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deeds. Characters began their boasts by elaborately recounting noble lineages and past heroics. ("I came from battle [where I] destroyed a race of giants," declared Beowulf.) Brandishing of weapons and other theatrical gestures added emphasis. Yet, Conquergood argues, boasts were "future-oriented." "I did" was invariably followed by "I must continue to do." And boasts were made only in preparation for crises, never after them.

The audience played a key role in boasting. To win praise and acceptance, public utterances had to reflect society's ideals—in the Anglo-Saxons' case, the warrior virtues of valor and loyalty, not pragmatism or caution. A boaster would never have said, "I weighed the alternatives" or "I know when I'm beaten." Boasts thus subjected heroes to the most pressing demands of their countrymen. Public shame, or even exile, faced the soldier who broke his vows. As Beowulf's companion Wiglaf warned, "Death is better for any man than a disgraced life."

For Anglo-Saxon heroes, the need for peer respect outweighed "the brute urge to survive." Their boasting was a way to gain recognition for the risks they took and inner peace when their courage proved fatal.

### *Subversive Art in the Ancien Régime*

"Fallen Fathers: Images of Authority in Pre-Revolutionary French Art" by Carol Duncan, in *Art History* (June 1981), Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., Broadway House, Newton Rd., Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, R69 1EN, United Kingdom.

The French Revolution of 1789 was an uprising not only against Louis XVI and the *ancien régime* but also against patriarchy in general, whether the authority figure was *père de famille* or king. French artists in the decades immediately preceding the revolution captured the mounting distaste for traditional authority, writes Duncan, a Ramapo College (New Jersey) art historian.

After 1750, rapid population growth and rising unemployment in France strained familial and social discipline and spawned deep resentment of both. It was about this time that French painters became obsessed with old men. Often such figures were shown struggling against the assault of disobedient subordinates—especially sons. Yet many were objects of pity and sympathy, not powerful, fearsome tyrants.

Artists' growing ambivalence was typified by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, probably the most popular French painter of the 1760s and '70s. Greuze was a maverick who drew family scenes in defiance of the Royal Academy's edict to paint only historical and mythological episodes. His *The Father's Curse* (1778) and *The Son Punished* (1779) are strange endorsements of filial loyalty. They portray a rebellious son who abandons his family to join the army and returns home just after his father's death, too late for forgiveness. The stark generational hostility, argues Duncan, invites the viewer "to identify secretly with the criminal while consciously condemning him."

As the Revolution approached, these feelings surfaced even in ap-

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proved historical paintings. *The Deluge* (1789) by Jean-Baptiste Regnault—in which a tormented son must choose between rescuing his father or his wife and son—presents a rationale for abandoning traditional authority. And, in Jacques-Louis David's *Brutus* (1789), the Roman leader is shown being forced to execute his traitorous sons, rendered powerless before a genderless abstraction—the state.

Made anxious by reformist rumblings, Louis XV and Louis XVI hoped that these classical representations would inspire patriotism and reinforce the monarchy's image of grandeur and enlightened benevolence. Ironically, after 1789, the same paintings were hung and admired as "emblems of Revolutionary ideals."

*The Unromantic  
Jane Austen*

"The Novels of Jane Austen: Attachments and Supplantments" by Daniel Cottom, in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* (Winter 1981), Box 1984, Brown University, Providence, R.I. 02912.

Literary critics since Sir Walter Scott have been struck by the unsentimental view of love portrayed in the novels of Jane Austen (1775–1817). But Austen's wry studies of romance reflect no lack of feeling, suggests Cottom, of Wayne State University (Michigan). Rather, Austen was reacting to the disorganized state of British society at the turn of the century. To her, Cupid's work was poorly served by the stiff codes and etiquettes ordained by the waning, still dominant aristocracy. But his arrows were no better steered by the sentimental values of the ascending middle class.

Austen resisted the idea that romantic attraction results from distinct affinities between people. The sentimental lover—e.g., Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)—tries to believe her love is fated, certain. But Austen shows this certainty to be "laughably weak in comparison to the instability of society," says Cottom. To Austen, love is haphazard, subject to displacement, and ruled by circumstance. Thus, the exceedingly correct Mr. Collins of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) could switch his affections with remarkable speed from Jane Bennet—who had a beau—to her sister Elizabeth, with Mrs. Bennet, the ladies' mother, "stirring the fire."

Love is further obstructed by the "task of telling lies, when politeness require[s] it," as Austen wrote. In Austen's novels, dialogue between lovers, as between all others, must follow long-established, outworn forms that no longer can convey inner feelings. The misunderstandings and conflicts that result provide Austen's plots. Marriages and families are not havens from the world, as they are in Charles Dickens's novels. They are reflections of it. Relationships within them are "as formal as or more formal than" relationships with outsiders.

Austen conveyed the social chaos of the day. But she also showed the ways in which individuals gain some measure of control over their lives: As Mrs. Grant of *Mansfield Park* (1814) observes, "If one scheme of