



Isabelle de Montolieu Reads
Anne Elliot's Mind: Free
Indirect Discourse in *La
Famille Elliot*

ADAM RUSSELL

Adam Russell was a student at the Sorbonne before taking up the position of Associate Lecturer in French at the University of Tasmania in 2007. He recently completed his doctoral studies on the topic of the first French translation of free indirect discourse in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*.

*P*ERSUASION, posthumously published in 1818, was first translated into French as *La Famille Elliot, ou l'ancienne inclination* (Paris, 1821) by the Swiss novelist Isabelle de Montolieu, who had in 1815 published a translation of *Sense and Sensibility* as *Raison et Sensibilité, ou les deux manières d'aimer*. Studies of these translations are few and far between—Noël King (1953), Diilsep Bhagwut (1975), and, more recently, Valérie Cossy (2006). Indeed, Cossy observes that “translations of Austen’s novels have received virtually no attention” (17).

In general, scholarship tends to focus narrowly on evaluating translations as lexical and semantic equivalents of the originals at the level of the sentence. With the exception of Cossy’s work, these studies are for the most part prescriptive accounts of the translations, little more than catalogues of various “infidelities” and “shortcomings.” This emphasis is, no doubt, the principal reason that the early French translations have suffered so much neglect, as they have always been found very wanting on the criteria of lexical and semantic equivalence. Yet many of these translations were not intended to be “faithful” to the original: they were known as adaptations or imitations (Lambert 396). The disclaimer “traduction libre de l’anglais” (free translation from the English) would typically appear on the title page, and the common reader would have assumed that perhaps nothing more than the skeleton of the original story would be reproduced.¹ Suffice it to say that important dimensions of

these translations, such as the representation of thought and speech, have been thoroughly ignored by previous scholarship.

Jane Austen is generally hailed for her important contributions to the development of the modern novel, especially with respect to her innovations in the representation of thought and feeling. Kathryn Sutherland discusses some of the “specific features that mark Austen’s contribution to the novel as a serious modern literary form” (253). According to Sutherland, Austen’s greatest achievement is her “narrative method inflected by the personal subjectivity of a self-conversing heroine” (254). She observes that the representation of the heroine’s inwardness within the framework of “probable psychology and motive” is Austen’s most significant contribution to the maturity of the novel as a literary form: in Austen’s hands, the novel becomes capable of exploring the complex ethical dimensions of real human dilemmas (260). In a similar vein, Valerie Shaw observes that Austen makes one of her “subdued” heroines, Anne Elliot, “live more in a consciousness of life’s felt complexities than in rationalistic formulations about life” (303). Sutherland argues that Austen’s modernity is most clearly expressed in her use of free indirect discourse for the representation of speech and thought in fiction, highlighting “the inwardness of the heroine, whose complex life of the mind replaces the less probable adventures in the body of her conventional counterpart” (254).

The hallmark technique of Austen’s mature writing, known as free indirect discourse (FID), or *style indirect libre* in French, is responsible for what has become known as the “inward interest” of her writing. In *Persuasion*, Jane Austen uses this technique to present Anne Elliot’s consciousness. This narrative technique is primarily concerned with the representation of a fictional character’s inner life as well as his or her discourse, often recalling the very “melody” of the character’s actual words. Stephen Buccleugh provides the following non-technical but highly descriptive definition of FID: “Free indirect discourse occupies a middle ground between direct discourse, the direct transcription of a character’s speech, and indirect discourse, a narrator’s paraphrase of the contents of a speech event in the narrator’s own ‘style.’ Free indirect discourse is not framed within quotation marks as direct discourse would be, but neither is it preceded by third person references to the speaking (or thinking) character and past tense *verba dicendi*, such as ‘she said’ or ‘she thought,’ which characterize simple indirect discourse” (35).

Austen was the first of the English writers to use free indirect discourse extensively to represent the consciousness of her heroines. Dorrit Cohn’s *Transparent Minds* (1978), entirely devoted to the narrative implications of

representing the interiority of a character, nominates Austen's work as the precursor of later writers' innovative use of FID (115). According to Marilyn Butler, the "flow of Anne's consciousness sets the tone" for the narration of *Persuasion*, the Austen novel that treats "the inner life for the first time with unreserved sympathy" (290). For John Pikoulis, the novel's drama is played out in the heroine's mind: "Anne is both a 'creation' and the novel's experiencing centre. Her consciousness constitutes *Persuasion's* drama, such as it is" (25). Significantly, Butler describes *Persuasion* as "a novel of subjective experience" (279).

How does Montolieu handle the translation of Austen's hallmark narrative technique? Montolieu's translation reproduces many of the effects of free indirect discourse found in the original, thereby giving central importance to the representation of the "complex life" of the heroine's mind in the translation. Two grammatical features assist in this project: the *imparfait* (imperfect) tense is employed, as it often is in literary French, to represent the mental processes and perceptions of fictional characters; and the use of the pronoun *on* in association with the imperfect, another stock device in instances of FID in French, introduces subtle effects of the fusion of several voices into the narration. The pronoun *on* fulfills, in the words of Sylvie Mellet, the role of a "precious auxiliary" to the ambiguity inherent in FID (105-06). The narrative discourse of *La Famille Elliot* is actually teeming with occurrences of this pronoun, a technique that infuses the narrative with ambiguity. The availability of *on* in French provides a strategy for indirectness that English does not have, and this strategy affects how fragments of FID function in *La Famille Elliot*. The pronoun *on* and the imperfect certainly facilitate the narration of Anne Elliot's subjective experience in passages of FID. In other words, the co-occurrence of the pronoun *on* and the imperfect allows the heroine's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions to be embedded seamlessly into the narration (or narrator's discourse). This delicate and complex linguistic embedding of the heroine's subjective experience in the narration of *La Famille Elliot*, however, remains relatively invisible. The use of the pronoun *on* with the *imparfait* incarnates a non-verbalized, implicit subjectivity that hardly remains distinct from the narrator's voice.

Evidence for Montolieu's use of this strategy can be produced through analysis of extracts from the narration of *La Famille Elliot*.² Of course, this article cannot aim to produce even a partial (let alone a complete) sampling of FID in *La Famille Elliot*. Nor am I suggesting that the translation's propensity to rely on the heroine's consciousness can be inferred from the analysis of a single passage. However, the fact that the narration of *La Famille Elliot* repre-

sents the heroine's consciousness in a key scene, Anne's encounter with Wentworth in the Upper Assembly Rooms in Bath, indicates Montolieu's overall approach to this aspect of *Persuasion*. This passage constitutes one among many representations in *Persuasion* of the heroine conversing with herself in an attempt to quiet her perturbed mind. My discussion of this scene is followed by an analysis of a minor passage in which FID is used in association with the pronoun *on*. These passages are illustrative of the way free indirect discourse is used throughout *La Famille Elliot* to represent the contents of Anne Elliot's mind.

Montolieu's preface to *La Famille Elliot* (reprinted and translated at the end of this essay) bears witness to the fact that she was one of Jane Austen's first critical readers, very much aware of the complexities of her narrative technique. In the context of general regrets on Austen's passing, Montolieu mentions her translation of another Austen novel, *Sense and Sensibility*. Indeed, in her preface to *Raison et Sensibilité*, she makes her admiration for Austen's realism quite plain. However, she reserves the right to introduce "light" modifications, according to her established "custom."³ In her "Note du Traducteur" to *La Famille Elliot*, Montolieu contrasts what she terms the childishness of the gothic novel with the "subtlety of insight or depth of feeling" of Austen's representation of her heroine's thoughts and feelings, characterized as "almost imperceptible, delicate nuances that come from the heart, and the secret of which Miss Jane Austen understood more than any other novelist." Montolieu seeks to interest the reader by emphasizing one of the apparent qualities of the novel, its subtle depiction of the heroine's inner life. It seems unlikely that Montolieu would abandon this element of *Persuasion*'s narration in *La Famille Elliot* after explicitly drawing her readers' attention to it.

According to Montolieu, the story "emanates from the heart" in "barely perceptible delicate nuances." She also alerts her readership to the suspenseful plot of the original, claiming that the narration gives the reader the impression of being "witness" to both the events of the fictional universe and the most intimate movements of the heroine's heart. Montolieu describes the heroine's psychic state as "nourissant au fond de son cœur une inclination secrète" (nourishing a secret attachment at the bottom of her heart). Montolieu's text does indeed adopt strategies for representing the heroine's consciousness.

In the extracts under investigation here, Montolieu uses free indirect discourse to portray the heroine in the act of conversing with herself, thereby allowing the French reader to be privy to the heroine's subjective experience in much the same way that the English reader is given access to the heroine's

thoughts and feelings in the original. The well-known scene between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth in the Upper Assembly Rooms in Bath, during the concert patronized by the Dowager Viscountess Lady Dalrymple, is an example of what Butler refers to as a “nervous scene,” “half-articulate” and “tracked in Anne’s consciousness” (278, 282). In this passage, Austen’s narrator represents Anne’s mental processes as she experiences “that flow of anxieties and fears which must be all to herself” (*Persuasion* 212). The passage gives us an insight into the heroine’s inner disturbance occasioned by Wentworth’s “hurried” departure.

The heroine’s sensitivity to Wentworth’s every move and mood is conveyed through numerous representations of her mental landscape as she converses with herself. This self-communion is especially prevalent as the heroine endeavors to interpret Wentworth’s odd behavior:

[S]he found herself accosted by Captain Wentworth, in a reserved yet hurried sort of farewell. “He must wish her good night. He was going—he should get home as fast as he could.”

“Is not this song worth staying for?” said Anne, suddenly struck by an idea which made her yet more anxious to be encouraging.

“No!” he replied impressively, “there is nothing worth my staying for;” and he was gone directly.

Jealousy of Mr. Elliot! It was the only intelligible motive. Captain Wentworth jealous of her affection! Could she have believed it a week ago—three hours ago! For a moment the gratification was exquisite. But alas! there were very different thoughts to succeed. How was such jealousy to be quieted? How was the truth to reach him? How, in all the peculiar disadvantages of their respective situations, would he ever learn her real sentiments? It was misery to think of Mr. Elliot’s attentions.—Their evil was incalculable. (190-91)

Norman Page comments on the different ways in which both thought and speech are represented here. While Anne’s question and Wentworth’s reply are couched in what Page calls “ordinary direct speech,” Wentworth’s “hurried sort of farewell” is reported in free indirect speech within quotation marks: “He must wish her good night. He was going—he should get home as fast as he could.” Page remarks that the employment of quotation marks in such contexts “seems to have been a well-established eighteenth-century convention” (735).

The final paragraph depicting Anne’s confusion is a remarkable fragment of free indirect discourse representing her consciousness. The series of

sentences in the exclamatory and interrogatory modes portrays the heroine's mixed feelings of gratification and perplexity as it gradually dawns on her that Wentworth is "jealous of her affection." Page argues that Anne's state of mind is conveyed both by the syntax and the lexical range of the passage: "the peculiar advantages of direct and indirect speech are combined to fashion a medium which brings the reader close enough to the character's consciousness to have a sense of something at times resembling interior monologue, yet at the same time preserves the kind of objectivity . . . which make[s] explicit comment possible" (738). In Page's analysis, the sentence preceding the interjection "But alas!" is probably *not* a representation of the heroine's own thought but an authorial comment. I consider it, however, to be an example of the kind of ambiguity FID introduces quite seamlessly into narrative discourse through the dual-voice effect that simultaneously conveys the character's thought processes and the narrator's commentary. Such passages are indeed rich sites of intra-lingual and inter-lingual interpretation.

The final paragraph of this passage represents the perceptions of Austen's heroine, incarnating the presence of a mind in the midst of its musings. Montolieu's translation gives central importance to the representation of the heroine "nourishing a secret attachment at the bottom of her heart." The imperfect tense is essential to embodying the heroine's consciousness.

- (1) Jealousy of Mr. Elliot! It was the only intelligible motive.
 (2) Captain Wentworth jealous of her affection! Could she have believed it a week ago—three hours ago! (3) For a moment the gratification was exquisite. (4) But alas! there were very different thoughts to succeed. (5) How was such jealousy to be quieted? (6) How was the truth to reach him? (7) How, in all the peculiar disadvantages of their respective situations, would he ever learn her real sentiments? (8) It was misery to think of Mr. Elliot's attentions.—Their evil was incalculable.

MONTOLIEU'S TRANSLATION

- (1) Alice le suivait des yeux, et son cœur palpitait de plus douce joie, un seul mot expliquait sa conduite de cette soirée; et ce mot, Alice l'a deviné; il est jaloux de M. Elliot: c'est là le seul motif de sa mauvaise humeur, de son départ, de ce qu'il vient de dire.
 (2) Wentworth jaloux de son affection! l'aurait-elle pu croire il y avait quelques heures? (3) Maintenant elle en est persuadée. Pendant quelques momens son bonheur fut parfait. Il m'aime, il aime encore

son Alice, était-elle près de répéter à haute voix; (4) mais, hélas! d'autres pensées vinrent diminuer sa joie. (5) Comment pourra-t-elle le tranquilliser et dissiper cette injuste jalousie? (6) comment lui faire connaître la vérité? (7) comment, avec tout le désavantage de leurs situations respectives, pourra-t-il jamais apprendre qu'il est aimé? Elle ne pouvait le rencontrer que par hasard en public, et dans ces occasions son cousin Elliot était toujours avec elle; (8) elle ne pensait plus à lui, à ses attentions qu'avec terreur, et son malheur lui paraissait irremédiable. Elle quitta le salon moitié contente, moitié désolée, adorant Wentworth, haïssant presque M. Elliot, et se reprochant ces deux sentimens. (*La Famille Elliot* 2:158-59)

MY TRANSLATION OF MONTOLIEU'S PASSAGE

(1) Alice was following him with her eyes, and her heart was throbbing with the sweetest joy, a single word explained his conduct of that evening; and this word, Alice guessed it; he is jealous of Mr. Elliot: it's the only motive for his bad mood, for his departure, for what he has just said. (2) Wentworth jealous of her affection! would she have been able to believe it a few hours ago? (3) Now she is sure of it. For a few moments her happiness was perfect. He loves me, he still loves his Alice, she was nearly repeating out loud; (4) but, alas! other thoughts came to diminish her joy. (5) How will she be able to reassure him and dispel this unfair jealousy? (6) how to make the truth known to him? (7) how, with all the disadvantage of their respective situations, will he ever be able to learn that he is loved? She could only meet him by chance in public, and on these occasions her cousin Elliot was always with her; (8) she no longer thought of him and his attentions except with dread, and her misfortune seemed irreparable to her. She left the concert hall divided between happiness and sorrow, adoring Wentworth and almost hating Mr. Elliot, while reproaching herself for both of these emotions.

Tense and punctuation in (1) in Montolieu's translation transcribe the narration's gradual movement, by identifiable degrees, from free indirect discourse that reports the heroine's thoughts indirectly to quoted monologue that reports her thoughts verbatim. The movement of tenses is not abrupt. The narration moves smoothly from the series of verbs in the imperfect (*suivait, palpait, expliquait*) to the unexpected present tense of the heroine's thoughts: "il est jaloux de M. Elliot: c'est là le seul motif de sa mauvaise

humeur, de son départ, de ce qu'il vient de dire." The unusual presence of the *passé composé* (compound past)—“et ce mot, Alice l'a deviné”—softens and naturalizes this transition from a tense of narration (*imparfait*) to a tense of direct discourse (*présent*). The exclamatory mode in (2) and the present tense in (3) reinforce the realistic effects that this direct quotation of her thoughts produces.

The representation of the heroine's thoughts in a hybrid form of quoted and narrated monologue is predicated, or prefigured, by the reappearance of the *passé simple* (historic past) in (3) and (4) with the exclamatory expression “mais, hélas!” The interrogatory sentences of *La Famille Elliot* in (5), (6), and (7) reproduce the interrogative mode in the passage from *Persuasion*. However, the narration of *La Famille Elliot* transposes the past tenses of the occurrence of FID in *Persuasion* into the future tense in (5) and (7) and the infinitive in (6). This transposition represents the temporal orientation of the heroine's mind, while the presence of the third person pronouns in (5) recalls the reporting discourse of the narration. The use of the infinitive in (6) and the future tense in (7) introduces clauses that could be analyzed as quoted monologue. In this context, these elements introduce an exact representation of the character's thoughts: the heroine's thoughts are being reported directly, or verbatim. The clause “other thoughts came to diminish her joy” determines unequivocally this attribution to the heroine.

The narration returns to an indirect representation of the heroine's consciousness through free indirect discourse for reported thought, signalled by verbs in the imperfect in the last half of (7) and in (8). The use of the *passé simple* in (8) signals the close of this instance of FID as the narration shifts to a perspective external to the heroine's mind, the narrator's global perception of the scene, “watching” the heroine as she leaves the Assembly Rooms while still reporting her feelings with an immediacy deftly expressed by a series of present participles: “adorant Wentworth, haïssant presque M. Elliot, et se reprochant ces deux sentiments.” Even though the narration has shifted away from the more explicit signals of FID, such as the imperfect tense and the exclamatory and interrogatory modes, the heroine's thoughts are reported implicitly through the narrator's perception of the scene, in which Anne leaves lamenting the attentions of one man and the jealous coldness of another.

Louise Flavin observes that free indirect speech, at its most complex, also achieves the ambiguous polyvocality of character and narrator associated with reported thoughts, as in the passages above. Flavin acknowledges that it is sometimes unclear who is actually speaking as the narrator selects and rephrases what characters are supposed to have said. This process of selective

presentation of characters' speech sometimes gives the content of free indirect speech a highly ambiguous quality. According to Flavin, such ambiguity is especially prevalent when the narrator reports the character's perceptions and reactions to another character's speech (21). In such instances, the narrator only reports what registers in the listening character's mind. More complexity arises from a narrator's reporting "what a character hears another character say that another character has said" (21).

Montolieu maintains the centrality of the heroine's consciousness in *La Famille Elliot* through the kind of complex manipulation of free indirect discourse that Flavin describes. An excellent example is found in the long passage recounting William Elliot's reconciliation with Sir Walter and Elizabeth. This passage relates the circumstances surrounding Sir Walter's willingness to pardon his distant cousin and heir, William Elliot, for shunning Elizabeth's hand and slighting the family. In the following passage in *Persuasion*, Flavin notes a polyvocality of four voices, whereby the narrator reports what the heroine hears Elizabeth tell her about what Mr. Elliot has told Sir Walter and Elizabeth: "How one speech registers on another character's consciousness and how another character perceives what has registered on that consciousness give the passage a content that far exceeds the meaning of the words themselves" (21). What Mr. Elliot said to them is reported through the consciousness of the heroine. The narrator's statement in (3) about the heroine listening to her father and sister clearly signals that the heroine's consciousness is central to this passage of reported thought, which also functions to convey further layers of reported speech.

(1) But this was not all which they had to make them happy.
(2) They had Mr. Elliot, too. (3) Anne had a great deal to hear of Mr. Elliot. (4) He was not only pardoned, they were delighted with him. (5) He had been in Bath about a fortnight; (he had passed through Bath in November, in his way to London, when the intelligence of Sir Walter's being settled there had of course reached him, though only twenty-four hours in the place, but he had not been able to avail himself of it): (6) but he had now been a fortnight in Bath, and his first object, on arriving, had been to leave his card in Camden-place, following it up by such assiduous endeavours to meet, and, when they did meet, by such great openness of conduct, such readiness to apologize for the past, such solicitude to be received as a relation again, that their former good understanding was completely re-established. (*Persuasion* 138).

MONTOLIEU'S TRANSLATION

(1) Mais elle apprit bientôt que ce n'était pas seulement ce qui rendait Elisabeth heureuse: (2) Elle avait souvent entre ces murs et sur ces beaux sofas son cousin Elliot. (3) Alice eut beaucoup de choses à entendre sur le compte de ce parent: (4) on ne pouvait pas assez répéter combien il était beau, élégant; ses habits, ses chevaux, sa tenue, répondaient parfaitement au nom qu'il portait: il était non-seulement *pardonné*, mais dans la plus haute faveur. (5) Il avait passé à Bath à la fin de novembre, en revenant d'une course, et comptait passer son hiver à Londres; mais apprenant que sir Walter était établi à Bath, il s'était décidé à y revenir et à y rester quelque temps: (6) il y était depuis quinze jours. Son premier soin avait été d'envoyer sa carte à Camden-Place, de la suivre bientôt lui-même, de chercher avec assiduité toutes les occasions de rencontrer ses parens, et de s'excuser avec la plus noble franchise de sa conduite passée, en montrant le plus grand désir d'être reçu comme un parent et un ami, ce qu'on n'avait pu lui refuser. (*La Famille Elliot* 2:37-38).

MY TRANSLATION OF MONTOLIEU'S PASSAGE

(1) But she soon learnt that this alone was not what was making Elisabeth happy: (2) she often had her cousin Elliot between these walls and on these nice sofas. (3) Alice had to hear a great many things on the topic of this relative: (4) one could not reiterate enough how handsome and elegant he was; his clothes, his hair, his manners perfectly matched the name that he bore: he was not only forgiven, but held in the highest favor. (5) Returning from a journey, he had passed through Bath at the end of November, expecting to spend winter in London; but learning that Sir Walter had settled in Bath, he had made up his mind to come back and remain here for a while: (6) he had been here a fortnight. His first concern had been to send his card to Camden-Place, following it himself soon after, zealously seeking every opportunity to meet his relations, and apologizing for his past conduct with the most noble sincerity, while demonstrating the greatest desire to be admitted as a relative and a friend, which one had not been able to refuse.

The occurrences of FID in Austen's passage are reproduced in *La Famille Elliot*, with the slight disambiguating effect in (1) of attributing the

reported speech embedded in the representation of the heroine's mind to her sister, Elisabeth. However, this attribution is later re-ambiguated by the use in (4) and in (6) of the very vague pronoun *on* ("one"). The blurring of boundaries and the rich, referential "emptiness" of the pronoun are immediately evident. Although this context limits the pronoun's attribution to a finite group of characters, it is impossible to determine exactly to whom it refers: Does it designate Elisabeth and Sir Walter? Or does it designate the obsequious Mrs. Clay as well? Who is unable to refuse?

In (3) of *La Famille Elliot*, a verb of perception (*entendre*, to hear) is employed to predicate, or prefigure, the subsequent occurrence of free indirect discourse that conveys this hybrid or reported thought and speech. The heroine's thoughts in this passage, serving to report her sister's speech regarding Mr. Elliot and what he has told her, are introduced by a colon. Her mental activity is denoted in (4), as in the previous passage, by the series of verbs in the imperfect: "on ne pouvait pas assez répéter combien il était beau, élégant; ses habits, ses chevaux, sa tenue, répondaient parfaitement au nom qu'il portait: il était non-seulement *pardonné*, mais dans la plus haute faveur." The contents of the heroine's consciousness here are a distillation of what she registers from her sister's account of Mr. Elliot's speech; however, this passage also conveys the heroine's reactions to what she is hearing, reported in the clause introduced by the second occurrence of the colon in (4): "il était non-seulement *pardonné*, mais dans la plus haute faveur." This interpretation is reinforced by the italicized *pardonné*, expressing the heroine's astonishment at what she is hearing from Elisabeth. The colon signals a narrative shift to representing the contents of the character's mind: the third person pronoun and the imperfect are syntactic elements that often produce a high degree of imitative realism, especially when employed in conjunction with exclamatory or interrogatory modes, without actually reporting the character's thoughts directly.

The use of the pronoun *on* (one) in the final sentence of this extract also introduces an element of ambiguity concerning the source of this information. It is now difficult to know to whom Anne is actually listening. Is she listening to her sister alone, or also to Sir Walter, or Mrs. Clay? The use of the pronoun *on* with the imperfect in passages of FID in *La Famille Elliot* is a key device for maintaining the bivocality of the original passages of FID in the original.

In producing her version of Austen's narrative, then, Isabelle de Montolieu confronts the problematic of free indirect discourse. Her text explores the potentialities of this mode of narration in perspicacious ways that carry over the meanings of Austen's narrative through the achievement of a range of subtle and resonant effects.



“Note du Traducteur,” *La Famille Elliot* (1821)

J’ai long-temps balancé a placer ici cette Notice sur l’auteur de l’ouvrage que j’offre au public: il me paraissait que cet ouvrage n’étant point connu, même de nom, hors de sa patrie, ne pouvait inspirer nul intérêt aux lecteurs; je regrettais cependant de passer sous le silence un morceau très-intéressant par lui-même, et présentant un tel ensemble de perfection, que j’accusais, je l’avoue, l’auteur de cette Notice (malgré ce qu’il dit en finissant) d’une prévention exagérée; mais j’ai été détrompée par un Anglais d’un mérite très-distingué, qui m’a assuré que, loin d’avoir exagéré l’esprit et le mérite de miss JANE AUSTEN, l’auteur de la Notice n’avait point assez pesé sur la réputation dont elle jouit en Angleterre, comme créatrice d’un genre inconnu avant elle, celui de l’art d’intéresser par le seul développement des caractères soutenus avec une vérité parfaite, et la peinture vraie des sentimens qui agitent les personnages qu’elle met en scène. L’auteur de la Notice biographique ne dit point si quelque circonstance de sa vie avait contribué à lui donner l’idée d’une situation qui, avec des positions différentes, se retrouve dans tous ses romans, au moins dans ceux que je connais; c’est celle d’une jeune personne nourrissant au fond de son cœur une inclination secrète sans savoir, ainsi que le lecteur, si elle est partagée; ce n’est presque qu’au dénouement qu’on est instruit: il en résulte que miss AUSTEN a su éviter les scènes d’amour, si souvent répétées et si fastidieuses. L’amour, ce premier mobile des romans, est presque toujours voilé dans les siens, et quand le lecteur le devine, l’intérêt augmente, et devient même assez vif sans qu’on rencontre d’autres événemens que ceux de la vie la plus ordinaire. Il est possible que les lecteurs qui aiment à être violemment émus trouvent cet intérêt trop faible, trop resserré dans des scènes de famille tracées avec tant de naturel, qu’on croit en avoir été le témoin, et qu’elles perdent peut-être par cela même l’attrait de la nouveauté; mais il en existe un autre qu’on ne peut définir, qui tient sans doute à ce naturel, à cette vérité, à des nuances délicates presque imperceptibles qui partent du fond du cœur, et dont miss Jane

Austen avait le secret plus qu'aucun autre romancier. Sa mort prématurée est donc une grande perte, non-seulement pour ses amis, mais pour tout le monde. En mon particulier, je regrette de n'avoir plus à traduire de ses ouvrages: trois seulement me sont tombés entres les mains, *Raison et Sensibilité* (1); celui-ci, qui est un ouvrage posthume trouvé dans ses papiers (2). Il fut publié en 1818, sous le titre de *Persuasion*. Ce titre m'a paru trop vague en français; je ne trouvais pas qu'il indiquât l'ensemble de la situation; je l'ai remplacé par celui-ci *la Famille Elliot, ou l'ancienne Inclination*; et enfin un autre ouvrage également posthume, intitulé *l'Abbaye de Nozthanger* (sic), qui m'a paru moins intéressant que le premier, et je ne l'ai pas encore traduit. L'auteur paraît avoir eu pour unique but de jeter du ridicule sur les romans fondés sur la terreur, et principalement sur ceux de madame Radcliffe. Comme depuis long-temps ce genre est absolument passé de mode, il est peut-être inutile d'y revenir, et de montrer ce qu'il y a de défectueux et de puérite: personne n'en était plus éloigné que miss AUSTEN, et ses romans, si simples et si attachans en sont la meilleure critique. J'aime à croire qu'on me saura gré d'avoir ajouté à celui-ci sa biographie; on aura sans doute du plaisir à s'arrêter sur un aussi beau modèle de talents, de vertus, de perfections presque au-dessus de l'humanité, et à connaître le nom de celle à qui on a dû quelques momens agréables. Quant à moi, si loin encore de lui ressembler, je suis fière de placer à côté du sien, comme son traducteur, celui d'ISABELLE, Baronne DE MONTOLIEU.

Lausanne, le 1^{er} mai, 1821.

(1) Cet ouvrage se vend chez Arthus Bertrand.

(2) Jane Austen est morte en 1817.

MY TRANSLATION OF "Translator's Note," *The Elliot Family*

I have long weighed up whether to include the Bibliographical Notice of the author whose work I am now offering to the public: it appeared to me that this work—not being at all known, even by name, outside of its own motherland—could not inspire any interest at all in my readers; however I was sorry to pass over in silence a fragment interesting in and of itself, and presenting such a comprehensive example of perfection, that I must admit that I was accusing the author of this Notice of excessive partiality (de-

spite what he says in conclusion); but I have been undeceived by a very distinguished Englishman, who has assured me that far from having exaggerated the wit and worth of Miss JANE AUSTEN, the author of the Notice had not emphasized enough the renown that she enjoys in England, as the creator of a new genre unknown before her, that of the art of arousing interest by the sole means of perfectly realistic characterization, and the true portrayal of the feelings that stir the characters she creates. The author of the Notice says nothing at all about whether some event in her life had been a contributing factor in giving her the idea of a situation which, with varying degrees, is to be found in all of her novels, at least the ones that I am familiar with; it's this idea of a young woman nourishing a secret attachment at the bottom of her heart without knowing (likewise for the reader) whether this attachment is reciprocated: it is almost only at the end that we find out: consequently Miss Austen found a way to avoid hackneyed love scenes, so often rehashed and so tedious. Love—the primal motive of any novel's plot—is almost always veiled in hers, and when the reader finds it out, the interest grows, and even becomes quite acute without the need for any events other than those present in the most ordinary of lives. Possibly those readers who like to be affected by violent emotions will find this aspect too lukewarm, too much confined to family wrangles depicted with so much realism that one has the impression that one had witnessed them, and as such, they lose perhaps the appeal of novelty. But there's another allure-ment that cannot be defined, which has without a doubt something to do with this straightforward realism, these fine nuances that emanate from the bottom of the heart, the secret of which Jane Austen understood better than any other novelist. Her premature death is therefore a great loss, not only for her friends, but for everyone. In my own mind, I am sorry to no longer have cause to translate her novels: only three have fallen into my hands, *Sense and Sensibility*,⁽¹⁾ this one here, a posthumous work found among her papers.⁽²⁾ It was published in 1818, under the title of *Persuasion*. This title seemed too vague in French; I didn't consider it indicative enough of the entire situation, so I replaced it with the present title, *The Elliot Family, or First Love*; and finally another posthu-mous work entitled *Northanger Abbey*, which seemed less interest-

ing than the first, and I have not yet translated it. The author seems to have had for her sole purpose ridiculing novels based on terror, and principally those of Mrs. Radcliffe. As this genre has been entirely out of fashion for a long time, there's probably no need to comment and show what is unsound and childish: no one was as far from this as Miss Austen, and her novels, so plain and engaging, represent the best critique of this genre. I like to believe that my readers will be grateful to me for having added her biography to this novel; you will no doubt take pleasure in dwelling on so fair a model of gifts, virtues, and perfections almost above humanity, and to know the name of the one to whom we have owed some pleasant moments. As for me, so far from resembling her, I am proud to put beside hers, as translator, the novel of Isabelle, Baroness de Montolieu.

Lausanne, May 1, 1821.

(1) This work is sold at the publisher's, Arthus Bertrand.

(2) Jane Austen died in 1817.

NOTES

1. According to Marie-Pascale Pieretti, "the practice of crediting the translator (and not the original author) was common in the eighteenth century . . . , suggesting that, in the consciousness of the period, translation did not imply a completely passive transposition of the foreign work. Although the distinction these translators made between creative writing and translation points to a difference between the status of the author and the status of the translator, translators' prefaces and printers' indications on title pages of that period, show that the notions of 'author' and 'translator' were not as clearly distinct as we, as modern readers, may assume them to be" (480).

2. The extracts from *La Famille Elliot* reproduced here have been taken from the 1828 edition, the preface ("La Note du Traducteur") from the 1821 edition. The 1828 edition abridged the preface, omitting any reference to *Northanger Abbey* and thus giving readers the ludicrous impression that Montolieu's deprecatory remarks regarding *Northanger Abbey* were actually intended for *Persuasion* and, by association, *La Famille Elliot*.

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