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NEEDLEWORK - EILEEN SUTHERLAND

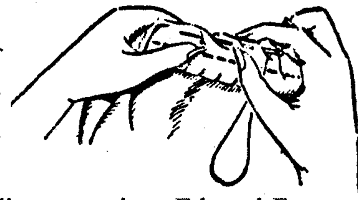
Darcy is scornful of those who consider "netting a purse" as an accomplishment, but the ability to do various types of sewing, fancy-work or embroidery was an essential part of the education of any well-brought-up young woman.

Hand sewing was so common that it was called merely "work". In Jane Austen's novels, it is taken for granted that every young woman does some kind of "work" in her leisure time - it is scarcely ever emphasized, but it is always there in the background.

When Elizabeth wants to stay and nurse Jane at Netherfield, she sends home for some clothes; her current "work" is included: in the evening, "Elizabeth [is] at work in the opposite corner." When the Steele sisters visit the Middletons, their work-bags are "searched" by the mischievous children. Mrs. Allen was constantly talking: "While she sat at her work, if she lost her needle or broke her thread...she must observe it aloud." Even Lady Bertram doesn't think it seemly to be ensconced on her sofa without working: in her husband's absence she "had done a great deal of carpet work and made many yards of fringe." Mrs. Price, not much of a mother and preferring her sons - "Her daughters never had been much to her" - nevertheless had taught Fanny a little: "Fanny could read, work, and write" when she arrived at Mansfield Park, 10 years old.

Plain sewing, or mending, such as Fanny did in Portsmouth to help prepare Sam's linen before he went to sea, was often done by servants, or at least not done by ladies in public. Fancy work or embroidery could be worked on before visitors. The results were given as gifts or displayed: Mrs. Goddard's parlour was "hung round with fancy-work," perhaps the labour of her scholars. In Fanny's East Room, "the table between the windows was covered with work-boxes and netting-boxes", presents from her cousins.

Sewing for the poor was the accepted responsibility of well-to-do ladies. Mrs. Norris scolds Fanny for being idle: "If you have no work of your own, I can supply you from the poor-basket." Needlework could be a source of money for the needy: Mrs. Ferrars gave each of the Steele sisters "a needle-book, made by some emigrant." Mrs. Smith earned a little extra money by making and selling "little thread cases, pin-cushions and card racks."



In Northanger Abbey, Jane Austen mentions netting specifically: Isabella's dear friend Miss Andrews was "netting herself the sweetest cloak you can conceive," and both Catherine herself ("the netting-box...was closed with joyful haste") and Isabella (intent on "matching some fine netting-cotton") are also spoken of at this work.

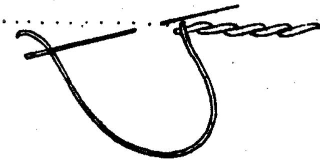
In later novels, however, work is used more subtly. When Elinor questions Edward Ferrars about "Mrs. Edward Ferrars", she hides her face, "taking up some work from the table." When Bingley and Darcy return from London to see Jane, Elizabeth, wanting to watch their reactions from across the room, "sat down again to her work." When Mr. Knightley tells Emma that Harriet and Robert Martin are going to marry, she has "recourse to her workbasket...leaning down her face" to conceal her emotions. Fanny, when Henry Crawford starts to read Shakespeare, refuses to look at him - "all her attention was on her work" - until she could not resist looking up.

No doubt many real young ladies found their needlework useful to display their talents, give themselves something to do at awkward moments, and cover up their feelings of embarrassment or delight.

The Costume Journal. A Publication of the Costume Society of Ontario, has an interesting article on "Sewing & Needlework Tools, 1800-1821", by Alma K. Luckett, in the Summer, 1998 issue. Here are some excerpts:

"Steel sewing needles, which had been available for at least two centuries, by this time had reached a high standard of quality. They were so fine that it was possible to use human hair to embroider pictures: the delicate embroideries resembled engravings. Petit Point was also a pastime for the woman of leisure. The needle to the ordinary woman, however, was a precious possession, guarded with care against loss... Rust was a problem and remained so for some years to come. To protect against this, needles were kept in small tightly-closed cases made of turned ivory or bone: needle cases for the woman of substance might be of silver or mother-of-pearl or even gold...

Needlebooks were also in fashion, but the flannel leaves holding the needles absorbed moisture, so were not as practical as the closed cases. Needles were being sold in numbered sizes in blue paper packets at the beginning of the century. This gave rise to the needle cases made to resemble eighteenth century knife boxes; the packets stood upright between the dividers.



Emeries were used to remove rust and also to sharpen. These also took many forms: small cushions, red silk strawberries and various shapes used for the pincushion. Filled with emery powder (a form of carborundum), they can be distinguished from a pincushion by their weight.

Both silk and linen thread were used for sewing in the early eighteenth century. Cotton thread was not developed commercially until after 1806 when Napoleon's Berlin decree cut off all supplies of raw silk. The Clark brothers (J.& P.) of Paisley, Scotland, who were in the loom equipment supply business, developed a smooth cotton yarn as a replacement for the silk used to set up the loom, and this soon was used for sewing. 1812 was the year Clark's sewing thread appeared on the market. Bought in skeins, it then had to be wound into a ball and placed in a small container with a hole in the side through which the thread was drawn...

Waxing of the sewing thread was necessary to strengthen it and make it glide easily through the fabric. Beeswax was generally used for this. It could be purchased in flat cakes wrapped in gold paper, which when unwrapped were placed in small ivory or bone holders...There is a theory that human earwax was used at one time to wax thread. This would explain why so many early workboxes had an ear-spoon as one of the fittings.

Pins of the period were made individually and each required seventeen operations. Shafts and the coiled wire heads were made separately and attached by young children who slipped the coil onto the pin shaft, fastening it into position by means of a heading-ram. When an early pin is examined under a magnifying glass, these coils are visible... Considering the operations necessary, it is not surprising to find that pins were comparatively expensive. In Toronto in 1810 a paper of pins cost 50 cents and required two and a half hours of labour to purchase.

Another necessary part of a woman's sewing equipment was her pincushion. Pincushions of the period were tiny (reflecting the pin size) with fine detailing. Various small designs were employed.

Thimbles have been made from many different materials: leather, ivory, steel, gold, silver and brass, among others. At this time very elegant ones were fashioned from the impractical mother-of-pearl. Some were even made of fine china by companies such as Royal Worcester. These were probably given as gifts to be admired and not necessarily used, although they are reputed to be excellent for sewing on silk.

Sewing clamps of various kinds were used to aid the needlewoman. These, called the housewife's "third hand", held the fabric firmly to the table, freeing both hands for the hemming, while a pincushion attached to the top served its useful purpose. Late eighteenth century ones were made of ivory, wood, metal, and even Tunbridge Ware. Later, the "hemming bird" made of silver or white metal made its appearance. This held the fabric by its beak, and usually had a small pincushion attached. Other clamps were used in pairs to hold the skein of thread while it was being wound into a ball...

How did our needlewoman keep her tools and accessories together? In the eighteenth century these were kept in a large soft pouch or etui which could be carried in a capacious pocket. Sewing sets were also popular. These often had fittings of gold or silver in a small flat case; sometimes the fittings consisted of only a thimble and scissors, and small cases such as these could be carried in milady's pocket when visiting...

With the dawning of the nineteenth century and its accompanying dramatic change to body-clinging styles which proscribed pockets, a new container was called for. This ushered in the era of the fitted workbox. Eighteenth century boxes had had general compartments but now the emphasis was on workboxes especially made for sewing implements. (However, the portability of the etui and small sewing case was still appealing, and these remained in use well into the century.)...

The good classical design of the period is as much in evidence in the needlework tools as it is in the architecture, furniture and costume of the time. To keep this in mind helps in dating these small, usually decorative pieces."

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SCOTT'S AUTHORSHIP - HOW DID JANE AUSTEN KNOW? Eileen Sutherland.

Waverley appeared anonymously in July 1814. (Each subsequent novel by Scott was described as "By the author of *Waverley.*") Andrew Hook, in the introduction to the Penguin edition (1972) wrote: "Only a handful of people were let into the secret of Scott's authorship, although of course very soon thousands more suspected it."

The publisher, Murray, guessed that Scott was the author, but did not know for sure. In 1827, his son heard the news that Scott acknowledged authorship of all the Waverley novels, "a secret which, considering it had already been made known to about thirty persons, had been tolerably well kept."

Jane Austen did not know Murray when she wrote to her niece Anna in September 1814:

> "Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones.- It is not fair.- He has Fame and Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people's mouths.- I do not like him, & do not mean to like Waverley if I can help it - but fear I must.-"

Jane Austen sounds very sure of her information in this letter. How did she know about the authorship of *Waverley* at this time, only two months after publication?

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"When the poet complained in Ecclesiastes that 'of making many books there is no end,' he might also have added, 'but of bookshelves, however, the end cometh too soon.' "

Review by Alberto Manguel of: *The Book on the Bookshelf*: Henry Petroski.

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THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE POSTAL SYSTEM IN ENGLAND

Virgil Oriente - February Meeting (Report by Eileen Sutherland)

Postal service, as Virgil Oriente told us, has a long history. In ancient Greece, a government courier system transported messages back from the battlefronts. Excellent Roman roads, with fresh horses stationed at 20-mile intervals, provided a fast, efficient system for transmitting government reports or documents throughout the Roman Empire. None of these, however, was available for the private citizen, although the wealthy could utilize slaves or travelling friends to carry messages. The Dark Ages disrupted such services, but later monarchs re-established an organized delivery system.. In the 15th century, Louis XI established a corps of royal couriers, in which private persons could pay and use the system. The Church and the Universities also built up systems for sending information. Business and trading firms in Italy established a co-operative network which had all the elements of a modern postal system - fixed rates, couriers, stamps, express and assured delivery.

In the early 16th century, English merchants were involved with traders on the continent, and the English postal system was modelled on the Continental one. Commercial interests led to the increase and efficiency of transporting information. Henry VIII in 1515 appointed a "Master of the Post," who established regular routes for the King's mail service. Even in the reign of Elizabeth, with changing times and customs and increased literacy, there was little progress in methods of transporting letters. In the interests of security, the government stifled all attempts at improvement.

In the 17th century a postal service was at last developed for public use. James I (VI) supervised an ambitious effort to set up a postal system from London to the Continent and to all parts of His Majesty's dominions. Charges were levied on the receivers, according to the number of sheets of paper in the letter. A registry in London kept records of senders and receivers. Delivery was subject to the availability of horses - an enduring problem!

Increased literacy and growing business interests created a climate for independent carriers, not under government control. At the end of the 17th century, William Dockerill's "Penny Post" serving London and the outlying areas was an immediate success. With a pre-paid charge, letters were sent out every hour, stamped with the time of arrival at each sorting office. This private post was dissolved in a few years. In the early 18th century, Charles Povey created a private postal service in London. A collector took letters to the sorting houses, and delivered letters to private homes, receiving a penny for his trouble. This service, too, was dissolved. Ralph Allen, wealthy mayor of Bath, became a "Farmer" of postal services. His system of cross post roads - post offices in small towns, all letters to be stamped as they passed through, and records kept - resulted in increased revenues and efficiency. John Palmer proposed delivery of mail by coach - the last word in the carriage of mail until the coming of the railway. Mail could go from Bristol to London by horse in two days, by mail coach in 17 hours. Surveyors spot-checked the mail bags. Passengers were carried inside the coaches, an armed guard rode outside.

Virgil's informative talk was interspersed with readings, stories, humour and fascinating slides of old mail coaches, sorting offices and the old mail routes.

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JANEITES AND ANTI-JANEITES: WHEN AND WHY - Murray Wanamaker

March Meeting. Report by Rachele Oriente.

The purpose of Murray's talk was to present British and American criticism of JA, both past and present, famous and unknown. If the talk focused on the negative, it was because there have been enough encomiums.

The first four novels were published anonymously. *S&S* (1811) "By a Lady" was not noticed till 1812 by reviewers. *P&P* (1813) "By the Author of *S&S*" was praised by reviewers and became the fashionable novel of the spring of 1813. Playwright Sheridan called it "one of the cleverest things I've ever read." Henry Austen related that a gentleman famous for his literary attainments advised that *P&P* must have been written by a man because it was "too clever for a woman." It was Henry Austen who initiated the confirmation of JA as the author. *MP* (1814) was sold out in the first edition. *Emma* (1815) (1816 on the title page), was "By the Author of *P&P*." JA enjoyed recording opinions of her books, both favorable and unfavourable.

Sit Walter Scott was hired by JA's publisher, John Murray, to write an anonymous article on JA for the *Quarterly Review*. Scott discussed *S&S, P&P,* and *Emma*, but appeared not to know *MP*. This review inaugurated JA into the formal realm of English literature. Scott likened her work to the "Fleming School of painting", and said "the subjects are often not elegant...but finished with a precision up to nature." Not all of Scott's article is in praise of JA - he criticizes the "prosings" of *Emma*'s characters. Anti-Janeites tend to criticize completely, but Janeites can acknowledge some flaws in JA.

Famous Janeites include: Scott, the Prince Regent, Henry James, A.C.Bradley, W.D.Howell, Kipling, C.S.Lewis, Thomas Macaulay, Woolf, Lord David Cecil, George Eliot, Coleridge, Lionel Trilling, J.F.Kirk (a mid-19th century reviewer who ranked JA with Fielding and Johnson).

Famous Anti-Janeites and those Ambiguous towards JA include: Sarah Coleridge (who said Wordsworth was not interested in JA). Longfellow believed JA gave "capital pictures of real life" but that she "explains and fills out too much." Elizabeth Barrett Browning said the novels were "perfect as far as they go, that's certain, but they don't go far enough." The Bronte sisters, Ralph Waldo Emerson, W.S.Gilbert, Mark Twain, E.M.Hayes, Joseph Conrad, Sir Harold Nicolson, Cardinal Newman, D.H.Lawrence, Angus Wilson, Frank O'Connor, Mary Russell Mitford. - are some other Anti-Janeites.

Many Anti-Janeites criticize her for her narrow world and vision, and question whether her novels really reveal human conditions. It is typical to contrast the Bronte sisters and JA. The Brontes lived and depicted a very much harsher life than JA. In 1850, Charlotte Bronte said about *Emma*, that "anything like warmth, enthusiasm and passions were perfectly unknown" and that JA dealt with the business of "eyes, hands and feet but not with the human heart..." that JA was a "sensible lady" but a "rather incomplete and insensible woman."

American Anti-Janeites accuse her of lack of humour and subtlety in thought or language. The most vitriolic American is Emerson, who complained that her novels are "vulgar in tone", "sterile", "without genius, wit or knowledge of the world." Mark Twain said that JA inspired in him "an animal repugnance."

Is Jane Austen a great novelist? JASNA believes so - as do millions.

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Murray Wanamaker gave a humorous and informative talk with anecdotes and quotations. The numerous questions and comments afterwards showed the keen interest of the members.

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Library Corner - Dianne Kerr

Our sincere thanks to **Christine Dewar** for her very generous donation to the library fund.

Mansfield Park, the movie: we have the Vansun's review coupled with an interview with the Canadian Director, in our 1999 Folder.

Oriente, Rachele: *The Epistle as Epiphany*: The Use of the Letter in Jane Austen. Address presented Sept.1997. Finally got it out of her. Many of you urged me at the time to make sure I got a copy for the library.

Watkins, Susan: *Jane Austen in Style* (1990). Regency. Not very studiously sourced, but full of beautiful intriguing photos, sketches and drawings not commonly seen, e.g. the piano in the drawing room at #1 Royal Crescent, Bath, made in 1798; discussion of Palladianism (64); explanation of 'Capability' Brown (66); Adlestrop Park and Stoneleigh Abbey both credited as 'ancestral home of Mrs. Austen'; examination of Humphrey Repton; searches for possible models for the 'great houses' in The Novels; dinner party arrangements and menus; immersion in Yesterday.

REMINDER: Edgeworth, Maria: *Belinda* (first = 1801). This is one of the 'only a novel' examples whose deprecators the Narrator so scorns in *NA*. One can see why Austen esteemed Edgeworth; the plotting is quite complicated (more kinks than a snake); but, so far as I can remember, every last knot is unravelled before the end. The style is a bit stilted (for my taste) - but persist! A good yarn full of swindlers, liars and cheats who get their just deserts, just in the 'tell-tale compression of pages' at the end.

PERSUASIONS ON-LINE. V20.No.l. 1999. Two copies. One down-loaded by **Viviane Mc-Clelland**; the other purchased by **Keiko Parker**. Much thanks to both of you. The 'ON-LINE' consists of articles that didn't make it into our annual Journal *Persuasions*.

COLLECTED REPORTS OF THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY (1949-1965). A veritable treasure chest for those of us who like their sources untampered. Not entirely, (writers can't resist down-loading their particular prejudices on us), but to a large degree - e.g. photocopies reproduced from the Marriage Register of Steventon (Austen's father Rector 1761-1805; 'The Banns of marriage between Henry Fredrick Howard Fitzwilliam of London and Jane Austen of Steventon'; and 'The Form if an entry of a Marriage. Arthur William Mortimer of Liverpool and Jane Austen of Steventon'; and 'The Marriage was solemnized between us, Jack Smith, Jane Smith, late Austen, in the presence of Jack Smith, Jane Smith'; - accompanied by discussion as to: Who wrote these entries and when?

His Grace the Duke of Wellington served as President of the Society (founded in 1940) from 1951-1964, when he was succeeded by Lord David Cecil. (B&W photos of both). Wellington was an active and enthusiastic President; you'll enjoy his short but thoughtful and well-written article on *Houses in Jane Austen's Novels.* A Presenter on *NA* notes that Austen would have known about the (strange) " ' business', (which was the Presidential proclamation of August 9, 1809, reimposing the embargo on American trade with the British Empire); that it would have been in the newspapers at the time of Fanny's first ball; and might well catch Tom Bertram's eye." (Tom mentions it to Dr. Grant).

There is a B&W photo: '...of a garment, with the claim of an unexceptionable pedigree to be Jane Austen's,...(pedigree stated); Banking Accounts show the entries for July 9th 1816, Jan.8th, July 9th, Sept.11th and 12th 1817 for: 'Miss Jane Austen. Account with Hoare's Bank.' And the cost of probate paid by Cassandra Elizabeth Austen, Sptr. Sister, Executrix.

BUSSBY, FREDERICK. *Jane Austen in Winchester.* Booklet donated by me in about 1989; forgot to mention the fact. Bussby was Canon Residentiary in Winchester in 1969; not much of a scholar (in my opinion), but booklet has facsimile of: 'To the Memory of Mrs. Lefroy who died Decr.16 - my Birthday. Written 1808'; the text of *VENTA* (Written at Winchester on Tuesday the 15th of July 1817) - the day before she died; and another untitled Limerick, purportedly written by Austen, dated "Feb.7,1811." Cover had silhouette credited as: "done by herself in 1815."
Scripts. Script Bank mentioned in the latest *JASNA News.* We possess two. Hot off the Press. Donated by quick-speed **Catherine Weflen**. #3 *Jane Austen's Gentlemen, Rascals and Fools,* and #5 *Jane Austen's Sailors.* Both pretty faithful; one egregious error: Mrs. Bennet is credited with: 'Now, I admire all my three sons-in-law highly. Wickham perhaps is my favourite, but I shall like your husband quite as well as Jane's'; some not unreasonable speculations; a quick read - large print.

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Letters and Lunch - April Meeting : Eileen Sutherland.

The discussion began with **Doris MacKenzie** reading several short interesting letters from *84 Charing Cross Road* by Helene Hanff (incidentally, one of my favourite books - a delightful record of a friendship over the years through letters). **Sandy Lundy** described the book she was currently reading, *A Chronicle of a Journey to India*, as "a work of art" - Eliza Faye wrote to her family at home, with interesting and amusing (Sandy had us all joining in her infectious laughter) accounts of the country, people and methods of travel Eliza came across. **Keiko Parker** read us some "letters about letters," Virginia Woolf's comments on some of Jane Austen's letters, and her writings to Hugh Walpole, Ethel Smythe, and others. **Irene Howard**, reading from *The Brontes: A Life in Letters* by Juliet Barker, mentioned that the book had letters from all the young Brontes but she was disappointed not to have much from or about the father, Patrick. **Margaret Howell** read several selections from *Letters From Bath* by Rev. John Penrose: letters to his daughter during his sojourn in Bath about 1766-7, giving intriguing details of daily life at that time.

For a slight change of theme, **Phyllis Taylor** gave us an account, with comments by **Ruth Nesbitt**, of a theatre tour to London and Bath they had recently enjoyed. The tour was led by the actor **John Parker** who vividly portrayed the villain Montoni in our dramatic version of *Udolpho* on J.A.Day last year. They went to the theatre seven times in nine days, attending in the evening and discussing the play the next day. They were divided into groups, each of which researched one of the plays and reported to the other members - an excellent way to get the most out of their theatre-going. Besides the plays, Phyllis mentioned a visit to the new British Library, "Not much architectural interest outside, but wonderful inside." They saw the *Chapter and Verse* exhibit of 1000 years of British Literature, representing the best writers of the centuries. Here they saw the table where the young Brontes sat around composing their early writings, and Jane Austen's desk, recently donated to the Library by Joan Austen-Leigh and her family.

From London they went to Bath and visited, among other places, the new Jane Austen Centre. Phyllis considered this a fine centre for the display and interpretation of Jane Austen's life and works. It is located in an eighteenth century house similar to one Jane Austen lived in at Bath. Phyllis ended her interesting account with some advice: Book ahead for any exhibits you want to see, and telephone for the latest information about opening hours, before you start off - details change!

Lunch lived up to all our expectations!

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Jane Austen in Hollywood: Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield, eds. (1998)

Review by Eileen Sutherland.

Even if you were not absolutely enthralled by the recent spate of Jane Austen movies (between 1970-1986: 7 feature-length films or TV series; 1995-6: 6 more adaptations), you should enjoy this collection of essays by various authors who analyze the most popular examples.

In the Introduction, the editors attempt to answer two questions: what made the novels so readily adaptable? And, what changes were required to make the films successful?

Readers have appreciated the values of the novels for over 200 years. The characters strike a balance between recognizable types and individuals with complex motivations and idiosyncratic personalities. Their central themes - sex, romance and money - concern us today also. Reading the novels we can experience the nostalgia of the "good old days" as well as enjoy criticism and ridicule of certain aspects of the society of the time.

The cultural environment has changed over the two centuries, and the novels require considerable adaptation for film. They must be shortened (even the five hours of the A&E *Pride and Prejudice* could not cover the whole novel); the visual medium puts greater emphasis on images: pictures of the letter-writer and letter-reader, for example. Images change the emphasis - Austen rarely mentions dress, but the costumes in the films stress fashion. Physical beauty of the film heroine and the handsome hero are equated with worth. Even the magnificent scenery and the lavish interiors intrude blatantly into Austen's stories.

Viewers cannot be trusted with subtlety; the satire of the novels becomes stronger in some cases, weaker in others. Passions become coarser: emotions are heightened and romance is celebrated far beyond that of the novels. Some films heighten feminism, undercutting Austen's subtleties. "Heroines tackle physical activity, social conventions, and love, all equally well."

Austen's novels have fit into a succession of cultural moments ever since they were written. Nowadays, however, every generation needs a film or video re-make. "Once on film, those images are fixed in a way that Austen's writing (by nature of its medium and her skill) avoids. These adaptations...have more to tell us about our own moment in time than about Austen's writing."

Rachel Brownstein discusses the distinctive Merchant-Ivory style - elegant faces and dresses and furnishings and colours. The 1985 BBC *Sense and Sensibility* was slow and dull with muted colour and lots of shadows; daily life of the Dashwood women - unpacking linens, stowing them in chests - is pointlessly exhausting. Ang Lee in 1995 made domestic life interesting - by shifting points of view, we see through Elinor's eyes and then see Elinor as Austen does.

Perhaps the most obvious adaptation - which not every viewer will object to - concerns the male characters, especially the heroes. Cheryl Nixon writes: "These films are successful because they, quite literally, 'flesh out' Austen's male characters...We do not like Austen's heroes...The films must add scenes to increase the desirability of her male protagonists." All viewers will remember Darcy's swim, enhancing, glamorizing Darcy's physical presence. His emotions must also be made livelier. Austen's hero "proves his masculinity by learning to regulate his emotions in accordance with the constraints dictated by a public courtship." In the films, "masculine emotional display makes the final pairing of hero and heroine obvious, removing the narrative suspense of a relationship hindered by social restraint [and] removes the most interesting challenges Austen places before her male characters."

Rebecca Dixon focuses on the ladies in the films. Adding humour, omitting some episodes, shifting some themes - any of these may cause a loss of a vital portion of the novel's meaning. The

A&E *Persuasion* is good: a good cast; a naval theme well presented; dialogue, cinematography and costumes that all work well. Only the portrayal of Elizabeth Elliot is at fault. Her exaggerated coarseness creates a clearer foil for Anne, but misleads viewers about the nature of women's role at the time. Never in all of Austen's novels do we see a woman act as rudely as Elizabeth does in the film - not even the silly and impetuous Lydia Bennet. Women were submissive to fathers and husbands, and behaved with careful attention to the impressions they made on others. Anne's gentle feminism (as in her talk with Captain Harville) is undermined by Elizabeth's behaviour: if a woman could act as freely as this, then Anne would be free to espouse feminism in any way she chose. Presumably viewers were not expected to recognize subtle cues about Elizabeth - she had to be exaggerated into a caricature.

A keen analysis of the vicissitudes of class is given by Carol Dole. Recent films have taken differing attitudes to ideas of class, depending on the nationality of the filmmakers. *Persuasion*, thoroughly British, insistently draws attention to class issues: close-ups of assembled servants with stony faces at Kellynch Hall; statue-like poses of menservants in the ballroom at Bath; beaters labouring in the hunt scene; fishermen at Lyme. The film neither erases nor belittles concerns about class - it is the least respectful of class tradition. "Social values are in disarray, class boundaries are called into question, producing a form of class mobility unknown in Austen's earlier novels." The American *Emma* is filmed with a raillery of the class system that produces the privileged characters, but the spectacle of upper-class luxuries endorses such a system. The working-class labour that produced this world of leisure is almost invisible. The British film by contrast emphasizes the number of workers needed to sustain the leisure class: servants bring in letters, open doors, unpack luggage, dress the ladies' hair.

Audience approval in the adaptations is discussed by Amanda Collins. These recent films are "judged not on the basis of their historic realism but on their ability to mold history into a form which is reminiscent of the present." *Sense and Sensibility* is "shrouded in the rose-colored sheen of nostalgia." Edward Ferrars is transformed into a man "we believe Elinor is right to love." Margaret has been given an "utterly 20th century persona" - free to grow up (at least in her own mind) to be whatever she wants to be. *Persuasion* is grounded in a specific historical moment. The film is devalued because the actors are not physically beautiful. Amanda Root is criticized for being an accurate portrayal of a woman who has "lost her bloom," quiet, self-effacing, lacking "charm." The film depicts "both the beautiful and the bleak aspects of life in the 19th century." Critics disparaged this historical realism.

Elizabeth Ellington writes of the physical setting of *Pride and Prejudice*. Darcy's grounds and home symbolize their owner. Through landscape, Austen addresses wider social and economic issues: class, enclosure and agricultural advances, the vogue for landscape gardening, and the growth of middle-class consumerism in the rise of tourism. The novel has an extensive use of visual imagery and thus lends itself more than the other novels to filming. Both the 1940 Hollywood version and the 1995 A&E film capitalize on visual imagery such as shots through windows looking out. "Both films offer readings of Austen that, through landscape, direct our attention to or away from certain episodes, offer subtle re-readings or (perhaps) mis-readings of the novel, and show us what elements were ideologically current and worth emphasizing in each period." Landscape in the earlier film is overshadowed by the visual Greer Garson, while in the later one Jennifer Ehle is superseded by the real star, Old England.

These are only a few of the ideas considered in this collection, which make readers think about the films they saw and the books they read. [Vancouver Public Library Collections]

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New Bath Centre

The increased interest in Jane Austen following the latest movies has led to an enhanced exhibit centre in Bath, the Jane Austen Centre, at 40 Gay Street. Exhibits describe fashionable Bath and its elegant Georgian buildings, and depict Jane Austen's life there from 1801 to 1806. Costumes from the movie *Persuasion* are on view, as well as a formal Georgian town garden. The shop has plenty of gift ideas and books. Admission is £4 (just about $10). This is also a centre for guided tours of Bath.

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"I read recently that a film is being made of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters.* In the Introduction of my old Penguin copy of the book (1969), Laurence Lerner states that *Wives and Daughters* 'is surely the most neglected novel of its century' and that it 'raises Elizabeth Gaskell to the level when we can compare her with Jane Austen or George Eliot.' He goes on to say that 'the novel recalls them both. It looks back to Jane Austen, the great writer of serious comedy, and forward to George Eliot, the great writer of witty tragedy, and seems to bridge the gap between them.' *Wives and Daughters* was Elizabeth Gaskell's last book. She died (suddenly, before she wrote the last chapter) in 1865."

(From: Nancy Stokes, *The Writing Desk*, Toronto)

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Book Review - Eileen Sutherland.

Who Betrays Elizabeth Bennet? Further Puzzles in Classic Fiction: John Sutherland.

"Conflate" is not a word I commonly use, but it is perfect ("to fuse together, blend, especially two variant texts or readings") to describe what Sutherland is doing. This book is the third of a series of literary puzzles (following <u>Is Heathcliff a Murderer?</u> and <u>Can Jane Eyre Be Happy?</u>) in which the author "conflates fiction and reality" in a delightfully entertaining series of essays.

Sutherland's reading of the originals is meticulous and thoughtful, but he has a knack of twisting emphases and details in order to look at the scene or the character from another point of view. While he sometimes seems to want to catch the author out in an inconsistency or confusion, mostly Sutherland points out details which throw more light on certain concerns of the novel, or suggest the significance of moments of authorial silence that might otherwise be missed.

Each of the books has a chapter or two with reference to Jane Austen, but Sutherland uses such subjects as dentistry, sanitation, railway systems and many others, to discuss motives and circumstances of well-known characters in literature.

This is light reading, interesting and humorous, which leads to intriguing moments of surprise and pleasure. (VPL Main & Kerrisdale)

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