

JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

Vancouver Region

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Star-gazing.

Edmund and Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, 'standing at an open window looking out on a twilight scene':

"There's Arcturus looking very bright." "Yes, and the bear. I wish I could see Cassiopeia." "We must go out on the lawn for that. Should you be afraid?" "Not in the least. It is a great while since we had any star-gazing." (p.113.)

Mansfield Park was begun in 1811, and finished 'soon after June 1813.'

About ten years before, in 1801, there was great excitement among astronomers when several small new 'planets' were discovered. It is intriguing to think that Jane Austen **might** have known about this and was interested enough to put a 'star-gazing' scene in a later book.

In the mid-1700s, astronomers were puzzled by a space mystery. When they calculated the distances between the seven planets then known - Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter Saturn and Uranus - they noticed that there was a regular pattern. But one area of space didn't fit this pattern. Based on their positions in space, Jupiter and Mars should have had a planet between them. Where was it?

At a meeting in 1796, astronomers agreed to search the area between Jupiter and Mars for the 'missing' planet. Because very few asteroids are visible to the naked eye, it is not surprising that the first ones were discovered only after the invention of the telescope. Even then, the discovery of the first asteroid, Ceres, was accidental. On January 1, 1801, an Italian astronomer, Giuseppe Piazzi (1746-1826), discovered what he thought was the missing planet. He was constructing the most accurate map of the sky up to that time, and as part of his careful method he would always measure the position of a star on two separate nights. This was how he discovered that one faint 'star' had moved, and must actually be within the solar system. However, he fell ill at the crucial moment and 'lost' his planet. A brilliant mathematician named Karl Friedrich Gauss (1779-1855), calculated the probable orbit, and Ceres was rediscovered on December 31, 1801. Piazzi was considered the original discoverer, and he named the object Ceres, after the Greek goddess of the earth.

In 1802, another object was seen between Mars and Jupiter. It was named Pallas, after the Greek goddess of wisdom. In 1804, yet another object was discovered! This one was called Juno, after the queen of the Roman goddesses. Vesta, named after the Roman goddess of the hearth, was spotted in 1807. The astronomers who had set out to find one planet had instead found four. In the mid-1800s, amateur astronomers found even more. By the end of the 1800s, hundreds of objects had been discovered between Jupiter and Mars. The lumps of rock not large enough to be called 'planets' are called *asteroids*, meaning 'star-like'.



Most astronomers believe that asteroids are rocky debris left over from the formation of our solar system, which was originally a *nebula* of dust and gas in orbit around the sun. Out of this gaseous mass the nine planets and more than 60 moons took shape. Millions of comets and asteroids were 'left over'. If all the asteroids could be brought together to form a planet, that planet would be less than half the size of the moon. It would measure about 930 miles across. The asteroid Ceres, 584 miles across, would make up about 25% of that planet.

Ceres has a spherical shape, and has no atmosphere. The gravity on Ceres is just a tiny fraction of our moon's gravity. The edges of the impact craters are surrounded by lumps of rocks called *ejecta*, thrown out by the collisions that formed the craters. Ceres is one of the few asteroids that has enough gravity to pull ejecta to its surface instead of letting it drift off into space. The surface rocks are rich in chemicals containing carbon, and also contain trapped water, bound up in the chemicals. Liquid water never existed on the surface, but the materials that formed the asteroid must have contained ice.

If Mary Crawford hadn't been so fascinating, luring Edmund back into the room to the pianoforte, Fanny and Edmund might have seen Ceres.

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Confinement.

"*Emma's* series of enclosed environments reveals its metaphoric nature: enclosure is used to mark limited or narrowed possibility, and limited possibility is coterminous with diminished vitality. Beginning in a drawing room, it is nine chapters before the scene of *Emma* widens beyond Hartfield, and even then, the only excursion beyond the boundaries of the parishes of Highbury and Donwell (a disastrous one, of course) is to Box Hill. Highbury is a (literally) narrowed environment and within it, at intervals, a series of other enclosed or confined spaces metonymically suggests the relation between freedom, or opportunity, and health, both spiritual and physical. Not only the drawing room at Hartfield, in which Emma in her melancholy vigil feels imprisoned for life, but the crowded rooms at the Crown, whose windows Mr. Woodhouse fears might be thrown open by thoughtless young persons, the narrow stairs and confined accommodation of Mrs. and Miss Bates, which is so much to the detriment of their niece's welfare: all these imply how readily confinement and sickness reciprocally reinforce each other. In all sorts of ways - the evening at the Westons', when the party may be marooned by snow, the carriage in which coming home from this outing, Emma is confined with Mr. Elton - the novel calls the reader's attention to the limits of the spaces within which its personages enact their lives and its crises unfold. On the other hand, outdoor life and action (John Knightley's racing boys, Robert Martin going three miles round to get Harriet walnuts, George Knightley's walking in at all hours) is obviously associated with opportunity and freedom and, in turn, with health, and it is normally the prerogative of the males. Exercise, like open windows, is anathema to a notion of health that conceptualises it as conservative, the guarded maintenance of a narrowed norm of stability, and that links it to a fixed conception of feminine capacity. As Anne Elliot is to remark in *Persuasion*, 'We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us': the enforced confinement of women's (or ladies') lives, makes psychological as well as physical health more precarious."

- *Jane Austen and the Body* - John Wiltshire.

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LOOKING BACK - The beginnings of JASNA.

For those new members, and others, who may be interested in our history.

In the summer of 1975, several North American members of the Jane Austen Society in Britain, including J. David Grey of New York, Henry Burke of Baltimore, and Joan Austen-Leigh and her husband Denis Mason-Hurley, attended the meeting. They mourned the lack of such a group in North America. Finally, exasperated at their lamentations, Denis scolded them: "Stop complaining that you don't have a group like this, and do something to start one!"

They came back home, and time passed, and they continued to wish there was some such organization here. At long last, Jack Grey got busy, advertised a meeting, and spread the word to all who might be interested. On October 5, 1979, an inaugural dinner was held at the Gramercy Park Hotel in New York. About one hundred attended - scholars and students, collectors and booksellers, librarians and scientists - all fervent admirers of Jane Austen.

The Jane Austen Society of North America was on its way. In subsequent years, more and more Regional Groups were established in the major cities of the United States and Canada.

JASNA Vancouver.

In May, 1981, Joan Austen-Leigh decided that there should be a Jane Austen Society in Vancouver. She borrowed her daughter's apartment and hosted a supper party. Eight of us were there. Keiko Parker and I were already members of JASNA and on the mailing list; the others Joan knew as writers living in Vancouver who might be interested in Jane Austen's work.

We had a very pleasant time talking about the novels. At the end of the evening, Joan more or less said: "Now I've got you together to form a Jane Austen Society - the rest is up to you." We left, expressing our hopes of getting together again soon. Then we all sat back and waited for someone else to do something.

Eventually I realized that I wanted a Jane Austen Society in Vancouver, and if nobody else was going to arrange it, then I would have to do it myself. In October, 1981, Ron and I went to the annual conference, held that year in San Francisco. I saw no-one else from Vancouver, but Joan Austen-Leigh gave a fascinating talk about the Austen family. The pleasure of meeting other people interested in Jane Austen, and eager to talk about her, made me determined to have a Jane Austen group in Vancouver.

I wrote to Joan for the list of names she had invited, and made out invitations for a Jane Austen Birthday party in December. In the end, only two could come, and I cancelled the party. The next March, I tried again, with a supper party at my home - nine of us altogether, including Joan, her husband Denis, and her daughter Freydis Welland. Others were Keiko Parker, Mary Coleman, Kathleen Carter and Flora Farnden - some of you will remember these members. It was another pleasant evening, and we had lots of ideas for meetings in the Fall.

The first years we were not thinking of regular monthly meetings, but rather of special events, such as our first annual dinner, at Brock House Restaurant in November 1982 - twelve of us there, non-stop conversation, and an informal talk by Joan Austen-Leigh; and lunch at the Beach House in Stanley Park. It is obvious how much help and encouragement we got from Joan Austen-Leigh, who was always willing to do all she could.

In the next few years we got more ambitious - reserved meeting rooms at various public libraries, and had guest speakers from the libraries or from UBC. By this time, the Vancouver group was well established, thanks in large part to the generosity of local scholars who willingly donated their time and effort to give us learned and interesting talks.

I think we can sincerely quote Jane Austen: "There was not an oath or a murmur from beginning to end!" And we are looking forward to many more such years.

A Truth Universally Acknowledged - Adele Shaak.

“It is a truth universally acknowledged . . .” No Janeite needs more - an active brain supplies the rest - “that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, 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.”

Every time I start to reread *Pride and Prejudice*, these lines settle me comfortably into my cosy visit with the Bennet family. Not only the words but the cadences and structure are as firmly etched in my mind as the features of a well-loved face. So you can imagine my astonishment when I picked up an 1806 copy of the *Memoirs of the Professional Life of Horatio Viscount Nelson*, by Joshua White, Esq., and started to read the preface:

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that nothing more strongly tends to cherish those virtues which honour human nature, than the memoirs of characters who have been particularly distinguished by them. Independent of the interest which they never fail to excite, they scatter in generous minds seeds of emulation, which spring up, and in time produce noble fruit.”

The passage not only starts with the same seven words, it echoes Austen’s opening in form and sound. One could argue, of course, that all well-written paragraphs share a basic structure, but to me the two paragraphs are too similar for coincidence.

The idea that Austen’s most famous opening was not solely the original product of her brain so shocked me that I had to try to reconcile the situation. What follows is pure speculation, but here is what I think took place:

Admiral Lord Nelson was already a national hero when he was killed by a sniper during the battle of Trafalgar in October, 1805. His dramatic death was followed by an extended and emotional period of national mourning. Joshua White’s *Memoirs* were printed in 1806, and the book went through several editions and printings in short order. The copy I saw was a miniature ‘pocket edition’, and the introduction refers to several other sizes and formats that were available. I infer that this book was a bestseller, and that you could expect to find it in the Austen or any other well-read household.

Austen wrote *First Impressions* in the mid-1790s, but substantially revised the book in 1811-1812, before it was published as *Pride and Prejudice*. I believe that she was familiar with White’s book, and that she deliberately changed the opening of *Pride and Prejudice* to mimic White’s preface.

Why? I can think of a couple of reasons.

Consider Joshua White’s first sentence. A simplified version of White’s opening would be something like “Nothing in the universe fosters virtue like a memoir” - which is, essentially a very silly statement. One feels the only person who would agree with it would be the memoir’s publisher. I can easily see the Austen family, always alive to pomposity, being highly amused by White’s grandiose statement, and Austen wrote primarily for the amusement of her family.

Now, consider Austen's opening. If the first seven words resonated with me two hundred years later, they would surely have resonated with Austen's audience, who would recognize the reference to the Nelson memoir. Thus Austen ties the ordinary village lives in her novel to one of the major national events of the decade, and suggests that the Bennets' stories have all the importance, to the Bennets, that Nelson's life had to the nation.

Structurally, Austen uses her first sentence to move the reader in space and time. She starts with the entire universe and quickly narrows her focus to human society, to a fortune, to a man, and finally to a wife. The importance of becoming a wife is the focus of the novel, and the reader arrives there, almost giddy from the ride, in one amusing, gently mocking sentence.

The Austen sense of humour appears at once, as she presents "A single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" as a "universal truth", highlighting the absurdity of the statement, intensifying the reader's amusement.

For these reasons, I believe Austen deliberately chose to use White's prose for her own literary purposes.

I don't want anyone to think, as was one academic's horrified reaction, that I am accusing Austen of plagiarism. That would be to suggest she had to steal White's words because she couldn't come up with anything better on her own, which is ridiculous (though I think it would have given Jane a laugh). No, I accuse her only of exercising her superlative talent.

Anyone can read White's turgid prose, but to see the possibilities, to bring wit, elegance, and complexity out of White's bombast, takes true genius.

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Jane Austen's Use of Dance.

"Body language is also speech and, like purely verbal communication, reveals attitudes of aversion and attraction. Exemplified by gestures and actions that are at once realistic and metaphoric, the method is brilliantly revealing.

Nowhere is the combination of realism and metaphor more clearly shown than in Austen's use of dance. It is possible to reconstruct many of the social customs of the age simply by studying the descriptions of balls and dances in *Emma* . . . but it is also possible to see the ritualized encounters of the ballrooms as indicators of social and sexual definition. What partners *may* dance with one another, what partners *do* dance with one another - what woman the man chooses, what man the woman entices or resists - the pairings and non-pairings involved all provide dramatizations of the mating process that are seldom as visible elsewhere. Given the inhibitions of early nineteenth century customs, the dance is one of the few places where choosing is apparent and touching is allowed. Jane Austen knew precisely what she meant when she said that 'to be fond of dancing [is] the first step toward falling in love'."

"Dream of Order", Alice Chandler,
Quoted in *Jane Austen*, Harold Bloom, p.40-42.

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Another View of Emma.

(Recently I came across a newspaper clipping written by Andrew Davies some years ago, when he was planning to film *Emma* for television. It is worth reading again. E.S.).

“Jane Austen famously called Emma a heroine ‘whom no one but myself will much like’. And one can see why she said it.

Emma Woodhouse is arrogant, ignorant, snobbish, a control freak, and a bully, who treats other people as if they were mechanical toys. She has little insight into others and almost no self-knowledge. And what are her redeeming features? She is patient, affectionate and protective towards her father. And, er, that’s it.

It’s interesting that Austen chose her as a heroine; in the typical Austen romance, the heroine is the Jane Fairfax figure - a Cinderella, disadvantaged, deserving, finally triumphing over adversity, despite being snubbed and spurned by various Rich Bitches. In *Emma*, the heroine is the Rich Bitch. But *Emma* has to be more than a story about a spoilt child with an over-active imagination, for that would not be interesting to grown-ups. Emma is young, but she has to *count* in the world. She has ruled Hartfield since she was 12 years old. Her games have consequences. . . . She is a grown woman, beautiful, blooming with health and energy - but retarded in her emotional and sexual development.

Jane Fairfax is, I think, the character most misunderstood and undervalued by critics. They tend to make the naïve mistake of accepting the judgment of Emma, who is a poor judge of character, and of Frank, who is not to be trusted. Everything that we see of Jane’s behaviour suggests not a cold, reserved nature, but a passionate one held painfully in check. She is reserved with Emma, but she is wise to be. She knows Emma doesn’t like her, and she is rightly wary of Emma’s capacity for malice. Would any of us reveal our secrets to someone like Emma Woodhouse?

Emma is unusual, for a Jane Austen novel, in that we get a working model of a whole society - with some fascinating glimpses of the underclass. The Martins are important in the structure of the novel, and it’s interesting that while Emma feels she can have nothing to do with them (they’re too low to enter her social circle, too comfortably off to be the object of her charity), Knightley, the moral touchstone of the story, has a lot of time for the Martins.

The farmworkers’ cottages on the Donwell estate are clean and tidy. Not so the cottages on the Hartfield estate, some of which are dreadfully dilapidated. We would expect Mr. Woodhouse to be a hopeless landlord, unable to bear the responsibility of his riches, and Emma herself is not much better.

And then there are the gypsies who menace Harriet Smith and her friend, and the chicken thieves who make off with all Mrs. Weston’s turkeys. These are the criminal classes, threatening the ordered pattern of society. And as we know from novels such as *Middlemarch*, as well as from history books, the English upper classes were extremely worried about the possibility of revolution at that time. There had been a revolution in France - why didn’t it happen here?

I think Jane Austen’s answer would be: because of Mr. Knightley and his like. Unlike the French aristocracy, the English upper classes - or enough of them to swing it - lived with their tenants and their labourers, and took their responsibilities seriously. Old-style one-nation Conservatives, in fact. And we can be pretty sure that those leaky old cottages on the Hartfield estate will soon be renovated once Woodhouse’s liquid capital is available to Knightley’s enlightened management.”

Searching for Jane Austen - Emily Auerbach.

What motivation exists for a young woman to 'be labouring to enlarge her comprehension or exercise it on sober facts' or ever to go beyond 'a few first chapters, and the intention of going on to-morrow'? Austen suggests that had her heroine been born male and a younger son in need of earning a living, she might have succeeded as a skilled attorney, like her brother-in-law. Austen uses militant language when she observes that Emma 'combated the point' with her former governess. Emma spars with Mr. Knightley, enjoying the chance for one-upmanship and intellectual exchange. She finds herself arguing *for* Frank Churchill only because Mr. Knightley is arguing against him: 'She . . . to her great amusement, perceived that she was taking the other side of the question from her real opinion.'

Emma is a portrait of an intelligent, strong, artistic woman in a society offering women no encouragement to use gifts of this kind. Austen adds pathos to her tale by showing how static, dull, and confining life can be for such a woman - or for anyone forced to conform to the mind-numbing habits of others.

In *Emma* Austen captures the human tendency toward stasis through her portrayal of Mr. Woodhouse. Two recurring words in this novel, particularly in association with Mr. Woodhouse, are *usual* and *always*: 'her father composed himself to sleep after dinner, as usual'; 'Mr. Woodhouse going to bed at . . . the usual time'; 'Everything safe in the house, as usual'. Wherever Mr. Woodhouse goes, he makes 'the usual stipulation' that there be little to vex his nerves or endanger his health. Like a male Lady Bertram, he is 'without activity of mind or body' . . .

This novel opens and closes with Mr. Woodhouse's distaste for marriage precisely because it necessitates alteration: "Matrimony, as the origin of change, was always disagreeable. To require no change - not only in oneself but also in others - smacks of arrogance and tyranny. Mr. Woodhouse sees no reason for Emma ever to leave Hartfield because he likes having her with him. Because he is 'fond of society in his own way', Mr. Woodhouse only invites those whom he can command 'as he liked'. He is too self-absorbed to be capable of empathy: 'he could never believe other people to be different from himself'. If cake disagrees with him, no one should eat it. If he hates drafts, no one should open a window. Because he fears anything different or in motion ('The sea is very rarely of use to anybody . . . nobody is healthy in London'), he advises others against travelling.

Isabella Woodhouse has married a man almost as conservative as her father, a rather grumpy lawyer who grumbles about travelling anywhere or attending any party: 'The folly of not allowing people to be comfortable at home - and the folly of people's not staying comfortable at home when they can! Here are we setting forward to spend five dull hours in another man's house, with nothing to say or to hear that was not said or heard yesterday, and may not be said and heard again tomorrow'. We sympathize with John Knightley's view when we see that parties in Highbury indeed consist of 'nothing worse than every day remarks, dull repetitions, old news, and heavy jokes'. But John Knightley does little to enliven the scene for himself or for others. . . .

However, Emma's imperfection becomes part of her charm. Austen sees to it that readers are glad Emma is *not* a more traditionally perfect or conventional heroine. Would we really prefer Harriet Smith? " . . .

Frank's dalliance with Emma, pursuit of pleasure, delight in riddles and other trifles, flattering speech, and charming surface manners lead Mr. Knightley to view him as a selfish puppy in the Robert Ferrars style rather than a true gentleman.

But, as always, Austen invites readers to read between the lines and view *all* her characters as blind. Mr. Knightley has as much to learn from Frank as Frank does from Mr. Knightley. Discussion of Frank's foppery in traveling sixteen miles to London for a haircut must

be reevaluated after we discover that his trip actually took place so that he could order a piano to be sent anonymously to Jane Fairfax. His generous gift and his enjoyment of singing duets suggest a genuine appreciation of art - and of his fiancée's talents. As one scholar notes, Frank demonstrated discriminating taste in instruments: 'The Broadwood piano was the best that money could buy at the time.' Frank's 'perfect knowledge of music' contrasts with the nouveau riche inhabitants of Highbury who lack the skill to use their own instruments (Mrs. Cole owns a 'new grand pianoforte' but confesses, 'I do not know one note from another'), those who pretend to love music yet have no intention of playing (Mrs. Elton claims to be 'doatingly fond of music' yet seems now that she has snagged a mate to be 'so determined upon neglecting her music'), and those too provincial ('I hate Italian singing - There is no understanding a word of it,' Harriet complains) to appreciate foreign composers.

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When and Where did You meet Jane Austen?

"I wanted to share with all of you our family Jane Austen connection. Evan (Llewellyn) and I had taken our two children, Emily (18) and Alyd (9), on a backpacking trip around the world five years ago. We were gone for a year and covered a lot of miles in South East Asia and Europe. We had a recurring experience on our trip that turned Emily into a passionate reader of everything by Jane Austen. Many of the guest houses and hostels we stayed in during our time in Thailand and Indonesia and even Turkey had several shelves of books left behind by other travellers. The idea was anyone could add their well-read books to the shelves and take something new away. We consistently found Jane Austen books on those traveller shelves all around the world, proof that Austen's novels continue to be as popular on the beaches of Bali as they are in a hotel in Rome or a small cluttered backpackers hostel in Istanbul." Joyce Thierry.

[How about *you*? What was *your* first experience of enjoying Jane Austen?]

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"In her *Juvenilia*, Austen recorded the fitful and whimsical awfulness of her contemporaries with the same exquisite intelligence, mirthful good humour and elegance of style as when she was writing the five great novels of her twenties and thirties. An education in the Classics, which she was fortunate enough to have - her clergyman father taught her Latin and Greek - was still fresh in her mind; the rhythm of the prose falls naturally into cadences of three. 'I hope you like my determination; I can think of nothing better; and am your ever affectionate - Mary Stanhope,' writes her wilful heroine in *The Three Sisters* . . . This is exhilarating, energizing writing: the writer seems in love with her new-found ability. The reader laughs aloud, and yet feels a kind of melancholy for the loss of youth and, if not exactly innocence - for these young heroines of Austen's are far from innocent - then the bravado, courage and hope that go with being young and silly. Austen is trapped in these pages as a girl, but we know her to have died young, and that is sad."

The Teen Queen, Fay Weldon. *The Daily Telegraph*, Aug. 3, 2003.

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GYPSIES

“Gypsies were a major problem in England in Jane Austen’s lifetime, . . . Harriet Smith encounters gypsies when she goes for a walk with her school friend Miss Bickerton. The gypsies want money from her and are prepared to use violence to get it. Soon abandoned by her friend, Harriet is left to their mercy, ‘half a dozen children, headed by a stout woman and a great boy, all clamorous and impertinent’, and gives them a shilling. She tries to walk away, the gypsies follow and surround her ‘demanding more’. Harriet is terrified. She speaks to the gypsies, begging them not ‘to use her ill’ and, by doing so, commits a hanging offence.

Conversing with gypsies, or being found in their company, was one of the offences in England punishable by death. Harriet Smith could be hanged for her misadventure! Any humane judge would have been likely to find poor silly Harriet innocent of such a crime and accept her tale of an accidental encounter, but her excuse was used by many of those who were caught with gypsies, and sometimes the excuse was not believed. In 1782, a fourteen year old girl, protesting her innocence, was hanged for being found in the company of gypsies. No wonder Harriet ‘fainted away’ upon being rescued. Jane Austen’s contemporary readers would have had a clear understanding of her peril.”

Jane Austen and Crime, Susannah Fullerton.

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Jane Austen’s Heroines.

“Jane Austen’s heroines - and it is this which distinguishes them from Clarissas and Evelinas, like Catherine of *Northanger Abbey*, have ‘nothing of a heroine of romance about them.’ It is simply the accident of filling the central position of a love-story which makes heroines of them; but they show no hint of those perfections and those astounding misfortunes which raise a girl above the level of ordinary mortals.

Possessing neither superhuman virtue nor unmatched beauty, they appear to us in all the simplicity and variety of their own characters. They never strike an attitude or adopt a pose. They need be nothing but themselves all day long; nice girls, rather badly educated, sad when circumstances force it on them, and cheerful because they are young and in good health, provided that cheerfulness is not uncalled for at the moment.

For the first time English fiction gives us heroines who never fly up above the level of reality, who are neither angels nor goddesses, and, born to a placid middle-class existence, contrive to be happy in it. They are subjected to all the contingencies which up to that time the heroine of a novel had been spared. Returning from a long country walk in driving rain, they arrive with - ‘weary ankles, dirty stockings and a face glowing with exercise.’ Their lives, like their days, are tranquil and all of a piece. They spend their time in embroidery and fringe-making; they play a few pieces rather badly on the piano; they draw or paint, and, most important of all, they receive visits from their friends and very often go to call on them.

Their persons are less well known to us than is the way they spend their time. The features of these heroines, whose living image we can so well conjure up, are not once described by the author.

Jane Austen and her Work, Leonie Villard (1924).

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Seeds from Jane Austen's Lifetime.

"A handful of seeds discovered inside a 200-year-old notebook at the National Archives in London have been nurtured to life by scientists at the Royal Botanic Gardens. The plants, including a shrub called *Liparia villosa*, a stunning pincushion-like flower called *Leucospermum* and a type of acacia, are now growing vigorously, they said.

The notebook in which the seeds were found carries the inscription of Jan Teerlink, a Dutch merchant who gathered them during a visit to the Cape of Good Hope in 1803. On his return journey, with a cargo of tea and silk, his Prussian vessel, *Henriette*, was captured by the British navy. All documents, including his notebook, were seized and passed to the High Court of Admiralty. Some time later the notebook was handed to the Tower of London and later to the National Archives, where it lay undisturbed until curators stumbled across it.

The notebook was examined by Roelof van Gelder, a guest researcher from the Royal Dutch Library, who found 40 tiny packets inside containing 32 species of seeds. Most were labeled with Latin names, but others bore such tags as 'Unknown mimosa', 'Seeds from a tree with crooked thorns' and 'Seeds of the wild melons eaten by the savages along the Orange river'.

A few of each variety were given to ecologists at the Millennium Seed Bank, a \$150m project run by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London that aims to preserve seeds from 10% of the world's flowering plants. For one species the seed bank had only two seeds, one of which turned out to have been eaten inside by an insect.

'I didn't think there was any chance of success whatsoever. Two hundred years is a very long time and these were kept in far less than ideal conditions', said Matt Daws, a seed ecologist at the seed bank. 'But it was also an opportunity that was far too good to pass up.' He exposed the seeds to smoke, since many seeds from the region are germinated by bushfires. They were then transferred to a jelly-like medium. The result: the team has two shrubs 10cm high and an acacia nearly at waist height.

For Kew's scientists, the project has been of more than historical interest. Dr. Daws said: 'If seed can survive that long in poor conditions, then that's good news for those in the Millenium Seed Bank stored under ideal conditions.'" *Guardian Weekly*, Sept.29-Oct.5, 2006.

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"[Emma] is just a perfect, perfect work of art - high comedy, emotional moments, brilliant characters, suspense - all presented with the sure touch of a writer working at the height of her powers." Veronica Bennett, in *Jane Austen's Regency World*, March 2005, Issue #14.

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