



ing. Born a Jew, he converted to Catholicism. Unfortunately, his jibes fed a virulent anti-Semitic current in Austrian life that was exploited early on by politician Karl Lueger and later by the infamous ex-Vienna resident, Adolf Hitler.

Above all, notes Timms, a Cambridge Germanist, Kraus was concerned with language, particularly as it was used and abused by the Austrian press. His parodies were often indistinguishable from the newspapers' daily offerings; occasionally, he would simply reprint passages from the news, allowing absurdity, or pomposity, or pseudosignificance to speak for itself. There was, however, no irony intended when Kraus denounced Austrian (and other European) journalists for their role in the outbreak of World War I: "The war guilt of the press is not that it set the machinery of death in motion, but that it hollowed out our hearts so that we could no longer imagine what it was going to be like!"

JANE AUSTEN

by Tony Tanner
Harvard, 1986
291 pp. \$20.00 cloth, \$8.95
paper

Daughter of an English country vicar, novelist Jane Austen (1775–1817) lived through the French Revolution, the rise and fall of Napoleon, the flowering of Romanticism in the arts, and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. Charlotte Brontë—a sister novelist and slightly later contemporary—judged her cloistered, static, and completely unaware of social and political change. Tanner, a professor of English at Cambridge, attacks this persistent myth.

Each Austen novel, he says, turns on "the relationship and adjustment between individual energy and social forms." And those forms, Tanner shows, are far from static. The works of her youth—*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey*—reflect an 18th-century Rationalist perspective. Individuals in these novels strive against the "potential instability" of emotion in an effort to maintain "the required stabilities of society." Marriage, the inevitable outcome of an Austen plot, provides the resolution of this struggle—and therefore of the 18th-century woman's basic life problem.

Later in her life, when writing *Persuasion*, Austen's faith in the dominant class was shaken, inclining her more toward a Romantic regard for feeling. Anne, *Persuasion*'s heroine, finds herself

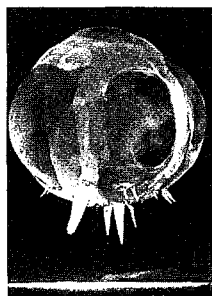
in a corrupt "old order of society" that prizes only "rank and consequences." Eventually, she abandons "prudence" to follow her heart, marrying the man of *her* choice.

In her last and unfinished novel, *Sanditon*, Austen leaves both Rationalism and Romanticism behind. Instead, she paints a portrait of a crass seaside resort, a developer's dream, dedicated to "distraction and amusement and idleness . . . fabricated out of words, money—and sand." This literary leap carried her far beyond the rural harmony presented in *Emma* and foreshadowed the Dickensian hard times soon to come.

Science & Technology

THE MAKING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

by Richard Rhodes
Simon & Schuster, 1987
886 pp. \$22.95



In 1900, English scientist Frederick Soddy recorded the spontaneous transmutation of thorium gas into helium. From this observation, Soddy worked out the principle of radioactive half-life. It was, he later recalled, like the opening of a new world: "For more than two years, scientific life . . . became hectic to a degree rare in the lifetime of an individual."

Soddy's work made scientists rethink their concept of the atoms as stable components of elements. Over the next 45 years of research chronicled here by author Rhodes, the discoveries of a few remarkable men would unleash the most destructive force the world has known. The path from Soddy's laboratory to the first explosion at the Trinity test site in New Mexico seems all but inevitable, but Rhodes makes dramatically clear the importance of the special genius of men like Denmark's Niels Bohr, who developed the model of the atom with its orbiting electrons, and Hungary's Leo Szilard, who in 1933 envisioned the possibility of splitting atoms with neutrons.

Drawing on recently released government documents, interviews, and memoirs, Rhodes plumbs the motives of those who wanted to make the bomb. Scientific curiosity was a factor, as Robert Oppenheimer, director of America's Manhattan Project, admitted. But politics and survival were paramount. Throughout World War II, Britain, Germany, Japan, Russia, and America all sought to come up with the winning weapon first. Bohr, like other physicists who fled to the United States, had