

**Material Mobility and the Horse-Drawn Carriage in
the Age of Austen**

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Abstract

My project presents an original theorisation of the horse-drawn carriage by examining its dual position as both ‘object’ and ‘space’ in the works of Jane Austen. Using a rigorous interdisciplinary methodology, I analyse the carriage itself, and Austen’s engagement with it as a vehicle and material object, through the exploration of two distinct but interconnected theoretical avenues that shape the two parts of my thesis: eighteenth-century material culture, and literary and social geography.

Scholars have long noted that the rendering of material solidity is rarely a priority in Austen’s work in comparison to its prominent role in other Georgian texts. However, my thesis makes exciting connections between two major bodies of scholarship within the Romantic period – Austen studies and material culture studies – to unearth the key role of objects in Austen’s fiction. My research adds to the current corpus of material investigation by Jennie Batchelor, Barbara Benedict, Lynn Festa, and Bruno Latour (among others), but closes a gap in knowledge by championing an object (the carriage) hitherto overlooked by Austen studies and elided by the academy altogether.

Throughout my thesis I contextualise Austen and her carriages among the literary vehicles of writers such as Henry Fielding, Frances Burney, and Thomas De Quincey, underscoring Austen’s unique manipulation of the carriage as a spatial entity. Concurrently, my thesis also extends current scholarship on Enlightenment and Romantic notions of movement and emotion by Sara Landreth, Miranda Burgess, and Danielle Bobker. By addressing questions concerning the relationship between the carriage’s provision of mobility and the psychology of emotion of Austen’s characters, my project rethinks how we read the material and spatial meanings of her texts.

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Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

Austen's Carriages

In *Northanger Abbey* (1817), the most enchanting aspects of Isabella Thorpe's proposed nuptials to James Morland include 'a carriage at her command, a new name on her tickets, and a brilliant exhibition of hoop rings on her finger'.¹ The charms of becoming a figure of envy to Isabella's new and old acquaintances alike centre not on having found eternal companionship and love, but on the potential material acquisitions that her marriage to James may afford her. Pride of place on Isabella's list of anticipated assets is the horse-drawn carriage. Her urgency to assume command of a vehicle is symptomatic of the eighteenth century's preoccupation with physical and social mobility, both of which could be advanced through shrewd conspicuous consumption of a carriage. Isabella's aspirations for a carriage as a social signifier of her new status as wife and woman of means, though, form just one facet of the period's vehicular rhetoric that centred on identity formation. Jane Austen's fictions, from her teenage writing to her mature works, exemplify the carriage's complex position in eighteenth-century society. Through a rigorous examination of Austen's many representations of horse-drawn vehicles, this thesis untangles the carriage's deeply fraught relationship with social and gendered identities, and addresses its power to influence sociability and behaviours that unfold within its spaces.

My discussions throughout this thesis unpack women's and men's relations to carriages in Austen's writing. Often, this entails considering horse-drawn vehicles that appear as objects in her fiction, carriages that are given enough visual shading and depth to appear as fully realised things as well as spaces to be occupied. However, not all of the many carriages that Austen included actually materialised on the page. Some of the most prominent

¹ Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 90.

Austenian carriages, like the barouche-landau in *Emma* (1816), only appear *off* the page, adjacent to the present action but habitually discussed by characters. Regardless of their physical presence in the narrative, then, a carriage is never far from the minds of Austen's characters, and this thesis works to understand the nature and motivations behind this urgency to claim proximity to carriages. In examining both the visualised and the spectres of carriages in Austen's writing, my study underscores the integral role of carriages in eighteenth-century social and economic contexts. I bring a wealth of historical and visual contexts to illuminate period perception of carriages, and how Austen engages with those perceptions.

Scholarly treatments of eighteenth-century material culture have encompassed a broad spectrum of objects that gained popularity across the period, from muffs, fans, pockets, and other fashionable adornments worn on the body, to tea-table accoutrements, and domestic fittings and furnishings.² Many of these studies contribute to the valuable critical discussions of the significance of artefacts in Austen's writing. For example, Janet Todd's collection of essays, *Jane Austen in Context* (2005) provides insight into Austen's engagement with consumer practices surrounding things like books, dress, and food, while Barbara Hardy in her monograph *A Reading of Jane Austen* (1975) dedicates a chapter to the intersections between characters and their possessions, most prominently their homes. In her contribution to Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite's *A Companion to Jane Austen* (2009), Barbara M. Benedict's chapter 'The Trouble with Things' uncovers Austen's dramatization of

² Example studies include Amanda Vickery's *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2009); Laura Engel's *Austen, Actresses and Accessories: Much Ado About Muffs* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015); Barbara Burnham and Ariane Fennetaux's *The Pocket: A Hidden History of Women's Lives, 1660–1900* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2019); Chloe Wigston Smith's *Women, Work, and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013); Jennie Batchelor's *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005); Markman Ellies's *Tea and the Tea-Table in Eighteenth-Century England* (Pickering and Chatto, 2010); and Hannah Greig's *The Beau Monde* (Oxford UP, 2013). The new materialisms turn in eighteenth-century studies has also brought the philosophy on the mind to bear of material objects. Example studies include Sean Silver's *The Mind is a Collection: Case Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Pennsylvania: Penn Press, 2015), and Lynn Festa's *Fiction Without Humanity: Person, Animal, Thing in Early Enlightenment Literature and Culture* (Pennsylvania: Penn Press, 2019).

consumable goods' role in competitive sociability.³ More recently, Austen's world of things has garnered attention from full length studies, such as Laura Engel's monograph *Austen, Actresses, and Accessories: Much Ado About Muffs* (2015). Engel's study, broadly an examination of Austen's intervention with the period's fashion trends and commodity culture, seeks to illuminate the fashionable accessory, the muff, as a status symbol complicit in feminine endeavours for upwards social trajectories. Moreover, in drawing upon a variety of theatrical, literary, and visual representations in which the versatile muff signifies a spectrum of meaning, her work uncovers Austen's astute manipulation of the accessory's inherent paradoxes, complexities, and significance. Hilary Davidson's recent work, *Dress in the Age of Jane Austen: Regency Fashion* (2019) presents authoritative insight into distinctive Regency fashions as depicted in Austen's literary world, understanding dress as a reflection of Britain's turbulent transition into the modern era. Davidson examines Austen's fictions and letters as entry points for unpacking the eighteenth century's complex fashion and textile realm, exploring the relationship between clothing and the self but also understanding dress in broader contexts as her work telescopes outwards from the sphere of home and self toward national and global perspectives. Finally, Sandie Byrne's rich and wide-ranging study situates Austen's completed works and juvenile fragments against wider cultural and legal perspectives in her investigation into eighteenth-century debates concerning ownership and possession in the marriage market. Byrne underscores the significance of objects across Austen's texts in lieu of figurative language to shade and contour her narrative world, stating

³ There are many essays pertinent to the study of material objects in Austen's writing in Todd's edited collection, see for example 'Book Production' by James Raven, 194-203; 'Dress' by Antje Blank, 234-251; and 'Food' by Maggie Lane, 262-66, in *Jane Austen in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010). See also Barbara Hardy's chapter 'Properties and Possessions' in *A Reading of Jane Austen* (Peter Sabor, 1975, published with corrections by Athlone Press, 1979), 136-65. See Barbara M. Benedict 'The Trouble with Things: Objects and the Commodification of Sociability' in Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite *A Companion to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 343-54. Paula Byrne's astute work on the minutiae in Austen's writing for the general reader is also excellent, particularly her chapter that takes an in depth look at the part carriages play in Austen's novels. See Paula Byrne *The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things* (London: Harper Press, 2013), 109-22.

that objects ‘become metonyms of other structures and extensions of characters or reflections of their true colours’.⁴

Such investigations into Austen’s interaction with the material world have predominantly tracked her engagement with objects which, though diverse, are united in their bonds to the domestic sphere as paraphernalia of the indoors. My study aims to diversify this rich body of work by drawing focus to an object that occupies the outdoors, one that traverses the landscape and geographical space between one domestic space and another. Sandie Byrne’s observation that ‘Austen’s employment of tangible objects and her descriptions of those objects, though economical, are rarely inconsequential’ applies, in pertinent ways, to Austen’s deployment of the carriage across her novels and the fragments of teenage writing.⁵ Not once does Austen elaborate on the physical conditions of any of the carriages that appear across her fiction (save for the long list of fittings cobbled onto John Thorpe’s gig in *Northanger Abbey*). This absence of visual contour is, as I will show, at odds with carriage representations in other mediums, which routinely draw attention to a vehicle’s paintwork, fine fabric interiors, or grace of motion. Rather, we are provided simply with the name of specific carriage typologies: phaetons, gigs and curricles, barouches and barouche-landaus. As this thesis will show, carriage names immediately signalled the social and personal status of the characters associated with each vehicle type, and drew on cultural and social understandings of precise carriage types shared by Austen and her readers.

For Austen, invoking a carriage makes extra visualisation and characterisation superfluous, and I suggest such narrative economy testifies to the horse-drawn carriage’s prominence in the eighteenth-century world of goods. Indeed, carriages proliferated during the period, to the extent they were a ubiquitous presence on national thoroughfares, in urban

⁴ Sandie Byrne, *Jane Austen’s Possessions and Disposessions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), 15.

⁵ Byrne, 1.

centres, and provincial towns alike. As with the smaller and more portable *à la mode* objects, the popularity of the carriage permeated literary and visual culture, with vehicles and their drivers attracting both admiration and censure as their images were replicated in novels, newspapers, poems, portraiture, and visual caricatures. In spite of the carriage's entrenchment in British social and cultural life, however, the horse-drawn vehicle has attracted less scholarly attention than the many other fashionable objects across the eighteenth century, and certainly less than it requires. Though the carriage receives regular mention in material investigations that draw parallels between conspicuous consumption and status formation, it usually garners minimal critical discussion, pigeon-holed simply as the ultimate expression of social aspiration and power. In recent years, however, the intricacies of the carriage's physical and cultural properties have begun to be mined more thoroughly in studies that examine the vehicle's social and literary positions. For instance, Sara Landreth's work on vehicular it-narratives provides invaluable insights into period concerns regarding the nature of the soul and self-motion. For Landreth, vehicular narrators contribute to Enlightenment debates surrounding spatial change as a component in the study of human nature and emotion. Danielle Bobker has also addressed Laurence Sterne's representation of sociability and the carriage's power to influence and govern social interactions, while Chris Ewers' recent monograph foregrounds the concurrent rapid development of vehicular travel and popularisation of the novel genre in the eighteenth century.⁶ Claire Grogan identifies several ways that Austen deploys carriages in her works, many of which I unpack across this thesis, such as their use as 'external indicators of wealth or social standing but also, and more surprisingly, as indicators of the driver or passenger's emotional state and even sexual

⁶ See, for example, 'The Vehicle of the Soul: Motion and Emotion in Vehicular It-Narratives' (*Eighteenth Century Fiction* 26, no. 1, 2013, 93-120) by Sara Landreth; 'Carriages, Conversation, and A Sentimental Journey' (*Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 35, 2006, 243-66) by Danielle Bobker; and *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018) by Chris Ewers.

satisfaction'.⁷ While Grogan astutely recognises the capaciousness of the carriage in Austen's fictions, by drawing on a wide range of print and visual sources my thesis provides the essential context with which to deepen our understanding of the carriage in eighteenth-century literature and culture. These studies have shaped my thinking about the carriage as a self-contained object of conspicuous consumption and as a series of interconnected spaces that can be occupied and moved. These overlapping and often contradictory aspects of the carriage contribute to the sheer capaciousness of the vehicle's inventory of provisions, for instance not only is the carriage an object that can create a platform for sartorial display, it is also a space within which to retreat from the prying gaze of onlookers. By foregrounding the unique duality of the horse-drawn vehicle in Austen's work, I reveal the carriage's pivotal role in eighteenth-century literary and material worlds as conveyance and class-marker that communicated intricately nuanced and subtle ideas of sociability, aspirations, and identities. If attention to Austen's material world has largely focused on domestic objects, my thesis enlarges the scope of her material contexts by calling attention to objects that move and can move her characters both physically and emotionally. Moreover, my shift in focus calls into question the scale of Austen's objects that have thus far been subjected to scholarly scrutiny. Austen's famous self-deprecating quote about the 'little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which [she] work[s] with so fine a Brush' could easily have been a key influence in diverting critical attention toward the minutiae of Austen's material world.⁸ I draw attention back to the very large objects that her characters regularly discuss and obsess over.

Austen was not alone in her references to carriages and carriage scenes in her fiction, and indeed drew on the work of previous writers who took care to include the carriage and its spaces as figurative and functional tools in their work. Frances Burney, for instance, relies

⁷ Claire Grogan, 'Jane Austen's Vehicular Means of Motion, Exchange and Transmission', *Lumen: Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23 (2004): 189–90.

⁸ Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen's Letters*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 337.

upon the phaeton carriage's reputation as a modish yet dangerous conveyance to underscore women's often negative experiences of carriage travel, particularly as victims of male carelessness in their pursuit of thrill and pleasure from fast driving in *Evelina* (1778) as we shall see in chapter one. Henry Fielding approaches the carriage differently, regularly employing the coach journey motif to enact temporal and geographical relocations, but to also add complexity to the narrative, such as in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) whereby the twists and turns of physical transit unveil Joseph's inner growth and development. Austen recalls this aspect of Fielding's methodology in *Northanger Abbey*'s heroine, Catherine Morland, during her arduous journey home which I examine in chapter five. In yet another approach to the carriage's narrative capaciousness, Laurence Sterne manipulates the idiosyncrasies of the désobligeant and vis-à-vis interiors to shade interpersonal experiences in the opening scenes of *A Sentimental Journey* (1768). Austen's use of the carriage is certainly shaped by these earlier examples and several critics have placed her work in relation to Burney, Fielding, and others.⁹ As I will show, Austen calls upon the carriage, as Burney does, as an object for propping up a variety of identity expressions, and though Austen uses this technique frequently across her fiction to varying degrees, each example is tailored for each character. Like Fielding, Austen uses the carriage as an economical means of shifting perspective, so that we may leave characters as they drive off in the carriage at the end of a chapter, and re-join them hours or days later in a new location at the start of the next chapter. Also present are scenes set within and around the vehicle spaces, and like Sterne Austen manipulates these spaces to create or relieve social tensions, the limited space of the carriage acting as the set upon which her characters must navigate the pitfalls of polite sociability within mobile spaces. Whereas those earlier novelists employ a specific element of the carriage's physical

⁹ See, for example, Jo Alyson Parker's study *The Author's Inheritance: Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, and the Establishment of the Novel* (Northern Illinois UP, 1998), and Chris Ewers's *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018), 162-186.

or abstract conditions for a singular purpose, in Austen's writing a broad spectrum of the carriage's signifying capacity is subtly actioned. Indeed, in her hands, the carriage takes on an unprecedented versatility and figurative significance. Across my study, I demonstrate the mutability of Austen's carriages both as objects and as narrative tools. As we shall see, it is perhaps not that Austen utilises the carriage in a completely new way from her contemporaries, it is how she expertly meshes all the carriage's variant uses into the fabric of her novels that is uniquely fresh. For authors writing in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the horse-drawn carriage as a narrative trope was deployed in a 'set carriage scene', in which action took place in and around a vehicle. For Austen, as we shall see, the carriage operates so complexly and so richly that even carriages offstage develop insights into her characters.

Just as my thesis aims to enlarge the scope of Austen's material landscape and the carriage's literary significance, it also reconstructs the lost material history and archives of eighteenth-century carriages. Studies of carriages often restrict themselves to genealogical approaches to the evolution of carriage design since the Roman chariot, in which details of connoisseurship overwhelm the vehicle's central place in the social and material histories of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ My thesis, however, links the carriage's technical details to social and cultural contexts to show how the object's embeddedness in eighteenth-century life was often contingent upon the unique physical properties of various carriage typologies. These distinctive technical, mechanical, and artistic properties of individual carriages recommended different vehicles to a plethora of circumstances. The carriage operated as a useful – and central – tool for social signification.

¹⁰ For example, Ralph Straus's *Carriages & Coaches: Their History & Their Evolution* (London: Martin Secker, 1912).

The Carriage in the Long Eighteenth Century

The current field of carriage historiography is composed of a relatively limited pool of studies that track the major developments of vehicular design and engineering from the Roman chariot and medieval wagons and carts, to the elegantly crafted conveyances of the Georgian period and steam carriages of the nineteenth century. The majority of these studies, such as G. A. Thrupp's *The History of Coaches* (1877) were composed in the years that saw the horse and carriage give way to the rail network, and present nostalgic surveys of erstwhile symbols of modernity rather than critical scholarship.¹¹ Thrupp, in his introduction to the volume, remarks on the difficulty of tracking the developments in the art of coach-building during the eighteenth century, 'on account of the absence of any connected history, and also from the very vague descriptions contained in books on the subject'.¹² Though he goes on to surmise that there undoubtedly remains 'rich mines of information unsearched... because unknown', in the 140 years since Thrupp compiled his history the landscape of eighteenth-century coach-building still remains relatively shrouded in mystery.¹³ Ralph Straus, writing in 1912, sought to plug the gap in the 'diffuse' histories of the carriage aimed at the general reader, and Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake in the 1950s lectured and wrote on the art of coach-building while amassing a collection of carriages that went on to form the Maidstone Carriage Museum in 1946.¹⁴ These works, though useful reference points, veer towards connoisseurship and lack the robust bibliographic detail that would make them valuable entry points into even the most famous coach-building workshops. More recently, Rudolf

¹¹ See George Athelstane Thrupp *The History of Coaches* (London: Kirby & Endean, 1877). Similar studies include *Early Carriages and Roads* (London: Vinton, 1903), and *Modern Carriages* (London: Vinton, 1905), both by Walter Gilbey, though these histories both predominantly focus on carriages popular in the mid to late nineteenth century.

¹² George Athelstane Thrupp, *The History of Coaches* (London: Kerby & Endean, 1877), vi.

¹³ Thrupp, vi.

¹⁴ See Ralph Straus *Carriages and Coaches: Their History and Evolution* (London: Martin Secker, 1912). Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake's lecture 'Carriages and their History', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 100, (1952): 167-88, provides a lively, if brief, overview of certain carriage models and their cultural contexts.

Wackernagel and Jean Hopkinson have worked to redress such scholarly gaps in a fascinating article on the art of late-eighteenth-century coach-building, where they provide a much-needed corrective to the sparsely researched coach-building industry. Moreover, their study illuminates the business practices of one of the eighteenth century's most prominent and revered master coach builders, John Hatched of Long Acre, whose innovations, as we shall see below, were a prime influence on the industry.¹⁵

In general, studies of carriage making and their developments place heavy reliance on the same two coach-making treatises from the eighteenth century (Thrupp's volume freely lifts entire passages from these original works). The first of these texts is William Bridges Adams' *English Pleasure Carriages* (1837). His work is at once a history of the art of carriage design, encompassing everything from a survey of state coaches, descriptions of defining features of carriage models, lists of materials, ironwork and spring styles, to lists of artisans and inventions, and definitions of taste. It also presents a collection of the period's most fashionable carriages. The purchase of a carriage was a significant financial investment and the volume thus provides a compendium of information to help guide prospective carriage buyers in their decision, and acts as a reference for makers. For Bridges Adams, 'locomotion is the most important agent in human civilisation', and as such the advancement of carriage design must endeavour to facilitate locomotion with elegance, beauty, and comfort in mind.¹⁶ The carriages in his collection, as the title of the volume suggests, err toward the expensive, opulent end of carriage design, with many of these carriages intended for use solely for pleasurable outings and sightseeing rather than extended transit.¹⁷

¹⁵ See Rudolph H. Wackernagel and Jean Hopkinson's article 'Carlton House Mews: The State Coach of the Prince of Wales and of the Later Kings of Hanover. A Study in the Late-Eighteenth-Century "Mystery" of Coach Building' *Furniture History*, 31 (1995): 47-115.

¹⁶ William Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages: Their Origin, History, Varieties, Materials, Construction, Defects, Improvements, and Capabilities* (London: C. Knight & co., 1837), 1.

¹⁷ In my second chapter I explain with greater depth what constitutes a pleasure carriage.

The second source – perhaps more well-known and regularly cited – is William Felton’s *A Treatise on Carriages* (published as two volumes in 1794 and 1796). Felton, himself a master coach-builder, composed his treatise out of frustration at the lack of transparency in the industry, and like Bridges Adams, intended his work as a guide for prospective buyers. Unlike Bridges Adams, Felton provides minute breakdowns of the sorts of pricing that can be expected from coach-builders for carriage bodies, the different methods of hanging the body from springs, and additions such as lamps, ironwork, and interior fabrics. His approach is more technically-focused and includes minutely labelled diagrams and cross sections of a range of vehicles from small two-wheel gigs to large coaches. These diagrams and illustrations likely contributed to his works’ longevity and continual replication in subsequent studies of the carriage.¹⁸ These texts are invaluable reference points that I frequently refer to in my exposition of the physical conditions of certain carriage models, as they constitute the period’s most thorough and complete studies of the carriage. However, over the course of my research I have found the endeavour to neatly categorise every carriage typography using the surviving evidence to be an exercise in futility. Contemporary writing such as Felton’s and Bridges Adams’ regularly assumes basic knowledge of carriage terminology and principles from their readers, and employs technical terms interchangeably that seemed to hybridise as much as the vehicles did themselves. For the sake of protecting trade secrets, carriage makers often used ambiguous terms in reference to the building and repairing of carriages in trade literature, though Georgians themselves commanded an understanding of precise vehicle types robust enough to easily differentiate carriage typologies on sight, as the numerous distinctions made in literature and art confirm. As I will show in chapter three, carriage classification was an indeterminate art, as contradictions in

¹⁸ Claire Grogan refers to Felton’s *Treatise* in an appendix to the Broadview Press edition of *Northanger Abbey*, noting the immediate success of the two volumes and including plates of some of the era’s most popular carriages such as the ‘Chaise and Four’, the ‘Phaeton’, and both the ‘Curricule’ and the ‘Gig’. See Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Claire Grogan, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2004), 271–74.

definitions not only appear between one coach-builder and another, but also arise over the course of one single treatise.

Whilst the art of carriage design and development is a murky history, it is also clear that the coach-making industry was a lively one, and at certain moments innovation exploded, corresponding with the improvement of the British road network. Ewers's work, for example, has shown the accelerated expansion of Britain's infrastructure through the implementation of the Turnpike network, led to the nation's increasing obsession with speed. The Turnpike network, however, was not the only shaping force behind carriage design and technical innovation. As my thesis shows, the market responded to demands for and changing tastes in comfort, space, height, customisability, and price. William Felton (who I position as a coach-making expert throughout my study) hails master coach-maker John Hatchett as the father of the period's carriage design and engineering innovations. Felton attests that 'To [Hatchett] every coach-maker is highly indebted, as present they seldom build without copying his designs', while noting the success of other coach-makers of 'very slender abilities' is due solely to patronage from 'Great Personage[s]' rather than from their own merit as coach-makers.¹⁹ The 'Coach of Safety' (Figure ii), exemplifies Hatchett's unique innovations in carriage design and engineering, but the fine colour work and intricacies in the proposed decoration points to Hatchett's refined artistry. Hatchett, apprenticed in 1851, went on to open his own coach-building premises in Long Acre (see Figure iii), the stronghold of British coach-making, and at the height of his success enjoyed patronage from royal clients such as the Dukes of Gloucester and Cumberland. Hatchett's trade card (Figure i) invokes heavenly imagery as part of his marketing strategy, and apart from a carriage wheel in the bottom left corner of the image, the absence of coaching imagery is unique in comparison

¹⁹ William Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages: Comprehending Coaches, Chariots, Phaetons, Curricles, Whiskies, &c.: Together with Their Proper Harness, in Which the Fair Prices of Every Article Are Accurately Stated*, vol. 1 (London: J. Debrett, 1794), v.

with other trade ephemera (examples of which are examined in chapter three). The simplicity and elegance of the Romanesque figure and cherubs is a testament to Hatchett's success, only his name and royal patronage is required to draw in business.



Figure i: Hatchett's trade card, from the Heal Collection of trade ephemera. Photographed with permission from The British Museum, London.

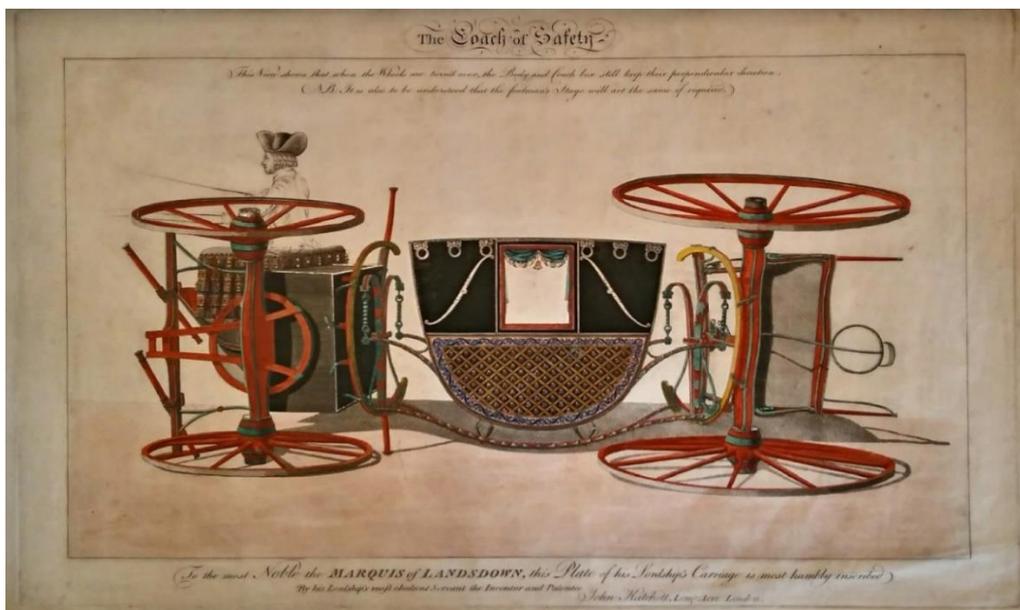


Figure ii: 'The Coach of Safety', designed and patented by Hatchett. This, the second of two finely painted designs, demonstrates the unique method of hanging the carriage body so that it maintains an upright position in the event of an overturning. Photographed with permission from the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.



Figure iii: Hatchett's coach-building premises. Photographed with permission from the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

The writer Sophie von La Roche visited Hatchett's coach-building premises in the famous coaching district of Long Acre, London, in September 1786, and wrote up a lengthy description of the business. Her recollections reflect the sheer industriousness of the business, and provide rare insight into the mystery of the coach building process:

We went to Hatchett, one of London's most famous master saddlers, who employs several hundred workmen in his service. At home we have no conception of such a saddler, with premises for cartwrights, smiths, harness-makers, carvers, painters, upholsterers, gilders – all kinds of workmen necessary for coach and harness-making, and other accessories, working under his

supervision and producing the loveliest masterpieces of their kind. I cannot think of any visit more interesting than this one; think of three floors of spacious rooms filled with swarms of busy people whose perfect workmanship is only excelled by still more perfect implements.

The painters and lacquer-workers were on the third floor – All the main flights of stairs are broad, and so arranged that the banisters may be taken down, and the finished vehicle allowed to slide down in ropes. I especially admired the neat craftsmanship of the harness-workers and upholsterers. We concluded our tour amongst a number of finished coaches, and with an inspection of some fine drawings of all kinds of vehicles.

I was amused to see how the people played into each other's hands, as the saying goes; and that a saddler has a counting house and a pay-master just like a banker. I should like to have taken the drawing of a coach costing five thousand guineas, made for the Nabob of Arcot, along with me; or that for the Empress of Russia, or Rumbold's the Governor of the East Indies, – just to have an idea of the size and significance of this kind of conveyance.²⁰

La Roche's observations underscore a nationalist essence in Hatchett's workshop: the expansive rooms over three floors that house a network of artisans from different craft disciplines are not typical of the coach-building industry in her native Germany. Instead, La Roche's superlatives in reference to Hatchett's 'loveliest masterpieces' and 'perfect workmanship [that is] only excelled by still more perfect implements' position the firm at once as quintessentially English, but also as the model of coach-building excellence. Indeed, both Felton and Bridges Adams celebrate the primacy of English coach manufacture in

²⁰ Sophie von La Roche, *Sophie in London, 1786: Being the Diary of Sophie v. La Roche*, trans. Clare Williams (London: J. Cape, 1933).

Europe in their trade publications. For instance, Felton opens his *Treatise* acknowledging the ‘superior excellence of English workmanship’ that contributed to the popularity of English carriages, both domestically and on the continent, claiming the exportation of vehicles to Europe was a ‘considerable and profitable branch of British commerce’.²¹ Bridges Adams echoes similar sentiments, arguing that English workmanship is unrivalled by the skill of European coach-makers, and concluding that the ‘circulation of English models on the Continent would [...] increase the already extensive taste for English carriages’.²² La Roche’s reference to the fine drawings of extravagantly priced carriages, designed for the wealthy elite and heads of state from Russia to the East Indies, further testifies to the British monopoly on carriage production within its own Empire and rival states.

In the design and construction of private carriages, the coach-maker’s vision was not absolute, the buyer could request their own specifications for the carriage throughout the process, and as such the building process involved a large element of collaboration between coach-makers and their clients. The long list of price breakdowns in Felton’s volumes show that carriages could be customised with an array of extra accessories and finishes – a provision that *Northanger Abbey*’s John Thorpe takes full advantage of as we shall see in chapter three. William Bridges Adams describes one of the most unique horse-drawn vehicles that I have found throughout the course of my research, a curriole made for a Mr. Coates that was coated in copper and which resembled a classic ‘sea-god’ chariot. No visual representation appears in the volume, but Bridges Adams describes Coates’ vehicle as ‘very beautiful in its outline, though it was disfigured by the absurdity of its ornamental work’.²³ It appears that, even when a proposed design was found lacking in taste or refinement, coach-makers were still obliged to execute the client’s vision for their carriage.

²¹ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1794, 1:i–ii.

²² Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages*, viii.

²³ Bridges Adams, 239.

Mobility and its technologies of motion were not exclusively the preserve of the wealthy elite who maintained their own private vehicles. The expansion of Britain's infrastructure helped increase the availability and accessibility of public transport to people who could not afford to maintain their own carriage and horses. Austen's own family, who we know from her letters were forced to give up their private carriage in 1798 due to the expense, benefitted from the provision of travel by public coaching systems.²⁴ Travelling via such means as the stage and mail-coach systems required a certain degree of intermingling among travellers, whereby a range of differences from rank, gender, or religious beliefs had to be sensitively navigated. Scenes of intermingling strangers in public coaches were common in narrative writing, perhaps most memorably in the work of Henry Fielding. Bobker has drawn attention to how writers, such as Laurence Sterne, manipulate the specific connotations of the 'désobligeant' and 'vis-à-vis' carriages, in the opening scenes of *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), to reveal the carriage journey to be an integral motif in protosociological discussion.²⁵ Austen, we know from her letters, was a frequent traveller, herself making trips by public transport systems like the stage and mail coaches. For instance, in a letter to her sister, Cassandra, in 1814 Austen describes with some relish the trials and tribulations of public coach travel:

I had a very good Journey, not crouded, two of the three taken up at Bentley being Children, the others of a reasonable size; and they were all very quiet and civil. – We were late in London, from being a great Load and from changing Coaches at Farnham it was nearly 4 I believe when we reached Sloane St; Henry

²⁴ In a letter to her sister, Cassandra, in 1798 Austen remarks on the decrease in assemblies they attended 'ever since we laid down the carriage'. Deirdre Le Faye's accompanying note to this reference explains that 'Mr Austen had bought a post-chariot probably in 1784, but evidently it had proved too expensive a luxury for the family, hence it being "laid down"'. See Deirdre Le Faye's fourth edition of *Jane Austen's Letters* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), pages 20 and 375 respectively.

²⁵ Danielle Bobker, 'Carriages, Conversation, and A Sentimental Journey', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 35 (2006): 244.

himself met me, and as soon as my Trunk and Basket could be routed out from all the other Trunks and Baskets in the World, we were on our way to Hans Place in the Luxury of a nice large cool dirty Hackney Coach.²⁶

While Austen clearly enjoyed her trip in Yalden's stagecoach, it was relatively unusual for a genteel woman to travel unaccompanied on a stagecoach due to the perceived analogousness between public modes of transport and sexual availability. In an earlier letter, Austen tells Cassandra she wishes to travel alone via the stagecoach but that her brother, Frank, would not allow it, and we may conjecture Frank's disapproval was influenced by the debauched connotations of public travel.²⁷ As we shall see later in this thesis, Austen presses upon these negative social connotations of women solo-travellers in *Northanger Abbey*. We will also see in this thesis Austen's commentary on the many barriers to women's access to travel in her writing, something Austen experienced herself as Deirdre le Faye notes that, after the death of Austen's father, Austen was largely dependent both financially and socially on her brothers 'for she could not travel on a journey of any distance unless one of them was available to accompany her'.²⁸ Indeed, scholars are increasingly turning their attention to the influence Austen's experiences of travel had over her writing. As Hazel Jones points out, Austen travelled through fourteen different counties in England, which 'fostered [her] enduring regard for the country's varied landscape and unique architecture, thriving industry and productive agriculture' which we see reflected in her novels.²⁹ Similarly, Paula Byrne emphasises that '[i]n thinking about the forces that shaped her imagination, we should add to her family and her books her experience of the road and of different places'.³⁰

²⁶ Le Faye, *Jane Austen's Letters*, 281–82.

²⁷ Le Faye, 11.

²⁸ Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 147.

²⁹ Jones references in particular Edward Ferrars' appreciation of 'that combination of beauty and utility' in *Sense and Sensibility*. See Hazel Jones, *Jane Austen's Journeys* (London: Hale, 2014), 13.

³⁰ Paula Byrne, *The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things* (London: Harper Press, 2013), 110.

Despite Austen's personal experience of public modes of overland travel, her characters rarely traverse the country in commercial vehicles: one of the few key instances can be found in her juvenile writing as Laura, the morally suspect protagonist of 'Love and Freindship' chances upon her entire family within the confines of a stagecoach.³¹ Rather, the journeys Austen's characters regularly undertake echo two instances from Austen's experience of private vehicular travel, the first one being the family exodus from Chawton: 'My Br[other, Edward], Fanny, Lizzy, Marianne & I composed this division of the Family, & filled his Carriage, inside & out.—Two post-chaises under the escort of George conveyed eight more across the Country, the Chair brought two, two others came on horseback & the rest by the Coach—& so by one means or another we all are removed'.³² The great mix of all available modes of carriage transport here calls to mind the logistical conundrum in *Mansfield Park* (1814) where it takes almost a fortnight to plan who will go in which carriage, who on horseback, or would one carriage be sufficient on the proposed trip to Sotherton? On the other hand, the most luxurious journey that Austen writes about in her letters is likely inspiration for the summer outings Mrs Elton aspires to in *Emma* – 'I had great amusement among the Pictures; & the Driving about, the Carriage been open, [sic] was very pleasant.—I liked my solitary elegance very much, & was ready to laugh all the time, at my being where I was.—I could not but feel that I had naturally small right to be parading about London in a Barouche'³³ Further, despite the relative absence of stagecoach travel across her fiction, Austen's depictions of group travel within private vehicles echo the pitfalls of navigating social interactions within the mobile spaces of commercial carriages. As I address in chapters four and five, Austen draws out the issues of social relations and inward

³¹ Austen in fact refers to this scene from 'Love Freindship' in her letter outlining her trip in Yaldon's stagecoach when she says 'It put me in mind of my own Coach between Edinburgh & Sterling'. See Le Faye, *Jane Austen's Letters*, 282.

³² Le Faye, 239.

³³ Le Faye, 223.

reflection that map onto these different modes of transportation, and her conversations set in carriage interiors parallel the difficulties of navigating fleeting social relations in public vehicles, recapitulated in private contexts.

Structure

While my thesis focuses on carriage representations that fall broadly within Austen's lifetime, the vehicle's cultural and social meanings developed over a broader period of time, and we see evidence of its Georgian valances taking shape from the late seventeenth century. From as early as the 1670s when the numbers of coaches on the streets of London increased, wheeled conveyances were viewed with suspicion for their transgressive potential to disrupt the proprietary social order. Historically the preserve of the royal and aristocratic classes, carriages were inherited with a culture of ostentation and pageantry. However, regardless of social rank, carriages were increasingly being purchased by those who could afford them, as such differentiating and elevating themselves above the poor. For instance, Taylor the Water Poet in 1623 indicates the frustration felt 'when every Gill Turntripe, Mrs. Fumkins, Madame Polecat, and my Lady Trash, Froth the Tapster, Bill the Taylor, Lavender the Broker, Whiff the Tobacco Seller, with their companion Trugs' style themselves in the manner of their social superiors with the use of a coach.³⁴ Richard Steele similarly connects the carriage to the blurring of class boundaries in the early decades of the eighteenth century: 'to see men, for *no reason upon earth* but that they are rich, ascend triumphant chariots... has at the bottom nothing else in it but an insolent transport, arising only from the distinction of fortune'.³⁵ Meanwhile in 1625, Francis Bacon's theoretical framework that identified two forms of emotional deception – simulation and dissimulation – was continuously intertwined

³⁴ John Taylor, *The World Runnes on Wheeles, or, Oddes Betwixt Carts and Coaches* (London: Henry Gosson, 1623), 17.

³⁵ Richard Steele, 'No. 144', in *The Tatler*, ed. Donald Frederic Bond, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), 321.

with horse-drawn carriages over the long eighteenth century, and particularly applied to public forms of travel. Early in the eighteenth century, Jonathan Swift censures the writers of Grub Street for their focus on style over moral substance through a vehicular analogy that compares the writers to coach-makers, whose focus on the outward lustre of a vehicle provided carriage owners an ornate veneer of luxury behind which they could hide.³⁶ This long social and literary history underpins my treatment of Austen's carriages across my chapters. The carriage's cultural inheritance is continually reproduced and replicated over the long eighteenth century in print and literary satire, as well as in novels. Indeed, it is so firmly entrenched in the popular imagination that by the time Austen publishes her fictions, a simple gesture to a single carriage typology is enough to invoke the full signifying power of that carriage which is buttressed by its long history. Throughout my study, I rely on the term 'cultural capital' to describe the unique signifying power of individual carriages. My usage of the term is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital which refers to a collection of symbols that can be acquired, such as skills, tastes, mannerisms, material belongings, that can be leveraged for favourable position within a stratified society.³⁷

Geographers Miles Ogborn and Charles Withers suggest that a significant transformation in the field of eighteenth-century studies was 'animated by an attention to questions of space, place and landscape'.³⁸ Indeed, geographical perspectives such as Jürgen Habermas's notions of communication and the public sphere or Bruno Latour's theories on networks and the production of knowledge have continued to be influential in eighteenth-century studies since their conception. As such, another framework that informs my thesis, but in particular the final chapters, is the notion of spatiality, where I draw on the field of

³⁶ I discuss Swift's analogy in greater detail in chapter five of this thesis. See Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), in *Major Works*, ed. Angus Ross and David Woolley (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 92.

³⁷ See Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), especially pages 336-9.

³⁸ Charles W. J. Withers and Miles Ogborn, eds., *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004), 2.

human geography and Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory. Over the course of my work I privilege the term 'spatiality' in reference to the carriage's multiple and layered inner and outer spaces in preference to terms such as 'space' or 'structure', for example. I deploy the term to signal my emphasis on the carriage as a self-contained *thing*, an object invoked for its cultural capital and signifying depth. The carriage in this context is habitually visualised as though from a distance; this outside perspective lends the carriage an impenetrable, almost two-dimensional quality. As my thesis shows, the carriage's spatial composition was not a simple singular plane but a complex amalgam of spaces with varying depths, heights, and locations across the carriage body. For instance, one could sit outside the internal carriage space on the roof, next to the driver, or the external platform and seat at the rear of the carriage usually reserved for servants, or, of course, one could choose a seat within the carriage body itself. These separate features created different spaces which, as my work shows, were imbued with different social connotations and created unique social conditions that shaped the interactions and experiences of those occupying the different spaces. Moreover, the carriage, as a collection of spaces, occupies multiple physical spaces itself as it traverses different geographies from towns and cities to the open turnpike roads. The term 'spatiality', then, refers to this nebulous quality of being composed of multiple spaces, and motion through space itself. Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory has also been influential in my understanding of the carriage as both an object and space. In particular, the notion that objects exist in a network of continually shifting relationships was particularly pertinent to the work of chapter two in which I mine more deeply the connections between individuals and their carriages.³⁹

³⁹ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 46–50.

Over five chapters, my discussions of Austen's fiction are enriched by a broad spectrum of extra-literary materials, including visual caricature, portraiture, newspapers, as well as contextual print sources such as journals, private letters, and poems. My aim in drawing together these materials is to underscore the carriage's entrenchment in all aspects of Georgian culture. Part I of this study, 'Georgian Manner and the Horse-Drawn Carriage as Social Apparatus', focuses on material meanings of the carriage and explores the intricacies of Austen's deployment of horse-drawn vehicles as narrative devices. This section comprises three chapters, each using a case-study methodology to investigate distinct carriage typologies and the different contexts in which Austen utilises their precise physical, social, and cultural properties to nuance our perception of her characters and plots. Chapter one, 'The Phaeton and Bodily Harm in the Juvenilia', investigates period perceptions of fast carriages and the dangers associated with driving them, and considers the sensibility elicited by vehicular accidents. This chapter focuses on a mid-sized carriage regularly portrayed as the sports car of the era, a symbol of elegant British design and modern fast living, the phaeton. It examines Austen's engagement with literary and political connotations of the phaeton, and her methods of exuberantly yet insightfully deploying the carriage accident as a plot device to move action forward in her teenage writing. My analysis juxtaposes Austen's satire in 'Love and Freindship' with prominent examples of visual caricatures that proliferated in the latter decades of the 1700s as a reflection of the increasing regularity of carriage accidents. Concentrating on the 'Love and Freindship' phaeton disaster, the chapter draws out the imaginative parallels between grotesque and bawdy visual satires aimed at the Prince of Wales's very public overturning, which was made infamous by James Gillray in 1788. Austen, well-versed in the tropes of Gothic literature, clearly parodies the overblown displays of feeling to which archetypal heroines of Romantic texts were prone. Following in that vein, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the intense sensibility that Laura and

Sophia, both widowed by the narrative's phaeton crash, experience in the disaster's aftermath.

Chapter two, 'The Barouche-Landau and Augusta Elton's Performance of Politeness' moves on from the savage satire of Austen's juvenilia and the terrors of bodily harm, to examine the ubiquitous model of sociability, politeness, and the largest vehicle of my three case studies, in *Emma*. Unlike the sleek elegance of the phaeton the focal carriage of this chapter, the barouche-landau, was opulent to the point of ostentation. By this stage in her career Austen had honed her carriage references and we see her often relying on her audience's knowledge of a specific carriage model's cultural valence. In effect, Austen's usage of the signifying capabilities presented by the spectrum of carriage typologies functions as an economical shorthand for characterisation. This chapter focuses on Augusta Elton's equivocal attempts to employ the barouche-landau, as one of the rarest and most expensive vehicles available, to bolster her social reputation. Augusta centres her polite performance on the unique physical properties of this carriage to signify her gentility. My discussions underscore the slippage that could occur between polite modes of material acquisition that propped up genteel identity formation, and the immodest displays of conspicuous consumption that could betray the misinterpretation of polite social codes. As such, my investigation positions Augusta Elton's reliance on the barouche-landau's signifying power as a misconception of vehicular rituals and codes, which works to distort her polite and genteel self-presentation to reveal her bold attempts at social elevation through large, moving objects.

The third chapter, 'The Gig and John Thorpe's Vision of Masculinity', showcases the comparatively cheap, two-wheel gig carriage which rapidly gained popularity in the 1790s and beyond. The gig's clientele, predominantly young men of the rising mercantile classes, were frequently portrayed in literary and visual sources using their vehicles to impress young

women and assert dominance over their male peers. The gig's overabundance in busy urban centres earned it a reputation as a nuisance vehicle, while its patrons were dismissed as obnoxiously ambitious. This chapter centres on Austen's rendering of one such owner, *Northanger Abbey*'s John Thorpe, and his conspicuous use of a gig in his efforts to attain the vision he has of his own importance, masculinity, and desirability. The chapter unpacks how the mutability of the gig's construction impinged on the vehicle's suitability as a prop for stable masculine and genteel identities. In doing so, this chapter considers Austen's varied representations of the gig and comparative vehicles in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Persuasion* (1818). The gig's obvious imitation of the more refined curricle threatens to out its aspirational owners as class interlopers. Timbers used in British carriage construction were habitually sourced from plantations that exploited slave labour; this chapter unearths the indentured violence and enslaved labourers behind the gig's manufacture, in turn revealing the parallels between Thorpe's own intrinsic violence and his conveyance.

The second section of my study, 'Place, Space, and the Horse-Drawn Carriage', builds upon the material evidence of Part I to prioritise a geographical approach in its attention to the horse-drawn vehicle as an entity of interconnecting spaces that, crucially, could be moved. Part II investigates Austen's manipulation of the carriage's spaces, the miniature stage upon which she sets unsolicited marriage proposals, tête-à-têtes, and private moments of meditation. It analyses Austen's rendering of the carriage as a public or private space to consider its effects on her characters' identities and conduct. Whereas my first three chapters address the social rituals in which the carriage, as a material object imbued with metonymic meaning, was played as a pawn of sociability, in chapter four I consider the carriage's role as a space that facilitates and influences social interactions. This chapter, 'Carriage Topology and the Politics of Sociability', takes direction from the metaphysical principles of codifying the carriage's layered spaces from Thomas De Quincey's rhapsodic

essay 'The English Mail Coach' (1849). Although Austen was writing several decades before De Quincey published his essay, her treatment of private carriages and their spaces anticipates De Quincey's well-known treatment of the mail-coach. As such, this chapter examines notions of the carriage's interiority, as well as the duality inherent in the carriage's construction of 'inside' and 'outside' spaces. Though Austen's characters rarely travel in public mail-coaches, De Quincey's extended analysis of the politics of mail-coach sociability illuminates the inward/outward tensions that exist across the carriage structure, observable in the social space of both shared and private carriages. With this grammar of spatiality as a guide, I investigate Austen's manipulation of such spaces, probing deeper into the carriage's complex interconnection with eighteenth-century culture and sociability. My examples include conversations set within carriages from *Mansfield Park* and *Sense and Sensibility*, in which I analyse how Austen visualises the carriage's spaces to further understand how the carriage's distinct spaces intersect with social hierarchies and behaviours of carriage occupants.

My fifth and final chapter, 'Austen's Carriages in Motion', turns to the carriage's most fundamental and basic function, its provision of movement. This chapter examines the carriage in motion, exploring the various effects the carriage's movement and traversal through space has upon the emotional lives of Austen's heroines. Across all of her writing, we know both female and male characters undertake carriage journeys of varying length with similar frequency, yet Austen's lack of interest in the male experience of travel and instead elaborates only on her heroines' traversals through geographic space. This chapter examines several journeys represented in *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and *Sense and Sensibility*, considering Austen's representation of masculine and feminine travel and their contrasting patterns. The chapter pays most attention to Austen's preoccupation with feminine journeys and her characterisation of women as adept, conscientious travellers in

spite of period restrictions that precluded women easily accessing the means to be mobile. Further, it investigates the ways in which the carriage's provision of mobility is utilised by the women in Austen's fiction as a means of personal and intellectual growth. Finally, this chapter discusses eighteenth-century debates over the imbrication of spatial and vehicular transport and emotional transport, and examines Austen's treatment of motion and emotion across her fiction.

Overall, my project presents an original theorisation of the horse-drawn carriage by examining its dual position as both 'object' and 'space' across Austen's works. Using a rigorous interdisciplinary methodology, I analyse the carriage itself, and Austen's engagement with it as a vehicle and material object, through the exploration of two distinct but interconnected theoretical avenues that shape the two parts of my thesis: eighteenth-century material culture, and literary and social geography. Throughout my thesis, I highlight the carriage as a vibrant and lively source of insights into Austen's engagement with large moving parts, and which illuminates her interest in materiality and movement.

Part I: Georgian Sociability and the Horse-Drawn Carriage

Chapter One: The Phaeton and Bodily Harm in the Juvenilia

The case studies of individual carriages that comprise Part I of my thesis focus on the multifaceted social significance of the carriage. As I shall make clear, the cultural valence of a vehicle is not homogenous across the many different styles and models of carriage but is mutable, and often contingent upon the stature of the vehicle itself. My opening chapters thus focus individually on three different vehicles of various sizes to showcase the idiosyncratic character of each carriage, and the ways in which Austen manipulates their unique traits to enhance her portrayal of the characters associated with each conveyance. Chapters two and three consider two extremes of the vehicular spectrum, respectively the lavish and large carriage of status, the barouche-landau, and the small, relatively cheap ‘nuisance’ carriage, the gig. I wish to open Part I with a vehicle that occupies a mid-point between these two extremes in terms of physical stature, and the cultural capital that adhered to its physical properties. The phaeton, an open-bodied four-wheeled carriage built for teams of two, four, or six horses, was considered an elegant ‘sports’ vehicle known for its capacity to travel at speed. Favoured in its various distinctive forms by royals such as the Princes William and George, and later Queen Victoria until her old age, the phaeton’s enduring popularity stretched for many more decades than other fashionable carriages of the period thanks to royal and aristocratic endorsement. Austen herself harboured a ‘great desire to go out’ in a phaeton, an urge that was satisfied in 1801 as she recounts in a letter to her sister, Cassandra, upon her return from an ‘Airing in the very bewitching Phaeton & four’.¹ Similarly enraptured by the vehicle, Leigh Hunt reminisces about the tall phaeton, ‘with its yellow wings’ and ‘handsome mixture of danger and dignity’, fondly noting the phaeton’s aura that captivated generations. His continuation, ‘looking up to it with respect in our childhood,

¹ Le Faye, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 95.

partly for its loftiness, partly for its name, and partly for the show it makes in the prints to the novels of the period', points toward the phaeton's entrenchment in the public consciousness across real, literary, and print worlds.²

In the dramatic culminating letters of Austen's 'Love and Freindship', a fashionable high phaeton is overturned with fatal consequences for the two men within it: those who 'had been in so elevated a situation... now laid low and sprawling in the dust.'³ The crash stands as just one of the many examples of the young Austen's acute awareness of the period's popular literary devices and tropes, as novelistic representations of dangerous driving and carriage disasters proliferated in tandem with the uptick in vehicles upon eighteenth-century thoroughfares. Over the course of her life Austen, like many vehicularly mobile Georgians, had first-hand experience of the dangers of carriage driving. She writes in a letter to Cassandra of the shock she and their cousin, Eliza, experienced as the horses drawing their carriage 'gibed' outside Hyde Park corner, commenting that 'a load of fresh gravel made it a formidable Hill to them, & they refused the collar'.⁴ Even from such an early stage in her writing career as the juvenilia, Austen insightfully engages with the literary carriage accident as a plot device to propel action forward while simultaneously distilling the chaos into an exuberantly satirical commentary on the patrons of modish fast carriages. She was not alone in her views of the phaeton and indeed period caricatures also actively lampooned this carriage type and those who chose to travel within them. In revisiting the final disaster of 'Love and Freindship', contextualising it with contemporary print satire, this chapter reconsiders Austen's engagement with the literary and political landscape of the phaeton. The ruination of those travelling in the luxury of a private carriage being punished by a bloody death plays upon the preoccupation in literature and visual caricature of the dangers of

² Leigh Hunt, *Coaches and Coaching* (Boston: H.M. Caldwell Company, 1800), 11.

³ Jane Austen, *Teenage Writings*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland and Freya Johnston (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), 87.

⁴ Le Faye, *Jane Austen's Letters*, 192.

carriage travel. The aftermath clearly parodies Romantic and sentimental texts that were popular at the time, and burlesques women's excessive displays of sensibility that are the hallmarks of many of these novels. This chapter sets out to investigate the relations amongst bodily harm, carriage accidents, and sensibility. It unearths the significance of the carriage to those relations and how the vehicle connects (not always harmoniously) with sensibility, issues to which I later return to in Part II where I examine Austen's other applications of the carriage as narrative trope. Whilst the title of this chapter encompasses the 'juvenilia' as a whole, I wish to focus the bulk of my analysis upon the epistolary style piece 'Love and Freindship' from Austen's *Volume the Second* notebook. As the only extended epistolary piece that Austen finished in its entirety, 'Love and Freindship' is one of the finest complete examples of Austen's teenage writing. Her ability to identify and subsequently experiment with time-worn tropes of sentimental fiction to the point of absurdity, turning scenes of sentimentality into comedy, showcases her acute eye for parody and how material objects aid and abet her satiric wit. I supplement my investigation of teenage Austen's phaeton with brief references to the vehicle's deployment in her mature works, where we see some of the vehicle's physical and structural attributes enlisted in Austen's social commentary. In particular, I unpick Austen's use of a pony phaeton in *Pride and Prejudice*, where we will see its small stature and circumscribed access to extensive geographical space used to signal the infantilisation of its patron, Miss Catherine de Bourgh.

Austen was not alone in her attentions to the phaeton's scale. Contemporary illustrations exalted the phaeton (most prominently the 'tall' or 'high' phaeton) as the acme of British fashion and industrial design, often depicting it as a symbol of modern fast living.⁵ In 1796 William Felton, with great conviction, describes the phaeton as having 'for some

⁵ Fashion plates and popular satires depicting phaetons point towards the vehicle gaining traction circa 1770, remaining in use until motor vehicles presented tangible competition to the popularity of horse-drawn vehicles.

years... deservedly been regarded as the most pleasant sort of carriage in use'.⁶ Felton attributes this high praise to its unparalleled contribution to health, amusement, and fashion, and 'superior advantage of lightness over every other sort of four-wheeled carriage[s]'.⁷ The carriage inherited its name from the Greek myth of Phaeton, who stole his father Helios' Sun Chariot and catastrophically lost control of the team of horses that pulled it. Eighteenth-century phaeton drivers were regularly painted across popular formats from visual print, serialised fiction, and novels, as sharing traits (often negative) with the mythical Phaeton, in particular his hubris. Female patrons of these vehicles were especially targeted for censure or admiration, particularly considering the pervasive attitude that conflated female mobility and their traversal of space with their sexual availability.⁸⁹

Take, for example, the engraving 'Phaetona or Modern Female Taste' (Figure 1.1). Phaetona's large ostrich-feather plume and the masculine cut of her jacket indicate the likely subject of this caricature was the politically-active Duchess of Devonshire.¹⁰ Cindy McCreery points out that women who engaged with the masculine world of politics frequently found themselves the subject of satire, often painted as depraved for abandoning traditional female

⁶ William Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages: Comprehending Coaches, Chariots, Phaetons, Curricles, Whiskies, &c.: Together with Their Proper Harness, in Which the Fair Prices of Every Article Are Accurately Stated*, vol. 2 (London: J. Debrett, 1796), 68.

⁷ Felton, 2:68. Throughout this chapter, and indeed this part of my thesis, I call heavily upon Felton's two volumes of his *A Treatise on Carriages* published 1794 and 1796. I also rely on a later work by William Bridges Adams titled *English Pleasure Carriages* (1837), both of which greatly inform my technical understanding of eighteenth and early nineteenth century carriages.

⁸ Bobker, 'Carriages, Conversation, and A Sentimental Journey', 253. I unpack the complex gender politics of carriage-driving in Part II of my thesis. However, a common parallel was drawn between fast vehicles and debauched notions of female sexuality and sexual availability. Bobker notes that this connection was especially prevalent in the context of single and non-elite women making use of vehicles for hire, explaining that the 'link to whoring was especially strong for hackney coaches, and linguistically overdetermined: hackney meaning "for hire" or "common" (derived from the Old French *haquenée*) is a homonym of the name of the London borough where there were many brothels'.

⁹ See the Royal Collection Trust exhibition notes for *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life*, London, 2009. Available at <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/400994/the-prince-of-wales-phaeton>. Accessed 10/01/2020.

¹⁰ The accompanying notes for this image by the British Museum's curator M. Dorothy George in 'Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires in the British Museum', V, 1935, indicates that the feathers as well as Phaetona's coronet suggest the figure's likeness was based upon the Duchess of Devonshire. In the notes, George also compares the satire with the prologue of a comedy named 'The Suicide' published in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1778: "'Tis now the reigning taste with belle and beau / . . . Their art and skill in coachmanship to shew: / A female Phaeton all danger mocks, / Half-coat, half-petticoat she mounts the box. . . .". See page 382.

roles.¹¹ McCreery also notes, however, the satirical prints' often-ambivalent attitude toward their subjects in print, they are not wholly censorious, but somewhat admiring, too. By driving herself and thus claiming the privilege of this masculine prerogative, Phaetona disrupts the status quo, inviting the satirical gaze to softly admonish her, manifested here in her overblown hairstyle that replicates popular caricature style. The vast plumes of her headdress echo the scale and angle of the carriage's body, creating a frame within which Phaetona's slim figure is overwhelmed by these objects and suggest that the inescapable cycle of self-expression and self-construction via material object that diminish and oppress the self. At the same time, the interesting play on perspective acts in the opposite manner whereby the diminutive horses deflect attention from them and back toward herself, simultaneously increasing her stature and our perception of her importance, thus counteracting the parodic elements of the print.

¹¹ Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 141–42.



Figure 1.1: ‘Phaetona or Modern Female Taste’ (1776) depicts a lady extravagantly coiffed and adorned with ribbons and ostrich feathers, dressed in fashionable driving clothes. The side panel of the phaeton is decorated with a ducal coronet and the motto ‘Swift’.
Photographed with permission from the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

Turning to the phaeton of ‘Love and Freindship’ we will see that Austen’s acerbic satire operates less ambiguously than in prints such as *Phaetona*. I preface my literary investigation in this chapter with a rigorous technical overview of the vehicle that takes centre-stage of this of this case-study, the phaeton. As we shall see, the phaeton’s construction was critical to its cultural and literary representation. Phaetons were a richly diverse class of vehicles that catered to every taste imaginable. To showcase this variety, I map my technical investigation onto the changing vehicular needs of the phaeton’s most prominent patron, King George IV. I also draw upon art and visual caricature to illuminate the phaeton’s status in the consciousness of the public, and its cultural contexts. These contexts, as I show, help to underpin how Austen’s teenage writings invoke the phaeton to add shade and depth to characters, functioning as an economical means of characterisation

that Austen later cultivates and finesses throughout her mature works. Austen's portrayal of the phaeton coalesces around the vehicle's dubious safety record, as a fatal crash parodies the frequent phaeton disasters reported in national and regional newspapers. As Juliet McMaster notes 'Love and Freindship' is key evidence in the continuing debate regarding true and false sensibility, and I shall explore this notion in relation to carriage disasters as the 'heroines' of 'Love and Freindship', Laura and Sophia, exhibit extreme manifestations of sentimental feeling following the phaeton's overturning.¹²

The highs and lows of fashion

As I noted in the introduction to my thesis, the creation of a carriage was largely a collaboration between coach-maker and prospective buyer.¹³ The patron's input could range from purely cosmetic elements in design like interior and exterior embellishments, to fundamental construction features such as the method of hanging the body to the carriage itself. Some carriages (for example the gig which I discuss in chapter three) allowed for a greater range of possibilities in terms of structural customisation and innovation than others, and the phaeton falls high upon this spectrum of mutability. The primary considerations before creating a new vehicle were, as William Bridges Adams enumerates in 1837, the purposes for which it was being built – for example would it be employed on long journeys, need to accommodate large families, or employed as a leisure vehicle in towns? – and, most importantly, how much draught will be required to move the vehicle? In layman's terms, this equated simply to how many horses would be used to draw the carriage, and the required magnitude of their power output.¹⁴ Felton, too, cited this consideration as a principal

¹² Juliet McMaster, *Jane Austen, Young Author* (Burlington: Routledge, 2015), 126.

¹³ I refer here specifically to carriages intended for private use, rather public service or 'for hire' vehicles such as post-chaises, stagecoaches, or hackney carriages.

¹⁴ Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages*, 141.

determinant in how a phaeton was constructed, and as I shall presently show, the proliferation of phaeton-class vehicles in sizes and forms ‘more various than any other’ indicates that a broad range of tastes and needs were accommodated by coach-makers.¹⁵

The prominent physical features observable in all models of phaetons, regardless of the vehicle-size, combined to create a unique silhouette. The phaeton occupied a middle ground between smaller vehicles built for speed and convenience, and larger ‘status’ carriages admired for their aesthetics and intended primarily for spectacle rather than travel. According to Sir Garrad Tyrwhitt-Drake, the phaeton was one of the first vehicles to have been designed for the owner-driver rather than for a coachman and owner-passenger; logically, phaetons could thus be grouped with the common and fashionable light carriages gigs, curricles, or chaises.¹⁶ Indeed, as Felton enumerates, each of these vehicles followed an open-bodied format (with the option of adding a hood or covering should the owner wish), and these bodies were subdivided into the principal forms step-piece, half-panel, chair-back, and tub-bottom.¹⁷ However, unlike gigs or curricles which were characterised by their two wheels, the phaeton boasted four. Furthermore, whilst the height of these vehicles would have been subject to a degree of change at the behest of the buyer, phaetons harboured the unique quality of being available to purchase ‘off the peg’ in three distinct sizes – small or ‘low phaeton’; middle-sized; and large or ‘high phaeton’. Further nuances in phaeton design concerned the method of ‘hanging’, or, affixing the vehicle-body to the mechanical carriage underneath, most popularly in the crane-neck and perch styles (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3 respectively for examples of high phaetons fashioned in these two methods). Each style of hanging had its aesthetic and practical merits. The large perch phaeton was lighter and thus more nimble than the crane-neck, and the positioning of the body over the ‘axletree’ ensured

¹⁵ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:68.

¹⁶ Garrad Tyrwhitt-Drake, ‘Carriages and Their History’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 100, no. 4865 (1952): 174.

¹⁷ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1794, 1:44.

its greater balance. Contrarily, the crane-neck was ‘on every other account’ to be preferred for their ease of use and superior appearance.¹⁸



Figure 1.2: A large crane-neck phaeton. This version of a phaeton is particularly suited to gentlemen travelling larger distances due to its commodious luggage space. See volume 2 of Felton’s *A Treatise on Carriages*, 73-5, for image and contextual notes. Reproduced courtesy of Getty Research Institute.

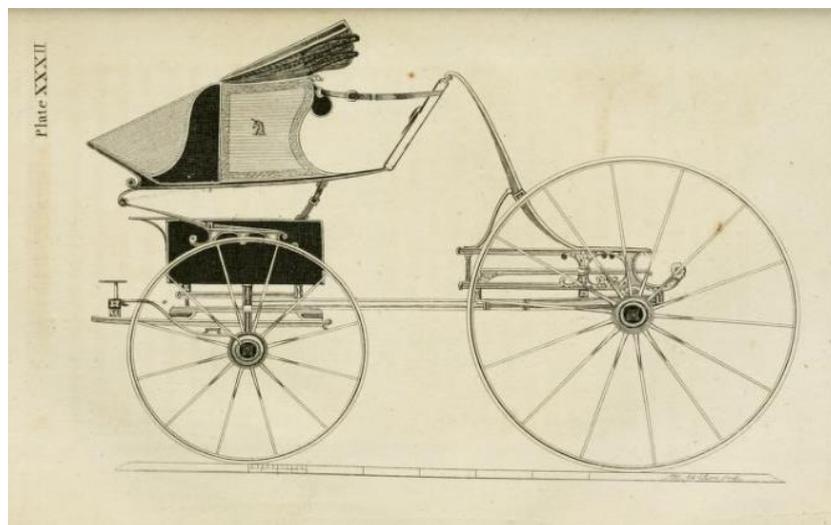


Figure 1.3: A perch high phaeton. This style is not only lighter than the crane-neck, it is also possible to be built to larger dimensions. It is, however, less manoeuvrable than its crane-neck counterpart. See volume 2 of Felton’s *A Treatise on Carriages*, 70-1, for image and contextual notes. Reproduced courtesy of Getty Research Institute.

¹⁸ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:73.

The enduring popularity of these vehicles was due, I argue, to their rich variety. As the tastes and needs of the buyer changed over time, a phaeton carriage was always ready to meet these new preferences and circumstances. Much like modern motorcars, eighteenth-century vehicle silhouettes changed according to the latest fashions. For phaetons, this manifested itself in the height. Indeed, the favoured phaetons of George IV reflect the vehicle's flexibility. Throughout his life the Prince was said to have tested his taste in all areas of life. In a biography that distances itself from previous censorious explorations of George IV as dilettante and ineffectual monarch, E. A. Smith's re-evaluation of George IV and his contributions to Britain's cultural capital positions the Prince as a 'knowledgeable and discriminating patron of the arts'.¹⁹ His friend the Duchess of Devonshire (the very same Duchess of Devonshire depicted in Figure 1.1) wrote in a private memoir in 1782, that not only did the prince have a fascination with fashionable and lavish dress that bordered on 'tawdry', but that 'his person, his dress, and the admiration he has met with... take up his thoughts chiefly'.²⁰ Indeed, George IV was notorious for his conspicuous consumption, from ostentatious building projects like Carlton House and later the pomp and pageantry of his coronation in 1821, much of his energy was channelled to projecting a certain self-image that diverted attention from his political shortfalls.

Consider this image of George, then Prince of Wales, by George Stubbs (see Figure 1.4). The two magnificent horses that will draw the Prince's high phaeton dominate the composition. Their sleek black coats and black and red harnesses match the smart livery of the portly groom and the elegant vehicle itself, creating a sophisticated sense of continuity and harmony. This image would have chiefly appealed to the 'discerning eye of a man of fashion', who would recognise the beauty and elegance of the vehicle and its accoutrements

¹⁹ E. A. Smith, *George IV* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), x.

²⁰ *Anecdotes Concerning HRH the Prince of Wales (1782): Bessborough, Georgiana*, n.d., 289–92.

as a reflection upon the taste and expertise of the Prince himself.²¹ Judy Egerton interprets Stubb's approach to the Prince's 'gaily painted and upholstered' phaeton as an homage to the vehicle's 'debut, on a fine morning, with Samuel Thomas, the Prince's State Coachman, in the full glory of his scarlet coat with gold collar and cuffs'. For Egerton, the little dog's (named Fino) playful posture seems to salute the new highflyer phaeton ahead of its first outing.²² The conscious styling in this scene was an important means of projecting an image of the Prince as a sociable man of fashion, unconcerned with or even rejecting the regal extravagance and overindulgence he was known and vilified for. More than just a marker of a keen sense of style, the phaeton, as an owner-driven vehicle, plays an integral role in the formation of this tasteful identity. With a quiet sense of dignity, George is seen to be modest enough to drive his own conveyance and the luxury and opulence of royalty are consequently erased – only a discreet reference to his position can be found in the silver arms on the blinkers of the horses. Stripped of the unsavoury princely pomp he was known for, the Prince of Wales is recast simply as the epitome of elegance, fashion, and taste. Moreover, in employing the phaeton to render the Prince in this role, Stubbs' portrait reimagines the phaeton itself in much the same way, removing its associations with 'devil-may-care' drivers and encouraging desacralized interpretations of the phaeton as a marker of genteel taste. The portrait's composition furthers the phaeton's removal from its spirited reputation, with the horses un-harnessed from the carriage itself, and both the figures assuming relaxed, almost casual poses, the scene is imbued with a sense of stillness and calm. The sole reminder of the sheer dynamism and power of the high phaeton, I suggest, is expressed in the energetic posture of the little dog. Reared up on its hind legs, Stubbs captures the animal's evident

²¹ 'The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life', Royal Collection Trust, n.d., <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/400994/the-prince-of-wales-phaeton>.

²² Judy Egerton, *George Stubbs, Painter: Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven; London: Yale UP for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2007), 178.

vitality mid-pounce, a burst of movement in the otherwise still tableaux that anticipates the phaeton's capacity for exhilarating motion.



Figure 1.4: George Stubbs' *The Prince of Wales's Phaeton* (1793). Reproduced courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust.

With his love of rich food (in great quantities), the Prince's corpulence and ill-health precluded him from making use of highflyer phaetons in his later years. As King George IV, he was no longer able to mount the high phaetons of his youth let alone drive one, and instead it became necessary for him to commission a conveyance in 1824 that ran 'on wheels no bigger than those of a bath chair' (see Figure 1.5), and emulated the traditional low or pony phaeton.²³ Tyrwhitt-Drake notes the general fashion of the era reflected George's shift in

²³ Tyrwhitt-Drake, 'Carriages and Their History', 174.

preference, and indeed the phaeton made a transatlantic leap to become the popular and elegant choice of vehicle for American women, the ‘Park Phaeton’.²⁴ American coach-makers developed the ‘curved and undulating’ lines traditionally associated with English iterations of the carriage, into a more angular silhouette composed of ‘straight lines and right angles’.²⁵ In Britain, the circumstances via which this model became popularised, and the clientele that favoured it, meant that this conveyance was devoid of any of the more noble or daring qualities inherent to the highflyer. Culturally impotent by comparison with its lofty counterpart, this low phaeton, as Felton notes, was purchased principally by the timid and the infirm: ‘the infirm, because they are easy of access; and the timid, because they are more easy to escape from in time of danger’.²⁶



Figure 1.5: ‘The King’ printed by C. Hullmandel (c.1830). This phaeton, modelled on the pony phaeton, allowed easy access to the interior for those with limited mobility. Reproduced courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Science Museum, Science Museum Group Collection.

²⁴ Tyrwhitt-Drake, 174; ‘Ladies’ Park Phaeton and Pair’, *The Hub* (1871-1919); *New York* 20, no. 6 (1 September 1878): 298–299.

²⁵ ‘Ladies’ Park Phaeton and Pair’.

²⁶ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:82.

Austen taps into the low (or pony) phaeton's [in]significance to shore up her characterisation of Miss de Bourgh, daughter of the arrogant Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), who we are told rides by Mr Collins's parsonage in her 'little phaeton and ponies'.²⁷ Miss de Bourgh appears as one of the many obstacles to the union of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy, and Austen devotes scant time to describing her character and appearance: hence we are told little more than that she is 'of a sickly constitution', is 'cross', and a shockingly 'thin and small' 'quiet little creature'.²⁸ During Mr Collins's visit to the Bennet family, however, Austen deploys the pony phaeton to add shape and substance to her spartan description, exposing a double bind between the characterisation of character and carriage as they each work to define the other. Questions posed by Mrs. Bennet to Mr Collins reveal Miss de Bourgh was 'prevented... from making that progress in many accomplishments' that would be expected of young, eligible women of such great rank as hers, and that she has not yet been presented at town.²⁹ Miss de Bourgh, then, exists in a circumscribed world both mentally and corporeally, being too ill to actively participate in her education and society life. Although access to, and ownership of, a carriage and its provision of mobility often correlated to economic and social power, (something I investigate in relation to the characters of *Emma* in chapter two), Miss de Bourgh's use of a pony phaeton operates to the contrary. Low phaetons were often restricted to use in parkland, a miniature and manicured territory removed from the hustle, bustle, and speed of urban centres. As we know, Miss de Bourgh drives her phaeton by Mr Collins's residence, but what we also know is that his humble parsonage is 'separated only by a lane from Rosings Park, her ladyship's residence'.³⁰ Miss de Bourgh's mobility, and her power of autonomy, extends little further than beyond the boundaries of her family home and her mother's authority. Miss de Bourgh

²⁷ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 51.

²⁸ Austen, 50, 122.

²⁹ Austen, 51.

³⁰ Austen, 50.

is, in a sense, rendered perennially infantilised, and such a depiction is ratified unknowingly by Mr Collins who remarks that her governess still resides within Rosings Park.³¹ John C. Waller comments on the eighteenth-century propensity to rely on an essentialist doctrine in which the illustrious genealogy of a family ensured their cultural dominance over those of lower birth.³² He notes the irony of Lady Catherine de Bourgh's assumption that she, and her daughter, had a natural talent for music despite never learning the art simply due to their exalted birth, and I suggest Austen's satirical inflection to the depiction of aristocratic women similarly operates through Miss de Bourgh's driving.³³ The image Austen creates is almost comical; Miss de Bourgh, a woman with the potential for great circumstance but none of the faculties or vigour to realise such a position, circumnavigates her home like an adult child in a carriage that is unable to offer her the power that comes with true mobility. Through its associations with a woman deficient in physical and mental vitality and beauty, the self-reflexive nature of the carriage is brought to the fore as Austen presents the low phaeton as equally stunted in its cultural and social consequence. The phaeton may have the benefit of high-ranking patronage, which does impress the sycophantic Mr. Collins, but the more sharp and discerning characters of the novel are able to sidestep the intoxicating influence of high birth and a fashionable carriage to see Miss de Bourgh and her phaeton in their true light. As Elizabeth Bennet cries at the violent uproar caused by the arrival of the low phaeton outside the Collins' parsonage, 'And is this all?'.³⁴

³¹ Austen, 51.

³² John C. Waller, 'Born to Virtue: Ideas of Generation and the Eighteenth-Century Elites', in *The Secrets of Generation: Reproduction in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 100–119.

³³ Waller, 100.

³⁴ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 122.

Fast Driving, the high phaeton, and the issue of safety

From the mid-century onwards, when high phaetons gained traction as the sporting vehicle of the day, a popular iteration of the vehicle's design created what would become the two hallmarks of phaeton carriages – their height, and the speed at which they could be driven. In an era characterised by the accelerated expansion of Britain's infrastructure and the concurrent evolution in carriage construction, the restrictive boundaries of vehicular travel were continually shattered, and the nation became increasingly obsessed with speed. With the coaching industry's challenging of past methods, Britain's intensifying taste for expedited mobility could be realised by innovative design, and the daring aesthetics of the highflyer tested the possibilities and limits of vehicular travel during the heyday of the transport revolution. More pressing than the eccentricities in the highflyer's aesthetics were, however, the concerns for safety that stemmed from the sheer volume of accidents involving high phaeton carriages. The combination of extreme height and equally extreme speed contributed to the prevalence of phaeton disasters, but as I will show, a driver's skill in handling both vehicle and horses were equally culpable.

The vertical dimensions of these carriages increased to dizzying proportions. As Tyrwhitt-Drake explains, the phaeton was unrivalled both in its eccentricity of design, and unsurpassed in height.³⁵ Although the extreme height of a phaeton was, at the time, considered aesthetically pleasing and the pinnacle of fashion, highflyer phaetons were not exempt from censure or satire. *The New Fashioned Phaeton*, a print published in 1776 (Figure 1.6), lampoons the peculiarity of high phaetons, showing off their dependence on spectacle over functionality. The image depicts a high phaeton drawn by a pair of horses stopped outside a townhouse, its body is drastically elevated above the mechanical *carriage*

³⁵ Tyrwhitt-Drake, 'Carriages and Their History', 174.

on an expanding lattice-like spring to the height of the house's first-floor window.³⁶ From the window, an elegant woman is handed into the phaeton by the well-dressed male passenger. The most salient aspect of this image, though, is not the comically exaggerated carriage itself, but the spectacle it has created. Such spectacle is firmly reinforced by the woman's extravagantly large ostrich-feather plumes that adorn her stacked hairstyle. Onlookers of all ages have been drawn from the street and within the townhouse itself. From the doorway, the smaller of the two figures stares upwards, mouth agape in awe of the conspicuous pageantry of the scene, whilst the female figure raises a hand upwards in astonishment. The small boy in the forefront points and raises his hat in appreciation, a posture echoed by Leigh Hunt's childhood memories recalled in his essay on carriages, of looking up in respect and admiration for the phaeton vehicle's loftiness and reputation.³⁷ The print is inscribed with the Latin phrase 'Sic Itur Ad Astra', or 'thus one journeys to the stars', an adaptation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. In its original context, the phrase (spoken by Apollo to Iulus) references victory in war and the godlike courage that will raise the victorious to the heavens. Its invocation in this caricature, though, playfully mocks the grandiose self-importance of highflyer clientele.

³⁶ I elaborate on some specific coach-building terminology in chapter three; for the sake of economy, I am using William Felton's italicised term '*carriage*' as he does, to refer to the mechanical apparatus from which the body of the carriage would have been hung and from which the wheels would have been attached. See William Felton *A Treatise on Carriages* (Debrett, 1794).

³⁷ Hunt, *Coaches and Coaching*, 11.



Figure 1.6: 'The New Fashioned Phaeton' (1776). Photographed with permission from the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

Driving any form of wheeled-vehicle drawn by horses was an inherently precarious affair, and regardless of coach-makers' intelligent engineering to allay the extent of danger it was impossible to eliminate all risk. The nature of the animals was something that could not

be accounted for; as Ewers explains, horses were flighty creatures liable to being spooked, and on occasions of accidental contact between their hindquarters and the coach framework, a horse's general reaction was to increase its pace.³⁸ The safety of a vehicle's occupants, then, depended upon the expertise of the driver, which involved both their skills in horse-handling and their understanding of the mechanics of the vehicle they drove. The uniquely tall construction of highflyers posed the greatest challenge to a driver's prowess, and coaching authorities were in consensus that the vertical dimensions of the carriage were one of the primary causes of the numerous phaeton disasters. Felton, for instance, warns against 'turning short' in a high crane-neck 'lest by the height of the body, and weight of the passengers, it should overset', and Bridges Adams noted retrospectively that an oddity in preventative design 'marked its total insecurity'.³⁹ It should be stressed, though, the physical properties of the high phaeton were not in themselves the root of these disasters, but the fact that its design impinged upon the driver's ability to safely control the horses. Tyrwhitt-Drake describes the inconvenience drivers would have had to overcome perched upon the phaeton's 'enormously high seat', whilst Bridges Adams, with contempt, writes that the 'detestable' motion of the vehicle rendered the 'act of driving difficult' and even that the 'power of the drivers over their horses' was lessened by the phaeton's construction.⁴⁰ These accounts place as much emphasis on the occupant as the conveyance itself, to the success of a journey. For example, the challenge of remaining in the vehicle, particularly for those occupying the un-sprung seat habitually reserved for a servant (an ostensibly tricky position transpiring from thoughtless design), was said to have 'require[d] as much skill as is evinced by a rope-dancer at the theatre'.⁴¹

³⁸ Chris Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018), 146.

³⁹ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:73; Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages*, 237.

⁴⁰ Tyrwhitt-Drake, 'Carriages and Their History', 174; Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages*, 247.

⁴¹ Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages*, 237.

The virtuosity and poise of a driver was paramount, though, not just in terms of commanding a pleasant ride for themselves, their passengers, and the drivers with whom they share the road, but in reinforcing their self-presentation to the public. Although my following example takes place in a tilbury carriage (a two-wheeled vehicle much like the gig of chapter three), this scene in Marguerite Blessington's sketch 'The Park' from *The Magic Lantern* (1823) demonstrates the role of skilled driving in sociable settings that would have applied in equal measure to phaeton drivers:

The line of carriages is now broken by a tilbury, driven by a city Dandy, who has chosen the Park to make his debut in as a whip: the horse becomes restive, and the want of skill in his driver excites the ridicule of his more dextrous brothers of the whip: the tilbury is entangled in the wheel of a coach, which causes a general stoppage; heads are seen emerging from the windows of all carriages round, anxious to ascertain the cause of delay; and the ladies in the next carriage are between alarm and anger, almost unintelligibly vociferating from the windows to their servants to let them out; while their terror only seems to increase the merriment of the surrounding crowd, and to give fresh impetus to the unfortunate Dandy, who is malagé the advice of all the by-standers, with one hand reining back his impetuous steed, and with the other urging him on by applying the whip.⁴²

Blessington highlights the dandy's 'want of skill' as the main cause of this commotion despite the instability of the tilbury; all two-wheel vehicles, and indeed the four-wheeled phaeton, increased the likelihood of accidents. Instead, the driver's inability to calm his horse and understand the basics of equine commands – confusing the horse with a command to stop

⁴² Marguerite Blessington, *The Magic Lantern; or, Sketches of Scenes in the Metropolis* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823), 34–35.

while simultaneously ‘urging’ it forward with the whip – is both the cause of an accident and a social faux pas. Blessington’s dandy is more committed to the surface of style rather than the substance of skill which, as I enumerated in my introduction to this thesis, was an epidemic that infiltrated many arenas of the eighteenth century and satirised through a vehicular lens. The reaction of passers-by, on foot, other drivers or ‘brothers of the whip’, and passengers such as the vexed ladies ‘vociferating’ and ‘between alarm and anger’ betray the extent of his blunder in social terms. Whilst nobody here comes to harm, the hubbub caused by the unfortunate and terrified dandy is practically comedic; his ineptitude behind the wheel parallels a sociability solecism that ruffles the feathers of other drivers adhering to the rigid order of Georgian politeness. Later, however, the stakes are raised, as Blessington describes more dire outcomes from poor driving skills:

All is now alarm and confusion, for the tilbury driver, with his restive horse, again appears, and now excites more anxiety than he formerly did merriment, for his vehicle being disentangled from the coach, and his horse feeling the restraint removed, sets off with a rapidity that spreads terror all around. Nothing is to be seen but horses plunging, and drivers and equestrians all endeavouring to avoid the same dangerous contact.⁴³

This time, the reaction is much less jovial, and the social indiscretion of bad driving is no longer the greatest cause for concern, but the safety of the general public. As well as the driver’s deficient skill, the uproar is also contingent upon the terrifying rapidity at which the horse, pulling a very light-weight vehicle, accelerates through the park. The episode culminates with the excitation of tangible fear and sympathy for the dandy when the crowd

⁴³ Blessington, 37.

perceives the very real danger they and driver are in, and though ‘no serious accident... occurred’, Blessington describes the debacle as a series of ‘disasters’.⁴⁴

Similar to the tilbury, the phaeton’s physical structure presented many challenges to the inexperienced or inattentive driver. Yet, considering the fact that the phaeton was designed for those who preferred to drive themselves rather than by a career-coachman, the inexperienced or inattentive was precisely the phaeton’s primary consumer. Indeed, newspaper reports of owner-driven phaeton accidents are abundant such as this account of a mother’s delayed reactions to flighty horses:

Yesterday afternoon as a Lady was driving a high phaeton near the King Bohemia’s Head, Turnham-green, with her two children, maid, and lap-dog attended by a servant behind on horseback, the horses, without any other carriage being near them, turned out of the road, which the lady not attending in time, they were overturned in a very dirty part of the road, and the whole family almost smothered with mud. The lady and maid were much hurt, and one of the children, about three years old, was thrown upon the bank by the maid, by which its cheek was cut, but its life in all probability saved. Some of the inhabitants and the company from the tavern took every means for the relief of the distressed mother; and she soon had the news that the surgeon had pronounced the children’s bones to be whole, and to compleat [sic] her happiness after the fright, Chloe, the lap-dog, was brought safe to her arms.⁴⁵

This account, likely fictional though modelled on countless real events, initially appears less focused on the upset of the carriage, but the closing lines regarding the children’s health and the safety of lapdog present a sardonic commentary on the priorities of the mother. The

⁴⁴ Blessington, 38.

⁴⁵ *Middlesex Journal and Evening Advertiser*, 15 April 1775, no. 945, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

wellbeing of her children, whom all remain anonymous, excite little apparent reaction from the Lady, a far cry from her attitude toward the lapdog. The animal usurps the position of the Lady's children in not only being mentioned by name but by being the first to be returned to her arms following the accident. The status of lapdogs, as neither object nor person, complicated their classification as property, an issue that was subject to debate for much of the eighteenth century. Indeed, proposals to institute a tax on dogs, which as Lynn Festa points out would re-categorise dogs from beloved entity to mere chattel, reached parliamentary level as a means to combat national problems ranging from increased cases of rabies to wasteful expenditure on food lavished on dogs.⁴⁶ The luxurious lifestyle that elite women's lapdogs habitually enjoyed positioned the companion pets as unnecessary indulgences in times when a large portion of the population were living in poverty, and speaks to an 'ostensibly misplaced value of dog over person'.⁴⁷ Certainly, our phaeton-driving mother appears guilty of participating in a hierarchy that prioritises her pet over her own children. Further, since the lapdog was often regarded as a powerful symbol of consumerism, much like the phaeton itself, the Lady's preoccupation with objects of conspicuous consumption over her children's welfare is testament to the era's growing anxieties over the prioritisation with luxury and pleasure over moral duty.

As I have shown, restive horses were a considerable factor in many carriage accidents. Ewers notes that, due to the stress placed on horses working in particular on commercial vehicles such as the post and stagecoaches on busy routes, the high 'churn rate' (approximately four years) resulted in a large volume of young and inexperienced horses in

⁴⁶ Lynn M. Festa, 'Person, Animal, Thing: The 1796 Dog Tax and the Right to Superfluous Things', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 33, no. 2 (2009): 3. Festa notes several bills debating a tax on dogs were quashed over the century, including proposal in 1755 that was brushed aside due to upcoming general elections and the start of the Seven Years' war; a debate before Irish Parliament on a dog-tax bill took place in 1763; a dog tax was proposed to Commons "to ease the poor rates" in March 1776; in 1785, writers to *The Gentleman's Magazine* proposed a tax on dogs; and finally William Pitt passed a controversial dog-tax bill in 1796. See especially pages 6 and 36.

⁴⁷ Festa, 14.

circulation.⁴⁸ Unlike the case in the *Middlesex Journal*, not all phaeton accidents avoided tragedy so lightly, and terse reports of far more serious cases, often due to the unpredictable behaviour of the horses, are equally plentiful. The *St James's Chronicle* writes that 'Last Week Lord St. Laurence was flung from his high Phaeton, near Dublin, by the Horses taken Fright, and killed on the Spot'.⁴⁹ Under similar circumstances, 'An accident happened to the First Consul [...] in a phaeton drawn by four horses, which he drove; the animals being of high blood ran off, and their progress being soon obstructed by a bank, they were thrown down.'⁵⁰ Driving a vehicle capable of rapid speeds like a phaeton was an inherently precarious affair. Ewers also notes that, should a horse spook, carriages were not equipped with sufficient apparatus to brake or curb speed. Slowing the progress of a vehicle 'propelled by galloping horses' without brakes and even with the assistance of a 'drag chain' was invariably not fast enough to avoid an accident.⁵¹ The skill of a coachman to overcome the shortcomings of carriage design cannot be overstated in its importance to the safety of carriage and road-users. Indeed, these accounts, though ranging in the gravity of their outcomes, are all testament to the paramount importance of a driver's vigilance and proficiency in avoiding disaster.⁵²

Of course, phaetons were driven at intentionally dizzying speeds as well, after all they were designed for this specific purpose. Evidence suggests that the nationwide love for fast driving was a particularly British fascination that began long before the old parish roads gave way to modern turnpikes in the mid-century. Cesar Saussure, visiting from France on a tour of England between 1725 and 1729, mused on this phenomenon: "When you travel on

⁴⁸ Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 146.

⁴⁹ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 22 April 1779, no. 2826, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

⁵⁰ 'Foreign Intelligence.', *The European Magazine, and London Review*, May 1803, no. 43, British Periodicals.

⁵¹ Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 146.

⁵² Phaeton catastrophes were not isolated to large cities such as London but reported nationwide and in various regional papers.

horseback in England it is always at a trot or a gallop, and Englishmen hardly know what it is to go at a foot's pace".⁵³ Two decades later in the 1750s, the surge in turnpike roads radiating outward from major cities like London at ensured greater speeds could be reached thanks to smoother road conditions. At the same time, the possibility of experiencing such speeds spread laterally from major, well-connected cities, to hitherto immobile regions of the country. 'Views of London' (1798) by Rowlandson (Figure 1.7) exaggerates the effects of the turnpike roads. In the background of the print, life within the confines of the city perimeters seems stationary, a likely consequence of congestion similar to that satirised by Blessington in 'The Park'. Even the figure mounted on a horse appears motionless, looking outward to the abruptly mobilised carriages on the turnpike road that are juxtaposed against the urban stillness. The urge to test one's speed against one's peers is encapsulated by an accident recorded by *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette* in 1751 which involved the driver of a small vehicle and single horse returning to the capital where, in the act of passing an acquaintance, 'a Race ensued, in which he was thrown out, and had the Misfortune to have one of His Ribs broke'.⁵⁴ Between 1750 and 1770, an even greater surge in the expansion of Britain's transit systems occurred, often termed 'turnpike mania' at the peak of the efforts, extending and crystallising the effects of the previous transformative period.⁵⁵ The phaeton's popularity as a fashionable carriage skyrocketed in the 1770s and the ensuing increase in their production could well account for the increased number of crashes involving phaetons. My research reveals that this correlation is twofold. The elimination of Britain's decaying and dangerous thoroughfares in favour of Turnpike roads instigated a shift in vehicle design as coach-makers responded both to the drastically improved road conditions and the emerging

⁵³ César de Saussure and Van Muyden (Madame.), *A Foreign View of England in 1725-1729: The Letters of Monsieur César de Saussure to His Family* (Caliban, 1995), 182.

⁵⁴ 'News', *London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, 13 June 1751, no. 88, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

⁵⁵ Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 24.

new tastes of their clientele. Smoother, more uniform road surfaces reduced the likelihood of a carriage sustaining damage from the deep ruts and other obstacles characteristic of the old road system. The sturdiness and structural durability of a carriage was, as a result, no longer the sole priority, and the energetic investment in carriages designed specifically for speed reflects the coaching community's consumer preferences for sleek, lightweight, and fast-moving carriages over their cumbersome predecessors. The creation of these new vehicles to suit this increasing urgency for speed was often undertaken at the loss of structural safety, and so it was not simply a case that there were greater numbers of these vehicles, highflyers outstripped the competition *and* fell short in their structural integrity.



Figure 1.7: Thomas Rowlandson, 'Views of London No. 4. Entrance of Oxford Street or Tyburn Turnpike with a view of Park Lane' (1798). Whilst these vehicles depicted are not phaetons, Rowlandson's image illustrates the freedom provided by turnpike roads to drive at wanton speed. Reproduced courtesy of the British Museum.

Phaetons, as the ‘sportscars’ of the Georgian era, were favoured by those who revelled in the ‘fearful pleasure of driving them’.⁵⁶ As Jeffrey Schnapp enumerates in his essay on the anthropology of speed and thrill, lust for speed and the inflated sense of ego that often accompanied wild driving (since, to ‘accede to speed was to attain god-like powers’) paved the way for terrifying encounters between vehicles (8).⁵⁷ Frances Burney’s *Evelina* (1778) – a significant influence on Austen’s writing – was published during the period of drastic national road expansion and coincides with the growth in popularity of the highflyer. References to phaetons appear across *Evelina*, and indeed Burney dramatizes one terrifying encounter between high phaeton drivers. Lady Louisa recounts that Lord Merton, in imitation of the mythological Phaeton ‘drove so monstrous fast’ in his phaeton that he frightened her ‘out of her senses’, and her head was ‘quite giddy’.⁵⁸ Lord Merton, though, refrains from acknowledging fault at his fiancée’s discomfort. His carelessness for her as his passenger and his rash choices on the road are revealed further by Louisa, who cries

‘you wicked creature you! – I must tell you one thing, Ma’am, – you can’t think how abominable he was! do you know we met Mr. Lovel in his new phaeton, and my Lord was so cruel as to drive against it? – we really flew. I declare I could not breathe. Upon my word, my Lord, I’ll never trust myself with you again, – I won’t indeed.’⁵⁹

Merton’s disregard for Lady Louisa’s safety highlights the vulnerability of women and their often-negative experiences of carriage travel at the behest of their male peers who drive them. Burney reveals female distress to be the unimportant collateral damage to this specifically

⁵⁶ Thrupp, *The History of Coaches*, 73.

⁵⁷ Jeffrey T. Schnapp, ‘Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)’, *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 1 (1999): 8. Schnapp posits that driving as an act of thrill-seeking creates an addiction loop of hyperstimulation that requires a devastating crash to initially crystallise and thus validate the hyperstimulation of the driving, and secondarily to interrupt the cycle to regenerate a new cycle of hyperstimulation. See Schnapp pages 3 and 34.

⁵⁸ Frances Burney, *Evelina* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 279.

⁵⁹ Burney, 280.

masculine form of pleasure-seeking, played out between male drivers in their bid to assert their own dominance.⁶⁰ Erin Mackie notes that the cast of male characters in *Evelina* represent the major male archetypes that have been represented in literature since the seventeenth century. Mackie identifies ‘the society fop, Mr Lovel; the predatory rake, Sir Clement Willoughby; the gruff, indeed brutal sailor, Captain Mirvan; [...] the sleazy libertine, Lord Merton; [...] and the perfect gentleman, Lord Orville’.⁶¹ While they embody an array of the period’s elite masculinities, Mackie points out the violent self-interestedness and assertion of power over the feminine that characterises the majority of these men.⁶² Burney’s portrayal of the phaeton as the vehicle of choice for men unconcerned with – or worse, relishing in – feminine discomfort and terror, the phaeton becomes emblematic of masculine violence. Further, since the potential accident with the phaeton includes the foppish, aspirational Lovel at its centre, the problems with phaetons as ostentatious displays of wealth and taste are reaffirmed through this association between phaeton and fop.

Whilst *Evelina* does not paint a favourable portrait of Lady Louisa’s character in her letters, Louisa’s disjointed exclamatory speech is, here, testament to her serious distress, one that transcends the emotional and crosses the boundary into physical suffering – “I could not breathe”. Indeed, Louisa is so affected that she still recalls the event after several days “O, you half killed me the other morning, with terror!,” reconfirming the physicality of her trauma, “I have not yet recovered from my fright. How could you be so cruel as to drive your phaeton against my Lord Merton’s?”.⁶³ It is important to note that Lady Louisa is not neurotic in her fears: dangerous phaeton accidents with greater consequences than a terror

⁶⁰ Female experience of travelling in different vehicles in a range of contexts is examined in greater depth in Part II of this thesis. Further, Burney’s dramatization of violence and dangerous masculine behaviour against women that play out within different carriages across the narrative of *Evelina* will be investigated more thoroughly in chapter four, in the context of gendered and specifically female experience of carriage travel and carriage interiors.

⁶¹ Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009), 151.

⁶² Mackie, 151.

⁶³ Burney, *Evelina*, 285.

requiring several days' recovery are present in the narrative and in close proximity to Louisa. For instance, Mr. Coverly, whom Merton dismisses as an incapable driver, is late to an engagement having had a 'little accident' in which he overturns his phaeton 'and broke it all to pieces'. Lady Louisa, stricken with a scream at this news, swears off riding in a phaeton from that point forward.⁶⁴

Above, I noted that the associations between Burney's elite masculinities and the phaeton positions the vehicle as an emblem of violence. However, I suggest Burney's approach to the phaeton and its involvement in violent masculine identities was more layered. The use of a phaeton carriage would not instantly categorise its male patron as violent, rather, this characterisation was predicated in equal measure upon the phaeton driver's personal style and skill while commanding the reins. Across the narrative of *Evelina*, Burney sets up an interesting juxtaposition between the patrons of high phaeton carriages. As with *Pride and Prejudice*'s Miss de Bourgh and her pony phaeton, Burney's contrast functions to confirm a self-reflexive relationship between a carriage and its owner. This works so that initially, the personal traits of the owner are interpreted and amplified through the vehicle, but also the abstract qualities of the carriage equally inform the characters of those that drive them. In the first instance, Merton's aggressive, competitive one-upmanship against Mr. Lovell – also in a phaeton – echoes the hubris of the mythological Phaeton and adds strength to the prevailing characterisation of phaeton drivers as both reckless and self-important. This is encapsulated in the following comedic sketch of a duel that transpired 'in consequence of a quarrel at Epsom' between a brewer, who drives a mighty phaeton, and a distiller driving a small 'buggy'. The driver of the high phaeton, which was drawn by a stately team of four horses, 'desired the other, who was in an humble *Buggy*, to go out of the way, but the humble *Buggy* had *spirit* enough to resent the contemptuous language of the proud Phaeton, who was quite

⁶⁴ Burney, 286.

ready to *brew a row...*'⁶⁵ Whilst a humorous report, the politics of driving in vehicles of different stature, both physical and social, is made clear in microcosm: the 'haught[y]' brewer is, it seems, accustomed to being yielded to by conveyances of less consequence, takes offence at the buggy driver's ignorance of social mores of the road. Burney's Lord Orville, the polite and gentlemanly love interest of Evelina, however, also makes use of a phaeton. Unlike Merton, Lovel, and Coverly, whose obnoxiousness is simply compounded by their association with the arrogantly coded phaeton, Lord Orville's 'excellent sense and refined good breeding' transcends the associations of the high phaeton's reputation.⁶⁶ In the hands of a restrained and correct coachman, the phaeton might reflect well on its driver, showing how the human at the helm could positively moderate perceptions of this notorious vehicle. Orville shows great awareness of how a phaeton is adversely perceived as something to be feared ('If the ladies will trust to my driving," said Lord Orville, "and are not afraid of a phaeton, mine shall be ready in a moment'), and his care to alleviate his passengers' qualms via his slow and cautious driving reinforces the importance of conscientious horsemanship to a pleasant journey.⁶⁷ Mackie points out that Lord Orville's 'authentically gracious address' is a foundational aspect of his genteel manners, one which Evelina finds both 'legible and reassuring' as she struggles to interpret the 'treacherously polite manners' of Orville's elite masculine counterparts.⁶⁸ As such, immediately following her journey with Mrs Selwyn in Orville's phaeton, Evelina's (misplaced) indignation toward Orville at what she believed to be a great indiscretion on his part, is brought swiftly to an end in light of his 'respectful behaviour', and the phaeton is thus simultaneously engendered with a positive valence.⁶⁹ This scene highlights the importance of striking a balance between polite conversational practices

⁶⁵ *London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 25 May 1796, no. 4178, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

⁶⁶ Burney, *Evelina*, 283.

⁶⁷ Burney, 283.

⁶⁸ Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates*, 154.

⁶⁹ Burney, *Evelina*, 283.

and physical action, as Orville's physical skill and composure whilst driving contributes to his moral character just as much as his deference to Evelina and Mrs Selwyn does.

The Fall of Phaeton

The Prince of Wales, between 1788 and 1795, was in residence at Kempshot House a mere five kilometres from Austen's family residence in Steventon. As Jocelyn Harris notes, with the Prince's proximity to Austen and her circle of family and friends, ample material for royal satire – most notably concentrated in *Northanger Abbey's* John Thorpe – was readily available.⁷⁰ Indeed, Harris's comprehensive chapter on Austen's lampoons of the Prince of Wales, as well as several other royals, reveals that such satirical attacks can be located across her *oeuvre* from her youthful writings until her last works, the incomplete *Sanditon*, in 1817.⁷¹ *Northanger Abbey's* John Thorpe is perhaps Austen's most prominent caricature of the Prince of Wales, and Harris connects Thorpe's penchant for fast carriages and cavalier attitude to safety with Prince George's equally reckless driving, as seen in prints such as Gillray's *The Fall of Phaeton*. Harris finds evidence for this connection in the Prince's embarrassing overturning in 1788 (which I discuss below), seeing it as the potential inspiration for the scene in which Catherine Morland expresses fear that her brother's gig is unsafe. I address the gigs of *Northanger Abbey* in my third chapter, but here I build on Harris' research into Austen's royal satire by analysing the phaeton disaster in 'Love and Freindship', which I read as further evidence of Austen's cutting parody of the Prince's fall.

On Thursday 19th June 1788, it was reported in the *Morning Herald* that the Prince, whilst out driving alone with his mistress Mrs. Fitzherbert, was the unfortunate victim of an altercation with a public stagecoach:

⁷⁰ Jocelyn Harris, *Satire, Celebrity, and Politics in Jane Austen* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2017), 161.

⁷¹ See Jocelyn Harris, 'Chapter 5 – "Carried Home, Dead Drunk": Satires on the Royal Family' in *Satire, Celebrity, and Politics in Jane Austen* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2017), 161-211.

The Prince of Wales was overturned in his Phaeton, on Monday night, at Kensington-Gore, chiefly on account of the furious manner in which one of the Brentford stages drove into town. His Royal Highness, on drawing aside suddenly to avoid the coach, snapped the bridle of one of his horses, and the other going on with vehemence, overturned his carriage, by which he and Mrs. Fitzherbert were both thrown out. The Prince sustained no injury, but Mrs. Fitzherbert sprained her ankle.⁷²

The report generously elides any details that may have implicated the Prince in the tumble, though it was widely known that he was a notorious thrill-seeker, performing such stunts as ferociously driving his three sisters and their governess, Lady Charlotte Finch, into several lampposts in Windsor.⁷³ The episode with Mrs. Fitzherbert was rich inspiration for the period's satirists, and Gillray's *The Fall of Phaeton* was perhaps the most audacious in its lacerating portrayal of the Prince Regent and Fitzherbert (see Figure 1.8).

⁷² *Morning Herald*, 19 June 1788, no. 2390, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

⁷³ Flora Fraser, *Princesses: The Six Daughters of George III* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 121.

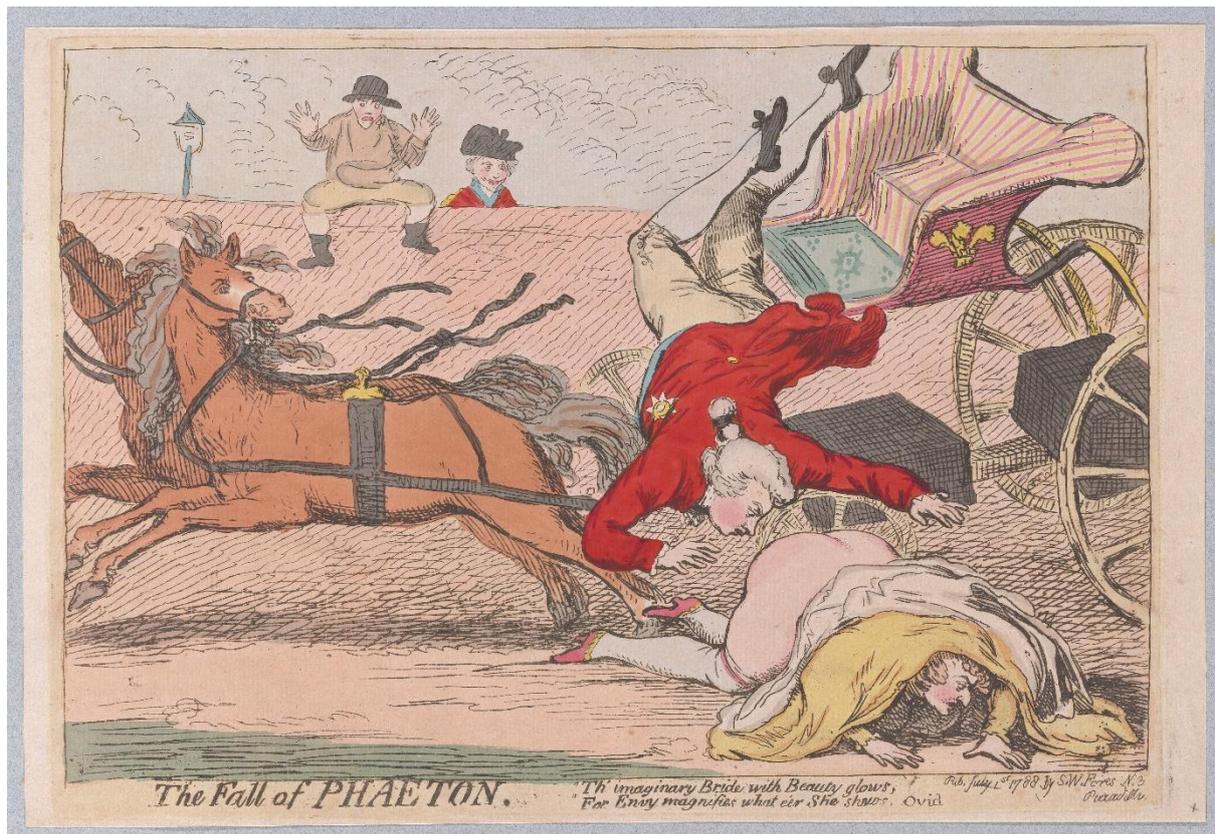


Figure 1.8: ‘The Fall of Phaeton’ by James Gillray (1788). Behind the commotion and the spirited horses, a surprised yokel and a military officer eagerly survey the scene, pointing towards the very public nature of the incident. Photographed with permission from Beinecke Rare Books & Manuscripts Library at Yale.

Gillray’s lively portrait depicts the mythological fall of Phaeton through the very real fall of the Prince of Wales from his high perch phaeton. In the foreground, the Prince falls with poise and grace from his seat, with elegantly turned legs and pointed toes, but in a grotesque and bathetic twist of fate his course is set headfirst into the exposed posterior of Mrs. Fitzherbert. The myth of Phaeton was a particularly fruitful lens for Gillray through which to critique the Prince’s myriad unsavoury traits, from his overambition, pride, and immaturity to his lack of moderation. For example, it was common knowledge that George was frequently referred to as ‘the rising sun’ in reference to his blatant ambition to succeed his father George III as monarch, and Phaeton’s act of driving his father’s Sun chariot can be

seen as a mythical mirroring of this premature, almost treasonous rite of passage.⁷⁴ As Schnapp points out, the horses that drew Helios's mighty chariot have been allegorised over the centuries as the passions, and George's hedonistic appetites were well documented.⁷⁵ Phaeton's inability to maintain control of the horses has calamitous effects, and perhaps George's reported slip of the reins in his own fall represents the dire consequences of his egotistical preference for his own needs and comforts might have upon the monarchy, the government, and the nation at large. The parallels can be drawn on an even more fundamental level. Phaeton's primary motivation in driving the chariot was initially to seek reassurance from his father, Helios, for his ambiguous heritage, whilst George's life began with the misfortune of him being pronounced female upon his birth.⁷⁶ Perhaps his reckless thrill-seeking in the driver's seat of a high phaeton was his own means of stabilising his gendered identity, as Phaeton attempted to secure his own origins.

Harris draws attention to Austen's artistic affinities with Gillray and other popular satirists of the period, especially for her translation of grotesque elements of visual caricature into her writing.⁷⁷ I suggest that Austen's implementation of the grotesque encompasses the exaggerated character profiles of the four protagonists in 'Love and Freindship', which in turn serve as the foundations for her burlesque of George IV and his phaeton crash later in the

⁷⁴ The name 'Rising Sun' for the Prince was often the topic of print satire, for example Gillray's *The Prince at Grasse* (1787) shows Edmund Burke, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the politician Charles Fox, and Prime Minister Lord North pointing to the sun rising over the rooftops while assuring the Prince, himself with a bright yellow sun pinned to his blue coat, that his debts would be paid, as the companion print *The Prince at Clover* (1787) confirms. Prints purchased by the National Portrait Gallery 1947. Gillray's later print *The Cabinetical Balance* (1806) directly addresses the Prince's urgency for ascension over the waning King George III. In the print, the feeble rays of the setting sun – containing the royal crown – sinks behind the north pole of the globe, while the bright beams that shine across the whole image emanate from the large rising sun topped by feathered plumes and coronet belonging to the Prince of Wales. The print's inscription reads 'NB: The representation of, the astonishing strength & Influence of the Rays from the Rising-Sun, is taken from Sir Isaac Newton's Theory of Light.' Held in the British Museum. Flora Fraser's study of the royal family's personal correspondence shows that, even within the family, George was known as a rising sun, as his sister Princess Sophia remarks in 1804: 'Does he really fancy, because he is the rising sun, anything he says, it is to be swallowed whole?'. See Fraser, *Princesses: The Six Daughters of George III* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 208.

⁷⁵ Schnapp, 'Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)', 9.

⁷⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. E. V. Rieu (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 25–26.

⁷⁷ Harris, *Satire, Celebrity, and Politics in Jane Austen*, 161.

narrative. In particular, the moral code developed and upheld by Laura, Sofia, Augustus, and Edward resembles the type of parodically warped morality common in visual satire, including caricatures of the Prince. One instance that brings the two couples' collective moral code into focus sees Augustus, the husband of Laura's foil, Sophie, contrive independence from his parents by means of a clandestine marriage and the support of a 'considerable sum of money' embezzled from his father. The act of stealing is, though, just the initial indicator of moral turpitude, rather, Laura's description of the method of and justification for Augustus acquiring the money underscores the full extent of his and his companions' inverted world view. According to Laura's letter, Augustus 'gracefully purloined [the money] from his unworthy father's Escritoire'; her shrewd lexical here choice creates a moral hierarchy that situates the graceful Augustus beyond reproach, in opposition to his unworthy father.⁷⁸ Their sense of entitlement and superiority, a theme that runs throughout the narrative, reveals their deep investment and belief in their ethical system. Joseph Drury's insights into the relationship between technologies of motion and the moral sphere is particularly useful here in extracting meaning from the 'Love and Freindship' phaeton crash. Recognising the post-chaise as an icon of the eighteenth century's new culture of mobility for its 'unprecedented capacity to satisfy the new desire for speed', Drury notes that moralists identified a deficit between the 'increasing speed at which people could reach their destinations, achieve their economic goals, and satisfy their desires', and any 'comparable advances in the moral sphere'. Rather than facilitate moral growth, the period's culture of mobility and ensuing appetites to extend 'desires beyond [one's] immediate proximal relations' inhibited humanity's capacity to respond to the present pleasures and moral obligations.⁷⁹ In the context of 'Love and Freindship', the four characters are guilty of extending themselves

⁷⁸ Austen, *Teenage Writings*, 78.

⁷⁹ Joseph Drury, *Novel Machines: Technology and Narrative Form in Enlightenment Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), 109.

beyond their current capacity through dishonest methods to immediately increase their economic worth, while their own distorted ethical system relieves them of pressure from standard moral obligations. Augustus and Edward's fatal ride in the phaeton thus rehearses their mismatch in values, and the crash itself constitutes a stylistically hyperbolic punishment for moral turpitude.

The literary landscape in which Austen composed 'Love and Freindship' was overloaded with sentimental fiction; the style's mores were firmly embedded in the cultural consciousness. Indeed, Claudia Johnson highlights that these characters exist in a world that requires them to act according to the conventions and tropes at large in the sentimental genre, as such, many of their actions have no motivations nor are they guided by personal need and desire. The characters perform the way they do simply because the world of sentimental fiction requires it of them. As Johnson phrases it, Austen's characters are often 'bewildered to discover that their very status as sentimental characters dictates otherwise gratuitous courses of action'.⁸⁰ In this context, it would be unfair to dismiss the foursome's misbehaviour, which is? guided by the rubric of their moral code, as a reflection of an inner, conscious malice. Rather, it could be pitted as a symptom of Austen's extended commentary on the conventions of sentimental fiction, in which characters prioritise their own emotions to such an intensity as to risk selfishness instead of selflessness. As Marilyn Butler attests, '[t]he intention in satirizing Laura is above all to expose the selfishness of the sentimental system.'⁸¹ We should also bear in mind that Austen's juvenile writings were just as much, if not more so, stylistic experiments as they were exercises in understanding the evolving worldview of a teenage girl. As such, to figure the demise of Edward and Augustus as an expression of Austen's distaste for wrongdoing is to largely misunderstand the humour of 'Love and Freindship'.

⁸⁰ Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 31.

⁸¹ Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 169.

Returning to my discussion of Austen's satire of the Prince of Wales, the similarities between Edward and Augustus and George IV are numerous across 'Love and Freindship'. Edward's illicit marriage to Laura, for example, is undertaken in defiance of his father, Sir Edward, recalling the Prince Regent's illegal union with Maria Fitzherbert that went ahead without the consent of the King. The Prince, thanks to an exorbitant lifestyle and precipitous spending, was plagued by debts that he refused to pay off, and Edward and Augustus prove equally imprudent. Edward, for one, insists to his sister, Augusta, that he shall 'exist on Love', scorning the notion of monetary assistance from their father to support himself and his wife.⁸² Augustus reflects most keenly the Prince's attitude toward spending; surviving on stolen money, Augustus and his wife, Sophia, quickly exhaust their funds in hosting Edward and Laura, 'But they, Exalted Creatures! scorned to reflect a moment on their pecuniary Distresses and would have blushed at the idea of paying their Debts'.⁸³ As McMaster notes, one of the cornerstones of the comedic conceit in 'Love and Freindship' is the doubling of the protagonists. In Sophia, Laura is granted with a satisfying mirror image to essentially quadruple the comedic effect as each heroine 'acts and postures against the other' to 'mutually reinforce each other's absurdities'.⁸⁴ Similarly, then Augustus and Edward are mirrors for each other, and if indeed these characters are parodies of George IV, then they are the Prince doubled. At the end of the narrative, Austen's gruesome tableau of Laura's and Sophia's 'elegantly attired' husbands 'weltering in their own blood' (87) in the wreckage of their phaeton assumes a dark nuance in its reference to the Prince's fall. As well as a satisfying, if grisly punishment for moral deficiency, their disastrous overturning also presents a parodic double assassination of the Regent whom Austen disliked.

⁸² Austen, *Teenage Writings*, 74–75.

⁸³ Austen, 78.

⁸⁴ McMaster, *Jane Austen, Young Author*, 146.

Unlike the newspaper reports and satirical prints we have already seen, which elide blood and bloody clothes in their presentations of grotesque calamity, Austen's disaster tableau is uncensored. The scene is richly imagined, invoking both senses of sight and sound. Augustus and Edward 'welter' in their own blood, a ghastly image of excessive and chaotic bleeding. In amongst the shrieks, screams, and incoherent ramblings of Sophia and Laura, the macabre groans of Edward, who momentarily survives the crash, cut through the furore.⁸⁵ Austen's bold representation of extreme imagery is matched by her experimental approach to parody, a genre which she pushes to the point of absurdity. Together, they form the foundations of her comedic method in the juvenilia. I have thus far approached the 'Love and Freindship' crash as a parody of George IV's own overturning, and as a burlesque of the constraints of sentimental fiction that prescribes set behaviours and punishments for bypassing sentimental mores. However, I argue that another function of Austen's phaeton crash can be interpreted if viewed through the lens of Schnapp's theory of a cycle of hyperstimulation. Schnapp posits that a crash acts as a necessary interruption to the cycle of daredevil driving as a means to satisfy the addiction to hyperstimulation posed by the realisation of and subsequent desensitisation to ever increasing speeds. When read through this lens, Augustus and Edward's overturning stands as the catastrophic event that interrupts their damaging cycle of gratuitous behaviours. The crash essentially presents them with a clean slate with which to begin again, another chance to navigate life stripped of the consequences caused by their moral deficiencies. Of course, their death ensures this new beginning is never realised, any notions of hope are unceremoniously quashed in the final comedic twist of this scene – '...and instantly fetching a Deep sigh, [Edward] Expired' – though they die absolved.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Austen, *Teenage Writings*, 87.

⁸⁶ Austen, 88.

The graphic violence and dramatic death in this crash, which I elaborate further in the final section of this chapter, are far removed stylistically from Austen's representation of an overturning in her final mature work, *Sanditon*. Austen opens the unfinished work with the overturning of a Gentleman and Lady's carriage, yet despite the immediacy of the incident, the geographical and temporal progress of the incident is comparatively sedate. Indeed, Austen's measured lexis and deliberate narrative pace underscores the laboriousness of the scene, as the 'severity' of the crash was 'broken by their slow pace' in the process of 'toiling up [a] long ascent'.⁸⁷ While the blistering pace of the phaeton crash of 'Love and Freindship' concludes in just a few lines, *Sanditon*'s overturning and its aftermath comprise the whole of the first chapter. Significantly, the crash occurs as the Gentleman and Lady's carriage leaves the turnpiked road and turns onto a narrow, poorly kept lane, a topological shift imbued with historical resonance that contrasts modernity with the past. Turning off from the turnpiked road, the characters' carriage leaves a thoroughfare representative of a new age, a faster, more connected, and modern nation, instead travelling onto a parish lane untouched by the modernisation of the turnpike system. Travelling in a post-chaise, a vehicle which, like the phaeton, encapsulated modern tastes in its capacity for speed, along a lane representative of a bygone era creates an irreconcilable friction between present and past, progress and stasis. Overturning at this physical juncture, the carriage accident represents a temporal fracturing from modern Georgian Britain: the old-fashioned lane effectively halts the consequences of modernity, inhered within the carriage and turnpike road, from reaching the town to which it leads. As Ewers briefly observes, Austen's use of the crash trope in this instance 'symbolises a return to the past'.⁸⁸ The slowness of *Sanditon*'s carriage accident in *Sanditon*, and its placement at the very opening of the work, is a world removed from the extreme speed and

⁸⁷ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 295.

⁸⁸ Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 146.

violence of the phaeton disaster in ‘Love and Freindship’. Austen thus moves from a crash at the very beginning of her writing to another at the very end; the contrasts between two accidents show evidence of Austen’s own attempts to ‘interrogate the new world of speed’.⁸⁹ The two accidents composed at the start and at the end of Austen’s career, signal the ongoing prevalence of the crash trope in literature but also points toward its value in both parodies of sentimental fiction and the realism of her mature style.

Disaster and extreme sensibility

Over the course of this chapter we have seen the versatility of the carriage crash trope as a tool for satirical and moral reflection, as a means to instigate plot progression, or to signal temporal relocation. In this section I turn to the relationship between carriage disasters and excessive displays of sensibility, which were targeted by teenage Austen’s satire. Scholars have been interrogating Austen’s relationship to the culture of sentimental writing for decades. In *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), Ian Watt describes Austen’s impatience with the vogue of overly emotional bad novels which constituted the sentimental genre, a genre that was, he claims, predominantly marketed toward an uncritical, feminine readership. He does, though, acknowledge the importance of sentimental fiction to the development of Austen’s writing, noting the evident influence of writers such as Richardson and Fielding, for example.⁹⁰ In *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975), Marilyn Butler re-reads Austen’s relationship to sentimental fiction more astutely and acknowledges the genre’s crucial importance by framing it within the development of the British Enlightenment.⁹¹ Austen was critical of the extreme displays of sensibility by sentimental heroines, and she pointedly

⁸⁹ Ewers, 146.

⁹⁰ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), 290, 296–98.

⁹¹ Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*.

satirised these tropes from her juvenilia through to her mature works. *Sense and Sensibility* is Austen's most obvious satire of the cult of sentimental literature, and Claudia Johnson notes the 'scathing satire on the unseemliness of excessive feeling' in 'Love and Freindship' marks the juvenile work as at once a fledgling *Sense and Sensibility*, and a scathing parody of 'the destinies inscribed by sentimental fiction'.⁹² I close this chapter, then, by underscoring Austen's parody of the carriage disaster in 'Love and Freindship' is imbricated in equal measure with her lampoon of sentimental tropes.

Constant journalistic reports and literary dramatisations of overturning carriages during the period of significant expansion to Britain's domestic infrastructure ensured that carriage disasters remained firmly in the public consciousness. The manuscript verse-letter poem 'A full and true account of a pleasure party to Rockingham in 1817', for instance, provides invaluable insights into how carriage accidents, so publicly reported and caricatured in print and visual mediums, figured in private musings. More specifically, though, it paints a vivid (if tongue in cheek) scene of extreme sensibility in the context of an overturned carriage, while the accompanying ink drawing adds to the melodrama with driving rain, wind, and ominous winged creatures peering down upon the scene. The incident elicits general fainting fits, tears, and desolation among the party:

The braces of the car are broke!!!
And death like comes, the morbid stroke!
The Driver thrown, has lost the rein,
And senseless lies upon the plain:
The heart's (?) before, that lightly bound,
How chang'd! — are stretch'd upon the ground —
The eye before that dazzl'd bright,

⁹² Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 31.

Is clos'd! — the tongue is dumb with fright!!!
Whilst horror, and despair within,
Fill up the measure of the scene!!!!
Alas! what words can now express.
The misery of our distress!
What pencil could attempt to paint,
So many lying in a faint?
'Tis more than Swift himself could do,
Or Hogarth's pencil even knew:
For more than I shall ever tell,
Oh! that such a loss befell -
Nay, had you seen them loss'd together,
Quite uncover'd to the weather!
The thoughts bring tears back to my eyes,
"Cursed cursed emptiness!
"Alas! that we had ever come,
"But quietly remain'd at home..."⁹³

⁹³ C. R., 'A Full & True Account of a Pleasure Party to Rockingham in 1817 by C.R., Illustrated by J.P' (1817), Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.



Figure 1.9: One of nine ink illustrations that accompany the manuscript poem ‘A full and true account of a pleasure party to Rockingham in 1817’. Tumbling bodies flung from both carriages in driving rain, while two grounded cherubs cry at the scene. Photographed with permission from Yale Centre for British Art.

Austen’s heroines show similar propensities for bodily displays of sensibility in response to carriage disasters, but Austen primes us for their extreme somatic responses in the phaeton crash’s preceding scenes. Having been banished from Macdonald Hall for stealing considerable sums of money and orchestrating the unfortunate elopement of Macdonald’s daughter, Laura and Sophia find themselves a short distance from the hall ‘by a limpid stream... suited to meditation’.⁹⁴ Laura, feeling the place incited a cheerful and contemplative mood, begins making innocuous observations on the ‘lovely Scene,’ the ‘Noble Grandeur of the Elms,’ and the ‘beautifull [sic] Sky!’.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, Laura’s appreciation of natural beauty triggers the overactive sensibilities and melancholy of her companion, who detects references and associations with her husband, Augustus, perhaps imprisoned at Newgate – or already hung. Sophia’s reactions become increasingly flamboyant as Laura’s references become more vague in her attempts to avoid exciting further distress. Observations of the elm trees ‘wound’ Sophia’s sensibility as Augustus was similarly tall and majestic, and ‘possessed that noble grandeur which [Laura] admire[d] in them’, while the sky reminds Sophia so strongly of her husband’s waistcoat that her

⁹⁴ Austen, *Teenage Writings*, 86.

⁹⁵ Austen, 86.

‘feelings... were at that time so exquisite, & the tenderness she felt for Augustus so poignant that [Laura] had not the power to start any other topic’.⁹⁶ Sophia’s propensity for sentimental overreactions anticipates her fate later in which her feeling becomes so extreme as to transcend emotional experience and tip into bodily pain. As Laura scrambles to find a topic that would not direct her friend’s thoughts back to Augustus and ‘awaken all her sensibility’, Austen cuts Sophia’s exaggerated outpouring short with a ‘lucky overturning of a Gentleman’s Phaeton’ – the very one that carries Augustus and Edward.⁹⁷

The men’s gruesome deaths represent the primary, and most obvious, physical effects of accidents involving horse-drawn vehicles as instances of actual bodily harm that prove fatal. However, by examining Sofia’s intensity of feeling it is clear that displays of sensibility resulting from proximity to vehicular catastrophes are a secondary, and perhaps no less painful, form of bodily harm. Following the carriage overturning, Laura and Sofia exhibit extreme displays of sensibility, manifested in numerous physical symptoms such as fits, swoons, faints, and bouts of madness. Such corporeal responses, as Markman Ellis and J. G. Barker-Benfield both note, were typical of the culture of feeling.⁹⁸ Laura, who runs about for no less than two hours ‘raving in a frantic, incoherent manner’, only ceases her efforts once she realises Sophia has recovered from her swooning fit.⁹⁹ While Laura evidently commands the stronger constitution of the two women, for she was ‘not in the least fatigued’ by her exertions, the severity of Sophia’s physical symptoms of sensibility tax her body to such an extent she later develops a ‘galloping Consumption’ which, in a few days ‘carried her off’.¹⁰⁰ Teenage Austen passes over the carriage disaster itself relatively quickly in just a few short

⁹⁶ Austen, 87.

⁹⁷ Austen, 87.

⁹⁸ G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2; Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 19.

⁹⁹ Austen, *Teenage Writings*, 88.

¹⁰⁰ Austen, 88, 89.

paragraphs, the bulk of which describe an ‘Hour & a Quarter’ of shrieking and fainting plus the further two hours that Laura is overcome with her symptoms of sensibility. With the husbands’ deaths relegated almost to a side note, the focus on the length and severity of Laura and Sophia’s extreme feeling serves to fracture the women’s physical responses from their actual trigger. Several days have passed since their husbands’ gruesome deaths and Sophia, experiencing ‘violent pain in her delicate limbs’ and a ‘disagreeable head-ake [sic]’, attributes her symptoms not to the horror she had witnessed, but to catching a cold and continually fainting in the cold evening air.¹⁰¹ With the events of the past few days obscured, we would be forgiven for forgetting the cause the of Sophia’s swoons were it not for the vocabulary Austen chooses to describe Sophia’s eventual demise. Evocative of the equine and transit by horse, Sophia’s ‘galloping’ fever that ‘carried her off’ brings us back to the carriage disaster and compounds the relationship between Sophia’s overactive sensibility and the carriage disaster to which she is reacting. In her final moments, Sophia advises Laura against fainting fits for their dangerous effects upon the constitution, comparing them to the preferable ‘frenzy fit’ which may actually be conducive to a healthy life – ‘Run mad as often as you chuse [sic]; but do not faint-’.¹⁰² Sophia’s death seems at first an expression of teenage Austen’s distillation of sentimentalism into absurdity. However, Johnson, in her discussion of Austen’s intervention into sentimental conventions in *Sense and Sensibility*, highlights the habitual denouement of sentimental fiction’s women who experience heartbreak, that ‘women abused in love are expected to die’.¹⁰³ Sophia, unable to overcome her heartbreak after the phaeton crash that deprived her of her husband, is sentenced to death in true adherence with the sentimental archetype; the parody thus lies in the fact that she is survived by Laura whose very life defies sentimental rules.

¹⁰¹ Austen, 89.

¹⁰² Austen, 90.

¹⁰³ Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 64.

From my discussion we have seen that, across the narrative, Austen diligently set the groundwork of highlighting Augustus's, Edward's, and their wives' moral failings. Further, their dubious actions are comfortably justified, as a distorted moral code hierarchically protects those with 'exalted Ideas, Delicate Feelings [and] refined Sensibilities' from experiencing guilt for their mistreatment of others who do not participate in the same exacting sentimental conventions.¹⁰⁴ In driving a phaeton, we are shepherded into associating Edward and Augustus with the likes of rash and reckless Phaeton, George IV, the foppish Lovell, the preoccupied Lady who covets her lapdog – all of whom display dubious moral choices, but moreover, all of whom cause a phaeton accident. By establishing associations with the phaeton carriage's problematic cultural inheritance, the final crash comes as less of a catastrophic surprise, and more of an anticipated morbid spectacle. Laura's and Sophia's displays of sensibility following their husbands' crash questions the nature of a 'true', or 'false', sensibility, especially since Sophia miraculously recovers after two hours and proceeds to enquire about their sleeping arrangements for the night. Her sensitivity and preoccupation with her own comfort reveals the displays of feeling are more shallow, surface level spectacles than they are deeply felt agonies. The moral sentimental code that characterises the majority of people as soulless in fact turns in on itself, revealing it as a mere disguise for unfeeling callousness. Indeed, as I have already shown elsewhere, Austen's intentions in satirising Laura, as Butler notes, was to underscore the 'selfishness of the sentimental system'.¹⁰⁵ The presence of the carriage in this scene distorts what should be an emotional moment following the fatal disaster since, as the traditional hallmark of rank, it carries with it doubts of luxury and excess, which in turn inspire the excessive display of false sensibility. In this instance, the phaeton serves as the ideal vehicle to gather the points of

¹⁰⁴ Austen, *Teenage Writings*, 88.

¹⁰⁵ Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, 169.

Austen's satire. In the next chapter, we move to another four-wheeled carriage, the rare and opulent barouche-landau in *Emma* (1816). Unlike the phaeton's capacity for speed, as we shall see, the barouche-landau was best suited for leisurely journeys through parks and countryside, making it a bargaining chip leverageable for lofty positions upon the social ladder.

Chapter Two: The Barouche-Landau and Augusta Elton's Performance of

Politeness

The previous chapter unpacked the cultural valence of Georgian Britain's vehicular symbol of modernity, the phaeton, and brought to light its relationship with bodily harm and sensibility through the biting satire of Austen's teenage writing. Looking to one of Austen's more mature works this chapter zooms in on another eighteenth-century vehicular symbol, the magnificent barouche-landau. The heft and magnificence of the barouche-landau, as we shall see, generated a different set of material and symbolic characteristics to the tall and nimble phaeton. In the second volume of *Emma* (1816), Austen introduces us to a woman who, within the crucible of her character, embroils and vexes eighteenth-century debates regarding the cultural practice of politeness and its relationship to economic wealth and genteel status. Augusta Elton (née Hawkins), is the heiress of a fortune amounting to £10,000, and upon her marriage to the country rector, Mr. Elton, she endeavours to carve out a genteel identity for herself as Highbury's most adulated 'Lady Patroness'.¹ However, Augusta is born in the urban seaport of Bristol and transplanted, as a result of her marriage, to the small provincial town of Highbury in which the elite families boast the illustrious reputation of old money or land. There Augusta is positioned as an outsider.² As the daughter of a merchant who, it is likely, made his living from the slave trade, Augusta's lack of

¹ A small number of studies have exclusively dealt with Augusta Elton in *Emma*, only one of which focuses on her status and polite performance. See Juliet McMaster, 'Mrs. Elton and Other Verbal Aggressors', in *The Talk in Jane Austen*, ed. Bruce Stovel and Lynn Weinlos Gregg (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002, 73-9). See also Diana Birchall 'Eyeing Mrs. Elton: Learning Through Pastiche' (*Persuasions*, 2010, 30 no.2 n.pag.), Devoney Looser "'I Always Take the Part of my Own Sex': Emma's Mrs. Elton and the Rights of Women' (*Persuasions*, 2003, 25, 192-6), and Carrie Wright 'Mrs. Elton's Pearls: Simulating Superiority in Jane Austen's *Emma*' (*Persuasions*, 2016, 37 no.1 n.pag.).

² I refer to Emma Woodhouse and her father in the first instance who, as the 'younger branch of a very ancient family' had been established in the ancestral seat of Hartfield for 'several generations'. Secondly, with regards to land, the Woodhouses' land forms a small portion of the Donwell Abbey estate belonging to Highbury's other genteel resident, Mr. Knightley. See Austen, *Emma* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 108.

‘name’, ‘blood’, and ‘alliance’ and other criterion that might otherwise define her as genteel leave her particularly vulnerable to scrutiny from her set of social superiors in Highbury.³⁴ Fortunately for Augusta the idiom of politeness – a defining feature of Georgian ideology – offers all the tools of correct sociability necessary to negotiate the unfamiliar social mores of her new environs. Moreover, the formation of elite identities was intimately linked with the discourses of politeness; if used effectively, then, the rules of polite sociability could enable Augusta’s self-promotion as a woman of gentility, hence furthering her aspirations of upward social mobility.

This chapter examines Augusta’s methods of polite performance, which as I shall make clear, are principally attempted through the continual references to her brother-in-law’s luxurious carriage, the barouche-landau. Augusta uses the barouche-landau as a positional object – that is, an object of high status value that derives its construction as such from its relative scarcity – that indicates a patrician social standing.⁵ As such, Augusta’s relationship with the carriage echoes the network of human and nonhuman objects that each possess agency to effect an outcome, as described by Bruno Latour’s Actor Network Theory (ANT). Specifically, the barouche-landau acts to ‘modify the state of affairs’ by broadcasting Augusta’s gentility and, she hopes through references to it, to promote herself as the refined woman of taste.⁶

Ultimately (and unfortunately for Augusta), her treatment of the carriage exposes the precariousness of such methods in light of contemporary perceptions of the barouche-landau.

³ Jane Austen, *Emma* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 144.

⁴ Merchants of Bristol were granted the right to participate in the slave trade in 1698, resulting in a flourishing economy by the eighteenth century. See Gabrielle White ‘Emma: Autonomy and Abolition’ in *Jane Austen in the Context of Abolition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), 55-72 for an examination of Austen’s attitudes towards slavery in *Emma*.

⁵ See Fred Hirsch *Social Limits to Growth* (London: Routledge, 1977). See also David Spring ‘Interpreters of Jane Austen’s Social World’ in *Jane Austen: New Perspectives* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), 53-72 for application of Hirsch’s term ‘positional good’ to Austen’s work.

⁶ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 71.

The barouche-landau was an object enmeshed in connotations of exclusivity, yet it is coerced by Augusta's polite tactics into a social practice that has inclusive ideals at its centre. Further, I argue that Augusta's equivocal approach to genteel performance is symptomatic of her consistent misinterpretation of cultural codes. This chapter examines the tensions that consequently emerge between her need to assert her class identity in terms of both economic prosperity and polite performance, which ironically lead to the overall, and absolute, failure of her genteel aspirations.

I begin this chapter by outlining the ideals of the Georgian model of politeness. While polished and moderate modes of conversation and manners were broadly considered the standard of polite sociability, I will also show that recent scholarly work on politeness reveals the courteous practice to have been riddled with contradictions and consequently subject to misinterpretation. I then move to a study of the material conditions of this chapter's central carriage, the barouche-landau itself. As the name suggests, the barouche-landau was a hybrid vehicle that spliced together the most alluring features of the individual barouche and landau carriages to create one of the most rare, expensive, and sought-after commodity objects of the early nineteenth century. Through contemporary newspaper evidence and technical insights from coach-makers, this section highlights that patronage of the barouche-landau was almost exclusively from the pool of rich and ranked elite. I will then move to discuss Augusta Elton's equivocal deployment of polite sociability and her methods of anchoring her polite performance to her access to the barouche-landau.

The materials of performing politeness

The Georgian model of politeness was distinguished by such Addisonian features as simplicity of style and taste, moderation in manners and modes of address, and most prominently reciprocity and consideration in conversation. Simply put, the polished citizen

avoided unbridled excitement, egocentricity, and extravagance. Conversation was the key facilitator in polite philosophy for, as John Brewer tells us, without repeated practice of ‘pleas[ing] in company’ courteous behaviour was liable to decay from the ideal ‘smooth emollience of the polite person’ to vain self-regard and intolerance.⁷ Decorous sociability, then, was the primary means via which morality and taste were cultivated, emphasising, as Jon Mee identifies, the ‘opening out of society in the name of improvement’.⁸ Analogously, correct, and genteel manners were also significant in projecting one’s socioeconomic status, since according to Maxine Berg ‘[c]ivilised conduct, taste, aesthetics, and deportment conveyed affluence’.⁹ Whilst it is true that the achievement of refined comportment was more readily available to the reading classes, politeness was not strictly mapped against the hierarchical social landscape of the eighteenth century, but was deemed concomitant with the genteel ranks purely by virtue of it being ‘that which is characteristic of gentlemen and ladies’.¹⁰ Politeness thus, to an extent, eliminated the exclusionary strategies inherent in the boundaries of rank, ameliorating potential hereditary ‘embarrassments’ suffered by people such as Augusta Elton in its exaltation of the notion that gentility was principally located in one’s deportment, not one’s pedigree.

It is important to note, however, that both the term and dogma of ‘politeness’ were not as stable as my overview has thus far suggested in that, as Jenny Davidson explains, politeness was particularly vulnerable to redefinition and a universal consensus on its paradigms was consequently nowhere in sight, even by the mid-eighteenth century. Generally presented with the positive valence associated with civility and decorum by its supporters,

⁷ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013), 92.

⁸ Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762 to 1830* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 38.

⁹ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 205.

¹⁰ Lawrence E. Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (2002): 876.

politeness's critics were quick to undermine this conception of the term. These adversaries aimed ultimately to produce the most insidious interpretations of the courtesy tradition and did so using a logic that stripped politeness of its respectability via dual reductions. First, 'politeness' was reduced to 'tact', a term that was understood to be congruent with 'lying'; second, 'politeness' was equated with 'gallantry', and 'gallantry' was equalled to 'adultery'.¹¹ These tactics reveal the period's anxieties about the relations between sociable manners and morals, which were concentrated on questions over sincerity and truthfulness – after all, to abide by paradigms of polite comportment was to perform the best version of oneself in public, and leading potentially to the concealment of one's character that ran errant to civil idioms.¹²

Indeed, dissimulation, concealment, and performance were central to the polite ethos, but were understood as having a complex double burden. On one hand, the mask of politeness was used in personal agendas such as upward social mobility or, since 'most elite... men desired wives varnished with sophistication', women often avoided destitution by employing genteel airs to secure the financial and domestic stability that came with a husband.¹³ On the other hand, notions of personal gain gave way to the socially encouraged form of concealment that was utilised in the facilitation of easy interactions between groups of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, with divergent interests, fostering an egalitarian sense of inclusive sociability.¹⁴ Yet such egalitarian aims only went so far. Whilst this mode of sociability was used to span the gulf of rank or wealth, it was essentially an *exclusive* form of inclusivity in that it encouraged social interaction between the 'well-bred,

¹¹ Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 46.

¹² Davidson, 46.

¹³ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven; London: Yale UP, 2009), 16.

¹⁴ The contretemps between Edmund Burke and Mary Wollstonecraft regarding the political and moral implications of the French Revolution presents the most forceful arguments for and against the element of insincerity found in polite ideology. See Jenny Davidson *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness* (Cambridge UP, 2004), 76-107.

[but] distanced the vulgar'.¹⁵ This doubled sense of ambiguity and complexity surrounding the culture of politeness frames my analysis of Augusta's polite tactics. In the absence of a cogent definition of the paradigms of politeness, it would be simplistic to assert that Augusta merely misinterprets polite maxims due to her ignorance or 'ill breeding'. Instead, my analysis tracks the contradictions within genteel dogma and how they both support and undermine Augusta Elton's performance and standing, in the same way her actions erode the integrity of her intentions.

By the late eighteenth century, this mode of courteous socialising had become firmly entrenched in the culture of visiting, an activity, as Vickery notes, that was enjoyed by both sexes but in which women were not only sanctioned to congregate, but also held jurisdiction over proceedings.¹⁶ In the domestic sphere, sociability became even more ritualised, most prominently through the 'ceremony' of tea-drinking which presented women the opportunity to display luxury wares specific to the tea-table. Jon Stobart explains the pivotal role of socialising in the domestic setting to the performance of politeness since '[p]olite credentials could be cemented through the rituals of tea drinking'.¹⁷ According to Maxine Berg, this performance of gentility and its material accoutrements held the capacity to demarcate rank.¹⁸ As Klein points out, material consumption was an 'important domain for the actuation of politeness' as consumer attitudes turned to focus on the 'qualitative' rather than just the 'quantitative' modes of material acquisition.¹⁹ Vickery explicates this cultural phenomenon, noting the 'self-fashioning' possibilities that can be expressed through a mastery of the 'language of goods' with possessions acting like 'crucial props' in the creation of an

¹⁵ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 196.

¹⁶ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 14–16.

¹⁷ Jon Stobart, *Sugar and Spice: Grocers and Groceries in Provincial England, 1650-1830* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 215.

¹⁸ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 230.

¹⁹ Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', 882.

‘assemblage that came close to self-portrait’.²⁰ Essentially, the volume of objects amassed was no longer the principal means of status formation through conspicuous consumption, but rather had become secondary to the importance of how one chose to style oneself.

Utensils of the tea-table, above personal adornments and fashion or sought-after carriages, though, were regarded the most highly. *The Spectator* promoted women as proponents of politeness in the early eighteenth century and following its emphasis on the feminine world of politeness the tea-table was accordingly ‘reassigned to the realm of polite conversation’.²¹ The thoughtful preparation of the tea-table and arrangement of the equipage of tea-drinking was essential, as cups, saucers, tea-urns could be purchased in an array of shapes or sizes and thus proved a test of polite women’s aesthetic judgement and governance of their cultural capital.²² Rowlandson’s etching ‘Tea’ (Figure 2.1) captures the combined importance of physical tools of politeness – the accoutrements of the tea table – and the abstract concepts of pleasing in polite company, founded upon ‘Courteous and engaging’ conversation. The utilisation of these two concepts formed the foundation upon which a successful polite interaction was based. Rowlandson captures the trio in active talk through sociable gestures, on the left side of the square tea table, with her hands clasped in admiration, is Mrs Boswell. Opposite her is the object of her admiration, Samuel Johnson who entertains her with his conversation, while she appeases him with the hospitality of her well-laid tea-table. Meanwhile Boswell, the figure at the centre of the print, waves an open palm toward Johnson in invitation both to his wife’s tea-table and to participate in polite conversation. The caption suggests Johnson’s unparalleled command of polite conversability, but it also reveals that even the most charming guests, rather than being innately courteous, could turn their polite address on and off whenever they chose. Johnson’s adept deployment

²⁰ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 107.

²¹ Markman Ellis, *Empire of Tea: The Asian Leaf That Conquered the World* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 87–88.

²² Ellis, 149.

of polite conversational tactics exemplifies the inherent illusoriness of the social mode, as it enables him to covertly manipulate his hostess into overlooking his motley appearance.



Figure 2.1: Thomas Rowlandson, 'Tea' (1786). The inscription reads 'My Wife had Tea ready for him which it is well known he delighted to drink at all hours, particularly when sitting up late, He shewed much complacency that the Mistress of the House was so attentive to his singular habit, and as no man could be more polite when he chose to be so, his address to her was most Courteous and engaging, and his conversation soon charmed her into a forgetfulness of his external appearance'. Photographed with permission of the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

The fascinating interplay between polite conversability and correct material consumption informs my reading of Augusta Elton's performance of politeness. In the second volume of the novel, Emma's first conversation with Augusta unfolds in the domestic,

sociable setting. The meeting occurs at Emma's home, where Augusta performs the ritual of morning visiting. Augusta centres her performance in the material claims she makes on the barouche-landau in conversation with Emma, the polite and well-bred heroine of the novel:

'My brother and sister have promised us a visit in the spring, or summer at farthest,' continued Mrs. Elton; 'and that will be our time for exploring. While they are with us, we shall explore a great deal, I dare say. They will have their barouche-landau, of course, which holds four perfectly; and therefore without saying any thing of *our* carriage, we should be able to explore the different beauties extremely well. They would hardly come in their chaise, I think, at that season of the year. Indeed, when the time draws on, I shall decidedly recommend their bringing the barouche-landau; it will be so very much preferable. When people come into a beautiful country of this sort, you know, Miss Woodhouse, one naturally wishes them to see as much as possible; and Mr. Suckling is extremely fond of exploring. We explored to King's-Weston twice last summer, in that way, most delightfully, just after their first having the barouche-landau. You may have many parties of that kind here, I suppose, Miss Woodhouse, every summer?'²³

Augusta's animated speech draws our attention to her access to not one, but three horse-drawn carriages – her own and the two owned by her brother-in-law, Mr. Suckling. Provision of physical movement, a characteristic shared by all models of carriage, mirrors the social mobility to which Augusta aspires. In this case, any carriage, whether it be a generic or custom design, could adequately support Augusta's genteel performance. What is immediately apparent, though, is that one carriage in particular holds more valence in terms of social signification for Augusta than the others. In this passage alone, she names Mr.

²³ Austen, *Emma*, 214.

Suckling's barouche-landau three times, marking her unerring belief in the potency of the barouche-landau as status symbol over the other two carriages.

In the early eighteenth century, French philosopher Abel Boyer posited that the object of polite behaviour was to bend conversation in ways that made 'other People have [a] better Opinion of us and themselves', a trick clearly utilised by Johnson in Rowlandson's print of the tea table.²⁴ Almost a century later Augusta assumes an adulterated conversational technique whereby the three invocations of the barouche-landau are substituted for refined conversability and function as the sole 'pleasing' aspect of her dialogue. Augusta's championing of Mr. Suckling's carriage is thus an example of her personal interpretation of refined taste in material acquisition that Klein posits was crucial in polite performance. In reality, though, Augusta flouts the rules of simplicity and exposes her misunderstanding of the tenets of genteel behaviour, revealing the unevenness of her attempts to assert her status in terms of the material objects and polite ideals that govern her social world. As we shall see, periodicals, newspapers, and prescriptive literature of the era all underscored the barouche-landau's precarious status as fashionable object, a reputation that compromises Augusta's investment in the barouche-landau as a social signifier.

The rare barouche-landau

Augusta's persistence in affirming the barouche-landau's signifying force is testament to her belief in the strength of the vehicle's inherent 'aura' of gentility. In Augusta's estimation, the barouche-landau's potency as a status symbol is recognised and respected by all, and will mitigate the evils of a lowly or dubious background. But what were the specific characteristics that made it such an appealing positional good – why not rely on her own

²⁴ Abel Boyer, *The English Theophrastus: Or, The Manners of the Age* (London: W. Turner, 1702), 108.

equipage, which we know to be ‘extremely expeditious’?²⁵ Concrete material and visual evidence of the barouche-landau’s existence outside of Austen novels, or the essays of Janeites, is minimal. Publications by respected coach-makers and engineers on the craft of carriage building, for example, either do not recognise it as a model in its own right (focussing instead on the merits and defects of the individual barouche and landau carriages from which the hybrid inherited its best features) or they simply do not mention the barouche-landau at all. The elision of this specific model from influential contemporary sources, and the few extant pictorial examples is revealing in itself: this general lack of archival evidence speaks volumes about the very rareness of the barouche-landau model.

The evidence found in coach-making treatises on the barouche and landau carriage models does convey that the rarity of the barouche-landau was due, at least in part, to its considerable expense. In *English Pleasure Carriages* for example, William Bridges Adams outlines the prominent features of barouches and landaus, the materials used in their construction, and gives helpful insights as to their usage and maintenance. He notes that the landau, which was designed with the intention of folding open the body so that passengers had the pleasure of travelling in the open air, required extensive ‘very heavy ironwork’ to strengthen the carriage body and to provide support when in the open position. As a consequence of this extra weight and supports, large springs and sturdy frame work were also necessary. The combined cost of such materials and the skilled labour required to produce quality products made the landau ‘an expensive carriage to build’. Adams further stresses the problems of finance in his explication of the carriage’s liability to ‘get out of order’ as its constituent parts – the leather, iron, and wood – were negatively (and, apparently, very easily) affected by extremes in temperature and both dry and damp conditions, and the ‘expense of

²⁵ Austen, *Emma*, 225.

repairs [was] considerable'.²⁶ Indeed, Stobart and Mark Rothery's recent study on consumption and the country house gives several cases where expenditure on 'low-value, mundane items and services', like coach and tack repairs or replacements, outstripped that which was spent on the vehicles themselves – a clear confirmation of the high ongoing cost of maintaining a carriage.²⁷ From Adams's description of the landau's great weight and propensity for damage, it is clear that it was not an economical vehicle fit for everyday use, nor was it built for arduous and long journeys. Its apparent emphasis on form over function thus effectively curbed the scope of its suitability to leisurely and sociable trips.

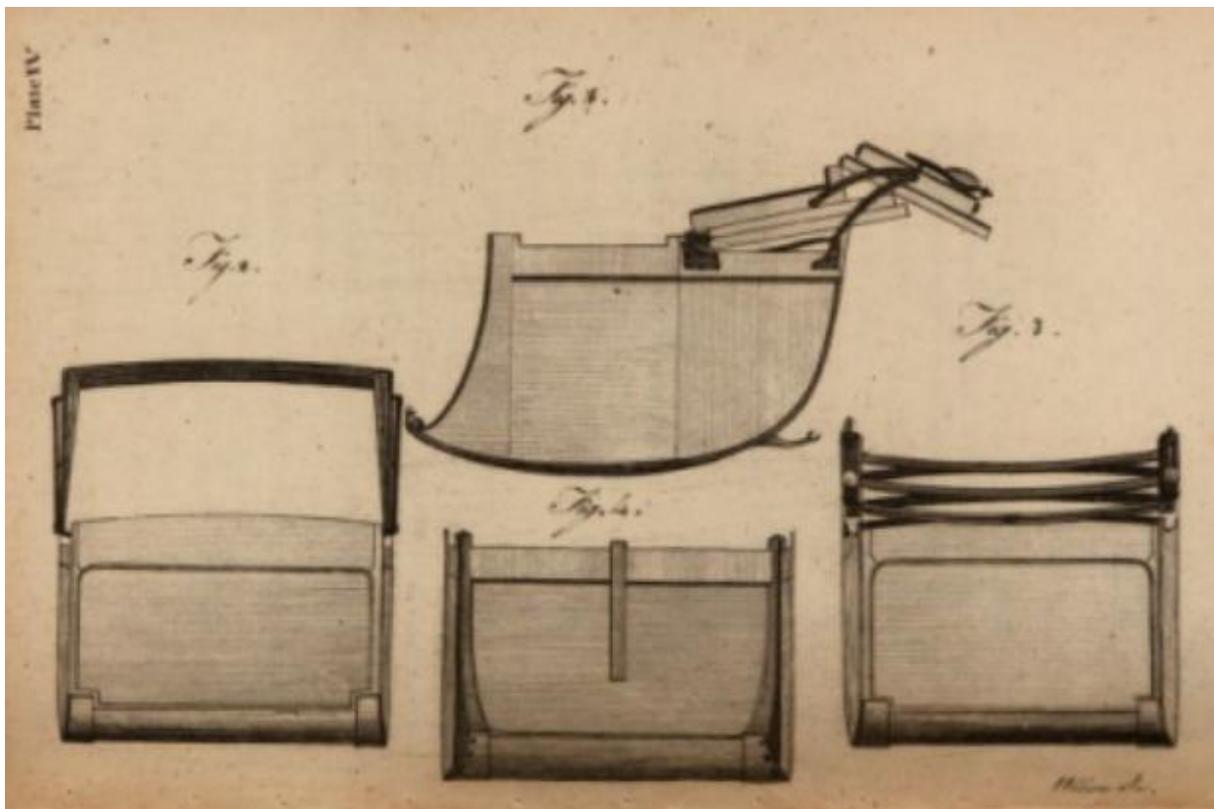


Figure 2.2. Plate showing the body and retractable hood of a landau carriage from the first volume of William Felton's *A Treatise on Carriages* (1794). Reproduced courtesy of Harvard Libraries.

²⁶ Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 224.

²⁷ Jon Stobart and Mark Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016), 41. Stobart and Rothery refer specifically to the Leigh and Newdigate households. For example, Sir Roger Newdigate's total spend of £695 on five carriages over the latter part of the eighteenth century, yet his expenditure on horse hire, horse feed, repairs, replacement harness and the like, was far greater.

Turning to ‘one of the most delightful of all open carriages’, Adams elevates the barouche, a vehicle with a light and graceful appearance, to the ‘principal of all open carriages’. However, its delightfulness was seasonally restricted to the fine weather of the late spring and summer months, ‘being little adapted for winter’, since a defect in its design meant that only two of its four to six passengers could be covered in wet weather without compromising the lining of the carriage.²⁸ Similar to the landau the versatility of the barouche was circumscribed; being unequipped with ‘travelling furniture’, the vehicle was unfit for long journeys and Adams accordingly advises usage of the barouche be confined to principally within urban settings.²⁹ The constraints both seasonal and geographical that the landau and barouche carriages were subject to did more than simply restrict their use to specific times of the year, and specific locations, they also limited their potential clientele. Considering the impracticalities that arise from such extensive limitations, it was highly unlikely that these carriages were used as the owners’ primary mode of transport, but were a secondary vehicle used on special occasions. Augusta Elton corroborates this when she points out Mr. Suckling also owns a chaise, but that it would be an inappropriate choice for the leisurely pastime of a summer exploring party.³⁰ The leisure time required to make sufficient use of an ‘occasional’ vehicle was available to only a select few in command of the most impressive fortunes. The capital required to purchase, house, and maintain two carriages, feed and stable horses, employ postilions, coachmen, and farriers, was comparable to what is required today, Vickery tells us, to keep a helicopter.³¹ Thrupp notes in his late Victorian study of coach history that there were ‘23,000 four-wheeled vehicles paying duty to the Government’ – the same size equipages that Mr. Suckling owns – along with ‘27,000 two-

²⁸ Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages*, 227–29.

²⁹ Bridges Adams, 228.

³⁰ A chaise was a much smaller vehicle than a landau or barouche (both of which carried four passengers as standard) made for one to two passengers. It was simple in shape, convenient, and comparatively cheap. See William Felton *A Treatise on Carriages* (London, 1794), particularly pages 44–46, 54–55.

³¹ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 124.

wheel, and 18,500 tax-carts' amounting to '69,000 carriages in Great Britain' at the time Austen composed *Emma*.³² The general population of Great Britain in 1814 is estimated to have been between eight and 10 million, meaning that less than ten percent of the population had the means to support a carriage.³³ In terms of status formation then, the rarity and expense of vehicles such as the barouche or the landau set their owners aside from the majority of coach owners – even if that majority was a paltry number to begin with – in material terms as an elite and prodigiously wealthy branch of the coaching community.

Georgian newspapers played a major role in satisfying the nation's fascination with what commodities other people had in their arsenal, publishing segments dedicated to the latest fashions and styles seen about town. Reports of the circulation and 'transfer of bejewelled luxuries' between the elite satisfied such curiosities, while advertisements for household auctions that richly described the bounty of the estate to be sold, logically presented in order of desirability, offered an enticing message '[t]his could all be yours; you could step into the whole thing'.³⁴ It is here that we find some of the few confirmations of the barouche-landau's existence. The following example from a segment from *The Morning Post* – which we know from her letters, was read by Austen³⁵ – printed January 1804, provides a technical description of the barouche-landau used by the Prince of Wales during his birthday celebrations:

A neat light landau barouche, painted yellow, with arms, coronet, and garters on the door; lined with blue and yellow, with Morocco squabs, a large sweep budget,

³² Thrupp, *The History of Coaches*, 80.

³³ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 588–96.

³⁴ Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 55–56; Cynthia Wall, *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 170.

³⁵ In a letter to her sister, Cassandra, Austen writes that 'The Duchess of Orleans, the paper says, drinks at my Pump' in reference to *The Morning Post*'s report that the Duke of Orleans had arrived in Cheltenham from London. See Deirdre Le Faye *Jane Austen's Letters* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), Letter 144 pages 332-2, and page 460 for explanatory note.

and circular driving seat, lined with blue Morocco leather, carriage and wheels with patent axle-trees, painted red, picked out blue and yellow.³⁶

The passage depicts the ultimate extravagance; sumptuous Morocco leather, coveted for its suppleness and rich colour, lines the seats ('squabs') and the interior, while brilliant colours ostentatiously bedaubed the ornate exterior, finished with arms and a coronet.³⁷ Such luxury, of course, would not have come cheaply. Coachmaker William Felton outlines some prices of fitting up a carriage in such a manner: squabs of Morocco leather would have cost somewhere in the region of £4.15s, and lining the coach with the same was priced at £23; patent wheel rims fetched between £3 and £5 dependent on circumference; and a large 'budget' to stow luggage was approximately £8.³⁸ To contextualise this, these cosmetic additions to the carriage itself amount to the sort of budget that gentleman's daughter, Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, had to survive on annually.

The opulence of *The Morning Post's* barouche-landau, whilst appropriate for its royal passenger on such a public occasion, was not representative of all barouche-landaus owned by those outside of the monarchical ranks. *The Morning Chronicle* illustrates in detail the standard – albeit still plush – appearance of the equipage:

Was seen in Hyde Park, last Sunday, a Patent Landau Barouche, without a perch, the top covered with brown leather, the platform, boot and harness the same, which looked extremely handsome, the body painted a beautiful dark green, highly varnished, arms and crests in all the panels, the top was thrown open, lined with stone coloured cloth, Morocco squabs, and rich silk lace. The carriage

³⁶ 'Fashionable World', *The Morning Post*, 18 January 1804, no. 11010, British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900.

³⁷ Authentic Morocco leather was made from goat skin and 'most excellently manufactured in Morocco, in European and Asiatic Turkey' as well as in England and other European countries. See Alexander Watt *Leather Manufacture* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1906), 2-3, 283-90.

³⁸ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1794, 1:166, 165, 130, 134. Felton's treatise, the first volume published in 1794, precedes *The Morning Post* article by 10 years. I am therefore treating these prices as approximates.

attracted attention of the public for its lightness and elegance; it was driven by a postilion [sic] three or four times round the park, it appeared very short, and turned with great ease, in a remarkable small compass. It is unanimously approved of and doth the builder a great credit for his invention.³⁹

The choice of fabrics used to line and decorate the carriage's interior are similar to that of the Prince's, but the material details of this barouche-landau are demure by comparison, the colour palette of dark green and grey are sombre and understated. Despite all the luxuries – from silk lace to patent panels decorated with crests – that betray the vehicle's great expense, the glory of this carriage is not primarily anchored to its physical attributes, but to the public scene that it generates. These circles, 'three or four times' round Hyde Park, were a performance in themselves, intended to showcase the exquisite craftsmanship of the barouche-landau in physical terms, but also to elicit admiration from the crowd that had gathered to see how elegantly it took the corners. What we can infer from this narration, in which the precision of movement is emphasised, is that the journey had no specific object other than the journey itself: it was at once a pleasure ride but also an exhibition of the glory of motion. Essentially, it was a performance that belied superficial motives – a spectacle in which the owners' wealth was paraded publicly through the metropolis.

Who were these wealthy people who could afford a second carriage solely for the summer months? Newspapers regularly published lists of individuals accompanied with an account of their vehicle. *The York Herald*, for instance, listed the following attendees and their equipages to the horse races in August 1807:

The Hon. Edward Lascelles – A Landau-Barouche and four beautiful blood
Horses.

³⁹ 'The Mirror of Fashion', *The Morning Chronicle*, 29 August 1805, no. 11320, British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900.

Col. Mackenzie – A handsome Landau-Barouche, in full fashion.

Mr. Leaton – A handsome Landau-Barouche

Col. Rayne – A Landau-Barouche ⁴⁰

The barouche-landau stands a cut above the ordinary horse-drawn vehicle, and this is mirrored in the vehicle's patrons. What these men have in common, aside from the privilege of their sex, is that with the exception of Mr. Leaton, they are all distinguished by rank or title. By employing the barouche-landau as the positional good in her status formation, Augusta Elton claims proximity to those in power, and in turn makes very bold claims about her social stature. Polite feminine commodity consumption, as Ellis articulates, was exemplified through the domestic, indoor objects associated with the tea-table and the careful arrangement of such objects to best display a woman's aesthetic judgement.⁴¹ However, by invoking the ultimate conspicuous object of masculine desire and thus, perhaps, masculinity, Augusta rejects feminine modes of managing her cultural capital and in turn frustrates notions of genteel commodity consumption by aligning herself with an elite object symbolic of the masculine outdoors.

⁴⁰ 'The Turf', *The York Herald*, 29 August 1807, British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900.

⁴¹ Ellis, *Empire of Tea*, 149.

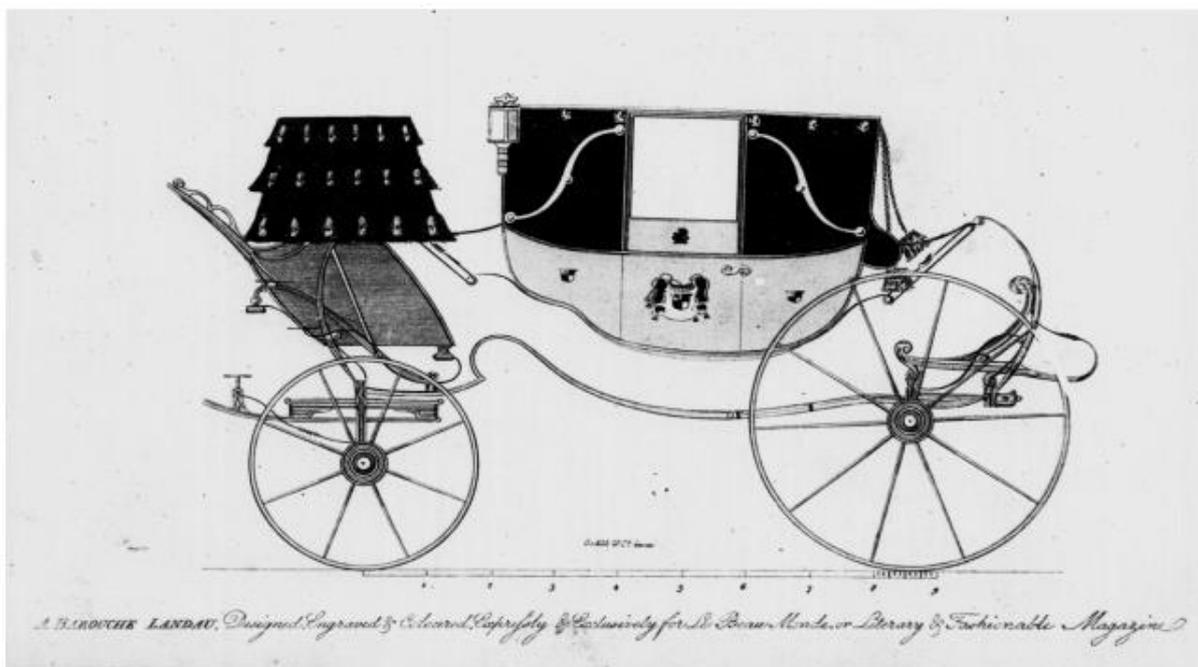


Figure 2.3. Fashion plate of the almost mythical barouche-landau carriage, labelled ‘A beautifully coloured, and most approved Fashionable Barouche Landau’, from an 1806 edition of the short-lived periodical *Le Beau Monde, Or, Literary and Fashionable Magazine*. Reproduced courtesy of British Periodicals Collection.

These newspaper and coach manuals highlight how the barouche-landau assisted status formation most effectively in material terms – as an additional, non-essential mode of transport that should only be used in fine weather. Moreover, considering the majority of the owners in these extracts were titled and ranked men, it also goes some way in asserting pedigree, and a specifically paternalistic one at that. Indeed, elsewhere in the narrative Emma’s frustrations at Mr. Knightley’s preference for walking over the use of his own carriage stress the novel’s emphasis on the carriage as a marker of gentlemanly status. Emma observes that people travelling via means they know to be beneath them are marked by an air of ‘consciousness or bustle’, whereas Mr. Knightley conceals his concerns ‘of being supposed ashamed’ behind a ‘sort of bravado’.⁴² Seeing Mr. Knightley arrive at a dinner engagement at the Cole’s in his carriage, however, Emma remarks gladly that ‘This is coming

⁴² Austen, *Emma*, 167.

as you should do... like a gentleman', chiding him that since he has travelled via means befitting of his station, he is no longer 'striving to look taller than any body else'.⁴³ Period perceptions of a second, superfluous carriage play a central role in Augusta's equivocal attempts to cement her social standing. However, the polite culture of the era lambasted such pretensions and superficial materialism, and as my analysis of Austen's use of the barouche-landau in *Emma* will show, the efficacy of the barouche-landau as a class signifier in the more abstract terms of politeness far from clear cut.

Augusta and her carriages of conversability

I return now to Mrs. Elton's speech in which she sets up her brother-in-law's barouche-landau as status symbol *non plus ultra*, the primary means of effecting the polite performance which thinly veils her ultimate ambition of surpassing Emma as 'Lady Patroness' of Highbury. As I have shown, the mask of gentility and politeness was partially constructed through correct modes of commodity consumption – indeed material acquisition was positively encouraged so long as it did not stray into passionate excess. The period's sociocultural and ethical commentators responded to the superficial consumer practices, the kind embodied by the 'extremely handsome' barouche-landau of *The Morning Chronicle*, with papers aimed at improving the aesthetic and ethical tastes of the public. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, published between 1709 and 1714, are two of the most prominent examples of fashionable didactic literature. By no means the only progenitors of courteous comportment, Jacob Sider Jost notes that *Tatler* and *Spectator* were, however, so influential that their 'periodical eternity' continued to hold sway over British ideals of conversability even into the nineteenth century. Indeed, Sider Jost

⁴³ Austen, 167.

points out that the afterlives of *Tatler* and *Spectator* were so enduring due to their ‘republishing and canonization’ from daily print ephemera into ‘more permanent collected volumes and rereading.’⁴⁴ As such, Addison and Steele were regarded as defining voices of polite discourse and were continually read throughout the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ Further, their ideology of moderation and good sense was echoed through the burgeoning conduct literature across the period. Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women* (1775), for example, supports *The Tatler*’s recommendation for ‘Simplicity in our Dress, our Discourse, and our Behaviour’ by explicitly aligning ‘what is genteel’ with the ‘preserving [of] elegance with the plainest habit’.⁴⁶ An article from *Lady’s Magazine*, published in 1786, emulates Addison and Steele’s ideals in its notion of what constitutes polite behaviour – ‘good manners, good sense, and good nature’.⁴⁷ The prevalence of Addison and Steele’s prescriptive literature is clear, and indeed we know that Austen was ‘well acquainted with the old periodicals’ from her nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh’s memoir.⁴⁸ Moreover, Enit Steiner had traced Austen’s interaction with the periodicals in her fictions, first explaining the particular sociability of *Sense and Sensibility*’s Elinor Dashwood as one that upholds the periodicals’ emphasis on ‘a standard of taste that refused display’.⁴⁹ More compellingly, though, Steiner also explains that in *Northanger Abbey* Austen ‘acknowledges sardonically the unabated cult of the *Spectator*, which kept being reprinted for its representative style of polite society, but which Austen

⁴⁴ Jacob Sider Jost, ‘The Afterlife and The Spectator’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 51, no. 3 (2011): 606.

⁴⁵ The temporal reach of *Tatler* and *Spectator* was increased by their appearance in anthologies such as Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, and Freeholder with a preliminary essay by Anna Laetitia Barbauld* (London, 1804).

⁴⁶ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women, in Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: Mein & Fleeming, 1775), 8, 61. Fordyce’s *Sermons* was originally published in 1766. My citations are from the revised edition of 1775.

⁴⁷ ‘Definition of Politeness’, *The New Lady’s Magazine; or, Polite and Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex: Entirely Devoted to Their Use and Amusement ...*, 1786.

⁴⁸ James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 71.

⁴⁹ Enit Karafili Steiner, ‘Between Cohesion and Reform in *Sense and Sensibility*’, *Women’s Writing* 22, no. 4 (2015): 458.

considered too antiquated to appeal to the young readership of her time'.⁵⁰ As such, I argue that Augusta Elton's love of 'old-fashioned politeness' is based upon Addison and Steele's established codes of genteel manners; Augusta sees herself as successfully following their prescriptions for a courteous demeanour.⁵¹

Considering Austen's attitude toward Addison and Steele's rhetoric as Steiner points out, it is perhaps unsurprising that Augusta Elton's 'polite' interactions are more often than not unsuccessful, since she utilises a mode of sociability Austen deemed anachronistic. I read Augusta's championing of the barouche-landau as a conscious attempt to fulfil the ideals of polite consumption, which Klein outlines as being heavily dependent on quality over quantity.⁵² By choosing to focus her energies on the most sophisticated, elegant, and ostentatious vehicle out of the three at her disposal, Augusta indeed makes a qualitative choice, of a kind, rather than a quantitative one. The question of whether her choice coincides with polite ideals advised by Addison and Steele and their numerous descendants, though, is a complex one. In terms of adhering to prescriptions of 'simplicity' – one of the most prominent watchwords of the era's fashionable didactic literature – of style and taste, the astronomical expense of maintaining a horse-drawn vehicle significantly oversteps the boundaries of what was considered simple consumption. As Stobart and Rothery show in their examination of the consumer habits of the Newdigate and Leighs households, livery given to postillions and coachmen were flamboyant, and rejected the sober wardrobe of the gentleman, as were the styles and finishes of the carriages themselves.⁵³ Styles details the distinctive features of traditional postilion livery as 'two-coloured coats with contrasting, often brightly coloured linings and facings, and [...] gold and silver lace trimmings on coats,

⁵⁰ Steiner, 466.

⁵¹ Austen, *Emma*, 236.

⁵² Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', 882.

⁵³ Stobart and Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House*, 40.

waistcoats and hats'.⁵⁴ Moreover, the constant visibility of manservants such as coachmen and postilions outside the home made them the ideal platform upon which to advertise the employing family's wealth and class pretensions. Styles points to how this constant visibility was a powerful incentive for employers to dress their manservants in opulent and immediately recognizable garments, resulting in increasingly spectacular liveries that were reported in newspapers the same way sumptuous new carriage fashions were covered.⁵⁵ Whilst we cannot be sure of the manner in which Mr. Suckling styled his barouche-landau or his liveried servants, given that the coaching fashions of the late eighteenth century were increasingly divorced from 'everyday fashion' in their gaudy ostentation, there is little reason to assume Mr. Suckling was an exception.⁵⁶

The barouche-landau's conspicuous consumption did run alongside a subset of masculine fashions, for instance so-called macaronis styled themselves in bold and bright colours and accessories. Peter McNeil describes the visually splendid macaroni dress, a male sartorial mode of expression that imported both the fashions and the fabrics of the French, Spanish, and Italian elite, and often utilised inharmoniously 'clashing' colours and decoration, with strong 'ludic overtones and hints of carnivalesque *mentalité*'.⁵⁷ The macaroni man's departure from the increasing sobriety of male dress in the Georgian period certainly had parallels with the extravagant fashions and spending habits of the coaching community. McNeil notes that macaroni fashion consciously echoed 'broader fashion schemes' from diverse material goods and fashionable spaces such as snuff boxes and boudoirs, using a palette of 'pea-green, pink, red and deep orange, garnished with a great deal of gilt'.⁵⁸ Whilst

⁵⁴ John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007), 296.

⁵⁵ Styles, 298–99.

⁵⁶ Styles, 301.

⁵⁷ Peter McNeil, *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2018), 31–32.

⁵⁸ McNeil, 31.

not an exact match, these colours bear a distinct resemblance to the yellows, greens, and reds of the sumptuous barouche-landaus that paraded through Hyde Park. Moreover, the fashions of the vehicles of travel and macaronism further intersect since, as men drew inspiration from their continental Grand Tours, the macaroni style embodied a ‘cosmopolitan outlook that privileged travel’.⁵⁹ Although the macaroni style would have been outmoded at the time of Austen’s writing having reached the height of its popularity in the 1770s, there’s a case to be made that as the look of the dandy takes hold and replaces the macaroni, carriage decoration functions as an outlet for men to express their taste with bright, excessive colours. There is no question that the barouche-landau falls foul of the modest standards of the polite era, given its lavish depictions in contemporary newspapers. Thus, Augusta’s use of the barouche-landau – her efforts at a qualitative mode of consumption – as the foundation of her genteel performance is done so at the expense of simplicity.

The discord between Mrs. Elton’s intentions and her actions further complicates and overshadows her attempts at polite consumer practices. Brewer states that the polished man of taste was distinguished by a passive mode of consumption; he was not the active ‘pursuer or acquirer of culture’.⁶⁰ Despite her choice to champion one carriage above the others, loosely (but unsuccessfully) mimicking accepted practices, Augusta *is* an active consumer. Clothing and personal adornments preoccupy her. Often appearing ‘as elegant as lace and pearls can make her’, Augusta prominently positions luxury fashions to elicit admiration to the extent her appearance takes precedence over polite character.⁶¹ Miss Bates is obliging enough to comply, singing her praises to others: ‘dear Mrs. Elton, how elegant she looks! – Beautiful lace! – Now we all follow in her train. Quite the queen of the evening!’⁶² However,

⁵⁹ McNeil, 31.

⁶⁰ John Brewer, “‘The Most Polite Age and the Most Vicious’”: Attitudes Towards Culture as a Commodity, 1660-1800’, in *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1995), 352.

⁶¹ Austen, *Emma*, 229.

⁶² Austen, 258.

Augusta's conscious self-presentation does not always succeed, and she is victim to jealousy if others receive compliments before herself, which provokes her to draw attention to her appearance: 'How do you like my gown? – How do you like my trimming? – How has Wright done my hair?'.⁶³ Compared to the demure and proper manner in which Jane Fairfax accepts 'good many compliments', Augusta's practice of soliciting praise remains distasteful and improper.⁶⁴ The gendered pressures placed upon women, though, does much to explain Augusta's behaviour. Ann Bermingham explains that '[w]omen's empathetic relation to the commodities of fashion must be seen within the context of their own commodification. Within the discursive space of the marriage market women continually had to discriminate between the tasteful and vulgar consumption of goods, cultural events and novelties. For how a woman consumed... would determine how, in turn she was consumed'.⁶⁵ As a married woman Augusta has, presumably, participated in the strict cultivation of aesthetic commodity goods that the marriage market required for a woman to be herself an eligible commodity.

Similar to other women of her station, Augusta would have used her pin money to purchase gowns and trimmings. As Susan Staves shows, feminine consumption did not entirely end after marriage; married women participated in the acquisition of goods through their expenditure of 'pin money'. Pin money was a small allowance given to a woman by her husband for her own personal expenditure, and frequently written into the marriage contract. What she could purchase with this money was, however, strictly governed by law. Women were required to spend their allowance solely on the purchase of trivial items of amusement, personal articles, and clothing, and were a woman discovered to be saving pin money or spending it as capital her husband was within his right to cease payment of his wife's

⁶³ Austen, 254.

⁶⁴ Austen, 254.

⁶⁵ Ann Bermingham, 'The Picturesque and Ready-to-Wear Femininity', in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770*, ed. Peter Garside and Stephen Copley (Cambridge UP, 1994), 98.

allowance.⁶⁶ In the context of the concept of coverture whereby married women relinquished their individual identities and legal rights to become ‘one’ with their husbands, Gillian Skinner points out that pin money presented married women with an avenue of financial independence from their husbands’ rule.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the infantilising legal interpretation of marriage that condemned a woman’s existence to be ‘figuratively “covered”, subsumed into that of her husband’ is a stark reminder of the vulnerability of women’s subjectivity.⁶⁸ Indeed, having collected the accoutrements necessary to secure a husband, Augusta’s continued accumulation of fashionable clothes and adornments after her marriage vows, and need to secure the positive opinions of her companions, belie anxieties over the social precarity of married women. Her conspicuous consumption and grasps for attention reveal a continued competitiveness against other women as she strives to not be overshadowed in society as an already-consumed commodity, in favour of her yet-to-be-consumed unmarried acquaintances Emma and Jane Fairfax, and even Harriet Smith. Considering Augusta’s post-nuptial consumption in the context of the competitive marriage market, her displays of luxury remain symptomatic of her desire to still be perceived as consumable. Bermingham further illustrates the pressures that fashion culture and its prescribed modes of consumption placed on women by noting that married women’s restricted arenas for personal expenditure was ‘condemned as frivolous and schemes to police it were not uncommon’.⁶⁹ Bermingham points out that while consumption provided one of the only means for women to participate in the cultural and public spheres, at the same time reformers of feminine manners sought to

⁶⁶ Susan Staves, *Married Women’s Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (London: Harvard UP, 1990), 133. Staves notes the intricacies and incoherence of legal theories surrounding women’s pin money in the eighteenth century, see pages 132-161.

⁶⁷ Gillian Skinner, ‘Women’s Status as Legal and Civic Subjects: “A Worse Condition than Slavery Itself”’, in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 92, 95.

⁶⁸ Skinner, 92.

⁶⁹ Bermingham, ‘The Picturesque and Ready-to-Wear Femininity’, 99.

exclude women from public life, instead aiming ‘to limit their activities to the home in the name of maternal duty’.⁷⁰

Augusta’s consumption practices allow her a certain amount of agency in how she is consumed in social situations, and how she promotes herself at the expense of other women. Peppered throughout her speech, and indeed many of her conversations, are allusions to her access to different vehicles, revealing her appetite for personal gain both in terms of wealth, and status formation. As Augusta confuses and collapses polite ideals of passivity and status-assertion through conspicuous consumption, she undermines her own polite project. However, if we return to Latour’s ANT we know that, even if an actor within a network performs the task it was delegated, this action rarely transpires in the way that was intended. The ‘machine never works exactly the way we want,’ but by definition the action is ‘*dislocated... betrayed, translated*’.⁷¹ Augusta Elton deploys the transformative agency of the *barouche-landau*, yet the object’s resistance to the will of its patron is evident in its ‘dislocation’ from the action it was delegated – the propping up of Augusta’s *polite* status – and instead is ‘translated’ to betray mere proximity to the affluence of her brother-in-law.

Adhering to prescribed disciplines of conversability – social comity or courteous reining in of the self, for example – would allow Augusta to converse freely and easily with her social superiors since politeness helped bridge the gap between classes and granted access to shared experience.⁷² As a newcomer to Highbury, Augusta brings with her different ideals of polite conversation which, as Mee has shown, could increase the risk of inhibiting channels of communication, particularly since these ideals are motivated by the need to stake her claim, as the honoured new bride in town, as Emma’s social superior.⁷³ For any polite exchange to be successful, Steele advocated an egalitarian model in which ‘Equality’, he

⁷⁰ Bermingham, 99.

⁷¹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 46.

⁷² Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, 875.

⁷³ Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 204.

posits, 'is the Life of Conversation... Familiarity in inferiors is Sauciness; in Superiors, Condescension'.⁷⁴ Whilst tone of address between participants is stressed most prominently here, 'equality' just as much referred to the equitable division of the conversational floor. The exchange that I have used as the basis of this chapter's argument – the first between Augusta and Emma in which we are given full details – however, displays Augusta's total disregard for this convention as she dominates the conversational exchange, satisfied with Emma's 'slight' replies as she 'only wanted to be talking herself'.⁷⁵ This not only negatively affects Emma's private perception of Mrs. Elton as vain and self-satisfied, it also, unsurprisingly, impedes the flow of dialogue to the point that Emma is 'silenced' on at least two occasions.⁷⁶ As the two women uphold irreconcilable ideals of conversational conventions, silences and breaks in conversation are inevitable. For Mee, the exchange of terms between Augusta and Emma is strained by their competition for authority, and made particularly uncomfortable by the fact Emma was previously courted by Augusta's husband, Mr. Elton. Emma fights to uphold her polite restraint, while Augusta contradicts her host and social superior in a bid to establish herself in Highbury society.⁷⁷ As Mee points out, it is the undertow of a conversation, that which occurs beyond the words spoken, 'may ultimately silt up the channels of communication'.⁷⁸ The suppression of her counterpart positions Mrs. Elton as what Juliet McMaster terms 'a verbal aggressor', her speech being nothing short of 'veiled warfare' of one-upmanship as she consistently dictates the direction of the conversation.⁷⁹ For Claudia Johnson, Augusta's 'insistent publicity' of her accomplishments, leadership, and taste is what makes her so intolerable, bullying her 'auditors into frustrated acquiescence',

⁷⁴ Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, ed. Donald Frederic Bond, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), 174.

⁷⁵ Austen, *Emma*, 213.

⁷⁶ Austen, 214.

⁷⁷ Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 206.

⁷⁸ Mee, 206.

⁷⁹ Juliet McMaster, 'Mrs. Elton and Other Verbal Aggressors', in *The Talk in Jane Austen*, ed. Bruce Stovel and Lynn Weinlos Gregg (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002), 76.

while Emma's receptiveness to delicacy informs her, for the most part, when to remain silent.⁸⁰ Indeed, throughout this visit which, we are told, lasts just 15 minutes, Augusta grants herself the privilege of choosing four out of the five distinct topics (Maple Grove, the barouche-landau, her life at and recommendation of Bath, and her social endeavours since settling in Highbury), whilst Emma, full of self-restraint for fear of being 'impolite', says at most three consecutive lines at any one time. Even when Emma is finally able to introduce the subject of music – a common topic in the era's 'conversation piece', an emerging painting genre that portrayed subjects in studied compartments that conveyed their knowledge of classical arts and cultural interests – Augusta monopolises the topic for almost two pages.⁸¹

Assessing Augusta's effusion on the barouche-landau specifically, which springs forth from the frosty silence she creates via her unwillingness to comprehend Emma's modesty on Surrey's beauties, we notice that she continues unrelentingly for 14 lines, before finally asking a question of her host.⁸² This question, 'You have many parties of that kind here, I suppose, Miss Woodhouse, every summer?', is designed neither to be reciprocal nor to accommodate the free flow of conversation. When she at last invites Emma to share the conversational floor, she does so to draw attention to the fact that she has travelled comparatively widely across the southern regions of the country – in carriages – whilst Emma has been entirely confined to Highbury and the neighbouring Donwell estate. Augusta's effort at reciprocity only serves to create further distinctions between the two women, that stem from their contrasting experiences of mobility in carriages.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 129.

⁸¹ My definition here is from Lawrence Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century' (*The Historical Journal* 45.4, 2002, 869–898), 877. For an extended and rigorous exploration of the conversation piece, see Kate Retford, *The Conversation Piece: Making Modern Art in Eighteenth Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2017), which centres the genre as an important innovation in eighteenth-century portraiture but one that resists a concrete definition.

⁸² Austen, *Emma*, 214.

As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Ewers has emphasised the threats of unrestrained mobility in other eighteenth-century novels. In Defoe's work, unrestrained mobility, for instance, leads to a sense of rootlessness as familial values and tradition are unravelled, but in Robert Bage's *Hermesprong* (1796) characters are placed on a scale of their moral values according to their mobility.⁸³ For example, Ewers explains that 'the "good" and progressive figures such as Hermesprong and Caroline prefer to walk (he is an extraordinary pedestrian), while the reactionary and morally dubious Lord Grondale, Dr Blick, and Sir Philip Chestrum travel everywhere by chaise or on horseback'.⁸⁴ This is a compelling argument, and I argue that Austen arranges the characters of *Emma* on a similar principle. The gentlemanly Mr Knightley frequently opts to walk rather than idly ride in a carriage. Emma, perhaps blinkered by the strict tenets of polite society, views Mr Knightley's actions as below his station, but as the perfect example of an English gentleman Knightley's temperament and values recommends the pedestrian mode of mobility as befitting of the morally superior. Emma, one rung down from Knightley, has access to carriages and therefore the potential for an extended range of mobility yet she has remained stationary within Highbury without the connections to the capital and both the educating and corrupting influences of the metropolis' society. Her circumscribed mobility means she is almost completely static in both a geographical sense and a moral sense, though she does show the capacity to learn and grow. Her in-between status is reflected in the complexity of her morality. On the one hand she is the precocious, polite, and genteel heroine bent on creating 'happily ever afters', but on the other she is shown to have poor judgement and, sometimes, a callousness in her nature.⁸⁵ Finally, there is Augusta Elton, with her journeys across southern

⁸³ Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 30, 159.

⁸⁴ Ewers, 159.

⁸⁵ Emma's propensity to place too much stock in her genteel status and her subsequent misjudged blunders in social situations is a key theme of scholarly attention into the novel, as is her capacity to overcome her prejudices as she strives for moral development. Butler points out that Emma is a fallible heroine, bestowed with high status, vigorousness, and power both within her household and her community, 'Jane Austen's purpose in

England and connections to the slave trade, is ranked the lowest in Austen's scale of morality.

Augusta's connections to the slave trade, we know, are the root of some embarrassment for her. During an evening at Hartfield, Augusta presses (a little too forcefully) Jane Fairfax to make hasty arrangements as a governess; Jane responds to Augusta's oversteps by drawing allusions between the two industries as her search for employment will likely take her to 'Offices for the sale – not quite of human flesh – but of human intellect'.⁸⁶ Augusta's self-consciousness regarding the source of her inheritance are palpable in her response to Jane, 'I assure you Mr Suckling was always rather a friend to the abolition'.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Augusta's connections to the slaving industry are underscored further when we take into account the materials of her beloved barouche-landau. The body of a luxury carriage such as this would have largely been constructed with mahogany, valued for its burnished shine. Elaine Freedgood's investigation of mahogany furniture in *Jane Eyre* (1847) has elucidated the violent history of Britain's importation of mahogany wood from the West Indies, and its ties to 'deforestation, slavery, [and] ecologically and socially devastating cultivation of cash crops in Madeira and Jamaica'.⁸⁸ As I will elaborate in chapter three's treatment of the gig, violence is symbolically compressed within the wood itself. As Charlotte Sussman details, the eighteenth century was characterised by a glorification of 'mercantile and colonial expansion on domestic consumer practices'. However, a 'nebulous anxiety' in response to these new consumer goods

giving her an exceptionally unfettered social position is rather to leave her free to act out her wilful errors, for which she must take entire moral responsibility'. Lynda A. Hall tracks Emma's transformation following her humiliation of the spinster Miss Bates on the Box Hill outing, noting that it is 'through Emma's actions to rectify her wrong [...] that we see the ultimate transformation in the heroine as well as the intrinsic value of the spinster [Miss Bates] who facilitated Emma's growth. See Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, 250–71; Lynda A. Hall, *Women and 'Value' in Jane Austen's Novels: Settling, Speculating and Superfluity* (Cham: Palgrave, 2017), 163–67; 174.

⁸⁶ Austen, *Emma*, 235.

⁸⁷ Austen, 235.

⁸⁸ Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 35.

proliferated as suspicion spread over the possibility that colonial materials retained some of the violence with which they were initially appropriated from the colonised locations.⁸⁹ In the context of such widespread anxieties over the possibility that colonial violence might be transported home along with the colonial material that is the product of such violence, reassigns the choice to use a barouche-landau from a fashionable one to a moralistic one.

Mr. Knightley encapsulates Austen's conflation of nationalism and morality when he sternly declares that Frank Churchill 'can be amiable only in French... he can have no English delicacy towards the feeling of other people', whilst Frank Churchill's ill-tempered and feverish admission that he is 'sick of England – and would leave it to-morrow, if [he] could' stands in opposition to English moral values.⁹⁰ Extrapolating this narrative trope of nationalism onto Augusta, her traversal over a large geographical range within England is commensurate with the unpatriotic sentiment displayed by Frank Churchill, particularly since the locations she claims affiliation with were major slave trade ports and thus link to an ambiguously vast geographical reach overseas. Bristol, along with Liverpool and London, was one of Britain's dominant slave trade ports that saw ships embark upon circular voyages from its harbours that might take them, initially, to the African continent to trade for bodies in exchange for commodity goods, then onwards to the West Indies and its promise of sugarcane, before returning homewards.⁹¹ Emma, on the other hand, is firmly rooted in provincial England, the site of polite English 'delicacy', as Mr. Knightley phrases it. Emma's movements are almost exclusively parochially limited to a place where the 'English verdure, English culture, English comfort' and thus her restricted mobility is conceptualised by Austen

⁸⁹ Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713-1833* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 13–14.

⁹⁰ Austen, *Emma*, 118, 287.

⁹¹ For more on Austen's pointed use of Bristol and its long associations with slave-trade ventures to deepen the negative characterisation of Augusta Elton, see Catherine Ingrassia's article 'Emma, Slavery, and Cultures of Captivity'. *Persuasions*, no. 38, 2016, 95–106.

within a specifically national ideology of manners and morality.⁹² Douglas Murray delves into the novel's complex intersection between mobility and immobility. He points to Emma's inertia (she is the only Austen heroine to not travel) and to how her father is contrasted with the constant mobility of those who leave Highbury for pastures new and to those peripatetic outsiders who have travel in to settle in the village. According to Murray, Austen presents the clearly demarcated spaces of Hartfield and Highbury more broadly as sanctified places that have a developed sense of heritage that has grown from the continued stasis of its native residents. Far from a negative attribute of Highbury culture, this stasis contrasts with the constant mobility, represented both by those who enter and leave Highbury from a nebulous and uncategorised network of places, that is presented as somehow aberrant.⁹³ As such, the mobility of those around Emma and her father, as both 'confirmed homebod[ies]', is seen as something unruly that can puncture the sanctity and purity of Highbury and its culture.⁹⁴ Consequently Augusta, intending to use her travels and 'superior knowledge of the world to enliven and improve a country neighbourhood' and promote herself as the more culturally accomplished, actually risks disrupting the integrity of Highbury's honest and ethical moral system with her cosmopolitanism.⁹⁵ Emma, who has never even been the seven miles to Box Hill, thus remains the morally superior. Further, the barouche-landau itself threatens to disrupt the tranquillity of the English pastoral picturesque with its imported materials that speak to an extreme violence and exploitation.

Just two paragraphs on in the text, however, Augusta appears to attempt to remedy the schism she so actively created between herself and Emma by turning to her love for the domestic. As I have previously discussed, politeness and polite conversation were often

⁹² Austen, *Emma*, 283.

⁹³ Douglas Murray, 'Mobility in England, 1816: Austen's "Emma" and Repton's "View from My Own Cottage"', in *Jane Austen's Geographies*, ed. Robert Clark (London: Routledge, 2017), 242–43.

⁹⁴ Murray, 243.

⁹⁵ Murray, 220.

concerned with the domestic and expressed in interior settings. Augusta repeats her claims on the domestic, again over many lines, by declaring ‘there is nothing like staying at home, for real comfort’ and that she is quite sincerely ‘devoted’ to the domestic to the extent that her sister, Selina, apparently has trouble encouraging her to venture ‘beyond the park paling’.⁹⁶ Through her many iterations of the point, Augusta aims to linguistically align herself with Emma by entering into the same discursive world to which she believes Emma subscribes. But as we have seen, and will continue to observe as the novel progresses, the sincerity of this sentiment is questionable. Augusta’s symbol of politeness specifically designed to convey one away from the domestic to another location via the outdoors and beyond the borders of the park, thus implicitly implicating herself as one not entirely ‘at home’ with being at home, so to speak. Several times she draws our attention emphatically – though inadvertently – to her need to be mobile. She has travelled to several different towns and cities, all of which would have required the use of a conveyance in order to reach. We know that she is from Bristol and has moved a relatively great distance to settle in Highbury; she makes it a point to tell her company of her ‘Bath life’; she recommends Clifton apparently on the basis of first-hand knowledge; and her explorations of King’s Weston are some of the first ever boasts she makes to Emma. Indeed, Augusta takes an active interest, even an enjoyment, in travel; ‘explore’ and ‘exploring’ are terms that regularly appear in her lexicon. Later in the narrative she mourns the restrictions surrounding women’s movement: ‘for, let a woman ever have so many resources, it is not possible for her to be always shut up at home’.⁹⁷ Such lamentations cannot be a more tangible affirmation of Augusta’s resistance to the thought of remaining at home. The only logical way we can interpret Augusta’s professions of love for the domestic then, are as an act which she assumes in the hopes of

⁹⁶ Austen, *Emma*, 214–15.

⁹⁷ Austen, 279.

impressing herself upon Emma. In terms of polite conversation, this is an unequivocal example of the hypocritical element of polite discourse that Davidson observes in the polite tradition. Whilst hypocrisy was seen as an intrinsic element in the maintenance of the perfect polite veneer, the disconnect between what Augusta sincerely feels and what she says rings false – as Davidson explains, ‘most hypocrites are unable to keep their real motives hidden behind the mask of virtue’.⁹⁸ Augusta’s ineptitude thus exemplifies Klein’s point that cultural traits, such as courtesy and politeness, were not inherent within an individual by virtue of their superior location in the social hierarchy, but heavily predicated on one’s natural ability to master and perform cultural codes.⁹⁹ It is unsurprising, then, that Augusta’s exchanges with Emma fall flat, culminating in the stunned silence of the woman more proficient in the arts of sociability.

Augusta’s dominance and insincerity are not the only transgressions to be observed in this interview, however. To return to her three references to Mr. Suckling’s barouche-landau: primarily, this self-interested boasting directly contradicts a central narrative of politeness that insists merit alone is not sufficient to be deemed polite if it was ‘not seconded by Agreeableness’.¹⁰⁰ We have seen that Augusta’s social ineptitude often occurs during polite visits as she dominates conversations conducted in the feminine domestic sphere, eventually stifling dialogue until it fails and a new topic must be chosen. The carriage, however, transforms polite sociability by removing it from the domestic and relocating it in the masculine outdoors, providing Augusta with the means to effect a form of sociability she has more control over and with which she is more proficient. Confirmation of this can be found in Augusta’s conduct both preceding and during the excursion to Box Hill, later in the novel. The trip, originally devised by Emma for herself, Mr. Weston, and ‘[t]wo or three more of the

⁹⁸ Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness*, 1.

⁹⁹ Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, 873.

¹⁰⁰ Boyer, *The English Theophrastus: Or, The Manners of the Age*, 104.

chosen' as a 'quiet, unpretending, elegant' and 'infinitely superior' outing to the bustling 'pic-nic parade of the Eltons and the Sucklings', sees Emma's set and the Eltons brought together upon Mr. Weston's initiative.¹⁰¹ Augusta, disappointed by the news Mr. and Mrs. Suckling's visit would not occur until the autumn, appears particularly anxious to set the date for the Box Hill outing, and becomes increasingly perturbed the more new postponements develop – "Is not this most vexatious, Knightley?" she cried. – "And such weather for exploring! – These delays and disappointments are quite odious. What are we to do? –".¹⁰² Not only does this reinforce Augusta's previous contrived manipulation of the language of domesticity, but it tellingly reveals an urgency to be within the *en plein air*: a conversable world, to use Mee's phrase, that she can most easily moderate.

When the trip does eventually commence, it is the little-travelled Emma, transplanted for the first time from her parochial confines and removed from the rituals of the polite domestic sphere, who makes herself disagreeable in her unfeeling comments to Miss Bates about her perpetual verbosity.¹⁰³ Emma, unsuccessfully negotiating Augusta's favoured realm of sociability, commits a social infraction, a display of rudeness to a social inferior that runs counter to the behaviour advocated by the polite code of conduct she believes herself to be so adeptly in control of.¹⁰⁴ Augusta on the other hand, has far more social success as, we learn later from a conversation between a forgiving Miss Bates and repentant Emma, in which we find that Augusta persuaded Jane Fairfax and Mrs. and Miss Bates to join her for the evening. Augusta's victorious social orchestrations *outdoors* continue with her evening's entertaining

¹⁰¹ Austen, *Emma*, 277.

¹⁰² Austen, 278.

¹⁰³ Austen, 291.

¹⁰⁴ Claudia Johnson points out, though, that instances of Emma's social transgressions are remarkably few, and stand out as all the more shameful precisely because they occur so infrequently. Johnson notes that Mrs Elton's presence in this scene helps us identify Emma's infractions, but also highlight how admirably she comports herself for the majority of the novel. Where Mrs Elton aggressively advertises her self-styling as 'Lady Patroness', Emma endures 'page after page of... vexing developments without letting slip the slightest impatience'. See Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), especially pages 129-130.

indoors, though the tone of the evening falls somewhat short of jovial once relocated to the domestic. Jane Fairfax, for instance, bears the brunt of Augusta's attentions and at last bows to pressure to accept Augusta's offer of a governess position in an acquaintance's household – a fate Jane Fairfax had been holding off. The evening is plagued by sense of fatigue and resignation, Miss Bates tells us that she 'cannot say that any of them [the party] seemed very much to have enjoyed it'.¹⁰⁵

Augusta's dialogue also betrays the eighteenth-century propensity for fetishizing objects as 'vessels of transcendent meaning', a cultural trait that, as Barbara Benedict notes, was heavily satirized by Austen.¹⁰⁶ Augusta falls into this trap in her reverence for the *barouche-landau*; her repeated references reveals her attempts to use what she sees as its transcendent power to transform her own status by association. In Benedict's terms, Augusta's treatment of the *barouche-landau* as the ultimate status symbol is set up by Austen as a 'satirical [emblem] of misplaced feeling', and such appetites excited by a material object we know are antithetical to polite ideology.¹⁰⁷ Further, the triple reference to the *barouche-landau* itself betrays the passionate desire censured by Edmund Burke as a vulgar 'energy of mind' which, if left unchecked, 'hurries us on to the passion of certain objects'.¹⁰⁸ Like her chosen signifier, Augusta's conversation is aggressively consumerist in its references to luxuries and possession of modish fashions, a trait that mirrors the carriage's emphasis on showy aesthetics above all else. This preoccupation with surface-level appearances leaves the carriage liable to continual breakdown, and Augusta's conversation, mirroring the material shortcomings of the carriage, is subject to the same propensity for failure.

¹⁰⁵ Austen, *Emma*, 300.

¹⁰⁶ Barbara Benedict, 'Satire, Sentiment and Desacralization: The Relic and the Commodity in Jane Austen's Novels', in *Dynamics of Desacralization: Disenchanted Literary Talents*, ed. Paola Partenza (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 54.

¹⁰⁷ Benedict, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), 116.

It is important to note that wealth and pedigree are integral to the social milieu of Highbury in the eyes of some of its inhabitants. Emma Woodhouse's language, for instance, is scattered with exclusionary terms on the basis of rank (sets of 'gentlemanlike people' are distinguished from the 'second set', for instance), just think of Emma's scornful meditation on Augusta's lack of pedigree, and her disdain for Augusta's mercenary heritage as 'the youngest of two daughters of a Bristol – merchant, of course'.¹⁰⁹ By that token, it is not only Augusta who vexes the relationship between economic and material wealth and the culture of politeness, begging the question is Augusta wholly to blame for her misjudgement of courteous cultural codes, or is she merely trying to be accepted into a social world founded on similar misjudgements?

Hierarchies of polite exchange

By choosing the barouche-landau as her favoured status symbol, Augusta creates tensions between material and abstract notions of status by forcing an ostentatious object of material and economic prosperity – an object consequently only available to an exclusive set – to act as the physical incarnation of the polite ethos. However, as noted above, the ideology of politeness is subject to a complex double bind as an exclusive form of inclusivity, which compromises the barouche-landau's status as a polite object. Indeed, this paradoxical notion is mirrored in the modes of sociability that are encouraged by the barouche-landau in several ways. Augusta's wish to arrange exploring parties in the barouche-landau may have some polite merit since the composition of the carriage's interior, in which four are held perfectly, would have facilitated the easy flow of conversation between passengers as they faced each other two by two, aided as well by the pleasant weather that was necessary to the use of the

¹⁰⁹ Austen, *Emma*, 173, 17, 144.

vehicle. Additionally, Augusta uses the barouche-landau – or, at the very least, promises to – as a tool for bridging the schism between social sets by extending invitations to Jane Fairfax to join her summer sojourns, just as Highbury’s elites, Emma and Mr. Knightley, send their carriages for the service of those less fortunate, like Miss Bates and her elderly mother.¹¹⁰ The gathering of people with such a range of social experiences within the other carriages of *Emma* has a levelling effect upon its passengers, the strains and tensions of rank and wealth are dissolved as those inside the carriage are granted access based upon courteous codes of social comity. Mrs. Elton shows an awareness of this levelling effect, but being the designing woman that she is, Augusta uses her marital carriage to gain the social advantage of claiming Emma as her equal – ‘[w]e have carriages...’.¹¹¹ This calculated use of a horse-drawn vehicle exposes Augusta’s invitations for Jane Fairfax to be her companion in the barouche-landau as not the transparent, charitable actions of polite goodwill she wishes them to be perceived as, but as the continued efforts to demonstrate her superior charitable inclusion. Augusta’s self-serving motivations become even more apparent as she assumes the authority to refuse the offers of others of sending their carriages for Jane Fairfax and the two Bates women. To Mrs. Weston, Augusta announces that she ‘understand[s] you were so kind as to offer, but another time it will be quite unnecessary. You may be very sure I shall always take care of *them*’.¹¹² Jane Fairfax and Mrs. and Miss Bates are accordingly transformed into the emblems of Augusta’s charity, objectified as tools in her polite masquerade.

The barouche-landau redefines orthodox forms of sociability, but ultimately fails to make such forms transparent, as its own status as public or private space is difficult to pin down. On the one hand, the carriage’s interior provides a private space that emulates the

¹¹⁰ Austen, 222. Jane Fairfax, orphaned as a young child, is a highly accomplished young woman and genteel in nature, but, before her marriage to Frank Churchill, occupies a lower rung of the social ladder as a soon-to-be governess.

¹¹¹ Austen, 222.

¹¹² Austen, 252.

polite domestic setting, but on the other the carriage's ability to traverse public spaces undermines its designation as wholly private.¹¹³ Richard Lovell Edgeworth's *An Essay on the Construction of Roads and Carriages* (1817) illuminates the carriage's mutable relationship with sociability in his description of the changing fashions in carriage construction:

A sudden revolution in the height of private carriages took place a few years ago. Such as were exhibited in Bond Street were made so low, that gentleman on foot could hold conversation with ladies without any exertion of their limbs. It was however soon discovered, that other people overheard their conversations, and carriages immediately sprang up to their former exaltation¹¹⁴

Edgeworth's essay reveals a mutually dependent relationship between the construction of the carriage itself, in its encouragement of a specific conversability, and how that conversability directly influenced its redesign. The lowering of carriage heights ever closer toward street level facilitated illicit conversation between ladies, from the safety of their vehicles, and gentlemen pedestrians by eliminating the need for either party to cross the boundary of potential impropriety of travelling in the carriage together. Essentially, a quasi-private sphere that encapsulated the vehicle itself and its immediate peripheries had been created by this structural remodelling, so that specific pedestrians were free, and encouraged, to participate in private conversations with passengers. As Edgeworth's anecdote shows, though, this circumvention in itself began to excite the curiosity and judgement of onlookers, and in response to the failure of this quasi-private sphere, the carriage's dimensions rapidly reverted. Whilst we can't know for certain whether the barouche-landau was subject to this dramatic back and forth in fashionable elevations, or if its very invention was born out of the need for revolution back to lofty carriage stature to counter invasions upon passenger privacy, these

¹¹³ The notion of public and private spaces in relation to the horse-drawn carriage, and how the spaces of the carriage may be gendered, are addressed fully in Part II of this thesis.

¹¹⁴ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *An Essay on the Construction of Roads and Carriages*. (London: R. Hunter, 1817), 107.

changes are an undeniable chapter in carriage construction history. As such, Edgeworth's essay confirms an inextricable link between carriage construction, conversability, exclusivity and privacy, but also reveals that this relationship was complex and subject to redefinition according to the prevailing needs of vehicle owners.



Figure 2.4: From Thomas Rowlandson *World in Miniature*. A sociable outing to the countryside in a large open-topped carriage. Photographed with permission from the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

Ellis comments compellingly on the social effect of travelling within a carriage, arguing that it is a 'paradigmatic space for sentimental encounters, a liminal zone between public and private, where [...] disparate characters might come together and by this proximity, be forced into communicating'.¹¹⁵ I argue that this smoothing out of social ranks within a carriage is more diluted within the barouche-landau than within standard vehicles such as a coach or a chaise. As the most exclusive model available, the creation of a shared experience within the barouche-landau's interior is an elevated one, not least in physical

¹¹⁵ Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, 153.

terms as the passengers are raised above the dirt of street level. The inherently selective sociability fostered by a carriage is further amplified by the barouche-landau's rarity, at once raising its passengers onto the plane of the highly privileged but also removing them from the rest of society. By having a conversation in a vehicle that is exclusive in social terms and exclusionary in construction, the inclusive ideal of courteous culture is problematised once again, as the social set in question simultaneously inserts and excludes itself into and from the public domain. In addition, the very mechanics and dimensions of the barouche-landau, particularly its retractable hood, press further on tensions between inclusivity and exclusivity. During her summer exploring parties, Augusta will expect the retractable hoods of the barouche-landau to be thrown open, allowing her passengers to see but also to be seen. At once this adaptability troubles and blurs the vehicle's already tenuous dichotomic boundaries of public/private, inclusive/exclusive. It introduces the element of spectacle – an opportunity for the passengers to indulge in sartorial and social display. In contradistinction to the revolution in carriage dimensions outlined by Edgeworth, which developed as a means of detracting attention away from passengers, the public eye here is welcomed, and indeed absolutely encouraged. I suggest this invitation of the public gaze in turn designates passengers of private pleasure carriages as consumable by the onlookers, transforming themselves through the rituals of the carriage as public visual property.

In choosing such an object in her performance of gentility, Augusta claims to be the social equal of other barouche-landau owners who, as we know from newspaper evidence, are predominantly male members of the gentry through to the monarchy. Augusta's fortune (while in itself not insubstantial) is but a third of Emma's £30,000 and acquired not through the respected hereditary channels, but through recent trade success. Her station thus remains far below the landed titled men she attempts to claim as her equals. Her invitation is increasingly diluted by the fact that she is not the owner of this carriage, but is merely granted

access to it by her familial connections to Mr. Suckling. Augusta is not in control of her own status formation but dependent upon her brother-in-law's patronage. The legitimacy or, perhaps eminency, of Mr. Suckling's patronage is called into question by the uncertainty of his own status. At most, he is only the second generation to live in his seat at Maple Grove – even then, he has been resident for just 11 years, and Augusta cannot be certain how long Maple Grove has been the family seat: 'I believe, at least – I am almost sure that old Mr. Suckling had completed the purchase before his death'.¹¹⁶ We can thus infer that Mr. Suckling's wealth is the product of 'new money' which we know Emma to be particularly averse to. The precariousness of Augusta's chosen status symbol is also compounded by the fact that we never meet Augusta's brother and sister and thus have no insight into their manners or gentility. Like the barouche-landau itself, they remain offstage. With no title and no guarantee of his polite etiquette, Mr. Suckling evokes the nouveau-riche characters comically censured by *The Tatler*: 'but to see Men for no Reason upon Earth but that they are rich, ascend to triumphant Chariots, and ride through the People, has at the Bottom nothing else in it but an insolent Transport, arising only from the Distinction of Fortune'.¹¹⁷ In overstepping the boundaries of his rank by purchasing a luxury item reserved more often than not for the aristocracy and monarchical ranks purely because he can afford to do so, Mr. Suckling displays the vulgarity of feeling that Burke detested. Further, the object at the centre of Augusta's conversation never actually appears in the text, unlike her pearls and lace. The barouche-landau remains firmly at Maple Grove in spite of many promises of a visit to Highbury, and this absence only works to delegitimise Augusta's claims to its signifying power.

¹¹⁶ Austen, *Emma*, 243.

¹¹⁷ Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, ed. Donald Frederic Bond, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), 321.

The didactic literature of the eighteenth century emphasised that ‘the Appellation of Gentleman’ was dependent upon one’s behaviour and not one’s circumstance (*The Tatler* 3: 99-100) and we have seen that Augusta’s ideas of decorous sociability fall short of this idealised model of politeness.¹¹⁸ Like the barouche-landau’s impractical emphasis on form over function, Augusta mistakenly extolls style over substance. Furthermore, the commodity object she has chosen to aid the formation of her polite and moneyed identity flouts the circumscribed notions of polite consumption. As we have seen, however, the barouche-landau’s potential for reinterpretation mirrors the complex and often contradictory ideology of politeness. Nevertheless, to use such a precarious object in status formation clearly requires more skill and depth of understanding of polite behaviour than Augusta possesses. The very transitory nature of the carriage is what makes it a precarious status symbol. Drawn by beasts that are flighty by nature, the carriage moves out of reach, precisely like the genteel status Augusta almost, but never quite, achieves. The next chapter – the third and final case study of this thesis – will address another famous Austen carriage and its patron: *Northanger Abbey*’s notorious John Thorpe and his two-wheel gig carriage. As this chapter understood the barouche-landau’s contentious role in shoring up an elite identity, chapter three will unearth the gig carriage’s deployment as a marker of masculinity.

¹¹⁸ Steele, *The Tatler*, 2014, 3:99–100.

Chapter Three: The Gig and John Thorpe's Vision of Masculinity

The gig carriage lies in sharp contradistinction to the barouche-landau at once in its physical dimensions and its frequent presence upon the streets of Regency England. The previous chapter read the physical absence of Augusta Elton's coveted equipage in *Emma*, where it seems to loom as a spectre of gentility without ever appearing as anything more than an idea, as an unfulfilled promise, that mirrored its scarcity in both Regency streets and literature. This chapter turns to the overabundance of the gig carriage in these two arenas. Overall Austen's fictions reflect the quotidian appearance of gig carriages upon eighteenth-century streets. But none intervene in period grievances against this particular vehicle so explicitly as *Northanger Abbey* (1817). The dramatic difference in physical size, construction materials, and price between the barouche-landau and the small, two-wheeled gig, contributed to the latter's proliferation. Where the barouche-landau has four wheels, the gig has two and consequently requires a single horse to draw it as opposed to the majestic team of four to six necessary to the former. Not only, then, would a gig have been cheaper to purchase outright compared to the barouche-landau, with no need for liveried footmen, fewer horses, and fewer moving parts to repair in case of damage, additional costs in maintenance and upkeep would have been comparatively minimal. Whilst the repercussions of this price difference served initially to open up the elite market of vehicle-ownership to an economically inferior consumer base, the corollary effects extended into more abstract concepts like gendered identities and their performances. Unlike the barouche-landau which we have seen used as a prop for a genteel social performance, Austen invokes the gig carriage as a means of foregrounding a gendered social performance. For *Northanger Abbey*'s comic villain John Thorpe, the gig carriage helps to establish a hyper-masculine identity, functioning as the primary tool in his quest to appear rakish, sexually virile, and superior.

This chapter examines the bombastic John Thorpe's efforts to vie for superiority over his male peers and over the women he encounters. Thorpe wields the 'rhetoric of authority and domination', extending it to his horse and carriage.¹ Like Augusta Elton, Thorpe continually references his conveyance and horse as part of his *modus operandi*, manoeuvring all conversation toward eliciting admiration for his 'curricle-hung' gig.² While Thorpe has a perceivable advantage over Augusta Elton in the physical presence of and access to his own gig, this chapter will make clear that his treatment and manipulation of the carriage in a bid to present a specific social and gendered identity, remains as equivocal as Augusta's. The material conditions of the gig, its diminutive stature and its use of specific timbers in its construction, both contrast and overlap with the far more opulent carriage of the previous chapter. The gig's reduced surface area and thus the amount of materials required to build it meant that it cost far less at all stages from construction, purchase, and maintenance than pleasure carriages like the barouche-landau. Although we know the coaching community was an elite 10 per cent of the general population of Britain, these simple material conditions of the gig alone place it and its owner several rungs lower on this social scale. This chapter reads the metonymic meanings of the gig's timber, which was used predominantly in the mechanical operation of the vehicle upon which the body sits and called lancewood. I contextualise my treatment of the gig across this chapter by drawing evidence of its public reputation from a range of literary and visual sources, such as the poetry of William Combe and the accompanying satirical prints of Thomas Rowlandson. While the evidence confirms that the gig was a popular carriage for young men (corroborated in Austen's own writing), we shall see that the gig also carried complicated cultural associations with women and their sexuality.

¹ Kathy Justice Gentile, 'A Forward, Bragging, Scheming Race': Comic Masculinity in *Northanger Abbey*', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 32 (2010): 79.

² Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 30.

The gig's multivalent meanings rendered it a far more mutable object than Thorpe's repetitive boasting might make it initially appear. The gig was the ultimate customisable vehicle, built to the specific whims of the purchaser or the coach-builder, with some models able to be quickly adapted to suit various purposes. I argue that the gig's inherent hybridity and fashionable fluidity troubles its form to the point that the gig becomes difficult to identify and interpret. With multiple variants of gig constructions – including chair back gigs, shooting gigs, curricule made gigs, and gig made curricles – all commonly in production, distilling the true nature and character of the gig proves a complex task. I suggest that Thorpe's character replicates the inherent slipperiness located in the physical dimensions of the gig, as he relies on the carriage to signify his masculinity in his gendered performance. However, Austen's satirical treatment of the period's emerging masculine tropes through Thorpe – he is neither rake nor fop, displays elements of both, yet performs as a comic villain – complicates our perception of the person/carriage relationship. Throughout this chapter, I will uncover the central role of the gig in undermining the masculine authority that Thorpe attempts to manufacture through material possession.

The promiscuous gig carriage

Whilst the conveyances themselves may have been easy to come by in the latter end of the century, a definitive clarification of what a 'gig carriage' was and how it was constructed proves more elusive. Austen presses on this nebulosity in *Sanditon*, as Charlotte Heywood struggles with her friends to discern the type of vehicle emerging from the mist: 'they could not for some time make out what sort of carriage it was, which they saw coming up. It appeared at different moments to be everything from the gig to the phaeton, – from one horse to four; and just as they were concluding in favour of a tandem, little Mary's young eyes

distinguished the coachman'.³ Classifications vary across the literature of the period, with 'gig' being used to denote a specific model of two-wheel carriage but also as a broader umbrella term for conveyances sharing common characteristics, and definitions are subject to contradictions within and across volumes by coach-building authorities.⁴ William Bridges Adams in *English Pleasure Carriages* highlights the taxonomic complexities inherent in two-wheel open-carriages since their total number of varieties far outstrips that of their four-wheel counterparts, artfully adding that this superabundance of forms makes it 'difficult even for practiced observers to be familiar with them all'.⁵

The gig's emergence as a popular mode of transportation coincided with the period in which Austen composed *Northanger Abbey* in the 1790s, and by the end of the decade it had become a familiar, and frequently unwelcome, sight in towns and cities throughout England.⁶ Austen presents our first encounter with the gig in *Northanger Abbey* through the exasperated eyes of the coquettish Isabella Thorpe, who exclaims 'Oh, these odious gigs... how I detest them!', having been stranded on the pavement by heavy traffic that made crossing Cheap-street impossible 'at least three times a day'.⁷ This brief episode proves especially useful in foregrounding the contemporary cultural perceptions of the vehicle that have been somewhat lost in the two and a half centuries since *Northanger Abbey*'s publication. Isabella's effusions echo common opinions on the gig's unpopularity, a notion compounded by their situation upon a street of 'so impertinent a nature' that crossing it was dreaded by many of the residents

³ Austen, 344.

⁴ Similar to the period's usage of the term 'chaise' to denote two-wheeled open carriages of various forms. See William Bridges Adams *English Pleasure Carriages*.

⁵ Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages*, 220.

⁶ *Northanger Abbey*'s journey from composition to publication was a convoluted one. It was the first of Austen's novels to be completed for publication, in 1803, but was published posthumously along with *Persuasion* in 1817. The narrative similarities between *Northanger* and Austen's juvenile writing suggests the novel was composed initially around 1794, but references to popular gothic novels later in the decade (Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* being the most prominent) would indicate that Austen revised the manuscript around 1798-99. See Cecil Emden's 'The Composition of *Northanger Abbey*' in *The Review of English Studies*, 19, no.75, (1968): 279-81.

⁷ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 29, 28.

of Bath.⁸ Whilst Austen does not detail the gender nor the character of the general populace of carriage drivers in this scene, the gigs' topological situation upon Cheap-street, a road that connects Bath to London and Oxford, allows us the inference, according to Aoife Byrne, that their drivers were young men of leisure from these major cities.⁹

Northanger Abbey's brief scene on Cheap-street captures the mess and discomfort that could be caused by carriages on busy thoroughfares through urban centres, and Rowlandson visualised, in 1807, the potential mishap resulting from overcrowding in 'Miseries of Travelling – O Miserabli Mihi' (Figure 3.1). While there are two carriages visible in the street, it is poignant that Rowlandson choses the gig as the perpetrator of damage and not the professionally-driven coach in the background. The scene recalls Isabella Thorpe's frustrations, which were aimed specifically at gigs. The elderly couple appear inept in their coachmanship as they back their gig into the display window of a china shop, the owners of which gesticulating as they remonstrate the couple for the damage they have caused. Note the dog rearing up to spook the horse, a leitmotif Rowlandson includes in other caricatures of gig carriages including the plate accompanied by William Combe's poem 'The Gig' – Figure 3.4 that I discuss later in this chapter. The difficulties of handling both horse and gig are encapsulated here, and the presence of the dog and its ability to frighten the horse is testament to the prevalence of flighty horses on eighteenth-century roads. As with the phaetons of chapter one, the driver's skill in handling restive horses pulling two-wheel carriages like a gig was essential, but as Rowlandson's print suggests, many amateur drivers were not adept enough to avoid misadventure. The dangerous situation Rowlandson's elderly couple find themselves in is given all the more urgency as a coach, replete with the professional guidance

⁸ Austen, 28.

⁹ Aoife Byrne, "'Very Knowing Gigs': Social Aspiration and the Gig Carriage in Jane Austen's Works", *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 37 (2015): 202.

of a postillion, takes the correct line down the street which unfortunately leads them inexorably closer to the gig and imminent calamity.

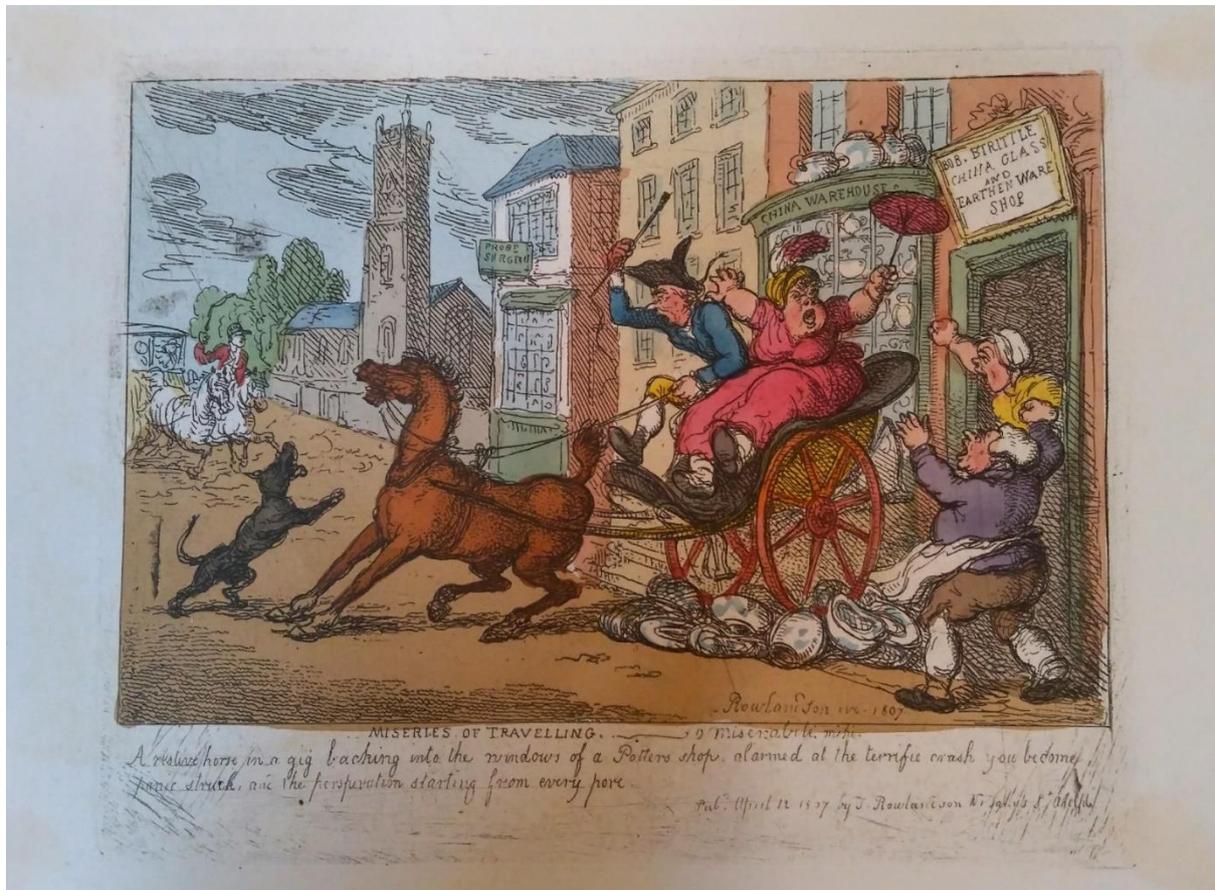


Figure 3.1: Thomas Rowlandson's 'Miserables of Travelling – O Miserabili Mihi' (1807). The caption reads 'a restive horse in a gig backing into the window of a Potters shop; alarmed at the terrific crash you become panic struck, and the perspiration starting from every pore'. Photographed with permission from the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

The competition for space on the busy streets of cities like London and Bath was common fodder for visual caricaturists and satirists. Marguerite Blessington offers another perspective to Austen's teeming Cheap-street as she sketches the onslaught of carriages vying for physical space in 'The Park':

Carriages of every description were to be seen, from the splendid *vis-à-vis* and elegant chariot, down to the vulgar city coach and more vulgar gig; next to the well-appointed curicle followed a shabby-hired whiskey; while the *cabriolet*,

with its Dandy driver, was contrasted by its next neighbour, a vehicle partaking the joint qualities of a taxed-cart and Irish jaunting-car, conducted by a butcher-like looking man, accompanied by a large female, whose cheeks might in colour out-vie his primest ox beef.¹⁰

Blessington's crowded sketch evinces the triumph of the British carriage building industry as she highlights the diverse typologies of carriages available at the time. Out of the eight distinct vehicle types in this passage, five of them are light-weight two-wheel carriages with an open construction – a gig, curricule, whiskey, cabriolet, and jaunting-car. This was common in cities since space was at such a premium, and as Blessington's sketch shows it was not just gigs that enjoyed popularity in the late eighteenth century but smaller vehicles as a whole. As this chapter unfolds, I shall make clear the difficulties in defining carriages that fall under this umbrella from one another, since their identifying features are generally modelled on the most successful elements of whatever was the most sought-after style of carriage at the time. However, Blessington's juxtaposition between the 'vulgar gig' and the 'well-appointed curricule' raises questions over why the gig was propelled to the forefront of public irritation over the many carriages that boasted similar constructions and popularity. What material conditions caused the gig to accrue such negative associations?

By orchestrating our first glimpses of the vehicle that will become so prominent throughout *Northanger Abbey* upon Cheap-street, Austen makes us immediately aware of both the gig's (relatively) small economic worth and its deficient cultural capital. Thrupp's *The History of Coaches* compounds this notion of the gig in his notes regarding the tax upon two-wheeled vehicles, which in general hovered around £3, 17s. Interestingly, though, should the carriage cost be within the £12 margin and the words 'taxed cart' have been painted on the side panels, then the vehicle was liable to a reduction of the yearly tax to twelve

¹⁰ Blessington, *The Magic Lantern; or, Sketches of Scenes in the Metropolis*, 26.

shillings.¹¹ It is likely this tax reduction acted as a significant incentive to opt for two-wheeled carriages over their four-wheeled counterparts; not only were they cheaper to purchase, they were also more economically sustainable. This does few favours for the owner in terms of asserting oneself upon the social and economic ladder, yet literature of the period proves two-wheeled vehicles were regularly invoked in establishing a performance of wealth and fashion. I return once again to the crowded and uncomfortable scene in Blessington's 'The Park':

In the drive, which is now considered the fashionable one, and for which I can assign no other reason than its being the most disagreeable part of the Park, the crowd of equipages from Hyde Park Corner to Cumberland Gate, is so great, that carriages are sometimes detained stationary for half an hour at a time [...] Each person that you meet complains of the heat and the dust, and the crowd, but still perseveres in giving this side of the Park preference, to the cool and more agreeable one near the Serpentine river [...]: surely this preference is a convincing proof of the influence of fashion, which we daily see demanding fresh sacrifices of taste and comfort for her votaries.¹²

The 'disagreeable' conditions of the 'fashionable' quarter of Hyde Park on an average Sunday morning – the crowds, dust, heat – are emphasized in contrast to the much quieter and cooler side of the Park by the Serpentine river. Foregoing personal comfort for the sake of securing a prominent position on the fashionable side of the park underscores the notion that association with a carriage is not necessarily enough to shore up unstable identities. As we saw in the previous chapter, Augusta Elton's performance of gentility was diluted by the barouche-landau's absence throughout the narrative (as well as the fact she didn't own the carriage

¹¹ Thrupp, *The History of Coaches*, 75.

¹² Blessington, *The Magic Lantern; or, Sketches of Scenes in the Metropolis*, 27–28.

herself, which belonged to a male relative through marriage). Blessington's sketch thus highlights the importance of being seen, of creating a spectacle, in the carriage to successfully perform various identities. It is likely that the overcrowded Cheap-street of Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, with its mass of 'carriages, horsemen, or carts' and 'odious gigs', resembled this throng of small vehicles in Hyde Park.¹³ While the name 'Cheap-street' invokes negative connotations, its continual foot traffic and volume of carriages guaranteed a large audience for drivers to showcase themselves and their vehicles. As such, Cheap-street seems the perfect location for promoting oneself along with one's carriage to curry favour among society.

As I have already alluded to above, the gig carriage was not unique, but one of many forms of lightweight two-wheeled vehicles that were in popular use during the latter decades of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. The gig constituted one particular form of seven carriages that shared common characteristics. Whisky (or whiskey) carriages, named as such for their lightness and ability to move swiftly through the city streets, had been in use since the late 1760s, and the fashionable curricle (to which I shall return later in this chapter) for several decades more.¹⁴ A buggy, used for short-distance travel, was popular from the middle of the century.¹⁵ The early decades of the nineteenth century saw several other varieties added to these primary models; the Tilbury or Tilbury Gig was invented by the coach-building firm Tilbury of Mount Street for Lord Stanhope, and was fashionable throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the Stanhope was made for the Hon. And Rev. Fitzroy Stanhope (1787-1864) also by the Tilbury firm at the turn of the

¹³ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 28, 29.

¹⁴ Horace Walpole, in a letter to H.S Conway on the 9th August 1768, writes charmingly that the 'apprentices... flirt to Epsom in a Tim-whisky', a testament to the vehicles' speed and lightness. See volume 39 of *Horace Walpole's Correspondence: Yale Edition* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1874), 106.

¹⁵ This form of carriage is now chiefly associated with traditionalist communities in North America, such as the Amish, and is now more commonly constructed with four wheels as opposed to two as was the norm in the eighteenth century.

century. Finally, the Dennet, presumed to have been named after the English surname, was fashionable c1818-1830. Despite enjoying periods of popularity, though, even just a brief survey of literary and visual sources from across the eighteenth century will unearth far fewer mentions of these specific typologies compared to their cousin, even. As this chapter continues, I uncover the characteristics that at once ensured the gig remained one of the most popular vehicles on the market, and at the same time made it a target for scrutiny and disapprobation.

Ambition and the gig

By the time the gig had become firmly entrenched in the cultural landscape as an ‘affordable’ (relatively speaking) run-around for the young men of the eighteenth century, the period’s literature reflected the aspirations that appeared to be shared by many patrons of the gig carriage. A survey of poems, novels, or short stories in periodicals that pertain to or reference the gig make it clear that it was common practice for the carriage’s clientele to purchase a gig with a view to moving swiftly on to something bigger, better, and faster. Ambition and the gig seemingly went hand-in hand; buying a gig signalled to one’s peers that you were establishing yourself on the rungs of the social ladder. But the gig also acted as a ‘gateway’ carriage to something of greater physical stature, inhered with more social capital. The gig’s connotations of ambitiousness are further distilled into a sense of restlessness among gig patrons, foregrounded by a common trope replicated in many depictions of the gig that show once the carriage has been acquired, an impatience sets in that catalyses the process of moving on to another, better vehicle. Austen encapsulates this sentiment perfectly via the thoughts of *Sanditon*’s Miss Denham, a woman ‘who felt her consequence with Pride and her Poverty with Discontent, and who was immediately gnawed by the want of an handsomer

Equipage than the simple Gig in which they travelled'.¹⁶ Austen amplifies the feeling of restlessness through Miss Denham's apparent embarrassment at riding in a gig carriage and not a vehicle of more consequence. Miss Denham finds herself caught in between her social ambitions and pride, and the reality of her 'poverty'. Riding in a gig, a carriage which, at £18 11s, was a significantly cheaper carriage than its elegant cousin the curricule which averaged £22, acts as an uncomfortable reminder of her social and economic position, as well as signals to others her position within the social and economic strata.¹⁷ The gig's extreme popularity was likely a primary contributing factor to Miss Denham's embarrassment and urge to progress on to more 'handsome' vehicles. Regardless of how handsome a gig could be, by value of its overabundance the gig fails to differentiate its occupants, like Miss Denham, from the mass of other two-wheel carriage patrons. Instead, it solidifies one's position on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy, a position that could be transcended through the right vehicle. Thorpe's extensive fittings and fixtures on his gig evinces a similar restlessness for a better carriage than the vehicle he currently possesses (though he reveals none of the embarrassment toward his gig that Miss Denham does), and these ambitions to progress are closely yoked to his attitude towards his masculinity.

Thorpe's ambitiousness manifests itself, in part, in the sheer volume of speech that he dedicates to his gig and the numerous customisations he has made to it, a point I shall return in this section. His mode of pitching this information and the lexical and syntactical choices

¹⁶ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 320.

¹⁷ I have estimated these costs by combining two sets of average prices that William Felton presents in his *Treatise*. The first price is for the carriage body, not including any extra furnishings, fabrics, or embellishments. According to Felton, the general gig-model body was utilised in both gig and curricule carriages and averaged at £7. The distinguishing features between gig and curricule carriages was, as I will elaborate in this chapter, located in the mechanical apparatus underneath the body and the method of hanging the body from this apparatus, which Felton refers to throughout simply as the 'carriage'. In the second table which presents the average pricing of both two-wheel and four-wheel carriages, refers specifically to this mechanical apparatus from which the carriage bodies would have been hung and from which the wheels would have been affixed (but does not include the price of wheels). The price given for the gig carriage was £11 11s, and the price given for the curricule carriage was £15. For the full table of costings of the carriage body and the mechanical carriage, see Felton *A Treatise on Carriages* vol. 2 (London: Debrett, 1796) page 38 and page 67 respectively.

that he makes, though, requires attention. In our very first meeting with Thorpe, he recounts that his gig is ‘Curricled-hung you see: seat, trunk, sword-case, splashing-board, lamps, silver moulding, all you see complete: the iron-work as good as new, or better. He asked fifty guineas: I closed with him directly, threw down the money, and the carriage was mine.’¹⁸ Thorpe commits a significant portion of his speech to highlighting the details of monetary exchange in his purchase, a subject habitually avoided in polite conversation and particularly so between unfamiliar parties. In a similar departure from polite conventions, Thorpe’s register deviates away from the simple, unaffected style of natural, everyday speech to appear rehearsed, constrained in its focus upon material objects. Thorpe’s meandering inventory of the adaptations made to his gig bear striking similarity to the exhaustive list-style structure common in coach-building trade cards and newspaper advertisements.

Consider these trade cards for a coach maker and whip and harness maker (Figure 3.2 and 4.3 respectively). William Welsh and Timothy Barnard’s trade cards exemplify the typical eighteenth-century format of this kind of business-related ephemera. The combination of visual imagery, which was often elaborate, and text reinforced the marketing strategy by invoking a sense of abundance and choice which was buttressed by the visually appealing iconographic imagery.¹⁹ Welsh’s approach to this technique is particularly effective. In his text, Welsh claims to ‘Make[s] and sell[s] all Sorts of Coaches, Chariots, Rutlands...’, while his central image (which surrounds simply his name, business, and location on a plain background) is a strangely shaped, fantasy carriage on a set of functioning wheels underneath. On one hand, Welsh’s linguistic phrases create the sense that a vast range of tastes can be catered to as he manufactures ‘*all*’ sorts of closed and open, two- and four-wheel vehicles. Meanwhile, the bizarrely shaped carriage, almost dream-like with its irregular shape,

¹⁸ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 30.

¹⁹ Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, ‘Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century’, *Cultural and Social History* 4, no. 2 (2007): 157–59.

encourages the client to project an image of their own desired carriage onto the fantasy image – anything is possible, Welsh can make it for you. Whip-maker Timothy Barnard’s trade card similarly displays his wares in a list format, surrounded by ornate scrolls and wreaths and accompanied by miniature reproductions of the whips he makes and a rider on horseback. Unlike Welsh, Barnard highlights his connoisseurship by naming his mentor and his royal patronage as part of his marketing strategy. These examples show that trade cards sought to produce an evocative visual allusion to the act of shopping as a pleasurable experience, with many invoking visual, olfactory, and tactile senses to connect potential consumers with the act of consumption. Berg notes that trade cards ‘offered personal connection’ between the consumer and the act of shopping, since the imagery of the advertisements often represented the physical shop that sold the advertised wares. Further, this connection to the act of shopping was strengthened by the trade card’s visual guidance on the way goods should be consumed, and allusions to polite society and its conventions.²⁰ Philippa Hubbard makes a similar observation in that trade cards ‘possessed a mnemonic value connected to both the lived and virtual experiences of consumption’.²¹ John Thorpe employs similar tactics to prime his audience to consume his carriage, though as I will make clear later in this chapter, the gig assumes a synecdochal status for Thorpe himself and as such Thorpe’s efforts in reality prepare his audience for how they might consume him and his own body. The most obvious similarities between trade cards and Thorpe’s lexical choices are the long lists he uses to reel off the fashionable fixtures and embellishments which must overwhelm the small frame of his carriage. Further, Thorpe uses stock phrases conventional in the language of advertising and reproduced across thousands of trade cards, ‘all you see complete’ echoes phrases like Welsh’s ‘all Kinds, made after the compleatest Methods’.²² Thorpe also follows his list with

²⁰ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 274.

²¹ Philippa Hubbard, ‘Trade Cards in 18th-Century Consumer Culture: Circulation, and Exchange in Commercial and Collecting Spaces’, *Material Culture Review*, 2012, 31.

²² Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 50.

an in-depth reference to how much he paid for his gig, a format almost identical to Welsh and Barnard's lists that advertise their vast stock at 'the most reasonable' or 'moderate' prices.

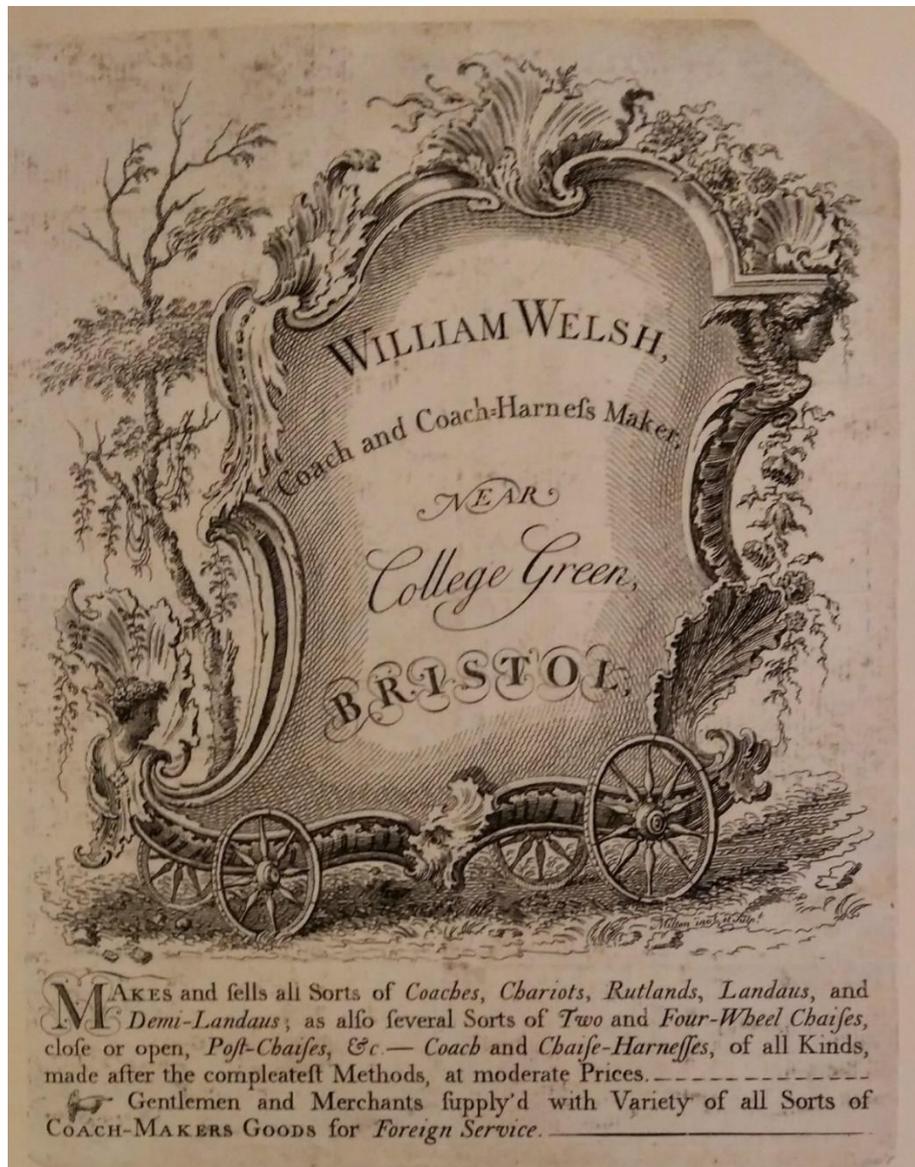


Figure 3.2: A trade card for William Welsh 'Coach and Coach-Harness Maker. The advert reads 'Makes and sells all Sorts of Coaches, Chariots, Rutlands, Landaus, and Demi-Landaus, as also several Sorts of Two and Four-Wheel Chaises, close or open, Post-Chaises, &c. — Coach and Chaise-Harness, or all Kinds, made after the compleatest [sic] Methods, at moderate Prices'. Photographed with permission from the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.



Figure 3.3: A trade card for Whip-Maker Timothy Barnard. The advert reads ‘Makes and Sells all Sorts of the Finest Whips, Wholesale and Retail, at the most reasonable Prices: With Several other Goods in the Sporting Way. – N.B. He was Apprentice to the late Mr. Theobald, King’s Whip-Maker, in West-Smithfield – Likewise all sorts of Canes & Sticks mounted in the Best Manner’. Photographed with permission from the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

In showcasing such an abundance of carriage accessories, Thorpe hopes his audience might translate his accumulated accoutrements as knowledge, the specifically masculine knowledge of carriage design and fashion, and hence further distil this into a masculine identity. Thorpe’s linguistic style extends beyond specific trade cards conventions. Supercilious statements such as ‘it is a capital one of a kind’ come breathtakingly close to newspaper advertisements – gig horses, for example, are described as ‘capital seasoned’ and

‘finest and best... in England’.²³ Thorpe’s linguistic choices resemble even more finely the persuasive prose of an advertisement for a curricle in the same newspaper, described as ‘remarkable neat, town-built... on the most modern principle, with an occasional head and wings and a pair of patent lamps...’. Like trade cards, newspaper conventions include an enticing monetary deal as the *Times* advert shows, and Thorpe’s speech mirrors the list of the gig’s aesthetic attributes with the price he paid. This, however, undermines the image of connoisseurship that he has carefully – if tastelessly – crafted if we accept Felton’s expertise regarding the price of two-wheeled vehicles. Thorpe’s impulsive deal of fifty guineas (approximately £52) is agreed without any evidence of negotiation, while Felton’s monetary breakdowns for a gig body and mechanical undercarriage equal in the region of £20.²⁴ While Felton’s pricing does not include the cost of wheels, the fifty guineas Thorpe paid for a second-hand gig is almost triple the price Felton specifies for a brand new gig carriage. Far from appearing a knowledgeable businessman, Thorpe’s impulsivity betrays his naivete.

This strange divergence in register from natural, polite conversational codes, to the overblown language of advertising, signals a difference in Thorpe’s appropriation of a carriage from that of Augusta Elton. No longer a symbol rife with competing social and cultural sensibilities, the carriage here functions blatantly as an advertisement for Thorpe’s desired masculine persona. Thorpe appropriates the emotive power of the linguistic and structural practices of advertising in order to impress the image of himself as fashionable and masculine upon *Northanger Abbey*’s heroine, Catherine. Mining deeper, Thorpe’s advertising of his gig can be mapped back on to his own body (a point I shall elaborate upon later in this chapter), so that when he relays the physical conditions of the gig to Catherine, we can also interpret this as a verbal inventory of Thorpe’s own physicality. Thorpe’s verbosity

²³ ‘Classified Ads.’, *Times*, 19 July 1799, no. 4539, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

²⁴ In the previous footnote I outlined Felton’s pricing for gig carriage bodies and their mechanical undercarriage, which I am also referring to in this instance.

concerning the merits of his gig is, though, revealing in itself. If the gig were as modish and desirable as Thorpe would have Catherine, and anyone who would listen, believe, why does Thorpe deem it necessary to actively elicit admiration by drawing attention verbally to his carriage and, as a consequence, his own gendered performance. While Thorpe's behaviour stops short of reflecting the kind of embarrassment felt so keenly by *Sanditon's* Miss Denham, his use of the language of advertising does reveal an awareness of an insufficiency in the gig's signifying power. As the quotidian choice of carriage for men of Thorpe's ilk, the gig does little in its own right to distinguish Thorpe from his peers, but by employing grandiloquent language Thorpe seeks to counteract the gig's inadequacy with a verbal onslaught as embellished as his own carriage.

The lesser-known poem 'The Gig' by William Combe (creator of the popular Dr Syntax persona and poems) constitutes a prime example of the ambitious social aspirations that were applied to the gig carriage. The poem is found in the second volume of Combe's *The English Dance of Death* collection of poetry, which was composed for Thomas Rowlandson caricatures – see Figure 3.4 for the print that accompanied 'The Gig'.²⁵ The acerbic yet comic poem invokes the 'noble flame' of ambition, a 'Passion felt by all', from its beginning in mock-epic style. Combe anchors notions of personal ambition to the gig through his key figure, Jack Muslin. Muslin, we are told, possessed a fine understanding of his trade, a 'good *Cheapside* Reputation', and the potential to amass a fortune should he have 'resolv'd to toil and strive / On to the age of Forty-five'. Yet a yearning overcomes him, his priorities of a stable and comfortable future are diverted to an instantaneous urge to be seen outwardly as growing rich. In order to affirm his nouveau-riche arrival, Muslin purchases a gig carriage, 'Thus his ambition run the rig / To have a well-bred Horse and Gig'.²⁶ Within a few lines, the

²⁵ These prints, all the full size of one page, appeared in the two volumes as either separating one poem from another, or, in the case of 'The Gig', Rowlandson's prints were placed within individual poems.

²⁶ William Combe, *The English Dance of Death, from the Designs of Thomas Rowlandson, with Metrical Illustrations*, vol. 2 (London: R. Ackermann, 1815), 162.

gig's capacity as physical, material signifier falls short of the type of the extensive wealth, luxury, and social capital that Muslin aspires to, necessitating further boasts to stabilise the strength of the gig's symbolism. The feeling of unease is mirrored by Muslin's wife, who hopes that owning a gig will pave the way for owning another, bigger model of open carriage that requires a team of two horses rather than the gig's single horse. Vaunts of base cost – 'What this thing fetch'd – what that thing cost... how his Gains surpass'd his Losses' – soon give way to declarations of extreme social elevation, 'He now declare, and stakes his word, / He gave the *GO-BY* to a Lord; / And that He'd driven to a stand / SIR HARRY, with his Four-in-Hand'.²⁷ Finally, Muslin appears driven to obsession over the physicality and power of his horse, the speed he is able to reach, and distance he can traverse in his gig: 'So fine his Horse, and such his power, He could trot fourteen miles an hour; / And then he'd wager, play or pay, / To go to *Brighton* in a day' the evidence from this stanza alone sees the journey Muslin makes toward a similar indiscretion.²⁸

²⁷ Combe, 2:164. The 'Four-in-Hand' was a late eighteenth early nineteenth century driving club, also known as the Whip Club or the Four Horse Club. Members (of which in its heyday there were fewer than 40) would bribe for-hire coachmen to allow them control of the reigns and race along the British roads

²⁸ Combe, 2:164.



Figure 3.4: A Thomas Rowlandson caricature, used to accompany William Combe’s poem ‘The Gig’ in the second volume of *The English Dance of Death*. The image is captioned ‘Away they go in a Chaise and one, Or to undo, or be undone’.

Combe’s *Muslin* satirizes the typical gig owner as materially driven and hungry for ever more extravagant and modish vehicular commodities. *Muslin*’s embrace of the gig’s speed, cost, and access to higher social echelons that the vehicle provides him with anticipates Austen’s portrait of the gig-obsessed John Thorpe. Whilst it is a common theme to persistently divert his companions’ attention toward his gig, his horse, and his own prowess across the narrative, the first time we see Thorpe overtly soliciting admiration for his equipage is a particularly rich example in microcosm of his monolithic perspective on the gig throughout the narrative. It is densely packed with gloating statements over the price he paid for it, its fine craftsmanship, and its wealth of additions:

‘What do you think of my gig, Miss Morland? a neat one, is not it? Well hung; town built; I have not had it a month. It was built for a Christchurch man, a friend of mine, a very good sort of fellow; he ran it a few weeks,

till, I believe, it was convenient to have done with it. I happened just then to be looking out for some light thing of the kind, though I had pretty well determined on a curricle too; but I chanced to meet him on Magdalen Bridge as he was driving into Oxford, last term: “Ah! Thorpe,” said he, “do you happen to want such a little thing as this? it is a capital one of the kind, but I am cursed tired of it.” “Oh! d—,” said I, “I am your man; what do you ask?” And how much do you think he did, Miss Morland?²⁹

At first glance, the long inventory of physical attributes that Thorpe ascribes to his gig appears to reflect Thorpe’s preoccupation with his own vanity. However, his urgency to highlight the completeness of his carriage’s finish bears similarities to the characters of Combe’s poem who betray a restlessness and an ache for something more substantial. Claudia Johnson notes that the ‘characteristic masculine activity of *Northanger Abbey* is measurement... of mileage, of time, of money...’, and in Thorpe these all find their nexus within the gig.³⁰ In other words, Thorpe’s measurement of his masculinity is based upon the excellence of his carriage. We have seen already that all carriages fall under the umbrella of aspirational objects – once you owned one, it was a common assumption that you were now firmly set upon the rungs of the social and economic hierarchical ladder – yet, as I have enumerated, the salient point about the gig is that it was not considered the ultimate vehicle with which to end one’s journey up the social ladder. Rather, it was a starter carriage to something bigger, better, and more fashionable. In ‘The Gig’, the exponential progression of Jack Muslin’s boasts reveals a dissatisfaction with his current situation – nothing is ever quite enough to satiate his ambition. In the context of *Northanger Abbey*, even the means of Thorpe’s acquiring the gig are born out of the previous owner’s ‘cursed tired[ness]’ of it;

²⁹ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 30.

³⁰ Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 38.

perhaps he has outgrown the carriage and moved on to loftier vehicles.³¹ A wealth of period sources exposes plausible reasons for the apparent urgency to progress on from a gig. As I have discussed, both Austen and Blessington negatively encode the gig, and do so forcefully as they depict them as loathed vehicles for their tastelessness and unrefinement. Regardless of how well-crafted a gig may be, their status as a vehicle appropriate for the deployment of, for example, the performance of genteel masculinity is treated with suspicion. Leigh Hunt encapsulates this in his essay on carriages, ‘But to us, even gigs are but a sort of unsuccessful run at gentility’, suggesting they are frequently used for this purpose and society has become immune to the gig’s signifying potential, or rather, have turned their attentions to a vehicle with greater cultural capital.³² As I showed in chapter one, crash tropes functioned as a warning against pushing too far beyond the limits of human capability, anchoring the sensibility of carriages and modes of carriage driving to a sense of ambitiousness that erred towards a dangerous obsession with betterment. Perhaps the reason the gig is so often depicted in both literature and visual satires to be violently lurching toward a crash, serves also as a warning to prospective buyers and owners against obsessive ambition in ignorance of the limits of their social rank.

Such a warning though, was evidently not enough to restrain masculine ambition. Compare these testimonials of the gig’s inadequacy with Blessington’s description of a curricle, and it is not difficult to understand why: ‘The elegant curricle, driven by its more elegant owner, the beautiful Lady F—, now follows, and attracts all eyes, while this lovely female Phaeton, enveloped in capes and veils, scarcely deigns to show a portion of those beauteous features, that have never been seen without exciting admiration’.³³ Both owner and vehicle in all their elegance and finery work to positively elevate the status of each.

³¹ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 30.

³² Hunt, *Coaches and Coaching*, 11.

³³ Blessington, *The Magic Lantern; or, Sketches of Scenes in the Metropolis*, 32–33.

Leigh Hunt, too, distinguishes the curricle from its cousins, believing it to be ‘the prettiest of these vehicles,’ and ‘also the safest. There is something worth looking at in the pair of horses, with that sparkling pole of steel laid across them. It is like a bar of music, composing their harmonious course’.³⁴ With the power to excite such admiration, it clear why so many aspired toward a curricle.

Thorpe’s revelation that he had ‘pretty well determined on a curricle’ before the chance meeting with his friend on Magdalen Bridge is, I argue, particularly worth investigating in light of the material longing surrounding the lowly gig.³⁵ Although it is unlikely Austen read that specific advertisement for a curricle from the 1799 edition of the *Times* newspaper, the coincidental similarities between its lexis and Thorpe’s own language in reference to his gig are striking and signal the gig’s double status as a desirable and undesirable material object. Mapping this onto Thorpe’s use of the gig as signifier of his manliness, his references to curricles and self-conscious presentation of his gig as ‘curricle-hung’ reveal a slippage between the identity Thorpe wishes to portray and the one he is, in reality, able to. In other words, Thorpe holds the ambition to embody the most fashionable, elegant, masculinity admired during the late eighteenth century, but his ability, and the carriage he hopes will bolster his performance, fall short of these visions. As such, he occupies an uncomfortable in-between state. In the second volume of the *Treatise*, Felton notes that ‘... Curricles being now the most fashionable sort of two-wheel carriages, it is usual, in building a Gig, to imitate them, particularly in the mode of hanging’; ‘imitating’ is a particularly loaded word when translated onto Thorpe.³⁶ In the same way his curricle-hung gig imitates the most fashionable carriage of the era, Thorpe himself tries to imitate

³⁴ Hunt, *Coaches and Coaching*, 10–11.

³⁵ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 30.

³⁶ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:107.

contemporary ideals of masculinity.

The gig and its counterparts

Thus far in this chapter's discussion I have highlighted the Georgian cultural preference for curricles over gig carriages, despite the gig's popularity and, indeed, abundance during the 1790s and beyond. As I will elaborate, the curricle's superiority stemmed, for one, from its elegant materials and refined structure which were favoured by elite ranks with the wealth to procure such costly markers of taste. The gig, on the other hand, was constructed more economically with a more basic structure. Taken at face value it would be easy to assume that the curricle attracted patrons who boasted higher social, economic, and fashionable pedigree in comparison with the clientele of the cheaper gig. Indeed, *Northanger Abbey* appears to support this supposition as it pits Tilney and the curricle against Thorpe and the gig. However, as the past two chapters have shown, carriages used as signifiers in social performance were often unstable and susceptible to diversion from their original intention. Here, I will work through this discussion to study the credibility of the curricle, and question whether it was really a marker of difference in the way that we expect.

Despite the similarities between many small carriages available to drivers, they were not an entirely homogenous group of vehicles and period sources demonstrate some attempt to separate the gig from its counterpart carriages. William Felton in the first volume of *A Treatise on Carriages* (1794) presents a useful summary of what constitutes a gig carriage and what defines it from its common cousins the curricle, and the whiskey:

...wherein the principal difference lies, is the curricle, being formed for two horses abreast, which at present is the most fashionable carriage in use; the gig from the whiskey also differs materially, the whiskey being constructed on the

most simple plan, with the body united to the carriage, while the gig exhibits a greater portion of fancy, having the bodies hung in various directions³⁷

This ‘greater portion of fancy’, the highly subjective nature of the construction of open-bodied carriages intended for fewer horses, is largely to what Felton attributes the lack of clarity or consensus on the gig’s form. Being almost entirely at the whim of the prospective owner and in agreement with the carriage builder, he tells us that ‘no one general rule is observed in building’ these vehicles.³⁸ Indeed, an article in *Le Beau Monde* underscores just how inventive gig carriage construction had become by the time of its publication in 1806, describing the ‘Monstroche – A most curious sort of gig... having only one wheel’. To combat the likelihood of the vehicle oversetting, the monstroche was equipped with an ‘iron scythe, within three inches of the ground’ on either side of the axle-tree. The article continues: ‘This carriage, thus armed with a scythe, is probably intended for the use of that class of physicians, described by Addison in the following line: “Some slay in chariots, some on foot”’.³⁹

Felton’s treatise makes clear that it was difficult for many to separate one small vehicle from the next, yet within 30 pages he offers a contradicting stance even as he states a purportedly infallible method of classifying open-bodied vehicles. This principal method depends on three simple factors: the specific shape of the carriage ‘body’, the manner in which the body is affixed to the *carriage* (the mechanical apparatus via which the vehicle is able to move, including the frame and wheels), and ‘the form of the *carriage* itself’ through which ‘they are named, as gig, curricule, &c’.⁴⁰

³⁷ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1794, 1:75.

³⁸ Felton, 1:44.

³⁹ ‘Fashions for November, 1806.’, *Beau Monde, or, Literary and Fasionable Magazine., 1806-1809; London* 1, no. 1 (November 1806): 59.

⁴⁰ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1794, 1:75. Felton lists the foremost varieties of carriage ‘body’ as ‘the step-piece, the tub-bottom,’ and ‘the chair-back or half-pannel [sic] bodies’. See particularly pages 44-46, 49-50 for further elucidation.

The divergence in descriptions within Felton's own work are echoed and amplified elsewhere across comparable publications. Bridges Adams' writing, for example, largely underscores the indeterminacy of carriage classification. Felton and Bridges Adams share the opinion that a gig carriage is most likely to be hung from leathern braces or straps to the *carriage*, but the manner in which this should be done varies across these descriptions. Take Bridges Adams' outline:

The vehicle formerly known as a Gig was the lightest one-horse vehicle used in England. It is simply an open railed chair, fixed on the shafts, and supported on two side springs, the hinder ends of which were connected to the loop irons by leathern braces to give more freedom of motion. The wheel was larger and the body kept higher than the Stanhope; for which reason the shaft required less curvature.⁴¹

Here the body of the gig is described as being 'fixed' upon the shafts, and merely 'supported' by springs and braces on either side. Felton, though, tells us that 'Fixing the body to the fore springs prevents its being so easy to ride in, as if it were hung by braces, or springs fixed under the body'.⁴² Furthermore, Bridges Adams' description of a gig resembles more accurately what Felton asserts is a whisky, which 'fixes on the shafts'.⁴³

The discrepancies within and across these authoritative publications do more than signal the gig's mutability, however. The urge to avoid revealing trade secrets to the reading public may also be a contributing factor to the vagueness and lack of consensus about the vehicle's material and physical form. Trade writing such as Felton's, though comprehensive and self-professedly transparent, still displays a greater urgency to protect information about what was a very popular type of carriage – and available to far broader market than, for

⁴¹ Bridges Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages*, 245.

⁴² Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:108.

⁴³ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1794, 1:44.

example, the barouche-landau. For instance, the minutely labelled and delicately illustrated diagrams of Felton's texts (Figure 3.5), remain steadfastly one-dimensional and thus almost impossible to use as blueprints for the replication of the carriages' designs to which they pertain. Figure 3.5 exemplifies the kind of diagram that runs throughout the *Treatise*; the fine drawings and extensive accompanying notes function as a marker not just of Felton's specialist knowledge but also as a sign of his goodwill to his reading audience via his transparency as a coach-maker. Note, however, that Felton's Figures 1, 2, and 3 of the front and side planes of a gig body are presented 'in the framing only', and Figures 4, 5, and 6 are equally as sparse in terms of depth and technical detail. Significant elements in design are thus withheld. This absence of detail raises important questions regarding the nature of the coach-building trade and the perceived character of the master coach-builders of the period, whose conduct and motivations shape our ability to interpret these vehicles. Coach-builders and harness-makers had reputations as jealous defenders of their trade territory, guarding their esoteric knowledge from other professions, and this secrecy put pressure on their reliability. According to Felton, they stood united in 'strenuously oppos[ing] every new adventurer in the trade'.⁴⁴ This closed-minded approach to novel inventions is thrown into sharp relief in that these supposed 'outsiders' are directly invested in the advancement of carriage design as 'wheel-wrights, smiths, painters, carvers, [and] joiners'.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Felton, 1:iii.

⁴⁵ Felton, 1:ii.

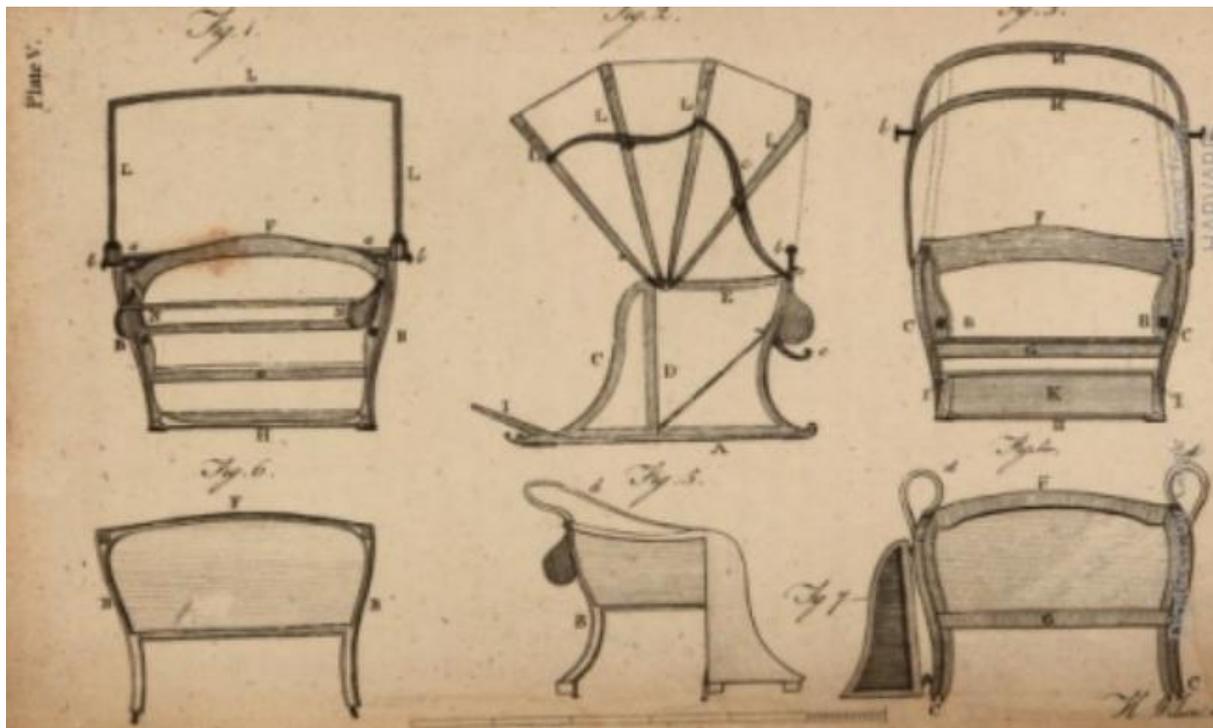
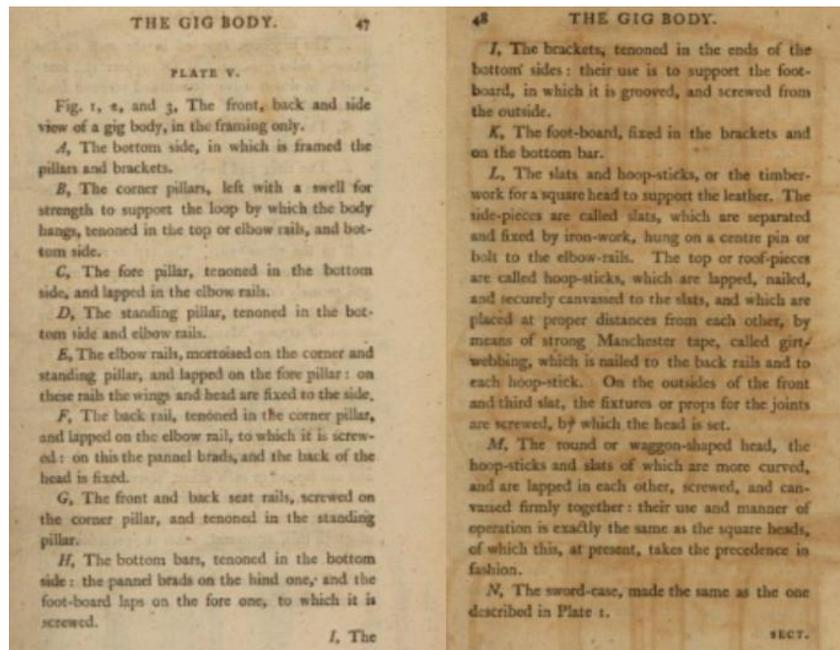


Figure 3.5: Plate V of William Felton's first volume of *A Treatise on Carriages* (1794). Extensive notes accompany the minutely labelled planes of a gig carriage body. Reproduced courtesy of Harvard Libraries.

As we know from the examples of the barouche-landau in chapter two, it was common practice for coach-makers to compile the most favourable attributes of different pleasure carriages into one hybridised form, and this practice was also true of two-wheeled vehicles.

The gig was modelled upon the more fashionable and admired curricle, but further complexity to the gig's slippery status emerges from the blurred boundaries created by hybridisation. This practice brought into existence two competing and confusingly named types of gigs: the curricle-made gig and the gig-made curricle. The curricle gig, shown in Figure 3.6, is characterised by its adaptable form, interchangeably able to be used either as a gig (with one horse) or a curricle (with two horses) via the pole attached to the shaft. Its slightly elongated body makes its appearance more uniform with a standard curricle than any other gig variation. Confusingly, the gig curricle shown in Figure 3.7 was intended for use with a single horse, 'and only by chance with two' as was the standard curricle.⁴⁶ This carriage's main categorisation as a curricle thus seems erroneous considering the standard curricle's major distinguishing feature was its construction for a team of two horses instead of one. The rules for labelling these lightweight vehicles only appears more obfuscated.

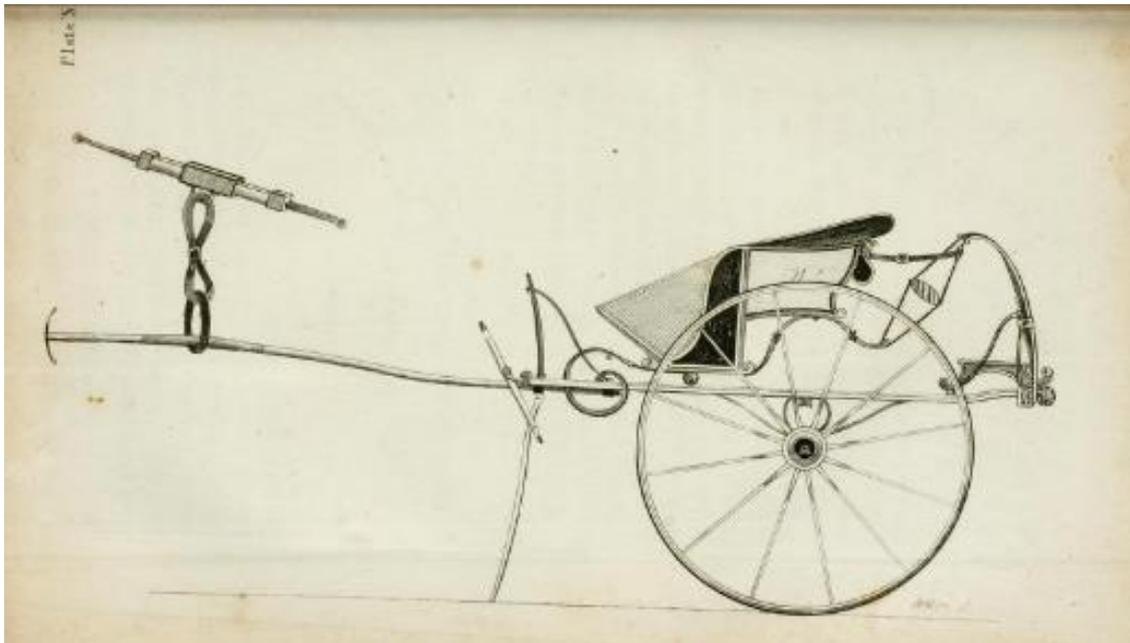


Figure 3.6: A plate of 'curricle gig' from volume 2 of Felton's *Treatise* (1796). Reproduced courtesy of Getty Research Institute.

⁴⁶ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:110.

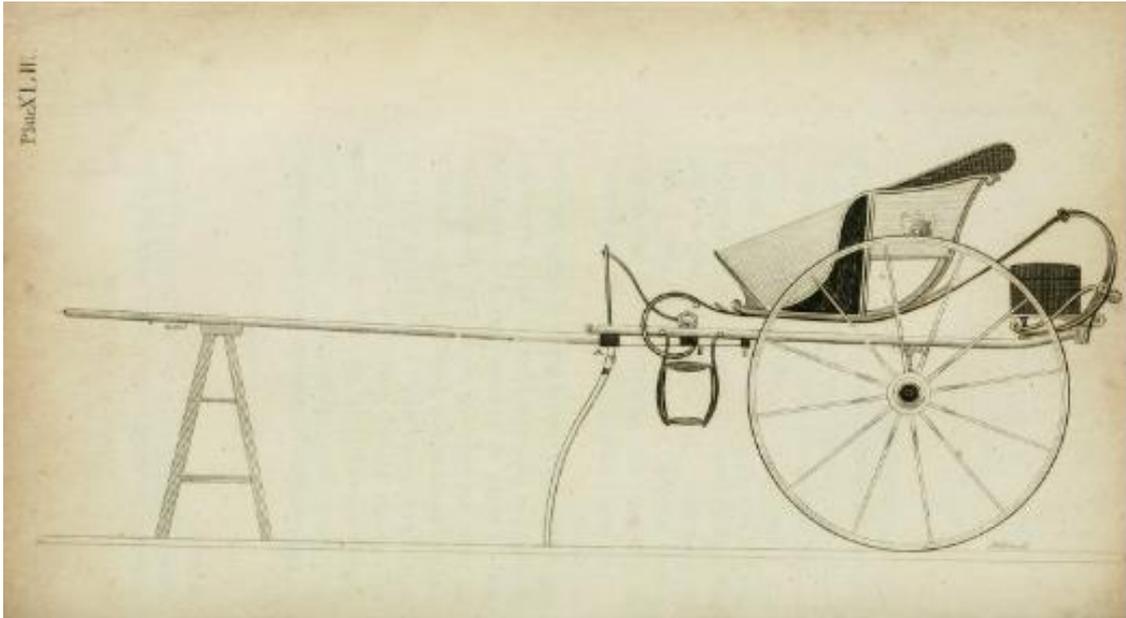


Figure 3.7: A plate of ‘gig curriole’, also from the second volume of Felton’s *Treatise*.
Reproduced courtesy of Getty Research Institute.

The carriages’ technical features intersected with cultural and social meanings, as well as with perceptions of gig drivers. Sara Landreth, for instance, has observed how these vehicles were viewed with suspicion, an attitude which simultaneously extended to the drivers:

This notion – that relative ‘closenes’ of different vehicles equated to a potential for moral turpitude – persisted throughout the eighteenth century. Frances Burney’s *Evelina* urges readers to compare Sir Clement’s enclosed chariot to Lord Orville’s open phaeton: in the former, Clement deceptively ‘order[s] the [coach]man to go a wrong way’ so that he has time to force advances upon a ‘terrified’ Evelina; in the latter, Orville demonstrates his ‘excellent sense and refined good-breeding’ when he takes Evelina and Mrs Selwyn for a ‘polite’ and properly chaperoned drive in Bristol Hotwells.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Sara Landreth, ‘The Vehicle of the Soul: Motion and Emotion in Vehicular It-Narratives’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 26, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 112.

However, we know that open carriages were not upheld as the pinnacle of virtuous vehicles, far from it. In the following passage Catherine blushes as Austen uses her musings on curricles to underscore the danger of young men and women driving together unchaperoned in open carriages, in its potential to be misconstrued in society for sexual promiscuity. At the same time, this scene also neatly distinguishes two types of drivers, good ones and bad ones, and two types of carriage patrons, curricle and gig, and from this we can infer certain things about both of them as men.

The remembrance of Mr. Allen's opinion, respecting young men's open carriages, made her blush at the mention of such a plan, and her first thought was to decline it; but her second was of greater deference for General Tilney's judgment; he could not propose anything improper for her; and, in the course of a few minutes, she found herself with Henry in the curricle, as happy a being as ever existed. A very short trial convinced her that a curricle was the prettiest equipage in the world; the chaise and four wheeled off with some grandeur, to be sure, but it was a heavy and troublesome business, and she could not easily forget its having stopped two hours at Petty France. Half the time would have been enough for the curricle, and so nimbly were the light horses disposed to move, that, had not the general chosen to have his own carriage lead the way, they could have passed it with ease in half a minute. But the merit of the curricle did not all belong to the horses; Henry drove so well – so quietly – without making any disturbance, without parading to her, or swearing at them: so different from the only gentleman-coachman whom it was in her power to compare him with! And then his hat sat so well, and the innumerable capes of his greatcoat looked so becomingly

important! To be driven by him, next to being dancing with him, was certainly the greatest happiness in the world.⁴⁸

I opened this section of my discussion highlighting period propensities to look more favourably upon patrons of the curricle in comparison to the gig. Cosmetically, the carriages are mostly similar, but subtle differences in construction and finish distinguishes them and scales them into a hierarchy of taste. The same is assumed of the men who drive them. Catherine's blushes soon turn to elation as the curricle moves off, light, nimble, and smooth, while Henry Tilney's prowess as a modest but elegant driver completes the picture that recommends his and his vehicle's superiority over his rival. Unlike her time in the gig with Thorpe, subjected to unrelenting boasts that then give way to uncomfortable silences, Catherine has nothing to question about the merits of the driver or the validity of what they say. Here in the curricle with Tilney, nothing about the carriage or the man that drives it falls short of anything but admirable. The other 'gentleman-coachman' in his urge for a curricle, aspires to be like Tilney, but not only does he lack the primary signifier of Tilney's gentlemanly taste, in his swearing, parading, and disturbances Thorpe is fundamentally deficient in his competence as a driver and his own personal comportment.

My technical insights have shown, though, that the differences between these two carriages are not so clear cut, and scholarship (notably Claudia Johnson's study of masculinity in *Northanger Abbey*) has similarly re-thought how we should perceive Tilney in comparison to Thorpe.⁴⁹ As readers, we are inclined to notice Thorpe's brashness and the misogynistic relationship he has with the women around him; indeed it is difficult to ignore his dishonest and bullying treatment of Catherine to force her compliance with his own prerogatives. By comparison, Tilney stands as a nurturing, pedagogical influence, at least on the surface. As

⁴⁸ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 113–14.

⁴⁹ Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 36–39.

the novel progresses, though, the differences between Henry Tilney and John Thorpe seem to diminish. Tilney imposes his opinion on Catherine almost as much as Thorpe does, for example the day he meets Catherine he dictates what her journal entry for that evening should be, subsuming her voice in his own as dedicates the entry to the praise of himself as a ‘most extraordinary genius’.⁵⁰ To read this as blatant bullying, however, would be to misunderstand the tongue-in-cheek tone, but Tilney’s impositions on Catherine are indeed real, but they are more refined, more polished, and more subtle than Thorpe’s. For both men, the supremacy of their voices over those of the women around them is a cornerstone of their narrative. Thorpe achieves this, we know, through incessant boasting to which any reply, other than agreement, is mostly impossible. Tilney curbs and directs Catherine’s speech more covertly. For example he dismisses Catherine’s reply to his suggested topic for her journal, ‘But, perhaps I keep, no journal’, as a fiction by using his apparent expertise in the workings of women’s minds to decisively overrule her – ‘Perhaps you are not sitting in this room, and I am not sitting with you’.⁵¹ Johnson points out that, against the ‘bluster of John Thorpe, Henry Tilney stands out, not in opposition, but if anything in clearer relief’.⁵² Transposing this onto the vehicles that both men make use of, it is clear that the curricle is little more than a refined version of a gig, a two-wheel vehicle that bears a fundamental structural similarity to the gig but dressed in a slightly finer exterior.

The inexact nature of the gig’s structural composition poses problems for Thorpe’s investment in the vehicle as a signifier, the carriage’s indeterminate nature undermines the validity of its use to stabilise Thorpe’s masculine gendered performance. The gig’s mutability, its readiness for customisation, and striking similarities with other carriages make signifying one, stable identity, impossible. Further, the gig carried complicated cultural associations with

⁵⁰ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 15.

⁵¹ Austen, 16.

⁵² Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 37.

women and their sexuality. Frances Burney's letters suggest that 'gig' was a term used to refer to flighty or wanton girls, as she describes 'Charlotte L-- called, – and the little gig told all the quarrels [...] she led in her family, and made them all ridiculous, without meaning to make herself so'.⁵³ Further confirmation of the gig's association with a negative rendering of the feminine and female sexuality is found in Francis Grose's collection of slang words, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, which gives the following entry for Gigg: 'gigg is also a high one horse chaise, and a woman's privities'.⁵⁴ According to Cindy McCreery, hired vehicles such as the hackney coach were regularly evoked in visual caricature to parallel the movements of sex workers through the metropolis. She notes that the women are 'described in terms of their physical structure and their sexual accommodation of passengers' that echoes the description of coaching advertisements.⁵⁵ For example, 'The Male Carriage' (1787, see figure 4.8) represents the classic parody of a stagecoach advertisement that is set to travel through the West End of London. McCreery notes that '[a]s with a vehicle, a prostitute's (sexual) "motion" and "range" were considered useful information for potential customers'.⁵⁶ While these examples pertain to hackney carriages and stagecoaches and not specifically gig carriages, they are useful for underpinning the erotics of carriage travel, particularly since gig carriages could themselves be hired as we see in *Northanger Abbey* as James Morland hires his gig for the trip to Blaise Castle. In light of Landreth's astute observations on period perceptions of open carriages, the connotations between gigs and sexuality adds further complexity to the characterisation of an already metonymically-loaded set of vehicles.

⁵³ Frances Burney, *Diary and Letter of Madame d'Arblay 1778-1780*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1843), 393.

⁵⁴ Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (Printed for Hooper and Wigstead, 1796).

⁵⁵ McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*, 54.

⁵⁶ McCreery, 56.



Figure 3.8: ‘The Male Carriage’ (1787) ‘Sets out from Soho, at 8 o’clock, in the Evening, stops at Drury Lane and Covent Garden to take in – inside Passengers to pay £1.18 – allowed to carry 2 St– the Carriage Steel sprung, fresh painted, well guarded, and kept in good Order – the Axle-tree warranted from taking fire lest the Motion be ever so quick. NB. Places may be taken at the Sterling Warehouse in the Garden, and of Mother-Orange-chip in the Lobby’. Reproduced courtesy of the Library of Congress.

In chapter one I demonstrated Orville’s good breeding and deference to others could be read via his accomplished driving skills, and here I suggest that the character of the driver

is a significant influence on the perception of vehicles that must be taken into account. Thus far this chapter has charted the gig's role in compounding the toxic, brutish personality traits of John Thorpe, itself represented as one of the many nuisance carriages in Bath, but elsewhere in Austen's *oeuvre* the gig is shown to be receptive to the personalities of its occupants, prompting the gig's positive re-coding. Austen's fictions present a breadth of instances where open gigs appear dangerous and sexualised, or safe and polite depending on who takes responsibility for the carriage and horses' direction. Moreover, curricles (and their patrons) do not always have the moral superiority to gigs, but they are represented in much the same light as their supposed lesser counterparts. For example, Marianne's outings with Willoughby in his curricle in *Sense and Sensibility* raise eyebrows, while we are still happy to see Catherine and Tilney drive in his curricle. Small vehicles are not always entrenched with vulgar, ambitious, or ungentlemanly connotations. In *Persuasion*, the Crofts offer to take Anne Elliot home in their gig with 'kind urgency', and unlike other representations of driving in a gig an impending accident is avoided without the usual dread, terror, or threat:

'...My dear Admiral, that post! we shall certainly take that post.'

But by coolly giving the reins a better direction herself they happily passed the danger; and by once afterwards judiciously putting out her hand they neither fell into a rut, nor ran foul of a dung-cart; and Anne, with some amusement at their style of driving, which she imagined no bad representation of the general guidance of their affairs, found herself safely deposited by them at the Cottage.⁵⁷

Instead, the Crofts' respectability and their contentedness with their current social position recommends not only themselves but subverts the habitual coding of the gig as a symbol of avariciousness and overreaching. Rowlandson's caricatures also provide an excellent visual

⁵⁷ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 78.

representation of the duality of the gig carriage. In 'Rural Sports' (1811, Figure 3.9), a runaway gig in the far-left background is contrasted with the sedate and leisurely transit of a young couple on the right side of the image. Rowlandson draws on all the elements of the gig's undesirable reputation, it is pulled by uncontrollable horses, is evidently unstable as it rocks sideways onto a single wheel, and the driver is thus implicated as an incompetent amateur. Heading over a barren hill into stormy weather, the picture is rather damning. On the left, however, a couple in a second gig are enjoying a sedate pleasure ride. The young man, who appears to have stopped the carriage to allow the horse to eat from a basket of hay, and his companion are rewarded for their poised and careful driving with blue skies, lush green foliage on the trees, and rural entertainment. It is interesting that the crowd of people do not notice the commotion behind them, the vehicle on the left is evidently in some danger, and it is likely Rowlandson alludes to the overabundance of gigs that were often the root cause of vehicular mishaps in urban centres. Perhaps they have become such a common sight that, even if they careen over the crest of hill, they barely excite the attention of the crowd focused on the rescue of a cat.



Figure 3.9: Thomas Rowlandson's 'Rural Sport – Cat in a Bowl' (1811). Photographed with permission from the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

John Thorpe and his masculine materials

In discussing the emergence of a British ideal of masculinity in the eighteenth century – and how it was expressed through carriages and driving skills – it is important to note the significant role of politeness in crystallising such a gendered paradigm. Common fears during the eighteenth century surrounded the notion that men, if starved of the company of women, would fail to uphold polite and polished ideals of masculinity and the language that accompanied this sociability.⁵⁸ Thorpe, we know, spends very little time with women – he solicits Catherine's company at dances, but immediately abandons her in favour of male company and masculine pursuits (gambling, or cards for example). His transgressions against

⁵⁸ Michele Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), 50.

women are also numerous and his misogyny varies in degree of violence, from calling his sisters ugly or thoughtlessly mocking his mother's 'quiz of a hat' for making her resemble a witch, to kidnapping.⁵⁹ Thorpe spends very little time, then, engaging in the polite conversation with women that aided in the formulation of the ideal 'British' gentleman. His language, sometimes emulating the syntax and lexis of advertisements for carriages and horses in newspapers, other times abrupt and overtly rude, is antithetical to the smooth emollience of conversation that polite commentators prescribed. More damning, Thorpe is one of the only characters across Austen's writing to swear. Thorpe, then, more closely emulates the base, natural manliness that was characterised by 'roughness of behaviour' and 'indelicate language of everykind' in his refusal to consistently participate in polite conversation in mixed-gender company.⁶⁰

As Cohen points out, anxieties surrounding the possibility that, in spending too much time in the company of women in pursuit of this idealised polite manliness, men might become women were rife. Further, the polite spaces, quasi-public/private, where men would converse with women harboured great potential to threaten the masculinity of the gentleman.⁶¹ These anxieties offer one way to understand Thorpe's lack of interest in feminine sociability and his propensity to seek male company offstage. In doing so, Thorpe avoids such perceived threats to his masculinity. In order to resist the effeminisation and frenchification, risks associated with the practice of politeness on the French model, it was necessary to participate in polite conversation in spaces that nullified this threat to British masculinity.⁶² David Fordyce, in *Dialogues Concerning Education*, (1748) suggested such safe spaces as coffee

⁵⁹ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 33. In chapter 11 Thorpe holds Catherine against her will – much to her distress – in his carriage after manipulating her into believing that her engagement with her soon-to-be great friend, Miss Tilney, is no longer to be fulfilled. I shall examine this scene in greater depth in Part II of my thesis.

⁶⁰ William Alexander, *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time : Giving an Account of Almost Every Interesting Particular Concerning That Sex, among All Nations, Ancient and Modern* (Philadelphia: J.H. Dobelbower, 1796), 323; Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women, in Two Volumes*, 1:18.

⁶¹ Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*, 47–50.

⁶² Cohen, 52.

houses, mechanic's shops, or the Houses of Parliament.⁶³ One of the few places we see Thorpe actively engaging in conversation with women for extended periods is within the space of his gig. I suggest that, rather than frequenting such accepted polite and masculine spaces as Parliament or coffee houses to safely polish himself into a gentleman, Thorpe retreats into the interior of his carriage in order to remove the threat of effeminisation during conversation with women, allowing him to maintain his essential roughness. The gig, though, dramatically differs in physical terms, as a small, moveable space that, with an open construction, troubles the boundaries between public and private. At no point in the novel does Thorpe ever achieve the goal of pleasing in mixed company. Catherine privately notes his unpleasant manners or is noticeably uncomfortable in his company when within the carriage.⁶⁴ The purpose of the gig to protect Thorpe's manliness whilst enabling a politeness to emerge is, as we have seen before, diverted from its original deployment, producing something very different. The basic, rough and unpolished gig, rather than push Thorpe on to greater heights of refinement and genteel masculinity, only tethers him more strongly to the undesirable elements of masculinity.

The importance of the culture of politeness in the development of the gentleman cannot be understated, and the practiced conversation between the sexes formed the cornerstone of producing the polished gentleman. However, too much polish and the dangers of slipping into effeminacy threatened the stoic masculinity prided by the British. To become 'frenchified' was to threaten to weaken and enervate the national fibre.⁶⁵ In terms of Thorpe's masculinity, though, I posit that his gendered performance does not decidedly place him in one eighteenth-century masculine archetype or another. He is neither rake nor fop but displays hints of both. Thorpe's investment in the gig as symbol of his masculinity and, as Jill Heydt-

⁶³ David Fordyce, *Dialogues Concerning Education Vol. II* (London, 1748), 304–5.

⁶⁴ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 33, 62.

⁶⁵ Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*, 7.

Stevenson notes, his canvassing of the male body are potential indicators of queer tendencies. For example, upon first seeing Henry Tilney, Thorpe tells Catherine ‘Hum– I do not know him. A good figure of a man; well put together’, but before even being introduced to each other he immediately seeks to orchestrate the sale of a horse between Tilney and his friend Sam Fletcher.⁶⁶ What is certain, though, is that the overarching inflection of Thorpe’s masculine persona is violent and misogynistic as scholars such as Johnson and Heydt-Stevenson concur.⁶⁷

Thorpe as a character not only functions as the comic villain in a parodic mirroring of the gothic trope, he is Austen’s most aggressive male character, with a propensity for violence in both his ‘disparaging banter’ and actions.⁶⁸ This element of his character proves especially important when considered in conjunction with a metonymic reading of the materials used in the gig’s construction. Following the model of Elaine Freedgood’s discussion of mahogany in *The Ideas in Things*, I wish to investigate lance-wood (a prominent material used in gig construction) in terms of its historical and physical properties, refiguring my findings against Austen’s portrayal of Thorpe. Freedgood suggests that a social hierarchy was inherited in wood in the nineteenth century: mahogany was sought after by the elite, while simultaneously betrayed a ‘nouveau riche groping for the trappings of bourgeois arrival’, whilst deal occupied the other end of the scale as the lowliest wood in the Victorian period.⁶⁹ A similar hierarchy certainly existed in the eighteenth century. For instance, Freedgood refers to the ‘age of walnut’ in which walnut furniture was highly coveted between 1660 and 1720, but I wish to build upon Freedgood’s argument and suggest that this hierarchy of cultural and social valence is transposed onto a scale of violence – slavery.⁷⁰ I suggest a similar polarity exists

⁶⁶ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 54.

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 37; Jillian Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen’s Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 117.

⁶⁸ Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 37.

⁶⁹ Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things*, 31.

⁷⁰ Freedgood, 31.

between the barouche-landau (mahogany) and the gig, which was made of cheaper materials. While slavery and violence is imbricated in both these woods, the gig's low position within the hierarchy of carriages and the behaviours of its clientele lays bare the violent properties of the gig's constituent material.

Etymologically, lance-wood is a simple contraction of 'lance' – the archaic weapon used by soldiers on horseback – and 'wood'; violence is located in its very name. indeed, by the time Austen came to compose *Northanger Abbey* in the 1790s, lance-wood had been recorded as being used to whip enslaved people for almost a century. Hans Sloane, whose collection of thousands of exotic objects became the foundations of the British Museum, famously recounts the bodily trauma inflicted upon enslaved people using lance-wood:

For Negligence, they are usually whipt by the Overseers with Lance-wood Switches, till they be bloody, and several Switches broken, being first tied up by their Hands in the Mill-Houses. Beating with *Manati* Straps is thought too cruel, and therefore prohibited by the Customs of the Country. The Cicatrices are visible on their Skins forever after; and a Slave, the more he have of those, is the less valu'd⁷¹

As a tool for inflicting such cruelty upon the bodies of enslaved people, the violence inhered within the produce of colonialism and slavery like the mahogany of Augusta Elton's barouche-landau in the previous chapter is, within the lance-wood of Thorpe's gig, increased not only as a product of violence, but as a *producer* of violence. Sloane's graphic narrative of common punishments performed in early eighteenth-century plantations is recorded as one of the many devices of coercion and torture used to ensure the subordination of enslaved people. Sloane's description almost luxuriates in the gruesome details of such bodily harm, and

⁷¹ Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica*, vol. 1 (London, 1707), lvii.

Thorpe's fascination with the physicality of his horse after driving it to exhaustion – 'look at his forehead; look at his loins; only see how he moves... tie his legs and he will get on' – at once parallels and extends this observational curiosity into a physical enactment upon such curiosity.⁷² The morally and politically indeterminate curiosities in the first half of the century, though by the time Austen was writing *Northanger Abbey* those anxieties discussed in the previous chapter regarding the possibility of violence being transported to Britain via the produce of slavery would have been at the forefront of political consciousness.

Heydt-Stevenson remarks upon the inherent violence of Thorpe's character as a 'slanderer, kidnapper, animal abuser, liar, and con-artist' as he whips his horse and drives it to exhaustion – 'Hot! He had not turned a hair till we came to Walcot Church... tie his legs and he will get on.'⁷³ Sloane's precise description of torture against enslaved bodies and the spectacle of pain that ensued has been interpreted as suggesting a 'psychological kink'.⁷⁴ Drawing on Heydt-Stevenson's argument that Thorpe conflates his own sexuality and masculinity with his carriage, I wish to draw parallels between Sloane's psychological kink and Thorpe's own apparent morbid fascination with his horse's physicality and the violence he performs upon it. I have argued already that Thorpe metonymically employs his gig to highlight his own masculinity and inherent 'manliness', but the sexual overtones are most overt when he asks Catherine to look at his horse's 'forehand; look at his loins; only see how he moves'; Thorpe, in reality is reflecting these comments back onto his own body, just as, according to Heydt-Stevenson, his praise of his carriage as 'well-hung' and 'town-built' read as references to his own genitalia and sexual virility. Perhaps contrasting with the sexual admiration Thorpe harbours for his horse (and his own body), the violence he performs against it seems shocking; Thorpe 'lashe[s] his horse into a brisker trot,' makes indeterminate

⁷² Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 30.

⁷³ Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, 117; Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 30.

⁷⁴ Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550-1807* (London; Totowa, N.J: Frank Cass Publishers, 1978), 20.

and animalistic noises as he laughs and ‘smack[s] his whip’.⁷⁵ Thorpe appears even to enjoy such brutality, revelling in the exquisite pain he can inflict upon his horse, mirroring the psychological kink that has been recognised in Sloane’s torture scenes.

As this chapter has illuminated, master coach-makers reveal only so many of their trade secrets, predominantly drawing attention to the most high-end constituent parts – such as mahogany or morroco leather – and surreptitiously forgoing mention of the materials inherited with less cultural and social valence. Given the violent application of lancewood, I am therefore not surprised to find that it is rarely mentioned in coaching manuals of the period, save that it is preferable to ash as the shafts in lightweight vehicles due to its elasticity. Throughout Part I of this thesis I have addressed the carriage’s place as a capacious object able to embody a spectrum of gendered and class identities that depended on and were shaped by the material conditions of various carriage typologies and their reception in social and cultural consciousness. I have shown Austen’s dextrous deployment of a range of carriage models in her fictions as shorthand to round and colour the characters associated with the vehicles. In Part II, I will build upon the material evidence that I have gathered over the course of these first three chapters, but move outwards to a geographical and spatial focus. In the final two chapters of my study, I investigate Austen’s engagement with the carriage as a spatial entity to uncover her manipulation of the carriage’s spaces to influence and affect social interactions that play out in and around the carriage.

⁷⁵ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 62.

Part II: Place, Space, and the Horse-Drawn Carriage

Chapter Four: Carriage Topology and the Politics of Sociability

In Part I, I investigated the material conditions of three models of private carriages, examining the different contexts in which Austen draws attention to their particular physical, social, and cultural properties. In Part II, I turn my focus to the carriage's place and function beyond that of its material status as an object of conspicuous consumption. Across the final two chapters of my thesis, I consider how the spatiality of the carriage, its layered spaces and mutable perimeters, and crucially, its provision of mobility, impinge upon the social and psychological lives of Austen's heroines who occupy space within, around, or upon a vehicle's structural boundaries.

In chapter four, I explore notions of the carriage's interiority, as well as the duality inherent in the carriage's construction of 'inside' and 'outside' spaces. Utilising Thomas De Quincey's depiction of layered spaces in his rhapsodic essay 'The English Mail Coach' (1849) as my entry point, I investigate Austen's manipulation of such spaces, probing deeper into the carriage's complex interconnections with eighteenth-century culture and sociability. In chapter five, I address questions concerning the relationship between the carriage's provision of mobility and the psychology and emotion of Austen's characters, several of whom perform important, transformative emotional work within the interior spaces of the carriage. Together these chapters illuminate the spatial relations between the interiority of characters and the inward turns of narrative.

Throughout the previous section of my thesis, particularly in chapter two's treatment of the barouche-landau, I emphasised the role the carriage played as social apparatus, a material object that could signify and stabilise a range of gendered and ranked identities. The work of this chapter adds to my earlier analyses of the carriage's status by scrutinising its role as an object imbued with metaphorical resonance, addressing its sculptural dimension – for instance its layers, perimeters, and compartments – to fortify my understanding of the

carriage's spatiality. For instance, the previous chapters predominantly approached the carriage as a self-contained object, but the work of this discussion reassesses the carriage's status as I move into its physical composition, understanding it as a series of interconnected spaces with boundaries that could be occupied and moved through. As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, I privilege the term 'spatiality' over similar terms such as 'structure' or 'space', as means of recovering the carriage as an amalgam of spaces made up of various heights, depths, and locations across the body of the carriage.

In my discussion of Augusta Elton's attempts to leverage her access to several carriages in exchange for social power in chapter two, I touched upon the politics of manufacturing the ideal set of companions to undertake leisurely, sight-seeing journeys.¹ In this chapter, I investigate more closely the social rituals that play out in the spaces of the carriage among familiar mobile communities as I position the vehicle itself as a locus of sociability. In re-focusing my interrogation of the carriage from an object, to a place of enclosure that possesses permeable boundaries and which moves through space, I study the social politics of physically arranging mobile communities. This social choreography creates further depth that is transposable onto the physical structure of the carriage.

Of course, not every journey created an occasion for either casual or sustained acts of sociability such as the orchestration of social hierarchies within micro mobile communities. Carriages were well known symbols of violence against women at the hands of male counterparts and featured in literature from across the century as hostile spaces in which women found their voices silenced and bodily autonomy quashed. I revisit scenes from *Emma* and *Northanger Abbey* to look afresh at women's experience in an environment in which they must struggle against patriarchal absolutism. Hostile carriage environments don't

¹ I refer to Augusta Elton's offering her marital carriage to assist Miss Bates, as well as insisting Miss Fairfax be included as part of their set in the carriage, as a means of establishing her charitable status as Lady Patroness. See chapter two of this thesis.

always depend on a power struggle defined by a gendered dichotomy, however. As I show in this chapter's discussion of *Sense and Sensibility*, the Dashwood sisters endure a long and uncomfortable journey in their chaperone Mrs Jennings's carriage, but their discomfort stems from a verbal onslaught rather than a physical one, and not from a man but an older woman.

Over the course of this chapter I examine the spaces of the carriage on several levels. I begin my examination from a technical viewpoint in which I track the evolution of carriage construction and how these changes impinged upon social interactions within the carriage. To bolster my theoretical methodology I open my discussion by consulting technical sources and reconcile these against De Quincey's famous essay 'The English Mail Coach' to ascertain the logistics of compartmentalisation of the carriage spaces and how individual spaces mapped onto different levels of social rank. As my discussion unfolds it will become clear that the physical dimensions and boundaries of the carriage's structure were far from rigid. Rather, a carriage's spaces assumed an elasticity and mutability directly influenced by the nature of the social interactions that they enveloped, and as a result, a single carriage could be experienced differently by each of its occupants. Using examples from *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, I foreground the interpersonal experiences, conversations, and behaviours of characters in the carriage, uncovering how Austen visualises interiors both static and portable. After teasing out Austen's method of solidifying carriage spaces, I will track the politics of arranging who sits where in the carriage, as different seats and spaces are imbued with levels of honour and social prestige determined by factors such as physical height of seats in relation to others, proximity to the driver, or access to the best views of the landscape. Finally, this chapter closes with a discussion of carriages as hostile spaces. Typically, carriages were rendered hostile as masculine dominions that stifled female passengers both physically and emotionally, and I supplement my analyses of Austen's hostile carriages with examples from her contemporaries, including Ann Radcliffe and Samuel Richardson. Turning to *Sense and*

Sensibility, I close this chapter with a discussion that adds another perspective to the function of aggression within carriages, by examining interactions of a travelling set exclusively composed of women.

Ins and outs of horse-drawn carriages

The internal construction of coaches in Britain before the middle of the seventeenth century seated elite passengers facing outward, toward the streets. As the poet John Taylor (a resolute objector to the coach) remarked in 1623, this orientation ‘makes people imitate Sea Crabs, in being drawne side-wayes’.² Danielle Bobker has noted that these seating arrangements were symptomatic of a culture of pageantry whereby royal and noble passengers were framed as ‘living tableaux or portraits of themselves for subjects to regard in loyal awe’.³ The ‘Stockholm Scroll’ (Figure 4.1), painted by an unknown artist in the early seventeenth century, situates the barge-like carriages within the giant panorama of the Polish royal wedding procession in 1605 that included the Polish political and ranked elite. The carriage shown in Figure 4.1 positions the occupants (the King’s new bride front left and her bearded lady in waiting beside her) back to back, a clear indication of the prioritisation of spectacle over the conversability of passengers.

² Taylor, *The World Runnes on Wheeles, or, Oddes Betwixt Carts and Coaches*, 14. Taylor harboured suspicions over the coach’s closed construction for concealing lewd acts: ‘the Coach is a close hypocrite, for it hath a cover for any Knavery’, *The World Runnes on Wheeles, or, Oddes Betwixt Carts and Coaches*, 13. The erotic possibilities of the carriage’s construction will be discussed more in chapter five.

³ Bobker, ‘Carriages, Conversation, and A Sentimental Journey’, 245.



Figure 4.1: A detail from the 15m long ‘Stockholm Scroll’ depicting the marriage procession of King Sigismund III and Archduchess Constance of Austria into Kraków on 4th December 1605. In the carriage is Constance and seated to her right is her lady in waiting, the bearded woman Helene Antoine. Image courtesy of The Royal Castle in Warsaw Museum.

The spectacle created by positioning passengers outwards stifled opportunities for cultivating a sense of intimacy among passengers on board the vehicle. This optics-centred construction remained the norm until a radical re-structuring of the coach during the reign of Charles II reoriented passengers inwards, towards each other. G. A. Thrupp attributed the internal turn to the rising popularity of the sedan chair (a wheel-less means of transporting single passengers in style and privacy), inspiring a more compact construction which superseded the coach’s traditional ‘long barge shape’.⁴ The adoption of an *en face* arrangement enhanced the communicative possibilities of the carriage’s structure as eye contact could be established without contrived movements of the body or head, naturally fostering a sense of community and shared experience even before dialogic exchange. Cultural historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch highlights the concomitant developments of ‘other

⁴ Thrupp, *The History of Coaches*, 48.

bourgeois institutions of communication, such as coffee-houses, clubs, newspapers, and theaters' with the coach's inward turn, concluding that it 'must be seen as part of that larger configuration'.⁵ However, Bobker's insight that the conditions of hired vehicles provided 'little in the way of convention or conventional social lubricants for temporary and incidental relationships', complicates the carriage's designation as a space of polite sociability.⁶ As such, I suggest that the production of civil talk within the carriage structure was equally dependant on the vehicle's status as private conveyance as it was on its inward turn. In a private vehicle, at least, the travelling group could be manufactured from a social set already known to one another and with a similar command of polite practices, ameliorating the effects that prominent signs of difference such as physiognomy or manners that Bobker identifies as prominent inhibitors of civil talk.⁷

As with most elements of the carriage's construction I have discussed throughout this thesis, the complexity of the carriage's spaces since the shift from outward to inward orientation, too, resists any definitive categorisation. However, the structural development of the carriage from the medieval period to the eighteenth century reveals a visible evolution in the carriage's spatial topology both within its structure as an entity of adjoining spaces, and between itself and the surrounding spaces through which it moved. Pictorial evidence of medieval wagons and carts and early modern carriages depict the vehicles as highly nebulous spaces, the separate spheres of 'outside' and 'inside' appear less demarcated than in Georgian carriages. The construction of the passengers' covering seems not to have been designed to bear the weight of further passengers or luggage, and the large gaps in the covering reduced the perceived barriers between passengers and pedestrians as the eye was consciously invited

⁵ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, 'The Compartment', in *The Railway Journey*, 1st ed., The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century (University of California Press, 2014), 74.

⁶ Bobker, 'Carriages, Conversation, and A Sentimental Journey', 246.

⁷ Bobker, 246.

toward the passengers.⁸ With the perimeters of these vehicles seemingly more permeable, at least on an ocular level, a sense of separation from the pedestrian realm was instead instilled through vehicle height, raising occupants above their subjects, and the opulence and sumptuousness of the carriage design. Royal travellers were thus distinguished from the crowds of poor through overt displays of dominance in terms of physical stature and displays of luxury.

The effects of the vehicle's new design were twofold. First, the inwardness of the carriage's restructuring redefined the relationship between its spaces, consolidating the division of the carriage as a spatial entity into separate spheres 'inside' and 'outside'. Secondly, tension was created between the carriage and the external spaces through which it moved, challenging the privacy of its interiors. As the carriage interior increasingly promoted a sense of seclusion from the outside, so too did it tempt and invite the curious eye inwards. The crossing of perimeters by people external to the carriage, whether physically or optically, was now more often an offense upon the privacy of the carriage occupants.⁹ The rider in Figure 4.2, for instance, disregards the carriage's codes of privacy as he encroaches on an illicit moment between Caroline Brunswick, wife to George IV, and her consort Bartolomeo Pergami. This fundamental interior restructuring was not to be the only instance in carriage manufacturing history where sociability and communication influenced the architecture of a vehicle. As I discussed in chapter two, the responsiveness of the carriage's construction to the

⁸ This is likely due to the specific circumstances in which the carriages were represented, royal processions for example, rather than long and arduous journeys across the country (images of which I have not found). Image details from medieval manuscripts frequently show the outward-facing passengers (predominantly royal or noble women) covered by an open latticed cover, perhaps of wood, or by draping fabrics much like hand-held litters. For example, the wooden lattice structure of Jean Le Tavernier's 'Kobelwagen' (c.1455, held in the Bibliothèque Nationale Paris) is bare, exposing its elegant female passenger to the landscape, save for a large red cloth thrown over the rear quarters of the wagon.

⁹ It is important to note this was heavily dependent on the purpose for the journey. As I have discussed previously, taking a drive was often undertaken as a performance and opportunity to display oneself and carriage as evidence of superior taste and a visual expression of elite status.

social requirements of its patrons continued to be exploited, as a trend for low-hung carriages enabled private conversations between passengers and pedestrians.

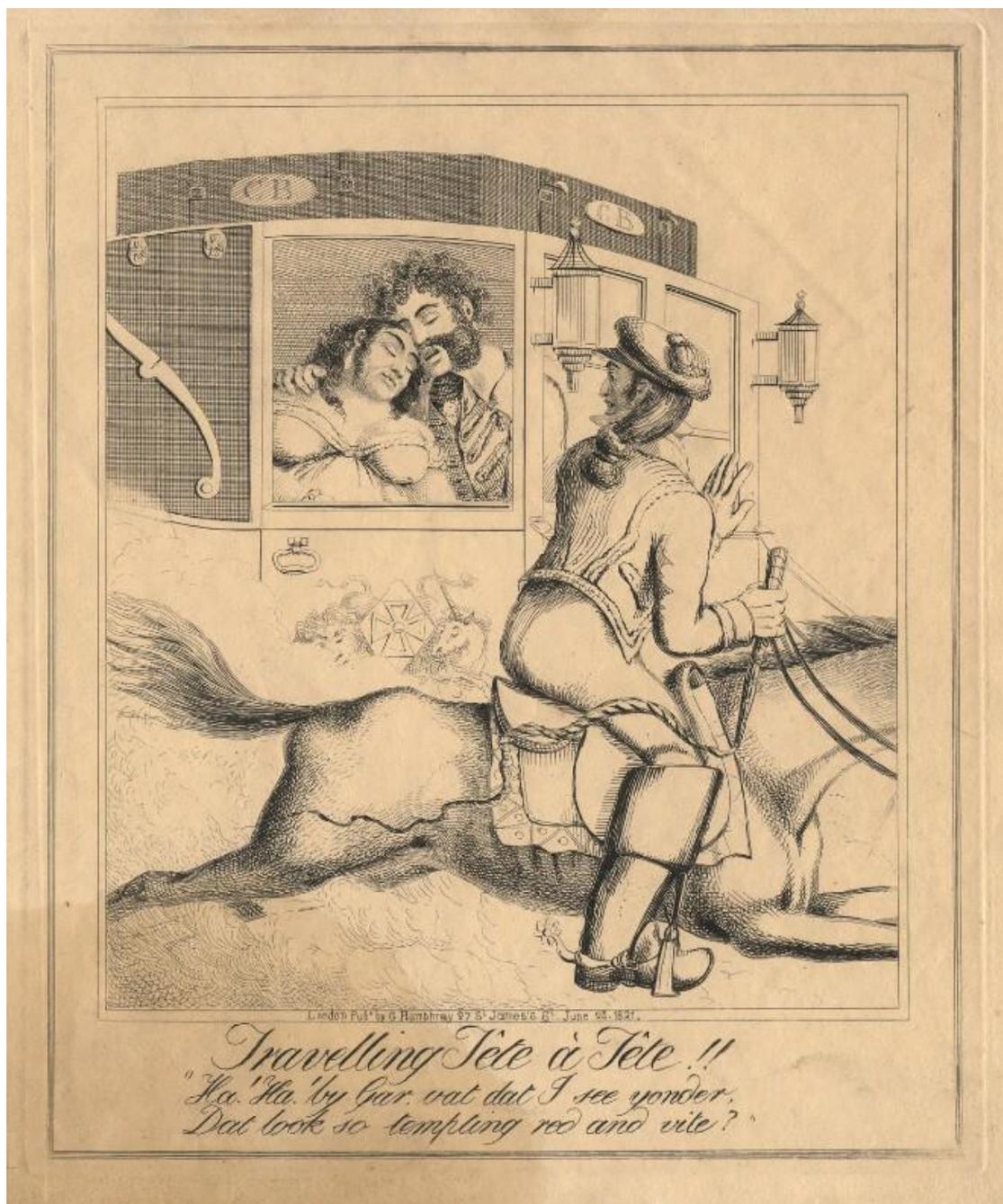


Figure 4.2: ‘Travelling Tête à Tête!!’, published by George Humphrey in 1821, is one in a series of caricatures against Queen Caroline. The caption reads ‘Ha! Ha! By Gar, vat dat I see yonder, Dat look so tempting red and vite?’. Reproduced courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.

In my brief history of the carriage in the introduction to this thesis, I noted that the carriage transgressed the proprietary social order as those with money, regardless of the merits of their rank, could afford to elevate themselves – quite literally – above the poor. Correlating physical height to monetary success and societal rank is a striking element of the rituals of carriage sociability, though similar practices are observed in other arenas – a commoner’s head must never exceed the height of the monarch’s, for example. The levels exist on several planes, most prominently between the street and the carriage, but is expressed more complexly within the carriage spaces as well, and they impinge upon interpersonal experiences during transit. Thomas De Quincey’s ‘The English Mail Coach’ provides a particularly thorough portrayal of social structures mapped onto the physical structure of the carriage. In the following passage, De Quincey enumerates how one’s physical position within the occupiable spaces of the mail-coach compelled a social segregation that continued to be enforced even once the vehicle had been vacated. Notably he positions passengers as objects themselves, ranked by the quality of their materials:

Up to this time, it had been the fixed assumption of the four inside people (as an old tradition of all public carriages derived from the reign of Charles II) that they, the illustrious quaternion, constituted a porcelain variety of the human race, whose dignity would have been compromised by exchanging one word of civility with the three miserable delf-ware outsides. Even to have kicked an outsider might have been held to attain the foot concerned in that operation; so that, perhaps, it would have required an act of parliament to restore its purity of blood. What words, then, could express the horror, and the sense of treason, in that case, which *had* happened, where all three outsides, the trinity of Pariahs, made a vain

attempt to sit down at the same breakfast-table or dinner-table with the
consecrated four?¹⁰

The social constructions of the carriage remain intact even outside the confines of the carriage structure – at dinner in posting inns – and as De Quincey shows, the segregated communities base hostilities depending on perceived economic value, materially categorising the two factions as porcelain and delftware. The cultural and aesthetic value of porcelain and of delftware is hierarchised in much the same way as I have demonstrated the elegant curricule to have carried more social prestige than its ubiquitous and cheaper cousin, the gig. Michael Yonan emphasises the cultural aesthetics of porcelain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, noting the prevalence of porcelain as a metaphor in literature across the period. The majority of literary examples of this metaphor render porcelain as valuable in terms of ‘economic situations or questions of taste’, and De Quincey’s application of the porcelain title to the inside passengers effectively elevates their class and economic status.¹¹ Further, Yonan identifies the versatility of the porcelain metaphor in its ‘ability to conjure the fragility of egos or the tenuousness of relationships’, and this is certainly suggested in the social world of De Quincey’s mail-coach.¹² The porcelain metaphor affirms the inside passengers’ preoccupation with appearances and assertion of their elite identity, to exchange a ‘word of civility’ with their outside counterparts would be to threaten the credibility of their superiority. I noted earlier that the conditions of hired vehicles inhibited the production of civil talk as social differences became insurmountable obstacles, and within De Quincey’s mail-coach the ranked and moneyed differences between inside and outside passengers were cause for incivility. The desire to preserve the sanctity of elite identities by inside passengers

¹⁰ Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings*, ed. Robert Morrison (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 175.

¹¹ Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E. Yonan, eds., *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2010), 3.

¹² Cavanaugh and Yonan, 3.

highlights a shortcoming of the tenets of politeness, it is as though they are inapplicable to portable spaces such as the mail-coach.

Following this, De Quincey consolidates the separate spheres of inside and outside by drawing equivalencies between the mail-coach's portable spaces and the architectural spaces of static structures such as the theatre:

We...were addicted to the practice of looking down superciliously even upon the insides themselves as often very questionable characters [...] And the analogy of theatres was valid against us, where no man can complain of the annoyances incident to the pit or gallery, having his instant remedy in paying the higher price of the boxes. But the soundness of this analogy we disputed. In the case of the theatre, it cannot be pretended that the inferior situations have any separate attractions, unless the pit may be supposed to have an advantage for the purposes of the critic or the dramatic reporter. But the critic or reporter is a rarity. For most people, the sole benefit is in the price. Now, on the contrary, the outside of the mail had its own incommunicable advantages. These we could not forego. The higher price we would willingly have paid, but not the price connected with the condition of riding inside; which condition we pronounced insufferable. The air, the freedom of prospect, the proximity to the horses, the elevation of seat: these were what we required; but, above all, the certain anticipation of purchasing occasional opportunities of driving.¹³

Here, De Quincey subverts the social power structures within the mail-coach. Separation of passengers was not dependent on the privileges of wealth, with the less-advantaged resigned to the coach top, but an active choice from both sets of passengers. The inside passengers, despite paying more and therefore likely of a higher rank than the outside passengers,

¹³ Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings*, 176.

apparently have fewer privileges than those occupying the coach's exterior spaces. Despite the protection from the elements and relative safety afforded to those seated inside the coach interior, in forgoing these protections the outside passengers gain spatial and ocular advantages. Atop the mail-coach, the outside passengers occupy a physically dominant position over the inside passengers who are quite literally beneath them, and from these seats the insiders' privacy is somewhat compromised as the outsiders' perspective allows them to look down upon their rivals. Beyond these rivalries, though, the outside passengers benefit from a far greater scope and freedom in what they can see of their surroundings during transit, and ultimately have access to total control in the opportunities to drive.

The spaces of the mail-coach are further layered and differentiated by De Quincey in the paragraph that follows the theatre analogy:

Under the coercion of this great practical difficulty, we instituted a searching inquiry into the true quality and valuation of the different apartments about the mail. We conducted this inquiry on metaphysical principles; and it was ascertained satisfactorily that the roof of the coach, which by some weak men had been called the attics, and by some the garrets, was in reality the drawing-room; in which drawing-room the box was the chief ottoman or sofa; whilst it appeared that the inside which had been traditionally regarded as the only room tenantable by gentlemen, was, in fact, the coal-cellar in disguise.¹⁴

In drawing parallels between the mail-coach and domestic architecture, the mail-coach's spaces are no longer simply categorizable along the binary inside/outside, but are sub-categorised along a scale of social hierarchy and honour. De Quincey refutes opinions that the outside spaces are akin to isolated and uninhabitable rooms, likening the coach roof to the drawing room, the traditional social centre of the domestic home. A particular position of

¹⁴ Quincey, 176.

privilege is identified in the coach 'box', the seat at the front of the carriage where the driver would have been seated, while the homogenous inside space is relegated to dirt and darkness as a cellar.

De Quincey's metaphysical encoding of the carriage's spaces relates specifically to the mail-coach, a particularly expedient public means of transport in the eighteenth century. Austen's characters rarely patronise commercial vehicles such as the stage and mail, aside from Laura finding herself in the company of her entire family within the confines of a stagecoach in 'Love and Freindship' (as discussed in my thesis introduction). It is probable that their distaste for public transport is symptomatic of their precarious social position as daughters of lesser gentry or rising mercantile families. To condescend to hired coach travel would have challenged the validity of their carefully constructed social identity, whereas the aspiration for a carriage of their own (a corollary of marriage) would have cemented their elite social standing. Instead, Austen's cast of characters prefers to command their own private vehicles, or access travel via hired post-chaise – the more expensive and private means of distance travel – as more befitting of their station, aspirational or actual. De Quincey's observations on the sociability of the mail-coach, however, can be fruitfully used as a tool to understand Austen's carriage spaces and the behaviours that play out within them. De Quincey's codes find another expression in the context of private vehicles, as private carriages were subject to similar class and space tensions even among known parties. Austen's scenes set within carriages thus predominantly comprise deliberately manufactured social groups, unlike the public modes of transport of arbitrarily arranged heterogenous mobile communities. And yet within these groups, divisions or alliances can still be observed forming based upon the boundaries of the carriage spaces they occupy.

I have touched upon the public/private dichotomy inherent in the conditions of the carriage, but I want to highlight the complexity of this dualism as it operates on several levels

not just between those within the carriage and those without. The carriage separated occupants from pedestrians by creating a barrier between them and raised occupants above street level thus providing layers of privacy, yet their ocular privacy was complicated by the movement of the carriage through the public realm of the street, which (should the occupants wish) made them more visible. Travelling incognito would not have been easy since the ostentatiousness of many carriage types drew the eye toward it regardless of whether the occupants intended to make a spectacle of themselves or not. For the purposes of my analysis, I also wish to consider the carriage's potential as a domestic space. De Quincey's metaphors of the coal cellar certainly support the domestication of the carriage's spaces. Julie Park in her investigation of detachable pockets in *Pamela* understands notions of the home to be more portable than standard formulations of the domestic allow, stating that 'homes were located not just within the architectural edifice of a house but also in everyday spaces that extend and move outside it'.¹⁵ For instance, family vehicles, or those owned privately by individuals, could be viewed as an extension of the home, a mobile domestic setting, as they transport persons from their home in a capsule fitted up to their own specifications as their own house would have been. Watt notes that the 'delineation of the domestic life and the private experience of the characters that belong to it' go hand in hand, going on to state that 'we get inside their minds as well as inside their houses'.¹⁶ Watt's notion that entering the spaces of the domestic was like entering the mind itself, can thus be mapped onto the interiors of literary carriages in much the same way.

By envisioning the carriage as an extension of the domestic space of the house, my discussion considers the gendering of the vehicle's spaces, connecting it to the way that particular rooms of a house were associated more with one gender than another. In

¹⁵ Julie Park, 'Detachable Pockets and Letter Folds: Spatial Formalism and the Portable Interiors of the Eighteenth-Century Novel', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. 50, no. 1 (1 May 2017): 8.

¹⁶ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 175.

acknowledging the carriage as a space that blurs gendered classifications, a rationale for the behaviours that play out within its perimeters is supplied. As Karen Lipsedge notes from the 1750s onwards, rooms within the social centre of the domestic interior became increasingly perceived as specifically male, such as the dining room, or female in the case of the drawing room.¹⁷ As we have seen throughout this thesis the carriage avoids concrete classification on several levels from its construction to its social import as a marker of identity. This remains true of how its spaces were gendered. Often, men commanded the economic means to purchase and service a carriage, had the space to keep one and its accoutrements, and pay for the horses and grooms that a carriage required. Driving itself was often viewed as a masculine pastime. Based on this evidence, it would be simple to resign the carriage object to the masculine realm, its spaces along with it. It would explain the volume of kidnappings, sexual advancements, and marriage proposals enacted by men against captive women that are perpetually dramatized in the eighteenth-century novel. But we know, too, that women owned and drove their own vehicles, and as I shall unpack in chapter five, the carriage interior was utilised by women as a space for reflection and important emotional labour.

Sociability of carriage spaces

Austen's often-quoted counsel to her niece, Anna Lefroy, that the ideal subject matter for a novel should centre on just '3 or 4 Families in a Country Village' implies a novel's cast is best anchored to a small geographic space.¹⁸ Literary criticism, though, has in recent years recognised that Austen's domestic fictions are anything but static. Franco Moretti highlights how the mobility of Austen's characters was more expansive than the companionate shared walks that took place within domestic boundaries, or between one village house and another,

¹⁷ Karen Lipsedge, *Domestic Space in Eighteenth-Century British Novels* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), 56. I am mindful, not to overstate the extent to which this gendering divided spaces into concrete spheres.

¹⁸ Le Faye, *Jane Austen's Letters*, 287.

through an extended atlas of Austen's topography. For Moretti, Austen's mobilities generally trace and mirror the movement of the marriage market. He points out that the central hubs in which this market operates are located in London, Bath, and the seaside, stating that 'here is also where all the trouble of Austen's universe occurs: infatuations, scandals, slanders, seductions, elopements – disgrace'.¹⁹ While Moretti's work rethinks many assumptions of Austen's work, Ewers highlights the gendered bias in criticism fielded against Austen that censure her female journeys for being compromised by motivations of courtship, by pointing out that typically masculine journeys like those in *Tom Jones*, *Peregrine Pickle*, and *Hermesprong* are equally motivated by marriage. All denouements of the male protagonists of these novels is achieving a good match, yet none of these novels have garnered the same negative attention for like crimes.²⁰ Ewers recognises the eighteenth-century novel tradition's questioning of the patriarchal tyranny of the home, as heroines 'abscond from their guardians'.²¹ Austen's characters extricate themselves from the pull of the home, regularly undertaking excursions to local attractions or further afield to neighbouring counties or circulating between their country seats and fashionable urban centres such as Bath and London during the season. Even Emma, whose mobility is perhaps the most circumscribed of all Austen's heroines – she has never even seen the sea – takes advantage of the modes of transport available to her to explore to Box Hill.

Often, due to the distance of many of these journeys, characters are conveyed to their destinations in their own private carriages or in post-chaises. As readers we are regularly present for the preparatory stages of a trip as characters order their vehicles from the comfort of their homes. But the next steps – the point at which the carriage is entered, and the journey commences – we are infrequently invited to witness. These narrative events are seldom

¹⁹ Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1999), 15.

²⁰ Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 163.

²¹ Ewers, 164.

elaborately described, a withdrawal to a carriage executed as economically as, for example, ‘Mrs Bennet and her daughters departed’.²² Austen’s glossing over these details, though, does not set her apart from other novelists of the period, many of whom utilised carriages as economical devices to propel plot both temporally and geographically elsewhere. Henry Fielding’s fictions, for instance, implement the coaching trope as a fundamental means of organising his narratives. By comparing the vacant pages that divide chapters and volumes to ‘stages where in long journeys the traveller stays some time to repose himself, and consider of what he hath seen in the parts he hath already passed through’, Fielding makes reading analogous with narrative journeying.²³ Austen’s quiet orchestration of characters’ traversal of distance somewhere off the page, reacquainting the reader with them once their topological shift has been completed, echoes, though less self-consciously, Fielding’s narrative transaction. Narrative junctures in Fielding’s fictions regularly conclude with the narrator informing us we are to take leave of characters as they embark upon the next leg of the journey, and we are to reconvene once they reach the next post.

Rarely, though does Austen set extended scenes within the numerous carriages she plants throughout her novels. Whereas the stagecoach trope had been utilised by Austen’s predecessors and contemporaries to stage social exchanges between unlikely groups, or as convenient segues into unrelated paranarratives with reasonable credibility, Austen approaches moments within carriage interiors differently. As I will explore in chapter five, Austen characterises time spent within the moving carriage as an opportunity for deep self-reflection, for extending one’s knowledge and aesthetic appreciation, and for constructive emotional labour. Here I am centrally concerned with how Austen’s works give us rich

²² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 34.

²³ Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 76. The analogy between reading and travelling was an immensely popular trope of the eighteenth-century novel.

insight into the social politics and rituals of the carriage, and unlike many similar scenes set in public transport, her narratives show us the turbulent sociability of manufactured groups.

Austen importantly renders her carriages concurrently in material and spatial terms, as a means of establishing the conditions for sociability within the carriage. Thorpe's gig in *Northanger Abbey* is unusually embellished among a catalogue of carriages across Austen's *oeuvre* that are given little to no particularisation regarding their aesthetic appearance or spatial organisation. This remains true of carriages that appear as physical presences in the narrative, for example the only descriptor for Willoughby's curricle in *Sense and Sensibility* comes from Colonel Brandon who, Willoughby confides to Marianne, 'found fault with the hanging' of the carriage.²⁴ Even Augusta Elton's beloved barouche-landau in *Emma*, the opulent symbolism of which is evoked countless times, is merely a two-dimensional phantom in its lack of description. Augusta does point out that the vehicle 'holds four perfectly', but we already know this passenger capacity was typical of the large pleasure carriages; her statement thus adds no extra value to the known image of the barouche-landau we have constructed. It seems, then, that prior knowledge of popular carriage design typology was an essential prerequisite for envisaging these mobile spaces. Austen allows the weight of the name and its attached cultural, social, and aesthetic inheritance to perform the narrative legwork. Philippa Tristram provides an explanation for the vague descriptive signposting typical of eighteenth-century novelistic spaces: 'Just as a gentleman was defined by his likeness to other gentlemen, so a house should resemble other houses of similar standing'.²⁵ Translating this onto the carriage, the lack of description implies the bulk of Austen's

²⁴ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 40. I cannot say to what extent this description would have ameliorated for contemporary readers the stereotypical image of a curricle. It is possible that the hanging of a carriage impinged upon its aesthetics in a manner obvious to all including those without specialist coaching knowledge, or that it was particularly esoteric. For modern readers curricle hanging is largely an alien concept, the view of Willoughby's curricle thus remains obscured by the abstraction of time. As we know from Part I, however, the metonymic relationship between carriage and human body would imply that Brandon's qualms about the carriage are directed at Willoughby himself.

²⁵ Philippa Tristram, *Living Space: In Fact and Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1989), 5.

carriages deviates very little from the period standard expected by the polite elite, and ‘it would therefore be redundant to describe what every courteous author must assume was already known to his readers’.²⁶

Similarly, the spaces of Austen’s carriages are not contoured through spatial description. Unlike De Quincey’s mail-coach the separate social spheres created by the structural boundaries and perimeters are seldom envisaged so explicitly, leaving only an indistinct impression of space. I will show instead that through pockets of conversation, action, or private thought, the impression of solid architectural space is clearly rendered. In *The Prose of Things*, Cynthia Wall discusses the formation of ‘implied spaces’ in eighteenth-century interiors:

Ordinary interior space rarely zooms into view, unless some extraordinary event explodes within. And, even then, what is viewed is not the visual entirety of Jane’s Red Room, but a floor plan, a two dimensional and unfocused space called the ‘Chamber,’ or the ‘Parlour,’ or the ‘Kitchen’ rather than a fully realized set of rooms all decked out with someone’s choices of fabric colour, furniture, and ornament.²⁷

Austen’s carriages are subject to even more spartan modes of spatial visualisation than Wall’s identification of implied space. Mr Elton’s proposal to Emma Woodhouse on the return journey from dinner at Randalls constitutes a key example of how Austen glances at the contours of the carriage interior. A slight mix-up of the dinner party sees Emma escorted to the second of two carriages leaving Randalls, with her only companion the drunk Mr Elton. Quite unexpectedly (at least to Emma), Mr Elton interrupts Emma’s politely restrained observations on the weather by seizing her hand and making ‘violent love to her’.²⁸ This is

²⁶ Tristram, 5.

²⁷ Wall, *The Prose of Things*, 124.

²⁸ Austen, *Emma*, 103.

arguably one of the most explosive moments in the entire novel and yet no features or details of the carriage materialise in the reverberations of Mr Elton's actions. What we do get is the impression of form and space in the act of the 'door shutting lawfully' upon them as they settle in the carriage. The forceful motion presages the dramatic events to come, the carriage's 'lawful' sealing metaphorically enacts the contractual bond of marriage between the two ensconced within its interior. The effect upon the ambience of the space is profound; no longer indistinct or unfocused the door's closure transforms the carriage into a tense, claustrophobic space in which Emma struggles for composure amid 'unpleasant sensations', 'swelling resentment', and 'deep mortification'.²⁹

Another characteristic of implied spaces Wall identifies is the way in which objects and contoured spaces fade in and out of existence according to narrative demand, at the behest of the characters occupying and traversing those spaces.³⁰ For example, in Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), Wall notes how objects materialise around Pamela the moment she requires them or moves through them and disappear once more as they are behind her. Austen's carriages exhibit an ascetic variation of this descriptive technique. The intensely uncomfortable social conditions shaped, in part, by the prison-like carriage interior in *Emma* was supplied simply through the closing of a previously invisible door. In another of this novel's carriages, a sheepskin rug is spoken into solidity, at once cutting short Emma's concerned reverie that Mr Elton's sigh at Harriet's absence was inappropriately short for a concerned lover. The sheepskin rug brings the carriage space into focus. Now, the space is warm and comfortable, 'guarded from the weather' so successfully that 'not a breath of air can find its way unpermitted'.³¹ Austen's use of the sheepskin exemplifies the descriptive power a single object can exert over a novelistic space, at once bringing the space into view

²⁹ Austen, 104, 105.

³⁰ Wall, *The Prose of Things*, 124.

³¹ Austen, *Emma*, 91–92.

and adding sensory dimension through tactile sensation. Indeed, in so far as Wall remarks that descriptive properties of objects radiate their ‘visualness – or at least [their] significance – into the surrounding undescribed space’, the sheepskin brings into sharp relief the inherent inside/outside dichotomy of carriage travel.³² By contrasting the temperatures between the carriage interior and the snow outside that Mr Elton glimpses, the passengers become removed in their comfortable space from the harsh external conditions through which they traverse, solidifying the carriage’s structural perimeters.

In *Mansfield Park*, Austen deploys these narrative techniques to visualise the carriage to full effect on a visit to Sotherton, the country seat of Maria Bertram’s future husband, Mr Rushworth. After a fortnight of deliberation, the party finally settles on an arrangement that will see the Bertram sisters, Mary Crawford, Mrs Grant, and Fanny driven to Sotherton in Henry Crawford’s barouche. The journey (a 20-mile round trip, though we only witness the outbound leg) takes an entire chapter to play out, yet despite the scene’s length the material and spatial details of the carriage’s appearance remain unspecified. Compared to the exhaustive list of features that John Thorpe reels off about his gig, Crawford’s barouche – the far larger of the two carriages – seems unembodied as an object, and its corresponding spaces appear, to use Wall’s term, unfocused. Whilst we are not privy to the barouche’s colour, its use of fabrics, or crests and embellishments or extra fittings, Austen does reveal minimal structural details.

First, the barouche box is narrated into existence, delineated from the unquantified homogenous space of the vehicle, as the Bertrams debate who will be the one to sit there.³³ The sisters’ eagerness to secure the barouche box for themselves – all with ‘the most appearance of obliging others’ – solidifies and divides Crawford’s carriage into two separate

³² Wall, *The Prose of Things*, 110.

³³ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 62.

zones.³⁴ The Bertram sisters' thinly veiled competitiveness to assume the barouche box highlights a hierarchy of privilege that graduates the zones of the carriage's spatial topology from the 'place of all places, the envied seat' of the box, to the crowded and undelineated interior.³⁵ As the stalemate between Julia and Maria Bertram continues to amplify the social stakes of the seating arrangement, Mrs Grant, who views the occasion as the perfect opportunity for Julia to take a driving lesson, appoints her to the barouche box. 'Happy Julia!' ascends the 'post of honour' in a moment, meanwhile 'Unhappy Maria' brings into focus the lowly barouche interior as she takes her 'seat within, in gloom and mortification'.³⁶ Maria's low spirits effectively demarcate the vehicle interior from the elevated box as a space of darkness, of limited visibility – both in terms of seeing, and being seen – and as a place concomitant with social humiliation. From Rudolph Ackermann's barouche (Figure 4.3) it is clear the interior seating of a barouche is little removed from the box, the highest point of the carriage. If we assume that the Sotherton party were to also travel with the barouche hoods drawn back to better enjoy the views as in Ackermann's illustration, the physical boundary between these two zones is eradicated. And yet, the evident emotional investment the sisters have in the seating arrangements creates a spatial gulf between their seats that seems to extend far further than the physical limits of the carriage, creating a sense of elasticity to the barouche's spatiality. The animosity between the two factions that occupy both sides of De Quincey's inside/outside dichotomy of the public mail-coaches is thus here expressed between the barouche box and the rest of the carriage's provision of seating. In the same way De Quincey felt the outside passengers held a certain privilege over the inside passengers for

³⁴ Austen, 64.

³⁵ We know from stage coach tickets from the mid-nineteenth century that a place on the box seat would have come at additional expense. For example, the itinerary for Frank Funnell's 'well-appointed four-horse Char-a-bancs', a commercial touring service located in Folkstone, advertises the box seat for 6.d. atop of the regular return fare. Sourced from undocumented coaching ephemera and scraps in the John Johnson Collection at the Bodleian, University of Oxford.

³⁶ Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 64.

their proximity to the driver and opportunities to drive themselves, Julia is herself in a position to wield this power of proximity.



Figure 4.3: A dark green barouche with light blue interior upholstery, and yellow lining of the collapsible hood that matches the fabric covering the barouche box. The caption reads ‘A Barouche with Ackermann’s Patent Moveable Axles’, from Rudolph Ackermann’s *Fashionable Carriages 1816*. Photographed with permission from the John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

The minimal material and spatial details of Crawford’s carriage, which manage to convey its seating hierarchies, also bring its space somewhat into view. By invoking the barouche box, as the prominent structural feature of the vehicle, and subsequently gesturing toward the interior seating, the carriage as a spatial entity is materialised just enough to create a solid sense of place in which to stage extended social interactions. The social politics of the established group both inform and are informed by the space, adding depth and nuance to our understanding of the barouche’s topology without the distraction of material embellishments. Through Austen’s economical use of visual description our attention is drawn firmly to the social arrangements, the interactions, and the psychology – particularly in Fanny’s case – of the characters in the carriage. Under such conditions of visual simplicity, the dialogue of characters seated within a carriage acquires greater importance as it unfolds unencumbered

by visual interference. Kathryn Sutherland identifies dialogue as a means for Austen to ‘collapse the boundary between storyteller and audience, inviting them to conspire in imagining and rioting within a shared textual space’.³⁷ I wish to extend Sutherland’s reading to the carriage, in that as its perimeters and zones gain just enough solidity to zoom into view, but not so much as to become the primary focus, textual boundaries dissolve and we find ourselves sharing the carriage space, and the sociable world, with the characters.

The absence of material objects and furniture in this cross section of a vis-à-vis (Figure 4.4) offers a visual example of how Austen’s narrative signposting of the barouche draws focus away from its material and spatial qualities and redirects attention to the sociable world of its occupants. William Felton describes the vis-à-vis carriage as ‘seldom used by any other but persons of high character or fashion’, and ‘usually finished in a superior manner than what the generality of carriages are’.³⁸ It is almost impossible to confirm his statements in this print since, aside from the ducal coronets on the exterior and the moving parts painted red, the print shows a pared down interior in which objects, embellishments, even furniture are practically non-existent. Arguably, with their towering wigs and fashionable adornments, the two women are positioned as the main objects in the print. Architecturally, the carriage is more of a box than a vehicle, as although there is a window, it is entirely opaque with only the suggestion of light and shadow in a manner reminiscent of Richardson’s rendering of windows ‘as though they are closets whose walls are opaque’.³⁹ Nor are there any doors, though we can imagine the women entered through a door now removed from view for the purposes of the ‘bisection’. The women, then, are hermetically sealed in, with nothing left but for them to either sit in silence, or converse, which their face to face orientation – literally

³⁷ Kathryn Sutherland, *Jane Austen’s Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 232.

³⁸ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1794, 1:65.

³⁹ Tristram, *Living Space*, 245.

vis-à-vis – would encourage.⁴⁰ This particular print, though, concentrates on the inwardness of the interior space as the two women aren't conversing, but rather appear to be reading. As this cross section highlights the 'greyness' of narrative space, its lack of visual particularisation ensures the women and the conversation is the focal point of the image. From the unfocused setting, the women appear in sharp relief, and I suggest the absence of description in the majority of Austen's carriages draws our attention firmly to the characters and their conversation. The gaping hole via which we are admitted the sight of the vis-à-vis interior chamber in this print seems immaterial as the cramped view of the women appears even more crowded as we are admitted to share the space with them. So too, are the boundaries of Crawford's barouche sufficiently dissolved so as to admit the audience into its spaces, and the absence of material embellishments ensures the characters and their intricate social politics is never overshadowed.

⁴⁰ However, as I will discuss in greater depth in chapter five, conversation was not a necessary component of carriage travel but self-reflection was a common by-product of travel within a carriage.



Figure 4.4: ‘The Vis-à-vis Bisected, Or The Ladies Coop’, printed by M. Daryl in 1776. The print satirises the 1770s fashion of women’s high hairstyles. Reproduced courtesy of the British Museum.

Fanny’s daily experience with the Bertram family vastly differs from her enriching experience of travelling within Crawford’s barouche. As we shall see, Fanny finds herself quite literally on the inside on the journey to Sotherton, but since her introduction to the family at Mansfield Park at aged ten, Fanny has existed on the peripheries of familial society. Her rupture from her overcrowded and poverty-stricken home in Portsmouth and relocation to the spacious house of her aunt and uncle marks the beginning of a traumatic struggle to absolve her feelings as an interloper and gain admittance to the Bertram family’s spaces, or failing that, to carve out a sense of place for herself in the vast space of Mansfield. Whilst Fanny’s timidity in part inhibits her agency and ability to take up space, the family deny her access and full participation in family spaces and activities. For instance, following Mr Norris death the family plan to displace Fanny, then aged 15, from the main house to live with Mrs

Norris, but her scheme to take up residence in ‘the smallest habitation which could rank as genteel’ ensures Fanny’s exclusion.⁴¹ Indeed, Fanny is consistently moved or under threat of being moved from place to place at the behest of her family, and regularly without her knowledge. The loss of her own pony, too, significantly impacts Fanny’s ability to exercise any sense of autonomous mobility. Instead, her aunts observe she ‘might ride one of her cousins’ horses at any time when they did not want them’, but the Bertram sisters never end up sacrificing their own pleasure for the sake of allowing Fanny to continue her riding lessons.⁴²

Fanny has most often been examined in terms of her interiority and compromised rights to domestic spaces, and the ways these impinge on her identity. Laura Mooneyham White, for instance, argues the space and ‘the self and its quest for identity’ are analogous, and Keiko Kagawa suggests that Fanny’s subjectivity and psychic interiority are ‘constructed by way of a body’s external experience to its spaces’.⁴³ Henna Messina extends White’s and Kagawa’s arguments about the role of space in Fanny’s production of selfhood by examining her method of ‘deriving agency from the assemblages of nonhuman materiality within the domestic spaces in which she is confined’.⁴⁴ These scholars’ productive arguments recognise the power of the comforting East Room (the old school room, abandoned by Fanny’s cousins and now hers to occupy freely), but their discussions overlook the value of non-domestic, outdoor spaces to Fanny’s sense of agency. Even in the East Room Fanny’s self-confidence is subdued. While Messina views the East Room as a nest of comforts where Fanny displays resourcefulness in repurposing discarded household detritus as meaningful keepsakes, I

⁴¹ Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 22.

⁴² Austen, 28.

⁴³ Laura Mooneyham White, ‘Traveling to the Self: Comic and Spatial Openness in Jane Austen’s Novels’, in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen* (G.K. Hall, 1998), 199; P. Keiko Kagawa, ‘Jane Austen, The Architect: (Re)Building Spaces at Mansfield Park’, *Women’s Studies* 35, no. 2 (1 March 2006): 135.

⁴⁴ Henna Marian Messina, ‘Fanny Price’s Domestic Assemblages in Austen’s Mansfield Park.’, *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 38 (2016): 205.

suggest that Fanny's diligently curated space actually inhibits her potential to assert herself. As Fanny gazes upon her vast assemblage of objects, she relives moments of happiness that transpire from her suffering of 'tyranny, of ridicule, and neglect' so frequently that 'the whole was now so blended together, so harmonized by distance, that every former affliction had its charm'.⁴⁵

The domestic spaces Fanny occupies often overwhelm her: 'The grandeur of the house astonished, but could not console her. The rooms were too large for her to move in with ease... she crept about in constant terror of something or other'.⁴⁶ She is perpetually ill at ease in Mansfield's great rooms, but her sensitivity to physical spaces is somewhat alleviated once she enters the barouche. On the journey to Sotherton, Fanny 'was not often invited to join in the conversation of the others', just one of the many exclusions Fanny experienced in the static spaces of the domestic home, yet, importantly, Fanny is unaffected – 'nor did she desire it'.⁴⁷ Her exclusion from these conversations feels more like an assertion of her agency, a deliberate rejection of the shallow sociability in favour of a deep observation and admiration of the country road along which they travel. The carriage's provision of mobility is a crucial difference from the other interiors Fanny occupies. As it transports her through the landscape, she finds herself 'soon beyond her knowledge', offering her an expansive new visual perspective and access to new knowledge that is outward facing, while the East Room simply looks inwards.⁴⁸ Actively traversing the wealth of geographical space between Mansfield and Sotherton provides Fanny with a new perspective that turns her view outward through a moving landscape and, as a corollary, Fanny's attentions are diverted from the oppressive tensions of the Bertram sisters' conversation, who both bring with them the oppressive social dynamics of Mansfield Park.

⁴⁵ Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 119–20.

⁴⁶ Austen, 12.

⁴⁷ Austen, 64.

⁴⁸ Austen, 64.

Access to the carriage space, and its transformative mobility, is difficult initially for Fanny to secure. Mrs Norris first makes excuses that would have kept Fanny at home, but her cousin Edmund intervenes by forfeiting his seat to ride on horseback. While gaining access to the carriage primarily means securing the power associated with physical mobility, carriage occupants concurrently acquire the right to *see*, a notion hinted at continually in the lead up to the Sotherton excursion. Mrs Rushworth instigates the conflation of sight and privilege as she pities Fanny for ‘she should not see the place [Sotherton]’, while Mrs Norris, as evidence of her distaste for Fanny, takes the opportunity to deny her access to this privilege, ‘she will have opportunities in plenty of seeing Sotherton... her going now is quite out of the question’.⁴⁹ Maria confirms the hierarchy of space across Crawford’s carriage, basing this upon the barouche box’s superior vantage point, ‘There can be no comparison as to one’s view of the country’.⁵⁰ Julia, attuned to the importance of sight, uses her proximity to the landscape and ocular range to further compound her advantage over her sister in the social composition the barouche. What we hear of her conversation in this scene is optic-centred, her ‘view of the country was charming, she wished they could all see it, &c.’.⁵¹ Julia establishes a sensory hierarchy rooted to optical faculties that is then mapped onto a social order, with one’s access to a full range of vision securing top rung on the social ladder. While she has complete ocular freedom, Julia’s statement implicates the rest of the barouche’s occupants’ limited field of vision as equivalent to subordinate social positions. This statement in particular further fills in the space of the carriage by exaggerating the elasticity of its spaces. As Julia elevates herself in terms of what she can see, she increases the perceived physical distance between herself and the other carriage occupants in an assertion of her superiority. Fanny, though, does not participate in Julia’s notion of social hierarchy, and

⁴⁹ Austen, 61.

⁵⁰ Austen, 62.

⁵¹ Austen, 65.

instead exercises her new-found access to ‘seeing’ to quietly entertain herself. Fanny’s observations of the pastoral scene through which they move are astutely focused, nothing seems to escape her notice as she takes in the ‘appearance of the country, the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children...’.⁵² Fanny’s active surveying is vastly contrasted to how Julia interacts with her surroundings. While Fanny sensitively engages with the underlying conditions of rural life – acknowledging the labouring poor, their crops and the very earth that they cultivate – Julia proffers only surface level commentaries ‘Here is a fine burst of country’.⁵³ Julia’s failure to fully exploit her self-established ocular privilege compromises her progression through the landscape, her blinkered approach to seeing leaves her unequipped to question her own relational position within the broader geographical and social contexts that the carriage journey lays before them. For all Julia’s emphasis on her power of sight, she actually *sees* very little and much less than her counterparts who, according to her own ocular hierarchy, should pass through the landscape with a heavily compromised view.

Carriage spaces as hostile environments

Throughout this chapter we have seen the carriage operate as a series of spaces that influence and govern the sociable rituals that play out within and around the vehicular interior and exterior. Thus far I have underscored the positive, and even transformative, effects that gaining access to and occupying the mobile spaces of a carriage can have upon a protagonist’s sense of autonomy, particularly upon hitherto stifled and timid characters such as Fanny Price. Further, I have highlighted how Austen materialises carriage spaces to show how this affects spoken exchange between occupants and the subsequent prominence that

⁵² Austen, 64.

⁵³ Austen, 65.

speech assumes within the visually pared-down vehicle interiors. These scenes show the promise and potential of the spatiality of the carriage. However, the same vehicular spaces commonly featured in eighteenth-century novels as sites of discomfort and physical danger for women who occupied them, and their discomfort was often signalled via their ability, or inability, to vocalise their distress. As such, I end this chapter with a further investigation of vehicular social exchanges that studies the carriage as a space in which female agency and speech are often compromised or stifled when the carriage becomes a hostile environment. Before I revisit scenes from *Northanger Abbey* and *Emma* to analyse moments in which Austen's heroines find themselves overpowered by male counterparts, I want to contextualise Austen's representation of hostile carriage spaces in relation to her literary predecessors. Often, carriages appeared as key objects in abduction scenes, and regularly functioned as a source of masculine power against which female detainees struggled to assert their agency.

Abduction scenes were common in eighteenth-century novels, and we have already read Burney's dramatisation of hostile carriage environments in *Evelina*. In the large majority of literary kidnappings, the carriage plays an integral role as the captors' getaway vehicle and mobile space in which to imprison their victims. In such representations, writers manipulate the spaces of the carriage to modulate the captives' experiences. At the centre of these traumatic feminine experiences is the loss of sensory autonomy. Through a combination of violent restrictions against the body, either gagging, blindfolding, or physical restraints, women's agency to utilise their basic sensory faculties is completely quashed. For instance, the dark and airless carriage that Ellena di Rosalba is smuggled into by ruffians in Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) features as a space of total disorientation. Driving rapidly through the night with the windows and blinds drawn shut, the gloomy carriage interior seems devoid of any defining features. Ellena's inability to anchor herself within the space to anything visual

leaves her mind to spiral in ‘a tumult of terror and amazement’.⁵⁴ Perhaps more unnerving, the carriage is imbued with an eerily haptic quality as Ellena casts about for anything she can reach, and she perceives the things she touches must be the figures who captured her. Ellena, as Radcliffean heroines are prone, loses consciousness from her overwhelming fear but upon regaining her senses her entreaties to her captors, whom she still cannot see, are met with a ‘death-like silence’ that intensifies the sense of claustrophobia that the absence of visual differentiation instilled within the carriage interior.⁵⁵ Whilst Ellena’s abduction takes her on an extensive journey through rocky countryside, her time in the carriage continues largely unpunctuated by molestation or interference from her captors, and the carriage’s rendering remains relatively stable throughout the scene, neither adding to nor diminishing her trauma. By contrast, Harriet Byron’s turbulent and traumatic abduction in Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) presses upon the carriage’s key role in abduction scenes, highlighting its influence over the female experience and the dispossession of her autonomy. Harriet’s assault is characterised by the repeated and extensive attempts her assailants take to physically and verbally restrain, muffle, and silence her:

As the chariot drove by houses, I cry’d out for help once or twice, at setting out. But under pretence of preventing my taking cold, he tied an handkerchief over my face, head, and mouth, having first muffled me up in the cloak; pressing against my arm with his whole weight, so that I had not my hands at liberty. And when he had done, he seized them, and held them both in his left-hand, while his right-arm thrown round me, kept me fast on the seat. And except that now-and-then my struggling head gave me a little opening, I was blinded.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian*, ed. Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), 60.

⁵⁵ Radcliffe, 60.

⁵⁶ Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison; in a Series of Letters.*, ed. Mrs Anna Letitia Barbauld (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1810), 242.

At the hands of her captor, Sir Hargrave, Harriet's bodily and sensory autonomy is systematically and violently removed, not only can she not move she also cannot see, speak, nor reach out to touch anything. Indeed, throughout the extended scene the subversive value of feminine sight and sound is emphasised through Hargrave's continual efforts to deny Harriet the use of these faculties. For instance as the chariot continues on its journey Harriet can sense by the carriage's rocking motions that they are moving through a town, but Hargrave prevents her from gaining her bearings or calling for help by smothering her: 'wrapt me up close, and tied the handkerchief about my mouth and head. I was quite passive'.⁵⁷ Harriet's painful stillness contrasts with Hargrave's explosively active motion, he 'seize[s]' Harriet's hands, 'throws' his arm around her body, and dominates her with his whole bodyweight. Hargrave's activeness and Harriet's subjugation, here, encapsulates the particularly eighteenth-century trope that positioned the carriage interior as a dominion of patriarchal tyranny, a space that ensured masculine power over the feminine.

In abduction scenes, the carriage space is rarely differentiated in any detail (and as I will show, this remains true in Austen's renditions of uncomfortable carriage scenes). However, Richardson gestures towards windows, fore-glass and some cloth coverings within the carriage to the effect that the whole structure seems fortified by layers of physical barriers through which Harriet must negotiate in order to escape. The thickening of the carriage's perimeters adds more layers of obscurity on top of the cloak, the blindfold, and the gagging handkerchiefs that already stifle and obscure Harriet's voice and body. The space thus telescopes inwards and the carriage's boundaries are made impermeable, removing Harriet almost entirely from the world outside. Harriet experiences only a limited range of sensations, from briefly regaining sight as Hargrave removes the blindfold at safe distances from urban centres, to the rocking motion of the carriage that gives her a vague indication of

⁵⁷ Richardson, 246.

the sort of geography through which they move. The limited sensory interactions Harriet has with her surroundings engender an overwhelmingly disorientating experience, made more harrowing in that the few sensations she *is* permitted to feel are violently administered by Hargrave's rough handling, gagging, and sense of his bodyweight upon her. As such, she is allowed no chance to anchor herself to a location through sight, and no chance to call out and make herself known; she is totally obscured from the world as the world is also totally obscured from her as she struggles within the claustrophobic carriage.

Austen perhaps comes closest to the dangerous carriage scene of her Georgian predecessors in *Northanger Abbey*. In chapter three, we saw how John Thorpe relied on his gig carriage to express his physicality. My discussion also centred on Thorpe's tendency to employ the lexis of advertising to elicit praise and admiration for his vehicle which, although considered at odds with polite praxis, at least presented a moment of conversational reciprocity for his acquaintances. In the context of this chapter's spatial framework, I'd like to deepen my interrogation of *Northanger Abbey's* vehicular social exchanges to highlight the alternative effects upon speech and conversation that carriages and vehicular travel had upon passengers. For instance, the proposed drive in open carriages for the Morland and Thorpe siblings to Claverton Down presents a key example of conversational deterioration staged within a carriage. From the outset, Thorpe dominates the conversation between himself and Catherine with his (supposed) knowledge of spirited horses and his prowess at handling the reins, assuring her of his ability to control the horse when it moves off at pace. At first in her naivety Catherine is able to enjoy the drive which, contrary to Thorpe's assertions, continues sedately, and speaks 'her pleasure aloud with grateful surprise'.⁵⁸ Before long, however, and following a 'silence of several minutes', Thorpe further undermines any chance of conversational equilibrium with a series of probing and uncomfortable questions regarding

⁵⁸ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 43.

the nature of Catherine and Mr Allen's relationship, and her potential to inherit a fortune. Thorpe's succession of questions instigates a conversational power imbalance that permits Catherine little room to utter more than a few words at a time to confirm or deny Thorpe's assumptions, a downward spiral in which Catherine increasingly finds herself stifled. In the following passage, Catherine's conundrum is plainly visible:

Thorpe's ideas then all reverted to the merits of his own equipage, and she was called on to admire the spirit and freedom with which his horse moved along, and the ease which his paces, as well as the excellence of the springs, gave the motion of the carriage. She followed him in all his admiration as well as she could. To go before or beyond him was impossible. His knowledge and her ignorance of the subject, his rapidity of expression, and her diffidence of herself put that out of her power; she could strike out nothing new in commendation, but she readily echoed whatever he chose to assert⁵⁹

For the duration of their drive Catherine comes to realise that Thorpe has persistently lied and contradicted himself to increase his own self-importance. Catherine is perplexed by this behaviour since, we are told, she comes from a family of relatively straightforward people who enjoy at most the occasional pun or proverb.⁶⁰ Thorpe's constant backtracking and superficial veneer of knowledge make his true meanings difficult, if not impossible, to pin down and reflect, if we recall back to chapter three, the slipperiness of the gig's physical conditions. Catherine finds herself lost in Thorpe's vehicular jargon and appears powerless to contribute original responses to the conversation, and instead opts to simply agree with whatever he says. Eventually, Thorpe's verbal barrage of hypermasculine endeavours that centre on his carriage, horses, and hunting, renders the conversation completely one-sided.

⁵⁹ Austen, 45.

⁶⁰ Austen, 46.

Catherine's silence does little to deter him, though, as he displays no concern for eliciting a response or establishing a productive exchange with her, but rather remains content to blithely continue speaking at her. In chapter three we saw how Thorpe spoke about the trappings of his carriage as synecdoche for his own body. Returning to Lipsedge's insights on the gendering of particular rooms in the domestic sphere, here his gig operates spatially as his own personal place of dominion in which his speech overpowers and dominates Catherine.

The powerlessness, and indeed voicelessness, that Catherine feels at this moment in Thorpe's carriage, is contrasted with another vehicular encounter later in the narrative which recalls the abductions dramatised by Burney and Richardson. Having been coerced into foregoing an engagement with the Tilneys by the Thorpe siblings in favour of a trip to Blaize Castle, Catherine's uneasiness escalates into impatience as Thorpe refuses her right to quit the carriage. Despite the potentially dangerous situation, Catherine finds her autonomy and voice to assert her displeasure and intentions to exit the carriage, so that she may rectify the social *faux pas* she, through no fault of her own, made against the Tilneys. What is salient in this exchange is the effect of Catherine's words on Thorpe's communicative capacity. When Catherine finds her voice, the confusion and surprise caused by Catherine's push-back coupled with the excitement of driving impinges initially on Thorpe's ability to speak. Instead, Thorpe is reduced to making 'odd noises' and violent gestures as he 'smack[s] his whip' and continues driving.⁶¹ The push and pull of conversations conducted in this carriage, differs from the polite mode of sociability adhered to in the other bourgeois institutions of communication that Schivelbusch deemed analogous with carriage spaces. Unlike the coffeehouses where the tenets of polite sociability would have governed and reciprocity would have ruled, the gig as a site of communication fails to operate in the same way and functions rather as a space in which the conversational floor must be fought for along with

⁶¹ Austen, 62.

the safety of the female body. While Catherine is powerless to do anything physically, and admittedly has to ‘give up the point and submit’, she does not submit silently:

‘Stop, stop, Mr. Thorpe,’ she impatiently cried; ‘it is Miss Tilney; it is indeed. How could you tell me they were gone? Stop, stop, I will get out this moment and go to them.’ But to what purpose did she speak? Thorpe only lashed his horse into a brisker trot [...] Still, however, and during the length of another street, she entreated him to stop. ‘Pray, pray stop, Mr. Thorpe. I cannot go on. I will not go on. I must go back to Miss Tilney.’ But Mr. Thorpe only laughed, smacked his whip, encouraged his horse, made odd noises, and drove on; and Catherine, angry and vexed as she was, having no power of getting away, was obliged to give up the point and submit.⁶²

Whilst subordinate to Thorpe as he controls the direction and pace of the carriage, Catherine is not totally powerless. The effect of her stern entreaties reduces Thorpe to an animalistic state, unequipped to respond rationally in full sentences. Catherine’s conviction, as well as her having caught him in a lie, catches Thorpe off guard, without the self-possession to handle his embarrassment cogently.

We know from the discussion in chapter two that *Emma* is rich in examples of conversational tugs-of-war in which polite tactics must capitulate in the face of unpolished talk to avoid uncomfortable social disruption. Celia Easton attributes Austen’s treatment of social dynamics throughout *Emma* as a method of exploring and subsequently confounding ‘women’s voices’.⁶³ A prime offender is Augusta Elton, whose verbal aggressiveness overpowered Emma Woodhouse into silence during a sociable domestic visit. Within the confines of a carriage, however, verbal disparity and miscommunication between parties

⁶² Austen, 62.

⁶³ Celia Easton, “‘The Encouragement I Received’: Emma and the Language of Sexual Assault”, *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line* 37, no. 1 (2016): n.pag.

produce significantly more unnavigable social situations. Looking again at Mr Elton's proposal which I gestured toward earlier in this chapter, a similar social and, indeed, gendered dynamic that was at play in Catherine and Thorpe's carriage scenes, here informs the exchange between Mr Elton and Emma Woodhouse. Mr Elton cuts through Emma's carefully planned speech aimed at neutralising his drunken talk by seizing her hand and 'making violent love to her'.⁶⁴ Emma does persist in trying to win back the equilibrium, 'She tried to stop him; but vainly', apparently drowned out by the sheer volume of Mr Elton's words as 'he would go on, and say it all'.⁶⁵ Emma is, of course, not abducted by Mr Elton like the elaborate plot that was aided and abetted by coachmen and women paid for by Richardson's Sir Hargrave, and nor is there any kind of purposeful physical violence or restraint in *Emma*. However, Mr Elton's behaviour does echo in some respects the more violent carriage plots of Burney and Richardson. Moreover, since the template for violent carriage plots already exists as a novelistic trope, so we read Austen's carriage scenes within the context of past violent scenes. Unlike other unequal exchanges across the narrative that remained only verbal, here within the carriage interior Mr Elton is emboldened to transgress boundaries and reaches out to physically grasp Emma by the hand. Not even John Thorpe, arguably Austen's most overtly violent character, trespasses the boundaries of the female body in the carriage.

Not all hostile carriages are the result of a gendered power imbalance that sees women flounder against male counterparts. The long carriage journey that Elinor and Marianne undertake in *Sense and Sensibility* provides another perspective that differs in kind and scope from my previous examples which align more closely with Burney's treatment of hostile carriages. Within Mrs Jennings's carriage, gendered violence against women is supplanted by

⁶⁴ Austen, *Emma*, 103.

⁶⁵ Austen, 103.

the difficulties in managing a relationship between women of unequal status, age, and circumstance:

Elinor could not find herself in the carriage with Mrs. Jennings, and beginning a journey to London under her protection, and as her guest, without wondering at her own situation, so short had their acquaintance with that lady been, so wholly unsuited were they in age and disposition, and so many had been her objections against such a measure only a few days before! But these objections had all, with that happy ardour of youth which Marianne and her mother equally shared, been overcome or overlooked...⁶⁶

The tensions between thought and travel will come to fore in my next and final chapter, but for now I want to gesture briefly here to the relationship between mind and motion. The language of not being able to ‘find herself’ in the carriage space is particularly noteworthy since the carriage is in motion, traversing what is presumably unfamiliar geography on their journey to London. The geographical connotations of being lost reflect inwards to the carriage interior, as Elinor must navigate unfamiliarity of another ilk – a social unfamiliarity. Indeed, Elinor’s discomfort and emotional disorientation stems not from a gendered power imbalance, but rather from an imbalance between the level of social intimacy between the Dashwood sisters and Mrs Jennings, and the service Mrs Jennings is providing them as she chaperones the sisters to London. The Dashwood sisters are indebted to a woman whom they have limited social intimacy with and, coupled with the differences in personality between Mrs Jennings and Elinor Dashwood, the interior of the carriage is rendered as a socially exhausting space. Navigating the situation while upholding polite sociability falls to Elinor, while Marianne shirks her responsibilities by refusing to participate in the conversation.

⁶⁶ Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, 118.

To shed more light on the ways in which this carriage interior operates as hostile, I want to examine the social roles that are taken on whilst in the carriage interior. Mrs Jennings, the owner of the carriage, takes it upon herself to entertain the Dashwood sisters with conversation, whilst Elinor takes up the conversational slack of her sister who sits in private meditation.

They were three days on their journey, and Marianne's behaviour as they travelled was a happy specimen of what future complaisance and companionableness to Mrs. Jennings might be expected to be. She sat in silence almost all the way, wrapt in her own meditations, and scarcely ever voluntarily speaking, except when any object of picturesque beauty within their view drew from her an exclamation of delight exclusively addressed to her sister. To atone for this conduct therefore, Elinor took immediate possession of the post of civility which she had assigned herself, behaved with the greatest attention to Mrs. Jennings, talked with her, laughed with her, and listened to her whenever she could; and Mrs. Jennings on her side treated them both with all possible kindness, was solicitous on every occasion for their ease and enjoyment, and only disturbed that she could not make them choose their own dinners at the inn, nor extort a confession of their preferring salmon to cod, or boiled fowls to veal cutlets. They reached town by three o'clock the third day, glad to be released, after such a journey, from the confinement of a carriage, and ready to enjoy all the luxury of a good fire.⁶⁷

The kindness of Mrs Jennings toward the end of the three-day journey is almost overbearing. As with the other hostile carriages we have already seen, the feminine voice is compromised. While Elinor assumes the role of civility and talks and laughs with Mrs Jennings at every

⁶⁷ Austen, 119.

opportunity, the language of interrogation, 'extort a confession' is a particularly strong indication that the Dashwood sisters have, eventually, been reduced to silence not even breakable by interrogative tactics. The difference here, though, is not that the loss of voice is the result of masculine physical or verbal violence, but social exhaustion.

Austen is precise in naming the time (three days) that elapses, underscoring how social exhaustion and the absence of sociability trails the Dashwood sisters on this journey. In the final chapter of this thesis, I consider the carriage in motion and the various effects of the carriage's movement and traversal through space upon the emotional lives of Austen's heroines. Further, I investigate the ways in which the carriage's provision of mobility is utilised by the women in Austen's fiction as a means of personal and intellectual growth. Chapter five will discuss eighteenth-century debates over the imbrication of spatial and vehicular transport and emotional transport before examining Austen's treatment of motion and emotion.

Chapter Five: Austen's Carriages in Motion

In chapter four, I examined the carriage's layered spaces and the inherent duality represented by its 'inside' and 'outside' spaces, and also investigated the complexities of the carriage's connection between spatiality and sociability. This chapter extends my enquiries into the carriage's relationship with space but centres on the carriage's movement through space, and how this traversal of space shapes Austen's heroines. Austen distils the obstructions women faced in travel in a brief, but rich, exchange in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), to show how her characters clearly understand distance in opposite ways. At the start of the exchange, Elizabeth Bennet takes umbrage at Mr Darcy's flippancy toward geographical distance, when he suggests Charlotte Lucas was fortunate in securing a living 'so easy a distance from her own family and friends'.¹ But for Elizabeth, to call Charlotte's relocation to her new husband's parsonage at Hunsford 'an easy distance' at 'nearly fifty miles' from her familial home is myopic. As their exchange continues, the period's gendered expectations concerning mobility are thrown into sharp relief. Darcy's counter to Elizabeth's objection, 'what is fifty miles of good road? Little more than half a day's journey', underscores the ease at which men were accustomed to negotiating distance, and reveals an ignorance to the obstructions women had to surmount in order to traverse the country.

Austen's characters experience more than just a journey's length and distance differently, masculine and feminine journeys are also characterised by their unique shapes and patterns. As Ewers argues, Austen's fiction contrasts the curtailed, 'circular' mobilities of its heroines with the 'long-distance, rapid, linear mobility' of its male counterparts with a critical view of exposing these gendered inequalities.² In chapter four, I stressed how few of the journeys that occur across Austen's novels are ever elaborated upon; importantly the

¹ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 137.

² Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 161.

‘long-distance, rapid, linear’ journeys identified by Ewers, I argue, receive no attention. These male journeys all occur somewhere outside of the narrative, off the page. Rather, in the few instances we accompany a traveller and all their inner thoughts over any great distance, we remain in the company of a heroine. I suggest that this absence of insight into the male experience of travel contributes to Austen’s critique of mobility that included men and excluded women. More specifically, I propose that her narrative and descriptive disinterest in the male journey reflects the relatively unshackled nature of male travel. Man’s freer access to travel reduces its significance to the male experience, it is simply part and parcel of daily life, and as a result their journeys are of less consequence to Austen’s audience. Darcy’s comments to Elizabeth where great distance is diminished into a leisurely afternoon outing certainly support the idea that men of his rank are unengaged while travelling through space. Conversely, and as I will show throughout this chapter, Austen proves women to be adept, more conscientious travellers. Young and inexperienced Catherine Morland travels 70 miles through unfamiliar territory completely alone in *Northanger Abbey*, while even an invalid Mrs Churchill manages a 190-mile carriage journey in *Emma*. Julia Prewitt Brown recognises that although the lives of Austen’s heroines are subject to constraint, ‘her novels are not about restriction ... [but] about how women find ways to develop and assert their womanhood despite the restriction placed upon them’.³ In the face of their limited access to vehicular travel, it should not be surprising then, that consciously or unconsciously, Austen’s heroines frequently exploit the precious moments in motion that carriages furnish them with for their own benefit. From a deeply felt excitement at the prospect of an extended journey that soothes the unease over past events, to the act of traversing distance itself and encountering new places, travelling for Austen’s women plays an important role in their lives. In this, the

³ Julia Prewitt Brown, *Jane Austen’s Novels: Social Change and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979), 156.

final chapter of my thesis, I want to consider Prewitt Brown's words in the context of journeying and carriage travel, as I investigate the ways in which the women of Austen's fiction take advantage of the carriage's provision of mobility for personal, emotional, and intellectual growth.

I begin this chapter with a brief survey of contemporary philosophical debates regarding the nature of transport. Enlightenment philosophers had engaged with questions concerning the soul in motion since the seventeenth century and the topic consequently encompassed a vast and complex network of theories about travel and mobility. As the theories show, spatial, vehicular transport was heavily imbricated with emotional transport. As Sarah Landreth has argued, 'movement through space must also move emotions; at some invisible moment of contact, spatial change becomes cognitive change'.⁴ My second section studies how Austen's most explicit engagement with the effects that physical motion can have on the psyche. I focus here on Catherine Morland's long journey home, revealing the transformative effects of spatial change as Catherine performs important emotional transformation, to emerge restored from her traumatic ejection from Northanger Abbey. Finally, I examine how Austen links domestic travel to emotional change, starting with Elizabeth Bennet's proposed tour to the Lake District with her aunt and uncle in *Pride and Prejudice*. Unlike other instances of feminine travel, such as in *Northanger Abbey* where we accompany the traveller in physical motion, often in *Pride and Prejudice* we see the effects of the journey upon Elizabeth before she has actually undertaken any spatial change. I show that for women of the lower gentry, who felt the pressures of needing to appear mobile while not necessarily commanding the wealth to make this a reality, the prospect of a journey could be a potent influence on the emotions.

⁴ Landreth, 'The Vehicle of the Soul', 115.

On being moved

Over the course of this thesis I have gestured to the carriage's imbrication with the body and sexuality, for instance in chapter three in which we saw the gig stand as a proxy for Thorpe's body and masculinity, and also understood that female sexuality and sex work was regularly caricatured as a form of vehicular mobility. We saw, too, in the previous chapter the social taboo of two young people travelling together unchaperoned in an open carriage and how it tacitly implied a sexual relationship. Carriages, then, were reputed as objects that circulated sexual desire. The erotic potential of carriage travel was most often referenced in relation to public vehicles: stagecoaches were notorious spaces of palpable sexual frisson thanks to the eroticism of proximity experienced by groups of strangers. Georg Christophe Lichtenberg, a German satirist, commented on the sensual riot on a typical English stagecoach journey: 'a dangerous exchange of glances but often also for a scandalous entanglement of legs causing a giggling in both parties and a confusion of souls and thought, so that eventually many an honest young man who only [wants] to travel from London to Oxford [goes] straight to the devil instead'.⁵ The 1783 etching 'Whitsuntide Holidays' (Figure 5.1) visualises such bawdy intimacy, in which the relative stillness of the inside passengers is contrasted with the drunken tangle of bodies on the stagecoach roof where a sailor, in the centre of the fray, fondles a woman's breast.

⁵ Lázló Tarr, *The History of the Carriage*, trans. Elizabeth Hoch (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1969), 257.



Figure 5.1: ‘Whitsuntide Holidays’ (1783) published by Carrington Bowles. Amid the crowd of outside passengers on the Greenwich to Charing Cross stagecoach, seated precariously on the roof, a sailor fondles a woman’s breast. She seems not to mind the intimacy. Reproduced courtesy of The British Museum.

Opportunities for sexual dalliances were facilitated by the nature of public vehicles, whereby physical conditions brought diverse groups together in close proximity and emboldened passengers by offering relative privacy. Moreover, the carriage’s motion, and precise nature of that motion, was thought to be the principal stimuli for exciting pleasurable feelings among the occupants of a vehicle. George Farquhar and Peter Motteux’s early eighteenth-century farce *The Stage-Coach* (1705) highlights the contributing factors to stagecoach eroticism, including the setting of diverse groups of people in which women outnumber men. The most salient condition, though, is the movement of the stagecoach itself. Its rocking and jolting motions seem to make women more receptive to male advances:

Here chance kindly mixes,

All Sorts and all Sexes, More Females than Men;
 We squeeze them, we ease them,
 The Jolting does please them;
 Drive jollily then.⁶

Isaac Cruikshank's companion images 'Jolting Preventives' and 'Symptoms of Jolting' (1797, figures 5.2 and 5.3 respectively) illustrate the difficulties of maintaining polite physical distance within the cramped interior of a carriage, made all the more challenging with the sudden jolting motions of the vehicle. The second image, 'Symptoms of Jolting', illustrates four specific types of jolting motion, each of which elicit a different effect on the bodies inside the carriage interior. While the four panes do not necessarily gesture towards the more erotically charged symptoms of carriage motion, they do demonstrate the unavoidable jumble of bodies and close bodily proximity the carriage's movement can cause.



Figure 5.2: Isaac Cruikshank, 'Jolting Preventives' (1797). The occupants of four carriage interiors – presumably stagecoaches – cling to straps to avoid the effects of the four types of 'jolt' described in the companion print, 'Symptoms of Jolting' (Figure 5.3). Reproduced courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

⁶ George Farquhar and Peter Anthony Motteux, *The Stage-Coach* (London: Benjamin Bragg, 1705), 19.



Figure 5.3: Isaac Cruikshank, ‘Symptoms of Jolting’ (1797). Dorothy M George’s accompanying notes for this print in the *Catalogue of prints and drawings in the British Museum. Division I, political and personal satires* identify the different movements depicted in each pane: ‘in four compartments, all representing the interior of a stage-coach containing two passengers... who are being flung together in different ways. They represent (1) “A perpendicular jolt”, (2) “An horizontal jolt”, (3) “A jolt dexter”, (4) “A jolt sinister”.’ Reproduced courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale.

However, for many writers in the eighteenth century, spatial motion was more than just an enabling force for titillating escapades but rather formed a cornerstone of the study of human nature. In her study of eighteenth-century vehicular it-narratives, Landreth notes that ‘for many Enlightenment writers, questions about motion and inquiries about emotion were ultimately inseparable’.⁷ In fact, motion and emotion were subjects so embroiled with one another that a single vocabulary of vehicularity had been used in philosophical debates since the seventeenth century. The rationale behind this intermingling becomes less obscure when the nature of the term ‘transport’ is more closely examined. Miranda Burgess points to the term’s ‘conceptual capaciousness’, explaining that the *OED* provides a total of five distinct

⁷ Landreth, ‘The Vehicle of the Soul’, 98.

definitions, one of which identifies ‘transport’ with ‘vehement emotion’ and cites Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* as its sole eighteenth-century reference.⁸ To further demonstrate the breadth of the term’s applications, Burgess briefly tracks its variant usages across Austen’s fictions ‘as a synonym for a range of experiences of extreme emotion, pleasurable and painful, as well as for removals of the body both imaginative and physical’.⁹ Before I launch my own investigation of Austen’s treatment of the soul in motion, I will contextualise Austen’s approach within long-standing period debates regarding influences of physical motion on the mind.

In spite of the difficulties that women faced accessing vehicular travel, the work of this thesis has made clear that travel by horse-drawn carriage, be it private or hackney, was an increasingly quotidian element of public life in the long eighteenth century. As such, the horse-drawn carriage became a useful tool for writers to address the connection between motion and emotion, especially when it came to travel via carriages. For instance, in Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry* (1757) aesthetic appreciation is further enhanced once the body is in motion in a carriage: ‘Most people must have observed the sort of sense they have had, on being swiftly drawn in an easy coach, on a smooth turf, with gradual ascents and declivities. This will give a better idea of the beautiful, and point out its probable cause better than almost anything else’.¹⁰ The emphasis on the speed, smoothness, and gentleness of the motion is evident here, implying that spatial change was not the sole requirement for a better

⁸ Miranda Burgess, ‘Transport: Mobility, Anxiety, and the Romantic Poetics of Feeling’, *Studies in Romanticism* 49, no. 2 (2010): 234. The full definition on the *OED* is as follows: ‘The state of being ‘carried out of oneself’, i.e. out of one’s normal mental condition; vehement emotion (now usually of a pleasurable kind); mental exaltation, rapture, ecstasy. Also with *a* and *plural*, an instance of this, a fit of joy or rage; sometimes *transferred* an ecstatic utterance.’

⁹ Burgess, 235. For more analysis of the term ‘transport’ and its application to the emotions, particularly regarding eighteenth-century anxieties over ‘wandering’, mobile, or circulating feeling see Miranda Burgess ‘Transport: Mobility, Anxiety, and the Romantic Poetics of Feeling’ (*Studies in Romanticism* 49, no. 2, Nostalgia, Melancholy, Anxiety: Discursive Mobility and the Circulation of Bodies, 2010, 229-60), especially pages 234-41.

¹⁰ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 158–59. Landreth also comments on this passage of Burke’s *Enquiry*. For her analysis of the passage, see ‘The Vehicle of the Soul’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 26, no. 1, Fall 2013, 93–120, especially pages 98-99.

understanding of beauty, but that specific conditions of motion were prerequisite to a heightened sense of aesthetic appreciation.

If smooth and swift velocity elicited a more astute understanding of beauty for Burke, and certain rocking motions of carriages induced a palpably erotic atmosphere as we saw earlier, thinkers also wrestled with how different modes of motion produced diverse affective reactions. Indeed, the claim that the specific nature of movement elicited a spectrum of feelings and emotions that directly corresponded to that movement was regularly made by eighteenth-century writers. Burke illustrates the connection between ‘certain motions... and certain consequent feeling in our minds’ with the carriage analogy, commenting that ‘a gentle oscillatory motion, rising and falling’ was a ‘species of motion’ that, universally, ‘relaxes more than the rest’.¹¹ The two figures in Rowlandson’s ‘A comfortable nap in a post chaise’ (Figure 5.4) demonstrate Burke’s claims as the figures recline within the carriage interior, seemingly rocked to sleep by the carriage’s undulations. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Burke concludes that hasty transit ‘over rough, rocky, broken road’ negatively impacts upon one’s senses and therefore aesthetic response. The pain incurred by such ‘sudden inequalities’ in the motion the body is subjected to mars the perception of beauty in scenes that, had they been viewed from a smooth, swift carriage, would have been evident.¹² Elsewhere, Samuel Johnson’s eidolon in *The Rambler* number 117 notes ‘the power of agitation upon the spirits is well known; every man has felt his heart lightened in a rapid vehicle’.¹³ The effects of rapidity for Johnson are less introspective than those of Burke, but instead illustrate an animalistic power that travelling at speed can incite within those that experience it. Closer to the opening decades of the century, *The Spectator* number 132 highlights the role of the carriage in motion in dissolving social boundaries as ‘the coach jumbled us insensibly into

¹¹ Burke, 158.

¹² Burke, 159.

¹³ Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler. By Samuel Johnson, LL.D. Four Volumes in Two*, vol. 2 (London: W. Locke, No 12, Red Lion Street, Holborn; and C. Lowndes, No. 66, Drury Lane, 1791), 45.

some sort of familiarity’, a feeling evidently shared by Lichtenberg who commented on the erotic ‘confusion of souls’ in stagecoaches.¹⁴



Figure 5.4: ‘A comfortable nap in a post chaise’ by Thomas Rowlandson (1788). Two travellers sink companionably together, unplagued by driving or navigational duties. Photographed with permission from the Beinecke Rare Books & Manuscripts Library at Yale.

As Landreth attests that, if we take for granted the effects of changes in physical motion upon the mind as did many eighteenth-century writers, including Burke, then ‘it follows that emotions must have some kind of physical manifestation or presence in the body’.¹⁵ Indeed, the exact location of the soul in relation to the body was a common preoccupation of the Enlightenment. As Landreth goes on to explicate, the philosophical group the Cambridge Platonists maintained ‘that the soul had a specific spatial location inside

¹⁴ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald Frederic Bond, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 23; Tarr, *The History of the Carriage*, 257.

¹⁵ Landreth, ‘The Vehicle of the Soul’, 115.

an intermediary “vehicle” that was neither fully material nor wholly immaterial.¹⁶ To add to this, I want to acknowledge questions centring on motion and the mind that shaped debates over the ability to feign emotional responses and how the carriage was often portrayed in the eighteenth century as a reflection of the inner mind and its potential for deceit. In the previous chapter I drew upon Ian Watt’s notion that entering the spaces of the domestic was like entering the mind itself, a point I argued found its analogue with the interiors of literary coaches. To deepen my previous line of enquiry, I highlight Francis Bacon’s identification of two forms of emotional deception – simulation and dissimulation – from 1625, a theory that was continuously intertwined with horse-drawn carriages over the long eighteenth century. Bacon writes that simulation occurs ‘when a man industriously and expressly feigns and pretends to be what he is not’, in other words, simulation is demarcated as a purposeful, premeditated performance or projection of a false self. Dissimulation, the lesser of the two evils due to the lack of agency that drives its occurrence, takes place ‘when a man lets fall signs and arguments, that he is not what he is’.¹⁷ Through Bacon’s framework, all of Austen’s characters who choose to stabilise their social and gendered performances with a carriage are potentially guilty of dissimulation, particularly given the carriage’s extended history with deceit and the veiling of the self.

We have already seen in the previous chapter’s discussion on vehicular speed and the increased rate at which pleasure can be attained that the carriage was viewed dubiously for its role in derailing concomitant progress in the moral sphere. It is unsurprising, then, that the carriage finds itself linked in the popular imagination as a medium through which to critique the moral deficiencies professional life. For instance, Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), which I gestured at in the introduction to this thesis, uses a vehicular analogy to criticise Grub Street

¹⁶ Landreth, 116. Landreth’s summary of the vehicular hypothesis is indebted to Philip Almond’s work. For an in-depth discussion of the Cambridge Platonist’s theories, see Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), especially pages 29-33

¹⁷ Francis Bacon, *Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 350.

writers' propensity to privilege allegory over didactic content. As he does so, Swift connects the inner and outer spaces of the carriage with Bacon's sense of deception and veiling of the self:

The Grubean Sages have always chosen to convey their precepts and their arts shut up within the vehicles of types and fables ... it has fared with these vehicles after the usual fate of coaches over-finely painted and gilt, that the transitory gazers have so dazzled their eyes and filled their imaginations with outward lustre, as neither to regard nor consider the person or the parts of the owner within.¹⁸

Augusta Elton in *Emma* could certainly be accused of prioritising 'outward lustre'. Her preoccupation with the barouche-landau as a means of bolstering an outward appearance of genteel politeness at the expense of cultivating actual courteousness bears a remarkable resemblance to Swift's vehicular analogy, where writers obsess over outward style to distract from the deficiencies in the substance of their writing. John Thorpe is also guilty of simulation in his reliance on the cosmetic attributes of his gig to veil his shortcomings as a gentleman. Indeed, as Landreth points out, Swift's satire underscores the cultural tendency of '[p]eople – especially coach makers and hack writers – [to] spend too much effort simulating polished exteriors while neglecting to mould personal character'.¹⁹ Augusta's barouche-landau never appears physically in the narrative, and thus we can only speculate that her performative gentility would continue inside the carriage interior. However, John Thorpe quite overtly continues his masculine performance once inside the carriage's perimeters. He even increases his efforts as he founds his masculine veneer on the lies, telling Catherine about the speed of his horse and his adept horsemanship, or the structural integrity of James

¹⁸ Jonathan Swift, *Major Works*, ed. Angus Ross and David Woolley (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 92.

¹⁹ Landreth, 'The Vehicle of the Soul', 112.

Morland's hired gig. The likes of Augusta Elton and John Thorpe are testament to Austen's acute awareness of the deceitful connotations of the carriage, as these characters hide in the shadows of their carriages' social and cultural capital. Austen also deviates from this narrative of deception. Far from assuming a polished veneer or performing an idealised version of themselves, many of Austen's women strip away outward appearances and performative behaviours and exist authentically as themselves once inside the carriage interior. The heroines I focus on in this chapter use their time in transit industriously, whether consciously or unconsciously, to cultivate an emotional and aesthetic maturation.

Emotional transformation in *Northanger Abbey*

In chapter three of this thesis I discussed in depth John Thorpe's relationship to his two-wheel carriage, and the wider attitudes of the Georgian public to the 'nuisance' vehicle. Indeed, in scholarly discussions of travel and carriages in Austen's work, Thorpe's gig and debates about masculinity expressed through material means frequently take centre stage.²⁰ *Northanger Abbey*, though, is a far richer resource for understanding the multifaceted nature of Georgian transport for women than scholarship has thus far acknowledged. Several important journeys feature in the novel – including Thorpe's quasi-abduction of Catherine in his gig that I have touched upon previously. Each of the journeys Catherine endures comprises a unique set of circumstances. She travels varying overall distances; takes unfamiliar routes to and from different locations; sometimes she has companions; and other times travels alone, and in different vehicle types (including public and private carriages). As

²⁰ Examples of such studies include Jill Heydt-Stevenson's study of Austen's subtle approach to sexuality and sexual appetites *Unbecoming Conjunctions* (Palgrave, 2005), which recasts Thorpe's material obsession with his gig as an autoerotic preoccupation with his own body and masculinity. As I discussed in chapter one Jocelyn Harris speculates that Thorpe's character is a biting satire on the Prince of Wales in her book *Satire, Celebrity, and Politics* (Bucknell UP, 2017), claiming that they are both 'notorious speedster[s]', see page 169. Finally, Aoife Byrne's article "'Very Knowing Gigs'" (*Persuasions*, 2015, vol. 37, 198-207) traces Thorpe's vehicular fascination with social aspiration; see especially pages 201-203.

Landreth explains, spatial change leads to emotional change and Catherine's separate journeys elicit different psychological responses.²¹ The episode that I want to dedicate most of my analysis to is the journey that she is involuntarily forced to embark upon from Northanger Abbey, back to her home at Fullerton. This 70-mile trip is probably the most significant carriage journey that any of Austen's cast of heroines performs and its significance is reflected in Catherine's marked cognitive transformation over the route. Simone Broders claims that the journey to Fullerton 'adds a peripatetic quality to the curious heroine, who learns while she both physically and mentally meanders'.²² My analysis of Catherine's mental and physical progression through space will examine more closely the process of Catherine's emotional transformation and what it is that she learns on her return home.

Contrary to the polite customs of the time, General Tilney sends Catherine (or, more accurately, banishes her) from the abbey in a hired post-chaise without the courtesy of supplying a servant to chaperone her.²³ The news that Catherine is to leave Northanger Abbey is delivered by the General's daughter and Catherine's friend, Eleanor who, sensitive to the humiliation her father's actions will cause Catherine, struggles to find the words to ameliorate the insult:

²¹ Landreth, 'The Vehicle of the Soul', 115.

²² Simone Broders, 'The Fast and the Curious: The Role of Curiosity in the Gothic Heroine's "Grand Tour of the Mind"', *English Studies* 98, no. 8 (2017): 925.

²³ Joseph Drury provides useful background on the mechanics of travel by post-chaise. As a semi-public/semi-private vehicle, it differs from the stage and mail-coaches that I have thus far tackled more directly. According to Drury the post-chaise was one of the most popular vehicles to be introduced around the Turnpike explosion in the mid-century: 'First introduced into Britain from France in the early 1740s, this was a closed vehicle with four wheels, drawn by either two or four horses, and designed to carry no more than two or three passengers. In place of a coachman sitting on a box, it was typically driven by a post boy or postilion riding one of the leading horses, leaving the front of the vehicle open for a luggage rack and a window. Travelling in a postchaise took two main forms in the eighteenth century: one could either hire both vehicle and horses from postmasters or innkeepers *en route*; or one could purchase one's own carriage, [...] stop only to change horses, and save oneself the trouble of having to transfer one's luggage to a new vehicle at every stage.' See Drury *Novel Machines: Technology and Narrative Form in Enlightenment Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), 122.

I hope, I earnestly hope, that to your real safety it will be of none; but to everything else it is of the greatest consequence: to comfort, appearance, propriety, to your family, to the world. Were your friends, the Allens, still in Bath, you might go to them with comparative ease; a few hours would take you there; but a journey of seventy miles, to be taken post by you, at your age, alone, unattended!²⁴

Eleanor's apprehensions for Catherine's wellbeing extend beyond concerns for the physical in recognition of the damage to Catherine's reputation that travelling under such circumstances will make her vulnerable. Catherine's position constitutes a doubled danger for her physical and social situation that intensifies contemporary attitudes towards lone female travellers (as examined in chapter three). The post-chaise, like all vehicle typologies, had its own precise reputation in the cultural imagination of the Georgian public, and this was frequently pressed upon by mid-century writers. For instance Karl Philipp Moritz illustrates the post-chaise's renowned speed during his journey in 1782 by post from Oxford to Birmingham, in which he was 'driven along with such velocity from one place to another, that I seemed to myself as doing nothing less than travelling'.²⁵ William Felton, too, recommends the post-chaise for its 'lightness and simplicity', observing that it was 'a carriage intended only for expeditious travelling'.²⁶ The carriage's lightness, speed, and ready availability were characteristics that, as Joseph Drury notes, were the primary contributors to the post-chaise's characterisation as a particularly transgressive vehicle. As a 'uniquely effective instrument of motion', he explains, many writers and visual satirists employed the post-chaise as a useful apparatus for facilitating 'erotic adventure'.²⁷ If, as Drury articulates, the period's popular culture portrayed the post-chaise as a moving space in which abductions,

²⁴ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 166.

²⁵ Karl Philipp Moritz, *Travels, Chiefly on Foot, through Several Parts of England in 1782, Trans. by a Lady* (London, 1797), 185.

²⁶ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:50.

²⁷ Drury, *Novel Machines: Technology and Narrative Form in Enlightenment Britain*, 124.

elopements, and the ‘gratification of impatient desires’ played out, then we have a more profound sense of Catherine’s vulnerable position in which her homeward journey places her.²⁸

Rowlandson’s humorous depiction of a romantic mishap during what can safely be construed as an elopement in ‘Off She Goes’ (Figure 5.5) includes a post-chaise as the facilitating instrument of the clandestine nuptials. The print shows a corpulent woman who has broken a rung and fallen from a ladder, landing upon her lover – a man in military uniform – who lies beneath her, while a post-master laughs in the background and holds open the door of the post-chaise. Her red gown and yellow bonnet echo both the paintwork of the post-chaise and the post-master’s livery – the classic colourway of for-hire vehicles – implying, perhaps, her meretricious profession. The disgruntled innkeeper poking his head out of the window, and the smiling moon peering down upon them from behind the clouds, complete the scene of an illicit late-night escape. Rowlandson’s satirical imagery bears distinct similarities to David Ogborne’s mid-century comedy *The Merry Midnight Mistake* (1765), which lampoons a botched elopement between two lovers with a significant age difference. Dropluck, the hero Major Fetely’s right hand man, concocts a plan that will allow his master Major Fetely to steal away his under-age lover, Priscilla, who was ‘born and concealed in an Inn under the Care of Mrs. Fetely’.²⁹ In springing her from the inn, the end goal of Dropluck and Fetely’s plan is to travel with Priscilla to Scotland where the lovers can escape the constricts of the new marriage laws that encompassed England and Wales, and legally marry.³⁰ Crucially, the success of the plan is contingent on the speed of the post-chaise

²⁸ Drury, 125.

²⁹ David Ogborne, *The Merry Midnight Mistake, or Comfortable Conclusion* (Chelmsford: T. Toft, 1765).

³⁰ In 1753 Lord Hardwicke passed a new parliamentary law entitled ‘The Marriage Act 1753: An Act for the Better Preventing Clandestine Marriage’. Prior to the law passing, the old marriage customs encouraged clandestine and often bigamous marriages that frequently took place without parental consent. Further, before the Act couples were able to marry even if one or both of the partners were underage, such marriages were common in London in the 1740s among the wealthy. In reaction to the building pressure to address the pervasive issue of clandestine marriage, the 1753 Act, however, required there to be a formal ceremony conducted by a minister in a parish church of the Church of England for a marriage to be legally binding. Now,

that is to act as the getaway vehicle. Dropluck describes post-chaises, with their extraordinary speed, as ‘pretty magic machine[s], constructed on the same principle Fortunatus’s wishing cap was, for as soon as you get into it, you are hurried between heaven and earth with such fury, that you may be at Edinburgh in a few hours’.³¹ Austen, too, plays upon the period’s post-chaise elopement fantasies when Lydia Bennet, the flirtatious and reckless youngest of the five Bennet sisters in *Pride and Prejudice*, causes a familial crisis when she schemes to elope to Gretna Green. Lydia’s moralistic sister, Mary, lingers on the precariousness of female virtuousness, imploring that from Lydia’s mistakes her sisters must learn the valuable lesson ‘that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable—that one false step involves her in endless ruin—that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful’.³² Catherine is not eloping in *Northanger Abbey* and so her transit is different from my other post-chaise examples but these contexts shape the cultural associations of this carriage and means of travel.

it was illegal for any persons under the age of 21 to marry without parental consent or consent from a guardian. To evade the constraints of the Act, Melissa Ganz notes the sharp uptick in the number of couples that travelled to the border village of Gretna Green in Scotland where Hardwicke’s Act did not apply from the mid-eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. For a rigorous discussion of the Marriage Act, see Melissa J. Ganz, *Public Vows: Fictions of Marriage in the English Enlightenment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), especially 1-22 and 135.

³¹ Osborne, *The Merry Midnight Mistake, or Comfortable Conclusion*, 4.

³² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 219.



Figure 5.5: Thomas Rowlandson's 'Off She Goes' (1812). The British Museum's catalogue of print satire describes the scene as an elopement. Photographed with permission from the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale.

While Catherine demonstrates her own virtuous politeness by graciously accepting her ouster, she is not so naïve as to be unaware of the insult and malice in the General's actions, as her busy inner monologue reveals:

The manner in which it was done so grossly uncivil, hurrying her away without any reference to her own convenience, or allowing her even the appearance of choice as to

the time or mode of her travelling; of two days, the earliest fixed on, and of that almost the earliest hour, as if resolved to have her gone before he was stirring in the morning, that he might not be obliged even to see her. What could all this mean but an intentional affront?³³

Catherine's ejection from Northanger Abbey is distinct from the post-chaise examples I have thus far discussed in that, unlike the couples whom eloped together to the Scottish borders, Catherine is made to travel alone. As we will discover later in the narrative, the General had courted Catherine as an advantageous match for his son, Henry, based on false rumours (generated by John Thorpe) that she is the heiress of a considerable fortune. Upon discovering the truth of her wealth – or lack thereof – the General swiftly terminates his hospitality as Catherine no longer has any value to him, now that she no longer functions as an asset of marriage to consolidate his wealth. As such, the erotic associations of post-chaise travel that plagued the reputations of eloping couples are superseded by the analogoussness between hired public vehicles and low social and economic status. In the General's opinion, Catherine's worth is so negligible that she neither merits use of a private vehicle nor the protection of a servant to chaperone her on the long journey. Under such inauspicious conditions, it is little wonder that Catherine sets off on her journey insensible to anything but her own fraught emotions. The accuracy of Catherine's interpretation here contrasts with her previous, naïve readings of people and their actions (describing Isabella Thorpe as a great friend of 'fidelity and worth', for example).³⁴ Later in this analysis I will show how Catherine's appetite for Gothic fantasies skews her perceptions of reality, but it is also possible that Catherine's consumption of Gothic novels benefitted her interpretative skills by presenting her with an array of villains of whom to be wary. Claudia Johnson notes the tools

³³ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 167.

³⁴ Austen, 57.

that Gothic literature could have bestowed upon Charlotte Smith's heroine Geraldine in *Desmond* (1792), had she the opportunity to read any, in teaching her 'what to suspect from her protectors'.³⁵ Catherine, though, benefits from a litany of Radcliffe novels that instil a sense of suspicion in their patriarchs, they have taught her, Johnson points out, about 'distrust and concealment, about cruel secrets hidden beneath formidable and imposing surfaces'.³⁶ Catherine's reading practices, then, have helped her to marshal robust skills in interpretation that lend validity to her view of the world.

As we saw in chapter four methods of public transport like the stagecoach, as the name suggests, traversed the country via a series of stages or posts. Travelling in a hired post-chaise, Catherine's journey would similarly have been divided into stages of several miles apiece. Understanding the mechanics of travel by post provides a useful framework with which to analyse Catherine's psychological developments. Catherine's mental state echoes her journey in that it can be divided into three discernibly distinct stages. The first of these phases, coinciding with the outset of her physical journey, is characterised by excessive feeling which inhibits and influences the way Catherine interacts with the sensory world around her. For instance, in the first few miles we find that:

Catherine was too wretched to be fearful. The journey in itself had no terrors for her; and she began it without either dreading its length or feeling its solitariness. Leaning back in one corner of the carriage, in a violent burst of tears, she was conveyed some miles beyond the walls of the abbey before she raised her head; and the highest point of ground within the park was almost closed from her view before she was capable of turning her eyes towards it.

Unfortunately, the road she now travelled was the same which only ten days

³⁵ Johnson, *Jane Austen*, 33.

³⁶ Johnson, 40.

ago she had so happily passed along in going to and from Woodston; and, for fourteen miles, every bitter feeling was rendered more severe by the review of objects on which she had first looked under impressions so different. Every mile, as it brought her nearer Woodston, added to her sufferings, and when within the distance of five, she passed the turning which led to it, and thought of Henry, so near, yet so unconscious, her grief and agitation were excessive.³⁷

At first, we see that she neither comprehends her change of place nor the world outside the carriage perimeters, and Catherine's perspective at this stage of her journey is so inwards that she fails to acknowledge the presence of the post-chaise's retinue of attendants.³⁸ Richard Gill and Susan Gregory note that the characters in *Northanger Abbey* are regularly judged on 'their awareness and responsiveness to places', and these first few miles are indeed strangely anonymous.³⁹ Deprived of any sensory definition, description, or variation, just one single 'corner of the carriage' provides us with any sense of solidity to Catherine's setting. For Gregory and Gill, Catherine's minimal interactions with, and ignorance of, her surroundings on the Fullerton journey emblemise her 'lack of worldliness'.⁴⁰ This is certainly a convincing reading, yet I argue that Catherine has showcased considerable personal growth by the time she leaves the abbey both in terms of her ability to reasonably judge the worth of other characters, and in her own sense of personhood.⁴¹ I propose that Catherine's unresponsiveness to place identified by Gregory and Gill can be more productively analysed

³⁷ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 170.

³⁸ Travelling in a hired post-chaise, Catherine would have been accompanied by a post boy, a driver, and perhaps a postillion.

³⁹ Richard Gill and Susan Gregory, *Mastering the Novels of Jane Austen* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 34.

⁴⁰ Gill and Gregory, 34.

⁴¹ Sheila J. Kindred's article 'From Puppet to Person: The Development of Catherine's Character in the Bath Chapters of *Northanger Abbey*' (*Persuasions*, vol.20, 1998, 196-206) presents an excellent timeline of Catherine's progression into personhood, where the mishaps, misunderstandings, and social faux pas in the Bath chapters of volume 1 create the foundations of Catherine's sense of self and her ability to objectively decode and judge the moral worth of other characters. I argue that her development only continues during her time at *Northanger Abbey*.

if we broaden our focus to also include the first iteration of the journey in our consideration. Catherine's passivity in the post-chaise as she is 'conveyed some miles beyond the walls', then, takes on a layered meaning. On the surface Catherine's inaction reflects the autonomy she was unable to exercise in when and how she was to leave the Abbey.⁴² On a fundamental level, though, the violence of Catherine's emotions suggests that to be 'conveyed' is more than a physical removal but also an affective transport catalysed by the vehemence of her feeling. The carriage provides a featureless space in which Catherine can release the emotions she had contained while in the presence of Eleanor and her wretchedness relieves her from comprehending the mundane evils of coach travel – its length and its solitariness.

However, Catherine does gather the strength to '[turn] her eyes toward' the view behind her and, in turn, displays an intense awareness of the landscape through which she travels.⁴³ These next 14 miles are familiar to Catherine as the post-chaise retraces the route that she took to the abbey with Henry in his curricle several weeks earlier. Rather than facilitating a Burkean appreciation of aesthetics and sublime feeling, which we shall find present in Elizabeth Bennet's experience, the progression of the post-chaise through familiar territory forces Catherine to confront uncomfortable and extreme feelings of grief that are deeply rooted to the spatial realm. Before I elaborate upon Catherine's fraught interactions with her geographical surroundings while travelling in the post-chaise, I want to examine the curricle journey which, as Dussinger points out, had a 'powerfully liberating effect' on Catherine's mind.⁴⁴ In fact, Catherine's psychological state on the first iteration of the journey is drastically contrasted to the amorphousness of overwhelming feeling she initially suffers in the post-chaise. Her thoughts and emotions take shape, have definition, and can be easily

⁴² Etymologically the term 'convey' is imbued with connotations of secrecy and mystery, and given the early hour at which the post-chaise is ordered for Catherine, it is easy to interpret her removal from the abbey as the General's attempts to pretend as though she had never been present.

⁴³ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 170.

⁴⁴ John A. Dussinger, "'The Glory of Motion': Carriages and Consciousness in the Early Novel', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 1, no. 2 (1989): 139.

followed. For example, her meditation on Henry's style of driving, noting his skill as he 'drove so well – so quietly – without making any disturbance, without parading to her, or swearing at them [the horses]' follows a logical sequence, uninhibited by the intense anxiety we see later.⁴⁵ She has the clarity of mind to compare the differences in driving style between Henry and John Thorpe, the 'only [other] gentleman-coachman' she had encountered, and she is even able to form an opinion on the means of her conveyance which she believes to be the 'prettiest equipage in the world'.⁴⁶

Clear though Catherine's thoughts are, they are also relatively superficial. Further, Catherine's interactions while in the curricle are limited to her immediate vicinity. Despite the curricle's open construction which provided an unobstructed view of the landscape, Catherine seems unaware of the spaces through which she progresses. Catherine's primary interests wander no further than the curricle's physical perimeters – the specifics of the carriage's motion under Henry's command and the material conditions of the carriage itself. More than anything, the true delight of the journey centres on her proximity to Henry: 'To be driven by him, next to being dancing with him, was certainly the greatest happiness in the world'.⁴⁷ The geographical space and the landmarks through which she passes are relegated to second place, and it seems that only once the journey draws toward its culmination does Catherine begin to cast her attention fully outwards. She impatiently anticipates a view of the abbey, as 'every bend in the road was expected with solemn awe to afford a glimpse of its massy walls of grey stone, rising amidst a grove of ancient oaks, with the last beams of the sun playing in beautiful splendour on its high Gothic windows'.⁴⁸ Indeed, over the course of the journey from Bath to the Tilney home, Catherine creates her own Gothic narratives in expectation of the thrill she imagines the abbey will deliver, a desire that has been fuelled by

⁴⁵ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 113–14.

⁴⁶ Austen, 113.

⁴⁷ Austen, 114.

⁴⁸ Austen, 117.

her appetite for the in-vogue Gothic novel. Henry stokes her desires of a Radcliffean adventure by spinning his own Gothic narrative in which the anticipation of ‘a dagger, [...] a few drops of blood, [...] the remains of some instrument of torture’ is never realised, but stopped short by the untimely extinguishing of a candle.⁴⁹ Catherine, enthralled by Henry’s stories of ‘sliding panels and tapestry’, ‘gloomy passages’ and ‘secret subterraneous communication’ between her apartment and an ancient chapel, is transported both physically (she believes) and imaginatively into a Gothic horror.⁵⁰ Her interaction with the spatial realm, then, is not the conscientious topographical response that Gregory and Gill argue was, for Austen, ‘the equivalent of discrimination and insight’.⁵¹ Instead, Catherine’s active imagination positions her as the architect of what she sees, the Gothic image that exists solely in her mind blurs the distinction between what is really there and what she perceives.⁵²

By contrast, once she traverses the same 14 miles in the post-chaise Catherine has shed her former preoccupation with the Gothic. Unencumbered by the stresses of that imaginative world, Catherine’s concerns now centre on the social implications of true events, past and present. Critically, both her optical focus and, by extension, emotional focus, are firmly concentrated outwards toward the landscape. We have seen how Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* was able to look upon her collection of household detritus and dull the painful memories they conjured by substituting other, more positive ones, to the extent they intermingled and became indistinguishable from one another. Catherine, though, has not had the benefit of the passage of time to grow accustomed to her pain as Fanny did hers. Views

⁴⁹ Austen, 116.

⁵⁰ Austen, 116.

⁵¹ Gill and Gregory, *Mastering the Novels of Jane Austen*, 34.

⁵² The disappointment of the abbey’s modern appearance seems, at least initially, only to deepen Catherine’s need to create a Gothic atmosphere. Her time at Northanger Abbey is coloured by her desire to seek out what she imagines to be there – a Gothic narrative in which the General is cast as the villain, who has perhaps murdered his wife, a plot modelled on Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance* – but which is not. On her clandestine tour of Henry and Eleanor’s late mother’s apartments in search of proof to her fantasies, though, Catherine’s receptiveness to the abbey’s architecture eventually awakens her to reality. The modern rooms offer no support for her wildly implausible suspicions, and her embarrassing meeting with Henry moments later concludes one more step on her progression toward knowledge.

and objects that at first were of secondary importance now rise up the hierarchy for their associations with Henry, made all the more precious since, at this juncture in the narrative, Catherine believes her erstwhile curricula ride across the outskirts of the Abbey will never be repeated. Now, every ‘review of objects which she had first looked under impressions so different’ viscerally affects her as the pleasant memories she has emblematised into the passing landscape creates an emotional dislocation with her present anguish that exacerbates ‘every bitter feeling’.⁵³ This effect only worsens the closer the post-chaise draws to Woodston, Henry’s parish: ‘Every mile [...] added to her sufferings, and when within the distance of five, she passed the turning which led to it, and thought of Henry, so near, yet so unconscious, her grief and agitation were excessive.’⁵⁴ I argue that in comparing these two versions of the journey, we can see that the progress Catherine has already made in terms of her insight and discrimination while at the abbey continues to develop during her limited time in the post-chaise. Her intense sensitivity to the passing objects is, in fact, partly due to her passage from naïve girl incapable of separating fact from Gothic fantasy, and entrance into the world as a more engaged, complex, and knowledgeable young woman. Catherine’s interactions with space and place on her journey home is geared toward reconciling emotional pain, the views she passes represent a reflection on or connection with a beloved past scenario that seems unlikely to reoccur.

The contained physical space of the post-chaise creates the material conditions for Catherine’s intellectual and emotional growth. As the expansive lens of the Gothic imagination draws everything into view and turns Catherine into a fanciful wanderer prior to the journey, the physical limitations of the walls of the post-chaise create the conditions for development. Her passage through the familiar landscape forces her to confront her feelings,

⁵³ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 170.

⁵⁴ Austen, 170.

whereas her interests in Gothic literature encourage Catherine to avoid the potentially painful process of engaging with and understanding her deeper emotional intelligence in its provision of chilling escapist fantasies. The carriage walls serve to contain her while simultaneously providing the conditions for emotional and mental focus. For instance, while the carriage's passage through the landscape presents her with an expanse of geographical space coupled with the aesthetic and emotional inheritance that is inherited in that space, this new knowledge is filtered through the windows of the carriage and moderated by the pace of the vehicle. The carriage's rate of transit ensures the scenes outside of its boundaries are filtered and focused, and therefore offers a new way to engage her and reconcile her emotional turmoil compared to the flights of fancy excited by her appetite for Gothic fiction.

The effects of the post-chaise's speed manifest in Catherine's anxious emotional response to the views from the carriage window. Drury notes that the extreme velocity of post-chaise travel could, for many travellers, produce a 'species of visceral pleasure akin to the effects of moderate physical exercise'.⁵⁵ The first 14-mile stage of her journey – a distance we know would have taken one hour to traverse at the very least – is an unrelenting emotional tour from which Catherine is allowed no respite. Excruciating though we have seen this to be, perhaps the expeditiousness of the post-chaise and its incitement of anxiety is beneficial to Catherine's overall emotional wellbeing and development. Although Catherine is conveyed against her will tantalisingly close to Woodston where Henry, unaware of her ejection from the abbey, is delivering the morning sermon, the painful crescendo of feeling this induces only lasts for as long as Catherine still physically occupies the environs of Woodston. Thanks to the expedited motion that the post-chaise provides, the zenith of Catherine's anxiety is quickly surmounted as the carriage doesn't linger long enough to protract her grief any further. Once the post-chaise passes Woodston and the familiar

⁵⁵ Drury, *Novel Machines: Technology and Narrative Form in Enlightenment Britain*, 123.

landscape is left in the distance behind her, Catherine crosses a physical boundary in space *and* a boundary in her own mind as she passes into unknown surroundings.

Catherine, on what I identify as the second stage of her emotional transport, recalls her focus back inwards, as she retreats into an internal phase that sees her lost in a reverie of incessant uneasiness and anxiety from which she can find little repose:

In this unceasing recurrence of doubts and inquiries, on any one article of which her mind was incapable of more than momentary repose, the hours passed away, and her journey advanced much faster than she looked for. The pressing anxieties of thought, which prevented her from noticing anything before her, when once beyond the neighbourhood of Woodston, saved her at the same time from watching her progress; and though no object on the road could engage a moment's attention, she found no stage of it tedious. From this, she was preserved too by another cause, by feeling no eagerness for her journey's conclusion; for to return in such a manner to Fullerton was almost to destroy the pleasure of a meeting with those she loved best, even after an absence such as hers—an eleven weeks' absence...⁵⁶

Here, the privacy of the carriage allows Catherine to perform an important emotional transformation, as she works through and reconciles these discomforts in her own mind undisturbed. This seems to be the bulk of the journey and despite Catherine's anxiousness to prolong the journey, as her rapidly fluctuating thoughts speed by, so too do her surroundings. Across all her fictions, Austen conscientiously documents distances and lengths of journeys – we know that Mr Woodhouse in *Emma* is nervous about the quarter mile journey around the corner to Randalls, or that Elizabeth Bennet walked four miles from Longbourne to Netherfield, for instance. Here, against her usual precision, Austen gives us no precise

⁵⁶ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 171.

distances, no notion of how many hours Catherine sinks into the corner of the post-chaise. We can, however, work backwards in order to ascertain the length and distance of this leg of Catherine's journey. The first stage, the painful 14 miles of fresh tears and heartache, passed over relatively quickly – though would have taken at least an hour. We know from post-chaise advertisements that the greatest speeds they achieved were in the region of 14 miles per hour. The final stage, which I shall elaborate upon briefly, creeps into being when Catherine, rather reluctantly spies the 'well-known spire which would announce her within twenty miles of home'.⁵⁷ Of the 70-mile journey we now have 34 miles accounted for, and so we can deduce that second stage of her journey accounts for 36 miles, making it the longest of all stages. Austen's omission of physical distance and precise time indicators powerfully underscores Catherine's insular mindset during the second phase of her journey, but also situates us with her in her experience of undifferentiated time and space that passes much faster than she is willing to accept.

Broders notes that '[t]he state of being in motion entails a perpetual shift in perspective,' and that the dispensing of knowledge 'either forbidden... or unavailable at the beginning of the journey' is a useful consequence of this continuous physical and mental motion.⁵⁸ Similarly, as Catherine's journey continues further there is another quite a radical shift in Catherine's outlook and mentality that marks a change from inwardness toward interaction with others. Finally, she begins to engage with the postmasters, who have been travelling with her all along and to whom she is indebted for place names and tidbits of information about her route, signalling the end of Catherine's internal phase and ushering in a new, more sociable phase. Here, the sociability of the carriage, whereby Catherine can mingle with people unknown to her, soon begets the final phase of Catherine's emotional

⁵⁷ Austen, 171.

⁵⁸ Broders, 'The Fast and the Curious', 924.

journey. This final stage, the last twenty miles that takes them roughly eleven hours to complete (a vastly protracted journey time compared to the first 14 miles), we are removed from Catherine's experience and instead view the journey very much through the narrator's:

I bring back my heroine to her home in solitude and disgrace; and no sweet elation of spirits can lead me into minuteness. A heroine in a hack post-chaise, is such a blow upon sentiment, as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand. Swiftly therefore shall her post-boy drive through the village, amid the gaze of Sunday groups, and speedy shall be her descent from it.⁵⁹

It is interesting that the narrator begins to depict Catherine arriving home as a heroine, in noble dignity as a countess riding in a chaise-and four, and I suggest this characterisation is a subtle nod toward Catherine's well-known propensity for fantasy. Mediated through the narrator, however, and swiftly brought back to the reality of Catherine's return home, the brief chaise-and-four fantasy acknowledges Catherine's past but also indicates she has grown a little wiser to the dangers of fanciful thought. Catherine has been dreading the culmination of the final stage – arriving home – for the majority of the 70 miles, for fears of being seen humiliated in a hired vehicle and without a servant to attend her. Indeed, the narrator highlights her own 'humiliation' in recounting the final few steps, who hurries the process along to spare any lingering dread. But Catherine, almost in defiance of the narrator's version of the journey, seems not to share in the narrator's vision of humiliation. In fact, we only have a very vague sense of Catherine's state of mind upon arriving at the sweep gate of her home, the narrator's best guess: 'whatever might be the distress of Catherine's mind'.⁶⁰ In any case, once Catherine alights and embraces her family for the first time, the anxieties and emotional turmoil that she worked through on her journey have been left behind, 'she was

⁵⁹ Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, 172.

⁶⁰ Austen, 172.

even happy!’.⁶¹ Catherine, I suggest, has not only been physically conveyed from one location to another, but has been emotionally transported from a place of despair to one of repair, undertaking an important lesson in emotional maturation.

Prospective Touring in *Pride and Prejudice*

Catherine’s experience on her long journey home from the abbey encapsulates period notions of the relationship between emotional transportation and the body in motion. In this final section I turn to examine another expression of emotional transportation, though as we shall find, its expression is not directly instigated by motion but somewhat abstracted from it. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the Bennet sisters belong to a social class in which women were expected to appear, to use Katharine Glover’s term, ‘conspicuously mobile’ in order to maintain ‘full participation in the polite world’. Glover explains that mobility and movement from one locale to another were defining features of the elite experience, but we know also that accessing this mobility for the women of the Georgian period was not without its obstructions.⁶² Austen was acutely aware of issues surrounding feminine access to mobility and Ewers has noted the parallels between Austen’s heroines and Austen herself in that their social rank required ‘mobility to be genteel, but where circumstances made this difficult’.⁶³ As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, masculine and feminine experience of travel varied greatly; for the men of Austen’s fiction, traversing distance was part and parcel of daily life and elicited little in the way of anticipation or excitement. Austen’s women, however, endured greater curtailments to their mobility. Trips to castles or the seaside which for men were simply ways to pass the time assume a greater significance for Austen’s

⁶¹ Austen, 172.

⁶² Katharine Glover, *Elite Women and Polite Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011), 139.

⁶³ Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 169.

heroines, who think beyond the journey itself to anticipate and envision the possibilities these journeys might afford them. In this section I will examine the cultural significance of journeys and the feminine experience of accessing the conspicuous mobility that was expected of the genteel ranks, in turn using my findings to contextualise Elizabeth Bennet's emotional response not to being *in* motion, but to the *prospect* of being in motion.

The Bennet family, existing at the very modest end of the gentry social rank, wield just enough financial power for the maintenance of a single carriage, a sturdy coach. According to Felton, 'a plain substantial coach is to be recommended in preference to a slight ornamental' horse-drawn vehicle in a household 'where only one carriage is kept, and the use of it almost constantly required'.⁶⁴ Owning their own vehicle relieves some of the social pitfalls of conspicuous mobility by making them largely self-sufficient, unlike, for instance, Miss Bates and her mother in *Emma* who have to defer to the generosity of others and their offer of a seat in their carriages in order to participate in polite society. That said, the routine strains upon the carriage and its horses in a family of seven mean that the Bennets' movement is still subject to restrictions. One particular incident with the eldest daughter, Jane, encapsulates the difficulties of accessing mobility on both a ranked and gendered level and demonstrates the potentially severe consequences of curtailed access to horse-drawn vehicles. Following a meeting at a dance, Jane accepts an invitation to dine at Netherfield from the sister of Mr Bingley (the latter being the eligible young newcomer whom Jane eventually marries). She requests the family coach for the four-mile journey from Longbourne but is refused its use by her mother who insists she ride on horseback, a scheme that Mrs Bennet hopes will increase the likelihood of an overnight invitation to avoid the impending heavy rain.⁶⁵ Mrs Bennet's obsession with marrying off her daughters over the course of the

⁶⁴ Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*, 1796, 2:33.

⁶⁵ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 22.

narrative is part of the novel's comedy, but her paranoia also satirises the economic precariousness of lower-level gentry like themselves, whose family estate is entailed to another upon the death of the head of the household, Mr Bennet.⁶⁶ Mrs Bennet's attempts to speed up the courtship between Mr Bingley and her daughter reveal much about the workings of the household. Her dictation over Jane's means of travelling to Netherfield to ensure that Jane must stay at least one night, but it also implies how the pressure on the family carriage is too great to relinquish its use to just one daughter over a protracted period of time. Jane's ease of movement is not only derailed by Mrs Bennet's concerns for securing the family's future, Mr Bennet also admits that the horses are required to work on the farm indicating that the pressures of the household added in equal measure to the curtailment of the Bennet sisters' mobility. It is evident, then, that owning a carriage did not ensure unlimited physical mobility, especially for daughters (or even for the eldest daughter), and therefore access to full participation in polite society. The economic pressures of a large household dictate the extent at which women of the lower gentry, like the Bennets, are able to enjoy the freedoms their family carriage could provide them with.

If the restrictions on Jane's access to the carriage and its provision of freer, more expansive mobility are replicated for all of five of the Bennet daughters, then one particular period in Elizabeth Bennet's life stands out as an uncharacteristically mobile time.

⁶⁶ Social rank and the financial precarity of those families, like the Bennets, whom exist on the peripheries of the landed gentry, have garnered much scholarly attention. Indeed, as Robert Markley points out, wealth acts as one of the guiding principles of *Pride and Prejudice* as its characters 'view [their] world through prisms of money, inheritance law, and the values and obligations imposed on gentlemen and gentlewomen by their estates'. Markley's essay illustrates the intricacies of social rank in the novel in economic terms, highlighting that although Mr. Bennet's annual income of £2,000 is not insubstantial and places the family within the lower echelons of the genteel ranks, unless he produce a male heir or his daughters marry, upon his death the women of Mr. Bennet's family risk slipping into economic and social obscurity thanks to the entail on his estate. Edward Copeland's chapter on shopping and the pseudo-gentry elucidates further the nuances in social rank within the rural elite, pitched against the backdrop of genteel consumption and attitudes to spending. He notes that Mr. Collins' covetous examinations of the fittings and furnishings of Longbourne, which he will acquire upon Mr. Bennet's passing, is representative of the power of material acquisition as 'the pseudo-gentry's lifeline to station'. See Robert Markley, 'The Economic Context', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Pride and Prejudice'*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 79–86; Edward Copeland, *Women Writing about Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790-1820*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism ; 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 96–99.

Elizabeth's experiences of expansive domestic transit during this period sees her visit her aunt and uncle, the Gardiners, who live 24 miles from Longbourne in London, where they propose an extended tour of the Lake District and surrounding area. From the Gardiners' home, Elizabeth continues on to Rosings Park to visit her friend Charlotte in her marital home – Mr Collins' Hunsford parsonage. As Elizabeth's visit to Rosings Park draws to a close, broader inequalities between masculine and feminine travel are exposed when Lady Catherine de Bourgh promises *one* space in her barouche to Elizabeth and her cousin Maria for a trip to London. Her condescension to take both girls is dependent on arbitrary factors as cool weather conditions, suggesting that access to mobility for women was not egalitarian even within class boundaries, but was a privilege bestowed on a select few and subject to perpetual uncertainty.⁶⁷ The contrast between masculine free movement and feminine curtailed mobility is made all the more salient as Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam cut short their stay at Rosings, announcing their departure and taking their leave in the space of less than 24 hours. Meanwhile, Lady Catherine's promises of a trip to London (made just after her nephews' departures) are predicated on Elizabeth extending her stay for a further one month. While Austen's male characters (particularly rich and elite ones like Mr Darcy) are free to travel seemingly without the need for permission, planning, or forethought of any kind – Frank Churchill's 32-mile round trip to London for a haircut is a case in point – her heroines' travel plans are regulated by outside intervention, negotiation, and subject to the whims of benefactors. During Elizabeth's period of heightened mobility, it is important to acknowledge that these gendered inequalities in access to mobility still impinge upon Elizabeth's travel plans. Elizabeth's transit across the country is not solo, nor was it her own personal plan initiated and financed by herself, but part of a pre-arranged journey or at the behest of her generous family.

⁶⁷ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 162.

Such restrictions, I posit, contribute to the anticipation and excitement that Elizabeth experiences when she is presented with the opportunity to travel with her aunt and uncle. The following passage from the *Pride and Prejudice* demonstrates how great an effect upon Elizabeth's emotions that the notion of a future journey has:

Before they were separated by the conclusion of the play, she had the unexpected happiness of an invitation to accompany her uncle and aunt in a tour of pleasure which they proposed taking in the summer.

'We have not quite determined how far it shall carry us,' said Mrs. Gardiner, 'but perhaps to the Lakes.'

No scheme could have been more agreeable to Elizabeth, and her acceptance of the invitation was most ready and grateful. 'My dear, dear aunt,' she rapturously cried, 'what delight! what felicity! You give me fresh life and vigour. Adieu to disappointment and spleen. 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 other 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.'⁶⁸

This passage plays neatly into the debates over vehicular and emotional transport examined above. Elizabeth imagines the journey's edifying effects on her aesthetic appreciation and in so doing, echoes Burke's comments on the contribution of the carriage's motion to one's understanding of art and beauty. The prospect of this journey elicits an excitement from

⁶⁸ Austen, 119.

Elizabeth that is not replicated by any of her mobile male counterparts, nor, indeed, by any of Austen's male characters. Her rapturous cries of delight and felicity speak to the feminine experience of circumscribed mobility.

The prospect of travel also presents an opportunity for Elizabeth to escape, both emotionally and physically, from her strained relationship with Mr Darcy – at this stage in the narrative, Elizabeth is still under the impression that Darcy has acted amorally against Mr Wickham. Elizabeth's observation 'What are men to rocks and mountains', are particularly poignant. She implies that the natural scenes and sublime beauty she is anticipating will eclipse any discomfort she may be feeling over the past events with Darcy. The tour has the potential to dislocate Elizabeth from familiar locales which harbour memories of connections she finds distasteful by sheer geographical distance, but also the unfamiliar and, indeed, sublime scenery she will soon witness provides her with necessary perspective. In Catherine's journey in *Northanger Abbey* we can see Elizabeth's imagined journey toward emotional clarity in action. As we have seen, initially the 14 or so miles of familiar landscape bring Catherine extreme pain as the route reminds her of Henry Tilney. It isn't until she traverses unfamiliar landscape, with the assistance of the coachmen who point out place names and landmarks, that Catherine's mind begins to ease. For Elizabeth, the rocks and mountains she is yet to visit hold the potential to both edify and soothe.

In her genuine appreciation of the opportunity to travel, Elizabeth differentiates herself, and her aunt and uncle, from other travellers. We can assume, given its prevalence among young men more so than young women, that Elizabeth is referencing the privileged young men on their European Grand Tours. These tours abroad were designed with the intention of enabling the traveller to cultivate aesthetic understanding and appreciation, but in all likelihood were spent more hedonistically. I mentioned in my introduction to this chapter the different experiences of travel between men and women, whereby men's freer access to

expansive geographical transit reduces their overall appreciation of their mobile privilege, compared to women whose curtailed access to this mobility yet pressure to simultaneously appear mobile increases their appreciation of travel. Elizabeth's urgency to appreciate the sublime landscape more astutely than 'the generality of travellers' underpins the gendered experience of travel, providing evidence that women were more predisposed to conscientious travel as they utilise their time in transit to their personal development.

Conclusion

Over the course of the eighteenth century, movement and travel had increasingly become a ubiquitous facet of everyday life for people both in rural outposts and urban centres, and particularly so during the latter decades of the Georgian period when Austen was producing her fictions. Indeed, as Elizabeth Bohls writes, '[i]t is scarcely possible to discuss the eighteenth-century novel without speaking of travel'.¹ Thanks to concomitant innovations in domestic infrastructure and vehicular technology, the carriage's popularity increased exponentially over the Georgian period, simultaneously transforming domestic travel from an act of necessity to a leisurely pastime. As a reflection of its rapid proliferation, the carriage increasingly played important roles and operated in multiple ways in the period's literature, so much so that Ewers insists that 'transport and infrastructure profoundly influenced texts'.² Percy G. Adams' landmark study on travel writing and its intersections with the emerging novel genre encapsulates the direction of much of the scholarly interest in eighteenth-century mobility and its literary representations that has leaned toward geographical enquiries that map the period's changing mobilities.³ With the recent and enduring scholarly turn toward the material in eighteenth-century studies, it is surprising, then, that the primary object that facilitated this increase in national mobility and which had a defining influence on the shape of the novel genre, the carriage, has dipped under the radar. The existing field of study relating to eighteenth-century technologies of motion has thus far been characterised by an energy for collecting and connoisseurship, which has sidestepped the carriage's rich potential for social and cultural revelations. My thesis has sought to bridge this gap in knowledge by

¹ Elizabeth A. Bohls, 'Age of Peregrination: Travel Writing and the Eighteenth-Century Novel', in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 97.

² Ewers, *Mobility in the English Novel from Defoe to Austen*, 192.

³ See Percy G. Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

centring the carriage in my exploration of Georgian mobility and material culture. My thesis rests on the insight that the horse-drawn carriage held a key position in eighteenth-century public and private life as the nexus in which mobility and materiality intersected. By redressing the balance of scholarly material investigation into Austen's works which hitherto focused on smaller domestic objects, the minutia of her material world, my thesis has underscored the carriage's capacity for social, cultural, political, and indeed aesthetic signification.

Through the writing of Felton and Bridges Adams, we understand the breadth and depth of the aesthetic and mechanical innovations that underpinned the carriage's ascension to Britain's ultimate positional good over the course of the eighteenth century. Their trade literature provides insight into the industry's operation and presents a snapshot of the period's accelerated diversification in carriage typology that had not previously been witnessed. Adjacent to technical trade literature, representations of the carriage saturated media from visual satire to portraiture. The potent combination of its diverse forms and abundance upon eighteenth-century thoroughfares made the carriage rich subject matter and ensured its utility in literary genres as well. For Cynthia Wall, our twenty-first century ocular interpretation of a narrative that sees only a murky abundance of *things* sans context, differs vastly from the eighteenth-century propensity toward referential interpretations of a narrative's collection of objects. She notes that 'early eighteenth-century readers were able to see – to fill out, expand on, rehydrate – the local, immediate signs of a shared culture, a shared visual landscape of meaningful, referential detail.'⁴ My thesis has shown the carriage's participation in such networks of assumed knowledge that Wall identifies; as rich emblems of a 'shared culture', carriages were especially effective shorthand from which readers could extrapolate meaning. While novelists continually enlisted the carriage to serve a range of narrative purposes, only

⁴ Wall, *The Prose of Things*, 8–9.

under Austen's guidance does the carriage's unique ability to attach itself to a broad range of characters and to showcase their desires, ambitions, and secrets truly become apparent. From her earliest writing, Austen demonstrated the carriage's pliability as a narrative tool and mined its rich capacity for characterisation. In 'Love and Freindship' we see Austen's early implementation of the carriage trope that she would continue refining into its elegant articulations in her mature works. Here, the teenage Austen drew from the phaeton carriage's symbolic inheritance as an emblem of fast-paced modernity that struggled to strike a balance between pleasure-seeking and moral growth. Later, in *Emma*, Augusta Elton's obsession over the barouche-landau – a carriage that remains perpetually offstage throughout the narrative but which is invoked at every opportunity – underscores the inescapable pressures faced by women of the rising mercantile classes to establish themselves as polite members of the genteel ranks. John Thorpe's mendacious claims at grandeur and gentlemanly gentility in *Northanger Abbey* is at once propped up by the gig but simultaneously betrayed by its slipperiness; as an imitation of a more genteel vehicle the gig, like its owner, also pretends to something greater than it actually is.

Despite Austen's acute focus on the limited social worlds of the country elite, her works establish an intricate grammar of space and place that interrogates the changing relationships between motion and emotion, the boundaries between interiors and exteriors, and social hierarchies mapped across vehicular planes. Conversations held within carriages and the politics of seating arrangements are common stock of the eighteenth-century novel's use of the carriage as a narrative trope. De Quincey articulated the differentiation of mail-coach passengers which transcended a simplistic separation based on physical boundaries of 'inside' and 'outside', but was predicated on perceptions of social class and physical zones of privilege. Stage-coach scenes executed by authors such as Samuel Johnson, Richard Steele, and Delarivier Manley, to name a few, present heterogenous groups attempting to navigate

the pitfalls of conversation produced within carriage spaces that provide little to no guidelines for civil talk. So too, does the carriage feature as an effective means of plausibly relocating narrative action both temporally and geographically elsewhere, as Fielding demonstrates in *Joseph Andrews*. What makes Austen's use of the carriage trope so masterful, though, is her refusal to rely solely on a particular interpretation of the trope, but instead her works cultivate all its variant iterations – which had become so recognisable from decades of reproduction – and re-deploys them within a new set of parameters. From *Mansfield Park* and *Sense and Sensibility* we see how Austen's rendering of the carriage space as a locus of sociability differs from the early representations by her contemporaries in that the occupants of her carriages are all familiar with one another to different degrees. As such, we see the social machinations most regularly illuminated within the confines of public modes of vehicular transport between strangers play out at new and different levels of intimacy. In works such as *Emma* and *Northanger Abbey*, patriarchal violence that plays out in morbid detail in Richardson's writing here stops short of physical transgressions against the boundaries of the feminine body, instead Austen's scenes see heroines emerge from carriages unscathed, if sometimes a little embarrassed. Finally, from *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* once again, Austen flouts the commonly held assumptions over women's diminished capacity for extended travel by giving us heroines who use their access to mobility conscientiously, to cultivate aesthetic appreciation, and emotional strength. Upon closer inspection, then, the carriage proves itself to be far more than just a conveyance, but a material and spatial entity that operates on far more subtle levels than its outward showiness would at first suggest. Instead, the carriage holds a mirror up to our social and economic anxieties the we seek to conceal behind the veil of material goods, but balances uncovering the uncomfortable truth of such human weaknesses by fostering our capacity to feel, emote, and transform.

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