

*Rolling Green Hills & Country
Manors*

The Use of Landscape in Jane Austen's Novels

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Introduction

When the name of Jane Austen is mentioned, many people automatically think of romantic tales like her novel *Pride and Prejudice*, which is often considered one of the most popular love stories of all time. However, not only in *Pride and Prejudice*, but in each of Austen's novels, love plays a crucial and central role. In every story, the reader is introduced to a different heroine and her personal experiences, including her search for love. Even though Austen herself never married, she used her knowledge and imagination on the subject of love to write her successful novels. However, love was not the only subject which Austen was interested in.

When taking a closer look at her work, the reader may notice that landscape and architecture also belonged to Austen's list of interests. The descriptions of the English landscape and its rolling green hills, hedgerows, winding streams and impressive country houses are an essential part of Austen's writing. It is no surprise that nature is so clearly present in her work as Austen herself "had such a love of natural scenery that she would sometimes say that she thought it must form one of the delights of heaven" (Batey 9). In her novels, Austen only rarely gives really detailed accounts of landscapes, but when she does focus on nature and architecture, it usually has a special meaning. In these cases, the descriptions tend to tell more than simply the number of trees and the different views from the windows. Austen's descriptions of landscape and architecture tend to have a symbolic meaning and tell much more than what the reader probably expects of such an account.

A term which can be linked to Austen's descriptions of natural scenery is the picturesque, an aesthetic ideal written about by eighteenth-century theorists like Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight, and, most importantly, William Gilpin. Nature played an important role in Austen's life and the society she grew up in, because "in the decade in

which Jane Austen was born, the English landscape garden was at the peak of its renown, and the picturesque vogue was in its early stages” (Duckworth, *Landscape* 278). A select number of people were fascinated by landscaping and as this fascination was at its peak when Austen was growing up, it is no surprise she also developed an interest in nature and architecture. As mentioned before, an important name in the eighteenth-century world of landscaping is William Gilpin. In his book *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the Summer of the Year 1770* Gilpin used the picturesque to encourage people to start looking at the English landscape in a particular way. The picturesque can be described as “an art of seeing that precludes a disinterested and objective view; instead, it absorbs spectators into the scene, actively involving them in the construction of highly imaginative and entirely illusory – entirely interested – views and prospects” (Valihora 90). At the turn of the century, the picturesque became more popular and it “introduced British culture to such notions as the complexity of visual perception, the mobility of the point of view, the idea of ‘vision in motion’, the attempt to make the viewer slide into the picture and thus occupy an internal viewpoint, and so on” (Crisafulli xiv). The popularity of this aesthetic ideal spread to literature, prose and poetry, and can also be found in Austen’s work.

Jane Austen, as described by her brother Henry, “was a warm and judicious admirer of landscape, both in nature and on canvas. At a very early age she was enamoured of Gilpin on the Picturesque” (84). When she was growing up, she learned to look at nature in terms of the picturesque by reading pieces by Gilpin and she continued to hold onto these ideas when she was older. Landscapes could be altered as long as they would look natural in the end, which is what the picturesque ideals suggest. Gilpin influenced writers like Austen, and so did Ann Radcliffe, who “was the first, or at least the best, at applying Gilpin’s lesson by translating the picturesque into literature” (Battaglia 17). Austen knew all the rules of how to describe a

picturesque landscape, which can be seen in the description of Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice*. However, she also knew how to mock these same rules, because Gilpin's ideals had become a social trend, which was something Austen did not like. In her novels, both the picturesque rules and the improvement of estates appear on several occasions and are an important aspect of her use of landscape in her fiction.

Several critics have discussed Austen's use of different landscapes in her novels. First of all, there is Alistair M. Duckworth, whose work *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* was published in 1972. Duckworth discusses, as the title already suggests, the importance of estates and their improvements in Austen's work. He gives the most extensive analysis of different estates and how these buildings are connected to characters and other structures, like society and manners. While paying attention to Austen's different works, Duckworth confirms the claims of other critics, but also highlights new features which have not been discussed before. Another critic is Rosemarie Bodenheimer, who focuses in her article "Looking at the Landscape in Jane Austen" on the metaphorical value of landscapes in Austen's six novels. Bodenheimer states there are different approaches to the various landscapes in Austen's earlier and later works and she separates these from one another and discusses them in groups, for example the use of picturesque ideals in *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* and the moral perspectives of the heroines Emma Woodhouse and Elizabeth Bennet in *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Bodenheimer mainly pays attention to the characters' language of response to nature and how the scenery influences a character's condition.

Barbara Britton Wenner's work *Prospect and Refuge in Jane Austen* also deals with the meaning of place and landscape in Austen's novels. Wenner stresses the importance of looking closely at the setting in all of Austen's stories, including her earliest writings. She focuses in particular on the connection between the heroines and the landscape. She states that

the heroines find their own place and themselves because of the landscape, and when looking at the natural scenery it has a more symbolic than purely literal meaning. Last but not least, in her work *Jane Austen and the English Landscape* Mavis Batey pays attention to different aspects. While using various images of important Austen landscapes and Gilpinian landscape paintings, Batey discusses the role of scenery in Austen's novels and the connection between nature and certain characters. Moreover, she also focuses on the variety of places where Austen herself lived and which she visited in the course of her life. Batey also discusses the influence of Gilpin and Repton and examines other sources, like William Cowper's poetry and novels by Fanny Burney and Ann Radcliffe.

In this investigation, a closer look will be taken at the use of landscape and architecture in Jane Austen's work, focusing on the novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. The first chapter will be dedicated to the connection between estates and certain characters, for example Mr Darcy and Pemberley and Mr. Knightly and Donwell Abbey. In these cases, Austen describes an estate in order to show more about the personality of its owner, which is an interesting way of using architecture and nature descriptions. In the following chapter, some light will be shed on the relationship between certain heroines and the landscapes they are in, for example Fanny Price and the Mansfield Park estate and Anne Elliot's moods which fit the different seasons in *Persuasion*. In these examples there is a special connection between certain characters and the landscape or estate they are in at a particular moment. The character is influenced by the landscape, which comes back in his or her emotions or actions. It can also work the other way around, namely the landscape being influenced by, for example, the absence of a certain character. In these cases, Austen establishes an obvious connection between the feelings and actions of certain characters and the landscapes.

In the third chapter, the allegorical meanings of certain landscape scenes will be central, for example the Sotherton scene in *Mansfield Park*. In these scenes it is clear that Austen uses the landscape to tell more about certain characters or storylines. After having taken a detailed look at the different novels and these separate groups of landscape descriptions, a conclusion will be given in order to show that Jane Austen uses landscape and architecture in several different ways in order to give more information on different characters and situations.

1. Pemberley, Donwell Abbey, Northanger Abbey: Estates and Their Owners

In the year 1616, the English poet Ben Jonson published the poem “To Penshurst”, in which he describes the country house Penshurst. At the time, this estate belonged to Robert Sidney, who was a younger brother of Sir Philip Sidney. In the poem, Jonson not only tells the reader about the country estate, but uses the description to also tell something about the personality of its owner, Robert Sidney:

Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show
 Of touch, or marble ; nor canst boast a row
 Of polished pillars, or a roof of gold :
 Thou hast no lantern whereof tales are told,
 Or stair, or courts ; but stand’st an ancient pile,
 And these grudged at, art revered the while.
 Thou joy’st in better marks, of soil, of air,
 Of wood, of water; therein thou art fair. (ll. 1-9)

All the positive qualities of the house reflect on its owner and Jonson uses imagery to assert the character and the virtue of Robert Sidney himself. Using an architectural description in order to show the character of the owner of the estate is also something Jane Austen does in her work. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen’s heroine Elizabeth Bennet gets to know the real character of Mr Darcy after visiting his estate, Pemberley. In Austen’s novel *Emma*, the main character Emma falls in love with Mr Knightley, who is portrayed by Austen through a detailed description of his estate, Donwell Abbey. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen does the same by confirming the true character of General Tilney through the description of his estate, Northanger Abbey. In these three novels, Austen uses an account of landscape or architecture to describe the character of the owner of the estate.

In these descriptions, her fascination with landscape artist William Gilpin and his aesthetic movement the picturesque also becomes apparent. Gilpin had his own specific idea of beauty: “Picturesque beauty is a phrase but little understood. We precisely mean by it that kind of beauty which would look well in a picture. Neither grounds laid out by art, nor improved by agriculture, are of this kind. ... The undressed simplicity, and native beauty, of such lanes as these, exceed the walks of the most finished garden” (Gilpin, quoted by Gay 48). Austen believed in this same ideal, which emerges when taking a closer look at her own landscape and architecture descriptions. She was not in favour of the improvement of estates and preferred a natural look, like Gilpin. An important landscape improver around Austen’s time was Humphry Repton, whose ideas on improvements do not completely match Gilpin’s ideals. Robert P. Irvine discusses:

The “improvements” of Repton and his imitators were designed to improve the way an estate looked, and could involve anything from cutting down trees and diverting streams to moving whole villages, all to improve the view from the big house and its approaches. ... Many voices were raised against such irreparable damage to the product of long ages of growth, and Austen is drawing on their arguments. (128)

Austen follows the ideals of Gilpin and, like others, did not believe in the improvements of estates. This also comes into relief in her novels since most characters that mention and enjoy the improvement of landscapes turn out to be the immoral ones with unlikeable characters, for example Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice* and General Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*. When taking a closer look at Austen’s picturesque descriptions of Pemberley, Donwell Abbey, and Northanger Abbey, the reader may notice that these accounts also offer more information on their respective owners Mr Darcy, Mr Knightley and General Tilney.

Mr Darcy and Pemberley

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* is probably Jane Austen's most famous work. The book, of which the original title was *First Impressions*, was printed in 1813 and was Austen's second published novel. The book tells the story of the Bennet family, which consists of Mr and Mrs Bennet and their five daughters. Mrs Bennet's main goal in life is to make sure her daughters marry well-established gentlemen and the story revolves around this. The focus is especially on Elizabeth Bennet, the second oldest daughter, who builds up one of the most famous romantic relationships in English literature with the male character Mr Darcy.

Landscape plays an important role in this work, like in Austen's other novels. Elizabeth, like the other heroines, seems to have a love for the English landscape. She is excited when her aunt and uncle invite her to join them on a landscape tour through northern England and she is not afraid of a bit of rain and mud, which becomes apparent in the famous scene where Elizabeth makes a three-mile muddy walk through the fields to visit her sister Jane at Netherfield. However, when talking about landscape and *Pride and Prejudice*, there is one scene that is definitely the most important one and that is when Elizabeth sees Pemberley, Darcy's estate, for the first time: "The center of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* contains one of the greatest landscape scenes in English literature, one that has been commented upon extensively since its publication nearly 200 years ago" (Wenner, *Prospect* 56).

Austen gives an extensive description of Pemberley, in which William Gilpin's picturesque ideals are present. As Mavis Batey writes, Pemberley "is a fictitious literary landscape created in the same way that Gilpin said he composed his picturesque landscapes; ideas are taken from the general face of the country not from any particular scene ... The Pemberley chapters had almost certainly been written based on her concentrated reading of Gilpin" (76). The untouched landscape and the striking natural surroundings, just as Gilpin wanted it, place the country house, which is the center of the description, in a beautiful

setting. It is through this landscape that Elizabeth comes to know Mr Darcy's real personality and has to put her prejudices aside. When she talks to her sister Jane about her love for Darcy, she says: "It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley" (288). It is the first view of Darcy's estate which changes Elizabeth's feelings towards him. This does not happen because Elizabeth only wants Darcy for his estate, but because the landscape helps her realize what his true character is like and that she has made a mistake by judging him before she really knew him as a person.

The first time the Bennet girls and the reader are introduced to Mr Darcy, he is already put in a negative light: "His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again" (11). His character does not improve in the first chapters of the novel, as he only proves to be the proud, disagreeable man Elizabeth thinks he is. Even when he proposes to her for the first time, Elizabeth has nothing nice to say about him:

From the very beginning, from the first moment I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that ground-work of disapprobation, on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry. (150-51)

After Elizabeth's refusal, Darcy gives her a letter which explains some of his actions and at this point, Elizabeth starts to realise her opinion of Darcy was maybe formed by prejudices.

When Elisabeth then visits Pemberley together with her aunt and uncle, she suddenly learns what Darcy's personality is really like. The fragment in which Elizabeth first sees Pemberley is described in close detail by Austen:

They gradually ascended for half a mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road, with some abruptness, wound. It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; — and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. 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. (187)

Elizabeth is taken in by the beauty and charm of the place, while at the same time her feelings towards Darcy are improving. The building is described as “large” and “handsome”, the same words which are also used by Austen to describe Darcy at the beginning of the novel: “... But his friend Mr Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year” (10).

After writing about the building itself, Austen mentions the stream in front of the house which is described as “of some natural importance” and “swelled into greater”, which refers to Darcy, who has an importance as well, which is swelled by his arrogance. However, Austen writes that the stream has no artificial appearance, which suggests that Darcy is a genuine honest person and not artificial. Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle are then let into the house, where the tour continues. Elizabeth admires the large windows in the house and enjoys the beautiful scenery outside:

Every disposition of the ground was good; 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 — with delight. As they passed into other rooms, these objects were taking

different positions; but from every window there were beauties to be seen. The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendor, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings. (188)

It is mentioned that there is a different view from every window, but each has its own beauty. Elizabeth learns to do the same with Darcy: to look at him from different angles and notice the diverse beauties of his character.

The furniture in the house suits its owner and shows good taste and elegance, which can also be said about Darcy. This is, for example, in contrast to Lady Catherine de Bourgh's furniture and possessions, which are expensive and extravagant, like Lady Catherine herself. She is described by Austen as a "tall, large woman, with strongly-marked features, which might once have been handsome. Her air was not conciliating, nor was her manner of receiving them such as to make her visitors forget their inferior rank. She was not rendered formidable by silence; but whatever she said was spoken in so authoritative a tone as marked her self-importance" (127). The resemblance with Darcy emerges in this description, as Lady Catherine is also "tall" with "strongly-marked features". However, as Austen writes, Lady Catherine was once handsome, but is not any longer. She is a proud and unlikeable woman, who, through the years, has lost her handsome looks. Maybe because she had some difficulties with the process of ageing, she became bitter and an unfriendly woman. In this case, her personality and looks seem to be linked to one another, which can also be said about Darcy. In Elizabeth's eyes, Darcy becomes more attractive as soon as she learns about his positive character traits. Clearly, there is a link between personality and physical appearance when looking at Mr Darcy and Lady Catherine.

Lady de Bourgh's self-importance, which is also mentioned in Austen's description, comes back in her choice of possessions. She owns beautiful carriages, her garden is a large

improved park, her house is decorated with an eye for the “fine proportion and finished ornaments” (127), and during dinner she presents her guests with special dishes they do not know: “Lady Catherine seemed gratified by their excessive admiration, and gave most gracious smiles, especially when any dish on the table proved a novelty to them” (128). Lady Catherine wants to show off her wealth and does so by improving her surroundings as much as she can with, for example, expensive and extravagant furniture and decorations. By doing this, she tries to impress others, but also seems to be begging for attention. In contrast, Darcy does not need to make an impact on others by using his wealth and he does not want the attention. As a result, the contrast between Lady de Bourgh’s and Mr Darcy’s personalities is also visible in the description of their furniture and home environment.

Important here is the influence of Gilpin and his picturesque ideals on Austen’s fictional landscapes Pemberley and Rosings. Pemberley is continually described in a natural and simplistic way, which emphasises its beauty while following the ideas of Gilpin. This kind of landscape fits the moral and sympathetic character of Mr Darcy. In contrast, Rosings is described in less detail, but Austen makes it clear that Lady Catherine is fond of expensive furniture and improvements around the estate with which she can show off her wealth and luxurious way of living. As Austen herself was not a fan of improving estates, the fact that Lady Catherine is all for improving is already a hint that she is not one of the moral and decent characters in the novel. This is then later proven by Austen, when the reader finds out Lady Catherine is indeed a shallow person who only cares about herself. This process of linking the love for improving to a certain personality also comes back in some of Austen’s other novels, for example General Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* and Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park*. Taste, as an aesthetic category, is an important keyword here and is used by Austen to indicate moral refinement. Different personalities are linked to different tastes, for example the characters with an expensive and luxurious taste that are in favour of

improvements tend to be the immoral and unlikeable characters of Austen's stories. In contrast to this, the moral and sympathetic characters have quality taste and are against improving estates. In these cases, Austen uses the Gilpinian idea of natural surroundings without explicit improvements to already give the reader a small hint about the true personality of certain characters.

Another important aspect when talking about Elizabeth's thoughts on Darcy after spending some time at Pemberley, is Darcy's portrait. The house has its own gallery where several family portraits can be found, including a portrait of Darcy himself, which catches Elizabeth's eye:

Elizabeth walked on in quest of the only face whose features would be known to her. At last it arrested her — and she beheld a striking resemblance of Mr Darcy, with such a smile over the face as she remembered to have sometimes seen, when he looked at her. She stood several minutes before the picture in earnest contemplation, and returned to it again before they quitted the gallery. Mrs Reynolds informed them that it had been taken in his father's life time. There was certainly at this moment, in Elizabeth's mind, a more gentle sensation towards the original than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance. (191)

The way Darcy has been portrayed highlights some of his features, his smile, for example. These influence Elizabeth's view of him. The combination of the portrait, Darcy's house and the landscape completely changes Elizabeth's perception of him.

This chapter, which describes Elizabeth's first visit to Pemberley, is used by Austen to give both Elizabeth and the reader a new, more positive image of Mr Darcy. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer writes: "The sequence of descriptions in the chapter creates a sense of ascent, multiplicity, and expansion which defines not only the landscape but also the widening of Elizabeth's vision of Darcy, and the increasing intensity of her feeling" (610). Austen wants

to show that Pemberley and Darcy are connected and every detail of the grounds actually represents Darcy's own character, which Elizabeth slowly learns to understand while she is at Pemberley: "Elizabeth's journey through the park, from its boundary to the house, is a spatial recapitulation of her association with Darcy from her first prejudiced impressions of his external appearance, through a recognition of other (and seemingly contradictory) views, to a final arrival at the central core of his character" (Duckworth 1971, 125). This makes the scene more than just a detailed account of the landscape, as it tells even more about Darcy as a person and changes Elizabeth's views completely.

Mr Knightley and Donwell Abbey

Austen's fourth novel *Emma*, which was published in 1815, tells the story of Emma Woodhouse, a young woman who, in comparison to most other Austen heroines, does not have to worry about money and marrying well. Emma is more occupied with the love lives of other people around her than trying to find a suitable man for herself. She takes care of her father, while staying busy with matchmaking and helping Harriet Smith, an innocent girl, to learn all about manners and how to be a proper lady. Without noticing it at first, Emma herself slowly falls in love with Mr Knightley, a friend of the family, who lives in an estate close to theirs, Donwell Abbey. The scene in which Emma takes a first, real, proper look at the grounds of Mr Knightley is a significant event in the novel: "Along with the description of Pemberley, the view from the pleasure grounds of Donwell Abbey is Austen's most influential landscape" (Wenner, *Prospect* 82). Like in *Pride and Prejudice*, where Elizabeth Bennet starts to see Mr Darcy's real personality when she visits Pemberley, Austen also uses the landscape and architecture of Donwell Abbey to portray Mr Knightley's true character.

The name of Emma's love interest already suggests part of his character. Mr Knightley is described throughout the novel as a chivalrous man, so his name fits him perfectly.

Knightsley is introduced as an intimate friend of the family, who is in his thirties and owns an estate, Donwell Abbey. At the start of the novel, Emma already sees him as a true gentleman and compares him to other men: “Mr Knightsley’s air is so remarkably good that it is not fair to compare Mr Martin with him. You might not see one in a hundred with gentleman so plainly written as in Mr Knightsley” (24). She speaks highly of him in almost every situation: “I know no man more likely than Mr Knightsley to do the sort of thing — to do any thing really good-natured, useful, considerate, or benevolent” (177). However, Knightsley is also the only one who dares to challenge Emma and confront her with her mistakes, which is something Emma is not always pleased with: “Mr Knightsley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them: and though this was not particularly agreeable to Emma herself, she knew it would be so much less so to her father, that she would not have him really suspect such a circumstance as her not being thought perfect by every body” (5). Even though Emma thinks highly of Mr Knightsley, she never considers him as a possible love interest for herself until over three-quarters of the narrative, when she hears Harriet say she is in love with Knightsley.

The name of Knightsley’s estate, Donwell, also has another meaning, because it refers to the fact that Knightsley, who belongs to the well-established gentry, has done well in the sense of being an active force for moral good in society. However, it also suggests that Emma herself needs to realise Knightsley is the right man for her and that she will have done well for herself when she ends up together with him. Although Emma has visited Donwell Abbey multiple times, this scene is her first visit where she actually learns to admire the entire estate. Just like Elizabeth Bennet, Emma relates the characteristics of the landscape and buildings to that of its owner, which causes her to regard Mr Knightsley in a new and different manner.

On a fine day in June, Emma, Mr Weston, Mrs Elton and others decide to organise a trip to go to Box Hill together. When he hears this, Mr Knightsley invites all of them to come

to Donwell Abbey and enjoy some of his fast-ripening strawberries. At this point in the story, Emma has experienced some setbacks, mainly having to do with her matchmaking plans for Harriet, and she is looking forward to a pleasurable day without any worries. As soon as Emma and her father arrive, Mr. Woodhouse is placed in one of the best rooms of Donwell Abbey and taken care of, so Emma can go her own way. She starts to investigate the buildings and the grounds and, mainly with her nephew Henry in mind, who will become the owner of Donwell Abbey if Knightley does not marry, starts to see the beauty of it:

She felt all the honest pride and complacency which her alliance with the present and future proprietor could fairly warrant, as she viewed the respectable size and style of the building, its suitable, becoming, characteristic situation, low and sheltered — 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.

(289)

The estate is slightly hidden and has a traditional feel to it. It is not described as having been improved in various ways or slightly modern for its time; it is a traditional house with a beautiful, natural setting around it, which fits Austen's and Gilpin's ideas of the ideal landscape. The "abundance of timber in rows and avenues" can be linked to a specific scene in Austen's *Mansfield Park* where Fanny hears Mr Rushworth is planning on cutting down an avenue at his estate Sotherton: "Cut down an avenue! What a pity! Does it not make you think of Cowper? 'Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited'" (41). Fanny mentions William Cowper, whose work and ideas Austen loved and supported. The "abundance of timber in rows and avenues" at Donwell Abbey is therefore a positive sign, because it portrays the natural feel of the grounds, which is in accordance with both Austen's and Cowper's ideas. In the description of Donwell Abbey, the house is described as

“respectable” and having a “suitable, becoming, characteristic situation”. These characteristics can be linked to Knightley, because he is also a respectable person in the neighbourhood who has managed to find his own place in Highbury and society.

Austen continues the description of the estate: “The house was larger than Hartfield, and totally unlike it, covering a good deal of ground, rambling and irregular, with many comfortable, and one or two handsome rooms. It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was — and Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding” (289). In the description, the stress is more on “comfortable” than “handsome”, which shows that the house is mainly practical and useful and not just to show off. The same goes for Mr Knightley, because, unlike Frank Churchill, he is not a show-off who only cares about looks, but an honest and friendly man. Just like the estate, Mr Knightley is what he ought to be and looks what he is: a decent gentleman who fits his name.

After looking at the house from a different perspective than usual, Emma joins the group for a walk through the gardens of Donwell Abbey, which is where Austen gives another important description of the landscape:

They insensibly followed one another to the delicious shade of a broad short avenue of limes, which stretching beyond the garden at an equal distance from the river, seemed the finish of the pleasure grounds. — It led to nothing; nothing but a view at the end over a low stone wall with high pillars, which seemed intended, in their erection, to give the appearance of an approach to the house, which never had been there.

Disputable, however, as might be the taste of such a termination, it was in itself a charming walk, and the view which closed it extremely pretty. — The considerable slope, at nearly the foot of which the Abbey stood, gradually acquired a steeper form beyond its grounds; and at half a mile distant was a bank of considerable abruptness

and grandeur, well clothed with wood; — and at the bottom of this bank, favourably placed and sheltered, rose the Abbey Mill Farm, with meadows in front, and the river making a close and handsome curve around it. (290-91)

The landscape around the estate like in *Pride and Prejudice*, is described in a picturesque way. The traditional, naturalistic beauty of the landscape is maintained and no real improvements are necessary. Again, the traditional feel refers back to Knightley's reliable and slightly old-fashioned character. Austen also writes in this scene: "It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive" (291). This Englishness is a good quality and one of the best compliments that could be given to the estate and at the same time to Mr Knightley's personality.

Donwell Abbey is also described as having several comfortable rooms with quality furniture and interesting objects. This is, for example, shown when Mr. Woodhouse spends time in the house: "Mr. Knightley had done all in his power for Mr. Woodhouse's entertainment. Books of engravings, drawers of medals, cameos, corals, shells, and every other family collection within his cabinets, had been prepared for his old friend, to while away the morning; and the kindness had perfectly answered" (292). In other scenes throughout the novel it becomes clear that the rooms in the house are comfortable and grand; stressing the pleasant and the useful instead of the decorative and the impressive.

Just like Pemberley could be seen in comparison to Rosings, Donwell Abbey and Mr Knightley can be compared to Mrs Elton and her manor. Mrs Elton, the vicar Mr Elton's wife, is constantly looking for compliments, incredibly vain and tries her best to be as fashionable as possible: "... Mrs. Elton was a vain woman, extremely well satisfied with herself, and thinking much of her own importance; ... she meant to shine and be very superior, but with manners which had been formed in a bad school, pert and familiar; ... all her notions were

drawn from one set of people, and one style of living; ... if not foolish she was ignorant" (217). Mrs Elton tries to make an impact on other people in Highbury as much as she can and because of this she becomes a threat to Emma. Knightley and Emma may not be impressed by Mrs Elton's behaviour, but most of the other people are, which is risky for Emma and her position as the Queen Bee of Highbury. The contrast between the extravagance and theatrical behaviour of Mrs Elton and the traditional and polite personality of Mr Knightley is the same kind of distinction found in *Pride and Prejudice* when looking at Pemberley and Rosings.

General Tilney and Northanger Abbey

The novel *Northanger Abbey*, of which the first version was titled *Susan*, was written by Austen at the end of the nineteenth century. However, it was one of the last of her works to be published, namely in 1817, after her death. The story focuses on seventeen-year-old Catherine Morland who makes several new acquaintances when she is visiting Bath, including her love interest Henry Tilney. Henry and his younger sister Eleanor are both fond of Catherine and because of this their father, General Tilney, invites her to visit their estate Northanger Abbey. This is the start of another significant scene in Austen's work, as the description of the estate can be linked to the character of its owner, namely General Tilney. However, in contrast to the earlier examples of Mr Darcy and Mr Knightley, the description of Northanger Abbey is not flattering to the owner's personality, but is intended at his negative character traits. Unlike Darcy and Knightley, General Tilney does not fit the image of the perfect, sympathetic gentleman. Instead he is a shallow, materialistic, selfish man, which becomes apparent in the description Austen gives of Northanger Abbey.

Northanger Abbey can be seen as a parody of the Gothic novel, of which the first example was Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*, published in 1765. There are especially similarities between the well-known Gothic novel *The Mysteries of*

Udolpho (1794), written by Ann Radcliffe, and Austen's storyline. Catherine and her friend Isabella Thorpe are both fascinated by Gothic literature and read and discuss Radcliffe's books in the novel. As the story is a parody, Catherine is the complete opposite of Gothic heroines. While these heroines were beautiful and had exciting lives, Catherine is described as a plain, boring girl who is "almost pretty" (4). As soon as she arrives in Bath, she starts to use her imagination more and more and comes up with exciting Gothic scenarios in order to turn normal situations into something mysterious and supernatural. Catherine's delusions create a certain psychological tension, which was one of the elements often used in Gothic novels. Whereas the first part of *Northanger Abbey* has nothing to do with Gothic fiction, the second part is a clear parody of the genre, which especially emerges when Catherine visits Northanger Abbey: "By going to the abbey Catherine for a chapter or two takes the reader with her into the setting and plot of a Radcliffean novel of terror, mystery and self-induced illusion" (Butler xxvii).

The Gothic influences in *Northanger Abbey* already become obvious when Catherine is on her way to Northanger Abbey together with Henry Tilney. They talk about the estate and it becomes clear that Catherine is looking forward to her visit and expects much of the abbey:

"... You must be so fond of the abbey! After being used to such a home as the abbey, an ordinary parsonage-house must be very disagreeable." He smiled, and said, "You have formed a very favourable idea of the abbey." "To be sure, I have. Is not it a fine old place, just like what one reads about?" "And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce? Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?" (101)

Henry is joking around by trying to scare Catherine a bit before she arrives at the estate. However, this can also be seen as some kind of warning: Catherine expects General Tilney to be a nice man, but she receives an early warning of the horrors she will probably encounter

while at Northanger Abbey. In terms of a Gothic story, Catherine plays the role of the heroine, while General Tilney can be seen as the domestic tyrant. At one point Catherine also starts to suspect General Tilney of murdering his wife, which is the perfect storyline for a true Gothic story.

Henry continues his scary tales, by telling Catherine she will probably be lodged apart from the family, in a gloomy chamber with no one to talk to but a creepy, old housekeeper.

His words really resemble a Gothic story:

Nothing further to alarm perhaps may occur the first night. After surmounting your unconquerable horror of the bed, you will retire to rest, and get a few hours' unquiet slumber. But on the second, or at farthest the third night after your arrival, you will probably have a violent storm. Peals of thunder so loud as to seem to shake the edifice to its foundation will roll round the neighbouring mountains – and during the frightful gusts of wind which accompany it, you will probably think you discern (for your lamp is not extinguished) one part of the hanging more violently agitated than the rest. (102)

Henry tells his stories in order to scare Catherine, which he manages to do. These tales cause Catherine to think that the abbey is even older and imposing than she already expected.

When Catherine and Henry reach the estate, Catherine expects to see a Gothic, large, old building, but reality does not exactly fit her description:

She knew not that she had any right to be surprised, but there was a something in this mode of approach which she certainly had not expected. To pass between lodges of a modern appearance, to find herself with such ease in the very precincts of the abbey, and driven so rapidly along a smooth, level road of fine gravel, without obstacle, alarm, or solemnity of any kind, struck her as odd and inconsistent. She was not long at leisure, however, for such considerations. A sudden scud of rain, driving full in her face, made it impossible for her to observe anything further. (103)

While Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse visit both the Pemberley and the Donwell Abbey estates on sunny days, Catherine arrives in the rain, which, in true Gothic fashion, can already be seen as a bad omen.

The interior of the abbey, the furniture, and the decorations are not what Catherine expected, as most of it is modern and has been redecorated:

Yes, it was delightful to be really in an abbey! But she doubted, as she looked round the room, whether anything within her observation would have given her the consciousness. The furniture was in all the profusion and elegance of modern taste. The fireplace, where she had expected the ample width and ponderous carving of former times, was contracted to a Rumford, with slabs of plain though handsome marble, and ornaments over it of the prettiest English china. The windows, to which she looked with peculiar dependence, from having heard the general talk of his preserving them in their Gothic form with reverential care, were yet less what her fancy had portrayed. 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! To an imagination which had hoped for the smallest divisions, and the heaviest stone-work, for painted glass, dirt, and cobwebs, the difference was very distressing. (103-4)

Catherine had certain expectations, but the house does not live up to them. The same can be said about General Tilney; Catherine expects him to be a charming, friendly man, but he turns out to be exactly the opposite, as Blair suggests: “Catherine’s willingness to suppose the General charming does not survive long once she is at Northanger. Here Austen unleashes the General among his material possessions and signifiers of status to devastating effect” (xii).

Catherine in the beginning also heard stories about General Tilney himself, which raised her expectations of him. John Thorpe, one of her acquaintances in Bath, gives her a

positive account of Henry and Eleanor's father: "He is a fine old fellow, upon my soul! Stout, active – looks as young as his son. I have a great regard for him, I assure you; a gentleman-like, good sort of fellow as ever lived" (60). When Catherine meets General Tilney for the first couple of times in Bath herself, she is charmed by him and has nothing negative to say about his character, like everyone else: "That he was perfectly agreeable and good-natured, and altogether a very charming man, did not admit of a doubt, for he was tall and handsome, and Henry's father" (82). However, just like the abbey, which does not turn out to be as imposing and Gothic as Catherine expected, General Tilney is not what other people describe and think him to be, which becomes apparent as the novel progresses.

General Tilney has used his "improving hand" (118) to change the old abbey in many ways, in order to have everything newer, bigger and better than his neighbours. The importance of luxury and wealth above comfort already suggests General Tilney's shallow character: "The modernity and fashionability of the interior fittings and furnishings, detailed in the General's running commentary, may displease Catherine by being 'not-Gothic'; but Austen is subtly directing the reader's attention to the shallow, busy, ostentatious materialism of the General" (Blair xiii). There are certain aspects of the estate, the gilding in some of the rooms and the shape of the windows, for example, which are all improvements which General Tilney talks about the most. These improvements are modern and do not enrich the abbey, in Catherine's eyes, just like General Tilney's shallow and materialistic side do nothing for his character.

An example of General Tilney's love for improving is the kitchen of the house, which has been transformed from an ancient place to one of the most modern kitchens of its time:

They proceeded by quick communication to the kitchen—the ancient kitchen of the convent, rich in the massy walls and smoke of former days, and in the stoves and hot closets of the present. The general's improving hand had not loitered here: every

modern invention to facilitate the labour of the cooks had been adopted within this, their spacious theatre; and, when the genius of others had failed, his own had often produced the perfection wanted. (119)

The kitchen has been renovated, just like various other rooms, which is a waste of the old rooms and architectural design of the abbey. Catherine, just like Austen herself, seems to be appalled by all these improvements: “Catherine could have raved at the hand which had swept away what must have been beyond the value of all the rest, for the purposes of mere domestic economy; and would willingly have been spared the mortification of a walk through scenes so fallen” (119). Catherine is also shown the garden, which the General describes as being “unrivalled in the kingdom” (115) and some of the other most elegant and expensive rooms in the house, which were “most completely and handsomely fitted up; everything that money and taste could do, to give comfort and elegance to apartments, had been bestowed on these” (120). Even though Catherine is slightly impressed by all of this, she starts to think of the abbey in a more critical way. However, even though Austen uses the descriptions to already give the reader a hint of what General Tilney’s character really is like, Catherine continues to be naïve and still believes General Tilney to be the nice and friendly man he appears to be at first sight.

It does not take long before Catherine experiences General Tilney’s real character herself. When he comes home from a short trip, he orders Eleanor to tell Catherine the whole Tilney family has to go away and Catherine is expected to leave the estate the next morning as early as seven o’clock. The fact that Catherine is forced to leave Northanger Abbey so suddenly is a big insult, which Eleanor feels terrible about. Later on, Catherine finds out General Tilney only invited her to his estate, because he thought she belonged to a wealthy family. As soon as he realises this is actually not the case, he throws her out, because he does not want to be associated with lower-class people. General Tilney’s real personality, hints of

which had already been given in the scenes at Northanger Abbey, eventually shines through. Catherine suspected the general of having murdered his wife and even though he did not do that, his actions are almost as horrible in her eyes: “Catherine, at any rate, 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” (162).

When looking at the descriptions of Northanger Abbey, the reader notices that General Tilney has really improved and changed the place. However, the foundations of the Gothic abbey are still there. For example, as quoted before, when Catherine enters the abbey she sees all the improvements, but there is still the pointed arch which is part of the original abbey. The original walls have just been covered with modern plaster, which can also be said about the owner. General Tilney tries to be modern and civilized, but beneath the kind and polite man there is a Gothic tyrant. Clearly, Austen also used the old foundations of the estate and linked these to General Tilney’s personality.

Even though only these three examples have been discussed in this chapter, Austen also works connections between owners and their estates into some of her other novels. In *Sense and Sensibility* the Norland estate changes from a pleasant and beautiful place into an improved, stately country manor as soon as John Dashwood and his family come to live there. This change can be linked to John, who is one of the unlikeable characters in the novel, because he does not try to help out his mother or sisters and only thinks about his wife and himself. In the same novel, Delaware, Colonel Brandon’s estate, suits the sympathetic personality of its owner and the same goes for Robert Martin and his Abbey-Mill Farm in *Emma*. In all these cases, Austen uses the landscape descriptions to suggest more about the different personalities of important characters, both positive and negative, which helps the Austen heroines on their way.

2. Austen's Heroines & the Landscape

Each Jane Austen novel has its own typical Austen heroine, who has her own positive and negative qualities. While Elizabeth Bennet is known for her impertinence, Emma Woodhouse worries too much about other people's business, Anne Elliot is the most introverted, and Catherine Morland's character is defined by her naïveté. However, even though the heroines have their own distinctive qualities, there are several similarities between them as well. Next to the fact that all the female protagonists are looking for romance and happiness, most of them also seem to have a special relationship with the landscape around them. Some of the heroines' searches for happiness and a place in society are closely linked to the landscape, as Barbara Britton Wenner suggests: "Austen knew that a way of seeing and a way of being within a landscape were crucial for her novelistic heroines. She worked to create spaces for her heroines to negotiate positions of greater power with more opportunities for freedom and happiness on their own terms" (*I Have*, par. 3). Accordingly, another important example of Austen's landscape use in her novels is the interesting relationships she sometimes establishes between the different heroines and the nature and architecture around them. Examples of this are the link between the seasonal landscapes in *Persuasion* and the character of the heroine Anne Elliot and the connection between Fanny Price and the Mansfield Park estate in the novel *Mansfield Park*.

Anne Elliot and the Seasons

Persuasion is Austen's sixth and last completed novel, written in 1816 and published in 1818. The novel tells the story of Anne Elliot, an introverted young woman who, at the age of 27, seems destined to become a spinster. When she was younger, she fell in love with a young, poor naval officer named Frederick Wentworth. However, her family and friends did not

approve of this union and Anne turned Frederick's proposal down. After seven years, Frederick comes back into Anne's life and she realises she is still in love with him.

In the course of the novel, Anne's character goes through a transformation and Austen uses descriptions of the landscape to portray this change in Anne's behaviour. The use of nature to convey certain emotions, such as love, can be linked to the Romantic period. Anne's journey from being expected to be rational all the time to being persuaded by her emotions also fits the ideas of Romanticism, a literary movement in which Austen herself played a significant role.

In *Persuasion*, nature is not only used by Austen as a descriptive element, but as an important way of portraying the transformation of the heroine Anne Elliot. The landscape descriptions of Uppercross, Lyme and the city of Bath in particular play a significant role in the change of Anne's personality from being introverted and overlooked to starting to bloom again and finding happiness. During Anne's visit to Uppercross, one day the group, which consists of Louisa and Henrietta Musgrove, Captain Wentworth, Mary, Charles Musgrove and Anne, decides to go for a walk. Even though Anne tries to stay away from Frederick Wentworth as much as possible, she still decides to come along and just enjoy nature as much as she can:

Her pleasure in the walk must arise from the exercise and the day, from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges, and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn, that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness, that season which has drawn from every poet, worthy of being read, some attempt at description, or some lines of feeling. (64)

Austen describes the autumn landscape in a way that fits Anne's emotions at that particular moment: "The sweet scenes of autumn were for a while put by, unless some tender sonnet,

fraught with the apt analogy of the declining year, with declining happiness, and the images of youth, and hope, and spring, all gone together, blessed her memory” (65). The falling of the leaves and the fading colours resemble Anne’s fading personality. She used to be happy, but she is slowly fading, like the colours of the leaves. Her younger years are gone and all she has left are memories of what could have been. In autumn, everything is slowly dying and that is how Anne feels inside. By seeing Frederick Wentworth again and hearing the rumours of him wanting to marry one of the Musgrove sisters, Anne feels like she has no hope left and she is unhappy, which fits the autumn landscape.

However, Austen already gives a hint of what will be in store for Anne through her description of the Uppercross landscape. Farmers are working on the land and Austen writes: “... After another half-mile of gradual ascent through large enclosures, where the ploughs at work and the fresh-made path spoke the farmer counteracting the sweets of poetical despondence, and meaning to have spring again, they gained the summit of the most considerable hill” (65). The farmers are ploughing, because soon spring will come and they have to be ready for that new beginning. This suggests that even though Anne feels faded and unhappy right now, she will soon experience a new beginning and start to bloom again, because after autumn and winter, there is always spring.

In contrast to the autumn landscape at Uppercross, Austen then describes the sea landscape of Lyme in one of the following chapters. Captain Wentworth suggests visiting some of his friends in Lyme and the same party, consisting of Charles, Mary, Henrietta, Louisa and Anne, decides to join him on his trip to the seaside town. As soon as Austen starts her first description of Lyme, the difference between this town and Uppercross becomes quite obvious:

The scenes in its neighbourhood, Charmouth, with its high grounds and extensive sweeps of country, and still more its sweet, retired bay, backed by dark cliffs, where

fragments of low rock among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide, for sitting in unwearied contemplation; the woody varieties of the cheerful village of Up Lyme; and, above all, Pinny, with its green chasms between romantic rocks, where the scattered forest-trees and orchards of luxuriant growth declare that many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state, where a scene so wonderful and so lovely is exhibited, as may more than equal any of the resembling scenes of the far-famed Isle of Wight: these places must be visited, and visited again to make the worth of Lyme understood. (73)

Words such as “happiest”, “romantic”, “wonderful” and “lovely” already show that the landscape at Lyme has an effect on Anne different from the autumn scene at Uppercross.

Louisa Musgrove tells Anne that she also believes that going to Lyme can make a person feel better and how it helped one of her acquaintances:

I am quite convinced that, with very few exceptions, the sea air always does good.

There can be no doubt of its having been of the greatest service to Dr. Shirley, after his illness, last spring twelvemonth. He declares himself, that coming to Lyme for a month did him more good than all the medicine he took; and that being by the sea always makes him feel young again. (78-79)

The fresh sea breeze also seems to have a positive effect on Anne, because she slowly starts to get in touch with her old, younger self again. She loses the negative attitude which was so clearly present in the autumn landscape in Uppercross, and starts to bloom again. Austen uses Lyme as a place where nature and emotions come together: “Lyme Regis as rendered by Austen offers a remarkable fit between place and feeling, nature and human nature, geology and sociology. Lyme’s vistas inspire the transports of sensibility just as its bracing air invigorates the body” (Graham 179). Frederick Wentworth also sees this transformation in

Anne and makes a comment about it: “Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which showed his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance, a glance of brightness, which seemed to say, ‘That man is struck with you, and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again’” (80). When Wentworth first arrived at Uppercross and saw Anne again after so many years, he thought she was not the same Anne Elliot he met all those years ago. Now, as Anne starts to bloom once more, he again sees in her what he saw when he first met her.

When looking at Austen’s positive account of the seaside village of Lyme, the reader may notice another significant aspect, namely the place of the navy in the novel. Frederick Wentworth, who met Anne when he was a poor man, has now made his fortune as a naval officer: “He had, very soon after their engagement ceased, got employ: and all that he had told her would follow, had taken place. He had distinguished himself, and early gained the other step in rank, and must now, by successive captures, have made a handsome fortune” (22). It is probably not a coincidence that Anne finds herself and her happiness again when she is near the sea, while at the same time she longs for a life with a man who is part of the navy and leads a life at sea. In contrast to Austen’s other heroines, Anne does not choose safety, namely staying on the land, but wants to try a more uncertain life; a life at sea. Austen already gives an example of this kind of marriage in the novel, namely the Crofts. Mr Croft, an admiral, and his wife have spent many years at sea and they seem to have a perfect marriage, as Mrs Croft says: “When you come to a frigate, of course, you are more confined; though any reasonable woman may be perfectly happy in one of them; and I can safely say, that the happiest part of my life has been spent on board a ship. While we were together, you know, there was nothing to be feared” (54). This significant connection between Anne and the sea looks like another hint from Austen in which she links the landscape to a specific character which influences the mood of the heroine.

The blooming of Anne's personality seems to come to a stop when she has to leave Lyme and Uppercross and go to her father and sister in the city of Bath instead. She has to leave the freedom of the seaside and countryside behind and go to the city, where she feels like a prisoner, which becomes clear as soon as Anne enters the city: "Anne entered it with a sinking heart, anticipating an imprisonment of many months, and anxiously saying to herself, 'Oh! When shall I leave you again?'" (105). While Lady Russell, Anne's friend and companion, is happy to be in the city again, Anne does not share that feeling: "She persisted in a very determined, though very silent disinclination for Bath; caught the first dim view of the extensive buildings, smoking in rain, without any wish of seeing them better, felt their progress through the streets to be, however disagreeable, yet too rapid" (103). The cold and grey elements of the city buildings reflect Anne's mood: she feels trapped and emotionless in this materialistic place and misses the freedom she had at the seaside in Lyme. However, when Anne was unhappy in Uppercross she just decided to accept her situation, because even though she longed to be somewhere else, she thought she could not have that anymore. However, after experiencing the beauty and freedom in Lyme, she is strong enough to decide she cannot be forced to find a place in Bath, because she wants to be elsewhere. This completes Anne's transformation, as she now knows what she wants and what makes her happy. Captain Wentworth confirming his love for her completes the perfect picture, but even before that Anne has already found her own personality and beauty. Clearly, Austen uses certain parallels between Anne's character and the landscape and weather to show the transformation she goes through.

Fanny Price and Mansfield Park

Jane Austen wrote her third novel *Mansfield Park* between 1812 and 1814, the year in which it was also first published. The book tells the story of a young, poor girl named Fanny Price

who is raised by her wealthy aunt and uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram and his wife, who live at Mansfield Park. Fanny grows up with her four cousins Edmund, Tom, Maria and Julia, but Edmund is the only one who is kind to her and does not see her as inferior. Fanny slowly turns into a young woman with many admirable qualities in contrast to most of the other characters, who make mistakes and do not behave the way they are expected to. As Ann Banfield writes in “The Moral Landscape of Mansfield Park”, there is a “special relation between setting and character in the novel” (3), as in most of Jane Austen’s works.

Throughout the novel, different descriptions of the scenery and estates can be linked to certain characters or events central to the story. The importance of landscape already comes forward when looking at Fanny, who is often seen as a sober Austen heroine, but who lightens up when surrounded by or talking about nature: “Fanny Price, like Jane Austen herself, loved to observe ‘the appearance of the country, the bearings of the road, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children’” (Batey 22). In the novel, there appears to be a special link between Fanny and the Mansfield Park estate. Fanny seems to have a certain influence on the house, and vice versa. The state of the house can be linked to Fanny’s personality and emotions at certain times, which is another example of Austen’s use of descriptions of landscape and architecture in order to say more about her heroine’s path.

Fanny comes to live with the Bertram family when she is only ten years old, shy and silent. As the novel progresses, Fanny’s personality changes and parallels between Fanny and Mansfield Park become more obvious. First, both take up a central place in the novel. Fanny is the main character around whom all the storylines seem to revolve one way or another. Like Fanny, Mansfield Park also takes up a central role in the novel since it is the main place of events, to which almost all of the characters continue to come back, both literally and figuratively.

Secondly, throughout the novel the term “improvement” plays an important role. It is used when talking about improving the landscape or an estate, for example when Mr. Rushworth wants to change his estate, Sotherton: “It wants improvement, ma’am, beyond anything. I never saw a place that wanted so much improvement in my life” (39). It is striking that the characters who continually talk about improving, like Mr. Rushworth and Mary Crawford, are the ones that end up making mistakes, and that the moral and sympathetic characters like Fanny and Edmund are against improvement, as Edmund at one point shows: “... had I a place to new fashion, I should not put myself into the hands of an improver. I would rather have an inferior degree of beauty, of my own choice, and acquired progressively. I would rather abide by my own blunders than by his” (41). Mansfield Park has also undergone some slight improvements and changes over the years, but it has kept its natural beauty, which fits Austen’s ideals. In the novel, the term “improvement” is also used concerning Fanny, as she has turned from a small, shy girl into a beautiful young woman. Edmund literally says to Fanny: “Your complexion is so improved! – and you have gained so much countenance!” (141). However, Fanny is still the same girl with the same personality, with just a few minor changes. So, in this case, the improvement does not mean something negative; it is a natural improvement which Austen approves of, just like the improvements to Mansfield Park itself, which have caused it to keep its natural appearance.

Austen describes Mansfield Park and Fanny in the same terms. When Sir Thomas sees Fanny right before the ball, Austen writes:

He saw with pleasure the general elegance of her appearance and her being in remarkably good looks. The neatness and propriety of her dress was all that he would allow himself to commend in her presence, but upon her leaving the room again soon afterwards, he spoke of her beauty with very decided praise. (195)

Later on in the novel, Mansfield Park is described in similar terms: “The elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony, and perhaps, above all, the peace and tranquillity of Mansfield, were brought to her remembrance every hour of the day” (280). In these descriptions, a link between Fanny and Mansfield Park is obvious.

Fanny herself also feels connected to Mansfield Park, as Barbara Britton Wenner argues:

Fanny has been at Mansfield Park only a short while, and yet she feels extremely connected to this place, exclaiming to her cousin, Edmund, “If I could suppose my aunt really to care for me, it would be delightful to feel myself of consequence to any body! – Here, I know, I am of none, and yet I love the place so well”. Edmund attempts to reassure her that she will have free access to the park and gardens, but Fanny needs to live at Mansfield Park and to be a part of it in a way she never could if she lived separately with Aunt Norris. Though she believes herself of little consequence to the family, Fanny loves the place and feels an almost spiritual connection to it. (*Prospect* 66-67)

The connection is, for example, visible in the description of Fanny’s room in the house and her own blooming personality. When Fanny arrives at Mansfield Park, she is given a room, namely “the little white attic” (109). These specific words are used by Austen to refer back to Fanny herself, because she is a modest and virginal small girl when she arrives at Mansfield Park: “She was small of her age, with no glow of complexion, nor any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice” (9). The attic is described as a small room, close to the nurseries and the housemaids, so Fanny could get help from them whenever she needed it. However, it is a different room, namely the old schoolroom of the Bertram children, which Fanny makes her own and not the little attic. Austen writes:

The room had then become useless, and for some time was quite deserted, except by Fanny, when she visited her plants, or wanted one of the books, which she was still glad to keep there, from the deficiency of space and accommodation in her little chamber above: but gradually, as her value for the comforts of it increased, she had added to her possessions, and spent more of her time there; and having nothing to oppose her, had so naturally and so artlessly worked herself into it, that it was now generally admitted to be hers. (109)

Fanny makes this deserted schoolroom her own place in the large house by gradually putting some of her own possessions in there and spending more time in it. Fanny learns much while staying at Mansfield Park, but she also slowly but surely turns into a teacher herself, someone who teaches other people what is important and what to do. The little white attic and the schoolroom, then, fit Fanny's personality at different stages in the novel perfectly.

Just like she finds her place in the old schoolroom, Fanny also gradually finds her own place in the family. She keeps her aunt company, becomes closer to Edmund and her uncle starts to be fond of her as well. The old schoolroom is being lived in again and becomes a special room in its own right, namely Fanny's room, just like Fanny is also blooming and finding her own place at Mansfield Park. The room is important to Fanny: "The room was most dear to her, and she would not have changed its furniture for the handsomest in the house, though what had been originally plain had suffered all the ill-usage of children" (110). She loves the room and the furniture in it for what it is, just like Fanny eventually will be loved at Mansfield Park for the person she is. In this case, there is also an obvious link between Fanny's personality and the house itself.

This connection becomes even more visible when Fanny has to leave Mansfield to go back to Portsmouth. While she is away, several unfortunate events happen to the Bertram family: Maria is banished after running away with Henry Crawford, Tom has become ill and

Julia wants to run off with Mr Yates, which her parents are not happy about. Fanny is called back to Mansfield, and as soon as she returns, everything seems to fall back into place: Tom recovers, Maria and Henry resurface and end their affair, and Julia and Mr Yates decide to marry. It is clear that Fanny and Mansfield are connected to one another and when Fanny is somewhere else where she is not happy, unfortunate events also happen at Mansfield Park and the other way around.

Finally, both Mansfield Park and Fanny take on both a dynamic and a static role in Austen's novel. Mansfield Park is a central place with a certain balance throughout the book, but it also changes, which makes it both static and dynamic. The reader experiences everything through Fanny's eyes and Fanny continues to be the static character around whom everything happens. However, change also happens to Fanny herself, which makes her a dynamic character at the same time (Bansfield 23-24). It is not until the end of the novel that Fanny realises that Mansfield Park is her home and not Portsmouth: "When she had been coming to Portsmouth, she had loved to call it her home, had been fond of saying that she was going home; the word had been very dear to her, and so it still was, but it must be applied to Mansfield. That was now the home. Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield was home" (309). At the end of the novel, Edmund realises he does not want to marry Mary, and ends up marrying Fanny instead. In a way, he comes home to Fanny, just as Fanny comes home to Mansfield Park.

When looking at Austen's use of landscape and architecture descriptions in her novels, the reader sees that Austen liked to make certain connections between the different heroines and the landscapes they find themselves in, as Barbara Britton Wenner suggests: "Basically what Austen would have all her heroines find in the landscape is a real notion of who they are – of self" (*Prospect* 9). Elizabeth Bennet realises her true feelings for Mr Darcy after

spending time at Pemberley, Marianne Dashwood talks about nature in a Romantic way, which fits her own personality, and Emma Woodhouse's actions not only seem to influence herself but also the town of Highbury, and vice versa. The two cases discussed in this chapter are probably the most worked out examples when talking about links between landscape and the search of the leading ladies to find happiness and a place in society, which is yet another example of Austen's structural and thematic use of descriptions of landscape and architecture in her work.

3. Symbolism and Landscapes

It can safely be said that nature and architecture play an important role in Jane Austen's various stories. Whether a landscape description is used to say something about one of the heroines or about their love interests, in Austen's work almost all of these descriptions of estates or natural scenery have a special meaning and refer to something else, something less obvious. Some of these landscape scenes, the ones that have been thoroughly thought out by Austen, not only have a literal meaning, but also a symbolic one. In these particular scenes, the details of the landscape can be seen as symbolic for the situation the heroine finds herself in at that particular moment or what the past or the future looks like. In these cases, Austen decided to give the readers something to think about while reading the story, instead of spelling it all out for them. An important example of these allegorical landscape descriptions is the Sotherton scene in *Mansfield Park*, which tells much about the different personalities of the characters in the novel. Secondly, the Box Hill scene in *Emma* gives more explicit information about the residents of Highbury and Emma's feelings and situation. In both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, there are also other symbolic descriptions of the landscape, which tell something about what is going to happen in the future of the heroines. Lastly, Austen also tends to form oppositions between the countryside and the city, and the different events taking place in each of these locations. In this chapter a closer look will be taken at these different scenes and how Austen uses the landscape to tell the reader something in a symbolic way.

Sotherton

An important example of the symbolic relation between landscape and character is the Sotherton scene in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, which tells much about the imminent downfall of certain characters. In this scene, Austen offers the reader some hints about the different personalities of the characters by making them visit Mr. Rushworth's estate, Sotherton. A

clear division is made between the moral characters, namely Edmund Bertram and Fanny Price, and the immoral characters that will not end well, like Maria and Julia Bertram and Henry and Mary Crawford. Austen invites the reader to interpret the scene in a symbolic way, which gives more information about the different characters and their future storylines.

In Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas Bertram is the master of the house. As soon as he leaves for Antigua, especially the children take the chance to do what they want and enjoy themselves without their father being around to watch their every move. At one point in the story, the men are talking about the improvement of estates. Mr Rushworth's Sotherton estate is mentioned, because it needs large improvements. The group decides to visit Mr Rushworth's grounds and this is the start of one of the most important and most widely discussed scenes in *Mansfield Park*.

One of the first aspects of Sotherton the reader is introduced to is the impressive scale of the grounds. Maria Bertram, who is about to marry Mr Rushworth and already considers the grounds her property as well, mentions, for example, the church, the woods and the parsonage. After following the long avenue, the group arrives at the house, where they are welcomed by Mr Rushworth and his mother. An extensive tour of the house and its surrounding grounds follows, which includes a visit to the chapel and the woods. The whole scene is all about crossing certain boundaries, literally and symbolically, and the description of the estate and the landscape can be linked to the various characters.

The first signs of symbolism emerge when the group is slowly approaching Sotherton and Maria is telling the others where they are going: "Now we are coming to the lodge gates; but we have nearly a mile through the park still. It is not ugly, you see, at this end; there is some fine timber, but the situation of the house is dreadful. We go downhill to it for half-a-mile, and it is a pity, for it would not be an ill-looking place if it had a better approach" (60). Here, Austen already suggests Maria's true character, since she is all for improving the estate

and improvement usually stands for something negative in Austen's work. It is, in fact, Maria's own character which needs improving and not the estate. Maria mentions the park is not ugly at the beginning, but the house looks dreadful. This can also be said about the young people themselves: from the outside they are beautiful, accomplished people from higher class, but a closer look reveals that their actions are not that attractive at all. Maria also says they have to go downhill, which might perhaps refer to the downfall of some of the characters later on in the book.

Besides Fanny, no one in the group is really interested in the house, until they arrive at the private chapel of the manor. Fanny mentions she finds it a pity that the chapel is not used any longer for family prayers, which is the start of the first small argument between Edmund and Mary Crawford:

"It is a pity," cried Fanny, "that the custom should have been discontinued. ... A whole family assembling regularly for the purpose of prayer, is fine!"

"Very fine indeed!" said Miss Crawford, laughing. "It must do the heads of the family a great deal of good to force all the poor housemaids and footmen to leave business and pleasure, and say their prayers here twice a day, while they are inventing excuses themselves for staying away."

"*That* is hardly Fanny's idea of family assembling," said Edmund. "If the master and mistress do *not* attend themselves, there must be more harm than good in the custom."

"At any rate, it is safer to leave people to their own devices on such subjects.

Everybody likes to go their own way – to choose their own time and manner of devotion." (63)

This conversation already shows Mary Crawford's fate as one of the characters who will not end well. She talks about letting people go their own way and do what they want to do, and she mocks the idea of a family assembly and of religion. This scene shows Mary Crawford is

not one of the moral and sympathetic characters, like Edmund and Fanny, who are polite and care about the people around them. By contrast, Mary is rude and mocks important ideals. She disagrees with Edmund and, most importantly, Fanny, who is the example of a moral and well brought up girl. The chapel is also a symbol for Edmund's future career as a clergyman and the fact that he and Mary have their first argument there is already a sign that their union will never work: "The chapel, identified with the way of life Edmund has chosen, which Miss Crawford learns of there, represents one impediment to their marriage. Here they have their first disagreement, provoked by a discussion of the place itself, just as later Edmund's ordination separates them for the first time" (Banfield 9).

Another important symbolic scene is the one in which Julia talks about a possible wedding between her sister Maria and Mr Rushworth:

While this was passing, the rest of the party being scattered about the chapel, Julia called Mr Crawford's attention to her sister, by saying, "Do look at Mr Rushworth and Maria, standing side by side, exactly as if the ceremony were going to be performed. Have not they completely the air of it?" Mr Crawford smiled his acquiescence, and stepping forward to Maria, said, in a voice which she could only hear, "I do not like to see Miss Bertram so near the altar." Starting, the lady instinctively moved a step or two, but recovering herself in a moment, affected to laugh, and asked him, in a tone not much louder, "if he would give her away?" "I am afraid I should do it very awkwardly," was his reply, with a look of meaning. (64)

Maria is supposed to take on the role of the bride, but at the same time she flirts with Henry, which already shows the bad future prospects of her relationship with Mr Rushworth: "The chapel is also the future scene of Maria and Rushworth's marriage. Here the couple acts out the ceremony in a charade which reveals its real nature. While Julia calls attention to them

standing side by side before the altar ... Henry flirts with the bride. The pantomime suggests what the marriage will be: an empty formality” (Banfield 9-10).

Henry and Maria’s scandalous flirtation is described in almost biblical imagery in their walk through the garden, which is surrounded by iron palisades and a locked iron gate which leads to the park. Mrs Rushworth’s choice of words in this scene is rather striking:

“James,” said Mrs Rushworth to her son, “I believe the wilderness will be new to all the party. The Miss Bertrams have never seen the wilderness yet.” No objection was made, but for some time there seemed no inclination to move in any plan, or to any distance. All were attracted at first by the plants or the pheasants, and all dispersed about in happy independence. Mr Crawford was the first to move forward, to examine the capabilities of that end of the house. (65-66)

Again, Austen writes with a double meaning. The wilderness can refer to the park itself, but also to the Bertram sisters’ future actions of misbehaviour. It is, obviously, also typical that Henry Crawford is the first person to move forward towards the wilderness and that he is the one that takes the others with him. After walking for some time, the group has split and Fanny decides to stop walking and sits down on a bench. She sees Maria and Henry going to the locked iron gate and how Henry tries to persuade Maria to just slip around it instead of waiting for Mr Rushworth with the key:

As she spoke, and it was with expression, she walked to the gate, he followed her. “Mr Rushworth is so long fetching this key!” “And for the world you would not get out without the key and without Mr Rushworth’s authority and protection, or I think you might with little difficulty pass round the edge of the gate, here, with my assistance; I think it might be done, if you really wished to be more at large, and could allow yourself to think it not prohibited” (72-73).

A connection between Maria and Eve, who is tricked into leaving the Garden of Eden by the snake, can be suggested here. In this case, Maria is tricked to leave Sotherton, where she is safe, and leaves with the snake, here in the form of Henry Crawford: “Austen uses the iron gate at Sotherton to represent Maria’s doorway to destruction, because she does not wait for the key but, instead, circumvents the proper entry-way, using a path suggested by Crawford, Maria symbolically enters not Heaven, but Hell” (Meyers 97). All this time, Fanny remains sitting on her bench and tries to warn Maria, but she will not listen. While the others take the wayward path, Fanny decides to stay in front of the gate, which leads to happiness in marriage for her in contrast to the others.

In these few chapters concerning the group’s visit to Sotherton, Austen gives specific details of the landscape and the estate. However, these details are figuratively used by her to shed light on the relationships between the people in that landscape and their personalities. Most of the characters cross certain boundaries, like the locked gate, except Fanny, who only waits and observes. When looking closely at the deeper meaning of Austen’s descriptions, the scene reveals some of the key characters’ personalities and their future directions, as Ann Banfield argues: “Sotherton, surrounded by iron palisades and with an empty and silent chapel at its center, becomes a correlative for a society where moral codes and rules of etiquette are not founded on principles of right and where the clergyman, spokesman for and guardian of these principles, is silent or excluded” (9).

Box Hill

One of the most important scenes in Austen’s novel *Emma* is the scene in which Emma visits Box Hill together with a group of people consisting of Frank Churchill, Harriet, Jane Fairfax, Miss Bates, and others. The trip had already been planned and anticipated for quite some time, but was postponed. Now the summer outing is finally going to happen and Emma is

excited: “Emma had never been to Box Hill; she wished to see what every body found so well worth seeing, and she and Mr. Weston had agreed to choose some fine morning and drive thither. Two or three more of the chosen only were to be admitted to join them, and it was to be done in a quiet, unpretending, elegant way” (284). However, the trip is not quite such a success as Emma expected it to be. The scene plays a significant role in the maturation and development of Emma’s character, in which Austen uses the scene setting to give the reader some hints of what is going to happen.

The Box Hill scene can be seen as the climax of this novel. It is the place where Emma is no longer in her comfort zone; instead she is away from Highbury, at the top of a hill, which is the stage for the peak of Austen’s story. When the group is at Box Hill, different events take place and Emma realises not everything goes the way she wants it to go. Even though Austen herself does not describe what the landscape exactly looks like in this scene, there is still much to be said about the scene setting of Box Hill and the events happening there. Other critics who have written about this subject are Barbara Britton Wenner, who visited several significant places in Austen’s novels including Box Hill in Surrey, and Penny Gay, who discusses the Box Hill landscape in her article “A Changing View: Jane Austen’s Landscape”. With the use of the work of these critics, the symbolic link between the landscape and the actions and emotions in the Box Hill scene will become apparent when taking an even closer look at Austen’s novel *Emma*.

Both the chapter and the trip seem to start out promising:

They had a very fine day for Box Hill; and all the other outward circumstances of arrangement, accommodation, and punctuality, were in favour of a pleasant party. ...

Nothing was wanting but to be happy when they got there. Seven miles were travelled in expectation of enjoyment, and every body had a burst of admiration on first arriving. (296)

However, after only a couple of lines the trip seems to hit a sour note:

But in the general amount of the day there was deficiency. There was a languor, a want of spirits, a want of union, which could not be got over. They separated too much into parties. ... It seemed at first an accidental division, but it never materially varied. Mr. and Mrs. Elton, indeed, showed no unwillingness to mix, and be as agreeable as they could: but during the two whole hours that were spent on the hill, there seemed a principle of separation, between the other parties, too strong for any fine prospects, or any cold collation, or any cheerful Mr. Weston, to remove. (297)

Instead of enjoying the trip as a group, smaller units are formed and it does not take long before the mood is ruined and unpleasant events start to happen. It is no coincidence that this incident takes place while Emma is away from Highbury, her safe environment. For these few hours, she is away from the place she knows and trapped on a hill instead. This change of scenery influences Emma and it causes her to act differently, as Barbara Britton Wenner writes: “Emma does not ‘belong’ to this landscape, and the combination of people, such as Frank Churchill and the place, cause her to act in a way that hurts one of the mainstays of Highbury. ... Emma finds herself emotionally exposed and censured at Box Hill” (*Prospect* 80-81). Emma had intended to escape her daily Highbury routine, but in the end everything turns out completely different from what she expected.

Emma forms a group with Frank Churchill and Harriet, whose true characters are exposed while on the hill. Frank is described as “stupid” and “looking without seeing” (297), which are qualities that fit him perfectly, even though Emma does not realise this yet. He is arrogant and only cares about himself, which causes him to “look[ing] without seeing”. Frank is dull, and Harriet is the same, as she is a follower. She follows around the people whom she admires, like Emma, and Frank in this case. This is the start of the exposure on Box Hill, where Austen seems to want to give the characters a chance to show their true personalities.

Frank Churchill, Harriet and Mrs Elton, who is vain and acts as if she is really important, whereas she is not, have already shown their true personalities, but then it appears to be Emma's turn.

As Emma is bored and annoyed, particularly by Mrs Elton's behaviour, she is tricked into insulting Miss Bates:

“Oh! very well,” exclaimed Miss Bates, “then I need not be uneasy. ‘Three things very dull indeed.’ That will just do for me, you know. I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan't I? – (looking round with the most good-humoured dependence on every body's assent) – Do not you all think I shall?” Emma could not resist. “Ah! ma'am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me – but you will be limited as to number – only three at once.” Miss Bates, deceived by the mock ceremony of her manner, did not immediately catch her meaning; but, when it burst on her, it could not anger, though a slight blush showed that it could pain her. “Ah! – well – to be sure. Yes, I see what she means, (turning to Mr Knightley,) and I will try to hold my tongue. I must make myself very disagreeable, or she would not have said such a thing to an old friend.” (299)

Emma insults Miss Bates, which is not her usual behaviour, as she is generally a polite girl. This insult is the start of other mistaken actions and interpretations, for example about possible marriages. Frank flirts with Emma and she goes along in this game of his, which hurts Jane Fairfax, Frank's secret fiancée whom no-one knows about. At the same time, Mr Knightley also appears to be a little jealous of Frank's flirtations with Emma. At the top of Box Hill, miles away from Highbury, all kinds of immoral behaviour seems to take place. It is the outsider, the man from the city, Frank Churchill, who seems to be the leading character here, the one with the power, as Susan Rogers writes: “He himself presides over the game at Box Hill. Emma is merely the object of the game. She is set in a place where she is admired

and flattered, but she does not set the rules of the game or the tenor of the proceedings” (par. 15).

Instead of having a pleasant day out with good prospects, Emma only feels confined and terrible about her own behaviour:

Even Emma grew tired at last of flattery and merriment, and wished herself rather walking quietly about with any of the others, or sitting almost alone, and quite unattended to, in tranquil observation of the beautiful views beneath her. The appearance of the servants looking out for them to give notice of the carriages was a joyful sight; and even the bustle of collecting and preparing to depart, and the solicitude of Mrs. Elton to have *her* carriage first, were gladly endured, in the prospect of the quiet drive home which was to close the very questionable enjoyments of this day of pleasure. Such another scheme, composed of so many ill-assorted people, she hoped never to be betrayed into again. (302)

Emma’s feelings are reflected in the landscape of Box Hill. As mentioned before, Box Hill is in the middle of an open landscape and a couple of miles away from Highbury, the safe home of most of the members of the group. As suggested by Austen in the quotation, at the top of the hill there is the possibility to enjoy the “beautiful views”, which suggests an open landscape. Barbara Britton Wenner, who visited Box Hill, writes: “The landscape itself at Box Hill is surprisingly exposed. On the top of the hill there is little wood and, on one side, there is nothing but a vast exposed prospect with no refuge. On the other side of the hill is a tangle of woods and no prospect. The lack of the two in combination is what makes this scene a true zone of exposure for Emma” (Wenner, *I Have* par. 2). It is on the top of Box Hill where some of the characters’ real personalities shine through, and also for Emma it becomes a zone of exposure. It is at this place, away from home, that Emma behaves impolitely and unlike

herself and where the stranger from the city, Frank Churchill, seems to influence everyone.

Penny Gay writes:

The behaviour of Frank Churchill and Emma during this picnic shows that both are “out of bounds” (Emma has never been to Box Hill, though it is only seven miles from Highbury). This landscape, being neither productive nor in any way related to its visitors, is a no-man’s-land, spiritually and literally; and Emma in insulting poor Miss Bates breaks the basic rule of the community which normally constrains her behaviour. (60)

The open landscape and the views from the top of the hill suggest new and wide possibilities, but the wrong choices are made by Emma. She picks the wrong friends, Frank Churchill and Harriet, and the wrong enemies, in this case Miss Bates and Mr Knightley, who is disappointed in Emma’s rude behaviour and confronts her with it.

The landscape in this scene is used by Austen in a symbolic way, because it fits Emma’s emotions and moral development at this point in the story. At the top of Box Hill, a different side of Emma’s character comes to the surface and for once, nothing goes the way she wants it, which she is not used to: Mrs Elton and Frank Churchill are the ones in the spotlight, Harriet and Frank, who are supposedly her friends, let her down, she is rude to Miss Bates, which is unlike her true self, and Mr Knightley is heavily disappointed in her. There is no place to hide when she is on the hill, which causes Emma to make the wrong decisions and be confronted with her own bad behaviour. This scene can maybe even be linked to the old Greek term “hubris”, because Emma finds herself on top of a hill, looking down on reality, thinking she has everything and can do anything, but this superciliousness eventually results in retribution.

When the group decides to go back to Highbury, Emma sits in her carriage and “she continued to look back, but in vain; and soon, with what appeared unusual speed, they were

half way down the hill, and everything left far behind” (303). It is also with unusual speed that Emma managed to ruin her reputation with her inappropriate behaviour, and the way it all was before the trip to Box Hill is left far behind as she drives away. At the same time, Emma also leaves a certain part of her personality behind. After this scene, she realises Frank Churchill is not as great as she thinks he is and she slowly starts to realise who the decent people are and how they deserve to be treated. Emma’s departure from Box Hill has two meanings, as Adam Potkay writes: “Emma takes a carriage ride home that removes her, literally and allegorically, from the novel’s central scene of theatrical display. Emma leaves Box Hill and all that it represents” (par. 1).

Pride and Prejudice & Emma

In both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, Austen not only uses the descriptions of landscapes to tell something about the personality of the owner of an estate, but also about the storylines of the heroines themselves and what is in store for them. Elizabeth Bennet’s love life is described symbolically by Austen when Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle visit Mr Darcy’s Pemberley estate. Emma Woodhouse’s future is also already hinted at by Austen when describing the views from Mr Knightley’s Donwell Abbey estate.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen continues her symbolic description of Pemberley when Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle decide to take a walk through the grounds, where they bump into Mr Darcy himself. Elizabeth does not know how to behave around him and feels ashamed of how she has treated him in the past. The family continues their walk while Darcy goes the other way and at one point Elizabeth finds herself near a small stream:

They crossed it by a simple bridge, in character with the general air of the scene; it was a spot less adorned than any they had yet visited; and the valley, here contracted into a glen, allowed room only for the stream, and a narrow walk amidst the rough

coppice-wood which bordered it. Elizabeth longed to explore its windings; but when they had crossed the bridge, and perceived their distance from the house, Mrs Gardiner, who was not a great walker, could go no farther, and thought only of returning to the carriage as quickly as possible. (194)

It is near this place that Elizabeth meets Darcy again, which has been done on purpose by Austen. The bridge stands for the prejudices and misunderstandings between Elizabeth and Darcy and how their love will eventually be the bridge between them. Elizabeth also longs to explore the windings of the walk, but she is forced to wait because her aunt does not feel well. In other words, the particular setting of the scene suggests that Elizabeth longs for a life with Darcy, but the time is not quite there yet and she will have to wait a little longer.

In *Emma*, Austen describes the landscape around Mr Knightley's Donwell Abbey estate in detail:

They insensibly followed one another to the delicious shade of a broad short avenue of limes, which stretching beyond the garden at an equal distance from the river, seemed the finish of the pleasure grounds. — It led to nothing; nothing but a view at the end over a low stone wall with high pillars, which seemed intended, in their erection, to give the appearance of an approach to the house, which never had been there.

Disputable, however, as might be the taste of such a termination, it was in itself a charming walk, and the view which closed it extremely pretty. (290-91)

In the garden, the avenue of limes appears to lead to nothing special. The high pillars and low stone wall seem to announce something which is not there. However, as they walk on, they come to see the picturesque view of the landscape, including the river, all part of Knightley's estate. This walk can be seen as "a metaphor for the process of mistake, misdirection, and eventual clarification which is the drama of Emma's mind in the novel" (Bodenheimer 612). Emma makes several mistakes, for example by making Harriet believe Mr Elton is in love

with her and also her own thoughts of what Mr Knightley means to her, and she often leads herself and others into the wrong direction. However, at the end Emma manages to find solutions for everything, including Harriet's wishes and her own love life. It can also refer to Emma's opinion of Mr Knightley; she sees him as a pleasant man with no special prospect for her, but in the end she is surprised and he turns out to be much more to her than she originally thought and expected.

City and Countryside

Another significant example of Austen's use of symbolism can be found when looking at the distinction made between the countryside and the city. It is often said that Austen "was at heart a country girl" (Hannon 7), and this obviously comes forward when reading her work. On several occasions, there are clear connections between certain settings and a specific character's behaviour or actions. When looking at what happens in the countryside and what happens in the city, the reader can see that Austen fits certain actions to a certain landscape. As mentioned before, the countryside took up a special place in Austen's heart, so it is not surprising she talks more positively about the country landscape than the city, where most unfortunate events seem to take place. The city is portrayed as the centre of civilisation, but also of snobbery and selfishness, where various characters turn out to be two-faced and superficial. This is in contrast to the countryside and the seaside, which are both portrayed as harmonious, balanced places where the characters develop their emotions and where the heroines find their way.

This division is, for example, obvious in the novel *Mansfield Park*, as most unfortunate turns in the story happen outside Mansfield Park. In the city of Portsmouth, there is no contact with nature. At the home of her family, Fanny only notices the noise, the narrowness and the lack of clean air: "There was nothing to raise her spirits in the confined

and scantily furnished chamber that she was to share with Susan. The smallness of the rooms above and below, indeed, and the narrowness of the passage and staircase, struck her beyond her imagination” (277). The city is not described as an attractive place to be, which is also why this is where awful events happen: “In the country, Fanny’s health and the Crawfords’ moral tastes improve; in the city, Edmund claims, morals have been corrupted. Tom’s illness results from a wild party in London, Maria’s elopement occurs in London, and Mary’s real values are revealed to Edmund in London” (Banfield 4). While in the countryside, Fanny finally starts to feel like she has become a part of the Bertram family, Fanny and Edmund are married, and most of the problems are solved there.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, this contrast between the city and the countryside also becomes apparent. Elizabeth Bennet loves the country, which shows Austen’s own preference once more, and in contrast to the city, the countryside is only talked about in a positive way most of the time. It is when Mr Bingley goes to the city that Jane is left alone and devastated and it is also in the city of Brighton that Lydia decides to marry Wickham. Lydia is infatuated by the soldiers who are staying close to the Bennet home and does everything she can to get close to the young men. When the soldiers are transferred to Brighton, Lydia manages to convince her parents to let her go there as well. However, Brighton did not have a good reputation at the time: “Brighton was then full of officers with ‘all the glories of the camp’. Brighton was nothing if not smart and vulgar; by 1796 the sixth edition of *The New Brighton Guide* could advertise it as a place ‘where the sinews of morality are so happily relaxed, that a bawd and a baroness may snore in the same tenement’” (Batey 125). It is no surprise that in this city, away from home, Lydia decides to elope with Wickham, one of the young soldiers. This is a disgrace to the family and Lydia’s horrible behaviour can be linked to the setting of the city of Brighton.

This division between countryside and city is also clearly present in Austen's other novels. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne and Elinor Dashwood are both at their happiest when they are in the country. It is in the city that Marianne finds out the truth behind Mr. Willoughby and that she becomes ill and also the place where Elinor thinks Edward Ferrars is going to marry Lucy Steele. In *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot feels unhappy when she is in Bath with her family and only longs to go back to the country and the sea. In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine loves the city, but she is a young and naïve girl who still has a lot to learn. She makes many mistakes while she is in the city and learns the most lessons when she is in the countryside. It is in the city where she makes the wrong friends, namely the Thorpes, and where she becomes fascinated by Gothic stories, which make her fantasy run wild. In the countryside, she slowly learns to see the important difference between fantasy and reality and it is also the place where she eventually gets together with the man she loves, Henry Tilney. These examples all show that Austen also used the difference between the countryside and the city and the various actions and events in these places in a symbolic way, similarly to how she used other landscapes in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* in the same manner.

Conclusion

The different landscape scenes in Jane Austen's novels each tell their own story. Elizabeth Bennet walking through the Pemberley grounds, the similarities between Fanny Price's personality and Mansfield Park, Marianne Dashwood's romantic thoughts on nature; in all her novels Austen shows her own love for nature by giving landscape and architecture a significant role.

In her novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Northanger Abbey*, Austen uses the descriptions of estates like Pemberley, Donwell Abbey and Northanger Abbey to give the reader a hint of what the character of the estate's owner is really like, positive or negative. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's description of Mr Darcy's estate Pemberley shows the character of its owner, which helps Elizabeth to look at Darcy from a different point of view. She realises what his true character is like, which makes her fall in love with him. In *Emma*, the descriptions given of Donwell Abbey and its surrounding grounds also tell much about Mr Knightley, the owner of the estate. In her novel *Northanger Abbey*, Austen uses the descriptions of the estate Northanger Abbey to tell more about its owner's character. However, this time it all works negatively, as the description of the landscape and architecture can be considered a warning of the true character of General Tilney. These meaningful descriptions help the heroine realise what her true feelings are or are used by Austen as a warning, in the case of Catherine Morland.

Austen's heroines also all seem to have a special relationship with the different landscapes they find themselves in. There is a clear link between Fanny Price's maturation and the estate of Mansfield Park, and Anne Elliot's personality changes together with the different seasons. In these examples, Austen explicitly uses the landscape to show the development of the heroine in that particular novel.

Lastly, Austen also occasionally uses landscape descriptions in a symbolic way, to give both a literal and a figurative meaning to particular scenes. When looking at the Sotherton scene in *Mansfield Park*, the reader notices that the account of the estate and its surrounding grounds tells even more about the different characters and their paths in life than about the landscape itself. The same goes for the Box Hill scene in *Emma*, which marks a significant point in the maturation of Emma's character. In *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, Austen also adds several symbolic landscape descriptions to give the reader a hint of what the heroine's future looks like. Finally, there is also an obvious use of symbolism when looking at the different events and feelings in the countryside and the city. When looking at the different scenes in her novels, the reader can notice that Austen preferred the countryside over the city, which is why most unfortunate events seem to happen in the city instead of the countryside, where all the problems are solved and the heroines live happily ever after.

Over the years, various critics have discussed Austen's use of landscape in their work. While Alistair Duckworth focused on the improvement of estates in Austen's novels, Barbara Britton Wenner discussed the importance of prospect and refuge for Austen's heroines in the various landscapes, and Rosemarie Bodenheimer and Mavis Batey both discuss the Austen landscapes from yet another different approach. In contrast to, but also with the help of, these critics I have set out to combine Austen's various uses of landscape descriptions in one work and look at these groups separately but also in relation to one another. First of all, I discussed the static descriptions of estates as an emblem for the moral qualities of the different male and female owners. This was followed by the role of landscape in the emotional development of the various Austen heroines, and, last but not least, the dynamic role of symbolic descriptions of landscape and architecture in the plot of various stories. These different uses of landscape are extremely interesting to look at in closer detail and show Austen's fascinating way of

using descriptions of both landscape and architecture to tell more than just what the scenery looked like.

Though this investigation is focused on three specific categories, much more can be said about Austen's use of landscape. For example, when taking a closer look at Marianne Dashwood's Romantic ideas on nature in *Sense and Sensibility* or Frederick Wentworth's discussion with Louisa Musgrove on a hazel nut in *Persuasion*, the reader can see that there are even more significant scenes in which nature plays an important role which have not been discussed in this paper. Next to this, there are also the many different film and television adaptations of Austen's novels which are worth researching, in which each director has his or her own ideas on how to portray the typical English Austen landscapes. Clearly, even further research could be done by examining other landscape and nature scenes in Austen's novels in order to find out even more about her own ideas on nature and architecture, and the role of landscapes in her novels.

Overall, it has become clear that Austen portrayed her own love for nature and architecture in her writing. Not only by describing beautiful English countryside views, but by using the landscape in many different ways to give even more information on her characters and storylines.

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