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The Button's Golden Age. Eileen Sutherland.

The late eighteenth century was the golden age of the button. Men's coats had rows of buttons closely spaced up the front, and on the back, cuffs and pocket flaps, enlivening the plain fabrics then in fashion, as well as being practical fasteners; they emphasized the cut of the garment, and added colour and brightness. Caricatures showed flashing lights from huge shiny buttons dazzling the eyes of everyone near.

Ladies' gowns were decorated on the hem, at the bottom of the sleeves and around the neckline. Fancy coloured buttons could enhance the beauty of a simple gown, especially glittering in candlelight.

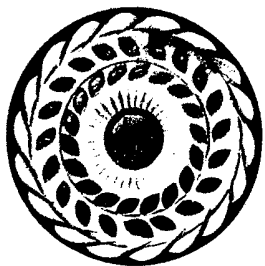
Buttons were made of many materials - polished steel, silver or gold, mother-of-pearl, coloured shells, ivory, ceramics, *cloisonné* enamel, tortoiseshell, jet, and semi-precious stones. They were intricately carved or decorated with a variety of designs.

Some miniature painters began their career decorating buttons with landscapes, flowers and cupids. Wedgwood produced sets of cameos of classical subjects, gods and goddesses, personifications of Peace, Victory, and the Muses. Meissen and Sèvres made porcelain buttons with beautiful bird designs and brilliantly coloured floral pictures. Nature was also represented on buttons with carefully detailed animals, trees, and leaves. Seasonal activities, sports and games, heraldic and zodiacal symbols, and Biblical or mythological characters were other popular motifs.

There could be a hazard in wearing buttons: An inveterate gambler wore a new coat with a row of large metal buttons up the front. Instead of bringing him luck at cards as he had hoped, he consistently lost. His opponents complimented him on the elegance of the garment, but did not mention that the cards he secretively held close to his chest were effectively mirrored in his large shiny buttons.

But buttons could also be useful in other ways. Teased by Emma about his admiration for Jane Fairfax:

"Mr. Knightley was hard at work upon the lower buttons of his thick leather gaiters, and either the exertion of getting them together, or some other cause, brought the colour into his face..."



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Henry Austen, Banker - Eileen Sutherland.

Jane Austen's biographers describe her brother Henry as "self-confident, eager and optimistic almost to excess;" "the handsomest, most fascinating, least stable of all the family;" possessed of "a brilliant insouciance" with "high spirits and a flow of stimulating conversation" and "an infectious gaiety which made him the life and soul of a party." He also had "a mercurial changeable temperament which disinclined him to stick to any course of life for long," and was "noted in the family for his indiscretion."

These are not the major qualities I look for in a banker, but Henry had a successful career in banking for fifteen years.

Henry Austen was born in Steventon in 1771. He was educated at home and then at Oxford. The family intended him for the Church, but Henry decided otherwise: when he graduated he joined the Oxfordshire Militia as a Lieutenant, rising in rank over the next few years to Captain, Paymaster and Adjutant.

His duties as Paymaster included all the money functions of the regiment - receiving money, paying bills, paying the men, and even keeping and investing their money for them - duties not unlike those of a banker. He made important contacts in the banking world that were useful to him later. Henry was lucky - he joined the Militia when funds were pouring in for recruiting, and got out in 1801 when the government was short of cash to pay the troops. He left the Militia a considerably richer man than he had entered it. Officers were paid gratuities on demobilization, and with the interest on Eliza's fortune, they could live, according to cousin Philadelphia Walter, "quite in style."

In 1910, W.R.Bisschop wrote *The Rise and Fall of the London Money Market 1640-1826* (surprisingly interesting!) which traces the history of banking in England, and incidentally forms a good background for Henry's experiences.

Before the 16th century, banking in England didn't exist. Trade was carried on by foreign merchants with foreign capital, with agents in London and other seaports. Payments were made in cash (as far as available). Usury and very high rates of interest were condemned. Borrowing was a last resort when debts had to be met, or taxes paid to the Crown. Those best provided with money to lend were foreign merchants. Lombards had settled in London as agents of Florentine bankers, sent originally to collect the Papal taxes: the funds were transmitted to Italy by means of bills of exchange drawn against shipments of wool. Actual shipments of specie were very rare.

The Papal agents who had accumulated huge quantities of silver, which they wanted to put to use, developed into independent merchants, using their own capital, not the money of others. They were money lenders, not intermediaries, and could not be considered as bankers. European banks and bankers were known but had not found imitators in England.

England's trade and commerce with European countries steadily increased, exporting products from the newly developed regions overseas, as well as English goods. The rapid development of local industry placed the English more and more able to trade with their own capital. The profits realized by the merchants contributed in a large degree to the accumulation of this wealth. The Government made efforts to foster trade and commerce, and measures



were taken aimed at greater stability in the English monetary system. Among other things, all mints in the country were closed except a single mint on Tower Hill in London for the whole of England. At the beginning of the 17th century, that mint was leased to a goldsmith.

A great problem for those with wealth was the selection of a safe place for its custody. Considerable amounts in the first half of the 17th century were entrusted for safekeeping to the London Mint. However, Charles I closed the Mint in 1640 and appropriated the merchants' funds accumulated there. These funds were subsequently restored to the owners, but the Mint had lost forever its reputation for security.

At this time wealthy merchants began to place their cash with goldsmiths; the latter could receive and effect payments on their behalf. Private persons followed their example. The goldsmiths were quick to seize the opportunity. They offered their services as cashiers to all who were willing to deposit their gold and silver plate, ornaments, jewelry or specie with them. They made no charge for their services, but any deposit of cash was considered a free loan, "at call."

The deposit and current account system had come into use, and continued to form the principal part of the business of goldsmiths. These funds did not lie idle - a business in precious metals was carried on by them which surpassed anything previously done by the merchants. The goldsmiths knew that the money entrusted to them "on call" would not all be withdrawn at once, and fresh deposits would continually replace those which were recalled. Relying on this, they began to lend out funds, to discount bills (to supply merchants with hard cash for their bills of exchange) at varying rates of discount. They also lent to private persons who found themselves desperate for ready cash. When the goldsmiths became intermediaries, receiving funds from others and supplying them to third parties on loan, banking can be said to have become a separate profession.

At the end of the 17th century, there was much agitation for the establishment of a State Bank. The main object was to provide the King with funds to carry on the war with France. A subscription list was opened (for £1,200,000), and subscribers were to receive interest. In addition, the subscribers as a body were to constitute a company with the right to carry on a banking business - to receive money on deposit, to deal in bills of exchange, in gold and silver, and to issue promissory notes transferable by endorsement. Within a couple of months the entire amount had been subscribed, and the Governor and Company of the Bank of England commenced operations.

In the country, independent banks came into existence in the same way the goldsmiths in London had gradually developed into bankers. The safekeeping of cash was a problem, but even more serious was the danger of dispatching money to and from London - contemporary accounts are full of stories of hold-ups and robberies of coaches, and of unreliable drivers. Country merchants who had business interests in London, found it convenient to establish themselves as bankers in small towns. Private London banking firms entered into relations with these provincial merchants. Often a junior partner was delegated to a provincial town where he made himself familiar with local conditions and opened a banking business in conjunction with the senior partners in the City.

Development of country banks did not proceed rapidly until the last half of the 18th century. Improved means of transport, and extension of industry, trade and commerce, required an exceptional demand for capital. Credit was granted liberally, but not always wisely. By the last half of the 18th century and the early years of the next, a multitude of small country banks had sprung up, rising from 353 in 1797 to 900 in 1813. This involved a renewed demand for capital.

After leaving the Militia, Henry had involved himself in the world of banking. In 1807, with two officer-friends, he established the firm of Austen, Maunde and Tilson, with offices at 10 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. The lively little Hampshire town of Alton was commercial enough to get a branch of the London bank, known as Austen, Gray and Vincent; other small branches were opened at Petersfield and Hythe. The inflationary economy created by the war with France brought prosperity to banking firms. In the flush of success, Henry's bank riskily issued many bank-notes in small denominations, and relied on merchant-partners for solvency.

However, difficult times were in store for the country banks. The sudden prosperity and widespread progress of industry led to speculation; business undertaken was frequently out of proportion to available capital. Silver had become so scarce in 1810-20, especially in the provinces, that the deficiency had to be met by the issue of paper money. Large numbers of notes of 3, 5, and 7 shillings, and £1 and £2 were put into circulation.

After Waterloo, a sudden sharp economic depression resulted in crises, which continued throughout 1815, culminating in 1816-17. Government orders for foods, cloth and other stores in the southern countries were drastically cut back. Gray, the grocer-partner at Alton, failed and brought down Austen, Gray and Vincent there. A panic run on other small banks began: 89 country banks collapsed. Over-established, Henry's London bank could not redeem the bank-notes when required. The bank fell, and Henry was declared bankrupt early in 1816.

Henry's long illness at this time, and the enforced neglect of his affairs, no doubt contributed to the general crisis. No blame or personal extravagance was attributed to Henry, but he was professionally ruined, and had lost a good deal of money belonging to members of his family. Mr. Leigh-Perrot lost £10,000, and Edward Knight, £20,000 - both had been sureties when Henry had been appointed Receiver General of Taxes for Oxfordshire not long before. The other brothers lost some hundreds each. Jane Austen herself came off comparatively lightly, as all she had to invest had been £13, some of the profits of *Mansfield Park*; but poor Madame Bigeon, Henry's housekeeper, lost all her savings. There was not one of the family that did not suffer mental anxiety if not actual financial hardship. Fortunately, most of the family's personal banking had remained with Hoare's of Fleet Street, where it had always been - otherwise they might have been literally destitute.

The condition of the English coinage in the last years of the 18th century was deplorable. Silver coins were of an inferior quality, and were regularly clipped and defaced. It was not until 1816 that the Government began to call in the under-weight coinage and replace it with newly-minted silver coins. Before June, 1819, almost twelve million half crowns, well over fifty million shillings, and over 30 million sixpences were in circulation. Old "tokens" and previously issued paper notes could now be exchanged for new "hard" coinage. The gold standard was adopted as the sole basis of the whole monetary system, which was now placed on a firm basis.

By this time, Henry's almost exasperating buoyancy and sanguine temperament had helped him rise above these misfortunes. With sincerity and conviction, even with cheerfulness, he declared he was never cut out to be a banker, and decided to go into the Church. In a very short time he got himself ordained and was appointed curate at Bentley, not far from Chawton. He soon became known as an eloquent preacher. With his usual high optimism, he tried to pay off some of his debts from his stipend, but years later he still owed most of the money. He didn't let it worry him. "Oh what a Henry!" as Jane Austen said in another context.

It says much for the strong affection and close ties of this extraordinary family that (except for the Leigh-Perrots, who never forgave their nephew) there was not the least coldness between him and those relations who had been the victims of his misfortunes.

Random Readings from *Emma*: November Meeting.

"Open your volume of *Emma* anywhere, pick a passage, and read it aloud." Then the discussion begins: Can we identify the passage, the speaker, the situation? What part does this passage play in the plot of the novel as a whole? What does it tell us about a character, or a relationship? What does it tell us about Jane Austen, and her writing? We had a good time at the November meeting with this "game," and received lots of new ideas and insights.

Joan Reynolds began with Miss Bates' talk at the Crown when "supper was announced." We enjoy Miss Bates' chatter, but several members commented that what was really important was what Miss Bates did not say aloud, but cued us in to what was going on around her. She wanted Jane to put on her tippet because of drafts, then: "Mr. Churchill, oh! You are too obliging! How well you put it on!" And later: "Sir, you are most kind, upon my word, Jane on one arm, and me on the other!" tell us that Frank is hovering there beside Jane all the time. Jane Austen uses Miss Bates' talk as a vehicle for providing information. We "see" all that is going on.

Adele Shaak read of the meeting of the Knightley brothers at Hartfield: "The brothers talked of their own concerns and pursuits." This passage gives us a good picture of the relationship of the brothers - friendly and supporting, communicative but not effusive, the older brother reporting all the Donwell affairs. We see Mr. Knightley as a magistrate and landowner, with a responsible attitude to the farms and his tenants, and John Knightley equally interested in all he was told.

John Parker's reading depicted Emma's emotional turmoil, first believing Mr. Knightley returned Harriet's affection: "Mr. Knightley and Harriet Smith! Such an elevation on her side! Such a debasement on his!" and later, after Harriet's acceptance of Robert Martin's second proposal: "It would be a great pleasure to know Robert Martin." No matter whom Harriet dreamed of at the moment, she still thought of Robert Martin, and this is another example of Jane Austen's careful preparation of what is to come.

A discussion of Frank Churchill before he comes to Highbury was read by **Jill Sims**. Mr. Woodhouse tells the John Knightleys about Frank's letter to Mrs. Weston: "a very proper, handsome letter it was . . . written from Weymouth." More foreshadowing - this is the first mention of Weymouth.

Mrs. Elton's plans for the strawberry-picking visit to Donwell were Rousseau-like, (what Mavis Batey called his "half-baked ideas on noble savages") "everything as natural and simple as possible." **Murray Wanamaker** quoted Mr. Knightley's reply: "My idea of the simple and natural will be to have the table spread in the dining-room. The nature and simplicity of gentlemen and ladies, with their servants and furniture, I think is best observed by meals within doors" - a down-to-earth contrast to her proposal for a "sort of gipsy party".

Keiko Parker, referring to the unexpected snowfall at the Christmas visit to the Westons, commented on the concise, abrupt interchange between Mr. Knightley and Emma: "Your father will not be easy; why do not you go?" "I am ready, if the others are." "Shall I ring the bell?" "Yes, do." They know each other very well, a true partnership, with respect and understanding.

Towards the end of the meeting, the conversation became general. **Irene Howard** discussed Jane Austen's use of Mrs. Elton as similar to Miss Bates - giving information in the background of her attention-seeking speeches. She has some of the same characteristics as Emma, but Mrs. Elton doesn't change for the better as time goes by. **Sheila Calvert** looked at Emma as exemplifying the relation between our ideal and our fallible self - a blindness, an inability to interpret experience. Emma is her own judge, she analyses her actions over and over, and gradually learns from them. **Jill Sims** mentioned the point when Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley discuss Emma: when her mother died she lost the only person who could check her. There was no

one else in her life who matched her intellectually. She has a first-class mind but she doesn't use it. **Dianne Kerr** spoke of Mrs. Elton's too-quick defense of Mr. Suckling as "always rather a friend to the abolition". Jane Austen wrote: "a merchant, of course, he must be called" in the "heart of Bristol". This city was considered the port connected with the slave trade. Possibly we are meant to think that Mr. Hawkins was in the slave trade.

As we made this close study of passages of *Emma*, we all became better acquainted with the novel, and had a deeper appreciation of the skilful craftsmanship which went into Jane Austen's writing.

* Our efficient and reliable Kitchen Co-ordinator, Norah Morrow, was sick and unable to come. Doris MacKenzie hustled around, shopping for supplies, setting out plates and cutlery, arranging the food, making coffee, and doing the dozen things that have to be done. Willing assistants - unnamed but not unhonoured - did a thorough clean up and tidying afterwards. All went well, but we missed Norah and hope she'll be welcoming us with her usual smile and cheerful words in December. [P.S. Dec. 14th: She was!]

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To Jean

A little booklet, *The Jane Austen Thank You Recipe Collection* - favourite recipes inspired by Jane Austen's references to food in her novels - was presented to Jean Oriente at the September, 2002, meeting. It was inscribed:

To "L'aimable Jean"

This booklet is presented to

Jean Oriente

on her retirement as Chair of the programme committee.

We much appreciate her dedication and conscientious work for several years.

With "Love and Freindship" and "Esteem"

from the members of the Jane Austen Society of North America, Vancouver Region.

Keiko Parker, Regional Co-ordinator.

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"Tiny Piece of Canada in England" : From Nancy Stokes: *The Writing Desk*, Toronto.

- From The Toronto Star, June, 2002, Catherine George, Associate Travel Editor.

"There is a road sign along the A30 between Exeter and Taunton in south-west England that bears the Canadian flag and the Ontario coat of arms. Down a leafy laneway lies a tiny piece of Canada, Wolford Chapel. The plaque in front tells the story of how it came to be part of Ontario. It's the burial place of John Graves Simcoe, first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada (Ontario) and founder of York (Toronto), capital of Upper Canada. Before coming to Upper Canada in 1792 Simcoe married Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim and purchased the Wolford estate. Simcoe, his wife and five of their 11 children are buried in the chapel. Wolford Chapel and the land it sits on were deeded to the people of Ontario in 1966. It was restored and is maintained by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, the only foundation property outside the province. (Wolford Chapel is 35 km from both Exeter and Taunton. Take the Dunkeswell Rd. off the A30 east of Honiton.)"

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Music and Readings - December Meeting.

The mantel was decorated with fresh greenery, and the fire was sparkling with cheery flames and glowing coals. And later, tantalizing aromas drifted in to us from the kitchen. It was a perfect setting for a delightful entertainment for December.

Charming trios from Pleyel, Picchianti and Beethoven, all music from Jane Austen's period, and some delightful readings from favourite authors, gave us a wonderful break from the busy Christmas season. Three music students from UBC: **Sam Tseng** (flute), **Jeanette Searle** (clarinet) and **Gwen Seaton** (bassoon) had never played together before, but their melodic tone, precise timing and obvious enjoyment in their own music impressed us all.

Interspersed with the trios, we heard readings which put us into a good seasonal mood. **John Parker** began with a brief biography of Parson James Woodforde (1740-1803), who was rector of the parish of Weston in Norfolk. The particular excerpt from his diary that John read was a description of an all-too-typical winter Christmas Day in the north of England. It was very cold, with deep snow and a sharp east wind. "I walked to church . . . had but few Communicants the Weather so bad. . . Immediately after the Morning Service. . . , I was attacked with an Epileptic Fit, and fainted away in my Desk, but thank God! soon recovered and went through the remaining part of my duty." Friends and parishioners were very kind and helpful, and he felt well enough to walk home. He had something warm to drink; but he "could only eat some plumb Pudding & a few Potatoes. . . . A very fine Sirloin of Beef roasted and plenty of plumb Puddings for dinner & strong beer after." He had a good night, and the next day for dinner had "Calf's Fry & Rabbit roasted. I drank plentifully of Port Wine after dinner, instead of one Glass, drank 7 or 8 Wine Glasses, and it seemed to do me much good, being better for it." John brought out the humour of the piece, and the contrast with our dinners of today.

Some excerpts from Jane Austen's letters to her sister Cassandra were read by **Rae Fraser**, to highlight winter social activities and the weather that sometimes accompanied them. At one ball, "there were nearly 60 people . . . There was a scarcity of Men in general, & a still greater scarcity of any that were good for much." At another, Jane reported on the guests: "There were very few Beauties, & such as there were, were not very handsome," and "She appeared with the same broad face, diamond bandeau, white shoes, pink husband, & fat neck." Items of dress included: "My black cap was openly admired by Mrs. Lefroy; and secretly I imagine by everybody else in the room." One letter mentioned a "dreadful storm" which did a great deal of damage among the trees, especially the elms - five or six were blown down almost at one time. Jane reported that their neighbour James Digweed "supposed that the Elms fell from their greif at your absence. Was it not a gallant idea?" The excerpts gave us glimpses of characters and events which surely led to incidents in the novels. Rae's expressive reading brought out the hilarious touches of wit in Jane's personal letters - they must have been a delight for Cassandra to receive.

Lorraine Meltzer completed the readings with a well-chosen account of Christmas festivities at Tredegar House, which had been enlarged and modernized in Jane Austen's time. The *Shrewsbury Chronicle* gave a report of "hospitable hosts and lavish food" at a Christmas dinner and masquerade. At winter balls, guests wearing flimsy gowns and not much in the way of warm coverings, arrived in drafty coaches. They were always offered hot soup and negus on their arrival, and sometimes again just before they departed for home much later. We remember Fanny Price, going upstairs after her ball, "feverish with hopes and fears, soup and negus, sore-footed and fatigued", and she had not been out in the cold!

Our meeting day was not very cold, but we could look out at trees blowing in the gusty wind and drizzling rain. Inside we were cosy and comfortable, and very well entertained - it was a wonderful way to celebrate Jane Austen's birthday and the coming Festive Season.

Mad King George's Illness - Here Today.

A local family has been in the news lately - father, mother, son, 16 , and daughter, 14 - who came in 1998 as visitors from sun-drenched South Africa to cloudy, wet Prince Rupert. They have settled happily there, have job offers, and large community support, but Citizenship & Immigration Canada is attempting to deport them.

The father and children have a disease called *porphyria*, a genetic intolerance to sunlight, caused by a deficiency in an enzyme which inhibits the body's ability to process light-sensitive chemicals in the blood. This can result in burning, blisters and scarring on skin exposed to sunlight, and extreme symptoms can include nausea, vomiting and chronic pain; sometimes a sufferer will stop breathing. The young daughter attempted suicide in South Africa because she felt "I can't go on living like this." The children suffered from headaches, blisters and sores in South Africa's hot sunny weather, and could only go outside to play at night.

In the case of King George III, whose medical men did not know the cause of his illness, the painful physical symptoms (and the horrible treatments he had to undergo!) quite literally drove him mad in 1788, and again, permanently, in 1811.

Since the family has been living in Prince Rupert, their symptoms have virtually disappeared. Now that doctors know more about porphyria and its symptoms, and the mitigating effects of avoidance of sunlight, the family should surely be allowed to remain in Rupert, on compassionate and humanitarian grounds. We will await the final decision, hopefully by a more enlightened administration than poor King George faced.



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Christmas Festivities. Eileen Sutherland.

Early in January, we attended *Jane Austen's Holiday Fayre*, a "potpourri of Regency delights", created and directed by Joan Bryans, and presented by the United Players of Vancouver at the Jericho Arts Centre. The theatre was set up "cabaret style", and as we sat at the little tables sipping complimentary spiced cider and delicate little Maids of Honour tarts, we were entertained by a cast of ten, singing and giving readings from the early works of Jane Austen and her brothers James and Henry, including the short comic tale of *Sir William Mountague*, and the even shorter, *Adventures of Mr. Harley*, as well as *The History of England . . .* by a "partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian." Songs, accompanied by music of the harpsichord, included the traditional Welsh air, *The Ash Grove*, and the delightful Somerset folk song, *No John, No John, No John, No*, and others. Dramatic interludes were an extract from Sheridan's *The Rivals*, where Captain Absolute, in the guise of Ensign Beverley, claims to be Captain Absolute to trick Mrs. Malaprop into giving him a chance to have a brief but tender meeting with his love, Miss Lydia Languish; and a ruthlessly condensed version of *High Life Below Stairs*, familiar to us from Jane Austen Day last year when members of our group entertained us with that play.

The actors and singers were obviously enjoying themselves, and their enthusiasm was contagious. It was not highly polished professional theatre, but their intention was to present "a miscellany of comedy, poetry and song such as Jane Austen and her family would entertain their neighbours with", and we could easily imagine we were in a modest country house in late 18th century England, enjoying the company of friends and relatives. The evening made a delightful end for our Christmas celebrations.

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Clippings.

A sincere "thank you" to those members who have recently passed on to me various newspaper clippings with interesting references to Jane Austen.

Joan Reynolds. You can revel in the past (for a few hours) with a stage-coach ride in Lincolnshire. The coach - black and red, drawn by four white horses and lovingly restored - used to travel the Great North Road between London and Edinburgh. The journey took ten days and cost £10 (sitting inside) or £3.50 (sitting on top, risking falling off if you fell asleep). The wood-panelled interior measures 4 feet by 3 feet, and was designed for six passengers, packed in snugly. Up-top seats nine, with a good view of the countryside, but no protection from inclement weather. The coach travels at about 6 mph, slow enough to enjoy the sheep and hedgerows in the rural areas and the attractive villages with people waving as it goes by. Most of the modern passengers wear period costumes, ladies in bonnets, gentlemen in top hats. Some are celebrating birthdays or anniversaries, and come from all over the world for the coach ride. Jane Austen's books are a popular topic of conversation. [Michael Powell: London Times Weekend. n.d.]

Jackie Johnson. In a letter to the editor [TLS Sept.20, 2002], John Bury, London, suggests that *Eugene Onegin* may be a principal source for *P&P* (published 1813). The main characters include a young country gentleman and his superior friend, the hero of the story. At a local ball, they meet two attractive sisters. The English characters differ markedly from their Russian counterparts, but the situations are similar. At the ball the hero is bored and frustrated, and reacts by misbehaviour. Darcy's lesser misdemeanour results only in mortification, but Onegin's very bad behaviour (a reckless flirtation with his friend's favourite) ends with a duel in which he kills his friend. In both novels, the hero goes away; meanwhile the heroine visits his country house and is shown around by the housekeeper. Elizabeth receives a much better opinion of Darcy's character; Tatiana, however, discovers that Onegin is a "poseur acting the part of a Byronic hero." Eventually the plots of the two narratives differ completely - *P&P* has a happy ending, but Onegin is doomed to a tragic future. The writer points out, however, that Austen does not suggest that the happy ending is assured. "Darcy's courtship is eventually successful; but, like Waterloo, it was a damned close thing." Two French translations were published in 1822, "If Pushkin read one of these translations soon after it came out, then one can see how likely it is that Austen's compelling story inspired him to write *Eugene Onegin*, which he began in 1823."

In a later letter to the TLS (Oct. 11, 2002) Charles G. Coutinho refutes this argument. In a catalogue of Pushkin's personal library of 1,505 volumes, including books in English and French, Austen is "conspicuous by her absence. Neither in a French translation nor in the original English, do any of her works appear." His English books included those by Scott, Byron, Burns, Southey, Walpole, Swift and Shakespeare - "one can only conclude that Austen's absence was due primarily to Pushkin's failure to have read her," and he also failed "ever to discuss Austen in any of his letters or essays dealing with contemporary literature."

Also from **Jackie Johnson:** Annette Kobak (TLS, Oct. 11, 2002) reviews the recent book by Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen's 'Outlandish Cousin' The Life and Letters of Eliza de Feuillide. The review doesn't tell us who called Eliza "outlandish" but Kobak repeats Claire Tomalin's remark that "Something about Eliza jarred with many of the Austens." Perhaps Eliza was merely too clever, "foreign and frivolous". Nothing of the sort comes across in these letters, mostly to her young inexperienced cousin, Phyllida Walter. The facts of her life may have been enough to give her an uncommon, foreign aura to stay-at-home relatives. Eliza was born in India and spent long spells there and in France; she frequented high social circles in both France and England; and there was a worrying question about her parentage - she was born to Philadelphia (Mr. Austen's sister) and Saul Tysoe Hancock after eight childless years, at a time when they were very friendly with the young widower, Warren Hastings, who became Eliza's godfather and later set up a trust fund of £10,000 for her. Deirdre Le Faye dismisses the possibility that Hastings was Eliza's real father, but such gossip must have followed her all her life.

Le Faye writes text that glosses and links Eliza's letters. When the young woman and her mother settled in Paris, her letters are filled with lively descriptions of French customs, social events, and influential people. In 1781 Eliza married a French captain, Jean-François de Feuillide, "a marriage aided," according to Kobak, "by some mutual wishful thinking: her husband arrogated to himself the title 'comte' and Eliza allowed herself to be thought of as very wealthy." She returned to England for the birth of her first (and only) child, Hastings, and spent the next years in a busy social life in London, with occasional visits to the country, including her Austen relations at Steventon. The count was guillotined in 1794, but this and other momentous events of revolutionary and Napoleonic France take a minor part in her letters concentrating on dances, dress, men, legacies and other occupations of a genteel life. Kobak feels that this does not add up to the "epistolary novel" that Le Faye seemed to aspire to: there are too many gaps and too factual information about the "buffeting" events of Eliza's life, which remains largely "unexamined." "There is also enough discreet hypocrisy between the *mondaine* countess and her correspondent, the 'wide-eyed country mouse' Phylly, to draw a veil over their real emotions."

More riches from **Jackie Johnson**. A long review by Michael Caines, of *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, by Paula Byrne, which provides "comprehensive coverage of recent biography and literary criticism" in this "definitive and pioneering work" on the theatre. Byrne deals with Austen's own visits to theatres; the family theatricals at Steventon; her experiments with dramatic forms in the Juvenilia; and the dramatic elements of the mature novels. Byrne explains why adaptations of the novels to film are never completely successful: "Screenwriters find it almost impossible to render the ironic third-person authorial voice that is so important to Austen's narrative method." The second part of the book discusses theatrical references in the novels themselves, and "enriches our understanding of the novels" in her re-reading of *Mansfield Park*, the parallels with the situation in *Lovers' Vows*, and the plays that were well known at the time. The book "has much to say to the theatre historian about an extraordinary member of the late 18th century audience, and a great deal more to teach the literary critic about that theatregoer's own art." This is a big book, filled with detailed information, well worth reading.

Diana Bodnar sent a long story from Scotland on Sunday (July 28, 2002) about the serendipitous discovery of three volumes of a first edition of *P&P*, which eventually sold for £34,000, a world record price for any Jane Austen book. Anonymous owners of a castle in Scotland asked a rare-book consultant to select some volumes to be sold by auction. Among other valuable books he found one volume of the first edition of *P&P*; later he found a second volume in a different place; and still later he found the third in another room. It was a great success story. Check your own attics and dusty shelves, but don't expect to find treasures everywhere. For the future, the consultant has this advice: "The strategy is simple: buy two copies of first editions of debut novels (one to read and one to preserve). Many will doubtless disappoint, both as literature and as investment, but the benefits are threefold. Firstly, you may strike gold as your novelist soars off into the literary stratosphere; secondly, you will be impressively well read and up to date with literary trends; thirdly, you will be supporting fledgling novelists when they need it most, thereby helping to ensure publishers keep taking the odd chance and publish first-time novelists. In other words, you'll be doing good."

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