



## The Case of the Petulant Patriarch

KENNETH W. GRAHAM

Kenneth W. Graham is a Professor of English at the University of Guelph. He is a past president of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, and was named JASNA's first North American Scholar.

MY TITLE IS A LITERARY ALLUSION that may need explanation. The allusion originates for me in a small town without a library in the Manitoba prairie, where the bookrack of the drugstore offered means for a fourteen-year-old to pass long winter nights in a world that television had not penetrated. A seemingly endless supply of Perry Mason mysteries produced by Earl Stanley Gardner (or a factory of that name) with titles like *The Case of the Petulant Patriarch* would culminate in a courtroom scene where Perry's brilliant questioning and clever maneuvers uncovered the real culprit and saved the innocent. *The Case of the Drowning Duck* is the only genuine title I can recall; its outcome hinged on a newly discovered substance called detergent, which, when added to a duck's swimming pool, dissolved its natural oils and caused the duck to drown.

As Perry Mason so frequently demonstrates, surveillance and research are the paths to solving the mystery. The clues that Jane Austen drops casually into her narratives encourage detectives. A date, a wedding, a death will set Austen sleuths working out sequences that clarify motivations, even constructing detailed calendars (Moody). Among the many satisfactions of reading Austen is the assurance that clues reveal realities, that things fit, and that characters step into the pages of a Jane Austen novel from fully imagined lives.

I propose, then, to fulfill my ambitions of so many years ago and step into Perry's shoes to shadow General Tilney, the petulant patriarch. He is a puzzling figure, not only in what he is but in what he represents: we meet a man, overconfident, stubborn, selfish, petulant, who in his accomplishments and influence represents the upper levels of British authority. Shadowing General Tilney through his army career and his life as a husband, father, and landowner will bring us into contact with the tensions of his times and with what may well be the real mystery to be solved, the mystery of Jane Austen's position in the ideologically uneasy epoch of the 1790s that engendered *Northanger Abbey*. The novel's attitude to its times and to the social and political hegemony of a particular patriarchal class is the mystery to be unraveled.

### The General and the Army

A central fact about General Tilney is that he achieved senior field rank in the British army, and that advancement could not have been attained without an extensive military career. My argument does not depend on precise dates, but if we assume (with Chapman and Moody) that the action of the novel takes place in 1798, when General Tilney is "past the bloom, but not past the vigour of life" (80)—perhaps fifty-five in those years before *Viagra*, then we can reconstruct his life in this way.

General Tilney was closely involved in the Seven Years War (1756-63), which brought about a considerable expansion of the British empire, and, a few years later, in action against enemies that threatened it. He was born about 1743 to a well-established Gloucestershire family. His father purchased him a commission shortly after the start of the Seven Years War. Indeed, he might have been involved in the action at the Plains of Abraham (Quebec) in 1759, except that that was primarily an infantry operation, and I have assumed that the General was in the cavalry, probably in a dragoon regiment. His son, the Captain, serves in a fictional cavalry regiment, the 12th Light Dragoons, that I assume once to have been his father's.

Tilney was very likely one of the ten thousand British troops that joined Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick in Westphalia in 1759. A combined army of Hanoverians, Hessians, and British sought to counter the advance of French forces in Westphalia and Hesse and

protect Frederick the Great's right flank while he engaged the armies of Russia and Austria in the east and south. Military operations ranging for four years through western Germany offered stunning opportunities for young Tilney to learn his profession. He would receive training and experience possible only in the operational campaigns of a great army: as a troop commander in cavalry charges and pursuits, tactical crossing of water obstacles, investing walled cities, and reconnoitering enemy positions and movements. As a young officer, he would have received postings to a great headquarters as an *aide-de-camp* and courier, positions offering chances to observe the highly polished, trained, and experienced armies of Hanover, Hesse, and Prussia. His normal progress in his own unit would have carried him to positions with supply and administrative responsibilities.

The European campaign gave him the concentrated and realistic training that war gives and that peacetime exercises and maneuvers can never match. Tilney may also have learned, since he seems inclined that way, the importance of iron discipline in quarters and on the march. The British had not comported themselves well in these areas in comparison to their German comrades (Fortescue II 568).

After the Peace of Paris in 1763, Tilney continued in military service, probably as a twenty-year-old captain. Because of birth, interest, experience, and money, he had high prospects for promotion. I suspect he seized the opportunity to purchase a majority soon after the peace in a newly formed light dragoon regiment—perhaps the fictional 12th. The battlefields of Europe had taught the value of more mobile cavalry for reconnaissance and skirmishing (Fortescue II 595).<sup>1</sup> Major Tilney's peacetime army was a political army without a commander-in-chief (Glover 40); it offered special opportunities of promotion and seniority to officers of his background (Houlding 412-13).<sup>2</sup> In the late 1760s he attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel; his seniority and ability to pay the premium permitted him to take over a vacant command in another dragoon regiment (Burton 655-68). Upon the death of his father, he retired on half-pay to look after his estates at Northanger, in the family for 250 years. He married, in 1770, a lady of fortune, Miss Drummond, and started to pay serious attention to making his estates productive and profitable. All this, plus his work in county government, local government, and magistracy kept him close enough to his young wife for her to bring into the world in steady

succession Frederick, born in 1772, Henry, in 1774, and Eleanor, in 1776. The period also confirmed him, as a significant landowner, in some influential friends at Westminster.

With the revolt of the thirteen colonies, and before the birth of his daughter, Tilney returned to active service with a dragoon regiment, organizing their embarkation and joining General Howe at Staten Island, in time to take part in the campaign to drive the American forces out of Manhattan and Long Islands. His seniority and wealth gained him a colonelcy in the 17th Light Dragoons (his marriage having netted him some ready cash) when the position became available (Fortescue III 184).

Colonel Tilney possessed the qualities for further promotion: extensive war and peacetime experience as well as the political assets of wealth, influence, a power base in Gloucestershire, and a wide acquaintance with men of rank and importance. He was promoted to Brigadier General and then to Major General, both ranks signifying at that time an appointment overseas, either in command or on staff (Rogers 104-05).<sup>3</sup> His command of detail, energy, and insistence on discipline made him an adept military leader. Like his commander, General Howe, he probably found the experience in America frustrating, since successes were rendered fruitless by the inability to consolidate them (Rogers 162).<sup>4</sup> On the cessation of hostilities he returned to Britain, assisted in processes of demobilization, and retired from the army in 1785. He had the pleasure three years later of purchasing for his eldest son a commission of cornet in his old regiment, the 12th Light Dragoons. For Frederick, in conditions of peace, opportunities for promotion do not come as readily as they had to his father, but Frederick lacks his father's drive and focus.

Back at Northanger after the American war, the General set his energies to organizing the efficient operation of his estates and to the command and control of his family. His activities on his lands would have delighted the contemporary agronomist Arthur Young—he enclosed commons, drained fields, moved villages, and experimented with crops and selective breeding (Mingay 99). His active interference in the lives of his family probably brought dismay to his wife and younger children. His wife died in the year some Parisians attacked the Bastille and changed the course of history.

## Campaign to Capture Catherine

We meet the General nine years after the death of his wife. Jane Austen gives us a glimpse of his military abilities by showing us his campaign to capture Catherine Morland. It is a campaign that follows correct procedures, but, significantly, makes little assessment of the personalities involved.

Perceiving an attraction between his son Henry and Catherine, he conducts a reconnaissance. He learns of a connection with the Allens and the fact that Mr. Allen is wealthy. He continues his reconnaissance by calling on the aid of intelligence. He interrogates John Thorpe, whose confident responses convince him of Catherine's wealth and prospects with the Allens. "Upon such intelligence," the narrator comments drily and ambiguously, "the General had proceeded" (245). In fairness, we should acknowledge that the General no longer has the resources of an extensive command structure to bring him the tactical information he would be accustomed to having.<sup>5</sup> He completes his reconnaissance by inviting Catherine to their rooms in Milsom Street. That experience confirms his confidence that Catherine is smitten with Henry and his family.

From reconnaissance he turns to the execution of his mission in three phases. First, he gives orders to his support troops: he commands a willing Henry to woo her and Eleanor to draw Catherine further into his ambush by inviting her to visit Northanger Abbey. When the time comes to execute that part of the plan, he becomes impatient with Eleanor and presents the invitation himself, with all the labored charm of which he is capable. Second, he furthers their intimacy by encouraging Catherine and Henry to ride together for some hours in the curricle. Finally, he arranges to display Henry's rectory and hint at his independent wealth. For a few moments he is almost coy, almost Isabella-like, as he hints at a special sympathy between the two and of the approaching pleasure of selecting another tea service from Staffordshire.

THE CAMPAIGN RESULTS IN VICTORY! CATHERINE IS WON!

Of course, you may argue that Catherine is won despite, and not because of, the General.

That observation recalls us to Austen and the two perspectives on the General: the profession's and Catherine's. We have to acknowl-

edge that some characteristics that make the General so eminently dislikable are useful to an army officer and brought about rapid promotion: organizing abilities, insistence on precise obedience of commands, strict punctuality, even an assured self-display of chaise, postilions, and outriders. His state visits of inspection would attract the earnest attention of battalions and regiments receiving his scrutiny; sometimes a superficial smartness instills lifesaving discipline and quickness of response in battle conditions. In domestic commonwealths of hearts and hands, such habits of command and precision of expectation, especially combined with an arbitrary, irritable, and petulant selfishness (perhaps inborn in oldest sons and heirs), bring dissension and unhappiness.

### Jane Austen, the General, and the Establishment

In the General, Jane Austen created a commanding and influential member of Britain's ruling class. His position and accomplishments received prominent recognition by his own society. But his role in the novel suggests a reserve about this representative of the establishment that may extend to the establishment itself. The novel has doubts about the privileges that he and the other members of the establishment assume. Patriarchs give themselves the rights to control the mating of young people, especially daughters, to regulate households, to control admissions into schools and colleges, to repress ideas and behaviors that frighten them, and to abet the belief that the world they create through their meddling and self-interest is benevolent and satisfactory to everybody. The novel responds to one petulant patriarch with a skepticism that verges on rebelliousness, a skepticism very much in the air in the 1790s when writers and thinkers like Richard Price, Thomas Paine, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft were taking the lead from America and France to argue for alternatives to established practices in law, parliament, the church, gender relations, and class structure.

I am not eager to include Jane Austen in that company of reformers. Austen would have been acutely aware of the advantages enjoyed by her family by virtue of their being of the gentry and connected with the establishment. Her father held two livings (at Steventon and Deane) as a clergyman in the established church, and her brothers James and Henry received scholarships at St. John's

College, Oxford, by virtue of family connections (*Family Record* 23; 38).

But as a woman, Jane Austen was underprivileged, and her novels attest to her painful awareness of the limited scope for an intelligent woman of the impecunious gentry—to be a wife, or a governess, or a spinster—but in each case to face a probable future of the humiliations of genteel poverty on the death of the father or husband. Miss Bates in *Emma* is an uncomfortably vivid representation of the humiliation, the cheese-paring, the patronizing and bullying that impoverished women of the gentry seemed fated to experience. Austen's sympathies certainly extended to others similarly underprivileged, just as her resentments may have embraced the most manipulative and arrogant members of the privileged classes, as I think we see in the example of General Tilney.

Two hundred years ago, Austen was writing *Northanger Abbey* in a climate of tension. It was a world in which protest was dangerous. The mutineers at Spithead, Yarmouth, and the Nore had just been executed for advocating a wage adequate to support the families left behind, the tolerable treatment of the sick, the rehabilitation of the wounded instead of discharging them without pay or treatment. To be underprivileged in Austen's world was generally to receive harsh treatment. Since the novel developed out of a time of skepticism and rebellion, we should not be surprised to see a simmering dissatisfaction with much that the General represents—perhaps arising from a sympathy with the similarly dispossessed and underprivileged. The novel calls attention to a number of sources of rebellion, all having to do with a 1790s sensitivity to politics and power. I have room here to discuss two, chivalry and popular disturbances.

### Chivalry

When we of the late 1990s visit the 1790s, we encounter puzzling references to a chivalry that we might have expected to be long dead. William Godwin's powerful 1794 novel, *Caleb Williams*, refers to “the poison of chivalry” (326) and demonstrates the socially and personally destructive effects of chivalry on a community leader and magistrate, Mr. Falkland. That Godwin should consider chivalry worth attacking is surprising, since terms like *quixote* and *quixotic* were well established in the language to convey amusement at the credulousness of readers of romances. Catherine is, after all (at least for part of the novel), a

Gothic quixote when she centers her Gothic horror fantasies on Northanger Abbey and the General. In the splintered world of the 1790s, however, the word *chivalry* took on a cultural significance when Edmund Burke surrounded the notion with sublime resonance and made chivalry the inheritance of the gentry. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* created paradigms for simplifying the complex dissections of the 1790s into crude polarities. His nostalgia for a nonexistent past and dismay for the losses of the present centered on the ideal of chivalry, a moral and social force that should have protected Marie Antoinette:

I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness,...just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevate sphere she just began to move in,—glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! what a revolution that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream... that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. (91)

Not quite, responds Jane Austen. We still have the General. She proceeds to use this man of honor, this cavalier, to expose the selfish distortions that chivalry in the 1790s was subject to, much like Godwin did.

In the General's remarkably successful campaign to win the heiress Catherine for his son Henry, he exerts his chivalry to the utmost with revealing results. Catherine is at first flattered by the attentions of this distinguished man. He shows her "such ready, such solicitous politeness." "The general attended her himself to the street-door, saying every thing gallant..."(103). On their next meeting, "in spite of his thanks, invitations, and compliments—it had been a release to get away from him" (129). By chapter 5 of the second volume, Catherine has to endure the "incessant attentions of the General" (154). Her taste for the General's gallantry has palled.



Jane Austen seems to be demonstrating reservations about Burkean chivalry. Of course, General Tilney employs it crudely and only for selfish ends. There may be a slight sexual threat in the General's gallantry that Juliet McMaster finds attached to many of Austen's army characters (122). It is he who gives us the first intimations of Catherine's physical attractiveness in his sensual admiration of the "elasticity" of her walk and dancing (103). Sexual threat is further developed in his son's, the Captain's, attentions to Isabella. Should we admire Isabella for confronting that coarse gallantry and using it in the high-stakes game she is playing to win an heir to significant property and position? Both father and son are in complete contrast with another literary father and son whose chivalry is genuine. Chaucer's "Knight... loved chivalrye" and "nevere yet no vilainye ne sayde/In al his lyf unto no maner wight." His son, the squire, is ardently and selflessly in love: "So hootte he lovede, that by nightertale/He slepte namore than dooth a nightingale." Their wholehearted commitment to their loves compares instructively to the calculated insincerities of the General and his military son. Their chivalry is a tactic, a device for using others. The tour of the gardens at Northanger when Catherine "was all impatience to see the house" (177) is one of many instances when the General uses a chivalric deference to someone else's wishes to obtain his own way.

The clear dislike of the General's chivalry carries Austen away from Burke and towards Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, who both saw chivalry as a means of domineering over the vulnerable through the pretense of protecting and honoring them. We may think of the General and his son Frederick when we read Mary Wollstonecraft's castigation of "the cold unmeaning intercourse of gallantry.... this vestige of gothic manners" and the various heartless devices employed by men to make women "wretched" (154). We suspect we are hearing echoes of the courtship of Miss Drummond in the General's wooing of Catherine and Captain Tilney's endeavors to seduce the eager, anxious Isabella.

In subsequent Austen novels, the corruption of chivalry ceases to be of much concern. Burkean chivalry is reasserted in the responsible Mr. Darcy, whose library represents a pledge to civilization, and the knightly Mr. Knightley, who enacts the paternal obligations of the ideal noblesse to all within his sphere of influence. Fears of invasion

and insurrection fed the apostasy of the succeeding decade, and Jane Austen followed her society's shift to the right. But in *Northanger Abbey* we catch a glimpse of the slightly more radical Jane Austen of the 1790s.

### Disturbances, or "A Bottle a Day" Keeps Disorder at Bay

All is not well in the larger world presided over by the General and his friends. That the novel admits to social disturbances is worth exploring. The first acknowledgment that there are disorders comes from John Thorpe, whose cure for half of them is a bottle a day (63). The second falls in a reference to the conversations of Mr. Allen and the gentlemen in the Pump Room: politics of the day and contrasting accounts in the newspapers suggest both concern and controversy (71). One of Henry Tilney's conversations moves from a technical discussion of the picturesque to the enclosure of crown lands, to politics, to silence—a sequence that reminds us that acts of parliament were sponsored by powerful delegates of the gentry to add to their territories by enclosing commons, forests, and crown lands at the expense of the rural population. It was one of many sources of grievances and disturbances in Jane Austen's England (Neeson 6).

Disturbances there were aplenty: the Treason Trials of 1794; famine and unrest in 1794-96 (Wells 50),<sup>6</sup> the repressive bills of 1795-96; and events of 1797-98 that included an attempted invasion of Ireland by the French, Irish insurrection, and mutinies in the British navy. In the years that Austen was writing *Northanger Abbey*, Britain was experiencing the second famine within half a decade; it extended from 1799 to 1801.

Since E. P. Thompson's ground-breaking article, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," we have learned that classifying a crowd as a mob is a device employed by the gentry (and their uncritical admirers) to dismiss dissatisfactions with their benevolent rule. Thompson points out that food disturbances came about when grain was kept from the open market and held until prices rose, or when it was shipped where the produce would fetch higher prices. What was called riot was in fact an insurrection by which a large body of the populace compelled magistrates, gentry, farmers, millers, and middlemen to make produce available at a price the people could afford to pay. The alternative was to have the pro-

duce stolen and barns burnt.

When Eleanor and Henry construct a riot out of Catherine's "something very shocking indeed, will soon come out of London" (112), their immediate response captures a culture of nervous rumors and expectations. In 1795 a London crowd had surrounded the King's coach shouting "bread, bread," and the same year saw seventy-four food disturbances throughout England, including one at Bath (Stevenson 35-36). Eleanor looks for a remedy in the repressive acts of a paternalistic government: "proper measures will be taken by government to prevent its coming to effect," she says (112). Henry's reconstruction features a crushing confrontation between the people and the forces of the gentry: "a mob of three thousand men assembling in St. George's Fields; the Bank attacked, the Tower threatened, the streets of London flowing with blood, a detachment of the 12th Light Dragoons...to quell the insurgents, and the gallant Capt. Frederick Tilney...charging at the head of his troop..." (113). Henry's tableau, imagined for amusement, echoes the occasions when the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers were called out by the Lord Mayor in anticipation of political disturbances during the arrest and trials of the officers of reform societies in 1794 and during food protests of 1795.

Indeed, meetings and protests—against the war, against arrests, against high prices—were so frequent that the government responded with repressive legislation. The acts of 1795 and '96 made unlawful political meetings of over fifty persons and extended the legal definition of treason to include writing and publishing that might "stir up the people to hatred or contempt...of the government" (Aspinall 319-22)<sup>7</sup>—an inclination that normal people find difficult to resist. The General's pamphlet-reading activities may be part of a government campaign to detect opinions that might be regarded as treasonable. An attitude as commonplace as "contempt of the government" offers considerable latitude for the construction of treason. At this point in the novel, Eleanor and Henry, like their father, seem to support coercion.

Austen gives us reason to believe that the General's arrogance, arbitrariness, and selfishness extend to national politics. The General woos the Gloucestershire electorate. He makes it a rule "never to give offence to any of my neighbours...a set of very worthy men. They

have half a buck from Northanger twice a year; and I dine with them whenever I can” (210). These efforts to keep the favor of men of property and substance, his trips to London, his spending his evenings “poring over the affairs of the nation” (187), all suggest that he is the local member of parliament and is keeping the favor of the men who elect the two members for Gloucestershire. If he isn’t the M.P., he is furthering his interests in national politics, not an impossible task in a county like Gloucestershire, which had only six thousand voters (Thorne 165).<sup>8</sup> He admires titles, so he may have designs on the honors list.<sup>9</sup>

In those disturbed times, men in power, like the General, responded to dissent with repression. The domestic setting reflects the national. The novel’s crisis, which alienates father from children, suggests that arrogance and dogmatic intolerance by government may have similar effects on the class structure of the nation.<sup>10</sup>

### Catherine’s Radicalism

Catherine’s skepticism, which she seems to have inherited from her mother, unifies the novel’s generic division: it connects the quixote story of a gullible novel-reader with the apprenticeship novel that sees Catherine grow towards a perceptive maturity. Catherine gets carried away by Gothic enthusiasms because there is no thrill if you do not suspend disbelief. She curbs her skepticism and accepts people at face value for similar reasons. Not to accept their self-projections mars the pleasure of making new acquaintances—the special delight of a seventeen-year-old encountering Bath from a village where a visit to Mrs. Allen is a conversational high point. Though dormant, her skepticism is present: it is evident of her growing dislike of John Thorpe, her reservations about Isabella, her discomfort with the General, even in her vexation with history: “the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all...” (108). She suspects the pamphlets that the General spends his nights reading are “stupid” (187).

Journeys are especially important in Austen novels for bringing the heroine to a better understanding of herself, of the hero, and of the society in which their union must find fulfillment. The journeys in *Northanger Abbey* show an interesting development away from the mock-romantic unrealities of the trip from Fullerton to Bath, with its play on the fever-pitch Gothic with “maidens overwrought.” The

novel's second major journey, to Northanger Abbey, confirms Catherine in her love of Henry, but arouses her distrust of his father. Catherine's Gothic imaginings about the General and the mysterious death of Mrs. Tilney carry us to the speculative fringe of one of Ann Radcliffe's prolonged plots. Henry, scion of the gentry, is shocked at Catherine's suspicions and assures her that they live in an open society. Soon after, Catherine's sins against the father are amply but mysteriously recompensed by the father's sins against her. He takes arbitrary measures to protect his interests and sends Catherine upon her final and most important journey of the novel. It is a contemplative and lonely journey without the artificial terrors of the first one or warm responses of the second. The third is an anxious journey of doubts and inquiries leading to an inner reconciliation as this "heroine in a hack post-chaise" (232) returns to Fullerton convinced of her own innocence. While distressed at past events and present appearances, Catherine resists recrimination: her only concern is to avoid bringing "pain" to her family and to cause "resentment" and "ill-will." Her concerns parallel the reaction of her parents and affirm the civility that the General disowns. They refuse to be indignant at his lack of tenderness and his breach of hospitality. Mrs. Morland in particular dismisses the General from her mind and considers instead the benefits to Catherine's sense of independence to have undertaken such a journey on her own. Two days later, she meets Henry with friendliness and good will. Catherine's moral growth brings her closer to her parents in behaviors and attitudes, and a far remove from the General's selfish peevishness.

Henry is not so forgiving. He has defended his father against Catherine's suspicions and the patriarchy against complicity in hidden crimes. He has asserted the openness and fair dealing of his society. On hearing of his father's treatment of Catherine, he is boldly indignant. Although he had complied with an earlier order to court Catherine, he defies the order to abandon her. The furious disagreement between father and son ends in Henry's repudiation of his father's house and his father's control. A novel that ends on a wry acknowledgment of "parental tyranny" and "filial disobedience" reminds us that Henry's is a rebellion against a patriarchy that expects its capricious commands to be obeyed. That rebellion brings us back to the epoch of the 1790s and reminds us of the divisiveness that the

rash acts of the patriarchy produce.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine enacts some of Austen's insight and reserve. Austen, like others of the gentry, feared equality, fraternity, democracy. She felt the comforting power of government of the gentry. But the novel does not shy from disturbing doubts about the wisdom of the governing gentry. General Tilney's judgment, throughout, is suspect: his abbey represents a failure in imagination; his crediting John Thorpe demonstrates a failure in judgment that brings into question his activities of surveillance for the safety of the nation; his inflexibility with his children shows the selfish dogmatism that will see him alienated from children and grandchildren. They will meet with him only with reluctance.

My shadowing of the General and his like through the tortuous paths of chivalry and disturbances seems to be leading to farfetched conclusions about Jane Austen's radicalism. Yet, if we compare *Northanger Abbey* with a contemporary work and a later one, we see its uniqueness in the Austen corpus. In a work as socially and ideologically removed as William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), we find parallel motifs that point to their importance at a cultural moment in the mid-1790s: the distortions of chivalry, the dangers to the social order when power combines with selfish dogmatism, the ideological misrepresentations of history, the rejection of Burkean nostalgia, a notion of necessity in which acts have inescapable consequences, the nagging concern that the crimes of the gentry may go undetected, and a consciousness of the manifold ways in which social harmony is shattered by the petulant violence of self-righteous gentry. Both *Northanger Abbey* and *Caleb Williams* use examples of domestic tyranny to reveal parallels with governmental tyranny. If we compare the uneasy conclusion of *Northanger Abbey* with that of later novels like *Pride and Prejudice*, the lack of resolution is striking. There is no confident reconciliation with the social order that signals the sensible transference of power to the next generation. Catherine and Henry appear to embrace retirement from their world.

The trauma in the Tilney family caused by a patriarch who rules by arbitrary command parallels the trauma of the nation torn between loyalty at a time of national threat from a powerful external force and resistance to insensitive and arbitrary acts against liberty. We all know

that Jane Austen's novels are complex and honest, that they attack selfishness, arrogance, and irresponsibility. If we detect a difference in *Northanger Abbey* from the other novels, a reserving of judgment at the ways domestic and national order were achieved, then perhaps we can agree that Austen's petulant patriarch bears investigating.

#### NOTES

1. The light dragoons featured accomplished horsemen armed with carbines for firing at the gallop and lighter horses that were cheaper and faster, and they were more easily supplied than the heavier dragoons.
2. Peacetime cavalry engaged in garrison duties and coastal patrols against smuggling on the established rotation to Ireland, North Britain, and England.
3. For the peculiarities of the brigadier rank see W.B.R. Neave-Hill, "The Rank Titles of Brigadier and Brigadier-General," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 25 (1969): 96-116.
4. Supply lines stretching the length of the Atlantic denied the British army necessary men, munitions, and, especially, horses. Howe had only two regiments of light dragoons. These lacked a full complement of horses because of the number that died at sea.
5. I am grateful to Mr. Ware Myers of Claremont, California, for sharing with me this observation.
6. "The famines of 1794-6 and 1799-1801 were the most extreme manifestations of the increasingly obvious fact that population growth had outstripped the agrarian production capacity of the British Isles."
7. These were The Seditious Meetings Act and the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act.
8. In fact, Gloucestershire elections were not seriously contested in 1784 and not contested at all in 1790 and 1796. Two aristocratic families headed by the 5th Duke of Beaufort and the 5th Earl of Berkeley made a pact that gave each interest the right to choose one of Gloucestershire's two members of parliament.
9. We see that he cultivates influential acquaintances and leaves Bath early owing to the absence of the Marquis of Longtown and General Courteney. Indeed, his excuse for turning Catherine out of *Northanger* is a hastily contrived visit to the Marquis of Longtown to the west of him, near Hereford.
10. The next government response to protest was to be the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800, preventing workers from combining to bargain wages and working conditions (G.D.H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People 1746-1946* [London: Methuen, 1966] 173-77. The figure behind the legislation of 1799 was Wilberforce, "whose zeal for negro liberty," the authors comment, "was only equalled by his enthusiasm for repressing insubordination in white workers..." [173]). The concerted activities of employers, magistrates, and members of parliament over the next fifteen years removed from law all pretense of protecting working people.

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