The Phantom of the Author: Literary Analysis Reconsidered

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ABSTRACT

The Phantom of the Author: Literary Analysis Reconsidered

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of

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By Lisa Rourke

This project argues that authorial knowledge matters a great deal to literary critics. Such a claim contradicts conventional thinking about the role of the historical author in literary analysis:

As Hans Harold-Muller and Tom Kindt observe in *The Implied Author: Concept and Controversy*, from the late nineteenth century and through much of the twentieth century, “Interest in the author, his biography, and what he intended to express was dismissed as biographism or psychologism and banished from literary theory.”¹ To compare such dictums to critical practice, this project undertook a close study of over 200 critical essays and ten prominent scholarly books about novels by Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy. Chapters 1-3 explore the ways that critics “access” the historical author. The first chapter analyzes how critics use biographies and the author’s private writings in their readings of novels by Austen and

Hardy. The second chapter examines the manner and extent to which critics make assertions of authorial intention in interpretation. And the third chapter explores the ways in which critics infer authors’ values and beliefs from their novels. Through close analysis of my findings, the dissertation makes three key claims: 1) critics often rely on biographical sources to support their readings, especially when those sources are authoritative, substantive and plentiful; 2) when biographical sources are relatively scarce, critics tend to make central to their readings both claims of authorial intention and recourse to authorial beliefs inferred from the novels themselves; and, 3) distinctions between different author forms, such as implied and historical authors, may not be important for interpretive purposes because it does not seem to matter to interpretive outcomes whether one or several novels are used or whether biographical sources are added. The fourth chapter synthesizes the data from the first three chapters as the basis for exploring why critics might be so invested in knowledge of authors despite past dictums against relying on such knowledge in textual analysis. Using concepts from bio-cultural approaches and theories of value, the dissertation concludes that authorial knowledge—even when it is tangential or trivial—adds to the perceived value of literary analysis.
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In *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters* (2010), Blakey Vermeule ruefully recounts a story about a graduate class that she taught in which students hotly debated the moral worth of J.M. Coetzee’s fictional characters. Vermeule was particularly distressed by the debate, and “felt obscurely that these students needed to be disciplined, and rather quickly, out of an obvious fallacy…[of] talking about a fictional character as though he were a real person.”

Vermeule attributes her discomfort to the unwritten rule that dictates the “proper” way to talk about literary characters. However, as she makes clear from her own experience, rules—whether written or unwritten—do not necessarily conform to practice.

While Vermeule’s concern focused on the unwritten rule against treating fictional characters as real people, I observed a similar breach in one of my own classes when my students violated the unwritten rule against musing on the similarities between the author’s biography and the content of a fictional text. As Hans Harold-Muller and Tom Kindt observe in *The Implied Author: Concept and Controversy*, from the late nineteenth century and through much of the twentieth century, “Interest in the author, his biography, and what he intended to express was dismissed as biographism or psychologism and banished from literary theory.” Thus, I watched with dismay as my students eagerly sought traces of Coleridge in his supernatural poetry (Coleridge was Christabel’s well-meaning but hapless father in *Christabel*) and pondered Henry James’s intentions for offering an ambiguous end to *The Turn of the Screw*. While my students could potentially be excused—they were undergraduates, after all—I began to notice anecdotally

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the same kinds of authorial evocations in published literary criticism. Anecdotes, however, are hardly evidence, so I determined to take a more systematic approach to analyzing the ways and the extent to which scholars use knowledge about authors to construct their readings of texts. I undertook a close study of over 200 critical essays and ten prominent scholarly books about novels by Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy.

My ultimate claim in this project is that knowledge about the author matters to literary critics—so much so, in fact, that when straightforward biographical sources are lacking, critics infer details about author’s lives, belief systems, and intentions from a variety of material. Building on these findings, I seek to explain why the use of knowledge about the historical author is so pervasive and persistent among literary critics. My claims are derived from an investigation of critical practice over the past seventy-five years—an investigation that I survey in the first three chapters. Put differently, chapters one, two and three explore the types of sources that critics use to “access” the historical author. Through close analysis of my findings, I argue the following: 1) critics rely on biographical sources to support their readings when those sources are authoritative, substantive, and plentiful; 2) when biographical sources are relatively scarce, critics tend to make central to their readings authorial intention and authorial beliefs inferred from fictional sources; and, 3) distinctions between different author forms, such as implied and historical authors, may not be important for interpretive purposes. After analyzing my data in the first three chapters, I synthesize my findings in the final chapter by turning to the obvious question: why are critics so invested in authorial knowledge, despite past dictums against relying on such information? Using concepts from bio-cultural approaches and theories of value, I conclude that authorial knowledge—even when it is tangential or trivial—adds to the perceived “value” of literary analysis.
Before I began my study, I believed that there was a rupture between theory and practice; that is, I expected to find that, in literary analysis, the ways that critics use knowledge about authors would not conform to the dictums articulated by different twentieth century theoretical approaches. However, a close analysis of the theory reveals more nuance than we may have realized: critical approaches renowned for championing close reading sometimes make allowances for inferring an author’s intentions, and critical approaches eschewing authorial intention sometimes make allowances for using knowledge about authors from biographical sources as well as from their fiction. The real disparity, then, is not so much between theory and practice as between perceived and actual practice. This study offers a snapshot of the state of critical practice, as opposed to what we might imagine that state to be. Specifically, it examines the ways and extent to which critics, in their readings of texts, use biographical sources, authorial intention, and knowledge about authors that is inferred from their fiction.

Critical approaches to interpretation can be characterized in some sense by the way that they view the author. Some approaches popular from the 1920s to the 1970s, including formalist, new critical, structuralist and post-structuralist approaches, largely de-center the author as a response to earlier twentieth century approaches that are heavily historical and author-centered. Alternately, approaches popular after the 1970s, including new historicist and identity-based approaches such as feminism and post-colonialism, identify more of a role for the author, although the nature of this role varies greatly. New historicist approaches, for instance, often place authors in their historical context as part of textual analysis whereas feminist criticism is often more interested in biography as it relates to female authorship. Wayne Booth seeks a middle ground between more and less author-centered approaches when he introduces the notion of the “implied author,” an author surrogate, in his 1961 book *The Rhetoric of Fiction.*
Russian formalists argue in the early 1920s that literature is a set of systematic procedures and structures; literary analysis, then, should be primarily the study of the way these procedures and structures function. Nevertheless, Russian formalists sometimes evoke the author’s intention in their readings. In his analysis of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, for example, Victor Shklovsky, a pioneer of the formalist school, argues that Sterne uses temporal disruptions in the text so that readers will make mistaken assumptions. As Shklovsky explains, “[In *Tristram Shandy*], the action is continually interrupted; the author repeatedly goes backward or leaps forward; whole ten-page passages are filled with whimsical discussion about fortifications or about the influence of a person’s nose or name on his character…The causes follow the consequences, and the author, himself, prepares the groundwork for erroneous assumptions.”\(^4\) Shklovsky suggests in this passage that Sterne has a master plan for his novel that he executes through various digressions and temporal disruptions. Most importantly for our purposes, Shklovsky’s commitment to formalist approaches does not unilaterally preclude using the author’s intentions.

Further developing the formalist view of the text as a work separate from its historical author, I.A. Richards aimed to improve interpretive technique by studying textual ambiguities and the ways that they inform each other. This method of study necessarily limits the potential role of authorial knowledge since it relies on an analysis of specific textual moments; however, Richards believes that using the author’s intentions can be a useful tool for distinguishing among multiple meanings that appear to be equally valid. Richards argues that identifying an author’s motivations can provide a way to resolve “the rival meanings that bewilder us in discussion.”\(^5\) In

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addition, Richards claims that different approaches from the field of psychology can offer “indispensable instruments” with which to determine an author’s intentions. While Richards does not elaborate on the form that these different approaches might take, he does acknowledge the skepticism with which some psychologists will likely view the reliability of such endeavors. At the same time, Richards defends his claim by noting that psychological approaches offer a useful first step towards discerning an author’s intentions: “I am anxious to meet as far as may be the objection that may be brought by some psychologists…that the protocols do not supply enough evidence for us really to be able to make out the motives of the writers and that therefore the whole investigation is superficial. But the beginning of every research ought to be superficial.”

Even though Richards allows that initial investigations of authorial intention might be superficial, he nevertheless claims that intention can be useful for interpretation despite his commitment to analyzing texts as works in their own right.

Building on Richards’s claims about the value of identifying textual ambiguities to produce readings, William Empson, a founder of the New Criticism and student of Richards, mandates distance between author and text in his seminal book *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930). However, in his later book, *Using Biography* (1984), Empson argues that scholars should actively attempt to identify with the author’s intentions as part of literary interpretation: “A student of literature ought to be trying all the time to empathize with the author (and of course the assumptions and conventions by which the author felt himself bound); to tell him that he cannot even partially succeed is about the most harmful thing you can do.” Empson’s practice in *Using Biography* mirrors his observations about the important role of intention in interpretation. Empson argues, for instance, that Henry Fielding structures the plot of *Tom Jones*, in part, to

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6 *Ibid* Richards, 10.
trumpet Fielding’s ethical theories. In particular, Empson claims, “In *Tom Jones* [Fielding] is expressing a theory about ethics, and the ironies are made to interlock with the progress of the demonstration. The titanic plot…was devised to illustrate the theory…That is, the feeling that [Fielding] is proving a case is what gives *Tom Jones* its radiance.”8 Empson argues that Fielding has a specific agenda for *Tom Jones* and, in Empson’s mind, acknowledgement that Fielding is “proving a case” makes *Tom Jones* “immensely better” than *Amelia* or *Joseph Andrews*, which harbor no comparable agenda. In another example, Empson cites a passage in which the narrator mulls the consequences of Sophia’s discovering Tom in bed with Mrs. Waters, and Empson argues that the episode reflects Fielding’s “central thesis” about the consequences of mistreating women.9

In contrast, in their influential article “The Intentional Fallacy” (1947) William Wimsatt and Munroe Beardsley strongly repudiate the practice of using an author’s motives. Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that we can never know with certainty an author’s intention; that is, we can never know what the “poet” tried to do.10 They further claim that a poem should be interpreted on the basis of its language and without regard to the historical author, who loses control of the work once it becomes public: the poem is "not the critic’s own and not the author’s (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or

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Thus, Wimsatt and Beardsley characterize critics who seek to determine the author’s intentions as “irresponsible.”

However, although Wimsatt and Beardsley oppose using an author’s intentions for any reason, they argue that knowledge about authors from biographical sources can enrich analysis: “The meaning of words is the history of words, and the biography of an author, his use of a word, and the associations which the word had for him, are part of the word’s history and meaning.” At the same time, they caution against over-relying on biography in the reading of poetry. For example, Wimsatt and Beardsley cite a critic analyzing a quatrain from John Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” in which the critic connects Donne’s interest in Kepler and Galileo to the poem. While acknowledging the significance of the critic’s observations, Wimsatt and Beardsley note that the critic sometimes privileges biography at the expense of the text: “Perhaps a knowledge of Donne’s interest in the new science may add another shade of meaning, an overtone to the stanza in question, though to say even this runs against the words. To make the geocentric and heliocentric antithesis the core of the metaphor is to disregard the English language, to prefer private evidence to public, external to internal.” Wimsatt and Beardsley suggest that using Donne’s knowledge about the earth’s relationship to the sun may compromise close reading when the value of that knowledge is placed above the language of the poem. More broadly, Wimsatt and Beardsley worry that excessive reliance on biography may shift the focus from the internal language of the text even as they encourage its use in specific circumstances.

11 Ibid Wimsatt and Beardsley, 470.
12 Ibid Wimsatt and Beardsley, 470.
13 Ibid Wimsatt and Beardsley, 478.
14 Ibid Wimsatt and Beardsley, 481-482.
In his later article, “Genesis: A Fallacy Revisited,” (1968) Wimsatt goes a step further when he suggests that an author’s fiction can provide biographical knowledge that is sometimes useful in interpretation. Wimsatt claims that poems leave traces of the author that can be gleaned by the discerning critic: “For whatever does get into a poem presumably is put there by the poet and reflects something in the poet’s personality and life. It is for the biographer, in his particular insight and skill, to say what is reflected and in what relation to other things in the poet’s life.”\(^{15}\) However, although Wimsatt makes allowances for using fiction to infer biography in certain circumstances, he does not alter his position about authorial intention. As Wimsatt explains, “In accepting this kind of biographical claim [about the author’s fiction], let us notice that it is a particular kind of claim, not of intention but of subject matter…The poet and his friends and enemies are present in the poem as historic figures.”\(^{16}\) Wimsatt suggests, then, that while poetry can reveal knowledge about the historical figure that penned the work, this knowledge has nothing to do with intentions of that figure.

As a response to new critical approaches that de-center the author, Wayne Booth tries to reinsert an author surrogate into textual study without losing the value of close reading practices that the new critics advanced. To this end, Booth introduces the concept of the “implied author” in his influential book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Unlike the historical author, who is also the writer, the implied author, according to Booth, is a product of a single fictional text. Booth describes the implied author as an “unofficial scribe” or the author’s “second self” for whom “we infer an ideal, literary, created version of the real man.” Moreover, Booth claims that the implied author represents the reader’s imagined ideal that derives from the values and norms of a particular fictional work. As Booth explains, the implied author offers “the intuitive


\(^{16}\) *Ibid*, 204.
apprehension of the completed artistic whole; the chief value to which this implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life.”\(^{17}\) Thus, Booth suggests that we can determine the implied author’s values in a way that is not possible to accomplish for the historical author. Booth claims, for instance, that we cannot comment with any confidence on the historical Shakespeare’s moral values, but we can certainly argue that the implied author of Shakespeare’s plays took “a strong line on at least one or two of the seven deadly sins.”\(^{18}\) Many scholars believe that Booth’s implied author offered a way to return a version of the historical author to literary criticism through the back door after this author was essentially banned by new critical approaches. While the implied author is clearly distinct from the historical author, the implied author nevertheless acts as a proxy for the historical author because it offers a conceptual link between writer and text.

Although new critical approaches permit the use of knowledge about authors in limited circumstances, structuralists reject outright such use as they seek a “pitiless divorce…between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader.”\(^{19}\) As Roland Barthes asserts, analysis is “the decomposition of the work of reading…a way of observing the reversibility of the structures from which the text is woven,” and critics should focus on these underlying structures and their relations to each other.\(^{20}\) In his structural analysis of Balzac’s *Sarrasine*, for example, Barthes dissects the text into five hundred and sixty one numbered fragments, or lexias, to identify universal narrative structures that can be

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18 Ibid, Booth 76.
used to explain “what it is we do when we read.”\textsuperscript{21} The historical author generally has very little role in structuralist analysis because the author is not inherently part of a text’s structure.

New critical and structuralist approaches dominate from the 1940s through the 1970s after which a second critical trend emerges that makes authors relatively more important to interpretation. At the same time, critical approaches captured by this trend, including new historicism, feminism and postcolonialism, have very different authorial investments. New historicists, for instance, analyze texts within their historical context, and the author can be one important consideration among other historical phenomenon. In \textit{Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare} (1980), Stephen Greenblatt, a founder of New Historicism, reconstructs the life of Thomas More as a means to explore More’s putative belief, expressed in his works, that political life is “absurd.”\textsuperscript{22} To illustrate More’s alienation from society, Greenblatt quotes a passage from William Roper’s \textit{The Life of Sir Thomas More} (1962) in which More confides to his daughter that his family has kept him from going mad. Greenblatt uses this kind of knowledge to contextualize his readings of More’s works. For example, in his analysis of \textit{Utopia}, Greenblatt comments on the influence of English culture on More’s life. Further, Greenblatt infers knowledge about More from \textit{Utopia}: “\textit{Utopia} offers the profoundest commentary on those aspects of More’s life that we have been discussing; it is at once the perfect expression of his self-conscious role-playing and an intense meditation upon its limitations.”\textsuperscript{23} Finally, Greenblatt uses authorial knowledge inferred from \textit{Utopia} to argue that More grappled with his own sense of “incompleteness.” In such ways, Greenblatt explores the way that the structures of texts and the author’s life inform each other.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid} Barthes, \textit{S/Z}, x.


\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid} Greenblatt, 33.
Alternately, feminist critics, particularly those writing in the late 1970s and 1980s often place authorial knowledge more directly at the center of their analysis than new historicists. Thus, biographical sources and the author’s fiction have been extremely important to many feminist interpretive practices in this time period, especially as these sources relate to female authorship. In their important book *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), for example, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that nineteenth century women authors attempt to redefine themselves through their works and often leave traces of themselves in their fiction: “The coherence we noticed in literature by women could be explained by a common, female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinitions of self, art and society.”\(^24\) That is, Gilbert and Gubar believe that nineteenth century female authors use fiction to redefine themselves in patriarchal societies.

In addition to analyzing literature for strategies employed by women authors to address their specific circumstances, Gilbert and Gubar use knowledge from biographical sources to ground their literary interpretation. For example, they argue that Maria Edgeworth’s novel *Castle Rackrent* is a subversive critique of patriarchy that is heavily influenced by Edgeworth’s relationship to her domineering father: “Maria Edgeworth seems to have used her writing to gain the attention and approval of her father. From the beginning of her career, by their common consent, he became the impresario and narrator of her life.”\(^25\) In this case, Gilbert and Gubar’s perception of Maria Edgeworth’s relationship to her father shapes their reading of *Castle Rackrent*.

The historical author is used in yet another way by postcolonial critics than it is for new historicists or feminists: in many instances of postcolonial criticism, the author acts as a

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\(^{25}\) *Ibid*, Gilbert and Gubar, 147.
representative of his or her cultural location and can, therefore, be considered in the broader context of a colonial presence. In his influential book, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said argues that texts are inextricably linked to the life and world of the author, and he uses authorial intention as well as knowledge from biographical sources and the author’s fiction to bolster his interpretations. In his reading of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, Said asserts that Conrad writes the novel for the purpose of highlighting European imperial tactics. Said argues, “Conrad wants us to see how Kurtz’s great looting adventure, Marlow’s journey up the river, and the narrative itself all share a common theme: Europeans performing acts of imperial mastery and will in (or about) Africa.”

Further, Said uses knowledge about Conrad from biographical sources to ground his reading. To bolster his claim that Conrad emphasizes the business nature of empire, Said suggests that Conrad may have known about a series of lectures on imperialism at the London Institute of Bankers. Said also posits Conrad’s sense of “exilic marginality” stemming from his status as a Polish expatriate.

In addition to using knowledge about authors from biographical sources and from the authors’ intentions, Said argues that an author’s fiction can reveal his or her beliefs. Said claims, for example, that *Mansfield Park* reveals Austen’s belief that the economic wellbeing of England depends on colonial expansion. To support his claim, Said asserts that Austen concurs with Fanny’s assessment of the relationship between the relative wealth of Fanny’s Mansfield home and Sir Thomas’s financially fruitful colonial interests in Antigua: “I think Austen sees what Fanny does as a domestic or small-scale movement in space that corresponds to the larger, more openly colonial movements of Sir Thomas, her mentor, the man whose estate she inherits.”

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27 Ibid Said, 23.
28 Ibid Said, 89.
Further, Said argues that it is important to discern why Austen chooses to represent Antigua in a particular light. A comprehensive analysis of Austen’s intentions coupled with a close reading of the novel suggest to Said that Austen perpetuates the ideology of colonialist expansion.29

While Said’s work focuses primarily on European writers, postcolonial criticism that focuses on texts from outside of Europe may similarly contextualize its readings with knowledge about the author. In an essay on Chicana literature, Ellen McCracken analyzes the “chica lit” *The Dirty Girls Social Club* by Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez in parallel with the “high art” *Caramelo* by Sandra Cisneros to argue that both novels “exist on a continuum of an expanding definition of culture” and are shaped by a form of commercialism.30 To support her claim about the effects of commercialism on the authors, McCracken analyzes how Valdes-Rodriguez remakes herself as a “Chicana vamp” by dressing for book cover and other appearances in loud, stereotypical Mexican folkloric wear such as a red rebozo and *china poblana* costume.31 As evidence of the ways that Cisnernos celebrates her Latina heritage in the United States, McCracken examines how Cisneros “Mexicanized” her Victorian house in San Antonio by painting it bright purple. Further, McCracken quotes Cisneros’s comment to the Historic Design and Review Commission, which charged that the color was not historically accurate: “The issue is bigger than my house. The issues is about historical inclusion…Purple is historic to us.”32 While not every postcolonial critic seeks recourse to the author to this extent, many do because postcolonial

29 A number of critics have actively disagreed with Said’s argument. See, for example, Susan’s Fraiman’s “Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture and Imperialism” (*Critical Inquiry* 21.4, Summer 1995, pp. 805-821).
critics argue that ideology serves as a vehicle through which texts operate; thus, authors can provide a crucial link between text and ideology.

In analyzing these two major and divergent trends with respect to the role of authors in literary analysis—one that de-centers the author and the other that places the author at its center—I have attempted to show that, with the exception of structuralism and post-structuralism, engagement with authors has continued to have a place, even though that engagement assumes a more central role in the later criticism. While scholars may have perceived that the author was “banished” from interpretation at different moments in time, an examination of the various theoretical practices demonstrates that this was rarely the case. Many of the approaches discussed identify when and how scholars should use authorial knowledge in readings: new critical approaches offer some guidance for using authorial intention and biographical sources; Wimsatt and Beardsley similarly identify a role for biographical sources; and new historicist and identity-based approaches suggest that biographical sources and the authors’ fiction can be important in establishing a context for interpretation. Yet, if the use of authorial knowledge in literary analysis has often been present—and even encouraged at specific moments—how do we account for the implicit understanding in the academy that such use should be curbed, or even forbidden? This question returns us to the disconnection I have posited between perceived and actual practice. Given the relatively consistent use of authorial knowledge in literary theory, it is not surprising that many scholars in my study similarly use this knowledge to bolster readings of texts. However, my research also reveals that scholars often use authorial knowledge for no clear interpretive purpose: scholars conduct criticism in ways that cannot be accounted for by existing theoretical approaches in literary studies.
For this project, I wanted to learn how and why critics use different kinds of authorial knowledge in their readings of literary texts and determined that an empirical approach in which I systematically analyzed a large body of critical writings would best address these questions. I selected Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy as subjects for case studies because the novels of both writers had been canonized by the 1930s, which would allow me to examine several generations of critical trends. In addition, since little is known about Austen’s life relative to Hardy’s, I would be able to explore whether the relative availability of information influenced the way this information was used: would Hardy critics rely more heavily on knowledge about Hardy than Austen criticism relied on Austen because so much more information is publicly available for the former than for the latter? I was curious if Austen scholars project knowledge in the vacuum of information.

For the criticism that would be included in my study, I elected to use articles analyzing novels by Austen and Hardy that were indexed in the MLA database because the database offered a defined sample of scholarly essays. To narrow the sample size, I included articles that offered readings of two novels by Austen and two novels by Hardy. Specifically, I selected Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* and Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* and *The Return of the Native* because one novel by each author is considered more autobiographical than the other: critics analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* often identify Elizabeth Bennet with the young Jane Austen, and critics analyzing *Jude the Obscure* often parallel Jude to Thomas Hardy. In contrast, critics rarely compare *Northanger’s* Catherine Morland to Austen or *Return’s* Clym Yeobright to Hardy. I was particularly interested in whether the putatively more autobiographical works would invite a greater use of authorial knowledge in literary analysis than the less autobiographical works. I included in my study all articles indexed in the MLA database from
1940 to 2010 that analyzed these four Austen and Hardy novels written in English; a minimum of eight pages; and, focused on a single fictional text. 33 I did not include essays on film and television adaptations. This process yielded a total of 235 articles with the following breakdown by novel: seventy-four articles analyzing *Pride and Prejudice*; seventy articles analyzing *Jude the Obscure*; fifty-four articles analyzing *Northanger Abbey*; and, thirty-seven articles analyzing *The Return of the Native*.

In addition, I examined a small sample of books that analyzed the works of Austen and Hardy to explore whether scholars use authorial knowledge differently when interpreting an author’s canon than they do when interpreting individual texts. To determine which books to include in the study, I selected the five most frequently cited by the 107 Hardy articles and the five most frequently cited by the 128 Austen articles since it seemed clear that these books have consistently engaged with, and possibly influenced, scholarly discourse over time. I corrected for the potential bias towards older books—which could be more frequently cited by virtue of the fact that they have been available longer—by factoring in the number of years since the book had been published. 34 The five most frequently cited Austen books include two from the 1980s, two from the 1970s, and one from the 1960s. The five most frequently cited Hardy books include two from the 1980s, two from the 1970s, and one from the 1940s. 35

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33 The first article indexed in the MLA database analyzing *Jude the Obscure* was published in 1940; the first article analyzing *The Return of the Native* was published in 1942; the first article analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1947; and, the first article analyzing *Northanger Abbey* was published in 1957.

34 To correct for a potential bias towards older books, I divided the total number of citations for each book by the number of years since the book’s publication date to determine the average number of citations per year. For example, 19 of the 128 critics analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* cited Claudia Johnson’s *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*. Johnson’s book was published twenty-four years ago, in 1988. Thus, critics in my study cite her book on average 0.8 times per year (nineteen divided by twenty four), which is the highest ratio among the Austen books. In other words, critics cite Johnson’s book more frequently than any others on Austen.

35 The five Hardy books from least to most frequently cited include: *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (1970) by J. Hillis Miller; *The Great Web: The Form of Hardy’s Fiction* by Ian Gregor (1974); *Thomas Hardy* by Albert Guerard (1949); *Women and Sexuality in Thomas Hardy* by Rosemarie Morgan (1988); and, *Thomas Hardy and Women* by Penny Boumehla (1982). The five Austen books from least to most frequently cited include: *Jane
For each of the articles and books, I examined whether they used biographical sources, made assertions of the author’s intention, and inferred knowledge of the author from his or her fiction. The first three chapters focus one of these types of engagement with the author. The first chapter explores how critics use biographical sources. The second chapter examines how critics use the author’s intention. The third chapter analyzes how critics use an author’s fiction to infer knowledge about the author. And, the fourth chapter explores different possibilities derived from research on cognitive psychology as well as theories of value that might explain the consistent pull toward the author in literary analysis. In addition to identifying how critics used authorial knowledge in their readings, I assessed whether critics who made claims about the author used these claims centrally or peripherally in their readings. I have included in the bibliography the articles and books included in the study. The appendices include the rubrics for my coding of the articles.

My methodology clearly has limits. By restricting myself to just two authors—Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy—I may have skewed the data towards critics who are more invested in the author’s life than they might have been for other authors. If I were to continue my research, for instance, I would like to explore the ways that critics analyze texts of more contemporary authors such as Salman Rushdie and Toni Morrison. This additional research would likely capture other critical approaches, and it would have the added benefit of enlarging my sample size, which would increase the significance of my findings.

Chapter One, “Letters and Biography in Literary Analysis,” lays the foundation for the rest of the dissertation by establishing patterns seen through the first three chapters regarding the
ways that critics use biographical sources in their readings. The chapter finds that the arguments of critics are more likely to rely on biographical material when that material is both abundant and authoritative: Florence Hardy’s biography of Thomas assumes greater authority among scholars because of the critical consensus that Thomas heavily influenced—and probably even wrote—this biography. Although Hardy and Austen critics use biographical sources with roughly the same frequency, I speculate that biographical material is more central to the Hardy readings than to the Austen interpretations because Hardy has an “authoritative” biographer (Austen does not) and because, in his private writings, Hardy is more explicit about his beliefs and motivations than Austen is in her correspondence. An examination of the articles and books analyzing Pride and Prejudice, Northanger Abbey, Jude the Obscure and The Return of the Native reveals that biographical material is, for the most part, either central or peripheral to the major claims. I found that biographical sources are generally central to interpretation when those sources are used to infer the author’s beliefs or when those sources are used establish the author’s expertise, such as knowledge of specific philosophies. Biographical sources are usually peripheral to interpretation when those sources engage the author as an interlocutor or when they are used only as a springboard to a claim. The chapter finds no clear historical trends with respect to the use of biographical material and suggests that prevailing literary approaches do not necessarily influence critical practice. Finally, the chapter concludes that the frequency with which critics use knowledge from biographical sources—even when that knowledge is peripheral—suggests that any perceptions of a death-of-the-author economy may be more fiction than reality.

Chapter Two, “The Author’s Agenda: Intention in Interpretation,” investigates why assertions of Austen’s intention are more important to the claims of Austen critics than to the claims of Hardy critics, even though Austen and Hardy critics evoke the author’s intention with
nearly the same frequency. In other words, it asks why readings of Austen’s novels rely more heavily on assertions of authorial intention than do readings of Hardy’s novels despite the fact that the readings evoke intention in nearly the same percentage of cases. The chapter attributes the discrepancy between the practice of the Austen and Hardy critics in part to Austen’s narrative techniques, such as her use of irony and free indirect discourse: these techniques introduce textual ambiguity, and critics sometimes seek clarification by Austen’s putative intentions. In addition, the chapter suggests that where Hardy scholars rely heavily on Florence Hardy’s “authoritative” biography Austen scholars instead rely more heavily on her presumed intention because Austen does not have a comparable authoritative biography. The chapter concludes that critics may be more likely to use authorial intention as a surrogate source of authorial knowledge when biographical sources are relatively scarce and when the language of the text is ambiguous.

Chapter Three, “Reading for the Author: Inferring Values and Beliefs from Novels,” explores the ways and extent to which scholars use an author’s fiction to infer knowledge about the author’s beliefs. The chapter hypothesizes that Austen critics rely more heavily on Austen’s fiction to infer her values and beliefs than Hardy critics similarly rely on his fiction, again because of the relative scarcity of biographical sources for Austen compared to Hardy. On a related note, this chapter asserts, in response to a question posed earlier in the Introduction, that critics do project knowledge in the vacuum of information about Austen. As evidence, it points out that none of the five Hardy books infers knowledge about Hardy from his fiction, yet, all five of the Austen books do. The articles display a similar trend whereby Austen criticism relies more heavily on knowledge inferred from her fiction than does Hardy criticism. Finally, the chapter closely analyzes three kinds of authors that the articles in my study infer from fiction: Wayne Booth’s “implied” author, which is inferred solely from a single fictional text; Booth’s “career”
author, which is inferred from more than one fictional work by the same author without recourse to biographical sources; and the “historical” author, which I define as an author that is inferred from one or more fictional texts by the same author in addition to biographical sources. I was curious if interpretation was impacted from the use of the implied author compared to the career or historical author. Intriguingly my findings suggest that it may not matter to interpretation whether the articles evoke implied, career or historical authors. Put another way, my findings suggest that it may not matter to interpretive outcomes whether one or several novels are used or whether biographical sources are added: regardless of the type of author inferred, critics generally make claims about the author’s values and beliefs and use these claims to support the larger argument.

Chapter Four, “Why We Care About Authors,” returns to questions posed in the Introduction and throughout the first three chapters about why critics seek recourse to the author, even when the authorial knowledge is peripheral to the argument. Insights from approaches in cognitive and evolutionary psychology suggest that critics, in their readings, use information about authors for a variety of reasons. First, authorial knowledge can fill gaps in interpretation. For instance, readers of Jude the Obscure might wonder how Jude can have such terrible luck. To fill that interpretive gap, critics have argued that Hardy’s pessimistic outlook explains, in part, Jude’s consistently bad fortune both personally and professionally. Second, authorial knowledge can fill gaps in the fiction itself. In cases where readers do not find a fictional character’s claims to be credible, for example, they may turn to the author—the source of the text—for answers. Finally, authorial knowledge may help readers to organize and navigate their own experience. For instance, Pride and Prejudice may help readers to make decisions about their marital options. While bio-cultural approaches may explain why critics use authorial
knowledge that is central to their readings, theories of value relating to art may help to explain why critics use authorial knowledge peripherally in their interpretations of texts. Yale psychologists George E. Newman and Paul Bloom build on the work of Walter Benjamin when they investigate why we value original art over identical duplicates—copies that are indistinguishable from the original. Newman and Bloom claim that we value originals because they are intimately tied to their process of production, including the artist. Newman and Bloom’s work empirically affirms the value we place on the narrative history of objects of art. Their research suggests, for instance, that a forgery is worth substantially less than a genuine masterpiece because the forgery does not have direct associations with the artist and his or her history. Thus, the source of the art—the artist—cannot be decoupled from the art itself without the work’s losing value. Similarly, I argue that critics may perceive that attaching authorial knowledge that is either peripheral or central to an interpretation raises the value of the analysis. My research suggests that the use of authorial knowledge in literary analysis is both pervasive and consistent despite spoken and unspoken dictums against such use. I conclude that the high percentage of critics who do evoke the author, however minimally, suggests that the binary erected by New Critics between “the purely textual” and “everything else” is untenable. Put differently, the binary is false because we cannot extract ourselves from our cultural moment or divorce ourselves from personal knowledge.

I hope that this project will deepen our understanding of the ways that we evoke authors in our readings and invite reflection of our own critical practices, our teaching practices, and the fruitfulness of maintaining distinctions between different author forms for interpretive reasons. I mean for my project to contribute to an ongoing conversation about the ways that we practice criticism with respect to authors. My wish is that my findings will help to dissipate lingering
stigmas regarding the evocation of authors in readings of texts. Open and frank discussions about actual critical practice will pave the way for a greater level of comfort with why we do what we do.
Chapter 1

Letters and Biography in Literary Analysis

In the introduction to *Using Biography*, William Empson acknowledges that the various essays he includes “contain more biography than most of my output” because “the ‘use’ [of biography] is all for our better understanding of the work.”36 While Empson, a New Critic, seems to have arrived at his conclusion about biography relatively late in his career, his use of this knowledge in literary criticism mirrors that of many scholars in my study. In this chapter, I argue that critics rely heavily, and much more than is usually recognized, on knowledge gleaned from biographical sources. This argument is supported by ample statistical evidence, drawn from my analysis of 235 articles and ten books. My research also shows that critics have been consistent over time in their use of knowledge drawn from biographical sources. Even more intriguingly, critics rely on biographical knowledge in cases where that information seems peripheral to the argument. Moreover, biographical knowledge is more frequently peripheral to the claims of critics analyzing Austen’s works than it is to critics analyzing Hardy’s works, and I attribute this to the relative scarcity of biographical information for Austen than for Hardy. Given my findings, I speculate that information about the author offers a kind of validation to critics that the text alone is unable to provide. In a sense, critics treat the author as a privileged scholar who supports or pushes forward a particular interpretation; for that reason, critics gravitate toward sources that seem to have been “touched” by the author in some way. Taken collectively, my

research suggests that scholars should disabuse themselves of any illusions that biographical sources are not frequently evoked in the close reading of fictional works.

Half of the articles in my study—approximately 120 of the 235—utilize knowledge from biographical material. This chapter focuses closely on trends within scholarship showing the various conditions that affect the extent to which and the manner in which critics utilize this information. As I will show, both the nature of particular fictional texts and the nature of the available sources appear to predict the way that critics use biographical knowledge in their readings. For example, articles that analyzed novels considered to be autobiographical more frequently cited the authors’ letters than articles that analyzed less autobiographical-seeming novels. Thus, critics in my study more frequently cited passages from Austen’s letters for readings of *Pride and Prejudice* than for readings *Northanger Abbey*, and critics more frequently cited passages from Hardy’s letters for readings of *Jude the Obscure* than for readings of *The Return of the Native*. Critics also more frequently cited Florence Hardy’s “authoritative” biography of her husband, Thomas, than Austen critics cited any one particular biography.

Finally, my findings suggest that dicta for or against the use of biographical information do not necessarily have a direct, measurable impact upon critical practice across theoretical paradigms. However, the ten books in the study use biographical material in different proportions from the 235 articles: all ten books use biographical knowledge compared to only half of the articles. In addition, the books analyzing the works of Austen and Hardy published after 1970 use biographical information more peripherally than those published before 1970. Put differently, biographical material is generally central to the claims of books published before 1970 and peripheral to the claims of books published after that time. In contrast, the articles evidence no such patterns of use.

24
Before proceeding, I will offer a brief clarification of the types of biographical materials that I will be examining and also summarize which types of materials surface most frequently in Austen and Hardy scholarship. When critics use biographical sources, they usually rely on the author’s private writings, which I call “manuscript sources”; on the author’s published non-fiction; and, on published biographies. I understand “manuscript sources” to comprise writings by the author that are not, to anyone’s knowledge, intended for public viewing. In my study, manuscript sources include the letters of Austen and Hardy, Hardy’s personal notebooks, and the conversations between Hardy and William Archer that Archer “recorded” and published. There are fewer manuscript sources available for Austen than for Hardy since much of Austen’s private correspondence was destroyed after her death to protect her privacy. Her juvenilia, some letters, and miscellaneous materials, such as poems and prayers, survive. Conversely, much of Hardy’s correspondence survives, and he additionally wrote many personal notebooks. Although Hardy and his literary executors destroyed some of these accounts, at least eleven notebooks and some scrapbooks are publicly available. Richard Taylor published four of Hardy’s notebooks in *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* (1979), which includes material ranging from Hardy’s denunciation of his critics to information about his first wife that was omitted from his second wife’s (Florence’s) much-cited biography. Finally, although they are not official “writings” and are not often cited in literary criticism, I consider Hardy’s recorded private conversations, documented in William Archer’s *Real Conversations*, to be manuscript sources since they reveal Hardy’s thoughts—mediated by Archer—that were not intended for the public at large.

In “biographical sources,” I also include the author’s published non-fiction. Austen published no non-fiction whereas Hardy published a number of essays and wrote letters to newspaper editors. However, even in Hardy’s case, few critics in my study use published non-
fiction in their analysis: five of the 107 articles that analyze Hardy’s novels use published non-fiction (5%) and, obviously, none of the 128 articles analyzing Austen’s novels use this source. The articles written about Hardy’s novels that do cite published non-fiction quote mostly from Hardy’s letters to the editor and his essays, including “Candour in English,” “Apology to Late Lyrics and Earlier,” “The Profitable Reading of Fiction,” and “The Dorsetshire Labourere.” The number of articles that use Hardy’s published non-fiction is so insignificant that I do not consider this source further.

Published biographies, of course, are secondhand constructed accounts of the author’s life. For purposes of precision, I examine the scholarly use of biography and manuscript sources both separately and together since critics use these sources differently. My findings understate the degree to which scholars use biographical sources because I only include documented sources and not, for instance, common knowledge, i.e., knowledge that the critic assumes to be well known and, therefore, does not document.

Patterns of Use Among Articles

The articles rely more heavily on some sources than others, including Florence Hardy’s biography of Thomas Hardy, manuscript sources that strengthened putative connections between the author and a protagonist, and manuscript sources that could be used to justify the critic’s reading. The following section examines the use of biography and manuscript sources first separately and then together regarding the frequency, manner, and historical trends of such use.

Overall, critics use knowledge from published biography in forty percent of the articles in my study (ninety-five of the 235 articles). However, as Figure 1 illustrates, this number does not reflect that critics use biography more frequently for some novels than for others.

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37 When I use the term “biographical sources,” I include both manuscript sources and biography.
My data show that articles that analyze *Jude the Obscure* and *The Return of the Native* cite knowledge from biography twice as often as articles that analyze *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*: over 60% of the articles interpreting *Jude* use biography, as do 50% of the articles analyzing *Return*. In contrast, only 20% of the articles analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* and 25% of the articles analyzing *Northanger Abbey* cite knowledge from Austen’s biographies.38

The difference in the perceived status of the Hardy and Austen biographies may account for much of the discrepancy: articles analyzing Hardy’s novels frequently cite the biography of Florence Hardy likely because of the critical consensus that Thomas Hardy heavily influenced, and probably wrote, this biography.39 Of the forty-four articles that cite biography in their readings of *Jude the Obscure*, thirty-two (73%) cite Florence Hardy’s biography; there is no comparable Austen biographer. Thus, the sense—accurate or not—that we possess an “authoritative” biography of Hardy helps to explain why the articles cite biography for his novels more frequently than for Austen’s novels.

38 In raw numbers, 14 of the 74 articles analyzing *Pride* used biography (19%); 14 of the 54 articles analyzing *Northanger* used biography (26%); 44 of the 70 articles analyzing *Jude* used biography (63%); and, 19 of the 37 articles analyzing *Return* used biography (51%).

39 *The Early Years of Thomas Hardy* (1928) and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy* (1930) were published under the name of Hardy’s second wife, Florence Emily Hardy. According to Carl J. Weber and others, including J. Hillis Miller, these biographies were most likely composed by Hardy.
Not only do certain biographies assume an authoritative status that seems disproportionately to invite their use in readings, but novels perceived as autobiographical similarly appear to encourage the use of manuscript sources, which are often used to forge connections between the author and a protagonist. John Halperin echoes many critics interpreting *Pride and Prejudice* when, for example, he surmises that “There is something of Jane Austen in both Jane [Bennet] and Elizabeth [Bennet]—though she is present chiefly in the latter.”\(^{40}\) Like some critics analyzing *Jude the Obscure*, Joseph Kestner similarly draws comparisons between Hardy and Jude by arguing that Hardy identifies the death of his own novel writing with Jude’s thwarted professional attempts: “Like Jude, Hardy, another mason, ‘finished’ himself, killed himself to the novel forever. For the last time, like Jude, he ‘felt at the back of the stone for his own carving,’ demolished like Jude, by authority: ‘The letter killeth.’”\(^{41}\) Critics rarely draw these kinds of connections between Austen and *Northanger Abbey*’s Catherine Morland or Hardy and *The Return of the Native*’s Clym Yeobright. As Figure 2 indicates, close to 40% of the articles that analyze *Pride* and *Jude* (seemingly more autobiographical) use knowledge from manuscript sources compared to approximately 25% for *Northanger* and *Return* (seemingly less autobiographical).\(^{42}\)


\(^{42}\) In raw numbers, 28 of the 74 analyzing *Pride* used manuscript sources (38%); 14 of the 54 articles analyzing *Northanger* used manuscript sources (26%); 25 of the 70 articles analyzing *Jude* used manuscript sources (36%); and, 10 of the 37 articles analyzing *Return* used manuscript sources (27%).
In an ideal world, manuscript sources are unmediated; however, there is often some mediation when they are published. Nevertheless, manuscript sources still offer relatively direct links to the author, unlike biography, which is necessarily mediated by a third party. Thus, when critics cite manuscript sources for novels perceived as autobiographical, they often do so to strengthen the ties to the author in a way that is not possible for biography.

In “Pride and Prejudice: Power, Fantasy, and Subversion in Jane Austen,” for example, Judith Lowder Newton uses passages from Austen’s letters to strengthen the connection between Elizabeth Bennet and Austen in a manner that is typical of other critics who cite the author’s letters in their readings of Pride and Jude. Newton argues that Pride and Prejudice spotlights the relative power of middle-class men over middle-class women that results from economic disparities between them and subverts those power relations by empowering certain women, including Elizabeth Bennet, and emasculating certain men, including Mr. Collins and Sir Lucas. Newton begins her article by referencing Austen’s letters to remind readers that Austen is a typical “middle class” woman of limited means: “To read Jane Austen’s letters—with their steady consciousness of bargains, pence, and shillings—is to be aware of one small but nagging way in which she experienced the restrictions of being an unmarried middle-class woman: she
had little money, and she had almost no access to more.”\textsuperscript{43} Newton then cites several passages in which Austen references her financial circumstances to draw the following conclusion: “The most authentically powerful figure in the novel is an unmarried middle-class woman without a fortune—a woman, we may note, who bears striking resemblance to Jane Austen.”\textsuperscript{44} Newton uses Austen’s letters to establish a connection between Austen and her protagonist, a pattern that is repeated through many of the articles analyzing \textit{Pride} and \textit{Jude}. This pattern raises the question of whether the novels perceived to be autobiographical inspire the use of manuscript sources or whether the process has actually happened in reverse: perhaps \textit{Pride} and \textit{Jude} seem more autobiographical than \textit{Northanger} and \textit{Return} not for intrinsic reasons but simply because the repeated articulation of the parallels between author and character creates a self-perpetuating perception of autobiography.

While critics use knowledge from manuscript sources more frequently for novels perceived as autobiographical, they also use manuscript sources that can be used to justify their own readings, even when the sources are relatively trivial. My study identified a curious phenomenon whereby Austen critics most commonly cited two fairly insignificant passages in which Austen discusses \textit{Pride and Prejudice} (this phenomenon does not occur in the other three novels). In the first letter, Austen confides to her sister, Cassandra, “I had some fits of disgust [while writing \textit{Pride and Prejudice}],” and later in the same letter, Austen expresses her concern that \textit{Pride and Prejudice} is “rather too light, bright and sparkling.”\textsuperscript{45} The second frequently cited passage records Austen’s “confession” that Elizabeth Bennet is “as delightful a creature as ever

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid} Newton, 29.  
The following examples illustrate some of the ways that critics use Austen’s observation about *Pride* in their readings.

In “Intelligence in *Pride and Prejudice,*” Susan Morgan argues that Elizabeth’s growing affection for Darcy and increasing disaffection with Wickham signal her intellectual growth: “Right thinking and wrong in the novel can be measured in terms of Elizabeth’s changing feelings towards Mr. Darcy and Wickham.” Claiming that Austen frames her exploration of the relationship between intelligence and romance as a love story, Morgan writes, “Jane Austen’s major study of the links between intelligence and freedom is cast as a love story, and of a sort which she delighted in characterizing as ‘rather too light, and bright and sparkling.’ Most of the action of *Pride and Prejudice* can be accounted for as a tale of love which violates the traditions of romance.” Although Morgan does not probe further Austen’s observation about *Pride,* Morgan implies a relationship between the “subversive” love story—one that “violates the traditions of romance”—and Austen’s airy account of her “too light and bright” novel. In a sense, Morgan uses Austen’s words to legitimate her reading of *Pride* as a “tale of love.”

Unlike Morgan, who makes a passing reference to Austen’s observations about *Pride,* Joseph Litvak organizes his essay around Austen’s use of the phrase “light, bright and sparkling” and the word “disgust”—a reference to Austen’s “fits of disgust” while writing the novel. In “Delicacy and Disgust, Mourning and Melancholia, Privilege and Perversity: *Pride and Prejudice,*” Litvak argues that *Pride and Prejudice* fails to deliver a substantive narrative, in part, because of the novel’s “overconsistency”: “Of course, what disgusts Austen is not so much her novel’s ‘general style’ itself as the lack of a ‘contrast’ that would ‘bring the reader with

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increased delight to [its] playfulness and epigrammatism.”⁴⁹ Litvak puts pressure on “disgust” to legitimate his reading about Austen’s ambivalence regarding *Pride*, and he arranges his reading around Austen’s observations: “That Austen can be driven to disgust not by her own writing, but by its very refinement, by what is most ‘light, and bright, and sparkling’ in it, comes as no surprise”,⁵⁰ “If *Pride and Prejudice* is disgusting because it is ‘too light, and bright, and sparkling,’ its seductive surface does not so much conceal a disciplinary core as constitute and convey a new and improved discipline of its own”;⁵¹ “As Austen anticipated, however, the novel may not be sufficiently ‘stretched out’ or larded to make us consume with such ‘increased delight.’”⁵² Admitting that, in his opinion, *Pride and Prejudice* is “The least enjoyable of all of Austen’s novels,” Litvak takes seriously Austen’s putatively denigrating characterization of *Pride* and makes it the organizing principle of his essay.

Taking a more sympathetic approach to *Pride* than Litvak, Marianne Fowler focuses on the word “delightful”—Austen’s characterization of Elizabeth Bennet—in her reading of *Pride and Prejudice*. In “The Feminist Bias of *Pride and Prejudice*,” Fowler argues that *Pride* is Austen’s own “feminist manifesto,” and she examines how Austen uses the language of *Pride* to engage with the feminist issues of her day. To justify her reading, Fowler writes, “[Elizabeth Bennet] is a completely new kind of fictional heroine, whom Jane Austen calls ‘as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print,’ and she must have delighted the feminists of her day.”⁵³ Fowler uses the word “delight” to connect Elizabeth to Austen’s putative 18th century feminist

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⁵⁰ *Ibid* Litvak, 35.
contemporaries. Further, Fowler infers from Austen’s comment that Elizabeth is a “new kind of fictional heroine” as a way to introduce *Pride* as Austen’s “feminist manifesto.”

Of course, many critics also cite passages from Hardy’s letters to legitimate their readings; however, the passages are usually substantive, in contrast to the relatively trivial passages cited by Austen critics. In “Sue Bridehead, ‘The Woman of the Feminist Movement,’” for instance, Kathleen Blake argues that, in *Jude the Obscure*, Sue’s conflicting ascetic and hedonistic inclinations stand in for those same putatively conflicting divisions in the feminist movement. To bolster her argument about Sue’s important role, Blake cites a passage from one of Hardy’s letters in which he writes, “‘Curiously enough, I am more interested in the Sue story than in any I have written.” Hardy’s letter reveals his deep-seated “interest” in Sue while Austen’s letters reveal her relatively frivolous “delight” with Elizabeth. The Austen examples are particularly enlightening because the critics do so much with so little which, I speculate, happens because there are so few revealing Austen letters in existence. In addition, the fact that critics so frequently cite two trivial passages from Austen’s letters suggests that the author offers external validation that the text alone cannot provide.

To this point, the chapter has evaluated biography and manuscript sources separately, but when they are combined, the influence of factors that appear to contribute to recourse of authorial material becomes even more pronounced. Figure 3 reveals that the combined use of manuscript sources and/or biography ranges from a low of 30% for critics analyzing *Northanger Abbey* to a high of 70% for critics analyzing *Jude the Obscure.*

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55 In raw numbers, 37 of 74 (46%) articles analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* used biographical sources; 16 of 54 (30%) articles analyzing *Northanger Abbey* used biographical sources; 50 of 70 (71%) articles analyzing *Jude the Obscure* used biographical sources; and 21 of 37 (57%) articles analyzing *The Return of the Native* used biographical sources.
Put differently, in the seventy years covered by the study, close to three quarters of the articles analyzing Jude the Obscure cite biography and/or manuscript sources, which underscores the influence of Florence Hardy’s biography and Jude’s autobiographical nature. If we were to factor in the use of common knowledge about Austen and Hardy, which is not measured in this study, the numbers for each novel would be higher. Even for Northanger Abbey, which is not considered autobiographical and about which Austen writes little in her letters, critics still use biographical sources one third of the time.

**Historical Trends of Biographical Source Use**

The previous section offers a snapshot of the prevalence of biographical source use for each novel; this section analyzes how critics have used biographical sources over time.
Figure 4, which presents an analysis of the data by decade, suggests that the prevailing theories of a particular historical moment do not necessarily impact critical practice.  

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<th>Manuscript Sources by Decade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pride and Prejudice</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jude the Obscure</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Return of the Native</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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To clarify what these percentages mean, for example, the MLA indexed 18 articles analyzing *Jude* in the 1990s (see footnote 60), and of these eighteen articles, six (33%) used biographical sources. As footnote 21 shows, the sample sizes for *Pride* and *Jude* were generally larger than for *Northanger* and *Return*: for example, the database indexed sixteen articles in the 1980s analyzing *Pride* compared to seven that analyzed *Northanger* and thirteen that analyzing *Jude* compared to four that analyzed *Return*. The smaller sample sizes for *Northanger* and *Return*  

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56 After tallying the number of articles that used biographical sources in any given decade – say the 1970s – I divided that sum by the total number of articles for the decade to arrive at a percentage. For example, the MLA database lists 11 articles meeting the study’s criteria on *Pride and Prejudice* in the 1970s, and of those 11 articles, 5, or 45%, cite manuscript sources. The following chart offers the raw numbers:

<p>| Number of Articles Citing Manuscript Sources in Each Decade Relative to the Total Number of Articles in that Decade |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|</p>
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<th>Pre-1970</th>
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<td><em>Pride and Prejudice</em></td>
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<td>5/11</td>
<td>6/16</td>
<td>6/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Northanger Abbey</em></td>
<td>0/5</td>
<td>0/5</td>
<td>4/7</td>
<td>5/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jude the Obscure</em></td>
<td>1/13</td>
<td>5/14</td>
<td>6/13</td>
<td>6/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Return of the Native</em></td>
<td>1/13</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>2/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
clearly make them less reliable than the larger sample sizes for *Pride* and *Jude*. At the same time, the historical patterns of manuscript source use are inconsistent, even among *Pride* and *Jude*, with the relatively larger sample sizes. The percentage of articles citing manuscript sources in their readings of *Pride and Prejudice* rises in the 1970s, falls in the 1980s, rises in the 1990s, and falls again in the 2000s. In contrast, the percentage of articles citing manuscript sources in their readings of *Jude* rises in the 1970s and 1980s, falls in the 1990s and then rises again in the 2000s, which is nearly the opposite pattern for *Pride*. The percentage of articles using manuscript sources in their readings of *Return* rises and falls each decade but in different ways than for *Pride* or *Jude*. The percentages for the Austen and Hardy novels are low overall pre-1970, and this is likely because two major volumes of Austen and Hardy letters were published at later dates: *One Rare Fair Woman: Thomas Hardy’s Letters to Florence Henniker* (Evelyn Hardy and F.B. Pinion, eds.) was first published in 1972; *Jane Austen’s Letters* (Deirdre Le Faye, ed.) was first published in 1995.

While it is unclear why the percentages for each novel rise and fall as they do, the more important point is that the percentages move differently for each novel, which indicates that the use of manuscript material does not obviously conform to prevailing theoretical trends. For example, we might expect that the heavy influence of new critical approaches in the 1950s and 1960s would translate to the 1970s as well. However, although manuscript source use pre-1970 was low for all four novels, this use spiked upward in the 1970s: the percentage of articles using manuscript sources rises to 36% in the 1970s from 8% before 1970 for articles analyzing *Jude the Obscure*, and it rises to 45% from 17% for articles analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* for those same periods. As such, there is *more* authorial attention post New Criticism.

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57 To illustrate: my study shows a spike from 0% to 57% in manuscript source usage in the 1980s for *Northanger Abbey*. Far from demonstrating a burst in critical interest in the “biographical” basis of *Northanger Abbey*, however, that spike is likely a result of the small sample size for the 1970s and the decades before 1970.
The historical patterns of use of published biography indicate a lack of consistency similar to the patterns of use of manuscript sources, which further suggests that such use does not necessarily correlate to specific theoretical movements. Figure 5 shows the percentage of articles that use knowledge from biography for each decade (footnote 62 provides the raw numbers for these percentages).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-1970</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>1980s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>2000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pride and Prejudice</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northanger Abbey</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jude the Obscure</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Return of the Nat.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Figure 5 illustrates, critics analyzing *Jude the Obscure* cite knowledge from biography more often during the 1970s than critics analyzing the other three novels; however, such usage for *Jude* rises and falls in the decades from the 1980s to the 2000s even as it remains at overall high levels. The patterns of use for critics analyzing *The Return of the Native* and *Northanger Abbey* rise and fall by decade but in dissimilar ways to each other and *Jude*. Critics analyzing *Pride and
Prejudice use knowledge from biography most consistently; yet the use drops dramatically in the 1990s to 8% before the numbers return to their more typical usage rate of 19%.

What does this lack of identifiable trends suggest about critical attitudes towards the use of knowledge from manuscript sources and biography? If the trends showed a clear downward trajectory, we might conclude that scholars no longer tacitly accept the use of these sources, perhaps as a response to lingering edicts against such practices. If the trends showed a clear upward trajectory, we might conclude that the use of knowledge from this source is more tacitly accepted now than in previous decades, perhaps as a response to newer identity-based theories. However, because no such trends exist, it is possible that the use of knowledge from biographical sources is somewhat resistant to the prevailing theories of a particular historic moment. The complete lack of synchronicity between authors and novels over time suggests that the use of biographical source materials does not necessarily conform to predominant theoretical trends.

How Critics Use Biographical Sources

My findings suggest that, broadly speaking, biographical sources may be understood as either central or peripheral to the major claims. By peripheral, I do not mean irrelevant or unimportant; I simply mean that critics sometimes use biographical sources in ways that do not materially impact the overarching argument. In “A Measure of Excellence: Modes of Comparison in Pride and Prejudice,” (1979) for instance, J.F. Burrows makes a single passing reference to an Austen letter, and he does not use any other biographical sources. Burrows evaluates the relative maturity of various characters in Pride and Prejudice by analyzing the ways that the characters use superlatives in their speech. He notes, for example, that Darcy’s niece, Georgiana, and Darcy’s housekeeper regularly employ superlatives—a sign of their relative naïveté—in contrast to the more mature Darcy, who rarely employs such superlatives in
his speech. Early in the article, Burrows likens the excessive use of superlatives in *Pride* to the “slang” that Austen critiques in a niece’s manuscript: “The flurries of superlatives, the sheer extravagance of phrases like ‘in his life’ and ‘in the world’ [uttered by Mrs. Bennet] characterize all this as akin to the ‘thorough novel slang’ that Jane Austen noted at one point in the manuscript her young niece had the courage to send her. Burrows’ reference to Austen’s letter establishes the care that Austen takes with language; nevertheless, it is largely peripheral to his larger claim about the way that superlatives in *Pride* mark the characters’ relative maturity.

Interestingly, the frequency with which the articles cite a source does not predict the degree to which an argument relies on this source. Articles analyzing *Pride*, for instance more frequently cite knowledge from manuscript sources than articles analyzing *Jude*; yet, articles analyzing *Pride* use this knowledge more peripherally than articles analyzing *Jude*. The context of the claim, then, is critical. Of course, the peripheral use of biographical sources in interpretation raises an important question: why do critics so often discuss an author’s biography when – strictly speaking – it may not be necessary to do so? For the moment, I will defer this question, since it is discussed thoroughly in chapter 4. To lay the foundation for that discussion, though, the following section offers a glimpse at some of the diverse ways that critics use biographical sources both centrally and peripherally. As a general rule, biographical sources in my study are central to the argument when they are used to infer an author’s beliefs or when they are used to establish an author’s expertise. Biographical sources tend to be peripheral to the argument when they are used as a springboard to a claim or when they are used to engage the author as an interlocutor.

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Biographical material is central to Ronald Morrison’s “Humanity Towards Man, Woman, and the Lower Animals: Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure and the Victorian Humane Movement,” for instance, because Morrison uses this material to infer Hardy’s beliefs about the proper treatment of animals to support his reading of Jude the Obscure. Morrison argues that Jude was shaped by Hardy’s involvement with the Victorian humane movement and his corresponding advocacy for the compassionate treatment of animals. For evidence of Hardy’s lifelong commitment to animal rights, Morrison documents Hardy’s bequests to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Council for Justice to Animals. Morrison additionally uses information from Richard Little Purdy’s biography, Thomas Hardy, to argue that the philosophical and ethical issues raised by contemporary scientists and philosophers influenced Hardy’s belief about the moral imperative to promote kindness towards animals: “This desire to promote ‘humanity’ towards humans and the lower animals alike sprang in part from [Hardy’s] long-term ruminations on the theory of evolution and on the philosophical and ethical issues raised by the work of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Thomas Henry Huxley.”

Morrison connects Hardy’s advocacy for animals to Jude by claiming that cruelty to animals was more common among the lower classes than the upper classes. Morrison argues that the schism between the classes is evident in scenes like the one in which lower-class Arabella barbarically slaughters a pig with seeming disregard for the suffering she inflicts: “Hardy at times…relies heavily on Victorian stereotypes that connect social class and cruelty to animals in his characterization of Arabella.” Morrison uses the pig anecdote as a bridge to his larger argument about class divisions and the moral imperative of the upper class to educate the lower class.

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62 Ibid Morrison, 70.
class in *Jude the Obscure*. Morrison constructs Hardy as an animal rights activist by drawing on biographical information in order to validate his interpretation of *Jude*; Morrison’s argument would be considerably weakened without recourse to Hardy’s putative beliefs.

Biographical sources are likewise central to Marianne Fowler’s “The Feminist Bias of *Pride and Prejudice.*” Fowler uses biographical sources to support her contention that Elizabeth Bennet’s defiance of conventional expectations reflects Austen’s critique of “the elegant-female stereotype.” To bolster her claim that *Pride and Prejudice* reflects Austen’s intervention in the “feminist controversies” of her historical moment, Fowler references R.W. Chapman’s *Jane Austen: Facts and Problems* for evidence of the time period in which Austen likely envisioned Elizabeth Bennet: “Although we have no direct evidence on how much of the first manuscript of *Pride and Prejudice* survived in the final version, it is probable that the character of Elizabeth Bennet was fully conceived by Jane Austen in 1796 and 1797, at the height of the feminist controversy, rather than in 1812, when the final draft of *Pride and Prejudice* was written.” It would be difficult for Fowler to argue that *Pride* is a response to 18th century feminist issues without first demonstrating Austen’s awareness on this front.

In addition, Fowler presumes Austen’s familiarity with courtesy books, such as William Kenrick’s *The Whole Duty of Woman* (1753), because Fowler argues that *Pride* is, in part, a reaction against these etiquette manuals. As Fowler explains, courtesy books “Were required reading for young ladies throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth...[and dictate that] that no properly modest young lady ever tries to be witty in her conversation.” Austen’s knowledge of courtesy book instruction is important to Fowler’s

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64 Ibid Fowler, 54.
65 Ibid Fowler, 48 and 50.
argument: if Elizabeth Bennet purposely defies stereotypes, then she must know against what she is resisting. Fowler’s inference of Austen’s knowledge is based on common knowledge of women’s education in the 18th century and not on a documented biographical source. Nevertheless, the example is instructive because it underscores the degree to which this study understates the use of biographical knowledge. More generally, Morrison and Fowler use biographical sources—both documented and undocumented—to assert an investment by the author in issues that directly tie to readings of the author’s fiction.

In contrast, biographical sources are often peripheral to the argument when critics use them as a springboard to a claim. Michael Hassett, for instance, begins “Compromised Romanticism in Jude the Obscure” with a quotation by Hardy: “This planet does not supply the material for happiness to higher existence.” Hassett uses Hardy’s lament about the human condition as a bridge to the following observation about the harshness of existence in Jude the Obscure: “Like much of Hardy’s fiction and verse, Jude focuses on the dilemma of a perceptive man in an uncongenial world, and on particular kinds of response to this situation.” Hassett’s article focuses primarily on the ways in which Jude resists the Romantic faith in the power of transcendence, and Hardy’s quotation serves as a means to introduce Hardy’s perspective on human agency. Hassett does not use other biographical sources—or authorial knowledge of any other type—in the rest of the article. The quotation does important work by bridging Hardy’s perspective on human agency to the novel; yet, it is not central to the argument in the same way that biographical sources are central to the claims of Morrison and Fowler.

Finally, biographical sources are often peripheral to the argument when they figuratively engage the author as an interlocutor. Put another way, biographical sources are often peripheral

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when they engage the author in a hypothetical conversation. Megumi Sato begins “Women’s Reading and Creation in *Northanger Abbey*” by observing that the literary space Austen describes is restricted in place and class. As evidence, he cites a passage from one of Austen’s letters in which she writes, “3 or 4 families in a country village is the very thing to work on.” Megumi continues, “It has been noted, however, that [Austen] was not unaware of the social changes and movements in her day and delicately depicted them in her works.” 67 Megumi pushes back against Austen’s statement that implies a limited knowledge beyond her immediate village and segues to a discussion of the ways in which the Industrial Revolution and Napoleonic Wars contributed to the rise of a female reading public. Austen’s passage about the country village has no direct relevance to Megumi’s larger argument about the issues involving women that are revealed through the act of reading, but by engaging Austen in a figurative discussion he validates his reading on some level. More generally, biographical sources are often peripheral to the argument when they are used as an early hook early to garner the reader’s interest.

The above examples point to the different ways that articles use biographical sources centrally and peripherally; the following figures show the proportions with which the articles use biographical sources in these two manners. Figure 6 indicates that when critics use biographical material in their readings, this material is central to the major claims in approximately three quarters of the articles analyzing all of the novels but *Northanger Abbey*.

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Put differently, when critics use biographical material, they use it peripherally in approximately one quarter of the articles analyzing *Pride, Jude* and *Return*. Since critics cite biography much more frequently for the novels of Hardy than for the novels of Austen (see Figure 1), we might expect that biography would likewise be more central to readings of *Jude* and *Return* than to readings of *Pride* and *Northanger*. And, it is true that biography is more central to the arguments of *Jude the Obscure* and *The Return of the Native* than for *Northanger Abbey*. However, the data for *Pride* is puzzling because biography is central to the arguments in approximately 70% of the articles that use biography—which is very similar to the proportions for articles analyzing *Jude* and *Return*. Why would this be the case?

An examination of how critics use biography when they analyze *Pride* reveals that they most often use this material to establish Austen’s knowledge of a particular subject. Fowler’s article, for example, uses biography to establish Austen’s awareness of the feminist controversies of her day, which is important to her argument about the feminist aspects of *Pride*. Another

\[\text{In raw numbers, biography is central to 10 of the 14 articles (71%) that used biography in their readings of *Pride and Prejudice* and peripheral to 4 of the 14 articles (29%); biography is central to 6 of the 14 articles (43%) that used biography in their readings of *Northanger Abbey* and peripheral to 8 of the 14 articles (57%); biography is central to 35 of the 44 articles (80%) that used biography in their readings of *Jude the Obscure* and peripheral to 9 of the 44 articles (20%); and, biography is central to 13 of the 19 articles (68%) that used biography in their readings of *The Return of the Native* and peripheral to 6 of the 19 articles (32%).}\]
critic, Shunji Ebiike, argues that Austen’s decision to change the title from *First Impressions* to *Pride and Prejudice* is a response to Frances Burney’s *Cecilia*, and he uses biographical sources to establish Austen’s familiarity with Burney’s novels.69 Similarly, in his analysis of eye imagery in *Pride*, Mark Hennelly uses biography to infer Austen’s admiration of certain landscape artists and novels, and he connects various points about these artists and novels back to the role of sight in *Pride*.70 Critics probably rely heavily on biography for readings of *Pride* to compensate for the relative scarcity of Austen’s manuscript material.

In contrast, Figure 7 may reflect the impact of relatively scarce manuscript material for Austen compared to Hardy.71

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71 In raw numbers, manuscript sources are central to 11 of the 28 articles (39%) that used manuscript sources in their readings of *Pride and Prejudice* and peripheral to 17 of the 28 articles (61%); manuscript sources are central to 5 of the 14 articles (36%) that used manuscript sources in their readings of *Northanger Abbey* and peripheral to 9 of the 14 articles (64%); manuscript sources are central to 21 of the 25 articles (84%) that used manuscript sources in their readings of *Jude the Obscure* and peripheral to 4 of the 25 articles (16%); and, manuscript sources are central to 7 of the 10 articles (70%) that used manuscript sources in their readings of *The Return of the Native* and peripheral to 3 of the 10 articles (30%).
Figure 7 reveals that knowledge from manuscript sources is central to the major claims for approximately 40% of the articles analyzing *Pride* and *Northanger* compared to 70% to 80% of the articles analyzing *Return* and *Jude*, respectively. I hypothesize that because manuscript sources are more abundant for Hardy than Austen, Hardy critics, in their readings of *Jude* and *Return*, rely more heavily on these sources than critics interpreting *Pride* and *Northanger*. As Claudia Johnson observes, “Shakespeare and Austen are the preeminent instances in the English literary tradition of beloved but fundamentally absent authors about whom quite little is actually known, and the nonexistence of manuscripts in their own hands make them seem distinctively more remote.” While the availability of source material likely accounts for this major difference, I speculate that the related substance of these materials also predicts how they will be used. Since Austen’s family destroyed many of her letters to protect her privacy, they are not as revealing as Hardy’s letters. Thus, while Austen might admit that Elizabeth Bennet is her favorite character or that she fears *Pride and Prejudice* is too “light, bright and sparkling,” she does not discuss her motives for writing or address controversies surrounding her work.

Clearly, Austen’s letters go deeper than her “light, bright and sparkling” observation; nevertheless, critics work hard to mine information about Austen from her writings because they are subtle. In “Jane Austen, Irony and Authority,” for instance, Rachel Brownstein recounts a letter from Austen to her niece, Fanny, in which Austen comments on Fanny’s unexpected visit to a gentleman’s squalid dressing room: “Your trying to excite your own feelings by a visit to his room amused me excessively. The dirty shaving rag was exquisite! Such a circumstance ought to be in print. Much too good to be lost.” Brownstein connects Austen’s use of irony in her letter to the use of irony in her fiction. But Brownstein also concludes that the passage reveals the

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following about Austen: “An appreciation of telling details; a pleasure in telling them, and in hearing tell; a clear sense of the connections between saying and feeling, and social and emotional life; and seriousness about getting into print.” Brownstein’s analysis of the passage comments as much on the subtlety—and limitations—of Austen’s manuscript material as it does on the content of the letter.

In contrast, Hardy comments explicitly on his beliefs as well as his fiction, and critics often cite these responses in their readings. In “The Journey Beyond Myth in Jude the Obscure” Janet Burstein cites a passage from one of Hardy’s letters in which he laments the “woeful fact that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions.” B.J. Alexander references Hardy’s religious beliefs when Alexander quotes the following passage from Hardy’s letter to support his reading of Jude the Obscure: “I might say that the Good-God theory having, after some thousands of years of trial, produced the present infamous and disgraceful state of Europe—that most Christian continent!—A theory of a Goodless-and Badless God…might perhaps be given a trial with advantage.” And John Paterson similarly spotlights Hardy’s fatalistic outlook when he quotes the following hypothetical by Hardy: “A hymn rolls from a church window, and the uncompromising No-God-ist or Unconscious God-ist takes up the refrain.” Paterson continues, “Caught in the conflict between reason and emotion, this imaginary figure might just as well have been Thomas Hardy himself.”

In addition to revealing his beliefs, some of Hardy’s letters indicate his intentions for his fiction while others defend it against attacks from the public. In his reading of Jude the Obscure,

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75 Ibid Alexander, 75.
James Harding cites a passage from Hardy’s letter to Edmund Gosse in which Hardy explains his intentions for the scene in which Sue throws a pig pizzle at Jude’s head: “[I wanted] to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead. The throwing of the pizzle, at the supreme moment of [Jude’s] young dream, is to sharply initiate this contrast.”

Wayne Burns, in a different example, quotes Hardy’s defense of Jude the Obscure’s Sue: “There is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue’s nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion, not inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy as far it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious. Her sensibilities remain painfully alert notwithstanding, as they do in nature with such women.”

Relative to Austen, Hardy grants much more access to his interiority in manuscript material: it would be unthinkable for Austen to denounce religion outright in any of her correspondence (or, if she had, her executors would doubtless have destroyed these accounts). While critics avail themselves of nearly all biographical sources in their interpretations, their arguments probably rely more heavily on Hardy’s material because it is more explicit than Austen’s.

As the above examples suggest, the substance of the manuscript sources appears to predict how they will be used in readings. Interestingly, the frequency with which critics cite a source does not correspond to the importance of the source to the critic’s argument. As Figure 2 reminds us, critics cite manuscript sources in approximately 40% of the articles analyzing both Pride and Jude even though manuscript sources are central the major claims of critics interpreting Jude twice as often as those analyzing Pride (see Figure 7). Put differently, when critics cite Austen’s manuscript sources in their scholarship, the information is peripheral to the argument in nearly twice as many articles as the information cited from Hardy’s correspondence.

even though critics cite manuscript sources for the two novels with the same relative frequency. The substance of the letters, then, may accurately predict the degree to which claims will rely on those letters, yet—intriguingly—the substance of the letters does not necessarily predict the frequency with which critics will cite passages from those letters.

**Patterns of Use Among Ten Most Frequently Cited Books**

There are two primary differences in the patterns and ways that the books and articles use biographical sources. First, all of the Austen and Hardy books use biographical material, compared to only half of the articles. This is not necessarily surprising since the books seek to analyze the whole of the authors’ novelistic canon, which is an approach that seems to encourage recourse to authors, particularly with respect to the evolution of their fiction. Second, the books published before 1970 generally use more biographical sources—and rely more heavily on those sources—than books published after 1970. In most other ways, the books and articles use biographical material similarly: to establish the author’s specific knowledge; to infer the author’s beliefs; to engage with the author as an interlocutor; and, as a springboard to a larger claim.

Many of the books in my study that analyze the works of Austen and Hardy use biographical sources to establish the author’s familiarity with a topic, although that knowledge tends to be more central to the arguments of the books published before 1980. In *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (1965), A. Walton Litz uses biographical information to establish Austen’s knowledge of the burlesque in order to further his analysis of the way that Austen parodies the burlesque in her fiction and of the way that parody functions more generally. Litz notes, for instance, that Austen’s family performed Richard Sheridan’s *The Rivals* and other comical theatricals in their Steventon home, and Litz further observes that Austen “must have been acquainted with other burlesques of bad fiction” because she had read Charlotte Lennox’s
Female Quixote. Biographical sources are central to Litz’s argument: he must assert Austen’s knowledge of the burlesque before he can argue that she parodies it in her works. In Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire (1970), J. Hillis Miller similarly asserts Hardy’s knowledge from biographical sources to foreground his reading of Hardy’s prose and poetry. Miller argues that a predominant theme in Hardy’s works is that happiness is not achievable because humans are subject to “Immanent Will,” an “unthinking force …sure to inflict pain on a man until he is lucky enough to die,” which is a notion that was popularized in the late 19th century by a number of philosophers, including Arthur Schopenhauer. To establish Hardy’s familiarity with Schopenhauer’s works, including his writings about Immanent Will, Miller draws on Carl J. Weber’s Hardy of Wessex: “[Hardy’s] attitude is in some ways strikingly similar to…Arthur Schopenhauer, the philosopher whose dissertation On the Four-fold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason Hardy read in 1889 or 1890.”

80 Miller, like Litz, must foreground the author’s knowledge for the argument to be credible.

In contrast, Tony Tanner’s use of biographical sources to demonstrate Austen’s knowledge is peripheral to his larger argument about the reasons for the ongoing relevance of Pride and Prejudice. In Jane Austen (1986), Tanner presumes Austen’s knowledge of the military from her brothers’ experience in order to counter claims that Austen was ignorant of seminal military events—a possible charge that, Tanner suggests, might stem from the margins on which the military operate in Pride and Prejudice. Tanner argues, “Jane Austen must have known about the troubles in the Industrial North just as she would surely have known about the

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naval mutinies of 1797...given that she had brothers in the navy.”

Tanner uses his observation about Austen to segue to his larger investigation of *Pride’s* continuing significance by comparing, for instance, the themes that the novel shares with other “dramas of recognition,” such as *Oedipus Rex* and *King Lear*. However, to get from Austen’s knowledge of the military to dramas of recognition, Tanner requires a number of steps: 1) Austen must have known about the military; 2) Although there is a military presence in *Pride*, “The overall impression given by the book is of a small section of society locked in an almost...timeless, ahistorical present;” 3) *Pride* is about “prejudging and rejudging” and is, therefore, a drama of recognition. Unlike Litz and Miller, who uses biographical sources as a foundation for their investigation of the authors’ canon, Tanner uses Austen’s putative knowledge of contemporary military events as a complex introduction to his examination of *Pride*’s endurance.

In addition, the books frequently use biographical material to infer the author’s beliefs. In *The Improvement of the Estate* (1971), Alistair Duckworth relies on a number of biographical sources, including Henry Austen’s “Biographical Notice of the Author” and C.S. Lewis’s “A Note on Jane Austen,” to conclude that Austen is a Christian both in her personal and professional life: “Against the regulated hatred, the detached irony, and the subversive morality that much recent criticism has stressed, it is necessary to take more seriously a Jane Austen ‘thoroughly religious and devout,’ who has the additional ‘merit...of being evidently a Christian writer.’”

Although Duckworth allows that Austen’s religious convictions are not “obtrusive” to her fiction, his claim about her spiritual inclinations are meant to refute the notion, popular with critics such as D.W. Harding and Marvin Mudrick, that Austen, in her works, “undermines the

82 Ibid, 104-105.
social values she seems to affirm.”84 In this sense, the notices of C.S. Lewis and Henry Austen are important to Duckworth’s claim, echoed throughout the book, that Austen’s works are not “subversive.”

In addition to using biographical sources to infer an author’s knowledge and beliefs, the books use this material to engage the author as an interlocutor. In *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975), Marilyn Butler cites Austen’s concern that the novel is “too light, bright and sparkling” in order to disagree with the assertion and later references Austen’s letter in which Austen calls Emma “a heroine whom no one but myself will much like” in order to counter with the observation that many readers have found Emma compelling. By having a figurative discussion with Austen, Butler reinforces her own claim about the significance of *Pride and Prejudice* and the likeability of Emma. In *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form*, Penny Boumelha, like Butler, quotes a passage from one of Hardy’s letters in order to disagree with it: “Whatever Hardy’s account of the genesis and composition of *Jude*, which he describes in a letter to Florence Henniker as ‘the Sue story,’ there can surely be no doubt now that…Sue Bridehead and marriage are the very impulse of the novel, not an afterthought.”85 In this instance, Boumelha strengthens her claim that Hardy invites an exploration of related themes, such as sexual relationships, by putting the “marriage question” at *Jude*’s center.

Finally, the books often use biographical material as a hook. Tony Tanner, for example, begins his introduction to *Jane Austen* with a passage from Austen’s letter to Cassandra in which Jane ironically reflects on “how interesting the purchase of a sponge cake is to me” in order to comment on the ways that Austen applies the irony in her life to her fiction. Rachel Brownstein

84 *Ibid* Duckworth, 7.
makes a similar claim based on Austen’s letter that mentions the “exquisite” dirty shaving rag. In a different example, Claudia Johnson cites in the introduction to *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (1988) Austen’s famous—and ironic—letter to her talentless nephew in which Austen deprecates her own work by contrasting her nephew’s “manly, spirited sketches, full of variety and glow,” to her “little bit (two inches wide) of ivory.”86 Johnson uses this passage to delve into the distinctions between “male” and “female” writers with respect to their place in the literary canon. Biographical sources do important work in both the Tanner and Johnson examples by acting as a bridge to larger ideas, but these sources are peripheral in the sense that they are not strictly necessary to the readings: Litz would have difficulty arguing that Austen’s works parody the burlesque if Austen had no knowledge of the burlesque, but Tanner and Johnson could still make a compelling case about the way irony functions in Austen’s fiction without citing passages from Jane’s letters to Cassandra.

While the trends in the patterns and manner of use of biographical material among the ten Austen and Hardy books are far from absolute, there is a fairly clear movement towards scholarship that uses fewer biographical sources in the 1980s. In addition, the arguments of the later books tend to rely less on biographical material than the earlier books: biographical sources are more central to the major claims in the books of Litz (1965) and Duckworth (1971) than they are to Boumhela (1982), Tanner (1986), and Johnson (1988). Interestingly, even book scholars who express caution about the use of biographical material may still use these sources. For instance, in *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (1970) J. Hillis Miller initially seems to eschew the use of biographical material in his readings of Hardy’s novels: “Illicit…are the metaphors for criticism which propose to explain the text by something extralinguistic which precedes it and

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which is its generative source—the life or psychology of the author, historical conditions at a
certain time…The pre-text of a given text is always another text open in its turn to interpretation.
There is never an extralinguistic ‘origin’ by means of which the critic can escape from his
labyrinthine wanderings within the complexities of relationship among words.”87 Miller argues
that critics should cautiously approach extralinguistic knowledge as a key to unlock the text. At
the same time, Miller occasionally seeks recourse to biographical sources in his readings of
Hardy’s works. For instance, Miller traces the ways that Hardy’s novels and poems echo Hardy’s
putative conception of fate through the “unconscious will of the universe.” To support his claim,
Miller cites Hardy’s letters to his friends Edward Clodd and Edward Wright.88 Thus, we have a
curious phenomenon whereby some scholars appear to resist their own stated intentions to move
away from “extranlinguistic” sources. Further, although scholars publishing in the later years
generally cite fewer passages from manuscript sources and biography than those publishing in
earlier years, every book uses knowledge from these sources to some degree, which raises the
question of why scholars have been so consistent in their use. While I will explore this question
more fully in Chapter 4, it seems probable that studies of an author’s corpus encourage the
introduction of biographical material as a means to weave a coherent narrative that accounts for
both the content of the fiction and the process by which the content is conceived.

Although there is a trend among the ten books towards using biographical sources more
peripherally over time, the trend among articles is much less conclusive. Of the 235 articles in
the study, 120 used biographical material (51%).

Figure 8 records the total number of articles that used biographical material in each decade and reflects whether that material was used peripherally or centrally (footnote 93 gives the raw numbers for these percentages).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Peripheral</th>
<th>Central</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1970s</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>39%</td>
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For example, before the 1970s, nineteen articles used biographical sources and, of these, biographical material was peripheral to the argument for five articles (26%) and central to the argument for fourteen articles (74%). As the data shows, while close to 75% of the articles written before 1970 that use biographical material use the material centrally, the number has hovered between 60% and 65% in each of the ensuing decades. Put differently, the percentage of articles that use biographical material centrally has not materially changed from the 1970s to the
present, which supports the claim that predominant literary theories do not significantly influence critical practice. For example, we might expect that biographical information would be significantly more central to articles published in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of identity-based approaches, such as post-colonialism and feminism, that place authorial knowledge more at their center than new critical approaches. However, the increase in articles from the 1970s to the 1980s for which biographical material is central is very slight. Thus, not only has the prevalence of biographical sources remained largely unchanged over time, but the manner in which those sources are used has also remained much the same from the 1970s to the present.

More importantly, the frequency with which critics use biographical sources over time, even when these sources contribute little to the reading, signals that perceptions of a death-of-the-author economy may be more of a fiction than reality. The findings in this chapter have shown that the use of biographical material in readings is pervasive. In addition, the nature of the material strongly influences its use: biographical sources are more central to the arguments of the Hardy articles than they are to the arguments of the Austen articles, in large part because of Florence Hardy’s biography of Thomas and the revealing nature of Thomas’s letters. An impressive 75% of the critics that use biography for their readings of Jude the Obscure cite Florence Hardy’s biography. Critics also frequently cite letters that reveal Hardy’s interiority, such as those in which he expresses his fatalistic outlook. Surprisingly, biographical sources are often peripheral to the major claims, which raises the question of the purpose that these sources serve in readings. On a related note, the manner in which biographical sources are used has remained remarkably consistent over time: biographical sources are peripheral to major claims in approximately 1/3 of the articles, regardless of the decade in which they were written. Finally, the lack of historic identifiable trends regarding biographical source use either by novel or author
suggests that such use is not measurably influenced by predominant literary theories. These collective findings suggest that many critics perceive that authorial knowledge validates interpretation in a way that the text alone cannot.
Chapter 2

The Author’s Agenda: Intention in Interpretation

The specter of Wimsatt and Beardsley looms large in the English academy. Should we find ourselves tempted to contemplate an author’s intention, we might imagine the two theorists admonishing, “How is [the critic] to find out what the poet tried to do?”90 Scholars writing after Wimsatt and Beardsley continue to grapple with the thorny notion of authorial intention by debating the very nature of intentionality as well as the circumstances, if any, under which critics can or should use intention in literary analysis. However, while many critics have theorized intention, the proof is in the practice. The previous chapter found that biographical sources are significantly more central to readings of Hardy’s works than they are to readings of Austen’s works; this chapter finds just the opposite—intention is significantly more central to readings of Austen’s novels than it is to Hardy’s novels. I argue that the reversal is a natural consequence of the greater availability of biographical material for Hardy than for Austen: Austen critics, in my opinion, compensate for the lack of biographical information by using her intentions as an alternate source of authorial knowledge in their readings of her texts. I speculate that Hardy critics do not rely on Hardy’s intentions to the same degree because they believe that they already possess ample knowledge of his motives from authoritative biographical sources such as Florence Hardy’s biography and his own private writings. If, as I assert in the introduction and explain more extensively in chapter four, critics use all kinds of knowledge about the author at remarkably high rates, then the data I outline in the following pages makes perfect sense: lacking

90W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” The Sewanee Review 54.3: (July-Sept. 1946), 469. (I discuss this article more fully in the introduction).
“hard” information, such as journals or letters, critics use authorial intention as an alternate means to support interpretation. Thus, while the specter of Wimsatt and Beardsley may loom large in the academy, the specter of, say, Jane Austen looms larger.

Additionally, I point to factors intrinsic to literary works that exert a powerful influence on the way that scholars interpret texts. Based on close readings of the data, I observe that critics discuss authorial intention more frequently when the narrative under examination is ambiguous, ambivalent, or ironic. Not only do scholars rely heavily on authorial knowledge, but literary critics also tend to “fill in” certain blanks, to gravitate toward mysteries that need solving. Thus, somewhat counter-intuitively, scholars discuss authorial intention more frequently when the historical author remains in the shadows. Stated in this manner, my argument may sound obvious—like simple common sense—yet it disrupts any lingering assumptions about the disappearance of intention in readings of texts. At the same time, my findings suggest that theoretical dictums against the use of intention—specifically, Wimsatt and Beardsley’s “The Intentional Fallacy”—have influenced the frequency with which critics seek recourse to intention as this frequency has declined historically. In contrast, the use of biographical sources in interpretation evidenced no such decline. Because “intention” and “intentionality” are so ambiguous and controversial, the next section takes a rather extended detour to explain how and why I use the terms.

**Authorial Intention, Textual Meaning and Textual Intention**

The terms “authorial intention,” “textual meaning,” and “textual intention” are often confused with one another. Wimsatt and Beardsley offer the following definition of authorial intention in “The Intentional Fallacy”: “Intention is design or plan in the author’s mind. Intention has obvious affinities for the author’s attitude towards his work, the way he felt, what made him
write.” Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that intention is synonymous with the author’s overall scheme for a text. Further, they argue that the author’s intention derives, in part, from his or her motivations for writing a particular work. However, Wimsatt and Beardsley do not endorse using the author’s intention under any circumstances because they claim that intention can never be known with certainty: “The design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art.” Although the “success” of a work is not about interpretation per se, Wimsatt and Beardsley make no allowances for using intention in readings of texts because intention is not “available.”

For most critics, authorial intention—the author’s “plan”—remains distinct from textual meaning, which follows from interpretation; that is, the process of interpretation constructs meaning. Scholars disagree about whether meaning is relative or fixed (although most today would surely say “relative”). In “Objective Interpretation” (1960), for example, E.D. Hirsch argues that meaning is fixed: “The relevance of textual meaning has no foundation and no objectivity unless meaning itself is unchanging.” In contrast, in Is There a Text in this Class? (1980) Stanley Fish claims that different communities of readers construct meaning according to their values and beliefs. As Fish explains, meaning “will be made and remade again whenever the interests and tacitly understood goals of one interpretive community replace or dislodge the interests and goals of another.” In addition, while not all critics believe that meaning results from intention, many do. Beardsley suggests in Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism (1958) that works of art are typically considered to be products of deliberate intention: Michelangelo likely plotted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel before he painted it just as Thomas

91 Ibid Wimsatt and Beardsley, 468-469.
92 Ibid Wimsatt and Beardsley, 468.
94 Stanley Fish, Is There A Text In this Class?, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (1980), 16.
Gray probably planned his poem, “Elegy in a Country Churchyard” before he wrote it. In that sense, artists or authors begin with a strategy of some kind in order to produce a text that readers or viewers can interpret.

Before proceeding, I should acknowledge a basic difficulty in parsing critical claims about authorial intention that arises when critics use the author’s name in cases when they are clearly referring to the text. As Beardsley observes, “many apparently intentionalistic statements can be regarded as misleading ways of talking about the work, itself.” Authorial intention and textual meaning may be confused when critics use the author’s name as a placeholder for the name of the text. Beardsley notes, for instance, that we might speak of Rembrandt when we really refer to his paintings. The statement “Rembrandt’s brush strokes convey a deeply disturbing tone” appears to speak of the historical Rembrandt. However, the critic may mean “The painting’s brush strokes convey a deeply disturbing tone” which refers, instead, to the painting. In this case, we may seem to comment on Rembrandt’s intentions when we really comment on the meaning of his paintings that we have constructed.

To distinguish between authorial intention and textual meaning in cases where a critic uses an author’s name in a claim, Beardsley argues that readers should analyze whether statements focus on the author or the text. To illustrate his point, Beardsley cites a statement made by critic A.C. Barnes about Cezanne: “[Cezanne’s] primary purpose was to make color the essential material of all his forms, and he strove to build up everything with color.” Beardsley argues that Barnes comments on Cezanne’s intentions because Barnes’s statement fails to reference Cezanne’s paintings and focuses instead on his “purpose.” If, on the other hand,

96 *Ibid* Beardsley, 27.
97 *Ibid* Beardsley, 27.
Barnes had written, “Cezanne’s paintings make color the essential material,” Barnes, according to Beardsley, would have commented on textual meaning since this second statement focuses on Cezanne’s paintings rather than Cezanne, himself.

However, as I went about the process of assessing whether or not critics have recourse to intentionality in the articles and books in my study, I found that, in many cases, the author’s name could be interchanged with the name of the text without materially affecting the meaning of the critic’s claim. In these instances where the potential assertion of authorial intention was not important to the interpretation, I presumed that the critic did not use intention because the stakes were so low. In “The Ethical Mode of Pride and Prejudice (1980),” for example, Giulia Giuffre explores the way that dichotomies among the characters in Pride illustrate moral patterns in the novel. She pairs “simple” characters, such as Sir William Lucas, “who is defined by his snobbery,” with “intricate” characters, such as Darcy, “who cannot be encompassed by any such generalization.” Noting that pivotal initiatives are often provided by the simple characters, Giuffre writes, “[The simple characters] are not caricatures, like Dickens’ galvanized anarchic creatures. The very point Jane Austen makes about them is that they are limited people.”

Giuffre’s claim—“The very point Jane Austen makes about them”—seems to assert the historical Austen’s intention to underscore the inherent limitations of unsophisticated individuals, even as Giuffre points to their important function in Pride and Prejudice. However, we could easily substitute the novel’s name for the author’s in Giuffre’s statement without seeming to change the meaning: “‘[The simple characters] are not caricatures, like Dickens’ galvanized anarchic creatures. The very point Pride and Prejudice makes about them is that they are limited people.’” Whether it is the text or Austen that makes the point, Giuffre’s statement remains mostly the

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same. More importantly, it matters little to Giuffre’s larger argument about the moral patterns in *Pride and Prejudice* whether she makes a claim about Austen’s intention or the meaning of the text here because Giuffre is not concerned with Austen’s “agenda.” Finally, the stakes are low because the claim is relatively trivial—whether or not Giuffre uses intention is insignificant in this instance. For the purposes of this study, I argue that Giuffre—and other critics who make similar types of claims where the name of the author and the name of the text can be used interchangeably—does not make an assertion of authorial intention.

In other cases, a similar substitution of the author’s name for the name of the text can materially change the meaning of the claim with respect to the larger argument, underscoring the importance of distinguishing authorial intention from textual meaning. In “The Case Against Charlotte Lucas (2000),” for instance, K. St. John Damstra argues that in *Pride and Prejudice* Charlotte orchestrates the marriage between Elizabeth and Darcy as a plot to secure Darcy’s patronage for the church which will, by extension, benefit Collins, Charlotte’s husband: “As a parson’s wife, [Charlotte] plans to get her hands on more money by marrying her best friend to one of England’s richest landowners, a landowner who also happens to provide significant patronage to the Church.”99 To support his claim that Charlotte seizes control of her destiny with more of an agenda than most readers are aware, Damstra argues, “Jane Austen creates Charlotte Lucas as a determined schemer who does not trust in the vagaries of fate.”100 Substituting “*Pride and Prejudice*” for “Jane Austen” does not initially seem to affect the meaning of the claim: “*Pride and Prejudice* creates Charlotte Lucas as a determined schemer who does not trust in the vagaries of fate.” The first and second statements appear to convey Charlotte’s conniving ways, and there are no obvious interpretive differences.

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100 *Ibid* Damstra, 166.
However, Damstra’s claim about Charlotte’s putative plot connects to his larger argument about Austen’s undisclosed agenda to give a woman the “ultimate authority.” Damstra’s wording—“Jane Austen creates Charlotte Lucas as a determined schemer”—therefore supports his contention that Austen creates the conniving Charlotte to send a message about the ability of women to take control of their fate. A theoretically altered sentence—“Pride and Prejudice creates Charlotte Lucas as a determined schemer”—suggests that readers can interpret the text in such a way to see Charlotte as the conniver with no relation to Austen’s putative agenda. With claims such as Giuffre’s, the distinction between authorial intention and textual meaning is not terribly important: the stakes are low because the claim does not affect the larger argument. In Damstra’s case, the distinction is critical because the meaning of his claim changes dramatically, depending on whether a reader believes that Damstra is making an assertion of authorial intention or simply a claim about textual meaning.

Distinguishing whether statements rely on intention or meaning is tricky in many cases; nevertheless, it is important to assess as best as possible whether or not claims are intentional in order to determine the prevalence with which critics comment on the author’s intentions in the articles and books in my study, as well as the degree to which they rely on intention to support their arguments. To further assist with this endeavor in instances where the critic does not specifically name the author, Beardsley recommends breaking down a claim to extract what the critic intended. As an example, Beardsley offers the following statement about a novel by Thomas Wolfe: “In this work there is an unsuccessful effort to particularize the characters.” Beardsley suggests that the statement could be commenting on Wolfe’s intentions—Wolfe tried, but failed, to particularize the characters—or, it could comment on the text, which, the critic might be arguing, is weak because the characters are not particularized. Beardsley claims that by
further parsing the claim, we can see what the speaker has in mind: “(a) that the characters are not very particularized, as novels go; (b) that the degree of particularization is spotty and irregular throughout the novel; and, (c) that the novel would have been better if these characters had been more fully particularized.” Beardsley concludes that because these three statements are about the novel rather than Thomas Wolfe, the speaker comments on a textual flaw and not the intentions of the author. 101 In contrast, if the critic’s statement had referenced extra-textual evidence, such as information about Wolfe’s life, we may have hypothesized that the speaker commented on Wolfe’s intentions.

However, Beardsley’s method of parsing a claim to determine whether critics rely on authorial intention or textual meaning runs into at least two difficulties, the first of which Beardsley himself anticipates. First, critics may make an assertion of authorial intention in one instance and textual meaning in another. As Beardsley observes, critics “tend to shift back and forth between the work and its creator, never quite clear in their own minds when they are talking about the one or the other.” 102 More importantly, by trying to distinguish between intentionalistic and non-intentionalistic claims, we necessarily fall into the same trap that Wimsatt and Beardsley caution against: if we substitute the word “critic” for “poet” in their dictum we may similarly ask, “How is the [one critic] to find out what the [other] critic tried to do?” Put differently, how can one critic know another’s intentions? The answer, of course, is that we cannot know with certainty what the critic intends.

Thus, scholars are in a dilemma: if they presume that critics comment on an authors’ intentions whenever critics use an author’s name, readers may mistakenly attribute an assertion of authorial intention when there is none. Conversely, if scholars presume that critics use the

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101 Beardsley, Aesthetics, 28.
102 Beardsley, Aesthetics, 26.
author’s name as a placeholder for the word “text,” they may claim to know better than the critic what he or she intends. Because there is no foolproof way to discern authorial intention, I have adopted Beardsley’s method for breaking down the claim to distinguish authorial intention from claims about the text. However, I would caution that such analysis is always unstable because it is judgment-based. To further anchor the distinction between intention and meaning, I would suggest that we also examine the extent, if any, to which critics refer to the historical author in their extended analysis. Such references are implied, in part, by the use of biographical sources because a critic using knowledge from biographical sources may have a vested or overt interest in the historical author—an interest that might translate to intention. Taken together, then, an analysis of a claim combined with an assessment of an overall approach should provide a strong indicator of whether or not a critic makes an assertion of authorial intention or textual meaning.

While distinguishing between authorial intention and textual meaning is important for the purposes of this study, scholars disagree about the way that authorial intention should be used in literary analysis, if at all. Wimsatt and Beardsley state unequivocally that critics should not use the author’s intentions in literary interpretation; however, other scholars argue that using these intentions under certain circumstances can be productive. In *Interpretation* (1980), for example, P.D. Juhl argues that readers should use an author’s intention to “disambiguate” competing interpretations of a text which, as we will see later in this chapter, critics do in actual practice.103 Further, Juhl argues that meaning and intention have a reciprocal, mutually dependent relationship: “There is a logical connection between statements about the author’s intention such that a statement about the meaning of a work is a statement about the author’s intention.”104 Juhl suggests that critics implicitly presume the author’s intention because understanding a literary

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104 *Ibid* Juhl, 12.
work is synonymous with understanding what the author intended to express, although Juhl does not tell readers where to “find” this intention.

For Stephen Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, readers need not worry about whether they are having recourse to intention because meaning and intention are the same. As Knapp and Benn Michaels explain in “Against Theory” (1982), “the mistake made by theorists has been to imagine the possibility or desirability of moving from one term (the author's intended meaning) to a second term (the text's meaning), when actually the two terms are the same.”105 The meaning of the text is identical to the author’s intended meaning, which negates the necessity of discerning intention for its own sake. Further, Knapp and Benn Michaels claim that all meaning has intention and that intentionless utterances do not exist. Thus, the very notion of grounding an argument in an author’s intention is “incoherent.”

Unlike Juhl, who believes that intention lies outside of the text and with the historical author, some critics, including Knapp and Benn Michaels, believe that intention lies within, or is created by, a text’s language. In Intention and Text: Towards an Intentionality of Literary Form (2008), for instance, Kaye Mitchell, a self-proclaimed “textual intentionalist,” argues that intention is “a structural or linguistic feature of texts.”106 Mitchell further claims that select phrases, words, and groups of sentences in their combination “intend” meaning and negate the need to infer what the author may have meant. The structural nature of textual intention eliminates the need for critics to presume the motivations of the author altogether: “It is therefore possible to analyze texts in terms of the intentionality that they themselves display without having recourse to the imaginative input of authors or the emotional responses of readers.”107

107 Ibid Mitchell, 149.
Whereas Wimsatt and Beardsley understand intention as an entity existing prior to the work, Mitchell and other “textual intentionalists” see intention within the work itself.

Textual intention is a relatively controversial idea (can texts really have intentions?) that has been explored and debated by philosophers and literary scholars alike. Philosopher Daniel Dennet probes intentionality as a means to predict behaviors of both objects and individuals, and some scholars have incorporated his ideas into literary analysis. Dennet analyzes our putatively “innate” inclination to use intention and posits that we broadly employ three different stances to predict behavior: the physical stance, the design stance, and the intentional stance. We use the physical stance when we use our knowledge of physical laws to predict outcomes. As Dennet explains, a cook can predict that a pot will burn if left on the stove for too long because a cook understands the theory of evaporation. However, Dennet argues that the physical stance has limited utility because we do not always have the information necessary to make inferences, particularly in cases involving unfamiliar materials. On the other hand, we do not need to have full knowledge of an object’s physical properties to employ the design stance, which allows us to make predictions based on how an object is designed to behave. We do not need to understand the mechanics behind an alarm clock, for example, to predict that, when set, it will go off at a designated time, because the intention of an alarm clock is to wake us up.

However, in cases where we may not understand how an object or agent is designed to behave, Dennet claims that we employ the intentional stance, where we predict behavior based on perceived intentions. Dennet claims that we presume that animate and inanimate agents behave rationally and then infer their intentions in light of their beliefs: “First you decide to treat the object whose behavior is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs that agent ought to have…Then you figure out what desires it ought to have…and finally you
predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs.”¹⁰⁸ Dennet suggests that we attribute rational behavior to objects and agents to predict their future behaviors. If, for example, I understand that animals try to avoid predators, and I see a hawk circling a meadow, I can predict that any mice in the meadow will perceive the hawk’s presence and seek cover. Thus, I employ the intentional stance to predict the behavior of the mice because I believe that mice will act rationally when faced with a threat to their wellbeing. Dennet’s claim that people use the intentional stance for both animate and inanimate objects raises the question for literary studies of whether texts can have intentions, as Mitchell and others believe. In “Narrative Theory and the Intentional Stance, (2008)” David Herman applies Dennet’s work by arguing that humans have an evolved predisposition to adopt the intentional stance wherever and whenever possible, including with texts. Thus, Herman argues that the interpretation of narrative invites the ascription of intentions. Further, Herman suggests that narrative offers readers a platform that allows them to “acquire, extend, and exercise their understanding of complex interrelationships among the intentional states that undergird and provide a way of explaining and predicting human behavior.”¹⁰⁹ While Dennet focuses primarily on our putative inclination to infer intention from physical objects, Herman claims that readers ascribe intention to narrative, in part, to interpret their world.¹¹⁰

The lines demarcating authorial intention, textual meaning and textual intention are fuzzy, as has been shown by the difficulty of distinguishing among them. And, of course, intentionality cannot be located with the same degree of certainty as biographical knowledge: we know without question that Thomas Hardy bequeathed a portion of his estate to the Royal

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¹⁰⁹ David Herman, “Narrative Theory and the Intentional Stance.” *Partial Answers* 6.2 (June, 2008), 249.
¹¹⁰ Ibid Herman, 249.
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—a biographical detail—but are less certain about whether he intended *Jude the Obscure* as a treatise on animal rights. On a related note, the speculative nature of intentionality puts critics on uncertain ground with respect to supportable claims: because we can never know an author’s intention with certainty, the utility of using intention to bolster an argument is unclear. Nevertheless, within the context of my work, it is helpful to demarcate what “counts” as authorial intention for two reasons. First, determining when critics truly infer authorial intention allows us to measure the prevalence of the practice. Does the lingering rhetoric of “The Intentional Fallacy” guide interpretation? In addition, the ability to discern authorial intention invites an investigation of how and why the assertion of intention is used differently for Austen criticism than for Hardy criticism.

**Patterns of Use Among Articles**

Using the previously established guidelines deriving largely from Beardsley’s work, I found that critics make assertions of authorial intention less frequently than they use biographical sources. Moreover, the use of intention in interpretation has declined since the 1980s in contrast to the use of biographical sources, which shows no discernible trends for any period. In addition, intention is more frequently central to the claims of the Austen than Hardy scholars. This use of intention is a reversal from patterns among biographical sources, which were more often central to the claims of the Hardy than Austen scholars, and I attribute this difference in the use to the relative lack of biographical material for Austen. Put differently, I speculate that intention is more central to the readings of Austen critics than it is to the readings of Hardy critics because Austen critics use intention as an alternate source of authorial knowledge. Finally, this section observes that specific narrative techniques, such as irony, sometimes invite the use of the author’s intentions as a way to resolve textual ambiguities.
Critics in my study make assertions about the author’s intention in approximately one third of the articles, contrasted with half of the articles that use knowledge from biographical sources (see Chapter 1). That is, approximately seventy of the 235 articles use authorial intention in their readings compared to 118 that use biographical sources. As with the data for biographical sources, however, this total does not reflect the differences in the extent to which critics use intention for the four novels (See Figure 9).\footnote{In raw numbers, 27 of the 74 articles analyzing \textit{Pride and Prejudice} made assertions of authorial intention (36%); 11 of the 54 articles analyzing \textit{Northanger Abbey} made assertions of authorial intention (20%); 29 of the 70 articles analyzing \textit{Jude the Obscure} made assertions of authorial intention (41%); and, 8 of the 37 articles analyzing \textit{The Return of the Native} made assertions of authorial intention (22%).}

For instance, twenty-seven of the seventy-four articles analyzing \textit{Pride and Prejudice} use intention (36%) compared with eleven of the fifty-four articles interpreting \textit{Northanger Abbey} (20%). As Chapter 1 demonstrates, critics are almost twice as likely to use knowledge from manuscript sources for \textit{Pride and Prejudice} and \textit{Jude the Obscure}—the seemingly more autobiographical novels—than they are for the seemingly less autobiographical novels, \textit{Northanger Abbey} and \textit{The Return of the Native}. The same is also true for authorial intention, where critics use intention in approximately 40\% of the articles for \textit{Pride} and \textit{Jude} and only 20\% of the articles for \textit{Northanger} and \textit{Return}.

![Figure 9: Percentage of Critics Using Authorial Intention By Novel](image)
Critics may believe that intention is useful in readings of autobiographical texts because the author’s voice presumably comes through more clearly for these texts than for less autobiographical works: putative messages to the reader would more likely come from the author rather than the narrator. In “Disarming Reproof: Pride and Prejudice and the Power of Criticism,” for instance, Priscilla Gillman argues that Austen’s novels, many of which focus on the relationship between those who judge and are judged, are, in part, Austen’s metaphorical critique of 18th century literary critics and reviewers. Gillman claims, “Austen exposes the flawed, suspect and problematic motivations behind supposedly neutral critical pronouncements, and reveals problems with criticism both epistemological and ethical.”112 Gillman probably makes a claim about Austen’s intention, rather than textual meaning, because Gillman argues that Austen gives readers and critics alike a cautionary message about the fallibility of literary criticism: “[Austen] reminds her readers of the necessity of independent judgment, and how no one judgment can provide a comprehensive assessment, a definitive verdict. Moreover, in condemning critics’ ethical lapses…Austen issues a stern warning to potential critics of her own novel.”113 Because Pride and Prejudice is often perceived as autobiographical, Gillman’s claims of Austen’s intentions may confer a certain degree of credibility since the reader may perceive that Austen speaks through Pride. At the same time, the relatively low percentage of claims of authorial intention for the less autobiographical Northanger Abbey is an oddity because no Jane Austen novel has a stronger authorial voice than Northanger.

In addition to using claims of intention to tease out the authors’ putative message to readers, critics also use the authors’ intentions to justify an author’s narrative choices; in these cases, intention centers on motive rather than meaning. In “The Text of Hardy’s Jude the

“Obscure,” Robert Slack explores Hardy’s changes to the text of *Jude* made during its two revisions for Hardy’s English publisher, and Slack uses biographical knowledge to make assertions of authorial intention. In his analysis of the scene in which Arabella throws a pig pizzle at Jude’s head, Slack observes that the scene was likely softened in revision in response to the vocal outcry of influential critics: “Hardy, no doubt sensitive to the many outcries like Mrs. Oliphant’s, deliberately emasculated the [pig pizzle] passage in his revision.”\(^{114}\) Slack is concerned with the motive behind Hardy’s decision to amend the passage rather than with the meaning of the passage itself.

In a different example, Maria Struzziero argues that *Jude the Obscure* is about transformation and regeneration rather than decline. To bolster her case, Struzziero counters perceptions about Jude and Sue’s “deviance” with an explanation of Hardy’s intentions for the characters: “A perceptive critical insight into Hardy’s true intentions was offered by Havelock Ellis in an essay published in 1896. He understood that Hardy did not mean to present Jude and Sue as ‘a mere monstrosity’…Rather, his artistic intention was to portray characters ‘crushed by a civilization to which they were not born’ by dealing with ‘the refinement of sexual sensibility.’”\(^{115}\) Agreeing with Ellis’s assessment, Struzziero claims that Sue and Jude’s opposition to traditional gender norms fails not because of degeneracy but because of their resistance to “ideological apparatuses.” Hardy’s putative motive for shaping his characters in a particular way helps Struzziero to make her point about society’s role in their fall and moves the focus away from the “degeneracy” of the characters.

Further, critics use intention to infer meaning from the author’s work. In “*Northanger Abbey* and Jane Austen’s Conception of the Value of Fiction,” J.K. Mathison derives Austen’s


“critical theory” from *Northanger Abbey*, and, as part of his argument, he examines the way that Austen’s heroines mature in her six novels. Claiming that *Mansfield Park*’s Fanny Price is the only heroine who does not mature credibly, Mathison writes, “In spite of the obstacles, each of Jane Austen’s heroines does mature. A possible exception is Fanny Price of *Mansfield Park*, although Jane Austen intends the reader to believe that Fanny has become an adult, that she has seen the world objectively, and has made a choice of life intelligently. That, in one case out of six, there may be a partial failure in achieving the intention does not alter the nature of the intention.”¹¹⁶ Mathison’s claim about intention bolsters his argument about the arc of Austen’s canon: although Austen may not have succeeded in credibly maturing Fanny, her intention spotlights a textual or narrative flaw rather than a departure from the maturation process of her other heroines.

An analysis of the prevalence and uses of intention offers one perspective on critical practice; an examination of the historical patterns of use offers another. While readings of *Pride* and *Jude* use authorial intention in approximately 40% of the articles overall, the historical trends indicate that such use by critics of those novels as well as among critics of *Northanger* and *Return* has declined overall in recent decades.

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¹¹⁶ John K Mathison, “*Northanger Abbey* and Jane Austen’s Conception of the Value of Fiction,” *ELH* 24.2 (June, 1957): 140.
Figure 10 shows the use of authorial intention for each novel by decade; footnote 121 provides the raw data for Figure 10.\textsuperscript{117}

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Each percentage represents the number of critics using authorial intention over a ten-year period. For example, three of the eleven articles (27%) indexed by the MLA database that analyze *Pride and Prejudice* in the 1970s use authorial intention as do four of the twenty-three articles (17%) that analyze *Northanger Abbey* in the 1990s. Of course, the findings from the smaller sample sizes are less reliable than the findings from the larger sample sizes; at the same time, the use of authorial intention for decades with smaller sample sizes is generally consistent with those of larger sizes. For instance, the use of intention for both *The Return of the Native* and *Pride and Prejudice* spikes from the 1970s to the 1980s despite a sample size of seven articles for *Return* in the 1970s and four in the 1980s relative to a sample size of eleven articles for *Pride* in the 1970s and sixteen in the 1980s.
For readings of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey* and *The Return of the Native*, the use of authorial intention generally rises from before the 1970s through the 1980s and significantly declines thereafter. *Jude the Obscure* is the exception: 62% percent of the critics use Hardy’s intention in the thirteen articles written before 1970, after which the percentages decline to 43% and then level off in the 30% range. *Jude* was a controversial novel when it was published in 1895 because it addresses then-forbidden topics such as cohabitation and the shortcomings of organized religion. As a result, many critics writing in the first two thirds of the twentieth century consider Hardy’s purposefulness with respect to the divisive ideas he raises. In “Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*: A Rejection of Traditional Christianity’s ‘Good’ God Theory,” (1964) for example, B.J. Alexander argues that, in *Jude*, Hardy advances “his conviction that no beneficent Providence rules the world.”

Similarly, Robert B. Heilman analyzes the language Hardy uses to describe Sue to determine whether Hardy purposely creates such a controversial character in “Hardy’s Sue Bridehead” (1966). Heilman concludes, “With an inferior novelist, such an array of terms might be an effort to do by words what the action failed to do; here, they only show that Hardy knew what he was doing in the action, for all the difficulties, puzzles and unpredictability have been dramatized with utmost variety and thoroughness.”

According to my data, the 1980s signal the peak period when critics use intention. In the 1980s, authors become more central to certain forms of criticism, including feminism and post-colonialism, and it is possible that this “return to the author” invites critics to use intentionality more in this decade than they had previously. After the 1980s, claims of authorial intention decline markedly for all of the texts except *Jude the Obscure*. In fact, we find no instances of

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118 *Ibid* Alexander, 78.
critical assertions of authorial intention for *The Return of the Native* after the 1980s, although the sample sizes are small. At the same time, assertions of authorial intention for *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* decline by over half even though the sample size is much larger than for *Return*. The percentage of critics using authorial intention for *Jude* remains fairly steady from the 1980s through the 2000s, which contradicts the trends of the other three novels, whose numbers may have dropped after the 1980s when new theories that were less author-focused, such as new historicism, came to the fore. As previously suggested, the Hardy numbers likely reflect persistent interest in Hardy’s motivations for introducing controversial topics in *Jude*; thus, the relatively high use of authorial intention may be an anomaly with respect to broader trends. The historical data imply, then, that the percentage of critics making assertions of authorial intention has generally weakened from the 1990s through the present. Still, one third of the critics analyzing *Pride* and *Jude* use authorial intention even in the 2000s, which supports the hypothesis that seemingly intrinsic qualities of some texts (i.e., those perceived as autobiographical) appear to disproportionately attract the use of intention in interpretation.

Finally, the relative availability of biographical sources and the narrative techniques of the text additionally appear to influence the use of intention in interpretation. As Figure 11 indicates, intention is more central to the arguments of Austen scholars than of Hardy scholars: authorial intention is central to the readings of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* in approximately three quarters of the articles compared to under two thirds of the articles for *Jude the Obscure* and *The Return of the Native*.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ In raw numbers, intention is central to 20 of the 27 articles (74%) that used authorial intention in their readings of *Pride and Prejudice* and peripheral to 7 of the 27 articles (26%); intention is central to 9 of the 11 articles (82%) that used authorial intention in their readings of *Northanger Abbey* and peripheral to 2 of the 11 articles (18%); intention is central to 14 of the 29 articles (48%) that used authorial intention in their readings of *Jude the Obscure* and peripheral to 15 of the 29 articles (52%); and, intention is central to 5 of the 8 articles (63%) that used authorial intention in their readings of *The Return of the Native* and peripheral to 3 of the 8 articles (37%).
As we might recall from Chapter 1, the data for biographical sources reveals just the opposite: biographical sources are relatively more central to arguments for Jude and Return, the two Hardy novels (see Fig 12).

I hypothesize that Hardy critics use biographical sources to validate their claims more frequently than Austen critics because these sources are abundant for Hardy. Moreover, Hardy sometimes addresses his intentions for his novels in his private correspondence; thus, Hardy critics do not need to speculate as much as they do for Austen. Returning to an example from Chapter 1, Hardy
states in a letter to Florence Henniker that the marriage theme in *Jude the Obscure* was an “afterthought”—Hardy implies that he never intended for marriage to be the centerpiece of *Jude*.¹²¹ No such comparable Austen correspondence survives. I conjecture that Austen critics, lacking extensive biographical sources, use intention as an alternate source of authorial knowledge. Interestingly, the prevalence with which critics use intention for articles interpreting *Pride* and *Jude* is roughly the same (see Figure 1); that is critics analyzing *Pride* and *Jude* make assertions of authorial intention in roughly 40% of the articles. At the same time, these assertions are central to readings of *Pride* in 75% of the articles and to *Jude* in 50% of the articles. Thus, the frequency with which critics use intention does not predict the importance of intention to their readings just as the frequency with which critics use biographical sources does not predict the importance of those sources to their interpretations.

A further investigation into why intention is more important to Austen than to Hardy critics suggests that certain textual triggers may predict how, and the extent to which, intention is used. For Austen’s novels, her narrative techniques, such as free indirect discourse and irony, appear to trigger assertions of her intention. Hardy’s novels do not have a comparable textual trigger, although religious references in his novels seem to invite claims about his intention in some cases. In Norman Holland’s “*Jude the Obscure*: Hardy’s Symbolic Indictment of Christianity,” for instance, biblical references trigger claims about Hardy’s intentions. Citing numerous allusions in *Jude* to the New Testament, Holland argues that Hardy shows the futility of sacrifice for religious purposes: “Considered, then, as a Christian allegory, *Jude* is a terrible indictment of Christianity…Hardy is also trying to show how that sacrifice achieved nothing.”¹²²

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¹²¹ *One Rare Fair woman: Thomas Hardy’s Letters to Florence Henniker 1893-1922*, Evelyn Hardy and F.B. Pinion, eds. (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1972): 43.

Similarly, B.J. Alexander’s “Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure: A Rejection of Traditional Christianity’s ‘Good’ God Theory” makes assertions of authorial intention based on Hardy’s “contempt for orthodox dogma”\(^\text{123}\) In his analysis of the scene in which Arabella hurls a pig pizzle at Jude, Alexander claims that the moment underscores Hardy’s intention to demonstrate the primacy of the physical over the intellectual and spiritual: “Nature, as it were, unsympathetically breaks up Jude’s intellectual preoccupation in favor of procreation of the race. Nature thwarts his religious aspirations by asserting the dominance of the body over the spirit, and, by logical extension, sex over religion. Thus, Hardy is once more advancing his conviction that no beneficent Providence rules the world.”\(^\text{124}\) John Paterson’s “The Return of the Native as Antichristian Document” also makes assertions of authorial intention based on Hardy’s “open denigration of Christianity.”\(^\text{125}\) And, Richard Nemesvari’s “Appropriating the Word: Jude the Obscure as Subversive” spotlights the significance of the biblical origins of Jude’s name: ‘Jude seems, in manuscript, to have been first called Jack…But Hardy had on his shelves a copy of Charlotte M. Yonge’s then standard History of Christian Names, and in finally deciding to call his hero Jude he was well aware of the ill omen attaching to the name.”\(^\text{126}\)

In contrast, the primary triggers for claims of Austen’s intention are Austen’s narrative techniques. In “Jane Austen and Elizabeth Bennet: The Limits of Irony,” for example, Carole Moses uses Austen’s intentions to analyze unreliable narration in Pride and Prejudice. Moses argues that Austen deliberately blurs the line between the putatively reliable omniscient narrator and the putatively unreliable Elizabeth Bennet so that the reader often does not know who

\(^{123}\) Ibid Alexander, 75.
\(^{124}\) Ibid Alexander, 78.
speaks. As a result, the narrator may or may not seem to be reliable because of free indirect discourse (a textual ambiguity that makes it unclear who speaks). Moses argues that, by blurring the distinction between Elizabeth’s voice and the omniscient narrator, “Austen forces the reader to experience the same errors that Elizabeth makes and to realize the difficulty of arriving at truth in a constantly shifting world.” Moses uses Austen’s intentions to clarify the seeming shifts in voice in order to demonstrate that these shifts are purposeful: by deliberately muddying the narrative voice, readers will appreciate the challenges of “arriving at truth in a constantly shifting world.” Put differently, free indirect discourse is the textual trigger with which Moses makes an assertion of Austen’s intention about the importance of discerning the “truth.”

In another example, irony is the textual trigger that Marianne Fowler uses to assert that, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen intends to teach young women to approach courtesy books skeptically. In “The Feminist Bias of *Pride and Prejudice*,” Fowler examines how Austen uses the language of *Pride* to engage with the feminist controversies of her day. Fowler argues that Austen deplores the physical and mental delicacy advocated by courtesy books—etiquette books for young women—and that Austen displays her dislike through the ironic use of the word “delicacy” with respect to Mr. Collins: “Jane Austen uses these adjectives [“delicacy,” “natural delicacy,” “true delicacy” and “genuine delicacy”] ironically and puts them into the mouth of one of her greatest fools [Collins] to show her contempt for the hypocritical kind of delicacy advocated by the courtesy books.” Fowler thus uses Austen’s putative intentions to offer a reading of Austen’s deployment of the word “delicacy.” Fowler and Moses use intention to seek clarification—and validation—from Austen regarding her narrative techniques.

129 Ibid Fowler, 61.
I speculate that intention is more central to articles analyzing Austen’s novels than to articles analyzing Hardy’s novels because Austen critics more frequently focus on Austen’s narrative techniques—an important textual trigger for intention—than they do on Hardy’s religious convictions (as a reminder, authorial intention is central to twice as many articles interpreting Austen’s novels as Hardy’s novels). An examination of the articles’ titles offers a crude way to measure this relative focus. Sixteen of the seventy-four articles analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* (20%) refer to Austen’s use of language in their titles, including Terence Clifford Amos’s “Some Observations on the Language of *Pride and Prejudice*” (1995) and Bettina Fischer-Starke’s “Key Words and Frequent Phrases of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (2009).” Other titles focus specifically on Austen’s irony, such as Rachel Brownstein’s “Jane Austen: Irony and Authority” (1988) and Carol Moses’s "Jane Austen and Elizabeth Bennet: The Limits of Irony (2003)." Moreover, this 20% figure represents the baseline for which critics analyze Austen’s language because it only includes titles that make specific references to language or narrative techniques: many more critics analyze Austen’s irony and ambiguity in their articles on other topics.

In contrast, only two of the seventy articles analyzing *Jude the Obscure* (3%) refer to Hardy’s language in their titles: Andrew Cooper’s “Voicing the Language of Literature: Jude’s Obscured Labor” (2000) and Aaron Matz’s “Terminal Satire in *Jude the Obscure*” (2006). Further, a total of 5 articles analyzing *Jude* refer to Hardy’s religious convictions (7%)—the most common trigger for intention among the Hardy articles.130 Thus, the centrality of Austen’s

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130 The five articles analyzing *Jude* that refer to Hardy’s religious convictions in their titles include: Norman Holland’s “*Jude the Obscure*: Hardy’s Indictment of Christianity” (1954); B.J. Alexander’s “Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*: A Rejection of Traditional Christianity” (1964); Barbara Fass’s “Hardy and St. Paul: Patterns of Conflict in *Jude the Obscure* (1974); Richard Nevesavari’s “Appropriating the Word: *Jude the Obscure* as Subversive Apocrypha” (1993); and, Norman Vance’s “Secular Apocalyptic and Thomas Hardy” (2000).
narrative techniques to the readings of her texts likely accounts for part of the discrepancy between the relative importance of intention to the readings of the Austen and Hardy articles.

The findings among the ten most frequently cited books are consistent with the findings among the articles but are more pronounced: authorial intention is more central to the readings of Austen’s novels than Hardy’s novels among the articles and, in the case of the books, authorial intention is significantly more central to the Austen than the Hardy books. In fact, all five of the Austen books make assertions of authorial intention whereas none of the Hardy books do. I attribute this difference in usage to a number of factors including: the type of arguments the books make; the author’s specific narrative choices; the novelist’s gender; and, the relative availability of biographical sources for one author compared to the other.

**Patterns of Use Among the Most Frequently Cited Books**

The ways that the five most frequently cited Austen books and five most frequently cited Hardy books in my study use—and do not use—intention may be related to the kinds of arguments put forth by the critics. Four of the five books analyzing Austen’s works argue that Austen preserves the status quo (A Walton Litz’s *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development*; Alistair Duckworth’s *The Improvement of the Estate*; Marilyn Butler’s *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*; and, Tony Tanner’s *Jane Austen*), and these books rely more heavily on assertions of Austen’s intention than the book arguing that Austen undermines eighteenth century social norms (Claudia Johnson’s *Women, Politics and the Novel*). In particular, Litz argues that Austen endorses eighteenth century ideals such as sympathy and imagination through her use of parody and the burlesque; Duckworth claims that Austen’s fiction promotes the existing social order by marking individuals as responsible or irresponsible, depending on their relationship to their estate; Butler suggests that a reading of Austen’s novels
demonstrates that she holds moral accountability of the individual in high regard; and, Tanner explores “Jane Austen’s concern with the problem of how a true social order could be maintained.”

Intention may be related to this “status quo” type of scholarship because the books often use Austen’s intention to argue that Austen instructs her readers about the importance—and ways—to maintain these different ideals. Alistair Duckworth argues that a reading of *Mansfield Park* demonstrates Austen’s desire to uphold the social order even as she suggests ways to improve it from within: “That there is a natural moral order stemming from God, that this order may ideally be incorporated into the historical structure of the estate…all these beliefs are present in *Mansfield Park*…Such qualities…are either inherently possessed by Jane Austen’s heroines…or they are ultimately learned; in any case, they suggest an author whose deepest impulse was not to subvert but to maintain and properly improve a social heritage.” To bolster his claim, Duckworth argues that Fanny, principled from birth, stands in for Austen’s desire to preserve social norms: “We must…see Fanny…as the representative of Jane Austen’s own fundamental commitment to an inherited culture—not merely to the ‘ceremonies of life,’ but to the ‘conduct…the result of good principles’ of which Edmund Bertram speaks.”

Other Austen scholars similarly use Austen’s intentions to show how she instructs readers about the importance of preserving the social order. In his reading of *Mansfield Park*, Tony Tanner argues that Austen emphasizes the important role of the clergy in maintaining the status quo: “Given Jane Austen’s concern with the problem of how a true social order could be maintained, particularly in that troubled period, she clearly considered the role of the clergyman

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131 Ibid Tanner, 170.
132 Ibid Duckworth, 80.
133 Ibid Duckworth, 73.
as being of special importance—less for the saving of souls…and more for the saving of society.” A. Walton Litz uses Austen’s intentions to argue that in *Northanger Abbey* Austen warns readers of “the dangers of uncontrolled sympathy” that result from Catherine Morland’s imagination run amok. Litz claims, “It was Jane Austen’s purpose to destroy [Catherine’s] daydream.” In her reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, Marilyn Butler argues that the combination of qualities embodied by Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Bennet, Darcy and Mr. Bingley exemplify Austen’s view of a “truly Christian character”: “We would not exchange Elizabeth’s intelligence for Jane’s innocence, nor Darcy’s consistency for Bingley’s pliancy…But in fact the author does not want us to—it is clear that her view of the truly Christian character blends the best qualities of all four.”

In contrast, three of the five Hardy books are consistent with much recent Hardy scholarship that explores the different ways and reasons that his novels engage with contemporary controversial issues: Albert Guerard’s *Hardy* analyzes the influence of industrialization on the nineteenth century agrarian English economy, and Penny Boumelha and Rosemarie Morgan explore the role of women in Hardy’s fiction. The other two books interpreting Hardy works, J. Hillis Miller’s *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* and Ian Gregor’s *The Great Web*, examine the formal structures of Hardy’s novels and Hardy’s artistic development, respectively, and do not particularly conform to or resist a strand of criticism. The type of scholarship practiced by the five Austen and five Hardy critics measured against their use—or non-use—of intention suggests that there may be a relationship between the use of

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136 *Ibid* Butler, 212.
intention and criticism that goes with or against a grain: scholars going with a grain may find intention useful to justify how the author allegedly maintains the status quo.

In addition, Austen’s narrative techniques often invite multiple interpretations of her texts, and critics sometimes use her intention to privilege one interpretation over the other, a phenomenon that has no parallel among the Hardy critics in my study. Carole Moses’s essay that analyzes *Pride and Prejudice* offers one example of how critics use intention to disambiguate meaning: Moses uses Austen’s intention to explore the way that free indirect discourse functions on the narratorial voice in *Pride and Prejudice*, and Moses concludes that Austen obscures the voice to make a particular point about the challenges of discerning the “truth.” In a different example, Alistair Duckworth uses Austen’s intentions to clarify the meaning of the ironic exchange between *Northanger Abbey*’s Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney in which Catherine expresses her conviction that General Tilney murdered his wife and Henry responds aghast at Catherine’s mistaken belief. Duckworth first notes the “double irony” of the exchange: “Catherine’s imaginative fantasy is undercut, but given the nature of her actual experiences with the General, Tilney’s rational rebuke is also insufficient.”

Duckworth next observes that, in their interpretations, “readers are apt to take different directions” for the scene: Henry could be the hero for properly censuring Catherine’s “undisciplined imagination”; Catherine’s belief could validate the “sympathetic imagination” given the violence of the General’s later conduct toward Catherine; or, Austen could be expressing her dislike of society based on the part of the passage which suggests that “Every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies.” To arrive at his interpretation that Catherine’s imagination is partially validated with respect to the

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137 *Ibid* Duckworth, 98.
138 Duckworth cites D.W. Harding’s reading in which Harding argues that the clause “where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies” is Austen’s unconscious revelation of Austen’s dislike for society. See “Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen,” *Scrutiny* 8 (March 1940): 348-349. Qtd. in Duckworth, 97.
malevolence of General Tilney, Duckworth turns to Austen’s intentions: “Clearly, in the second volume of *Northanger Abbey* Jane Austen was trying to translate into characterization and action a complex response to Gothic fiction and the attitudes it embodies…But wholly to affirm a life without terrors, wholly to reject the function of the imagination, was not part of her intention. Thus, as she was preparing for the subversion of Catherine’s ‘dreadful suspicions’ concerning the General, she was also, I believe, depositing evidence that would give to Catherine’s ‘sympathetic imagination’ a certain, carefully limited validity.”¹³⁹ For both Moses and Duckworth, speculation about Austen’s intention for particular plot points clarify meaning.

On a related note, Austen’s gender may contribute to her use of irony and free indirect discourse because these techniques, which add ambiguity to the text, grant Austen more freedom to express opinions that might have been otherwise unacceptable in her community. Thus, I speculate that there may, in some circumstances, be a relationship between the use of intention and an author’s gender. Claudia Johnson, for instance, argues that Austen’s gender plays a key role in her narrative choices: “Austen’s sex [is] a crucially significant factor, not only in the formation of her social opinions, but also in the development of aesthetic strategies for writing about them.” Johnson argues that Austen’s device of centering her novels in the consciousness of women “enables Austen to expose and explore those aspects of traditional institutions…which patently do not serve her heroines well.”¹⁴⁰ Austen’s gender, then, may influence her “aesthetic strategies” for deploying language and, as previous examples have shown, these strategies sometimes invite the use of intention as a means to hone interpretation.

Finally, the limitations of biographical information available for Austen relative to Hardy may encourage readers to probe Austen’s intentions more than Hardy’s. As Chapter 1 indicated,

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¹³⁹ *Ibid* Duckworth, 98.
Hardy critics may rely heavily on biographical sources, in part because these sources often convey what his intentions are presumed to be. While a good number of Austen’s letters survive, most of her correspondence addresses the day-to-day logistics of her life, which is likely why critics frequently cite moments when Austen reveals something of her thoughts about the novels. Since critics are privy to so few of Austen’s thoughts from conventional biographical sources, they may be more likely to make critical assertions about her intentions. In effect, these critics use intention as an alternate source of authorial knowledge. Since Hardy makes known many of his intentions with respect to his literary output in various biographical sources, critics need not seek as actively the reasons for his decisions.

A cursory glance at my findings might suggest that the use of authorial intention has gone out of favor in recent decades, particularly with respect to the use of biographical sources. And, in some respects, it has: only 30% of the articles use intention compared to 50% of the articles that use biographical sources. In addition, the use of intention has historically declined overall for readings of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Jude the Obscure*, and *The Return of the Native*. However, these “bigger picture” numbers can obscure the more interesting patterns of use for authorial intention—patterns that suggest that critics use intention to extrapolate an author’s message to the reader, justify the author’s narrative choices, and fill gaps resulting from textual ambiguity. Critics often infer an author’s textual message by seeking recourse to intention, and I speculate that putative messages from the more autobiographical novels may carry more weight because of perceived connections between authors and characters.

Critics in my study also use intention to explain controversial subject matter—a surprising 62% use Hardy’s intention in the articles published before 1970 for readings of *Jude the Obscure* compared to 17% of the readings for *Pride and Prejudice*, 20% of the readings for
Northanger Abbey, and 38% of the readings for The Return of the Native. I conjecture that Jude’s numbers are significantly higher than the numbers for the other novels because critics frequently use Hardy’s intentions to understand his motivations for engaging with controversial 19th century topics such as cohabitation. Put differently, intention brings Hardy into sharper relief by presumably filling gaps in the reader’s knowledge about his narrative subjects. While Hardy is often explicit about his intentions for his work, Austen is considerably less forthcoming—at least in the correspondence that survives. Relative to Hardy’s works, Austen’s works are also less straightforward in that her use of irony and free indirect discourse invite multiple interpretations. Critics, then, sometimes use intention to resolve textual ambiguity.

The patterns of use of intention illustrate that when vexing questions arise about texts, critics may turn to the author’s intention for answers: Hardy can arguably speak to his reasons for damning Christianity just as Austen can arguably speak to the meaning of Catherine Morland’s presumption of General Tilney’s murderous inclinations. This recourse to the author’s intentions is surprising only when juxtaposed against the admonitions against the use of intention in literary criticism that have filtered from the mid-twentieth century to the present. While theoretical approaches do seem to influence practice, my findings suggest that their influence is limited. As Chapter 1 showed, scholars frequently use biographical sources in their readings in seeming disregard of new critical approaches. Similarly, the use of intention has yet to disappear despite the influence of Wimsatt and Beardsley’s “The Intentional Fallacy” and other theoretical approaches, such as structuralism, for which intention is not relevant. The continued use of biographical sources and intention offers further evidence that the author offers a kind of validation to readings that the text alone is unable to provide. When conventional biographical sources are insufficient, as in the case of Austen’s correspondence, critics tap other matter for
authorial knowledge, such as intention. These findings suggest that the strong pull to the author is likely to supersede any theoretical approaches that fail to account for such inclinations.
Chapter 3

Reading for the Author: Inferring Values and Beliefs from Novels

A secret or at least a tacit life underlines the one we are thought to live. We are silent about it either because we do not know it, or, knowing it, find it dull, or because, for reasons of fondness or embarrassment we are tender on its account. One of the pleasures of writing novels and poems is that this sub-surface life can be drawn upon and transformed without incurring the responsibilities of autobiography or history, yet with happier obligations imposed by an art form.\(^{141}\)

Richard Ellmann

Many scholars seem to agree with Ellmann’s claim that writers leave traces of their “sub-surface life” in their novels and poems, given that critics often infer knowledge about authors from these putative traces. This chapter explores the extent to which and the manner in which critics of Austen and Hardy make claims about these authors from their fiction. My findings support the narrative of the first two chapters; namely, that when manuscript sources and biographies are sparse or deemed lacking, critics make other matter, such as the author’s intention, central to their readings. This chapter similarly finds that claims about Austen that are inferred from her fiction are more central to readings of her novels than claims that are inferred about Hardy from his fiction. I speculate that fiction, like the author’s intention, functions as an important alternate source of authorial knowledge for many Austen scholars because biographical sources for Austen are inadequate. The findings for the books are also similar to Chapter 2: all of the Austen books make assertions of authorial intention whereas none of the Hardy books do. Likewise, all of the Austen books make claims about Austen from her fiction whereas none of the Hardy

books infer these kinds of claims. The scholarly books on Austen specifically infer Austen’s convictions from her fiction by linking the values and beliefs of various characters (Elizabeth Bennet, for example) to Austen herself, by linking the values and beliefs of Austen’s novels to her worldview, and, occasionally, by arguing that a character embodies traits that are anathema to Austen, in which case the character acts as Austen’s foil. In each of these instances, fiction becomes an alternate avenue from which to mine knowledge about the author in much the same way as authorial intention. I speculate that critical tendencies show the persistent allure of the authorial persona even when biographical sources are scant.

Most importantly, Austen and Hardy scholars of both the articles and the books I have studied infer the same kinds of authorial knowledge from fiction: the author’s beliefs and values. That is, in most cases scholars of Austen and Hardy infer from their novels the authors’ convictions. Further, the inference of values and beliefs from fiction yields a variety of authorial forms. Wayne Booth, for instance, proposes the notion of the “implied author”—the author whose values and beliefs derive from a single fictional text—and the related “career author”—the author whose values and beliefs derive from more than one fictional text. Contentious notions from the start, Booth’s author forms (particularly the implied author) have inspired decades of debate. Using Booth’s author forms, this chapter assesses the frequency with which critics create implied and career authors; it also compares the kinds of claims made about implied and career authors to claims about historical authors. Intriguingly, the claims made about these different author forms are not only very similar to each other but are similarly used in readings of texts. That is, regardless of whether critics infer beliefs and values from the implied, career, or historical author, the degree to which the “knowledge” underwrites the central claims of an article tends to be the same for all the articles in my study.
When I argue that critics infer authorial values and beliefs from their fiction, I refer to instances when they make such authorial claims based solely on fictional works. Chapter 2 found that critics sometimes use the author’s name as a placeholder for the name of the text; thus, references to authorial intention may, in some cases, be references to textual intention. The same is also true of fiction—claims of authorial beliefs inferred from fiction may, in fact, be a claim about the text rather than the historical author. Analyzing statements in their broader context helps to distinguish seeming claims about the historical author from claims about the text. In *Jane Austen: Irony and Authority,* Rachel Brownstein explores Austen’s putative interest in the relationship between language, power, and pleasure, and Brownstein supports her reading with authorial speculation based on language in *Pride and Prejudice:* “[Austen’s] own interest in power is suggested as her uses of the word [power] acknowledge there are different kinds: in *Pride and Prejudice,* for instance, Elizabeth says that ‘it is not in my power to accept’ an invitation,’ and ‘I do not know anybody who seems to enjoy the power of doing what he likes than Mr. Darcy.’” Brownstein does not use Austen’s letters or biographies in the article to link the historical Austen to an interest in power; rather, Brownstein seems to make claims about Austen’s perspective solely from her fiction. The lack of biographical material raises the possibility that Brownstein is only interested in the concerns of *Pride and Prejudice,* rather than its author as an historical figure. However, the statement leading into the one about Austen’s interest in power clearly refers to the historical Austen: “That Jane Austen, unforgotten, canonized, and stunningly authoritative, has been a problem for feminists is not surprising: in the struggle for power between politically radical and conservative critics, she has for years been

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claimed by both parties.” The Austen that has been “unforgotten” and “canonized” clearly refers to the writer of the texts, which suggests that the statement that follows regarding Austen’s interest in power also refers to the historical Austen.

Brownstein’s other claims about Austen that are based on *Pride and Prejudice* similarly appear to concern the historical Austen rather than the text. For instance, to bolster her claim about Austen’s contempt for women’s novels that moralize, Brownstein cites Austen’s use of parody in *Pride and Prejudice*: “Logically enough, while portraying authority figures and their discourse as in general not exemplary, Austen mocked women’s novels most for their moralizing. The maxims that articulate the attitude of patriarchal authority on sex and marriage, the main subject of such novels, are parodied in *Pride and Prejudice.*” Brownstein seems to comment here on the historical Austen because Brownstein makes a broad-based claim about Austen’s distaste for overly preachy novels that derives from Austen’s portrayal of authority figures “as in general not exemplary.” While Brownstein specifically refers to parody in *Pride*, her statement seems to apply to other novels by Austen, many of which portray “authority figures and their discourse as in general not exemplary,” which suggests that she comments on Austen’s views rather than those of *Pride and Prejudice*. Brownstein is primarily concerned with Austen’s relation to power, and claims about Austen based on the text address this putative relationship. An examination of particular statements that appear to make claims about the author rather than text from fiction in the broader context of the argument seems to predict whether or not a critic has an investment in the historical author. My methodology for determining whether scholarly statements infer beliefs of the author or of the text, then, consists of analyzing the statements in the broader context of the entire article—it is ultimately a judgment call.

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143 *Ibid* Brownstein, 57.
144 *Ibid* Brownstein, 63.
this method for distinguishing between textual and authorial claims, the next section explores the manner and extent to which Austen and Hardy critics infer authorial values and beliefs from fiction.

**Patterns of Use Among Articles**

As Figure 13 illustrates, the frequency with which critics infer authorial beliefs from fiction is both remarkably high and remarkably consistent relative to the use of knowledge from biographical sources or authorial intention.\(^{145}\)

The entire range varies from 51% percent for *The Return of the Native* to just 57% percent for *Jude the Obscure*. This narrow band compares to the much broader ranges of between 30% and 70% for articles using biographical sources in their readings of texts and 20% to 40% for articles using assertions of the authors’ intention. Put another way, the range of use for articles that infer the author’s beliefs from fiction varies within six percentage points among the four novels compared to forty percentage points for articles that use biographical sources and twenty percentage points for articles that use authorial intention. The consistently high frequency with

\(^{145}\) In raw numbers, 41 of the 74 articles analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* inferred authorial knowledge from fiction (55%); 30 of the 54 articles analyzing *Northanger Abbey* inferred authorial knowledge from fiction (56%); 40 of the 70 articles analyzing *Jude the Obscure* inferred authorial knowledge from fiction (57%); and, 19 of the 37 articles analyzing *The Return of the Native* inferred authorial knowledge from fiction (51%).
which critics infer authorial beliefs across the novels suggests that intrinsic factors to the text, such as the use of irony, do not materially influence whether critics make claims based on the author’s fiction. In contrast, intrinsic factors to the text do seem to influence the use of biographical sources and authorial intention in readings of texts.

At the same time, critics use biographical sources, authorial intention and authorial beliefs inferred from fiction similarly in that these sources are central to some readings and peripheral to others. Chapter 1 offered an example in which biographical sources are central to Ronald Morrison’s analysis of animal rights in Jude the Obscure, and Chapter 2 analyzed the central role of Hardy’s intentions to B.J. Alexander’s argument that, in Jude, Hardy blatantly assaults orthodox Christianity. Similarly, in “Not-So-New Sue: The Myth of Jude the Obscure as a New Woman Novel,” the inference of authorial beliefs from Jude is central to Roxanne Jurta’s claim that Sue acts as Hardy’s spokesman in order to promote his cynical view of marriage. To support her reading, Jurta claims that an analysis of Sue’s response to the marriage process reveals Hardy’s critique of that process: “When Sue and Jude sign the marriage license, Hardy voices his own criticism of the bureaucratization of marriage through the protests of Sue.”

Jurta’s claim about the connection between Hardy and Sue is central to her argument regarding Hardy’s purported cynicism about the convention of marriage. Later, Jurta reinforces her claim that Hardy, again speaking through Sue, strongly objects to the irrevocability of the marriage contract. Finally, Jurta alleges Hardy’s criticism about the evils of marriage, which “are inextricably linked with the inconsistencies of women,” from her analysis of the novel. Jurta asserts Hardy’s beliefs about marriage from Jude, and she uses these putative beliefs to support her reading of the novel as an overall critique of matrimony.

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In contrast, the inference of authorial beliefs inferred from fiction is sometimes peripheral to the major claims for readings of the Austen and Hardy texts. In “Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure,*” for instance, W.R. Lawyer argues that Jude’s course in life is determined, in large part, by patterns developed early in his childhood and, further, that an analysis of these patterns grants insights into the workings of the human psyche. In his interpretation of the scene in which Arabella returns to Jude after a fight with her second husband, Cartlett, Lawyer claims that Arabella and Jude mutually use each other and, additionally, that the scene promulgates Hardy’s cynical reasoning on this front: “‘This is the way the world works,’ Hardy is saying, and of course he is right.” Later in the article, Lawyer claims that based on a reading of the Phillotson-Sue subplot, Hardy damns middle class values. Both of these statements remark on Hardy’s putative cynicism about human nature and cultural norms; however, they are peripheral to Lawyer’s larger argument about the way that Jude’s childhood informs the human psyche. Nevertheless, Jurta and Lawyer are typical in that they both infer from fiction the author’s values and beliefs. Jurta explores Hardy’s beliefs about marriage and Lawyer examines Hardy’s relationship to middle class values. In fact, most of the readings in my study that infer authorial knowledge from fiction infer the author’s convictions.

The extent to which the articles infer the authors’ beliefs and make those central or peripheral to a reading is important because it reflects the way that critics use that presumed knowledge. Given that the use of fiction to derive authorial knowledge is not “sanctioned” by the academy, we might ask why critics validate readings with these inferred beliefs? Similarly, why would critics use this knowledge to make claims that are peripheral to the overall argument? Interestingly, while the Austen and Hardy readings make claims about authors from their fiction

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to the same extent (see Figure 13), those claims are more central to interpretations of Austen’s novels—*Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*—than they are to Hardy’s novels—*Jude the Obscure* and *The Return of the Native* (see Figure 14).

Authorial knowledge inferred from fiction is central to the overarching argument for roughly 60% of the articles analyzing *Jude* and *Return* and 70% to 75% of the readings analyzing *Pride* and *Northanger*, respectively. These results support my contention that critics make other matter, including the author’s intentions, more central to their readings when biographical are somehow lacking: knowledge about authors inferred from fiction and assertions of authorial intention are proportionately more central to the Austen readings than to the Hardy readings. Conversely, biographical sources are proportionately more central to the Hardy readings than to the Austen readings, which I attribute to the fact that these sources are more plentiful, revealing

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150 In raw numbers, authorial knowledge inferred from fiction is central to the claims of 28 of the 41 articles (68%) that used this knowledge in their readings of *Pride and Prejudice* and peripheral to 13 of the 41 articles (32%); authorial knowledge inferred from fiction is central to claims of 23 of the 30 articles (77%) that used this knowledge in their readings of *Northanger Abbey* and peripheral to 7 of the 30 articles (23%); authorial knowledge inferred from fiction is central to the claims of 24 of the 40 articles (60%) that used this knowledge in their readings of *Jude the Obscure* and peripheral to 16 of the 40 articles (40%); and, authorial knowledge inferred from fiction is central to 11 of the 19 articles (58%) that used this knowledge in their readings of *The Return of the Native* and peripheral to 8 of the 19 articles (62%).

151 Authorial intention is central to: 74% of the articles analyzing *Pride and Prejudice*; 82% of the articles analyzing *Northanger Abbey*; 48% of the articles analyzing *Jude the Obscure*; and, 52% of the articles analyzing *The Return of the Native* (see Chapter 2).
and authoritative in nature for Hardy than for Austen. My findings suggest that, in their
analysis, critics seek to fill the vacuum of knowledge about Austen, and they use whatever
matter they deem most effective for this purpose. Put differently, critics seek recourse to
authorial intention and authorial knowledge inferred from fiction when this matter fills gaps left
by biographical sources.

The findings thus far have identified the ways and extent to which critics infer knowledge
about authors from their fiction; examining historic trends of how critics use this knowledge
offers an opportunity to see if such use has changed over time. In addition, it allows us to
compare historic trends for the use of authorial knowledge inferred from fiction to the historic
trends for the use of biographical sources and authorial intention. As a reminder, my data finds
no identifiable patterns regarding the historical use of biographical sources in literary analysis
and speculates that prevailing theoretical trends do not necessarily affect the use of biographical
knowledge. In contrast, the historical trends for articles making assertions of authorial intention
demonstrate a marked decline since the 1980s, suggesting that such practice has fallen out of
favor in recent decades which, I hypothesize, results from the lingering influence of Wimsatt and
Beardsley’s “Intentional Fallacy.” Alternately, it is possible that intention is used less when
historical data is used more.

152 Biographical sources are central to: 50% of the articles interpreting Pride and Prejudice; 39% of the articles
interpreting Northanger Abbey; 81% of the articles interpreting Jude the Obscure; and, 69% of the articles
interpreting The Return of the Native (see Chapter 1).
Figure 15 shows the historical use by novel and decade for critics inferring authorial knowledge from fiction.\footnote{153}

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<td>Pride and Prejudice</td>
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<td>Northanger Abbey</td>
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<td>Jude the Obscure</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<td>The Return of the Native</td>
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The figure indicates, for example, that five of the eleven articles (45%) analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* infer knowledge about Austen from that novel in the 1970s as do seven of the fourteen articles (50%) that analyze *Jude the Obscure*.

Two numbers particularly stand out: the high percentage of articles using fiction to make claims about Hardy for *The Return of the Native* in the 1980s (100%) and *Jude the Obscure* prior to 1970 (85%). We can likely attribute the comprehensive use of authorial knowledge based on *The Return of the Native* in the 1980s to the small number of articles (four) included in my study for that decade. However, although it seems as though the small sample size for some decades and novels would skew the data, the fluctuations in usage are dissimilar for the four novels, including those with larger sample sizes. For example, the MLA database indexes eleven articles

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\begin{tabular}{l|c|c|c|c|c|}
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*Pride and Prejudice* & 1/6      & 5/11  & 12/16 & 9/13  & 14/28 \\
*Northanger Abbey*    & 2/5      & 3/5   & 3/7   & 14/23 & 8/14  \\
*Jude the Obscure*    & 11/13    & 7/14  & 6/13  & 8/18  & 8/12  \\
*The Return of the Native* & 6/13    & 3/7   & 4/4   & 2/6   & 4/7   \\
\end{tabular}
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for *Pride* in the 1970s, sixteen articles in the 1980s, thirteen articles in the 1990s and twenty-eight articles in the 2000s—all relatively large samples—and, the use of *Pride* to make authorial speculations about Austen rises through the 1980s and then falls thereafter. In contrast, *Jude* also has a relatively large sample size for each decade; yet, the use of that novel to infer knowledge of Hardy’s beliefs reaches a peak before the 1970s, plateaus in the 1980s and 1990s, and then rises in the 2000s. Likewise, *Northanger Abbey* and *The Return of the Native* have relatively smaller sample sizes than *Pride* and *Jude*, and the use of these novels to infer authorial knowledge fluctuates by decade but in ways that differ from each other as well as from *Pride* and *Jude*. Thus, the chart evidences no apparent trends among novels with larger or smaller sample sizes.

To interpret the high percentage of readings that infer authorial knowledge from *Jude* before 1970 (85%), we might revisit the findings from earlier chapters to note two points of interest. First, the percentage of articles making assertions of authorial intention for *Jude the Obscure* also attained its highpoint before 1970 (see Figure 10 in Chapter 2), and the percentage of articles using published biography before 1970 is the second highest for the included decades (See Figure 5 in Chapter 1). These findings further support the hypothesis, proposed in Chapter 2 that critics interpreting *Jude the Obscure* before 1970 were invested in compiling a psychological profile of Hardy that would help to explain some of the more controversial aspects of the novel. The high percentages also imply a tacit belief among critics that a close reading of Hardy bolsters a close reading of *Jude*. Interest in Hardy’s motivations and concerns—and their connection to *Jude the Obscure*—persists after the 1970s, but not at the same level as previously. I speculate that in cases that provoke intense debate, critics turn to the author—for some, the ultimate arbiter—for resolution.

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154 Sixty two percent of the articles inferred authorial intention before 1970 for *Jude*, compared to 43%, the next highest percentage, in the 1970s. Sixty nine percent of the articles used knowledge from published biography for *Jude* before 1970, compared to 79% (the highest percentage) in the 1970s.
Regarding overall trends, the percentage of articles inferring knowledge about Austen from *Pride and Prejudice* shifts from 17% before the 1970s to 45% in the 1970s, up significantly further to 75% in 1980s, marginally down to 69% in the 1990s and further down to 50% in the 2000s. *Northanger Abbey* shifts up and down each succeeding decade from 40% before 1970 to 60% in the 1970s to 43% in the 1980s to 61% in the 1990s to 57% in the 2000s. *Jude the Obscure* has the inverse curve of *Pride and Prejudice* such that the number of articles using *Jude* to make claims about Hardy is exceptionally high before the 1970s, drops in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and goes back up in the 2000s. *The Return of the Native* has the inverse arc of *Northanger Abbey*, shifting first down and then up by decade. None of the percentages move in similar ways to each other. While this lack of trends indicates that there are no discernible historical patterns, it also suggests that prevailing critical approaches do not necessarily have a direct measurable impact on the use of knowledge inferred from fiction just as they do not necessarily have a direct, measurable impact on the use of knowledge from biographical sources.

Finally, half or more of the articles published after 2000 use the novels to make claims about Austen and Hardy (the numbers range from a low of 50% for *Pride and Prejudice* to a high of 67% for *Jude the Obscure*), a number higher than the overall percentage of articles using biographical knowledge or authorial intention in that same time period. These relatively high numbers for the present day indicate that scholars continue to embrace the practice of using fiction to derive knowledge about authors.

**Patterns of Use Among Ten Most Frequently Cited Books**

As Figures 13 and 14 illustrated, authorial knowledge inferred from fiction is frequently more central to the readings of Austen than Hardy even though readings of both authors cite this

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155 Percent of novels using biographical sources in the 2000s: *Pride*=29%, *Northanger*=29%; *Jude*=58%; and *Return*=43%. Percent of novels using authorial intention in the 2000s: *Pride*=29%, *Northanger*=14%; *Jude*=33%; and *Return*=0%.
knowledge in nearly 60% of the articles. Put differently, although Austen and Hardy critics make
claims about the author from fiction in over half of the articles, those claims are more frequently
central to the interpretations of Austen’s works than they are to Hardy’s. This pattern is even
more pronounced among the books: all five books analyzing Austen’s canon infer authorial
knowledge from her fiction; none of the Hardy books do. And like the articles, the books largely
infer the values and beliefs of the author. In particular, the Austen books infer her values and
beliefs by attributing her perspective to that of a novel; equating her views with those of a
character or narrator; attributing to Austen characteristics that oppose a character; and using the
values of a character to support biographical knowledge that confers Austen’s values. These
findings suggest that scholars are inclined to fill the vacuum of biographical knowledge for
Austen with alternative matter, including her fiction.

The scholarly Austen books most commonly infer Austen’s beliefs by attributing the
views of the novel to the views of Austen. A. Walton Litz suggests that, read collectively, Pride
and Prejudice and Mansfield Park offer a window into Austen’s perspective on the competing
demands between the self and society: “Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park are both
‘characteristic’ of their author, and neither alone gives a full sense of her complex vision. Jane
Austen does not oscillate between defiance of society and capitulation to its demands; instead,
she dramatizes the conflicts within her own personality and environment, conflicts between
Reason and Feeling, classic restraint and individual freedom, society and the free spirit.”156 Litz
argues that these kinds of conflicts grant “life and coherence” to all of Austen’s works. In his
chapter “Aspects of Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility,” Alistair Duckworth assesses
Northanger and Sense with respect to Austen’s putative beliefs: “My purpose in this chapter

156 Ibid Litz, 13.
is...to consider certain aspects of these works as they contribute to an understanding of Jane
Austen’s social and ethical attitudes.”\textsuperscript{157} Marilyn Butler Butler argues that \textit{Mansfield Park},
written when Austen was “touched by Evangelical influence,” reflects her disapproval of the
aristocracy.\textsuperscript{158} Further, Butler claims that a close reading of \textit{Mansfield Park} reveals Austen’s
ideological positions: “With the possible exception of \textit{Sense and Sensibility}, \textit{Mansfield Park} is
the most visibly ideological of Jane Austen’s novels, and as such has a central position in any
examination of Jane Austen’s philosophy as expressed in her art.”\textsuperscript{159} And Tony Tanner claims
that, in \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, an analysis of Lydia’s elopement with Wickham reveals Austen’s
beliefs about the dangers of mistaken first impressions: “It is fairly clear here that Jane Austen is
showing her particular suspicion of the pre-verbal immediacy of sexual attraction. In this area in
particular, she obviously thought that to act on first impressions could only be disastrous.”\textsuperscript{160}

All five books also infer Austen’s values and beliefs by attributing the views of a
caracter to the views of the author. In his analysis of the narrator’s defense of novels in
\textit{Northanger Abbey}, Litz draws parallels between Austen and Henry Tilney and Austen and the
narrator: “What is jarring about [the narrator’s defense of the novel] is the intrusion of the author
after we have come to accept Henry Tilney as her spokesman. Henry’s attitudes merge with
those of his creator on so many occasions that we are disturbed when [Austen] speaks to us
directly.”\textsuperscript{161} Litz then uses this claim about Austen’s putatively varying spokespersons to support
his argument that, in \textit{Northanger Abbey}, Austen tests a variety of narrative methods that “she had
not fully mastered.” In a different chapter, Litz claims that \textit{The Watsons}’ Emma Watson shares

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Ibid} Duckworth, 83-84.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Ibid} Butler, 284.
\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Ibid} Butler, 219.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Ibid} Tanner, 124.
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Ibid} Litz, 69.
Austen’s beliefs about the value of direct judgments: “[Austen’s] view is completely coincident with that of Emma Watson…Emma is subject to none of the misapprehensions and self-deceptions of the other heroines…Jane Austen is, it would appear, deliberately eschewing direct judgment as she works her way into the situation.”¹⁶² Litz uses this claim to support his contention that Austen experiments with narrative technique in *The Watsons*: because Austen is so intent on using Emma to make social distinctions, Austen “fails to give us a double vision of her heroine.” Similarly, Duckworth claims that *Mansfield Park*’s Edmund reflects Austen’s perspective about the important role of manners in an ideal society: “Through Edmund’s sentiments we see one of the few explicitly articulated presentations of what I take to be Jane Austen’s own view of an ideally constituted society—a society in which the primary social gestures (manners) incorporate moral intentions, which are themselves founded in religious principles.”¹⁶³

While some books make claims about Austen’s beliefs that are derived from characters in her novels who hold allegedly similar beliefs, other books attribute to Austen values and beliefs that are anathema to a particular character; in this case, the character acts as a foil to the author. For example, Claudia Johnson, in her reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, alleges Austen’s unhappiness with rules that confined women from an analysis of Collins’s delivery of Dr. James Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women* to the Bennet sisters: “Collins’s approval of such ‘books of a serious stamp’ in and of itself signals Austen’s disaffection with the rules about women promulgated in them. Austen could hardly recommend behavior to her readers through anyone so morally stunted as Collins.”¹⁶⁴ Johnson suggests that the episode reveals Austen’s distaste for

¹⁶² *Ibid* Litz, 89.
¹⁶⁴ *Ibid* Johnson, 75.
conventional sermons preaching proper behaviors to young women—evidence of Austen’s pushback against particular conservative values. Finally, the books occasionally use Austen’s fiction to bolster claims about her putative beliefs that are derived from biographical sources. Marilyn Butler, for instance, determines from prayers composed by Jane Austen that, as a Christian, Austen deplores “complacency” and “self-sufficiency.” Butler supports her claim about Austen with evidence about the fiercely independent Marianne from *Sense and Sensibility*: “Marianne has stood for a doctrine of complacency and self-sufficiency which Jane Austen as a Christian deplored.” Further, Butler uses her claim about Austen’s alleged disdain of Marianne’s qualities to support her larger argument about Austen’s relationship to the literature of contemporary women authors. In particular, Butler suggests that 18th century novelists, including Maria Edgeworth, Jane West and Elizabeth Hamilton “would almost certainly have had Marianne seduced and killed off, after the errors of which she has been guilty.”

The chapter has thus far explored the manner and extent to which the articles and books infer the authors’ values and beliefs by analyzing how these beliefs function in the readings; this next section explores whether the evocation of the author from the use of one or more works of fiction with or without biographical sources yields differences in interpretation. My research found that critics sometimes infer the authors’ beliefs from just one novel (in which case the critic infers an “implied” author) and other times from multiple fictional works (in which case the critic infers a “career” author). Often, the articles and books supplement textually based claims about the author with manuscript sources and biographies, which raises the possibility that the critic evokes the “historical” author. To determine whether the different author forms yield differences in interpretation from each other, the next section examines the types of

165 *Ibid* Butler, 189.
166 *Ibid* Butler, 189.
authorial claims that derive from implied, career and historical authors; the way that these claims 
function with respect to the critic’s argument; and their patterns of use among the articles.

Analysis of Claims that Infer Implied, Career and Historical Authors

In her 2013 article, “Implied Author, Authorial Audience, and Context: Form and History 
in Neo-Aristotelian Rhetorical Theory,” Dan Shen poses a question echoed by others who have 
grappled over the years with the notion of the implied author: “Why not just have the term 
‘author’? What is the point of having the ‘implied author’ in today’s critical context?” In 
response, Shen argues, “The necessity for having the ‘implied author’ today arises, to a certain 
extent, from the ambiguity of the term “author.” In the intervening fifty plus years since 
Wayne Booth first introduced the implied author in The Rhetoric of Fiction (1961), debates have 
raged over the usefulness and validity of the term, particularly with respect to clarifying the very 
idea of the “author.” Implied author detractors, including Gerard Genette, Mieke Bal, Ansgar 
Nünning, Michael Toolan, Nilli Diengott, Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller argue that the 
implied author should be permanently laid to rest while proponents such as Seymour Chatman, 
James Phelan, Peter Rabinowitz, and Dan Shen claim that the notion serves a range of purposes 
such as helping to distinguish between different authorial personas operating under the same 
name. Shen, for instance, argues that the implied author allows readers to discern authorial 
personas produced by the same writer of different texts: “Given such differences in authorial 
stance among the narratives bearing the same person’s name, it is both desirable and necessary to 
distinguish the implied author of one narrative from that of another.”

While Shen makes a valid point—many would agree that the authorial persona of *Pride and Prejudice* differs from the authorial persona of Jane Austen’s canon—this section probes whether these differences matter to interpretation. In other words, it analyzes if the kinds of claims differ in nature and the way they are used when, say, the authorial persona inferred from *Pride and Prejudice*, the “implied” Austen, compared to the use of the authorial persona inferred from Austen’s canon, a persona that Wayne Booth characterizes as the “career” author. This section further explores whether readings using an author inferred from his or her fiction and supplemented with knowledge from biographical sources—what I call an “historical” author—materially differ in their approach and findings from readings that inferred an implied or career author—an author inferred strictly from fictional works. As a response to these queries, this section offers a comparative analysis of how the various author forms function in the actual practice of literary criticism for the articles in my study.

My findings may surprise scholars on both sides of the implied author debate. To those who have declared the death of the implied author, my study finds that such a pronouncement may be premature: the notion appears to be alive and well even though the articles do not specifically identify the implied author as such. Additionally, to those who promote the notion of the implied author, my study suggests that it does not seem to matter to interpretation whether the articles evoke the implied, career or historical author. As previous examples have shown, the articles infer authorial values and beliefs in nearly all instances in which an author is inferred from a fictional work. Moreover, the articles use this inferred authorial knowledge in similar ways to support their readings. Put another way, my findings suggest that it does not seem to matter to interpretive outcomes whether one or several novels are used or whether biographical sources are added. However, I would caution that my findings present just one of many ways to
analyze interpretive difference. I hope that my research will invite further inquiry into variations in the kinds of interpretations that are potentially possible from the use of different author forms.

As is well known, Booth conceives of the implied author as a textual effect that is created from the values and norms of a fictional work. Moreover, Booth claims that each individual work yields a different implied author: “Regardless of how sincere an author may try to be, his different works will imply different versions, different ideal combinations of norms. Just as one’s personal letters imply different versions of oneself…so the writer sets himself out with a different air depending on the needs of particular works.”169 Thus, each work produces a unique version of the author, or a unique implied author. Booth suggests that readers who draw conclusions about the author from a single text infer an implied author. In my study, I use Booth’s definition and presume that an implied author is inferred if an article makes authorial claims based on a single fictional text and no biographical sources.

Alternately, Booth’s “career” author is inferred from more than one fictional text by the same author. Booth defines the career author as “what is implied by the writing of a sequence of works.”170 I use Booth’s definition to characterize authors inferred from more than one fictional text by the same author and no biographical sources. Finally, I put authors that are inferred from one or more fictional texts and biographical sources into a different category because the presence of these sources triggers a link to the “historical” author. Although the presence of biographical sources does not necessarily presume the historical author, I nevertheless call this the “historical” author to distinguish it from authors inferred solely from fictional works. My

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“historical author” differs from Shen’s “real author” or “historical self,” who she claims is not the writer of the text but, instead, exists “outside the writing process.”171

The following examples illustrate the ways that implied, career and historical authors function in the articles in my study. Robert Heilman’s “Hardy’s Sue Bridehead,” for instance, illustrates how implied authors operate in literary criticism. Heilman argues that in *Jude the Obscure*, Sue is Hardy’s “everyman” because she demonstrates the tension between a life governed by reason and a life governed by emotion. To support his claim, Heilman alleges that a reading of Sue demonstrates Hardy’s awareness of the dangers associated with living by rationality alone: “In Sue, Hardy detects the specific form of the danger [of living strictly by rationality]: the tendency of the skeptical intelligence to rule out the non-rational foundations of life and security. Sue cuts herself off from the two principal such foundations—from the community as it is expressed in traditional beliefs and institutions and from the physical reality of sex.”172 Heilman extrapolates Hardy’s convictions about the need to balance rational thought with emotional decisions to reflect on the complexities of Sue’s character. Heilman infers an implied Hardy because Heilman derives his knowledge about Hardy only from *Jude* and does not use any biographical sources in the article.

Another article, Leonard Deen’s “Heroism and Pathos in Hardy’s *Return of the Native,*” illustrates how critics infer a “career” author by using multiple fictional texts to draw inferences. In his article, Deen analyzes the protagonists from *The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the D’Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure*, and *The Return of the Native* as a means to infer Hardy’s putative beliefs about the inflexibility of society’s ethical conventions: “Michael Henchard, Tess

171 Shen argues that the person who writes a text is the implied author: “The difference between the “implied author” (second self) and the “real author” (first self) is the difference between the person assuming a certain air or a particular stance when writing the text and the same person in daily life out of the writing process.” *Ibid* Shen 142.

Durbeyfeld, Jude Fawley, and Sue Bridehead are all self-destructive, and self-accusation is an essential cause of their suffering. What accuses them, and Clym as well, is not so much conscience as superego—which defines more exactly Hardy’s belief that such tortures result in large part from taking internally and too seriously the external and rigid dictates of the moral codes of society.”173 Deen draws his conclusions about Hardy’s convictions solely from Hardy’s novels and does not use biographical information in his article; thus, Deen infers a “career” author.

Finally, Ruth Perry’s “Sleeping with Mr. Collins” infers an historical Austen because Perry makes claims about Austen based not only on Pride and Prejudice but also on biographical sources. Perry argues that Charlotte’s marriage to Collins offers a window into the transitional historical moment between marrying for practicality versus marrying for love and, like many critics who infer authorial knowledge from Austen’s fiction, Perry equates the views of Austen with those of Elizabeth Bennet: “Both Jane Austen and her character, Elizabeth Bennet, are sympathetic to Charlotte’s cheerful adjustment and genuinely glad to see her make the best of ‘her home and her housekeeping, her parish and her poultry.’”174 In addition, Perry makes claims about Austen based on her private correspondence. She concludes, for instance, that Austen is a pragmatist from a letter to her niece, Fanny Knight, and that Austen understood the competing impulses of marrying for practicality versus sentimental love from her letters to Harris Bigg-Wither (who proposed marriage to Austen): “That Jane Austen herself understood both impulses for marrying—the older, unromantic, practical reasons as well as the newer demand for sexual

attraction and sentimental love—can be seen by her double response to Harris Bigg-Wither, who proposed to her in 1802.”

Over half of the articles in my study (130 out of 235) infer authorial knowledge from fiction. Of the different author forms, the majority of articles infer what I define as the historical author: 61% (eighty) infer the historical author; 27% (thirty-five) infer an implied author; and, 12% (fifteen) infer a career author. However, the percentage of critics inferring an implied author as opposed to a career or historical author probably overstates the degree to which critics infer knowledge about authors from a single fictional text because I selected articles for my study that, from their titles, appeared to analyze only single works. If I had included articles that seemed to analyze multiple titles by either Austen or Hardy, the percentage of implied authors would likely have been lower, and the percentage of career authors would have been higher. However, despite the fact that I only examined articles explicitly analyzing a single fictional text, critics still referenced more than one work of fiction by the author in one third of the cases. We cannot know whether critics using implied authors—i.e., those who infer knowledge about authors from one fictional text and no biographical sources—do so because they write on just one text or because they believe that specific knowledge about authors can best be gleaned from a single text. Nevertheless, that so many critics use multiple works of fiction to make claims about authors despite the fact that they were explicitly focusing on just one text suggests an underlying conviction that readers can better understand authors by taking a holistic look at their canon: although it does not garner much discussion in academic circles, the “career” author appears to be thriving.

175 Ibid Perry, 126.
176 The one third figure combines essays that use multiple novels by Austen and Hardy from the historical and career author categories: 77 of the 235 essays used more than one Austen or Hardy novel to infer knowledge about those authors.
For the most part, articles in my study infer from Austen’s and Hardy’s novels the authors’ values and beliefs, regardless of whether the articles infer an implied, career or historical author. Typical claims made by critics inferring an implied Hardy suggest that, based on his fiction, Hardy critiques middle class values and marriage laws and indicteds human instinct. Similarly, typical claims made by critics inferring an historical Hardy argue that his fiction reveals Hardy’s conception of fate, his indictment of the Oxford education system, and his progressive attitude towards women. Critics inferring knowledge about the “career” Hardy make claims that do not materially differ from those made about either the implied or historical Hardy: Hardy is contemptuous of orthodox dogma, values lovingkindness above all other human attributes, and is skeptical of Christianity. Critics inferring an implied, career, and historical Hardy all make claims about his beliefs—Hardy is a fatalist, disparages dogma and promotes marriage reforms. In addition, they make claims about his values: Hardy damns the values of the middle class and the Oxford system of education, and he esteems women and lovingkindness. More broadly, the claims collectively focus on Hardy’s putative cynicism regarding societal norms and hope in the possibility of change.

Not only are the types of claims made about the implied, career and historical Hardy very similar to each other, they are also similar to the types of claims made about the implied, career and historical Austen. Articles inferring an implied Austen suggest, for example, that Austen promotes a specifically English world, cautions against a consistently satiric stance towards life and subscribes to the values embodied by the Enlightenment. Critics inferring an historical Austen make similar claims about her values and beliefs: she values close friendships between women, celebrates moral individualism, and, challenges 18th century notions of propriety. Finally, critics inferring a career Austen suggest that Austen disapproves of instantaneous
intimacy, views marriage as a covenant that promotes the development of a civil society, and
interrogates patriarchal power.

For all three author forms—implied, career and historical—critics make similar kinds of
claims about Austen’s beliefs and values: Austen envisions an ideal world that largely maintains
the status quo even as she simultaneously resists certain conventions relating to her community.
The Austen articles largely suggest that Austen’s novels reveal Austen’s overall satisfaction with
the status quo; in contrast, the Hardy articles largely suggest that his novels reveal Hardy’s
dissatisfaction with the societal norms and desire to change particular conventions. Nevertheless,
claims about Hardy’s challenge to middle class values and human instinct are not very different
from claims about Austen’s challenge to 18th century propriety or her belief about the dangers of
a satiric outlook. In addition, the more optimistic aspects of Hardy’s beliefs, such as his
putatively progressive view towards women’s rights, mirror the more hopeful aspects about
Austen’s beliefs, such as her celebration of female friendships. More importantly, the types of
claims made about an implied, career and historical Austen and Hardy focus on their values and
beliefs about their social worlds.

However, although most of the authorial knowledge inferred from the fiction of Austen
and Hardy addresses their convictions, some knowledge is so trivial that it does not easily fall
into a general category. For example, one article that infers an implied Austen suggests that
readers know from *Pride and Prejudice* that Austen is intimately familiar with window
watching. Another suggests that *Pride* reveals Austen’s association of the Lake District lakes
with a woman in love with wild nature. Similarly, articles inferring an historical Austen from
*Pride and Prejudice* suggest that Elizabeth Bennet is Austen’s fantasy or that Austen shares
Elizabeth’s shyness. Finally, an article inferring a career Austen from a reading of *Northanger
Abbey suggests that Austen has an acute need for privacy. Most of these claims are observations about Austen’s personality and preferences that do not necessarily confer her values and beliefs. At the same time, they do purport to reveal aspects of Austen’s character that, broadly, may connect to her convictions. Austen’s putative familiarity with window watching, for instance, connects to her alleged belief about the importance of conducting oneself properly at all times, since it is not possible to know when one is being observed. While the more trivial claims made about Austen and Hardy from their fiction are curious, the vast majority of claims address their values and beliefs about the social worlds that they inhabit.

The next section seeks further to identify potential differences in both the nature of inferred authorial values and beliefs as well as the ways that this authorial knowledge is used in readings to assess whether the distinctions between author forms are important for interpretive purposes. In particular, it analyzes three articles that interpret *Pride and Prejudice* from three different decades. Each article infers a different author form. The first, written in 1977, infers a career Austen; the second, written in 1985, infers an implied Austen; and, the third, written in 2000, infers an historical Austen. Evaluating the ways that critics use the different forms across three time periods offers one way to identify potential interpretive differences in their types and use of claims about the author.

The first of the three articles, David Monaghan’s “The Novel and Its Age: A study of Theme and Structure in *Pride and Prejudice*” (1977), argues that *Pride and Prejudice* is Austen’s “most assertive and unambiguous” expression of Edmund Burke’s Conservative ideal of moral equality between the classes. In contrast, Monaghan claims that other Austen novels deviate from this Conservative ideal by asserting the moral superiority of the gentry over the aristocracy and middle class which, in his opinion, reflects Austen’s vacillating position
regarding moral equality. To support his claim, he argues that an analysis of these other works reveals Austen’s (changeable) conviction that the gentry is more committed than the aristocracy and middle class to meeting its responsibilities to the community at large: “In her other works [besides *Pride and Prejudice*], Jane Austen… [suggests] that the gentry is more likely to fulfill its social obligations than the ranks above and below it.”\(^{177}\) As further evidence of Austen’s putatively on-again off-again bias towards the gentry, Monaghan analyzes the family heritage of Catherine Morland (*Northanger Abbey*), The Dashwood sisters (*Sense and Sensibility*), Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*), Emma (*Emma*) and Anne Elliot (*Persuasion*): “Jane Austen’s sense of the moral superiority of the gentry is indicated most clearly by the fact that this is the class from which, with the exception of Darcy, all her heroes and heroines, upon whom is placed the burden of maintaining and restoring social unity, derive.”\(^{178}\)

Additionally, Monaghan suggests that Austen’s alleged antagonism towards the aristocracy stems from her presumption that the aristocracy will contaminate members of the other classes with their bad habits, and he draws his conclusion from readings of *Mansfield Park* (MP), *Northanger Abbey* (NA), and *Sense and Sensibility* (SS): “Jane Austen’s hostility towards aristocrats is based very much on a sense that, like Yates (MP), they can infect the other ranks with their vices. Thus, whenever members of the gentry like General Tilney (NA) and Robert Ferrars (SS), the former of whom lists Lady Fraser and the Marquis of Longtown amongst his friends, and the latter of whom boasts of his intimacy with Lord Courtland and Lady Elliot, mingle with the aristocracy, they become tainted by them.”\(^{179}\) In contrast, Monaghan claims that the marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth confirms Austen’s more strongly held position that

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\(^{178}\) *Ibid* Monaghan, 152.

\(^{179}\) *Ibid* Monaghan, 153.
members of the gentry, middle class and aristocracy are morally equal: “The union of aristocracy and gentry/middle class is not easily achieved but it is possible, Jane Austen claims, once both Darcy and Elizabeth realize that, despite their very different social roles, the two groups share the same moral values. Elizabeth summarizes Jane Austen’s point when she refutes Lady Catherine’s claim that she is Darcy’s inferior.” Monaghan infers Austen’s convictions from her fiction to support his overarching argument about the ways that her novels deviate from and conform to Burke’s Conservative ideal of moral equality. Further, Monaghan infers Austen’s beliefs solely from her canon without additional supporting biographical sources and thus infers a “career” Austen.

In the second of the three articles, “No Love for Lydia: The Fate of Desire in Pride and Prejudice” (1985), Dennis Allen infers an implied Austen’s values and beliefs from Pride and Prejudice: he does not cite Austen’s other novels, nor does he use knowledge from biographical sources. Allen argues that a close examination of Pride demonstrates the ways that repressed desire structures Elizabeth and Darcy’s relationship—because Elizabeth and Darcy cannot directly express their desire for each other, that desire is displaced onto other avenues, such as dances. To support his claim, Allen suggests that his reading of Pride illuminates Austen’s belief about the need to control outward displays of emotional attachments: “This analysis will clarify Austen’s own view of desire and explain why, beyond the dictates of decorum, she is concerned to constrain the force of ‘passion.’” In addition, Allen claims that Elizabeth and Darcy displace their physical desire onto visual communication and walks and, from this analysis,

180 Ibid Monaghan, 165.
Allen infers Austen’s putative belief that desire is elusive: “Yet, Austen suggests, pleasure continually eludes us, and desire pursues it through a series of deferrals and displacements.”\textsuperscript{182}

Further, Allen argues that \textit{Pride and Prejudice} reflects Austen’s beliefs regarding how and when desire should be satisfied. Allen first analyzes the episode in which Elizabeth, about to embark on her trip with the Gardiners rues her sister Jane’s absence. According to Allen, Elizabeth recognizes that she is more likely to have a successful outing with some disappointment built in and, from this, Allen argues that Austen believes that repressed desire ultimately yields the greatest satisfaction: “Desire, Austen suggests, can only be directly acknowledged and satisfied after it has been repressed and any expectation of its fulfillment given up.” Allen concludes that in the conflict between desire and repression, “Austen finally sides with repression.” Moreover, Allen suggests from his reading of \textit{Pride} that Austen views unbridled desire as a direct threat to the social order.\textsuperscript{183} Just as Monaghan infers Austen’s beliefs with respect to the moral equality between the classes, so, too, does Allen infer her beliefs about the proper ways to express desire. In addition, both scholars use these putative beliefs to support their overarching claims about \textit{Pride and Prejudice} despite the fact that one draws from all six of Austen’s novels while the other draws from just one.

In the third article, “‘A Nobler Fall of Ground’: Nation and Narration in \textit{Pride and Prejudice} (2000), Susan Reilly infers Austen’s beliefs from both biographical sources and \textit{Pride and Prejudice}; Reilly therefore infers what I define as the historical author. Reilly argues that a reading of \textit{Pride} reveals Austen’s distrust of American ideals of liberty because of Austen’s putative belief that these ideals weaken the English model of domestic stability—a model that is intimately tied to the private control of land. Reilly cites knowledge from biographies, including\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Ibid} Allen, 435.\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Ibid} Allen, 437.
Park Honan’s *Jane Austen and the American Revolution* and David Nokes’s *Jane Austen: A Life* as well as passages from R.W. Chapman’s collection of Austen’s letters to establish Austen’s familiarity with—and dislike of—America. While Reilly uses biographical sources as evidence of Austen’s knowledge of America and its ideals, she uses *Pride and Prejudice* to infer Austen’s allegedly staunch support of English nationalism. To bolster her claim, Reilly quotes Elizabeth’s delighted reaction upon first seeing Pemberley and concludes, “Pemberley Woods is a likely enough spot from which to explore Austen’s views on English nationalism and domestic tourism” even as Reilly allows that “It may seem a strange landing from which to launch a survey of the author’s views on America.”184 Throughout the article, Reilly infers Austen’s beliefs about English nationalism from the topography of *Pride and Prejudice*: “‘Nobility’ for Austen is literally inscribed on English land: Darcy’s ‘nobler fall of ground’, bestowed on ‘disinterested’ and deserving gentlefolk, displays its lordly ‘eminence’ in a nature Providentially arranged, its taste, and the moral fitness to govern enjoyed by its owners. And it keeps the English nation a nation by displaying the class-determined and land-linked solidarity of the country of which it is a part.”185 Reilly concludes, “‘Liberty’ for Austen is Bingley’s ‘liberty of a manor’ at Netherfield.”186 Reilly posits Austen’s nationalistic inclinations from descriptions of private property in *Pride and Prejudice* to bolster her argument that, for Austen, American ideals pose a direct threat to the established English order.

Monaghan uses a “career” Austen to infer Austen’s beliefs about the moral equality between the aristocracy, gentry and middle class; Allen uses an “implied” Austen to infer Austen’s beliefs about the necessity to repress desire; and, Reilly uses an “historical” Austen to

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infer her conviction about the ways that American ideals threaten the established order in England. The nature of these inferences is similar in that they all relate to Austen’s values and beliefs regarding the relationship between individuals and society. Thus, the three articles make similar kinds of claims about Austen and, further, use the claims to support the broader argument, regardless of whether the article infers an implied, historical or career author. At the same time, the use of additional sources such as multiple works of fiction (in the case of the career author) or biographical sources (in the case of the historical author) appears to invite more expansive claims because of the added “evidence.” From his exploration of all six Austen novels, Monaghan identifies putatively competing impulses that Austen has regarding moral equality between the classes. Similarly, Reilly bolsters her case about Austen’s alleged denouncement of American ideals with a variety of biographies that establish Austen’s familiarity with America. In contrast, Allen’s claims about Austen’s purported privileging of repression over desire are narrower than Monaghan’s and Reilly’s claims, perhaps because Allen bases his inferences solely on *Pride and Prejudice*.

Another way to test for interpretive differences between the different author forms is to further probe how the articles use knowledge about the forms in their readings of texts. My findings suggest that, broadly speaking, authorial knowledge inferred from fiction is either central or peripheral to the major claims. Interestingly, an analysis of the relative centrality to the arguments of authorial knowledge inferred from fiction for articles that infer implied, historical and career authors identifies little meaningful interpretive difference. Figure 16 reveals that claims made about authors from their fiction are central to the argument for articles creating the historical and career authors in approximately three quarters of the cases and peripheral to the argument in approximately one quarter.
Figure 16: Relative Centrality of Beliefs to Argument by Author Form

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author Form</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Peripheral</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implied Authors</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Authors</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career authors</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Claims about implied authors are central to the argument in about two thirds of the articles and peripheral to the argument in approximately one third.\(^{187}\) As the numbers indicate, claims made about historical and career authors are more central to the argument than claims made about the implied author.

We might expect the percentage of articles inferring implied and career authors to move in lock step since one is basically an extension of the other in that neither uses biographical sources; that is, we might expect that claims about implied and career authors would be equally central to the argument. Instead, critics inferring historical and career authors appear to have more in common because their arguments rely on authorial knowledge based on multiple sources (either fiction or non-fiction) to roughly the same extent (See Figure 16). However, I speculate that these findings reflect that a career author is a *more compelling* version of the implied author because critics make claims about career authors from multiple fictional texts, which, as the Monaghan example shows, appears to invite more expansive claims than those from a single fictional text. Similarly, historical authors invite more expansive claims than implied authors because biographical sources offer additional evidence. Thus, it is not surprising that claims made about career and historical authors are central to the argument in a slightly higher percentage of cases than they are for implied authors.

\(^{187}\) In raw numbers, of the 35 essays that infer an implied author, the resulting claims are central to the arguments of 23 and peripheral to the arguments of 12; of the 80 essays that infer an historical author, the resulting claims are central to the arguments of 60 and peripheral to the arguments of 20; and, of the 15 essays that infer a career author, the resulting claims are central to the arguments of 12 and peripheral to the arguments of 3.
My findings suggest, then, that the introduction of additional sources—fictional or biographical—empowers critics to make grander authorial claims. Because of their additional persuasiveness, I hypothesize that critics make these claims more central to their argument. I speculate that the discrepancy between the way that claims are used from implied and career authors is not so much an interpretive difference as a matter of degree: the kinds of claims made about career and historical authors are basically an expansion of the kinds of claims made by the implied author and, as such, these claims are slightly more central to the argument than claims about implied authors.

I hope that my research will open the door to further inquiry into the questions posed by Shen: “Why not just have the term ‘author’? What is the point of having the ‘implied author’ in today’s critical context?” Given the lack of interpretive difference between claims made from different author forms in my study coupled with a resistance by critics to adopting the lexicon of these forms, having a single term—author—does not seem so outlandish. A movement towards the term “author” would, then, designate the author as a broad-based placeholder for any author form. While this solution may seem unsatisfying on at least one level—it does not recognize the myriad authorial personas that derive from different texts or combinations of texts—it does recognize the lack of clarity regarding the ways that critics use knowledge about authors in literary analysis and the fact that this lack of clarity does not appear to significantly influence interpretive outcomes. In a sense, the simple term “author” embraces the ambiguity to which Shen and others point. For better or worse, we can never know what critics mean by their use of the word “author” and, ultimately, the reader’s knowledge about the critic’s intentions seems to have minimal bearing on interpretation for the articles in my study. Given the ongoing debates
over “the author,” it is likely that the term will never realize a standard meaning in literary studies but, then again, my initial findings suggest that it may be of little consequence.
Chapter 4

Why We Care About Authors

Over the course of my research, I was not surprised to find a frequent recourse to authors in literary criticism that was relatively consistent over time. What I did not expect was that critics would use this authorial knowledge so differently. The first three chapters demonstrated that, in their readings of texts, Austen critics rely more heavily on both authorial intention and authorial beliefs inferred from fiction than Hardy critics. Hardy critics, by contrast, rely more heavily biographical sources—biographies and manuscript sources—than Austen critics. These findings give shape to an emerging narrative about an inclination to evoke authors, even when material is relatively scarce: lacking “sufficient” information in Austen’s correspondence or other non-fiction writings, Austen scholars seek alternate means to obtain insights into her mind. The first three chapters additionally noted intrinsic factors to fictional texts that appear to encourage authorial involvement. When an author introduces narrative ambiguity through techniques such as irony and free indirect discourse, critics more frequently turn to that author for clarification of meaning.

This last chapter theorizes these different observations by offering possibilities for why we use authorial knowledge in various ways. Drawing on research from a diverse array of fields including psychological theories of value, evolutionary psychology, and cognitive cultural studies this chapter proposes a series of linked approaches that overlap in complex ways. Theories of value offer a lens through which to explore the ways that our material relationship to celebrity artifacts influences literary analysis; biocultural approaches offer a lens through which
to examine various mental processes used to “access” the author’s mind in readings of texts. The approaches that I probe are by no means exhaustive. Rather, they aim to show the wide range of possibilities that help to explain why scholars keep returning to authors in literary interpretation. Viewed collectively, the various possibilities suggest that multiple vectors over-determine our interest in authors.

Theories of Value, Authors, and Literary Analysis

The use of authorial knowledge in readings of texts appears to be related to the value that we place on objects that have come into physical contact with a famous person whom we value: in the case of artifacts, the object becomes “shared” because we like it the same way that the celebrity did. Contemporary culture is rife with examples of consumers paying exorbitant sums for seemingly ordinary objects that have been owned by celebrities. In 2008, for instance, a rabid Boston sports fan buried a t-shirt worn by World Series winning Red Sox player David Ortiz in the concrete foundation of the new Yankee stadium supposedly in order to “curse” the Yankee rivals. The deed was soon discovered, and the Yankees paid a considerable sum of money to unearth the shirt, which later sold at auction for over $175,000. By contrast, a similar David Ortiz t-shirt retails on Amazon for $22.99. Similarly, in February of 2013, a private collector paid $629,000 for John F. Kennedy’s Air Force One leather bomber jacket. Amazon.com sells bomber jackets that look identical to JFK’s for $179.99. The lesson here, of course, is that objects that have come into contact with famous—or infamous—individuals have far greater value than objects that have not had comparable contact. In other words, provenance matters.

But how does the value we place on objects relate to the use of authorial knowledge? My research suggests that literary critics often display an interest in the back-story of the author’s relationship to the text that is similar to the interest in objects owned, worn by or associated with
celebrities. David Ortiz’s baseball jersey and John F. Kennedy’s bomber jacket immediately appreciate in value because of their association with famous individuals. Similarly, I hypothesize that scholars associating a textual interpretation with the author may perceive that the value of the interpretation increases because the author becomes a figurative “friend”—almost an endorsement—when we like what she likes about her work. Scholars citing Austen’s love of Elizabeth Bennet or making a cursory reference to a passing comment by Hardy may believe that they raise the value of their readings by forging a metaphorical relationship with the historical author. To support my claim and probe its meaning, I first turn to Claudia Johnson’s research on the value that individuals place on artifacts associated with Jane Austen and then to Yale psychologists George Newman and Paul Bloom’s theories of value—theories that echo the work of Walter Benjamin.

Incorporating into their critical readings references to artifacts that have associations with the author appears to raise the perceived value of interpretation in much the same way that JFK confers value to his bomber jacket. In Claudia Johnson’s *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, for example, Johnson explores the influence of a range of celebrities and celebrity culture on our reading practices, and she analyzes the ways that Jane Austen enthusiasts use artifacts to construct Austen. In her chapter “Jane Austen’s House,” Johnson observes that the relics in Jane Austen’s House Museum that were owned or used by Austen, including her music books, jewelry and a donkey cart, knowingly invite us “to make believe that the things before us bring us closer into Jane Austen’s presence.”

Critics in my study similarly connect the world of Austen’s fiction to relics from Austen’s life. In “The Original of Pemberley,” Donald Greene argues that Austen models

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188 *Ibid* Johnson *Cults and Cultures*, 154.
Pemberley, Darcy’s estate in *Pride and Prejudice*, after the stately home of Chatsworth. Greene attempts to forge a physical connection between Chatsworth and Austen by proving that Austen visited the “great house.” While acknowledging that no hard evidence exists of such a visit, Greene nevertheless asserts, “A hitherto unknown incident in [Austen’s] life…makes [a Chatsworth visit] probable,” and Greene proceeds to detail an 1806 journey by Mrs. Austen, Jane and Cassandra to Stoneleigh Abbey, from which the women toured a number of great houses (although Chatsworth is not specifically named).\(^{189}\) Further, Greene asserts that Austen must have visited Chatsworth based on the detail with which she describes Pemberley in *Pride*: “At some time or other, one feels Jane Austen must have visited Chatsworth herself: in those pre-photographic days, only her own sharp eyes could have carried away so much vivid and authentic detail.”\(^{190}\) By establishing Austen’s physical connection to Chatsworth, Greene extends the connection to Pemberley, which appears to raise the value of his reading.

However, Austen enthusiasts and Austen critics do not necessarily require artifacts that have a physical connection to Austen as long as those artifacts give the appearance of embodying her in some way. Johnson observes that many artifacts in the Austen museum, such as the piano and dining room table, are period correct but have no other physical connection to Austen. Yet, Johnson claims that the artifacts are “displayed not only on account of their capacity in some ways to authenticate Jane Austen…but also, and even more important, to impersonate and to embody her and in the process make it possible for us to connect with her, even as they scrupulously and candidly declare their insufficiency.”\(^{191}\) Put another way, artifacts such as the piano and dining room table “declare their insufficiency” because Austen has no connection to

\(^{190}\) *Ibid* Greene, 9.
\(^{191}\) *Ibid* Johnson’s *Cults and Cultures*, 160.
these pieces. In seeming contradiction of this fact, the overseers suggest that the artifacts nevertheless “embody” and “authenticate” Austen even though the piano and dining room table are not very different from the Amazon version of JFK’s bomber jacket.

In “Making Heritage and History: The 1894 Illustrated *Pride and Prejudice,*” Andrew Maunder makes a similar move to the Austen museum overseers when he explores how a late nineteenth century edition of *Pride and Prejudice,* complete with a new set of “wholesome” illustrations, came to embody Austen (Austen died in 1817). Maunder argues that at the end of the nineteenth century a variety of factors including high unemployment, poor standards of national health, and alcoholism fueled a backlash against modernity and a yearning for simpler (“colonial”) times, of which Austen was a part. Maunder claims that the new illustrations in the 1894 *Pride and Prejudice* mask Austen’s ironic subtext and present the novel as a “wholesome ideology of a bygone age.”192 Further, Maunder claims that the illustrations “quickly assumed almost mythic status as a cultural signifier.”193 Maunder concludes that, as with any visual image, what “signifies” Austen is not fixed but is “the product of wider cultural and historical determinants.”194 Thus, Maunder demonstrates how artifacts—even when they are not contemporaneous with Austen—can still “embody” Austen in some way just as the piano and dining room table in the Austen museum similarly purport to capture the mythic Austen. To extrapolate from Maunder’s example, critics may evoke the “cult” of authors to establish connections that validate a reading. Even though Maunder allows that what “signifies” Austen has little bearing on her historical self, Maunder nevertheless perceives that he legitimates his reading by connecting it to an Austen-like figure.

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Kelly McDonald similarly evokes an Austen figure when he charts the 1833 travels of James Edward Austen-Leigh (Austen’s nephew and first biographer) to the great houses of Derbyshire with his wife and other assorted family members—a journey of which Austen was clearly not a part. In “Derbyshires Corresponding: Elizabeth Bennet and the Austen Tour of 1833,” McDonald demonstrates how the Austen-Leigh excursion mirrors the journey through Derbyshire of Elizabeth and the Gardiners in *Pride and Prejudice*. As McDonald explains, understanding the road that Elizabeth and the Gardiner’s took through Derbyshire “brings us that bit closer to understanding not only those early readers but also Jane Austen and her dearest creation, Elizabeth Bennet.”

For McDonald, the simple re-enactment of the journey taken by Elizabeth and the Gardiner’s “brings us that bit closer” to understanding Austen. That Austen’s relatives make the trip only strengthens the ties; Jane’s absence is insignificant.

As these examples show, the cult of Austen extends beyond artifacts with which she had a physical connection. In McDonald’s case, there is a perception that establishing ties between Austen and her fiction adds value to the fiction. In other cases, such as Maunder’s, the “cult” of Austen produces new readings. Few authors have inspired the cult-like followings of Austen, yet many authors—living and deceased—have large followings that similarly endow them with a mythic status that derives, in part, from associated artifacts. Attaching an authorial history to an interpretation of the author’s text may raise the perceived value of the analysis to both the scholar and the reader. This is one more reason that might help to explain why the complete severance between author and text has met with so much resistance in actual practice: theories of narrative that don’t take us to levels of communication beyond the text ignore what critics do.

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195 Kelly M. McDonald, “Derbyshires Corresponding: Elizabeth Bennet and the Austen Tour of 1833,” *Persuasions* 30 (2008), 158.
The research of George Newman and Paul Bloom empirically affirms Johnson’s findings by demonstrating that art objects primarily derive value from their direct associations with the artist; the work of Newman and Bloom reflects Walter Benjamin’s earlier ideas about the “aura” of an art object. In his 1955 article “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin suggests that original works of art have an “aura” that gets lost in reproduction, making copies substantially less valuable than the originals. As Benjamin explains, “That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art…The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition.” Benjamin claims that once a work is reproduced, it becomes “detached” from the artist and loses the physical connection that produces the “aura.” Benjamin further argues that copies nullify the experience of uniqueness: “By making many reproductions [the technique of reproduction] substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence.”

Paul Bloom introduces a notion of value similar to Benjamin’s aura; however Bloom uses the term “essence” to describe an object’s inherent nature. In How Pleasure Works: The New Science of Why We Like What We Like (2010), Bloom argues that all individuals and objects have an essence, which he defines as “an underlying nature that is not directly observable.” Bloom suggests that we may believe that an object associated with a particular person is imbued with his essence. Further, the object’s essence “provide[s] us with valuable and positive information about another person” One of Bloom’s studies shows that while individuals will pay a lot of money for a sweater owned by actor George Clooney, the price drops significantly if

197 Ibid Benjamin, 223.
the sweater has been sterilized because of the perception that its essence has been destroyed.200 Objects retaining their “aura” or “essence” are more valuable than those objects without, which may explain why mechanical reproductions are not as valuable as originals and why George Clooney’s sweater declines in value once it has been washed. Literary critics who infer authorial knowledge from fiction may likewise be attempting to evoke the author’s aura or essence, particularly if we understand the essence to be the author’s underlying character or personality. When critics claim that a reading of Jude the Obscure reveals Hardy’s disenchantment with organized religion or that an analysis of Pride and Prejudice reveals Austen’s commitment to the status quo, these critics putatively offer a glimpse of the author’s underlying being.

The inclination to mine this “essence” may explain, in part, why critics so frequently infer authorial knowledge from fiction, but it does not fully account for the peripheral use of authorial knowledge in readings. Why, for instance, would a critic cite Austen’s comment about the “light, bright and sparkling” nature of Pride and Prejudice when the comment does not have a clear interpretive purpose? A recently published theory of value by Yale psychologists Paul Bloom and George Newman effectively quantifies the notions of auras and essences and, in my opinion, likely accounts for the peripheral use of authorial knowledge in readings of texts. In their 2012 article “Art and Authenticity: The Importance of Originals in Judgments of Value,” Newman and Bloom seek to explain why we value original works of art more highly than identical skilled copies whose differences from the original are imperceptible to the eye, even the eye of most art critics and historians. Originals and identical duplicates afford the same visual pleasure, so logically we should value them equally. However, this does not happen. Originals are invariably worth more—and usually significantly more—than high quality copies.

200 Ibid Bloom, Pleasure: 19.
To explain this discrepancy in value, Newman and Bloom conducted a series of five experiments in which participants were exposed to hypothetical scenarios in which an original object was duplicated. The type of object varied across experiments. For example, one participant might have viewed a painting while another viewed a piece of furniture. In addition, Newman and Bloom varied the circumstances surrounding the creation of the original object and the duplicate to determine if the time, effort and money to produce an object influenced its value. On the basis of their findings, Newman and Bloom attributed the discrepancy in value between originals and duplicates to two key dimensions: the belief that the piece stemmed from a unique, creative process and the artist’s interaction with the work. As they explain, “the assessment of the art object as a unique creative act (performance) and the degree of physical contact with the original artist (contagion)” determine the value.”201 Both of these dimensions are inextricably tied to the history of the creation of the object. Thus, an identical duplicate of Van Gogh’s *Starry Night* will be worth much less than the original because 1) the copy did not result from a unique creative act and 2) the copy had no physical contact with the artist. In other words, there are qualities about the original that render it irreproducible.

In *How Pleasure Works*, Bloom offers the following historical case study that illustrates the importance of the unique act of creation and the physical contact with the artist to the value of a work. A newly discovered Vermeer, *The Disciples at Emmaus*, quickly became one of the most valuable paintings in the Netherlands in the 1930s. However, it was later found that the master forger, Han Van Meegeren, had painted *Emmaus*, and the painting immediately became a nearly worthless artifact. Nothing about the painting’s perceptible properties had changed except

for its direct associations with Vermeer, which likely explains why the painting plummeted in value to almost zero from its auction sale price of nearly $3M.202

Further, Newman and Bloom argue that the assessment of the art object as a unique creative act is tied to the effort of the artist. Rembrandt, for instance, painted *The Night Watch*, and this original creative work represents the completion of his effort. A forgery of *The Night Watch* represents the completion of the forger’s effort and is, on one level, an interpretation of the original. On a related note, a duplicate is the product of a different process altogether. Most importantly for my purposes, Newman and Bloom assert that the value we place on a work of art is related to our assumptions about the processes that gave rise to its existence. At a minimum, they claim that we value the person who made possible the original’s existence. The importance we attach to the person explains, in part, why we value so highly some contemporary art consisting of ordinary objects and why we do not value the efforts of forgers. Because of their associations with famous artists and the artist’s purposeful selection and arranging of certain elements, works such as Robert Smithson’s broken glass (“Map of Broken Glass”) and Jeff Koons’s Hoover vacuum cleaners assume higher monetary values than comparable piles of broken glass and comparable vacuum cleaners. Moreover, Newman and Bloom’s studies show that it is not just the person, but also the entire process leading up to the finished product, that adds value in our minds to a work of art. For example, participants in the studies valued more highly works that they believed took longer to finish than those that they believed were completed relatively quickly.

Of course, novels are not the same as works of art. Works of art have a biological component since the artist has physical contact with the object, which putatively endows it with...

an “aura” or “essence.” The presence of this essence makes purification possible, as the example of George Clooney’s sweater demonstrated: once his sweater was washed, its perceived value plummeted. In contrast, novels do not have physical contact with the author; therefore, the notions of “auras” and “contagion”—the belief that objects can take on a special quality through physical contact—are not directly applicable. Instead, novels are mental objects, like language. Even given these distinctions, however, Newman and Bloom’s findings regarding the value placed on the creative process may still help to explain why scholars use authorial knowledge peripherally in their readings. I hypothesize that these scholars connect their textual interpretations to the author—the source of the process that gave rise to the text’s existence—because they implicitly believe that the association increases the value of the interpretation.

When a critic cites in passing Austen’s concern that *Pride and Prejudice* is “too light, bright and sparkling,” he or she may do so because including Austen’s own testimony validates the critic’s analysis, even though it is peripheral to the critic’s point. In addition, the critic seems to imbue that analysis with Austen’s “essence.”

Newman and Bloom’s notion of “contagion” may likewise be useful as a means to explain the peripheral use of authorial knowledge. As Newman and Bloom remind us, objects handled by famous people may acquire in the minds of the public a special quality that makes the objects more valuable than their ordinary counterparts. JFK’s bomber jacket is more valuable than a comparable one purchased from Amazon because JFK had physical contact with his jacket. Clearly, the concept of contagion does not map directly to the evocation of the author by literary critics because the author does not have direct physical contact with literary criticism. Still, the notion of contagion might still be useful in a metaphorical sense. By introducing authorial knowledge into readings, scholars arguably offer the illusion that the author has had
contact with the analysis. In a sense, the critic suggests that the author is somehow present in the reading; the author’s voice and the critic’s, perhaps, seem to blend. The scholar commenting on Austen’s critical eye towards *Pride and Prejudice* suggests that Austen has metaphorically touched the reading in a way that severing the author from the interpretation denies. This notion of contagion maps even more directly onto first editions, which have more direct associations with the author than later versions.

William Goetz’s article analyzing the role of civil marriages in *Jude the Obscure* offers an opportunity to examine how notions of creation and contagion can be used to explain peripheral references to the author in literary criticism. Goetz argues that a reading of *Jude* suggests that when civil marriages become cruel, they deviate from the law of nature and should be dissolvable.203 Goetz could make this argument solely through a textual analysis of Sue’s ill-fated relationships. However, to justify his reading of the novel, Goetz cites a letter from Hardy to his friend Edmund Gosse, in which Hardy writes, “It is curious that some of the [news]papers should look upon the novel as a manifesto on ‘the marriage question,’ (although of course, [the novel] involves [the marriage question.])”204 At first, this passage seems to contradict Goetz’s reading because Hardy claims that *Jude* is *not* a manifesto on marriage. However, Goetz extracts from Hardy’s comments the parenthetical aside acknowledging that the novel *involves* the marriage question and, from this, justifies his reading. The aside does not have much interpretive value; it is but an afterthought to a contrary claim. That Goetz chooses to use this passage that seems to be at cross-purposes to his argument suggests the lengths to which critics sometimes go to evoke the author or to secure some kind of authorial legitimation.

In addition to using Hardy’s aside to justify his reading, Goetz may be quoting Hardy’s comments because they offer a window into the creative process that gave rise to *Jude the Obscure*. Newman and Bloom’s claims about the importance of the process of creation to the value of an object might suggest that Goetz adds value to his own “object”—his interpretation—by including Hardy’s thoughts. In addition, by invoking Hardy’s comments about the marriage aspects of the novel, Goetz provides Hardy’s metaphorical touch—even his implicit approval—which we might read as a version of Newman and Bloom’s notion of contagion. Goetz, then, might perceive that his reading “appreciates” in interpretive value as a result of both the insight into Hardy’s thinking and the suggestion of Hardy’s indirect intervention in Goetz’s reading.

K. St. John Damstra’s analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* offers another example of the way in which Newman and Bloom’s notions of creation and contagion help to explain the peripheral use of authorial knowledge. In “The Case Against Charlotte Lucas,” Damstra argues that Charlotte orchestrates the marriage between Elizabeth and Darcy as a plot to secure Darcy’s patronage for the church, which will, by extension, benefit Collins, Charlotte’s husband. To emphasize that the reader should not underestimate Austen’s delight in subtlety, Damstra quotes Austen’s comparison of her writing to a “little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush.” Damstra may quote Austen to legitimate her (Damstra’s) unconventional interpretation of Charlotte’s motives. In addition, Damstra’s reference to the two inches wide of ivory ties her reading to Austen’s creation of her novels just as Goetz’s comment about Hardy’s surprise that *Jude the Obscure* is read as a marriage manifesto ties Goetz’s interpretation to *Jude*’s creative process. Although Goetz uses Hardy’s letter to justify his reading of the novel

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while Damstra uses Austen’s letter as a point of interest about Austen’s writing process, both passages appear to add value to the interpretation by connecting the author and interpretation.

**Biocultural Approaches to Authors in Literary Criticism**

Theories of value invite us to consider how the author’s physical relationship to a text influences interpretation: it seems likely that our interest in the processes of production connects to the use of authorial knowledge in readings. In contrast, approaches in evolutionary psychology and cognitive cultural studies that explore how and why reader’s access minds may explain other instances in which critics seek recourse to the author. Evolutionary psychology is the study of human cognition and behavior with respect to their evolutionary origins; it attempts to identify traits that are evolved biological adaptations, as well as side effects and compromises of those adaptations. Evolutionary psychology has been controversial both in the social sciences and humanities for a number of reasons. For instance, some scholars claim that it ignores human difference, argues for biological determinism, privileges nature over culture, and suggests that human nature is fixed and unchangeable.\(^{206}\) However, as British philosopher Janet Radcliffe Richards explains, the claims of evolutionary psychology “are about the origins and depth of particular tendencies.” Moreover, Radcliffe and other evolutionary psychologists recognize individual agency: “[Evolutionary psychology] does not suggest for a moment that any particular emotion is overwhelming to the extent of preventing self-control or rational judgment.”\(^{207}\)

Evolutionary psychology is useful for my exploration of why scholars care so deeply about authors because I speculate that our investment is tied to both biological and cultural factors.

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That is, neither one approach nor the other can fully account for the reasons that literary scholarship turns to authors time and again.

Building on the insights of evolutionary psychology, cognitive cultural studies is an interdisciplinary approach to literature and culture that incorporates insights from a diverse array of fields including neuroscience, anthropology, cognitive linguistics and philosophy of mind. Lisa Zunshine describes cognitive cultural studies as “an interdisciplinary field that studies the relationship between the ‘evolved human brain’ and the ‘the particular interpretations carried by particular cultures.’”208 One reason that cognitive and evolutionary approaches are controversial is because they seem to presume that select traits and behaviors, such as desire and oral storytelling, are universal. In particular, the notion of underlying universals has troubled many scholars in literary studies, which has generally moved away from universals and toward cultural specificity. As Brian Boyd argues, however, biocultural approaches make it possible “to explain cultural differences in a way that insisting humans are completely ‘culturally constructed’ cannot.”209

Lisa Zunshine’s work on Theory of Mind (ToM) offers one explanation for why critics seek recourse to an author’s mind to resolve textual ambiguity. Specifically, Zunshine claims that critics sometimes make assertions of authorial intention when they deem the accounts of characters or narrators to be unreliable. Theory of Mind, which derives from research on children with autistic spectrum disorders, is defined as “our evolved cognitive ability to attribute thoughts, desires, and intentions to other people and to ourselves.”210 We exercise TOM, also known as mind-reading, when we determine a person’s emotional state based on facial

209 Ibid Boyd, Carroll and Gotschall, 4.
210 Ibid Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies, 152.
expressions and body language. Similarly, we exercise our mind-reading abilities when we read fiction and anticipate outcomes based on the words and actions of the characters and narrator. In “On the Origin of the Human Mind,” evolutionary anthropologist Robin Dunbar suggests that children acquire ToM around age four when they are able to attribute second-order intentionality (also known as “second-level” intentionality): we exercise first-order intentionality when we believe something to be the case (“I believe that it will rain tomorrow”); we attribute second-order intentionality when we believe that another person thinks something to be the case (“I believe that Mary thinks it will rain tomorrow”).\textsuperscript{211} Like other evolutionary traits and inclinations, the ability to read minds is tied to basic human survival capacities: I am in trouble if I cannot anticipate whether a stranger reaches to his pocket for a gun or a piece of gum. Similarly, I am in a different kind of “trouble” if I do not know how to read a fictional character’s actions because I am liable to misinterpret important plot points.

In *Why We Read Fiction*, Zunshine argues that when in fictional works authors appear to cast doubt on something previously represented as “true,” readers turn to authors for resolution. As Zunshine explains, “The author who gives his or her readers a good reason to doubt a representation considered hitherto true in the context of the narrative can reliably expect the reader to start scrutinizing the source of that representation.”\textsuperscript{212} Zunshine further claims that readers use a process called metarepresentation to make judgments about the reliability of characters, and she describes metarepresentation as a representation of a representation that consists of two parts. The first is a “tag,” which is the source of the representation, and the second is the content. The statement “It will be a beautiful weekend” is a simple representation


\textsuperscript{212} Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction* Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, (2006), 64-65.
because it is not attributable to a particular source. However, the statement “my friend thought it would be a beautiful weekend” is a metarepresentation because it is attributable to another party (my friend). The phrase “my friend thought” is the source of the representation and “it would be a beautiful weekend” is the content. In addition, we store metarepresentations in our mind so that we can return to them at a later date to make informed decisions or, as Zunshine asserts, “Our metarepresentational ability allows us to store certain information/representations ‘under advisement.’”213 Thus, if I make outdoor weekend plans based on my friend’s comment but encounter inclement weather, I might remember that my friend later qualified her statement by explaining that her assessment was based on weather reports from the previous week. My ability to recall and then join the two statements allows me to see that I should not take weather advice from this friend in the future. We employ the same kinds of metarepresenting when we read fiction. After I read Darcy’s letter to Elizabeth in Pride and Prejudice, I will remember and trust Darcy’s account of the duplicitous Wickham and use it to interpret Wickham’s past and future statements. As Zunshine explains, “our tendency to keep track of sources of our representations—to metarepresent them—is a particular cognitive endowment closely related to our mind-reading ability.”214 In other words, our ability to recall who said what about various matters allows us to interpret different situations, both real and fictional.

To illustrate her point about the way that readers instinctively turn to authors when a fictional character’s claims are considered unreliable, Zunshine uses literary critic Ellen R. Belton’s analysis of Captain Wentworth, the hero of Jane Austen’s Persuasion. Belton claims that readers do not find credible Wentworth’s adamant denial of romantic feelings for Anne, the woman to whom he was formerly engaged. Further, Belton suggests that Austen intends the

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213 Ibid Zunshine Fiction, 50.
214 Ibid Zunshine, 47.
reader to question the truthfulness of Wentworth’s claim: “The value…of being allowed inside
the mind of [Wentworth] is partly an illusion, a device of the author’s to make us believe
simultaneously that we are being told everything there is to tell and that something crucial is
being left out.” Further, Belton claims that because readers putatively deem Wentworth (the
“source tag”) to be unreliable, they instinctively turn to the source of the source tag—the
author—for further insight into Wentworth’s words. Belton concludes that once the reader
recognizes Austen’s strategy, the reader becomes “not merely an inquirer into the motives and
intentions of the characters, but an inquirer into the motives and intentions of the author
herself.”215

Zunshine uses Belton’s interpretation to illustrate how insights about reader
metarepresentations can be productively paired with literary analysis. Once readers begin to
doubt the veracity of Wentworth’s claim about his feelings for Anne, they instinctively adjust
their thinking from “Wentworth no longer loves Anne” to “Wentworth believes he no longer
loves Anne.” The first statement is a representation and the second is a metarepresentation where
“Wentworth believes” is the source tag. Put differently, reader skepticism causes a conceptual
readjustment such that the representation becomes a metarepresentation. As a result of this
cognitive shift, Zunshine maintains, readers look to Austen, the source of Wentworth’s claims,
for clarification about his declaration. Of course, readers are aware that the author is the source
tag even when they have no reason to doubt the characters on the page. However, Zunshine
suggests that readers become more aware of the source tag at moments when the meaning
“snags”—when the voice of the narrative suddenly shifts or when a character behaves strangely.
Readers are always conscious that they are consuming something that has been authored, but

215 Ellen R. Belton, qtd in Zunshine, 63.
they often keep that knowledge in the background, except for moments when the artifice of the
fictional text becomes particularly visible or disruptive.

Building on her theories of metarepresentation, Zunshine argues that our natural
inclination to consult the author in cases where readers deem characters unreliable conflicts with
literary theories that are understood to declare the death of the author:

We can speculate, then, that it is our awareness that there is a source behind the
representation that legitimates a variety of personal and institutional endeavors to
resituate, reinterpret, and reweight every aspect of a literary text…As a literary
credo…’the Author is dead’ [Barthes] strikes a cultural nerve, and for a good
reason. It seems to demand a conceptual readjustment peculiarly challenging for
our meta-representing mind: the erasure of the figure of the author calls for some
kind of suspension—or deferral—of the process of source monitoring. It is
possible, then, that as a conceptual experiment, ‘the Author is dead’ is exciting
because it allows us to consider, variously, implications of such a suspension of
source-monitoring even if on some levels this suspension remains unattainable.\(^{216}\)

Zunshine suggests that attempts to eradicate the author from literary analysis require
readers to defer their natural inclination for “source monitoring”—tracking the mind
behind the sentiment—and she further suggests that while such a deferral may be a
productive exercise, “on some levels this suspension remains unattainable.” In addition,
Zunshine argues that the implied author emerges as a direct challenge to critics such as
Barthes, who declares the death of the author, because the implied author allows readers
to retain “a source tag behind [a] narrative” even as the historical author is banished as

the obvious textual source. Zunshine explains that in the case of the implied author, “The author is substituted by the reader. It seems that culture will find a way to insinuate a source tag into its perception of a representation that is a metarepresentation. A work of fiction has to have an agent-specifying source tag affixed to it, however extravagant...that agent may seem at certain historical junctures.” Zunshine’s theorizing suggests that we should not be at all surprised by the findings from my study that identify the expansive recourse to authors from a variety of sources. Our assertions of authorial intention may stem, in part, from cognitive processes encouraging us to view the source tag/author as the ultimate arbiter of meaning, regardless of the reliability of a character’s reportage.

Henry Rogers’ reading of *Northanger Abbey* illustrates Zunshine’s point about the ways that critics sometimes turn to authors to resolve issues of narrative ambiguities. In “‘Of Course You Can Trust Me!’ Jane Austen’s Narrator in *Northanger Abbey*” Rogers argues that Catherine’s somewhat unrealistic expulsion from the Abbey by Henry’s tyrannical father, General Tilney, is a traditional gothic convention that contrasts sharply with earlier plotlines that seem committed to realist fiction: Henry Tilney, for instance, frequently reins in Catherine’s overly fertile imagination before the expulsion. Rogers claims that readers are shocked by General Tilney’s behavior because they have been set up by the narrator to expect that *Northanger*’s characters will behave rationally: “The narrator manipulates elements of her story—including her audience—to convince that

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audience that her fiction and real life are governed by the dictates of reason and probability.”

Rogers suggests that after General Tilney acts the part of the gothic villain, readers begin to doubt the novel’s seeming commitment to realist fiction as represented by the narrator and turn to the source tag—Austen—to resolve the dissonance between the novel’s conflicting realist and gothic inclinations. To use Zunshine’s language, once readers deem the narrator to be unreliable, they make a conceptual readjustment from “The narrator is committed to realist fiction”—a representation—to “The narrator wants the reader to believe that the narrator is committed to realist fiction”—a metarepresentation. This cognitive shift causes readers to turn to Austen because something that was previously taken for granted now demands our attention and thus makes us look to the source tag for resolution. In this instance, Rogers makes an assertion about Austen’s intention when he suggests that Austen uses the misleading narrator to spotlight the inherent limitations of realist fiction: “[Austen] has created an essentially realistic fiction while she has satirically played upon the expected conventions of romance. She at last calls into question the limitations of that fiction and the values of reason and understanding it advocates.” “Austen”, then, is seen as the final arbiter regarding the shift in narrative tone between the first and second sections of the novel: having authored *Northanger*, she can best account for the dissonance between its two parts.

Critics may also turn to authors as the ultimate arbiter of meaning when characters offer conflicting interpretive frameworks. In “An Epistemological Understanding of *Pride and Prejudice*: Humility and Objectivity,” Martha Satz explores the tension in *Pride* between evidence and judgment. Mr. Bingley and his sisters, for instance, interpret differently Elizabeth’s

muddy walk to their estate just as Elizabeth and Jane see differently Mr. Bingley’s letter to Jane expressing a romantic interest. Further, Satz claims that it is reasonable to ask which among the competing perspectives of the characters Austen promotes: “If the novel presupposes that every person has a conceptual framework through which he perceives reality, then it is legitimate to ask what framework the author encourages the reader to adopt.” Satz argues that, in the last third of *Pride*, “Austen does what she has steadfastly refused to do before—metaphysically [underwrite] the validity of particular perceptions.” Moreover, Satz claims that Austen promotes Elizabeth’s mode of perception by contrasting Lydia and Wickham’s illicit affair with Darcy’s admirable conduct: “By conclusively displaying the rectitude and worthiness of Darcy’s character, Austen certifies the validity of Elizabeth’s processes of gathering evidence and of ultimately arriving at conclusions.” While Satz does not suggest that the narration is unreliable in the sense that the author tries to mislead the reader, she does suggest that the competing conceptual frameworks are unreliable with respect to which one the author promotes. Satz, then, turns to Austen to resolve which interpretive framework is most desirable for rendering judgments and making decisions—a move that may indicate our inclination for source monitoring. Austen, the source of *Pride*, is seen as best positioned to comment on the reasoning that readers should adopt.

Further, critics may turn to authors for a clarification of purpose when, according to the critic, a novel seems to be fundamentally misunderstood. In Norman Holland’s “*Jude the Obscure*: Hardy’s Indictment of Christianity,” for example, Holland notes textual flaws in *Jude* about which “critics are agreed” including the novel’s “lack of unity,” an over-abundance of

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221 *Ibid* Satz, 179.
themes, and a failure to focus on a central character. While Holland does not overtly disagree with these assessments, he suggests that critics have overlooked the “unifying meaning” in Jude’s imagery, and he turns to Hardy’s putative intentions to criticize Christian ideals for confirmation of his (Holland’s) reading: “Hardy uses images and symbols derived from the evolution of Christianity to criticize the so-called Christian society he knew in late nineteenth-century England and to criticize the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice.” In addition, Holland uses as evidence a Hardy biography to demonstrate that the allegory involving Little Father Time—Jude’s son with Arabella who murders the two biological children of Jude and Sue and then commits suicide—mirrors Hardy’s religious philosophy: “Hardy’s attitude toward Christianity as worked out in this allegory [of Little Father Time] in Jude accords with his religious philosophy as gleaned from a study of his use of the Bible in all his works.”

In addition to turning to the author’s intentions to resolve textual ambiguities and clarify textual purpose, critics may seek recourse to the author when their mind-reading capacities are stretched to the limit: an awareness of the author’s putative strategy or hopes for the reader can guide interpretation. Our minds are stretched to their limits when they are pushed to increasingly higher levels of intentionality. As a reminder, we exercise first-order intentionality when we believe something to be the case and second-order intentionality when we believe that another person thinks something to be the case. Third-order intentionality follows a similar suit. As Dunbar explains, “Intentionality…is a recursive sequence of mind states involving beliefs: ‘I believe that you believe that I

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223 Ibid Holland, 50.
224 Ibid Holland, 59.
believe something to be the case’ is an example of third-order intentionality.” Dunbar concludes from a series of experiments that most people have difficulty keeping track of anything higher than fourth-order intentional statements. In addition, Dunbar distinguishes between writers, who often must push themselves to the fifth level of intentionality and beyond, and readers, who must push themselves to one fewer level of intentionality than the writer—the writer must go beyond the reader in order to anticipate the reader’s response. Dunbar claims, “A novelist writing about relationships between three people has to ‘intend that the reader think that character A supposes that character B wants character C to believe that…”—five orders of intentionality. The reader, in contrast has a much easier task: he or she merely has to ‘think that A supposes that B wants C to believe that…”—four orders of intentionality.”

Dunbar spotlights the rigorous process through which writers often go to increase the levels of intentionality in anticipation of the reader’s response; however, his example also illustrates the theoretical possibility that readers can discern this process through a kind of “reverse intentionality.” In other words, readers can theoretically determine what the author intended for them to experience by trying to identify the author’s strategy. Perhaps, then, critics sometimes turn to authors for clarification about meaning when a novel pushes the critics’ mind-reading capacity by adding levels of intentionality through narrative techniques such as irony. That is, some narrative techniques may create a “need” for recourse to the author’s mind by taxing the mind of the reader. Austen, more so than Hardy, creates ambiguity on the level of narration, and I speculate that critics

more frequently make assertions about her strategies than critics analyzing Hardy’s texts because Austen’s use of irony on the narrative level requires additional processing by the reader.

Peter Matthews’ “An Open Invitation, or How to Read the Ethics of Austen’s _Pride and Prejudice_,” offers an example of how critics infer Austen’s “strategy” from her use of irony. Matthews explores the reaction of readers to ethical questions raised in _Pride_. As part of his reading, he probes the meaning of the novel’s famous opening line, “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” To narrow the interpretive possibilities, Matthews asks, “What is Austen’s strategy in making such a statement?” Matthews asserts that Austen assumes her readers’ familiarity with the tradition of the eighteenth century novel—particularly with the ideology that frames it as a vehicle of moral improvement. Further, he posits that eighteenth century readers will recognize that the opening line is an “ironic gesture” proffered by an narrow-minded narrator, whose seeming concurrence with cultural norms they will likely dismiss: “Crucial to Austen’s strategy is the unstated ability of the reader to refuse the novel’s invitation to partake of its worldview.” Matthews claims that eighteenth century readers will understand that the novel’s opening line is a “deliberate cliché” and disdain the narrator’s “worldview.” His assertion of irony adds another level of intentionality for readers. If the narrator does not speak ironically, the reader might think: “I believe that Austen believes that I believe that the narrator tells the truth.” If the narrator does speak ironically, the reader is pushed to an additional level of intentionality because the reader must figure out that he or she should repudiate the words of the seemingly objective narrator. To determine whether the narrator speaks ironically, Matthews exercises “reverse intentionality”

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when he infers Austen’s “strategy” of asking readers to look skeptically at eighteenth century cultural norms.

Other critics of Austen’s works exercise a kind of reverse intentionality when they infer the authors’ lessons for their readers—another kind of strategy or “grand plan”—even when these critics do not specifically tie these lessons to Austen’s narrative techniques. In “Conjecturing Possibilities: Reading and Misreading Texts in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*,” Felicia Bonaparte asserts, “Austen not only…uses the concept and language of reading for every kind of interpretation, she clearly intends, as she trains Elizabeth, to educate her readers as well, to teach them to read both the world and her novel.”229 Marianne Fowler argues in “The Feminist Bias of *Pride and Prejudice*” that Austen teaches “her young readers that a girl need not follow the confining courtesy-book pattern to achieve her goal. She can, like Elizabeth Bennet, be herself: candid, unaffected and utterly charming.”230 William Deresiewicz claims in “Community and Cognition in *Pride and Prejudice*” that “Austen quite clearly wishes us to understand that ‘mutual satisfaction’ is not the feeling people ought to have in a conversation, mutual agreement not the logical structure a conversation ought to have.”231 And, in her reading of *Northanger Abbey*, Melissa Schaub suggests, “The goal of the novel according to Austen is to teach the ability to deal with the people one encounters in everyday life.”232

Of course, Hardy critics also infer Hardy’s strategies for his works, which suggests that they similarly exercise reverse intentionality. In “Jude the Obscure as Tragedy,” Arthur Mizener argues that Hardy’s purpose in *Jude* is to contrast the “ideal” life with the “real” life: “Jude is not a character in a larger composition, the dramatization of one of several presented points of view

which go together to make up the author’s attitude, because Hardy’s attitude was not complex and inclusive but simple and exclusive. He therefore sought to contrast the ideal life with the real life, not of man, but of a man.”\textsuperscript{233} W.R. Lawyer argues that Hardy deliberately raises the reader’s awareness of Jude’s sexual involvement with Sue in “Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure.” In his analysis of the scene in which Sue worships in a church with her employer Miss Fontover, Lawyer claims that Hardy “follows with a rather elaborate explanation of the sexual nature of Jude’s involvement—as though he wants to make certain that his reader is aware of it.”\textsuperscript{234} And, in “Phantom Photographs: The Camera’s Pursuit and Disruption of Consciousness in Jude the Obscure” Rebecca Boylan argues that Hardy uses photographic techniques in Jude to spotlight the tension in photography between objectively representing an image and imposing the subjective experience of the image on the viewer. In her analysis of a scene in which Jude leaves Sue standing by shutters flooded with light, Boylan asserts that Hardy warns readers of the way light can wreak havoc on perception: “Hardy, therefore, uses this scene to remind the reader that consciousness, or too much light, can diffuse knowledge and confuse perceptions.”\textsuperscript{235} More broadly, the work on mind-reading of Dunbar and Zunshine raises the possibility that critics “reverse engineer” the author’s intentions when they posit the author’s “strategy” for a work.

Blakey Vermeule’s Why Do We Care About Literary Characters raises a different possibility for why critics evoke authors that ties to her argument that the public uses the personal issues of celebrities as “practical reasoning schemes” to guide life decisions. I speculate that critics may similarly use authors—one kind of celebrity—for the purpose of helping readers to make decisions about their lives. Vermeule claims that the tabloid versions of celebrities are

\textsuperscript{233} Arthur Mizener, “Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy,” *Southern Review* 6 (1940): 197.
\textsuperscript{234} W.R. Lawyer, “Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure,” *Paunch* 28 (1967): 17.
fictional characters in much the same way as literary characters. I would suggest, for instance, that Princess Katherine Middleton is no more real to most readers than *Pride and Prejudice’s* Elizabeth Bennet. To answer her rhetorical question about why the public cares so much about people they have never met and never will meet—celebrity as well as literary versions—Vermeule argues, “[Fictional characters] are the greatest practical-reasoning schemes ever invented. We use them to sort out basic moral problems or to practice new emotional situations.”236 Vermeule asserts that celebrities work out before the public eye problems common to private individuals: “The media use [celebrities] over and over again, the same stories, the same insights, to capture the human obsession with the same wide-scale human problems: sex, courtship, status, resource allocation...”237 The public, in turn, learns from these insights how to navigate their own ethical waters. If we extend Vermeule’s argument, then it seems that authors—celebrities in their own right—are like fictional characters since readers generally are privy only to the cartoon version of living authors portrayed by the media and to non-living authors through second-hand accounts. While these second-hand accounts can be thorough and nuanced, they still offer the subjective perspective of the writer. Thus, Vermeule’s hypothesis about why we care about fictional characters should apply to authors as well. Both authors and characters, then, are able to offer readers roadmaps that can be used to “sort out basic moral problems” and “practice new emotional situations.” Readers may turn to novels or characters for guidance in some instances and authors in others. As the following example shows, for instance, critics may use an author as an example of how to sort out a moral problem when a character attempts to sort out the same problem but comes to an unhappy end.

237 *Ibid* Vermeule, xii.
In “Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure: A Rejection of Traditional Christianity’s ‘Good’ God Theory,” B.J. Alexander explores how Hardy navigates his questioning of traditional Christian views, which echoes Jude’s similar grappling with his faith. Alexander uses biographical sources to document how Hardy resolves the challenges to his early beliefs: “Early Christian training had made Hardy an orthodox believer in Church doctrines. The discoveries of nineteenth century science, however, coincided with his own observations of the inexplicable cruelty and needless pain in life. Sickened by what seemed to him the blindness of traditional Christian teachings that optimistically advocated the presence of a personal, beneficent Power that lovingly protected his children from evil, Hardy held true to this intellectual conscience and rejected the belief which he deemed inconsistent with everyday observance of life.”238 Applying Vermeule’s reasoning, Hardy’s process of resolving his concerns with organized religion may offer a way for readers to resolve comparable issues of faith: Hardy’s resolution whereby he privileges “intellectual conscience” over seemingly random acts of cruelty and pain may offer a path for those who are similarly conflicted over their religious convictions. In this sense, Alexander’s evocation of Hardy offers readers a way to sort out a basic moral problem by spotlighting how Hardy worked through his issues of faith. Although Jude displays similar dissonance to Hardy regarding matters of belief, Jude dies an early and lonely death, in part, because he defies religious and cultural norms. In contrast, Hardy is not overtly persecuted for his decisions (although the public outcry over Jude caused Hardy to renounce novel writing). Readers, then, may find Hardy’s path more optimistic even though both Hardy and Jude appear to similarly arrive at their conclusions.

238 Ibid Alexander, 74-75.
While Alexander offers a reading of Hardy that might help readers work through religious issues, Tim Fulford offers a reading of Austen that might help readers “practice a new emotional situation.” In “Sighing for a Soldier: Jane Austen and Military Pride and Prejudice,” Fulford explores how, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen navigates military corruption in both her fiction and private life. Fulford argues that Austen’s views on military corruption were shaped by contemporary debates on the topic: “The debate about the militia grew in stridency over thirty-five years, with particular climaxes in the late 1790s, when Austen was drafting what was to become *Pride and Prejudice*, and again from 1811-1812, when she was revising it.” Fulford argues that Austen’s disapproval of military corruption expresses itself in *Pride*, particularly in a scene in which the narrator makes an offhand remark about the flogging of a private by a soldier—a “brutal punishment [that] seems just another amusing and ordinary event in the social round.” In addition, Fulford speculates that Austen’s evolving perspective about the military shows in the relief she expresses to her sister, Cassandra, when their brother, Henry, fails to obtain an adjutancy in a local regiment:

Men got commissions in the local militias without needing ever to have owned a residence in the area—thus, they could acquire social status regardless of merit…It was, perhaps, the corrupting effect of this unearned social status that Jane Austen feared in her brother Henry. In 1796 he tried to obtain an adjutancy in the Oxfordshire regiment, and when he was unsuccessful he tried again in the 86th. In January 1796, Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra: “I heartily hope that he will, as usual, be disappointed in this scheme.”

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240 Ibid Fulford, 165.
Although Fulford’s account of Austen’s evolving position is not as linear as Alexander’s account of Hardy’s evolving beliefs, Fulford nevertheless charts Austen’s putatively growing disapproval of military culture and suggests that she manages this new emotional situation by addressing it both in her fiction and in her private responses to Henry’s professional pursuits. Thus, Austen functions as a “practical reasoning scheme” for her readers with respect to how they might navigate those parts of contemporary culture of which they disapprove: readers might subtly “protest” using fiction and/or attempt to influence the career choices of loved ones.

Conclusions

The findings in this chapter offer various possibilities for why critics evoke authors in literary criticism: authors resolve interpretive questions; they provide models for navigating complex moral and ethical quandaries; and, critics may perceive that authors add value to interpretation by their mere presence in readings. The mind-reading work of Zunshine, Dunbar and Vermeule might account for the reasons that one particular group of articles use authorial knowledge. In contrast, theories of value posited by Benjamin, Newman and Bloom have implications that are more-broad reaching because they suggest that many individuals perceive that objects having direct associations with their creators are more valuable than those without. Applying these findings to literary studies, some scholars may perceive that evocations of authors in readings add value to interpretation. In addition, I speculate that Newman and Bloom’s notion of contagion—the artist’s “touch”—may explain the use of authorial knowledge in textual analysis: critics may perceive that they add value to their readings by making visible the author’s influence. In this sense, the author legitimates the reading on some level. As Claudia Johnson observes about some critics of Austen’s works, “The appearance of Austen’s ghost
seems to guarantee or supplement their own authority as writers.” Johnson speaks of Austen, but her words apply to many authors, whose “ghosts” seem to validate critics’ “authority as writers.” I speculate that most critics are not conscious of why they are evoking the author; they likely do so because such references are over-determined by an array of cultural and evolutionary prompts.

In “Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen,” Lionel Trilling acknowledges the difficulty of approaching writers as if we have no knowledge of their lives:

We all know that the reader should come to the writer with no preconceptions, taking no account of any previous opinion. But this, of course, he cannot do. Every established writer exists in the aura of his legend—the accumulated opinion that we cannot help being aware of, the image of his personality that has been derived, correctly or incorrectly, from what he has written.

As Trilling observes, we cannot help but be aware of “accumulated opinion” and “the image of a writer’s personality.” Thus, as Zunshine suggests, the act of interpretation that is purely textual is an interesting “conceptual experiment” even if this willing suspension of authorial disbelief remains, on some level “unattainable.” The results of my study bear out the claims of Trilling and Zunshine. Eighty percent of the 235 articles, and all ten of the books, evoke the author through at least one of the following discussed in the first three chapters: biographical sources, the author’s intention, or the author’s fiction. My study does not include other ways of evoking the author, such as through historical sources or common knowledge; thus, the numbers would be slightly higher if the net were broadened. The high percentage of critics that do evoke the

242 Ibid Johnson Cults and Cultures, 6.
244 Ibid Zunshine Fiction, 66-67.
author, however minimally, suggests that the binary erected by New Critics between the “purely textual” and “everything else” is untenable. Put differently, the binary is false because we cannot extract ourselves from our cultural moment or divorce ourselves from personal knowledge. This is not to say that we should not aspire to the purely textual, which offers interesting and complex readings in its own right. Rather, my study shows the futility of attempting to abolish the author altogether from our readings of texts.

The overwhelming presence of authors in criticism further suggests that our teaching approaches should not shy away from introducing students to fiction within the context of the author’s life. At a conference I recently attended, I queried an instructor about his class on Virginia Woolf. In particular, I asked if he introduced to his students the autobiographical parallels between To The Lighthouse and Woolf’s life. He explained that he had his students read excerpts from Woolf’s diaries to show how writing affected her life, but he admitted that he did not mention the autobiographical nature of the work because he feared that it would be “static background.” I speculate that his concerns about how to introduce authorial knowledge without undermining good close reading are typical among those who teach literature. Nevertheless, my findings challenge us to find effective and meaningful ways to incorporate authorial knowledge into our teaching without compromising valuable close reading practices.

Interestingly, the Modern Language Association (MLA) acknowledges a place for the historical author in its “Approaches to Teaching World Literature,” a series of 128 published volumes. For example, the “Approaches to Teaching” books on My Antonia, Ulysses, Heart of Darkness, and Things Fall Apart have biographical sources and interviews listed in the “Materials” section. Further, the series spotlights the autobiographical nature of well-known fiction, such as David Copperfield, The Awakening and The Yellow Wallpaper. Approaches to
Teaching *The Yellow Wallpaper*, for instance, includes Denise D. Knight’s “Texts and Contexts in Gilman's World: A Biographical Approach,” and *Approaches to Teaching Woolf’s To the Lighthouse* offers three essays in its section on autobiographical approaches. In contrast, the “Approaches” volumes generally do not offer a biographical approach when little is known about the author, such as Chaucer or Shakespeare.

As Blakey Vermeule observes, the collective practice of scholars ultimately trumps specific theoretical dictums: “My opinion about what literary theory should or should not be paying attention to is of no consequence. Literary theory and criticism are profoundly, irreducibly pluralist.” Following Vermeule, I conclude that literary theory should at least be accountable to longstanding critical practice – and as scholarship over the past seventy years has demonstrated, the author is almost surely here to stay.

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Pride and Prejudice: Articles Studied


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Jane Austen: Books Studied


Thomas Hardy: Books Studied


Appendix A: Quantitative Data For *Pride and Prejudice*

**KEY:**

PW—Private Writings  
Bilog—Biography  
AI—Authorial Intention  
AF—Beliefs Inferred from Author’s Fiction  
Y—Yes  
N—No  
C—Central  
P—Peripheral

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Appendix A: Quantitative Data For Pride and Prejudice

**KEY:**

PW-Private Writings
Biog-Biography
AI-Authorial Intention
AF-Beliefs Inferred from Author's Fiction
Y=Yes
N=No
C-Control
P-Peripheral

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### Appendix A: Quantitative Data For Pride and Prejudice

**KEY:**
- PW: Private Writings
- Biog: Biography
- AT: Authorial Intention
- AF: Selfs Inferred from Author’s Fiction
- Y: Yes
- N: No
- C: Central
- P: Peripheral

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Appendix B: Quantitative Data for Northanger Abbey

**KEY:**
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- **Blog:** Biography
- **AI:** Authorial Intention
- **AF:** Beliefs Inferred from Author’s Fiction
- **Y:** Yes
- **N:** No
- **C:** Central
- **P:** Peripheral

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# Appendix B: Quantitative Data for Northanger Abbey

**KEY:**
- PW = Private Writings
- Blog = Biography
- AI = Authorial Intention
- AF = Beliefs Inferred from Author’s Fiction
- Y = Yes
- N = No
- C = Central
- P = Peripheral

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# Appendix B: Quantitative Data for Northanger Abbey

**KEY:**
- PW: Private Writings
- Blog: Blogography
- AI: Authorial Intention
- AF: Beliefs Inferred from Author's Fiction
- Y: Yes
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### Appendix C: Quantitative Data for *Jude the Obscure*

**KEY:**
- PW: Private Writings
- BIO: Biography
- AI: Authorial Intention
- AF: Author's Foils from Author's Fiction
- Y: Yes
- N: No
- C: Central
- P: Peripheral

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# Appendix C: Quantitative Data for Jude the Obscure

**KEY:**

- PW: Private Writings
- BG: Biography
- AL: Authorial Intention
- AF: Author’s Fiction
- Y: Yes
- N: No
- C: Central
- P: Peripheral

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*Note: The table continues with more entries.*
Appendix C: Quantitative Data for Jude the Obscure

KEY:
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BG - Biography
AI - Authorial Intention
AF - Beliefs Inferred from Author's Fiction
Y - Yes
N - No
C - Central
P - Peripheral

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Appendix D: Quantitative Data for *The Return of the Native*

**KEY:**
- PW - Private Writings
- Biog - Biography
- AI - Authorial Intention
- AF - Beliefs Inferred from Author's Fiction
- Y - Yes
- N - No
- C - Central
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Appendix D: Quantitative Data for *The Return of the Native*

**KEY:**
- PW=Private Writings
- Blog=Biography
- AI=Authorial Intention
- AF=Beliefs Inferred from Author's Fiction
- Y=Yes
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