the countenance with which Charlotte talked of the healthfulness of the exercise, and owned she encouraged it as much as possible.” Upon watching these interactions between Mr. Collins and her friend, Elizabeth realizes that, for Charlotte, all of Mr. Collins embarrassing behaviors and comments can be overlooked and redirected elsewhere as needed. Elizabeth realizes that Charlotte encourages her husband to attend to his garden as much as possible, so that she can live in peace and enjoy the material comforts that allow her to be happy in life.

Later when the Collins’, Elizabeth, Sir Lucas, and Maria are invited for tea at Rosings by Lady Catherine, the group walks across the half mile park that separates Hunsford Parsonage and Rosings Estate. While Elizabeth appreciates the park, she muses, “…every park has its beauty and its prospects; and Elizabeth saw much to be pleased with, though she could not be in such raptures as Mr. Collins expected the scene

\[7\] Ibid.

\[8\] Ibid.
Austen uses the park as a parallel for Elizabeth’s feelings regarding her decision to not marry Mr. Collins as well as her views on Charlotte’s decision to marry him. Elizabeth’s appreciation of the park allows her to see that this is another indicator that Mr. Collins provides Charlotte the material comforts she desires. At the same time, while Elizabeth admires the estates, she is not enraptured by either Hunsford Parsonage or Rosings, which Austen uses to demonstrate that Mr. Collins is not the right man to be a husband to Elizabeth. Austen’s illustration of the pastoral scenes is a metaphor to show that Elizabeth finally understands why Charlotte chooses Mr. Collins as her husband. She sees that the material comforts that Hunsford provides for Charlotte and the minimal interaction with her husband are enough for her to be content. Elizabeth now comprehends Jane’s earlier comments to her when they first learn of Charlotte’s engagement. At the time, Elizabeth’s opinions about the situation are particularly harsh. In her discussions with Jane, she calls Mr. Collins “…a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man; you know he is, as well as I do; and you must feel, as well as I do, that the woman who marries him, cannot have a proper way of thinking.” Jane responds to Elizabeth’s declarations:

My dear Lizzy, do not give way to such feelings as these. They will ruin your happiness. You do not make allowance enough for difference of situation and temper. Consider Mr. Collins’s respectability, and Charlotte’s prudent, steady character. Remember that she is one of a large family; that as to fortune, it is a most eligible match; and be ready to believe, for every body’s sake that she may feel something like regard and esteem for our cousin.

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9 Ibid., 158.
10 Ibid., 133.
11 Ibid.
Elizabeth now sees how Charlotte’s “…prudent, steady character…” is demonstrated in her response to Mr. Collins’ embarrassing remarks, and her appreciation for the material advantages of Hunsford illustrate these characteristics as well.

The other relationship in which Austen uses the pastoral to demonstrate a significant change in social perception is between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. The change begins during her visit to Hunsford and is later cemented when she visits Pemberley. At Hunsford, Elizabeth’s view of Mr. Darcy begins to change because she has the opportunity to become acquainted with him amidst his own peers and family. She learns additional information about his behavior that will be proof later that his words are the truth. During her stay at Hunsford, Elizabeth becomes acquainted with Lady Catherine, who is the aunt of Mr. Darcy. She learns shortly after she arrives in Kent that Mr. Darcy will be visiting his aunt during her stay. Colonel Fitzwilliam, a cousin of Mr. Darcy and another nephew of Lady Catherine, accompanies him to Rosings. Mr. Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam call on the Collins’ and Elizabeth soon after they arrive in the country. Thereafter, both gentlemen visit the Parsonage regularly during their stay at Rosings to see the Collins’ and Elizabeth. Also, both gentlemen encounter Elizabeth in the grove that she likes to walk between Hunsford and Rosings, and the information she acquires during her conversations with each man starts to influence a change in how she perceives Mr. Darcy.

\[\textit{Ibid.}\]
First, Elizabeth unexpectedly encounters Mr. Darcy numerous times in the grove.

She figures that he has no reason to want to see her given his disagreeable nature and his perceived dislike of her, so she informs him that the Park is one of her favorite places to walk, assuming that he would also want to avoid her. However, her words do not dissuade him from seeking her company. Instead, he is encouraged even more to walk in the same grove. Elizabeth observes of Mr. Darcy:

He never said a great deal, nor did she give herself the trouble of talking or of listening much; but it struck her in the course of their third rencontre that he was asking some odd unconnected questions – about her pleasure in being at Hunsford, her love of solitary walks, and her opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Collins’s happiness; and that in speaking of Rosings and her not perfectly understanding the house, he seemed to expect that whenever she came into Kent again she would be staying there too…It distressed her a little, and she was quite glad to find herself at the gate in the pales opposite the Parsonage.\(^\text{13}\)

Elizabeth does not understand why Mr. Darcy is showing such particular attentions to her, but their walks in the park illustrate a change in Mr. Darcy’s behavior towards her and his increasing interest in her well-being and life. He says more to her during these walks than he has in any other setting previously in Hertfordshire. His social perception of her has changed over time unbeknownst to her. For Elizabeth’s part, she begins to see a more sensitive and caring side of him even if she is uncertain of the cause of his interest in her; however, despite his attentions, she still does not change her opinion of him.

Next, when Colonel Fitzwilliam encounters Elizabeth in the park, she learns more about Mr. Darcy and his relationship with his peers and family. While the information she learns initially is not happy news, it makes sense to her later after her confrontation

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 178.
with Mr. Darcy, and a letter is given to her by Mr. Darcy explaining his actions. First, when Elizabeth mentions Mr. Darcy’s sister, Georgiana, she assumes incorrectly that he has sole care of his younger sister. Colonel Fitzwilliam corrects her assumption and mentions that he also has guardianship over his cousin. She then inquires, “And pray what sort of guardians do you make? Does your charge give you much trouble? Young ladies of her age, are sometimes a little difficult to manage, and if she has the true Darcy spirit, she may like to have her own way.”\(^{14}\) When Colonel Fitzwilliam appears startled, Elizabeth mistakenly assumes that she is correct in that Georgiana has given some trouble to her guardians. However, as Elizabeth later learns, while there has been some concern inflicted on her guardians by their charge, it is not for the reasons that Elizabeth believes. While Georgiana gives them some difficulty, it is because she is almost persuaded to elope and is vulnerable to manipulative people like Mr. Wickham. Her naiveté and youth are to blame rather than any character flaw. Colonel Fitzwilliam’s reaction, though, is something that Elizabeth remembers later when Mr. Darcy mentions Mr. Wickham’s involvement with his sister; Colonel Fitzwilliam’s words validate the truth of Mr. Darcy’s explanations of why he has not mistreated Mr. Wickham.

Second, when Mr. Bingley’s name is mentioned and he is called a great friend of Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth sarcastically comments, “Mr. Darcy is uncommonly kind to Mr. Bingley, and takes a prodigious deal of care of him.”\(^{15}\) However, Colonel Fitzwilliam is quick to defend his cousin, saying that he truly does take care of Mr. Bingley, having

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 180.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
prevented him from making an imprudent marriage choice. By Colonel Fitzwilliam’s account of the particulars, he sincerely believes that Mr. Darcy has his friend’s best intentions at heart. Although at the time Elizabeth is angry at Mr. Darcy’s interference, Colonel Fitzwilliam’s opinions of Mr. Darcy’s loyalty are another piece of evidence which will prove Mr. Darcy’s later words of explanation regarding his interference as truth – that he truly believes his actions were done in the service of a friend. Colonel Fitzwilliam’s words demonstrate and affirm that Mr. Darcy is not the malicious man that Elizabeth seems to believe. The walks in Rosings Park between Elizabeth and the two gentlemen allow her to learn information that invokes doubt in her social perceptions of Mr. Darcy.

Elizabeth’s perception of Mr. Darcy completely changes when she first sees Pemberley Estate. As Bodenheimer argues, a “…good estate…” is a reflection of the “social virtues of their owners.”\textsuperscript{16} Austen uses this technique in 	extit{Pride and Prejudice}. Mr. Darcy is painted in a disagreeable light up to this point, but with the first glimpses of the beautiful estate, he transforms in her mind into a virtuous person. Elizabeth’s opportunity to see Pemberley begins when Mrs. Gardiner invites Elizabeth to tour the countryside with her and Mr. Gardiner.

Elizabeth readily agrees, declaring:

What are men to rocks and mountains? Oh! what hours of transport we shall spend! And when we do return, it shall not be like travellers, without being able to give one accurate idea of any thing. We will know where we have gone – we will recollect what we have seen. Lakes, mountains, and rivers, shall not be jumbled together in our imaginations; nor, when we attempt to describe any particular scene, will we begin quarrelling about its relative situation. Let our first effusions be less insupportable than those of the generality of travellers.**17**

By this time in the novel, Elizabeth feels disappointment in the characters of the men she has met. She is disappointed with Mr. Bingley and her perception of his ill treatment of her sister, Jane. Her interests in Mr. Wickham have peaked and dissipated in the same time frame. She has been proposed to by Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy; she rejects Mr. Collins’s proposal based on his ridiculous countenance, and Mr. Darcy’s based on his ungentlemanly manner, his interference in the blossoming relationship with her sister and his friend, and the maltreatment of Mr. Wickham. All of these events cause her to want to escape any mention of men. She agrees to the trip with the Gardiners so that she can leave these disappointments behind and regain her sense of solace. However, during the trip, they visit Derbyshire, home to Mrs. Gardiner, and the group decides to visit Pemberley since it is only within five miles.

When Elizabeth first glimpses the beauty of Pemberley and how well the estate is maintained, she remembers Mr. Darcy and his letter of explanation. She begins to wonder if her social perceptions have been completely wrong and ponders if she may have missed her chance for happiness in marriage. Bodenheimer argues that a good estate like Pemberley should reflect the social virtues of the owner; therefore, Mr. Darcy

cannot possibly have an ill virtue. Elizabeth “…watched for the first appearance of Pemberley Woods with some perturbation; and when at length they turned in at the lodge, her spirits were in a high flutter.”\textsuperscript{18} Initially, Elizabeth does not know what to expect, but she soon realizes that whatever her expectations, reality far exceeds it: “The park was very large, and contained great variety of ground. They entered it in one of its lowest points, and drove for some time through a beautiful wood, stretching over a wide extent.”\textsuperscript{19} The group’s long ascent to the house allows Elizabeth to admire every angle of Pemberley Estate. She reaches the conclusion that “…she had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste.”\textsuperscript{20}

In the house, Elizabeth and the Gardiners are provided a tour that further allows Elizabeth to admire the many facets of Pemberley, and which cause her to doubt more her previously held social perceptions of Mr. Darcy. First, the housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, provides glowing remarks about Mr. Darcy’s character, commenting that she has “…never had a cross word from him…” and she has “…known him ever since he was four years old.”\textsuperscript{21} The praise bestowed by the housekeeper surprises Elizabeth because everything she has seen or heard until this point leads her to believe Mr. Darcy to be an ill-tempered man. Next, Mrs. Reynolds compares Mr. Darcy to his father, who was

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 180.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 238.
admired by his staff and considered to be an excellent man. She says that “…his son will be just like him – just as affable to the poor.” 22 When Elizabeth hears this from the housekeeper, she cannot help but wonder and doubt her words. If anyone would have anything negative to say, it would be a servant of Mr. Darcy’s. Yet, here she tells the visitors that he is fair and kind to everyone, even the less fortunate. If a servant has these opinions, she wonders at the accuracy of her own opinions. Mrs. Reynolds continues to explain that Mr. Darcy is:

‘…the best landlord, and the best master,’ said she, ‘that ever lived. Not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but what will give him a good name. Some people call him proud; but I am sure I never saw any thing of it. To my fancy, it is only because he does not rattle away like other young men.’ 23

Mrs. Reynolds then praises Mr. Darcy and his treatment of his younger sister, saying, “Whatever can give his sister any pleasure, is sure to be done in a moment. There is nothing he would not do for her.” 24 Mrs. Reynolds also discusses Mr. Wickham’s connection to the Darcy family, and the fact that he is the son of her late master’s steward. She thinks he has “…turned out very wild.” 25 All of this information provided by the servant contradicts Elizabeth’s own opinions and experiences with the two gentlemen discussed, and she wonders how there can be such disparity in perception. She begins to think, though, that Mr. Darcy’s explanations in his letter, the opinions of

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 239.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 237.
Colonel Fitzwilliam, and now Mrs. Reynolds’s opinions may be the more accurate social perception of Mr. Darcy’s character and not her own experiences. When Elizabeth sees the portrait of Mr. Darcy in the family portrait gallery, she is convinced of this more than ever, thinking:

There was certainly at this moment, in Elizabeth’s mind, a more gentle sensation towards the original, than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance. The commendation bestowed on him by Mrs. Reynolds was of no trifling nature. What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant? As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how many people’s happiness were in his guardianship!...Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character...."\textsuperscript{26}

When Elizabeth and the Gardiners finish their tour inside the house, they continue to walk the grounds, and Elizabeth learns that Mr. Darcy has arrived earlier than anticipated to Pemberley. He briefly speaks with Elizabeth, and his demeanor has completely changed from the last time that Elizabeth sees him. After some brief pleasantries exchanged between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth continues her tour with the Gardiners. However, despite the beauty of the area that she has entered, she cannot think of anything but her encounter with Mr. Darcy. The pastoral, which previously allows Elizabeth to reflect in solitude and regain her sense of peace when she is feeling conflicted, no longer settles her.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 240.
Austen writes:

They had now entered a beautiful walk by the side of the water, and every step was bringing forward a nobler fall of ground, or a finer reach of the woods to which they were approaching; but it was some time before Elizabeth was sensible to any of it; and, though she answered mechanically to the repeated appeals of her uncle and aunt, and seemed to direct her eyes to such objects as they pointed out, she distinguished no part of the scene. Her thoughts were all fixed on that one spot of Pemberley House, whichever it might be, where Mr. Darcy then was.  

Bodenheimer writes, “Austen’s landscape writing is related to romantic narrative and poetic technique in the sense that it points inward, consistently pulling the emphasis away from pictorial description itself to the vision of feeling of the viewer. Her artful uses of descriptions as projections of a character’s sense of self or view of others reveal her sensitivity to the subject-object entanglements implicit in poetical responses in nature, and her ability to put them in the service of her wit.”  

Austen’s description of the beautiful grounds of Pemberley, the estate itself, and the natural elements imbedded in the land leads Elizabeth to reflect on its owner. She cannot help but admire Mr. Darcy and think how she has misjudged him. No matter at what angle she views Pemberley, she cannot find anything to be displeased with, and that is how she is beginning to feel about Mr. Darcy.  

Austen’s use of the pastoral to change her heroine’s social perception of people in the novel is subtle. She uses the beauty of the landscape and Elizabeth’s reaction to the scene to show a change in her perspective of characters like Charlotte, Mr. Collins, and Mr. Darcy. After Elizabeth visits Hunsford and sees the way Charlotte lives, her reaction

27 Ibid., 242.  

towards Mr. Collins changes. The grounds surrounding both the Parsonage and Rosings Park help her to understand why Charlotte chooses Mr. Collins for a husband. The pastoral helps her to change her social perception of Charlotte from one of criticism to one of acceptance. In the case of Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth’s visit to Pemberley cements her change in her opinion of him. The beautiful estate of Pemberley leads her to reflect on her own previously held opinions of its owner, and she begins to reconsider her own feelings towards Mr. Darcy. In these ways, Austen uses the pastoral to illustrate a change in the social perception of Elizabeth towards other characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. 
CHAPTER VII

IMPORTANCE OF LANDSCAPE IN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE FILM ADAPTATIONS

Of all of Jane Austen’s novels, *Pride and Prejudice* has been perhaps the most widely adapted. However, as with any novel that is to be adapted for a film, there are challenges to capturing the essence of the author’s words. One of the many difficulties in transforming the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* into film is the significant part the pastoral plays in her novel. As Ronnie Jo Sokol comments, Austen’s books were intended to be read aloud\(^1\), so the descriptions she provides for her pastoral scenes must allow her readers to picture what she wants them to imagine. With a film adaptation, the director provides that image to his audience, but the challenge still lies in finding a setting and capturing an angle of a place that creates the same image that Austen would have wanted her readers to picture. In this chapter, I will first explore the challenges inherent in adapting a novel into film. Next, I will examine two screen adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* to analyze the directors’ emphases on the pastoral in their films in order to illustrate a character’s identity and development, as well as his or her changes in social perception towards other people.

Geoffrey Wagner divided film adaptations into three types based on their resemblance to the original text: transposition, commentary, and analogy. A transposition follows the original text closely; a commentary changes the novel slightly using a new structure or emphasizing on a new angle; and an analogy uses the novel as a

starting point.  While most of the adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* are transpositions, even the most faithful adaptations of the novel have deviations because novel and film are two very different mediums. George Bluestone, the elder statesman of film criticism, states “…changes are inevitable the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium.”

Parrill argues:

> Interpretation enters through the screenplay, through the actors’ reading of a role, through the choice of settings, through the music, and through the photography. The screenwriter selects incidents and creates scenes. He may omit some characters and expand the roles of others. He may invent dialogue, or create dialogue from the narration; he may convey exposition through additional dialogue or through voiceover. He must adjust to the form – whether a mini-series or a two-hour theatrical release – in deciding which scenes to select and how to structure the program.

In the 1995 BBC mini-series of *Pride and Prejudice*, Director Simon Langton includes the majority of the characters and scenes which Austen writes about because the length of the feature allows for it. In the 2005 theatrical release starring Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen, some characters and scenes are redacted to allow the script to fit into a two hour time frame. As Parill notes, there are numerous factors that influence the making of a film including the adaptation of the novel into a script by the screenwriter, the choice of actors, an actor’s ability to convey the original dialogue to screen, costumes, music, and the choice of setting. The choice of setting for many

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3 Ibid., 10.

4 Ibid., 10-11.

5 Ibid., 14.
Austen films includes many pastoral scenes. Andrew Higson “…complains that the visual styles of these “heritage” films emphasizes the visual beauty of “heritage space” to the detriment of “dramatic goal-oriented action.”6 However, as Parill argues, “…since the action of Jane Austen’s novels takes place primarily within the characters and since the temporal and spatial setting is integral to this action…” it is necessary for the directors of these films to include images of the houses and landscapes that Austen’s characters inhabited and visited.7

As we have seen, Austen uses the pastoral to illustrate the identity of her characters and their development throughout the novel, which aligns with Parrill’s argument. In Chapter IV of Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth Bennet is an independent character who seeks her freedom by taking long walks in the various parks she encounters, enjoying the beauty of nature. In the opening scene of the 1995 BBC version, Jennifer Ehle, who plays Elizabeth, stands atop a hill and observes Mr. Darcy (played by Colin Firth) and Mr. Bingley (played by Crispin Bonham-Carter) riding towards a large house, which the viewer later learns is Netherfield Estate. Mr. Bingley comments, “It’s a fair prospect,” and Mr. Darcy responds, “Pretty enough, I grant you.” Mr. Bingley then further says, “It’s nothing to Pemberley, I know. But I must settle somewhere. Have I your approval?” Mr. Darcy answers with an observation saying,

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6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.
“You’ll find the society something savage,” but Mr. Bingley cheerfully responds with

“Country manners? I think they’re charming.”

Sokol notes:

This prologue establishes a number of details essential to the story. We learn, for instance, that the handsome Bingley and Darcy are athletic young men, not dandies or fops; that Bingley relies on Darcy’s opinion and solicits it before taking action; and that the enticing Elizabeth is moved by the sight of the sportsmen who are racing through the meadow and by the natural beauty surrounding her.

This exchange between the two friends also foreshadows the initial character of each person. Mr. Bingley is easygoing and unaffected while Mr. Darcy is skeptical. Mr. Darcy obviously does not think as well about people in the country as he does about people in the city, describing country folks as “savage.” Also, their exchange foreshadows Mr. Bingley’s reliance on Mr. Darcy for approval, as well as the latter’s influence on Mr. Bingley’s decisions. The reader will again see the impact of Mr. Darcy’s opinion on Mr. Bingley late in the movie when Mr. Bingley is persuaded to leave Netherfield and not to court Jane Bennet.

Elizabeth observes the exchange that takes place below in the valley, where she overlooks standing on a hill, and then exuberantly walks back towards Longbourn and her home. She shows admiration for the beauty of the nature surrounding her; she clearly delights in walking in the woods enjoying her surroundings. When she takes a look

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9 Sokol, “The Importance of Being Married: Adapting Pride and Prejudice,” 95.

10 Austen and Davies, Pride and Prejudice, DVD.
around her to ensure no one is watching her, then proceeds to gallop down the hill.

Elizabeth stops to pick flowers along the way, and she uses a cut through in the woods where some horses graze, which allude that this is a path she has traveled many times before. She enjoys the freedom of running through the English countryside, and these actions illustrate her independent nature.

When she approaches the Bennet house, she hears the arguments from her mother and younger sisters and decides to walk outside for a little while longer. As she walks around the house, Elizabeth sees Mr. Bennet reading in his library, and she stops to acknowledge him. An understanding passes between them; both exchange eye rolls over the chaos that is ensuing inside the house among the younger Bennet daughters. This exchange demonstrates a closeness and affection between father and daughter. It also sets Elizabeth apart from the rest of her family, and it emphasizes the difference in character between Elizabeth and her mother and younger sisters, Kitty and Lydia. While Elizabeth is mature and independent, Kitty and Lydia are immature and frivolous. The first glimpses of Mrs. Bennet imply that she is weak minded and does not have a strong constitution for which to handle conflicts.

Elizabeth then steps into the house at the same time Jane enters the same room, and they share a glance when they hear Mrs. Bennet calling their names. The look exchanged illustrates the close sisterly bond between Elizabeth and Jane. Their mother calling for each of them shows her reliance on her elder daughters to take care of her and any situation that causes her distress. In the first ten minutes of the 1995 BBC version, the audience can already predict the character of a number of the heroes and heroines of
*Pride and Prejudice*, particularly through the film’s use of the novel’s pastoral techniques.

In the 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice*, directed by Joe Wright and starring Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Bennet, the opening scene also illustrates Austen’s heroine as an independent woman. The film opens with Elizabeth walking among nature, engrossed in the reading of her book. She has been wandering among the parks surrounding her house and is walking home. As she approaches the house, Elizabeth witnesses Mrs. Bennet informing Mr. Bennet of the new occupant of Netherfield Estate. Her mother is desperately trying to convince her husband that he should pay a visit to the new occupant in order to make his acquaintance. Elizabeth smiles to herself and looks on affectionately at her parents. Similar to the 1995 version, these initial images of Elizabeth looking in at her family from the outside illustrates that she is different from the rest of her family. Unlike her other sisters, she is the independent one, whose walks by herself demonstrate her need and desire for freedom.

As discussed in Chapter V, Austen also uses the pastoral as a place for Elizabeth to seek solitude and serenity when she feels conflicted. In the 1995 BBC version, Elizabeth decides to go for a walk the morning after Mr. Darcy proposes marriage to her; she embarks on a walk in an attempt to sort through the issues that plague her. She hopes that the fresh air of nature will restore her sense of peace. Elizabeth is still reeling over the previous evening’s confrontation with Mr. Darcy. She continues to ponder the surprise of his declaration of love, her refusal to accept his marriage proposal based on her loyalty to Jane, and the perceived misfortunes of Mr. Wickham, as inflicted by Mr.
Darcy. She strolls in the park connecting Hunsford and Rosings, and the audience can see her need for freedom and an escape from her thoughts when Elizabeth breaks into a run after ensuring no one is nearby. When she slows down, she sees in front of her Mr. Darcy, who is pacing in the grove. She is unable to escape before he notices her; he calls her name and proceeds to hand her a letter, asking her to read it. Elizabeth is intrigued and finds a log to sit and read the contents. Unfortunately, the contents only add to her distress. However, as she walks through the park back to Hunsford, she recalls specific incidents at Netherfield Ball, in the way of flashbacks, that prove the truth of Mr. Darcy’s words in his letter. While frustrated, she comes to see Mr. Darcy’s perspective.

In the 2005 film version of *Pride and Prejudice*, Keira Knightley’s Elizabeth is walking in a park when she is caught in a downpour. As this scene is followed by her attendance at church and her discussion during the service with Colonel Fitzwilliam, one can assume that she has been out walking and pondering the information that Colonel Fitzwilliam has just provided to her. The audience can imagine Elizabeth is trying to sort through her emotions regarding Mr. Darcy’s interference in the blossoming relationship between Mr. Bingley and her sister, Jane, which Colonel Fitzwilliam relays to her. This information only further adds to her dislike of Mr. Darcy. As she is pondering these events, it begins to rain heavily, and she runs to seek shelter underneath a marble structure. She is startled when Mr. Darcy approaches her. While the scene that ensues with Mr. Darcy proposing is not faithful to the text, Director Wright creatively incorporated Elizabeth’s love for the pastoral into the development of the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth tries to restore her serenity by way of
communing with nature, but her thoughts are interrupted by Mr. Darcy and his proposal. The heavy rain dramatizes the already tense relationship between the two characters and destroys the sense of peace that the pastoral landscape should bring with it.

Later, towards the conclusion of the film, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy encounter one another in the park that separates the Bennet house and Netherfield Estate. Both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are unable to sleep as the result of Lady Catherine’s visit to the Bennet house in the middle of the night. Lady Catherine rudely wakes the Bennet family in order to speak to Elizabeth and attempt to acquire Elizabeth’s assurances that she has no intentions of marrying her nephew. The pastoral scene in which Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy encounter one another is vastly different from the rainy scene in the park in which Mr. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth earlier in the film. Here, we can see that it is very early in the morning, with the rolling mists and fog that indicate dawn is breaking. The two characters are walking towards one another and meet in the middle, implying that they both now understand the perspectives of the other person. Each is walking amidst nature’s beauty in an effort to restore his or her troubled mind. Only when they look up do they see that they have been walking towards one another. As they discuss the changes in their feelings for one another, they come together; holding each other’s hand, their foreheads touching; the audience understands this is a new beginning for the two of them, which is dramatized by the sun rising behind the new couple. Here, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy’s serenity is restored with the assistance of a walk among nature.

Austen also cleverly uses the pastoral as a way to illustrate a change in social perception, which was discussed in the previous chapter. The turning point in the novel
that demonstrates a clear change in one character’s perception of another is the infamous scene wherein Elizabeth visits Pemberley during a tour of the English countryside with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner. As such, no *Pride and Prejudice* film adaptation would be complete without including it. In the 1995 BBC version, there are several shots of Elizabeth and the Gardiners riding in a phaeton through open fields and tree-lined paths for several minutes before they even catch their first glimpse of Pemberley House. Mr. Gardiner remarks to Elizabeth during these shots, “I think we’ve seen woods and groves enough to satisfy even your enthusiasm for them, Lizzy.” Elizabeth, in breathtaking wonder, responds, “I confess. I had no idea Pemberley was such a great estate. Should we reach the house before dark do you think?”11 The anticipation clearly is mounting as the group rides through park after park. It is obvious they have been on the grounds for some time and still have not seen the house.

Then, a break in the trees shows a clear view to the majestic estate that is Pemberley House. Elizabeth is clearly enraptured with her first glimpse. While she stares in wonder, Mrs. Gardiner turns to Elizabeth and says, “I think one would be willing to put up with a great deal to be mistress of Pemberley.”12 The group is then given a tour by Mrs. Reynolds, the housekeeper at Pemberley. She shows Elizabeth a nice prospect from one of the upstairs windows, which overlook a lake. Elizabeth is amazed that no matter what view she looks from, there is no bad angle to view the estate. These views of

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.
the pastoral cause her to reflect on the virtues of its owner. Viewing the Pemberley Estate in all its grandeur causes her to reconsider her previous opinions of Mr. Darcy. Then, while viewing the gardens in the back of the house, Elizabeth unexpectedly encounters Mr. Darcy, who is still wet from his swim in the lake upon his early return to his home. Both are startled at seeing the other, but they exchange pleasantries. When Mr. Darcy excuses himself, Elizabeth begins to fret, and she frantically wishes to leave the grounds. The Gardiners agree, since their niece is quite upset, but before they reach the carriage, Mr. Darcy appears again, this time more formerly attired. He asks Elizabeth to introduce him to her friends, and Elizabeth is astonished at the amiableness and ease with which he interacts with her family. They all have a pleasant afternoon touring the grounds at Pemberley, and Mr. Darcy sends them off with the wish of seeing them all again soon. From the first moments Elizabeth enters the grounds of Pemberley to her last glance at Mr. Darcy as she leaves with the Gardiners, Elizabeth’s view of Mr. Darcy has completely been transformed. Without the emphasis of the pastoral, this transformation could not take place.

Similarly, in the 2005 film version, Keira Knightley’s Elizabeth is also stunned by her first look at Pemberley. The camera shows the carriage carrying Elizabeth and the Gardiners traveling up a very long tree-lined road towards a break in the woods. Then, the camera pans to a picture of Pemberley House separated by an enormous lake. The viewer can see the tiny carriage carrying the guests arriving in front of the house. Elizabeth’s disbelieving chuckle as she stands up from the carriage conveys her shock at what she has seen thus far of Pemberley Estate. As the housekeeper takes Elizabeth and
the Gardiners on a tour through the various rooms, Elizabeth is enamored with her surroundings. However, it is when the housekeeper shows the guests the bust of Mr. Darcy that Elizabeth’s facial expression betrays signs of remorse for all that could have been; she clearly realizes that she was wrong about Mr. Darcy and is saddened by the fact that she may have lost the one man who could have made her happy. The housekeeper asks Elizabeth, “Do you not think him a handsome man, miss?” and Elizabeth responds, “Yes, I dare say he is.”13 The admiration and sadness in Elizabeth’s facial expression indicate a clear change in her social perception of Mr. Darcy; she is regretful.

When Elizabeth wanders into another room of the house and hears a piano playing, she is curious and follows the sound. She peeps through an open door to see a young lady playing, who then stops suddenly when she realizes Mr. Darcy has arrived. This affectionate moment between Mr. Darcy’s younger sister, Georgiana, and himself cements Elizabeth’s change in perception of Mr. Darcy; it overwhelms her. Then, Mr. Darcy catches her watching, and Elizabeth runs away. But, Mr. Darcy stops her outside the house. An awkward moment filled with longing between the two people ensues, and Elizabeth breaks the tension by begging off and returning to the inn. The next scene shows Elizabeth walking briskly over the untamed land, escaping back into the pastoral to seek comfort and sort through her conflicted feelings.

In both the 1995 television miniseries and 2005 movie of *Pride and Prejudice*, the directors of each film are careful to incorporate the importance of the pastoral from Austen’s writing into their adaptations. Understanding that in Austen’s novels, the words

13 Jane Austen and Deborah Moggach, *Pride and Prejudice*, DVD, directed by Joe Wright (Los Angeles: Focus Features, 2005).
and description of the setting are far more significant than any dramatic action; the
directors took care to ensure that every piece of landscape conveys Austen’s unique style.
It is through her inclusion and description of the pastoral that Austen can so deftly reveal
the identity, character, and social perception of the heroes and heroines of her novel; the
directors work diligently to preserve the same outcome when adapting *Pride and Prejudice* into a visual medium.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Today, Jane Austen’s novels continue to remain popular some two hundred years after they were first published. In some ways, they have gained even more recognition as the result of the many screen and theatrical adaptations that have been released. Of all of Austen’s novels, *Pride and Prejudice* is the most well-known which for modern audiences is in part attributed to the “Darcy Mania” that ensued following the 1995 BBC television mini-series adaptation of the novel. However, Austen’s novels have needed time to earn respect in literary history. In the early years of Austen’s career, she had a difficult time even finding a willing publisher; further, after her manuscripts were published, some of her own peers could not understand why Austen’s novels were well-received.

In 1848, in a letter dated more than twenty years after Austen’s death, Charlotte Brontë writes to George H. Lewes and asks:

> Why do you like Miss Austen? I am puzzled on that point…I had not seen *Pride and Prejudice* till I read that sentence of yours, and then I got the book. And what did I find? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses.¹

As Barbara Britton Wenner argues, one of the reasons Brontë disliked Austen’s writing was because of the landscape used in her novels. “Brontë claims that Austen adhered to

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the “cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers.” However, while Austen’s descriptions of the English landscape were neat and tidy, her descriptions of the Picturesque were intended to serve as more than just a setting for her characters to develop their stories. What is lost on Brontë is Austen’s clever literary technique of using the pastoral scenes to describe the identity and values of her heroines, demonstrate their character development, and the changes in their social perception of other characters in the novel so that her heroes and heroines can achieve their happy endings.

For Austen, her upbringing and personal appreciation of the English countryside was so strong that she became an avid reader and admirer of people who studied and wrote on the Picturesque. Her passion is attributed in part to her own family’s deep involvement in their farming land. As a result, she had a strong preference for walking in the parks and woods surrounding her home, enjoying the fresh air that can only be found in nature. She would later use her own passions as identifying characteristics for the heroines of her novels.

Further, in the early years, as the Picturesque Movement gained momentum, she was a judicious admirer of William Gilpin and studied his teachings. As illustrated in the previous chapters, Austen’s passion for the Picturesque is incorporated throughout *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen shows her knowledge of Gilpin’s works in the descriptions and dialogues she provides the characters of her novel. She also uses Gilpin’s guidebooks on the pastoral to illustrate the characteristics and values of her heroine, Elizabeth Bennet. The pastoral is used as a way to identify Elizabeth’s independent nature and her desire for

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freedom and autonomy. Austen also uses the pastoral to demonstrate the positive and negative characteristics of her heroine, as compared to other members of her family.

Elizabeth’s appreciation of nature is a positive reflection of her character because she uses the time spent walking in the woods to contemplate serious issues. Conversely, Elizabeth’s mother and younger sisters, Kitty and Lydia, react to the pastoral in a negative way, reinforcing their negative characters; they commune with nature only to partake in frivolous activities such as pursuing men rather than any activity that would improve their minds. In this way, Austen uses the pastoral to demonstrate her heroine’s identity and show character development.

Austen also uses the pastoral to demonstrate a change in the social perception of her heroine towards other characters. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the two events where the pastoral is used to change Elizabeth’s perception is Charlotte’s marriage to Mr. Collins and her opinions of Mr. Darcy. Her social perception changes on Charlotte’s marriage after Elizabeth visits Hunford and Rosings and sees the material advantages of the estate and the grounds that befitt Charlotte’s temperament and desires for a happy life. In the case of Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth’s perception changes over many months and takes place in several areas – Hunsford, Rosings, Pemberley – as the result of information that she learns and ponders in the groves and parks of each of those places. What truly completes the transformation in her attitude towards Mr. Darcy is her visit to the Pemberley Estate, where Elizabeth equates a good estate with a good man. Since Pemberley is so well-situated, she cannot fathom now that the owner would be anything but virtuous.
While Austen leaves the reader to imagine the English landscape based upon her limited descriptions, the film adaptations provide the audience with that picture. The adage that “a picture is worth a thousand words,” in Austen’s novels, could not be truer. As discussed in the previous chapter, the success of the 1995 BBC television mini-series and 2005 theatrical adaptations of the novel is owed to the inclusion of many pastoral scenes because of the importance Austen places on the English landscape and what it meant for the identity, character development, and changes in social perception of her heroines. Without the selection of appropriate settings that provide the picture that Austen would have wanted her viewers to imagine, Austen’s novels could not have been adapted into a visual medium as successfully.

While some novelists, like Charlotte Brontë, did not appreciate Austen’s style of writing because of the incorporation of landscape to show characterization and human development, this thesis has demonstrated that the pastoral plays a significant role in defining *Pride and Prejudice*. Without Austen’s numerous references and descriptions to nature, the reader would not understand the importance of certain values, like freedom and independence, to her heroine. The Picturesque is a metaphorical picture of those values and demonstrate that an independent, intelligent, and witty woman, such as Elizabeth, is not too stubborn to change and admit when she is wrong in her opinions of others. The pastoral assists with defining her heroine, Elizabeth, and illustrate the values she cherishes. The landscape also provides a place where her heroine can seek solitude and peace in order to resolve her personal conflicts and seek fulfillment in her life. The pastoral is used as an effective literary tool that artistically shows human values that
Austen’s readers can identify with themselves. When people read Austen’s novels, they are drawn into a world where her heroines will make mistakes, but where they will also triumph and overcome their pride and prejudices, and ultimately, achieve their happy endings. It is stories like *Pride and Prejudice* about heroines her audience can relate to, that make her novels or films memorable and worth reading or watching time and time again.
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Secondary Literature


