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**Narrated Perception and Point of View**

**in the Novels of Jane Austen**

Thesis submitted in partial requirement for the degree of

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**in the Novels of Jane Austen**

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Doctor of Philosophy

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*A la memoria de mis yayos, que siempre me animaron a hacer un doctorado. Con amor y gratitud.*

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## ****Contents****

Abstracti

Copyright Noticeii

List of Abbreviationsiii

Chapter 1: Introduction 1-15

Chapter 2: Narrated Perception (NP) 16-41

2.0 Foreword 16

2.1 Narrated Perception: An Overview 19

2.2 Narrated Perception in Jane Austen’s Novels 33

2.3 Review 39

Chapter 3: The Senses in the Eighteenth Century 42-91

3.0 Foreword 42

3.1 Sensory Perception in Science and Philosophy 43

3.1.1 Rationalism and Empiricism 43

3.1.2 Science and Sensibility. Sight and Touch. Periodicals 56

3.2 Sensory Perception and the Sentimental Novel 67

3.2.1 Sterne, Burney and Austen 74

3.3 Review 89

Chapter 4: NP in Jane Austen’s Early Novels **92**-147

4.0 Foreword 92

4.1 Juvenilia, *Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon* 93

4.2 *Sense and Sensibility* 94

4.3 *Pride and Prejudice* 111

4.4 *Northanger Abbey* 127

4.5 Review 145

Chapter 5: NP in Jane Austen’s Late Novels148-194

5.0 Foreword 148

5.1 *Mansfield Park* 149

5.2 *Persuasion* 172

5.3 Review 193

Chapter 6: NP in Jane Austen’s *Emma* 195-231

6.0 Foreword 195

6.1 *Emma* 196

6.2 Review 229

Chapter 7: Conclusions232-240

References241-259

**Epilogue 260-**261

*Abstract*

This thesis is a stylistic analysis of a narrative technique known as ‘narrated perception’ (Cohn 1978: 133-134; Fludernik 1993: 305-309) in the novels of Jane Austen. The analysis looks at the language features that characterise passages containing narrated perception (NP), and connects those features with the construction and interpretation of narrative point of view. NP implicitly portrays the sensory perceptions of a fictional character by describing an object or event as it would look, sound, feel, smell or taste to that character. In the following passage from Austen’s *Persuasion* (1818), Captain Wentworth has left the room abruptly and Anne is left wondering why. After a few minutes, ‘footsteps were heard returning; the door opened; it was himself’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 222). It is up to the reader to interpret the description ‘the door opened; it was himself’ as Anne’s visual perception of Wentworth, with the implicit emotional implications this event has for her. A few scholars have studied NP as a distinct form of consciousness representation, but in general it has not received much critical attention. The analysis provides new insights into Austen’s style in the representation of characters’ consciousness, and contributes to a better understanding of NP as a narrative form. The research is primarily based on a qualitative analysis of passages. This is complemented by a quantification of instances of NP, aimed at revealing patterns and relationships between the novels. The analysis shows that NP represents perceptions more mimetically than other techniques; that it can be used with a range of functions and effects, such as irony and suspense; that it has the potential to mislead the reader in the interpretation of fictional events, and reflects the ideas of the time about the connections between sensory perception, attention, knowledge and emotion.

*Copyright Notice*

The work covered in Chapters 2 and 6 of this thesis partly draws on an article which previously appeared in the journal *Language and Literature* and is therefore subject to copyright. I am grateful to the editors of the journal for permission to incorporate this material here. I thank the editors and the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA) for selecting the article for the 2012 PALA Prize.

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## 

*List of Abbreviations*

DS: Direct Speech

FIS: Free Indirect Speech

IS: Indirect Speech

NRSA: Narrative Report of a Speech Act

DT: Direct Thought

FIT: Free Indirect Thought

NRTA: Narrative Report of a Thought Act

NI: Internal Narration

PN: Psycho-narration

CN: Coloured Narrative

NP: Narrated Perception

NP-FIT: combined Narrated Perception and Free Indirect Thought

*SS*: *Sense and Sensibility*

*PP*: *Pride and Prejudice*

*NA*: *Northanger Abbey*

*MP*: *Mansfield Park*

*P*: *Persuasion*

*E*: *Emma*

## ****Chapter 1****

## ****Introduction****

This thesis explores fictional representations of sensory experience, that is, the different ways in which the narrator of a novel may portray the visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory perceptions of a character, as well as other types of perception such as the subjective experience of time (chronoception). The specific focus of the research is a narrative technique known as ‘narrated perception’ (Cohn 1978: 111, 133-134; Fludernik 1993: 305-309) and the use of this technique by the English novelist Jane Austen (1875-1917) in her six major novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Northanger Abbey* (1818), *Mansfield Park* (1814, 1816), *Emma* (1816) and *Persuasion* (1818). Narrated perception (hereafter abbreviated as NP) ren­ders the sensory perceptions of a character by describing objects and events in the fictional world as they look, sound or feel to him/her. The following is an example taken from Fehr (1938: 98), where NP has been underlined:

(a) On turning round Fred saw Jack coming across the street towards him.

(b) “Look!” Fred turned round. Jack was coming across the street towards him.

Sentence (a) represents Fred’s perception explicitly with the verb ‘saw’. In contrast, the underlined sentence in (b) represents what Fred is seeing by simply describing an event. He is indirectly presented as an observer in the previous discourse by the fact that he ‘turned round’; this verb acts as a ‘perception indicator’ (Fehr 1938: 99). The fact that perception is represented in an independent sentence without any introductory verbs such as ‘saw’ makes the perception salient in syntactic terms, and suggests Fred’s rather than the narrator’s point of view. This is because the description that Fred saw something suggests an external perspective to him, whereas the direct presentation of a perception tends to align the reader with the viewer’s perspective. However, the lack of explicit description also means that sentence (b) looks like a neutral narratorial description (N), which entails a potential ambiguity between NP and N, a very important feature that will be extensively discussed in later chapters.

Several scholars have identified a number of features of NP (Banfield 1981; Brinton 1980; Fehr 1938; Fludernik 1993: 305-309; Hernadi 1972). These features are described in more detail in Chapter 2. Setting aside these few studies, however, there appears to be no systematic and in-depth analysis of the use of NP in particular narratives and authors. Exceptions include, for example, Brinton (1980: 364), who has studied selected works of twentieth-century novelists such as James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and Joyce Cary; but there seems to be no rigorous study of earlier narratives such as Austen’s.

The reasons behind insufficient research in this area seem to be manifold: firstly, the formal similarities between NP and free indirect thought (FIT) have favoured a theoretical overlap between the two concepts, so that most scholars, such as Ikeo (2007), Sotirova (2004, 2013: 40) and Rundquist (2014) do not make a distinction between speech, thought and perception, but include all three within the wider form of discourse representation known as free indirect discourse (FID). It must be noted, however, that not all scholars use the terms FID/FIT. Adamson (1995, 2001) terms this type of representation ‘empathetic narrative’; Banfield (1981) and Brinton (1980) ‘represented speech and thought’; Cohn (1978) ‘narrated monologue’; Chatman (1978) and Sotirova (2004, 2013) ‘free indirect style’, and Pascal (1977) ‘free indirect speech’. These concepts are relatively equivalent but their overlap is not complete. What is important in any case is that perception is often included as part of the definition of this technique.

Secondly, NP is not usually examined consciously and systematically, as a form of representation in its own right, but is more often alluded to indirectly or in passing, without any close reading of stylistic features. Auerbach’s analysis of a passage from *Madame Bovary* (1857) is a good example of this: he points out that the sentence ‘Charles was a slow eater’ is ‘not presented simply as a picture’ but as the way he is perceived by his wife Emma, who is there with him, and as a ‘variation of the principal theme’ of the scene, Emma’s despair (1953: 484). This underlines the essential similarities between NP and narrative description, and the implicit emotional undertones of NP, which are discussed in depth throughout this thesis. Auerbach, however, does not go into any detail about the features and implications of this type of figural consciousness representation. Similarly, Adamson’s argument that readers of Austen’s *Emma* tend to perceive neutral-looking sentences as objective facts, even when they actually render a figural viewpoint (1995: 33), could be said indirectly to include passages of NP. The adjective ‘figural’ is used in this thesis to refer to the characters (as opposed to the narrator), in line with the usage found in literary criticism (for example, Cohn 1878), and in contrast with the use of the same term in the figure-ground distinctions which are often associated with Cognitive Stylistics (for example, Jeffries and McIntyre 2010; Semino and Culpeper 2002).

Another reason why not enough has been said about NP, especially as far as Jane Austen is concerned, is that literary and stylistic criticism have chiefly tended to focus on narrative representations of other areas of consciousness, especially thought; that is, phenomena such as mental speech, imagery, ideas, memories, beliefs or imaginings. Along with a few of her contemporaries, Austen is considered to be an outstanding landmark in the development of narrative techniques for representing this type of consciousness, and her extensive use of FID has received much critical attention, being mainly covered in terms of narrative style (Booth 1961: 243-266; Bray 2001, 2003: 108-131; Dry 1977; Ferguson 2000; Finch and Bowen 1990; Flavin 1987, 1991; Gunn 2004; Lodge 1990: 126-128; Oberman 2009). This widespread critical interest mirrors research trends in cognitive science, which have been similarly attracted by ‘higher-order’ forms of consciousness (Humphrey N 1993).

However, this means that other, more primary forms of consciousness have been relatively neglected. The most conspicuous of these areas may be sensory perception: ‘the phenomenology of sensory experiences came first. Before there were any other kinds of phenomena there were ‘raw sensations’—tastes, smells, tickles, pains, sensations of warmth, of light, of sound and so on’ (Humphrey N 1993: 21). Humphrey proposes a ‘theory of consciousness as sensory activity’ (1993: 209), one in which to be conscious is basically ‘to have affect-laden mental representations of something happening here and now to me’ as well as what is happening outside of me (1993: 97). This thesis draws attention to the different ways in which Austen’s narrators portray the immediate sensory experiences of characters, an aspect of her fiction which has not been explored in depth. The analysis focuses on the stylistic features of passages containing NP, and on what those perceptions tell us about a heroine’s emotions, values and desires.

A number of literary scholars and stylisticians argue that, because perception does not always presuppose mental speech, it is best classed as a less conscious phenomenon than thought, or simply not part of consciousness at all. Fehr, for instance, maintains that in passages of NP ‘we are under the illusion of receiving a direct verbal replica of visions and auditions not yet affected by the stream of reflection’ (1938: 102); Ikeo argues that passages representing perception through ‘free indirect perception’ (NP) do ‘not fully’ explore a character’s ‘inner state’ (2007: 383), and Cohn considers that NP is used ‘merely to reflect (but not reflect *on*) the external events’ (1978: 111, original italics). Sotirova (2013: 40) argues that free indirect style (her term for FID) ‘in its classic form it depicts only fully verbalised thought’ and that it is only later on, in Modernist fiction, that this traditional technique is expanded ‘to transcribe thought, perception and emotion at the moment before it is fully articulated in the mind’, resulting in the all-encompassing narrative form known as ‘stream of consciousness’.

In contrast, the research presented in this thesis is aligned with that of Brinton, who considers that perception can be, and is indeed, conscious or reflective in many cases (1980: 369-377). Austen’s *Persuasion* and *Emma* in particular have proved to contain a large number of passages in which perception (NP) leads to thought (FIT) or is intermingled with thought, and passages in which a character is explicitly presented as being watchful or attentive, which shows that characters can be intensely conscious of having a perception and an emotion. This thesis also shows that Jane Austen already uses NP in the eighteenth century to represent the perceptual area of consciousness. In cognitive scientific accounts of the mind, perception is also considered to be an essential part of consciousness: ‘Consciousness indicates the entire area of mental attention, from preconsciousness on through the levels of the mind up to and including the highest one of rational, communicable awareness’ (Humphrey R 1954: 2). Traditionally, Chafe notes, philosophers have believed consciousness to be made up of thoughts, beliefs, intentions, and desires, and yet ‘a large proportion of what we experience is *perceptual*’ (1994: 31, original italics). Attention is a crucial factor here. Whatever experience comes under our attention can be in fact classed as consciousness: ‘perception simply is awareness or consciousness or experience of an existent object’ (O'Shaughnessy 2003: 291). There can indeed be unconscious perceptions, but essentially, ‘the attention is intimately linked with perception’ (O'Shaughnessy 2003: 291), or what is the same, ‘Perception is an attentive event’ (2003: 292).

Whenever the term ‘consciousness’ is used in this thesis, therefore, it refers to the thoughts and perceptions which are fully focused upon in the mind of a character. The term also refers to the fact that perception and other conscious processes constitute a unified whole:

At any given time, a subject has a multiplicity of conscious experiences. A subject might simultaneously have visual experiences of a red book and a green tree, auditory experiences of birds singing, bodily sensations of a faint hunger and a sharp pain in the shoulder, the emotional experience of a certain melancholy, while having a stream of conscious thoughts about the nature of reality. These experiences are distinct from each other: a subject could experience the red book without the singing birds and the singing birds without the red book. But at the same time, the experiences seem to be tied together in a deep way. They seem to be *unified*, by being aspects of a single, encompassing state of consciousness.

(Chalmers 2010: 497, original italics)

The thematic importance of perception in Austen’s novels has been noted by some scholars, but this aspect is not usually explored from a stylistic perspective. Pinch (1996), for example, discusses the central position of sense perception in *Persuasion*; Weissman points out that the ‘interest in the mystery and imprecision of human perception’ is a constant theme in Austen’s novels (1989: 241), noting, for example, that in *Pride and Prejudice* ‘Elizabeth falls in love with Darcy through a chain of perceptual signs, a series of traces’ (1989: 243); other critics allude indirectly and in passing to Austen’s use of NP (Banfield 1981: 71; Brinton 1980: 373; Dry 1977: 89; Gunn 2004: 48). However, none of these scholars analyses textual features in detail. Most accounts of perception in her novels are found within the field of literary criticism, whose approach is essentially non-linguistic. According to Morgan, Austen’s ‘subject is perception as an epistemological as well as a moral question’ (1980: 43). She considers *Emma* to be ‘an appropriate starting place for examining Austen’s ideas of perception because *Emma* is Austen’s grandest version of a commitment to personal vision’ (1980: 24). Here, the concepts of ‘perception’ and ‘vision’ may be based on sensory experience but seem to be primarily intended in a moral sense. Similarly, Bodenheimer (1981: 612) applies the term ‘corrected perception’ to Austen heroines’ changing views of themselves and their social reality, which also has moral connotations rather than sensory ones.

Perception is also often associated with landscape and the picturesque, with metaphor and symbolism (Alexander 1999; Banfield 1971; Bodenheimer 1981; Heydt-Stevenson 1985, 1995). For instance, Lascelles states that descriptions of ‘the visible world’ in Austen’s novels are scarce; whenever these descriptions appear they are always a picture of what characters see, and serve to tell us more about the characters themselves (1939: 178). Bodenheimer underlines the importance of landscape representation in the expression of the characters of Fanny and Anne: ‘The nature passages in *Mansfield Park* vividly suggest the growth and deepening of Fanny Price’s character’ and prepare the way for ‘the more overt celebration of natural process in *Persuasion*’ (1981: 606). Accounts such as these are relevant to this research because they link figural perception with places and landscapes, a feature which is considered typical of Austen (Wiltshire 2001: 131), but such conclusions need to be enriched by linguistic evidence. This study provides a detailed account of the textual traits associated with sensory experience, and the psychological and moral implications of that experience, connecting language features with point of view.

A close look at the stylistic arrangement of a text usually provides sound and concrete evidence to explain particular interpretations, and can also complement more intuitive readings (Semino 2004: 428). In Stockwell’s words, stylistic analysis ‘offers a raised awareness of certain patterns that might have been subconscious or not even noticed at all’ (2002: 7). This does not mean, however, that instinctive or first responses to a text are less valid than the readings of the analyst: ‘Interpretation is what readers do as soon as (perhaps even partly before) they begin to move through a text. Their general sense of the impact of the experience could range over many different impressions and senses, some of which are refined or rejected. It is this later, more analytical process that produces a reading’ (Stockwell 2002: 8). In fact, it is ‘in the detail of readings that all the interest and fascination lies’ (2002: 2). The analysis presented here takes into account what other readers and critics have said about Jane Austen’s novels as well, and engages with their ideas in a constructive and mutually enlightening way.

The questions addressed concern the extent to which NP is used in each of Austen’s novels, the stylistic features, patterns and narrative functions characterising these passages, the relationships between NP and other narrative techniques such as FIT, and the implications of a study of NP for a better knowledge of Austen’s narrative style. Chapter 2 reviews what different critics have said about NP, and gives reasons for considering it as a distinct technique that is closely connected with FIT but is best analysed separately. Critics may have touched upon the interplay between perception and thought but have not really explored this aspect in detail, especially in Austen’s fiction. Other forms of representation that often occur in conjunction with NP in her novels, and often portray perception as well, are ‘coloured narrative’ (Hough 1991: 173) and ‘psycho-narration’ (Cohn 1978: 21-57). These are briefly discussed too. This chapter also provides the terminology and categories of analysis used throughout this thesis, which are mainly based on the work of Semino and Short (2004).

Chapter 3 suggests possible ways in which NP can be said to reflect eighteenth-century ideas about the epistemology of sense perception, sympathy and sensibility. The aim of this chapter is not so much to offer any definitive readings of the novels as to consider them in the context in which they were written (Waldron 1999: 13). A contextual approach is relevant, first, because sensory perception was a crucial concept in eighteenth-century thinking: generally speaking, rationalism questioned the validity of sensory information as a source of knowledge about oneself and the world, claiming that ‘there are significant ways in which our concepts and knowledge are gained independently of sense experience’, while empiricism advocated ‘that sense experience is the ultimate source of all our concepts and knowledge’ (Markie 2013). A contextual approach also becomes relevant if it is considered that Austen lived at a time in which scientific concepts became deeply ingrained in popular culture, and had an enormous impact on literary activity, especially the literature of sensibility that flourished in the last decades of the century. Sense perception came to be generally regarded as the basis of knowledge, and was associated with emotion, personal identity and social behaviour: a disruption in the functioning of a sense, for example, was seen as the source of medical, mental and social problems (Rey 1995); and heroes and heroines of the sentimental novel are usually endowed with an exceptional physical sensitivity (fits, nerves, fainting), which renders them open, and thus vulnerable, to external impressions, especially through sight and touch.

The centrality of sensory perception in eighteenth-century science, philosophy and literature may account for the thematic prominence of perception in Austen’s novels (Pinch 1996), and perhaps also for her remarkable development of NP. This technique not only describes sense experiences but also evokes emotion and bodily sensations. In this way NP contributes to the expression of the characters’ identity and viewpoint, and can be regarded as a narrative device where self and world coalesce; as an ‘interface’ between body, mind and world. NP can also be said to reflect the ambivalent attitudes towards perception and identity that are characteristic of the period, in that perception is often presented as an important source of knowledge, but also as the root of misunderstandings and delusions. The final section of Chapter 3 discusses Austen in relation to contemporary periodicals, and compares her use of NP with that in the sentimental novels of Laurence Sterne and Frances Burney.

The exact chronology of composition and revision of the six major novels is still a subject of much critical debate (Sutherland 2005b: 12). The earliest novels in particular, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey*, underwent a series of revisions before publication which is difficult to track down (Sutherland 2005b: 12), especially as there are no extant working drafts or fair copies of the novels (González-Díaz 2012: 179). The most puzzling case concerns *Northanger Abbey*, the final revision of which has provoked much critical disagreement (Shaw 1990). An added layer of complexity lies in the difficulty of ascertaining the degree of editorial intervention in the texts, both by contemporary editors and by Robert Chapman’s 1923 (and subsequent) authoritative editions (González-Díaz 2012: 180; Sutherland 2005a: 26). The tendency in criticism is to group the novels into early and late novels, according to whether they were first written in Austen’s twenties while she was living at Steventon, or in her late thirties when she was living in Chawton. Sutherland challenges this traditional division and argues that ‘with the certain exception of a version of *Northanger Abbey*, sold to a publisher in 1803 under the title ‘Susan’, all the finished novels were the products of the mature Chawton years, and that this intense period of publication (1811-17) was the culmination of some twenty to thirty years of drafting, redrafting and continued experiment’ (2005b: 13). While this is true, some critics argue that, no matter how much the novels changed until they were finally published, it is probable that they were revised rather than reconceived (Knox-Shaw 2004: xi). Be the case what it may, for reasons of convenience and clarity the novels are here grouped according to their generally agreed classification as early or late novels (that is, first drafted before or after 1800). *Emma* is analysed in a separate chapter as a special case, for reasons that will be presently enumerated.

Chapter 4 begins with a brief note on the use of NP in Austen’s juvenilia, her epistolary novel *Lady Susan* (c.1793-1795) and her unfinished novels *The Watsons* (1804-1805) and *Sanditon* (1817). The discussion then focuses on the use of NP in her major early novels, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Northanger Abbey* (posthumously published in 1818). They will be hereafter referred to as *SS*, *PP* and *NA*. The quantification of passages undertaken for this research reveals that NP is significantly more abundant in *PP* and *NA* than in *SS:* Elizabeth’s perceptions are connected with the theme of conflict between prejudice and fact, especially in relation to Mr Darcy, and Catherine’s perceptions play a significant role in her process of discernment between fantasy and reality. In contrast, NP in *SS* chiefly serves to foreground Elinor and Marianne’s sensory and emotional experiences at particularly dramatic moments. Broadly speaking, *SS* features a substantial number of instances of collective perception; *PP* connects Elizabeth’s sensory perceptions with Mr Darcy’s speeches and silences, and with Pemberley; and *NA* mostly links perception with narratorial irony and Catherine’s Gothic delusions.

Chapter 5 analyses the use of NP in the two later novels *Mansfield Park* (1814, 1816) and *Persuasion* (published posthumously 1818). They are hereafter abbreviated as *MP* and *P*. NP is especially abundant in *P*, which presents a significantly greater use of NP than all the early novels; in contrast, MP contains less passages of NP than *PP* and *NA*. The heroines of *MP* and *P* have a special position as observers: both Fanny and Anne are overlooked by their respective families and often engage in looking and listening to other people. They are also similar in that they frequently experience some sort of agitation and try to reason themselves out of this. In tune with eighteenth-century ideas, physical sensibility appears intimately linked with an enhanced sensory and moral perceptiveness. However, these two novels are also different in their treatment of perception: NP in *MP* usually portrays Fanny’s painful feelings and her obsession with objects and the domestic, while NP in *P* has a strong tactile component, rendering Anne’s awareness of spaces and people around her, especially Captain Wentworth, with an element of desire and search for knowledge of other people’s feelings. Anne is the character that most frequently thinks about her perceptions while they occur, revealing a very reflective personality.

Finally, Chapter 6 analyses the use of NP in *Emma* (1816), hereafter abbreviated as *E*. The use of NP in this novel is more complex and more fully explored than in the other novels, especially the early ones, and the amount of instances it contains is larger. The presence of auditory perception in particular is very prominent in this novel as compared with the others, and various other types of perception are explored as well. Another important feature of NP is that it shows Emma to be constantly aware, not only of the external events happening around her, but also of her own reactions and feelings. In general, the stylistic features by which perception is represented in this novel, and the range or narrative effects of NP, can be considered the most elaborate in Austen’s fiction. It is shown in this chapter that NP contributes to the general view of this novel as ambiguous and unreliable, by often casting doubt on the accuracy of Emma’s perceptions. As occurs in *NA*, NP often expresses narratorial irony and helps to keep the reader in suspense about the direction of the plot.

A few traits are common to the six novels. In general, NP is connected with climactic or otherwise emotionally intense events. According to Prince, a narrative climax is generally the ‘point of greatest tension; the culminating point in a progressive intensification. In traditional PLOT structure, the climax constitutes the highest point of the RISING ACTION’ (2003: 1958, original capitals). Turner distinguishes between ‘minor’ and ‘major’ crises in a narrative: the former ‘carry the movement forward to a major crisis. The suspense and action are greatest during this build up’ (1998: 37). As for the major crisis or climax, it is ‘usually the highest point of interest or the turning point of the narrative at which time the action reverses direction’ (37). The major climax ‘should be a moment that is sufficiently stirring so that it is difficult to forget’ (37). In Jane Austen’s fiction, minor crises which carry suspense and action and move the plot forward are usually trips, balls, walks and other important social events (for example, William Price’s visit to his sister Fanny, Mr Darcy’s marriage proposal to Elizabeth). They often break the characters’ ordinary exchanges and routines. Trips in particular always entail some change in the heroine’s feelings or views, and changes in the relationships between characters, and usually contain numerous instances of NP. Major crises or highest points, those ‘sufficiently stirring’ and ‘difficult to forget’, tend to happen toward the end of the novels, but also earlier, and may overlap with the kind of situations just mentioned. Examples of major climaxes are the trip to Box Hill in *Emma* and Edward’s visit to the Dashwood ladies towards the end of *Sense and Sensibility*. It must be noted that NP occurs everywhere in these novels, although it tends to be *concentrated* around climactic moments. Moreover, although NP is invariably associated with these contexts, it is not prominent in all of them. That is, NP often equals climax, but climax does not always equal NP. For example, the scenes in which Elizabeth reads Darcy’s letter and realises her mistakes (Chapter 36) are very emotional and mark a turning point in the narrative, but there is no NP, mainly N, PN and FIT.

Another common trait to all of the novels is the fact that NP is highly suggestive of figural emotion in the vast majority of instances. Emotional intensity is partly enhanced by the shortness of clauses and sentences of NP in Austen, and by her use of dashes, colons and semi-colons, which add rhythm and intensity to the passages where NP occurs. It must be noted, however, that Austen’s works probably contained some editorial intervention (Sutherland 2005a) and therefore there is the possibility that this kind of typographical demarcation of NP may have been modified by hands other than Austen’s. Emotions are to be inferred by the reader, as they are only suggested by NP. This subtlety is what renders it a crucial technique. Compared to other techniques such as FIT and ‘psycho-narration’ (here abbreviated as PN), NP leaves the reader with much more to infer; it leaves the emotions that are felt by a character more hidden. In all the novels, visual perception is the most widespread form of perception. Another common feature is the fact that perception usually precedes thought, and so very often NP is followed by or intermingled with FIT. Finally, it is interesting to note that NP suggests varying degrees of narratorial alignment with the character’s viewpoint, in some cases displaying distance, in others ambiguity, which may lead readers to interpret NP as an objective fact when it is actually a character’s biased perception. The latter case is especially prominent in *E*.

This thesis contributes both to accounts of NP as a stylistic category and to Austen criticism. In contrast with most studies of narrative style, NP is here treated as a distinct stylistic category, and its textual features and narrative functions in Austen’s novels are analysed in an in-depth and systematic way. The study also advances on previous treatments of NP and offers new insights about the possibilities of this technique, demonstrating that the passages where it occurs in Austen are invariably associated with climax and strong emotion; and that, though NP mainly represents five-sense perceptions, it is also possible to find instances where the technique renders other forms of perception such as awareness of one’s own mental state or the passage of time. Another important contribution of this thesis is that it advances one step forward in defining the relationship of NP to other consciousness representation techniques: it shows that it is beneficial to analyse NP and FIT separately, and that coloured narrative (here abbreviated as CN) can also evoke perception and is indeed used extensively by Austen.

Furthermore, this study shares the benefits of stylistic analysis to the understanding of Jane Austen’s fiction, and combines qualitative analysis of specific passages with a quantification of instances of NP in each of the novels; a method of analysis which has yielded crucial insights. A quantification of passages has been undertaken because it is possible to isolate passages of NP in Jane Austen’s fiction, these passages normally comprising one or two clauses or sentences, and occasionally up to one whole paragraph. The rationale for tagging and compiling a list of instances of NP is mainly to see the relationships between the six novels. This type of quantification has proved crucial, as NP has been found to occur in similar contexts in all the novels, not arbitrarily. The primary focus of the research is qualitative, however. The quantitative element has not been developed further as it is chiefly aimed at providing an idea of the extent and distribution of NP in each Austen novel, and strengthening the claims derived from the stylistic analysis.

The process of tagging the data necessarily involves a previous qualitative interpretation, which renders it open to challenge and revision; and it is hoped that other scholars will contribute with their own analyses. The novels were read on a screen and examples of NP were retrieved from the main narrative into a separate file. Sentence-by-sentence tagging was then conducted manually using a word processor, and then counted to produce the raw data for the quantitative analysis. One or more clauses or sentences of NP occurring next/close to each other within the same paragraph, and having a clear semantic link (that is, referring to the same perception) were counted as one instance or token. If two clauses or sentences of NP were separated by a considerable amount of text and portrayed two different perceptions, they were counted separately, even if they occurred within the same paragraph. For a clause or sentence to be tagged as NP, it had to be independent and main (that is, coordinated with another through connectives such as ‘but’, ‘or’, ‘and’). Subordinate clauses, even though they may represent perception, were generally treated as part of the main clause, which may be PN or CN. When a subordinate clause representing perception occurred within FIT, however, it was usually treated as NP, since NP and FIT often occur together, portraying a combination of perceptions and thoughts. Instances of this type have been tagged as NP-FIT, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Obviously all of these distinctions are not straightforward or definitive, and they are not intended as such: they have been made on the basis of the existing literature on NP, and for the sake of clarity and consistency in the analysis. Other scholars may disagree with these boundaries, and consider as instances of NP what has been here classified as CN, for example. This only shows the richness and variety of expression that perception can adopt. It also evidences the absence of extensive research in this area, which entails a lack of definitive ground on which to assess and categorise particular instances of NP. This thesis is a first systematic contribution in that direction.

The relative frequencies of instances of NP in each novel have been calculated and compared across novels by normalising figures per ten thousand words, as not all novels and not all chapters have the same numbers of words. In this case, normalisation involves considering each example of NP/NP-FIT as one token, even though not all instances feature the same number of words. Burrows (1987) gives the number of words of each of the major Austen novels, breaking down the figures for dialogue vs. narration. His data has been used for the normalisation of the results for NP, using the whole novel word-count and not just the word-count for the narrative parts, as NP often occurs in between passages of direct speech.

The combined methodological approach used for this research has proved infinitely more fruitful than if either qualitative or quantitative element had been left out: the qualitative aspect brings to conscious awareness the specific stylistic features that define NP in Jane Austen’s novels, and the quantitative element has been crucial in revealing significant patterns of occurrence in each novel, that is, the episodes and chapters where NP is most concentrated, as well as common stylistic features across passages, and the most frequent types of perception. The benefits of this combined approach are not limited to Jane Austen’s novels but could be potentially useful in the study of other texts and authors.

This study demonstrates how NP stands in comparison with other narrative techniques and how Austen’s novels and heroines are different from one another. The analysis sometimes confirms and is enriched by literary interpretations but mostly adds new insights into the way consciousness is represented in these novels, using sound stylistic evidence. A study of NP as a distinct technique has yielded several insights which a study of FIT alone cannot do; for instance, revealing the presence of figural consciousness in parts of the novels which have not been given close attention before. The ambivalent role of sensory perception and the importance of the concepts of subjectivity and identity in the eighteenth century provide Austen with a background in which to explore the nature of human consciousness, the problem of knowledge of self and world, and the perceptual element of delusions and misinterpretations, all of which suggests why sensory perception is so prominent in her novels.

### ****Chapter 2****

### ****Narrated Perception (NP)****

### 2.0 Foreword

This chapter presents the methodology that will inform the analysis of passages from Jane Austen’s novels. The first part reviews what different critics have said about NP as a stylistic technique, and discusses the ambivalent position of NP within traditional discourse presentation models, giving evidence that NP shares some characteristics with both free indirect thought (FIT) and pure narration (N) but is not exactly equivalent to either of these categories. The second part presents the contributions of this thesis to the existing body of literature about NP, based on the conclusions of the analysis. Several aspects are pointed out: the connection between perception and emotion, the occurrence of NP in climactic episodes, possible narrative functions and effects of NP, and the use of this technique to represent forms of perception which are not necessarily based on the traditional five bodily senses, such as the appraisal of time or the atmosphere of a place.

The model of analysis used in the tagging and commentary of passages is primarily Semino and Short’s Speech, Writing and Thought Presentation paradigm (2004), which is in turn based on Leech and Short’s Speech and Thought Presentation scales (1981: 337-351). They are both widely used in the field of stylistics. The speech presentation categories occurring in the passages analysed, from more ‘character-oriented’ to more ‘narrator-oriented’ are the following, with short examples:

* Direct Speech (DS):*“I am sorry.”*
* Free Indirect Speech (FIS): *She was sorry.*
* Indirect Speech (IS):*She said that she was sorry.*
* Narrative Report of a Speech Act (NRSA):*She apologised.*

Another speech presentation category occurring in the analyses is what Vandelanotte (2004) terms ‘distancing indirect speech or thought representation’ (DIST). In DIST, the speech or consciousness of another is evoked or echoed rather than actually represented. Although the syntax is independent and the reported speech or thought can contain exclamations, interrogative structures and other markers of the subjectivity of the original speaker/consciousness, verb tenses and deictics are anchored in the perspective of the reporting speaker/narrator:

* “John will be late, (he said).” (Vandelanotte 2004: 551)

The result of evocation rather than representation is that the speaker here may or may not be adjusting to the original wording of John’s discourse. In fact, this sentence could be just an inference: the speaker is claiming that John will be late, and that he/she knows this because John said something to this respect (either “I will be late” or something like “I’ll be unable to arrive before 11pm”). Note the use of a future verb tense, which cannot occur in either IS or FIS. This means that the speaker’s deictic centre and viewpoint dominate the utterance; in fact, only the context (or a reporting clause, suggested between brackets) indicates that the utterance ultimately originates in someone else’s discourse. This category is similar to Short’s ‘speech summary’ (2012), whereby speech is evoked but not reported. The thought presentation categories occurring in the passages analysed are the following:

* Direct Thought (DT): *“I will never come here again.”*
* Free Indirect Thought (FIT): *He would never come here again.*
* Indirect Thought (IT): *He thought that he would never go there again.*
* Narrative Report of a Thought Act (NRTA): *He decided never to go there again.*
* Internal Narration or Narration of Internal States (NI): *He didn’t like the place.* NI is defined as any case ‘where the narrator reports a character’s cognitive and emotional experiences without presenting any specific thoughts’ (Semino and Short 2004: 46).

The above set of categories does not easily accommodate the representation of sensory perception, however. In fact, as discussed in 2.1, perception does not appear to have a clear-cut place in most discourse presentation paradigms. For this reason, it is necessary to complement the model with other categories: NP will be used to account for instances of perception portrayed from a character’s viewpoint, and ‘psycho-narration’ (Cohn 1978: 21-57), here abbreviated as PN, will be used to describe explicit reports of perception. PN is an umbrella term that encompasses all instances of consciousness represented from the perspective of the narrator. It usually features verbs of consciousness such as ‘think’, ‘see’ or ‘feel’, summarisation and elaborate lexis and syntax. PN can be said to include the categories of IT, NRTA and NI mentioned above, as these tend to convey the narrator’s viewpoint. It will be made clear in all passages whether PN represents thought or perception.

Finally, ‘coloured narrative’ (Hough 1991: 173), here abbreviated as CN, will be used to describe passages of N that include expressions connected with a character’s sensory perspective. Also referred to as ‘contagion’ or ‘contamination’ (Cohn 1978: 33; Fludernik 1993: 332-338; McHale 1978: 260-261; Pascal 1977: 52-58; Stanzel 1984: 192-193), CN is broadly defined as the incorporation of a charac­ter’s speech or mental language into N, and has been considered to be employed ‘with virtuosity by Jane Austen’ (Stanzel 1984: 192). The extensive use of CN in *Emma*, for example, has already been noted (Dry 1977: 92; Hough 1991; Pascal 1977: 56), but these studies mainly focus on the evocation of characters’ speech. However, it is possible to find passages which do not evoke speech but rather reflect sensory perception; for example: ‘In the drawing-room, whither she [Elinor] then repaired, she was soon joined by Mrs. Jennings, with a wine-glass*,* full of something, in her hand’ (Austen 1995 [1811]: 166). Here, the phrase ‘full of something’ reflects Elinor’s visual perception of the glass, the indefinite pronoun indicating that she is not able to ascertain what it contains. CN evoking perception has been considered to be a subtle or less developed form of NP (Fludernik 1993: 308) in the sense that perception in this case is usually represented by means of individual words or phrases instead of fully formed sentences. Theoretical considerations with regard to CN are beyond the scope of this research, but CN evoking perception occurs relatively frequently in Austen’s novels, sometimes in combination with NP, a fact which renders this form of representation important for a better understanding of sensory experience in these novels. Whenever CN occurs in the passages analysed, it will be pointed out whether it expresses perception or other forms of figural discourse (speech or thought).

Besides the addition of NP, PN and CN as categories of analysis, two more precisions must be made. Firstly, the label NP-FIT will be applied to those cases in which thought and perception overlap to some extent. Secondly, a distinction is made between straightforward and ambiguous passages of NP, the latter being those which can be read as either NP and N or both. It may be argued that ambiguity and duality are different phenomena, but this division does not make a difference in terms of interpretation, as in both cases there is a potential interplay of viewpoints. Whenever a reference is made to the ambiguity of a given passage, it only applies to first readings of the novels, since subsequent readings are likely to affect interpretation. Sentences are numbered in all passages for ease of reference, and NP is consistently underlined for further clarity.

**2.1 Narrated Perception: An Overview**

A fictional narrator has several possibilities when it comes to representing the visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory perceptions of a character. The most explicit way of doing so is to use a verb of perception such as ‘see’, ‘hear’, ‘smell’, ‘feel’, ‘notice’ or ‘perceive’. The following example is from Jane Austen’s *NA*:

1. 1 [DS] “Where can he be?” [N] said Catherine, looking round; but she had not looked round long before [PN: PERCEPTION] she saw him [Henry Tilney] leading a young lady to the dance.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 57)

The description of an act of perception (‘saw’) suggests that the point of view in this passage is that of the narrator: if the passage were based on the visual perspective of Catherine, the act of seeing would probably be taken for granted, and thus not mentioned. In addition, as the example shows, proper names may be used in this context, which reinforces the impression of narratorial perspective. In contrast, NP (Cohn 1978: 111, 133-134; Fludernik 1993: 305-309) renders the sensory perceptions of a fictional character without explicitly marking them as perceptions; that is, without introductory clauses containing verbs such as ‘saw’. Instead, objects, people, events and phenomena (for example, sounds, smells) are described just as they are would have looked or felt to the character concerned (Leech and Short 1981: 341). Compare the previous example with the following one, also from *NA*:

1. 1 [PN: NI] A gleam of sunshine took her [Catherine] quite by surprize; [N] she looked round; [NP] the clouds were parting, [N] and she instantly returned to the window to watch over and encourage the happy appearance.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 80)

As in the previous example, Catherine is here described as looking round, which seems to anticipate a description of a visual perception. However, her proper name is not used, and what comes afterwards is not a report that Catherine ‘saw’ something; instead, an independent clause is used, describing the *content* of her perception. The reader is meant to fill in the missing link in order to understand that ‘the clouds were parting’ is not a narrative statement but an instance of NP. The figural nature of the underlined clause is not immediately apparent, however: NP ‘involves the recovery of those parts of the discourse that initially appear to be pure narratorial report but that, on reflection, can be read as descriptions of events of states in the storyworld as experienced by a particular fictional mind’ (Palmer 2004: 49). In cases such as this, NP and N seem indistinguishable, especially as in this passage N precedes and follows NP, and NP does not contain any obvious lexis connected with the character (for example, an affective term). This type of ‘categorical assertions express the strongest possible degree of speaker commitment’ to the truth of the proposition because of their lack of epistemic expressions (Simpson 1993: 49). Thus it may be not be evident to the reader that ‘the clouds were parting’ renders Catherine’s visual viewpoint.

NP has also been termed ‘substitutionary perception’ (Fehr 1938; Hernadi 1972; McHale 1978: 280), ‘represented perception’ (Banfield 1981; Brinton 1980) and ‘free indi­rect perception’ (Chatman 1978: 204; Palmer 2004: 48). It is also very briefly mentioned in Leech and Short (1981: 341) and in Pascal (1977: 105-112, 114, 118-120). These scholars often discuss NP in connection with the related technique FIT (or its relatively equivalent term ‘represented thought’), and as an aspect of the wider category known as free indirect discourse (FID). The term NP is adopted here because it does not define the technique in relation to FIT/FID and also encapsulates the connection between perception and pure narration already mentioned. The relationship between NP, FIT and N is discussed in more detail in 2.2

A number of features of NP have been identified which are not usually exclusive to this technique or occur in every instance, but may help to categorise a given passage as representing a character’s perception. Some of these features are shared with FIT, and some are peculiarly its own (Brinton 1980: 369-370). It is typical of NP alone to be preceded by devices such as the verbs ‘look’ or ‘watch’, or a description of physical movements or gestures (Brinton 1980: 371) which involve the character positioning him/herself to observe or listen. In Example 2, the description of Catherine looking round functions as a ‘perception indicator’ or ‘window opener’ (Fehr 1938: 99-100). Brinton (1980: 371) quotes the following excerpts:

1. He watched their flight; bird after bird: a dark flash, a swerve, a flash again, a dart aside, a curve, a flutter of wings.

(Joyce 1969: 224)

1. She gazed back over the sea, at the island. But the leaf was losing its sharpness. It was very small.

(Woolf 1970: 216)

Perception indicators such as these ‘may be explicit, may be only hinted at, or may be missing entirely’ (Brinton 1980: 372). Another important marker of NP is the past progressive aspect, which expresses the simultaneity of the act of perception and the perceived event (Banfield 1981: 67; Brinton 1980: 373-374; Fehr 1938: 101). In Example 2, ‘were parting’ sug­gests that Catherine perceives the movement of the clouds as it occurs. In (b) above, ‘the leaf *was losing* its sharpness’. It should be noted, however, that the simple past can also represent a perception (Banfield 1981: 67), especially as ‘some verbs in English—generally known as stative verbs—are not normally compatible with the progressive aspect’ (Adamson 1995: 30). For example: ‘1 [N] Emma looked at Harriet while the point was under consideration; [NP] she behaved very well, and betrayed no emotion’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 298). Moreover, the past progressive aspect can appear in N: ‘1 [N] she [Emma] was therefore industriously getting rid of the subject as they returned’ (1996 [1816]: 129).

Like FIT, NP may feature different expressions of subjectivity, which contribute to turn the descrip­tion of an event into a character’s perception. For example, modal expressions such as ‘seem’—which Brinton (1980: 376) highlights as a crucial characteristic of NP,—‘look’ (+ adjective), ‘evidently’ or ‘apparently’ convey the impres­sion that the events described are not objective facts, but only what the witnessing consciousness makes of them. Other typical features of passages of NP are figural deictics (Duchan and others 1995: 15-16) such as ‘now’, ‘here’ or ‘this’. Brinton however remarks that present time deictics such as ‘now’ do not occur in NP as frequently as in FIT (1980: 373). Moreover, because ‘a character does not usually appear in his own perception of the external world, simple third-person pronouns are infrequent; possessive pronouns, however, are frequent’ (Brinton 1980: 372). Thus, for example, he/‘she’ (referring to the perceiving character) would be less frequent than ‘his/her’ (referring to another character).

NP also frequently features incomplete sentences and repetitions, such as ‘The train was full of fellows: a long long chocolate tram with cream facings’ and ‘The telegraph poles were passing, passing’ (Joyce 1969: 20. Cited in Brinton 1980: 374), as well as sentences beginning with coordinating or subordinating conjunctions (‘But the leaf was losing its sharpness’ in (b) above), colloquialisms, kinship terms (‘papa’) and in gen­eral any kind of evaluative language connected with the character’s personality and world-view. The notion of evaluative language does not accommodate a clear-cut definition, however, as evaluation can be expressed by a wide range of linguistic forms, such as adjectives (‘beautiful’) and adverbs (‘dreadfully’). Useful studies on evaluation are those of Bednarek (2006, 2008), Hunston and Thompson (1999) and Martin and White (2005).

Evaluation and expressions of figural subjectivity can and do also occur in other techniques, such as FIT, which renders NP and FIT similar in formal terms. The two techniques are also similar in that they attempt to portray a character’s conscious experiences from his/her own perspective, avoiding explication by means of introductory clauses (for example, ‘she thought/perceived that’) and locating deictics and expressions of subjectivity in the character’s deictic centre (Cohn 1978: 100), hence portraying figural consciousness in a more ‘direct’ or ‘mimetic’ way than a narratorial report (Brinton 1980: 371, 378). They both maintain the person and tense of the narrative as well. An example of FIT is the following:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Soon, however, she [Anne] began to reason with herself, and try to be feeling less. 2 [FIT] Eight years, almost eight years had passed, since all had been given up. 3 How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an interval had banished into distance and indistinctness! 4 What might not eight years do?

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 56)

After the narrator introduces Anne’s consciousness in sentence 1 (‘she began to reason with herself’) the rest of the passage portrays her thoughts in a more direct way, that is, without any introductory clauses such as ‘she thought’: a memory in sentence 2, a self-reproach in sentence 3 and a wondering conjecture in sentence 4. The past tense of the narration is maintained (‘had passed’) but there are several features that convey a figural perspective, such as repetition (‘eight years, almost eight years’), evaluation (‘absurd’), an exclamation and a question. Most of these sentences do not refer to what Anne is perceiving in her environment, that is, what Chafe calls ‘immediate’ conscious experiences (1994: 32), which is usually the dominion of NP, but portray thoughts that are unconnected with the immediate reality, that is, ‘displaced’ conscious experiences (Chafe 1994: 32). Sentence 3 is an exception, however, as it implies that Anne is aware of her own mental state (‘agitation’), and thus this sentence can be considered as a combination of thought and perception. Perceptions of oneself are discussed in 2.2.

It has been widely noted that NP and FIT frequently overlap or merge, one leading up to the other (Brinton 1980: 369-372; Fludernik 1993: 300). In many instances, for example, ‘presenting a character’s perception instantiates the character’s viewpoint, and this can easily lead to a presentation of the character’s psychological state’ (Ikeo 2007: 379). In the following passage, NP is followed by FIT:

1. 1 [N] Emma watched the entrée of her own particular little friend [Harriet]; [PN: NI] and if she could not exult in her dignity and grace, she could not only love the blooming sweetness and the artless manner, but could most heartily rejoice in that light, cheerful, unsentimental disposition which allowed her so many alleviations of pleasure, in the midst of the pangs of disappointed affection. 2 [NP] There she sat—[FIT] and who would have guessed how many tears she had been lately shedding?

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 181-182)

The first sentence, containing three main clauses (‘watched the entrée of her own particular little friend’, ‘she could not only love the blooming sweetness and the artless manner’, ‘could most heartily rejoice in that light, cheerful, unsentimental disposition’) and two subordinate ones (‘if she could not exult in her dignity and grace’, ‘which allowed her so many alleviations of pleasure, in the midst of the pangs of disappointed affection’), is a long description of Emma’s thoughts and feelings in PN. Note the use of the character’s proper name and the description of mental states in a very elaborate language, such as ‘exult in her dignity and grace’, ‘could most heartily rejoice’. The ensuing clause, ‘There she sat’ (NP) represents Emma’s observation of Harriet from Emma’s deictic centre (Harriet is ‘there’ in relation to Emma’s ‘here’). The contrast in length and syntactic simplicity with the previous sentence is striking. ‘There she sat’ could be read as N, and yet an unusual or dislocated word order, such as the pre-posing of complements or subject-verb inversions, has been pointed out to be a particular sign of figural perception (Fludernik 1993: 305). Here, the fronting of the adverbial ‘There’ foregrounds Emma’s visual standpoint and highlights the focus of her perception: a point in the distance where Harriet stops and sits down. This perception gives rise to a conjecture about Harriet’s emotional state in the next clause (FIT), expressed as a question.

In Example 4, NP and FIT are quite easily distinguishable in textual terms, especially as they are separated by a dash. In other instances, however, the blend between the two techniques is more subtle (Brinton 1980: 372), as when a thought includes a reference to an ongoing event: in this case it is a ‘thought about a perception, occurring either simultaneously with or immediately after the perception’ (Brinton 1980: 369). This narrative possibility is labelled in this thesis as NP-FIT:

1. 1 [PN: IT] She [Anne] felt that something must be the matter [with Captain Wentworth]. 2 [NP-FIT] The change was indubitable. 3) The difference between his present air and what it had been in the octagon room was strikingly great.—4 [FIT] Why was it?

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 179)

As discussed in Chapter 5, Anne is the Austen character who most frequently engages in reflection while she perceives herself or her environment. After the narrator’s presentation of her consciousness in sentence 1, it is almost as if she were telling herself the two syntactically parallel statements expressed in sentences 2 and 3 (‘The change was indubitable’, ‘The difference […] was strikingly great’), especially as they merge into FIT in sentence 4 (‘Why was it?’). Anne evaluates and compares Captain Wentworth’s present and past behaviour to her, and thus sentences 2 and 3 are best considered as thoughts, since according to Ikeo (2007: 383-384) memory falls into the domain of thought. However, these thoughts essentially refer to what she has in front of her (‘his present air’), and so there is an element of perception in them. In other instances of NP-FIT, it is perception rather than thought that dominates the representation, with perception containing one or more markers of verbal thought, such as interjections:

1. 1 [N] While waiting till the other young people could pair themselves off, Emma found time, in spite of the compliments she was receiving on her voice and her taste, to look about, [PN: PERCEPTION] and see what became of Mr. Knightley. 2 [FIT] This would be a trial. 3 He was no dancer in general. 4 If he were to be very alert in engaging Jane Fairfax now, it might augur something. 5 [NP-FIT] There was no immediate appearance. 6 No; he was talking to Mrs. Cole—he was looking on unconcerned; Jane was asked by somebody else, and he was still talking to Mrs. Cole.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 190)

This passage is analysed in greater depth in Chapter 6 (Example 74). Here, ‘No’ may be taken to indicate that Emma is mentally talking about her perceptions. Brinton considers the presence of interjections as a normal feature of NP rather than a special case (1980: 374). In this thesis, however, scenarios in which it is difficult to separate perception and thought, such as Examples 5 and 6, will be tagged as NP-FIT to distinguish them from those cases in which only perception is presented, ‘with no implication of internal speech nor necessarily even conscious thought’ (Brinton 1980: 378). This categorisation attempts to capture the way Austen’s prose blends perception and thought. Although in practice it is difficult to distinguish NP and NP-FIT, the distinction seems necessary since it will show that some of Austen’s heroines engage in reflection about their concomitant perceptions more often than others.

According to some scholars, NP does not usually contain questions and exclamations, as these are indicative of FIT or its equivalent category (Banfield 1981: 68). Other critics acknowledge that the presence of questions and exclamations in passages of NP is ‘rather rare’ but still possible (Brinton 1980: 374). A few examples of NP containing exclamation marks do occur in Austen’s novels, which shows the possibility of sensory perception being a very conscious process, and also a very emotional one:

1. 1 [PN: PERCEPTION] In another moment a happier sight caught her [Emma];—[NP] Mr. Knightley leading Harriet to the set!—2 [PN: NI] Never had she been more surprised, seldom more delighted, than at that instant.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 271)

Here, the underlined text can be considered as either NP containing an exclamation mark, or as NP-FIT portraying Emma’s inner verbalisation of her perception. What is clear, in any case, is that it represents a visual perception, and hence NP dominates over FIT. This is further corroborated by the fact that Emma is explicitly reported to have been ‘caught’ by a ‘happier sight’ in the preceding sentence. The presence of an exclamation mark does not necessarily mean there are thoughts involved, but rather that Emma is very much aware of her perception and experiencing strong emotions (‘surprised’ and ‘delighted’ the ensuing sentence). As was discussed in the Introduction (Chapter 1), perceptions can be intensely conscious and many instances of NP seem to reflect this awareness.

Unlike FIT, some scholars argue, NP does not allow parentheticals with verbs of perception (Banfield 1981: 69; Brinton 1980: 375). If a parenthetical such as ‘she saw’ is attached to a passage of NP, the passage then must be read as FIT because the verb of perception becomes a metaphorical expression of thought (Banfield 1981: 69). Thus, a sentence like ‘A few drops of raining were falling, she saw’ means ‘not that she saw it raining, but that she discovered or realized that it was raining’ (Banfield 1981: 69-70). Another feature that also seems typical of NP alone, and occurs very frequently in Jane Austen’s novels, is the enumeration of a series of objects, people or actions, ‘strings of related structures or expressions, sometimes leading up to a climax’ (Brinton 1980: 374), which usually indicates someone’s perception of them: ‘The guard went to and fro opening, closing, locking, unlocking the doors’ (Joyce 1969: 20. Cited in Brinton 1980: 374).

Another strong mark of NP is the expression of a character's inability to ascertain what he/she is perceiving, through indefinite expressions such as ‘something’, ‘somehow’ (Fludernik 1993: 306). In general, the set of lexical items which convey the character’s perception is ‘much larger’ than in FIT: ‘Although the semantic features of these lexical items are difficult to define precisely, they always express something more than is required for simple description. They express a character’s evaluation, assessment, characterization, or opinion of the world about him’ (Brinton 1980: 375). The ‘modifiers in this style are evaluative, poetic, at times even hyperbolic; exterior description would normally not allow this overblown style’ (1980: 378). For example, Brinton quotes literary passages of NP containing adjectival expressions such as ‘soft, quick steps and running voices’, ‘muffled thud’, ‘little, faint winds’, ‘two tiny spots’, ‘a warm little silver star’, ‘mean-little cottages’, ‘chocolate train’, ‘laborious drone’, ‘shrill twofold note’, ‘uplifted cathedral’, ‘Glistening reds’ and “gigantic chaos”; and verbs such as ‘sprawled’, ‘gleamed’, ‘blazed’, ‘ruffling’, ‘clacking’, ‘whirring’, ‘flecked’, ‘seeping’, ‘sparkling’, ‘streaked’, ‘wallowing’, ‘rippling’, ‘reeling’ and other verbs which ‘have an emotiveness and expressiveness not found in pure nar­ration’ (1980: 375). Although these assertions need further research, it might indeed be possible that a striking expressiveness in the description of an event may be perceived by the reader as indicative of a character’s subjectivity rather than the narrator’s detached description.

Finally, a haphazard or unsystematic presentation of a series of elements in a scene, and the fronting of words or phrases (such as ‘There she sat’ in Example 4 above) may also be taken as a characteristic sign of NP. The aim in such cases is to mirror the nature of human perception (Fludernik 1993: 305), which fixes its focus in a random way, moving from one focus to the next (Chafe 1994: 39). Austen’s style in the presentation of her characters’ perceptions of scenes is usually structured and elaborate, but interestingly NP often highlights the elements that catch a character’s attention, thus underlining the selective nature of perception:

1. 1 [NP] The Frank Churchill so long talked of, so high in interest, was actually before her [Emma]—[N] he was presented to her, [PN: IT] and she did not think too much had been said in his praise; [NP-FIT] he was a *very* good looking young man; height, air, address, all were unexceptionable, and his countenance had a great deal of the spirit and liveliness of his father’s; he looked quick and sensible.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 158, original italics)

Here, NP-FIT portrays Emma’s reflections about Frank according to what she is observing. The passage looks narratorial in that it contains only one long sentence and elaborate/summarising expressions such as ‘all were unexceptionable’. The description of Frank is methodical, progressing from his general appearance and manners to his countenance, which contributes to give NP a narratorial air as well. However, the passage features Emma’s evaluations (note the emphasis on the word ‘very’), and only certain aspects of Frank are described, according to what she is interested in: looks, height, air, address and countenance. These aspects seem to catch her notice in Mr Knightley’s person too: she observes his ‘tall, firm, upright figure’at a ball (Austen 1996 [1816]: 269) and tells Harriet that his ‘downright, decided’ address is very well suited to ‘his figure and look, and situation in life’ (1996 [1816]: 30). Height may be associated with moral worth in Austen’s novels (Chan 2004), which would explain why it is an important quality for Emma. In addition, Frank’s ‘spirit and liveliness’, quickness and good sense are qualities which Emma herself possesses (or thinks she possesses), which is probably why they are attractive to her. Later chapters provide more examples of perceptions of people and places—such as Elizabeth Bennet’s observation of the Pemberley estate in *PP*—which are very much suggestive of the heroines’ preferences, emotions, values and desires.

NP ‘functions importantly in blending the external and internal worlds in a fictional text: the physical world, as expressed normally in authorial description, becomes sense perceptions in a character’s consciousness’ (Brinton 1980: 363). NP ‘also lends vividness or immediacy to descriptions of the outside world’ through ‘the vividness of the verbs and adjectives’ (Brinton 1980: 378). Sometimes it is not the outside world but an imaginary perception that occurs: Fehr (1938: 105) notes that NP is not only used for real scenes but also remembered and imagined ones. In this case NP is the result of reflective consciousness and may be said to overlap with FIT. Brinton (1980: 377) cites the following passage as an example:

1. When he was on his way to meet Isabel there began those countless imaginary meetings. She was at the station, standing just a little apart from everybody else; she was sitting in the open taxi outside; she was at the garden gate; walking across the parched grass; at the door, or just inside the hall.

(Mansfield 1971: 157)

There are occasional instances of this type of perception in Austen. As Fanny ponders the consequences of Maria Bertram’s elopement, she mentally envisages each member of the family as they must be appearing at that very moment: ‘She confined herself, or tried to confine herself to the simple, indubitable family-misery which must envelop all, if it were indeed a matter of certified guilt and public exposure. The mother’s sufferings, the father’s—there she paused. Julia’s, Tom’s, Edmund’s—there, a yet longer pause’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 365). Although there certainly are thoughts involved in this passage, it seems as though the evocation of each name also suggests an image of suffering.

Finally, certain passages seem to represent a perception, but it is the perception of no one, it belongs to no character in particular (Brinton 1980: 373). Some instances of this phenomenon can also be found in Austen: ‘In the evening, when they were all there together, Marianne began voluntarily to speak of him again;—but that it was not without an effort, the restless, unquiet thoughtfulness in which she had been for some time previously sitting—her rising colour, as she spoke—and her unsteady voice, plainly *shewed*’ (Austen 1995 [1811]: 296, added italics). Here, Marianne is described as she appears outwardly, and the dashes may potentially suggest a figural perspective (Elinor and her mother, who are with Marianne on this occasion), but no one is presented as a perceiver explicitly. For this reason, this type of representation has not been included in the tagging and counting of the data.

Perception is an important component of theories of focalisation, being regarded as the most basic or ‘literal’ form of point of view (Chatman 1978: 153; Genette 1980, 1988; Rimmon-Kenan 1983). Perception is also frequently discussed in relation to discourse presentation models (Palmer 2004: 49), where it holds an ambiguous position in terms of categorisation. Narrative theory has established a traditional distinction between reflective and non-reflective consciousness (Banfield 1981: 65, 1982; Fehr 1938: 102; Jahn 1992; Kuroda 1976: 121; Leech and Short 1981: 341-342; Ron 1981: 20), and it is generally agreed that perception should not be considered as a discourse presen­tation category, as it renders a non-verbal or non-reflective area of consciousness. Some scholars are very firm in this respect: ‘If represented perception were part of RST [Represented Speech and Thought, that is, FID], RST should be called something else’ (Jahn 1992: 360). Non-reflective consciousness refers to any processes of cognitive appraisal which we perform without conscious thought, but which we could know if we turned our minds to them (Banfield 1981: 65). Reflective consciousness, in contrast, involves a conscious reflection on mental experience and it is usually associated with language. As was argued in Chapter 1, however, while it is true that perception can be considered non-linguistic and unreflective at a semi-conscious level, it is indeed ‘possible for the character to bring it to the level of reflection, that it be within the character’s possible knowledge’ (Brinton 1980: 369), and perception usually interacts with other cognitive experiences such as thought and emotion.

In those critical works which include perception, and more particularly NP, within discourse presentation paradigms, three slightly different positions are adopted: in most cases, perception is classified together with speech and thought within the broader category of free indirect discourse or FID (Chatman 1978: 203; Gunn 2004: 48; McHale 1978: 278; Palmer 2004: 49; Pascal 1977: 20, 59; Ron 1981: 18; Rundquist 2014: 165; Sotirova 2004: 232). In those studies which treat speech and thought separately, percep­tion is still not given a separate consideration, but is often discussed as an aspect of thought presentation; that is, as part of FIT or its equivalent term (Ikeo 2007; Teranishi 2007: 24, 32, 34). Finally, several critics have presented NP as a distinctive technique which shares some features with FIT/FID but also has its own peculiar characteristics, and hence can be examined separately (Banfield 1981; Brinton 1980; Cohn 1978: 111, 133-134; Fehr 1938; Fludernik 1993: 305-309, 311). The latter position is also the one adopted here.

Undeniably, as has been pointed out earlier in this chapter, NP and FIT present some com­mon features that render them similar, such as figural deictics, modality or evaluation. However, it is also true that many instances of NP do not resemble FIT in formal terms (Brinton 1980: 368-369), but look like purely narratorial descriptions of events. It may also be possible to distinguish NP from FIT in semantic terms: perception refers to what is occurring in the immediate environment of a character, while FIT may represent a wider range of cognitive processes, such as memories, hypotheses, intentions, wishes, regrets or mental dialogue with self or another person, which are not necessarily connected the character’s direct sen­sory experience of reality. That is, the two techniques ‘have different contents. Represented perception [NP] deals with the world outside, whereas represented thought [FIT] deals with the inner world of a character’s feelings and thoughts’ (Brinton 1980: 369).

The most significant differences concern their narrative effects and functions. Given the frequent overlap between perception and narration, it can be argued that the ambiguity between N and NP is potentially greater than the ambiguity between N and FIT. This argument is further supported by the fact that many instances of FIT which are presented as ambiguous in both theoretical discussions and stylistic analyses are actually instances of NP (Ikeo 2007: 381-384; Nikiforidou 2010: 269; Ron 1981: 23). In some studies, FIT representing perception is explicitly presented as a ‘marginal’ or ‘ambiguous’ type of FIT (Ikeo 2007: 381; Ron 1981: 23), whereas FIT representing thought is considered ‘straightforward’ (Ikeo 2007: 383). These scholars find that NP somehow does not really fit within this category:

Whereas represented speech and thought are easier to identify, and may be considered more prototypical instances of FIS [free indirect style], it is harder to unambiguously interpret a sentence as represented perception, that is, as being different vantage point from the narrator’s.

(Nikiforidou 2010: 269)

Significantly, Gunn, who rejects the ambiguity generally attributed to FID in Jane Austen’s fiction, acknowledges that passages of perception in *E* are more ambiguous than passages representing thought, because of the novel’s ‘tendency to blur the distinction between the narrator’s report and Emma’s focalizing perceptions’ (2004: 48). This seems to underline the greater ambiguity of NP. Moreover, in terms of narrative function, although both NP and FIT serve to represent the content of a character’s consciousness, NP has the added function of simultaneously describing events. In this sense, NP becomes another narrative device (Fludernik 1993: 311), which places it in a midway position between N and FIT. Cohn describes NP as the ‘hazy region’ between N and ‘narrated monologue’ (1978: 133), and Fludernik locates NP between N and FID in her discourse presentation scale, if slightly closer to N (1993: 311). For McHale, NP is equivalent to coloured narrative (CN): at one extreme, CN ‘becomes indistinguishable from neutral (diegetic) narrative, while at the other extreme it converges with FID’ (1978: 261).

In general, the scholars who have researched NP point out its amalgamation of outer and inner realities and its mimetic capabilities: NP ‘can naturalize as a character’s perception a good deal of discourse that appears at first sight to be pure narratorial description’, and this ‘interface between characters and their storyworld is a highly informative way to link the internal consciousness of characters to their external social and physical context’ (Palmer 2004: 49). NP ‘successfully coalesces the external and internal worlds [...]. It lends subjectivity to a sight, sound, or smell, for the external world is represented with the coloring which a character’s temperament and interests impart’ (Brinton 1980: 378). This technique is thus ‘a principal strategy for organizing a text according to limited points of view’ (McHale 1978: 278). Brinton notes that, unlike other techniques for representing consciousness, NP ‘necessitates no breaks in narration’ (1980: 378) since it contains no introduction with verbs of perception and at the same time narrates events. One effect of this is that a perception expressed through NP gains in vividness and directness. This study shows that the sense of immediacy is aided by the shortness and simplicity of Austen’s NP, which generally features a less elaborate syntax and language than N and PN (even sometimes FIT). The author’s characteristic use of punctuation also often evokes figural consciousness and heightens the rhythm and emotional impact of the representation (Sutherland 2000, 2005a: 296-301). The next section presents an overview of the conclusions about NP yielded by the analysis of Austen’s prose, which have not been noted in previous studies of the technique.

**2.2 Narrated Perception in Jane Austen’s Novels**

The various critical works that have been reviewed in 2.1, especially Banfield (1981), Brinton (1980), Cohn (1978: 111, 133-134), Fehr (1938) and Fludernik (1993: 305-309), have advanced much in the understanding of NP as a narrative technique. However, as discussed in the Introduction (Chapter 1), there is still a considerable lack of research in this area, and the use of NP in specific narratives does not yet appear to have been explored in depth. The following are the overall features which have emerged from the analysis of Austen, which need to be contrasted with analyses of other authors and narratives to see how the patterns observed in her novels are repeated or vary, and to what extent they can be considered general characteristics of NP. They are more fully illustrated in later chapters.

One of the most important characteristics of NP evidenced by the qualitative analysis is the frequent connection between perception and emotion. In the passage about the clouds (Example 2), Catherine has been saddened by the stormy weather, which prevents her from taking a walk with Henry and Eleanor. In this state of things, the appearance of the sunshine as described through her perception of the sky (‘the clouds were parting’) may suggest joy and excitement, feelings which are not explicitly reported anywhere in the text but only indirectly attached to the ‘happy appearance’ (N) in the subsequent clause. Similarly, in Example 7 (‘Mr. Knightley leading Harriet to the set!’) NP evinces happiness, surprise, gratitude. Emotions are not usually spelled out in NP, however, but must be inferred by the reader. Subsequent chapters will illustrate in more detail how NP often suggests emotional nuances and contributes to characterise Austen’s heroines, revealing aspects of their consciousness which may not be explic­itly disclosed elsewhere in the narrative, or of which the heroines themselves may not be aware, such as intentions, prejudices and personality traits.

The emotional quality of passages of NP has been noted in passing in the literature: ‘As readers, we see and feel things along with the characters when represented perception [NP] is used, and we also grasp the subjective meanings which things carry for the characters’ (Brinton 1980: 378). Fludernik states that NP can ‘give rise to thought processes and emotions’ (1993: 305), and Palmer notes that in the passage ‘He sat on the bench. The train pulled away’, at first glance ‘the second sentence looks as if it is as much a simple physical description as the first sentence. However, it can also be read as the character’s perception of the physical event and, even more importantly, by extension, the character’s experience of the psychological implications of the event’ (2004: 48-49). For example, Palmer notes, the context may indicate that the character was waiting for the person he loves who was not on the train. What Palmer does not note, however, is the emotional aspect of the sentence, which may be read as conveying sadness, loneliness or a sense of loss. There does not yet appear to be any sustained stylistic analysis of NP that may indicate how the psychological and affective dimensions of sensory experience are hinted at in particular novels and passages, and how NP consistently and subtly helps to build a picture of a character’s inner landscape.

Perception and emotion feature very prominently in eighteenth-century moral philosophy, as discussed in Chapter 3, and the same occurs in contemporary cognitive accounts of perception (Chafe 1994: 31; Damasio 2000; Humphrey N 1993: 25). The affective element seems to be indis­pensable for an individual to become conscious of his/her perception (Damasio 2000: 26), and indeed ‘having sensations that we *mind about* is part and parcel of having experiences that we are *conscious of’* (Humphrey N 1993: 53, original italics). The intimate link between emotion and perception, and their influence on each other, is also the subject of ‘appraisal theory’ (Arnold 1960; Lazarus 1991), by which our perception of an event, object or person is often accompanied by an emotional response which is based on that appraisal. For an emotion to be evoked, an object ‘must be appraised as affecting me in some way, affecting me personally as an individual with my particular experience and my particular aims’ (Arnold 1960: 171). For example: ‘Seeing a bear in the zoo arouses nothing but interest and curiosity—but seeing the same animal outside the zoo may arouse violent fear. What is the psychological process that turns a perception into an emotional experience?’ (Arnold 1960: 91). Research suggests that the mere act of perceiving does not necessarily evoke any particular emotion; it is ‘the kind of attention directed towards an object [which] determines the emotional experience’ (McEachrane 2009: 33). In the case of the bear, we perceive the animal according to the degree of danger we sense in each situation. For this reason, perception is enhanced in the presence of emotionally significant stimuli (Phelps and others 2006; Scherer and others 2001; Zeelenberg and others 2006).

Appraisal theory, which belongs to the field of psychology, may explain why a fictional character’s prejudices, wishes and feelings often determine his/her visual perceptions as well as the ideas and emotions resulting from those perceptions. This theory may also account for why readers can sense an implicit emotional component in passages of NP, and sometimes see more than the character does: for example, knowing Emma’s intention to find a suitable match for her friend Harriet may help a reader to see an essential bias in her perceptions of different men, especially Mr Martin, whom she considers inferior (Austen 1996 [1816]: 28). In the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries, the term ‘feeling’ sometimes approaches physical sensation while ‘emotion’ seems more connected with internal, mental experience (Pinch 1996: 16), but the distinction is not stable in the period. Even today there is no clear critical consensus regarding the usage of these terms (Whiteley 2010: 44-46). Since a distinction between them is not relevant for a description of characters’ emotional life in this research, the terms ‘emotion’ and ‘feeling’ are used interchangeably here as well.

Another crucial and consistent feature of NP, connected with the importance of emotions in perception and evidenced by the tagging and quantification of passages, is the concentration of NP at points in the narrative which can be considered climactic and emotionally intense in some way. NP tends to occur when important events happen and when the heroines (and other characters) are experiencing strong emotions or observing their environment with special attention. As discussed in Chapter 1 and shown in later chapters, NP is particularly abundant in situations such as trips, balls and dinners, and towards the end of each novel. The effect of an increased use of NP is an increased emotional impact as well, as will be illustrated in particular passages; and, depending on the context where NP occurs, a greater or lesser alignment between the narrator and the character’s viewpoints. In some instances, the narratorial voice seems to distance itself from the perspective of the heroine, especially when the perception represented is biased or inaccurate in some way. Often distance is expressed with a touch of irony or humour. In other cases, the blend of N, NP and coloured narrative (CN) suggests a conflation between the two, as if the narrator were identifying with the perspective of the heroine.

Other functions and effects associated with NP have emerged in the course of the analysis, which have not been often noted in the literature about this technique. The most important of these, partly connected with narratorial distance, is the potential ambiguity and unreliability of passages of NP. Because the narration of events in this case is filtered through a partial, subjective point of view, the reliability of the events presented through NP may be called into question. Brinton notes this effect, though only in passing: ‘Neither direct speech nor represented speech and thought [FID] need be trusted, whereas pure narration must be taken as the truth. Represented perception [NP] is half way between these extremes’ (1980: 379). Phelan also includes perception as one of the most important elements of a narrative connected with (un)reliability (2005: 34). The analysis of Austen’s novels suggests that the degree of reliability attributed to passages of NP may depend on various fac­tors. For example, NP might be more readily accepted as an objective truth when it does not contain any expression of figural subjectivity, or when the reader has no source of information about the fictional world other than the character’s consciousness. Interpretation may also depend on the reader’s general perceptiveness and degree of scepticism about a particular character. As shown in the analysis of *E* in Chapter 6, the occurrence of NP at certain strategic points can open the door to misinterpretation of the characters’ motives and the overall direction of the plot.

Ambiguity is another feature observed in Jane Austen’s novels. It is often caused by the narratorial appearance of NP and by its combination with CN, and usually leads to either unreliability or a convergence of viewpoints. The potential ambiguity between NP and N has received less critical attention than that between NP and FIT. A possible difference between NP and N has been suggested by Brinton, who maintains that the lexical items used in NP ‘always express something more than is required for simple description’ as was discussed in the previous section (1980: 375). As for CN, its use to represent perception is especially prominent in *SS* and will be discussed in greater depth in the passages analysed. In all of these cases, it is difficult to separate narratorial and figural discourses, and disambiguation may or may not occur. The context in which NP occurs plays a very important part in the reader’s interpretation. NP may be easier to distinguish from N when it is preceded by a perception indicator and/or contains expressions that can be attributed to the character’s worldview, and also when it is preceded by techniques representing perception or other types of consciousness (PN, FIT). In other cases, it is the fictional context that provides the clue to discover NP: for example, a seemingly narrative statement may be more easily interpreted as figural if it presents an assessment of the fictional reality which the reader can notice to be inaccurate or wishful in any way. All of these possibilities are explored further in upcoming chapters.

Very frequently, NP is preceded by a description of a character’s perceptions in PN, which already situates the reader within the character’s perceptual viewpoint. This has been noted in the literature (Brinton 1980: 371) and will also become apparent in the analysis of Austen’s novels. What has not been noted and can be appreciated in the novels, however, is that sometimes disambiguation occurs in the clauses and sentences *following* NP. A similar conclusion with regard to FID is provided in Bray (2007). This is an example from *PP*:

1. 1 [N] Darcy made no answer. 2 [NP] He seemed scarcely to hear her, and was walking up and down the room in earnest meditation; his brow contracted, his air gloomy. 3 [N] Elizabeth soon observed, [PN: NI] and instantly understood it. 4 [FIT] Her power was sinking; every thing *must* sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 225)

This passage occurs straight after direct speech. Elizabeth has just given Darcy the news that her sister Lydia has eloped with Wickham. There is no perception indicator in sentence 1, only a narratorial description of Darcy’s silence, and so sentence 2 could well be interpreted as N too: there are indications of figural consciousness (the epistemic modal ‘seemed’, the past continuous aspect ‘was walking’, a semi-colon perhaps indicating a pause), but the phrases ‘his brow contracted, his air gloomy’, occurring after the semi-colon, sound narratorial in their parallel arrangement. Sentence 3, however, explicitly reports on Elizabeth’s observation of Darcy and thus suggests the figural nature of sentence 2; that is, sentence 3 allows a retrospective reading of sentence 2 as figural perception.

Another feature which has been revealed by the analysis, and does not seem to be accounted for in the literature, is the use of NP with ironical purposes, especially in *NA* and *E*, whose very imaginative, deluded heroines are often subjected to the narrator’s satire. Finally, the tagging of passages has revealed instances of NP in which a character’s perception is not necessarily based on the information provided by the bodily senses, but involves a different type of sensitivity and reactivity, which is here referred to as ‘awareness’. For example, awareness of time (chronoception), the ongoing state of things between the perceiving character and other characters (tension, awkwardness), the (im)possibility or necessity of doing something, and one’s own feelings, thoughts, bodily sensations, actions and movements. These perceptions or realisations may be more or less conscious, and most of the time do not refer to tangible physical realities.

Instances of NP representing a character’s awareness of time are very common, especially in *NA* but also in other novels, such as the following perception of Emma’s: ‘1 [PN: NI] all that she could hope was, by giving the first information herself, to save her [Harriet] from hearing it abruptly from others. 2 [NP: AWARENESS] It was now about the time that she was likely to call. 3 [FIT] If she were to meet Miss Bates, in her way!’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 147). In the following passage, Fanny realises that she has just done something totally new to her: ‘1 [NP: AWARENESS] She had never spoken so much at once to him [Henry Crawford] in her life before, and never so angrily to any one; [N] and when her speech was over, she trembled and blushed at her own daring’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 188). Examples of a heroine’s noticing her mental, physical and emotional state or her actions are most frequent in *E*: ‘1 [FIT] She would not look again. 2 [NP: AWARENESS] Her heart was in a glow, [PN: IT] and she feared her face might be as hot’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 271). The proof that the underlined clause renders Emma’s perception of herself and is not a narratorial report of her feelings is the ensuing PN, where she is explicitly reported to be equally wary of the facial expression stemming from those feelings.

Passages representing awareness of one’s own mental and bodily processes have often been included in the quantification of instances of NP for two reasons: they are usually combined or merged with thoughts and thus are often instances of NP-FIT; and sometimes they do involve perception of a sensory type, such as when Anne realises that she ‘was in the carriage’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 84), which entails a physical sensation (sight, touch) as well as mental awareness of the situation in which she finds herself. This passage is analysed more fully in 5.2 (Example 64). Other types of awareness, such as the perception of time, have been excluded from the quantification of passages since they do not conform to standard forms of perception, that is, bodily perception. None of these other, “non-standard” forms have been noted in criticism about NP, and they are discussed in subsequent chapters as crucial varieties of perception which are represented through NP in Austen’s fiction.

**2.3 Review**

Sensory perception is an area of consciousness which has received comparatively less attention in theories of narrative discourse presentation than other forms of consciousness such as thought. In particular, there is a considerable lack of research about NP as a narrative technique. This may be owing to the fact that perception is often treated as an aspect of free indirect thought (FIT) or free indirect discourse (FID), and that criticism of Austen in particular has tended to concentrate on figural thoughts or to treat perception as a general theme of the novels, without looking at the texts in depth. This thesis focuses on the stylistic features that characterise the representation of figural perception, providing new insights about Austen’s fiction and at the same time contributing to enrich the existing body of criticism about NP.

The tagging of passages follows Semino and Short’s widely accepted 2004 Speech, Writing and Thought Presentation model, with the addition of categories that may be better suited to account for different forms of rendition of perception, namely, NP, ‘psycho-narration’ (PN) and ‘coloured narrative’ (CN). The category of NP-FIT has also been added to describe those cases in which perception and thought are difficult to distinguish; for example, when a character reflects on something he/she is seeing. Cases tagged as ambiguous between NP and N are those in which it is difficult to determine by any formal cues which point of view is being represented, as well as those which can be read as both N and NP. As for CN, it is the term used to refer to narrative passages which evoke a character’s speech or consciousness in particular expressions. It will be made clear in the passages analysed whether CN evokes perception or other types of figural discourse (thought or speech).

Chapter 2 has reviewed what different critics have said about perception in general and NP in particular, and has argued that NP can be considered to be closely related to FIT but also to N. Some formal differences can be found between NP and FIT but they are not as significant as those concerning narrative function and effect. In particular, NP is generally considered to be more ambiguous than FIT and performs the function of narrating events as well as portraying consciousness, a function which is not typical of FIT. Although there are obvious formal similarities between NP and FIT (for example, lack of introductory clauses, figural deictics), there are also similarities between NP and N; indeed perception often looks like a simple description of a fact or event, showing barely any or no signs of a character’s subjectivity. For these reasons, NP and FIT are best studied as distinct and interrelated forms of consciousness representation: ‘Linguistically and functionally, […] represented perception [NP] bears strong similarities to represented speech and thought [FID]. Yet we have seen that in both respects represented perception [NP] is distinct from represented speech and thought [FID]’ (Brinton 1980: 379).

Several common features and patterns of occurrence across Austen’s six novels have become evident in the course of the analysis. They are not recorded in the literature about NP and can be added to what we know about this technique. Formally, NP often features short, simple clauses and sentences, and in general a less elaborate syntax than N; the figural quality of these passages is often enhanced by the use of punctuation such as dashes and semi-colons (Sutherland 2000, 2005a: 296-301). The analysis also evidences an intimate connection between perception and emotion, and the consistent concentration of NP around climactic and emotionally intense parts of the narrative: for example, during meals, walks, trips and balls, and in towards the end of the novels. These are usually occasions on which characters observe one another and crucial events take place, often leading the heroine to realise important truths. In some of the novels, especially *NA* and *E*, NP occurs at strategic points where the reader is not supposed to know more than the character does; in such cases, NP contributes to add suspense by denying the reader access to further information than that contained in the heroine’s perceptual consciousness.

Depending on the context where it occurs and the features is presents, NP may be used to convey either distance or identification between narratorial and figural viewpoints. The potential ambiguity between NP and N may have the effect of inducing the reader to accept a character’s subjective perception as an objective fact. If, conversely, a reader is able to see more than the character does, NP may cast doubt on the reliability of a character’s perception and sometimes convey irony. Disambiguation may occur when a perception presents an assessment of the fictional world which the reader can notice to be biased or inaccurate. In other cases it is the preceding or subsequent text that makes it clear. Finally, the study of NP in Austen has revealed that this technique is used to represent different modalities of perception which have not been noted in the literature, such as awareness of time, situations and one’s feelings and actions. Later chapters illustrate how all of these aspects represented through NP contribute to define each Austen heroine and the themes of each novel.

## ****Chapter 3****

## ****The Senses in the****

## ****Eighteenth Century****

**3.0 Foreword**

This chapter presents an overview of some of the scientific, philosophical and literary ideas that were in currency in eighteenth-century Europe, and suggests possible ways in which these ideas can be seen to be reflected in Jane Austen’s use of NP. Part 3.1 discusses the status of science and the senses in the eighteenth century, and looks at the main currents of thought that flourished at this time, particularly rationalism and empiricism, both of which were concerned, from different perspectives, with the nature of subjectivity and the epistemology of sense perception. The discussion focuses on several key thinkers of the period and their views on the relationship between body, mind and world; on the importance of sight and touch in the period, and how scientific ideas found their way into periodicals and the movement of sensibility. Part 3.2 discusses Austen’s fiction in the light of the late-eighteenth-century sentimental novel, which, as another expression of the epistemological and moral preoccupations of the age, was also characterised by a central interest in sensory experience and its connection with knowledge and emotion. Austen’s use of NP is compared with its use by Laurence Sterne, an important representative and author of sentimental fiction, and Frances Burney, one of Austen’s most noted literary predecessors.

Jane Austen’s treatment of NP can be said to reflect the various debates of her time about sensory experience and cognition, inasmuch as NP attempts to mimic the dynamics of human perception and its connection with mental and bodily processes: through NP the reader of Austen can get an idea of what it is like to perceive the fictional world from the perspective of a particular character; an idea of what people and places look, sound, feel like to them; of the immediacy and vividness of sensory experience, and the affective reactions, moral evaluations and social implications involved. The fact that NP is invariably used at moments of climax, heightened feeling and personal insight in all of her novels seems to confirm this fundamental correlation between perception, knowledge and emotion. NP also reflects the contemporary interest in the responses of the body to the external world by often implying a physical, embodied dimension to a character’s perception (for example, an awareness of another’s proximity). The significance of the debates discussed in this chapter for a study of Austen will become more apparent in the analyses presented in subsequent chapters.

**3.1 Sensory Perception in Science and Philosophy**

**3.1.1 Rationalism and Empiricism**

Lying between the two great scientific revolutions of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, the eighteenth century is sometimes regarded as a time of transition in which science remained largely undeveloped; and yet this period was crucial in the assimilation and expansion of the new ideas of the Enlightenment that had begun in the previous century (Porter 2003: 3). A leading contemporary figure famously described the eighteenth century as being ‘par excellence *le siècle de la philosophie*’ (D’Alembert 1965 [1805]: 9, original italics), because of the remarkable intellectual progress of the age, the enthusiasm for that progress, an optimist belief in the malleability of the mind and the general expectation that science would dramatically improve human life (Bristow 2011; Porter 2003: 6; Suzuki 1995: 336). It was a time for celebration of the achievements of the seventeenth-century thinkers who had revolutionised scientific inquiry, such as René Descartes (1596-1650), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), John Locke (1632-1704), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and most notably the physicist Isaac Newton (1642-1727). The empirical methods of observation, experimentation and induction proposed by Newton had a vast influence on the intellectual climate and activity of the eighteenth century, becoming the staple model in virtually all fields of inquiry (Bristow 2011; Olson 2003: 437; Todd 1986: 23; Wood 2003).

In particular, there was for the first time a serious attempt in the field of moral philosophy to develop a science of the mind which would possess an equivalent status to the natural sciences and apply the same principles of investigation. This search for a science of the mind can in fact be considered a central feature of eighteenth-century intellectual life (Olson 2003: 436). As a result, ‘philosophy was transformed from being a largely speculative to a predominantly empirical enterprise, inspired primarily by Newton’s achievements in the physical sciences’ (Wood 2003: 802). David Hume (1711-1776) was one among a number of philosophers who aspired to be the ‘Newton of the mind’ and devoted themselves to establishing the basic laws that govern the elements of the human psyche and its operations (Bristow 2011). Other prominent figures of this new approach to philosophical inquiry were Thomas Reid (1710-1796), George Berkeley (1685-1753), David Hartley (1705-1757) and Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), some of whom are discussed later on in this section.

The enthusiasm for the scientific study of the mind was part of a wider interest in the study of mankind: the ‘self-assertiveness of humanity in the Enlightenment expresses itself, among other ways, in humanity's making the study of itself its central concern’ (Bristow 2011). In general, the focus shifted from abstract metaphysics towards human individuality, subjective life and introspection. An important intellectual debate was conducted which, broadly defined, concerned the relationships between body, mind and world. Even the transcendental domain was approached through the mind and the natural world: ‘Nature itself, first the vastness of space and then the sublimity of earth, became an expression of God through which finite people could approach the infinite and understand both beauty and morality’ (Todd 1986: 23). Some of the questions that were debated centred, for instance, on the identity and place of man in the universe, the nature of mind and matter, memory, the association of ideas in the mind, the causes of emotions, the individual’s sense of self and the sources and limits of knowledge (Lodge 2003: 40; Markie 2013). The image of the ‘window in the breast’, through which an observer could see the innermost thoughts and feelings of another person, was frequently used to signify this strong interest in interior discovery (Van Sant 1993: 61).

These series of debates often made reference to the physical senses. In general, whether asserted, doubted or refuted as the fundamental basis of subjective life, sense perception came to occupy a prominent place in philosophical, medical and epistemological writings, with discussions revolving around what could be known through the senses and the implications of sensory experience for personal character, world-view, behaviour and health. The proponents of a medical theory known as ‘vitalism’, for instance, recommended avoiding both lack of sensation as well as over-stimulation of the senses, since this could bring many diseases, physical and intellectual (Rey 1995: 278-279). In general, sense perception challenged and even supplanted the authority of received tradition to become the most primary source of knowledge (Mannheimer 2011: 5). Thomas Reid, for instance, considers that the ‘perception of external objects is one main link of that mysterious chain which connects the material world with the intellectual’ (1785: 75).

The central importance of sensory perception as a scientific and epistemological concept in eighteenth-century thinking is reflected in the fact that it was the essential point of disagreement between the two major currents of thought that flourished in learned circles, namely, rationalism and empiricism (Markie 2013). These movements had been initiated in the seventeenth century, principally by Descartes, Bacon and Newton. They found their main expression in the natural sciences and moral philosophy, and sought to achieve a systematic knowledge of nature by relying solely on the powers of the human intellect. Rationalists assert that knowledge is attainable from reason and intuition alone, without any reference to sensory experience. This is because the most fundamental and unquestionable truths available to consciousness—the idea of God and ourselves as thinking beings—are innate and not given to us by the senses (Descartes 1953: 27, 30; Leibniz 1981 [1765]: I. i, iii; Spinoza 1985 [1677]: II.I). In contrast, empiricism considers sense experience as the foundation for all knowledge and questions the ability of reason to attain any certain truth.

Descartes is generally regarded to be the founder of a rationalist system of philosophical inquiry. His method, deployed in his *Discourse on Method* (1637) and his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), is based on the premise that one should never accept any opinion as true unless one is certain that it is so (Descartes 1953: 15). The method consists of dividing ‘each of the difficulties under examination’ into as many parts as possible, and subjecting them to rigorous logical questioning, commencing ‘with objects the simplest and easiest to know’ and ascending towards ‘the knowledge of the more complex’ (1953: 16). Complete knowledge can only be attained through a chain of deductive reasoning which considers every new opinion in the light of previously ascertained truths. Once the truth of an opinion has been established, one’s own rational conviction about it is the only authority to be trusted (1953: 22-23).

For Descartes, the first unquestionable truth, experienced as a universal intuition, is that we exist because we are aware of our own mental activity: ‘I think, hence I am’ (1953: 27). While everything else can in principle be doubted, it is impossible to deny the certainty that we think; and if we think, then we must exist. The next step is to realise that one of the characteristics of our thinking is our capacity to doubt, which reveals an imperfection in us. Descartes concludes that there must be a reason why we are able to think of something more perfect than ourselves: ‘it but remained that it [the idea of perfection] had been placed in me by a nature which was in reality more perfect than mine’ (1953: 28). This proves the existence of God and the dependence of every imperfect being on Him for its existence (1953: 28-29). These two given truths—the existence of God and our innate notion of Him and our own soul (1953: 30-31)—constitute the basis for every other kind of knowledge.

In order to make progress in knowledge, therefore, it is necessary to raise our thoughts above sensible objects (Descartes 1953: 30). In fact, Cartesian philosophy is based on a sharp distinction between mind and body, which for him are clearly distinct entities: ‘“I,” that is to say, the mind by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is even more easily known than the latter’ (1953: 27). We can indeed know our mind without knowing anything about the body or the physical world, and therefore the latter are not strictly necessary in Descartes’ theory to account for mental functioning (Flanagan 1991: 11). This opens the way for doubts about what can be known through the senses: in principle his methodical doubt is designed to challenge whatever threatens to undermine our empirical knowledge of the world, that is, ‘to save us from real doubt’ (Flanagan 1991: 9)—Descartes himself says that his aim is not to imitate ‘the sceptics who doubt only that they may doubt, and seek nothing beyond uncertainty itself’ (1953: 23)—and yet some critics consider that by casting sensory experience and prejudice aside in order to attain universal, objective principles, Descartes’ method may well have been a foundation for a sceptical system of knowledge (Bristow 2011).

Similar ideas about the limited role of the senses can be found in other important representatives of seventeenth-century rationalism, such as Spinoza and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716). Spinoza’s *Descartes’s “Principles of Philosophy”* (1663) endorses the Cartesian dualism of body and mind,but his later and most important work, the posthumously published *Ethics* (1677), fleshes out his more recently acquired view that everything that exists—body and mind, God and nature—are made of one and the same substance (1985 [1677]: I). Like Descartes, Spinoza uses a metaphysical approach which presupposes the unquestionable existence of God (1985 [1677]: I. P11) and is based on mathematical and logical axioms rather than experience: for him, everything which exists in the universe has a rationally comprehensible basis for its existence, namely, immediate causality, and ‘God is the efficient cause of all things’ (1985 [1677]: I. P16. C1). In principle, the processes of cause and effect structuring the universe are available to human reason, but empirically ‘the order of causes is hidden from us’ (1985 [1677]: I. P33) because reality is ‘represented to us through the senses in a way that is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect’ (1985 [1677]: II. P40. S2. I). His division of knowledge into three different types—opinion, reason, intuition—includes sensory perception within the first type, together with imaginations and recollections. Spinoza describes perception as ‘knowledge from random experience’, and considers it ‘the only cause of falsity’ (1985 [1677]: II. P41), whereas reason and intuition are higher and more reliable types of knowledge.

The fallibility of sensory experience is also discussed by Leibniz in his *New Essays on Human Understanding* (first published in 1765): ‘Although the senses are necessary for all our actual knowledge, they are not sufficient to provide it all, since they never give us anything but instances, that is particular or singular truths’ (1981 [1765]: Preface). Indeed, ‘only the supreme Reason, who overlooks nothing, can distinctly grasp the entire infinite and see all the causes and all the results’ (1981 1981 [1765]: Preface). Leibniz quotes the popular saying that ‘what suits our wishes, is forwardly believed’ (1981 [1765]: III. XX. 12) to demonstrate the essential affective bias of perception. The narrator of *P* makes a similar remark: ‘How quick come the reasons for approving what we like!’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 16). However, Leibniz acknowledges that the senses play an important role, insofar as the unceasing flux of perceptions in our minds constitutes the source of our sense of continuity and belonging in the universe (1981 [1765]: Preface). It is ‘also through insensible perceptions that I account for that marvellous pre-established harmony between the soul and the body’ (1981 [1765]: Preface). Sense experience also serves as confirmation of rationally apprehensible truths: for example, ‘solidity, in so far as there is a distinct notion of it, is fundamentally conceived through pure reason, though the senses provide a basis for reasoning to prove that solidity occurs in nature’ (1981 [1765]: II. iv).

A similar middle-ground position between rationalism and empiricism is that held by Christian Wolff, who follows on the steps of Leibniz’s work, and by Immanuel Kant. The latter points out the importance of both experience and reason in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (first published 1781): ‘That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt’ and yet, the same time, ‘it is quite possible that our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we receive through impressions, and that which the faculty of cognition supplies from itself (sensuous impressions giving merely the occasion)’ (Kant 2013 [1781): 27). Like other rationalists, Kant affirms that reason and reflection are necessary for processing sensory experience into coherent thought. That is, he distinguishes between sensation (sensory information) and perception (the meaning attributed to that information). Moreover, ‘there are objects which reason thinks, and that necessarily, but which cannot be given in experience, or, at least, cannot be given so as reason thinks them’ (2013 [1781): 14). For example, our notion of time is only accessible to us through a succession of events or states and not from the perception of any particular object. Conversely, reason is not infallible either, as it cannot possibly know things that are beyond experience, such as the existence of God (2013 [1781): 62).

The other major stream of thought that developed in the seventeenth century and became predominant in the eighteenth century was empiricism. Empiricists drew away from metaphysics and deductive reasoning to focus on the observable world. As a scientific method, empiricism emphasised that the validity of any hypothesis or theory must rest ultimately on observable evidence, especially as discovered through experimentation, and not be deduced from a priori reasoning or intuition. As an epistemological concept, empiricism regarded experience, and more specifically sensory experience, as the origin of all knowledge, in opposition to the notion of innate, intuitive or received ideas. The world exists as it appears to the senses, and according to this view, human consciousness is also the result of sensory experience: whatever we learn or know comes from the combination of external-sense information and any internal associations, inferences and representations resulting from those sensations (Locke 1706 [1689]: II. I. 5. 52). The interaction between ‘me’ and ‘the other’ takes place at the level of bodily sensation, and in this regard sensory perception can be considered as the point of convergence between physical, mental and social experience.

Bacon and Newton are considered to be the founders of empiricism in the natural sciences (Bristow 2011). In his *Novum Organon* (1620), Bacon lays the foundations of an experimental natural science by proposing empirical observation and experimentation, and the method of induction, as the ruling principles of scientific investigation. Newton incorporates Bacon’s ideas into his own model of the universe as expressed in his Principia Mathematica (1687), which explains physical phenomena in terms of a few relatively simple, universally applicable, mathematical laws, and presents the human mind as capable of knowing those laws (Bristow 2011). In the field of philosophy, and more particularly within the branch of epistemology, the prime and most influential proponent of empiricism was John Locke (Suzuki 1995: 336). *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (1689) presents his epistemological views concerning the limits of human knowledge, whereby knowledge is primarily attained through sensory experience: ‘Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, White-Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of Reason and Knowledge? To this I answer, in one Word, from *Experience*’ (1706 [1689]: II. I. 2. 51, original italics). Sensory perception in particular is the ‘first step and degree towards knowledge, and the Inlet of all the Materials of it’ (1706 [1689]: II. IX. 15. 85).

Locke refutes Descartes’s notion that God has imprinted in each of us a set of innate ideas. The proof is to be found in ‘the great variety of Opinions, concerning Moral Rules, which are to be found amongst Men’ (1706 [1689]: I. III. 6. 24). Although he accepts the notions of God and an immaterial, immortal soul, their existence cannot be demonstrated empirically (1706 [1689]: II. XXIII. 15. 201; IV. X). For him, all ideas come from sensation (‘impressions’) and reflection: ‘First, *Our Senses*, conversant about particular sensible Objects, do *convey into the Mind*, several distinct *Perceptions* of things, according to those various ways, wherein those Objects do affect them: And thus we come by those *Ideas*, we have of *Yellow, White, Heat, Cold, Soft, Hard, Bitter, Sweet*, and all those which we call sensible Qualities’ (1706 [1689]: II. I. 3. 51, original italics). The other source of ideas is ‘the *Perception of the Operations of our own Minds* within us, as it is employ’d about the *Ideas* it has got’, that is, reflection, from which there result ‘*Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing, Reasoning, Knowing, Willing*, and all the different actings of our own Minds’ (1706 [1689]: II. I. 4. 52, original italics). We ‘have nothing in our Minds, which did not come in, one of these two ways’, that is, from the senses or reflection (1706 [1689]: II. I. 5. 52).

Like the rationalists, Locke distinguishes between sensation and perception, the former being ‘the actual Entrance of any *Idea* into the Understanding by the Senses’ (1706 [1689]: II. XIX. 1. 142, original italics) and the latter the product of conscious reflection on sensations, which means that perception requires attention: ‘the Objects of our Senses, do, many of them, obtrude their particular *Ideas* upon our Minds, whether we will or no [sic]’ (1706 [1689]: II. I. 25. 61, original italics), but for perception to occur, it requires the conscious notice of the mind (1706 [1689]: II. IX. 3. 81). Perception is also closely connected with emotion: ‘there is scarce any affection of our Senses from without, any retired thought of our Mind within, which is not able to produce in us *Pleasure* or *Pain*’ (1706 [1689]: II. VII. 2. 70, original italics). Finally, perception is related to evaluation: raw sensations are often altered by our judgment without our noticing it, and so judgment is apt to be mistaken for direct perception (1706 [1689]: II. IX. 8-9. 82-83). This is especially true in the case of sight, where the sensation is not felt as something distinct from the perception. As shown in later chapters, passages of NP evidence the intervention of the mind (attention, emotion, evaluation) in the processing of sensory information.

Other notable proponents of British empiricism in the eighteenth century were Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, and most importantly Hume and Berkeley. The work of Hume and Berkeley had a different turn, however: despite the general optimism and confidence in the intellectual excellence of humanity, these and other sceptical thinkers questioned the reliability of reason and the senses to understand the nature of things, and thus our capacity to attain any certain knowledge. The most extreme form of scepticism, idealism, to which Berkeley subscribed, even affirmed that external reality only exists as ideas in the mind. The rise and standing of scepticism and idealism, according to Bristow, was not surprising given ‘the negative, critical, suspicious attitude of the Enlightenment towards doctrines traditionally regarded as well founded’ (2011). Such an epistemological stance was grounded on the contemporary crisis of authority regarding any belief, which for sceptics and idealists not even the authority of reason could supplant.

In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) and in his later *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) Hume’s point of departure is empiricist. He presents memory and the senses as the basis for our stable conception of the world: ‘without the authority either of the memory or senses our whole reasoning wou’d be chimerical and without foundation’ and ‘consequently there wou’d be no belief or evidence’ (1739: I. 150). He adheres to Locke’s account of the understanding in terms of impressions and ideas: ‘An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea’ (1739: I. 22). The degree of vivacity of an impression or idea determines its reality for us (1739: I. 41). In fact, vivacity is what distinguishes a perception or memory from imagination: ‘an idea of the memory, by losing its force and vivacity, may degenerate to such a degree, as to be taken for an idea of the imagination’, and conversely, ‘an idea of the imagination may acquire such a force and vivacity, as to pass for an idea of the memory’ (1739: I. 154).

Hume’s scepticism begins to dawn with the realisation that only what is present to the senses can be accounted for: ‘knowing perfectly the manner in which objects affect my senses, and their connections with each other, as far as experience informs me of them, [is] my philosophy, which pretends only to explain the nature and causes of our perceptions, or impressions and ideas’ (1739: I. 118). That is, the only aspect of reality we can safely assess is the accuracy of our perceptions; by our reason alone we are unable to understand the origin and nature of things in themselves, or metaphysical realities: ‘We may draw inferences from the coherence of our perceptions, whether they be true or false; whether they represent nature justly, or be mere illusions of the senses’ but ‘their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason’ (1739: I. 151-152). A similar idea is expressed by D’Alembert, who asserts that sensation is only useful to understand the relationship between external things and ourselves, but not to know things themselves (1965 [1805]: 137). Hume considers that some concepts, such as the idea of substance, are not provided by external evidence either: ‘If it be perceiv’d by the eyes, it must be a colour; if by the ears, a sound; if by the palate, a taste; and so of the other senses. But I believe none will assert, that substance is either a colour, or sound, or a taste. The idea of substance must therefore be deriv’d from an impression of reflection, if it really exist’ (1739: I. 36). Note the scepticism inherent in the last clause. The idea of time cannot be conveyed by the senses either, just like Kant affirms, and several other ideas come more from reason than from perception, such as the ‘different degrees of remoteness’ of objects from ourselves, which in the eye just ‘appear as if painted on a plain surface’ (1739: I. 105).

Hume gradually integrates both experience and intellect as sources of knowledge, while at the same time he concludes ‘that in no single instance the ultimate connexion of any objects is discoverable, either by our senses or reason, and that we can never penetrate so far into the essence and construction of bodies, as to perceive the principle, on which their mutual influence depends’ (1739: II. 221). The idea that the senses are fallible is recurrent throughout the *Treatise*: he talks about ‘the natural infirmity and unsteadiness both of our imagination and senses’ (1739: I. 79) and points out, for instance, that the invention of microscopes and telescopes has rendered visible what was not apparent to the naked eye, thus raising doubts about the accuracy of our perceptions: ‘The only defect of our senses is, that they give us disproportion’d images of things, and represent as minute and uncompounded what is really great and compos’d of a vast number of parts’ (1739: I. 56-57). Siding with the rationalists, he asserts that mathematical truths are much more perfect than those attained through sensory information; even the least of the mathematical sciences, geometry, is superior to empirical evidence (1739: I. 129). Given the fallibility of our sensible faculties, the application of supposedly infallible empirical scientific principles and inductive methods must necessarily lead to conclusions that cannot be infallible either. In the end, ‘all knowledge degenerates into probability’ (1739: I. 316) and ‘at last [into] a total extinction of belief and evidence’ (1739: I. 320).

Hume’s scepticism eventually reaches the point where he believes that even our sense of self and personal identity may be just a constructed fiction: ‘setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement’ (1739: I. 439). That is, ‘Ourself, independent of the perception of every other object, is in reality nothing’ (1739: II. 115). Sensory experience constitutes the only evidence of self, and it is the passions that create the illusion of self by fixing our perceptions: ‘no object is presented to the senses, nor image form’d in the fancy, but what is accompany’d with some emotion or movement of spirits proportion’d to it’ (1739: II. 171). This once again underlines the close connection between emotion and perception. Emotions increase the vivacity of impressions and ideas, and render them more acceptable to us (1739: I. 213), creating a sense of who we are.

As for Berkeley, in his *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowlege* [sic] (1710) he agrees with both rationalists and empiricists in separating body and mind, and in considering knowledge as springing from sense perception and mental operations such as reflection, memory and imagination (1710: 41). However, he moves towards idealism in his assertion that the world only exists insofar as we perceive it: ‘neither our Thoughts, nor Passions, nor Ideas formed by the Imagination, Exist without the Mind’ (1710: 43). That is, ‘the various Sensations or Ideas imprinted on the Sense, however Blended or Combin’d together (that is whatever Objects they compose) cannot Exist otherwise than in a Mind perceiving them’ (1710: 43). The evidence provided by the senses is not to be doubted, however (1710: 80), only it cannot be alleged as a proof for the existence of anything. Like other thinkers, Berkeley links emotion and perception: for example, as far as aural perception is concerned, ‘I intreat the Reader to reflect with himself, and see if it does not oft happen either in Hearing or Reading a Discourse, that the Passions of Fear, Love, Hatred, Admiration, Disdain, etc. arise immediately in his Mind upon the perception of certain Words, without any Ideas coming between’ (1710: 30-31). According to this view, the concurrence between emotion and perception takes place automatically, without the intervention of conscious thought; it implies that perception and emotion are conjoined at a very deep or primary level, even if perception is often accompanied by thought as well. The textual realisation of these various links will be explored in the passages analysed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

In spite of Hume’s fundamental scepticism and Berkeley’s idealism, the aim of their work is not to present a sceptical viewpoint (Hume 1739: II. 320) but to establish a science of the mind or of man. Common to most eighteenth-century philosophers of the mind was a prevailing interest in the origins and nature of emotion (Pinch 1996: 17) and especially ‘an increasing focus on the importance of passions in shaping human actions’ (Olson 2003: 441). Many thinkers devoted themselves to the study of sensations and emotions, so that an understanding could be gained into what made people happy and fearful, and how societies could be best organised so that people were made to act in ways that served the general good (Olson 2003: 458). Spinoza, for instance, devotes the third and fourth parts of the *Ethics* to the affects (joy, sadness, pity, hatred, fear) and their importance in connection with morality and the mind. The sensory quality of emotions and the way they could be communicated became a central concern as well:

The eighteenth century had frequently been intrigued with the problem that the emotions posed for communicability, since being able to hear others talk about their emotions and empathize with them was patently different from actually feeling those emotions.

(Ferguson 2000: 166).

For instance, Leibniz asserts that it is difficult to convey to another person what sensation feels like: ‘ G IV 422-26; VE V 1075-81. Latin.we cannot explain what red is to a blind man, nor can we make such things clear to others except by leading them into the presence of the thing and making them see, smell, or taste the same thing we do’ (1989 [1684]): 23). That is, only by making another perceive what we perceive, from our perspective, can we convey the quality of our perceptions and the emotions derived from them. In particular, visual perception was considered to be strongly related to identification and sympathy, which entailed imagining oneself in the situation of the sufferer (Van Sant 1993: 16). This meaning of sympathy is closer to some meanings of what we call ‘empathy’ today. Contemplating other people's experiences, either with the actual eye or the imaginative eye, made real and close such experiences, and presupposed the construction of a point of view for the sufferer: ‘Pity—and all other feeling that arises from a sympathetic exchange of place—is evidence that some degree of interiority has been attributed to the person observed’ (Van Sant 1993: 17). This important connection between sight and sympathy can be seen reflected, for example, in the proliferation of philanthropic institutions in the eighteenth century (Mullan 1988: 144), which made the people in their care highly visible to the public eye, as objects of pity and reform, both in reports and in particular public events, thus giving them a point of view with which an observer could sympathise (Van Sant 1993: 22, 27).

The sentimental novel of the late eighteenth century also took up this interest and attempted to place readers inside the mind of a character so that they could see the same things and have similar emotional experiences. Various ‘experimental techniques’ were developed in fiction (Leech and Short 1981: 337), such as free indirect discourse (FID), to particularise a point of view and favour empathy and identification with a character’s thoughts and feelings (Leech and Short 1981: 347). Jane Austen seems to have realised the potential of NP for emotional identification as well. The connection between perception, sensibility and empathy with a fictional character will be discussed in more detail in 3.2 and illustrated in successive chapters. Before moving on to the exploration of NP in relation to the sentimental novel, the following section discusses the importance that sight and touch, and the concept of sensibility, acquired in the eighteenth century, and Austen’s possible links with the ideas of her time, which found their way into popular culture especially through periodicals and other popular writings.

**3.1.2 Science and Sensibility. Sight and Touch. Periodicals**

The ideas of the rationalists and empiricists discussed in the previous section gained popular currency in the society of eighteenth-century Britain. This century in fact stands out as the period during which scientific knowledge acquired an enhanced public prominence and became an integral part of Western culture (Jacob 1988: 3; Porter 2003: 6). The presence and availability of science would be taken for granted today (Jacob 1988: 3), and yet this was only made possible for the first time in the eighteenth century with the institutionalisation of science, the public recognition of natural philosophers and historians, the propagation of scientific ideas in coffeehouses, the publication of D’Alembert and Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772), and the praise and dissemination of scientific discoveries in the work of humanists and poets (Porter 2003: 7). Scientific ideas also found a way into popular knowledge through allusions in conduct literature and periodical articles. The efforts that were made to popularise knowledge can be appreciated, for instance, in Reid’s *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), where he apologises to ‘the more intelligent reader, who is conversant in such abstract subjects’ by pointing out ‘that what to one reader is a superfluous repetition, to the greater part, less conversant in such subjects, may be very useful’ (1785: vi).

The different scientific ideas about the senses became part of the collective consciousness too. Sight and touch in particular came to be considered as the basic or ‘philosophical’ senses without which it would be impossible to know the world and oneself (Van Sant 1993: 84). David Hartley, in his *Observations on Man*, states that touch ‘may be considered as our first and principal Key to the Knowledge of the external World’ (1749: 138). Even sight was sometimes regarded as a type of touch: ‘some singly imperceptible Bodies must come from [objects] to the Eyes, and thereby convey to the Brain some *Motion*, which produces these *Ideas*, which we have of them in us’ (Locke 1706 [1689]: II. VIII. 12. 75, original italics). Touch had been recognised as the primary sense since antiquity, but the ‘difference between earlier views and those of the eighteenth century lies in the prominence of the concept of sensibility, which in medicine, philosophy, and the general culture brought out the underlying, potential significance of the sense of touch’ (Van Sant 1993: 92).

Sensibility became a central idea in the eighteenth century, denoting a developed emotional faculty and the capacity for extremely refined feeling, which manifested itself primarily in the ability to show sympathy for the suffering of others (Todd 1986: 7). Sensibility played a major role in the development of a new conception of morality in which the heart ceased to be associated with romantic delusions to become a guarantee of truthfulness (Mullan 1988: 63). There was a ‘general shift of the foundation of moral life from reason and judgment to the affections’ (Van Sant 1993: 5). Even sociability or social exchange was ‘founded on delicacy of sentiment, on the rush of feeling’, on the ‘traffic not only of opinions, but of harmoniously organized feelings’ (Mullan 1988: 7). This ability to feel intensely was believed to be dependent on the susceptibility of physical structures, and more particularly, to reside in one’s physical nerves (Barker-Benfield 1992: xvii; Powell 2012: 269; Van Sant 1993: 3). In this regard, sensibility brought together body and mind.

Perhaps not coincidentally, two of the Austen heroines whose perceptions are most often represented by means of NP are Anne and Fanny, both of whom are described as nervous and physically sensitive: for example, Fanny is ‘very timid, and exceedingly nervous’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 264), and Anne often experiences ‘very painful agitation’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 75), even ‘extreme agitation’ (1998 [1818]: 82), which makes her body tremble (1998 [1818]: 63). The metaphors which became dominant in the discourse of sensibility were often related to the heart and the nerves, such as ‘vibrations’, ‘impressions’, ‘pulses’, ‘fibres’, ‘motions of the heart’ (Van Sant 1993: 9). Studies in tactile sensibility, through observation and experimentation, proliferated at this time: for instance, Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777) identified the presence of irritability and sensibility ‘by the regular effects obtained from certain experimental manipulations’ such as the shortening of muscles upon being pricked or burned (Broman 2003: 472-473). However, he could not prove the existence of sensibility without having recourse to the ‘assumption of a consciousness in the experimental subject that could sensibly register the pain’ and produce external signs such as disquiet (Broman 2003: 473). Body and consciousness thus came to be seen as mutually dependent.

This association between consciousness and the physical senses meant that, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the body acquired a new epistemological dimension, especially in medical theory (Broman 2003: 483). The ways in which one’s body and the external world interacted became a central concern:

if the preceding century’s epistemology focused upon the responses of consciousness to the external world, the most significant eighteenth-century medical experiments examined the responses of the body – the bones, the tissues, the nerves – to the external world, and by a variety of agencies, of which the terms ‘nerves’ and ‘sensibility’ are but two, that medical understanding entered into general culture.

(Wiltshire 1992: 9)

In Jane Austen’s novels, ‘it is no longer possible to imagine the relation between the human subject and the world as one simply between mind or consciousness and external reality’ (Wiltshire 1992: 9). This is a very important idea, which underlines the fact that Austen is not only concerned with her characters’ thoughts, but also with bodily sensations; with her heroines’ physical reaction to the world, in tune with epistemological and medical notions of her time. The expression of the ideas of sensibility in eighteenth-century literature is explored more extensively in 3.2, and the bodily component implicit in passages of NP is further illustrated in the analysis of *MP* and *P* in Chapter 5.

Sight was as important as touch: ‘When sensibility became a predominant concept, it was associated with perception, and more particularly, as dependent on sight and analogous to sight’ (Van Sant 1993: 13). Sight was, along with touch, considered to be an essential source of knowledge about self and the world, and a very important object of investigation in natural, medical and philosophical writings: ‘the Ideas of this Sense are far more vivid and definite than those of any other’; ‘Our Stock of visible Ideas may be considered as a Key to a great Part of our Knowledge, and a principal Source of Invention in Poetry, Painting, Mathematics, Mechanics, and almost every other Branch of the Arts and Sciences’ (Hartley 1749: I. 209, 213). Joseph Addison famously says in his *Essays* *on the* *Pleasures of the Imagination* that ‘Our sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses’ (1828: 1), and in fact vision gradually became ‘privileged over the other senses as the primary mode through which the world was to be encountered’ (Mannheimer 2011: 4).

The general importance of visuality, that is, ‘sight as a culturally conceived reality’ (Odgen 2005: 5), was reflected in all areas of eighteenth-century life: ‘the concept of vision as a faculty that could be taught, guided, and enhanced was one that extended from thought-experiments and natural philosophy, to artistic training, connoisseurship, and pictorial composition, to gardening and book-design’ (Mannheimer 2011: 13). There was a general fascination with the dynamics of vision, both as a physical and a social process (Swenson 2010: 27), and studies about vision proliferated in this century, with works such as Newton's *Optics* (1704), Berkeley's *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), Diderot's *Letter on the Blind* (1749) and De Condillac’s *Treatise on the Sensations* (1754). In the seventeenth century Descartes had made extensive contributions to optical investigations (*Optics* and *Dioptrics*, 1637), and Spinoza had collaborated in the development of the microscope and the telescope; two technical innovations which revolutionised the way human beings could look at nature and understand it better. The observation of nature and paintings, ‘especially history, landscape, and sea-pieces’, was encouraged as ‘an excellent promoter of reflection:—such prospects charm the eye, and thence gain an easy passage to the soul’ (Haywood (ed) 1775 [1744-1746]: I. IV. 208). Sight linked the external with the internal, and gave people the opportunity and responsibility to use their visual faculties for physical, intellectual and spiritual progress (Pointon 1997: 89).

Sight was in some regard above touch, standing as it did as the sense most closely allied with reason, science and knowledge (Classen 1997: 402). The pleasant sensations excited by other senses were inferior to the rational and moral purity originating from sight (Humphrey N 1993: 42). It was believed that heightened powers of visual perception gave rise to a more elevated aesthetic and moral perception, and, in the context of sensibility, to the viewer’s sympathy for others. Sight was also associated with masculinity (Ogden 2005: 7; Powell 2012): ‘women have traditionally been associated with the ‘lower’ ‘sensual’ realms of touch, taste and smell’ while men ‘have been linked with the ‘higher’ ‘intellectual’ realms of sight and hearing, the sensory domains of scholarship, exploration and government’ (Classen 1997: 409). At the same time, however, the success of sensibility meant that looking often became a sentimental experience, and so this traditionally masculine activity acquired feminine qualities: ‘The experience is one in which the male viewer first feels his sense of power, which is then softened into an effeminate and more reflective mode of looking, of being’ through feeling and rapture (De Bolla 1994: 110). In the context of the visual arts, looking also became part of everyday experience and not just a privilege for the learned few, for example through public exhibitions of paintings: ‘One no longer sees with the educated eyes of a classically informed elite’ but instead ‘an aesthetics of individualism [emerges] in which the sentimental look is sufficient to indicate one’s being part of a republic of visuality’ (De Bolla 1994: 105).

All of these ideas about the senses entered the general culture through literature and periodical writings. This suggests that Jane Austen very probably imbibed those ideas just as other novel writers did. Criticism has noted the influence of contemporary ideas on Austen’s fiction and her engagement with them, providing various historical accounts: for example, Harris (1989) links Austen’s fiction with Locke, Richardson, Fielding, Milton, Shakespeare and Chaucer. She considers that Locke’s emphasis on ‘individual perception rather than on blind submission to received opinion’ is translated into intelligent women who take responsibility for themselves in Austen’s novels (Harris 1989: 2), and that his ideas of a blank, unprejudiced mind are realised in *NA*, where Catherine learns from sense experience, memory and probability (1989: 1, 12). Other critics have noted her place within feminist thinking (Johnson 1988, 1995; Kirkham 1983), her interaction with the political ideas of her time (Butler 1987; Waldron 1999) and her indebtedness to the cult of sensibility (Tuite 2002).

Others such as Dadlez (2009), Knox-Shaw (2004) and Pinch (1996) discuss her fiction in the light of the empirical tradition, particularly Hume’s work, pointing out, for instance, her zeal for the observation of everyday experience and for the ‘ideals of probability and accuracy’ (Knox-Shaw 2004: 19). In his review of *E*, Walter Scott praises Austen’s excellence in ‘copying from nature as she really exists in common walks of life’ (1815: 192-193), and Austen herself often rejects what is not credible in the novels she reads. For instance, she satirically describes Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1810) as ‘an excellently-meant, elegantly-written Work, without anything of Nature or Probability in it’ (Letter to Cassandra, Monday 11 – Tuesday 12 October 1813. Le Faye 1995: 234). Her juvenile work *Love and Freindship* (1790) also parodies the uncommon events and improbable coincidences of traditional romantic fairy tales.

With regard to her literary roots, although ‘the exact extent of Jane Austen’s reading can never be known’ (Bradbrook 1967: 139), it is known that she and her family were well acquainted with the literary scene in general (Waldron 1999: 3). Bradbrook (1967) explores her indebtedness to a variety of literary sources: for example, the moralist writers Jane West, Dr John Gregory and Thomas Gisborne; William Gilpin and the tradition of the picturesque, the indebtedness to whom will be shown in the analysis of *PP*; Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Crabbe, Cowper; the feminist tradition, with figures such as Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752); the novelists Samuel Richardson and the female novelists who followed his style: Charlotte Smith, Ann Radcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, and most importantly, Frances Burney, whose novels Austen admired and subscribed to (Bradbrook 1967: 94-102). Her extensive reading is also evidenced by the numerous references in her letters and novels (Dow and Halsey 2010), as well as by the accounts provided by Henry Austen’s ‘Biographical Notice of the Author’ (1818) and James Edward Austen-Leigh’s *Memoir* of his aunt (1886).

Her openness to the Enlightenment was partly possible because of the openness of the Anglican Church, to which she belonged, to the intellectual trends of the century (Knox-Shaw 2004: 5). In addition, her father was passionate about science and the Enlightenment in general, which may also have contributed to her indebtedness to the ideas of the time (Knox-Shaw 2004: 8). She was certainly in contact with the learned world through her father’s library and her brothers’ scholarly pursuits: while students at Oxford, James and Henry Austen founded the college newspaper *The Loiterer* (1789-1790), and given Jane’s interest in their careers ‘we can assume that she was familiar with those essays in *The Loiterer* written by James and Henry; and it is likely that she knew the entire work. The publication of *The Loiterer* coincided with her first ventures into authorship, and there are numerous affinities between the periodical and her juvenilia’ (Litz 1961: 251). In fact she allegedly contributed a fictional letter to Issue no. 9 under the pseudonym ‘Sophia Sentiment’ (Geng 2001: 9, n. 32). *The Loiterer* stands ‘as a record of the ideas and opinions which prevailed in Jane Austen's early environment’ (Litz 1961: 252), touching upon miscellaneous topics such as Rousseau’s ideas on education and sentiment, and especially promoting science, which suggests the possibility that Austen may have been directly or indirectly acquainted with the concepts that were being discussed in intellectual circles (Knox-Shaw 2004: 19).

Some of those concepts became further ingrained in social consciousness through the ‘explosive growth’ of popular fiction, magazines, newspapers, periodicals and educational writings, and through the appearance of ‘a host of new institutions of sociability’, such as reading societies and salons (Broman 2003: 482). Other avenues to science available for women of Austen’s social position were botany and home medicine (Schiebinger 2003). Besides *The Loiterer*, Austen may have been conversant with other periodicals and magazines. For instance, she is known to have read Dr Johnson’s *The* *Rambler* (Waldron 1999: 2). Critics have also explored her indebtedness to Henry Mackenzie’s periodical works *The Mirror* and *The Lounger* (Hardman 1980; Southam 1964: 13) and other periodicals such as *The Spectator* (Austen-Leigh 1886: 84; Bradbrook 1967: 4; Shevelow 1989: 135-136). She may also have been familiar with periodical publications specifically addressed to women, such as Eliza Haywood’s *The Female Spectator* (1744-1746); and she probably read conduct literature, among which were Dr John Gregory’s *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) and James Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women* (1793 [1766]), the latter of which is read aloud by Mr Collins in *PP*.

Some of these periodicals and conduct books contain references to contemporary philosophical ideas and scientific discoveries which are directly or indirectly connected with sensory perception. In line with empiricism, the senses are often presented as an important source of knowledge and personal growth. For example, the idea that knowledge enters through our eyes is very common: ‘what the eye is witness of strikes the most, and makes the most deep and lasting impression’ (Haywood (ed) 1775 [1744-1746]: I. II. 96). The concept of the ‘charm’d eye’ is widespread in this century (De Bolla 1994), especially in connection with nature: ‘we can no where cast our eyes without beholding something to admire’; ‘a mind eager to enquire into the minutest works of nature, will be insensibly led to a contemplation on the greatest’ (Haywood (ed)1775 [1744-1746]: IV. XIX. 38). Along similar lines, Fordyce states: ‘Our eyes must rest in Nature for the greatest profit because Creation displays more wonders and beauties than any ornaments can do’ (1793 [1766]: I. VII. 221). Austen’s Fanny seems to be following the advice of these authors when she delights in the contemplation of the evergreen (Austen 1996 [1814]: 174), the summer stars (95), the sea (339) and the landscape of Mansfield Park (368-369). These passages link the character’s visual experience with knowledge, spiritual depth and moral virtue: in fact, Fanny’s love of nature is contrasted with Mary Crawford’s total disinterest (174).

At the same time, moralist and periodical writings tend to consider the senses as potential troublemakers, often emphasising that they lead us astray (Haywood (ed) 1775 [1744-1746]: IV. X. 65). Fordyce points out that ‘the Most High, having formed his rational offspring for a happiness more refined and noble than the indulgence of the senses alone, has wisely made the gratifications arising from thence in a great measure momentary’, and that those who prolong these gratifications are the ‘slaves of appetite and fancy’ (1793 [1766]: II. VIII. 31). Contemporary ideas about education stress the necessity of subjecting the senses to reason. An article in *The Mirror* about Locke’s theories of education says that ‘[man’s] education should begin, as it were, from his birth, and be continued till he arrive at firmness and maturity of mind, as well as of body. Sincerity, truth, justice, and humanity, are to be cultivated from the first dawnings of memory and observation’ (Anonymous 1781: Article 14, Saturday March 13, 1779. 121). Body and mind deserve the same share of education; and observation, a faculty connected with sensory as well as intellectual activity, intervenes decisively in that education as a source of either good or bad notions. In Austen’s novels, observation can also be a source of misconstructions, as in the case of Elizabeth, who ‘derives first impressions through the dangerous medium of her senses’ (Harris 1989: 108). Imagination, too, affects perception as it produces

from one single hint, a thousand and ten thousand subsequent ideas:—it also imposes upon our senses, or to speak more properly, renders them subservient to its own creative faculty, so as to make us call them in for witnesses to things that never were; and we really believe we hear, see, or touch what is most remote from us, and oftentimes what is not, nor cannot be in nature.

(Haywood (ed) 1775 [1744-1746]: III. XIV. 106)

This passage may well be applied to Emma, whose imagination often imposes upon the information received by her senses.

The contemporary gender values attributed to sensory perception feature in conduct and periodical literature as well. For example, it is affirmed that a robust body makes up for an equally robust mind, and so it follows that the male mind is by nature stronger than the female one: ‘Their [men’s] constitution of mind, no less than of body, is for the most part hardy and rough. By means of both, by the demands of life, and by the impulse of passion, they are engaged in a vast diversity of pursuits, from which your sex are precluded by decorum, by softness, and by fear’ (Fordyce 1793 [1766]: I. V. 133-134). The idea that men and women have different degrees of mental strength according to their physical constitution and way of life is also discussed by Anne and Captain Harville in Austen’s *P*; only Anne introduces a twist:

“I believe in a true analogy between our bodily frames and our mental; and that as our bodies are the strongest, so are our feelings; capable of bearing most rough usage, and riding out the heaviest weather.”

“Your feelings may be the strongest,” replied Anne, “but the same spirit of analogy will authorise me to assert that ours are the most tender. Man is more robust than woman, but he is not longer-lived; which exactly explains my view of the nature of their attachments. Nay, it would be too hard upon you, if it were otherwise. You have difficulties, and privations, and dangers enough to struggle with. You are always labouring and toiling, exposed to every risk and hardship. Your home, country, friends, all quitted. Neither time, nor health, nor life, to be called your own. It would be too hard indeed” (with a faltering voice) “if woman’s feelings were to be added to all this.”

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 219)

This passage shows Austen’s awareness of contemporary theories about the correlations between body and mind, but also challenges them: Anne believes that tenderness, a characteristic the narrator often attributes to Anne herself, adds an extra layer of strength and durability to a woman’s feelings. That is, tenderness of feeling signifies mental strength, allowing women to stay faithful to men for longer periods of time. This idea questions the established correlation between physical and mental capabilities. In fact, Anne and the other Austen heroines present an atypical mix of strong intellects and tender bodies and feelings. For example, Anne possesses a ‘strong mind’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 58) while her figure is ‘slender’ (1998 [1818]: 63), which at least suggests a challenge to preconceived notions in this regard. These associations indeed go against traditional associations of sensibility. As was mentioned earlier, at the end of the eighteenth century sensory perception acquired a sentimental dimension, even for men (De Bolla 1994: 110), and Anne’s speech here seems to be hinting at this new and more complex understanding of the human being, whereby mental and emotional strength are not determined or mirrored by bodily frame.

Austen’s notable development of NP seems to celebrate the important role of the senses in the acquisition of knowledge, in line with empiricist views. Her novels’ emphasis on the observation of everyday reality is closely linked with visual perception, which, as noted above, is the main source of information for the heroines, and the most abundant type of perception represented through NP. However, the potential fallibility of sensory experience, highlighted especially by the rationalists, must have presented great attractiveness for her as well, and indeed features strongly in her novels too: ‘Austen’s interest in her heroines’ faults and errors [is] in itself something extraordinary in fiction’ (Mullan 2012: 306). Like her character Elizabeth, Austen was amused by people’s mistakes and nonsense: she says in one of her letters, ‘pictures of perfection as you know make me sick & wicked’ (Letter to Fanny Knight, Sunday 23 – Tuesday 25 March 1817. Le Faye 1995: 335). Accordingly, perception is presented in her novels as an ambivalent source of knowledge, usually supplying the heroines with truthful, important information yet at the same time conveying a certain epistemological uncertainty by showing that characters can be deceived. In such cases there seems to be a limit to sensory knowledge, and prejudices and emotions impinge on perception. The double-edged function of NP in her novels offers one possible explanation why they have given rise to opposite interpretations about whether or not there is a single truth, point of view or definitive interpretation of reality in them (Morini 2009; Patteson 1981).

Moreover, besides perception Austen explores other forms of knowledge such an intuition. Her heroines sometimes come to know their own feelings and the state of things outside themselves at moments of inner insight, rather than through perception:

Emma’s eyes were instantly withdrawn; and she sat silently meditating, in a fixed attitude, for a few minutes. A few minutes were sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart. A mind like her’s, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress. She touched—she admitted—she acknowledged the whole truth. Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley, than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet’s having some hope of a return? It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 335)

In this famous passage, Emma becomes ‘acquainted with her own heart’ through reflection. The truth she arrives at ‘darts through’ her from within and not from external information.

For all of the above reasons, it can be argued that, rather than reflecting any particular philosophical theory, Austen’s use of NP echoes the debates and contradictions of the age as far as the senses are concerned. The following discussion presents possible connections between her novels and the sentimental literature of her time, which also reflects contemporary philosophical theories by exploring the importance of sight and touch in relation to knowledge and emotion. The discussion presents ways in which Austen’s fiction and the sentimental novel converge and diverge, and points out some of the differences between Austen’s use of NP and that of Sterne and Burney, illustrating her creativity and skill in the development of this technique.

**3.2 Sensory Perception and the Sentimental Novel**

As discussed in the last section, sensibility became a central idea in eighteenth-century Britain, both in popular culture and in intellectual and literary circles. It referred to a developed emotional faculty that expressed itself primarily in the ability to show sympathy for the suffering of others, and depended on the susceptibility of the skin and nervous system, as well as to the input provided by sight. Sensibility was cultivated in moral philosophy and in all literary genres, but the novel in particular became the site for moral and social debate in the 1790s (Todd 1986: 3), both by radical and conservative writers. Certain stereotypes began to be associated with this genre, such as the deluded female who reads too many novels, the model girl, the female rebel, the hero/guardian who has all the right answers, and contrasting pairs of heroines, one right, the other wrong (Waldron 1999: 2). These themes may ring a bell if one thinks about Austen: the deluded female who reads too many novels sounds very much like Catherine; the model girl could be any of Austen’s sensible and morally upright heroines, such as Anne and Fanny; the hero/guardian who has all the right answers makes one think of Mr Knightley; and a contrasting pair of heroines can be found in Elinor and Marianne.

However, these various stereotypes are reshaped and explored by Jane Austen in much greater depth and complexity. The differences between her fiction and the novel of sensibility seem obvious at first sight, and yet it is possible to find several correlations between them in connection with NP. In line with the general intellectual atmosphere of the time, which saw an increasing focus on subjectivity and introspection, the eighteenth-century sentimental novel showed a growing interest in the exploration of characters’ consciousness. Women’s consciousness in particular ‘became predominantly the place of sensibility’ (Todd 1986: 67), with female characters populating the fictional arena. In this respect, the sentimental novel can be said to set an important background for Jane Austen, who took this interest in female consciousness further. The general interest in the creation of a perceiving point of view leads to the development of narrative techniques, the most celebrated being FIT but, as this study demonstrates, also NP.

Sensibility also reflects the contemporary interest in the body: ‘Sensibility’s most modern elements are its invitation to experimental procedures and its centralizing of the body’ (Van Sant 1993: xiii), particularly the female body: ‘Sensibility is not so much spoken as displayed. Its instrument is a massively sensitized, feminine body; its vocabulary is that of gestures and palpitations, sighs and tears’ (Mullan 1988: 61). Because of its fundamental connection with suffering and pain, sensibility could also have the downside of causing illness or physical debility (Mullan 1988: 110), even death as occurs in Richardson’s novel *Clarissa* (1748). As discussed in Chapter 5, Fanny and Anne are also sensitive characters whose anxieties and worries, and sometimes their sensory perceptions, cause them to feel physically unwell (Wiltshire 1992: 195). In this regard, Austen’s use of NP shows her interest in sensibility by presenting the female body as a vehicle for expressing emotion.

Paradoxically, although the female body is the quintessential vehicle for sensibility, and sensibility might appear more suited to report women's experience than men’s, there is an absence of physical detail in sentimental novels, and any sexual element is suppressed: ‘Women of a status to be idealized were assumed to have structures that it would be indecorous to reveal despite the natural delicacy of those structures’ (Van Sant 1993: 113). To describe a body is to introduce particularity and thus a location for experience, and therefore, the physical appearance of the heroine in the novel of sensibility is never fully described, except for a few minimal touches, in order to preserve female decorum. Similarly, Austen mainly relies on sight and maintains this reticence to describe her heroines’ bodies. However, NP allows her to introduce a subtle, indirect way of representing a bodily dimension, sometimes suggesting tactile experience and, more generally, physical sensation (for example, heat, motion, discomfort caused by someone else’s presence), and in this regard it can be argued that her use of this technique is an innovative exploration of the sensory realm.

Besides the decorum with which female tactile experience is treated, the contemporary belief in the epistemological authority of the senses to construct reality and influence human behaviour naturally precluded an active, sexually discriminating female gaze as well (Conway 2001: 34). For this reason the female gaze in the novel is generally divorced from any sexuality and limited in scope to the observation of the home, as ‘the ever-vigilant monitor of her household and the good of all its members’ (Powell 2012: 263-264). According to Ogden, the works of Eliza Haywood (1693-1756), Frances Burney (1752-1840), Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) and Jane Austen follow this traditional gender distinction in presenting heroines who ‘see the world with empirically discerning, domestically oriented and sexually (self)regulating eyes’ (Ogden 2005: 14). When discussing Austen in particular, he affirms that her women are typically depicted as the natural objects of the male gaze (2005: 57, 58). It is only in the twentieth century, he argues, that the female gaze was empowered with a wider scope of roles: Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), for instance, presents a heroine with ‘multifaceted eyes’ and explores every aspect of female visuality that had characterised the preceding centuries, most importantly the desiring sexual gaze (2005: 19).

This thesis argues, however, that the way NP is deployed in Austen’s fiction constitutes one major step forward in that process of empowerment of female characters, because of her original and innovative treatment of perception. Her fiction reflects the contemporary importance of sight in the fact that visual perception is by far the predominant type of NP in all the novels, and yet various senses other than sight are explored as well; especially touch in *P*, and hearing in *E*. Moreover, sight and hearing are appropriated by female characters, which reverses the contemporary cultural and gender conventions about the senses discussed in 3.1.2, empowering her heroines with reason, insight and authority. Austen’s heroines are intelligent, sensitive women who display an empirically discerning gaze in their observations and evaluations by being often watchful and learning from their perceptual mistakes. Although they occasionally show a traditional visual conduct (for example, Elizabeth sometimes lowers her gaze in the presence of Mr Darcy) and some of them are misguided in their perceptions (particularly Emma and Catherine), male characters are sometimes mistaken too (Mr Knightley for instance), and most heroines observe others very openly and accurately, especially the men they love. Their perceptions take place in various scenarios besides the domestic one, such as natural landscapes, streets, shops and balls. Moreover, while in novels of sensibility the object of the spectacle of ‘melancholy’ is the female body (Mullan 1988: 112), in Austen’s novels the female character is not just the recipient of others’ looks and touches, but also an active onlooker and feeler. Austen gives a “voice” to female perception, presenting sensory experience from a woman’s bodily, cognitive and moral point of view through the immediacy and figural quality of NP. All of these aspects are more fully explored in later chapters.

It could be said in fact that sensory perception as expressed through NP is one major way in which Austen’s heroines depart from the literary norm of her time. Their atypical empowerment has already been noted, though not in relation to perception: ‘Women of power abound in the novels – Austen, long before the days of affirmative action, sees to it that they are far more plentiful than a sample of her society would allow’ (Knox-Shaw 2004: 213). Emma, for instance, has a position of social influence and some of the confidence and independence of ‘the new woman’, characteristics which cannot be found in Burney’s characters (Bradbrook 1967: 110-111). It is shown in later chapters how sight and hearing endow Austen’s heroines with discernment, while tactile experience contributes to enhance the physical aspect of their perceptions, such as desire for the affectionate touch of another; that is, her novels combine ‘a heroine's access to knowledge (through the act of looking) and to pleasure (through textual consciousness of the body)’ (Warhol 1992: 6). According to some critics, Austen’s use of the novel form actually has the purpose of legitimising female physical desire (Wiltshire 1992: 131).

Austen is also innovative in the sense that she explores through NP an aspect of eighteenth-century thought noted by Powell (2012), namely, the multi-sensory quality of perception: ‘eighteenth-century spectation is closely linked not only to the visual but also to the aural, to social interaction and, prominently, to theatrical practices’ (2012: 258); ‘in practice being a spectator is also inseparable from listening’ (2012: 259). Later chapters show that a great number of instances of NP combine visual and aural perception. In fact, audition is the second most frequent type of perception in all of the novels. Moreover, sight is sometimes associated with touch as well as hearing, thus ‘underscoring a complex physicality in textual representations of observation’ (Powell 2012: 260). The following perception contains visual, aural and tactile elements: ‘1 [N] she [Catherine] hurried on, slipped with the least possible noise through the folding doors, and without stopping to look or breathe, rushed forward to the one in question. 2 [NP] The lock yielded to her hand, and, luckily, with no sullen sound that could alarm a human being’ (Austen 2003 [1818]: 182). Catherine has been anxious to visit the room of the deceased Mrs Tilney: as she stands before the door, her appraisal of the lock is primarily visual, but she also feels its touch in her hand and perceives and evaluates the sound made by it. The blend of different types of perception is not stated explicitly, however, which makes NP a more subtle and mimetic technique than psycho-narration (PN) and pure narration (N).

Sentimental themes such as the faded heroine are also present in Austen: for example, Anne’s looks are affected by her intense suffering, and Fanny often gets headaches and fever when she experiences distress, thus illustrating the mutual dependence of mind and body. However, unlike sentimental heroines, Austen’s characters are usually responsible for their own mental and physical situations, rather than mere recipients of external forces; they are accountable for their choices and decisions. For example, Marianne’s illness is brought on by her own excess of feeling and sensibility, which prompts her to walk under the rain. She is moreover spared the traditional fate of the sentimental heroine (death), which sets Austen apart from this novelistic tradition. The exploration of the physical, emotional and moral effects of perception, typical of sentimental literature, is also present in Austen’s fiction, but her emphasis does not lie on external manifestations such as tears or fits, but rather on the way sensory experience in general, and NP in particular, reveal something about the perceiving character, with special interest in that character’s moral, rational and aesthetic responsiveness. All of these features are more fully illustrated in the analyses of Chapters 4-6.

In general, the flat, stereotypical characters of sentimental fiction give way to Austen's complex and realistic characters, and her novels present a perceptive analysis of everyday life, in opposition to the idealised or fantastic worlds of sentimental fiction. As was mentioned earlier, the style and methods of sentimental literature are ridiculed in Austen's fiction for their unnaturalness, especially in the juvenilia: she ‘parodies the ecstatic tone of sensibility, which finds the world either amazingly horrid or infinitely superior, and she mocks characters who are overwhelmed by their sensitive and palpitating bodies’ (Todd 1986: 145). She abandons the epistolary and fragmented form of many sentimental novels, such as Henry Mackenzie’s *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), in order to exploit the possibilities of a third-person narrator and a carefully planned plot.

The cult of sensibility was criticised and eventually rejected at the end of the century, and Jane Austen has been considered as an important figure in the change of attitude towards it (Todd 1986: 144-45), together with figures such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) also helped to undermine the conventions of sensibility (Barker-Benfield 1992: xxx), such as the encouragement of an excess of feeling, which did damage to women because it was not accompanied by the cultivation of reason. Sentimentality and its fiction became associated with the provinces, the under-educated, the ill-bred, and women like Lucy Steele in Austen’s *SS*. In addition, there was anxiety at the possible effects of sentimental fiction upon women’s minds, especially when the novel became the predominant form (Todd 1986: 134). Although sensibility was considered to have changed the nation’s manners, making them more soft and gentle, it was also viewed as having had the same effect on morality: it had loosened or softened principles, permitting immorality, and this was recognised from all quarters, both conservative and radical, religious and atheist (Todd 1986: 137). The cult of sensibility, however, helped to shape a new outlook on the world which influenced Jane Austen’s writings. Brissenden sums up Austen’s indebtedness to sensibility by stating that her ‘work grows out of, is a reaction against and an assimilation of, the English [sentimental] novel of the late eighteenth century’ (1974: 97). She develops the sentimental novel in a number of ways, the most relevant to this research being narrative technique.

Some of these developments and connections have been noted in this section: Austen abandons the epistolary, fragmented form of sentimental novels to create third-person well-structured plots. Several stereotypes associated with the heroines of sensibility, such as the deluded female or contrasting pairs of heroines, are developed by her in a much more complex way; and she adds a similar depth and complexity to the exploration of female consciousness and the creation of a perceiving point of view. Unlike sentimental heroines, her characters are accountable for their choices and situations. In general, Austen’s realistic characters, and her insightful analysis of everyday life, contrast with the flat and idealised worlds of the novels of sensibility.

The role and effects of sensory perception, explored by sentimental literature, are also present in Austen’s fiction, but her emphasis does not lie on external manifestations such as tears or fainting, but on what sensation and perception tell us about the perceiving character. Her fiction reflects the contemporary importance of sight in the fact that visual perception is the predominant type of NP in all of her novels. However, the typically masculine capacities of active sight and hearing are given to female characters, who are thus empowered with reason, empirical insight and authority. At the same time, her heroines reflect a human reality, common to men and women alike, in their sometimes misguided or mistaken perceptions.

Austen’s use of NP has also been argued here to develop the contemporary interest in the responses of the body to the environment, with NP being a vehicle for expressing emotion, and suggesting a certain implied physicality. In her novels, the female character is not just the recipient of others’ looks and touches, but also an active onlooker and feeler. Austen gives a “voice” to female perception, presenting sensory experience from a woman’s bodily, cognitive and moral point of view. The following section discusses Austen’s use of NP in relation to the narratives of two of her contemporaries.

**3.2.1 Sterne, Burney and Austen**

Jane Austen had a variety of literary influences, as discussed in 3.1.2. Some of them belong to the tradition of the novel of sensibility. Richardson in particular can be considered as the most important representative of early sentimental fiction, ‘for in the mid-eighteenth century his novels made the new form serious and respectable’ (Todd 1986: 66). Richardson can also be considered Austen's predecessor in the sense that ‘he produces an account of the inner conflicts of morally sensitive individuals which for dramatic, psychological vividness and minuteness of detail is new in English fiction’ (Brissenden 1974: 35). He used the epistolary form to explore the nature and expression of sensibility, but, more importantly, the nature of female consciousness. Austen is known to have enjoyed reading him and she even adapted his novel *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) into a play of the same name (Doody 1983): ‘Every circumstance narrated in Sir Charles Grandison, all that was ever said or done in the cedar parlour, was familiar to her; and the wedding days of Lady L. and Lady G. were as well remembered as if they had been living friends’ (Austen-Leigh 1886: 84). However, Richardson’s prose is less suitable for a comparison in terms of NP, because of its epistolary form: ‘When a story is told through letters, the first-person phenomenon of experience is reported in a first-person narrative while it is still fresh. The narrative unfolds with the events, and the outcome is unknown to the narrator’ (Lodge 2003: 44). Jane Austen began writing fiction in epistolary form as well (*Lady Susan*, *Love and Freindship*), but she probably did not consider the letter as an appropriate form for the exploration of psychological tensions (Bray 2003: 123-131), and so she eventually abandoned it.

The prose of Sterne (1713-1768), in contrast, though written in the first-person, is closer to Austen’s novels in its use of a narrator that mediates the presentation of a series of events along a plot line. Sterne came to be known as the quintessential man of sentiment, and attained great fame in the eighteenth century (Mullan 1988: 151). His novels were often simultaneously condemned for their obscenity and moral unreliability, and praised for the mastery in the description of feeling (Mullan 1988: 152-153). In his *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), the narrator and main character, the British cleric Yorick, tells of his adventures abroad through a series of encounters with various people, especially women. The novel is highly fragmented, consisting of isolated episodes; the unifying thread is Yorick’s physical and emotional responses to his experiences. As mentioned earlier, in Austen novels external action is subordinated to interior experience as well, but her narratives are carefully structured. In contrast, sensation in Sterne’s fiction, as in other sentimental novels, is ‘the basic unit of experience; it replaces adventure as the basic unit of narrative’ (Van Sant 1993: 100). Yorick is the typical hero of sensibility, who has heightened powers of perception and an acuteness of feeling. This includes a delicate sexual impulse, as illustrated by some of his adventures (Van Sant 1993: 107).

It is possible to identify passages of NP in this narrative, and indeed NP is used quite extensively, although it is difficult to distinguish it from pure narration; that is, it is difficult to separate the narrating character from the experiencing character, because Sterne writes in the first person. However, in several instances a perception indicator or the textual context, or both, make it clear that the narratorial voice is sticking to the impression produced by a sense perception at the moment of experiencing it. Through the use of NP the narrative gains in vividness and immediacy:

1. 1 [N] When we had got to the door of the Remise, she withdrew her hand from across her forehead, and let me see the original—[NP] it was a face of about six and twenty—of a clear transparent brown, simply set off without rouge or powder—it was not critically handsome, but there was that in it, [PN: NI] which in the frame of mind I was in, attached me much more to it—[NP] it was interesting.

(Sterne 2003 [1768]: 15)

In the case of Sterne (and Frances Burney, discussed later in this section), a manual analysis of the data was conducted but the results were not quantified as it was done with Austen’s novels. Several representative examples of NP were picked for stylistic analysis, and recurrent features and patterns of occurrence were identified. In this passage, a first-person form of NP is clearly identifiable because it is preceded and triggered by the perception indicator ‘see’ in sentence 1. Yorick-narrator makes it explicit that he is narrating from ‘the frame of mind I was in’ at the time the events took place, that is, from the perspective of Yorick-character. Accordingly, he sticks to his evaluations at that time, which are still indistinct as the lady gradually unveils her face: he estimates her age (‘about six-and-twenty’), does not know how to interpret the qualities of that face (he uses an indeterminate pronoun in ‘there was *that* in it’), and summarises his impression of the face as overall ‘interesting’ because that is how her face appeared to him then. Other evaluations occur: ‘clear transparent brown’, ‘simply set off’, ‘not critically handsome’, which probably refer to his evaluations at the time as well.

The punctuation used is very similar to that observed in Austen, too: in this passage, dashes occur as soon as N ends and the representation of consciousness begins. The different dashes probably separate different perceptions and different stages in his evaluation of the lady’s face (‘about six and twenty—of a clear transparent brown’, ‘without rouge or powder—it was not critically handsome’) until he comes to the conclusion that it is interesting. Finally, note that the underlined clauses are shorter and simpler in syntactic terms, in contrast with N and PN which contain subordination: N contains a temporal clause, ‘When we had got to the door of the Remise’, attached to the main clause ‘she withdrew her hand from across her forehead’; and PN is made up of a relative clause (‘which […] attached me much more to it’) containing another relative clause inside (‘the frame of mind [which] I was in’).

The above example can be compared with a passage from *E* in which perception is similarly represented as indistinct, confused, to show that Austen’s narrators tend to conform to the experiencing characters’ perspective too, and that her use of NP presents similar stylistic features:

1. 1 [FIS] “The ladies were all at home.” 2 [PN: NI] She [Emma] had never rejoiced at the sound before, nor ever before entered the passage, nor walked up the stairs, with any wish of giving pleasure, but in conferring obligation, or of deriving it, except in subsequent ridicule.

3 [NP] There was a bustle on her approach; a good deal of moving and talking. 4 [PN: PERCEPTION] She heard Miss Bates’s voice, [NP] something was to be done in a hurry.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 311)

In this example, perception is auditory. Emma is not quite sure of what she is hearing: there is a ‘bustle’, ‘a good deal of moving and talking’ and she only catches part of a speech stating that ‘something’ must be done quickly. The narratorial voice could have told us what Miss Bates is actually saying, but prefers to keep the perspective anchored in Emma’s perceptual consciousness. The two clauses in sentence 3 are short and simple, like Sterne’s, and juxtaposed to one another through a semi-colon (note that the second clause, ‘a good deal of moving and talking’, omits the verb ‘There was’), in contrast with sentence 2 in the first paragraph, which is longer and more complex: two parallel non-finite clauses are attached to ‘wish’ (‘of giving pleasure’, ‘of deriving it’) and one more non-finite clause attached to the preposition ‘in’ (‘conferring obligation’). The structure of these clauses is also semantically symmetrical: ‘of giving pleasure, but in conferring obligation’, ‘of deriving it, except in subsequent ridicule’. This suggests the narrator’s perspective, in contrast with NP, which sticks to Emma’s perspective and uses more colloquial language (‘a good deal of’).

It has been argued that in *A Sentimental Journey* many episodes are based on tactile experiences (Van Sant 1993: 98), and yet the instances of NP found are predominantly visual. This once again underlines the importance of visuality in this century, especially in connection with compassion and what Hume terms ‘sympathy’ throughout his *Treatise* (1739) which is based on the perception of a resemblance between another person and our idea of ourselves (Pinch 1996: 35): ‘In that case resemblance converts the idea into an impression [a sense experience]’ (Hume 1739: II. 139). That is, the perception of a feeling in another who is seen as resembling the perceiver in some way can trigger a similar sensation (of pain, for example) in the perceiver. The act of looking in particular is important in order to share another person’s feelings. At another point in the narrative, Yorick hears about Maria, a special woman who has suffered greatly and has mental health problems, and he searches for her on purpose to be touched by her misfortunes:

1. 1 [N] When we had got within half a league of Moulines, at a little opening in the road leading to a thicket, [PN: PERCEPTION] I discovered poor Maria sitting under a poplar—she was sitting with her elbow in her lap, and her head leaning on one side within her hand—a small brook ran at the foot of the tree.

(Sterne 2003 [1768]: 95)

NP is once again easy to distinguish because it is preceded by PN representing perception, with the perception indicator ‘discovered’. Markers of the experiencing character’s consciousness are the continuous aspect and a present participle (‘was sitting’, ‘leaning’) and the use of dashes. The picture of Maria rendered here has a bucolic air: she is outside the town, under a tree and beside a little stream. Her position is one of reflection, dejection and solitude. Yorick knows that both her lover and her goat have abandoned her, and perhaps his perception evokes an implicit feeling of awe at the beauty and sadness of the scene. The fact that he feels touched is made explicit a bit later, when he sits down by her to hear her story: ‘as I did it [wipe her tears], I felt such undescribable emotions within me, as I am sure could not be accounted for from any combinations of matter and motion’ (2003 [1768]: 95).

Sympathy, Hume argues in his *Treatise*, is a universal quality: ‘Now ’tis obvious, that nature has preserv’d a great resemblance among all human creatures, and that we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which, in some degree or other, we may not find a parallel in ourselves’ (1739: II. 75). In Austen’s novels, ‘sympathy involves at least a presumed sharing of emotion’ (Dadlez 2009: 77). For a character to experience sympathy, he/she must be aware of the circumstances (the causes of the emotion) and the behaviour (the effects of that emotion) of the character with whom he/she sympathises (Dadlez 2009: 77). Fanny and Anne are two of the Austen heroines who feel most sympathy for their fellow characters. Their observations, like Yorick’s, are necessary to experience this sense of identification, fellowship and compassion. For instance, Fanny often needs only to look at Edmund to understand the reasons for his feelings and feel the same as him: 1 [N] She looked at him, [NP] but he was leaning back [in the seat of the carriage], sunk in a deeper gloom than ever, and with eyes closed[FIT]as if the view of cheerfulness oppressed him, and the lovely scenes of home must be shut out. 2 [PN: NI] It made her melancholy again’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 369). Fanny’s perception, expressed through the past continuous aspect, provokes ‘melancholy’ even though she has felt happy in the immediately preceding sentences: ‘when they entered the Park, her perceptions and her pleasures were of the keenest sort’ (1996 [1814]: 368-369). This passage is analysed in more detail in Chapter 5 (Example 52).

Sterne endows places, objects and landscapes with a figural, sometimes symbolic meaning, a feature which is also found in passages of NP in Austen, especially in *NA* and the later novels, as shown in 4.3 and Chapters 5 and 6. In the following instance, the many hues of red seem to add to the scene’s romantic atmosphere, even hinting at physical desire, between Yorick and a maid. The episode is called ‘The Temptation’, which may be interpreted as having sensual connotations as well:

1. 1 [N] As the fair *fille de chambre* was so near my door she turned back, and went into the room with me for a moment or two whilst I wrote a card.

2 [NP] It was a fine still evening in the latter end of the month of May—the crimson window curtains [N] (which were of the same colour as those of the bed) [NP] were drawn close—the sun was setting and reflected through them so warm a tint into the fair *fille de chambre*’s face—[PN: IT] I thought she blush’d—[PN: NI] the idea of it [N] made me blush myself—[NP: AWARENESS] we were quite alone; [N] and that super-induced a second blush before the first could get off.

(Sterne 2003 [1768]: 76-77, original italics)

Yorick’s visual perceptions of the crimson curtains, which shed a red light into the room, and the probable blush of the maid under the same light, make him blush himself. There is also an instance of awareness, perhaps connected with visual perception (‘we were quite alone’) which may have sensual connotations too. Again NP features the past continuous aspect and several dashes, conveying the sense that we are there with the experiencing Yorick at the same time the events unfold. In the following passage from Austen’s *MP*, a similar figural or symbolic meaning is attributed to the perception of the sun and the room where Fanny is:

1. 1 [PN: NI] She was deep in other musing. 2 [PN: NRTA] The remembrance of her first evening in that room, of her father and his newspaper came across her. 3 [NP + NP: AWARENESS] No candle was *now* wanted. 4 The sun was yet an hour and half above the horizon. 5 [PN: IT] She felt that she had, indeed, been three months there; [N] and the sun’s rays falling strongly into the parlour, [PN: NI] instead of cheering, made her still more melancholy; for sun-shine appeared to her a totally different thing in a town and in the country. 6 [NP-FIT] Here, its power was only a glare, a stifling, sickly glare, serving but to bring forward stains and dirt that might otherwise have slept. 7 There was neither health nor gaiety in sun-shine in a town.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 362, original italics)

In the sentence ‘No candle was *now* wanted’ Fanny becomes aware of the passage of time by comparing the amount of sunlight in the present summer day to the day when she first came to stay with her family a few months earlier. Her awareness of this change leads her to observe the sun in sentence 4: ‘The sun was yet an hour and half above the horizon’. The fact that she is observing is not explicitly stated, and therefore this sentence could be considered as another instance of awareness, or could even be read as N. However, the description does not seem intended as a faithful narratorial account of the position of the sun; in fact it could be regarded as irrelevant were it not intended as a rendition of Fanny’s visual perception, as well as a reflection of the feelings arising from that perception. The impression NP gives in this instance is of external sunlight becoming inner darkness: Fanny’s sadness is not alleviated by the sight of the sun, and the concomitant realisation ‘that she had, indeed, been three months there’ (sentence 5) sinks her even more into her own pain and sense of confinement. The rest of sentence 5 renders other thoughts and feelings in PN (‘melancholy’). Sentences 6 and 7 have been tagged as NP-FIT, as they contain a series of reflections which simultaneously refer to Fanny’s ongoing sight of the sun. For example, the clause ‘its power was only a glare, a stifling, sickly glare’ portrays the way she perceives the light, at the same time it expresses an inner complaint. The commas probably represent mental pauses, and the emphatic repetition and negative evaluation of ‘glare’ suggest disgust.

Finally, it can be argued that the ambiguity of NP has different narrative effects in Sterne and Austen. As has been pointed out above, it is difficult to distinguish between the narrating and the experiencing character in Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey*, because they both refer to an ‘I’. In any case, even in obvious instances of first-person NP, such as the ones analysed above, there does not seem to be any essential disparity in the viewpoints of the narrating and the experiencing self. In contrast, as will be more fully illustrated in later chapters, the presence of two different perspectives in Austen’s fiction (that of the narrator and that of the character) potentially poses more interpretative challenges, causing greater ambiguity and unreliability and sometimes irony.

In conclusion, Yorick-narrator seems to appeal to the reader's sensibility through the visual and tactile experiences of Yorick-character, to favour identification with his experiences and awaken similar emotions. Yorick may be morally reprehensible in some of his flirtations with women, and yet, even if some characters present moral and intellectual deficiencies, the narrator can provoke the reader's sympathy by making them the centre of consciousness (Leech and Short 1981: 347). Similarly, Austen exploits the idea of reader identification through the particularisation of a point of view, even in the case of deluded or self-important characters such as Emma. Flavin concludes that at the end of each Austen novel ‘the narrator’s affinity for or detachment from each character corresponds to the amount of FID each is granted’ (1987: 145); and Semino and Short argue that the effect of FID is to make ‘the reader feel close to the character’s thinking process’ (2004: 15). The same conclusions can be applied to NP, which can be considered as another technical innovation which both Austen and Sterne use quite extensively.

Common to Sterne and Austen is also the use of commas, dashes and semi-colons, and syntactic simplicity in passages of NP. However, their style is different in many ways, especially as Sterne writes in the first person and she uses the third person. In contrast with the specific patterns of occurrence of NP in Austen, the technique is used quite uniformly in *A Sentimental Journey*. Since the latter is made up of isolated episodes and presents no climax in the same sense Austen’s novels do, the effects of NP observed in her novels, such as the intensification of emotion, seem less evident or relevant to his plot. Moreover, the ambiguity of NP in their respective fictions has different effects: in particular, the use of a narrator reporting on a character’s perception in the third person often results in the presence of two different perspectives, which sometimes casts doubt on the character or leads to irony. These effects cannot be found in Sterne’s prose, as there is no essential dissimilarity between the narrating and the experiencing “I”.

The women novelists who followed the tradition inaugurated by Richardson were particularly influential on Austen (Bradbrook 1967: 89). These include Eliza Haywood, Charlotte Smith and, most importantly, Fanny Burney (Wiltshire 2001: 77). Walder presents these female writers as being ‘evidently much closer in period and interest to Austen’ than the novels of well-known major eighteenth-century male writers (1995: 24). The relationship of Austen to Burney is easier to trace than that with other predecessors (Bradbrook 1967: 108). In fact ‘probably her most important antecedent was Burney, whose *Cecilia* provided the title of *Pride and Prejudice* and whose work undoubtedly acted as a direct influence’ (Walder 1995: 25). Sensory perception has an important place in Burney’s fiction, especially visual perception, being an important source of information for her heroines Camilla and Cecilia. However, her use of NP is scarce. As in Austen’s fiction, figural perception is mostly represented through PN, using verbs of perception and summarisation. In the following example from *Cecilia* (1782), Mr Monckton is angry because he wanted to sit next to Cecilia, whom he secretly intends to marry, but Morrice has frustrated his plan by noisily jumping over the sofa and planting himself next to her. When Morrice perceives Mr Monckton’s anger, he gives up his seat to him:

1. 1 [PN:NI] Morrice, who wished nothing so little as disobliging Mr. Monckton, [N] and whose behaviour was merely the result of levity and a want of early education, [PN: PERCEPTION] no sooner perceived his displeasure, [N] than rising with yet more agility than he had seated himself, he resumed the obsequiousness of which an uncommon flow of spirits had robbed him, [PN: NI, UNCONSCIOUS] and guessing no other subject for his anger than the disturbance he [Morrice] had made, [N] he bowed almost to the ground, first to him, and afterwards to Cecilia, [NRSA] most respectfully begging pardon of them both for his frolic, and [IS] protesting he had no notion he should have made such a noise!

(Burney 1782: I. I. X. 142-143)

This passage illustrates the features which characterise the representation of consciousness in *Cecilia*. To begin with, sentences are usually long and complex, which suggests the narrator’s style and viewpoint: here, one sentence occupies a whole paragraph. Other features which introduce distance and reveal a prominent narratorial point of view are the use of the characters’ proper names, the subordination of thoughts, perceptions and emotions to verbs of consciousness (‘wished’, ‘perceived’, ‘guessing’), and the use of elaborate syntax and lexis (‘resumed the obsequiousness of which an uncommon flow of spirits had robbed him’). Additionally, this passage features an explicit commentary of the narrator (‘whose behaviour was merely the result of levity and a want of early education’), and the presentation of a fact of which Morrice is unaware (‘guessing no other subject for his anger’). It also shows that Cecilia is not the only character whose consciousness is represented, despite being the central character.

These features occur in Austen’s fiction too, but generally not in NP. Several examples of NP can be found in Burney’s fiction, which suggests an incipient development of the technique, but they are very occasional, and in the majority of cases seem to be placed in a context which renders them ambiguous between NP and N, especially because of their mixture of markers of figural perception and narratorial language:

1. 1 [N] Cecilia stopt to look at her [a homeless woman]: [NP] her dress, though parsimonious, was too neat for a beggar, [PN: NRTA] and she considered a moment what she couldoffer her. 2 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] The poor woman continued to move forward, but with a slowness of pace that indicated extreme weakness; and, as she approached and raised her head, she exhibited a countenance so wretched, and a complection so sickly, [PN: NI] that Cecilia was impressedwith horror at the sight.

(Burney 1782: I. I. IX. 121)

There is a perception indicator at the beginning of sentence 1 (‘stopt to look at her’), and after a colon Cecilia’s perception is portrayed directly in what can be considered a clear example of NP. In contrast, sentence 2 is not straightforward: there are some markers of figural idiom which point to Cecilia’s consciousness, such as the epithet ‘poor woman’, or the epistemic modal ‘indicated’. There is also the fact that she is observing this woman all this time. However, the language employed is rather formal (‘slowness of pace’, ‘exhibited a countenance’), and the syntax is arranged in a complex fashion (for example, note the parallelism of ‘a countenance so wretched, and a complection so sickly’). In addition, the character’s name is used at the end, and the deictic centre is not that of Cecilia, but the deictic position of an external observer (that is, the narrator): ‘move forward’ is used instead of, for example, ‘come closer’. These features, although representing what Cecilia sees, do not perhaps reflect the way her mind perceives the world, from her own perspective. Instances of NP like this can be said to be still in an “embryonic” state, in the sense that although they represent the content of a character’s perception, the expression conforms more to the narrator’s style.

It must be noted, however, that the contexts where NP occurs in Burney’s narratives are similar to those found in Austen. Indeed, whenever NP occurs, it seems to do so at emotional moments: in the above passage, Cecilia is observing a ‘poor woman’ and NP may be said to convey feelings of compassion and a desire to help. Cecilia’s ‘horror’ at the ‘wretched’ and ‘sickly’ aspect of the lady’s face is explicitly reported by the narrator in the last clause. NP in Burney’s fiction is also used to convey a character’s alertness and attentiveness to his/her environment; a feature which can be observed in Austen as well:

1. 1 [N] Yet was he [Mr Monckton] not idle; [PN: PERCEPTION] the sight of Sir Robert [PN: NI] gave abundant employment to his penetration, which was immediately at work, to discover the motive of his visit: but this, with all his sagacity, was not easily decided; [NP] for though the constant direction of his [Sir Robert’s] eyes towards Cecilia, proved, at least, that he was not insensible of her beauty, his carelessness whether or not she was hurt by his examination, the little pains he took to converse with her, and the invariable assurance and negligence of his manners, seemed strongly to demonstrate an indifference to the sentiments he inspired, totally incompatible with the solicitude of affection.

2 [PN: PERCEPTION] In Cecilia he had nothing to observe but what his knowledge of her character prepared him to expect, a shame no less indignant than modest at the freedom with which she saw herself surveyed.

(Burney 1782: I. I. VII. 99)

The passage starts with quite an elaborate perception indicator (‘the sight of Sir Robert gave abundant employment to his penetration’), which helps to read the subsequent clauses as NP. These clauses are long and complex: NP starts with a subordinate clause (‘for though the constant direction of his eyes [...]’) containing a *that-* clause (‘that he was not insensible of her beauty’); and the main clause (‘his carelessness […] seemed strongly to demonstrate an indifference to the sentiments’) contains a relative clause (‘[which] he inspired, totally incompatible with the solicitude of affection’) plus an adverbial subordinate clause (‘whether or not she was hurt by his examination, the little pains […], and the invariable assurance and negligence of his manners’), in turn containing a relative clause (‘[which] he took to converse with her’). The lexis is also quite formal (‘invariable assurance and negligence of his manners’, ‘indifference to the sentiment he inspired, totally incompatible with the solicitude of affection’). For these reasons, NP in this example is not very different from the sentence following it (PN) which also represents Mr Monckton’s observation of Cecilia in a formal fashion (‘a shame no less indignant than modest’). The only difference lies in the latter’s use of an introduction with the verb ‘observe’. The evaluations contained in NP (‘insensible of her beauty’, ‘carelessness’, ‘indifference’) are indicative of Mr Monckton’s assessment of Sir Robert. The proof that these expressions belong to his consciousness is that they are redundant for the reader: at this point of the narrative, the narrator has already made it clear that Sir Robert often stares at Cecilia with insolence. Mr Monckton’s perceptions serve to confirm Sir Robert’s attitudes, and contribute to express his watchfulness and apprehension at the realisation that he has a rival.

The formal ambiguity between NP and N in Burney’s fiction is increased by the constant evaluation of the characters on the part of the narrator (which may sound figural), and the fact that the narrator displays the same opinions as Cecilia. Moreover, N very often makes use of devices which usually appear in NP, such as the past continuous aspect and expressions of subjectivity and modality such as ‘seem’, ‘look’ or ‘evidently’, which increases the overlap between figural and narratorial points of view:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Mr. Arnott, though extremely gratified that she [Cecilia] consulted him, [N] *betrayed by his looks* an hopelessness of success [PN: NI] that damped all her expectations. 2 [NRSA] He promised, however, to speak to Mr. Harrel upon the subject, [N] but the promise was *evidently* given to oblige the fair mediatrix, [PN: NI] without any hope of advantage to the cause.

(Burney, 1782: I. I. XI. 150, added italics)

It could be said that both sentences 1 and 2 contain Cecilia’s perceptions of Mr Arnott: ‘his looks’ speak of his hopelessness, and he is ‘evidently’ giving a promise only to please her. However, other devices do not really conform to Cecilia’s perception, but betray the narrator’s point of view. To begin with, sentence 1 is a narratorial report in formal terms: it first represents Mr Arnott’s actual feelings in PN (‘though extremely gratified’), then his appearance in Cecilia’s eyes, and then her feelings (‘damped all her expectations’). Secondly, the designation ‘fair mediatrix’ in sentence 2 is not likely to belong to Cecilia’s view of herself, and therefore, turns this statement into N; or perhaps more accurately, into coloured narrative (CN). The conflation between narratorial and figural viewpoints in Burney’s fiction is often so complete that it seems impossible to distinguish between them; perhaps it is irrelevant to do so, given that ambiguity does not lead to unreliability, as it does in Austen’s *NA* and *E*.

In contrast, although PN is still the predominant technique in Austen’s novels, she also greatly develops NP, which allows her narrators to present a character’s sensory experiences with more immediacy and a greater emotional subtlety. Austen’s skill ‘in transforming the material that Fanny Burney supplied is particularly apparent when there is a direct verbal reminiscence or use of an almost identical situation’ (Bradbrook 1967: 100). In the following passages, one from Burney’s *Camilla* (1796), the other from Austen’s *E*, the heroes Edgar and Mr Knightley take the hands of their respective heroines with the intention of kissing them, but suddenly drop them. Austen’s text contains NP (and FIT) while Burney’s does not. Bradbrook’s comparison of the different effect of these passages (1967: 100-102) does not go into stylistic features in depth, and so his commentary is here complemented with a more detailed analysis of the specific textual elements by which Austen’s text gains in vividness and emotion. One main way of achieving these effects is NP:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Penetrated by this unexpected openness and compliance, [N] he [Edgar] snatched her hand, with intent to press it to his lips; [PN: IT] but again the recollection he had seen that liberty accorded to Sir Sedley, [PN: PERCEPTION] joined to the sight of his writing, [N] checked him; he let it go; bowed his thanks with a look of grateful respect, and attempting no more to stop her, walked towards the summer-house, to peruse the letters.

(Burney 2009 [1796]: 576)

1. 1 [N] Emma’s colour was heightened by this unjust praise; and with a smile, and shake of the head, which spoke much, she looked at Mr. Knightley.—2 [NP-FIT] It seemed as if there were an instantaneous impression in her favour, as if his eyes received the truth from her’s, and all that had passed of good in her feelings were at once caught and honoured.—3 [NP] He looked at her with a glow of regard. 4 [PN: NI] She was warmly gratified—and in another moment still more so, by a little movement of more than common friendliness on his part.—5 [NP] He took her hand;—[FIT] whether she had not herself made the first motion, she could not say—she might, perhaps, have rather offered it—[NP] but he took her hand, pressed it, and certainly was on the point of carrying it to his lips—when, [FIT] from some fancy or other, [NP] he suddenly let it go.—6 [FIT] Why he should feel such a scruple, why he should change his mind when it was all but done, she could not perceive.—7 He would have judged better, she thought, if he had not stopped.—8 The intention, however, was indubitable; and whether it was that his manners had in general so little gallantry, or however else it happened, but she thought [NP-FIT] nothing became him more.—9 It was with him, of so simple, yet so dignified a nature.—10 [PN: NI] She could not but recall the attempt with great satisfaction. 11 It spoke such perfect amity.—12 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] He left them immediately afterwards—gone in a moment.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 317-318)

Edgar and Mr Knightley are each jealous of another man at this point, and their ‘actions are almost the same, the result of a similar mingling of hope and fear’ (Bradbrook 1967: 101). However, the way these actions are represented makes a great difference. The differences concern, first, focalisation: Burney’s text focuses more on external action (predominance of N) while Austen’s focuses on the response of figural consciousness to external events; Burney is interested in the hero’s consciousness (‘Penetrated’, ‘recollection’, ‘the sight of his writing’), Austen in the heroine’s (‘She was warmly gratified’); Burney’s text displays a narratorial perspective in the representation of feelings and perceptions (PN), while Austen uses an array of techniques, mostly character-oriented (NP, FIT). Secondly, the way in which clauses and sentences are arranged determines not only the stylistic texture of each passage, but also its narrative effects: the first text comprises only one long sentence, with an occasional break by a semi-colon. In contrast, the second text is made up of shorter clauses and sentences, regularly separated by dashes and semi-colons, which add rhythm and a figural air to the passage (‘He left them immediately afterwards—gone in a moment’).

Many of these clauses and sentences are NP, and so it can be argued that the qualities of rhythm and vividness of the Austen text are partly achieved through this technique. Bradbrook notes how in this passage ‘the very rhythms of Jane Austen’s prose suggest the bold, decisive movements of her hero, and how the short sentences and staccato clauses convey Emma’s flutterings, too’ (1967: 102). What he does not note, however, is that even those ‘bold, decisive movements’ of Mr Knightley, which apparently look like narration (‘he took her hand’), are equally conveyed from Emma’s viewpoint (NP), which does not happen in the Burney text. In addition, the events described in NP have a different emotional impact from those of Burney’s text: Edgar’s perceptions and state of mind are followed by a narratorial description of his actions (‘he let it go; bowed his thanks with a look of grateful respect’), with no further report of the emotional implications of the event. In contrast, Emma’s thoughts and perceptions, preceded by the perception indicator ‘she looked at Mr. Knightley’, are charged with emotional significance. They are often combined (NP-FIT): for instance, sentence 2 blends thought and perception in a way that is not found in the Burney text: ‘It seemed as if there were an instantaneous impression in her favour, as if his eyes received the truth from her’s’. The epistemic modal ‘seem’ indicates Emma’s mental conjectures, which are based on a concomitant visual perception of Mr Knightley’s eyes. NP in sentences 3 and 5 represents tactile and visual perceptions (‘He looked at her with a glow of regard’, ‘He took her hand, pressed it, and certainly was on the point of carrying it to his lips—when, from some fancy or other, he suddenly let it go’). Another epistemic modal is used here (‘certainly’), and ‘suddenly’ suggests movement, absence of touch and perhaps also Emma’s surprise and disappointment. All of these perceptions may be interpreted by the reader as conveying Emma’s happiness at Mr Knightley’s forgiveness, and a desire for his attention and physical affection; a desire which is implicitly conveyed in FIT in sentence 7 (‘He would have judged better, she thought, if he had not stopped’).

In short, the second text is much longer, yet represents figural consciousness with a more intensified rhythm and in much greater depth, and as a result has more of an emotional impact and a greater significance in the advancement of the plot: ‘The quality of the writing, particularly the use of rhythm, is what makes the scene between Emma and Mr Knightley so vivid’ (Bradbrook 1967: 102). In contrast, ‘Edgar’s actions are comparatively conventional and unexciting, and Fanny Burney views the situation externally as just another incident in the story, which we do not share or take part in, as we do in *Emma*’ (Bradbrook 1967: 102). The use of NP, together with FIT, sets this scene apart from others, granting the reader access to Emma’s consciousness, representing the fictional world through her visual and tactile perceptions in a highly mimetic fashion, and investing Mr Knightley’s actions with a special emotional significance, both for Emma and for the reader. This passage is further analysed in Chapter 6 for a discussion of the implications of tactile perception in *E*.

In conclusion, Austen is similar to Sterne in terms of the stylistic features of NP, which in both writers generally includes punctuation such as dashes, and shorter and less elaborate clauses and sentences, and invests places and objects with figural meanings. However, the fact that *A Sentimental Journey* is more fragmented and episodic, and narrated in the first person, means that the use of NP does not have the same emotional force it does in Austen’s carefully constructed plots, where it contributes to enhance the impact of climactic and emotionally intense moments. More importantly, as illustrated in later chapters, NP in Austen presents two different perspectives, the narrator’s and the character’s, a feature which often lends itself to ambiguity and unreliability, and sometimes irony. This contrasts with the generally single meaning intended by Sterne’s first person narrator. As for Burney, Austen is similar to her in her preference for the third person, and in her use of NP in specific contexts to foreground an observant character and increase the emotional effect of a passage. However, Burney’s NP is still very elaborate, with very long and complex sentences and a mixture of figural and narratorial features. Overall, Austen’s development of NP is more extensive and innovative than that of Sterne and Burney, and qualitatively different, as the analyses above have illustrated.

**3.3 Review**

This chapter has discussed the ideas about the senses which were debated in eighteenth-century rationalism and empiricism. There was considerable intellectual debate about the limits and reliability of what can be known through the senses, and about the role of sensory experience in the modelling of our conception of reality, emotions, health, education and moral action. Common themes to both rationalism and empiricism have emerged in the course of the discussion: a view of the mind as essentially a thinking entity, the role of attention and memory in perception, and the intervention of reflection and feelings (sensibility, passions, inclinations) in the processing of sensory information, which can lead the mind to error. Although in principle they were separate concepts, many empiricists, even those of a sceptical and idealist slant, acknowledged the existence of immaterial realities which can be known through intuition (such as the idea of God), and some rationalists acknowledged the importance of the senses. This shows that the boundaries between the two lines of thought often became hazy.

Many of the scientific ideas and debates of the period found a way into popular knowledge through the institutionalisation of science and allusions in literature and periodical articles. This applies to the ideas about the senses as well. Sight and touch in particular came to be considered as the most fundamental instruments for understanding the world. They feature prominently in the tradition of sensibility as well, a central concept of the second half of the eighteenth century which preached the virtues of an enhanced physical receptiveness in connection with the ability to feel strong emotions and gain deeper insight into oneself and the world. The act of looking in the context of sensibility was important in order to share another person’s feelings; what Hume calls ‘sympathy’ throughout his *Treatise*. The development of more mimetic techniques for representing fictional consciousness, such as FIT and NP, was parallel to the increasing emphasis on the construction of a perceiving point of view through which knowledge of the world could be gained.

It has been argued in this chapter that Austen’s NP reflects some of the ideas that were being discussed in scientific circles, periodicals, conduct books and sentimental fiction. The different contemporary standpoints with regard to the epistemological importance of perception can be seen reflected in the double role played by NP in Austen’s texts, as a crucial source of knowledge and insight, but also a cause of self-deception, as in many cases the feelings and judgments of Austen’s heroines (and heroes) influence their sensory perceptions. The association of the eyes with reason, knowledge and morals in periodicals and conduct books may also have influenced her development of visual perception in her novels. As for sensibility, Austen’s fiction inherits from the sentimental novel an interest in human consciousness, especially female consciousness, to which she gives a new profundity and significance.

However Austen’s fiction displays a greater narrative complexity and maturity. Her use of NP challenges contemporary conventions about the senses in various ways, for example, by presenting heroines who actively look at men and listen to them, thus defying the conventional masculine authority of sight and touch. She seems to have discovered in NP an effective way to express the immediacy and vividness of sensory experience (for example, by means of independent syntax and figural language) and the affective and moral dimension of that experience. This technique can be said to constitute an apposite narrative expression of contemporary epistemologies of perception in that it blends bodily sensation, consciousness and the external world into a clause or sentence. Austen’s use of NP has been compared in this chapter with that of two literary contemporaries, Sterne and Burney, showing that Austen is similar to Sterne in terms of punctuation and the emphasis on the experiencing character’s perspective, and similar to Burney in her use of NP in specific contexts associated with strong emotion. However, Burney uses NP very sparingly, and Sterne’s first-person fiction does not display the ambiguity and unreliability often derived from Austen’s third-person narratives. Compared to these two writers, Austen deploys NP much more extensively and with a greater variety of narrative effects. The conclusions presented in this chapter are more fully illustrated in the rest of the thesis.

## ****Chapter 4****

## ****NP in Austen’s Early Novels****

**4.0 Foreword**

This chapter begins with a short note on Austen’s juvenile works, her short epistolary novel *Lady Susan* (c.1793-1795) and her unfinished third-person novels *The Watsons* (1804-1805) and *Sanditon* (1817), where an incipient use of NP can be observed. The discussion then moves on to the use of NP in Jane Austen’s first three full-length novels, commonly referred to as the early or Steventon novels: *SS* (1811), *PP* (1813) and *NA* (1818). The analysis suggests that NP is most abundant in *NA*, and that it follows a consistent distribution pattern in the three novels, invariably occurring at moments of intense emotion or suspense, and when the heroine is attentively observing her environment. NP in *SS* features a significant amount of collective perceptions, in which Elinor, Marianne and their mother function as a joint perceiving consciousness; NP in *NA* is mostly connected with the aspect of the Abbey and Catherine’s Gothic adventures, and often portrays self-deceived perceptions; and NP in *PP* features an attentive Elizabeth, who often watches and listens to Mr Darcy.

Other conclusions are drawn concerning the specific features of perception in each novel. The stylistic similarities and differences between them are also discussed in connection with characterisation and point of view. In particular, there seems to be a correspondence between the way perception is represented and the relationship between narrator and heroine. Thus, in *SS* and *PP*, where the heroine is mostly treated with empathy by the narrator, there is a predominance of psycho-narration (PN) and coloured narrative (CN), techniques which tend to suggest an identification of the narrator with the character’s point of view. In contrast, NP in *NA* often suggests the narrator’s ironic distance from Catherine, especially when she is most naïve and deluded. The following sections illustrate the stylistic features which have led to these conclusions; features which make each novel and each heroine unique in terms of sensory perception.

**4.1 Juvenilia, *Lady Susan*, *The Watsons*, *Sanditon***

Austen’s juvenilia is a collection of plays, letters and stories which she wrote in her teenage years, approximately between 1787 and 1793 (Lascelles 1939: 4; Le Faye 2003 [1997]: 2, 4), and which later on she copied into three notebooks, *Volume the First*, *Volume the Second* and *Volume the Third* (Southam 1964: 14-15). Some of the most important pieces in this collection are *Frederic & Elfrida* and *Love and Freindship* [sic]. A manual search has revealed that there are no instances of NP in *Frederic & Elfrida* and *Love and Freindship*, and the same applies to the novel *Lady Susan* and the unfinished *Sanditon*. However, there are a few in *The Watsons* (they have not been quantified). In the following passage, occurring during a ball, Emma Watson has just promised a little boy to dance with him, but now she has to tell him he will have to wait until after tea, because she must dance with Colonel Beresford. NP represents her visual perception of the little boy as she is whisked away by the Colonel:

1. 1 [N] And without staying for an answer, she turned again to Miss Carr, and in another minute was led by Colonel Beresford to begin the set. 2 [PN: NI] If the poor little boy’s face had in its happiness been interesting to Emma, it was infinitely more so under this sudden reverse;—[NP] he stood the picture of disappointment, with crimsoned cheeks, quivering lips, and eyes bent on the floor.

(Austen 1974: 122)

Emma is implicitly set up as a perceiver in sentence 2 by the narrator’s report that the face of the boy was interesting to her. The subsequent description of him, after a dash, is best read as Emma’s visual perception, perhaps conveying sadness and pity. This passage illustrates some of the features of NP which will become apparent in the analysis of Austen’s six major novels, namely, the occurrence of this technique during situations which lend themselves well to observation of others, such as social gatherings, balls, dinners or trips; and the implicit emotional content of perception, sometimes associated with compassion for others. The fact that NP occurs in this novel, begun and then abandoned while Austen was living in Bath, prepares the way for a more fully developed use of this technique in her completed novels.

**4.2 *Sense and Sensibility***

The first manuscript of *SS* was written about 1795 as an epistolary novel entitled *Elinor and Marianne* (Mudrick 1952: 38, n. 2; Southam 1964: 54). It was then rewritten as a third-person narrative between 1797 and 1798, and further revised between 1809 and 1910 when Jane Austen was living at Chawton (Southam 1964: 55). According to Mudrick, the manuscript was thoroughly revised again shortly before its publication by Thomas Egerton in 1811 (1952: 39, n. 5). As in all Austen novels, figural perception in *SS* is mostly represented by means of explicit reports of perception in PN, such as the following:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Elinor submitted to the arrangement which counteracted her wishes, with less reluctance than she had expected to feel. 2 With regard to herself, it was now a matter of unconcern whether she went to town or not, [PN: PERCEPTION] and when she saw her mother so thoroughly pleased with the plan, and her sister exhilarated by it in look, voice, and manner, restored to all her usual animation, and elevated to more than her usual gaiety, [PN: NI] she could not be dissatisfied with the cause, and would hardly allow herself to distrust the consequence.

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 133)

Here, Elinor’s perception is explicitly reported with the verb ‘saw’. Although semantically these clauses represent what she sees (her mother and sister looking happy), the elaborate language of the passage suggest the narrator’s discourse and point of view. For example, the proper name of the character is used, and there are syntactic parallelisms containing antithetical expressions and lexical repetition (‘restored to all her usual animation, and elevated to more than her usual gaiety’), which are typical of eighteenth-century prose style. Austen may have imbibed this style from her extensive reading of essays and periodicals, particularly the prose of Dr Johnson (Lascelles 1939: 109; Page 1972: 92). The length and syntactic complexity of the passage, containing several levels of subordination, also favours a narratorial reading: for example, sentence 2 features three main clauses coordinated by ‘and’ (‘it was now a matter of unconcern’, ‘she could not be dissatisfied with the cause’, ‘would hardly allow herself to distrust the consequence’) and two subordinated clauses (‘whether she went to town or not’, ‘when she saw her mother’), the latter of which contains four non-finite subordinate clauses (‘so thoroughly pleased with the plan’, ‘and her sister exhilarated by it in look, voice, and manner’, ‘restored to all her usual animation’, ‘and elevated to more than her usual gaiety’).

In contrast, the use of NP is very sparse in this novel. In fact, *SS* is the novel containing the lowest number of passages of NP in Austen’s fiction. As shown in Table 1 below, 27 passages have been tagged as straightforward NP, 22 as ambiguous between NP and N, and 5 as NP-FIT. This yields a total of 54 instances and a relative frequency of [5]. As was explained in Chapter 1, the relative frequencies of instances of NP in each Austen novel have been calculated normalising figures per thousand words, as not all novels and not all chapters have the same numbers of words, considering each instance of NP as one token. Burrows (1987: xv) gives the number of words for each of the major Austen novels, breaking down the figures for dialogue vs. narration, and his data has been used for the normalisation of the results for NP, using the whole novel word-count (which includes dialogic parts), as NP often occurs in between passages of direct speech. The word count for this novel is 117,641.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Novel** | **Straightforward NP** | **Ambiguous NP-N** | **NP-FIT** | **Total** |
| *SS* | 27 [2.3]  (50%) | 22 [1.9]  (41%) | 5 [0.4]  (9%) | 54 [4.6]~[5] (100%) |

**Table 1. Number, density and percentage of instances of NP in *SS***

**(Figures in square brackets represent normalised figures per 10,000 words)**

NP is absent in the initial and final chapters (1, 2, 49, 50) and in specific chapters or series of chapters (for example, 12-14, 23-25) which focus more on dialogue and narrative description, or represent consciousness by means of other techniques. In the rest of the novel, the distribution of NP is quite even: in general, it occurs once (occasionally twice) in each or every other chapter. As the narrative draws to a final climax—Marianne falls seriously ill, Willoughby reveals his true motives, Elinor becomes anxious about her sister’s fate and her own—more passages of NP occur. Chapter 48 stands out from the rest, with 5 instances. The increase in the number of passages coincides with intensified observation and emotion. In this chapter Edward pays an unexpected visit to the Dashwood mother and sisters, during which he discloses the truth of his situation and asks Elinor to marry him. His visit has an intense emotional significance for all of the characters, and this is reflected in the numerous expressions of tension, expectation, surprise, relief and joy that permeate the chapter:

1. 1 [DS] “When do you write to Colonel Brandon, ma’am?” [PN: NI] was an inquiry which sprung from the impatience of her [Elinor’s] mind to have something going on.

2 [DS] “I wrote to him, my love, last week, and rather expect to see, than to hear from him again. 3 I earnestly pressed his coming to us, in my letter, and should not be surprised to see him walk in to-day or to-morrow, or any day.”

4 [FIT] This was gaining something, something to look forward to. 5 Colonel Brandon *must* have some information to give.

6 [PN: NRTA] Scarcely had she so determined it, [N] when the figure of a man on horseback drew her eyes to the window. 7 [NP] He stopt at their gate. 8 It was a gentleman, it was Colonel Brandon himself. 9 [FIT] Now she should hear more;—[PN: NI] and she trembled in expectation of it. 10 [NP-FIT] But—it was *not* Colonel Brandon—neither his air—nor his height. 11 [FIT] Were it possible, she should say it must be Edward. 12 [N] She looked again. 13 [NP] He had just dismounted;—[FIT] she could not be mistaken;—[NP-FIT] it *was* Edward. 14 [N] She moved away and sat down. 15 [DT] “He comes from Mr. Pratt’s purposely to see us. 16 I *will* be calm; I *will* be mistress of myself.”

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 303, original italics)

The choice of NP over PN is marked here, given that PN is used everywhere else in the novel as the staple technique for representing perception. If this passage is compared with Example 1 above, the different effect achieved by the use of a different technique becomes evident: although NP is preceded by a perception indicator (‘drew her eyes to the window’), explicit verbs of perception are absent, and instead the content of Elinor’s perceptions is presented directly: compare the hypothetical explicit report ‘*She saw* a gentleman stopping at the gate, whom *she concluded* to be Colonel Brandon himself’ with the more mimetic quality of NP: ‘He stopt at the gate. It was a gentleman, it was Colonel Brandon himself’. Note also the brevity and simplicity of clauses and sentences, in contrast with the length and complexity of PN in Example 1. The lack of explicit attribution, combined with syntactic simplicity, contributes to quicken the rhythm of the passage, and to evoke a succession of images in Elinor’s consciousness, as well as her intense emotions on recognising Edward.

A further marker of Elinor’s subjectivity and ‘ongoing’ perception is the fact that a mistaken perception is followed by an accurate one: it was not Colonel Brandon but Edward. In terms of narrative economy, the representation of the whole process of perception as it unfolds in Elinor’s mind is unnecessary; that is, the narrator could well have directly stated that Elinor saw Edward approaching the house, or summarise the two perceptions in a shorter fashion, such as ‘Elinor thought she saw Colonel Brandon, then realised it was Edward’. Such a sentence, however, does not convey her process of perception with any immediacy or emotional force. In contrast, NP gradually reveals, by means of short strokes of perceptive consciousness, the way in which first her expectations and then her emotions shape her vision: according to her knowledge of reality, only Colonel Brandon is likely to pay a visit; in her progressive realisation of who is actually before her, her emotions invade her (she ‘trembles’ and reassures herself: ‘I *will* be calm, I *will* be mistress of myself’).

The subjective nature of these sentences is rendered clearer by their proximity to free indirect thought (FIT). In fact, NP seems to ‘borrow’ expressions which are usually connected with mental speech, such as an isolated ‘But’ in sentence 10, which has prompted the categorisation of this sentence as a combination of perception and thought (NP-FIT). That is, this sentence can be read as representing a perception that is simultaneously verbalised in Elinor’s consciousness. Graphic signs (dashes) are used to render a mental succession of images: ‘But—it was *not* Colonel Brandon—neither his air—nor his height’; these divisions may be interpreted as conveying hesitation, pauses, or different stages in Elinor’s perception. According to Sutherland, punctuation in Austen has an aural element to it: for example, the ‘illogical use of semi-colon and comma’ noted by R. W. Chapman in a passage of *MP* ‘may represent correctly the natural pauses of the voice’ (1923: 518. Cited in Sutherland 2005a: 294, n. 54). Similarly, dashes in this passage seem to convey pauses in Elinor’s mental voice. Another sign of figural consciousness is the emphasis placed on particular words (‘it was *not* Colonel Brandon’, ‘it *was* Edward’), which suggests her initial confusion and later realisation, as well as the emotional implications of the discovery.

The paragraphs that follow Example 2 equally contain NP and maintain the same syntactic simplicity and emotional intensity:

1. 1 [DS] “Is Mrs. Ferrars at Longstaple?”

2 “At Longstaple!”—[N] he [Edward] replied, with an air of surprise—3 [DS] “No, my mother is in town.”

4 “I meant,” [N] said Elinor, taking up some work from the table, [DS] “to enquire after Mrs. *Edward* Ferrars.”

5 [PN: NI] She dared not look up;—[N] but her mother and Marianne both turned their eyes on him. 6 [COLLECTIVE NP] He coloured, seemed perplexed, looked doubtingly, and after some hesitation, said,

[DS] “Perhaps you mean—my brother—you mean Mrs.—Mrs. *Robert* Ferrars.”

7 “Mrs. Robert Ferrars!”—[N] was repeated by Marianne and her mother, in an accent of the utmost amazement;—and though Elinor could not speak, even *her* eyes were fixed on him [PN: NI] with the same impatient wonder. 8 [COLLECTIVE NP] He rose from his seat and walked to the window, apparently from not knowing what to do; took up a pair of scissars that lay there, and while spoiling both them and their sheath by cutting the latter to pieces as he spoke, said, in an hurried voice,

[DS] “Perhaps you do not know—you may not have heard that my brother is lately married to—to the youngest—to Miss Lucy Steele.”

9 [NRSA] His words were echoed with unspeakable astonishment by all but Elinor, [N] who sat with her head leaning over her work, [PN: NI] in a state of such agitation as made her hardly know where she was.

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 304-305, original italics)

The passage is permeated with exclamations and expressions that convey the emotions felt by the Dashwood ladies during the whole of Edward’s visit (‘dared not look up’, ‘utmost amazement’, ‘could not speak’, ‘unspeakable astonishment’, ‘in a state of such agitation as made her hardly know where she was’). In this passage, NP mainly conveys the ladies’ collective evaluation of Edward’s words and gestures in an attempt to discover what he is up to: note the use of epistemic modals (‘seemed’, ‘looked’, ‘apparently’), which reflect an assessment based on outward appearance, and the juxtaposition of a series of short clauses (‘coloured, seemed perplexed, looked doubtingly’) which can be taken to reflect a series of perceived actions (Brinton 1980: 374). They wish him to explain why he has come; however, because Edward is doing anything but speak, NP may also be read as implicitly conveying a feeling of eagerness and frustration on the part of the perceivers. The perception indicators ‘turned their eyes on him’ and ‘*her* eyes were fixed on him with the same impatient wonder’ equally highlight the fact that the ladies are watching Edward intently and expectantly, especially Elinor (note the emphasis on the pronoun ‘her’), for whom this visit has the greatest implications; and NP reinforces the idea of watchfulness by rendering their collective perceptions syntactically and semantically salient through lack of introductory verbs. The particular actions on which the ladies’ perception focuses are not neutral, but constitute signs that may explain why Edward is not speaking: ‘took up a pair of scissars that lay there, and while spoiling both them and their sheath by cutting the latter to pieces as he spoke, said, in an hurried voice’. The spoiling of the scissors and the hurried voice, together with the fact that Edward ‘rose from his seat and walked to the window’, are salient elements in the ladies’ consciousness because these things tell them of his nervousness and the reason of his visit.

Examples 23 and 24 illustrate the two principal contexts of occurrence of NP in *SS*, namely, episodes of particular emotional significance for the characters and moments in which characters are keenly observing one another. A feature of NP which is particularly characteristic of *SS,* and is also illustrated in Example 3, is the extensive representation of collective perceptions—what Palmer calls ‘intermental’ consciousness, which is the ‘joint, group, shared, or collective, as opposed to intramental, individual, or private thought’ (2005: 427). Out of the 54 instances of NP found in this novel, 28 represent Elinor’s perceptions (51%), 17 represent collective perceptions (31%), 3 portray Marianne’s perceptions, 3 Mrs Dashwood’s (6% each) and the remaining 3 passages render the perceptions of Sir Middleton, Mrs Jennings and Willoughby. Although Elinor is clearly the main focaliser of the narrative as far as perception is concerned, the results also indicate that a significant portion of instances are filtered through the joint consciousness of the Dashwood family: sometimes Elinor and Marianne, sometimes Marianne and her mother, and sometimes the three of them together. The following table represents these figures:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **No. of instances of NP** | **Percentage** |
| Elinor | 28 | 51% |
| Collective (Dashwood mother and sisters) | 17 | 31% |
| Marianne | 3 | 6% |
| Mrs Dashwood | 3 | 6% |
| Sir Middleton | 1 | 2% |
| Mrs Jennings | 1 | 2% |
| Willoughby | 1 | 2% |
| TOTAL | 54 | 100% |

**Table 2. Subject of perception (heroine/other characters) in *SS***

Some critics affirm that Elinor is an outcast within her family: ‘what lurks behind her sarcasm is painful resentment at feeling marginalized’ (Wallace 1992: 159). Harding argues that in this and the other two early novels ‘the heroine is in some degree isolated from those around her by being more sensitive or of finer moral insight or sounder judgment’ (1998: 16). In a sense, it is true that Elinor is an outcast in her family: for example, neither her mother nor her sister will listen to her or take her advice, which often relegates her to a position of observer, analyst and moral judge (Wallace 1992: 159). However, the significant number of collective instances of NP in *SS* seems to defy these conclusions and reveals something about this novel which perhaps has not received the critical attention it deserves: the fact that, unlike other Austen heroines, Elinor is fully integrated within her family in many ways. Some critics do allude to the fact that in *SS* Austen explores ‘what would now be called group psychology’ (Knox-Shaw 2004: 15), but do not explain how this is done at the level of the text. In contrast, the analysis of NP presented here offers textual evidence of this ‘group psychology’, showing that, despite their obvious differences in personality and opinions, the Dashwood mother and sisters are almost always together and form a close group who look at the world similarly.

This fact is also made clearer if Elinor is compared with other Austen heroines, who can be said to be more isolated than she is: Catherine does not seem to have any special connection with her family and is away from them for the most part of the novel. Elizabeth is estranged from her parents and younger sisters, and does not even always share the same point of view with her beloved sister Jane; in any case they never appear together as a joint perceiving entity. Fanny and Anne are the most isolated heroines in Austen’s fiction, being excluded and ignored by their families and, for some time, by the men they love as well. As for Emma, though an active part of the Highbury community, she creates for herself a place of self-importance and independence which detaches her from the rest of her neighbours and places her in a privileged position as an observer and ‘imaginist’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 277). She is also isolated in the sense that she does not want to mix with the wider community, especially the lower classes (Flavin 1991: 50). In all of these other novels, collective NP occurs occasionally, but nowhere as frequently as in *SS*.

The abundance of collective NP in *SS* also suggests that Elinor and Marianne are co-heroines, and that the Dashwood family are equals, socially and intellectually, with similar core values, as the following passage illustrates:

1. 1 [COLLECTIVE PN: NI] They [Elinor, Marianne, Mrs Dashwood] were of course very anxious to see a person on whom so much of their comfort at Barton must depend; and the elegance of her appearance was favourable to their wishes. 2 [COLLECTIVE NP] Lady Middleton was not more than six or seven and twenty; her face was handsome, her figure tall and striking, and her address graceful. 3 Her manners had all the elegance which her husband’s wanted. 4 [COLLECTIVE FIT] But they would have been improved by some share of his frankness and warmth; [COLLECTIVE PN: NI] and her visit was long enough to detract something from their first admiration, by shewing that though perfectly well bred, she was reserved, cold, and had nothing to say for herself beyond the most common-place enquiry or remark.

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 26)

This description of Lady Middleton reflects the way in which the Dashwood ladies perceive her: for example, her exact age is not given (‘was not more than six or seven and twenty’) and her manners are presented in relation to those of Sir Middleton, who is also present on the occasion (‘all the elegance which her husband’s wanted’). There is a perception indicator in sentence 1 (‘see’), and echoes of perception in the preceding and ensuing text (collective PN and FIT): ‘the elegance of her appearance’, ‘his frankness and warmth’, ‘though perfectly well-bred, she was reserved, cold, and had nothing to say for herself beyond the most common-place inquiry or remark’. This means that NP, FIT and PN are not easy to separate in this instance, and perhaps sentence 4 could be considered as an instance of collective NP-FIT (or even collective NP-FIT-PN). Instances of collective PN and FIT in this novel may be as frequent as collective NP, and though this question falls out of the scope of the present research, it may be a fruitful area to explore in order to find further evidence of the importance of intermental or group consciousness in this novel.

In passages like Example 25, NP appears to convey an evaluation of a person without any emotion involved; and yet perception in Austen usually reflects what a character wants to see and how they want to see it. That is, there is often an essential predisposition which is frequently connected with emotion. As was discussed in the preceding chapters, emotion and perception subtly influence each other and this determines the point of view of a person. According to appraisal theory (Arnold 1960), we direct our attention to an object according to the emotions that object arises in us. In Example 4, the Dashwoods’ appraisal of Lady Middleton is implicitly based on the values they appreciate in a person: for them, outward elegance and good manners are meaningless if not accompanied by openness and inner warmth. Therefore, someone like Lady Middleton is likely to create a negative impression. In the following passage, Marianne’s visual appraisal takes place in a very particular way as well:

1. 1 [N] Mr. and Mrs. Palmer were of the party; from the former, whom they [Elinor and Marianne] had not seen before since their arrival in town, as he was careful to avoid the appearance of any attention to his mother-in-law, and therefore never came near her, they received no mark of recognition on their entrance. 2 [AMBIGUOUS N/COLLECTIVE NP] He looked at them slightly,without seeming to know who they were, and merely nodded to Mrs. Jennings from the other side of the room. 3 [N] Marianne gave one glance round the apartment as she entered; it was enough, [NP] *he* was not there—[N] and she sat down, [PN: NI] equally ill-disposed to receive or communicate pleasure.

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 144, original italics)

NP conveys Marianne’s disappointment on not finding Willoughby among the people present at the party. Note the presence of a perception indicator (‘gave one glance round the apartment’) and the use of a dash after NP (significantly, the only dash in the whole paragraph), which suggests figural perspective (Sutherland 2000). Marianne’s consciousness is also evoked by means of a personal pronoun (‘he’) instead of Willoughby’s proper name: the use of a pronoun indicates that its referent is salient and taken for granted in Marianne’s mind. It is also taken for granted that the reader will be able to identify who this ‘he’ refers to. Furthermore, the pronoun is emphasised to underline the emotional content of the perception: NP does not just describe what Marianne sees (a group of people assembled in a room) but the manner in which she perceives those people; that is, as not including the only person she wants to meet there, and therefore as a sight that provokes bitter feelings. Such feelings are explicitly expressed in the subsequent clause (‘she sat down, equally ill-disposed to receive or communicate pleasure’).

In this passage events are viewed from Marianne’s perspective and not from Elinor’s. As was noted above, only 3 instances of NP represent Marianne’s perceptions as an individual perceiver, which is not numerically significant in terms of NP, but her consciousness is often represented through collective NP, and her thoughts and feelings even more extensively through other techniques, especially PN and FIT. This does not happen with other characters such as Elinor and Marianne’s mother, Mrs Dashwood. The fact that we are granted access to Marianne’s consciousness during events in which Elinor is also present suggests that Marianne’s perspective on those events is as important as that of her sister for the understanding of the narrative (it also suggests that Mrs Dashwood is important in terms of NP, but not other techniques). In particular, having a co-heroine allows the reader to see aspects of the fictional world which Elinor may not share, such as Marianne’s view of Edward (Example 29 below). NP establishes a contrast between the two: it conveys Elinor’s sympathetic appraisals (‘It was evident that he [Edward] was unhappy’, Austen 1995 [1811]: 84) and Marianne’s often unsympathetic, sometimes even sharper, ones (‘there was a deficiency of all that a lover ought to look and say’ in Example 29); Elinor is usually attentive to what is going on around her (‘Amongst them were Sir John and Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings, but there were two others’, 1995 [1811]: 91) while Marianne frequently withdraws from people she is not interested in (‘*he* was not there—and she sat down, equally ill-disposed to receive or communicate pleasure’). Secondly, both Marianne’s and Elinor’s perceptions may reveal to the reader things which may not be so evident. For example, although Marianne says her feelings are stronger than her sister’s (‘Elinor has not my feelings’, 1995 [1811]: 15), many of Elinor’s perceptions convey a strong tenderness towards Marianne, especially when the latter is ill, which evinces a greater sensibility than is made apparent by her other, more rational or detached appraisals.

Besides Marianne’s perception, Example 26 contains an instance of ambiguous collective NP in sentence 2 (‘He looked at them slightly, without seeming to know who they were, and merely nodded to Mrs. Jennings from the other side of the room’). No contextual clues can be found which may mark this as anyone’s perception, and yet a figural perspective is suggested by the epistemic expression ‘seeming’ and the phrase ‘the other side of the room’, which could be interpreted as being anchored in Elinor, Marianne and Mrs Jennings’ spatial deictic centre. For these reasons, this sentence can be read as either N or NP. The number of passages tagged as ambiguous or dual between NP and N is always fewer than straightforward ones in all of Austen novels (41% vs. 50% respectively in *SS*). An analysis of ambiguous passages does not add any relevant insight into the representation of perception in this novel, however: for example, whether the sentence above (‘He looked at them slightly […]’) is taken as a narratorial statement or a figural perception, it does not make a difference in terms of the reader’s knowledge of the characters or the plot; it does not convey unreliability. And yet, the fact that a significant 41% of passages have been tagged as ambiguous does say something about point of view in general in this novel. More particularly, the effect of sustained ambiguity as far as NP is concerned is often a conflation of viewpoints, whereby the narratorial perspective is aligned with that of the character, usually Elinor.

Similarly, although NP is so scarce in this novel, the use of coloured narrative (CN) is abundant and frequently keeps the narrative anchored in Elinor’s point of view. Together with PN, CN is the main technique used to render figural perception in *SS*. For instance, N follows the presentation of Elinor’s point of view, and thus descriptions of characters and events appear to be from her deictic centre as well; the following example of CN evokes not only perception but also thought:

1. 1 [PN: IT] She [Elinor] could easily conceive that marriage might not be immediately in their [Willoughby and Marianne’s] power; [FIT] for though Willoughby was independent, there was no reason to believe him rich. 2 His estate had been rated by Sir John at about six or seven hundred a year; but he lived at an expense to which that income could hardly be equal, and he had himself often complained of his poverty. 3 [PN: NI] But for this strange kind of secrecy maintained by them relative to their engagement, [N] which in fact concealed nothing at all, [PN: NI] she could not account; [CN: THOUGHT] and it was so wholly contradictory to their general opinions and practice, [PN: NRTA] that a doubt sometimes entered her mind of their being really engaged, [N] and this doubt was enough to prevent her making any enquiry of Marianne.

4 [CN: THOUGHT AND PERCEPTION] Nothing could be more expressive of attachment to them all, than Willoughby’s behaviour. 5 To Marianne it had all the distinguishing tenderness which a lover’s heart could give, and to the rest of the family it was the affectionate attention of a son and a brother. 6 The cottage seemed to be considered and loved by him as his home; many more of his hours were spent there than at Allenham; and if no general engagement collected them at the park, the exercise which called him out in the morning was almost certain of ending there, where the rest of the day was spent by himself at the side of Marianne, and by his favourite pointer at her feet.

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 63)

In this passage, Elinor wonders whether or not Willoughby and Marianne are engaged, and ponders circumstances, appearances, words. The presentation of her consciousness in the first paragraph (PN and FIT) is followed by a description of Willoughby’s behaviour to the Dashwood family in the second paragraph. This description may well be read as N: summarisation is used (‘many more of his hours were spent there’) and the scenes presented here, such as the idyllic picture of Marianne, Willoughby and the dog, may not necessarily reflect Elinor’s visual perception. Yet the principle of continuation, by which ‘the reader, once s/he has started to read in terms of speech or thought representation, will continue processing the text in this frame until alerted by textual and semantic (contextual) features to reinterpret in terms of a new frame’ (Fludernik 1993: 285) may prompt the reader to continue reading the narration from Elinor’s perspective. This is aided by particular words or phrases: epistemic expressions such as ‘seemed’, and evaluations such as ‘nothing could be more expressive of attachment to them all’, which perhaps suggest her conclusions (for example, the pronominal expression ‘them all’ seems to have a subjective quality to it). For all of these reasons, the second paragraph has been categorised as CN, evoking thoughts and perhaps also visual perceptions.

Other elements of the story which contribute to keep the narrative anchored in Elinor’s point of view include a restriction of the reader’s knowledge to what she knows (for example, regarding the affair between Marianne and Willoughby) and the presence of narratorial opinions and evaluations which can be said to be shared by her as well; for example:

1. 1 [N] As Elinor and Marianne were walking together the next morning, [NRSA] the latter communicated a piece of news to her sister, [PN: NI] which, in spite of all that she knew before of Marianne’s imprudence and want of thought, surprised her by its extravagant testimony of both. 2 [IS] Marianne told her, with the greatest delight, that Willoughby had given her a horse, one that he had bred himself on his estate in Somersetshire, and which was exactly calculated to carry a woman. 3 [DIST] *Without considering that it was not in her mother's plan to keep any horse, that if she were to alter her resolution in favour of this gift, she must buy another for the servant, and keep a servant to ride it, and after all, build a stable to receive them,* *she had accepted the present without hesitation*, [NRSA] and told her sister of it in raptures.

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 51, added italics)

The italicised clause reports Marianne’s words in what Vandelanotte (2004) terms ‘distanced indirect speech and thought’ (DIST). As described in Chapter 2, DIST is a discourse presentation category in which a speaker summarises somebody else’s words from his/her own perspective. The report therefore usually includes evaluations associated with the speaker. In this passage, there is a clearly negative evaluation of Marianne’s words (‘Without considering […] she had accepted the present without hesitation’). This is, presumably, not Elinor’s mental discourse, but the narrator’s report of Marianne’s speech. A sense of the dominance of a narratorial perspective is reinforced by an external reference to Elinor as ‘her sister’. The italicised fragment, however, can be argued to reflect Elinor’s opinion as well as the narrator’s. This conflation of viewpoints is implicit in sentence 1, where the narrator explains that Elinor considers Marianne’s communication as an ‘extravagant testimony’ of her usual ‘imprudence and want of thought’. By using CN and modal expressions in what appears to be N, the narrator establishes a continuity between consciousness and events, which creates coherence of point of view and endows the fictional world with a figural air. CN in *SS* is used to represent thoughts, speech and perceptions alike. It may be argued that the extended use of CN in this novel, especially in those cases evoking sensory perception, leads to a greater development of NP in Austen’s later novels as a distinct narrative form.

The sustained conflation of viewpoints throughout the novel contributes to support the widespread critical idea that the discourses of the narrator and Elinor are often indistinguishable, and that Elinor seems to have the narrator’s ‘unqualified sympathy’ (Wallace 1992: 158). It has been argued that Elinor ‘is herself the criterion of sound judgment and good feeling’ (Harding 1998: 17). The reader’s possible identification with her point of view may be based on the fact that she is the main focaliser (Leech and Short 1981: 347), but more importantly, Elinor is similar to her narrator in that she primarily acts as an observer and analyst of reality for herself and her family (Wallace 1992: 159), a fact which is indirectly connected with sensory perception, especially sight.

As occurs in all of Austen’s novels, visual perception in *SS* comprises the majority of instances of NP (30 instances, 56% of the total instances found). A combination of visual and auditory perceptions is the second most common type, with 16 instances (30%). Purely auditory perception comprises 5 instances (9%), and the remaining 3 instances (5%) represent tactile perceptions. This means that visual perception occurs in 86% of cases in total, and aural perception in a 39%. Table 3 below outlines the various types of perception found in *SS*:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nove**  **l** | **Visual** | **Aural** | **Tactile** | **Visual and aural** | **Visual, aural and tactile** | **Position in space / distance from others** | **Imaginary** | **Awareness of self** | **T**  **o**  **t**  **a**  **l** |
| *SS* | 30 (56%) | 5  (9%) | 3  (5%) | 16 (30%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 |

**Table 3. Types of perception in *SS***

As was discussed in Chapter 3, ‘eighteenth-century spectation is closely linked not only to the visual but also to the aural, to social interaction’ (Powell 2012: 258). Looking at someone often entails listening to them as well. The substantial presence of auditory NP in Austen’s novels portrays this important aspect, and reveals her heroines’ sensitivity and attentiveness to the spoken word as a source of knowledge about the world and themselves. In addition, as noted in Chapter 3, by rendering the visual and aural perceptions of her heroines prominent, Austen also endows them with the typically masculine capacities of intelligence, wisdom, authority and penetration associated with the higher or intellectual senses. The following passage contains a mixture of visual and auditory impressions, conveying the idea that the Dashwood family are interested in what other people say as well as how they appear before their eyes:

1. 1 [N] He [Edward] was welcomed by them all with great cordiality, but especially by Marianne, who shewed more warmth of regard in her reception of him than even Elinor herself. 2 [PN: NI] To Marianne, indeed, the meeting between Edward and her sister was but a continuation of that unaccountable coldness which she had often observed at Norland in their mutual behaviour. 3 [NP-FIT] On Edward’s side, more particularly, there was a deficiency of all that a lover ought to look and say on such an occasion. 4 [NP] He was confused, seemed scarcely sensible of pleasure in seeing them, looked neither rapturous nor gay, said little but what was forced from him by questions, and distinguished Elinor by no mark of affection*.* 5 [PN: NI] Marianne saw and listened with increasing surprize.

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 76)

In this passage, a female character scrutinises a male one, visually and aurally, thus reversing traditional gender conventions about the preferred subject and object of perception. Sentences 3 and 4 represent Marianne’s perception and evaluation of Edward, signalled by modal devices (‘ought to’, ‘seemed’, looked’) and evaluative ones (‘deficiency’, ‘confused’, ‘scarcely sensible’, ‘neither rapturous nor gay’, ‘forced’). Sentence 3 has been categorised as NP-FIT primarily because of the expression ‘ought to’, which can be argued to turn the whole statement into a verbalised thought. Marianne focuses on looks but is also very much attentive to words and silences: ‘ought to look and say’, ‘said little’. It seems as though auditory perception is important to her. The importance she places on aural experience is also evident when she compares Edward’s reading of poetry with that of Willoughby in another part of the novel: ‘1 [N] His [Willoughby’s] society became gradually her most exquisite enjoyment. 2 They read, they talked, they sang together; his musical talents were considerable; [CN] and *he read with all the sensibility and spirit which Edward had unfortunately wanted*’ (Austen 1995 [1811]: 43, added italics). The italicised statement here can be read as perceptual CN in which the narrator summarises and compares a series of events, that is, Willoughby’s and Edward’s readings, from Marianne’s aural perspective.

Marianne’s evaluation of Edward while she observes him constitutes an instance of NP-FIT. A total of 5 instances (9% of the total, [0.4] relative frequency; see Table 1 above) have been tagged as NP-FIT, which does not seem a significant figure, especially when compared with the percentages for the late novels: 29% ([2.3]) in *MP*, 35% ([4.4]) in *P* and 26% ([4]) in *E*. *NA* also stands out from among the early novels, with 19% ([2.2]), and only *PP* contains fewer instances of this type than *SS* (4%, [0.4]). This shows that perceptions and thoughts are more clearly distinguishable in *SS* than in other novels, and that Elinor does not engage in reflection while she perceives as often as later heroines do. Another instance occurs when she assesses Colonel Brandon: ‘1 [PN: NI] She liked him—[PN: PERCEPTION] in spite of his gravity and reserve, she beheld in him an object of interest. 2 [NP-FIT] His manners, though serious, were mild; and his reserve appeared rather the result of some oppression of spirits, than of any natural gloominess of temper’ (Austen 1995 [1811]: 44). Here Elinor is conjecturing about the reasons behind the ‘reserve’ that she observes in the Colonel. Although her conclusions are not based only on what she sees on the present occasion, they take place in her mind *while* she is observing him.

It is also possible to find in *SS* instances of the “non-standard” forms of perception, or awareness, which were alluded to in Chapters 1 and 2. Like other instances of NP, they occur at times of intense emotion and attentiveness, and are sometimes combined with “standard” NP (that is, NP representing perceptions based on the five physical senses) and with FIT. A total of 11 passages have been identified in this novel, although there may be more. In most of them, a character becomes aware of the time at moments of distress or anxious waiting, such as the period of Marianne’s illness: when Elinor ‘1 [PN: PERCEPTION] saw Marianne at six o’clock sink into a quiet, steady, and to all appearance comfortable, sleep, [PN: NI] she silenced every doubt. 2 [NP] The time was now drawing on, when Colonel Brandon might be expected back. 3 [FIT] At ten o'clock, she trusted, or at least not much later, her mother would be relieved from the dreadful suspense’ (Austen 1995 [1811]: 267). Here, the perception of time, through the past continuous aspect, is connected with feelings of relief. As in many other examples, NP is preceded by PN representing perception and followed by FIT, both of which contribute to give the underlined passage the air of figural perception rather than pure narration. Another instance of awareness represents the joint consciousness of Edward, Lucy and Elinor, which confirms the above-noted importance of collective consciousness in this novel. Each of the characters in this passage becomes aware of the uneasiness of the situation they find themselves in:

1. 1 [N] It was a very awkward moment; and the countenance of each shewed that it was so. 2 They all looked exceedingly foolish; [AMBIGUOUS PN: NI/ NP?] and Edward seemed to have as great an inclination to walk out of the room again, as to advance farther into it. 3 [COLLECTIVE PN: NI] The very circumstance, in its unpleasantest form, which they would each have been most anxious to avoid, had fallen on them—4 [COLLECTIVE NP: AWARENESS] They were not only all three together, but were together without the relief of any other person. 5 [N] The ladies recovered themselves first.

(Austen 1995 [1811]: 203)

After the narrator describes how ‘They all looked exceedingly foolish’, a report of Edward ensues which has been categorised as ambiguous because of the use of the epistemic modal ‘seemed’. This verb suggests the vantage point of someone who does not have access to Edward’s consciousness and can only evaluate him from his external behaviour; and yet, there is no perception indicator or any other sign that someone is here perceiving him, so this is probably best read as the narrator’s presentation of his feelings under the pretence of limited omniscience, which has been termed narratorial ‘reticence’: ‘Austen’s narrators are often reticent, and their voices are imperceptibly mixed with that of the characters, which renders it difficult to decide which propositions they endorse and which they dismiss from an ironic perspective; or whether irony is intended at all’ (Morini 2010: 339). After the presentation of what each character is feeling in sentence 3 (intermental or collective PN), a dash introduces what could be categorised as the characters’ joint awareness in sentence 4: they not only perceive the others’ physical presence, but also become aware of the awkwardness of the situation, and of the fact that there is no one else to relieve that awkwardness. NP perhaps also implicitly reveals each character’s conviction that the others are feeling uncomfortable too.

Finally, this novel is slightly different from the others in that it features two heroines or co-heroines. Although Marianne’s perceptions only occur in 3 instances, they set her up as an occasional second focaliser, through whom the reader gets a slightly different perspective. In any case, she acts as a co-focaliser in collective instances, and her thoughts and feelings are extensively represented through PN and FIT. The use of a contrasting pair of figural perspectives is especially evident in *E*,where Mr Knightley’s perceptions dominate one whole chapter. In *MP,* too, there are several focalisers, as discussed in 5.1. The next part of this chapter discusses *PP*, where, in contrast with *SS*, NP is used more extensively, mainly represents the perceptions of the heroine and presents a wider range of functions associated with perception, such as humour, all of which features are illustrated in several passages.

**4.3 *Pride and Prejudice***

*PP* was drafted between October 1796 and August 1797 as an epistolary novel entitled *First Impressions* (Austen-Leigh and Austen-Leigh 1913: 96; Southam 1964: 58). In November 1797, Jane Austen’s father wrote to the London publisher Thomas Cadell offering to send him the manuscript, but it was declined (Austen-Leigh and Austen-Leigh 1913: 97-98; Knox-Shaw 2004: xi; Le Faye 2003 [1997]: 5; Mudrick 1952: 38, n. 1). Jane Austen made significant revisions to the manuscript during 1811 and 1812 (Le Faye 2003 [1997]: 9), turning the epistolary novel into a third-person narrative and renaming the story *Pride and Prejudice*. The manuscript was finally accepted and published by Thomas Egerton in 1813.

In total, 134 instances of NP have been tagged (76 straightforward, 53 ambiguous between NP and N, 5 instances of NP-FIT) in a total number of 119,963 words. This yields an relative frequency of [11.1] instances, which is over double the amount found in *SS* [5]. Table 2 below shows the figures for both novels for a clearer comparison:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Novel** | **Straightforward NP** | **Ambiguous NP-N** | **NP-FIT** | **Total** |
| *SS* | 27 [2.3]  (50%) | 22 [1.9]  (41%) | 5 [0.4]  (9%) | 54 [4.6]~[5] (100%) |
| *PP* | 76 [6.3]  (56%) | 53 [4.4]  (40%) | 5 [0.4]  (4%) | 134 [11.1] (100%) |

**Table 4. Number, density and percentage of instances of NP in *SS* and *PP***

**(Figures in square brackets represent normalised figures per 10,000 words)**

Despite quantitative differences, NP in *PP* generally follows the same pattern that has been observed in *SS,* as it invariably occurs at climactic and emotionally intense moments and when the heroine is especially observant of the people and places around her. Both straightforward and ambiguous instances are clearly concentrated in four parts of the novel: Chapter 18 (12 instances), which narrates the ball at Netherfield; Chapters 28-35 (from 5 to 8 instances each) which narrate Elizabeth’s stay at the Collins’ in Kent and present her observations of them, Lady Catherine, her daughter and Coronel Fitzwilliam. Mr Darcy’s marriage proposal here portrays violent emotions and can be said to be the first significant climax of the story, containing 8 instances. Another significant cluster is that made up of Chapters 43 and 44, which constitute a second climactic point and narrate Elizabeth and the Gardiners’ trip to Derbyshire. Their visit to Pemberley is especially important, featuring the highest number of instances of NP per chapter in the whole novel (15). Finally, Chapters 53 and 54, with 7 instances each, narrate Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy’s return to Netherfield, and present a very anxious Elizabeth, who experiences strong emotions and is alert to every one of Mr Darcy’s actions and words.

Elizabeth is the most important focaliser of the novel as far as NP is concerned: of the 134 instances tagged, 122 (91%) represent her perceptions, 9 (7%) represent collective ones, 2 instances (1%) Charlotte Collins’ perceptions, and 1 (1%) a perception of Mrs Gardiner’s. This distribution stands in marked contrast to that of *SS*, where, as discussed earlier, Elinor's perceptions only make up half of the instances tagged (51%), the rest being mostly collective and a very few distributed among different characters. In terms of NP, these figures suggest that *PP* is more consistently focalised through the heroine than *SS*, and that, whereas Elinor and her family sometimes function as one perceptive agent, Elizabeth is more of an individual perceiver. It must be noted, moreover, that collective instances in *PP* do not represent the perceptions of the same group of characters in a consistent way, as is the case in *SS*, and thus cannot be said to constitute a distinctive form of NP.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **No. of instances of NP** | **Percentage** |
| Elizabeth | 122 | 91% |
| Collective (various groups) | 9 | 7% |
| Charlotte Collins | 2 | 1% |
| Mrs Gardiner | 1 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 134 | 100% |

**Table 5. Subject of perception (heroine/other characters) in *PP***

As for types of perception, mixed-type instances (NP-FIT) are very scarce in this novel as well. As Table 4 above indicates, they comprise 5 cases (4% of the total, a relative frequency of [0.4]), an even less significant figure than the 9% found in *SS*. This means that perceptions and thoughts are most of the time distinguishable from each other. In contrast, the later novels *MP*, *P* and *E* will be shown to contain significant percentages of NP-FIT instances, revealing heroines who engage in deep reflection at the same time they sense their environment.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nove**  **l** | **Visual** | **Aural** | **Tactile** | **Visual and aural** | **Visual, aural and tactile** | **Position in space / distance from others** | **Imaginary** | **Awareness of self** | **T**  **o**  **t**  **a**  **l** |
| *SS* | 30 (56%) | 5  (9%) | 3  (5%) | 16 (30%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 |
| *PP* | 76 (56%) | 21 (16%) | 0 | 29 (22%) | 0 | 8  (6%) | 0 | 0 | 134 |

**Table 6. Types of perception in *SS* and *PP***

As shown in Table 6, the majority of instances of NP in *PP* are of a visual nature, comprising 76 instances (56%), plus 29 instances in which it is combined with aural perception (22%), which means that visual perception occurs in 78% of cases in total. Compared with *SS*, where visual perception comprises 86% of cases in total, the percentage for *PP* is lower. In the following example, Elizabeth sees how her cousin Mr Collins, ignoring socially accepted customs and her own hints, decides to introduce himself to Mr Darcy:

1. 1 [DS] “Pardon me for neglecting to profit by your advice, which on every other subject shall be my constant guide, though in the case before us I consider myself more fitted by education and habitual study to decide on what is right than a young lady like yourself.” 2 [CN: PERCEPTION] And with a low bow he [Mr Collins] left her [Elizabeth] to attack Mr. Darcy, whose reception of his advances she eagerly watched, and whose astonishment at being so addressed was very evident. 3 [NP] Her cousin prefaced his speech with a solemn bow, [PN: PERCEPTION] and though she could not hear a word of it, [PN: NI] she felt as if hearing it all, [PN: PERCEPTION] and saw in the motion of his lips the words “apology,” “Hunsford,” and “Lady Catherine de Bourgh.”—4 [PN: NI] It vexed her [PN: PERCEPTION] to see him expose himself to such a man. 5 [NP] Mr. Darcy was eyeing him with unrestrained wonder, and when at last Mr. Collins allowed him time to speak, replied with an air of distant civility. 6 Mr. Collins, however, was not discouraged from speaking again, and Mr. Darcy’s contempt seemed abundantly increasing with the length of his second speech, and at the end of it he only made him a slight bow, and moved another way. 7 [N] Mr. Collins then returned to Elizabeth.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 82-83)

This passage is from Chapter 18, one of the parts of the novel where NP features most prominently. Elizabeth spends most of the ball at Netherfield assessing Mr Darcy and observing what is passing around her, and thus it is not surprising to find many passages representing her perceptions, both in PN and NP. These passages also often describe her feelings of anxiety and embarrassment at the vulgarity of her relations. Example 31 begins with Mr Collins’ words to Elizabeth in ‘direct speech’ (DS). Sentence 2 contains the perception indicator ‘eagerly watched’, which establishes Elizabeth as the perceiving consciousness at the same time that it indicates her feelings (eagerness). This sentence has been categorised as CN because, although it reports actions from the narrator’s point of view (the description ‘she eagerly watched’ is necessarily external to Elizabeth), the heroine’s perceptual viewpoint is evoked in two ways: firstly, the verb ‘attack’ in ‘he left her to attack Mr. Darcy’ does not describe Mr Collins’ self-introduction neutrally but conveys Elizabeth’s disapproval of it, and perhaps also her fear of the consequences. Secondly, the last relative clause (‘whose astonishment at being so addressed was very evident’) suggests Elizabeth’s visual perspective in the modal ‘evident’. This clause can be regarded as a transition to an independent clause of visual NP in sentence 3 (‘Her cousin prefaced his speech with a solemn bow’).

In the rest of sentence 3 and in sentence 4, PN is used to represent visual and aural perceptions (‘could not hear a word’, ‘saw in the motion of his lips’, ‘see him expose himself’) and feelings (‘felt as if hearing it all’, ‘It vexed her’). Finally, in sentences 5 and 6 Elizabeth’s visual perceptions are portrayed through NP again. Her appraisal of Mr Collins and Mr Darcy is conveyed by different markers of perception: verbs in the past continuous aspect and present participles (‘was eyeing him’, ‘seemed abundantly increasing’), epistemic expressions indicating conjecture about Mr Darcy’s feelings (‘seemed’, ‘an air of’) and evaluative items which mark the negative appearance of his gestures in her eyes (‘*unrestrained* wonder’, ‘*distant* civility’, ‘*only* made him a *slight* bow’). Emotions are not reported explicitly, and yet the fact that NP foregrounds Elizabeth’s perceptions in syntactic terms accentuates the impression that she is watching intently, and feeling the anxiety and vexation expressed earlier in CN and PN.

As is the case with the rest of Austen’s novels, a significant number of instances of NP in *PP* represent a combination of visual and auditory perceptions (29/134, 22%), this type being the second most common, and some passages only auditory ones (21/134, 16%). That is, a 38% of instances in total contain an aural element. If this figure is compared with that for *SS* (39%), audition comes across as slightly less prominent in *PP*. However, as Table 6 above shows, the amount of purely aural instances (21; 16%) is much larger than that for *SS* (5; 9%). Indeed, auditory perceptions can be argued to be more important in *PP* than in *SS*, in the sense that they consistently refer to Mr Darcy, whose character Elizabeth attempts to ‘sketch’ (Austen 1996 [1813]: 80) from both looks and words. The following passage occurs in Chapter 43, which narrates Elizabeth and the Gardiners’ visit to Pemberley and contains the highest number of instances of NP in the whole novel. It is a crucial chapter in terms of narrative crisis, in which Elizabeth experiences strong feelings and perceives everything around her in the new light which Darcy’s letter and his housekeeper throw on his character. The visit culminates with an unexpected encounter with Mr Darcy in the garden. Having refused his marriage proposal, Elizabeth does not dare to look into his eyes and instead listens to his voice to try to ascertain how he feels:

1. 1 [N] They [the Gardiners] stood a little aloof while he was talking to their niece, who, [PN: NI] astonished and confused, scarcely dared lift her eyes to his face, [PN: NI (UNCONSCIOUS)] and knew not what answer she returned to his civil enquiries after her family. 2 [PN: NI] Amazed at the alteration in his manner since they last parted, every sentence that he uttered was increasing her embarrassment; and every idea of the impropriety of her being found there, recurring to her mind, the few minutes in which they continued together, were some of the most uncomfortable of her life. 3 [NP: AWARENESS] Nor did he seem much more at ease; [NP-FIT] when he spoke, his accent had none of its usual sedateness; and he repeated his enquiries as to the time of her having left Longbourn, and of her stay in Derbyshire, so often, and in so hurried a way, as plainly spoke the distraction of his thoughts.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 206)

After the narrator describes Elizabeth’s feelings and thoughts in sentences 1 and 2 (‘astonished and confused’, ‘knew not what answer she returned’, ‘embarrassment’, ‘uncomfortable’, ‘every idea of the impropriety of her being found there’), the first clause of sentence 3 reveals her awareness of Mr Darcy’s agitation as well as her own as she concludes ‘Nor did he seem much more at ease’. The rest of sentence 3 renders her aural perceptions and has been tagged as NP-FIT because it also contains a memory (memories were discussed in 2.1 as a form of thought) in the comparison between ongoing and former impressions of Mr Darcy’s tone of voice (‘had none of its usual sedateness’). At first sight this sentence may appear to be the narrator’s report of Mr Darcy’s speech, especially as there is summarisation (‘repeated his enquiries […] so often’), which is usually a sign of narratorial perspective (Cohn 1978: 21-57). However, the fact that Elizabeth is looking down (‘scarcely dared lift her eyes to his face’), the presence of epistemic modal expressions (‘seem’, ‘plainly spoke’), the evaluation of his tone of voice (lack of ‘sedateness’) and speech quality (he is repeating things in a ‘hurried’ manner) all suggest Elizabeth’s auditory perspective. These aural clues reveal to her the ‘distraction of his thoughts’, in the last clause, a conclusion which also has an element of awareness of the state of things between them (tension, awkwardness).

In Chapter 54, another prominent part of the novel in terms of NP, Elizabeth is desperately wanting to talk to Mr Darcy: ‘She was in hopes that the evening would afford some opportunity of bringing them together’, and so ‘the period which passed in the drawing-room, before the gentlemen came, was wearisome and dull to a degree, that almost made her uncivil’ (Austen 1996 [1813]: 274). When the gentlemen finally join the ladies, NP suggests Elizabeth’s despair and desire for his physical proximity: ‘1 [NP] Darcy had walked away to another part of the room. 2 [N] She followed him with her eyes, [PN: NI] envied every one to whom he spoke, had scarcely patience enough to help anybody to coffee; and then was enraged against herself for being so silly!’ (1996 [1813]: 275). Here NP occurs after DS, and it is only the subsequent description (‘followed him with her eyes’) that acts as a perception indicator, favouring a retrospective reading of the underlined sentence as NP. In addition, there seems to be an emotional element to NP, conveying Elizabeth’s frustration that Mr Darcy is physically removed from her. The text that ensues contains both visual and aural perceptions:

1. 1 [PN: NI] She was a little revived, however, by his bringing back his coffee cup himself; [N] and she seized the opportunity of saying,

[DS] “Is your sister at Pemberley still?”

2 “Yes, she will remain there till Christmas.”

3 “And quite alone? 4 Have all her friends left her?”

5 “Mrs. Annesley is with her. 6 The others have been gone on to Scarborough, these three weeks.”

7 [AMBIGUOUS PN/FIT] She could think of nothing more to say; [FIT] but if he wished to converse with her, he might have better success. 8 [NP] He stood by her, however, for some minutes, in silence; [N] and, at last, on the young lady’s whispering to Elizabeth again, he walked away.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 275)

The frustration conveyed by the last paragraph is noticeable, yet implicit. In sentence 7 (FIT), Elizabeth concludes that ‘if he wished to converse with her, he might have better success’; she is mentally stuck and seems to be waiting anxiously, expecting, yearning for a sign of interest on his side; for, at least, a word of common courtesy. FIT favours a reading of sentence 8 as figural (NP): ‘He stood by her, however, for some minutes, in silence’. Elizabeth perceives both his proximity (a visual, almost tactile experience) and his silence (an aural perception), and although her feelings are not expressed here, NP may suggest a variety of emotional nuances connected with what has been said in the preceding paragraphs (‘enraged against herself’). The reader may feel along with Elizabeth how long those minutes appear to her, and how exasperating the situation is.

In the latter part of the novel, as Elizabeth realises her feelings for Mr Darcy, it is typical of NP to represent her perception of Mr Darcy’s position in space in relation to herself. As Table 6 above shows, 8 instances of this type have been tagged (6% of the total). Of these 8 passages, 2 occur when Elizabeth still dislikes Mr Darcy and finds his presence irksome (the ball at Netherfield, their walks in Rosings Park), and 6 instances convey a strong desire to have him come near her and speak to her, and more importantly, to discern any sign that he still loves her. Statements such as ‘Mr. Darcy was almost as far from her, as the table could divide them’ (Austen 1996 [1813]: 274) are typical of NP in the latter part. On Mr Bingley’s and Mr Darcy’s return to Netherfield in Chapters 53 and 54, Darcy does not seem interested in pleasing Elizabeth any more. This apparent contradiction in his behaviour confuses her, and may confuse the reader too:

1. 1 [NRSA] Elizabeth said as little to either [Bingley or Darcy] as civility would allow, [N] and sat down again to her work, with an eagerness which it did not often command. 2 She had ventured only one glance at Darcy. 3 [NP-FIT] He looked serious as usual; and, she thought, more as he had been used to look in Hertfordshire, than as she had seen him at Pemberley. 4 [FIT] But, perhaps he could not in her mother’s presence be what he was before her uncle and aunt. 5 [AMBIGUOUS PN: NRTA/FIT] It was a painful, but not an improbable, conjecture.

[…]

6 [IS] Darcy, after enquiring of her how Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner did, [NRSA] a question which she could not answer [PN: NI] without confusion, [N] said scarcely any thing. 7 [NP] He was not seated by her; [FIT] perhaps that was the reason of his silence; but it had not been so in Derbyshire. 8 There he had talked to her friends, when he could not to herself. 9 [NP] But now several minutes elapsed, without bringing the sound of his voice; [PN: NI] and when occasionally, unable to resist the impulse of curiosity, [N] she raised her eyes to his face, [PN: PERCEPTION] she as often found him looking at Jane, as at herself, and frequently on no object but the ground. 10 [NP-FIT] More thoughtfulness, and less anxiety to please than when they last met, were plainly expressed. 11 [PN: NI] She was disappointed, and angry with herself for being so.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 270)

This passage contains several instances of NP, and resembles Example 33 in that it contains a combination of aural and visual perceptions about a thoughtful, silent Darcy. This passage is more reflective than Example 33, however, which is noticeable in the fact that NP often merges with FIT. Perceptions are followed by memories and conjectures: for example, the visual appraisals represented in sentences 3 and 10 (‘He looked serious as usual’, ‘More thoughtfulness, and less anxiety to please […] were plainly expressed’) are conjoined with remembrances of how Mr Darcy had used to look and act earlier (‘more as he had been used to look in Hertfordshire’, ‘than when they last met’). Since memories fall into the domain of thought, sentences 3 and 10 have been tagged as NP-FIT. Sentence 3 even contains a parenthetical (‘she thought’), which according to Banfield can occur in FIT but not in NP (1981: 69). This is a good example of the flexibility in the combination of techniques that can be appreciated in Austen’s novels, especially in *E* as will be shown in Chapter 6.

It is also interesting to note that NP in sentences 7 and 9 is only identifiable because of the presence of FIT in between. Indeed, the propositions ‘He was not seated by her’ and ‘But now several minutes elapsed, without bringing the sound of his voice’ could well be regarded as N, especially as there is no perception indicator anywhere that may mark them as figural, were it not because they are both semantically related to the adjoining FIT: in ‘[NP] He was not seated by her; [FIT] perhaps that was the reason of his silence’, FIT establishes a retrospective causal relation between Mr Darcy’s silence and his physical distance from Elizabeth by expressing a conjecture through the modal expression ‘perhaps’. The pronoun ‘that’ refers back to the proposition ‘He was not seated by her’ and includes it within Elizabeth’s consciousness; that is, it turns this proposition into a visual perception. Similarly, in ‘[FIT] There he had talked to her friends, when he could not to herself. [NP] But now several minutes elapsed, without bringing the sound of his voice’, there is a semantic relation of contrast between the two propositions ('But') which transfers the figural quality of the first sentence to the second; that is, the comparison between his former and present behaviour makes it possible to read the report of his silence as Elizabeth’s auditory perception. The deictics ‘now’ and ‘bringing’ also suggest Elizabeth’s temporal and spatial position. Finally, as we are told that she is looking down, avoiding his sight (sentences 1, 2 and 9), a description of him in auditory terms seems more easily attributable to Elizabeth's consciousness than to the narrator.

Another feature of NP in this novel is its connection with places, particularly Pemberley. Interestingly, Elizabeth’s visual perceptions of Pemberley have a strong affinity with her perceptions of Mr Darcy: in Chapter 43, she observes the house and grounds of his estate in Derbyshire, and listens to his housekeeper, arriving at new conclusions about his character, and wondering what her life would have been like if she had accepted his marriage proposal. The way she perceives the house, the rooms and the gardens suggests the way she sees Mr Darcy too:

1. 1 [N] Elizabeth, as they drove along, watched for the first appearance of Pemberley Woods [PN: NI] with some perturbation; [N] and when at length they turned in at the lodge, [PN: NI] her spirits were in a high flutter.

2 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] The park was very large, and contained great variety of ground. 3 They entered it in one of its lowest points, and drove for some time through a beautiful wood, stretching over a wide extent.

4 [PN: NI] Elizabeth’s mind was too full for conversation, [PN: PERCEPTION] but she saw and admired every remarkable spot and point of view. 5 [N] They gradually ascended for half a mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. 6 [NP] It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills;—and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. 7 Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. 8 [PN: NI] Elizabeth was delighted. 9 [FIT] She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. 10 [NRSA] They were all of them warm in their admiration; [PN: IT] and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 201)

This passage opens Chapter 43. In the first paragraph, Elizabeth’s attention to her surroundings, and her feelings of anxiety and excitement, are explicitly reported by the narrator (‘watched […] with some perturbation; […] her spirits were in a high flutter’). This state of mind sets up the atmosphere that will permeate the whole chapter. The second paragraph is ambiguous, as it is not possible to ascertain whether Elizabeth perceives any or all of these facts: is she conscious of the largeness and ‘great variety of ground’ of the park, of them having entered it ‘in one of its lowest points’, and of being driven ‘through a beautiful wood’? This description could be simply N; however, Elizabeth is presented in the first paragraph as watching ‘for the first appearance of Pemberley Woods’, and the third paragraph begins by explicitly stating that ‘she saw and admired every remarkable spot and point of view’ (PN). Therefore, it could be argued that, even if the descriptions occurring in this chapter may not always be explicitly filtered through Elizabeth’s perceptual consciousness, most of them probably reflect what she is seeing or hearing, and the way she is evaluating it (‘beautiful’).

The third paragraph contains a clearer instance of NP. The perception indicator ‘the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House’ introduces a description of the valley and the house which can be said to render the visual perception of Elizabeth (and her companions, too, although she is set as the main perceiver). The description is stylistically elaborate and orderly, presenting each part of the scene separately, as if one were viewing a painting: the house as the centre or foreground (‘It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground’), followed by its background (‘and backed by a ridge of high woody hills’), then the elements in front, after a dash (‘and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance’). The human eye does not process images in such a methodical way, but wanders quickly from one place to another; in fact, a description of this type looks more typical of narrative contexts. This may be the influence of Austen’s enthusiasm for William Gilpin and the cult of the picturesque, which gave her a taste for landscape beauty and for the language of painting, such as composition (Bradbrook 1967: 50-51). Pemberley is here presented in quite a pictorial fashion, as a place of outstanding beauty which ‘delighted’ Elizabeth; and it ‘is against such a background of romance, sublimity, beauty and delight that the hero and heroine of *Pride and Prejudice* are reconciled’ (Bradbrook 1967: 59).

No matter how picturesque it may be, however, the description of Pemberley is explicitly anchored in Elizabeth’s perceptual viewpoint by the perception indicator already mentioned, and is not a neutral, all-encompassing description but highlights a few specific traits of the place which conform to Elizabeth’s aesthetic and moral standards. In particular, the description focuses on the natural aspect of the place, which has not been spoiled by any adornments that could give it an ‘artificial appearance’. The importance of naturalness for Elizabeth is explicitly described in sentence 9 (FIT): ‘She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste’. Elizabeth’s positive evaluation of the aspect of the grounds can be interpreted in a moral light: naturalness reveals the character of its owner; it reveals simplicity of mind, genuineness, and a disregard for all artifice or concealment, which is shared and valued by the heroine. Her admiration of the simplicity of Pemberley is expressed again later on in this chapter, in passages containing NP:

1. 1 [PN: PERCEPTION] and she looked on the whole scene, the river, the trees scattered on its banks, and the winding of the valley, as far as she could trace it, [PN: NI] with delight. 2 [NP] As they passed into other rooms, these objects were taking different positions; but from every window there were beauties to be seen. 3 The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of its proprietor; [PN: PERCEPTION] but Elizabeth saw, [PN: NI] with admiration of his taste, [PN: PERCEPTION] that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendor [sic], and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 202)

Note the use of the past continuous aspect (‘were taking different positions’), which reflects the change in the appearance of the objects as Elizabeth moves around, her eyes fixed on the windows. Note also the strong presence of PN representing perception, which helps to read most other descriptions of the place as Elizabeth’s visual appraisals too. Once again, she pays attention to the lack of unnecessary finesse that characterises the inside of Darcy’s house, which reflects her preferences and perhaps also an emotional reaction, a softening towards him inside her. This preference for the natural, the authentic and the unaffected is a common theme in Jane Austen’s fiction; for example, Mr Knightley praises Harriet for being an ‘unpretending, single-minded, artless girl—infinitely to be preferred by any man of sense and taste’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 273). And NP implicitly expresses the importance of the natural by highlighting the specific aspects of the fictional world on which Elizabeth fixes her perceptual attention.

In total, 40% of the instances of NP found in *PP* have been tagged as ambiguous between NP and N.As discussed in 4.1, ambiguity in *SS* is often achieved through a sustained use of CN. In *PP*, several factors contribute to create ambiguity, such as a frequent absence of perception indicators, and, as in all of Austen novels, the use of epistemic modals such as ‘seem’ or ‘evidently’ in what appears to be N. In the latter scenario, the narrator deliberately avoids omniscient reports of thoughts and feelings (PN) and instead appears to infer these from outward appearances; a practice that was referred to as ‘reticence’ (Morini 2010: 339) in the discussion on *SS* and illustrated in Example 30 (‘Edward seemed to have as great an inclination to walk out of the room again, as to advance farther into it’). Ambiguity in *PP* often results from abrupt changes in viewpoint across clauses and sentences; between Elizabeth’s consciousness and that of other characters or N. The following passage, taken from Mr Darcy’s declaration of love to Elizabeth, exemplifies all of these factors:

1. 1 [NRSA] He concluded with representing to her the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer; [IS] and with expressing his hope that it would now be rewarded by her acceptance of his hand. 2 [N] As he said this, [PN: IT/PN: PERCEPTION] she could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer. 3 [NP-FIT] He *spoke* of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security. 4 [PN: NI] Such a circumstance could only exasperate farther, [N] and when he ceased, the colour rose into her cheeks, and she said,

[Elizabeth’s Direct Speech]

5 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] Mr. Darcy, who was leaning against the mantle-piece with his eyes fixed on her face, seemed to catch her words with no less resentment than surprise. 6 His complexion became pale with anger, and the disturbance of his mind was visible in every feature. 7 [PN: NI] He was struggling for the appearance of composure, and would not open his lips, till he believed himself to have attained it. 8 [PN: NI] The pause was to Elizabeth’s feelings dreadful.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 157-158, original italics)

This chapter (34) stands out quantitatively, with 4 ambiguous and 4 straightforward instances of NP. It is full of tension and contradictory feelings (pride, anger, vanity, love, gratitude), which are conveyed mainly through dialogue, but also indirectly through NP. The two instances of NP in this example represent the way Elizabeth perceives Mr Darcy’s words, looks and gestures during the pauses in between their respective speeches. Sentence 3, ‘He *spoke* of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security’, follows on from a representation of Elizabeth’s thoughts or perceptions in PN (‘she could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer’) and could therefore be read as a thought based on auditory and visual information (that is, hearing Mr Darcy’s words and observing his face), which is why it has been categorised as NP-FIT. Note the emphasis on the word ‘spoke’, which establishes a contrast between what Elizabeth has heard and what she perceives visually.

The second instance of NP (sentences 5 and 6) has been tagged as such because it seems to render the perspective of someone who is inferring Mr Darcy’s feelings from his facial expressions: ‘seemed to catch her words’, ‘no less resentment than surprise’, ‘His complexion became pale with anger’, ‘the disturbance of his mind was visible in every feature’. The epistemic modal ‘seemed’ and the past progressive aspect (‘was leaning’) also suggest a figural perspective. However, these sentences could also be read as N, since there is no perception indicator anywhere which may suggest this is Elizabeth’s perception of Darcy. In addition, sentence 7 seems incongruous with NP, as it introduces a sudden switch in point of view, describing Mr Darcy’s actual feelings in PN (‘He was struggling for the appearance of composure, and would not open his lips, till he believed himself to have attained it’). A further switch to Elizabeth’s consciousness occurs in sentence 8 (‘The pause was to Elizabeth’s feelings dreadful’).

Another reason for ambiguity in this novel is that both the narrator and the heroine are prone to irony and satire. The examples analysed so far tend to reflect Elizabeth’s emotions (anxiety, desire, disappointment) as well as her values and opinions. They are all earnest, insightful perceptions, such as those portraying her admiration of the natural beauty of Pemberley. In contrast, 10 instances (7% of the total attributed to Elizabeth) are connected with her mocking character and can be described as humorous:

1. 1 [N] Elizabeth asked questions in vain; Maria would tell her nothing more, and down they ran into the dining-room, which fronted the lane, in quest of this wonder; [NP] it was two ladies stopping in a low phaeton at the garden gate.

[Elizabeth’s and Maria’s Direct Speech]

2 [NP] Mr. Collins and Charlotte were both standing at the gate in conversation with the ladies; and Sir William, [PN: NI] to Elizabeth’s high diversion, [NP] was stationed in the door-way, in earnest contemplation of the greatness before him, and constantly bowing whenever Miss De Bourgh looked that way.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 132-133)

Here, NP expresses derision at Sir William’s submissive attitude towards the wealthy Lady Catherine and her daughter Miss De Bourgh, and scorn for the exaggerated importance given to these ladies by all present. The process of perception represented in this passage is gradual: after Elizabeth has been refused information of who is coming to visit them in sentence 1, sentence 2 presents her first visual perception of ‘two ladies’. Then she sees Mr and Mrs Collins (note that the latter is referred to as ‘Charlotte’, which suggests Elizabeth’s perspective), and Sir William bowing to the person whom Elizabeth can now recognise as Miss De Bourgh. There is irony in the description of the ladies as ‘the greatness before him’, and in the verb ‘contemplation’, which has certain religious connotations to it, implying that Sir William admires the ladies as if they were goddesses, or in any case much above him. The perceptions are represented through the past continuous aspect and present participles (‘stopping’, ‘were […] standing’, ‘was […] constantly bowing’) and contain the parenthetical ‘to Elizabeth’s high diversion’, which the narratorial voice inserts as if to show its concurrence with Elizabeth’s views.

The fact that both the narrator and Elizabeth have a tendency to satirise means that in many passages narratorial and figural viewpoints seem to merge. In contrast with the previous passage, where NP is relatively easy to spot, the following passage is highly ambiguous. It appears to be N, and yet several features point to Elizabeth’s view of things. The scene has been described as ‘an entertaining caricature of card-table conversation’ (Harding 1998: 10):

1. 1 [N] When the gentlemen had joined them, and tea was over, the card tables were placed. 2 Lady Catherine, Sir William, and Mr. and Mrs. Collins sat down to quadrille; and as Miss de Bourgh chose to play at cassino, the two girls [Elizabeth and Maria] had the honour of assisting Mrs. Jenkinson to make up her party. 3 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] Their table was superlatively stupid. 4 [AMBIGUOUS NP/NRSA] Scarcely a syllable was uttered that did not relate to the game, except when Mrs. Jenkinson expressed her fears of Miss de Bourgh’s being too hot or too cold, or having too much or too little light. 5 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] A great deal more passed at the other table. 6 [AMBIGUOUS NP/NRSA] Lady Catherine was generally speaking—stating the mistakes of the three others, or relating some anecdote of herself. 7 Mr. Collins was employed in agreeing to every thing her Ladyship said, thanking her for every fish he won, and apologising if he thought he won too many.

(Austen 1996 [1813]: 138-139)

Sentences 1 and 2 present the characters from an external viewpoint, which is shown in the fact that Elizabeth and Maria are referred to as ‘the girls’. The rest of the passage (sentences 3-7) has been categorised as ambiguous between NP and N/NRSA: the use of the past continuous aspect (‘was generally speaking—stating […], or relating’; ‘was employed in agreeing […], thanking […], and apologising’) gives the sentences the air of NP, and sentence 5 seems to be anchored in Elizabeth’s spatial deictic centre in its reference to ‘the other table’, that is, the one where she is not sitting. These features indicate that the passage could well reflect the way Elizabeth perceives some or all of what is being narrated. At the same time, however, there are no perception indicators, and it is difficult to know with certainty whether she is actually listening to what is passing at the other table, and evaluating things in that way (for example, as ‘superlatively stupid’). Moreover, sentences 4, 6-8 summarise the words of Lady Catherine, Mrs Jenkinson and Mr Collins (summarisation being a typically narratorial feature as was mentioned earlier), and the antithetical ‘being too hot or too cold, or having too much or too little light’ in sentence 4 is perhaps an instance of what Short (2012) describes as ‘speech summary’, which turns an original piece of discourse into a representative summary; in this case with the aim of satirically representing Mrs Jenkinson’s behaviour as a mere satellite to Miss De Bourgh.

The analysis shows that the formal clues in this passage are far from clear-cut, which makes it difficult to distinguish between figural perception and narratorial report. In any case, ambiguity in *PP* does not entail any fundamental disparity between narratorial and figural viewpoints: in this example, the description of what passes at the card tables may or may not be perceived by Elizabeth, but the narrator’s satirical presentation of the situation can be said to be in perfect harmony with Elizabeth’s view of each of the characters described. It can be concluded that in this novel ambiguity is not essentially misleading or unreliable, but, on the contrary, has the effect of merging the point of view of the narrator with that of Elizabeth. This alignment is similar to that found in *SS*, where Elinor’s perceptions seem to be often backed up by narratorial statements. In contrast, the perceptions of Catherine and Emma present assessments which are later on confirmed to be mistaken. The following section analyses in more detail the use of NP in *NA* and discusses possible connections between stylistic features and point of view.

**4.4 *Northanger Abbey***

The first manuscript of *NA* was ‘first composed in 1798’ (Austen-Leigh 1886: 47) with the title *Susan*. In 1803, Henry Austen offered it to the London publisher Benjamin Crosby, who promised to publish the book but never did. Austen repurchased the copyright from him in 1816 (Le Faye 2003 [1997]: 10; Sutherland 2005b: 9, 16, 18-19, 20-22), and the novel was eventually published posthumously in 1818 with its present title*.* Because of its early date of composition, *NA* is generally considered as one of her major early novels, together with *SS* and *PP*. Mudrick (1952: 39-59) lists among the reasons for considering *NA* an early experiment the text’s resemblance to the juvenilia, its blatant irony, which is more subtle in later novels, and the intrusive presence of the narrator. William and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh give similar reasons, saying the novel retains the young writer’s ‘tendency to satirise contemporary extravagances’, and a disparity in tone between the first and the second volume (1913: 96-97).

The 1818 edition of *NA* included an ‘Advertisement' written by Austen herself, in which she explains that this ‘little work was finished in the year 1803, and intended for immediate publication' (2003 [1818]: 13), which leads many to agree that 1803 was the last date in which she revised the manuscript (Austen-Leigh and Austen-Leigh 1913: 96; Litz 1965: 58, 1986: 49-50; Mudrick 1952: 39, n. 5) and to the generally accepted classification of *NA* as an early novel. However, the text’s apparent mixture of mature and immature features makes other critics consider the possibility of further substantial modifications to the manuscript as late as 1816 (Bradbrook 1967: 93; Gooneratne 1970: 60-62; Lascelles 1939: 36-37; Le Faye 2003 [1997]: 10; Shaw 1990). Perhaps the most important element that has been pointed out in this regard is the novel’s sustained use of free indirect discourse (Shaw 1990). Given that free indirect discourse (FID) ‘constitutes a hallmark of Jane Austen’s maturity’ (Shaw 1990: 596), the apparently odd abundance of FID in *NA* must respond to a later intervention in the text: ‘the frequency with which Jane Austen wields the device in *Northanger Abbey*, indeed, the pattern of its occurrence, is significant’, supporting the conclusion ‘that the juvenile novel was at least stylistically improved in 1816’ (Shaw 1990: 592).

Note that Shaw not only mentions the ‘frequency’ with which FID is deployed in *NA*, but also crucially the ‘pattern of its occurrence’ as the clue that justifies a possible later addition. The evidence of a pattern is true in the case of NP too: the previous sections have already shown NP to be associated with climactic and emotionally intense contexts, and the same pattern of distribution occurs in *NA*, as will be presently discussed. Moreover, if admittedly FID is more extensively used in *NA* than in *SS* and *PP*, this is also the case with NP. In fact, FIT and NP frequently occur close to each other in this novel. Whether or not FIT and NP were incorporated to the manuscript at a later stage is not relevant here, however; what is relevant is the fact that they tend to occur in specific chapters or passages. Indeed, the extent to which these techniques are used in Austen’s novels does not so much depend on the author’s stage of stylistic development as on the particular characteristics of the novel or episode concerned

The representation of perception by means of NP is significantly more profuse in *NA* than in *SS* and *PP.* A total of 88 passages containing NP have been tagged (47 straightforward, 24 ambiguous between NP and N, 17 of the type NP-FIT) in a total of 76,432 words. This yields a relative frequency of [12] instances, which is higher than those for *PP* and *NA* ([11.1] and [5] respectively). The contrast between *NA* and *PP* is not as great as that between these two novels and *SS*, however. As has just been argued, quantitative differences between the novels are less dependent on chronological development and more connected with the role of NP at particular times, with the relationship between narrator and heroine, and the effects sought in each novel. Table 3 presents a compilation of the results for the three early novels:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Novel** | **Straightforward NP** | **Ambiguous NP-N** | **NP-FIT** | **Total** |
| *SS* | 27 [2.3]  (50%) | 22 [1.9]  (41%) | 5 [0.4]  (9%) | 54 [4.6]~[5] (100%) |
| *PP* | 76 [6.3]  (56%) | 53 [4.4]  (40%) | 5 [0.4]  (4%) | 134 [11.1] (100%) |
| *NA* | 47 [6.2]  (54%) | 24 [3.1]  (27%) | 17 [2.2]  (19%) | 88  [11.5] ~ [12]  (100%) |

**Table 7. Number, density and percentage of instances of NP in *SS*, *PP* and *NA***

**(Figures in square brackets represent normalised figures per 10,000 words)**

NP naturally tends to be more abundant in passages where a character is exploring, observing, taking in a view of a person, house or landscape, and these circumstances are especially important in *NA*, where Catherine spends a considerable amount of time exploring and observing the Abbey and its inhabitants. In addition, as this section illustrates, NP is used by Austen to portray a character’s inaccurate perception of what is happening in the fictional world, and also often with the aim of implicitly conveying narratorial distance from the consciousness thus represented. In this light, a sustained use of NP seems more suited to render the consciousness of an imaginative, deluded Catherine than the sensible, practical mind of Elinor: ‘the ideas of Elinor and Elizabeth do not need to be distanced so firmly as those of Catherine’ (Burrows 1987: 167). Note that the percentage of ambiguous cases is significantly lower in *NA* than in the other two novels, which, as will be presently discussed, suggests a lesser alignment between narrator and character in terms of point of view.

As occurs in *SS* and *PP*, the distribution of NP in *NA* follows very significant patterns: in Chapters 1-20, which narrate Catherine’s stay in Bath, instances of NP are scarce, with 1 or 2 passages per chapter on average. As soon as she arrives at Northanger Abbey at the end of Chapter 20, however, the use of both NP and FIT is greatly intensified: in Chapters 21-25 the number of instances of NP as compared to the first twenty chapters is substantially higher (between 9 and 16 passages). Two chapters in particular stand out: Chapter 21 (16 instances) portrays the first of Catherine’s Gothic adventures, that is, her exploration of her room and the chest she finds in it, and the frightful night she has when setting out to unlock a mysterious black cabinet; and Chapter 24 (12 instances) marks the climax of Catherine’s imaginations, with her secret trip to the forbidden gallery, and the realisation of her self-deceptions. The remaining chapters (26-31), where the concluding events of the story take place, hardly contain any NP.

The vast majority of instances of NP represent Catherine’s perceptions (97%); 2 instances represent collective perceptions with various groups, and 1 passage Eleanor’s observation of Catherine as the latter is preparing to leave the Abbey. Focalisation in terms of NP is thus achieved even more consistently in *NA* than in *SS* and *PP*, where Elinor’s and Elizabeth’s perceptions comprise 51% and 91% of the total, respectively. As usual, the majority of instances represent visual perceptions (63%), followed by visual-aural (17%), aural (9%), and various combinations of visual, tactile and aural (10%). There is also one passage representing an imaginary perception (1%), in which Catherine mentally visualises what Blaize Castle would look like. All of these types of NP, plus some instances of awareness, are more fully illustrated in this section.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **No. of instances of NP** | **Percentage** |
| Catherine | 85 | 97% |
| Collective (various groups) | 2 | 2% |
| Eleanor | 1 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 88 | 100% |

**Table 8. Subject of perception (heroine/other characters) in *NA***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nove**  **l** | **Visual** | **Aural** | **Tactile** | **Visual and aural** | **Visual, aural and tactile** | **Position in space / distance from others** | **Imaginary** | **Awareness of self** | **T**  **o**  **t**  **a**  **l** |
| *SS* | 30 (56%) | 5  (9%) | 3  (5%) | 16 (30%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 |
| *PP* | 76 (56%) | 21 (16%) | 0 | 29 (22%) | 0 | 8  (6%) | 0 | 0 | 134 |
| *NA* | 55 (63%) | 8  (9%) | 0 | 15 (17%) | 9 (10%) | 0 | 1 (1%) |  | 88 |

**Table 9. Types of perception in *SS*, *PP* and *NA***

In Chapters 1-20, the ones narrating the Bath events, NP invariably occurs at moments of emotional significance for Catherine, especially when she is anxious. For example, NP evokes the stress experienced in the crowd at a ballroom: ‘1 [PN: IT] she found that to proceed along the room was by no means the way to disengage themselves from the crowd; [NP] it seemed rather to increase as they went on’ (Austen 2003 [1818]: 21-22). NP also conveys her frustration at being separated from the people she wants to be with during another ball: ‘1 [PN: PERCEPTION] Of her dear Isabella,[PN: NI]to whom she particularly longed to point out that gentleman, [PN: PERCEPTION] she could see nothing. 2 [NP] They were in different sets. 3 She was separated from all her party, and away from all her acquaintance;—[PN: NI] one mortification succeeded another’ (2003 [1818]: 54). In Chapter 12, she believes she has offended Henry and Eleanor Tilney and desperately tries to explain herself to them; NP first occurs when she visits their house and appearances seem to indicate that she has been refused admittance (2003 [1818]: 87-88); and then at the theatre, when she notices that Henry does not look at her during the play. She concludes he is offended:

1. 1 [N] On the beginning of the fifth [act], however, [PN: PERCEPTION] the sudden view of Mr. Henry Tilney and his father, joining a party in the opposite box, [PN: NI] recalled her to anxiety and distress. 2 The stage could no longer excite genuine merriment—no longer keep her whole attention. 3 [N] Every other look upon an average was directed towards the opposite box; and, for the space of two entire scenes, did she thus watch Henry Tilney, without being once able to catch his eye. 4 [PN: NI] No longer could he be suspected of indifference for a play; [NP] his notice was never withdrawn from the stage during two whole scenes. 5 At length, however, he did look towards her, and he bowed—but such a bow! no smile, no continued observance attended it; his eyes were immediately returned to their former direction. 6 [PN: NI] Catherine was restlessly miserable; she could almost have run round to the box in which he sat, and forced him to hear her explanation.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 88-89)

NP is here preceded by three perception indicators (‘the sudden view of Mr. Henry Tilney and his father’ in sentence 1; ‘Every other look upon an average was directed towards the opposite box’ and ‘did she thus watch Henry Tilney’ in sentence 3). NP has a narratorial feel to it in its use of summarisation (‘his notice was *never* withdrawn from the stage’), connectives (‘At least’, ‘however’) and elaborate language such as the parallel structure ‘no smile, no continued observance attended it’. However, the use of an emphatic ‘did’ (he ‘did look towards her’) and an exclamation mark (‘such a bow!’) evokes Catherine’s subjectivity and emotion. On a semantic level, the way Henry is described also implicitly expresses Catherine’s feelings: from an objective point of view, perhaps Henry is simply watching the play as attentively as she had done before spotting him. However, he is perceived for what he does not do: although he bows to her, what is underlined is his lack of smile, enthusiasm and ‘continued observance’. This is a good example of what was discussed in Chapter 2 as ‘appraisal theory’ (Arnold 1960). Catherine perceives Henry’s behaviour in the light of the guilt she feels for having (unwittingly) broken an engagement with him and his sister. The co-text around NP also throws a negative meaning over her perceptions (‘was restlessly miserable’). However, the narrator does not make clear whether Henry and Eleanor are indeed offended; all that is represented is Catherine’s perception of the whole affair. This may affect the reader’s interpretation, depending on his/her degree of reliance on Catherine’s view of reality.

Because NP is usually associated with Catherine’s emotions, in Chapters 1-20 it often occurs when Henry and General Tilney are present. The General makes her anxious, Henry often excites feelings of happiness:

1. 1 [N] in the course of a few minutes, she found herself with Henry in the curricle, [PN: NI] as happy a being as ever existed. 2 [PN: IT] A very short trial convinced her that a curricle was the prettiest equipage in the world; [NP-FIT] the chaise-and-four wheeled off with some grandeur, to be sure, but it was a heavy and troublesome business, [FIT] and she could not easily forget its having stopped two hours at Petty-France. 3 Half the time would have been enough for the curricle, and [NP-FIT] so nimbly were the light horses disposed to move, [FIT] 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. 4 [CN: THOUGHT] But the merit of the curricle did not all belong to the horses;—[NP] Henry drove so well,—so quietly—without making any disturbance, without parading to her, or swearing at them; [AMBIGUOUS PN/FIT] so different from the only gentleman-coachman whom it was in her power to compare him with!—5 [NP-FIT] And then his hat sat so well, and the innumerable capes of his great coat looked so becomingly important!—6 [FIT] To be driven by him, next to dancing with him, was certainly the greatest happiness in the world.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 148-149)

In this passage, NP and FIT are equally abundant, and indeed the two techniques appear very much together in this novel. The underlined fragments in sentences 2 and 3 have been categorised as NP-FIT because Catherine seems to be reflecting on the speed, noise and aspect of the chaise and horses at the same time she perceives them. For example, the expression ‘to be sure’ sounds like an expression that she could have mentally verbalised in reference to the ‘heavy and troublesome business’ going on in front of her eyes. Sentences 4 and 5 too contain NP representing visual and auditory perceptions: the dashes evoke figural consciousness, and together with the use of repetitions, contribute to give a figural quality to the description (‘so well—so quietly’, ‘without making any disturbance, without parading to her’). This instance also contains Catherine’s evaluations (‘drove so well’, ‘sat so well’, ‘so becomingly important!’). As in the previous example, the presence of an exclamation mark enhances the emotional impact of the perceptions represented, and provides a contrast to Banfield’s conclusion that exclamations do not occur in NP (1981: 68). In sentence 5 NP is again combined with FIT: note the colloquial nature of ‘And then’, which probably suggests Catherine is mentally enumerating conclusions about her perceptions. The whole passage conveys her adoring feelings for Henry, and may come across to the reader as comical by its very excess of adoration and praise.

The number of instances of NP (and FIT for that matter) increases significantly as soon as Catherine arrives at Northanger Abbey at the end of Chapter 20. Her arrival marks the commencement of the climax of the story: although crucial events have happened in Bath, it is in the Abbey where the events that will finally lead to self-discovery and happiness take place. The Abbey is the scenario for Catherine’s explorations, observations and self-deceptions with regard to Gothic romances; it is the place where her friendship with Eleanor becomes established and Henry’s affection for her can be suspected by the reader; it is also the place which will reveal the true character of General Tilney. These chapters (21-25) contain between 9 and 16 passages; in fact throughout these chapters there is an instance of NP (and FIT) practically in every paragraph, which contrasts greatly with the earlier part of the book and supports the argument that these techniques are reserved for specific episodes and used for certain narrative purposes, especially in order to increase the rhythm and emotional impact of the representation.

More specifically, what distinguishes NP in these later chapters is the fact that it is much more often combined with FIT (NP-FIT), and that it has the narrative function of introducing deluded perceptions, which sometimes convey ambiguity and sometimes irony. As shown in Table 7 above, instances of NP-FIT in this novel amount to 19% (17 instances, with a relative frequency of [2.2]), a high figure which contrasts significantly with 9% ([0.4]) in *SS* and 4% ([0.4]) in *PP*. This indicates that reflective perceptions, in which sensory information and thoughts overlap with each other, are more typical of Catherine than of Elinor and Elizabeth:

1. 1 [PN: NI] The windows, to which she looked with peculiar dependence, [PN: PERCEPTION] from having heard the General talk of his preserving them in their Gothic form with reverential care, [PN: NI] were yet less what her fancy had portrayed. 2 [NP-FIT] To be sure, the pointed arch was preserved—the form of them was Gothic—they might be even casements—but every pane was so large, so clear, so light! 3 [PN: NRSA] To an imagination which had hoped for the smallest divisions, and the heaviest stone-work, for painted glass, dirt and cobwebs, [PN: NI] the difference was very distressing.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 153)

Catherine is bent on finding traces of the Abbey’s past aspect and history. Everything she observes is therefore evaluated against this background. Here, she is disappointed to find that the windows have a more modern look than she had anticipated. After the perception indicator ‘looked’ in sentence 1, sentence 2 is a mixture of thought and perception (NP-FIT), with markers of verbal consciousness such as ‘To be sure’ and a conjecture or concession (‘they might be even casements’), as well as the use of dashes, repetition and an exclamation mark to signal figural consciousness (‘the pointed arch was preserved—the form of them was Gothic’ and ‘so large, so clear, so light!’). Note also that the narrator stresses Catherine’s ‘fancy’ in the first sentence and her ‘imagination’ in the last sentence (PN). The vivid imaginations of Catherine and Emma render these two Austen heroines similar, and explain why NP is also similar in both novels, as discussed later in this section and in Chapter 6.

Chapters 21 and 24 stand out from other chapters in containing the highest number of instances of NP in the whole novel (16 and 12 respectively). Catherine explores the Abbey, both with the members of the Tilney family and on her own, and all of her perceptions are permeated with a desire to have similar Gothic experiences to those she has read about in romances and sentimental novels. She feels and perceives as she thinks a heroine ought to. In Chapter 21, she investigates her room and sets out to open a black cabinet which attracts her fancy irresistibly:

1. 1 [N] The night was stormy; the wind had been rising at intervals the whole afternoon; and by the time the party broke up, it blew and rained violently. 2 Catherine, as she crossed the hall, listened to the tempest [PN: NI] with sensations of awe; [PN: PERCEPTION] and, when she heard it rage round a corner of the ancient building and close with sudden fury a distant door, [PN: IT] felt for the first time that she was really in an Abbey. 3 [NP-FIT]—Yes, these were characteristic sounds;—[PN: NRTA] they brought to her recollection a countless variety of dreadful situations and horrid scenes, which such buildings had witnessed, and such storms ushered in.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 158)

NP is preceded by PN representing a perception (‘she heard it rage’), which acts as a perception indicator. It is once again combined with FIT: the affirmative interjection ‘Yes’ confers to the underlined clause the appearance of a conscious, verbalised thought, based on a concomitant auditory perception. Catherine perceives the sounds of the storm as ‘characteristic’ of an abbey, which reveals a mind furnished with Gothic adventures. Once she is upstairs in her room, her perceptions focus not on random objects but on those objects which may supply her imagination with signs of alarm: ‘1 [N] She looked round the room. 2 [NP] The window curtains seemed in motion. 3 [FIT] It could be nothing but the violence of the wind penetrating through the divisions of the shutters’ (Austen 2003 [1818]: 159). Here, NP and FIT seem ironically to underline both Catherine’s fears and her delight in her Gothic delusions. This is another instance of perception which can be explained in reference to appraisal theory. At one point she ‘was struck by the appearance of a high, old-fashioned black cabinet’ in her room, which Henry had told her she would find it difficult to discover:

1. 1 [N] She took her candle and looked closely at the cabinet. 2 [NP] It was not absolutely ebony and gold; but it was Japan, black and yellow Japan of the handsomest kind;[N] and as she held her candle, [NP] the yellow had very much the effect of gold. 3 The key was in the door, [FIT] and she had a strange fancy to look into it; not however with the smallest expectation of finding any thing, but it was so very odd, after what Henry had said. 4 [N] In short, she could not sleep till she had examined it.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 159-160)

NP not only presents visual perceptions of the aspect of the cabinet, but also Catherine’s recognition and evaluation of its materials and light effects. This strong evaluative component renders perception close to thought, and in fact NP is once again is alternated with FIT, which is ironic in presenting Catherine’s motivations (‘not, however, with the smallest expectation of finding anything’). These perceptions are followed in subsequent paragraphs by other visual and tactile perceptions of the cabinet: ‘1 [PN: NI] With a cheek flushed by hope, and an eye straining with curiosity, [N] her fingers grasped the handle of a drawer and drew it forth. 2 [NP] It was entirely empty. 3 [PN: NI] With less alarm and greater eagerness [N] she seized a second, a third, a fourth; [NP] each was equally empty’ (Austen 2003 [1818]: 160). Eventually she finds a manuscript. As she is about to read it, however, she accidentally blows her candle and has to return into bed. The last paragraph of Chapter 21 portrays her strong feelings of fear and apprehension, and once again NP continues to be used simultaneously to describe her perceptions and the fictional world:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Till she had made herself mistress of its contents, however, she could have neither repose nor comfort; and with the sun’s first rays she was determined to peruse it. 2 [NP: AWARENESS] But many were the tedious hours which must yet intervene. 3 [N] She shuddered, tossed about in her bed, [PN: NI] and envied every quiet sleeper. 4 [N] The storm still raged, [PN: PERCEPTION] and various were the noises, more terrific even than the wind, which struck at intervals on her startled ear. 5 [NP] The very curtains of her bed seemed at one moment in motion, and at another the lock of her door was agitated, as if by the attempt of somebody to enter. 6 Hollow murmurs seemed to creep along the gallery, [N] and more than once her blood was chilled by the sound of distant moans. 7 [AMBIGUOUS N/NP: AWARENESS] Hour after hour passed away, [PN: PERCEPTION] and the wearied Catherine had heard three proclaimed by all the clocks in the house, [N] before the tempest subsided, or she unknowingly fell fast asleep.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 162)

The first instance of NP, in sentence 2, is an example of a time perception, which expresses an implicit feeling of exasperation in the evaluation ‘tedious hours’ and the modal ‘must’. The first clause of sentence 7 is also a time perception, which however has been tagged as ambiguous as it is followed by PN containing the character’s proper name, so it can be read as either N or Catherine’s awareness of the slow passage of time. In sentence 5, different perceptions are represented: visual (‘The very curtains of her bed seemed at one moment in motion’) and aural (‘the lock of her door was agitated, as if by the attempt of somebody to enter’, ‘Hollow murmurs seemed to creep along the gallery’). The sentence has a slightly narratorial presence (‘her bed’ and ‘her door’, not the figural ‘the bed’ and ‘the door’) and so could potentially be ambiguous, especially as NP often occurs in combination with N in this passage (sentence 6). However, NP is preceded by a perception indicator (‘noises […] struck [...] on her startled ear’) and most stylistic features evoke Catherine’s consciousness: the repetition of the epistemic modal ‘seemed’, together with ‘as if’, convey her conjectures, perhaps also even doubt and anxiety about the information conveyed by her senses. The lexis and syntax equally render the subjective quality of her perceptions, which are based on fear and imagination; thus, the otherwise normal sounds of the night become ‘hollow murmurs’, and objects acquire a life and agency of their own, which is expressed by their position as the subjects of active clauses: the curtains seem in motion, the lock is agitated, murmurs creep along the gallery. ‘Creep’ in particular has a somewhat menacing undertone, as if an unknown entity advances silently and purposely towards the perceiving subject. The chapter ends as it had begun, with a raging storm, the curtains in movement and Catherine feeling an intense fear.

An important function of NP that becomes prominent in the second half of the novel is the representation of time perception. In total, 15 passages of NP rendering non-sensory forms of perception have been foundin *NA*: 7 of them represent time perceptions, such as the ones noted in the last example (‘many were the tedious hours which must yet intervene’, ‘Hour after hour passed away’), and the rest portray Catherine’s awareness of where she is, who she is with, the possibility or impossibility of doing something, and her own feelings. The abundance of instances of NP rendering time perception is in line with the many references to time that appear throughout the novel: for example, ‘Catherine found herself alone in the gallery before the clocks had ceased to strike’ (Austen 2003 [1818]: 182); ‘as they sat down near the great clock’ (2003 [1818]: 30); ‘The clock struck ten while the trunks were carrying down’ (2003 [1818]: 147). There are 27 mentions of the word ‘clock’, either as an object or as a device to express a time.

Significantly, many of these references to time are expressed through NP. Criticism has already noted the prominence of time in this novel (Molesworth 2014), which is striking as ‘events in Austen frequently relate not to clock or calendar time, but to other events such as visits, balls, dinners, parties, internal to the narrative itself’ (Ireland 1980: 206). The presence of clocks and times in *NA* is probably related to the fact that ‘clocks of one form or another abound in gothic fiction’ (Molesworth 2014: 29). Gothic time is ‘marked by exceptional precision and promptness’ and in fact ‘the hour is prized. Almost nothing occurs in the gothic without some reference to the hour of its occurrence’ (Molesworth 2014: 32, 36). Similarly, in Northanger Abbey the clocks and the ‘family hours’ (Austen 2003 [1818]: 153) are to be obeyed, and though General Tilney ‘may perform none of a gothic villain’s actual behaviors […] he performs them with all of the gothic villain’s reverence for the hour’ (Molesworth 2014: 50). As for Catherine, ‘(j)ust as the gothic plot begins with and is discovered through the clock, so in Catherine’s mind nothing significant may occur without reference to the hour’ (Molesworth 2014: 51).

Another feature of NP that has been observed in the passages from the later part of the novel is the function of representing the heroine’s biased or self-deluded perceptions, which are often based on her emotions and desires for a Gothic adventure. This feature is more characteristic of *NA* than the other two early novels. In most cases, the reader has sufficient clues to question the reliability of Catherine’s perceptions. In Example 45, for instance, although there is no reason to suppose that the curtains are not in motion, or that indeed ‘hollow murmurs’ cannot be heard (after all, it is a stormy, windy night), it is the significance Catherine gives to them that influences the reader’s interpretation. In such cases, NP is often used to show narratorial distance from the character’s perceptual perspective. The syntactic independence of NP (like that of FIT) allows the narrator to describe a perception directly without the explicit participation involved in the use of an introductory clause such as ‘she saw’. It can be argued that narratorial distance from the character is the most conspicuous function of NP in this novel. Distance can present itself as irony, but not all instances of narratorial distance are ironic in this novel. All of them, however, underline the fact that there is a certain gap between the narrator’s and Catherine’s views of the fictional reality.

In other cases, however, the narrator does not supply the reader with enough extra information to form a different opinion from the one expressed in Catherine’s perceptions, and so the effect of representing an inaccurate perception through NP may be ambiguity in terms of where the narrative is going. The clearest instances of potentially misleading NP are those connected with General Tilney, whose real character is left implied for the most part of the novel. Indeed it is not until Chapter 30 that the narrator puts in Henry’s mouth an explicit explanation of the General’s true motives and personality: ‘Under a mistaken persuasion of her [Catherine’s] possessions and claims, he had courted her acquaintance in Bath, solicited her company at Northanger, and designed her for his daughter in law. On discovering his error, to turn her from the house seemed the best’ (Austen 2003 [1818]: 228). The narrator here justifies Catherine, saying that she ‘heard enough to feel, that in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty’ (2003 [1818]: 230). Because of the obscurity surrounding the General, and despite the reader’s knowledge of Catherine’s lively imagination, her perceptions may sometimes seem to contain a degree of truth. For example, it is evident that the General has hidden motives for not allowing her to go to the apartments of his deceased wife. Similarly, he is always shown to be strict and dominant towards his children. When Catherine hears him shout at Eleanor, even though he is probably magnified in her consciousness, the reader can get an idea of what he is like:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Her agitation as they entered the great gallery was too much for any endeavour at discourse; [N] she could only look at her companion. 2 [NP] Eleanor’s countenance was dejected, yet sedate; and its composure spoke her enured to all the gloomy objects to which they were advancing. 3 Again she passed through the folding-doors, again her hand was upon the important lock, and [N] Catherine, hardly able to breathe, was turning to close the former [PN: NI] with fearful caution, when [NP] the figure, the dreaded figure of the General himself at the further end of the gallery, stood before her! 4 The name of “Eleanor” at the same moment, in his loudest tone, resounded through the building, [PN: NI] giving to his daughter the first intimation of his presence, and to Catherine terror upon terror.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 180)

Note again the occurrence of NP at a moment of great suspense and ‘agitation’. NP in this passage represents visual perceptions (‘Eleanor’s countenance was dejected, yet sedate’), tactile ones (‘again her hand was upon the important lock’) and aural ones (‘The name of “Eleanor” […] in his loudest tone, resounded through the building’). Markers of figural consciousness include evaluations which belong to Catherine’s ideas about the forbidden apartments (‘enured’, ‘gloomy objects’), repetition (‘Again, […] again’, ‘the figure, the dreaded figure’) and an exclamation mark (‘stood before her!’). Here, General Tilney is perceived as a ‘dreaded figure’ and as a loud voice, which fits in with Catherine’s awe of him but is also probably a faithful mental representation of what happens in the fictional world.

Catherine’s secret visit to the chamber of the deceased Mrs Tilney in Chapter 24 constitutes the culmination of her Gothic imaginations, and opens the door to awakening and repentance. Throughout this chapter, perception (PN, NP), thought (PN, FIT) and CN succeed one another almost seamlessly, maintaining the narrative anchored in Catherine’s point of view. Her interpretation of the events described is the only interpretation given, and may or may not be trusted by the reader. The following episode is quoted in full to show the different effects of different techniques:

1. 1 [PN: NRTA] In the course of this morning’s reflections, she came to a resolution of making her next attempt on the forbidden door alone. 2 [FIT] It would be much better in every respect that Eleanor should know nothing of the matter. 3 To involve her in the danger of a second detection, to court her into an apartment which must wring her heart, could not be the office of a friend. 4 The General’s utmost anger could not be to herself what it might be to a daughter; and, besides, she thought the examination itself would be more satisfactory if made without any companion. 5 It would be impossible to explain to Eleanor the suspicions, from which the other had, in all likelihood, been hitherto happily exempt; nor could she therefore, in *her* presence, search for those proofs of the General’s cruelty, which however they might yet have escaped discovery, she felt confident of somewhere drawing forth, in the shape of some fragmented journal, continued to the last gasp. 6 Of the way to the apartment she was now perfectly mistress; and as she wished to get it over before Henry’s return, who was expected on the morrow, [NP: AWARENESS] there was no time to be lost. 7 [NP] The day was bright, [AMBIGUOUS PN: NI/ NP: AWARENESS] her courage high; [NP + NP AWARENESS] at four o’clock, the sun was now two hours above the horizon, [FIT] and it would be only her retiring to dress half an hour earlier than usual.

8 [N] It was done; and Catherine found herself alone in the gallery before the clocks had ceased to strike. 9 [NP: AWARENESS] It was no time for thought; [N] she hurried on, slipped with the least possible noise through the folding doors, and without stopping to look or breathe, rushed forward to the one in question. 10 [NP] The lock yielded to her hand, and, luckily, with no sullen sound that could alarm a human being. 11 [N] On tip-toe she entered; [NP] the room was before her; [AMBIGUOUS N/ NP: AWARENESS] but it was some minutes before she could advance another step. 12 [PN: PERCEPTION] She beheld what fixed her to the spot and agitated every feature.—13 She saw a large, well-proportioned apartment, an handsome dimity bed, arranged as unoccupied with an housemaid’s care, a bright Bath stove, mahogany wardrobes and neatly-painted chairs, on which the warm beams of a western sun gaily poured through two sash windows! 14 [PN: NI] Catherine had expected to have her feelings worked, and worked they were. 15 Astonishment and doubt first seized them; and a shortly succeeding ray of common sense added some bitter emotions of shame. 16 [FIT] She could not be mistaken as to the room; but how grossly mistaken in every thing else!—in Miss Tilney’s meaning, in her own calculation!

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 181-182, original italics)

This passage begins with Catherine’s reflections in PN (sentence 1) and FIT (sentences 2-6), in which she decides to go exploring on her own. Sentence 6 concludes with her awareness that ‘there was no time to be lost’ (NP) and introduces further clauses of NP, representing a combination of visual perceptions and awareness of time: ‘The day was bright, her courage high; at four o’clock, the sun was now two hours above the horizon’. Note the use of the figural deictic ‘now’, and the presence once again of clock time awareness as a prompter of action, as was discussed above. The clause ‘her courage high’ (with understood verb ‘was’) is ambiguous between PN representing Catherine’s consciousness and her own awareness that she is feeling courageous. It seems plausible to consider it NP, however, since it occurs between two clauses of NP/NP representing awareness, and is surrounded by FIT too. The ensuing paragraph begins by describing Catherine’s going to the gallery in N, and continues with her awareness of the short time available and the urgency of her situation (‘It was no time for thought’). The next instance represents a combination of visual, tactile and auditory perception (‘The lock yielded to her hand, and, luckily, with no sullen sound that could alarm a human being’), and the last one presents her visual appraisal of the much-dreaded chamber (‘the room was before her’). A further instance of NP depicting Catherine’s awareness of her own immobility and its duration occurs in ‘it was some minutes before she could advance another step’, although this could also be N.

As has been noticed in other examples, NP adds rhythm and dynamism to a passage through the shortness and syntactic simplicity of its clauses and sentences. This effect is best appreciated when NP is contrasted with the syntactic length and complexity of the mental soliloquy preceding Catherine’s perceptions, in FIT; for example: ‘It would be impossible to explain to Eleanor the suspicions, from which the other had, in all likelihood, been hitherto happily exempt; nor could she therefore, in her presence, search for those proofs of the general’s cruelty, which however they might yet have escaped discovery, she felt confident of somewhere drawing forth, in the shape of some fragmented journal, continued to the last gasp’ (sentence 5). Here a long sentence comprises two main clauses (‘It would be impossible to explain to Eleanor the suspicions’ and ‘could she therefore, in her presence, search for those proofs of the general’s cruelty’), linked by the coordinator ‘nor’. These main clauses in turn contain several levels of subordination: a relative clause attached to ‘suspicions’ (‘from which the other had, in all likelihood, been hitherto happily exempt’), and a relative clause attached to ‘proofs’ (‘which […] she felt confident of’). The latter relative clause in turn contains two subordinated clauses: an adverbial clause (‘however they might yet have escaped discovery’) and a non-finite clause acting as complement of ‘of’ (‘somewhere drawing forth in the shape of some fragmented journal, continued to the last gasp’). This non-finite cause contains another non-finite clause (‘continued to the last gasp’) that functions as an apposition to ‘journal’. Compare this syntactic complexity with the generally simpler structure of NP: ‘there was no time to be lost. The day was bright, her courage high; at four o’clock, the sun was now two hours above the horizon’; ‘It was done’; ‘It was no time for thought’. These clauses are sometimes juxtaposed by means of semi-colons and in some cases even omit main verbs (‘her courage high’), economising on words even more.

The rest of the paragraph portrays Catherine’s perceptions and thoughts in PN and FIT: she is finally overcome with shame and realises ‘how grossly mistaken in everything’ she has been. It is interesting that from sentence 12 onwards, PN is used instead of NP, to portray Catherine’s view of the very room she has been longing to see for many days. Perhaps PN is preferred precisely to achieve the opposite effect of NP: that is, lack of emotion, disappointment, collectedness, neatness. These are the characteristics of Catherine’s feelings, and also of the room (‘large, well-proportioned’, ‘arranged […] with an housemaid’s care’, ‘neatly-painted chairs’). The dash that introduces PN seems to introduce this change of tone in the description. The scene presented in this passage has been considered as an evocation of Locke’s traditional metaphor for inner enlightenment (Harris 1989: 9-10). Sensory experiences, Locke argues, ‘are the Windows by which Light is let into this *dark Room*’ (1706 [1689]: II. XI. 17. 95, original italics). Here, visual perception fills the dark room of Catherine’s mind with a ‘ray of common sense’, with certainty and truth, ‘prompted by the evidence of her own eyes’ (Harris 1989: 193, 10); and the entrance of this light into her mind is presented through PN, a technique that generally conveys the authoritative report of the narrator.

The Gothic episodes of Chapters 21 and 24 have been described as ‘inflexible’, ‘uncreative’, ‘pat and single-textured; atmospherically unprepared and discontinuous with the rest of the novel; too literally a carrying-out of the Radcliffean terror episode’ (Mudrick 1952: 57). This comment shows the fact that these chapters are different from the rest of the novel. The analysis presented here demonstrates that, even if these passages could be considered ‘single-textured’, their texture is internally coherent, and different from the stylistic texture of other chapters and episodes, in its abundant use of NP and FIT. Both chapters are charged with tension and emotional intensity, depicting Catherine’s excited feelings of curiosity, pity and horror. At the end of this last adventure, her sudden encounter with Henry at the stairs makes her fully aware of her folly and implicitly announces a happy ending by suggesting that Henry really cares for her: first, when he shows concern (‘“You look pale.—I am afraid I alarmed you by running so fast up those stairs”’, Austen 2003 [1818]: 183) and then in paying her ‘rather more attention than usual’ (187) and ‘in never alluding in the slightest way to what had passed’ (189).

After this episode, NP begins to appear more scarcely. In fact, the remaining chapters (25-31) hardly contain instances. Instead, FIT is used to convey reflection, shame and repentance, in a similar style to that found in *E.* For example, in Chapter 25 (Austen 2003 [1818]: 187-189) FIT portrays Catherine’s awareness of her delusions and her doubts about the impression she may have made on Henry:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Most grievously was she humbled. 2 [N] Most bitterly did she cry. 3 [FIT] It was not only with herself that she was sunk—but with Henry. 4 Her folly, which now seemed even criminal, was all exposed to him, and he must despise her for ever. 5 The liberty which her imagination had dared to take with the character of his father, could he ever forgive it? 6 The absurdity of her curiosity and her fears, could they ever be forgotten? 7 She hated herself more than she could express.

(Austen 2003 [1818]: 187)

The similarities between this passage and the following passage from *E*, where Emma realises and repents from her mistakes, are quite evident:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Her own conduct, as well as her own heart, was before her in the same few minutes. 2 She saw it all with a clearness which had never blessed her before. 3 [FIT] How improperly had she been acting by Harriet! 4 How inconsiderate, how indelicate, how irrational, how unfeeling had been her conduct! 5 What blindness, what madness, had led her on! 6 [PN: NI] It struck her with dreadful force, and she was ready to give it every bad name in the world.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 335-336)

In both passages FIT is preceded by PN, and contains exclamations, questions and repetitions. Both passages express self-condemnation and enlightenment. Other Austen heroines are judicious, rational and pragmatic from the start, and if they ever err it is because of false information, lack of confidence or experience, or the influence of other people’s opinions. They remain essentially themselves, and are strengthened in their virtues and enlightened about themselves and others after overcoming a series of misunderstandings and distressful events. Catherine and Emma, in contrast, need to learn from their mistakes and change their behaviour and their understanding of reality more deeply.

As was mentioned earlier in this section, there are similarities between *NA* and *E* in terms of their use of NP. The episodes relating Catherine’s delusions occupy only a relatively short space within the whole novel, whereas Emma’s mistaken perceptions occupy almost the entirety of the story and are more skilfully and consistently blended with N; this means that Emma’s perceptions may be accepted more easily at face value than those of Catherine. However, in both novels NP is associated with a detached, sometimes ironic, narrator and with a character blinded by imagination. The clash between fantasy and reality, between the actual and the imagined, between what things seem at first and what they really are; the problem of who can be trusted and the influence of prejudice on our view of the world, are themes present in all of Austen’s novels, but seem especially foregrounded in the plots of *NA* (Lascelles 1939: 49; Mudrick 1952: 40) and *E*; and sensory perception plays an essential role as an important source of information from which interpretations, opinions and misunderstanding emerge.

The high number of instances of NP in *NA* and *E* as compared with the other Austen novels also suggests a connection between them. Whether NP was already present in the original manuscript of *NA* or was added at a later stage, when Jane Austen had experimented with this form in *E*, the similarities between the two novels suggest that the use and extent of NP is determined by the peculiar characteristics of their plots, which deploy suspense, ambiguity and self-delusion as important features.

**4.5 Review**

A quantification of passages of NP has revealed that *NA* contains a higher number of instances than *SS* and *PP*, and that NP in the three novels is concentrated in climactic episodes and other emotionally intense moments. The analysis shows the connection of NP with the specific characteristics of each heroine, and the relationship between heroine and narrator. *SS* is the novel that contains the least number of instances, evenly distributed throughout the text. Perception in this novel regularly takes the form of CN, which infiltrates the narrative with Elinor’s visual and evaluative viewpoint. When NP occurs at all, it is mainly when Elinor is anxious about the people she loves. This means that NP tends to be concentrated in the chapters narrating Marianne’s distress and illness, and those involving Edward directly or indirectly. What mostly characterises NP in this novel is that it is very often used to render the collective perceptions of the Dashwood mother and sisters, and to represent the perceptions of other characters besides Elinor, particularly Marianne. In contrast, NP in other novels mostly represents the consciousness of the heroine.

*PP* is quantitatively close to *NA* in terms of NP (both of them contain more NP than the late novel *MP* too, as shown in the next chapter). NP is concentrated in four specific parts of the novel, chiefly involving balls and trips, and expresses Elizabeth’s emotions, values, opinions, personality and moral judgements as well as her changing perceptions of Mr Darcy, Mr Wickham and other characters. Predominant emotions are anxiety, concern, curiosity, anger and desire for Mr Darcy’s attention and physical proximity. About a third of the instances tagged are perceptions about Mr Darcy or relate to him, including those which portray Elizabeth’s observations of the Pemberley house and grounds. In fact, the chapter relating the trip to Pemberley contains the highest number of instances of NP. This serves as textual evidence of the pre-eminence of Mr Darcy in Elizabeth’s consciousness, and demonstrates his centrality to her process of self-awareness. In all of the instances tagged, Elizabeth is also particularly observant of the people and places around her. Most instances of NP portray serious and insightful perceptions of people and places, but in a few cases it presents humorous or satirical assessments, which makes it difficult to distinguish them from the equally satirical commentaries of the narrator. Another source of ambiguity is the fact that the text of *PP* features frequent switches from Elizabeth’s point of view to that of another character, or to N. *PP* and *SS* are similar in that the narrator seems often to identify with the heroine’s point of view. The fact that they contain more ambiguous instances of NP than *NA* supports the idea of a greater alignment in narratorial and figural viewpoints.

Among Jane Austen’s early novels, *NA* is the one in which NP is most used. Besides being associated with moments of great emotional intensity and perceptual alertness, NP in *NA* has the function of representing the heroine’s biased, inaccurate or mistaken perceptions, which are based on her emotions, fears, desires and naïveté. This has a double-fold implication for point of view: in cases where the reader does not possess enough information to form a different opinion to that of Catherine, for example about the General, the effect of representing a self-deluded perception through NP is ambiguity and/or unreliability. In other cases, the truth of Catherine’s perceptions may come across as relative and ironic when the reader has sufficient clues to identify her perceptions as fanciful or mistaken.

Catherine’s perceptions play a significant role in her process of discernment of reality. In contrast, NP in *SS* does not play such a significant role in the advancement of the plot or in the creation of the theme of fantasy, but chiefly serves to foreground Elinor and Marianne’s sensory and emotional experiences at particularly dramatic moments. Although instances of NP occur during Catherine’s stay in Bath in the first half of the novel, it becomes more prominent in the second half, which narrates her stay at the Abbey, with her imagined Gothic adventures. NP in this second part is very often combined with FIT, both of which add to the intensity of the events narrated. Although all of Austen’s heroines attain knowledge of reality and self-knowledge through their social mistakes and through a readjustment of their mental schemes, it could be argued that the blunders and self-deceptions of Catherine and Emma are more pointed, more extravagant and occasionally more harmful to others than the mistakes of Elinor, Elizabeth, Fanny and Anne, especially because they are based on ‘errors of imagination’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 284). The high number of instances of NP in *NA* and *E* as compared with the other novels suggests the connection of this technique with a self-deluded character and with a distanced (sometimes ironic) narrator. The similarities between these two novels will become more apparent in the discussion presented in Chapter 6.

## ****Chapter 5****

## NP in Austen’s Late Novels

**5.0 Foreword**

*MP*, *E* and *P* are generally referred to as Jane Austen’s late novels, mature novels or Chawton novels. They were all written at Chawton Cottage (Chawton, Hampshire), where Austen spent the last years of her life. She settled there in 1809 with her mother, her sister Cassandra and a long-time family friend, Martha Lloyd. The Chawton period followed her residence in Bath and Southampton (1800-1809), a time of considerable infertility in her literary activity: she had made some revisions to the manuscript of *Susan* (later *NA*) and had begun and then abandoned *The Watsons*, but had not written any full-length novel since the completion of *First Impressions* (later *PP*) in 1797. The years she passed in Chawton, in contrast, renewed her productivity as a writer and saw the revision of her early novels and the publication of four of her six major novels: *SS* (1811), *PP* (1813), *MP* (1814, 1816) and *E* (1816). Austen died in Winchester in July 1817, before she could finish her seventh novel, *Sanditon*. *NA* and *P* were posthumously published in 1818.

This chapter initiates a discussion of NP in Jane Austen’s later novels and specifically focuses on *MP* and *P*. The other late novel, *E*, is separately discussed in Chapter 6 as an exceptional case, as it presents the highest quantity of instances of NP in Austen’s fiction and a more fully developed use of the technique. The present chapter analyses the stylistic features of NP in *MP* and *P*, arguing that the prominence of the theme of perception, and the strong presence of NP in these novels, especially in *P*, can be connected with Fanny and Anne’s exceptionally observant natures and delicate sensibilities. NP serves to foreground these qualities at those times when Fanny and Anne are particularly attentive to their environment. As was shown in Chapter 4, the stylistic features of NP are intimately linked with point of view and the narrative themes and purposes of each text. In this case NP contributes to the creation of two heroines who are placed in a privileged position as observers because of their relative marginalisation at home, and endowed with a special sensibility and empathy for others which cause them pain but also lead to self-realisation and growth. These similarities account for the grouping together of these two novels in this chapter.

However, there are also several differences between them which are reflected in passages of NP. In the first place, there are several focalisers in *MP*, whereas *P* is more consistently focalised through Anne. Secondly, although agitation is one of the defining characteristics of these heroines, Fanny has a more delicate and nervous health than Anne, who has a stronger character and maybe a more mature personality, and often has more success in overcoming sensibility. In both novels NP portrays heroines who look at the world with sympathetic eyes, but in the case of *MP* perception is usually connected with distress and anxiety, while in *P* it is more expressive of desire, memory and sadness. There is an important auditory and tactile element in both novels, but hearing is much more important in *MP*, and touch in *P*, where perceptions of the hero’s physical proximity or distance are very prominent. When Fanny is aware of other people’s presence, NP suggests a sense of being encroached upon rather than desire for proximity. The following sections discuss in more detail the similarities and differences between *MP* and *P* in terms of the features, functions and effects of NP.

**5.1 *Mansfield Park***

*MP* was written between 1811 and 1813, and first published by Thomas Egerton in 1814. It was the first of Austen’s novels that was not a revision of an earlier work. It was also the only one of her novels which reached a second edition during her lifetime. The 1816 edition, by John Murray, contained several revisions that were authorised by Jane Austen herself, and mainly concerned spelling and punctuation. Sutherland provides evidence that the distinctive punctuation of the 1814 text has a strong subjective and emotional component which is suppressed to a great extent in the corrections made to the 1816 edition (2000, 2005a: 266-313). Because of the importance of punctuation in the analysis of NP, all of the passages from *MP* quoted in this work belong to Sutherland’s 1996 edition of the novel, which is based on the 1814 text.

A quantification of passages containing NP has revealed that *MP* contains more NP than *SS* but less than *PP* and *NA*, which challenges a chronological interpretation of the data. The total number of instances found in *MP* is 122 (52 straightforward, 34 ambiguous, 36 cases of NP-FIT) in a total of 157,641 words, which yields a relative frequency of [8]. If overall *MP* has fewer instances of NP than *PP* and *NA*, however, the former contains significantly more instances of the type NP-FIT, as will be discussed presently. Table 10 below contains the full results for the early novels plus those for *MP*:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Novel** | **Straightforward NP** | **Ambiguous NP-N** | **NP-FIT** | **Total** |
| *SS* | 27 [2.3]  (50%) | 22 [1.9]  (41%) | 5 [0.4]  (9%) | 54 [4.6]~[5] (100%) |
| *PP* | 76 [6.3]  (56%) | 53 [4.4]  (40%) | 5 [0.4]  (4%) | 134 [11.1] (100%) |
| *NA* | 47 [6.2]  (54%) | 24 [3.1]  (27%) | 17 [2.2]  (19%) | 88  [11.5]~[12]  (100%) |
| *MP* | 52 [3.3]  (43%) | 34 [2.1]  (28%) | 36 [2.3]  (29%) | 122 [7.7]~[8]  (100%) |

**Table 10. Number, density and percentage of instances of NP in *SS*, *PP*, *NA* and *MP* (Figures in square brackets represent normalised figures per 10,000 words)**

Like *NA*, *MP* contains a significantly lower percentage of ambiguous cases than the early novels *SS* and *PP*. Most of the instances in *MP* tagged as potentially ambiguous feature a frequent absence of perception indicators and a very noticeable use of modality in what appears to be N, which makes N look figural. Passages that are ambiguous because of a modal (‘Miss Crawford appeared gratified by the application’, Austen 1996 [1814]: 213) are quite frequent, making up 24% of the ambiguous cases (8/34). Modality conveys the sense that actions, motives, thoughts and feelings are being judged from external evidence, as if the narrator were another character within the story. Reticence through the use of modals and figural language is widespread in *MP*, possibly more so than in other novels. As has already been discussed, ambiguity in passages of NP seems to be generally related to the degree of alignment or distance between narrator and character. This means that the results for *MP* in principle suggest a predominance of distance from Fanny; a close look at the passages tagged, however, reveals that ambiguity does not entail the same type of distance as that observed in *NA*. Distance is created by the narrator’s inserting phrases which may be beyond Fanny’s knowledge or not belong to her view of things. The following passage occurs just after she has arrived in her parents’ house in Portsmouth and has been overwhelmed by the noise:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Fanny was almost stunned. 2 The smallness of the house, and thinness of the walls, brought every thing so close to her, that, added to the fatigue of her journey, and all her recent agitation, she hardly knew how to bear it. 3 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] *Within* the room all was tranquil enough, for Susan having disappeared with the others, there were soon only her father and herself remaining; and he taking out a newspaper— [N] the accustomary loan of a neighbour, [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] applied himself to studying it, without seeming to recollect her existence. 4 The solitary candle was held between himself and the paper, without any reference to her possible convenience; [N] but she had nothing to do, [PN: NI] and was glad to have the light screened from her aching head, as she sat in bewildered, broken, sorrowful contemplation.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 317, original italics)

There is no explicit perception indicator in sentences 1 and 2, although the fact that Fanny’s consciousness is reported (‘stunned’, ‘agitation’, ‘hardly knew how to bear it’) can favour an interpretation of the remaining text as representing events through NP: the clause ‘*Within* the room all was tranquil enough’ in sentence 3 reflects what is important for Fanny in aural terms (silence), and the emphasis on the first word suggests an awareness of contrast between the noises outside and the silence inside the room, and perhaps also an implicit feeling of relief. Secondly, in ‘there were soon only her father and herself remaining’ the use of a reflexive pronoun may indicate a figural perspective (Dry 1977). The modal ‘seem’ also suggests Fanny’s visual perception of her father (‘without seeming to recollect her existence’). However, there are various features in this passage which point to the narrator’s discourse: for one, Fanny cannot know that the newspaper is ‘the accustomary loan of a neighbour’ since she has just arrived; secondly, does she perceive in sentence 4 that the ‘solitary candle was held between himself and the paper, without any reference to her possible convenience’? Surely she is seeing the scene described; and yet she is not used to thinking about her own convenience, to having ‘her pleasure consulted’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 232), but rather to yielding to other people’s preferences. Sentences 3 and 4 are quite long and complex, too, in contrast with the shortness and simpler syntax that generally characterises passages of NP in Austen.

Given this combination of narratorial and figural features, it can be argued that in such passages there is indeed a lesser alignment of perspectives, in the sense that the narrator interferes and does not conform to Fanny’s perception alone, but introduces further information which may not be in Fanny’s consciousness, perhaps for the reader’s sake. The potential distance between the narrator and Fanny is even more evident when humour and irony are used; characteristics which are not typical of the serious personality of this heroine:

1. 1 [N] Fanny could hardly have kept her seat any longer, or have refrained from at least trying to get away [from Henry Crawford] [PN: NI] in spite of all the too public opposition she foresaw to it, [N] had it not been for [CN: PERCEPTION] the sound of approaching relief, [PN: NI] the very sound which she had been long watching for, and long thinking strangely delayed.

2 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] The solemn procession, headed by Baddely, of tea-board, urn, and cake-bearers, made its appearance, [PN: NI] and delivered her from a grievous imprisonment of body and mind.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 284)

The wording of the second paragraph, describing the appearance of the servants as a ‘solemn procession’ (and thus possibly comparing this event with a religious procession) seems unmistakably the narrator’s, and perhaps adds a touch of humour to an otherwise commonplace event. The fact that Fanny is anxiously waiting for this event and is ‘delivered’ from Henry when it takes place may also add to the religious undertone and the humour of the scene: tea time here acquires a redemptive power, freeing Fanny from the ‘imprisonment of body and mind’ which she usually experiences in Henry’s presence. It is clear from the context that she is watching the entrance of the servants, especially because she is described in the first paragraph as looking out for ‘the sound of approaching relief’ (CN), a description which acts as a perception indicator and colours the subsequent paragraph with her feelings (of relief). Overall, however, the scene seems to be described primarily from the narrator’s viewpoint.

In terms of point of view, there usually is no conflict between narrator and Fanny, however. The narrator does not show distance from her in the same way that the narrator of *NA* does from Catherine; that is, the narrator does not necessarily imply that Fanny is self-deceived. Although she is pointed out to be mistaken on a few occasions (‘Not considering in how different a circle she had been just seeing him [Henry], nor how much might be owing to contrast, she was quite persuaded of his being astonishingly more gentle, and regardful of others, than formerly’, Austen 1996 [1814]: 342), the narrator usually backs up her point of view and even shows compassion for her (‘Poor Fanny!’, Austen 1996 [1814]: 309). The contrast between the ironic, satirical voice of the narrator and the seriousness of the heroine also makes it easier to distinguish viewpoints in this narrative, and may explain why there is less ambiguity in this novel as far as NP is concerned.

It can be argued that the personality and circumstances of Fanny lend themselves well to the foregrounding of sensory perception through NP*.* To begin with, she is an observant, caring and empathetic character who constantly notices the comings and goings of the other characters. She often observes Edmund ‘with never-failing solicitude’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 368), ‘with silent, but most tender concern’ (377), and with eyes ‘fixed’ on him (375). Her ‘ill opinion’ of Henry Crawford is ‘founded chiefly on observations’ of his behaviour over time (262). In all of these instances, Fanny is in a state of sensory alertness (observing, listening attentively) and her attention is heightened by feelings of alarm and/or concern. Her isolated position within her family also encourages observation of others. Both she and Anne have been described as Cinderella types (Simpson 1987; Rowen 1995: 29-36) because of their diminished social status and because they are generally overlooked and taken for granted by those around them. The Cinderella theme, Harding argues, runs through all of the novels to some extent, but is especially pronounced in *MP* and *P* (1998: 16, 23). Fanny is removed from her family as a little girl to go and live at her uncle’s house, where she is marginalised on account of her humbler background: her cousins Maria and Julia look down on her and exclude her from their lives; Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram love her in their respective ways, but she is afraid of her uncle for most of the narrative, and her aunt’s affection is mainly expressed in a desire to have her assistance and company. Her aunt Norris constantly puts her down and reminds her of her inferior social position: ‘“I shall think her a very obstinate, ungrateful girl, if she does not do what her Aunt, and Cousins wish her—very ungrateful indeed, considering who and what she is”’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 123). Although she has a close, loving relationship with Edmund, she is overlooked by him when Mary enters his life. Her visit to her parents in Portsmouth reveals to her that she is not loved by them either, especially by the mother, who ‘had neither leisure nor affection to bestow on Fanny’ (1996 [1814]: 323).

For these reasons, and despite being the heroine of *MP*, Fanny can be considered to be an outsider for most of the narrative. In fact it is not until Chapter 7 that her perceptions are at all represented through NP, whereas the perceptions of Edward, the Miss Bertrams, Mrs Grant and Henry Crawford occur earlier on. Her role in the action is chiefly passive: she is always in the shadow and her opinion and welfare are seldom taken into account. This circumstance renders her different from the other Austen heroines, who can be said to have a more active role in their respective narratives. Only at the ball given in her honour (Chapters 26-28) and later on during her stay in Portsmouth (Chapters 38-46) does she start to receive other people’s attention and to become an active part of her own story. For example, she begins to rent books for the first time, and sets about educating her younger sister Susan: ‘She became a subscriber— amazed at being anything *in propria persona*, amazed at her own doings in every way; to be a renter, a chuser of books! And to be having any one’s improvement in view in her choice!’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 330, original italics). For the first time she gets to choose and take the initiative, and this surprises and pleases her.

Until this change takes place, however, Fanny stays at the margins of the action, observing and evaluating it. She seems to be aware of her status as an outside observer when, at the end of the novel, in reference to the project to act a play, she tells Edmund ‘“As a by-stander,” said Fanny, “perhaps I saw more than you did”’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 290). She is aware of things which other characters do not seem to see. For example, she ‘saw and pitied much of this [the effect of Henry Crawford’s double-dealing] in Julia’, while the ‘inattention of the two brothers and the aunt, to Julia’s discomposure, and their blindness to its true cause, must be imputed to the fullness of their own minds’ (1996 [1814]: 135). In spite of her penetration, however, Fanny is for the most part of the novel unable to share her perceptions and evaluations with others (Belton 1988: 56), especially with her ‘usual confidant’ Edmund (Austen 1996 [1814]: 97); his infatuation with Mary partially blinds him to the faults of the Crawfords, the inappropriate behaviour of Maria and his own inconsistency when he eventually agrees to take part in the play.

Fanny is also different from other heroines in her particularly sensitive, vulnerable and nervous constitution. As was discussed in Chapter 3, a sensitive body was considered in the eighteenth century to account for a heightened sensory perceptiveness. A person’s special sensibility was expressed through metaphors which were mostly related to the heart and the nerves, such as ‘vibrations, impressions, pulses, fibres, motions of the heart and heartstrings’ (Van Sant 1993: 9). For example, Fanny feels Mary Crawford’s words ‘all over her, in all her pulses, and all her nerves’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 296). During the preparations for the play, she has many ‘uncomfortable, anxious, apprehensive feelings’ (137), and after Tom pressures her to take part, ‘she went to bed full of it, her nerves still agitated by the shock of such an attack’ (125). She is nervous even when she is happy: ‘It was long before Fanny could recover from the agitating happiness of such an hour’ (194-195). The fact that she is capable of such ‘exquisite feeling’ (194) renders her special. As was discussed in Chapter 3, however, sensibility potentially posed disadvantages as well, because it often affected one’s health, and Fanny suffers from this: she gets a headache after spending some time picking up roses in the sun, ‘standing and stooping’, walking to her aunt Norris’s house twice, and especially because her mind and body come together: the ‘state of her spirits had probably had its share in her indisposition; for she had been feeling neglected, and been struggling against discontent and envy for some days past. As she leant on the sofa, to which she had retreated that she might not be seen, the pain of her mind had been much beyond that in her head’. (61). Fanny is acknowledged by Edmund to be less strong than others (page). She needs to go to bed early after her first ball, ‘feverish with hopes and fears, soup and negus, sore-footed and fatigued, restless and agitated’ (232); and her health is damaged while living in Portsmouth owing to lack of exercise, bad air and ‘incessant noise’, which ‘was to a frame and temper, delicate and nervous like Fanny’s, an evil’ (325).

The passages analysed in this section illustrate in more detail the connections between NP and sensibility. NP in *MP* follows the same pattern of occurrence that has been noted in the early novels, inasmuch as it tends to be associated with climactic episodes and chapters. More particularly, the technique invariably occurs when Fanny is intently watching something or someone; in most of these cases, acute emotions are involved as well. NP thus serves to foreground both perceptions and emotions. Passages containing NP are concentrated in five chapters or clusters of chapters: Chapter 10 (6 instances), which narrates the trip to Sotherton; Chapters 26-28 (5 instances each), which concern the ball at Mansfield Park; Chapters 31 and 32 (5 and 6 instances respectively), which focus on Henry Crawford’s marriage proposal; a very stressful event for Fanny. Here NP also occurs during the dreadful conversation she has with her uncle, in which she experiences very painful emotions. Chapter 34 (9 instances) is one of the most prolific chapters, narrating Edmund’s return to Mansfield Park after having been ordained. In this chapter both Fanny’s and Edmund’s perceptions are represented (3 and 6 instances respectively). Finally, the chapters narrating Fanny’s stay in Portsmouth (38-46) contain the highest number of instances of NP in the novel, with Chapter 38 concentrating most of them (9). NP portrays Fanny’s observations of her home in Portsmouth, and reflects painful emotions (neglect, sadness, disappointment) but also personal growth as she has experiences which are new to her, such as the realisation that Mansfield Park is her true home (Austen 1996 [1814]: 355).

What particularly distinguishes NP in this novel is its connection with emotions and sensations which can be described as uncomfortable or painful for Fanny in some way. A significant 38% of her perceptions (32/85) suggest some type of painful emotion. This feature of NP finds its echo in the narrator’s reference to Fanny on one occasion as a solitary sufferer (Austen 1996 [1814]: 135). She is a caring and empathetic character who is often pained by the sufferings and blunders of others. Through her sensory perceptions the reader may infer that she is experiencing nervousness, distress, concern, dislike, disapprobation, jealousy, neglect, sadness, a sense of inferiority or inadequacy, disappointment, guilt, nostalgia, anger, fear, loneliness, or a combination of these. As the analyses in this section suggest, however, Fanny may not always necessarily be aware of her feelings; at times she may deny or disguise them, or even displace them on to objects. Sadness and empathy are often evinced from passages where she observes a distressed Edmund:

1. 1 [N] She looked at him, [NP] but he was leaning back [in the seat of the carriage], sunk in a deeper gloom than ever, and with eyes closed[FIT]as if the view of cheerfulness oppressed him, and the lovely scenes of home must be shut out.

2 [PN: NI] It made her melancholy again; and the knowledge of what must be enduring there, [CN: PERCEPTION] invested even the house, modern, airy, and well situated as it was, with a melancholy aspect.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 369)

The perception indicator ‘looked at him’ in sentence 1 introduces a description of Edmund that portrays both Fanny’s perceptions (NP) and thoughts (FIT) in the same sentence. The past continuous aspect (‘was leaning back’) is used to signal figural perspective. As in other examples, the feelings implicit in NP are explicitly reported in a neighbouring sentence of PN (‘made her melancholy’ in sentence 2), and in this case feelings are projected on to the house as well (‘melancholy aspect’).

Fanny’s perceptions often enable her to experience the same feelings as the perceived object. As was discussed in Chapter 3, this is what Hume terms ‘sympathy’ in his *Treatise* (1739). The perception of a feeling in another who is seen as similar to ourselves in some way can trigger a like sensation in us. This occurs in the passage from Sterne analysed in Chapter 3, in which Yorick observes Maria and feels pity for her. Even Henry Crawford gets Fanny’s compassion when he is perceived to have feelings and values similar to hers. As he is about to leave Mansfield Park, she realises that he is capable of genuine sadness: ‘1 [N] Henry Crawford came and sat some time with them; [PN: NI] and her spirits not being previously in the strongest state, her heart was softened for a while towards him—because [NP-FIT] he really seemed to feel.—3 Quite unlike his usual self, he scarcely said any thing. 4 He was evidently oppressed, [PN: NI] and Fanny must grieve for him’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 302). He looks different to her; she perceives his silence (aural perception) and reflects on it (NP-FIT), evaluating him as ‘evidently’ not his usual self. All of this indicates to her that he regrets having to go (‘seemed to feel’), and so she feels sorry for him.

Henry features prominently in Fanny’s perceptions as expressed through NP: in fact he is the person she perceives the most (17 instances, 20% of the total instances of NP rendering her perceptions), followed by Edmund (12), Mary (7) and Sir Thomas (6). As Fanny and Henry walk together by the sea in Portsmouth, she realises one more point in common between them: ‘considering he was not Edmund, Fanny could not but allow that he was sufficiently open to the charms of nature, and very well able to express his admiration’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 339). In spite of these allowances, however, for the most part of the narrative her feelings towards him are those of dislike and disapprobation. She distrusts him from the beginning, and continues to feel uneasy in his presence even when her feelings for him have been softened by his attentions, and by her perception of their having similar feelings and tastes. Accordingly, NP in *MP* is overall very often associated with her discomfort when Henry is around. The following example conveys her sense of being encroached upon by his close physical proximity and unwelcome attentions. The passage belongs to the third cluster of chapters where NP is prominent (Chapters 31 and 32), which concern Henry’s marriage proposal and present a very anxious and upset Fanny:

1. 1 [PN: NI] She tried to get the better of it, tried very hard as the dinner hour approached, to feel and appear as usual; [N] but it was quite impossible for her not to look most shy and uncomfortable when their visitor [Henry] entered the room. 2 [PN: IT] She could not have supposed it in the power of any concurrence of circumstances to give her so many painful sensations on the first day of hearing of William’s promotion.

3 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] Mr. Crawford was not only in the room; he was soon close to her. 4 [AMBIGUOUS N/FIS] He had a note to deliver from his sister. 5 [N] Fanny could not look at him, but [NP] there was no consciousness of past folly in his voice. 6 [N] She opened her note immediately, [PN: IT] glad to have any thing to do, and happy, as she read it, to feel that the fidgettings of her aunt Norris, who was also to dine there, screened her a little from view.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 250)

The first paragraph describes Fanny’s feelings when Henry enters the room (‘shy’, ‘uncomfortable’, ‘painful sensations’). After a paragraph break, sentence 3 is ambiguous between N and NP, as there is not an explicit perception indicator anywhere; hence it could be read as the narrator’s description of Henry’s presence in and movement across the room. However, it is also possible to read it as NP, or as CN evoking Fanny’s perception of him as he approaches her. A figural reading is possible because the previous paragraph represents her consciousness. In addition, the stylistic features of the sentence seem to evoke figural subjectivity, if only subtly: the way Henry is described is not exactly neutral, but has a certain emotional undertone that is semantically related to the feelings of shyness and discomfort expressed in sentence 1. The narrator could have chosen to use an objective statement such as ‘Mr. Crawford approached her’. Instead, Henry is presented as ‘not only’ being in the room, but also ‘soon close to her’. The adverbial ‘soon’ perhaps evokes movement, and the expressive emphasis on his physical proximity reinforces the sense of Fanny’s uneasiness and her feelings of being suddenly encroached upon. The semi-colon in sentence 3 similarly suggests emphasis, and hence figural subjectivity.

The underlined clause of sentence 5, ‘there was no consciousness of past folly in his voice’ follows on from N (‘Fanny could not look at him’), and therefore could be considered N as well. However, it is best read as Fanny’s aural perception: since she is not looking at Henry, she can only listen to him and guess his feelings by evaluating the tone of his voice. This is similar to those instances observed in *PP* where Elizabeth evaluates Mr Darcy’s feelings from his voice alone. Fanny’s conclusion is that Henry’s voice betrays no regret, embarrassment or uneasiness about what she considers his ‘past folly’, that is, his behaviour towards Maria and Julia. Because the reader knows her moral uprightness and attitude towards Henry, it is possible for him/her to sense an implicit feeling of indignation or anger in the perception. In contrast with other passages, Fanny’s emotions are not openly expressed in a neighbouring clause or sentence of PN or FIT, but are implicit in NP alone.

Instances of awareness usually refer to Henry too. They often render Fanny’s relief when she escapes a situation that makes her uncomfortable. Out of the 20 passages portraying non-sensory awareness which have been tagged, 18 are attributed to Fanny, 1 to Henry and 1 to Tom Bertram. Of the 18 rendering Fanny’s consciousness, 6 represent relief and self-reassurance, 5 her perception of time and 7 represent various other types of awareness (where she is, what needs to be done or said, what she has just done). Immediately after the passage quoted above about the ‘solemn procession’ of the servants (Example 51), ‘1 [NP] Mr. Crawford was obliged to move. 2 [NP: AWARENESS] She was at liberty, she was busy, she was protected’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 284). She visually perceives Henry’s movement in the first sentence, and the physical distance between them makes her aware of how free, safe and comfortable she feels again in sentence 2. This sentence seems to combine an awareness of both bodily situation (physical distance from Henry, engagement with the tea things) and the feelings associated with it. It is possible to read sentence 2 as rendering a thought (FIT) if we assume Fanny is telling herself how she feels, although the sentence sounds semantically more plausible as a rendition of a general sense of relief and busyness rather than a conscious, verbalised self-address. In any case, as was noted at the end of 2.2, most instances of self-awareness have been included in the counting of passages as they are usually of the type NP-FIT.

A similar passage occurs when Fanny returns to Mansfield after having stayed in Portsmouth for what seems to her an eternity: she ‘1 [PN: NI] had sources of delight that must force their way. 2 [NP: AWARENESS] She was returned to Mansfield Park, she was useful, she was beloved; she was safe from Mr. Crawford’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 380). Note in both this and the previous passage the repetition of the structure ‘she was’, which perhaps conveys self-reassurance, and implicit feelings or relief and protection. On another occasion she is eager to avoid Mary Crawford because she thinks Mary is going to rebuke her if they happen to be alone. However, ‘1 [N] She [Fanny] succeeded. 2 [NP: AWARENESS] She was safe in the Breakfast-room with her Aunt, when Miss Crawford did come’ (1996 [1814]: 295-296). Mary eventually contrives to speak to Fanny alone, but does not rebuke her. At the end of the visit, she is relieved once again: ‘1 [NP: AWARENESS] It was over,and she had escaped without reproaches and without detection’ (1996 [1814]: 302). Like other instances of NP analysed so far, these passages conveying non-physical perceptions of relief are connected with pain and discomfort of some sort, because they imply a previous state of alarm and distress, and may be argued to evoke conscious thought as well.

As occurs in all of Austen’s novels, most instances of NP in *MP* are purely visual, comprising just above half of the total instances (62/122, 51%). Instances that present a mixture of visual and aural are also very common (38/122, 31%), which, added to the 19 instances of purely aural perception (15%) and the 2 that render a variety of perceptions (2%) indicates a strong aural component in this novel (48% of the total, almost half of the passages):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nove**  **l** | **Visual** | **Aural** | **Tactile** | **Visual and aural** | **Visual, aural and tactile** | **Position in space / distance from others** | **Imaginary** | **Awareness of self** | **T**  **o**  **t**  **a**  **l** |
| *SS* | 30 (56%) | 5  (9%) | 3  (5%) | 16 (30%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 |
| *PP* | 76 (56%) | 21 (16%) | 0 | 29 (22%) | 0 | 8  (6%) | 0 | 0 | 134 |
| *NA* | 55 (63%) | 8  (9%) | 0 | 15 (17%) | 9 (10%) | 0 | 1 (1%) |  | 88 |
| *MP* | 62 (51%) | 19 (15%) | 0 | 38 (31%) | 2  (2%) | 0 | 1 (1%) |  | 122 |

**Table 11. Types of perception in *SS*, *PP*, *NA* and *MP***

When compared with other novels, the importance of aural perception in *MP* becomes even more evident (39% in *SS*;38% in *PP*; 36% in *NA* and 34% in *P*); it is only surpassed in *E* (49%). This shows that Fanny is very much aware of and sensitive to other people’s words and tones, especially the pitch and volume of their voices: many of these instances occur when she is with her family in Portsmouth, where she feels overwhelmed by the constant noise: ‘1 [NP] Whatever was wanted, was halloo’d for, and the servants halloo’d out their excuses from the kitchen. 2 The doors were in constant banging, the stairs were never at rest, nothing was done without a clatter, nobody sat still, and nobody could command attention when they spoke’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 325). A few instances of aural perception have already been analysed: ‘*Within* the room all was tranquil enough’; ‘Quite unlike his usual self, he scarcely said anything’; ‘there was no consciousness of past folly in his voice’. Fanny is attentive to what others say and how they say it (especially Edmund and Henry) in an attempt to discover their meaning and feelings. In the following instance, aural perception conveys, once again, distress connected with Henry:

1. 1 [PN: NI] She was distressed whenever Mr. Crawford spoke to her, and [NP-FIT] he spoke to her much too often; and she was afraid there was a something in his voice and manner in addressing her, very different from what they were when he talked to the others. 2 [PN: NI] Her comfort in that day’s dinner was quite destroyed; [N] she could hardly eat any thing.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 250-251)

Here, Fanny’s aural perception is signalled by the indefinite ‘a something’ (Fludernik 1993: 306) and again refers to speech, voice and tone. The importance of aural perception in this novel underlines Fanny’s exceptional sensitiveness. In fact, aural NP contributes to realise one of Fanny’s attributes, mentioned several times in the narrative, namely, her being a great listener: the narrator explains that ‘Fanny, being always a very courteous listener, and often the only listener at hand, came in for the complaints and the distresses of most of them’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 136); and Edmund, after having parted from Mary forever, is in great need of an empathetic ear: ‘“Let me talk to you a little. You are a kind, kind listener”’ (1996 [1814]: 222). Even Fanny herself seems to be aware that listening is one of her strengths: ‘“If you only want me as a listener, cousin, I will be as useful as I can; but I am not qualified for an adviser. Do not ask advice of *me*. I am not competent”’ (1996 [1814]: 222, original italics).

Although Fanny is the main focaliser of the narrative as far as NP is concerned, other characters’ perceptions also feature in passages of NP. Some critics regard *MP* as one of the Austen narratives in which the minds of various characters are regularly accessed (Nelles 2006: 129, n. 5). This seems to be true in the case of NP at least: of the total 122 instances tagged, only 85 (70%) are Fanny’s perceptions, while the remaining 37 (30%) portray the perceptions of several other characters, the most important being Henry Crawford (8 instances), Edmund (8 instances) and Sir Thomas (8 instances). There are also 6 instances of collective perception (5%) with different characters, but since they are not always the same characters, this cannot be considered a feature of NP in this novel. Table 12 represents the percentage of cases of NP attributed to each character:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **No. of instances of NP** | **Percentage** |
| Fanny | 85 | 70% |
| Henry Crawford | 8 | 7% |
| Sir Thomas | 8 | 7% |
| Edmund | 8 | 7% |
| Mary Crawford | 3 | 2% |
| Julia | 2 | 1% |
| Mrs Grant | 1 | 1% |
| Tom | 1 | 1% |
| Collective (various groups) | 6 | 4% |
| TOTAL | 122 | 100% |

**Table 12. Subject of perception (heroine/other characters) in *MP***

The presence of various focalisers in *MP* renders it different from *P*, as discussed in 5.2, where Anne’s perceptions comprise almost the totality of instances of NP (97%). This renders *MP* similar to *SS*, which offers two different perspectives, those of Elinor and Marianne. Here, the perceptions of several characters other than Fanny provide different viewpoints about the same fictional world, and about Fanny, too.

Henry’s consciousness in particular is explored quite extensively for an Austen anti-hero. This may be because he is in fact a potential hero, complex and changing, and the reader needs access to his inner world if any empathy for him is to be created (Belton 1988: 56-57). Indeed he is described by the narrator as having ‘moral taste enough to value’ Fanny’s virtues (Austen 1996 [1814]: 196), which suggests the possibility of his being influenced and transformed. The main emotional aspect of his perceptions in NP is his solicitude and growing love for Fanny, but these perceptions are also influenced by his own sense of superiority over her and what he thinks about her. This means that, as happens with other characters, perception is all about him and his wishes:

1. 1 [PN: NI] She had a few tender reveries now and then, [N] which he [Henry] could sometimes take advantage of, to look in her face without detection; and the result of these looks was, that [NP-FIT] though as bewitching as ever, her face was less blooming than it ought to be.—2 [FIT] She *said* she was very well, and did not like to be supposed otherwise; but take it all in all, he was convinced that her present residence could not be comfortable, and, therefore, could not be salutary for her, [PN: NI] and he was growing anxious for her being again at Mansfield, where her own happiness, and his in seeing her, must be so much greater.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 339, original italics)

This passage is from Chapter 42, which contains 4 instances of Henry’s perceptions. The underlined segment simultaneously expresses a visual appraisal (‘her face was less blooming’) and a thought (‘ought to be’ is a modal expression of desirability or advisability). This leads into a more extensive representation of his thoughts in the subsequent sentence (FIT and PN). Both sentences convey Henry’s concern for Fanny, and reveal that he is in love with her, but also that he is concerned about himself: it is easier for him to see her in Mansfield Park, where he can talk to her more openly, and indeed on one occasion he resents the presence of Susan (‘he could have wished her sister away’, Austen 1996 [1814]: 335). In this passage, his perception of her face and general appearance reveals that he feels a sense of duty towards her and the need to look after her, which perhaps reveals the vulnerability of Fanny in his eyes.

As shown in Table 10, of the 122 straightforward cases of NP in *MP*, 36 have been tagged as NP-FIT (29%, with a relative frequency of [2.3]), a significantly higher figure than those for the early novels (9%, [0.4] in *SS*; 4%, [0.4] in *PP*; 19%, [2.2] in *NA*) and even *E* (26%, [4]). The novel containing the most instances of this type is *P*, with 35% of the total ([4.4]), as discussed later on in this chapter; *MP* comes second. This fact reveals that Fanny often reflects while she perceives: most of these instances involve her thoughts about the people she is observing. In the following passage, her perception of Henry’s carelessness and dishonesty towards Maria and Julia suggests anger:

1. 1 [PN: NI] Her two absent cousins, especially Maria, were much in her thoughts [PN: PERCEPTION] on seeing him; [NP-FIT] but no embarrassing remembrance affected *his* spirits. 2 [FIT] Here he was again on the same ground where all had passed before, and [NP-FIT] apparently as willing to stay and be happy without the Miss Bertrams, [FIT] as if he had never known Mansfield in any other state. 3 [PN: PERCEPTION] She heard them spoken of by him only in a general way [CN: PERCEPTION] till they were all re-assembled in the drawing-room, when Edmund being engagedapart in some matter of businesswith Dr. Grant, which seemed entirely to engross them*,* and Mrs. Grant occupied at the tea-table,[NRSA] he began talking of them with more particularity to his other sister [Mary]. 4 [CN: PERCEPTION] With a significant smile, [PN: NI] which made Fanny quite hate him, [N] he said, [DS] “So! Rushworth and his fair bride are at Brighton I understand—Happy man!”

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 186-187 original italics)

Sentence 1 announces Fanny’s perceptions by means of a perception indicator (‘on seeing him’). The rest of sentence 1 and the whole of sentence 2 present a series of reflections based on her visual perceptions: the clause ‘but no embarrassing remembrance affected *his* spirits’ is a mental conclusion about Henry’s feelings, implicitly based on his outward behaviour and appearance (facial expression, bodily gestures, manner of speaking). Sentence 2 is mostly FIT, expressing a complaint which Fanny could have mentally verbalised (‘Here he was again on the same ground where all had passed before […] as if he had never known Mansfield in any other state’). This complaint contains an indirect allusion to the way she perceives his behaviour in visual and aural terms (‘apparently as willing to stay and be happy without the Miss Bertrams’), which conveys indignation and disapprobation (‘She heard them spoken of by him only in a general way’). Finally, sentences 3 and 4 have been tagged as CN as they feature several expressions which evoke visual and aural perceptions: the adverbial ‘apart’ is deictically anchored in Fanny’s spatial position in the room; the indefinite adjective in ‘some matter of business’ may suggest her indistinct hearing of the conversation between Edmund and Dr Grant; the epistemic modal in ‘seemed entirely to engross them’ evokes conjecture based on the observation of the two men; and Henry’s smile is ‘significant’ only to Fanny, who knows his past flirtations with Maria.

Because NP is combined with conscious thoughts in this instance, it is possible that Fanny is aware of the sensations and emotions she is experiencing: she seems angry, and aware of being so. However, in other instances it is difficult to determine whether she is aware of the feelings derived from her perceptions. This is the case, for example, when she is jealous. In the following passage, which has been regarded as a climactic scene (Landry 2000: 65), Fanny observes how Edmund is teaching Mary Crawford how to ride a horse. The reader may feel that the description of the scene does not just present Fanny’s visual perceptions but is also permeated with her envious feelings and her suffering:

1. 1 [PN: NI] to Fanny’s timid nature it was most astonishing [PN: PERCEPTION] to see how well she sat. 2 [NP] After a few minutes, they stopt entirely, Edmund was close to her, he was speaking to her, he was evidently directing her management of the bridle, he had hold of her hand; [PN: PERCEPTION] she saw it, [PN: NI] or the imagination supplied what the eye could not reach. 3 [FIT] She must not wonder at all this; what could be more natural than that Edmund should be making himself useful, and proving his good-nature by any one?

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 57)

Sentence 1 contains the perception indicator ‘see’ (‘astonishing to see how well she sat’) which anticipates Fanny’s visual perceptions in the subsequent sentence. The first clause of sentence 2 can be read both as N and NP: it presents what Fanny sees, but at the same time makes use of summarisation (‘After a few minutes’), which usually indicates the narrator’s perspective. The rest of sentence 2 is more easily categorised as NP as it presents markers of figural perspective and is expressed through several juxtaposed clauses aimed at representing the temporal simultaneity of a series of events: ‘Edmund was close […], he was speaking […], he was evidently directing […], he had hold of her hand’. On first appearance, these sentences describe events in a neutral way; however, both the presence of the continuous aspect and the use of the adverb ‘evidently’ signal figural perspective.

These features also convey emotion: the juxtaposition suggests a succession of images in Fanny’s consciousness, which, aided by her ‘imagination’, cause hurt and jealousy, especially as they are mainly centred on the physical contact between Edmund and Mary (‘was close to her’, ‘had hold of her hand’). Harding similarly considers that in this passage ‘the picture could be of a sister’s muted jealousy and resigned regret’ (1998: 199). The repetition of ‘he’ may also suggest Fanny’s anxiety and pain. The fact that Edmund is here acting as a leader or guide (‘directing her management of the bridle’), a kindness which Fanny has always enjoyed for herself, may also add to the emotional aspect of the description, by suggesting jealousy. Landry sees a resonant pun on ‘bridal’ here, and a symbol that Mary will not be managed: ‘what Mary possesses in athleticism, she lacks in management’, which seems incompatible with ‘the moral delicacy of the clerical Edmund’ (2000: 66). Whether Fanny is conscious of all of these subtle nuances is difficult to assert, but they certainly agree with what the reader knows about her opinion of Mary.

As in Example 56, NP here occurs close to FIT and to PN representing perception. The final sentence of FIT is Fanny’s attempt to reason away the jealousy emanating from the sight; she is trying to justify Edmund’s actions and to deny any romantic interest on his part by dwelling on his general good nature and benevolence. In this instance, NP and FIT are more easily distinguishable than in other instances, especially because FIT contains a question, which is not typical of NP (Banfield 1981: 68; Brinton 1980: 374). The clause of PN that follows NP (‘she saw it, or the imagination supplied what the eye could not reach’) explicitly refers back to Fanny’s visual perceptions, and suggests the extent to which her jealousy and pain may affect those perceptions.

Besides jealousy, Fanny often experiences a sense of inferiority or inadequacy, especially when Mary Crawford is around. This feeling is also captured in NP. For example, at the ball at Mansfield Park (Chapters 26-28), another important landmark in the plot in terms of NP, Fanny cannot keep ‘1 [N] her eyes from wandering between Edmund and Mary Crawford. 2 [NP] *She* looked all loveliness—[FIT] and what might not be the end of it?’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 226, original italics). Preceded by a perception indicator (wandering eyes), NP expresses Fanny’s visual perception of Mary. It may be argued that it could also express a thought, a comparison between herself and her opponent, in which case sentence 2 would be best classed as NP-FIT: the emphasis on the pronoun ‘She’ seems to reflect a contrast between its referent and the perceiving consciousness, that is, between Mary and Fanny (the former looks exceedingly lovely, perhaps more so than the latter), or simply Fanny’s admiration. The evaluative phrase ‘all loveliness’ is also indicative of Fanny’s assessment of Mary’s looks. The reader may sense that she is feeling inferior and jealous, and, once again, it is unclear whether she is aware of the feelings arising from her perceptions. Visual appraisal gives rise to a question in the subsequent interrogative clause of FIT, as she wonders ‘and what might not be the end of it?’ This suggests dread of the effect of Mary’s charm on Edmund. The hyphen between NP and FIT can be seen as a typographical indication of the close connection between perception and thought.

Another interesting and distinctive feature of NP in *MP* is its connection with objects. In total, 4 instances of NP in *MP* refer to objects and rooms, and 2 instances reflect the emotional value of landscape features. This makes up 7% of the instances referring to Fanny, which may not appear to be a significant figure, yet the heroine’s fascination with objects and the domestic as reflected in NP cannot be found in any other Austen novel. Objects and scenes perceived by Fanny are frequently presented as expressions, even extensions, of her emotional state and physical sensations, as was seen in Example 52. Like other instances of NP, they mostly evoke painful feelings. The following passage occurs just after she has declined to act in the play her cousins are organising. Her conscience forbids her to act, and yet, as she looks around when alone in her room, she starts to feels guilty:

1. 1 [N] as she looked around her, [PN: NI] the claims of her cousins to being obliged, were strengthened [PN: PERCEPTION] by the sight of present upon present that she had received from them. 2 [NP] The table between the windows was covered with work-boxes and netting-boxes, which had been given her at different times, principally by Tom; [PN: NI] and she grew bewildered as to the amount of the debt which all these kind remembrances produced.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 127)

The sight of the ‘work-boxes and netting-boxes’ on the table, as expressed in NP, is not only a representation of Fanny’s visual consciousness but also implicitly reinforces her distress and sense of obligation towards her cousins, by presenting objects which have a special emotional significance for her. If this were not the narrative function of NP, the description of the specific objects she is seeing would seem superfluous. After all, the neighbouring sentences already express her emotions and perceptions overtly in PN (‘the claims of her cousins to being obliged were strengthened by the sight of present upon present’, ‘she grew bewildered’). The descriptions contained in NP may sometimes seem superfluous, like digressions, as was seen in Example 23 (‘He stopt at their gate. It was a gentleman, it was Colonel Brandon himself’), and yet they try to convey the whole process of perception as it unfolds rather than summarise it, and so they become necessary representations: indeed Austen avoids what is unnecessary, which means that when deviation occurs in her novels it does so to some effect (Knox-Shaw 2004: 22).

The relative clause ‘which had been given her at different times, principally by Tom’ can be considered to be either a narratorial description or part of NP. If the latter, this clause is probably best read as a memory triggered by the sight of the boxes, and thus the whole sentence could be categorised as NP-FIT, in which ongoing perceptions are intertwined with remembrances of past experiences. The presentation of the objects in NP, and the memories and feelings they provoke, may also function as a narrative device to show how selective Fanny’s perceptions can be. Knox-Shaw seems to be indirectly referring to NP when he comments on this passage: ‘the cold East room – to which Fanny withdraws after a particularly fraught session of casting for *Lovers’ Vows* – is seen at once from outside and through her eyes. Its clutter is selectively lit up as it touches, object by object, on her consciousness, picking out an intricate web of obligations and social ties’ (2004: 177). That is, the East Room is presented in a very particular way, showing only objects which provoke certain feelings, as if Fanny were looking for objects that strengthen her dependence and sense of inferiority.

Although the sensations arising from Fanny’s perceptions of objects and rooms are mostly negative and oppressive, positive emotions occur as well. The two clauses of NP in the following example refer to the necklace Mary gives to Fanny in Chapter 27, and express relief, joy and satisfaction:

1. 1 [PN: NI] [The ball] was now a real animation! [N] and she began to dress for it [PN: NI] with much of the happy flutter which belongs to a ball. 2 [N] All went well—[PN: NI] she did not dislike her own looks; [N] and when she came to the necklaces again, [CN: THOUGHT] her good fortune seemed complete, [CN: PERCEPTION] for upon trial the one given her by Miss Crawford would by no means go through the ring of the cross. 3 [PN: NRTA] She had, to oblige Edmund, resolved to wear it—[NP] but it was too large for the purpose. 4 [FIT] His [Edmund’s] therefore must be worn; [N] and having [PN; NI] with delightful feelings [N] joined the chain and the cross, [CN: THOGUHT AND PERCEPTION] those memorials of the two most beloved of her heart, those dearest tokens so formed for each other by every thing real and imaginary—[N] and put them round her neck, [PN: PERCEPTION] and seen and felt how full of William and Edmund they were, [PN: NRTA] she was able without an effort to resolve on wearing Miss Crawford’s necklace too. 5 [PN: NI] She acknowledged it to be right. 6 [FIT] Miss Crawford had a claim; [PN: NI] and when it was no longer to encroach on, to interfere with the stronger claims, the truer kindness of another, she could do her justice even with pleasure to herself. 7 [NP] The necklace really looked very well; [N] and Fanny left her room at last, [PN: NI] comfortably satisfied with herself and all about her.

(Austen 1996 [1814]: 224)

Sentences 1-3 explain the thoughts and feelings attending Fanny’s preparation for the ball through PN (‘real animation’, ‘happy flutter’, ‘did not dislike her own looks’, ‘had […] resolved to wear it’). The ‘happy flutter’ in particular seems to indicate the agitation that is so characteristic of Fanny. These three sentences introduce a figural perspective that affects other parts of the text: for example, the narratorial description that ‘her good fortune seemed complete, for upon trial the one [necklace] given her by Miss Crawford would by no means go through the ring of the cross’ (sentence 2) presents what Fanny is doing but also reflects what she is seeing and how she is seeing it (note the expressive and evaluative quality of ‘good fortune’ and ‘by no means’), and thus may be considered CN evoking thoughts and perceptions. Another part of the text that is affected by Fanny’s perspective is the underlined clause ‘it was too large for the purpose’ at the end of sentence 3, which can be considered NP describing her visual appraisal of the necklace. The clause is introduced by a dash, and seems to evoke feelings of relief, as she does not want to wear Mary’s necklace together with her brother’s cross. Another argument in favour of considering this clause as NP is the subsequent clause (sentence 4), which is probably FIT expressing a thought connected with the sight of the necklace (‘His therefore must be worn’).

The rest of the passage (sentences 4-6) continues to represent the thoughts, feelings and perceptions that occur while Fanny is trying on the chain and the cross and deciding what to do. The fragment ‘those memorials of the two most beloved of her heart, those dearest tokens so formed for each other by everything real and imaginary’ can be regarded as CN evoking the way William’s cross and Edmund’s chain appear together in Fanny’s eyes: both literally, as she holds them, and metaphorically, as she decides that they are ‘formed for each other’. The dominant perspective is still narratorial in the sense that the narrator alludes to the connections, both ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ (that is, in Fanny’s mind) which exist between the objects. Fanny eventually decides to wear Mary’s necklace together with the chain and the cross, and the result of her thoughts and actions is the underlined clause of NP in sentence 7 (‘The necklace really looked very well’), which renders her observation of the necklace, probably in a mirror, and her evaluation of it. The rest of the sentence explicitly reports the feeling (‘satisfied’) which is only implicit in the visual perception represented through NP.

As shown in this instance, certain objects in *MP* not only have an emotional value but also a symbolic significance. The cross and the chain can be considered to be symbols of the incompatibility between Mary’s and Fanny’s worlds. Earlier on in the same chapter, Mary’s necklace is described as being quite elaborate, whereas Edmund’s is ‘a plain gold chain perfectly simple and neat’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 217). This can be taken to reflect their different personalities and moral values (she is extravagant and materialistic, he is more austere and spiritual) and the greater affinity between Edmund and Fanny. Wiltshire too discusses the symbolic meaning of the chain and the cross:

It might be that the lack of fit between Henry’s chain and the cross indicates symbolically Henry’s disregard of Christian standards, or predicts their final incompatible destinies: much more likely, though, what it indicates is the difference between Edmund’s thoughtfulness, attuned to her [Fanny’s] needs, and the gesture of possession which Henry’s ‘gift’ actually is.

(1992: 100)

Most importantly, it is Fanny who gives meaning to objects; symbolism ‘is not constructed around her but by her, a route through her own love and desires’ (Wiltshire 1992: 100). This again underlines the importance of NP in connection with objects, since it is through seeing and feeling those objects that they acquire meaning for her. In other parts of the novel, the emotional and symbolic meaning of objects is mainly expressed through PN and FIT. In Chapter 16, for example, Fanny goes to the East room, her room, her ‘nest of comforts’, ‘[PN: IT] to try its influence on an agitated, doubting spirit—to see if by looking at Edmund’s profile she could catch any of his counsel, or by giving air to her geraniums she might inhale a breeze of mental strength herself’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 127). In Chapter 27, she worships Edmund’s handwritten note: ‘[FIT] It was the only thing approaching to a letter which she had ever received from him; she might never receive another; it was impossible that she ever should receive another so perfectly gratifying in the occasion and the style’ (Austen 1996 [1814]: 219). It seems as though objects represent persons and feelings, and even have the power to substitute for them. Note the occurrence of agitation here, which connects objects with sensibility and strong emotions. Fanny’s predilection for objects and domestic scenes shows that they are important sources of inspiration and comfort, and the narrator uses them as another form of expression of Fanny’s consciousness, especially through NP.

**5.2 *Persuasion***

*P* was written in twelve months, between August 1815 and July 1816, shortly after the completion of *E* (Gross 2002: 165). It was Austen’s last completed novel, and was posthumously published in December 1817 (dated 1818) together with *NA.* The quantitative results for *P* show that the density of instances of NP in this novel (a relative frequency of [13] in a total of 81,511 words) is higher than that of *MP* and the early novels. The differences between *P* and *NA* are slightly less marked, but equally important. Together with *E*, *P* is the novel which presents the most extensive use of NP in Austen’s fiction. As noted in Chapter 4, general quantitative differences between the earlier and the later novels could potentially suggest Jane Austen’s increasing awareness and development of NP as she went on to write her mature novels, even though on closer inspection the chronological ascent for NP is not regular: *MP* contains fewer instances of NP than *NA* and *PP*; there is a quantitative contrast between *MP* and *P* (with relative frequencies of [8] and [13] respectively), and *E* contains more NP than *P*, even though it was written earlier. However, the evidence of the analysis suggests that quantitative differences between novels are best explained by looking at the particular features and heroines of each narrative. Table 13 presents the full results for the novels discussed so far:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Novel** | **Straightforward NP** | **Ambiguous NP-N** | **NP-FIT** | **Total** |
| *SS* | 27 [2.3]  (50%) | 22 [1.9]  (41%) | 5 [0.4]  (9%) | 54 [4.6]~[5] (100%) |
| *PP* | 76 [6.3]  (56%) | 53 [4.4]  (40%) | 5 [0.4]  (4%) | 134 [11.1] (100%) |
| *NA* | 47 [6.2]  (54%) | 24 [3.1]  (27%) | 17 [2.2]  (19%) | 88  [11.5]~[12]  (100%) |
| *MP* | 52 [3.3]  (43%) | 34 [2.1]  (28%) | 36 [2.3]  (29%) | 122 [7.7]~[8]  (100%) |
| *P* | 39 [4.8]  39%) | 27 [3.3]  (26%) | 36 [4.4] (35%) | 102 [12.5]~[13]  (100%) |

**Table 13. Number, density and percentage of instances of NP in *SS*, *PP*, *NA*, *MP* and *P* (Figures in square brackets represent normalised figures per 10,000 words)**

Quantitative differences between *P* and earlier novels are chiefly based on the fact that sense experience is a particularly salient element of the plot in this novel (Johnson 1989; Pinch 1996: 145-156; Warhol 1992). Many readers of *P* ‘have stressed Anne’s acute perceptions of the outside world’ (Pinch 1996: 152) and ‘often pointed out that knowledge of the outside world seems to make its way into *Persuasion* more than into any of Austen’s other novels’ (1996: 148-149). Wiltshire describes *P* as being ‘carefully built around its heroine’s silent attentiveness’ (2001: 89). Like Fanny, Anne is an extremely sensitive and perceptive person, often quiet and pensive (Austen 1998 [1818]: 63), and always attentive to other people, both in the sense of observing them and caring for them. She is very often reported to be watchful: ‘With a great deal of quiet observation, and a knowledge, which she often wished less, of her father's character, she was sensible that results the most serious to his family from the intimacy [with Mrs Clay], were more than possible’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 33); she has plenty of ‘opportunities of making her observations’ of the behaviour of Captain Wentworth, Charles Hayter and the two Miss Musgroves (1998 [1818]: 76), and on one occasion regrets that she ‘could not stay. It might have been an opportunity of watching the loves and jealousies of the four’ (1998 [1818]: 75). In Bath, she ‘always watched them [the Crofts] as long as she could’ (1998 [1818]: 158), and during a visit to Mrs Smith, she ‘watched—observed—reflected’ (1998 [1818]: 145).

Perception is also prominent in this novel owing to the wider variety of sensory experiences which NP represents in comparison with other novels: as illustrated later in this section, in addition to sight, tactile and aural perception, and the perception of spaces and people’s presences, stand out as modalities of NP in this novel. Anne is also perceptually aware because, like Fanny, she is an isolated outsider. She occupies a relatively marginal, lonely position within her family and social circles. She has been motherless since she was very young; her father has ‘no affection’ for her (Austen 1998 [1818]: 232) and her two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, treat her with indifference or only pay attention to her when they need her assistance. Her opinion does not count: ‘Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;—*she was only Anne*’ (1998 [1818]: 7, added italics). The last clause reflects her family’s view of her (coloured narrative). Although she is not excluded from taking part in the activities of other characters, her estrangement from Captain Wentworth and her ‘superiority’ of mind (226) set her apart from most of the people with whom she associates. Not even her closest friend knows her innermost thoughts and feelings: there is always a ‘quarter of the mind which could not be opened to Lady Russell’ (199). It has been argued that Anne is so isolated that her inner life is only fully shared with the reader (Beer 1998: xxiii; Bree 1998: 26, 27; Wiltshire 2001: 89).

It may be objected that in terms of perceptiveness there is no palpable difference between earlier and later heroines; after all, Elinor and Elizabeth can also be described as observant, insightful characters. However, the case of Fanny and Anne is different in that their powers of sensory appraisal are particularly foregrounded, especially in connection with a special sensibility and an isolated position within their family and social circle. At the end of *P*, Anne is presented by the narrator as an exceptionally perceptive character, and this is not done with any other heroine, not even Fanny:

There was nothing less for Lady Russell to do, than to admit that she had been pretty completely wrong [with regard to Captain Wentworth and Mr Elliot], and to take up a new set of opinions and of hopes.

There is a quickness of perception in some, a nicety in the discernment of character, a natural penetration, in short, which no experience in others can equal, and Lady Russell had been less gifted in this part of understanding than her young friend [Anne].

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 233)

This passage essentially implies that Anne has been right with regard to Captain Wentworth and Mr Elliot, and that she has an uncommon perceptiveness which surpasses even that of Lady Russell, the very character who has been presented at the beginning of the novel as ‘rational and consistent’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 12) and a model in her conduct. However, she ‘was a woman rather of sound than of quick abilities’ (1998 [1818]: 12). The description of Anne as possessing a special ‘quickness’ of perception serves to make explicit what the whole narrative only hints at, partly through the use of NP: the fact that she is almost always perceptually alert to her surroundings and other people. Like Fanny, she is also able to see what other people do not, such as the doubtful intentions of Mrs Clay (unsuspected by her father and sister) or the equally suspicious motives of Mr Elliot in renewing an acquaintance with the family (which are not distrusted even by Lady Russell).

Although the above passage refers to a mental type of perception, that is, Anne’s insight into other people’s character, motives and feelings, it must be understood as implying enhanced sensory powers. As discussed in Chapter 2, eighteenth-century empirical epistemology argued that knowledge primarily derived from the information provided by the senses (Todd 1986: 23), and that an elevated aesthetic and moral perception was indicative of heightened physical susceptibility (Van Sant 1993: 87). It is not surprising, therefore, to find Anne’s perceptiveness intimately associated with physical sensitivity: she feels ‘a nervous thrill all over her’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 217). She is often described as experiencing agitation of body and mind, whether from sadness or joy: ‘Every moment rather brought fresh agitation. It was an overpowering happiness’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 223). Like Fanny, she tries to reason herself out of her nervousness, which she considers inappropriate: ‘many a stroll and many a sigh were necessary to dispel the agitation of the idea. She often told herself it was folly, before she could harden her nerves sufficiently to feel the continual discussion of the Crofts and their business no evil’ (1998 [1818]: 30). On another occasion she is ‘ashamed of herself*,* quite ashamed of being so nervous’ (1998 [1818]: 75).

In spite of her nervousness, however, Anne can be said to be more robust in mind and body than Fanny. They are both women of sensibility, yet there are also differences between them: on the one hand, it can be argued that Fanny is more sensitive, physically and emotionally; she cries often, while Anne does not, and feels empathy even for people who are practically strangers, such as Mr Rushworth (Austen 1996 [1814]: 85), and even people whom she finds disagreeable, like Henry. Anne is described by the narrator as a person ‘of strong [that is, intense] sensibility’ ever since she was a young school girl (Austen 1998 [1818]: 143). Both heroines are at times able to overcome their sensibility, but Fanny’s nervousness tends to affect her much more and make her ill, while Anne becomes stronger and generally more confident in the later part of the narrative. Although things do often affect her nerves, she is also capable of great powers of mind, maintaining rationality, ‘strength and zeal’ (1998 [1818]: 103) at decisive moments, even more than other characters, such as when Louisa falls from the Cobb. In contrast, Fanny does not seem to change so much; her confidence increases in Portsmouth, but cannot be compared with Anne’s dramatic improvement in self-assurance and looks while in Lyme.

Moreover, the primary focus of *MP* is Fanny’s sensitiveness and nerves, while Anne’s main feature is tenderness. She is described by the narrator as ‘tenderness itself’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 236) and as having ‘gentleness, modesty, taste, and feeling’ (1998 [1818]: 26). The narrator also alludes to the ‘engaging mildness of her countenance, and gentleness of her manners’ (93), and Captain Wentworth considers her to maintain ‘the loveliest medium of fortitude and gentleness’ (226). The attributes of gentleness, tenderness, agitation and nervousness are occasionally applied to other Austen heroines as well; for example, Catherine is capable of a ‘delicate sensibility’ (Austen 2003 [1818]: 125); but this is rather the exception than the norm, and sensibility does not seem to constitute a central feature of the other heroines’ bodies and psyches as in the case of Anne and Fanny. The intimate connection between physical sensibility and mental perceptiveness renders *MP* and *P* different from the earlier novels, where such a link is not obvious or not foregrounded. This helps to explain the greater use of NP in these two novels, but most especially *P.*

As has been observed in *MP* and the early novels, NP in *P* occurs at particularly intense or climactic moments in the narrative. NP is especially concentrated in five blocks of chapters, all of which respond to that description: in Chapters 8 and 9 (7 and 4 instances respectively) Anne and Captain Wentworth meet again after so many years and spend their first evening under the same roof, during the supper at the Musgroves’. Anne experiences great pain, especially because of the estrangement that exists between them. Chapters 10 and 12 (12 and 11 instances respectively) narrate the trips to Winthrop and Lyme and constitute a first climax in the story because of Louisa’s accident. Like other trips in Austen’s fiction (for example, the trip to Portsmouth in *MP*, or the trip to Box Hill in *E*), they turn out to be enlightening events for the heroine. Here, Captain Wentworth’s curiosity about and kindness towards Anne become evident to her, as does his high opinion of her. NP represents visual and auditory perceptions of different people (Captain Wentworth, the Musgrove sisters, Captain Benwick, the Harvilles, Mr Elliot) and various places, such as the Cobb in Lyme. NP in these two chapters is often connected with Anne’s feelings of increasing self-assurance.

In Chapter 15 (6 instances) Anne arrives in Bath. Several passages portray her observations and evaluations of Mr Elliot. Chapter 19 (6 instances) renders Anne and Captain Wentworth’s sudden encounter in a shop: 5 instances of NP occur during this short but intense meeting, and one of them represents Captain Wentworth’s jealous perception of Anne and Mr Elliot together (Austen 1998 [1818]: 167). It is significant that the only instance of NP connected with Captain Wentworth in this novel is reserved for his most anxious period, during which he realises his love for Anne, and is afraid of losing her forever. Finally, the last few chapters (Chapters 20, 22 and 23) contain the highest number of instances of NP (13, 9 and 10 instances respectively) and present the final climax of the plot: they revolve around the concert, the gatherings at Mrs Musgrove’s apartments, Captain Wentworth’s letter to Anne and their final union. Both Anne and Captain Wentworth experience strong emotions here: hope, anxiousness, jealousy, fear of being divided forever, and extreme happiness at the end; and NP contributes to highlight these feelings.

The concentration of NP in these five chapter clusters seems to be closely connected with the narrative effects sought in them: NP foregrounds Anne’s sensory perceptions in syntactic and semantic terms, and in so doing also highlights the sensations, emotions and thoughts that implicitly or explicitly accompany those perceptions. A distinctive feature of NP in *P* is the consistency with which it is applied to Anne, as almost the totality of instances found reflect her perceptions (99/102, that is, 97%). This is similar to what happens in *PP* (91%), *NA* (97%) and *E* (92%), but contrasts with *SS* and *MP*, in which a significant proportion of instances represent the perceptions of different characters other than the heroine (51% and 70% respectively), or portray collective perceptions. These results fit in with the general view of *P* as one of the Austen novels that are most consistently focalised through the heroine’s consciousness (Flavin 1989: 23; Warhol 1992). The fact that only Anne’s perceptions are portrayed through NP can also be connected with her isolation and with the aims of the plot, by which the reader is to be kept within her point of view and not meant to know what is going on with other characters, particularly Mr Elliot and Captain Wentworth.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **No. of instances of NP** | **Percentage** |
| Anne | 99 | 97% |
| Captain Wentworth | 1 | 1% |
| Charles Hayter | 1 | 1% |
| Mrs Croft | 1 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 102 | 100% |

**Table 14. Subject of perception (heroine/other characters) in *P***

As in other novels, purely visual instances of NP are a majority in *P* (50/102, 49%), which, together with instances combining visual and aural perception (22/102, 21%), makes up a total of 70% of instances rendering sight. Aural perception occurs in a total of 35 instances (34%). *P* is the novel with the lowest percentages in this regard (compare with visual perception in *SS*,86%; *PP*, 84%; *NA*, 79%; *MP*, 83%; *E*, 74%; and aural perceptions, 39% in *SS*; 38% in *PP*; 36% in *NA*;48% in *MP* and 49% in *E*). These differences respond to the fact that the percentages for *P* are spread out among various types of perception, as illustrated in Table 15 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nove**  **l** | **Visual** | **Aural** | **Tactile** | **Visual and aural** | **Visual, aural and tactile** | **Position in space / distance from others** | **Imaginary** | **Awareness of self** | **T**  **o**  **t**  **a**  **l** |
| *SS* | 30 (56%) | 5  (9%) | 3  (5%) | 16 (30%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 |
| *PP* | 76 (56%) | 21 (16%) | 0 | 29 (22%) | 0 | 8  (6%) | 0 | 0 | 134 |
| *NA* | 55 (63%) | 8  (9%) | 0 | 15 (17%) | 9 (10%) | 0 | 1 (1%) |  | 88 |
| *MP* | 62 (51%) | 19 (15%) | 0 | 38 (31%) | 2  (2%) | 0 | 1 (1%) |  | 122 |
| *P* | 50 (49%) | 13 (13%) | 1  (1%) | 22 (21%) | 0 | 12  (12%) | 0 | 4  (4%) | 102 |

**Table 15. Types of perception in *SS*, *PP*, *NA*, *MP* and *P***

Despite the lower percentages, the passages analysed in this section will show how important visual and aural perception (and other types of perception) are for the development of the plot of P. The first time NP becomes relatively prominent in this novel also the first time Anne and Captain Wentworth meet again after eight years’ separation. In Chapter 7, the suddenness of his visit to Uppercross Cottage, where she is staying with her sister Mary, and the violence of her emotions on the occasion, render the meeting, brief as it is, overwhelming for her. The intensity of the moment is well captured through the expression of Anne’s visual and auditory perceptions in NP:

1. 1 [N] The morning hours of the Cottage were always later than those of the other house; and on the morrow the difference was so great, that Mary and Anne were not more than beginning breakfast when Charles came in [IS] to say that they were just setting off, that he was come for his dogs, that his sisters were following with Captain Wentworth, [DIST] his sisters meaning to visit Mary and the child, and Captain Wentworth proposing also to wait on her for a few minutes, if not inconvenient; and though Charles had answered for the child’s being in no such state as could make it inconvenient, Captain Wentworth would not be satisfied without his running on to give notice.

2 [PN: NI] Mary, very much gratified by this attention, was delighted to receive him; while a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, [PN: IT] of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over. 3 [N] And it was soon over. 4 In two minutes after Charles’s preparation, the others appeared; [AMBIGUOUS NP: AWARENESS/N] they were in the drawing-room. 5 [N] Her eye half met Captain Wentworth’s; a bow, a curtsey passed; [PN: PERCEPTION] she heard his voice—[NP] he talked to Mary, said all that was right; said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing: the room seemed full—full of persons and voices—[AMBIGUOUS NP/CN: PERCEPTION] but a few minutes ended it. 6) Charles shewed himself at the window, all was ready, their visitor had bowed and was gone; the Miss Musgroves were gone too, [NRSA] suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen: [AMBIGUOUS NP/CN: PERCEPTION] the room was cleared, [N] and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could.

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 55-56)

This passage has been ‘celebrated because of the deftness of the means by which Anne’s inner agitation is represented’ and for ‘the simple repetitions of ‘said’ and of ‘full’ which catch her inability to focus, to concentrate, the momentary suspension of rational perception; the disordered, bumpy rhythms mimicking quick breathing and pounding heart’ (Wiltshire 2001: 89). However, there does not appear to be any in-depth analysis of the way Anne’s perception is textually conveyed in this particular instance. The first paragraph is made up of one long sentence, mainly representing speech, in which Charles Musgrove announces to Mary and Anne the imminent visit of Captain Wentworth and the Miss Musgroves. After a paragraph break, sentence 2 explains that on hearing this ‘a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over’. The rest of the paragraph consists of a succession of relatively short clauses and sentences, which render the visit from Anne’s sensory perspective and suggest great distress. The description begins with N: ‘And it was soon over. In two minutes after Charles's preparation, the others appeared; they were in the drawing-room’. The last clause here, after the semi-colon, could potentially express Anne’s fearful consciousness of Captain Wentworth’s presence in a nearby room, but there is no indication of figural perspective other than the possible emotional content of the representation, so the clause may be read as N.

The subsequent text is also N: ‘Her eye half met Captain Wentworth’s, a bow, a curtsey passed’. After this, it must be assumed that Anne no longer looks at him, as the narrator reports that ‘she heard his voice’; this clause of PN acts as a perception indicator that embeds the ensuing report within Anne’s auditory consciousness: ‘he talked to Mary, said all that was right, said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing; the room seemed full, full of persons and voices’. She listens to him as he speaks with Mary and then with the Miss Musgroves, and evaluates his words as ‘right’ and as indicating familiarity between the visitors (‘easy footing’). Eventually she is only aware of an indistinct collection of presences and sounds. The reader infers that everything has gradually become blurry in her consciousness owing to confusion, embarrassment and pain. This process of introversion, and the implicit sensations and emotions behind it, are marked by the fact that at first she clearly hears what Captain Wentworth says; then she only hears ‘something’, and finally only perceives ‘persons and voices’. Persons and utterances here turn into ‘bloated abstractions’ (Pinch 1996: 155).

There is also a sense of claustrophobia and perhaps an implicit wish that the meeting will soon be over in the perception that ‘the room seemed full, full of persons and voices’ (note the repetition of ‘full’). As Pinch argues, very often in *P* people are perceived as ‘crowds’ and domestic spaces ‘have a way of impressing themselves upon us in this novel as containers of bodies as well’ (1996: 146). It seems that ‘Anne experiences Wentworth’s sudden presence as something that ushers in acute awareness not only of him but of the presence of all around her’ (Pinch 1996: 155). The rest of the passage (sentence 6) is predominantly narratorial in that it reports speech (‘suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen’), refers to Captain Wentworth as ‘their visitor’ and makes use of Anne’s proper name towards the end (‘Anne might finish her breakfast as she could’). However, sentence 6 could also be categorised as NP (or CN), because certain words seem to evoke Anne’s perceptions: ‘Charles shewed himself at the window’ is best read from the visual perspective of those inside the house (that is, Anne’s); the repetition of ‘was gone’, ‘were gone’ seems to emphasise the idea that Captain Wentworth and the others are no longer there, which fits in with Anne’s previous perceptions; and the clause ‘the room was cleared’ again focuses on physical space and refers back, by way of contrast, to ‘the room seemed full’. These perceptions can be seen as accompanied by implicit feelings of relief: Anne feels she has been left alone; there is a sense of silence, of deliverance from distress.

Finally, it must be noted that the rhythm of sentences 4-6 is rendered syntactically rapid by the use of many short, simple clauses, juxtaposed between commas and semi-colons: ‘Her eye half met Captain Wentworth’s, a bow, a curtsey passed; she heard his voice; he talked to Mary, said all that was right, said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing; the room seemed full, full of persons and voices’. Contrast this structure with that of the preceding sentences, which are longer and syntactically more elaborate, containing different levels of subordination: two main clauses coordinated by ‘and’ (‘The morning hours of the Cottage were always later than those of the other house’, ‘on the morrow the difference was so great’), the second of which is followed by the subordinate clause ‘that Mary and Anne were not more than beginning breakfast when Charles came in to say that they were just setting off, that he was come for his dogs, that his sisters were following with Captain Wentworth’. This clause, in turn, contains several levels of subordination: a temporal clause (‘when Charles […]’) followed by a non-finite clause (‘to say that […]’) which in turn contains three that- clauses.

As the narrative progresses, Anne’s awareness of Captain Wentworth’s physical presence passes from causing distress to suggesting an increasing desire for that presence, a longing for physical and emotional connection; and frustration when there is distance between them. NP contains a strong spatial element which is not present in the early novels: many instances reflect Anne’s awareness of her own physical position and physical sensations in relation to Captain Wentworth, as well as her awareness of the presence of other people around her. Awareness of spaces and bodies has also been observed in *MP*, but is more prominent in *P*, and creates different sorts of emotions: Henry’s presence is more alarming and threatening to Fanny, while Captain Wentworth’s is less so, especially in the second half of the novel. In both novels, the presence of other people, especially men, has a tactile element to it, as if the heroine’s skin were the location of the emotion (aversion or attraction) caused by the physical proximity of another person. However, instances of actual touch are rare. In *P*, only one instance of NP renders touch, in a scene which has been described as constituting ‘a pivotal moment’ in the progress of the relationship between Anne and Wentworth (Pinch 1996: 153):

1. 1 [PN: PERCEPTION] In another moment, however, she [Anne] found herself in the state of being released from him [Walter]; [NP] some one was taking him from her, [CN: PERCEPTION] though he had bent down her head so much, that his little sturdy hands were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away, [PN: IT] before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it.

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 74)

Anne is kneeling down by the sofa where little Charles is lying, nursing him in his sickness. Captain Wentworth and Charles Hayter are also in the room. At one point, the boy’s younger brother, Walter, comes into the room and playfully climbs on to Anne’s back. She orders him to get down but he does not listen, and her posture makes her unable to shake him off herself. Suddenly, she perceives that ‘some one was taking him from her’. The sense of ongoing perception is here marked by the past continuous aspect and by the absence of a definite agent of the action (‘some one’). These features invite the reader to adopt in a symbolic way the same physical position as Anne—kneeling down, with her back towards the person who is taking away the boy—and allows him/her to share with Anne a feeling of physical relief, and another, deeper feeling of gratitude towards the unknown person who is helping her. The rest of the passage explains how everything happens, probably from the viewpoint of the narrator (‘before she knew’) but using expressions arguably connected with Anne’s perceptual viewpoint (‘sturdy hands’, unfastened’, ‘borne away’).

Pinch attributes to this passage a ‘combination of eroticism, claustrophobia, and sensation’ which can be metaphorically seen as ‘a moment where Wentworth asserts his potentially liberating role in Anne’s life’ but also literally as a moment ‘of sheer physicality’ that creates ‘a physical sensation [...] at a part of the body where we are most vulnerable’ (1996: 153). Gross also sees an erotic element here, conveying Anne’s ‘frank passion for Wentworth’ and the fact that she ‘thrills at his touch’ (2002: 177). The expression ‘found herself’ conveys the sense that things happen to Anne; that she does not act but often finds herself in situations (see also Example 64 below), which again suggests that the world encloses her, sometimes impinging on her personal space (Pinch 1996: 152), as occurs in Example 63 (‘she was so surrounded and shut in’). We readers are placed ‘within the orbit of Anne’s inner life, even of her body. When she looks down, the scene is described to us only through hearing; when her eyes are lowered we see only what falls within her field of vision. […] This bodily lodging inside Anne makes us share her oppression’ (Beer 1998: xxi). We also share her pleasures: in this passage and in Example 64, we do not see Captain Wentworth or the child; we only get a sense of the physical relief Anne feels.

These feelings, however, are not openly expressed but are only latent in NP. In fact, the clause of NP could be regarded as superfluous: the previous clause of PN has already stated that ‘she found herself in the state of being released from him’, and could also have added ‘by Captain Wentworth’; yet the narrator prefers to delay the disclosure of the helper’s identity, and to make the reader experience events along with Anne. In this way, NP becomes more expressive than PN, providing more insight into the characters’ consciousness, involving the reader in the process of perception and foregrounding not only Anne’s tactile experience but also suggesting the physical sensations and emotional content associated with perception. An example of a contemporary reader’s response to the emotional force of NP in this particular passage is reported by Pinch: ‘Maria Edgeworth singled out this passage in a letter, drawing attention to its surprising tactility: “The love and lover admirably well-drawn: don’t you see Captain Wentworth, or rather *don’t you in her place feel him* taking the boistrous child off her back as she kneels by the sick boy on the sofa?”’ (Pinch 1996: 153, original italics). The italicised fragment confirms the singular power of NP to align the reader’s mind with the physical and emotional state of the character; an effect which has been described by Beer as ‘sensory empathy’ with Anne in this passage (1998: xxii).

The following instance also has a certain tactile quality, and occurs in a passage that can be said to constitute a turning point in the story, when the presence of Captain Wentworth begins to be (implicitly) more and more attractive to Anne. Significantly, the fact that Anne is starting to feel differently towards him is especially conveyed by NP. This, once again, reaffirms the connection between NP and intense emotional occurrences, showing that this technique tends to be concentrated in such contexts and enhance hidden emotions:

1. 1 [NP]They were actually on the same sofa, for Mrs. Musgrove had most readily made room for him;—they were divided only by Mrs. Musgrove. 2 [N: NARRATORIAL COMMENTARY] It was no insignificant barrier indeed. 3 Mrs. Musgrove was of a comfortable substantial size, infinitely more fitted by nature to express good cheer and good humour, than tenderness and sentiment; and while the agitations of Anne’s slender form, and pensive face, may be considered as very completely screened, Captain Wentworth should be allowed some credit for the self-command with which he attended to her large fat sighings over the destiny of a son, whom alive nobody had cared for.

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 63)

There is no explicit perception indicator anywhere; however, the previous discourse suggests that Anne is observing Captain Wentworth: she sees ‘a momentary expression in Captain Wentworth’s face’, which convinces her ‘that instead of sharing in Mrs Musgrove’s kind wishes, as to her son, he had probably been at some pains to get rid of him’; and then observes that ‘almost instantly afterwards coming up to the sofa, on which she and Mrs Musgrove were sitting, [he] took a place by the latter, and entered into conversation with her’. This favours a reading of the ensuing, underlined sentence as NP. In addition, the description seems to evoke figural feelings: the adverbial ‘actually’ may be taken to reflect awareness, surprise and tension on Anne’s side. There is also an emphasis on the fact that Anne and Captain Wentworth are physically close and that ‘only’ Mrs Musgrove separates them, which may be best interpreted as Anne’s visual and spatial consciousness rather than an objective narratorial report. Even if taken as narratorial, the emphasis on their physical closeness remains. There also seems to be an emphasis on Anne’s being crowded by the ‘substantial’ Mrs Musgrove. The sofa itself may be symbolic of the feeling of being crowded, since furniture in *P* ‘often seems the register of the pressures that the characters tend to feel from other people’ (Pinch 1996: 146). In this case, Anne’s ‘agitations’ and reflections suggest both physical and psychological discomfort, but also probably her wonder at the fact that he is actually so close to her, and a certain element of desire.

The narratorial commentary in sentences 2 and 3 describes Mrs Musgrove as ‘no insignificant barrier, indeed’, ‘of a comfortable, substantial size’, uttering ‘large fat sighings’, and Captain Wentworth as deserving ‘some credit for the self-command with which he attended to’ her. Such a barbed representation does not seem plausible as figural perception; in fact Anne is described in sentence 3 as being ‘pensive’ and absorbed in her own ‘agitations’. This state of absorption has already been noted, and seems to contrast with her acute perceptiveness: ‘Anne is often so occupied with her own rumination and recollection that impressions from the outside seem to have a hard time finding their way in’ (Pinch 1996: 152). In this example, as in the scene of the first meeting between her and Wentworth, Anne is not fully registering what is going on around her: external objects and people are impressed on her consciousness as indistinct sensations; however, NP in Example 62 suggests that at least she is indeed aware of his close presence.

Anne’s desire for closeness with Captain Wentworth becomes even greater as they begin to speak to each other later on. Her perceptions become more and more focused and clearer, and her awareness of the physical distance between them evokes an implicit desire for his friendship and confidence, as in the following instance from the episode of the concert in Chapter 20: ‘1 [N] The others joined them, and it was a group in which Anne found herself also necessarily included. 2 [NP] She was divided from Captain Wentworth. 3) [NP-FIT] Their interesting, almost too interesting conversation must be broken up for a time’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 174). Later in the same chapter, Anne searches for him in the crowd, afraid of not having an opportunity to speak to him, and in this case, besides desire for his physical proximity, NP suggests anxiety:

1. 1 [N] Before Sir Walter had reached this point [in his speech], [PN: PERCEPTION] Anne’s eyes had caught the right direction, and distinguished Captain Wentworth, standing among a cluster of men at a little distance. 2 [N] As her eyes fell on him, [NP] his seemed to be withdrawn from her. 3 [NP-FIT]It had that appearance. 4 It seemed as if she had been one moment too late; [N] and as long as she dared observe, [NP] he did not look again: but the performance was re-commencing, [PN: NI] and she was forced to seem to restore her attention to the orchestra, and look straight forward.

5 [N] When she could give another glance, [NP] he had moved away. 6 [FIT] He could not have come nearer to her if he would; [NP] she was so surrounded and shut in: [FIT] but she would rather have caught his eye.

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 177-178)

After ‘Anne’s eyes had [...] distinguished Captain Wentworth’ and ‘her eyes fell on him’ (perception indicators), ‘his seemed to be withdrawn from her’ (NP). This is followed by a combination of NP and FIT in sentence 3, where she sees and realises that ‘she had been one moment too late’. Her next perception is both visual and aural, comprising the sight of Captain Wentworth and the aural perception of music: ‘he did not look again: but the performance was recommencing’. Note the use of epistemic modality (‘seemed’) and the past continuous aspect. In the second paragraph, sentence 5 presents another visual perception (‘he had moved away’) and sentence 6 renders a perception of her own physical situation (‘she was so surrounded and shut in’). All of these instances of NP express frustration and a need for his reassurance; there seems to be a sense of entrapment and a desire to be free to be approached by him. NP frequently alternates with thoughts in FIT, which also express her desire to be sought after (‘she would rather have caught his eye’).

The following instance from the trip to Winthrop (Chapter 10) is slightly different in that it portrays Anne’s awareness of her physical location, not in relation to Captain Wentworth’s distance from her, but as a way to reassure herself that he has shown her great kindness:

1. 1 [N] Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage.

2 [FIT] Yes,—he had done it. 3 [NP: AWARENESS] She was in the carriage, [PN: IT] and felt that he had placed her there, that his will and his hands had done it, that she owed it to his perception of her fatigue, and his resolution to give her rest.

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 84)

On their return home, the group from Uppercross happen to meet with the Crofts, who are riding home as well, in their carriage. Captain Wentworth speaks to them for a few minutes, and then returns to the group to assist Anne into the carriage (sentence 1). He does this without speaking to her (‘quietly’). In sentences 2 and 3, Anne convinces herself that what has just happened is true: she seems to tell herself, ‘Yes;—he had done it’ (FIT), and becomes aware that ‘She was in the carriage’ (NP). This perception suggests surprise and gratification, and confirms to Anne that she really is there thanks to Captain Wentworth. It is as if she were looking for physical evidence of the event. This clause does not sound plausible as N: indeed it would be redundant to describe Anne as being in the carriage, since this has already been stated in the previous paragraph. The clause rather reflects her awareness of her location as something extraordinary, unexpected, and emotionally significant.

Note that the subsequent clause of PN also focuses on the physical aspect of the event as she feels that ‘his will and his hands had done it’. According to Pinch, it is mainly ‘contacts with Wentworth that take these sensory, sensational forms. Their renewed courtship takes place through moments of physical contact – as when Anne finds herself handed into the carriage – which are both erotic and strangely intrusive’ (1996: 152-153). This type of semi-erotic, semi-intrusive contact is also illustrated in Examples 61 and 62 above. NP structures the evolution of Anne and Captain Wentworth’s relationship around moments of perception: ‘Austen’s depiction of their courtship stresses sensory experience, touch, sound’ (Pinch 1996: 153). The examples analysed in this section illustrate that the sensuous nature of Anne and Wentworth’s courtship mainly responds to the estrangement between them: they do not speak to each other for the most part of the novel, and thus they can only look and listen, and occasionally feel each other’s presence and touch in physical terms. Indeed, because Anne is mentally and physically isolated from him (and others), visual, aural and tactile perceptions are her only sources of information about his feelings: she observes him, overhears his conversations with other people and draws conclusions.

Overhearing is actually ‘an important way of knowing’ in this novel (Pinch 1996: 149). In addition, ‘noises frequently are the means by which other presences make themselves felt’ (Pinch 1996: 159), as when Captain Wentworth accidentally drops his pen and Anne is ‘startled’ to find him ‘nearer than she had supposed’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 219). The following two passages are from a scene in which Anne overhears Captain Wentworth and Louisa Musgrove talking:

1. 1 [N] Anne, really tired herself, [PN: NI] was glad to sit down; [PN: PERCEPTION] and she very soon heard Captain Wentworth and Louisa in the hedge-row, behind her, as if making their way back, along the rough, wild sort of channel, down the centre. 2 [NP] They were speaking as they drew near. 3 [PN: PERCEPTION] Louisa’s voice was the first distinguished. 4 [NP] She seemed to be in the middle of some eager speech. 5 [PN: PERCEPTION] What Anne first heard was,

[...].

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 80)

1. 1 [DS] “My first wish for all, whom I am interested in, is that they should be firm. 2 If Louisa Musgrove would be beautiful and happy in her November of life, she will cherish all her present powers of mind.”

3 [NP] He had done,—and was unanswered. 4 [PN: NI] It would have surprised Anne, if Louisa could have readily answered such a speech—[FIT] words of such interest, spoken with such serious warmth!—she could imagine what Louisa was feeling. 5 [PN: NI] For herself—she feared to move, lest she should be seen. 6 [NP] While she remained, a bush of low rambling holly protected her, and they were moving on. 7 [N] Before they were beyond her hearing, however, Louisa spoke again.

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 81-82)

In the first passage, NP is consistently alternated with PN representing perception. In sentence 1 Anne is reported to hear them coming near her (‘heard’), which acts as a perception indicator. In sentence 2 (NP) the past continuous aspect (‘were speaking’) signals Anne’s aural perception. Another sentence representing perception in PN ensues (‘Louisa’s voice was the first distinguished’) and this gives rise to a second sentence of NP, marked by the modal ‘seemed’, the indefinite adjective ‘some’ and the evaluation ‘eager’. Anne is not hearing distinctly, but is only aware of ‘some eager speech’. The passage ends with yet another sentence representing perception through PN (‘What Anne first heard was’).

In the second passage, Anne is still listening to them in silence. After Captain Wentworth’s words in DS, sentence 3 portrays her perception of silence: ‘He had done,—and was unanswered’. This could be taken as a narratorial report were it not for the ensuing PN, which reports Anne’s evaluation of that silence (‘It would have surprised Anne if Louisa could have readily answered such a speech’) and bursts into an emotional train of thought, in FIT (‘words of such interest, spoken with such serious warmth!’). The dash signals a pause after Wentworth’s speech, and the ensuing silence. The last instance of NP portrays Anne’s awareness of the physical space where she is; probably a combination of a visual perception of the ‘holly’ around her, and awareness that she is ‘protected’, that is, screened from their view. This sentence also renders her aural perception that ‘they were moving on’ through the past continuous aspect.

Anne’s main interest is to find out what Captain Wentworth says or what other people say about him, and aural NP tends to foreground those instances in which she is particularly alert: ‘1 [PN: IT] Such she believed were his [Mr Elliot’s] words; [PN: PERCEPTION] but scarcely had she received their sound, [PN: NI] than her attention was caught by other sounds immediately behind her, which rendered every thing else trivial. 2 [NP] Her father and Lady Dalrymple were speaking’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 177). They were speaking about Captain Wentworth. Note here that, besides the past continuous aspect, it is the fact that she is attentive that renders sentence 2 figural, as opposed to a narratorial report of speech; this is in line with what was discussed in Chapter 3 about the importance of attention for a perception to take place, and shows, once again, that a perception can be intensely conscious: ‘when we are not alerted, so to speak, to pay heed to certain of our own present perceptions, we allow them to slip by unconsidered and even unnoticed’, but if ‘someone alerts us to them straight away, and makes us take note, for instance, of some noise which we have just heard, then we remember it and are aware of just having had some sense of it’ (Leibniz 1981 [1765]: Preface).

A further feature that distinguishes NP in *P* is its frequent combination with FIT: *P* features the highest number of NP-FIT instances in all of Austen’s fiction (36 out of 102 instances, which makes up 35%). This stands in contrast to the percentages for *MP* (29%) and *E* (26%), and especially with the early novels, where NP-FIT is not so prominent: *SS* (9%), *PP* (4%) and *NA* (19%). The significant amount of NP-FIT instances in *P* shows that Anne’s perceptions are more often accompanied by ongoing thoughts than the perceptions of other heroines. Anne is often silent in gatherings and tends to engage in deep reflections at the same time she observes, listens to or senses what is going on around her. She has been regarded as being more reflective than other heroines (Lascelles 1939: 182-184), and indeed she is very often ‘pensive’ in the company of others, as was indicated in Example 62 above. For instance, while dining at the Musgroves’, she meditates on how different her relationship with Captain Wentworth is now as compared with former times, and how estranged they must be in spite of their physical proximity (Austen 1998 [1818]: 59-60); and she observes and reflects on the behaviour of the Miss Musgroves while she is playing the piano (66-67).

Two instances of NP-FIT seem particularly interesting. The first one occurs in Lyme, where Anne looks at the places she is thinking of as she walks past them: ‘1 [PN: NI] She gave a moment’s recollection, as they hurried along, to the little circumstances which the same spots had witnessed earlier in the morning. 2 [NP-FIT] *There* she had listened to Henrietta’s schemes for Dr. Shirley’s leaving Uppercross; *farther on*, she had first seen Mr. Elliot’ (1998 [1818]: 107, added italics). It seems that Anne links her thoughts with places more often than Fanny, whose perceptions as represented through NP are mainly focused on objects and rooms. Another interesting passage occurs in Chapter 19, when Anne and Captain Wentworth meet in a shop in Bath. Anne draws conclusions about his feelings as she observes him:

1. 1 [N] After a short interval, however, he came towards her and spoke again. 2 [NRSA] Mutual enquiries on common subjects passed; [COLLECTIVE PN: NI] neither of them, probably, much the wiser for what they heard, [PN: IT] and Anne continuing fully sensible of his being less at ease than formerly. 3 [NP-FIT] They had, by dint of being so very much together, got to speak to each other with a considerable portion of apparent indifference and calmness; but he could not do it now. 4 Time had changed him, or Louisa had changed him. 5 There was consciousness of some sort or other. 6 He looked very well, not as if he had been suffering in health or spirits, and he talked of Uppercross, of the Musgroves, nay, even of Louisa, and had even a momentary look of his own arch significance as he named her; but yet it was Captain Wentworth not comfortable, not easy, not able to feign that he was.

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 165-166)

In sentence 2, the narrator implies that Anne and Captain Wentworth are experiencing strong feelings by saying that they cannot really listen to each other (‘Mutual enquiries on common subjects passed; neither of them, probably, much the wiser for what they heard’). From sentence 3 onwards, NP and FIT are intermingled almost indistinguishably: Anne becomes aware of the fact that they ‘had [...] got to speak to each other with a considerable portion of apparent indifference and calmness’ but observes that ‘he could not do it now’. This observation leads her to conjecture that ‘Time had changed him, *or* Louisa had changed him’. Both of these conjectures later prove to be inaccurate; it is his feelings for her that make him anxious. She sees that ‘There was consciousness of some sort or other’ on his face, and concludes that ‘He looked very well,not as if he had been suffering in health or spirits’. The passage contains evaluation (‘very well’) and epistemic modality (‘some sort or other’). There is also a perception of speech (‘and he talked of Uppercross, of the Musgroves, nay, even of Louisa, and had even a momentary look of his own arch significance as he named her’) which could be read as a narratorial report of a speech act (NRSA) were it not for the presence of markers of verbal thought (‘nay’), figural evaluation (‘even’) and the presence of a visual perception too (‘a momentary look of his own arch significance’). All of what Anne sees and hears leads her to the conclusion that ‘Captain Wentworth [was] not comfortable, not easy, not able to feign that he was’.

The fact that Anne has become calmer than him in the later part of the narrative suggests an enhanced self-confidence that may be based on her knowledge that her importance with him has increased too. This greater confidence can be linked to sensory confidence, as demonstrated in this example, and to the fact that Anne is increasingly able to go out of her state of absorption and take in much more information from the outside (Pinch 1996: 155). In the above example, Anne is very much alert to Captain Wentworth’s appearance and actively perceiving, listening and thinking about him, while she evaluates his looks and words and conjectures about his feelings. An increased confidence will lead to the final events of the novel, with Wentworth declaring his love to Anne in a letter. This letter ends with an anxious request: ‘A word, a look will be enough to decide whether I enter your father’s house this evening, or never’ (Austen 1998 [1818]: 223). A look is the signal she gives him; and it is significant that NP is the very technique chosen at one of the most intense points in the narrative—the moment Anne and Captain Wentworth meet on the street just after she has read his letter—to convey that everything is finally decided between them:

1. 1 [N] They [Anne and Charles Musgrove] were in Union-street, [CN: PERCEPTION] when a quicker step behind, a something of familiar sound, [PN: NI] gave her two moments preparation [PN: PERCEPTION] for the sight of Captain Wentworth. 2 [NP] He joined them; but, [FIT]as if irresolute whether to join or to pass on,[NP] said nothing—only looked. 3 [PN: NI] Anne could command herself enough to receive that look, and not repulsively. 4 [NP] The cheeks which had been pale now glowed, and the movements which had hesitated were decided. 5 He walked by her side. 6 [PN: NRTA] Presently, struck by a sudden thought, [N] Charles said,

[…].

(Austen 1998 [1818]: 224-225)

NP expresses the silent understanding between Anne and Captain Wentworth. No narratorial explanations, no thoughts in PN, no words; only Anne’s visual perception of his facial expression and movements, and her awareness and even physical sensation that he walks by her side. This is all that is needed for her (and the reader) to understand the transcendental change that has just taken place in their lives: she has understood his enquiring look (‘he only looked’), which is connected with a conjecture in FIT (‘as if irresolute whether to join or to pass on’); and her perception of his reaction to her own look tells her that he has understood she accepts him. Anne’s confidence in this instance is expressed by the fact that she ‘could command herself enough’ and not feel nervous, as her happiness is at stake. The reader may sense in the description of the ‘cheeks which had been pale’ and ‘now glowed’, in ‘the movements which had hesitated’ and now ‘were decided’, and the fact that ‘He walked by her side’, a plethora of exquisite sensations and emotions, a sense of closeness, a feeling of liberty, security and fulfilment, and the conviction that their love is confirmed and their destinies are finally woven together.

**5.3 Review**

It has been pointed out by some literary scholars that sensory perception is generally more prominent in the later novels than in the earlier ones (Lascelles 1939: 178). In quantitative terms, this does not seem true of *MP*, which contains less NP than *PP* and *NA*, but *P* definitely stands out from all of the other novels discussed so far. Qualitatively, however, sensory perception has a strong thematic importance in *MP* and *P*. In particular, *P* has been said to emphasise corporeality, sensation, perception and emotion (Warhol 1992). The qualitative analyses presented in this chapter have provided stylistic evidence of the precise ways in which perception is prominent in these two novels, and shown that NP is connected with Fanny and Anne’s perceptiveness, isolation and sensibility.

Most instances of NP in *MP* represent Fanny’s perceptions, but some also represent the perceptions of other characters, particularly Henry Crawford, giving the reader access to other points of view about the same fictional events and about Fanny. In this regard *MP* resembles *SS*, where the perspective of a second character (Marianne) is occasionally provided through NP. What particularly distinguishes NP in *MP* is that it mostly expresses Fanny’s distress, and is very prominently connected with the emotional value of objects and domestic features. NP also portrays her feelings of oppression when Henry Crawford is around. Anne is also very conscious of spaces and other people’s presences; sometimes as a prompter of memories and distress, as occurs in *MP*, but also often containing an element of desire for physical and emotional closeness with Wentworth which contrasts with Fanny’s relation to objects, spaces and people as sources of comfort, privacy, inspiration, security or distress.

Despite the fact that *E* will be shown to contain more NP than *P*, only Anne among all of the Austen’s heroines is described as being endowed with a ‘natural penetration’ and a ‘quickness of perception’, which indirectly points to sensory experience (because it is the basis of that capability) as a salient element of the novel. Like Fanny, Anne has a nervous constitution and is isolated by her family, but she is stronger and her confidence increases in the second half of the novel. She is often alert to her environment, and her observations often suggest intense emotions such as sadness, jealousy, pleasure and desire, especially where Captain Wentworth is concerned. The progress of the relationship between them is actually marked by perception, since they do not usually talk to each other. Visual perception is as usual the most common type of NP, but there is also an abundance of instances of aural perception and awareness of spaces and distances from others, and this can be linked to Anne’s bodily and mental isolation, which constrains her to watch and listen, as well as to her increasing yearning for connection and affection.

## ****Chapter 6****

## ****NP in *Emma*****

**6.0 Foreword**

*E* deserves a separate chapter because the use of NP in this novel is the most extensive and fully developed in all of Austen’s fiction: many more examples can be found, passages are often longer, and they represent a wide range of perceptual experiences. In fact *E* can be said to embody and develop all of the features of NP that have been analysed in the other five novels: the importance of visuality, auditory perception and tactile experience; the combination of NP and FIT; the use of NP to convey awareness of spaces, time, objects and self; and the potential ambiguity of sensory perception. Aural perception in particular is extremely abundant in this novel, which sets it apart from the rest. Also prominent are the perceptions of self and the interplay of thought and perception (NP-FIT). The ambiguity and unreliability of NP are also generally greater and more complex than in the other novels, and are achieved by means of various devices which will be explored in detail in this chapter.

In line with the consistent patterns observed in the rest of Austen’s fiction, passages of NP in *E* are very much connected with climactic moments, emotions and social situations which prompt watchfulness of others. There is a wider range of degrees of alignment and distance between narratorial and figural perspectives. Distance is often expressed as irony and humour, as the reader is often able to see that Emma is deluded and conjecture hidden feelings and motives which are not revealed until the end. However, conjecture is all the reader can do: crucial amounts of information are withheld, and NP is one of the means of achieving this purpose. Indeed, another distinctive feature of this novel is the fact that NP is used at key times in the narrative to keep the point of view anchored in the heroine’s consciousness, thus contributing to create the suspense that is so characteristic of the novel. Emma’s mistaken perceptions are central to the novel: they are also important in *NA*, but definitely essential to the plot in *E*.

**6.1 *Emma***

The total number of passages containing NP which have been identified in *E* is 257 (95 straightforward, 95 ambiguous, 67 of the type NP-FIT). This means a relative frequency of [16] in a total of 156,729 words. The following table presents the quantitative results for all the Austen novels:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Novel** | **Straightforward NP** | **Ambiguous NP-N** | **NP-FIT** | **Total** |
| *SS* | 27 [2.3]  (50%) | 22 [1.9]  (41%) | 5 [0.4]  (9%) | 54 [4.6]~[5] (100%) |
| *PP* | 76 [6.3]  (56%) | 53 [4.4]  (40%) | 5 [0.4]  (4%) | 134 [11.1] (100%) |
| *NA* | 47 [6.2]  (54%) | 24 [3.1]  (27%) | 17 [2.2]  (19%) | 88  [11.5]~[12]  (100%) |
| *MP* | 52 [3.3]  (43%) | 34 [2.1]  (28%) | 36 [2.3]  (29%) | 122 [7.7]~[8]  (100%) |
| *P* | 39 [4.8]  39%) | 27 [3.3]  (26%) | 36 [4.4] (35%) | 102 [12.5]~[13]  (100%) |
| *E* | 95 [6]  (37%) | 95 [6]  (37%) | 67 [4]  (26%) | 257 [16]  (100%) |

**Table 16. Number, density and percentage of instances of NP in all of the six novels(Figures in square brackets represent normalised figures per 10,000 words)**

The table shows that *E* contains the highest density of instances of NP in all of Austen’s novels. The difference between *E* and *P* is smaller, which suggests a resemblance between the two novels with regard to the importance of NP in the characterisation of the heroine and the focalisation of the narrative. Another resemblance concerns the fact that the vast majority of instances of NP in *E* and *P*, as occurs in *NA*, are almost exclusively connected with the heroine (97% of the total instances in *NA* and *P*, 92% in *E*, 91% in *PP*), in contrast with the other two novels, where focalisation through NP is more diffused among characters (70% in *MP* and 51% in *SS*). Note, however, that the percentage and frequency of ambiguous cases in *E* is notably higher than in *P* (37% and 26% respectively), in in fact the highest in all of Austen’s fiction, with exactly the same amount of straightforward and ambiguous instances (37%). As was discussed in previous chapters, a greater ambiguity normally expresses a greater degree of alignment or overlap between narratorial and figural viewpoints. The case of *E* is slightly different, however, as ambiguity serves a particular function which can be considered typical of this novel alone: NP has the potential to mislead the reader by restricting the information available about any one character’s feelings, motives and circumstances to that contained in Emma’s perceptual consciousness. Table 16 also reveals a significantly high density of NP-FIT cases, with *E*’s frequency of [4] (26%) being close to *P*’s [4.4] (35%). All of these aspects are discussed in more detail in the analyses below.

*E* follows the same pattern that has been observed in all of the other novels, insofar as NP is invariably concentrated in climactic and strongly emotional episodes. The case of *E* is special, however, in that instances of NP are more evenly distributed across chapters, and are very numerous at key times in comparison with other novels: 25 is the highest number of instances found in one single chapter in *E*, which stands in marked contrast to 5 in *SS*, 9 in *MP*, 12 in *NA*, 13 in *P* and 16 in *PP*. The chapters containing the most instances have in common the narration of social situations where Emma is very alert to other people’s behaviour, especially because of the emotions she derives from her perceptions: a secret gratification when plotting other people’s lives and discovering their motives (for example, when she conjectures the reasons behind Jane Fairfax’s looks and actions), and a range of pleasant or distressing feelings in those situations which involve her happiness more directly (for example, when she is trying to ascertain whether Mr Knightley is in love with Jane). She may or may not be aware of such feelings, but they can be inferred by the reader in some passages of NP.

The first cluster of chapters where NP becomes prominent concerns Emma’s secret plans for Harriet and Mr Elton (Chapters 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10, which contain 7, 7, 5, 7 and 7 instances respectively). Besides attempting to bring Harriet and Mr Elton together as often as possible, Emma continually engages in attentive observation and active listening of them. In Chapters 13 and 15 (8 and 4 instances, respectively) Emma gradually realises her mistakes with regard to Mr Elton’s feelings. In particular, the climactic scenes at the Christmas party and then during the journey back home in a carriage, where Mr Elton proposes to Emma, contain instances of NP associated with violent emotions: surprise, anger, indignation, awkwardness. After these events, it is mainly FIT and PN that are used to render Emma’s awakening and remorse for having induced Harriet to care about Mr Elton. NP becomes prominent again when Frank Churchill visits Highbury: in Chapters 23 and 24 (5 and 6 instances respectively), NP mostly represents Emma’s perceptions and evaluations of him, which are based on a predisposition to like him and therefore are mostly positive.

Chapter 26 is the first landmark of the novel as far as NP is concerned, with 18 instances occurring during the narration of the party at the Coles’. NP here portrays Emma’s perceptions of various persons’ looks, actions and words, particularly those of Frank Churchill and Mr Knightley. A second important landmark is Chapter 30 (12 instances), which narrates the rest of Frank’s visit and ends with an awkward farewell between him and Emma. NP here is crucial: it renders Emma’s conclusions, which, if trusted, may turn out to be deceiving. In particular, she believes Frank is about to declare his love to her, which later on turns out to be false. With the arrival of Mr Elton and his wife in Highbury, Chapters 31-33 (5, 6 and 6 instances respectively) again present an observant Emma. Most passages of NP render her opinion of the looks, words and behaviour of the newly-wed couple. This opinion is not fixed from the beginning, however: in the first few instances Emma is willing to make allowances for the influence of first impressions and the inevitable clumsiness of the introduction for everyone. However, a few more meetings serve to confirm her in her disapprobation of Mrs Elton and the observation that Mr Elton is grown proud and ‘unpleasant towards Harriet’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 231).

The highest peak of the novel as far as NP is concerned is Chapter 38, with 25 instances. This chapter shows the potential of NP to contribute to the characterisation of a heroine by revealing feelings of which she is not aware herself, particularly in connection with Mr Knightley. The chapter narrates the ball at The Crown. It is a climactic episode in many ways: the ball itself constitutes an extraordinary event in the quiet life of Highbury, and Emma experiences strong feelings of anxiety, expectation and excitement on the occasion. Two events occur that dampen her happiness: Mrs Weston hints at a possible match between Mr Knightley and Jane, and this prompts her to find reasons why he should never marry, and to sharpen her observation of his behaviour. All of this a perceptive reader may suspect of betraying more than mere anxiety for a friend’s welfare. The other unpleasant circumstance is Mr Elton’s offense towards Harriet and Emma when he purposely refuses to ask Harriet to dance. NP portrays Emma’s perception of his gestures, words and ‘smiles of high glee’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 271) that pass between him and his wife. This situation ends with intense joy, however, as Emma sees Harriet has got an unexpected partner: ‘Mr. Knightley leading Harriet to the set!’ (271). NP also portrays Emma’s admiration of his dancing abilities, which again suggests her real feelings for him. She also becomes aware of Frank’s altered behaviour towards herself; of his being in an ‘odd humour’ (268) which she cannot fully comprehend. As in other parts of the novel, NP keeps the reader in the dark about Frank’s true motives by limiting the information to Emma’s perceptions and conjectures.

The above outline reveals that the number of passages containing NP is particularly high in chapters narrating walks, parties, balls, trips and love declarations (real or imagined); situations which lend themselves well to the observation of other people because of the intense social interaction involved, and hence to the representation of figural perception. In line with what has been observed in other Austen novels, chapters narrating trips contain a substantial number of instances of NP. The day trips to Donwell (Chapter 42) and Box Hill (Chapter 43) teem with observations, misunderstandings, tension and strong emotions. They are also climactic in the sense that crucial events happen during them: Chapter 42 (13 instances) renders Emma’s perceptions of Mrs Elton, Mr Knightley, Harriet, Frank and Jane, and most importantly the house and the grounds of Donwell Abbey. Her perceptions reveal to her the value of Donwell, Jane’s feelings and Frank’s character. Chapter 43 contains 6 instances, most of which revolve around the violent emotions experienced by Emma at the end of the trip to Box Hill; the most important trip in the novel, when Mr Knightley scolds her for having insulted Miss Bates. Both in this chapter and the next (Emma’s visit to Miss Bates) NP is connected with Emma’s repentance and awakening to her own faults.

Chapter 45 presents 11 instances of NP that convey Emma’s happiness as she realises from Mr Knightley’s looks and gestures that she has been forgiven for the offense to Miss Bates. The remaining chapters are quite uniform in the distribution of NP. They narrate the concluding events of the novel, all of which are intensely felt by Emma: NP features prominently when she is told the news of Frank and Jane’s engagement (Chapter 46, 6 instances); during the walk with Mr Knightley, when he declares his love to her (Chapter 49, 7 instances); when she realises her own fortune and happiness in marriage (Chapter 50, 4 instances); when she visits the Bates’ and is reconciled with Jane (Chapter 52, 7 instances); and during the final scene at the Westons’, where she meets Frank again (Chapter 54, 8 instances).

The vast majority of instances of NP in *E* portray Emma’s perceptions (237 instances, 92% of the total). There are 3 instances of collective perception and 2 instances representing Mr and Mrs Weston’s perceptions. Interestingly, Chapter 41 is entirely devoted to the perceptions of Mr Knightley, whose observations appear in 15 instances of NP (6% of the total). In this regard *E* is similar to *SS* and *MP*, where the perceptions of other characters are also represented through NP.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **No. of instances of NP** | **Percentage** |
| Emma | 238 | 92% |
| Mr Knightley | 15 | 6% |
| Mrs Weston | 1 | 0.5% |
| Mr Weston | 1 | 0.5% |
| Collective (various groups) | 3 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 257 | 100% |

**Table 17. Subject of perception (heroine/other characters) in *E***

In the case of *E*, the perspective of another character besides that of the heroine is given, not only as a complementary world-view underlying different emotions and opinions, as occurs in *SS* and *MP*, but also as an indirect way for the narrator to let the reader know that there is something going on which Emma has not noticed. Mr Knightley suspects there are ‘symptoms of intelligence’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 284) between Frank (the avowed lover of Emma) and Jane, and sets about watching these two closely during an afternoon a group of friends spend together. This group includes Emma, but her perspective is hardly provided in this chapter:

1. 1 [PN: IT] Mr. Knightley suspected in Frank Churchill the determination of catching her [Jane’s] eye—[NP] he seemed watching her intently—[FIT] in vain, however, if it were so—[NP] Jane passed between them into the hall, and looked at neither.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 287)

This passage, occurring at the beginning of the meeting, already presents a very observant Mr Knightley, who is on his guard for signs of double dealing on Frank’s side. The use of the past continuous aspect and the epistemic ‘seemed’ signals a figural viewpoint. Note also the alternation of NP and FIT and the presence of dashes, which may be taken to indicate the rapid succession of images and thoughts in Mr Knightley’s consciousness. In this passage he looks first at Frank, then at Jane, and cannot really make sense of what is going on. As they are all seated at a table, Frank suggests they play at quizzing one another with alphabet letter pieces and insists on giving Jane a word for her to make out. After Emma says in direct speech (DS) ‘“No, no, you must not; you shall not, indeed”’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 288), Mr Knightley continues observing: ‘1 [NP] It was done however. 2 [NP-FIT] This gallant young man, who seemed to love without feeling, and to recommend himself without complaisance, directly handed over the word to Miss Fairfax, and with a particular degree of sedate civility entreated her to study it’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 288). Here, visual and aural perceptions are intertwined with thoughts (NP-FIT) which emphasise Mr Knightley’s negative evaluation of Frank (‘without feeling’, ‘without complaisance’). The use of repetition and parallelism serves to reinforce his disapprobation of Frank’s conduct.

Other passages of NP in this chapter similarly evince Mr Knightley’s dislike towards Frank and disappointment in Jane; and perhaps, something else: is he just condemning Frank’s behaviour? A perceptive reader may see in his perceptions a sign of jealousy on Emma’s account as well. Later on in this chapter, he tries to convince her that there is something going on between Frank and Jane, and tells her so to prevent her from being heartbroken, but he does not find her very receptive. His observation and interpretation of her reaction is as follows:

1. 1 [PN: IT] He had hoped she would speak again, [N] but she did not. 2 [NP-FIT] She would rather busy herself about any thing than speak. 3 [PN: NI] He sat a little while in doubt. 4 A variety of evils crossed his mind. 5 [FIT] Interference—fruitless interference. 6 [NP-FIT] Emma’s confusion, and the acknowledged intimacy, seemed to declare her affection engaged.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 289)

In this passage, Mr Knightley ponders Emma’s feelings while he sees her acting seemingly careless about his words of caution. Sentence 2 has been categorised as NP-FIT because the structure ‘would rather […] than’ seems to express a verbalised evaluation that also refers to an ongoing perception (Emma busying herself). Mr Knightley also perceives silence and Emma’s apparent reluctance to speak (aural and visual perception). Sentences 3-5 again describe his thoughts and feelings in PN and FIT, and sentence 6 has been tagged as NP-FIT as his thoughts are based on the concomitant visual perception of ‘Emma’s confusion’. The conclusion of this perception is that ‘her affection [is] engaged’ (to Frank). It is difficult to interpret NP in this passage: is Emma actually confused or reluctant to speak, as Mr Knightley perceives her? Is she really avoiding his conversation? The narrator does not confirm or refute any of these perceptions elsewhere. What NP does suggest, however, is a jealous Mr Knightley, and demonstrates that he, too, can be mistaken in his perceptions; at least, in his conclusions about Emma’s feelings at this point in the narrative: although she has allowed herself the possibility of having feelings for him in the past, she later on confesses that she does not care about Frank. This example also illustrates the fact that Mr Knightley’s perceptions provide both a contrast to those of Emma and an outside view of her; that is, a glimpse into how other characters see her.

The majority of instances of NP in *E* represent visual perceptions: 110 instances (42%) are purely visual and 83 (32%) contain a mixture of visual perception and other types of perception. This means that visual perception is present in 193 instances, which makes up 74% of the total instances tagged. In the following passage, Emma, Mr Elton and Harriet are walking together. Emma is convinced that Mr Elton intends to marry Harriet, and contrives a way to leave them alone together so that he can declare his love to her. However, at this point the reader has enough information to infer that Mr Elton is in love with Emma, even if this has never been explicitly stated. In spite of his many signs of interest, Emma is blinded, and her visual perceptions reflect her wishes for them:

1. 1 [DS] “Part of my lace is gone,” [N] said she, [DS] “and I do not know how I am to contrive. 2 I really am a most troublesome companion to you both, but I hope I am not often so ill-equipped. 3 Mr. Elton, I must beg leave to stop at your house, and ask your housekeeper for a bit of ribband or string, or any thing just to keep my boot on.”

4 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] Mr. Elton looked all happiness at this proposition; and nothing could exceed his alertness and attention in conducting them into his house and endeavouring to make every thing appear to advantage. 5 The room they were taken into was the one he chiefly occupied, and looking forwards; behind it was another with which it immediately communicated; the door between them was open, [N] and Emma passed into it with the housekeeper to receive her assistance in the most comfortable manner. 6 She was obliged to leave the door ajar as she found it; [PN: IT] but she fully intended that Mr. Elton should close it. 7 [NP] It was not closed, however, it still remained ajar; [PN: IT] but by engaging the housekeeper in incessant conversation, she hoped to make it practicable for him to chuse his own subject in the adjoining room. 8 [PN: PERCEPTION] For ten minutes she could hear nothing but herself. 9 [FIT] It could be protracted no longer. 10 [N] She was then obliged to be finished, and make her appearance.

11 [NP] The lovers were standing together at one of the windows.12 [NP-FIT] It had a most favourable aspect; [PN: NI] and, for half a minute, Emma felt the glory of having schemed successfully.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 77)

There are ambiguous and straightforward passages of NP in this example. The first paragraph represents Emma’s speech (DS). Then there follows a description of Mr Elton looking happy and being attentive (sentence 4) and a description of the rooms in his house (sentence 5) which can be read as either N or Emma’s perception (NP). There are no perception indicators in the preceding text, and there is a piece of information of which Emma may not be aware (‘The room they were taken into was the one he chiefly occupied’), which suggests a narratorial perspective. However, both sentences may equally be interpreted as Emma’s perceptions, especially as they contain the epistemic modal ‘look’ (‘looked all happiness’), which can be taken to indicate how she sees Mr Elton. After leaving him and Harriet by themselves, she spends some time with the housekeeper in an adjoining room, in hopes that Mr Elton will close the door in between (sentence 6). The ambiguity of some passages can sometimes be resolved by subsequent linguistic cues (Bray 2007: 48), and sentence 6 favours a retrospective interpretation of the statement ‘the door between them was open’ in sentence 5 as figural, since the door being open or closed is revealed to be important for Emma’s plans. This in turn makes it easier for sentence 7 to be read as Emma’s visual perception, that is, as NP (‘It was not closed, however, it still remained ajar’).

After an aural perception represented in PN (‘For ten minutes she could hear nothing but herself’) and a thought in FIT (‘It could be protracted no longer’), Emma ‘was then obliged to be finished, and make her appearance’. Sentence 11, at the beginning of a new paragraph, has been categorised as NP as it probably represents Emma’s view of Mr Elton and Harriet: ‘The lovers were standing together at one of the windows’ could potentially be read as N, since it is not preceded by any perception indicator. However, the use of the past continuous aspect and the fact that Emma has just entered the room point to her visual perspective. Moreover, the designation ‘The lovers’ fits in with Emma’s wishes for Mr Elton and Harriet’s marriage. This passage is reminiscent of the passage from *MP* analysed in Chapter 5 in which Fanny observes Mary and Edmund riding together. Although in the latter case the heroine’s desires are very much against the match, the same projection of feeling occurs in the sight of two persons as lovers. Sentence 12 goes on to depict Emma’s thoughts, based on her visual perceptions (NP-FIT): ‘It had a most favourable aspect’. This could be the narrator’s description of the scene at the window, using the word ‘aspect’ in a literal way, and yet the evaluation ‘favourable’ can be easily attributed to Emma, who is watching out for signs that Mr Elton may be declaring his love. The latter interpretation renders NP ironic by implicitly suggesting Emma’s blindness. Irony is another characteristic of NP in *E* which will be pointed out in other examples in this chapter.

The prevalence of visual perception in *E* seems to be an intuitively available reading of the novel: ‘Throughout *Emma*, perception is figured partly in terms of metaphors of the visual’ (Jones 2008: 316). Compared with other novels, however, the percentage of visual perception is not one of the most striking, with visual perception comprising 74% of the total instances, in contrast with 86% in *SS*, 84% in *PP*, 79% in *NA* and 83% in *MP*. This is because, as occurs in *P* (70%), many other types of perception come into play in this novel. Indeed, what is not self-evident from an intuitive reading or a qualitative analysis alone, and has been revealed by the tagging and quantification of passages, is the widespread presence and importance of other types of perception, particularly aural perception: 40 instances of aural perception plus 86 instances combining aural and other types of perception make up a total of 126 passages, which constitutes almost half of the total instances of NP found in *E* (49%). This is a unique feature of NP in *E*, which contrasts with the results for the other novels, where aural perception is not as prominent (*SS* 39%; *PP* 38%; *NA* 36%; *P* 34%). Only *MP* comes close to *E* in this regard, as was discussed in Chapter 5, with 48% of aural instances.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nove**  **l** | **Visual** | **Aural** | **Tactile** | **Visual and aural** | **Visual, aural and tactile** | **Position in space / distance from others** | **Imaginary** | **Awareness of self** | **T**  **o**  **t**  **a**  **l** |
| *SS* | 30 (56%) | 5  (9%) | 3  (5%) | 16 (30%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 |
| *PP* | 76 (56%) | 21 (16%) | 0 | 29 (22%) | 0 | 8  (6%) | 0 | 0 | 134 |
| *NA* | 55 (63%) | 8  (9%) | 0 | 15 (17%) | 9 (10%) | 0 | 1 (1%) |  | 88 |
| *MP* | 62 (51%) | 19 (15%) | 0 | 38 (31%) | 2  (2%) | 0 | 1 (1%) |  | 122 |
| *P* | 50 (49%) | 13 (13%) | 1  (1%) | 22 (21%) | 0 | 12  (12%) | 0 | 4  (4%) | 102 |
| *E* | 110 (42%) | 40 (16%) | 5 [3 aural]  (2%) | 81 (31%) | 2  (1%) | 6  (2%) | 0 | 17  (6%) | 257 |

**Table 18. Types of perception in *E***

Not only is aural perception much more abundant in *E*, however, but also reveals a heroine who is very much involved with the people around her, and uses aural information for her own purposes. The range of auditory experiences is also greater in *E* than in *MP* and *P*: besides perceiving other people’s speeches, Emma is aware of tones, voices and laughs, a phenomenon which sometimes occurs in *MP* but not in *P*. In addition, many passages of NP do not represent Emma’s perception of speech but the absence of it; that is, other people’s silence, determination not to speak or the absence of sound in the environment. In the following passage, her perceptions have an essentially aural component as she realises her delusions with regard to Mr Elton, who unexpectedly declares his love to her:

1. 1 [PN: NI] To restrain him as much as might be, by her own manners, she was immediately preparing to speak with exquisite calmness and gravity of the weather and the night; [N] but scarcely had she begun, scarcely had they passed the sweep-gate and joined the other carriage, [PN: PERCEPTION] than she found her subject cut up—her hand seized—her attention demanded, and Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her: [NRSA] availing himself of the precious opportunity, declaring sentiments which must be already well known, hoping—fearing—adoring—ready to die if she refused him; [IS] but flattering himself that his ardent attachment and unequalled love and unexampled passion could not fail of having some effect, [PN: PERCEPTION] and in short, very much resolved on being seriously accepted as soon as possible. 2 [FIT] It really was so. 3 [NP-FIT] Without scruple—without apology—without much apparent diffidence, Mr. Elton, the lover of Harriet, was professing himself *her* lover. 4 [N] She tried to stop him; but vainly; [NP] he would go on, and say it all. 5 [PN: NI] Angry as she was, [PN: NRTA] the thought of the moment made her resolve to restrain herself when she did speak.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 108, original italics)

During a Christmas party at Randalls, Emma has been noticing what she considers a strange behaviour on Mr Elton’s side: his pointed interest in pleasing her. She asks herself ‘“Can it really be as my brother imagined? can it be possible for this man to be beginning to transfer his affections from Harriet to me?—Absurd and insufferable!”’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 99). As the party draws to a close and Emma is put in a carriage with him, she intends to ‘restrain him as much as might be’, but Mr Elton begins a ‘violent’ love declaration. In sentence 1, the narrator describes events (‘preparing to speak’ ‘passed the sweep-gate and joined the other carriage’) and reports Mr Elton’s speech within the frame of Emma’s aural perception in PN: ‘she found her subject cut up—her hand seized—her attention demanded, and Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her: […] and in short, very much resolved on being seriously accepted as soon as possible’). Another narratorial feature is the use of summarisation (‘hoping—fearing—adoring’), and the length and syntactic complexity of the sentence: there are several main clauses coordinated by means of ‘but’ and ‘and’, temporal subordinate clauses (‘scarcely had she begun […] than’), relative clauses (‘which must be already well known’), and that- clauses (‘that his ardent attachment and unequalled love and unexampled passion could not fail’) with embedded clauses in turn (‘of having some effect’).

Sentence 1 also contains several markers of figural subjectivity, however, which mark a transition towards the ensuing FIT and NP: the use of dashes, the adverbial ‘actually’ (‘Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her’) perhaps indicating surprise; and the expression ‘in short’, which, besides introducing a summary, can be taken to evoke Emma’s indignation and lack of patience, together with the evaluation ‘very much resolved’. Sentences 2 (FIT) and 3 (NP-FIT) are considerably shorter and contain dashes, which adds rhythm and evokes figural subjectivity. The use of repetition and evaluation (‘Without scruple—without apology—without much apparent diffidence’), the past continuous aspect (‘was professing’), designations which belong to Emma’s view of the fictional world (‘Mr. Elton, the lover of Harriet’) and an emphasis on the pronoun ‘her’ also mark figural perception. These various expressions could be read as verbalised thought, especially because of the emphasised pronoun, which is why this sentence has been categorised as a combination of NP and FIT. The next instance of NP, ‘he would go on, and say it all’ is expressive of aural perception as well. There is no mention of Mr Elton’s looks in this passage, only an auditory presentation of him.

This example illustrates the fact that NP in this novel is frequently expressive of narratorial distance, often in the form of irony. Emma’s astonishment may come across as comical to the reader who has suspected for some time the truth of Mr Elton’s intentions. To such a reader it is obvious that Mr Elton is in no need of ‘scruple’, ‘apology’ or ‘diffidence’ in declaring his intentions to Emma; and also that he is not ‘the lover of Harriet’ as Emma has been assuming. Her implicit annoyance when ‘he would go on, and say it all’ can also appear comical and reveal her indignation and sense of superiority over Mr Elton. The narrator is here using NP, among other techniques, as an indirect way of showing the end of both Emma’s and Mr Elton’s delusions, and as a way of increasing the emotional impact of the representation.

The importance of speech, sound and silence in *E* has already been noted but perhaps not treated in depth: ‘In any small, close-knit community such as Highbury, with its obligations, benefits, and irritations, speech—communication—is central. Accordingly, *Emma*, more than any other of Austen’s novels, emphasizes the significance of speech, not only through its brilliant dialogue, but also through an intense consciousness of speech habits and their implications’ (Sturrock 2007). The perception of speeches and silences is one very important source of information about the world for Emma. She often draws conclusions about people by what they say, and by how much they say. For example, she judges Jane by the amount of information she gives: she admires her elegance (visual perception), but detests her reserve, in NP-FIT: ‘She was, besides, which was the worst of all, so cold, so cautious! There was no getting at her real opinion. Wrapt up in a cloak of politeness, she seemed determined to hazard nothing. She was disgustingly, was suspiciously reserved’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 140). At the end of the novel, when they become friends and Jane opens up to her a little, Emma says ‘“Thank you, thank you.—This is just what I wanted to be assured of.—Oh! if you knew how much I love every thing that is decided and open!—Good bye, good bye”’ (1996 [1816]: 377). This passage, which may express Emma’s irony about Jane’s past reserve, shows nonetheless how much she prizes verbal communication.

Emma herself ‘is extraordinarily skilled in managing conversation according to polite rules. She makes everyone feel welcome and included; she also knows when to steer the conversation away from potential conflicts, and when reticence is the most tactful option’ (Michaelson 2002: 60). She is an expert in conversational practice. The spoken word is important to her. Not only does she constantly notice what other people say, but she is also aware of other people’s aural perceptions: ‘1 [PN: NI] Emma soon recollected, and understood him [Frank]; [N] and while she joined in the laugh, [NP] it was evident from Jane’s countenance that she too was really hearing him, though trying to seem deaf’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 392-393). She often receives information from overhearing conversations, a feature which has also been observed in *P*: ‘1 [PN: PERCEPTION] The first remote sound to which she felt herself obliged to attend, was the name of Jane Fairfax. 2 [NP] Mrs. Cole seemed to be relating something of her that was expected to be very interesting’ (1996 [1816]: 178). Very often Emma evaluates people’s tone of voice, sighs and laughter: for example, while Mr Elton exclaims ‘“Dreadful!—Exactly so, indeed.—She [Harriet] will be missed every moment”’, Emma evaluates him: ‘1 [FIT] This was very proper; [NP-FIT] the sigh which accompanied it was really estimable; [FIT] but it should have lasted longer’ (1996 [1816]: 96). She notes that Frank ‘laughed rather consciously’ (1996 [1816]: 214), and when Mrs Elton says to her ‘“And who do you think came in while we were there?”’, ‘1 [PN: NI] Emma was quite at a loss. 2 [NP-FIT] The tone implied some old acquaintance—[FIT] and how could she possibly guess? (1996 [1816]: 228).

Besides being always attentive to speech, Emma is also particularly sensitive to the absence of sound, and to any alteration in sound. It has been said that this novel ‘seems a realm where talk is coin and only silence is held cheap’ (Barchas 2007: 310). In Austen’s time, ‘the metaphor of voice and silence assumes that voice is *equivalent* to authority and silence is *equivalent* either to apathetic passivity or, more usually, to being silenced by an oppressor’ (Michaelson 2002: 4, original italics). In *E*, silence is unpleasant, and maybe also reveals passivity, lack of cooperation. At the same time, loquacious characters such as Miss Bates ‘violate the rules of “speech” in the novel’ (Davis 1995: 892). There needs to be a balance between speech and silence: ‘Like speech, silences—failures or refusals to communicate—can be aggressions against communal values. Jane’s silence, and even more so Frank’s combinations of misleading speech and silence, offend in that they unsettle normal community interactions in a closely-knit society’ (Sturrock 2007). There is also a ‘conflict between civility and sincerity’ (Michaelson 2002: 60), which can be argued to be true of other Austen novels as well, such as *SS*. It seems that ‘neither plain sincerity nor polite civility is an absolute good: either may be used for good or for ill’ (Michaelson 2002: 61). Austen is innovative in her treatment of speech and silence in the sense that there are no black and white positions: she ‘offers us good and bad speech, good and bad silence’ (Michaelson 2002: 215).

In contrast with other heroines such as Fanny, who is an advocate for silence, because of her personality (shy), youth and social condition (Michaelson 2002: 132-134), silence is usually unpleasant and oppressive to Emma; it makes her uncomfortable. In this regard she is similar to Elizabeth, who has to struggle against Darcy’s lack of conversational skills, which often results in uncomfortable silence (Michaelson 2002: 204). The argument Emma has with Mr Knightley in Chapter 8 concludes with his silence, which Emma finds difficult to bear: ‘1 [NP-FIT] to have him sitting just opposite to her in angry state, was very disagreeable. 2 [N] Some minutes passed in this unpleasant silence, [NRSA] with only one attempt on Emma’s side to talk of the weather, [N] but he made no answer’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 57). The perception of speech and silences becomes especially prominent during the walk in which Mr Knightley declares his love to her. Emma walks by his side, listens, speaks, conjectures about his words, and thinks about what she is to say next, but does not look at him, and thus most of her perceptions are auditory ones. What is particularly significant here is that silence, as Emma notices, is ‘most unnatural’ between them (Austen 1996 [1816]: 349). Several instances of NP portray her perception that he is silent: she needs to hear his voice and becomes nervous when she cannot. Silence is intrusive; it helps to build an atmosphere of climax:

1. 1 [DS] “Mr. Knightley,” [N] said Emma, [PN: NI] trying to be lively, but really confused—[DS] “I am in a very extraordinary situation. 2 I cannot let you continue in your error; and yet, perhaps, since my manners gave such an impression, I have as much reason to be ashamed of confessing that I never have been at all attached to the person we are speaking of [Frank], as it might be natural for a woman to feel in confessing exactly the reverse.—3 But I never have.”

4 [NP] He listened in perfect silence. 5 [PN: NI] She wished him to speak, [NP] but he would not. 6 [FIT] She supposed she must say more before she were entitled to his clemency; but it was a hard case to be obliged still to lower herself in his opinion. 7 [N] She went on, however.

[Emma’s Direct Speech]

8 [PN: NI] She had hoped for an answer here—for a few words to say that her conduct was at least intelligible; [NP] but he was silent; [NP-FIT] and, as far as she could judge, deep in thought. 9 [NP] At last, and tolerably in his usual tone, he said,

[…].

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 350-351)

In this passage Emma speaks twice and expects Mr Knightley to reply to her words, but is faced with silence instead. She also notices he is listening to her (sentence 4). The perception of his silence (‘he would not [speak]’) at the end of sentence 5 gives rise to a thought in sentence 6; an interpretation which a couple of paragraphs later proves to be mistaken: she feels he is silently judging her (she does not feel ‘entitled to his clemency’ and believes that her words ‘lower herself in his opinion’); yet from his subsequent love declaration the reader can retrospectively conjecture that Mr Knightley is probably surprised and glad about the news that Emma does not care about Frank. In sentence 8, perception and thought occur simultaneously (NP-FIT), as she evaluates him (‘deep in thought’) while she perceives his silence. This example also contains an aural perception in which Emma assesses Mr Knightley’s tone of voice (sentence 9). The evaluative adverb ‘tolerably’ supports the argument that she dislikes unusual speech qualities and silences. In this passage, aural NP contributes implicitly to express Emma’s desire for communication with Mr Knightley; perhaps also a desire to know whether he reciprocates her feelings for him. NP also has the function of delaying his love declaration for a few paragraphs and keeping both the reader and Emma in suspense.

The importance of sound in this novel is further corroborated by the fact that Emma does not seem to trust her visual perceptions as much as she does her aural ones. After Mrs Weston suggests that Mr Knightley may be planning to marry Jane, Emma closely observes his behaviour:

1. 1 [N] While waiting till the other young people could pair themselves off, Emma found time, in spite of the compliments she was receiving on her voice and her taste, to look about, [PN: PERCEPTION] and see what became of Mr. Knightley. 2 [FIT] This would be a trial. 3 He was no dancer in general. 4 If he were to be very alert in engaging Jane Fairfax now, it might augur something. 5 [NP-FIT] There was no immediate appearance. 6 No; he was talking to Mrs. Cole—he was looking on unconcerned; Jane was asked by somebody else, and he was still talking to Mrs. Cole.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 190)

The perception indicators ‘to look about’ (N) and ‘see what became of Mr. Knightley’ (PN) in sentence 1 prefigure the upcoming NP. Sentence 1 is a long and complex sentence, with one main clause (‘Emma found time’), a temporal subordinate clause (‘While waiting till the other young people could pair themselves off’), a concessive subordinate clause (‘in spite of the compliments she was receiving on her voice and her taste’) and two infinitive clauses that act as complements to ‘time’ (‘to look about’, ‘and [to] see what became of Mr. Knightley’). In contrast, sentences 2-4 (FIT) are shorter and simpler, generally made up of just one main clause (‘This would be a trial’, ‘He was no dancer in general’) and only sentence 4 containing a conditional subordinate clause (‘If he were to be very alert in engaging Jane Fairfax now’). Syntactic simplicity reflects figural consciousness, as do several deictics and evaluations: in sentence 2, the pronoun ‘This’ is anchored in Emma’s deictic centre, and refers to what Mr Knightley is about to do. The adverbial ‘now’ in sentence 4 is equally figural, and the word ‘trial’ reﬂects Emma’s evaluation of the situation, and expresses what Mr Knightley’s immediate behaviour will represent for her. Indeed, his attentions (or lack thereof) towards Jane would only be a trial for Emma, who is eager to ascertain his feelings. Sentence 3 continues Emma’s train of thought (she reminds herself of the fact that Mr Knightley does not usually dance) and sentence 4 presents a hypothetical future situation in which he forgets his usual unwillingness to dance in order to dance with Jane. The main clause, ‘It might augur something’, expresses the conclusion at which Emma would arrive if this hypothetical situation were to become true. The modal verb ‘might’ can also be considered a mark of Emma’s subjectivity, as its meaning can only be associated with the partial (that is, non-omniscient) point of view of someone who does not know the future and judges from present circumstances. Finally, note the subjective, indeterminate nature of ‘something’.

Sentence 5 passes from Emma’s internal thoughts to what is actually happening in her environment. The language used is mostly neutral, that is, non-evaluative; however, there is no indication that the point of view has changed, so according to the principle of ‘obstination’ or continuation (Fludernik 1993: 285) the reader is likely to continue reading from Emma’s vantage point, especially as she is on the lookout for signs of Mr Knightley’s interest in Jane. Sentence 6 has been categorised as NP-FIT because it makes use of a direct negation (‘No’), a device usually associated with verbalised thought or reﬂective consciousness (Banﬁeld 1981), and at the same time represents visual perception. Markers of perception are the use of the past continuous aspect (‘was talking’, ‘was looking’), semi-colons and dashes which signal successive perceptions in sentence 6, the evaluative adjective ‘unconcerned’ indicating the way Emma interprets Mr Knightley’s behaviour, and the use of repetition (‘was talking’, ‘was still talking’). This repetitive structure seems to convey Emma’s feeling of relief on discovering Mr Knightley’s apparent indiﬀerence towards Jane: ‘he was looking on unconcerned; Jane was asked by somebody else, and he was still talking to Mrs. Cole’. However, we cannot be sure that Mr Knightley is in fact feeling ‘unconcerned’; all we get is Emma’s view of things.

Earlier on, Emma has been mentally enumerating what she believes are her objections to Mr Knightley’s marriage, in a passage of FIT:

She could see nothing but evil in it. It would be a great disappointment to Mr. John Knightley; consequently to Isabella [her sister]. A real injury to the children—a most mortifying change, and material loss to them all;—a very great deduction from her father's daily comfort—and, as to herself, she could not at all endure the idea of Jane Fairfax at Donwell Abbey. A Mrs. Knightley for them all to give way to!—No—Mr. Knightley must never marry. Little Henry must remain the heir of Donwell.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 188)

In the example analysed above, readers may either believe that Emma is indeed worried about Mr Knightley as a friend, or conjecture that her perception that ‘There was no immediate appearance. No; he was talking to Mrs. Cole […]’ suggests other, perhaps unconscious, reasons for her alleged objections. If the latter interpretation, NP casts doubt on the reliability of the perception and suggests narratorial distance from the consciousness thus represented, perhaps even irony, in the sense that the reader is able to guess feelings of which Emma is not aware. In either case, the fact that the narrator chooses to express what is happening in the fictional world thro

1. ugh NP serves to keep the reader within Emma’s perspective, and contributes to the suspense of the plot. This feature is explored in more detail in other passages in this chapter.

Although Emma is visually certain that Mr Knightley does not show romantic feelings for Jane, it is not until she brings up the subject and actually *hears* the truth from his own mouth that she is fully convinced of his indifference. Her first surmise takes place during the same evening: ‘1 [N] Presently Mr. Knightley looked back, and came and sat down by her. 2 [NRSA] They talked at first only of the performance [of Jane at the piano]. 3 [NP-FIT] His admiration was certainly very warm; [FIT] yet she thought, but for Mrs. Weston, it would not have struck her’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 188). She is here evaluating what she hears. Several chapters later she is still thinking about this issue and confronts him directly, saying: “The extent of your admiration [for Jane] may take you by surprize some day or other”’ to which he replies, among other things: ‘“That will never be, however, I can assure you. Miss Fairfax, I dare say, would not have me if I were to ask her—and I am very sure I shall never ask her”’ (1996 [1816]: 236). It is only when she hears this that she is finally easy, which serves as further confirmation of the importance of aural perception in this novel.

However, like visual perceptions, aural perceptions are not always reliable, as Emma listens to what she wants, to whom she wants and when she wants. For instance, she seldom listens to Miss Bates’ long speeches, even though the latter gives crucial information among all her more trivial details; and she often interprets Mr Elton’s speech according to her own plans for him and Harriet:

1. 1 [PN: IT] She was quite convinced of Mr. Elton’s being in the fairest way of falling in love, if not in love already. 2 [PN: NI] She had no scruple with regard to him. 3 [NP] He talked of Harriet, and praised her so warmly, [FIT] that she could not suppose any thing wanting which a little time would not add**.** 4 [NP-FIT]His perception of the striking improvement of Harriet's manner, since her introduction at Hartfield, was not one of the least agreeable proofs of his growing attachment.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 37)

1. 1 [DS] “I have no doubt of it.” 2 [NP] And it was spoken with a sort of sighing animation which had a vast deal of the lover. 3 [PN: NI] She was not less pleased another day with the manner in which [NRSA] he seconded a sudden wish of her’s, to have Harriet’s picture.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 37)

In the first example, there is no reason to consider the aural perception and evaluation ‘He talked of Harriet, and praised her so warmly’ as inaccurate, as Mr Elton does probably praise Harriet in warm terms. However, the interpretation that is given to his ‘perception of the striking improvement of Harriet’s manner’ can sound suspicious to an insightful reader: is his speech really a proof of ‘his growing attachment’ to Harriet? At this point the reader perhaps does not have enough information to infer that Mr Elton prefers Emma to Harriet, and so this instance can prove misleading. By the time the second example occurs, after a few paragraphs, however, Mr Elton’s continual praise of Emma may make it plain to the reader that *she* is the object of his attentions, and therefore both passages of NP become ironic: indeed he probably speaks ‘with a sort of sighing animation’ that has ‘a vast deal of the lover’; only he is the lover of Emma, not Harriet. Note once again Emma’s attention to the meaning of sighs and tones. NP is distinguishable from a narratorial report of speech in these examples by the surrounding techniques, which maintain a figural perspective: in the first example, NP is alternated with thoughts in PN and FIT; and in the second, the ensuing PN, ‘she was not less pleased with the manner in which he seconded a sudden wish of hers’, implicitly refers back to NP: that is, she was not less pleased with this speech than with the previous one (‘it was spoken with a sort of sighing animation […]’), which retrospectively turns the latter into Emma’s perception. The presence of evaluative, indeterminate and colloquial expressions connected with Emma also helps to characterise the underlined clauses and sentences as figural (‘agreeable’, ‘a sort of’, ‘a vast deal of’).

Visual and aural perceptions are the most common types of perception in *E*, in that order, but other types of perception also occur. The most important is the perception of self, which occurs in 17 instances (6% of the total) and constitutes another crucial feature of NP in this novel. In these passages Emma perceives her mental and emotional state, behaviour and physical position. As occurs with other types of perception, these instances are usually less reliable earlier in the novel and more insightful in the later part, although this division is not always neat. Once again, in some of these passages it is possible for the reader to suspect feelings Emma may not be aware of, without having access to the actual truth. These perceptions thus may be seen as unreliable in some cases. The following instance occurs during the ball at The Crown, the most prominent part of the novel in terms of NP, with 25 instances. Emma perceives Mr Knightley’s gaze and becomes self-conscious:

1. 1 [PN: IT] She wished he could love a ball-room better, and could like Frank Churchill better.—2 [NP] He seemed often observing her. 3 [FIT] She must not flatter herself that he thought of her dancing, but if he were criticising her behaviour, she did not feel afraid. 4 [NP-FIT: AWARENESS] There was nothing like flirtation between her and her partner. 5 They seemed more like cheerful, easy friends, than lovers. 6 [FIT] That Frank Churchill thought less of her than he had done, was indubitable.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 269-270)

In this instance, as in Example 87 below, Emma’s perceptions (and thoughts) are based on her assumptions about Frank and prove to be inaccurate later. However, at this point the reader does not know what Frank is up to and may be taken in by Emma’s opinions. In sentence 1 (FIT), Emma directs her thoughts toward Mr Knightley, whom she perceives to be often observing her in sentence 2 (NP). The use of the epistemic qualifier ‘seemed’ perhaps denotes uncertainty: since Emma is dancing, and there are people around her, she may not be completely certain that he is looking at her. In any case, the perception that she is being observed instantly triggers another thought in sentence 3 (FIT), in which she rejects the idea that he may be interested in her dancing, and wonders if he is criticising her. This then turns her attention towards herself and Frank in sentences 4 and 5 (NP-FIT): ‘There was nothing like flirtation between her and her partner. They seemed more like cheerful, easy friends, than lovers’. These sentences represent her awareness of the way they are behaving to each other, and a conjecture about how they are coming across to others (‘seemed’). This perception-thought now triggers a reflection about her dancing partner’s feelings, perhaps based on visual perception: ‘That Frank Churchill thought less of her than he had done, was indubitable’. The transition back and forth from thought and perception in this passage is achieved in a subtle, skilful and mimetic way through the smooth alternation of FIT and NP. The reader may wonder why Emma is so concerned about Mr Knightley’s opinion of her; why she is so intent on appearing like a friend to Frank rather than a lover. The passage may convey a feeling of uneasiness on being watched, and a special alertness to her own behaviour. It may also put the reader on his guard about Mr Knightley’s and Emma’s feelings for each other.

Towards the end of the novel, Emma’s self-awareness tends to be more accurate. The following passage occurs at the end of the trip to Box Hill, during which Emma has insulted Miss Bates. The number of instances of NP in this chapter is 6. It is a climactic chapter in many ways: feelings are let out openly (for example, Emma displays her scorn for Miss Bates; Mr Knightley shows his displeasure to her) and important decisions are made: for instance, later on we learn that Jane decides to break her engagement with Frank during this trip. As Mr Knightley escorts Emma to her carriage, he reproaches her for her cruel behaviour to Miss Bates, and NP represents events through her intense feelings of repentance and sorrow. This is an unexpected, extraordinary event for her, very emotional. In fact, this is the first time she cries in the whole of the narrative. The passage conveys distress, awakening, and perhaps, something else, as will be presently discussed:

1. 1 [N] While they talked, they were advancing towards the carriage; [NP] it was ready; [NP: AWARENESS] and, before she could speak again, he had handed her in. 2 [AMBIGUOUS PN: NI MR KNIGHTLEY/ FIT EMMA] He had misinterpreted the feelings which had kept her face averted, and her tongue motionless. 3 [PN: NI] They were combined only of anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern. 4 [N] She had not been able to speak; and, on entering the carriage, sunk back for a moment [PN: NI] overcome—[PN: NRTA] then reproaching herself for having taken no leave, making no acknowledgement, parting in apparent sullenness, [N] she looked out with voice and hand [PN: NI] eager to show a difference; [CN: THOUGHT] but it was just too late. 5 [NP] He had turned away, [NP: AWARENESS] and the horses were in motion. 6 [N] She continued to look back, but in vain; [NP] and soon, [PN: NI] with what appeared unusual speed, [NP] they were half way down the hill, and every thing left far behind. 7 [PN: NI] She was vexed beyond what could have been expressed—almost beyond what she could conceal. 8 Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. 9 She was most forcibly struck. 10 [FIT] The truth of his representation there was no denying. 11 [PN: NI] She felt it at her heart. 12 [FIT] How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates!—13 How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued! 14 And how suffer him to leave her without saying one word of gratitude, of concurrence, of common kindness!

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 310)

In the first instance of NP (sentence 1), Emma sees the carriage and becomes aware of the rapidity with which she is helped into it. There seems to be a tactile element to this perception too, as she feels the brief touch of Mr Knightley’s hand in the process. Emma’s awareness of her presence within the carriage is similar to that seen in Example 64 above, where Anne is surprised to find herself inside a carriage thanks to the kindness of Captain Wentworth. Sentence 2 is ambiguous between PN and FIT: is the narrator describing Mr Knightley’s interpretation of Emma’s feelings, or presenting the latter’s lament about that interpretation? The fact that this sentence follows NP favours a reading of it as portraying Emma’s thoughts. Sentences 3 and 4 describe her feelings and actions in PN and N, and end with a description of how Emma ‘looked out with voice and hand eager to show a difference; but it was just too late’. The last clause here, preceded by after a semi-colon, has been categorised as CN because it echoes Emma’s mental evaluation of what she is about to see in sentence 5: ‘He had turned away, and the horses were in motion’. This instance of NP represents visual perception of Mr Knightley and also awareness of motion, which perhaps conveys a sense of helplessness.

Emma ‘continued to look back’ in sentence 7, which acts as a perception indicator. The next instance of NP, ‘and soon […] they were half way down the hill, and every thing left far behind’, represents Emma’s awareness of her own position in space, particularly in relation to Mr Knightley. This suggests deep emotion; in particular, a sense of frustration and despair seems to be expressed here. These feelings are portrayed more at length in the rest of the passage (sentences 7-14) in PN and FIT, which present an ‘agitated, mortified, grieved’ Emma. Once again NP represents perceptions in which the reader may see more than the character, especially as the perception ‘He had turned away’, rooted in Emma’s visual deictic centre, seems to have a terrible impact on her. It is only after her perceptions take place that her feelings burst out with full expression (note the use of exclamations and repetitions in FIT, ‘How could she have been so brutal’, ‘How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued!’). It seems as though her remorse on Miss Bates’ account has only been triggered by her affection for Mr Knightley, by his words and by seeing him angry with her and fading into the distance.

In other passages, Emma becomes aware of and analyses her state of mind. The following instance occurs after the walk in which Emma and Mr Knightley become engaged: ‘1 [PN: NI] What totally different feelings did Emma take back into the house from what she had brought out!—[FIT] she had then been only daring to hope for a little respite of suffering;—[NP-FIT: AWARENESS] she was now in an exquisite flutter of happiness, [PN: IT] and such happiness moreover as she believed must still be greater when the flutter should have passed away’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 356). The evidence that the underlined clause is best read as NP can be found in the subsequent PN, in which she is reported to be explicitly reflecting about the ‘happiness’ and the ‘flutter’ that are mentioned in NP, which implies that she is aware of them too in NP. In turn, NP favours the reading of the clause preceding it, ‘she had then been only daring to hope for a little respite of suffering’, as FIT, through an element of comparison (‘then […] now’). Otherwise both FIT and NP would be read as narratorial reports of feelings (PN). This is one of those instances in which one technique influences the interpretation of another. The dashes coincide with the transition from one technique to the next.

This passage, together with Examples 77 and 78, makes it clear that Emma is often aware of her own thoughts and feelings and thinks about them, which often results in a combination of NP and FIT. The frequency of NP-FIT instances in this novel is [4] (26%), which is lower than that of *P* ([4.4], 35%), close to that of *MP* ([2.3], 29%), and higher than those for the early novels. That is, the reflective nature of Anne and Fanny does not seem to be as strong in Emma while she is perceiving, but it is still very prominent. FIT is more often reserved for those times when Emma is alone, thinking about previous perceptions or feeling indignant or repentant, as in Example 78 above. However, there are also plenty of instances in which she reflects about what she is seeing or hearing:

1. 1 [PN: NI] she was particularly struck with the very appearance and manners, which for those two whole years she had been depreciating. 2 [NP-FIT] Jane Fairfax was very elegant, remarkably elegant; [FIT] and she had herself the highest value for elegance. 3 [NP-FIT] Her height was pretty, [FIT] just such as almost everybody would think tall, and nobody could think very tall; [NP-FIT] her figure particularly graceful; her size a most becoming medium, between fat and thin, though a slight appearance of ill-health seemed to point out the likeliest evil of the two. 4 [PN: NI] Emma could not but feel all this; [NP-FIT] and then, her face—her features—there was more beauty in them all together [FIT] than she had remembered; [NP-FIT] it was not regular, but it was very pleasing beauty.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 139)

This passage represents a continuous stream of thoughts based on concomitant perceptions. The sentences teem with evaluations (‘elegant’, ‘pretty’, ‘graceful’, ‘becoming’, ‘pleasing’) and repetitions (‘very elegant, remarkably elegant’) and FIT and NP succeed each other seamlessly. For instance, ‘Jane Fairfax was very elegant, remarkably elegant; and she had herself the highest value for elegance’ sounds like what Emma is telling herself at the same time she is looking at Jane. In sentence 4, perception triggers a memory (‘and then, her face—her features—there was more beauty in them altogether than she had remembered’). Other signs of potentially verbalised thought include expressions such as ‘and then’; maybe also ‘but’ in ‘not regular, but’. This passage mimics a real process of visual perception: Emma’s eyes and mind travel from Jane’s manners to her personal attributes as they sit down: height, weight (connected with signs of ‘ill-health’) and finally facial features. Emma is reported by the narrator to ‘feel all this’, and indeed her perceptions and evaluations reveal a disposition to like Jane, to be better acquainted with her. The way readers interpret this passage may depend on how much they trust Emma’s perceptions. Some may see a genuine pleasure in her observations; others a struggle, an effort to like someone who she has been ‘depreciating’ for a long time.

Tactile perception, though less important than in *P*, is still crucial in *E*: there are just 5 instances of tactile perception, which is not numerically significant (2% of the total), yet important in terms of characterisation and plot, because NP suggests that Emma is very much aware of Mr Knightley’s presence around her, and gradually reveals that there is more than friendship between them. Whenever there is the slightest physical contact between them, there seems to be an element of romantic attraction. The following passages occur towards the end of the novel, and in a subtle but forceful way mark the transition from friendship to love:

1. 1 [PN: NI] She was warmly gratified—and in another moment still more so, by a little movement of more than common friendliness on his part.—2 [NP] He took her hand;—[FIT] whether she had not herself made the first motion, she could not say—she might, perhaps, have rather offered it—[NP] but he took her hand, pressed it, and certainly was on the point of carrying it to his lips—when, [FIT] from some fancy or other, [NP] he suddenly let it go.—3 [FIT] Why he should feel such a scruple, why he should change his mind when it was all but done, she could not perceive.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 317-318)

1. 1 [DS] “Time, my dearest Emma, time will heal the wound.—2 Your own excellent sense—your exertions for your father’s sake—I know you will not allow yourself—.” 3 [NP] Her arm was pressed again, as he added, in a more broken and subdued accent, [DS] “The feelings of the warmest friendship—Indignation—Abominable scoundrel!”

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 349)

The first passage was analysed in comparison with a similar one in Burney in Chapter 3 (Example 19). Mr Knightley’s taking Emma’s hand to kiss it appears to her as ‘a little movement of more than common friendliness’ and she is ‘gratified’. Immediately after he takes her hand, Emma’s thoughts and perceptions succeed one another: the impact of his touch on her is such that she does not know how it has happened, and wonders ‘whether she had not herself made the first motion’. She seems confused here. In the ensuing NP, however, she focuses on her surroundings again: she feels that he is pressing her hand, and sees that he is ‘certainly’ going to kiss it. This evaluative adverb perhaps suggests self-reassurance, or even astonishment that such a thing is going to take place. FIT and NP then occur next to each other (‘from some fancy or other, he suddenly let it go’), and this perception, tactile and visual, seems to convey disappointment, a feeling that is also implied in FIT (‘why he should change his mind […], she could not perceive’). Mr Knightley has let his real feelings for her shine through for a moment, and she has desired him to carry through what he has started, even if she is perhaps not aware why. The reader, however, can probably see more than she does.

The second passage occurs as Emma and Mr Knightley are taking a walk, after which they become engaged. Up to this point they have been talking only, arm in arm, but suddenly ‘Her arm was pressed again’ against his chest. This tactile perception conveys Mr Knightley’s passion about what he is saying, and also his affection for Emma, which at this point is becoming more and more evident to the reader, even though Emma seems unaware of it until he asks her directly whether she would accept him. This passage also contains an auditory reference to his ‘broken and subdued accent’, which is probably best read as Emma’s perceptual consciousness since it follows on from her tactile perception. No thoughts about these perceptions ensue, however, which suggests that she is not really reflecting about his words, and thus perhaps not aware of that meaning; a perceptive reader, in contrast, may see a romantic interest behind Mr Knightley’s physical gestures and his indignation about Frank.

Similarly to what has been observed in other Austen novels, some instances of NP in *E* refer to objects and places. A total of 12 instances (5%) refer to Emma’s sight of, for example, Mr Knightley’s house, certain details in various letters, the portrait she draws of Harriet and the latter’s ‘Most precious treasures’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 280). Fanny’s predilection for objects in *MP* (7% of the total instances of NP in this novel) was discussed in Chapter 5 as a supply of either pain or pleasure to her. In *E*, the perception of objects is not so much connected with the sentimental value of objects as with the information they convey about their owners, and about her own importance (in the case of the portrait, for example). Objects turn Fanny’s attention inwards; Emma’s outwards, as a source of knowledge about others and herself. In this regard, the perception of objects and places resembles that observed in *PP*, especially when Elizabeth observes the house and grounds of Pemberley. There is a very similar passage in *E* where Emma observes Mr Knightley’s house, Donwell Abbey. As occurs in *PP* (Example 35), the heroine views the hero’s house and implicitly connects the sight with the worth of its owner. Perhaps the passage also symbolises Emma’s romantic feelings for Mr Knightley:

1. 1 [PN: NI] She felt all the honest pride and complacency which her alliance with the present and future proprietor could fairly warrant, [PN: PERCEPTION] as she viewed the respectable size and style of the building, its suitable, becoming characteristic situation, low and sheltered—[PN: PERCEPTION SHADING INTO N?] its ample gardens stretching down to meadows washed by a stream, of which the Abbey, with all the old neglect of prospect, had scarcely a sight—and its abundance of timber in rows and avenues, which neither fashion nor extravagance had rooted up.— 2 [NP] The house was larger than Hartfield, and totally unlike it, covering a good deal of ground, rambling and irregular, [AMBIGUOUS N/ FIT] with many comfortable and one or two handsome rooms.—3 [FIT] It was just what it ought to be, [NP] and it looked what it was—[PN: NI] and Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 295-296)

In sentence 1, Emma’s perceptions are represented through PN. She views the house, evaluating it as ‘respectable’, ‘suitable’, ‘becoming’, ‘sheltered’. These features can probably be extended to Mr Knightley, as indicative of the qualities he represents for her. After a dash occurring halfway through the sentence, the narrator continues to enumerate the elements perceived by Emma (‘ample gardens’), but then goes on to describe elements which are out of her sight (‘meadows washed by a stream, of which the Abbey, with all the old neglect of prospect, *had scarcely a sight*’), which is why this fragment has been tagged as perception probably shading into N. After another dash, the sentence reverts to what Emma is seeing (direct objects of the verb ‘viewed’): ‘its abundance of timber in rows and avenues, which neither fashion nor extravagance had rooted up’. The resemblance between this fragment and that from *PP* in which Elizabeth observes Pemberley is striking: ‘in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned’ (Austen 1996 [1813]: 201). In both passages perception highlights the features which are important to the heroines, underlining the importance of simplicity and genuineness for them.

Another dash introduces what seems ambiguous between NP, N and FIT: sentence 2 clearly describes what Emma is seeing (‘The house was larger than Hartfield, and totally unlike it, covering a good deal of ground, rambling and irregular’), and yet the mention of ‘many comfortable and one or two handsome rooms’ cannot be in her visual field: she cannot see these rooms from her position outside the house. However, she is actually presented as looking at it, and so this could be taken as either a narratorial description for the reader’s information, or better still as a thought of Emma’s about rooms which she already knows from previous visits and is now remembering. A figural interpretation is more consistent with the fact that this phrase is preceded by NP and followed by FIT (and NP) expressing an evaluation: ‘It was just what it ought to be, [NP] and it looked what it was’. Once again thoughts and perceptions alternate with one another almost seamlessly, a feature which is achieved with greater skill in this novel than in others. The paragraph ends with a narratorial report of Emma’s feelings in PN, ‘Emma felt an increasing respect for it’, which seems to point out an increased respect for the place and probably also an increased respect for its owner, but also comes across as slightly satirical against Emma’s snobbish family pride (‘the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding’).

The ambiguity of passages of NP is more complex in *E* than in other Austen novels. Ambiguity does not always cause unreliability; it mostly shows the greater development and combination of techniques achieved in this novel. Many different factors contribute to ambiguity in this novel. Ambiguity is caused, for example, by narratorial reticence, especially when verbs such as ‘look’, ‘seem’ and other epistemic expressions like ‘as if’ or ‘evidently’ are used in N (‘he looked rather doubtingly’, Austen 1996 [1816]: 70). Sometimes the use of a conjecture makes a statement look figural, but there may be no perception indicator or any other clues that can attribute that conjecture to a character, and so these passages can be interpreted as N featuring reticence. The following passage could be read as either NP or N, as it is preceded by Emma’s DS and followed by Mr Knightley’s DS, with no perception indicator anywhere: 1 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] Mr. Knightley was hard at work upon the lower buttons of his thick leather gaiters, and *either* the exertion of getting them together, *or* some other cause, brought the colour into his face, [N] as he answered’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 236, added italics). Emma is generally observing him in this chapter (33), and in this particular passage expecting an answer from him on a topic of the utmost interest to her (whether or not he is interested in Jane), and so this description could be read as NP: the use of a conjecture about his feelings (‘either the exertion […] or some other cause’) could be her interpretation of what she is seeing. Note the indefinite meaning of ‘some’. However, the fact that this description is not clearly attributed to Emma means that the passage could also be read as a narratorial description of Mr Knightley in which reticence is used, perhaps with comical purposes (‘some other cause’ may be inviting the reader to conjecture about Mr Knightley’s feelings as well).

The absence of a perception indicator is the most conspicuous cause of ambiguity, especially in short clauses and sentences that look like mere indicators of gestures, movements and speech markers, such as ‘He stopped’, ‘he was thinking’. The following passage occurs after Mr Knightley’s Direct Speech:

1. 1 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] He stopped.—2 [PN: NI] Emma dared not attempt any immediate reply. 3 [FIT] To speak, she was sure would be to betray a most unreasonable degree of happiness. 4 She must wait a moment, or he would think her mad. 5 [PN: NI] Her silence disturbed him; [N] and after observing her a little while, he added,

[…].

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 387)

Here, the underlined sentence can pass for N, and indeed it may be read as N, as there is no explicit indication that this description is anything else than the narrator’s reporting that Mr Knightley ceased to speak. However, there is also the possibility of reading it as Emma’s aural perception. The dash marks a transition to her thoughts in PN and FIT, and casts a figural significance to the first sentence. His silence perhaps signals to her that it is her turn to speak and yet she is aware that she is not ready to reply yet.

In other cases, the ambiguity is between Emma’s perception of her own feelings and a narratorial report of those feelings in PN:

1. 1 [N] Their conversation was soon afterwards closed by the entrance of her father. 2 [PN: NI] She was not sorry. 3 She wanted to be alone. 4 [AMBIGUOUS NP/PN: NI] Her mind was in a state of flutter and wonder, which made it impossible for her to be collected. 5 She was in dancing, singing, exclaiming spirits; and till she had moved about, and talked to herself, and laughed and reflected, she could be fit for nothing rational.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 388-389)

Here, there is no indication of whether Emma is aware of being in such a flutter of spirits or whether this is a narratorial report. In other passages, ambiguity is caused by the use of the past continuous aspect and evaluation in N which can be attributed to Emma: ‘1 [N] at dinner she found him [Frank] seated by her—[PN: NI] and, as she firmly believed, not without some dexterity on his side. 2 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] The party was rather large, as it included one other family, a *proper unobjectionable* country family, whom the Coles had the *advantage* of naming among their acquaintance’ (Austen 1996 [1816]: 177-178, added italics). There are no perception indicators, so the enumeration of the people attending the party at the Coles’ can be read as N, but the first sentence represents Emma’s consciousness, and the italicised items reflect her values and assessments, and so sentence 2 can also be considered NP, or perhaps CN evoking thoughts.

The greater and more complex ambiguity in *E* as compared to the other Austen novels generally has to do with the aims of the plot. As discussed earlier, ambiguity does not always entail unreliability. Conversely, unreliability does not always entail ambiguity, as shown in Examples 85, 86 and 87 below. Both ambiguity and unreliability contribute to keep the suspense of the narrative going from beginning to end. This consistency contrasts with *NA,* in which ambiguity only affects our interpretation of the General, whereas the Gothic delusions of Catherine probably seem to the reader to be more clearly connected with the character’s illusions and desires. Ambiguity and unreliability in *E* can distract the reader from crucial truths. In fact, NP is used at particular moments in which the reader’s interpretation of and expectations about the plot can be misled by Emma’s assumptions. Certain passages of NP occur at strategic points, portraying perceptions which, if trusted, may change the direction of our reading; even if we suspect something else is going on, we may ‘take the line of least resistance’ and raise ‘Emma’s assessments [to] the objective level’ (Adamson 1995: 33). The most striking cases are those which portray her perceptions of Frank. The following two passages are taken from the scene in which Frank seems to be about to declare his love to Emma; at least, that is how she views his behaviour:

1. 1 [N] Emma was ready for her visitor [Frank] some time before he appeared; [CN: PERCEPTION AND THOUGHT] but if this reflected at all upon his impatience, his sorrowful look and total want of spirits when he did come might redeem him. 2 [NP-FIT] He felt the going away almost too much to speak of it. 3 [NP] His dejection was most evident. 4 He sat really lost in thought for the first few minutes; [CN: THOUGHT] and when rousing himself, it was only to say,

[DS] “Of all horrid things, leave-taking is the worst.”

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 213-214)

1. 1 [DS] “In short,” [N] said he, [DS] “perhaps, Miss Woodhouse—2 I think you can hardly be quite without suspicion”—

3 [NP-FIT] He looked at her, as if wanting to read her thoughts. 4 [PN: NI] She hardly knew what to say. 5 [NP-FIT] It seemed like the forerunner of something absolutely serious [FIT] which she did not wish. 6 [PN: NI] Forcing herself to speak, therefore, in the hope of putting it by, [N] she calmly said,

[DS] “You were quite in the right; it was most natural to pay your visit, then”—

7 [AMBIGUOUS NP/N] He was silent; 8 [PN: IT] She believed he was looking at her; [FIT] probably reflecting on what she had said, and trying to understand the manner. 9 [PN: PERCEPTION] She heard him sigh. 10 [FIT] It was natural for him to feel that he had *cause* to sigh. 11 He could not believe her to be encouraging him. 12 [CN: PERCEPTION] A few awkward moments passed, and he sat down again; and in a more determined manner said,

[DS] “It was something to feel that all the rest of my time might be given to Hartfield. 13 My regard for Hartfield is most warm”—

14 [NP] He stopt again, rose again, and seemed quite embarrassed.—15 [FIT] He was more in love with her [PN: NI] than Emma had supposed; [CN: THOUGHT] and who can say how it might have ended, if his father had not made his appearance?

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 215, original italics)

In the first passage, Emma perceives and thinks about Frank’s disconsolate appearance (NP-FIT). On a second reading of the novel, it becomes apparent that indeed the perceptions that he ‘felt the going away almost too much to speak of it’ and that his ‘dejection was most evident’ are accurate: but the cause Emma implicitly attributes to them is not (Frank is dejected because he has to leave Jane, not Emma). The second passage also renders the meaning Emma attributes to Frank’s looks and words: the statements ‘He looked at her, as if wanting to read her thoughts’ and ‘It seemed like the forerunner of something absolutely serious’ are again instances of NP-FIT, in which Emma reflects about what she is seeing (‘looked’, ‘as if’). Two more instances of NP occur in this passage: ‘He was silent’ may be a narratorial description, and yet the subsequent PN, ‘She believed he was looking at her’, indicates that she is not looking at him and therefore is perceiving him in auditory terms (perception of silence). The second instance, ‘He stopt again, rose again, and seemed quite embarrassed’ is an enumeration like those cited by Brinton, of a series of objects, people or actions, ‘sometimes leading up to a climax’, which usually indicates someone’s perception of them (1980: 374). Here, short clauses succeed one another, and indeed lead to a climax, only interrupted by the entrance of Mr Weston. The passage ends with the conclusion that ‘He was more in love with her than Emma had supposed; and who can say how it might have ended […]?’ This sentence is a combination of FIT, PN (note the use of the character’s proper name) reflecting Emma’s opinions about Frank’s feelings, which again turn out to be inaccurate, and CN evoking that question in her mind about what could have happened.

Later on in the novel it is revealed that Frank was going to confess his secret engagement to Jane. By restricting the narrative viewpoint to Emma’s visual and cognitive perspective at this point, however, NP allows the narrator to be reticent about the amount of information conveyed to the reader, and to keep the suspense going. The same occurs in the following instance, in which NP again refers to Frank and fills up a whole paragraph:

1. 1 [N] Emma found that it was not Mr. Weston’s fault that the number of privy councillors was not yet larger. 2 [DIST] They had stopped at Mrs. Bates’s door to offer the use of their carriage, but the aunt and niece were to be brought by the Eltons.

3 [NP] Frank was standing by her, but not steadily; there was a restlessness, [NP-FIT] which showed a mind not at ease. 4 [NP] He was looking about, he was going to the door, he was watching for the sound of other carriages,—[NP-FIT] impatient to begin, or afraid of being always near her.

(Austen 1996 [1816]: 265)

After a narratorial presentation in sentence 1, sentence 2 presents speech, in what can be considered an instance of ‘distancing indirect speech or thought representation’ or DIST (Vandelanotte 2004). In DIST, no truly separate speech or consciousness is represented, but rather evoked or echoed: although the syntax is independent (as in this case) and the reported speech or thought can contain exclamations, interrogative structure deictics never belong to the reported speaker/consciousness, but are anchored in the deictic centre of the reporting speaker/narrator. Thus, the latter’s point of view dominates the representation. This sentence echoes a speaker’s original speech (probably Mr Weston’s) and places it within Emma’s knowledge.

The greater complexity of NP in *E* is evidenced in the fact that the second paragraph is all made up of NP and NP-FIT. The two sentences in this paragraph contain a series of conjectures about Frank’s possible motives for his nervousness: the verb ‘showed’ indicates an assessment based on external appearance; the verbless clause ‘impatient to begin, or afraid of being always near her’ also indicates a conjecture on Emma’s part; a conjecture which is easily attributable to the character because it proves to be mistaken: the reader later discovers that Frank is secretly engaged with Jane Fairfax and thus impatiently expects her arrival. He is not afraid of Emma’s seduction power as she believes. Evaluative expressions like ‘not steadily’, ‘there was a restlessness’, or ‘not at ease’ also reflect figural judgment. Finally, note the continuous aspect, the many syntactical repetitions and the enumeration of actions in juxtaposed clauses (‘He was looking about, he was going to the door, he was watching for the sound of other carriages’), which attempt to describe Emma’s observation of a succession of movements and gestures.

The use of NP in these two sentences has a somewhat mischievous purpose: the narrator could have chosen to attribute these perceptions explicitly to Emma, and yet this is left implicit. As occurs in Examples 85 and 86, the reader does not have any other source of information about the real state of things, and so he/she may accept her interpretations of what she is seeing, even if sceptically. The use of NP (and FIT) in all of these strategic places can turn out to be truly misleading, a feature which does not occur in any of the other novels.

**6.2 Review**

This chapter has demonstrated that *E* is distinctive in its use of NP, and the Austen novel in which this technique is most extensively used. NP plays all the roles it does in the other novels, taking some of these roles to more extremes, as in the case of aural perception. The novel also adds some extra features, such as the use of this technique potentially to mislead the reader. NP depicts a majority of visual perceptions, but the analysis has shown that speech and voice quality are also very important in *E*. Audition is in fact one of the most important and distinctive features of NP in this novel, and shows a character very intent on using other people’s verbal behaviour as the point of departure for her own interpretations and actions. Tactile perception is also important for what it reveals about the developing relationship between Emma and Mr Knightley. The same applies to the perception of places, especially Donwell Abbey. Another very important feature of NP in this novel is the perception of self, which convey Emma’s awareness and analysis of her own feelings. Many of these passages are instances of NP-FIT, which shows a very reflective heroine.

Ambiguity has been shown to be achieved through many different devices in this novel, which contrasts with the tendency in the other novels to display ambiguity through fewer devices. Ambiguity is caused, for example, by a lack of perception indicators, narratorial reticence, and an overlap between the report of feelings and Emma’s awareness of those feelings. In most cases ambiguity does not entail unreliability, but serves to merge narratorial and figural perspectives. However, there are many instances where it does affect reliability, and the latter scenario may have two different outcomes: if the reader is able to see more than Emma, the ambiguity is resolvable, and irony is sometimes generated; if NP does not convey more information than that contained in Emma’s consciousness, NP contributes to keep the reader in the dark about certain characters, such as Frank and Jane, and creates suspense. The greater number of ambiguous instances in *E* as compared with *MP* and *P* responds to these two purposes. NP is often placed in strategic places to delay the revelation of certain truths and to present crucial information through Emma’s inaccurate assessments.

The stylistic features of passages of NP have also been shown to be more complex and more fully developed than in other novels, especially the earlier ones, where NP tends to present a more elaborate language. Many of the passages analysed evidence a great skill in the alternation between NP and FIT: although it is still possible to distinguish between them, the two techniques are smoothly blended, conveying a more mimetic process of consciousness, in which, for example, perceptions give rise to thoughts, these in turn direct the character’s attention to a different place, then to oneself, then to external events again, then to reflection about those events. This smooth alternation makes passages of NP (or NP-FIT) longer sometimes. In fact NP has been found to comprise whole short paragraphs. The use of punctuation is also prominent, separating short, simple clauses and creating a rapid rhythm in the reading of these passages.

Finally, *E* is quite exceptional in the presentation of a second character’s sensory perceptions. Although the representation of the consciousness of other characters besides the heroine occurs in all the novels, this does not usually apply to NP; instead, their thoughts, perceptions and emotions are mostly represented through PN and FIT. Only in *SS* and *MP* has a similar feature been observed, in which other characters’ perceptions are represented through NP. Marianne’s perceptions provide a contrast to Elinor’s, and the perceptions of Henry Crawford a contrast to those of Fanny. However, these contrasting perceptions occur very occasionally, whereas Mr Knightley’s consciousness is more extensively represented throughout a whole chapter. Indeed, in Chapter 41, Emma’s consciousness virtually disappears and Mr Knightley’s takes centre stage. His thoughts and perceptions are consistently represented to show his observations and evaluations of the behaviour of Frank and Jane, whom he suspects of being on more than friendly terms. Emma has not noticed any of this, and perhaps the use of a second perspective helps the reader to suspect that she is not aware of everything that is going on. The analysis of passages has also revealed that the representation of Mr Knightley’s perceptual consciousness has the function of showing his own interpretations of the fictional world: he thinks Emma is in love with Frank, an interpretation which her behaviour justifies but which is not true at this point in the narrative. His perceptions also hint at romantic feelings for Emma, so that the reader may have an intimation of what is to come. These feelings are evinced by the fact that NP shows a jealous and angry Mr Knightley; perhaps too angry for just a friend. Together with Chapter 5, which is almost entirely in the form of a dialogue between Mr Knightley and Mrs Weston, Chapter 41 constitutes an exceptional shift in focalisation with regard to the rest of the novel, in this case from the heroine’s to the hero’s perceptions, which renders *E* quite unique among Austen’s novels.

### ****Chapter 7****

### ****Conclusions****

This thesis has explored the use of a narrative technique known as ‘narrated perception’ (NP) in the novels of Jane Austen. This technique represents fictional characters’ sensory perceptions of their environment (or themselves) by describing objects and events directly as they look or feel to them. Although a few authors have outlined the features of this technique and some of its narrative possibilities, for the most part NP remains unexplored in studies of fictional consciousness and in particular narratives. This research has focused solely and systematically on the features of NP in Austen’s texts, and has provided a rationale for a further exploration of this technique in other narratives. The aim of the analysis has been to show that there are ways of representing fictional perception which have not had close attention paid to them previously, especially from a stylistic perspective, and to provide new insights into the way consciousness and point of view are constructed in Jane Austen’s novels.

The analysis has confirmed some of the general features which are discussed in the literature about NP. In particular, the study confirms the fact that NP and free indirect thought (FIT) often occur in conjunction with each other, perception usually leading to thought but also vice versa; and that NP tends to involve certain features, such as the past continuous aspect, perception indicators (before and after NP), figural deictics, epistemic modal expressions, dislocated word order, repetitions, juxtaposition of a series of actions, affective and colloquial terms, and evaluative language attributable to the character. Some of the effects of NP which have been noted in passing in the literature are present in Austen’s fiction as well, such as the potential ambiguity and unreliability of this technique, which seemingly narrates events but does so through a character’s subjective view and therefore may not be trusted by the reader.

Elements such as ambiguity and unreliability, however, have not been discussed extensively in the existing literature about NP, and other patterns and features which have found to be prominent in Jane Austen’s novels have not been noted at all. This study thus enriches what we already know about this technique by revealing very consistent stylistic structures and a range of narrative functions and effects across the six novels which can be incorporated as potential features of NP. However, these conclusions need to be contrasted with more extensive and detailed discussions of other authors and narratives to see if they are idiosyncratic of Austen’s prose only, or could be regarded as general characteristics of NP as a narrative technique.

One of the most salient characteristics derived from the study is the fact that NP consistently occurs at key points which are climactic in some way, and are usually very emotional for the heroine. Intimately connected with this pattern of occurrence is the fact that NP implicitly adds to the emotional intensity of the passages in which it occurs. The emotional impact of passages of NP has not received much attention. Clauses and sentences of NP in Jane Austen’s novels regularly leave emotions implicit—definitely more so than narratorial reports such as ‘she saw’, and often even more implicit than other mimetic techniques such as FIT—which may actually have the effect of conveying the emotion more forcibly to the reader. Several formal features have been observed which add to the emotional impact of the representation of perception: the use of short and syntactically simple clauses and sentences, and punctuation such as dashes and semi-colons, which often quicken the rhythm of a passage and evoke rapid successions of images and feelings in a character’s mind.

Again connected with emotion is the fact that NP in Austen sometimes contains exclamation marks, a feature which has not been usually attributed to this technique (Banfield 1981: 68). Passages representing perception are not only suggestive of a heroine’s emotions, but also indicative of her preferences, biases, values and desires. This aspect can be seen in connection with appraisal theory (Arnold 1960), by which our feelings and predispositions condition our perceptions and in turn provoke a certain emotional response. Passages of NP in Austen show that the heroines’ perceptions are not random but focus on very specific elements of the fictional world, suggesting the kind of attention that they are directing towards them; that is, the way in which their desires and intentions, opinions and states of mind, determine and shape the interpretation of sensory information. NP has also been found to occur when a character is observing or listening to other people with special attention, thus foregrounding the link between attention and perception noted in Chapter 4, and enhancing the sense of sensory alertness by rendering a perception salient through independent syntax.

The analysis has also dwelt on the potential ability of NP to mislead readers by presenting what in fact is a character’s perception of an event as a seemingly objective account of it, especially in *NA* and *E*, and has showed how this ambiguity and unreliability may be triggered through particular stylistic features: for example, by a consistent use of epistemic modals (‘seemed’, ‘apparently’, ‘looked’) in what seems to be pure narration; by a lack of perception indicators, or by narratorial features such as summarisation, elaborate lexis and information which may not be in the character’s sensory field. Sometimes it is possible to distinguish NP by a perception indicator or by the neighbouring techniques, particularly psycho-narration (PN) and FIT, which often help to disambiguate a passage that looks narratorial, favouring a reading of it as NP. In other cases, it is the fictional context that provides the clue. In some instances, it may not be possible to determine whether a proposition is N or NP. Ambiguity does not always lead to unreliability, however. The analysis has shown that often the ambiguity between NP and N can lead to a conflation of narratorial and figural viewpoints, especially in *SS*, *PP*, *MP* and *P*, where the narrator usually endorses the perceptions and opinions of the heroine.

The use of coloured narrative (CN) to evoke figural perception also often leads to an alignment of narrator and character: the analysis has revealed that CN is used extensively in Austen’s novels, a fact which has already been noted in criticism but mainly for speech and thought; and that CN occurs in places which may not have been noticed before. In novels such as *SS*, a sustained use of CN of all types helps to keep the narrative anchored in the heroine’s point of view and perhaps favours the reader’s identification with her. Another feature which has been revealed by the analysis, and does not seem to be noted in the literature, is the use of NP with ironical purposes. Finally, the use of NP in Austen reveals the use of this technique to represent forms of perception which are not based on the physical five senses but entail other ways of being aware. These types of perception, referred to as ‘awareness’ here, express, for example, a character’s anxious consciousness of time, their appraisal of the atmosphere of a place, awareness of spaces and bodies (especially in the case of Anne), and awareness of their own emotions (for example, feeling agitated or pressured by another). These other forms of perception widen what we know about the representational possibilities of NP.

The analysis considers Austen’s use of NP within the context of the epistemological and moral ideas of her time, which regarded the senses as essential but also problematic sources of knowledge, with the power to lead a person either to the contemplation and understanding of the greatest works of nature, or to the grossest of errors and misunderstandings, owing to the limited natural capacity of the senses and the intervention of bias, emotion, attention and imagination. Sensory perception was a central concept in eighteenth-century rationalism and empiricism, particularly sight and touch, which may account for the importance of this theme in Austen’s novels. The ambiguous role of sensory perception is reflected in the fact that NP presents accurate perceptions of the fictional reality but also deluded ones. The ideas about the senses discussed in scientific circles entered the general culture through periodical articles and conduct literature, and the links between these and Jane Austen have been discussed as well.

With regard to Austen's literary sources, it can be argued that, as far as NP is concerned, her novels are influenced by the sentimental novel of the late eighteenth century, which explores the importance of sight and touch in connection with emotions and physical and moral sensitiveness. Austen’s use of NP can be seen as a development of the techniques used by some of the sentimental writers of her time. Two authors have been compared with her in terms of NP: Laurence Sterne, one of the landmark writers of sensibility, and Frances Burney, one of Austen’s most influential predecessors. The analysis evidences that Sterne uses NP quite extensively in *A Sentimental Journey*, with short and simple clauses and sentences and special punctuation, in a similar fashion to Austen, but he writes in the first person and there is no evident interaction between the narrating and the experiencing perspectives in terms of ambiguity, irony and unreliability, aspects which can be found in Austen’s third-person NP. Moreover, because Sterne’s novel is mainly composed of fragmented episodes, with no definite plot direction or climax, the use of NP does not have the same emotional force it does in Austen, who reserves NP for strategic moments to enhance feelings and desires.

Burney hardly ever makes use of NP, and when she does, the language and syntax are very elaborate, and most of the time ambiguous, between NP and N. However, her use of NP is similar to that of Austen, insofar as she narrates in the third person, and the sporadic passages of NP which can be found in her novels suggest an attempt to emphasise emotion, especially sympathy and identification, and a sense that a character is watching his/her environment attentively. Burney makes extensive use of CN, moreover, and this is also a feature of both Austen’s juvenilia and major novels. Austen’s juvenile works *Frederic & Elfrida* and *Love and Freindship* do not contain any instances of NP; neither do her short epistolary novel *Lady Susan* and her unfinished novel *Sanditon*. Only in *The Watsons* can a few instances of NP be found, in which NP is again connected with feelings, sometimes sympathetic ones, and watchfulness, as in the example of Emma Watson observing a little boy who looks sad because she is not dancing with him.

In Austen’s major novels, PN is the staple technique for representing perception; it has been pointed out in fact to be the dominant technique used for representing consciousness in fiction of all times (Fludernik 1993: 291; 299). What varies is the amount of NP used in each novel, its function and effect, which are slightly different according to the characteristics of the heroine and the relationship between her and the narrator. In all of the novels, NP has particular narrative effects: mimetic representation of perception, evocation of emotion, ambiguity, and attribution of figural meaning to places and objects. NP mimics sensory experience by foregoing explicit reports with verbs of perception and directly presenting an event as it is reflected in a character’s perceptual consciousness. In all of the novels, a number of passages have been tagged as ambiguous between NP and N, which in some cases leads to an alignment of narratorial and figural perspectives, in others to distance. The description of domestic objects and places acquires a special significance when filtered through the body of a heroine (eyes, ears, skin), being coloured with her values and intentions, and, in the case of *NA*, invested with Gothic significance.

Visual perception is the most abundant form of perception in all of the novels. Other types of perception become prominent according to the characteristics of each novel. In *MP*, *P* and *E* auditory perception is very important, especially in *E*, where Emma is always attentive to and makes inferences from what people say. Fanny and Anne listen to other people because they are usually outside their conversations. In all of the other novels, auditory perception is the second most common type of perception, but not as pronounced. Active looking and hearing were considered typically masculine privileges in Austen’s time, and endow her heroines with authority and initiative; they give a voice to their perceptions and contribute to reveal their different personalities. Touch also features in some novels, especially in *P*, where Anne’s perceptions evidence a desire for closeness with Captain Wentworth, physical and affective. Instances of awareness occur in all of the novels and acquire different meanings in each: for example, time perception is a dominant feature of *NA*; and the consciousness of one’s own state of mind is more often present in *E*.

The Dashwood ladies in *SS* very often function as a single perceptual entity, and accordingly collective perceptions are a unique feature of this novel. Collective NP occurs in other novels but not so frequently or with the same group of characters. The perception of domestic objects does not feature in any novel except in *MP*, where Fanny’s belongings and familiar places suggest comfort to her, and sometimes painful feelings. Elizabeth and Emma both observe the house and grounds of their future husbands, and their perceptions reflect their appreciation of the moral values of the owners. Most of Elizabeth’s perceptions are serious, but in some cases they convey both her and the narrator’s satire towards certain characters, especially Mr Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. NP in *NA* and *E* is partly used as a device for the narrator to show ironic distance from the character, and in certain contexts apparently with the aim of leading the reader to believe those perceptions accurate. In *E*, NP is placed at strategic moments in which the reader is not supposed to know more than Emma. This helps to keep the point of view within the limits of her knowledge, assumptions, delusions and wishes. Even if the reader distrusts Emma, NP does not usually allow any other interpretation of the fictional world. In contrast with the rest of the novels, where NP usually features one or two clauses or sentences, NP in *E* often stretches up to several sentences and even up to one whole paragraph.

The methodology used in the analysis has proved very beneficial in showing patterns and common features of NP across passages and novels. A qualitative analysis of particular passages is the point of departure for any conclusions drawn. The categories of analysis which are available from current models of fictional discourse representation are insufficient to account for the various forms of perception representation proposed here, and so Semino and Short’s 2004 model has been enriched with the categories NP, PN, CN and NP-FIT. The category of NP is used to account for those instances of perception portrayed chiefly from the character’s viewpoint; the category of PN covers narratorial reports with verbs of perception; and CN applies to those passages of N which contain one or more expressions connected with a character’s sensory perspective (visual, aural, tactile). The incorporation of PN and CN as categories of perception has not been undertaken before. Finally, the category NP-FIT has been used to tag those instances in which it is difficult to distinguish between NP and FIT using purely formal criteria, either because a thought contains a reference to an ongoing perception, or a perception contains markers of verbal thought. This category has proved useful to account for perceptions in which reflection of some kind is clearly involved, and to show that the combination of NP with FIT is most pronounced in the later novels, *MP*, *P* and *E,* where the heroines often reflect on the events they perceive.

NP-FIT evidences the closeness of perception and thought, which has been widely noted. In much criticism about fictional consciousness, NP is often merged with speech and thought within the wider category of free indirect discourse (FID). This provides one possible explanation of why NP has not been studied in depth. In contrast, this thesis has shown that NP is distinct from free indirect thought (FIT) in several regards. The discussion has pointed out a few formal and semantic differences between them (for example, the fact that FIT represents a wider range of cognitive processes, and that some instances of NP resemble N rather than FIT), and especially their different narrative effects and functions as the most significant differences between them: NP is generally considered more ambiguous than ‘straightforward’ FIT, even by authors who are sceptical about the ambiguity generally attributed to FIT in Jane Austen’s novels (Gunn 2004). In addition, NP not only represents consciousness but also narrates events and situations, a function which is not typical of FIT. In Austen’s novels, NP sometimes occurs where FIT does not usually do; for example, in the middle of a narrative passage (N) or in between dialogues (passages of direct speech). All of these arguments seem enough to consider treating NP as a category in its own right and as worthy of separate study. NP and FIT are presented in this research as both separate and interrelated forms of consciousness representation; in particular, NP may be situated halfway between FIT and N, formally and functionally.

The qualitative analysis of particular passages has been complemented with a quantification of instances of NP in all of the six novels, which has revealed a very consistent distribution. The process of quantification is necessarily based on a manual search, and involves a qualitative interpretation of the passages tagged; however, its purpose is not to seek numerical accuracy but rather to offer an idea of the extent to which NP is used in each novel and the contexts in which it occurs; two aspects which have been amply illuminated by the quantitative element. The analysis has also been enriched by taking into account cognitive research that emphasises the importance of perception as the most fundamental form of consciousness, thus shifting the focus away from the traditional interest in thought representation, and research which underlines emotion and attention as intrinsic components of sense experience. There are some stylistic studies which focus on perception and other forms of conscious or semi-conscious phenomena (for example, Brinton 1980; Sotirova 2013) but they tend to focus on twentieth-century writers.

The general absence of extensive research on NP as a distinct narrative technique means that other scholars will be able to develop what has been discussed here. Future directions of research may include a comparison between NP in Austen’s fiction and that of other contemporaries, in order to see how she is similar to and different from them, and to clarify further what her particular contributions to the development of NP are; and where her strengths lie in relation to this field. Another possibility is to pursue an exploration of readers’ responses to passages of NP: how readers interpret it; whether they see emotions behind perception; and whether they perceive ambiguity.

This research has succeeded in showing the benefits of studying NP as a distinct technique and in pointing out the need for this technique to be researched more extensively. The analysis has demonstrated the different ways in which this type of perception representation is textually realised in different novels, revealing different character psychologies; different degrees of the importance of sight, hearing and touch in each novel; and the different effects of passages of NP on the construction and interpretation of points of view. The analysis has also highlighted Jane Austen’s skills as a writer, showing how she develops and excels in combining a range of techniques to generate sophisticated, multi-layered texts which realise complex human perception, reflection and engagement, and construct fictive worlds which inculcate the reader in such realisation. It also extends existing narratological methodologies in a way that can help to further illuminate the style of other writers and enhance comparative, historical and genre studies of the novel.

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## ****Epilogue****

I read my first Austen novel when studying my BA in English Language, Literature and Linguistics at the University of Salamanca. That novel was *Sense and Sensibility*. I believe I cheated and read it in Spanish to save time, as the exam for that module was fast approaching. Even in translation, however, I distinctly remember my impression of the narrative. It left me with a sense of peace, balance, optimism. I felt a deep admiration for Jane Austen. I couldn’t tell how she had done it, I just knew that every time things felt chaotic, I only needed to go back to that text and read it again, to remember that everything is well. As the years went by and I read her original prose, this feeling became stronger and stronger, and my appreciation for her talent grew immensely. When I found I had the possibility of doing my MA research about *Emma*, I felt very happy. That was in 2005. Today, nine years later, and thanks to a fantastic scholarship from the University of Sheffield, I am about to complete a PhD about narrative style in her six major novels, and I feel (like most readers of Austen probably do) that I still have a lot to learn about her. One thing is for sure, though: now I think I understand the peace, the sense of balance, the sense that everything is well. The inspiration I have found in Jane Austen is immense; not only in her novels but also through reading accounts of her, visiting her houses in Chawton and Bath, and her grave in Winchester; praying with the prayers she wrote, reading and laughing with her personal letters to her sister Cassandra, and sharing my love of her novels with my family and friends, especially with my mum and dad, and my own dearest “Cassandras” Sara and María. My PhD comes to an end, but my admiration for such a brilliant mind will always stay. May the Lord bless you for all eternity Jane Austen.

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Mi primera novela de Jane Austen la leí cuando estudiaba la carrera de Filología Inglesa en la Universidad de Salamanca. Esa novela era *Sentido y Sensibilidad*. Creo recordar que hice trampas y me la leí en español para ahorrar tiempo porque se acercaba el examen de esa asignatura. Sin embargo, incluso traducida, recuerdo claramente mi impresión de la novela. Me dejó con una sensación de paz, de equilibrio, de optimismo. Sentí una profunda admiración por Jane Austen. No sabía cómo lo había logrado, solo sabía que cada vez que las cosas se pusieran caóticas sólo tenía que volver a leer ese texto para recordar que todo está bien. Según pasaron los años y leí la prosa original, este sentimiento se hizo cada vez más fuerte, y mi admiración por su talento creció inmensamente. Cuando supe que tenía la posibilidad de hacer mi investigación de Máster sobre *Emma*, me sentí muy feliz. Eso fue en 2005. Ahora, nueve años más tarde, y gracias a una estupenda beca de la Universidad de Sheffield, estoy a punto de completar un doctorado sobre la técnica narrativa de sus seis novelas, y siento (como la mayoría de sus lectores, seguramente) que todavía tengo mucho que aprender sobre ella. Sin embargo, una cosa es segura: ahora creo comprender la paz, la sensación de armonía, la sensación de que todo está bien. La inspiración que he encontrado en Jane Austen es inmensa; no sólo en sus novelas sino también leyendo cosas sobre ella, visitando sus casas en Chawton y Bath, y su tumba en Winchester; rezando las oraciones que ella escribió, leyendo y riéndome con sus cartas personales a su hermana Cassandra, y compartiendo mi gusto por las novelas con mi familia y mis amigos, especialmente con mi madre y mi padre, y mis queridas “Cassandras” Sara y María. Mi doctorado se termina, pero mi admiración por esta mente tan brillante siempre permanecerá. Que el Señor te bendiga por toda la eternidad Jane Austen.