



Jane Austen's 'Must': The Will and the Word

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"Jane Austen's "Must": The Will and the World"

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We examined elsewhere the significant division which distinguishes modal sentences expressing necessity, possibility, obligation and the like from indicative ones about matter of fact - "He must love her" from "He doesn't"; "He ought to marry her" from "He is engaged." Looking at modals from this perspective - as a group which shares the property of hypotheticalness - underscores grammatically the degree to which Austen's characters are occupied with constructing possible worlds of one sort or another. In this, her people are not extraordinary; they do what we all do but unlike many of us they have both the leisure and inclination to make modal thinking into a high art. Certainly Elinor does, and Elizabeth Bennet and Fanny and Anne Elliot, even Emma, although she is often wrong. No matter; it is in large measure the vitality of their hypothetical constructions that informs our sense of Austen's "world".

Catherine Morland in her simplicity provides a useful contrast because she has not had, as Austen tells us, the proper training for a heroine. Among other things, she has never learned to speculate and therefore understands nothing. When, for example, Isabella Thorpe finally confesses her secret attachment, saying that Catherine has surely already guessed it - "That arch eye of yours! It sees through everything" - the latter can truly reply: "No, indeed, I have not." With a literalness perhaps surpassed only by the Houynhmhs, Catherine has not reflected at all upon Isabella's friendship or motives or desires.¹ She takes her at face value - a great mistake - and Catherine's surprise is a measure of the distance between her and the far more suspicious reader, who has been anticipating all along some ulterior motive from Isabella.

Catherine does eventually become a heroine, first of an imagined Gothic novel and then of Austen's. By the end of *Northanger Abbey* she is no longer a blank consciousness. If she was deluded in her hypothetical scenarios of murder and violence at the Abbey, at least the road

of excess leads her to the palace of wisdom. By the end of the book she finally can and does reflect - and with great accuracy - that "in suspecting General Tilney... she had scarcely sinned against his character or magnified his cruelty." In that sober and cynical assessment, Catherine reveals herself a truly Austenian heroine for whom the legitimate uses of speculation are now open.

It is this question - what the legitimate uses of speculation are - that occupies Austen. The pervasiveness of her modal language is simply the natural, if not inevitable, linguistic concomitant of that interest. The question for Austen is not *whether* to form hypotheses but rather *how* and *when*, how to distinguish between those representations which are the instantiation of our desires and those which enable us to understand and reflect upon experience. In other words, the issue is where to draw the line between the will and the world. Here, too, modals figure prominently because identical modal sentences can represent either our wishes about the world or our beliefs about it. And in that potential for ambiguity they illustrate grammatically both how deeply the distinction between the will and the world is embedded in language and how hard at the same time the boundaries are to discriminate. The way Austen exploits these modal possibilities is the subject of this paper.²

There have been many attempts to sub-categorize modal sentences in order to establish a finer grid than the hypothetical/actual cut offers. All of them are useful but none covers every case. Von Wright's categories are the most ambitious and yet even these fail to catch one of the most fundamental (and provocative) characteristics of modal sentences, namely that they are frequently ambiguous between the expressions of desire or intention on the one hand and statements about belief or probability on the other - what I will call the volitive and the epistemic.³

For example, the following modal sentences can each be read as either the representation of a (possible, probable, necessary) state of affairs in the world or as an expression of will.

- (1) He must be nice

is either the epistemic "It appears that he is" or the volitive "I (or someone) demand(s) that he be."

- (2) He may stay

means either the epistemic "it is possible that he will" or the volitive "I (or someone) grant(s) him permission to."

- (3) He should be in his office

works the same way. It means either that he probably is or that I (or someone) require(s) that he be there.

The single modal case which makes the distinction between the volitive and the epistemic formally explicit, namely "shall"/"will", serves to indicate how complicated the effort to keep the two separate can become. Very briefly, in British English (RP) and sometimes in American English "shall" in the 1st person is a prediction, "will" a promise, except for interrogatives and emphatics. In the 2nd and 3rd person the forms reverse; "will" is a prediction, "shall" a declaration of intention. In other words, "You shall go" represents the speaker's determination that you go, whereas "You will go" is the speaker's prediction about your going. Conversely in the first person "I shall do it" is a prediction, "I will do it" is a promise. There is more, but this is probably enough to make the point.⁴ The odd alternations of "shall" and "will" and the tendency of the forms to fall together are not simply examples of the perversity of grammar. Rather, the tortuousness of the "shall"/"will" paradigm reflects the difficulty of maintaining a clear conceptual difference between our beliefs and inferences about the world and our desires and intentions with regard to it.

It is no doubt fortunate that the question of how much our own wishes, promises, and intentions are implicated in the world as we represent it is not always formally at issue in the grammar and perhaps it is one of the great comforts of language that we can take "musts" and "oughts" as binding, "coulds" and "woulds" as contingent without having to inquire too closely into whose bonds or contingencies they are. Certainly there would be no Austenian comedy if the Mrs. Bennets and Isabella Thorpes were forced to distinguish grammatically between their own imperatives and those of the world. But that we can often avoid making such decisions doesn't, of course, alter the fact that if we choose to or are forced to look closely at any modal sentence, we cannot avoid assigning a reading.

Happily, in most cases the ascription is so automatic and obvious that we don't stop to reflect, but the possibility virtually always remains for an alternate (if peculiar) reading. For instance, if a doctor says "You will die" or "You may live" we assume that he is drawing a conclusion about a state of affairs, in this case, the state of your health; if a judge were to pronounce either of these sentences, we would understand him to be doing something quite different, that is, declaring the will of the court. But, counter to our expectations, the doctor could be pronouncing a verdict, the judge making a prediction, although such a reversal raises some disconcertingly *Alice*-like visions of a mad tea-party where doctors mandate and judges guess. None of us could tolerate the unpredictability of such a world for long; the absence of stable expectations would be too hard on the nerves. Nevertheless, it is a world that modals offer a passport to.

Take, for example, the sentence, "You must be Albanian". An epistemic reading ("I

gather that you are") is straightforward and certainly more likely, but a volitive reading is funnier, recalling Ralph Rackstraw of the *Pinafore* who "In spite of all temptations to belong to other nations... remains an Englishman,"⁵ or the lady in the Saki story who, upon being approached on a railway platform by a stranger who says: "You must be the new governess", agrees, "Well, if I must, I must".⁶ Conversely, in the sentence "I must be running along", the more obvious reading is volitive ("I have to go"), but the epistemic ("Maybe I am") is again funnier in its image of the agent as spectator. The play of these alternate readings is not random; the absurdity, as these examples are intended to suggest, always turns on our sense of what lies within our power as opposed to what is given in the world. Ralph Rackstraw could not have been "a French or Turk or Roosian" because it is not a matter of choice, nor is the stranger's inference about the new governess correct even though the lady whimsically decides to "become" or pretend to be what is supposed.⁷ Indeed, the comedy in these cases derives from the category errors, volition or inference inappropriately applied.

While it is clear that we can construe modal sentences in ways that we know to be silly or impossible, such readings never blur our sense of there being a fundamental distinction between the epistemic and the volitive. On the contrary, the possibility for playfulness depends on the very stability of that notion and our consequent recognition of its being violated.

It is precisely this distinction - and its violations - that Austen's novels focus on and perhaps the modal that best illustrates the potential for alternate readings is "must". Certainly it is one that reverberates throughout Austen's prose, although the narrator herself is highly abstemious with her "musts". This passage from *Northanger Abbey* in the authorial voice:

But when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way.

is a notable exception and, here, the "must" is at least half-ironic, invoking the prerogative of the novel to provide the improbable while at the same time mocking the imperiousness of novelistic convention which demands that a hero be found. The characters, on the other hand, are rarely so self-conscious. They frequently announce that something "must" be the case without very much reflection on the degree to which their will informs their conclusions about the world. Chapter I of *Emma* is fairly representative in its abundance of "musts". There are 11 in 4 pages of dialogue. To take a sample exchange, Mr. Woodhouse "gratefully observed" a propos of a surprise late-hour visit from Mr. Knightly:

"I am afraid you *must* have had a shocking walk."

"Not at all, sir. It is a beautiful moonlight night and so mild that I *must* draw back from your great fire."

"But you *must* have found it very damp and dirty..."

"Dirty, sir! Look at my shoes. Not a speck on them."

And so it goes, the assertions and counter-assertions reminiscent of Edmund and Marianne on Barton Valley. It is clear that Mr. Woodhouse's "observations" are not observations at all but expressions of his fear - of night, of air, of walking, of sudden appearances - although grammatically his "musts" are epistemic inferences. Mr. Knightley argues from surer evidence (not a speck on my shoes, says he), but one wonders nevertheless whether his need to step back from the fire is really evidence of the warmth of the evening or whether it comes in part from the warmth of his determination to answer Mr. Woodhouse's anxiety.

Not much later, in response to Mr. Woodhouse's "Ah! poor Miss Taylor! 'tis a sad business!" Mr. Knightley uses another epistemic "must".

"When it comes to the question of dependence or independence... it *must* be better to have only one to please than two."

Although logic and numbers seem to be on his side, in this instance as in the earlier one, the necessary conclusion echoes with a certain passionate commitment that belies disinterestedness. This pattern - "musts" which have the surface shape of inferences and yet which resonate with will, where the epistemic seems to carry with it a possible covert volitive reading - raises questions both playful and serious about the extent to which belief can be read as desire, desire represented as belief.

Emma's first sparring match with Mr. Knightley involves just such an issue: she is busily congratulating herself for contriving the match between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston when Knightley objects that Emma is confusing her wishful thinking with the ways of the world. "I rather imagine, your making the match as you call it, means only... your saying to yourself one idle day, 'I think it *would* be a very good thing for Miss Taylor if Mr. Weston were to marry her'." Knightley then reasserts both the hypothetical and the epistemic force of the "would" by concluding, "You made a lucky guess; and *that* [Austen's emphasis] is all that can be said." Their dispute, however, is not so quickly disposed of, either in novels or in life, and Emma's rejoinder that desire and prediction are more nearly intertwined than Mr. Knightley will allow needs to be attended to. For Emma is partly right and she herself is a good case in point.

After the first meeting with Harriet Smith, for example, Emma, much in need of a project, sees clear signs of Harriet's previous neglect and future promise. The line of her argument goes like this:

She was not struck by anything remarkably clever in Miss Smith's

conversation, but she found her altogether very engaging... so artlessly impressed by the appearance of everything, in a style so superior to what she had been used to, that she *must* have good sense and deserve encouragement...The friends from whom she had just parted, though very good sort of people, *must* be doing her harm... she knew Mr. Knightley thought highly of them; but they *must* be coarse and unpolished and very unfit to be the intimates of a girl who wanted only a little more knowledge and elegance to be quite perfect.

The "musts" in this passage are all epistemic - conclusions about states of affairs in the world. For the first, Emma provides her grounds: since Harriet exhibits such intuitive good taste, she "*must* have good sense". The evidence may seem a little fragile but the shape, at least, is that of a reasonable inference. Emma's next conclusion - that the Martins are unfit to befriend a girl like Harriet - requires a rather large inferential leap but the grounds are not hard to supply: her former companions "*must* be doing her harm" because Harriet is still in so untutored a state. The third "must", however, although still apparently an inference, rests on no grounds at all. Despite the fact that Mr. Knightley approves of them, the Martins' failure to "polish" Harriet, Emma reasons, indicates that they themselves "*must* be coarse and unpolished". Gradually, the chain of evidence has been broken and this last conclusion seems to reflect more wish than truth. Her "I want it to be so" lies very close to the surface "it is the case that". That the "musts" lend themselves to both readings simply makes it easier for Emma to masquerade will under the guise of objectivity. Grammar is evidently on her side and it is interesting to note the extent to which the language allows such doubleness by the formal singleness of the modal.

The first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* is perhaps the best illustration of Austen's play on the equivocal nature of the "must".

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a large fortune must be in want of a wife.

If, we are told, the proposition is a "truth" and furthermore, "a truth universally acknowledged," why the "must"? What would be the difference if the line read "is in want of a wife"? Certainly the non-modal "is" is the form we expect in truth-functional propositions such as this appears to be. In part, the "must" operates as an intensifier but even so, one wonders if additional force is really needed. The incongruity between the scope of the claim - "it is a truth universally acknowledged" - and the slightness, not to mention questionableness, of the "truth" would be sufficient to make the whole clearly ironic. Why then the "must"?

First of all, because it places us within the domain of the hypothetical in contrast to the categorical "is". "Is in want of a wife" doesn't invite explanation in the way that "must" does. For example, if I say: "He is Albanian," it would be unusual to ask how I know. It is assumed

that I know by the usual ways - direct evidence, or good authority or some such thing. "He must be Albanian" in contrast is a hypothetical; I *cannot* have certain knowledge or the sentence would make no sense. The "must" announces that this is an inference rather than an assertion, and therefore raises the issue of what evidence I have, indirect or otherwise; it invites us to ask: "How do you know he's Albanian?" or "What makes you think so?" thereby opening up another range of questions entirely. That Austen chooses "must" then is significant for, in doing so, she clearly undercuts the very proposition she appears to be asserting.

The second reason for the "must" is that it offers an alternate reading which the "is" does not allow for. Taken in its most obvious sense, the "must" appears to be a report of a necessary epistemic inference about the way the world regards prosperous and unwived young men, roughly paraphrased as "It must be the case that young men are" (just as "You must be Albanian" = "It must be the case that you are"). But there is, needless to say, another possible reading, one which centers on the volitive "must" of "You must come" ("I insist that you do"). It is perhaps not reasonable to insist that a young man *be* in want of a wife any more than it is reasonable to insist that someone *be* Albanian. If we look at the imperative forms, "be Albanian!" "Be in want of a wife!" the absurdity becomes patent since neither is a command anyone could comply with.⁸ Nevertheless, we are all capable of insisting on the impossible. We are not likely to get it but when was that ever a bar to willfulness?

Conveniently enough, the very first speech of *Pride and Prejudice* provides a ripe candidate for just such willfulness, namely Mrs. Bennet who, with five daughters and a male entail, is perfectly capable of determining the wants or the needs of any young man in the neighborhood. Nor, it appears, is she alone. For, as Austen points out, "this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters." The opening line, "must" and all, can thus be ascribed to an uncounted number of aspiring parents, all quite capable of wishing unreasonably - "He must be in want of a wife" - and of transforming that wish into an inference which has the identical surface shape - "He must be in want of a wife." Mrs. Bennet's is simply the first voice that we hear.

Thus the novel's opening, which appears to be the author's report of conventional wisdom, becomes alternatively a representation of the fervent desire of at least one desperate mother. How are we then to read that first sentence? Is the "must" epistemic, an inference about the way marriages come about, or volitive, the insistence that anyone who is a good prospect for marriage marry? The passage is by no means unclear or indistinct, but it does have at least two quite separate readings, very different in meaning, and part of the wit that makes the line so

memorable comes from the recognition of these alternatives, for the ambiguity does not so much require us to choose between readings as to recognize the extent to which they exist, the extent to which our wishes often underlie our most "objective" predictions and suppositions.

Let me give another example of the way Austen suggests a double reading, alternating between desire and belief, for modal sentences. Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* is speculating in advance about whether to prefer Thomas or Edmund Bertram. The elder appears to be much the better catch.

He had been much in London, and had more liveliness and gallantry than Edmund, and must, therefore, be preferred... She had felt an early presentiment that she should [Austen's emphasis] like the eldest best. She knew it was her way.⁹

Here, the "must" seems obviously epistemic, a necessary inference from the data. Given the evidence she cites - Thomas' familiarity with London, his liveliness and gallantry, not to mention the unmentioned point that he will no doubt inherit Mansfield Park - the conclusion follows, with the "therefore" only confirming its inevitability. In fact it seems so obvious that the "must" is almost supernumerary and here again one could easily substitute "is" without doing any apparent damage to the meaning. Yet, as in the passage from *Pride and Prejudice*, the "must" is not as innocent as it looks. In both cases the modal calls attention to the fact that the conclusion *is* a conclusion and thus creates doubt just when one expects it to be most reassuring. That he must be preferred, even that he "must therefore" be preferred, doesn't at all ensure that he will be. And in this case he isn't.

Cool and calculating though she is, not even Mary Crawford can decide the matter, any more than Ralph Rackstraw could decide to be an Englishman. All her reasoning goes for naught; she is unable "to like the eldest best," no matter how necessary a conclusion it seems to be and the epistemic "must" of her argument only serves to point up the absurdity of deducing (inducing?) an attachment. If she is serious, she reveals not only a failure to self-knowledge but a failure to understand the limits of the will. Of course, it is more than likely that Mary is not serious, that what she offers is not a piece of epistemic reasoning but a parody of it, mocking her own propensity for calculation. But whichever is the case - whether the irony is Mary's or Austen's - its grammatical basis remains unchanged; the comedy lies in the inappropriateness of the epistemic modal.

One might give the "must" a volitive reading - "I insist on preferring, am determined to prefer him." For a moment, this hovers as a possibility, but we dismiss it because the sentence, like the first lines of *Pride and Prejudice*, is so marked, if not overmarked, as epistemic.

Nevertheless, the presence of the potential volitive is felt, especially when we get to the "should" of the next sentence.

Mary is careful not to reveal any overt expression of will. She uses the passive form "He must be" instead of the direct "I must" and when she does declare herself she does so in a guardedly roundabout way: "She *should* [Austen's emphasis] like the eldest best." There are three possible readings for the "should": "I ought to," "I predict that I shall" or "I intend to." The first takes it as an injunction, the endpoint of a chain of reasoning, and since Mary has been arguing herself into a preference, this would certainly seem to fit. However, this reading works least well; a "should" or "ought" of this kind cannot easily be the object of a "presentiment" and, more troublesome, since it implies objective obligation, it cannot legitimately be described as "her way" in the next sentence. What we need is a reading of "should" about which Mary can reasonably say "I know it is my way," one, in other words, which can be a possible object of self-knowledge and can be recognized as a habitual mode. The other two "shoulds" permit this.

The third person "she should" is either a first person "I should" as above, or a shifted form of the first person "I shall." Represented thought, like indirect speech, is always back-shifted so that the direct utterance "I will go home tomorrow" becomes "She would go home tomorrow, she thought"; "I shall be late" becomes "She should be late, she feared." Since Austen is scrupulous in observing the shall/will distinction (where "I shall" is a prediction, "I will" an expression of intention, with the notable exception of the so-called "emphatic shall" which is an intensified "will") it is possible for the "she should" to be a transposition of the prediction "I shall like the eldest best." This reading, like the "should" = "ought", accords with the epistemic deliberation of the sentence preceding it and appears to be reinforced by her characterizing it as a "presentiment" (a guess about the future) as though Mary were a spectator predicting her own behavior.

The grammar also permits an alternative reading, although it is not, I think, the first reading we would assign. If we take the "shall/should" not as epistemic but as emphatic, then the modal becomes volitive and the whole sentence changes; it becomes "I will (intend to) like the eldest best". Austen, it must be remembered, has italicized the "should" and in doing so seems not only to authorize but positively to invite this interpretation. Reading back from the emphatic "should", it is possible to regard the "must" also as volitive, in which case one would read the passage as somewhere between the relatively naked willfulness of Mrs. Bennet and her neighbors who have objectified their desires as the necessary way of the world.

Here again it is not as essential to decide between readings as to perceive them all as

potentially present, for whether Mary is simply predicting, or in fact determining upon a course of action, or disguising the one as the other, her attempt is fruitless (as the novel demonstrates and as she herself undoubtedly knows). Neither ratiocination nor will is of much use in matters of the heart; whatever Mary means, she is wrong. But nevertheless it is inherently human to do what Mary is doing - to try to predict even when prediction is impossible, to try to control even those events which cannot be controlled and to do both at once if we can possibly get away with it.

Both the complexity and the absurdity of these human enterprises are built into the modal system so that, at least verbally, we can arrange the world as we would like it. Sir John's "must" cannot bring the Colonel back, nor can Elinor's "must" make Willoughby love Marianne enough to marry her. Nevertheless, there is something oddly comforting in those verbal assertions, as though language can provide the gratification of the will which the world too often denies. For the moment, whether seriously or parodically, Mary Crawford can entertain possibilities which she cannot realize; she can enjoy the sense of determining or choosing or rather, of playing at choosing, which is even better. For the moment, she is, so to speak, writing the script.

In this case the novelist declines to cooperate (but then, Mary never wanted Thomas as much as Mrs. Bennet wanted husbands), and Austen's refusal reminds us that behind everyone else's "must" in the novels, there lies the novelist's imperative, Austen's "must", which can and does control events.¹⁰ Remember the language of children's make-believe - "Now you *must* be... and I *will* be... and we *must* do..." That fiat of fiction provides the final irony by allowing the author herself just those prerogatives of will that the novels demonstrate the foolishness or futility of wanting. No wonder then that Austen felt more sympathy with Emma Woodhouse than she expected her audience to feel, for Emma is a novelist manqué whose error is to regard the world as her manuscript. Her confusion is no doubt a grave error, but Austen understands the impulse. At precisely the moment when everyone is warning Emma of the folly of making a match between Mr. Elton and Harriet Smith, Austen herself is busily at work in Bath to provide that young clergyman with exactly the sort of wife he so richly deserves.

It is a measure of the distance between life and art that Emma's efforts are censured while the novelist's are applauded and it is certainly one of the advantages of art over life that art allows such prerogatives. Perhaps, when all is said and done, Austen's best defense of the novel is not the one found in *Northanger Abbey* but the one implicit in her play with the modals, for is not the ultimate lesson of all those overloaded (and abused) "musts" that fiction is the best domain for our "fictions". Only there can we satisfy our sense of how things "ought" to

be, indeed, "must" be. After all, how often in this world are the General Tilneys or Lady Catherine outwitted by their own design, the Mrs. Ferrars so ironically defeated, the Mrs Bennets provided for? Yet it is one of the charms of fiction that it is thus subversive to common sense or expectation.

To go back to the example of Mrs. Bennet's outrageous demand at the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*, we all assume, with Mr. Bennet, that his wife's intentions carry no force, and we understand it to be the stuff comedy is made of when she declares: "My dear Mr. Bennet, how can you be so tiresome! You *must* know that I am thinking of his [Bingley's] marrying one of them [the five daughter, of course]." But if we are as skeptical as Mr. Bennet, it is because like him we have not sufficient respect for the power of fiction and of fiction-makers. By the end of the novel all of us, Mr. Bennet included, are impressed by that power to command a world as wished. With three of his daughters almost magically settled, even *he* is awed, for fiction does triumph and Mrs. Bennet's "must" is realized beyond our wildest expectation of what the actual ever offers. The novel which begins by mocking the insistent willfulness of those who assume what it is a young man *must* want, ends by calling our attention to the represented world of fiction in which such things are possible.

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- 1 - It is the Houynhmhs, after all, who are so honorable (or perhaps so ignorant) that they lack a word for lying. The closest they can come is "saying the thing which was not." One can only conclude that, wise as these horses are, they are no grammarians, for lying as they define it is indistinguishable from the hypothetical. Fortunately, the Houynhmhs are not so stringent in practice. In fact, they spend quite a bit of time talking about things which are not. They speculate about who Gulliver might be and whether his story could be true; they conclude that he must be a Yahoo, consider what they ought to do and finally, decide that he shall be banished. One wonders whether, if Gulliver had never come among them, the Houynhmhs could have more successfully avoided modal expressions. Perhaps it is the presence of the human that generates them. Certainly it is the mark of the human to use them.
 - 2 - Not only Austen's language but her titles (when they are not proper names) are provocatively modal. "Pride" and "prejudice", "sense" and "sensibility" reflect the distinction between the volitive and the epistemic. Sense implies rationality, sensibility passion; pride is a passion which distorts, prejudice a cognition which does so; and the "and" of these titles suggests not so much the separation of the two as the need, however difficult, to recognize them as conjoined. "Persuasion" encapsulates both semantic domains in one word. In that last novel, *Persuasion*, it is never clear whether Anne Elliot or Captain Wentworth was the more "persuaded", nor whether either, neither or both were rightly persuaded, i.e., had reasonable grounds for believing.
 - 3 - Von Wright's categories are described in an early essay, "Deontic Logic" (1951) in *Logical Studies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), as follows: "So called modal concepts might conveniently be divided into three or four main groups. There

are the alethic modes or modes of truth. These are concepts such as the necessary (the necessarily true), the possible (the possibly true), and the contingent (the contingently true). There are the epistemic modes or modes of knowing. These are concepts such as the verified (that which is known to be false). There are the deontic modes or modes of obligation. These are concepts such as the obligatory (that which we ought to do), the permitted (that which we are allowed to do), and the forbidden (that which we must not do). As a fourth main group of modal categories one might add the existential modes or modes of existence. These are concepts such as universality, existence, and emptiness (of properties or classes)." I have taken the notion of the epistemic from him; I have taken the notion of the volitive from Anthony Kenny, *Will, Freedom and Power* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1976).

- 4 - Those for whom this is not enough can see also Zelda Boyd and Julian Boyd, "Shall and Will", *State of the Language*, edited by Leonard Michaels and Christopher Ricks (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980).
- 5 - W.S. Gilbert, *H.M.S. Pinafore*.
- 6 - Saki, "the Schartz-Metterklume Method". I would like to thank Jack Conner for supplying me with this example.
- 7 - It is important here to distinguish the existential "be" from the "be" of performing in a play or acting a part. That they are grammatically as well as conceptually separate is demonstrated by the following sentences: "Who could be Caesar" vs. "Who could Ceasar be".
- 8 - The constraints on such sentences are conceptual rather than grammatical as they are in sentences like "I promise it won't rain" which is grammatically acceptable but conceptually puzzling if one takes it literally.
- 9 - For an extremely interesting, detailed, non-modal discussion of this passage, see D.A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). Miller's entire chapter on Austen touches tantalizingly on modal notions. See especially his account of Emma's epistemic "musts", pp.92 ff., and his note on persuasion, pp.100-1.
10. Sir John Middleton's "He *must* and *shall* come back" in *Sense and Sensibility* offers a neat contrast to the narrator's "Something *must* and *will* happen" in *Northanger Abbey*. The "shall" and "will" are carefully distinguished. "He shall come back is Sir John's promise (like "You shall have your money") while "Something will happen" is the narrator's prediction. The "musts" on the other hand, are not so clearly distinguishable. With Sir John it matters little which "must" he means because neither the volitive nor the epistemic "must" carries any force. He is powerless to impose his will on the world and he lacks reasonable grounds for inference. His "must", like his promise, is an empty assurance.
 With the narrator, the situation is reversed. The distinction between the volitive and the epistemic "must" is irrelevant not because she is powerless but because she is powerful. For her, will and probability are one; her will constitutes the world, her desire can produce heroes or husbands when necessary, and consequently, the specifically epistemic "must", to the extent that it is suggested by the epistemic "will", is either ironic or disingenuous.