



“A forward, bragging, scheming  
race”: Comic Masculinity in  
*Northanger Abbey*

KATHY JUSTICE GENTILE

Kathy Justice Gentile is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. She is the author of *Ivy Compton-Burnett* (1991) and the editor of *Sexing the Look in Popular Visual Culture* (2010) and has also published essays on gothic fiction and film. She teaches a course on Jane Austen and film.

MASCULINITY'S EXCESSES and affectations have long been favorite targets of comic writers, at least as far back as Aristophanes and *Lysistrata*, where men's assumptions of superiority over women are mocked and overturned in uproarious and bawdy fashion. From the Greeks to Shakespeare to current film comedies, qualities associated with masculinity have been represented and ridiculed in enduring comic characters, such as the fool, the parasite, the braggart soldier, and the rascal. At the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, men still assumed moral, legal, and economic superiority over women; however, those writers who espoused ideas of gender egalitarianism, most notably Mary Wollstonecraft, were pushing back and challenging men's fitness to preside as the ruling gender. As Devoney Looser, Joseph Kestner, Claudia Johnson, and Michael Kramp have shown, Austen critiques and re-makes English manhood in her fiction in response to the evolving literary and cultural models of masculinity available during her lifetime. As a comic writer Austen took aim at the privileged and pretentious in her society, including men who wielded the economic and institutional power, and she satirized the excesses and follies of the ruling gender by creating a gallery of memorable male characters. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen revises stock comic characters and critiques various styles of masculinity, such as the rake, the rattle, the military man, and the gothic tyrant, by calling readers' attention to the egregious behavior and proclamations of the male villains who function as obstacles to Catherine Morland's pursuit of her love interest, Henry Tilney. In Henry's

vexed relation to the other male characters, he serves as both a representative of masculine privilege and as an “arch” critic of masculine hegemony. According to Michael Kramp, Henry rehearses and plays with various styles of manhood but always within a cohesive Enlightenment rationality that subsumes and moderates his erotic feelings and behavior (53-55). I suggest instead that Henry’s relation to masculinity is unstable and insecure as he both contends with other men for feminine approval and undergoes a crisis of masculinity that leads to his emergence as Austen’s first fully-developed new romantic comedy hero.

In *Northanger Abbey*, both the comic hero and the comic villains attempt to establish “superior” credentials as gentlemen by engaging in the rhetoric of authority and domination. The root of much of Austen’s comedy lies in characters’ pretensions to a superiority over others that contrary textual evidence demonstrates is illusory or undeserved; thus we may laugh at the discrepancies between a character’s claims about his abilities, position, or possessions and the actual or probable situation that the narrator reveals sooner or later in the narrative. For example, John Thorpe’s boasting about the unparalleled excellence of his horse and carriage is rendered ridiculous once we witness the very mediocre performance of his rig when he takes Catherine for a drive. In proposing the superiority theory of laughter in *Philebus*, Plato suggested that we laugh at, and feel superior to, ignorant individuals who are deluded about their own importance and may grossly overestimate their wealth or their physical or mental endowments (607). Certainly some of Austen’s comic female characters in *Northanger Abbey* coyly claim superiority to other women in areas of feminine expertise—notably Mrs. Allen, proud of her fine gowns, and Isabella Thorpe, boasting of her attractiveness to men.

Austen’s satire of unwarranted pretensions of superiority, however, is primarily directed at the male characters and their performances of masculinity. All the male characters, except Mr. Allen, Catherine’s host in Bath, and her father, who is not an active presence in the narrative, engage in bullying, condescending, assertive behavior toward Catherine as they assume their positions as the privileged gender. We are easily amused by John Thorpe’s bumptious declarations of masculine superiority, as in his claim that “I never read novels; I have something else to do,” followed by his belying himself by admitting that he has read “Mrs. Radcliff” (48-49). However, readers are not as quick to laugh at General Tilney’s boastful claims of status and property, his spying on his neighbors, his authoritarian treatment of his children, and his highly uncivil treatment of Catherine. Plato explains our differing reactions to

John Thorpe and General Tilney by distinguishing ignorance of self in the powerless from that in the powerful, arguing that “ignorance in the powerful is hateful and horrible, because hurtful to others both in reality and in fiction” (608). While Austen demonstrates that status, wealth, and power are often conferred on undeserving and sometimes deplorable individuals, her realistic comedy does not go so far as to overthrow the patriarchal status quo and instate a feminist romantic utopia. Instead her satire aims at exposing folly and abuse and eventually sidelining or defusing the comic villains in her fiction. At the end of *Northanger Abbey*, General Tilney, his unprincipled son, Frederick, and even John Thorpe remain unpunished and at large while Mr. and Mrs. Henry Tilney set up housekeeping in Woodston at a safe, though not eternally secure, distance from the machinations of scheming men.

Austen’s novels revise the New Comedy plot of Menander, as outlined by Northrop Frye, by subordinating the hero’s pursuit of the heroine and foregrounding the heroine’s pursuit of happiness. In Frye’s model, the action of a comedy stems from overcoming the obstacles thrown up by blocking characters to thwart or sabotage the hero’s desire for the heroine (84). In drawing the character types of comedy from Aristotle’s *Tractatus*, Frye observes that the most common blocking figure is the *alazon* or imposter (90). In Austen’s romantic comedy, the *alazon* is most often a deceiver or hypocrite who relentlessly pursues his or her own agenda, oblivious to and/or uncaring of the feelings and interests of others. Typically, the central *alazon* figure is the “heavy father” or *senex iratus* (Frye 90) in the tradition of the misanthropic fathers of Menander and the tyrannical fathers in Shakespearean comedy. While most readers would cast the patriarch General Tilney in the role of central villain in *Northanger Abbey*, other blocking figures or *alazons* may function as surrogates for the “heavy father”: these are often younger men, such as John Thorpe, who may act as rivals threatening the hero’s union with the heroine (see Frye 85, 90).

Having yet to see “one amiable youth who could call forth her sensibility” (16), Catherine Morland journeys out into the world from her country village and enters the masculinized public sphere of Bath. As she observes the contending masculinities represented by John Thorpe and the three Tilney men, Catherine learns to evaluate each male character and conceive of a model of manhood that she finds most congenial. In employing their deceitful stratagems, the male villains seem to be in league against the heroine and the “feminine” virtues she exhibits: innocence, sincerity, simplicity, a trusting nature, and an enthusiastic appreciation of new experience. However, as the comic villains’ designs are called out into the open by ensuing events and held up to

ridicule by the narrator, their blocking actions ironically work to bring about the ending in happy marriage, a conclusion that marks the triumph of the new society embodied by the hero and heroine over the more repressive, coercive patriarchal society championed by the father figure and his surrogates (see Frye 89).

Near the end of *Northanger Abbey*, when he meets General Tilney in London and frightens him with the news that Catherine's financial prospects are much less propitious than he had previously believed, John Thorpe accuses Catherine Morland and her family of being "a forward, bragging, scheming race" (246). Many readers appreciate the irony of this accusation, since both Thorpe and the General have ruthlessly exercised these very qualities of aggression, boasting, and scheming in their attempts to manipulate Catherine into compliance with their own avaricious desires. At the heart of Austen's characters' performances of masculinity is the propensity to self-aggrandize and hyperbolic boasting about their abilities and their possessions. The most outlandish braggart, of course, is John Thorpe, who pursues and tries to impress Catherine because he believes that she has wealthy connections. Austen's narrator describes Thorpe as seeming "fearful of being . . . too much like a gentleman unless he were easy where he ought to be civil, and impudent where he might be allowed to be easy" (45). John seems to affect a rakish suavity, an "I'm too cool to care what you think of me" attitude that frequently afflicts young men today as well, as many of my students attest when I teach *Northanger Abbey*. In Frye's comic lexicon, he is also a *miles gloriosus*, or braggart soldier character (90), a comic type going all the way back to Aristophanes, and continuing through the Roman comic dramatists, Plautus and Terence, to today's popular film comedies, where we often see the male braggart, who trash talks about others and inflates his exploits to compensate for his obvious inadequacies.

Thorpe is also a descendant of the braggart warrior Rodomont, a character in Ludovico Ariosto's rollicking Renaissance epic, *Orlando Furioso* (1532), a volume that David Gilson reports Austen had in her personal library and may have been presented to her in the late 1790s in Bath by her uncle, Mr. Leigh Perrot (436-37). Rodomont was known for his success in battle as well as his arrogance and boasting and thus symbolizes masculine competitiveness and the propensity to enhance rhetorically one's prowess in traditional masculine activities, such as warfare and the sexual conquest of women. According to the *O.E.D.*, the term "rhodomontade" or "rodromontade" first appeared in English literature in the early 1600s and was defined as "boastful or inflated

language.” The word “rhodomontade” appears in *Northanger Abbey* near the end of the novel, in the narrator’s summary of John Thorpe’s diatribe to General Tilney about Catherine and his former friend James Morland. According to the narrator, John claims that he was “misled by the rhodomontade of his friend to believe his father a man of substance and credit” (246). Since we have no evidence that James is a deceiver or a braggart—rather that he is the dupe of John’s scheming sister, Isabella—the narrator’s tone is obviously ironic: it is John Thorpe who has been guilty of rhodomontading contradictory fictions about the Morlands, initially by substantially inflating their incomes and then maliciously degrading them to a “necessitous” and “by no means respected” family (246).

Not until the end of the novel does the narrator explain John Thorpe’s inclination to inflate the fortunes of others based on little or no evidence: “With whomsoever he was, or was likely to be connected, his own consequence always required that theirs should be great, and as his intimacy with any acquaintance grew, so regularly grew their fortune” (244–45). Earlier the narrator informs us that Thorpe is a “rattle”—someone who espouses “idle assertions and impudent falsehoods” because of an “excess of vanity” (65), in other words, a rhodomontader. James comments to Catherine that being a “rattle” should be a recommendation to the ladies, as if women enjoy being entertained by hyperbole and spurious claims (50). As a comic villain, rhodomontader, rattle, and would-be rake, John Thorpe and his blatant and bungling misrepresentations not only create obstacles for the heroine in her pursuit of the hero but provide a hilarious parody of gentry and upper-class codes of masculinity in the 1790s. Male characters’ rattling and rhotomontading—that is, ignoring and/or greatly embellishing the truth—are the source of most of the major misunderstandings and betrayals in the novel.

General Tilney’s masculine bluster or rhotomontading focuses on the wondrous improvements he has made to the estate of Northanger Abbey, modernizing improvements that ironically fail to impress Catherine because of her preference for deteriorating ancient edifices. Tara Ghoshal Wallace comments that like John Thorpe, General Tilney “indulges in hyperbole” and “pompous understatement” to further his agenda (268). According to Frye, the *senex iratus* is the most important type of *alazon*, characterized by “his rages and threats, his obsessions and his gullibility” (90). Through most of the text, however, the General’s presumptuous and unctuous interference enables and encourages his son’s courtship of Catherine, rather than serving the traditional “heavy father” role of obstructing their relationship. Fueled by his ob-

session with material possessions and desire to increase his family's wealth and social status, General Tilney is all too ready to believe the rhodomontade about Catherine's economic prospects from his fellow braggart Thorpe. He promptly acts on the information about Catherine that John Thorpe conveys at Bath to cut out Thorpe as Catherine's suitor: "he almost instantly determined to spare no pains in weakening his boasted interest and ruining his dearest hopes" (245). His "rages and threats," therefore, are postponed until Thorpe again presumes on the General's credulity by trashing Catherine and her family, after which the General behaves very badly indeed in revoking his previous hospitality and turning out of his house the young woman he has a duty to protect.

In *Northanger Abbey*, the smooth-talking Frederick Tilney practices rhodomontade to advance his game of seduction and to compete against other men for the favors of women. After her first dance with him, Isabella remarks, "He is such a rattle!" (134), suggesting that he has been chattering away and probably flattering her and boasting of his own consequence. Although Isabella, with her own tendencies to hyperbole and contradiction, is not a reliable narrator, her reports of Frederick's rhodomantading are subsequently confirmed by a shocked Catherine, who overhears the Captain insinuating to Isabella that he is tormented by her beauty and wishes that she were free of her engagement to James (147).

In his assumption of intellectual superiority, even Henry Tilney sometimes seems complicit in masculine tyranny and bad male behavior, as when he teases and mocks Catherine and his sister, Eleanor, for their feminine ignorance and gullibility. Along with the comic villains, Henry partakes in a masculine, competitive, game-playing culture: even Catherine fears "that he indulged himself a little too much with the foibles of others" (29). Critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have noted that Henry often treats Catherine in a patronizing manner (138, 144). However, Henry's brand of masculinity is more ambivalently constructed than that of other male characters. Only compare his position as second son and clergyman, his interests in novels and women's dress fabrics, to the more prestigious professions and more "manly" pursuits of his fellows: for example, General and Captain Tilney's military careers, or John Thorpe's crude-talking, hard-drinking, hard-driving, and novel-disdaining version of masculinity.

In the revolutionary 1790s, when Austen wrote the first version of *Northanger Abbey*, English manhood was being refashioned against an enemy model of French foppishness, which was characterized as "trifling," "silly," and

“lascivious,” according to Joseph Kestner (149,157). Sarah Frantz has connected the Great Masculine Renunciation in men’s fashion from the 1750s to the early 1800s as men discarded elaborate, luxurious aristocratic clothing in favor of simpler, darker, more severe fashions, to a parallel movement repressing outward displays of emotion associated with the sentimental heroes of mid-eighteenth-century fiction (166-72). While homophobia was not overtly recognized in the late eighteenth century, masculinity has traditionally been defined in opposition to femininity, and a character’s association with extravagant aristocratic, French, and/or feminine practices clearly marked him as something other than a real man.

Thus, as he straddles the gender divide, Henry comes across as “strange” and “odd” to both Catherine and his sister, Eleanor. He archly fears that he will be described in Catherine’s journal as “queer” and “half-witted” (26) but then reveals his aspirations to intellectual superiority by expressing his wish that Catherine might instead remark upon his “extraordinary genius” (27). For Mrs. Allen, Henry is a “genius” at muslins (28), but for the reader, his “genius” lies in his mocking awareness of society’s artificially scripted courtship rituals and condescending stereotyping of female preferences and abilities, even as he adopts a condescending tone toward the women he encounters because they do not seem to be in on the joke. However, his interest in and satirical commentary on “feminine” topics, such as his rhodomantading disquisition on the merits of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, has the desired effect of impressing Catherine with his wit and knowledge, and she quickly comes to see him as the smartest and most attractive man of her acquaintance, in part because he is the first young man she has met outside of her neighborhood. While Henry sometimes rattles on, talking “incessantly in a lively or thoughtless fashion” (*O.E.D.*) and indulging in ironic rhodomontade in his performances of masculinity, his commentary influences Catherine so that she develops enough sophistication to see beneath the exaggerations and false claims professed by the men she encounters to the likely realities that underlie the braggadocio and nonsense. Through his instruction of Catherine and his attempts to impress her with his expertise and knowledge, Henry also comes to learn more about his own problematic manhood as he rises to meet the challenges posed by his courtship of Catherine.

As the era of aristocratic masculine privilege waned, a nostalgic male fantasy for the sovereign freedom to engage in sexual and other moral transgressions was reconstituted in a glamorized, outlaw version of the Restoration rake, as Erin Mackie has argued (129). Other masculine figures endowed with

sexual and physical prowess were the military hero and the gothic villain/protagonist, who were glamorized in the press and popular literature that cultivated female fantasies of larger-than-life heroes and dashing male lovers. The Restoration rake was an exemplar of the libertine philosophy espoused by the Earl of Rochester and other Court Wits who congregated around Charles II. As Robert Hume explains, a libertine or rake professed his freedom to pursue hedonistic pleasures without any regard for consequences to others (27). In response to the more conservative moral climate that followed Charles II's reign, the aggressively licentious literary rake gradually modulated into the moderately reformed rakish hero or sexually magnetic rake-villain of eighteenth-century sentimental comedies and romance novels up until the time of Austen. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the red-coated soldiers from the nearby militia regiment have an irresistible attraction for Lydia and Kitty, as well as for Mrs. Bennet, especially George Wickham, whose military appeal is enhanced by his good looks and ingratiating manners with the ladies. In *Northanger Abbey*, the "very fashionable-looking" (131) Frederick Tilney commands respect and admiration from the women in Bath as a captain in the army and as the heir to Northanger Abbey. While acknowledging to Isabella that he is "very handsome indeed" (134), Catherine finds the captain less attractive than Henry because "his air was more assuming, and his countenance less prepossessing" (131). His assuming air turns out to be a mask for his rakish intentions, which he proceeds to enact with the vain, foolish Isabella. Once Frederick's perfidy is revealed, the narrator does not clarify whether he abandons Isabella because he has succeeded in seducing her or because he succeeded in triumphing over James by breaking his engagement or both; however, Captain Tilney is apparently satisfied with the results of his seduction game with Isabella and has moved on to the next potential victim.

As a military man, Frederick is molded along the lines of his father, General Tilney, who first impresses Catherine as "a very handsome man, of a commanding aspect" (80). As Rachel Brownstein points out, the sexy general is more flattering and more openly appreciative of Catherine's physical attractions than is Henry, and therefore more openly gallant and rakish (38). During the years of war with France, however, press coverage of the military was not uniformly fawning and uncritical. Carolyn D. Williams finds that in the eighteenth-century popular press, generals were often portrayed as "sinister, pathetic, and even ludicrous" in domestic life, behaving as if they were still commanding troops (44). In spying on his neighbors, trying to outmaneuver John Thorpe in taking Catherine to Northanger Abbey, attempting to "invade" and capture



Mr. Allen's domain (which he mistakenly believes will become the property of Catherine), General Tilney acts as a military officer on a campaign to conquer others whose interests are at odds with his own, and his excessive posturing and preening soon elicit Catherine's wonder and disapproval.

Catherine begins to imagine General Tilney as a gothic villain when she recalls that in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* the villain Montoni's confinement and mistreatment of his ill wife leads to her death and then discovers "evidence" that the General has sequestered or done away with Mrs. Tilney. Even though Catherine is mistaken in casting the General as a murderer, as she realizes when the shocked Henry upbraids her for her suspicions, General Tilney's mercenary motivations are similar to those of Montoni, who carries the heroine Emily off to his castle in the Apennines, not for lustful motives but with the design of coercing her into signing away all her property to him.

In whisking Catherine away to Northanger Abbey and then casting her out with villainous incivility, the General is not the only character who exhibits gothic masculinity. Claudia Johnson has commented that Captain Tilney is a "permutation of the gothic villain" (46), although he does not directly function as a blocking figure in the heroine's pursuit of the hero since he is not interested in pursuing Catherine but rather her friend Isabella. Several critics have seen John Thorpe's attempted "kidnapping" of Catherine as a parody of conventions of gothic villainy. In fact, all the men contending for Catherine's approval associate themselves with gothic architecture by dangling the prospect of visiting ancient edifices as a means of exciting her interest. The allure of mysterious, moldering, formidable, labyrinthine castles attaches to the masculinity of the men who propose the adventure and considerably enhances their glamour for the susceptible Catherine, whose imagination has been inclined towards supernaturalism by reading *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. As an enticement to get Catherine to agree to go on a carriage ride, John tempts Catherine with the promise of Blaize Castle as an ultimate destination, and Catherine temporarily puts aside all her misgivings about John for the prospect of "the happiness of a progress through a long suite of lofty rooms, exhibiting the remains of magnificent furniture, though now for many years deserted" (88). Henry, too, is guilty of taking advantage of Catherine's gothic obsession by showing off his knowledge of gothic novels and spinning out an impromptu tale of "all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce" (157-58) as he drives her to his father's abbey. Henry's teasing promise of a gloomy, haunted chamber, an ancient housekeeper named Dorothy, mysterious cabinets, and a violent storm initiates Catherine into a

state of gothic suspense that inadvertently leads her to suspect the General of gothic crimes against his wife, after she has a chance to explore the abbey. Indeed, Henry's faux, pastiche gothic tale has the unintended effect on Catherine of eventually dispersing Catherine's gothic illusions about men, edifices, and romance so that when she visits Woodston, she is ready and willing to embrace the pleasant, comfortable charms of Henry's "new-built" (212) parsonage.

Since Henry is both complicit with and resistant to the prevailing models of manhood, how does he abet or thwart the blocking efforts of the comic villains and finally emerge as Catherine's ideal man? According to Frye's definitions of comic characters, Henry is the *ieron* figure, the hero who clashes with the *alazon* characters; however, he is more developed than the thinly drawn, self-deprecating figure characteristic of early comedy (90-91). Henry's competitiveness and insecurity are evident when he leads Catherine away from a conversation with John Thorpe to the dance and expresses some jealousy and concern that Catherine may neglect him for a rival: "That gentleman would have put me out of patience, had he staid with you half a minute longer. He has no business to withdraw the attention of my partner from me" (76). After Catherine is carried away against her will from a walk with Henry and Eleanor by John Thorpe in his carriage, she later tries to apologize to Henry, whose pride is obviously hurt because of Catherine's apparent preference for John's company. When he protests that he was not upset at being stood up, Catherine disagrees: "Nay, I am sure by your look, when you came into the box, you were angry" (95). As these two scenes indicate, Henry is not immune from anger and self-doubt, however suave and worldly he aspires to appear in his exhibitions of wit.

Even though Catherine comes to believe that Henry's "meaning must always be just" (114), despite his often puzzling manner, she sometimes questions her mentor's cool, confident assertions, particularly when Henry seems to align himself with "authoritative" masculine dictums on language, the inferiority of women, or the condition of England. Joseph Litvak notes the "sexual performativity" of Henry's "condescending wit and irony" (47), which may be Henry's method of compensating for his relative powerlessness in relation to his domineering father. For most of the narrative he seems to tacitly support his father's behavior and defend his character, as in his famous defense of the English midlands as a gothic-free zone and his father as an upright citizen and moderately devoted husband. At times, however, he is tersely suggestive about his father's and brother's real characters and underlying motivations. For

example, when Catherine closely questions him about Captain Tilney's reasons for pursuing Isabella, Henry insinuates that neither Isabella's or Frederick's motives may be strictly honorable, but he does not "out" his brother as a rakish cad.

However, not until his father's egregious breach of manners in sending Catherine back to her home in Fullerton without an escort does Henry successfully negotiate his crisis of masculinity by growing a backbone, standing up to his father, and declaring his intention to marry the young woman his father has wronged. When Henry visits Catherine in Fullerton to apologize for his father's conduct and offer his hand in marriage, instead of allowing Henry to speak for himself, the narrator summarizes his explanation and thus blunts for the reader Henry's discomfort and embarrassment at the task he needs to perform. Henry uncharacteristically blushes and "talk[s] at random, without sense or connection" when he and Catherine visit Mrs. Allen (243). When Henry finally has the opportunity to explain his father's behavior to Catherine, the narrator tells us: "Henry, in having such things to relate of his father, was almost as pitiable as in their first avowal to himself. He blushed for the narrow-minded counsel which he was obliged to expose" (247). After he declares his intention to marry Catherine and parts with the "furious" General "in dreadful disagreement," Henry experiences "an agitation of mind which many solitary hours were required to compose" (248).

While the narrator sympathetically notes Henry's discomfiting struggle to transform himself from witty onlooker to defiant knight in shining armor who calls out bad masculine behavior, she assures us that "Henry's indignation" at his father "had been open and bold" (247). By breaking with his father and the code of masculine solidarity and standing up for his beloved, Henry proves himself to be a romantic comedy hero worthy of the heroine's love and admiration. He sets himself against the contending masculinities enacted by his father, brother, and John Thorpe, and he rescues Catherine from the dishonor perpetrated against her by his father. In a society that champions men's rights over women's, Henry exhibits a feminist chivalry that recognizes the rights and humanity of his beloved.

His "bold" act of "filial disobedience," then, leads to the narrator's promise of "perfect happiness" (252) for the betrothed couple, but only after Eleanor's serendipitous marriage to a man of fortune, an event that temporarily reconciles the General to his younger son's disappointing marriage choice. According to Frye, "[t]he tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society: the blocking characters are more often reconciled

or converted than simply repudiated" (85). In *Northanger Abbey*, the blocking characters are not exiled and are included in the larger society of extended family; however, the very small "final society" is comprised of Catherine and Henry at Woodston, even as we realize the tenuous nature of a happiness that lies in close proximity to the unconverted comic villains who will reside at Northanger Abbey for the foreseeable future. Austen's satiric arraignment of the excesses and abuses enacted under the auspices of entitled masculinity enlightens readers that the happy ending she ensures would be exceedingly precarious in any space outside of romantic comedy. For most readers, however, comic faith (in the ideal of perfect happiness) trumps the disquieting possibility of further interference by "forward, bragging, scheming" male relatives.

#### WORKS CITED

- Ariosto, Ludovico. *Orlando Furioso*. Trans. Guido Waldman. Oxford: OUP, 1974.
- Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. Ed. R. W. Chapman. 3rd ed. London: Oxford UP, 1933-1969.
- Brownstein, Rachel M. "Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice." *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Ed. Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster. Cambridge: CUP, 1997. 32-57.
- Frantz, Sarah. "Jane Austen's Heroes and the Great Masculine Renunciation." *Persuasions* 25 (2003): 165-75.
- Frye, Northrop. "The Mythos of Spring: Comedy." *Comedy: Meaning and Form*. Ed. Robert W. Corrigan. New York: Harper, 1981. 84-99.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Gilson, David. *A Bibliography of Jane Austen*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 1997.
- Hume, Robert D. "The Myth of the Rake in 'Restoration' Comedy." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 10.1 (1977): 25-55.
- Johnson, Claudia L. *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*. Chicago: UCP, 1988.
- Kestner, Joseph A. "Jane Austen: Revolutionizing Masculinities." *Persuasions* 16 (1994): 147-60.
- Kramp, Michael. *Disciplining Love: Austen and the Modern Man*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2007.
- Litvak, Joseph. *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory, and the Novel*. Durham: Duke UP, 1997.
- Looser, Devoney. "Jane Austen 'Responds' to the Men's Movement." *Persuasions* 18 (1996): 159-70.
- Mackie, Erin. "Boys Will Be Boys: Masculinity, Criminality, and the Restoration Rake." *The Eighteenth Century* 46.2 (2005): 129-49.
- Plato. *Philebus. The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. Vol. 3. Oxford: OUP, 1969.
- Radcliffe, Ann. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Oxford: OUP, 1998.
- Wallace, Tara Ghoshal. "Northanger Abbey and the Limits of Parody." *Studies in the Novel* 20 (1988): 262-73.
- Williams, Carolyn D. "General Tilney and the Maidens all Forlorn: Typesetting in *Northanger Abbey*." *Women's Writing* 5.1 (1988): 41-59.