



Temporal, Spatial, and  
Linguistic Configurations  
and the Geopolitics  
of *Emma*

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IN *Emma*, THE SCENE IN WHICH MR. KNIGHTLEY quarrels with Emma for encouraging Harriet to reject Mr. Martin's proposal seethes with a tension that is the more palpable because Austen times and locates the encounter between the two principal characters with scrupulous care. Harriet has just left Hartfield for an "hour or two"; Mr. Knightley arrives for his customary chat; Mr. Woodhouse leaves for his morning stroll. Emma and Mr. Knightley are left alone together in an enclosed space, most likely the drawing-room or parlor. As their conversation gets underway, and Emma's intrigue gradually unfolds, Mr. Knightley grows disappointed and angry, Emma, irritated and defensive. The atmosphere in the room bristles with conflict.

In adapting the novel for the Hollywood screen, scriptwriter and director Douglas McGrath rewrites this confrontation as an archery contest in the open landscape. His film has the characters face outward, away from each other, shooting badly aimed arrows at an alien target. McGrath's adaptation disables here a primary Austenian device, one that organizes the novel's plot and with which the text makes its most strident and far-reaching social and political commentary. The scriptwriter's archery match disjoins

Austen's skillful interweave of spatial, temporal, and linguistic figurations in *Emma*; hence, the film underrates the power of this intertexture and its deployment in her work.

I do not mean to suggest that film can or should transcribe literary texts—each medium demands its appropriate narrative lens and, besides, film adaptations are, themselves, interpretations of the works they read. I am struck, however, by the extent to which the changes that McGrath brings to the text graphically underscore the significance of the spatial, temporal, and linguistic choices that Austen makes in crafting it and, indeed, in plotting *Emma*. Through strategic use of space, time, and language in this novel, Austen interrelates a sense of the individual, the local, and the imperial to critique English society and outline the social and political complexity of British imperialist culture at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Austen's original scenario has Mr. Knightley engage Emma in face-to-face barbed interchange within a confined space: Mr. Knightley "sitting just opposite to her in angry state," Emma "feeling uncomfortable and wanting him very much to be gone" (65). In the "very disagreeable" closeness of the room the reader can almost see how Emma squirms under his penetrating gaze and how he grows frustrated under Emma's gaze. And though Mr. Knightley finally walks off in a state of vexation, leaving Emma unsettled, and though her discomfort is short-lived, soon to be relieved by Harriet's return, the reader knows that he will eventually return. He cannot go farther than his seat, the Donwell Abbey estate in which Hartfield is "a sort of notch . . . [and] to which all the rest of Highbury belongs" (136). In one form or another the "scene" will repeat itself. Indeed, situating Mr. Elton's very "disagreeable" proposal to Emma in a closed, moving carriage traveling between their destinations within Highbury, Austen refigures in order to intensify this sense of closeness and bounds. A few pages later Emma will reflect on the inescapable situation: that "Their being fixed, so absolutely fixed, in the same place, was bad for each . . . of them" (143).

Highbury is an insular, insulated space whose principal inhabitants, especially those privileged by social status, always seem to be facing one another in a kind of cramped familiarity, be

it in vexation or gaiety, at charades or whist, in the open air of Donwell or Boxhill or in the ballroom at the Crown. Viewed in this light, there is really no *outside* in the Highbury social schema. Mr. Knightley's disagreement with Emma is really about where in the architecture of things Harriet fits. And his disappointment in her treatment of Miss Bates at Boxhill, as William Galperin notes, is based on what he deems her "responsibility as a member of her class": "The stratification which [he] regards as proper and natural is reflected almost less in his appeal to Emma than in his sympathy for Miss Bates whose peculiar abjection (and importance) owes entirely to the fact that she is one of them" (73). Even the poor wretches to whom Emma gives alms are by their very dependence drawn within the regulatory orbit of Highbury's social arena.

At the center of this space and symbolizing its insularity is the willful invalid, Mr. Woodhouse, who to his drawing-room in Hartfield "could command the visits of his own little circle, . . . [and therefore] had no intercourse with any families beyond that circle" (20). In this regard *Emma* differs from *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Mansfield Park*; in these novels the heroines take us with them "on the road," so to speak, beyond the boundaries of their own physical and psychic habitations. Commenting on the importance of "sense of place" in Austen's work, Mary Lascelles cites the disparity in atmosphere between the Bertram mansion, Mansfield Park, and Fanny's Portsmouth home as an example of the contrast Austen uses to portray "diversity of moral climates." In *Emma*, Lascelles asserts, "the air of Highbury is so dense that Jane Austen seems to have felt no contrast of climate was needed to enhance its rich effect" (179). Thus, Lascelles continues, "when Highbury takes visible shape we understand why there is no need for Emma to leave it; where definition is so sharp and scale so exactly kept the contrasts which it offers within itself are sufficient" (179-80).

The density of Highbury atmosphere owes much to the inroads of Maple Grove; the boundary between the two "climates" is never "exactly kept." The proximity of outsiders, Mr. Elton and Frank Churchill, throws Mr. Martin and his farm most conspicuously into relief while their actions often blur the conventional

marks of social distinction. Perhaps in *Emma* Austen is concerned less with depicting than with critiquing the contrast of moral climate, in which case, the reader, discontented with the “confines” of Highbury and unintimidated by the impingement of Maple Grove, is an audience to whom the novelist appeals. If, as Juliet McMaster contends, characters, and, I add, spaces, in *Emma* send signals bearing at once overt and covert meanings (131), then the resultant mosaic is surely Austen’s. Through multiplex signification Austen brings under scrutiny the sharpness of definition, precision of scale, and density of atmosphere that, in Lascelles’s view, secure and celebrate Highbury’s independence and insularity.

Austen conveys a sense of detached spatial containment by making strategic use of what Bakhtin, writing of *Madam Bovary*, calls “cyclical everyday time”:

Here there are no events, only “doings” that constantly repeat themselves. Time here has no advancing historical movement; it moves rather in narrow circles, the circle of the day, of the week, of the month, of a person’s entire life. . . . Day in day out the same round of activities are repeated, the same types of conversation, the same words, and so forth. In this type of time, people eat, drink, sleep, have wives . . . involve themselves in petty intrigues . . . play cards, gossip. (248)

Bakhtin’s description could have been written just as relevantly of Highbury:

Much could not be hoped from the traffic of even the busiest part. . . . Mr. Perry walking hastily by, Mr. William Cox letting himself in at the office door, Mr. Cole’s carriage horses returning from exercise, or a stray letter-boy on an obstinate mule, were the liveliest objects [Emma] could presume to expect; and when her eyes fell only on the butcher with his tray, a tidy old woman traveling homewards from shop with her full basket, two curs quarrelling over a dirty bone, and a string of dawdling children round the baker’s little bow-window eyeing the gingerbread, she knew she had no reason to complain, and was amused enough; quite enough still to stand at the door. A mind lively

and at ease, can do with seeing nothing, and can see nothing that does not answer. (233)

One gets the impression that on any other day, at the same time, in the same place Emma would witness the same doings. As Patricia Spacks points out, the liberation of “mind lively and at ease” is the product of Emma’s self-congratulatory musings that undercut their own conviction because they recall Mrs. Elton’s bragging “resources.” In addition, Emma “goes to work on [the] limited raw material” available; she not only gets “into trouble,” she fabricates rumors that create false perspectives and distress others (166). To “do with seeing nothing” and “see nothing that does not answer,” Emma casts a “proprietary gaze” that must “carefully screen out other considerations” (Parker 357). Still, this self-satisfied apperception is in tune with, and exemplary of, a certain Highbury localism that the text cultivates.

While intensifying this sense of Highbury insularity, Austen heightens underlying tensions by interspersing everyday cyclical time with, to borrow another of Bakhtin’s terms, “noncyclical time,” that is, “temporal sequences . . . that are more charged with energy and event” (248). In *Emma* such sequences include Frank Churchill’s visits, Mrs. Elton’s incursion from Bristol and Maple Grove, and Jane Fairfax’s extended visit from London. While on the one hand these characters and their locations provide an added source for speculation and gossip, they also disturb Highbury’s routine by drawing new boundaries and frustrating old ones. These temporal sequences are Austen’s means for expanding Highbury’s geographical and psychic space, and for introducing and weaving “historical and sociopublic events” into the finely tiered biographical surfaces of Highbury life. Through this strategy, the novelist deepens the text’s discourse. Places and characters that are not part of the story crowd the pages of the narrative. Mrs. Churchill and Enscombe, the Hawkinses and Bristol, the Sucklings and Maple Grove, the Campbells and London, the Dixons and Ireland—all are agents of crises, delays, meetings, partings, releases, disappointments. In their very absence these characters and sites implant Highbury with a subtle but inescapably unsettling presence.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Mansfield*

*Park* Austen sends us exploring with her heroines, but in *Emma* she maroons us in Highbury and, through the agency of visitors and newcomers, transports other localities to challenge Highbury's borders. Consequently, Austen asks her readers to look through the facade of the very insularity that she has so carefully fashioned and beyond the apparent "rich, unbroken continuity, . . . uncluttered awareness, routine contentment, cooperation and harmony" that Julia Prewitt Brown believes distinguishes the community and *Emma* (104).

Perhaps the most telling means by which Austen makes her point is through Mrs. Elton, whose family history is pointedly drawn in Volume 1 of the novel:

Miss Hawkins was the youngest of the two daughters of a Bristol—merchant, of course, he must be called; but, as the whole of the profits of his mercantile life appeared so very moderate, it was not unfair to guess the dignity of his line of trade has been very moderate also. Part of every winter she had been used to spend in Bath; but Bristol was her home, the very heart of Bristol. . . . And all the grandeur of the connection seemed dependent on the elder sister, who was *very well married* to a gentleman in a *great way*, near Bristol, who kept two carriages! (183)

The emphasis is unmistakable. Mrs. Elton is meant to be seen as originating not just from Bristol, but from the very heart or center of the place. She signifies the pulse of this locale whose business is trade. The passage calls the "dignity of the line" of her father's trade into question; at the same time it insinuates that the daughter's inheritance of ten thousand pounds belies the "moderate" profits that this moderate trade is supposed to have afforded. His business as a merchant, Mary Deforest concludes, "must be set to another 'line of trade' whose dignity was moderate but whose profits were not" (11).

English history attests to the fact that Bristol was a principal slave-trading market in the early 1800's. From Bristol, London, and Liverpool ships set out on a triangular voyage, carrying manufactured goods to Africa to trade for slaves, slaves to the West Indies to sell for sugar, and sugar to England on the return jour-

ney. As Deforest also points out, Mrs. Elton's family name, Hawkins, recalls John Hawkins, the sixteenth-century explorer who introduced the slave trade to Britain (11). For a careful artist like Austen such an allusion can be no mere coincidence.

Austen reinforces the connection between Mrs. Elton and slavery in a curiously coded exchange between the latter and Jane Fairfax. In an attempt to rebuff Mrs. Elton's unsolicited, unwanted exertions to secure her a position as governess, Jane asserts: "There are places in town, offices, where inquiry would soon produce something—Offices for the sale—not quite of human flesh—but of human intellect" (300). Mrs. Elton's immediate attention focuses not on "the sale of human intellect" in which her persistence in placing Jane involves them both; rather, she selectively and defensively replies: "Oh my dear, human flesh! You quite shock me; if you mean a fling at the slave-trade, I assure you Mr. Suckling was always rather a friend to the abolition" (300).

Jane's response, also defensively couched, problematizes the issue further:

"I did not mean, I was not thinking of the slave-trade," replied Jane, "governess-trade, I assure you, was all that I had in view; widely different certainly as to the guilt of those who carry it on; but as to the greater misery of the victims, I do not know where it lies. But I only mean to say that there are advertising offices, and that by applying to them I should have no doubt of very soon meeting with something that would do."  
(300-1)

Her explanation, while calling attention to the social and cultural guilt associated with economic exploitation of one group of human beings by another, hysterically conflates the effect and consequences of the slave trade with those of the occupation of governess. Somewhere in the difference between what Jane says and what she "did not mean," what she "was not thinking of," Austen states her authorial case.

From the 1770's to 1807, the year of official abolition of the slave trade, to 1833 when the institution of slavery was legally abolished in the British West Indies, conflict between abolitionists and supporters of British slave economy—particularly the mer-

chants and politically powerful West Indian plantation owners—excited heated debates. Numerous writers including Cowper, whom Austen quotes in *Emma*, wrote fervid antislavery protests; these usually focused on the physical horrors of the slave's existence. Austen also had read Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* which details, among "the various modes of . . . torture" it catalogues, "the whip—the chain—the iron collar" (116). Therefore, Jane's equating the "misery of the victims" of slavery with that of governess reads ironically.

In contriving tension between what Jane says and what she "did not mean," what "she was not thinking of," the author parenthesizes Jane's uncharacteristically confused, emotional outburst with a sense of distortion that, by implication, undercuts the argument of defenders of the trade who maintained, as Judith Terry points out, that the slave's "lot" compared "favorably with that of the English laborer" (100-1).<sup>1</sup> Echoes of Cowper's "Negro's Complaint" in Jane's reference to the sale of human intellect deals another deflating stroke to her analogy. In Cowper's poem, the speaker, a slave, lauds as a means of resistance the very faculty that Jane sees as the potential agency of her subjection. He asserts that though "men from Europe bought and sold" his flesh with "paltry gold" and have christened him "slave," he is "in thought as free as ever"; he exults: "Minds are never to be sold" (Vol. 11, 80-82).

In addition, Mr. Suckling's impromptu appearance in the exchange between the two women raises questions. Why do Mrs. Elton's solicitations cause Jane to think of commerce in human bodies? Why does Mrs. Elton find it necessary to defend not her own moral stance but Mr. Suckling's position regarding slavery? He is not part of the novel's diegesis. We are informed, however, that he has resided at Maple Grove for a mere eleven years; that his father *may* have "completed the purchase" of the property "before his death" (310, emphasis mine). The property, "retired from the road" and "shut out from every thing," is situated "in the most complete retirement," having "such an immense *plantation* all round it" (307, emphasis mine). Austen's richly allusive language, her framing and manipulation of temporal and social markers, engages the reader in a critical discourse that transcends the narrow boundaries of Highbury and its everyday cyclical time.

The novel critiques early nineteenth-century contemporary society in a much broader context and with a complexity that Austen characteristically achieves through subtly coded symbology.

When Emma is offended by Mr. Elton's social transgression, his proposal to her, she justifies her position by ranking Highbury estates. Hartfield places second in importance and degree only to Donwell Abbey. The landed property of Hartfield, she reflects, "was inconsiderable . . . but [the Woodhouse's] fortune from *other sources* was such as to make them scarcely secondary to Donwell Abbey itself in every other kind of consequence" (136, emphasis mine). Austen never reveals the "other sources" that swell Emma's fortune and fortify her social position. This silence teases me into asking whether the genteel retirement of Hartfield could have anything in common with the plantation that girds and sustains the bourgeois enclosure of Maple Grove. The same question may be posed about Enscombe: "A retired place. A fine place but very retired" (307). In echoing the "retreat" of Maple Grove, Enscombe too may be implicated in the latter's blurry geographic and economic borderlines.

Notwithstanding—or perhaps because of—her "self-important, presuming, familiar, ignorant, and ill-bred eye" (281), the insurgency of Mrs. Elton's insubordinate gaze is an important facet of the text's sociopolitical probe. To discount her leveling vision as vulgar, thereby false, as critics are wont to do, is to create a false connection between what is termed "good manners" and ethics. This conflation oversimplifies the novel's discourse. Mrs. Elton's determination to discover similarities between Hartfield and Maple Grove deals a subversive Austenian stroke to Emma's confident claims to inborn superiority. "Whenever you are *transplanted*, like me," Mrs. Elton tells her, "you will understand how very delightful it is to meet with any thing at all like what one has left behind" (273, emphasis mine). In Hartfield Mrs. Elton finds something "Very like Maple Grove indeed!" (272). Through this fluid, and, at the same time, tension-fraught collapse of ostensible differences—also evident in Emma's potential for Eltonic "resources"—Austen suggests that spatial and social differentiation is not necessarily synonymous with ethical or moral contradistinction.

In *Emma* Austen seeks to understand the consequences of change not only for her class but for the entire traditional socio-economic structure, and temporal and spatial configurations provide her with a most effective instrument. At Donwell Abbey, for instance, as the picnickers take leave of Mrs. Elton's Maple-Grovian overview of "every thing"—Bristol, Abbey Mill Farm, strawberries as well as "first circles, spheres, lines, ranks" (359)—the group's walk leads away to "a sweet view—sweet to the eye and mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive" (360). Central to this tableau is "an odd tête-à-tête": Mr. Knightley and Harriet "quietly leading the way" (360). Austen's wide and complex social canvas takes cognizance of the historical changes of the modern economic age. English verdure, culture, and comfort at the turn of the nineteenth-century embrace a variety of spaces: Donwell Abbey, Enscombe, London, Bristol, Maple Grove, overseas colonial West Indian plantations, paths that may bring the gentry and the nobodies together in the lead, and moments when "the *constitution*" of an upwardly mobile Weston may "prevail so decidedly against the *habits* of the Churchills" (198, emphasis mine).

Notably, Frank Churchill, product of a Weston/Churchill union, provides Austen with a kind of microtome for furthering her dissection of social stratification and its ideological assumptions. According to the narrator, Frank Churchill's "indifference to a confusion of rank, bordered too much on inelegance of mind" (198). This inelegance coupled with his French "characterization," in McAleer's view, signals Austen's "quiet repudiation of the social dogma of Jacobin insurgence" (75). However, Frank's behavior suggests other implications as well; his riotous discourse outstrips the limits of "quiet" circumscription. Despite his "Frenchified" manners, he is English and, like Jane, is biologically part of the Highbury community. That Austen links them secretly and romantically, that this secret prods his long-awaited visit from Enscombe and Jane's extended visit from London, that Austen brings them to Highbury at the same time and ejects them at the end of the novel—all these factors carry symbolic import.

The carnivalesque ball that only Frank, insider/outsider, could organize inside Highbury aptly begins by democratizing the

notion of “houses”; “He could not be persuaded that *so many good-looking houses* as he saw around him”—one of which would have belonged to the Coles, people of “low origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel” (207)—could not provide “numbers enough” of “proper families” for an evening’s entertainment (198, emphasis mine). Whereas Emma’s understanding of “proper families” has dynastic implications, Frank’s understanding refers to dwellers. The ball that he arranges is but the overt manifestation of the covert carnival through which he, with Jane’s collusion, conducts Highbury’s inhabitants. Mr. Knightley’s pairing with Harriet, dictated by his responsibility as a member of his class, and thus as a model of proper conduct, challenges traditional social grids inasmuch as Emma’s imaginist matchmaking unwittingly threatens the very socioeconomic codes that she values.

Concomitantly, the novel’s conventional ending with its predictable ranking of couples and placement of everybody in his/her “proper” space, does not undo the “dance” of possibilities—mostly “revolutionary”—through which the text leads its readers. This “dance” infuses *Emma* indelibly with that “admixture . . . of skepticism and optimism that properly informs irony,” as Galperin defines it (59). “The notion of propriety, of what is right and natural, bridles ironically against arbitrary, authoritarian and naturalized notions of propriety (with their additional echo of property) . . .” (69).

Writing of the resolution, Mark Parker states that in exposing “the signifying structure of class oppositions” in the final chapter, Austen demonstrates a keen awareness of what has been identified by critics as “the political unconscious.” It is this awareness, he believes, that enables her to produce a work that critically examines class relations while supporting “the interests of her own class” (358). The resolution also lays bare its own artifice and reflects unendingly on itself; in exploiting social, economic, and aesthetic conventions, the ending of *Emma* critiques the social, political, and aesthetic economy of convention.

Austen’s spatial, temporal, and linguistic contrivance in *Emma* also directs her sociopolitical probe in another direction, and to another level, through her treatment of Jane Fairfax’s relation to the absent Dixons and Ireland. What the author accom-

plishes through Mrs. Elton's origins and prolixity, and Frank's spatial and linguistic duality, she reconstitutes to other ends in Jane's situation and reticence. According to Galperin, "virtually every effort to reach beyond Highbury to the world of Frank and Jane is met with a countermovement . . . that returns us to Highbury and ourselves" (70). Still, in being returned to Highbury we are also returned to Frank and Jane who are inseparably part of the locality; and in returning us to them and to Highbury, the "countermovement" simultaneously brings us to face again the other locales that they border. Thus, in addition to the Highbury/Enscombe, Highbury/Maple Grove junctions, Austen also moves her reader towards another intersection: Highbury/London/Ireland.

Ireland, where the Dixons reside, is also the place where Jane does not go. Weymouth, the "charming Mr. Dixon, and the not going to Ireland" (160) pique Emma's interest, but about these subjects, Jane, Emma thinks, "is disgustingly . . . suspiciously reserved" (169). The reader shares Emma's curiosity about the "doings" in the Fairfax/Dixon/Campbell quarter. But Jane's reticence is also Austen's inasmuch as Mrs. Elton's volubility is the author's—both serve her aesthetic and sociopolitical purposes. In seaming the Highbury/London/Ireland border, Austen draws our attention to the underlying fissure; she refracts attention, thereby, to the passing of historical time and those sociopolitical events that, again, address English geopolitics. Austen notes with a certain exactitude the distance between Enscombe and London (190 miles), Maple Grove and London (125 miles), and Highbury, we gather, is half-a-day's ride from the cultural, political, and economic center. Yet, in referring to Ireland, Miss Bates must recollect and index whether this geographical space is a different kingdom or a different country (159). This difference is a significant register in her conversation as she attempts to intuit the spatial and emotional distance between the Campbells and their daughter. By implication this register also accents the spatial as well as ideological distance between London and Balycraig and, coactively, between London and Dublin.

In a letter to her niece dated 10 August 1814, Austen advises Anna, the aspiring young writer whose manuscript she had just

read: “you had better not leave England. Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the Manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations.” Even if one assumes that Austen takes her own advice in not accompanying the Dixons and Campbells to Dublin and Balycraig, Miss Bates’s lucid and discriminating pause in what is, otherwise, her customary breathless rush of jumbled ideas and incomplete sentences, must give the reader pause as well. As Juliet McMaster notes, the characters in *Emma* indulge in “multi-layered discourse” (100) and even Miss Bates’s endless prattle bears veiled significance (119). In this case, however, Miss Bates’s chatter exposes not secret *doings* but political soundings. Her momentary need to determine the status of Ireland’s geographical and political borders recalls recent historical *events*: the union debates and the 1801 inauguration of the United Kingdom.

Supporters of the union had assumed that it would make a “great contribution to the imperial strategy,” for resources could be mobilized more effectively and the ensuing economic and cultural “assimilation” would transform “Ireland from a dissension-riven economically retarded country into a prosperous and happy portion of the United Kingdom.” Anti-unionists, meanwhile, stressed what they viewed as a geographical imperative: Ireland was plainly a separate state from England and had a right to its own government, “distinct, national, resident” (McDowell 687-88). As it turned out, the union changed nothing; the Irish situation remained critical.

Miss Bates’s qualifying remark invokes this sociopolitical problem but offers no clue to the author’s position on the issue. However, in a letter dated 3 July 1813, Austen tells her brother Francis that “Our Cousins Colonel Thos Austen and Margaretta are going Aid-de-camps to Ireland and Lord Whitworth goes in their Train as Lord Lieutenant;—good appointments for each.” The congratulatory tenor of “good appointments” seems to suggest Austen’s endorsement, or, at the very least, uncritical acceptance of English military presence in Ireland and, therefore, of the legislative and administrative hegemony of London.

Such endorsement is hardly surprising. The centralization of government in London, seat of British imperial parliament, and

the suppression of Irish resistance in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were, in large measure, Britain's response to French threat to its borders. What critics have called Austen's Francophobia aligns her with dominant English political sentiment. According to Roberts, the novelist's "Francophobia was completely at one with her Toryism"; her conservative ideology was influenced by her anti-French sentiment and can be read as counterpoise to the "subversive forces" threatening English life and borders (42).

Through a complex of temporal, spatial, and linguistic configurations, Austen's *Emma* comments on contemporary issues: the slave trade, slavery, class sensibilities, the Irish question, and, by extension, British geopolitics. This finding confirms Roberts's contention that Jane Austen was neither an imperceptive nor uninformed member of her class, the English gentry. Roberts rejects both the critical school that views the novelist as "hostile to her class" and the one that sees her as a "pillar of the Establishment and even a reactionary"; he describes Austen as a writer stirred "by the historical impulses" of her milieu, a writer who sought to understand change and the ways it affected her society (8). In signifying the historical impulses of the age, *Emma* has something in common with *Mansfield Park*. Edward Said finds that the "rich texture," "aesthetic intellectual complexity," and "geographical problematic" of *Mansfield Park* requires "longer and slower analysis" by the reader; unlike lesser works, which bear their "historical affiliations . . . plainly," *Mansfield Park* "encodes experiences and does not simply repeat them" (96-7). Austen's encoding of experience in *Emma* draws the reader's attention beyond the borders of English provincial life to the geographical and sociopolitical problematics of British imperialist culture.

NOTE

1. I wish to thank Mark Turner for sending me Judith Terry's article.

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