

## **“Raising Demons: Children in Austen’s Novels”**

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### **PASSAGES FROM *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY***

- “With [Lady Middleton’s] children [the Steele sisters] were in continual raptures, extolling their beauty, courting their notice, and humouring their whims; and such of their time as could be spared from the importunate demands which this politeness made on it, was spent in admiration of whatever her ladyship was doing, if she happened to be doing any thing, . . . [the fond mother] saw with maternal complacency all the impertinent encroachments and mischievous tricks to which her cousins submitted. She saw their sashes untied, their hair pulled about their ears, their work-bags searched, and their knives and scissors stolen away, and felt no doubt of its being a reciprocal enjoyment. . . . “John is in such spirits to-day!” said she, on his taking Miss Steele’s pocket handkerchief, and throwing it out of window—“He is full of monkey tricks.”

And soon afterwards, on the second boy’s violently pinching one of the same lady’s fingers, she fondly observed, “How playful William is!” And here is my sweet little Annamaria,” she added, tenderly caressing a little girl of three years old, who had not made a noise for the last two minutes; “And she is always so gentle and quiet—Never was there such a quiet little thing!” But unfortunately in bestowing these embraces, a pin in her ladyship’s head dress, slightly scratching the child’s neck, produced from this pattern of gentleness such violent screams as could hardly be outdone by any creature professedly noisy. The mother’s consternation was excessive; but it could not surpass the alarm of the Miss Steeles, and every thing was done by all three, in so critical an emergency, which affection could suggest as likely to assuage the agonies of the little sufferer. . . . With such a reward for her tears, the child was too wise to cease crying. She still screamed and sobbed lustily, kicked her two brothers for offering to touch her, . . . [and when they left the room the] four young ladies were left in a quietness which the room had not known for many hours.”

- “When the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room after dinner, this poverty was particularly evident, for the gentlemen *had* supplied the discourse with some variety—the variety of politics, inclosing land, and breaking horses—but then it was all over; and one subject only engaged the ladies till coffee came in, which was the comparative heights of Harry Dashwood, and Lady Middleton’s second son William, who were nearly of the same age. Had both the children been there, the affair might have been determined too easily by measuring them at once; but as Harry only was present, it was all conjectural assertion on both sides; and every body had a right to be equally positive in their opinion, and to repeat it over and over again as often as they liked. The parties stood thus: The two mothers, though each really convinced that her own son was the tallest, politely decided in favour of the other. The two grandmothers, with not less partiality, but more sincerity, were equally earnest in support of their own descendant. Lucy, who was hardly less anxious to please one parent than the other, thought the boys were both remarkably tall for their age, and could not conceive that there could be the smallest difference in the world between them; and Miss Steele, with yet greater address gave it, as fast as she could, in favour of each. Elinor, having once delivered her opinion on William’s side, by which she offended Mrs. Ferrars and Fanny still more, did not see the necessity of enforcing it by any farther assertion; and Marianne, when called on for her’s, offended them all, by declaring that she had no opinion to give, as she had never thought about it.”

### **PASSAGES FROM MANSFIELD PARK**

- “She had now seen all that were at home. . . But though she had *seen* all the members of the family, she had not yet *heard* all the noise they could make. Another quarter of an hour brought her a great deal more. William was soon calling out from the landing-place of the second story for his mother and for Rebecca. . . . Mrs. Price, Rebecca, and Betsey all went up to defend themselves, all talking together, but Rebecca loudest, . . . the whole of which, as almost every door in the house was open, could be plainly distinguished in the parlour, except when drowned at intervals by the superior noise of Sam, Tom, and Charles chasing each other up and down stairs, and tumbling about and hallooing.”
- “Here everybody was noisy, every voice was loud . . . Whatever was wanted was halloosed for, and the servants halloosed out their excuses from the kitchen. The doors were in constant banging, the stairs were never at rest, nothing was done without a clatter, nobody sat still, and nobody could command attention when they spoke.”

- “She could not respect her parents as she had hoped. On her father, her confidence had not been sanguine, but he was more negligent of his family, his habits were worse, and his manners coarser, than she had been prepared for. He did not want abilities but he had no curiosity, and no information beyond his profession; he read only the newspaper and the navy–list; he talked only of the dockyard, the harbour, Spithead, and the Motherbank; he swore and he drank, he was dirty and gross. She had never been able to recall anything approaching to tenderness in his former treatment of herself. There had remained only a general impression of roughness and loudness; and now he scarcely ever noticed her, but to make her the object of a coarse joke.”
  
- Her disappointment in her mother was greater: there she had hoped much, and found almost nothing. Every flattering scheme of being of consequence to her soon fell to the ground. Mrs. Price was not unkind; but, instead of gaining on her affection and confidence, and becoming more and more dear, her daughter never met with greater kindness from her than on the first day of her arrival. The instinct of nature was soon satisfied, and Mrs. Price’s attachment had no other source. Her heart and her time were already quite full; she had neither leisure nor affection to bestow on Fanny. Her daughters never had been much to her. She was fond of her sons, especially of William, but Betsey was the first of her girls whom she had ever much regarded. To her she was most injudiciously indulgent. William was her pride; Betsey her darling; and John, Richard, Sam, Tom, and Charles occupied all the rest of her maternal solicitude, alternately her worries and her comforts. These shared her heart: her time was given chiefly to her house and her servants. Her days were spent in a kind of slow bustle; all was busy without getting on, always behindhand and lamenting it, without altering her ways; wishing to be an economist, without contrivance or regularity; dissatisfied with her servants, without skill to make them better, and whether helping, or reprimanding, or indulging them, without any power of engaging their respect.”

### **PASSAGES FROM PRIDE AND PREJUDICE**

“The little Gardiners, attracted by the sight of a chaise, were standing on the steps of the house as they entered the paddock; and when the carriage drove up to the door, the joyful surprise that lighted up their faces, and displayed itself over their whole bodies in a variety of capers and frisks, was the first pleasing earnest of their welcome.”

“On the stairs were a troop of little boys and girls, whose eagerness for their [cousin Elizabeth’s] appearance would not allow them to wait in the drawing-room, and whose shyness, as they had not seen her for a twelvemonth, prevented their coming lower. All was joy and kindness. The day passed most pleasantly away; the morning in bustle and shopping, and the evening at one of the theatres.”