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Carriages and Mobility in Jane Austen's Novels

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Introduction

"As to the mode of our traveling to town, *I* want to go in a stage-coach, but Frank will not let me," professed a twenty-year-old Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra in 1796 (qtd in Le Faye, 11). This was a surprising sentiment for Austen to declare – stagecoaches were not the vehicles of choice for a female member of the gentry. Few of Austen's characters ride in stagecoaches, a form of public transportation, they mostly own private carriages –the difference in transport is akin to that between today's cars and buses. Like buses and cars, the type of carriage one rode in denoted much about one's place in society. It is remarkable that Austen, who so minutely detailed the social hierarchy in her novels, wished to eschew societal conventions by riding in a stagecoach. Traveling was an important part of the lives of Austen and her characters because travel for pleasure was just becoming a reality during the Regency. Whether Austen really did want to ride in a stagecoach, or she was joking, her cavalier attitude regarding social distinctions comes through in her later writing. Austen's novels focus on the social stratification of England at the time, and while she seemed to accept the class system, her desire to travel in a means beneath her is characteristic of the slight subversions of class distinctions present in her writing. Towards the end of her life and her writing career, Austen proves to be sympathetic to a meritocratic system of society, like the system of rank in the Royal Navy. As a documenter of English societ, , Austen informs the reader of the nuances

of her characters' social standing and wealth through carriages. Carriages take on great significance in Austen's writing as representative of the characters that own them.

During the time that Jane Austen wrote her novels, many factors paved the way for travel to increase dramatically. The expediency of being able to effectively defend the country's borders from Napoleon and his conquering military was manifested in an improvement of the roads. Napoleon cut England off from the rest of Europe and so English travel was mainly self-contained. Another reason for the improvement of roads was the increase of English trade. At this time, England was a colonial superpower, and trade with her colonies was a prime way to create revenue. England secured raw materials from her colonies, manufactured goods, and then sold them both at home and abroad: "England was awakening to a new industrial era; and to meet the requirements of this new era, it was necessary to extend the facilities for the conveyance of the increasing quantity of raw materials and finished products" (Jackman, 211-2). The importance of agriculture was reaching new levels with the advent of improved farming techniques. Produce was shipped by land to markets, necessitating passable roads to different markets. The demands of military and trade led to the improvement an expansion of roads, and "by 1820, there was 125,000 miles of road" (Jackman, 234). Passable roads were integral in the development of tourism in England. And while roads did enable the gentry to explore England, they also limited where tourists could travel. Because of the specific routes of

roads, travel was mainly directed to resort towns, major cities, and through scenic routes in the country.

Changes in carriage construction as well as increased in availability people to purchase a better vehicles. Carriages were built by hand, specifically for the owners, the specialists included: "wheelwrights for the wheels, carriage makers for the mechanism, body makers for the coach body, blacksmiths… a woodcarver… upholsterers and embroiderers… curriers…painters…lamp makers…glaziers…and perhaps a locksmith…and a gilder" (Olsen, 122). The collaboration of so many specialists to produce one product is in itself telling of how complicated, yet important carriages were. There were many different types of carriages, and with enough money, anything was customizable. Carriage construction was revolutionized during Austen's life. The main improvement was a change in the type of springs used. C springs and elliptical springs became popular, minimizing the effects of the poor road conditions on the riders. Carriages were built to be aesthetically pleasing because they were representations of social status. In terms of functionality, the appearance of the carriage was as important as its ability to run well. According to a journal article in The *Decorator and Furnisher* from 1885, "next to use, a carriage is built to please the eye…The carriage of today, lightsome and convenient, is a thing of beauty, an adornment to our streets and a contribution in its moving grace, to popular artistic tastes" (164). Carriage construction was a personalized affair, with the owner choosing each part of his carriage to suit his needs. And because of

their customizability an external appearance, carriages became extensions of their owners. They were objects of conspicuous consumption and symbols of status.

Carriages came at an exorbitant cost, the price of carriages as well as the taxes levied on carriage owners allowed only the very wealthy to own a carriage. The British government imposed taxes on luxury items during the Napoleonic Wars to raise funds for the military; "England's war with France came at a cost, and one of the expedients to which the government resorted was a tax on private carriages" (Olsen, 128). According to George A. Thrupp, in the year that Austen published *Mansfield Park* and began writing *Emma* (1814), " there were 23,400 four-wheeled vehicles paying duty to the government; 27,300 two wheel, and 18,500 tax carts; a total of 69,200 carriages in Great Britain" (Thrupp, 80). Despite the rising costs of keeping a carriage the presence of carriages increased because travel became more feasible as well as more necessary.

By imposing taxes on the carriages, the British government was better able to control who was allowed the privilege of a carriage. Because the price of carriages was already high, the taxes levied on them limited the scope of possession. According to John A. Dussinger:

> Government licensing of all moving vehicles, the levying of highway taxes, and the various legal restrictions on driving represent, no matter how innocuously encoded, 'the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine' that reduce mobility to order. (147)

The government's necessity of funds was the main reason for the carriage tax and the taxes on all luxury goods at the time. But an effect of the tax was a gap in the social classes. More money than ever was needed to maintain a private carriage. Those of the lower classes could still travel via stagecoaches and longwagons, but the hassle of traveling was much higher. Both the upper and lower classes grew more mobile, but to differing degrees. The more one could spend on the act of traveling, the faster it went. Travel in private carriages went at a speed of about seven or eight miles per hour. But this was only if one was rich and had a light carriages as well as access to fast horses. When Mr. Darcy makes light of a journey of fifty miles, saying that it is, "Little more than half a day's journey. Yes, I call it a *very* easy distance" (*P&P*, 174). Elizabeth retorts, "The far and near must be relative, and depend on many varying circumstances. Where there is fortune to make the expence of traveling, distance becomes no evil" (*P&P*, 175). Mr. Darcy's wealth makes traveling convenient for him. Austen, as a frequent traveler as well as astute observer, was aware of the trials of travel.

Besides being practical vehicles for transportation, carriages were loaded with symbolism. Owning a private carriage signified great wealth and status. Carriages came in endless varieties, and each type signified something different such as practicality of frivolity. The physical presence of a carriage is a potent and complex symbol. Dussinger argues:

> As part of the changing world on wheels, novelistic discourse has focused on locomotion in at least three related ways: 1) since mobility

> reflects social as well as physical power, the vehicle itself, even while inert, usually arouses complex emotions and is instrumental in making class distinctions; 2) once in motion, the vehicle defines a radically private space vis-à-vis the static objects in the surroundings; and 3) the experience of being in motion may range from euphoric loss of self-consciousness to mental and physical confinement. (135)

Through carriages Austen documents the issues regarding physical and social mobility. Using the frame of gentry society, Austen explores the issues of mobility in England. This paper attempts to make the reader familiar with situations surrounding travel in Regency England as well as the importance and social significance of carriages, tourism, and mobility in Austen's novels.

The first chapter details specific types of carriages and their significance in the novels. Carriages were loaded with meaning, and Austen used the meaning associated with certain carriages as a method of characterization. Private carriages such as the curricle, gig, barouche, barouche-landau, and phaeton conveyed specific qualities about their owners. Carriages were also important plot devices in that they imposed certain restrictions such a how many people can travel together, how fast or far characters can go, and whether or not the characters require a coachman. Austen drew on carriages as objects of conspicuous consumption.

Travel and tourism comprise the next chapter. Austen included many instances of characters taking trips, either to view the country or to visit a specific destination. Austen characterized travel as either authentic or inauthentic depending on the type of trip a character takes and his or her actions during the trip. Authentic traveling occurs when characters expand

their thinking, and learn more about the world or themselves. Inauthentic travel occurs when characters reaffirm what is negative in their personalities during trips. Traveling moves the plot in different directions and creates new trajectories for characters' lives.

The third and final chapter details the relationship between physical and social mobility. Status and wealth are the prerequisites for mobility in Austen's novels. Physical mobility is directly correlated to social standing: those higher in status have the ability to move as they wish, and those lower in status either do not have the option of mobility or like the Bateses and Mrs. Smith, they must depend on their friends for the means to move. The carriage symbolizes the dichotomy between freedom and confinement inherent in English society. Austen expanded beyond carriages to include walking and sailing as alternatives. The mode of transportation that characters use is indicative of their attitude toward contemporary status designation.

Chapter 1

Carriages, Class, and Character

Carriages in Austen's novels not only move the plot forward and to different locales, but are also a means of characterization. Austen was concerned with documenting class and wealth, defining through minute detail who had and who had not, who belonged and who was out of place. Carriages were both commodities and social signifiers of class and wealth. They were unique in that they were useful objects, necessary for travel, but they were also status symbols. The presence of private carriages in Austen's novels is disproportionate to their actual prevalence in Regency England. The types of people that Austen wrote about were rich enough to own a

carriage; she was not describing the poor or working class members of society. According to Kirsten Olsen, "We can say with safety that fewer than 1 in 100 people owned a carriage and that fewer than 1 in 160 owned the sort of carriages that we associate with Austen's characters" (129). The overwhelming presence of carriages in all of Austen's novels points to their social significance. Austen often tells the reader the specific type of carriage each character owns. To a modern audience, the precise carriage models such as barouche or gig mean little, but in Austen's world they were extremely important. Austen described her characters through the different types of carriages that they keep. Some carriages are appropriate for their owners, but some are anomalous, and thus provide another layer of characterization. By examining the types of carriages associated with characters, the reader gains insight into the nuances of Austen's writing and her methods of characterization.

In reality, most people in Regency England would have traveled using public transportation. Austen wrote mostly about private carriages, but she did include some mentions of public transport. In the realm of public transportation, the options were stagecoaches, hackney or hack coaches, and mail coaches. These means of transportation were generally meant for people too poor to own their own vehicles, and were mostly left alone by Austen. She did not ridicule their use within the proscribed social class; for example, Robert Martin travels in a stagecoach as is appropriate for his place in society and income (see Fig. 1). But the characters of a slightly higher income reject

the stagecoach as beneath them. Miss Steele, when asked how she traveled to London, replies, "Not in the stage, I assure you… we came post all the way" (*S&S,* 205). Her quick reply denying travel by stagecoach attests to the low status it held as a means of transportation. Miss Steele does not want to be associated with the stagecoach, and her assurance of coming by the post-chaise rather than stage rings of desperation and a longing to fit into the upper class.

Members of the gentry did not usually travel via public transportation. When officious and unkind adults force their dependants to travel by methods beneath them Austen offers a biting criticism. In *Northanger Abbey,* General Tilney sends Catherine home in disgrace in a hack chaise (Fig. 2). Austen dramatically compares the ideal with the reality:

> A heroine returning…with a long train of noble relations in their several phaetons, and three waiting-maids in a traveling chaise-and-four…is an event on which the pen of the contriver might well delight to dwell… A heroine in a hack post-chaise, is such a blow upon sentiment, as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand. (217)

Being sent home in this manner is a great insult to Catherine, and she and her family feel it as such. General Tilney believed John Thorpe's lies about the wealth of the Morland family, and when he finds out the truth he feels he has been deceived. His actions signify that he believes that Catherine is not worth the expense of a proper carriage or even a farewell. Catherine's station is sunk in his mind, and he has no qualms about sending her home in a manner that represents, her lowered status. However, it is not Catherine's

fault that General Tilney believed a rumor about her wealth. She is innocent and dependant upon him and his actions show him to be un-gentlemanlike.

Likewise, in *Mansfield Park,* Mrs. Norris insults Fanny when she suggests that Fanny be brought to London from Portsmouth via stagecoach. Stagecoaches were not used by the gentry, and especially not without a chaperone. It was unconventional for a young girl to travel without a chaperone, and would have been highly unusual for a young, inexperienced, female traveler to undertake a journey on her own. Mrs. Norris' suggestion assumes that Fanny is not truly a member of the gentry, and is not worth the expense of a proper manner of traveling. Austen presents both General Tilney and Mrs. Norris as unfeeling and selfish because they fail to consider the station of those dependant upon them. Although Fanny's family is technically members of the gentry, they are poor and live in a small crowded house. Catherine Morland and Fanny Price are alike in their humble births. General Tilney and Mrs. Norris demonstrate they do not believe Catherine and Fanny to be as worthy as the truly wealthy and highborn children like Henry and Eleanor Tilney and the Bertram children. By forcing or suggesting to force them to travel by means beneath them, General Tilney and Mrs. Norris put the girls in their places, below the guardians themselves and their true charges.

Depending on the type, private carriages could either be useful tools or objects of conspicuous consumption. At the basest level, the presence of a private carriage signified wealth. With the carriage tax, as well as the

expense of carriage and horse upkeep, characters had to have money to own a carriage. Austen uses several categories to denote wealth: "Number of servants mark incomes at lower levels; the acquisition of a carriages does it for incomes that are a bit higher; and the 'house in town' certifies the presence of great incomes" (Copeland &McMaster, 134). In *Sense and Sensibility*, Fanny argues that the Dashwoods would have no need of money because, "they will have no carriage, no horses, and hardly any servants" (*S&S,* 14). Money is a driving force in the lives of Austen's characters, especially the women who depend on a good marriage to provide for themselves. When Mrs. Bennet learns of Elizabeth's engagement to Mr. Darcy he exclaims, "Oh! My sweetest Lizzy! How rich and how great you will be! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have!" (*P&P,* 357). Before examining the nuances of different types of carriages, it is essential to know that usually where there is a carriage, money follows.

In addition to indicating wealth, carriages also represent social standing. Sir Walter Elliot and his daughters Mary and Elizabeth are concerned with social position because their highborn family is quickly losing money and thus status. They closely associate carriages with rank. When Anne visits Mrs. Smith in the Lady Russell's carriage, Sir Walter is more appalled by the degradation of the carriage by the low end Westgate-buildings than his own daughter. He exclaims that the "Westgate-buildings must have been rather surprised by the appearance of a carriage … Sir Henry Russell's widow, indeed, has no honours to distinguish her arms; but still it is

a handsome equipage" (*P,* 148). Sir Walter places great stock in class, he is proud of his own high class, and judges others based on birth. He is personally offended that Lady Russell's carriage, a high-class vehicle even though its arms are not as decorated as his own, would be in such a low-class area. Carriages owned by people with titles had heraldic crests painted on their doors. Carriage owners who had not title or did not want to publicize their title would commonly have a monogram on their doors. The purpose of the crest or monogram was to inform passersby of the carriage's owner, and whom they were likely to find inside. And so, by the type of carriage as well as the designator on the door, it was possible to determine the wealth, rank , sometimes the actual owner of a carriage at a glance.

Within the world of private carriages, there were those driven by a coachman, and those driven by the owner. A coachman usually drove larger carriages meant for conveying many people. These carriages often had a special box, or seat outside of the body of the carriage in which the coachman rode. If there were enough horses, a postilion would ride a horse to keep them in line. A coachman was a specialized servant kept for the express purpose of driving and maintaining the carriage as well as the carriage horses. Other personal carriages were driven by the owner, these included gigs, curricles, phaetons, and occasionally barouches. Self-driven carriages allowed the owners greater physical freedom, as they could be more in control over the direction of their carriage. Fr plot purposes, Austen's characters often travel without the encumbrance of a coachman. The curricle,

an owner-driven carriage, was a fashionable two-wheeled carriage usually pulled by two horses and by driven gentlemen in Austen's novels (Fig. 3). The roof of the curricle was retractable and made of leather. Because of the retractable roof, curricles were practical choices as they were pleasant to drive in the open air of the country, but the roof could close should any weather appear to spoil the fun. And since they only seated two people, it was common for single men to drive them. The most notable drivers of curricles in Austen's novels are Mr. Elliot, Mr. Willoughby, and Mr. Henry Tilney.

In *Persuasion,* before any of the characters know him, they judge Mr. Elliot based upon his curricle. The narrator describes the carriage as a, "gentleman's carriage – a curricle" (*P,* 97-98). When Charles Musgrove hears Mr. Elliot's carriage, he "jump[s] up, so that he might compare it with his own" (*P,* 98). The competitive air with which Charles Musgrove views Mr. Elliot's curricle illustrates the social significance of the curricle. Mr. Elliot's carriage marks him as a member of the gentry, as well as a man of intrigue. His arms are hidden by a greatcoat and his liveried servant is in mourning attire, so the distinguishing features of the curricle are obscured, increasing the mystery of the occupant. The party from Uppercross is compelled to inquire after him because of his carriage. There has been an air of mystery surrounding Mr. Elliot for the entire novel; the reader only knows that there has been some sort of falling out between his father and Sir Walter and that he is to inherit Kellynch Hall. The reader catches glimpses of him throughout the text, and it is finally through his curricle that he is identified. The

curricle characterizes him as a gentleman, as well as a person of interest. Mr. Elliot, as the reader learns later in the text, is out to make a fortune for himself. He married a low-class woman for her money, and of Kellynch Hall, he says, "my first visit to Kellynch will be with a surveyor, to tell me how to bring it, with best advantage to the hammer" in other words, to auction it off for money (*P,* 191). That the reader is first introduced to Mr. Elliot through his curricle is fitting. It is an object representing his wealth and status as a gentleman, yet his arms, which he cares nothing for, are obscured.

In *Sense and Sensibility,* Austen uses a curricle to characterize in a different manner; Willoughby's curricle represents his living outside of his financial means. His curricle is an integral part of his appearance of wealth, which he needs to maintain in order to attract a wealthy woman to marry. The curricle is also a symbol of his inappropriate behavior with Marianne. He brings her to the house he would inherit after their marriage. Everyone except the couple understands the impropriety of this action. Marianne justifies that "as we went in an open carriage it was impossible to have any other companion" (*S&S,* 69). The openness of the carriage leaves the couple open to scrutiny and to assumptions of their engagement. Tellingly, Colonel Brandon, the man Marianne eventually marries, criticizes Willoughby's carriage. Willoughby says, "he has found fault with the hanging of my curricle" (*S&S,* 55). Colonel Brandon finds fault with Willoughby's character and this is represented by his feelings about the curricle. Austen cleverly uses the curricle as an extension of Willoughby himself.

In *Northanger Abbey,* a novel concerned with transportation as well as social class, Henry Tilney's curricle fits him perfectly. His carriage and his driving are faultless, and are contrasted by the crude imitation of him that is John Thorpe. The carriages of Henry and John and their ability as drivers clearly illustrate their identities for the reader. Henry's curricle is just as it should be, fitting for a gentleman, not exceedingly flashy, but certainly a carriage for a man of his station. Catherine Morland praises Henry's curricle and his driving:

> A very short trial convinced her that a curricle was the prettiest equipage in the world; … Henry drove so well – so quietly – without making any disturbance, without parading to her, or swearing at [the horses]; so different from the only gentleman-coachman whom it was in her power to compare him with!... To be driven by him, next to dancing with him, was certainly the greatest happiness in the world. (148-9)

Henry's skill at driving as well as his carriage characterize him as true gentleman and serve to attract Catherine to him even more. Having ridden with both men, Catherine is in the unique position to compare Henry and John as drivers and as potential suitors, and the difference is remarkable.

John Thorpe is a poor imitation of a gentleman, and it shows in his carriage and his driving. The reader is introduced to Thorpe through his carriage and his erratic driving; "the approach of a gig, driven along on bad pavement by a most knowing-looking coachman with all the vehemence that could most fitly endanger the lives of himself, his companion, and his horse" (*NA,* 43). Thorpe drives recklessly into Bath producing feelings of unease and fear in Catherin before she is even introduced to him. John Thorpe drives a

gig, a two-person carriage, drawn by one horse that was relatively cheap and maneuverable (Fig 4). In some cases, such as that of the Crofts, gigs were an apt choice, but in Thorpe's case, it seems as if it is a second choice to a curricle. He tells Catherine, "I had pretty well determined on a curricle" but that he did his friend a favor by taking the gig off of his hands (*NA,* 45). His gig is second hand, and has unnecessary trimmings such as a sword case to make it fancier. This could have just been the folly of the original owner of the gig, but because Thorpe announces it to Catherine, he shows his pride in the unnecessary adornment.

The dissonance between what Thorpe believes and reality shows that his high opinion of himself in unwarranted. His gig is curricle hung, showing Thorpe's desire to be like Henry Tilney. Thorpe is concerned with appearances, and so he points out the various parts of the vehicle ensuring that Catherine takes proper notice of his carriage. Thorpe repeatedly asks for praise, "did you ever see an animal more built for speed in your life…What do you think of my gig?" (*NA*, 44-5). He needs approval from Catherine, to feel like he is impressing her. After he alternately asks for praise and brags, the narrator comments in an ironic manner: "it was settled between them without any difficulty, that his equipage was altogether the most complete of its kind in England, his carriage the neatest, his horse the best goer, and himself the best coachman" (*NA,* 63). But his carriage is second hand, his horse does not listen to him and constantly dips, and he is a bad driver. Austen characterizes Thorpe as a poor driver, a driver of an inappropriate

equipage, as well as ignorant of driving distances. He chides James Morland, "'*Three*-and-twenty!' cried Thorpe, 'five-and-twenty if it is an inch…I defy any man in England to make my horse go less than ten miles an hour" (*NA,* 44). His insistence upon the incredible speed of his horses as well as his disregard of distances in general, show him to be ignorant. Austen is meticulous with her representations of distance and time of travel. Thorpe's ignorance as well as disregard for those who know better than him characterize him as belligerent and incompetent. But Thorpe's greatest fault is that he does not know how ridiculous he is. He believes himself to be a gentleman even though all of his actions prove otherwise. His delusion carries over to his carriage, which is second rate, and his driving which, contrary to his opinion, is awful.

The other notable gig owners are the Admiral and Mrs. Croft in *Persuasion*. A gig is a well-chosen vehicle for them. It is not showy or pricey, it is made for local trips, and its open body is perfect for observing the scenery of the country. The Crofts' carefree manner of driving also suits them. Mrs. Croft, a woman who cares little for gender roles and societal proscriptions, often takes the reigns from her husband, averting danger. Although not common, it was not unheard of for women to drive carriages, what is interesting though is that Mrs. Croft physically takes the reins from Admiral Croft because his steering is erratic. Mrs. Croft does not blindly follow her husband, as women of the Regency were expected to do, but rather takes control, "by coolly giving the reins a better direction herself, they

happily passed the danger" (*P*, 85). Austen uses their driving to characterize the Crofts; "Anne with some amusement at their style of driving, which she imagined no bad representation of the general guidance of their affairs, found herself safely deposited by them at the cottage" (*P,* 86-7). The Crofts are dependable, easy-going, and slightly irreverent. Since they were not born into high society, it seems that they disregard conventions of the gentry. They pose a challenge to the staid customs of the upper class. And as they are arguably some of the most likeable characters in the novel, Austen offers a social commentary on the way in which society was changing. Sir Walter is the highest born character, but he is also the most ridiculous and vain. The Crofts, in contrast are sensible, and their social position is earned though work, not birth. Their gig shows this, as it is a practical carriage for them, it is not showy or unnecessarily fancy.

Larger and more stylish than the gig was the barouche, a very fashionable and desirable equipage (Fig. 5). Barouches seated six people in total, four inside the carriage, facing each other, and two in the box. The two in the barouche box were usually the coachman and a footman. Barouches are equated with a high social status as well as a sort of frivolity. The roof of the barouche was retractable, but when raised, the roof only covered the back row of seats. Their openness makes them desirable for driving in the country during the summer, but they were unusable unless it was warm and dry. Because of their impracticality they were markers of the high social status of their owners; a barouche was usually not the primary carriage because of its

limited usefulness. Barouches commanded a higher status than most carriages because of their reputation as being second carriages, signifying that the owners had another more practical equipage. In *Sense and Sensibility,* Mrs. John Dashwood has high hopes for Edward, including the type of carriage he will drive, "it would have quieted her ambition to see him driving a barouche. But Edward had no turn for great men or barouches" (*S&S,* 18). Even though Edward is the first-born son of a wealthy man, his disregard of barouches shows him to be unconcerned with societal designations of status as well as frivolous status symbols. Edward rides a horse to visit Elinor at Barton Park, foregoing the commodity of a carriage as well as its social significance.

Henry Crawford's barouche is the catalyst for much of the dramatic action in one crucial scene in *Mansfield Park.* The barouche perfectly fits the party of six traveling to Sotherton. Julia and Maria engage in a silent contest as to who will ride in the barouche box with Henry. By riding in the barouche box, Julia and Henry were able to engage in mostly private conversation, but the rest of the party can observe them. Maria notes "his expressive profile as he turned with a smile to Julia" (*MP,* 76). Maria's jealousy over her sister's tête-à-tête with Henry is apparent. It is during this day trip that she is able to compare Henry and Mr. Rushworth, "she had Rushworth-feelings and Crawford-feelings" (*MP,* 77). This jealousy lays the foundations for Maria's actions later in the novel. According to Olsen, "that Crawford's carriage should be a barouche is peculiarly appropriate. It is a fair-weather conveyance, and he turns out to be a fair-weather gentleman"

(54). Crawford is flashy and undependable, as is his carriage. Henry's dedication turns out to be an outward show; he appears to truly love Fanny Price, but runs off with the married Maria in the end.

A slight variation of the barouche is the barouche-landau (Fig. 6). It was "purported to have features of both the barouche and the landau. It was not a popular innovation" (Olsen, 405). In *Emma,* Mrs. Elton brags continuously about her sister and her brother-in-law's (the Sucklings) barouche-landau. She sees the carriage as symbolizing their wealth and status. She proclaims the merits of the carriage as the perfect means to explore the country; "They will have their barouche-landau of course, which holds four perfectly…The would hardly come in their chaise, I think, at that season of the year…I shall decidedly recommend their bringing the barouche-landau" (*E*, 245). By saying this Mrs. Elton wants Emma to know that her relations are very rich as they have a barouche-landau as well as a chaise, that they have leisure time to spend exploring the countryside, and that her opinion holds weight with such important people. Emma, of course, sees through Mrs. Elton's name-dropping. Austen's choice of carriage here is telling; barouche-landaus had pomp, but the innovation of combining the two types of carriages did not catch on because other, more practical carriages had the same characteristics without the expense. Judging from their choice of a carriage, the Sucklings are showy, wealthy, and impractical. And while these characteristics when combined are mocked by Emma who sees nothing special in the Sucklings or their barouche-landau, Mrs. Elton has attached

such meaning to the carriage that it becomes a catchphrase. Austen displays Mrs. Elton's shallow values though her constant mentions of the barouche-landau.

In *Pride and Prejudice,* Lady Catherine de Bourgh drives a phaeton, often with her sickly daughter as the passenger. Lady Catherine is unique in that she is the only phaeton owner in Austen's novels. A phaeton was an extremely fashionable four-wheeled carriage (Fig. 7). The carriage seat was very high and there was room for two people to sit. A phaeton did not require a coachman. She drives the carriage herself, showing her power and independence from men. Unlike Mrs. Croft who sometimes takes the reins from her husband, Lady Catherine has no husband and so she assumes the masculine role of the driver. The seat of the phaeton was high, setting Lady Catherine and her daughter physically above others. This is fitting because Lady Catherine considers herself and her daughter to be superior to everyone else. She spends her time looking down on others, and instructing them in all matters in their lives. Elizabeth is unimpressed with Lady Catherine. She does not follow her advice, she refuses to answer her questions, including "what carriage her father kept" and when Lady Catherine and her daughter deign to stop by the parsonage in the phaeton, Elizabeth exclaims of the excitement, "And this is all?... I expected at least that the pigs were gotten into the garden, and here is nothing but Lady Catherine and her daughter!" (*P&P,* 160, 156). Elizabeth would rather see pigs than Lady Catherine. When Mr. Collins wants to emphasize the wealth of his patroness as well as his

connection to her he tells Elizabeth, “Her ladyship’s carriage is regularly ordered for us. I *should* say one of her ladyship’s carriages for she has several” (*P&P,* 155). Lady Catherine is obviously very wealthy, and one of the physical representations of that wealth is her multiple carriages. Her wealth, her carriages, and her feelings of superiority do not have the same effect on Elizabeth as they do on Lady Catherine’s other companions. And in the end of the novel, Elizabeth openly defies her and marries the man Lady Catherine has designated for her daughter to marry.

Carriages describe characters in subtle yet important ways. By deciphering the connections between characters and their carriages, the reader gains insight into Austen’s method of characterization. Carriages become a part of the characters’ identities. Even when they are not riding in the carriage the carriage is an extension of their personality. Austen’s choice of carriage is always deliberate, and so, armed with even a perfunctory knowledge of carriages, a textual analysis through the lens of mobility reinforces character traits and leads to many new conclusions about the characters.

Chapter 2

Tourism and Traveling

During the Regency, the tourism industry grew dramatically due to the recent improvement of the roads as well as the prevalence of private carriages. It was becoming possible for members of the upper class to travel frequently and with relative ease. Because travel outside of England was cut off by Napoleon, English tourists contented themselves with touring the country. Reasons for traveling varied, but most commonly included touring

the countryside to take in the sights, day trips for a change of scenery, and visiting resort destination or social hubs. Traveling is prevalent throughout all of Austen's novels; every novel features at least one, and often many trips. By providing an alternate setting, Austen creates a sort of alternate reality in which characters can choose how they act. Austen breaks the social inertia that characterizes daily life by changing the scene. Traveling is more than a just plot device to move the story forward; it introduces a multitude of new possibilities for the characters. New places create new social roles, and new trajectories for the characters.

Austen characterizes travel as either authentic or inauthentic. The characteristics of authentic traveling involve a desire to experience something new, to expand one's mind, or to appreciate nature. Authentic traveling creates meaning and draws the characters out of themselves. Inauthentic travel occurs when a character changes locations, but doing so only reaffirm his or her identity. There is no growth or personal development, and travel brings out the character's worst qualities. The difference between authentic and inauthentic travel experiences mirrors the difference between dynamic and flat characters. In this chapter, I will detail the authentic and inauthentic experiences of travel, in both the countryside, as well as in cities. Through these examples, I will demonstrate the enormous impact travel has in the trajectory of the novels.

Elizabeth Bennet embarks on a tour with her aunt and uncle, the Gardiners; they "set off …in pursuit of novelty and amusement" on a tour of

Northern England (*P&P,* 231). The experience of touring, and stopping along the way to explore the landscape of the English countryside was a typical vacation during the Regency. Because Elizabeth takes in the beauty of the countryside and allows her experiences to change her opinions, she has an authentic touring experience. The most memorable moment from this trip is her visit to Pemberley. When the Elizabeth first sees the house, she is struck by its beauty and tastefulness. Unlike Sotherton, the house meshes with the nature around it, and this harmony sets it apart from other great houses. Elizabeth thinks, "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…at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something" (*P&P*, 235). Elizabeth admires the timeless beauty of the house and its grounds. Pemberley is itself an authentic locale; nature and man have worked in harmony to produce a beautiful estate. Elizabeth's tour of Pemberley is fortuitous in that she sees the advantages of the great house, she hears of the kindnesses of its master Mr. Darcy, and then accidentally meets with the man himself. Elizabeth, who has been blinded by prejudice, finally sees the true Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth reevaluates her opinions because of her trip to Pemberley. The trip expands her thinking about Mr. Darcy and enables her to change the trajectory of her life – it instigates her reconciliation and later marriage to Mr. Darcy.

The trip to Beechen Cliff in *Northanger Abbey* is a positive travel experience in which the Tilneys and Catherine Morland appreciate the beauty

of the landscape leading to an expansion of understanding well as a deepening of their relationship. The purpose of this day trip from Bath is to experience the natural beauty and striking views of the hill. Henry teaches Catherine about picturesque landscapes, a subject in which he is well versed and about which she knows little. According to Reverend William Gilpin, a pioneer of the picturesque movement, "*Picturesque beauty* is a phrase little understood. We precisely mean by it that kind of beauty which would look well in a picture. Neither ground laid out by art, nor improved by agriculture, are of this kind" (qtd. in Olsen, 526). The purpose of the picturesque is to appreciate the beauty of an unmarred landscape, one that has the characteristics of a painting. Viewing picturesque landscapes was an important part of tourism and was common during this era. During their trip, Catherine fills the role of the ingénue and Henry becomes her teacher, "she soon began to see beauty in everything admired by him and her attention was so earnest that he became perfectly satisfied of her having a great deal of natural taste" (*NA,* 107). Catherine genuinely appreciates the magnificence of the landscape. Austen, "uses the Tilneys' knowledge of the picturesque to establish them as people of education and taste, but she makes it clear that Catherine Morland's less tutored perspective is more genuine and appreciative than theirs" (Olsen, 529). In learning about picturesque landscape, Catherine expands her knowledge of the topic. She shows genuine wonder and appreciation for the scenery. She also becomes better acquainted with the Tilneys. Austen uses the day trip to create a scenario in which Catherine and Henry can spend time

together away from the crowds of Bath. The positive traveling that occurs on this trip creates a positive situation in which Catherine is educated and the attraction between her and Henry is further developed.

In *Mansfield Park,* the picturesque plays an intrinsic role in travel. After fanny is removed from her childhood home she becomes a perpetual tourist. She is not at home at Mansfield Park, nor is she home when she returns to her original house in Portsmouth. Fanny travels from one place to another and she has no real control over her fate. According to Karen Valihora:

> In *Mansfield Park* (1814), Austen experiments with picturesque views to explore the detachment, distance, and impartiality implied in the third-person narrative…Fanny Price occupies the role, not of impartial spectator, but of picturesque tourist. (90)

The picturesque in the novel characterizes Fanny's interactions with the world around her. And as a perpetual outsider she is continually observing and judging picturesque landscapes and social scenes from a distance. Fanny is a good tourist; she applies the same critical eye and perception to both social and natural scenes. *Mansfield Park* details Fanny's social education and because of her ability to distance herself from situations, Fanny grows to be more of a gentlewoman than her highborn cousins. As she takes an objective view, her feelings are honest and she is guided by propriety and duty. Her sincerity as a true picturesque tourist is demonstrated during the trip she, the Bertrams, and the Crawfords make to Sotherton, Mr. Rushworth's estate. As the picturesque tourist, Fanny observes both the gardens as well as the other tourists and offers her own criticism of both. Fanny, the reader's eyes and the moral guide, is appalled by the behavior of

the other characters. They ignore the estate completely instead focusing on their own improper relationships. Fanny "was sorry for almost all that she had seen and heard" (*MP,* 93). Fanny alone behaves properly; this is connected to her authenticity as a tourist. She goes to Sotherton to appreciate the beauty of the grounds, and when this is interrupted by the follies of her cousins and the Crawfords, she turns her critical eye on them instead.

The characters are supposed to be critiquing Sotherton and its gardens with the aim of improving the picturesque aspects. The irony here is that according to Gilpin, true picturesque landscapes are not man-made. Mary Crawford believes, along with Mr. Rushworth, that she "should be most grateful to any Mr. Repton who could…give me as much beauty as he could for my money" (*MP,* 54). Mary's equation of money and beauty illustrates the commodification of nature as well as how much she values wealth. Rushworth also wants the most beauty he can get for his money, whether it is a more picturesque garden or the beautiful Maria Bertram. Austen comments that money does not buy authenticity- the gardens will be simulations; facsimiles of a true landscape, and Maria's love will be a show of emotions without any true feeling. Edmund proposes a hands-on improvement of the gardens with Mr. Rushworth's involvement in the process. And although his suggestion is more practical and sincere, he is still characterized as a follower. In their attempts to artificially create a picturesque landscape, the tourists at Sotherton, besides Fanny, are figured as inauthentic. Fanny, as a true appreciator of nature, wishes to see the beauty of the grounds. In the

barouche on the way there, “Fanny was very happy in observing all that was new, and admiring all that was pretty. She was not often invited to join on the conversation of the others, nor did she desire it” (*MP,* 76). Fanny truly appreciates nature; her passion is palpable when she discourses on nature, she exclaims, “Here’s what may leave all Painting, and all Music behind, and what Poetry only can attempt to describe!” (*MP,* 105). She eschews false picturesque improvement, and aches for nature as it truly is. She genuinely takes in the landscape, unlike the other tourists who only use this trip to reaffirm their bad characteristics.

The relationships established during the Sotherton trip affect the rest of the novel. The characters are too wrapped up in their own lives to appreciate the nature. Their worst qualities become concentrated as their actions are ungoverned by the rules of propriety they follow in their own homes. The trip serves as an opportunity to act out their desires without thinking of consequences. Of course, their actions do have consequences, but the change of scenery allows them to conveniently forget that. The open flirtations between Henry and Julia, Henry and Maria, and Edmund and Mary are possible now that then characters are removed from Mansfield Park. Edmund vacillates between flirting and being offended. He knows he is behaving badly, but he chooses to ignore it, as evidenced by his ignoring Fanny, the moral compass. Mary is impertinent and speaks without restraint, issuing insults and teasing Edmund. She is angry with herself for falling in love with a second son without the prospect of a fortune. Austen shows the

inferiority of Mary's character through her ignorance of the landscape; "Miss Crawford…had none of Fanny's delicacy of taste, of mind, of feeling; she saw nature, inanimate nature, with little observation"(*MP,* 76). Maria and Julia demonstrate their competitive natures in fighting over Henry, and their convictions of the own superiority. They act as if they are above the reach of the rules of propriety. The insidious seed of Maria and Henry's elopement is sown during this trip. When Maria and Henry proceed through a locked gate without waiting from Mr. Rushworth to return with the key, their actions are a precursor for their future transgression. Mr. Rushworth confides to Fanny, "I should not have had to follow her if she had staid" which mirrors his refusal to follow her after she and Henry elope (*MP,* 95). Mr. Rushworth tries to show off his land and himself, but his bragging is ineffective. The other characters except Fanny ignore him. Even Mrs. Norris acts poorly when she bullies the household staff into giving her heath, cream cheese, and pheasant's eggs. Her intimidating and grasping nature comes out at Sotherton. The characters' bad behavior is an extension of their true selves when they are ungoverned by societal mores. Austen uses the trip to Sotherton to give the reader insight into character motivation as well as to create a platform for the rest of the action of the novel.

A similar situation occurs when the characters in *Emma* travel to Box Hill, the trip seems to bring out the worst in everyone. Austen sets this scene at Box Hill, away from Highbury, and the distance allows the characters to distance themselves from their every day roles. They disregard the rules that

govern the society and hierarchy of Highbury and in doing so become exaggerated versions of their Highbury selves. Frank Churchill ramps up his rakish behavior and vengefully flirts with Emma in front of Jane Fairfax. His real intention is to make Jane jealous because she has just extended their engagement. He uses both Jane and Emma unscrupulously and selfishly disregards their feelings. His propensity to flatter and seek attention comes out as he makes himself and Emma the centers of attention. Mrs. Elton is offended because she is not the object of everyone's admiration; "Mrs. Elton swelled at the idea of Miss Woodhouse's presiding" (*E*, 335). Her self-importance grows and Mr. Elton placates her through flattery. Both Mrs. Elton and Frank show their mental stasis because they do not grow from the experience of travel, nor do they learn from their poor behavior.

The pride Emma feels in being the highest born female on the trip and the object of Frank's affected desire causes her to forget her duties as a member of the upper-class. She is unjust to the annoying yet helpless Miss Bates whose only faults lie in talking too much and reminding Emma that the social ladder goes both ways. Mr. Knightley, ever conscious of those below him, shows his altruism and gentlemanly nature. He upbraids Emma for her social misconduct saying, "How can you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How can you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation?" (*E,* 340). Mr. Knightley's tenderness for Emma, his desire to see her do the right thing, and his concern for Miss Bates lead him to act as a moral referee. Mr. Knightley's admonition forces Emma to reevaluate her

behavior and her relationship with those ranked below her. Emma feels her impropriety acutely; "The wretchedness of a scheme to Box Hill was in Emma's thoughts all evening" (*E,* 342). The trip to Box Hill is necessary for Emma's personal growth; she internalizes the lesson she has learned and realizes that she has been remiss in her duties as the highest-ranking female in the town. She makes amends to Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax by making more frequent and sincere social calls. The trip to Box Hill allows Emma to adjust her attitude and become worthy to marry Mr. Knightley.

In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice,* alternative settings provide the scenes for grave social misconduct. Austen sets sexual indiscretions in resort towns, showing the dark sides of these towns. Eliza, Colonel Brandon's niece, is on vacation in Bath with another family. While there, Willoughby seduces her and leaves her pregnant "with no creditable home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his address!" (*S&S*, 198). Willoughby's despicable actions occur in Bath, away from the action of the novel, but are central to his characterization. Willoughby is truly a rake and is a selfish user. The reader's opinion is turned against him and toward Colonel Brandon who finds his niece and saves her. Austen presents the true characters of Willoughby and Colonel Brandon through their involvement in this scandal. In *Pride and Prejudice,* Lydia travels to Brighton with the Forsters and soon runs off with Wickham. Austen employs a change of setting to enable Lydia to disregard the rules she follows when she is at home; she urges Mrs. Forster not to, "send them word at Longbourn…it will make the surprise the greater

when I write to them" (*P&P,* 276). The propensity to embarrass her family and engage in risky behavior with men had always been part of Lydia's personality, but it is only when she is away from home that she indulges fully. Her foolish actions have consequences for the reputation of the family. But since she is away from home, she feels that she is free from the reach of these consequences. If Mr. Darcy and Mr. Gardiner had not hunted the couple down, and forced them to marry, it is almost certain that Wickham would have jilted Lydia. Both Willoughby and Wickham take advantage of women in resort towns and although the women are not faultless, the men's actions are unforgivable. Their traveling experiences are not only inauthentic, but they can almost be considered criminal. Willoughby and Wickham show their true qualities through their misconduct, and their faults are contrasted with the virtues of the men that save the women. Colonel Brandon and Mr. Darcy are characterized as heroic and virtuous, worthy to marry the novels' heroines Marianne and Elizabeth.

The characters in *Persuasion* do not act inappropriately when they take a trip to Lyme, but the implications of the trip are dire. When Louisa Musgrove falls from the Cobb, her fate becomes inextricably tied to Lyme. She insists on being jumped down from the Upper to Lower Cobb by Captain Wentworth, insisting " I am determined I will" when he suggests she stop (*P*, 102). Her headstrong determination is amplified at Lyme and leads to her accident. Anne's characteristics become magnified too; Anne is catapulted into action as a caretaker after Louisa's fall. Anne catches Henrietta as she

faints, directs Wentworth minister to Louisa, and instructs Benwick to fetch a surgeon. Charles turns to her as the person in charge, exclaiming, "Anne, Anne…What in heaven's name is to be done next?" (*P,* 107). Louisa's fall allows Anne to show her true self. She forgets to be self-conscious around Wentworth, and to her great advantage, she demonstrates her skills. Anne's appearance also is improved by the change of scenery; "she was looking remarkably well; her very regular, very pretty features, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind" (*P*, 97). The then unknown Mr. Elliot is struck by her and Wentworth thinks, "even I… see something like Anne Elliot again" (*P*, 97). The trip to Lyme brings out Anne's best characteristics. It propels the plot of the novel forward and creates new trajectories for the characters. The result of the trip to Lyme is that Louisa falls in love with Benwick freeing Wentworth to pursue Anne. It is hard to characterize this trips as good or bad traveling; it rather seems to be necessary. The trip brings out the best in Anne, but it does not really change her, it just highlights her good qualities reminding Wentworth of the woman he fell in love with.

As tourism grew in popularity, the industry surrounding it grew as well. Traveling became another experience one could collect, reducible to a souvenir or a funny story. Travel added to the bourgeoning commodity culture; Regency men and women traveled to market towns for the purpose of shopping. According to Deidre Lynch, "the last quarter of the eighteenth century, [was] a time of increased domestic tourism…city streets across

England became…showcases for commodities" (Lynch,180). Shopping was not necessarily a bad thing, but characters that are consumed by consuming are portrayed as bad tourists. When Isabella and John Thorpe visit Clifton, they purchase spars as a remembrance of their time there. A spar is a type of ornament featuring crystallized minerals from a particular location, in this case, Clifton. The Thorpes have barely spent any time in Clifton yet they physically memorialize their trip with trinkets. The entire trip is summarized in a one sentence-long list; they, "ate some soup, and bespoke an early dinner, walked down to the pump-room, tasted the water, and laid out some shillings in purses and spars; thence adjoined to eat ice at a pastry-cook's, and hurrying back to the hotel, swallowed their dinner in haste" (*NA,* 111). Consumption seems to be all that the Thorpes accomplish on their trip; they consume food and the spa water, and buy useless souvenirs. The point of their trip to Clifton was to experience it, and then be able to make the claim of having traveled there. According to Barbara M. Benedict, "their easy commodification of their holiday experience into tourist collectibles indicated not only their own shallowness, but the triviality of popular pleasures" (Benedict, 347). The Thorpes do the same thing in Clifton as they would do in Bath. And so although there is a change of scene, there is no change in action. The characters do not learn anything from their trip. They come away with only trinkets, a representation of the triviality of their trip. Their inauthentic travel characterizes the Thorpes as frivolous and shallow.

London is the center of commodity culture in England. Members of the

gentry travel to London to socialize, shop, and attend concerts, plays, and balls. Traveling to cities constituted a different type of tourism than exploring the country. And although it does not seem that visiting a city can be inauthentic, the distinction between good and bad travel remains, without landscape viewing as a criteria. Characters who are level headed and do not let the dangers of being in a city affect them are good tourists; characters who use the city as an excuse to act out their socially unacceptable desires or to reaffirm their bad qualities are shown to be bad tourists. In *Sense and Sensibility,* when Marianne and Elinor Dashwood arrive in London, they observe it from an outsider's point of view. They are there for the purpose of shopping. To them the city is a new world of shops and social engagements. They shop, but they do not become consumed by commodities like Robert Ferrars. The first time he is introduced to the reader, he is notoriously "debating for a quarter of an hour over every toothpick-case in the shop" (*S&S,* 208). The ridiculous triviality of a toothpick-case, and the gravity with which Robert Ferrars chooses one, is a criticism of the conspicuous consumption occurring in London.

When characters visit other characters, the reader gets a glimpse into another world. As Marianne and Elinor are traveling in the carriage with her, Mrs. Jennings, "treated them with every possible kindness, was solicitous on every occasion for their ease and enjoyment" (*S&S,* 153). The carriage ride sets the tone for their visit to London with Marianne silent and sullen, Elinor polite and grateful, and Mrs. Jennings jolly and glad to have company. The

carriage acts as a conveyance to a different world for the sisters. Mrs. Jennings has proven herself to be meddlesome and teasing, yet never deliberately unkind. In London, she becomes even more of a gossip, unwittingly spreading rumors about Marianne's engagement to Willoughby. The sisters' qualities are magnified both by the change of scenery and by Willoughby's engagement to Miss Grey. Marianne lets her sensibilities run free and becomes despondent. Elinor acts as a screen, and her sense is augmented.

Marianne and Elinor are authentic in their feelings and their actions during their visit to London. They have new experiences in London: they meet new people, explore the city, and shop. They also learn the true nature of Mr. Willoughby. The sisters experience what London has to offer, but while there their dominant qualities of sense and sensibility are magnified.

Travel to Bath features prominently in both *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. Bath is described as a striking city, full of consumables, as well as a prison. Henry Tilney explains that after staying eight or ten weeks in Bath, the people "go away at last because they can afford to stay no longer" (*NA,* 76). Money is the issue here; the society at Bath is dependant upon consuming, characters consume food, concerts, spa water, clothing, etc. According to Barbara M. Benedict, "Bath itself represented a commodified experience, its shops, theatres, assemblies, pump room and concerts constitute prepackaged pleasures for tourists" (Benedict, 348-9). Bath is a sort of tourist utopia in which everything is there for the buying. Catherine

Morland is youthfully enamored of the city and the older and wiser Anne Elliot sees through its charms, preferring Kellynch Hall. Catherine, with her youth and inexperience "was all eager delight; her eyes were here, there, everywhere, as they approached the striking environs" (*NA,* 20). As Catherine is introduced to society at Bath, she gains world experience and becomes a more discerning character. She learns the difference between true friends like the Tilneys, and superficial acquaintances like the Thorpes. Bath plays a large part in her education as part of the bildungsroman genre. Conversely, "Anne entered [Bath] with a sinking heart, anticipating an imprisonment of many months" (*P,* 128). And although she is not excited to be there, Anne makes the best of her Bath experience. She renews her friendship with Mrs. Smith, she both meets and learns the truth about Mr. Elliot, and she renews her engagement with Captain Wentworth. Anne's trip to Bath is necessary in terms of the outcome of her relationships. While Catherine and Anne have different experiences in Bath, they remain true to themselves and engage in authentic personal development.

Travel within England propels the plots of many of Austen's novels. Travel creates unique situations in which Austen ingeniously, introduces new characters, characterizes existing characters, and broadens the scope of possibilities, while also accurately representing the reality of Regency touring. Traveling provides a venue for personal growth and gives the reader insight into the characters true qualities. In distancing themselves from their every day lives, dynamic characters are able to examine their choices and

begin the journey of personal growth. Austen paradoxically represents mental stasis as well as expansion through physical movement. In the whirlwind of movement beginning to blossom during the Regency, characters who continue their lives unexamined remain two-dimensional and characters who use traveling to their advantage are the given the opportunity to adapt and grow.

Chapter 3

Physical and Social Mobility

Social mobility was becoming a reality during the Regency. Because of the early stirrings of the Industrial Revolution, as well as the Napoleonic Wars, there were more opportunities to move up in the world. No longer were rank and wealth synonymous. Money, independent of rank became a

means to rise through the social hierarchy. Moving down the social ladder was also a distinct possibility: Austen provides Mrs. Smith in *Persuasion* and the Bateses in *Emma* as examples. The ways in which characters are physically mobile demonstrates how they are socially mobile. Although carriages give the illusion of freedom, the passengers are confined to a very cramped space. The dichotomy of mobility and confinement faced by contemporary English society is embodied in the carriage. Carriage rides are marked by their restricted physical space in the midst of wide-open landscapes. Complaints about being confined in carriages run throughout Austen's novels and this physical confinement forces characters to confront uncomfortable issues. Carriages are like crucibles in that they withstand great internal intensity while changes are occurring inside of them. Austen sets memorable scenes literally in motion, as the action takes place while the characters are in carriages. Austen moves beyond carriages as the sole means of transportation. Other methods of transportation important in Austen's novels including walking and sailing, these are placed in contradistinction to riding in a carriage. Walking demonstrates a rejection of the symbolism and rigidity associated with carriages, and naval ships represent physical mobility that leads to social mobility.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennett walks to Nehterfield instead of riding in her family's coach, demonstrating her free spirit and her eschewal of class distinctions. Elizabeth is not dependant on horses or a coachman to bring her somewhere; she is self-reliant. Walking is more active than riding

in a carriage. The confinement of the carriage box, as well as the routes a character is able to travel do not apply when a character walks. Elizabeth walks across a muddy field, an inaccessible route by carriage. Walking also a lacks the element of social confinement because it avoids social designations inherent in carriages. When Elizabeth walks the three miles to Netherfield by herself she rejects the social conventions of mobility. It was not common to walk when it was muddy as clothing was so expensive, and it was unheard of for women to walk long distances alone. But Elizabeth circumvents social conventions when they stand in her way. Elizabeth's method of transportation characterizes her as a rebel; during her walk she sullies her petticoat, which represents her liberation from the conventions of the rigidity of the upper class. Elizabeth demonstrates her independence and Caroline Bingley analyzes her actions as subversive, saying, "It seems to me to shew an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country town indifference to decorum" (*P&P,* 36). Elizabeth does not feel that the social standing of the party at Netherfield warrants her use of a carriage. She is unimpressed by Darcy's high social status because she believes his proud and disagreeable manner trumps his rank. And this, instead of infuriating him, inflames his desire for her. Elizabeth ignores rank and the conspicuous display of wealth that accompanies carriage usage. She is characterized as more practical and less status conscious than the Bingley sisters. That Elizabeth marries so high above her station is ironic because she does not stand for convention. But the

reader discovers, along with Elizabeth, that Darcy, regardless of his rank, is worthy of her affection.

Elizabeth's foil, Caroline Bingley, has completely opposite views on status. Instead of disdaining it like Elizabeth, Caroline is fixated on moving up in the social hierarchy. The Bingleys have earned their money through trade, placing them as members of the nouveaux riche. Elizabeth, as a gentleman's daughter, actually outranks Caroline, but this is of no significance to Elizabeth. Both of Bingley's sisters, "show the aspect of social mobility that Austen distrusted. They are status-hungry…" (McMaster, 124). Caroline wishes to be Mrs. Darcy, and her overt attempts at attracting Mr. Darcy are gauche and demonstrate her social climbing tendencies. Bingley, conversely, does not elicit a negative characterization from Austen. Austen, like Bingley, judges based on personal attributes. And so, although he is from an upstart family involved in trade, "In Bingley we see the best of social mobility" (McMaster, 124). He sees true beauty in Jane, despite her family. She is the prize he earns for his perception. Bingley is attempting to rise in society, but unlike his sisters, he does not feel entitled to rank because of wealth. He leases Netherfield with his new fortune, and in doing this tries on the role of a member of the landed gentry. Because he has a genuine desire to improve himself and is not status hungry like his sisters, Austen allows him to use his wealth to buy status without censure.

In *Emma,* Mr. Knightley is like Elizabeth Bennet in that he walks because he is not concerned with status. He is aware of it, but his status is so

high, he can afford not to let it affect him. He prefers walking to riding in carriages, a preference that demonstrates his indifference toward his own rank as well as the ranks of others. According to Juliet McMaster:

> Austen insists that part of his virtue is that he refuses to trade on his rank. He walks, when status conscious people…would make a point of riding in a carriage. When he does get out his carriage, it is to transport Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax, not himself. (118)

When he arrives at a ball in his carriage, Emma misinterprets his action saying, "This is coming as you should do…like a gentleman" when his true intention was to provide Jane Fairfax and Miss Bate with a ride (*E,*193). Emma feels that he did not "use his carriage so often as became the owner of Donwell Abbey" (*E,* 193). Emma, unlike Mr. Knightley, believes that not only is status implied in every interaction, status should also be seen. Riding in a carriage was a mark of social status, and his refusal to use his carriage shows that keeping up appearances matter little to him. Mr. Knightley's carriage is more useful to him in conveying his friends of a lower status, than it is as a mode of transport for himself. Mr. Knightley's carriage is a physical representation of his paternalism; he uses it to shelter those socially beneath him. Austen shows him to be a true gentleman because he is able to forget the superficial aspects of his rank, instead using his wealth and status to benefit Highbury. As the highest ranked male in the town, his responsibility is to help the less fortunate, he lends out his carriage as well as the trapping of wealth and status that come with it.

Status is important in *Emma* because Emma is so concerned with her place in the world and others' relation to it. In this novel, Jane Austen includes characters from many different rungs on the social ladder, from the high-ranking gentleman Mr. Knightley, all the way down to the traveling band of gypsies. Emma is perceptive of the smallest distinctions in rank, and as the reader most often views the action from her perspective, he becomes status conscious as well. Highbury is a stagnant town in which physical mobility has been replaced by an obsession with social status. The layers of class are difficult for the modern reader to discern, but from the significance that Emma attaches to the social hierarchy, it is clear that it is important in Highbury. The rising mercantile class complicates Emma's assessments of social standing; she develops a blind spot to class when Harriet Smith is concerned. Emma is the most class conscious but also one of the most static characters in Austen's novels. She rarely leaves Highbury, and has not even been to London, a journey of sixteen miles from her house. When she marries Mr. Knightley, she becomes the mistress of Donwell Abbey, but her rank and her wealth do not change much, and she continues to live in her childhood home with her father. Emma is literally and figuratively sheltered. Marriage is not a means of gaining social distinction or wealth for Emma, but rather a way to retain her status. By marrying Mr. Knightley, she preserves the rank she has been born with. Unlike the unmarried Miss Bates, Emma's rank will not depreciate with time. She is unique as an Austen heroine in that she does not move to a new home and her way of life does not change after she

marries. The stasis faced by Emma is self-induced; she could, like her sister, leave Highbury. However, she is both too committed to caring for her father and concerned with her status to leave.

When Emma and Mr. Elton are confined in a stopped carriage, Emma finds herself Mr. Elton's proposed vehicle of social mobility. Mr. Elton desires to move up in world and he sees Emma as a means for his increased rank. She is appalled that he "should suppose himself her equal in connection of mind!" (*E,* 121). Emma has mentally planned Mr. Elton's marriage to Harriet Smith, a young woman of unknown heritage and little money, and his pretensions to be Emma's equal are shocking and embarrassing to her. She and Mr. Elton are trapped together in a carriage during a snow storm; "they were to have a tête-à-tête drive…scarcely had they passed the sweep gate when she found…Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her: availing himself of the precious opportunity" (*E,* 115). Physically, they are in a vehicle, but tellingly, that vehicle is stopped. They are forced to awkwardly wait in anger and silence until the carriage slowly rolls to the parsonage. Once again, the carriage is a crucible for the roiling emotions inside. Emma could be a vehicle for upward social movement for Mr. Elton, but in refusing him, she has blocked Mr. Elton's social aspirations, calling his mobility to a halt. He is left to marry a socially inferior yet wealthy woman of 10,000*l* - the daughter of a merchant and a member of the trade class. Her low birth and lack of social grace characterize the Eltons as vulgar and out of-place in the gentry.

Status sometimes changed in negative ways and the loss of status often meant a loss of mobility as well. Miss Bates, a single woman, supporting her ageing mother, with little to live on, moves down the social ladder. When Emma insults her, Mr. Knightley reminds her that, "She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to, and if she lives to an old age, she must probably sink more" (*E,* 340). The Bateses are members of the growing class of the shabby genteel, meaning that they have more status than money. As Miss Bates' wealth and status decrease, so does her freedom to move. In taking care of her mother, Miss Bates is often confined to her small apartment. The people of Highbury, take the Bateses under their care, providing them with food when they have extra, inviting them over for social events, and lending them their carriages. It is their connections that keep them, at least, physically mobile. In depending on their friends, their once high status, still earns them physical mobility; "they have *connections*: they are on visiting terms with the best families of Highbury; and that's more than can be said… for the Coles, with all their money and servants" (McMaster, 125). They are dependant on the kindness of those around them; they are not at liberty to be mobile on their own. The Bateses have the advantages of birth, but in losing their wealth, they also lose their agency. The Bateses can go where mobile people are willing to take them, but no further.

Unlike Mrs. and Miss Bates, Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax both rise in status throughout their lives. It is fitting that Jane and Frank be joined in marriage because they both occupy interstitial social spaces. Wealthy

families foster them from childhood. The Campbells assist Jane in her education and she is able to train as a governess while living and traveling with them. The Churchills name Frank their heir; he gains wealth and connections, and through these, status. Jane travels with the Campbells, but when she returns to Highbury, she experiences both social and physical stasis. Frank's mobility greatly increases although he avoids visiting his biological father until Jane is also in Highbury. Jane and Frank escape the stasis of Highbury together. They improve their stations in life by distancing themselves from the town as well as from their births.

In *Persuasion,* social mobility is more fluid than in any of Austen's other novels. Austen includes examples of upward and downward mobility, with the Navy adding another layer of social and physical mobility. By describing the downfall of the self-absorbed Sir Walter and the rise of the self-made Captain Wentworth, Austen demonstrates her approval of the move toward a more meritocratic society. Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot are preoccupied by their high status because it is declining. As a baron, he has failed both his family and his tenants, but he is too narcissistic to think of anyone but himself. Sir Walter spends his days looking in mirrors, judging others' appearances, and rereading his own history in the *Baronetage*; "vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character" (*P,* 6). Sir Walter's good looks do not help him or his family and in fact are partially to blame for his downfall. Sir Walter's excessive spending leads to a change of physical place. Because he is a "foolish, spendthrift baronet, who had not

principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him," he can no longer afford to live in Kellynch Hall, the seat of his baronetcy and his family "retrenches" to Bath. (*P,* 232). And so, a change in social standing leads to a change in physical location.

Sir Walter's support of the upper classes is restricted to those who have been born of a high class. Sir Walter considers the Navy to be, "the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and even raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of" (*P,* 20). The rising middle class threatens him because he is losing his own status. Ironically, Sir Walter rents out Kellynch Hall, the representation of his wealth and status to Admiral Croft, a self-made man. According to Juliet McMaster, "in *Persuasion* [Austen] uses [the Navy] as a model system of promotion by merit, in contrast to the old-world system of heredity that Sir Walter considers sacred" (McMaster, 121). The Navy's meritocratic hierarchy becomes incorporated into England's social hierarchy and a high Naval rank corresponds to a high social rank. Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft earn status and wealth through their service to England, and they, unlike Sir Walter, are worthy of their titles Mobility is a required for members of the Navy to be eligible to move up in rank. By traveling, members of the Navy gain commissions and become qualified to lead voyages on their own. They travel throughout England and sail throughout the world and their ships are representative of the social and physical mobility of the Navy. Like carriages, ships convey the tension between confinement and freedom

because they confine sailors to a small space in the middle of the open sea. They are a means of physical mobility, but unlike carriages, which only reflect status, ships are a means to earn status.

When Captain Wentworth first proposes to Anne before he travels with the Navy, she is counseled to refuse him because his fortune and future rank are uncertain. Her decision leads to six years of stasis for her, and six years of constant motion for him. But he does exactly what his name suggests; he went away to become a worthwhile match for Anne. After making a name for himself by commanding the *Asp,* a ship not fit to sail, he leads a lucrative voyage earning wealth and status. When regaling the Musgroves with tales of his time spent sailing, he exclaims, "How fast I made money in her" (*P,* 62). Wentworth earns his title, his money, and his wife, and from all of these factors, he earns a higher social status.

Like Wentworth, Admiral Croft translates his motion in the Navy into social and capital gain. The Crofts earn enough money to keep a gig, rent Kellynch Hall, and travel to Bath. They continue their mobility on land, replacing a ship with a gig. The Crofts have earned their carriage and thus the status it connotes. Their place in society is manifest in their gig, a vehicle that they use to adapt their mobile life to the country. Another character who has earned his place in society and who will probably be rewarded with a carriage is Mr. Perry, Mr. Woodhouse's physician. The seemingly trivial bit of gossip regarding the potential of Mr. Perry getting a carriage, was actually a significant event, especially in a small town like Highbury: "Austen notes

their rising social status in making a memorable incident out of Mr. Perry's changing decision about setting up a carriage" (McMaster, 122). The Perrys have the financial means to contemplate increasing their mobility by purchasing a carriage. The Perrys earn money because of Mr. Perry's skill as a physician. Their rising wealth and standing in town will eventually become manifest in a carriage.

Mrs. Smith in *Persuasion* has lost her status, wealth, and mobility. After spending money extravagantly at the behest of Mr. Elliot, Mrs. Smith's husband dies leaving her in debt. Mrs. Smith then contracts a rheumatic fever, leaving her in a wheelchair; there was, "no possibility of moving…without assistance" (*P*, 145). The freedom of mobility is reserved for the upper class, and when Mrs. Smith is no longer a member of that class, she loses the privilege of mobility. When Anne visits her, "twelve years had transformed the fine-looking, well grown, Miss Hamilton [Mrs. Smith], in all the glow of health…into a poor, infirm, helpless widow, receiving the visit of her former protégée as a favor" (*P,* 144). Mrs. Smith loses her status and mobility simultaneously. She is confined to a small apartment, and her movement is limited to this apartment and the therapeutic baths. Bath is not a social hub for her; she is there to regain her mobility. When she learns of Anne's renewed connection to Mr. Elliot, she uses Anne as a vehicle for gaining her social mobility, or at least some of her lost money back. Before, "there was no body to stir. Mr. Elliot would do nothing, and she could do nothing herself , equally disabled from physical exertion by her state of bodily

weakness, and from employing others by her want of money" (*P*, 197). Because of her connection to Anne and Captain Wentworth, Mrs. Smith recovers some of her former wealth, and her health improves. Mrs. Smith's connection allows her to rise in society, and consequently improve other aspects of her life.

Mobility is usually figured as a desirable quality, but when it is obligatory, mobility become imprisoning rather than liberating. Forced travel due to displacement occurs repeatedly in the novels. Characters are obliged to move because of outside circumstances. According to Nicholas Dames:

> *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice*…illustrate the increasing popularity of 'internal tourism' or travel to picturesque or otherwise notable British locations, in the final decades of the eighteenth century. As a result they point our attention to the catalogue of spatial dislocations on Austen: the Dashwoods…Fanny Price…the Elliots. (418)

Elinor, Marianne, Fanny, and Anne become refugees due to various reasons: an entail, controlling relatives, and mismanaged money. And once these characters are forced to move, they continue until it is time to finally "settle down" by getting married. Like Jane Austen herself, the characters most affected by familial displacements are single woman. Each of these characters is given the possibility to create her own home by leaving her family and forming a new one. Marriage is the only option presented to end the inertia caused by displacement. All of these characters do get married. And except for Anne, marriage provides stability and stasis. Anne's fate is less than settled because the False Peace is about to end. Anne feels, "the dread of a future war… she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to

that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than its national importance" (*P*, 236). As Austen's last and oldest heroine, Anne most closely resembles Austen herself at the end of her life. Anne, Austen, and England face an uncertain and unsettled future. Austen acknowledges the danger of the oncoming war as well as the continued mobility of Anne and Wentworth. There is no country home, parsonage, or Pemberley waiting for Anne Elliot. The lack of a concrete place at the conclusion of this novel continues the theme of mobility into the future beyond Austen's novels and even her life.

Conclusion

Austen presented a portrait of England as it was on the cusp of a revolution of mobility. Her novels memorialize of the ephemeral world of the Regency. They present a world just out of reach for modern readers, a world

before the hassles of modern day conveniences. Soon after Austen's death in 1817, the nature of mobility in England changed drastically. The country was catapulted into the Industrial Revolution with the invention of the steam engine. The seeds of social mobility through trade had already been sown during the period when Austen was writing and as the trade industry expanded, so too did opportunities to move up in the world. From factory workers to entrepreneurs, the Industrial Revolution transformed England's social stratification. Lines between the social classes became blurred, as wealth independent of class was a greater factor in social standing.

The types of physical motion changed and the pace of travel increased dramatically. Train tracks snaked across England and locomotion changed the way in which people traveled. Rapid train travel replaced the leisurely carriage ride through the country. Life moved at a faster pace. Carriages came to represent the old world, and while they still signified wealth and status they also represented an antiquated version of society. Carriages were one of the last bastions of the upper class. With the introduction of factory-produced automobiles in 1908, carriages were phased out. Cars replaced carriages as modes of personal transportation, and just like carriages, different models of cars still signify different characteristics.

A few months before her death, Austen famously wrote to her brother James, "The little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine

a brush as produces little effect after much labour" in reference to writing her novels (Le Faye, 337). But, by analyzing Austen's novels through the motif of carriages, it is easy to see that though the scale is small, Austen's novels are profound. She was deliberate in her writing, and clever in her economy of meaning. The thread of carriages runs throughout all of Austen's novels, weaving in themes of mobility, character identity, social status, conspicuous consumption, and physical space. This reading presents only one way to explore the text, albeit, an important one. There are countess ways to explore her novels and find new meanings. And by examining the novels from different perspectives, like this essay has attempted to do with carriages, the texts are reinvigorated and new information is unearthed.

I disagree with Austen's statement about her works producing little effect; her novels have had a huge audience, and continue to live on in countless adaptations and reimaginings. Austen has her own cult following, and the Jane Austen societies across the world would never let her works be forgotten. Although Austen wrote in a very specific historical period, her novels include universal themes of love, friendship, and personal betterment-themes to which readers of every era are able to relate. The universality of sentiment as well as the clarity and hopeful endings of Austen's novels create nostalgia for a simpler time, even if that time was before the reader's.

Appendix

Fig. 1:
A Stage Coach

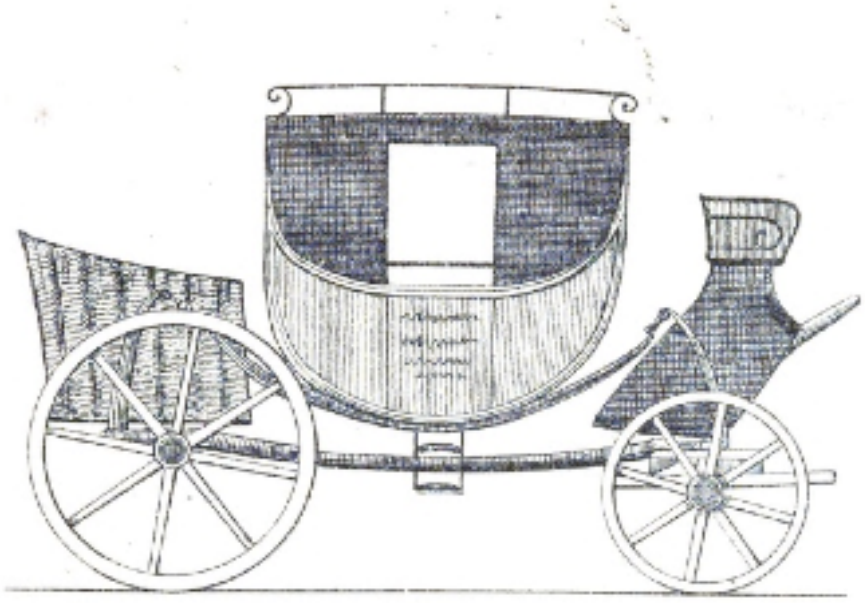
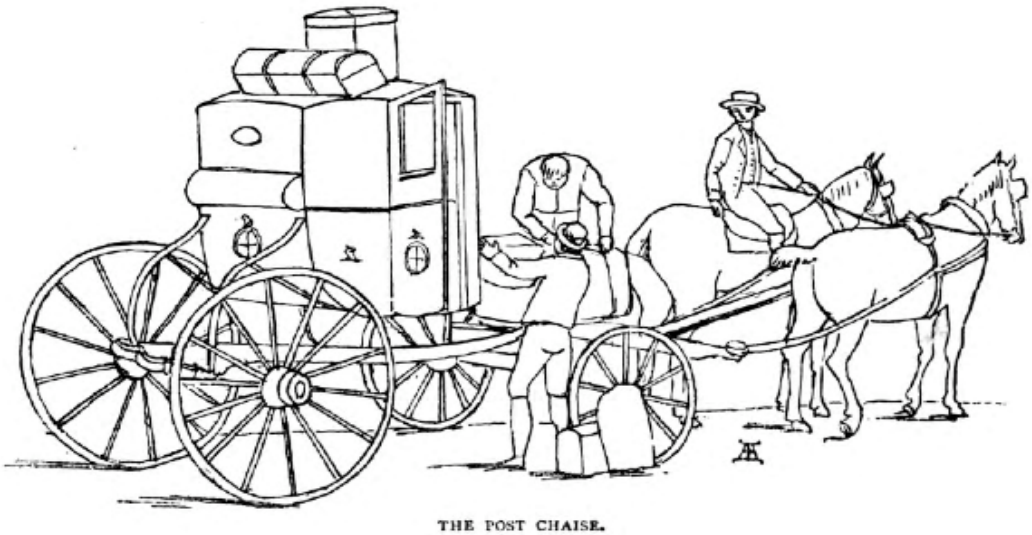


PLATE 34. AN ENGLISH STAGE COACH, 1787, AFTER ROWLANDSON

(Jackman, 117)

Fig. 2:
A Post Chaise



THE POST CHAISE.

(http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_3jzKULGkkfo/TDpw3SYgViI/AAAAAAAAAFs/nhNlkDPuvuY/s1600/royalmailcoach.jpg)
Fig. 3:

A Curricle

(HTTP://P1.LA-IMG.COM/286/10976/2683267_2_L.JPG)

Fig. 4:
A Gig

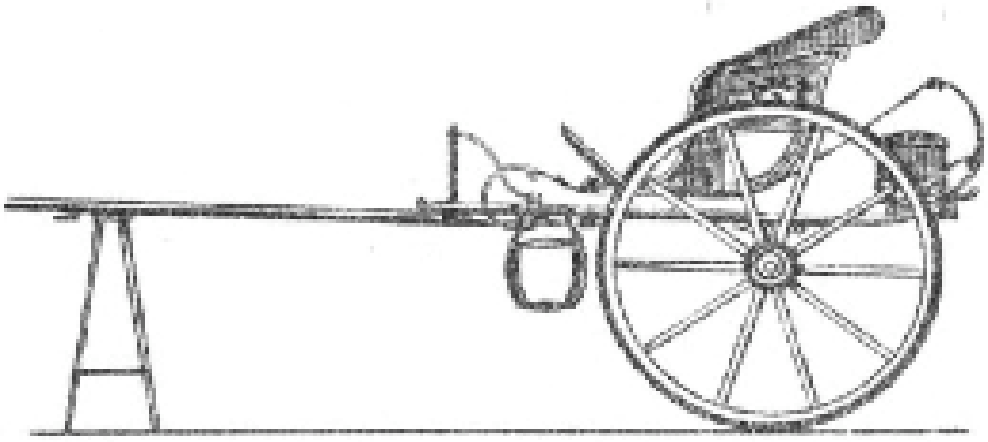
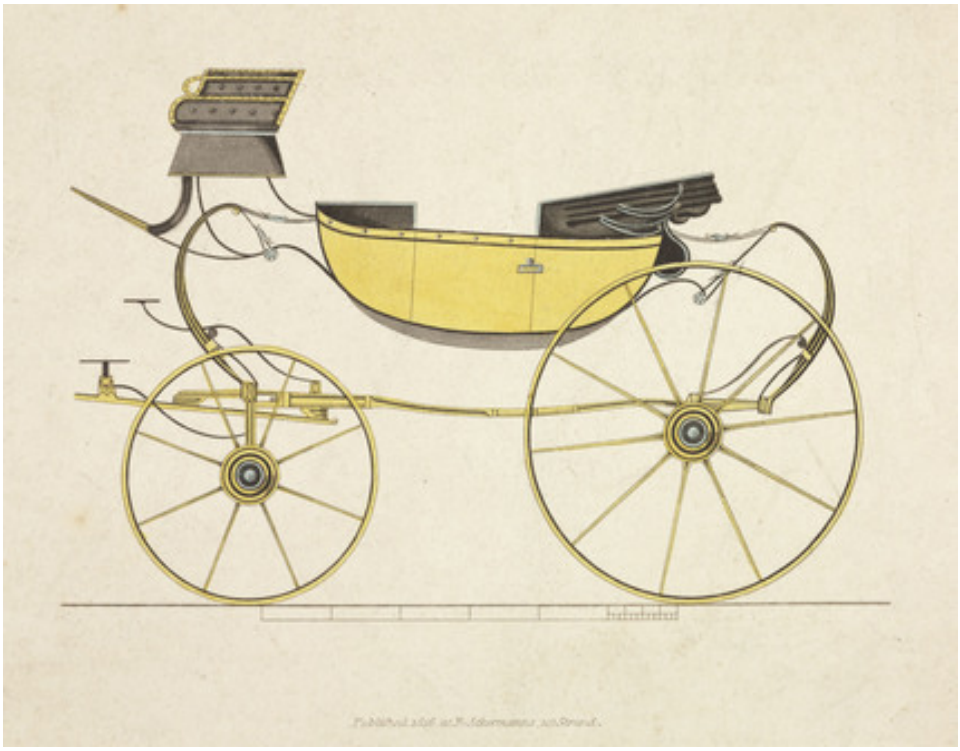


PLATE 31. CHAIR BACK GIG OF 1790.

(Adams, 76)

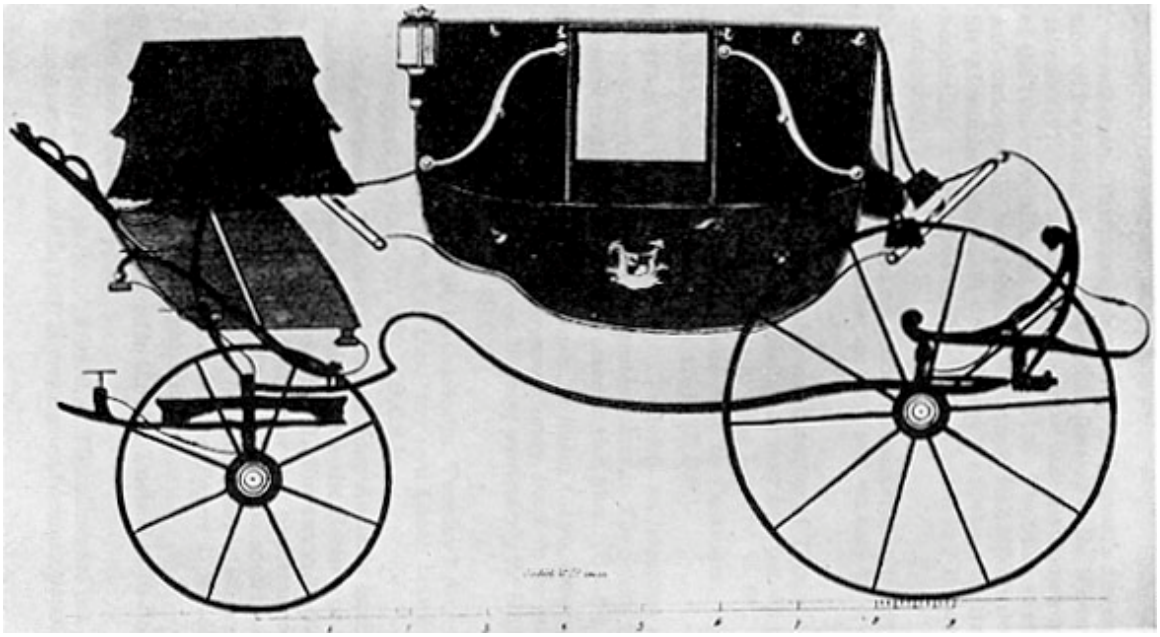
Fig. 5:

A Barouche



(http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f4/High_perch_sociable_barouche_carriage,_1816.jpg)

Fig. 6:
A Barouche-Landau



(http://www.jasnanorcal.org/ink9.htm)

Fig. 7:
A Phaeton

(http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/46/High_flyer_phaeton_carriage,_1816.jpg
)

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