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## Isabelle de Montolieu reads Jane Austen's Fictional Minds

The First French Translations  
of Free Indirect Discourse  
from Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

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**T**he hallmark technique of Austen's mature writing is known as free indirect discourse (FID), style indirect libre (SIL) in French. It is responsible for what has become known as the "inward interest" of her writing. In *Persuasion*, Jane Austen uses this technique to present Anne Elliot's consciousness. This narrative technique is primarily concerned with the representation of a fictional character's inner-life, as well as his or her discourse, often recalling the very "melody" of the character's actual words. Stephen Buccleugh provides the following non-technical but highly descriptive definition of FID:

Free indirect discourse occupies a middle ground between direct discourse, the direct transcription of a character's speech, and indirect discourse, a narrator's paraphrase of the contents of a speech event in the narrator's own "style." Free indirect discourse is not framed within quotation marks as direct discourse would be, but neither is it preceded by third person references to the speaking (or thinking) character and past tense *verba dicendi*, such as "she said" or "she thought," which characterize simple indirect discourse. Neither the content nor the style of such passages can reasonably be attributed solely to their narrators; often the idiom, the lexical and dialectical registers of such a passage, seems more characteristic of the character than of the narrator. Yet the absence of quotation marks and the presence of past tense verbs suggest the continued presence of a narrating voice positioned between the reader and the character's discourse.

*Persuasion*, Austen's posthumously published "late" novel (appearing in 1818, bound with *Northanger Abbey* in "two-decker" format) is first translated by Isabelle de Montolieu as *La Famille Elliot, ou l'ancienne inclination*, Paris, 1821. This study analyses the translation of FID from *Persuasion* to *La Famille Elliot*. Marguerite Lips (1926) has written a working definition for FID in French similar to the one Buccleugh provides for English:

On voit déjà que le style indirect libre est une forme intermédiaire rappelant à la fois les deux autres types de reproduction: il permet de conserver les exclamations, les intonations, et en général les procédés expressifs propres au direct; la syntaxe des propositions est indépendante, pas de verbe introducteur transitif; comme l'indirect subordonné, l'indirect libre transpose les temps et les pronoms personnels.

The argument thus focuses on the identification, function and effects of the translation of FID in Austen's narrative by the French text. How does Montolieu handle this technique? This study aims to answer this question.