The Jane Austen Society of North America

Vancouver Region

NEWSLETTER NO. 55 **AUGUST 1996**

MEASUREMENTS IN JANE AUSTEN'S ENGLAND - E.Sutherland.

Endeavouring to abolish all traces of the Old Regime, Napoleon set up a commission of scientists to modernize measurements. They developed the metric system, which became the legal system of weights and measures in France in 1799.

This was by no means the first use of metric, however. The East India Company used Chinese metric measurements and money, and brought back to England words such as catty (1 1/3 lbs. of tea, now our word caddy for the container), tael, mace, candareen and cash - all small coins. A Naval Report of 1802 mentioned a settlement "at seven mace two candareens per head," and evidently did not need to translate this into English money.

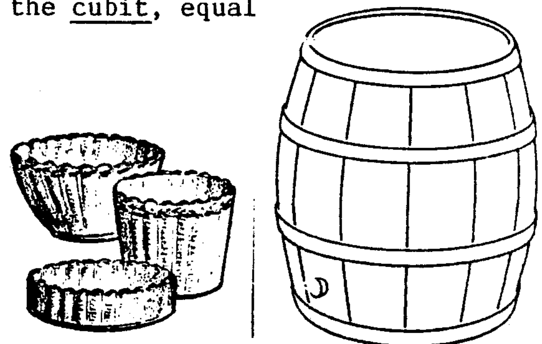
The philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) had proposed a decimal system for linear measurements, which included the gry, which was a tenth of a line, a hundredth of an inch and a thousandth of a foot. The system did not really catch on, but Locke himself used it; he wrote to the physicist Boyle in 1679 describing something: "The longest was three inches and nine grys long, and one inch seven lines in girt."

Locke's measurements did last for some time. The word gry was from a Greek term meaning the dirt under a fingernail (presumably of a non-gardener), the veriest trifle. In the introduction to the novel, The Heroine (1813), the author, Eaton Stannard Barrett, wrote: "The work has every fault which must convict it...but which will leave it not the ninety-ninth part of a gry the worse." Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra about the book: "It diverted me exceedingly...It is a delightful burlesque, particularly on the Radcliffe style." [Letter #92, 1814]. Barrett would not have used a word which was not in common use at the time.

The word line - a measurement for one-twelfth of an inch - was still common in the late 19th century. In fact it still has a technical use as a measurement for buttons.

Some old words are still used, but with a less specific meaning. A bolt is now merely an indeterminate roll of fabric; originally it had a definite measurement: one bolt equalled 28 ells, or 40 feet. Ell (from the Latin ulna, arm bone) was a measure of length derived variously from the distance from elbow or shoulder to wrist or fingertips - an English ell was 45", the Scottish ell,37.2"; the Flemish, 27". In 1837, Carlyle wrote of "Tearful women wetting whole ells of cambric in concert." In the same period, the word also meant a stick of that length (like a "yardstick"): "The mercer, upon seeing the ladies gown...can cut off her quantity by guess, without taking his ell to measure it." The word is no longer in use, but we remember it in the aphorism : "Give him an inch and he will take an ell." Still commonly used in the 18th century was another word for the forearm, the cubit, equal to approximately 18-22", now thought of only as a Biblical measurement.

Another measure whose meaning has deteriorated is skein, now a loosely tied coil of yarn or thread (or a gaggle of geese), but once very specifically "80 turns of thread upon a reel 54" in circumference", still used in this way at the end of the 19th century.



In many cases, words which we now use to mean a container, in Jane Austen's time referred to a measurement of its capacity: a barrel contained approximately 32-36 gallons. Many of the old terms for casks of various sizes - firkin, kilderkin, pipe, puncheon, tierce or tun - were still in use well into this century, and even now have some commercial usage. A barrel equalled four firkins, or 2 kilderkins; a pipe equalled half a tun or one hogshead or four barrels. Butts and puncheons were other measurements. The capacity of all these varied from place to place, and according to the commodity packed in them. They were used for beer, ale, wine and other liquids, and also for meat, salmon, butter, coffee, tobacco, sugar or gunpowder.

Many dry measures are still known although not commonly used now. A peck equals 2 gallons; a quarter was 8 bushels or a fifth part (originally, a fourth) of a wey or load; a chaldron was 4 quarters or 32 bushels: by Dickens' time it was only used as a measurement for coals (Martin Chuzzlewit). Like the other measures, they all had local variations.

A clove - not merely a section of garlic or a dried herb flower - was still used in parts of England in the late 19th century: "Seven pounds of wool make a clove, but in Essex 8 pounds of cheese and butter go to the clove."

A palm or a hand was another general measurement that arose from body parts like foot and ell. It varied - either the breadth of the palm, 3-4", or the whole length of the hand from wrist to fingertips. Now it is used almost solely with reference to the height of a horse.

We have already lost most of these distinctive measurement words since Jane Austen's day, and I wouldn't bet a gry that any will survive another generation except as historical curiosities.

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HURRICANE THREATENS MANSFIELD PARK

Thank you to Fred Braches for finding this poem, with the splendid image of Sir Thomas at the end. The poem is by Arthur Russell, former BBC Overseas Service journalist, and was published in New and Vanishing Delight, Winchester, 1975.

Jane in Alt

Westward over the Atlantic; speed five hundred
Miles an hour; altitude, clearing Everest
By fifteen thousand feet; outside temperature
Fifty below. Sunshine and glittering metal;
Motion barely perceptible; wingtips levelly
Ruling the horizon; cloudfloor seemingly flat
Far below our capsule of serenity and order.
The perils of air and sea appear to be subjugated.

Here in my hands, a notable contrast. Appalling
Catastrophe impends at Mansfield Park, where Fanny
Is suffering the indecorous affair of the amateur theatricals;
While over in Antigua, dread Sir Thomas Bertram
Anticipating the departure of the regular Falmouth packet
Has seized the chance of a passage in a private vessel
And approaches across the Atlantic, ominous as a hurricane.

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JASNA: JANE AUSTEN IN CYBERSPACE - Shannon Rupp.

For a techno-peasant like myself, computer communications is intimidating, and only the promise of learning more about Jane Austen could even tempt me to enter the world of the Internet and electronic mail. I use a computer in my work as a writer, and I deliver stories over the phone lines via modem, but the idea of using cold, hard technology for anything as warm and human as discussing Jane's writing seemed distasteful. Until I discovered Austen-L, the computer discussion group for Janeites.

Austen-L is what is referred to variously as a "listserv", a mailing list, or a discussion group. Listservs are a collection of messages that are e-mailed to a central computer address, organized into a "digest", and sent out to all the subscribers.

Discussions are as wide-ranging as those at any JASNA meeting. In the last few months we have explored everything from whether Lizzy married Darcy for Pemberley (the majority favour love), to whether we like the casting of Emma Thompson as Elinor (many of us feel she is too old). People pick up on various "threads" of discussion, and may pursue that thread for weeks, or months, until it is all talked out.

Far from being cold and impersonal, these e-mail discussions provide the same kind of personal interaction - and clashes - as any discussion group. On the list we have an aggressive know-it-all who bears a disturbing resemblance to Lady Catherine de Bourgh and who writes essay-length posts. (I can almost hear her demanding that she must have her share of the conversation). A pair of grad students have been fighting over issues in literary theory, a debate that turned so nasty it developed into what is called a "flame war" - a rare occurrence on this normally polite list. Although these two tend to use bludgeons rather than foils, one wag suggested that perhaps we were witnessing a real, live case of Pride and Prejudice. That shut them up.

While communing with a computer will never replace the pleasure of JASNA's meetings and luncheons, the listserv is a nice addition to my Austen sources. Because the list is so widespread - contributors come from Australia, Britain, Singapore, Europe, and all over North America - they provide a wide range of views. Given that Austen devotees, whether academics or fans, tend to be intelligent and articulate, this is a thoughtful list with an astounding array of expertise. One of the contributors works in the film industry, another is an historian specializing in British aristocracy.

After three months online I've decided that it's well worth mastering the relatively simple business of running e-mail to have access to such lively commentary. After all, where else can you find out the really important things in life such as when Pride and Prejudice will be aired commercial-free, with the missing scenes intact? (Without Austen-L, I wouldn't even know there were missing scenes - one of the English subscribers who had seen the recent TV programme in full, provided us with a list of what was cut).

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The only thing I have any sort of misgiving about with all these CD Roms is that it actually liberates people prematurely from the joys of the purely manual handling of books...There is something about the idea of turning pages backwards and forwards very very quickly...The texture of paper, the pleasure of typography, the bindings, the taking it down from a shelf... Jonathan Miller (TLS Jan.12, 1996.)

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"I mentioned the Simple Story to you...I thought it worth reading.- I, however, like it better than you seem to do, but I must say that galloping through a book, particularly a novel, 'is not the way, Milady Teazle', to seize what little merits it may have, as one is always affected and what degree of interest it may be called forth by minute description, or some, in itself, trivial circumstance, all which glanced over in a hurry totally loses its effect and one is only open to its faults,- I say this because I have galloped over a book myself and thought so differently of it at moments of more leisure and attention." - Hon. Mrs. Damer to Mary Berry, September 1, 1795.

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ESSAY PRIZES

JASNA Vancouver donated funds some years ago to both UBC and SFU for prizes for the best student essay each year (approx. $90 each). This year, there was no essay at SFU considered worthy of receiving a prize. Consequently, in accordance with the terms of the bequest, there will be a public lecture at Harbour Centre - given by Professor Christine Liotta, date to be announced. Tentative plans call for a showing of the film Sense and Sensibility, and the lecture will be a discussion of the film.

UBC has awarded the prize this year to Tanya Lewis, who has written this charming letter to thank us:

To Ms. Eileen Sutherland,

I am writing to thank you for the Jane Austen Society Prize. With such popular academic emphasis on business and the sciences, I find it encouraging that the Arts are still dear to hearts other than my own. I've been reading Jane Austen since I was 14 and although I've now read all her works - many more than once - they have yet to lose their charm. It is an honour to be associated with such an author, even so distantly.

Sincerely,

Tanya Lewis
2665 Fairview Cr.,
Vancouver, B.C. V67 2B8

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Peter Drucker ["the father of postwar management thinking", professor of social sciences at Claremont Graduate School in California] has reached the stage of life where he has the time to re-read books. He is now reading Jane Austen and William Thackeray, and finds Austen's economy and elegance with words instructive for his own writing. 'It's a very good antidote to modern sloppiness and language corruption', he says.

(Financial Post, June 19, 1996)

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Obsessed with survival

In his review of the film *Sense and Sensibility* (Jan. 27), Michael D. Reid writes, "How little we've evolved in matters of money and the heart over the past two centuries." He's missed the point. Most women in our society no longer need to marry. They can enjoy affairs of the heart or not, marry or not, while supporting themselves.

While enjoying the "period detail," Reid fails to understand why the women of Jane Austen's period seem to be "obsessed with finding Mr. Right." It isn't romance that drives them; it's survival. When Marianne loses sight of this truth and fails to follow the unwritten rules, she nearly brings disaster on herself and her family. Women today are able to separate their feelings of love from their need for economic survival, without calamity.

And finally, how can Reid call Austen's novel a forerunner to Harlequin romances and soaps? He must have missed the irony altogether! Austen was a very serious writer, writing about the very serious business of survival in a delightfully witty and ironical style. I'm grateful that her novel was faithfully translated into the medium of film by Emma Thompson.

Amber Harvey,
Victoria.

(Times Colonist, Feb. 3, 1996)

UNBECOMING WOMEN. BRITISH WRITERS AND THE NOVEL OF DEVELOPMENT: Susan Fraiman, 1993

Like an apprentice studying his trade, a young girl enters society to learn the ways of the world. But whereas the young man will eventually become a master of his chosen field, the girl can never achieve this same "becoming" - she must eventually find a role in marriage as a perennial dependent.

Fraiman discusses the stories of three heroines - Evelina, Elizabeth Bennet, and Jane Eyre - and points out that, alongside the story of their rise in the world to become beloved wives of wealthy gentlemen, is another story of diminution and dispowerment.

Here is an excerpt from the chapter, "The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet":

[After Darcy's first proposal, and Elizabeth's indignant refusal, he gives her a letter of explanation]. Elizabeth's initial judgment of Darcy is now recanted as unjust, its accusation redirected against herself. When the novel opens, Elizabeth is proud of her ability to know and evaluate, yet by its closing chapters she claims only to be high-spirited. Regretting her refusal of Darcy, the new Elizabeth longs to be schooled by his better judgment: '...from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance'. It should not be surprising to find that in an Austen novel judgment, information and knowledge rate higher than ease and liveliness...What may surprise and sadden us, however, and what the novel surely registers with a touch of irony, is that a heroine who began so competent to judge should end up so critically disabled, so reliant for judgment on somebody else. Not that Elizabeth lapses into sheer Lydiacy. Yet the final pages suggest nonetheless that her eye is less bold, her tongue less sharp, the angularity - setting her off from her more comfortably curvaceous sex - less acute.

According to one critical truism, Pride and Prejudice manages a kind of bilateral disarmament: Elizabeth gives up her prejudice, while Darcy relinquishes his pride. I am arguing, however, that Darcy woos away not Elizabeth's 'prejudice' but her judgment entire. For while Darcy defends the impartiality of his views, Elizabeth confesses to the partiality of hers; while his representation of the world is taken to be objective, raised to the level of universality, hers (like that of women generally) is condemned for being subjective and dismissed as mere 'prejudice'. But what does Austen's record actually show? Elizabeth was certainly wrong about Wickham, but was she really that wrong about Darcy? He may warm up a bit, and his integrity is rightly affirmed, but he is hardly less arrogant than Elizabeth at first supposed... And what about Darcy's own accuracy? His judgment of Jane is just as mistaken - and, though he denies it, as partial - as Elizabeth's view of Wickham. Yet Darcy's credibility remains intact. Finally admitting to having misinterpreted Jane, Darcy explains that he was corrected not by Elizabeth but by his own subsequent observations, and on this basis he readvises the ever-pliant Bingley. Whereas Lizzie's mistake discredits her judgment for good, Mr. Darcy's, far from disqualifying him, gives him an opportunity to judge again.

What happens in Pride and Prejudice, then, is not simply that an *a priori* prejudiced character at last sees the error of her ways. Rather, a character introduced as reliable, whose clarity of vision is evidently the author's own, is re-presented - in the context of her marriageability - as prejudiced. In my reading, the psychological drama of a heroine 'awakening' to her true identity is brought into conflict with the social drama of an outspoken girl entering a world whose voices drown out her own. (p.81)

DO YOU AGREE? COMMENTS, PLEASE.

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Ending a call for volunteers to help with the planning and organizing of the Richmond conference, came the statement:

"The members who are currently participating are having fun, but we are willing to share." (North Carolina Newsletter, Spring, 1996)

Did Tom Sawyer come from North Carolina?

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A STROKE THE MOST UNWELCOME, MOST ILL-TIMED, MOST APPALLING...

Jane Austen writes of broken promises, broken hearts and broken egg-shells, but we have to speak of broken bones, and to report a "sad accident" at Burnaby, when our member Jean Brown "was brought home in consequence of a bad fall", with two broken wrists! "This distressing intelligence...has agitated us exceedingly", and we are "much grieved" but not "greatly alarmed". "The invalid continues, though slowly, to mend."

"The poor sufferer will soon be able to bear the removal" to Scotland for her long-planned holiday with "warm-hearted,well meaning relations" there. We wish her a good journey and hope that "every thing that the most zealous affection, the most solicitous care could do to make her comfortable" will be given to her. And I am sure that we will not find her "so altered - so faded - worn down by acute suffering" when she returns to our meetings, but will be "perfectly revived, in excellent spirits, with fresh hopes and fresh schemes" for the Fall.

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GRUEL IN ANTIQUITY

In a review of the book Food in Antiquity (John Wilkins, et al, 1996), Emily Gowers writes of "the weed gruel, recreated on television recently from the stomach contents of an ancient Celt, is here discounted as so atypical and unpleasant that it could only have been a ritual last meal served to a condemned man."

Many friends of Mr. Woodhouse would have agreed.

(Times Literary Supplement, April 12, 1996).

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MAPLE GROVE - ROTTEN TO THE CORE

Mrs. Elton describes Maple Grove as the perfect country estate ("A charming place... Every body who sees it is struck by its beauty...The laurels at Maple Grove are in the same profusion as here...Nothing can stand more retired from the road than Maple Grove. Such an immense plantation all round it!"). But when do we rely on Mrs. Elton's opinion about anything? She herself is the daughter of a Bristol merchant - as Jane Austen specifically tells us - and the estate of her wealthy brother-in-law has been acquired only recently ("Mr. Suckling, who has been eleven years a resident at Maple Grove, and whose father had it before him - I believe, at least - I am almost sure that old Mr. Suckling had completed the purchase before his death"), and presumably with the profits from trading ventures out of Bristol - a port with well-known affinities with the slave trade. Mrs. Elton's denial - "I assure you Mr. Suckling was always rather a friend to the abolition" - is not convincing.

According to Stephen Derry (Notes & Queries, Dec. 1993), Jane Austen made her feelings about Maple Grove even more explicit with an allusion to Spenser. In Spenser's Faerie Queen, the trees in the wood are listed, ending with "the Maple, seldom inward sound" - beautiful on the outside but rotten within. Also, the Trojan Horse was said to have been made of maple wood.

Jane Austen may have been thinking of either or both of these references when she named Mr. Suckling's estate, Maple Grove, contrasting it with the genuine exemplary estate of Donwell Abbey, in Mr. Knightley's family for hundreds of years, "a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding", and whose fortune was derived from the land.

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QUOTED FROM THE TIMES - Newsletter of the Jane Austen Society of Puget Sound (Jan.1996)

"[Martin] Amis also discusses the current wave of Austeniana, arguing that the current crop of movies reveals more about the late twentieth century than the early eighteenth: 'Each age will bring its peculiar emphasis, and in the current Austen festival our own anxieties stand fully revealed. We like to wallow in the accents and accoutrements of Jane's world, but our response is predominantly sombre. We notice, above all, the constriction of female opportunity: how brief was their nubility, and yet how slowly and deadeningly time passes within it. We notice how plentiful were the occasions for inflicting social pain, and how interested the powerful were in this infliction... We fret and writhe at the physical confinement (how desperate these filmmakers are to get their characters out-of-doors).'...

Terrence Rafferty, in The New Yorker (Dec.18, 1995), also praises the lush landscapes of Emma Thompson's Sense and Sensibility: 'Slowly and surely, the movie persuades us to settle for the small delights of engaging storytelling, warm humor, pretty scenery, and pretty people.' This, he says, is consistent with Austen's guiding principle - 'the modest, constant value of everyday pleasures. She places her faith not in the exhilaration of romantic tumult but in the deep contentment of reasonable expectations reasonably satisfied.' Amis, in his discussion of Pride and Prejudice, echoes his thoughts: 'these tiny precisions [of language], these niceties, are the atoms that constitute Jane Austen's universe.' "

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AND FROM THE SOUTHWEST NEWSLETTER, of Southern California (Winter 1996):

"Laura Jacobs of Vanity Fair compares Persuasion and Sense and Sensibility favorable to previous productions, noting their almost startling naturalism. 'In filming Sense and Sensibility, Ang Lee was keen to avoid the curse of cozy. Lee's vision of Austen's England is pictorially opulent, symphonic in scale, yet powerfully raw and unprotected. [He] lets the colors of the Devon countryside dominate, and they come on aggressively, in sheets of blue gray, gray green, spanking white. Salt mist gathers into thunderheads and hearts. Gritty shadows - inspired by the Dutch-master paintings Lee saw in English manor houses - hang in the camera frame's corners, watching for ruin.' Roads are muddy, rooms are dim, children's necks must be scrubbed..." (Erika Kotite).

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GIVE ME SHAKESPEARE BEFORE THE NET - Leonard Batterink (Vancouver SUN, May 31, 1996)

For the last while, I've been trying to get excited about the Internet. Everyone is saying, "Thou shalt sign on". They tell me I can surf the Net, shop on it, talk to the world on it, that it's home for a New Cyberspace Community. If I don't get on line, I'll be isolated and stupid.

For now I'm still isolated. The Net has a certain bells-and-whistles appeal, but not enough to make me sign on. I have no business or professional need for it - going on line won't make me rich - so it would be only a hobby, for the improvement of my mind. And I wonder how much improving it will do.

It might be true that the Net provides almost limitless information. But that's exactly the problem. There's only so much time, so my information flow has to be limited. And the best is available somewhere else - in my favorite books.

Why should I give up Shakespeare to surf the Net? Hamlet, Lear, Falstaff - they have so much to teach. Why should I ignore The Canterbury Tales? For years I've wanted to find out what makes the wife of Bath so interesting. War and Peace, Crime and Punishment, Pride and Prejudice - they all wait on the shelf. The Bible needs repeated readings and, in a changing Canada, the Koran and the Upanishads should have a close look. I grew up in the Christian tradition, and I'm still committed to it, but it's time to learn from this country's other religions, too.

There are grim stories about an Internet filled with right-wing cranks, pornographers and other crazies, but they haven't scared me off. I'm grownup enough to avoid their junk. I just don't want to miss those good books.

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CONTINUATIONS AND COMPLETIONS - Mary Atkins.

[Following the May meeting, when we discussed articles from the recent Persuasions, Mary Atkins prepared her own list of some of the novels based on characters from Jane Austen's works. Some of these will be easy to find in your library]:

Aiken, Joan	Eliza's Daughter	S&S
	Mansfield Revisited	MP
	Jane Fairfax	E
Anon	Gambles & Gambols	All
Austen-Leigh. Joan	Mrs. Goddard, Mistress of a School	E
	A Visit to Highbury	E
Barrett, Julia	Presumption	P&P
Beckford, Grania	Virtues & Vices	P
Brinton, Sybil	Old Friends & New Fancies	P&P, MP
Brown, Frances	Susan Price, or Resolution	MP
Fenton, Kate	Lions and Liquorice	P&P
Gillespie, Jane	Truth and Rumour	E
	Deborah	P&P
	Sir Willie	P
	Uninvited Guests	NA
	Ladysmead	MP
	Teverton Hall	P&P
	Brightsea	S&S
	Aunt Celia	E
Gordon, Victor	Mrs. Rushworth	MP
Hill, Reginald	Picture of Perfection	
Hopkinson, David	The Watsons	W
Karr, Phyllis Ann	Lady Susan	LS
Lefroy, Anna Austen	Jane Austen's Sanditon	S
Menzies, June	His Cunning or Hers?	P
Porter, Margaret	Sweet Lavender	
Terry, Judith	Miss Abigail's Part (US: Version & Diversion)	MP
White, T.H.	Darkness at Pemberley	P&P

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MYSTERIES: Jane Austen and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor - Stephanie Barron.

Can you believe everything you read? Referring to this first of a projected series of several mystery stories, the publisher's blurb reports it "marvelously recreates Jane Austen's world, and puts her celebrated powers of observation to the ultimate test: the unraveling of dastardly crimes." A review calls it "a robust tale of manners and mayhem that faithfully reproduces the Austen style."

Let us know if you try it.

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LIGHT AND BRIGHT AND SPARKLING

René Goldman has pointed out that in the Polish language jasna is the feminine form of the adjective jasny, which means "clear" or "bright".

For example: jasny dzień = a clear day
pogoda jest jasna = the weather is clear, sunny.

May we all live up to our Polish name!

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JANE AUSTEN'S NEXT NOVEL, AFTER "SANDITON" - PERHAPS.

After her brother Henry's bankruptcy, and her own negotiations with respect to the publication and marketing of her novels, Jane Austen may have become more interested in day-to-day financial matters. Certainly, Sanditon seems to be taking a new direction into the business world. If she had lived to write for many more years, perhaps she might have done more along those lines.

MY Mississippi grandmother believed that all life revolved round love and money: 'The rest is just conversation.' That was Jane Austen's opinion, too. All of her finest first paragraphs, indeed her first lines, include money. Like the opening blast of *Emma*: 'Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever and rich.' I love the frankness about how much everyone is worth, and more important, their annual income.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy tops the money chart with his income of £10,000 a year. His friend Bingley has inherited 'nearly an hundred thousand pounds' which produces an income of £4,000 to £5,000. Each of the Bingley sisters has a fortune of £20,000 —or five times the sum that Mrs Bennet brought to her marriage. Mr Bennet's income is £2,000 a year, a fifth of Darcy's, less than half of Bingley's and, considerably more than Miss Austen's family, who managed on just £600 a year.

Then there is land ownership. Elizabeth ponders 'how many people's happiness were in his guardianship' as she tours Pemberley. Mr Bingley's money comes from the North—industry and commerce—and his sisters long for him to purchase an estate because only land ownership, that verdant sign of old money, can put them into the more agreeable shade of aristocracy.

But economically alert as she was, Miss Austen never created a character who was a Name in Lloyd's of London. She well might have. I know from the Wedgwood ashtray sent to us in 1988 on their tercentenary that Lloyd's was nearly a century old when Miss Austen was writing her novels. How I wish she had written about, say, a widow whose husband dies in the Napoleonic Wars, leaving her a house but no income. A dashing young underwriter persuades her to become a member of Lloyd's and, before you can say sense and stupidity, all is lost.

When I first read Jane Austen, I had a picture of the English as a people candid and clear about the importance of money. Now I understand that financial openness is largely a feminine English quality.

I know five farmers within a 10-mile radius of us who have now received their 'finality', the supposedly final lifeboat from Lloyd's that will help Names get their affairs in order. Not one of them—we had dinner with two last week—would dream of discussing it. My husband is one of those Englishmen who never discuss money and think it is unacceptable to grumble. Lloyd's most remarkable achievement is to convince so many Names that it is they who are personally either stupid or greedy. Names still don't seem to understand that some of the people they were dealing with were crooks who, were they living in America, would now be in jail. My husband's wife is from the old school—let's just call it the Jane Austen school—where money is serious business. Southern manners spare him my buckin' and snortin' at a dinner party, but here, in the more Austenian pages of COUNTRY LIFE, I can defend all those tongue-tied English farmers hit by the shenanigans at Lloyd's.

I don't believe that accepting this latest offer is good for the Names or good for the future of Lloyd's. If they really want a happy ending, Lloyd's must follow Miss Austen's example and provide a true finality in which a line is ineradicably drawn with the past. It's the Names who occupy the moral high ground.

Meanwhile, I dream of the day when I can say 'halleluja, free at last'. When I can wake up to Radio 4's *Today* programme and listen to hurricanes, oil spills, plane crashes, bombs and fatal diseases, and feel the joy of pure heartbreak, untainted by grim and guilty thoughts such as 'Oh Lord, does this affect Lloyd's?' I want what Jane Austen might have called 'difficult, ordinary unhappiness'.

"The Spectator", by
Carla Carlisle,
Country Life,
April 25, 1996.

[Ed. Note: A "Name" invested money in Lloyd's, but not as a regular shareholder. In the past, when Lloyd's was making lots of money, being a "Name" was like having a money tree. But lately Lloyd's has done poorly, and the Names are being called upon for more and more money - and must provide it: people are losing their estates, being ruined, and seemingly have no recourse, although attempts are being made to come to an agreement.]

TEDIUM - MONOTONY - VACUITY - MALAISE - SATIETY - APATHY - LASSITUDE - DULLNESS

I have read the Corsair, mended my petticoat, & have nothing else to do. (Mar.5,1814)

The word "boredom" was unknown to Jane Austen - it only came into the English language in the mid-19th century. Both Dickens and George Eliot made use of the new word and new concept. The verb "to bore someone" was earlier: its first occurrence in English was "after 1750" (etymology unknown): it did not occur in Johnson's Dictionary of 1755. Jane Austen used it several times: Mary Crawford was bored by touring Sotherton; Tom did not want to "bore" Sir Thomas by talking about the theatricals; Emma hoped she would never bore people about her young relations the way Miss Bates spoke so constantly of Jane Fairfax; and Elizabeth Elliot felt that Lady Russell bored people about "her new publications".

Byron also used the relatively new words in Don Juan (1823):

Society is now one polish'd horde,
Form'd of two mighty tribes, the Bores and Bored.

Boredom is distinguished from two similar word/concepts: it is "a trivial emotion that can trivialize the world...an embracing sense of irritation and unease". Ennui is more important - it is "a state of the soul defying remedy, an existential perception of life's futility". Accidie (torpor or apathy) was considered a sin: "the moral and theological danger of insufficient engagement with life's obligations and possibilities."

What was life like, when the concept of boredom was not required? And what social conditions made the concept necessary? In the Middle Ages, people accepted a personal responsibility: this "unreasonable confusion of mind" was considered a form of self-indulgence, and should be rigorously struggled against. The decline of orthodox Christianity, with its belief in strong faith and good works to occupy mind and body, and the increased industrialization of England resulted in more leisure time. By the 18th century, notions of satiety, weariness, chagrin - the "inability to enjoy leisure" - were considered a reflection of an internal inadequacy - one was to be pitied rather than abused. Later, it was believed that such unpleasant states of mind were the result of outside influences, and would dissolve with adequate stimulation. Later still, increasing concern with individual rights led to an increased sense of personal entitlement: people have a right not to be bored, and society's obligations include the prevention of boredom.

Many novelists have been attracted by the concept of boredom, both as a passive condition of mind, and as an incentive to action. Patricia Meyer Spacks (Boredom: A Literary History of a State of Mind, 1995) discusses writers' uses of the concept, and how it helps us to understand the world.

If you are feeling bored this summer, read Boredom, (VPL 820.9 S732b).

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LOVERS

"In our discussion, we discovered an important quality in Austen's Lovers/Heroes: the true lovers, like Brandon, often tend to stand back and watch quietly from afar, while the false lovers (Willoughby and Frank Churchill, for example) tend to hang about and chatter incessantly." - From the JASNA Puget Sound The Times, May, 1996.

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