

# JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

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## Medical Men in Jane Austen's Time. E.Sutherland.

The ability, training and social status of medical men of 1750 were very different from those of 1850. Jane Austen's lifetime, midway between these dates, was in this aspect as in many others a period of rapid change. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, medicine was practised by surgeon-apothecaries; by 1850, the medical profession was structured much as it is today.

Before registration, regulated training and licensing, medical men varied from those who held a university degree, were members of the Company of Surgeons, and had trained at a hospital, through all stages down to the grocer/farmer who sold drugs as a sideline, and called himself an apothecary. There was no demarcation between a "regular" medical man and a quack or charlatan. Some educated men took up medicine as a hobby, discussed it as they might science, politics or poetry, and became skilled practitioners of physic. The clergy and gentry often treated the members of their parishes.

18<sup>th</sup> century medicine could be divided into four categories: physic - the treatment by medicine of internal diseases diagnosed from a detailed history of the illness, observation of the patient, and consideration of his constitution and way of life; surgery - the treatment of external disorders by "manual interference" - dressing wounds and ulcers, setting fractures and dislocations, operations, and the treatment of venereal disease; pharmacy - the compounding and dispensing of drugs; and midwifery - traditionally a woman's field, but during the 18<sup>th</sup> century a growing number of medical men became specialists, and it became socially acceptable to "bespeak" a fashionable man-midwife early in pregnancy.

Physicians possessed a university degree in medicine (not necessarily a university education: MDs could be purchased). Those practising in London belonged to the London College of Physicians. These were of the highest status of medical practitioners - they did no manual operations and prescribed but did not dispense drugs. Their superior education gave them the right to oversee both surgeons and apothecaries. Surgeons broke their association with barbers and established the Company of Surgeons in 1745, which in 1800 became the Royal College of Surgeons of London. Apothecaries were of the lowest status, not far removed from tradesmen. They dispensed the medicines prescribed by physicians, and gradually over the 18<sup>th</sup> century came to diagnose complaints and treat poor patients unable to afford a physician's fee. Apothecaries were allowed to charge for the medicine but not for advice or visiting patients. They thus became the "doctors" of the lower classes.



These three groups gradually began merging, and the term surgeon-apothecary became common by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Advances in anatomy and surgery, and the growth of teaching hospitals, led to a rapid rise in the status of able, intelligent, well-trained surgeon-apothecaries, and they often took the place of physicians, especially in the provincial towns. Apprentices were most often the sons or other near relatives of established medical men; otherwise, the fees were high: in the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, from £250 to £300 for apprenticeship to a first-class surgeon, for example. Men less eminent in their fields of course charged less.

At the bottom of the scale of medical men were illiterate and uneducated practitioners who called themselves "surgeons" or "apothecaries". An advertisement of 1815 in Gloucestershire read: "I. Popjay, Surgeon, Apothecary and Midwife, etc. draws teeth and bleeds on the lowest terms. Confectionary, Tobacco, Snuff, Tea, Coffee, Sugar and all sorts of Perfumery sold here. NB New laid eggs every morning by Mrs. Popjay."

The typical education of a surgeon/apothecary was grammar school until aged 12-15, studying Latin and Greek classics, an apprenticeship of five years, then a year or two of medical instruction at a provincial hospital, or lectures and "walking the wards" in a London hospital. After this, the medical practitioner could move to the town of his choice and set himself up in practice. If he subsequently showed a proven clinical ability, he could, upon payment of a modest fee and on the recommendation of two colleagues, receive an MD degree to practise as a physician, from Aberdeen or St. Andrews. These Scottish universities stressed the importance of proven medical ability, whereas the London College of Physicians valued an education in Latin and classical authors rather than practical experience. This was the career of Edward Jenner - he practised for 20 years as a typical country surgeon/apothecary, bought his MD and began to practise as a physician, and experimented with vaccination.

Apprenticeship to a reputable medical man was of the greatest importance, not only for learning his "trade" but also for the contacts and entrée into the fairly closed world of medicine at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A bad master took advantage of his apprentice, kept him behind the shop counter or in a back room washing bottles and making up supplies of medicines, without instruction in what he should know. But a good master was almost a guarantee of a reliable assistant - he would teach his apprentice about drugs, chemistry and anatomy, and ultimately take him along to the patients' bedsides to take note of symptoms and help diagnose and prescribe. The system of medical apprenticeship gradually came to an end with the rising importance of teaching hospitals in the late years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The hospital training, especially in London, was expensive: a student in 1801-2 spent £26 for hospital pupil fees, 21 guineas for lectures on medicine, chemistry, anatomy, midwifery, physiology, surgery and theory of medicine, 6 guineas for dissections, and another £10 or so on instruments and books.

The 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were a period of great use of medicines. Even when a reputable apothecary doubted the efficacy of his nostrums, he continued to prescribe them: this was the way he earned his livelihood, and his patients demanded some sort of medicine for their ills. In most cases it is impossible to determine the actual drug or dosage used. There was no standard; each apothecary had his own formulae. Medicines were dispensed to maximize profits - in small amounts, supplied frequently: often a bottle contained only a single dose, and pills were dispensed one or two at a time. The increasing prosperity of the apothecaries resulted in a corresponding rise in social status - consider Mr. Perry "setting up his carriage" - it did not happen, but it was considered probable.

The popular view is of the physician having a monopoly of practice and treatment among the rich, while the poor apothecary dispensed the physician's prescriptions and carried on a

miserable practice among the poor. Recent research has suggested otherwise. An apothecary in Bristol at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century earned more than most of the physicians in that city. During the winter months, he had as many as forty patients with coughs and colds to be treated daily, averaging as much as £12 a day. During an influenza epidemic he visited seventy patients a day and his apprentices mixed saline solutions in ten-gallon casks from which individual doses were bottled up. No matter how wealthy an apothecary became, he still dispensed medicines over the counter and was considered a shop keeper, with the corresponding stigma which stood in the way of his social advancement. In *Cranford* (1855), the "ladies" are horrified when Lady Glenmire marries the doctor.

When we think of surgical operations in the 18<sup>th</sup> century without anesthetics, it is a horrible picture. But major operations were a very rare part of the ordinary surgeon/apothecary's practice. Of the 150 cases of a surgeon at Nottingham hospital in 1795-7, only four were major operations. Most of their practice was concerned with fractures, dislocations, bruises, sprains, wounds and burns, as well as routine medical disorders such as sore throats, abscesses and skin disorders. Most patients were treated by rest, diet, medicines and external dressings. Very common were leg ulcers, especially among labourers. A London surgeon in 1799 estimated that one out of five among the lower classes suffered this affliction, probably due to deficiency in diet. They were difficult to cure: each new medication was hailed as the infallible cure, but each in turn proved unavailing.

An interesting feature of medical records of this period is how willing patients were to consult a surgeon for minor conditions like sprains or bruises, and how often the treatments had to be continued over a period of months. Chronic infections assured a steady income for the medical practitioners. But the 18<sup>th</sup> century surgeon's skill with fractures, abscesses and toothache earned him a well-merited reputation.

Fees for medicines, visits and surgical care were surprisingly constant in all parts of the country - but everything was more expensive in the large towns and in London than in the rural districts. Fees were the same for all classes of patients, with the exception of the gentry and aristocracy, who were routinely charged much higher fees than farmers, merchants, labourers or the clergy. The lowest fee in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century of one doctor in Wells whose records have survived, was five shillings, for treating a sore throat, opening an abscess, or pulling a tooth. But this was approximately a day's wage for a farm labourer. More serious conditions requiring more time and skill were of course charged higher fees. Ordinary country surgeons were in a well-paid occupation.

In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, almost all ordinary obstetrical work was done by mid-wives; only complicated labours and emergency situations called for the intervention of a surgeon. By 1800, however, this position had changed, and midwifery was part of the practice of most ordinary practitioners. One reason was the invention of forceps about this time. Another was the growing status of surgeons, who were looking for ways to increase their income and attract regular and faithful patients. An average fee for a normal childbirth was 15s to 1 guinea. It was a low fee in consideration of the time involved, but man-midwifery was necessary in building up a practice and keeping patients. [In Jane Austen's major novels, only two child-births are given any prominence - Charlotte Palmer's and Mrs. Weston's; we cannot count Mrs. Price, who must have had innumerable lying-ins during the course of Fanny's growing up at Mansfield].

[Information from: *Medical Care and the General Practitioner*: Irvine Loudon, 1986].

## NEW ADDRESS FOR LONG-TIME MEMBER

Jill Sims,  
#225 Lakeside Gardens, 4088 Wellesley Ave., Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6M2

Jill has been a member of the Vancouver Region almost from its beginning. When she moved to the Island, her attendance was not so invariable, but she made the long trip over as often as she could. Her common sense and good humour were welcomed. Please write a note to Jill, and wish her well in her new life-style. I know she will be very pleased to hear from our members. Her strength is not what it was, and she may not be able to write back, but you may be sure she will be thinking of us all, and wishing she were with us.

Phyllis Bottomer sent in this little *snippet*\* for your entertainment and information.

“Since visiting Venice almost two years ago I have enjoyed a few of Donna Leon’s mysteries set in that intriguing city. The following quote is from her 2005 book, *Blood from a Stone*, and records a conversation between her detective, Guido Brunetti, and his wife as they browse bookstores looking for Christmas gifts for their teenage daughter.

In the first they found nothing that Paola thought Chiara would like, but in the second she bought a complete set of the novels of Jane Austen, in English.

“But you have those”, Brunetti said.

“Everyone should have them,” Paola said. “If I thought you’d read them, I’d get you a set, too.”

He started to protest that he had read them once . . . .”

\*Jane Austen never used this word (so far as I could find out), but it dates from 1664, so she may have known and heard it. I think she would have liked it. (E.S.)

**Berry Interesting!** By Liz Philosophos Cooper, in *The Wire*, Newsletter from Wisconsin.

“Whenever I think of Box Hill, I think of strawberries. Jane Austen conjures up quite a vivid image when she writes of Mrs. Elton in her large bonnet pontificating.

“The best fruit in England – everybody’s favorite – always wholesome. – These the finest beds and finest sorts . . . every sort good - hautboy infinitely superior – no comparison – the others hardly eatable – hautboys very scarce . . . .”

I was interested to read in a recent *Smithsonian Magazine* article by David Karp that what was called the hautboy in England during Austen’s time, is the little-found variety *Fragaria Moschata*, or *musk* strawberry. Once native to the forests of central Europe, this rare berry with mottled brownish red skin and tender white flesh can now only be found in Tortona, Italy between Genoa and Milan. It is known for its peculiar floral yet spicy aroma which is very different than the modern strawberry’s, with hints of honey, musk and wine.”

[This is a beautifully subtle insinuation of Mrs. Elton’s determination to appear more superior and knowledgeable than her companions. E.S.]

Ask Lady C. Kathleen Glancy. [With thanks to the "Republic of Pemberley" for the idea]

It must be obvious to all that Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who dispenses advice to everyone who asks her for it and quite a few who do not, should be running a problem page of her own in some genteel publication. And what could be more genteel than this publication? I have presumed to rob her ladyship's desk of a couple of letters - oddly enough they come from the same house - seeking her guidance. I am sure her Ladyship would deign to receive other cries for help, if anyone wishes to send them.

Dear Lady Catherine:

I venture to address you because I have heard from our vicar Mr. Elton, who had some conversation with your Mr. Collins at a recent synod, that you are a fount of good advice in every difficulty. I am in great distress, dear madam, and hope you can suggest a course of action to alleviate it. Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat - and therein lies my problem. My elder daughter, Poor Isabella, her husband Mr. John Knightley and their children will all be coming to stay, and Mr. Knightley, Mr. and Poor Mrs. Weston (Miss Taylor as she was - I will never know why she wanted to marry and leave us), Miss Smith, Mrs. and Miss Bates and Mr. Elton will all be calling, and they are likely to want to eat the fat goose, except Poor Isabella's youngest, little Emma, who is not yet on solid foods. Emma, my younger daughter, not Poor Isabella's baby, will not hear of their being served gruel, soft-boiled eggs and baked apples instead, and indeed when I proposed it last year Mr. John Knightley threatened to remove himself, Poor Isabella and the children to Donwell forthwith. It is not only the goose which troubles me. Mr. Knightley keeps sending over pheasants and partridges. Poor Miss Taylor, I mean Mrs. Weston, has promised despite all I could say to send some of her turkeys, which Emma says are so delicious that someone will steal them one day, and my grandsons express an alarming partiality for mutton. I cannot bear even to think about Christmas pudding, but I believe Serle may have done. Lady Catherine, how can I persuade my dear family and friends to have more care for their digestions? I beg the favour of your counsel at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely, Henry Woodhouse, Hartfield.

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Honoured Madam:

I beg your Ladyship's pardon for presuming to address you, but I have heard that your Ladyship is uncommonly good at finding good positions for people and I hope you will deign to consider my case. I am a cook, and if I say so myself a very good one. However, my master Mr. Woodhouse, though a kindly old gentleman, is stifling my talents. His preferred food is, begging your Ladyship's pardon, pap. Much though he praises the way I make gruel, soft-boil eggs and bake apples these are not dishes which are interesting to prepare. He makes me **boil** pork!!! I f ever I try out any new dish he seems to find a way to thwart me. I made a lovely wedding cake for Miss Taylor's marriage to Mr. Weston, and Mr. Woodhouse tried to stop anyone from eating it. He did not succeed on that occasion, but when I prepared a beautiful fricassee of sweetbreads and asparagus for one of his evening parties (the girl Patty, who is always most civil, had told me Mrs. Bates was very partial to such a dish and I thought to give the poor old lady a treat) he cast

aspersions on its being done enough and sent it back. I need a new situation, well away from Highbury where I have an unfortunate reputation, thanks to Mr. Woodhouse, as a cook who is able to produce the perfect gruel and soft-boil eggs wonderfully, which are not talents of interest to anyone with a normal appetite.

I have made some enquiries of my own, but I have been told not to go near Northanger Abbey, as General Tilney flies into a temper and dismisses his cooks on the spot for some minor offence fairly frequently. Mansfield Park is apparently a bad situation because a Mrs. Norris, sister-in-law of the master of the house, is forever prying about the kitchens interfering and taking any food not tied down or locked away off to her own kitchen, while the mistress of the house spends most of her time asleep and so eats very little. I have been told that the Dashwoods of Norland are mean even to members of their own family and pay their servants very little, though they are better than Sir Walter and Miss Elliot of Kellynch who have not paid their servants anything at all for the last two quarters. Your nephew Mr. Darcy has the reputation of being an exceptionally good master, but according to Mrs. Bennet, his mother-in-law, has a number of French cooks already, so he may not need an English one.

If your Ladyship can help me I will be eternally grateful.

Yours respectfully, Serle, Cook, Hartfield.

PS It has just struck me that your Ladyship might have a vacancy at Rosings. It would of course be a dream come true to work for your Ladyship, but alas not for me because, er, because - because my late mother had an irrational prejudice against the county of Kent. Yes, that's it. She had a prejudice against Kent and made me swear when she was on her death-bed never to take service there.

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### Centuries of British-French Conflict.

In the *Guardian Weekly* of March 31, reviewer Adam Thorpe described a book about French-British animosity throughout the last three centuries: *That Sweet Enemy*, by Robert (English) and Isabella (French) Tombs. They believe that "Franco-British relations have been the direct cause of some of the most catastrophic events."

Some lighter comments add an interesting touch: "The British have always surprised the French with their individual wealth, and their drunkenness", "Voltaire and Montesquieu came to London and admired English liberty, both behavioural and political", and "In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was the English who kissed on greeting, to the alarm of French visitors." Serious themes include "the greed on both sides in the 1750's, as each country scrambled for world control," and "trade, especially in sugar, deteriorated into territorial expansion, armed force and mass slavery."

The authors believe the costs of the war with the American colonies, aided by France, "led directly to the French Revolution - the greatest cataclysm in her history." Hordes of refugees in Britain led to the "closest contacts ever between the élites of the two countries."

After 1815, the rivals became "mutually suspicious allies." Through the years, the ordinary Frenchman embraced *le football*, and the British (less successfully), *la cuisine française*.

The reviewer ends by calling this "a gripping, magnificently informative book, with a delicious streak of dry humour." At 768 pages, it is obviously not a casual summer read, but puts the history of Jane Austen's lifetime into a wide-ranging chronicle of Franco-British relations.

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## THE GARDENS OF JANE AUSTEN'S ENGLAND

I have just received the following letter about a garden tour to England:

"I am writing to ask if you would kindly tell your members of this upcoming tour. Some of the people who are going are JASNA members and they suggested that I write to let others know of the tour. Although I am based in Ottawa, the group includes participants from Vancouver and Nova Scotia as well as other parts of Ontario.

I would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have. I am not a travel agent, but use the services of one solely to ensure that the funds are protected.

Thank you for your interest.

Linda Thorne."

If you are interested, please get in touch with Linda Thorne,  
[thorneandco@netscape.ca](mailto:thorneandco@netscape.ca)

Eileen Sutherland.  
 (Thanks to Phyllis Bottomer)

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"For those who are themselves self-absorbed, such bores as Miss Bates may become very irksome. The attention they fail to give makes the attention they demand all the more troubling. Screened from others by their volubility, needing only the pretext of an audience, they yield little of what one feels is owed one; and for one with claims so large as Emma's, they represent a peculiar affront. So that we find Emma chafing under the strain, while Knightley is sufficiently his own man to be detached and liberal: he can endure the nonsense, see the pathos and warmth, and recollect above all the duties of consideration.

Miss Bates is a special case of the bores and fools we find throughout Jane Austen's novels. Some are aggressively sociable, like Sir John Middleton; others archly prying like his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jennings; some pretentious and alternately servile or smug like Collins, some oppressively rude and patronizing like Augusta Elton. What they all share is deficiency of awareness, indifference to others' feelings or privacy, obtuseness about their own motives. They tend to be great talkers, talking not so much for victory, like Dr. Johnson, as for survival; they retain their stable existence, their life of untroubled repetition, by blocking off reality with talk."

- *Forms of Life. Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel*: Martin Price (1983) (p.73).

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"Very hard frost with much snow and very rough easterly wind . . . I don't know that I ever felt a more severe day. The turnips all froze to blocks, obliged to split them with beetle and wedges, and some difficulty to get at them on account of the snow - their tops entirely gone and they lay as apples on the ground."

February 1, 1799 (Norfolk). James Woodforde.

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## The Parish.

“Crabbe’s second book was to be *The Parish Register, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, a perfect format for his purpose, taken from the records locked up in the chest of every parish church. His late-eighteenth-century parishioners are a revelation: gardeners, readers - ‘Learning we lack, not books’ - gunshot bridegrooms, the rich, the destitute, an ‘author rector’ too busy writing to do much else, and his successor, an impressively saintly young clergyman to begin with, but soon to become a fundamentalist fanatic. Dibble the gravedigger buries them all. Thomas Hardy would take identical material and fill it out. In a Hardy novel the parishioners answer back in a way which disconcerts the reader, and makes him feel uncomfortable. Like Jane Austen, he uses a parish as a contained space in which, as in life, a group of people who know each other very well, and who are unconsciously conditioned by a shared background, are forced to cross and recross the same ground. Both novelists enjoy stirring things by causing a ‘foreigner’ to arrive. If you live in a city a foreigner comes from another country, if you live in a village, he comes from five miles down the road. Jane Austen and Hardy intrude upsetting characters into the parish, sexually and socially enthralling men, like Mr. Bingley, Frank Churchill and Sergeant Troy, and thrusting women who consider themselves above having to learn the local ways, such as Mrs. Elton.

Jane Austen’s parish pivots on a coolly amused Anglicanism in which Christianity is little more than a moral requisite, Hardy’s on a sad and beautifully fragmented Bible and Prayer Book tradition in which the statements on salvation are worn to shreds. Their parishes are full of dance music. For Jane Austen the most spiritual destination a parishioner can head for is a gentleman’s grounds, for Thomas Hardy the graveyard. Neither balk village frustration, boredom and longeurs. I once found myself writing about Jane Austen’s parochial defensiveness. However dull a village in one of her novels was, every other place had to be inferior to it, London most of all. ‘In London it is always the sickly season,’ declared old Mr. Woodhouse in *Emma*. When that parish paradigm, Mr. Knightley, is emotionally disturbed he has to go to London ‘to learn to be indifferent.’ For Mr. Elton, on his way there to get Harriet’s portrait framed, London is the destination of fools. To leave Highbury is to leave paradise. Hardy had mixed feelings about parish abandonment. Sometimes he sardonically encouraged his village-stuck characters to pull themselves out of the local rut and flee, sometimes he liked to see them as the last bastions of sanity and happiness.”

*Divine Landscapes*: Ronald Blythe (1986).

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**If I am a wild Beast, I cannot help it. It is not my own fault. Letter #80, p.311.**

The above quotation is often mis-interpreted. The secret of Jane Austen’s authorship was beginning to leak out, and she disliked the idea of publicity. She did not imply she was a wild beast: she merely insisted she did not like to be set up like an animal in a cage, constantly stared at.

Menageries had been kept at the Tower of London (and other royal estates) since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and were still maintained in Jane Austen’s time. (According to Venetia Morrison, *The Art of George Stubbs*, the public were allowed to visit on payment of an entrance fee, which was waived if the visitor brought a cat or dog to feed the lions).

In *S&S* (p.221), one of the important duties which prevented John Dashwood from calling on his sisters at Mrs. Jennings’ in London, was “to take Harry to see the wild beasts at Exeter Exchange.”

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"Very hard frost with much snow and very rough easterly wind . . . I don't know that I ever felt a more severe day. The turnips all froze to blocks, obliged to split them with beate and wedges, and some difficulty to get at them on account of the snow - their tops entirely gone and they lay as apples on the ground."

February 1, 1799 (Norfolk). James Woodforde.

### **The Irony of Fanny's Idealization of Mansfield Park.**

"The Mansfield we have seen has been nothing but contention, jealousy, and insensitivity to others. Fanny herself has been its most frequent victim, though one of Austen's themes is this heroine's inability to speak her hurt. Fanny, like the many critics who stress her passivity, is even less able to acknowledge her own pivotal role in Mansfield's bitter generational conflicts and consuming sexual jealousies. After all, Fanny has been exiled for flatly disobeying Mansfield's patriarch, and she has done so out of passionate illicit love for her cousin Edmund. Portsmouth... is crowded, chaotic, greasy and alcoholic - awash with stereotypes of the urban poor. But for all this, it only literalizes what at Mansfield is disorder of a more profound and hypocritical kind. At Portsmouth, two sisters tussle over a silver knife. At Mansfield they wage an unspoken battle over Henry Crawford, as Mary and Fanny do over Edmund. Portsmouth is dirty. Mansfield is adulterous. Portsmouth's patriarch drinks, curses, and ignores his daughters. The father at Mansfield intimidates, exploits, and also ignores his daughters. Portsmouth is noisy. Mansfield's greatest evil is its dishonest silence." (p.210)

"Jane Austen and Edward Said" by Roger Sales, in  
*Janeites. Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, Deirdre Lynch, ed. (2000)

### **Early Feminism**

[A feudal lady donned her dead lord's armour and drove her enemy from her castle]:

"Lives there such a woman now?...

There are thousands now  
Such women, but convention beats them down:  
It is but bringing up; no more than that:  
You men have done it: how I hate you all!  
Oh! Were I something great! I wish I were  
Some mighty poetess, I would shame you then,  
That love to keep us children! O I wish  
That I were some great princess, I would build  
Far off from men a college like a man's,  
And I would teach them all that men are taught;  
We are twice as quick!" And here she shook aside  
The hand that play'd the patron with her curls...

*The Princess* Alfred Tennyson.

The critic George Henry Lewes, writing in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in 1859, wondered if Jane Austen were short-sighted: ". . . the absence of all sense of outward world - either scenery or personal appearance - is more remarkable in her than in any writer we remember."

[Interesting thought, isn't it?]



**Parallel Cases in Emma.** "Mr. Knightley's Education": Rosalind S. Meyer.

"The parallel cases in *Emma* are so deftly obtruded upon our attention as to invite reflective enquiry. Any reader will observe that there are no less than four couples to be appropriately wedded by the close, a goodly number; and next, of the eight characters concerned, five are 'orphans' in some sense or other - even if we are to exclude Mr. Elton, Robert Martin and Mr. Knightley. Jane Fairfax has lost both her parents and Emma her mother; Frank Churchill is similarly deprived, nor visits his Father's house before it is entered by a second wife; Harriet has never known her parents and apparently never will; while Miss Augusta Hawkins has been obliged to live with her married sister at Maple Grove. Even if we grant the frequent incidences of mortality at the time, this is a considerable proportion of young persons within the same novel who lack normal parental guidance when launching into matrimony.

Moreover, circumstance isolates them still further. The story opens when Emma's surrogate mother, Miss Taylor, departs for her own establishment. Equally, those who until now had acted as parents to Jane, the Dixons [sic], are leaving for Ireland; while the Churchills are as remote from Frank in sympathetic surveillance as in the physical distance his excursions succeed in contriving. Harriet emerges into the world outside Mrs. Goddard's for the first time, and Mrs. Elton enters the tale as a stranger to Surrey. Certainly, this isolation is just such as Jane Austen's novels invariably prepare for their heroine in a variety of ways, so that she must face her difficulties alone; but when it devolves on one after another within the same tale it attracts our notice. For finally to emphasise the presence of an intentional parallelism, there are three protégés depicted as well. Jane Fairfax is annexed by Mrs. Elton in emulation of Emma's having adopted a young companion in Harriet, while the unfledged Robert Martin has been dependent on his experienced landlord from the time he inherited his father's tenancy. All three occasion a lively concern to their respective patrons. Pondering so many similar cases, we may be stimulated to search for counterparts not only among the players but in the action as well." [ Which the author does in the rest of the novel. E.S ] English Studies Vol.79, No. 3, May 1998, p.212-223.

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[American novelist and screenwriter ] Nora Ephron says: "Jane Austin's [sic] *Pride and Prejudice* and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* were the fore-runners of the romantic comedy. Those are the two works of art from which 98% of all romantic comedies derive."

**Pride and Prejudice** - "Ms. Ephron says she was in 'complete bliss' when she saw Joe Wright's 2005 adaptation of the classic, starring Oscar nominee Keira Knightley. ' It portrayed Elizabeth Bennet as a tomboy and I've never seen that done before', she says. She also enjoyed the 1995 BBC version (available on DVD) starring Colin Firth."

[From the Internet, thanks to Mary Atkins.]

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