

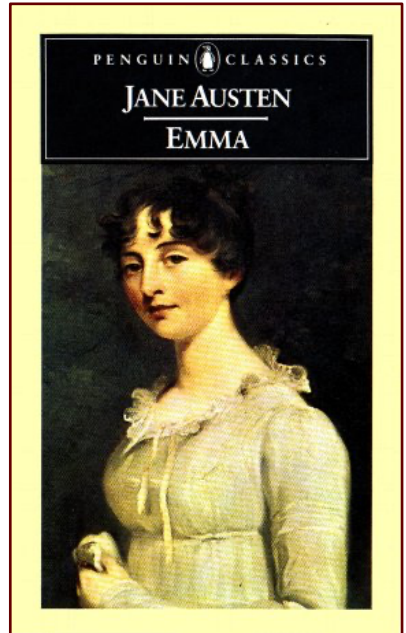
## JANE AUSTEN, HER WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS, AND SHAKESPEAREAN AUTHORSHIP

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(Chapter numbers refer to the total number, not numbers within each volume. Paginations are too different from edition to edition to be useful.)

### Summary

The claim: A century before Looney, in *Emma*, Jane Austen already understood the parameters and significance of the Shakespeare Authorship Question, with the identity of Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford as author. She offers an interim report to history, obliquely and allegorically, with plausible deniability. But the circumstantial textual evidence is considerable. I had long been writing about her as a realist author when Costa Chard encouraged me to explore her reference to ‘some famous ox’ near the end of the novel (Ch. 54). With amazement, I found three major trails of clues: one (Ch. 47) leading via Emma to the Touchstone passages of *As You Like It*; one (Ch. 42) leading to an entire layer of Spenserian and Arthurian allegory with a reference to the First Folio; and one (Ch. 19) leading, via Jane Fairfax, to the allusion to ‘Fairfax and the starry Vere’ in Marvell’s *Upon Appleton House*, later also used by Melville. An entire dumbing down of English civilisation, and a loss of the magical and archetypal with the enthronement of a bourgeois author, comes into view behind these trails.



## Overture

I believe Jane Austen, by 1814, understood the complete essence of the Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ), including the authorship of de Vere, and sought to explore and indicate it indirectly, through allegory and allusion. She sought a kind of restoration of Elizabethan values, including Shakespeare's High Tory vision. At the same time, for reasons to which we shall come, she did not want to bring her sense of a fraudulent narrative into view blatantly but to maintain what we today would call 'plausible deniability'. It therefore becomes a subtle invocation of the allegorical background to the realistic novel named *Emma*. With this, the whole situation of the *historicity* implicit in Jane Austen – the total communication about the state and mood of England at the given time – also gradually awakens.

In the background of this essay lies my original presentation to The de Vere Society,<sup>1</sup> which articulated the connection with the Touchstone passages of *As You Like It*: I shall summarise this now, with some additions concerning how she herself might have supplemented her understanding. I am not saying this *is* how she did, but as the kind of thing she might have spotted as an extremely precise textualist. Most of this paper is about confirmatory correlations on which she draws but I shall sketch here one pathway she may have followed, supposing it was not something she had already picked up in the traditional oral culture.

There is a pathway of allusions to *As You Like It* and the Touchstone passages, culminating in the 'I am Ipse' moment (Ch. 47). There is the direct allusion, discovered by Arnie Perlstein,<sup>2</sup> along with the one to 'I see Jane every day', to '... as you like. It...' in the Donwell chapter (Ch. 42). Then there is in *Emma* a pathway of allusions to 'Touchstone': a direct one in Ch. 26, one to the contrast, alluding to Marlowe's death ('infinite riches', 'a great reckoning'), to 'little room' ('a crowd in a little room', and Emma's Shakespearean phrase reinforced by Frank Churchill) in Ch. 29. In Emma's epiphany (Ch. 47), the phrase 'that Mr Knightley must marry no one but herself' alludes to both 'I am Ipse' and the 'must marry', which cannot be coincidental given the weight of the pathway to the Touchstone passages in *As You Like It*: 'Why sir, he that must marry this woman.' And it is reinforced by a *double* reference to Cupid and married love, 'It darted through her with the speed of an arrow ...', and

(Cupid's) 'dart' has come up on three separate previous occasions, each time implicitly alluding to *marriage*.

The additional material draws on her dimension of interest in Spenser and *The Faerie Queene*. We may assume she was well acquainted with the Commendatory Verses and was able to see the textual connections.<sup>3</sup> Austen would note how Spenser makes it clear in his poem to Oxford that, to say the least, he is a senior poet who has a central relation to the Muses and is in a position – in 1589 – to protect a fellow poet:

... Which by thy countenance doth crave to bee  
Defended from foule Envies poisonous bit.

And also for the love, which thou doest beare  
To th' Heliconian ymps and they to thee,  
They unto thee, and thou to them most deare

She would then have noted the Ignoto poem (p. 600) as from the same authoritative poet and, being familiar with Jonson's *First Folio* panegyric to Shakespeare, would have seen the emphatic affinities between these two celebratory poems:

*Jonson*

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,  
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;  
*While I confess thy writings to be such*  
*As neither man nor muse can praise too much;*  
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage.

*Ignoto*

Thus then to shew my judgement to be such  
As can discern of colours blacke, and white,  
As alls to free my minde from envies tuch,  
That never gives to any man his right,  
*I here pronounce this workmanship is such,*  
*As that no pen can set it forth too much*

The reference to *envy* is also shared between them here of course. Thirdly, the ‘repudiation of praise’ strategy is shared and is more emphatic in Jonson.

Other things in the Jonson poem would become obvious: that Elizabethan poets rather than Jacobean are Shakespeare’s contemporaries, Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe; that the text actually implies that Shakespeare knew Greek; that he is highly educated and not a child of nature, and works (sweats) endlessly at his texts; that he is ‘gentle’, i.e. aristocratic; that his works show his ‘race’; and that he was a court poet (Hampton Court – Avon) whose works, on the ‘banks of Thames’ did ‘take’ Eliza and James.

This, by itself, is bald and this paper supplements it with an account of how it is underpinned by Jane Austen, through at least two further major clusters of allusion. And how better than to explore all this in the very novel, which is *so ostensibly innocent*, timeless, living in the idyll of a perfect ‘Surry’ world, seemingly completely without traumatic drama on its surface. Astonishingly, no less a major critic than Lionel Trilling can even (just about) get away with saying it is pretty much a morally completely Edenic idyllic unfallen world:<sup>4</sup>

So, in *Emma* Jane Austen contrives an idyllic world, or the closest approximation to it that the genre of the novel will permit, and brings into contrast with it the actualities of the social world, of the modern self. *In the precincts of Highbury there are **no bad people**, and no adverse judgments to be made.* [My italic and bold.] Only a modern critic would think to call Mr. Woodhouse an idiot and an old woman; in the novel he is called ‘the kindhearted, polite old gentleman.’ Only Emma with her modern consciousness, comes out with it that Miss Bates is a bore, and only Emma can give herself to the thought that Mr. Weston would be a ‘higher character’ if he were not so simple and open-hearted.

... it is because we accept the assumptions of the idyllic world which they inhabit – we have been led to believe that man may live in ‘harmony and peace with himself and the external world’.

There is definitely something in this, something assuredly intended by Jane Austen and, even if Trilling amazingly over-eggs it, it is an illusion Jane Austen wishes a good deal of her readership to embrace.

The next example, coming from a somewhat sceptic Jane Austen critic, is even more striking. Barbara Thaden,<sup>5</sup> who, in an essay that has been something of a catalyst for me, sets out to invert the heroines, going so far as to treat Jane Fairfax (who is actually on the edge of breakdown or anorexia for most of the novel) as the ‘normal’ marginalised Austen heroine, familiar to us from earlier novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*, nevertheless also writes, ‘Austen’s work does not depict anger, or passionate despair, or personal suffering’, and this, as Woolf recognised, ‘is not a weakness but Austen’s greatest strength’. Virginia Woolf,<sup>6</sup> replying to a modern relative of Austen’s, Miss Austen-Leigh, who argued that the key to her works is ‘Repentance’, comments – as is also applicable here – ‘The truth appears to us to be much more complicated than that.’

This appearance of serenity and idyll, however, in fact powerfully intensifies the effect Jane Austen is working for, at the level of the subtly hidden, the very unobtrusively and in easily missed ways hidden, behind the ‘realistic novel’. To some of why she does this, and needs to do so, we shall come. In the hidden background, Jane Austen’s allegorical commentary brings historicity into full play, but getting there is quite the detour.

### **Nucleus of Emblematic Meaning**

How Jane Austen accomplishes this, I shall first consider. Here, to begin with, I want briefly to postulate a narrative method concept, which may by no means be original; I am simply using it for my own purposes in this connection: it is the concept of an ‘emblematic meaning nucleus’, in an organised and organic text: a novel, a drama, an epic poem, a piece of history, and so on. The meaning nucleus may be overt or hidden, depending on the emphasis. It is never either totally overt or totally hidden. It may be an object or a person. So, then, we have two groups of possibilities:

- i. ‘an overt emblematic meaning nucleus’, which may be a person or a symbolic object;
- ii. ‘a hidden emblematic meaning nucleus’, which may be a person or a symbolic object.

As I have said, overtness is not necessarily of an *object*. In *King Lear* the

antithesis between wordy hypocritical profession of love, and silent but authentic testimony of love, is the potent and generative contrast between *persons*. This, however, since the silence is overt, is still an overt meaning nucleus. But of course, its haunting quality indicates a profound hidden dimension also, which works upon Lear's implicit awareness – a hiddenness which I would expect to be always present when we are dealing with this kind of phenomenon of meaning.

### The Emblematic Meaning Nucleus in *Emma*

So, now we next come to *Emma*, which I am going to argue gives us a *covert personal meaning nucleus* in a profoundly haunting way, which is connected to the layers of allusion and allegory I am positing in the novel.

In *Emma*, on one side, we have in Emma herself, false and blundering, metaphorically loud pursuance of secret intuitions on her part, developed as a very penetrating psychology of deception and self-deception by Jane Austen – which is one part of the analogy that will open up the historicity dimension.

It is contrasted with, in Jane Fairfax, a genuine, actual, but hidden secret. This one is silent, protected with a deep silence, like Cordelia's, which in many ways is the secret emblematic meaning nucleus of the novel – and again, as a secret, it is an analogue of the Authorship historicity dimension which is being communicated 'under the radar'. For this secret realm, for much of the novel, Emma's self-deceptions, crashing missings of the point, and toxic activities, are the foil. They correlate, as she realises in her epiphany, with her own inauthenticity and falsity of feeling, which she therefore finds so agonising to confess to Mr Knightley.

As such the polarity, once seen, with its hidden taproot in Jane Fairfax's secret, pervades the novel. It makes possible all the further or higher levels of allusion and allegory, which I am positing. For they now simply become a further layer of increasing mystery and allegory. There is something about a secret that engages uncanny and archetypal resonances, closely connected with the possibility of *incognito encounter*, which comes up in this case in a most surprising way, to which I shall return.<sup>7</sup> Jane Austen is well able to tap into this. Through the articulation of *absence* in the novel, in this way, parallel absences can be analogically exploited by her.

## Levels of connected meaning in *Emma*

It removes from those levels the element of *arbitrary extraneousness* that initially seems to be involved. In this connection, there are, firstly, the emblematic cross connections from the orthodoxly recognised meaning nucleus in the ‘realistic novel’. Here, first, come in such graphic but rarely noticed contrasts as that between the key part of the opening sentence of the novel: ‘seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence’ and the feared denouement in Chapter 48: ‘if Harriet were to be the chosen, the first, the dearest, the friend, the wife to whom he looked for all the best blessings of existence’. Then, secondly, transitionally, there are the Spenserian Grail Knight connections we are coming to, in Mr Knightley’s pivotal ‘detective work’ (Ch. 41), which create a background of mysteries, positively alluring us to hermeneutic elucidation. Then there is the gradual convergence of the ‘Emma complex’ with the ‘Jane Fairfax complex’, for which, also, the ‘Harriet Smith complex’ goes proxy. This third cluster is strongly involved in the detective work chapter (Ch. 41) and probably points towards the SAQ, as we shall see. For Harriet indeed, Emma inadvertently creates her own caricature proxy secret, in the refusal to speak about Frank Churchill when Harriet herself means, not Frank Churchill but Mr Knightley. This, as a time fuse, then leads to Emma’s catastrophic awakening (Ch. 47).

This all then enables a binary convergence and conjunction of two systemic clusters of allusions to de Vere as Shakespeare, the *Upon Appleton House* (Andrew Marvell’s poem to Lord Fairfax’s daughter and the Fairfax family):<sup>8</sup> one (Jane Fairfax) and the *As You Like It*, one (Emma) already touched upon; entangled with the whole Spenserian dimension, to all of which we are now coming.

The potency of the whole double convergence comes out in the extreme and unexpected depth of the reconciliation between Jane Fairfax and Emma, which is like the archetypal healing and realigning marriages at the end of *As You Like It* (c.f. Ted Hughes in *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*).<sup>9</sup> So, in the way Hughes envisages for *As You Like It*, in Austen also there is a (very Shakespearian) parallel healing, revelation and re-alignment at the *archetypal-allegorical* level with the healing that takes place in the *realistic novel*, and with the marriages that end the novel arising in contrast to the marriages at the beginning (the Westons’ and the Eltons’), which cause a good deal of the trouble.

The secret, or complex of secrets now, is what makes the pivotal detective work chapter (Ch. 41), in several ways, so wounding for Mr Knightley. It also gives an augury of the disasters about to strike the secret engagement itself.

Thus, Frank Churchill's and Jane Fairfax's bond is nearly destroyed by the events at Donwell (Ch. 42) and Box Hill (Ch. 43), leading to Jane Fairfax's breaking of the engagement with Frank. There is, in parallel, from the Box Hill episode also, the partial rupture between Emma and Mr Knightley, with the beginning of Emma's shame and real remorseful awakening (yes, freely to admit it, this is indeed, as Miss Austen-Leigh says,<sup>6</sup> genuine repentance) over her insult to Miss Bates, Jane Fairfax's aunt – who is, as has come out clearly in the detective work chapter, likewise Jane's telepath, hearing Jane's unspoken words, and noting everything, as a Greek chorus.

In this connection there is an oblique connection with Harriet Smith, since Miss Bates's name is Hetty, which is one contraction of Harriet, and in Jane Austen's novels eldest girls are named after their mothers. Harriet as Emma's protégé becomes the friend that the much more accomplished Jane Fairfax should have been. Arnie Perlstein,<sup>2</sup> who discovered the downright incision, in the next chapter, of *As You Like It* into the stone of Austen's text, believes this makes Harriet, who is illegitimate, the secret daughter of Miss Bates, which may be pushing it too far – though the question, 'is Harriet's mother in the novel?' does remain – c.f. for example, Edith Lank.<sup>10</sup> Perlstein sometimes offers us sexualised versions of Austen's 'shadow novels'.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, whether or not it is a red herring Austen has dangled, it may at the very least give us a first symbolic link, in the sense of a silent and hidden affinity between Harriet and Jane Fairfax. Emma is certainly mostly badly wrong about Harriet; that is, the very reverse of a telepath. Because her intuitions are always governed by egotism and the desire to be the first to think of them, even when she is on to something, as with the Dixon intuition had she tried replacing Dixon with Churchill, she never submits her first guesses to any critique.

The paragraphs containing Miss Bates's words: 'I am not like Jane; I wish I were. I will answer for it *she never betrayed the least thing in the world.*' And, a little later, "'Aye, very true, my dear,'" cried the latter, *though Jane had not spoken a word, "I was just going to say the same thing. It is time for us to be going indeed."*



Too much is hidden in here to mention, apart from the author's name, and Miss Bates as Greek chorus. There is a hint that Harriet is a cuckoo in the nest, though the displacement of Jane Fairfax by the foundling changeling Harriet is entirely Emma's responsibility. Orphans and parentless children are rife in this novel. The illegitimate Harriet is the epitome of this. Lank's brief paper is well worth study and thought.<sup>10</sup> And if Harriet is a cuckoo in the nest, put there by Emma, the analogy I cannot fully develop here is with the bourgeois tradesman Stratford man as opposed to the true aristocrat, Edward de Vere. And that means that, just as Audrey in *As You Like It* symbolises Shakespeare's art, Mr Knightley, the Grail Knight of the Lea of the round table (replacing the Pembroke!) of the detective work chapter, is the true spouse and treasure of creative values whom Emma/Ipse/Touchstone 'must marry'. In the light of this we find ourselves thinking of the Droeshout when we hear Harriet's portrait being said by Mrs Weston to be: 'The expression of the eye is most correct, but Miss Smith has not those eyebrows and eyelashes. *It is the fault of her face that she has them not.*' (Ch. 6)

### **The Way Prepared for Covert Allegory**

The secrets have been powerfully evoked, in the stunningly revealing and concealing detective work chapter, which is the epitome of Trilling's comment that we never master *Emma*, always discovering new aspects.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, in the chapter after the detective work one, the Donwell Abbey visit (Ch. 42), the way is prepared for Jane Austen making deliberate and allusive use of both her own name and of the surname Fairfax (prompting us to revisit Chs. 19 and 20). But then she also has done, as we have just seen by way of a prelude, in Chapter 41.

Fairfax historically is a soldier's name. Jane is the daughter of a soldier and the foster daughter, so to say, of another, Colonel Campbell. This gives her a position of high honour in Jane Austen's pantheon and prepares the way for cross-linking to the Authorship via 'the fighting Veres', linked by marriage in life with the Fairfaxes. Mr Weston is also a soldier, of course, and his son, despite his dubious character, nevertheless holds the name of the greatest of all England's warriors, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. However, as a high Tory, Jane Austen was likely suspicious of him and of his Whig wife Sarah.<sup>11</sup>

We shall come to all this in a moment. But first, not only does Mr Knightley acquire the secret of Jane's and Frank's connection in his detective work chapter, which Emma blunderingly dismisses (Frank Churchill's own blunder here is only the tip of the iceberg – and 'blunders' is Emma's own word when she is talking to Mr Knightley about the Eltons and Harriet after the dance in Chapter 38). Also, his love for Emma is as yet a secret from her, though marked here by the Cupid word 'darting', and from anyone else but him (including the first-time reader, unless very perspicacious). And, of course, Emma, too, does have a real secret, her redeeming secret, which is hidden even from herself – her love for Mr Knightley, which connects with the authorial dimension in *Emma*.

And she only becomes authentic when this is forced upon her attention by Harriet. Harriet's feelings, once she has got clear of the egotistical and hollow Mr Elton, are in a way truer and more authentic than either Jane's or Emma's (she is entirely clear what a false chancer Frank Churchill is, and how profound is the quality of Mr Knightley, and returns, independently of Emma, to her true and first love, Robert Martin, whom she has never ceased to value). There is also the secret which is shortly to explode in Emma's face, namely that Harriet believes herself beloved, not by Frank Churchill as Emma hopes, but by Mr Knightley, of which, we might say, Emma 'never so much as dreamt' despite Mr Weston's unheard remark, 'Emma, you are a great dreamer, I think?'

It is no wonder, then, that Jane Austen connects this whole central uncanny chapter with Canto One of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*,<sup>12</sup> in which the uncanny and sombre world lying deep in the background of Shakespeare, and de Vere – c.f. Sonnet 106 (When in the chronicle of wasted time ...) and the Ignoto verses in *The Faerie Queene* introductory material of that highly allegorical work – is set in motion.<sup>3</sup> In that chapter of Jane Austen's, the whole world of secrecy multiplies and mutates, constituting a world of 'writing before writing theory', as if there were a continual miasm spreading, with no limits upon it.

In this detective work chapter there is the 'false dream' (a fictitious dream which actually does not exist) made up by Frank Churchill on the spur of the moment (to conceal his blunder in referring inadvertently to a communication about Mr Perry's carriage in a letter which Jane Fairfax has sent him) which mirrors those (actual, but artificial, dreams) Archimago sends via Morpheus to

the Red Cross Knight in Canto One of *The Faerie Queene*. Secondly, as the gruesome figure of *Error* evokes in Canto One, Frank Churchill has both women in his deceptive thrall:

Mr. Knightley connected it with the dream; but how it could all be, was beyond his comprehension. How the delicacy, the discretion of his favourite could have been so lain asleep! He feared there must be some decided involvement. Disingenuousness and double dealing seemed to meet him at every turn. These letters were but the vehicle for gallantry and trick. It was a child's play, chosen to conceal a deeper game on Frank Churchill's part.

With great indignation did he continue to observe him; with great alarm and distrust, to observe also his two blinded companions. (Ch. 41)

But Jane Fairfax is not blinded, not blind Cupid, only Emma is.

The Spenser connection connects with the dark 'satanic persuasion' element,<sup>13</sup> and *Paradise Lost*<sup>14</sup> (at least four allusions, two to the first pages of *Paradise Lost*, one to the last and also to *Eve's* Spenserian dream inserted by Satan), and also across via the 'circular table' – Arthurian connection with Mr *Knightley* – replacing the old Pembroke table (allusion to the deceptive production of the First Folio, 1623, under the aegis of the Pembroke brothers); this is all evoked in this chapter. The impact of the secrets, Jane's especially, bubbles away, connecting Jane Fairfax with the silent 'Vere', to which we shall come in a moment. I believe the Spenserian echo is sealed by one of Jane Austen's low-key indications of a verse echo:

He remained at Hartfield after all the rest, his thoughts full of what he had seen; so full, that when the candles came to assist his observations, he must – yes, he certainly must, as a friend – an anxious friend – give Emma some hint, ask her some question. He could not see her in a situation of such danger, without trying to preserve her. It was his duty.

She spoke with a confidence which staggered, with a satisfaction which silenced, Mr. Knightley. She was in gay spirits, and would have prolonged the conversation, wanting to hear the particulars of his suspicions, every look described, and all the wheres and hows of a circumstance which highly

entertained her: but his gaiety did not meet hers. He found he could not be useful, and his feelings were too much irritated for talking. That he might not be irritated into an absolute *fever* [*there is another 'fever' connection to come - - HW*], by the fire which Mr. Woodhouse's tender habits required almost every evening throughout the year, he soon afterwards took a hasty leave, and walked home to the coolness and solitude of Donwell Abbey." (Ch. 41)

Here is the parallel (among several Spenser connections in *Emma*) lv from Canto One of *The Faerie Queene*:

Long after lay he musing at her mood  
 Much grieu'd to think that gentle Dame so light,  
 For whose defence he was to shed his blood.  
 At last dull wearinesse of former fight  
 Having yrockt asleepe his irkesome spright  
 That troublous dreame gan freshly tosse his braine,  
 With bowres, and beds, and Ladies deare delight  
 But when he saw his labour all was vaine,  
 With that misformed spright he backe returnd again.

While both Jane Fairfax's and Emma's fortunes are heading towards their catastrophes and apotheoses in the world of the realistic novel, in the allegorical dimension two convergences are indeed happening: the significance of 'Jane Fairfax' is coming to fruition and realisation, in the allegorical realm, via allusion to Andrew Marvell's *Upon Appleton House*; and, as Emma enters into the realm of her apotheosis and lets go of the world of her self-deception, in her turn there opens out the 'Emma' connection with *As You Like It*, and the key 'authorial' figure of Touchstone.

Both are brought into view, in conjunction, in plain sight, in the next chapter, the Donwell Abbey visit, where Mrs Elton says (Arnie Perlstein's discovery,<sup>2</sup> the significance of which I do not know whether he fully realises) 'I see *Jane every day*. But *as you like*. It is to be a morning scheme ... '. I have italicised key words. Of course, 'ever' by itself here would normally be an entirely gratuitous inference. But it is there, and it is retroactively reinforced by the chapter introducing Jane Fairfax.

For, Jane Fairfax's role is signified by her being connected allegorically with the great Andrew Marvell poem, *Upon Appleton House*, which connects Lord Thomas Fairfax, the Civil War Parliamentary General, but also anti-regicide conciliator, with 'the starry Vere', one of the 'fighting Veres', Lord Horatio Vere, Oxford's cousin (arguably alluded to with his other cousin Francis Vere, in the castle guard shift of the opening of *Hamlet*), whose daughter Anne married Fairfax, and whose daughter, in turn, Mary Fairfax, was the pupil of Andrew Marvell, and whose apotheosis is iconised in *Upon Appleton House*. A piquant aside: Mrs Weston's child in *Emma* is named Anna, and Mrs Weston herself is Anne. Anne and Anna are contractions of the Hebrew Hannah, and Hannah is Mrs Weston's housemaid, who is the daughter of the Hartfield/Woodhouse coachman, who is James. Anne is the mother of Mary the mother of Jesus, according to tradition in the main Christian lineages, and one of the Jameses in the Gospels is the brother of Jesus. And in life, Horace Vere is married to Anne, who is the mother of Mary, the focus of Marvell's poem.

The Spenserian allusions in the detective work chapter are multiple and not blatantly obvious, but not especially hidden either. But Emma's mirroring in her epiphany of 'he sir that must marry this woman' and 'you are not ipse, for I am he', with 'It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that no one must marry Mr Knightley but herself', despite the cue of the double reference to Cupid following three earlier Cupidian uses of 'dart', actually leaves us with the slender tight rope wire of *a single line* on which to pin the 'ripple on the surface which should not be there'.<sup>15</sup> And here there is something shot-gun, if one may risk the metaphor, in the uses of the cupid allusions, almost something like a stage direction, not a complex cross-referentiality such as we have in the detective work chapter. And the reference to *As You Like It* is almost a simple coded reference, pointing us to the allegory of *As You Like It* in a rather concrete mode. However, even so, no one notices all this normally; I certainly did not for sixty years.

Where does all this take us? If the detective work chapter is supremely allusive and suggestion-saturated, so to speak, and the Emma cross-bow brutality of reference to *As You Like It* is almost too starkly concrete (which does not make it false but might make it somewhat trivial, which would be a surprise from Jane Austen), do we have something transitional? This is where Austen's

evocation, as I believe, of *Upon Appleton House*, and the allusion to de Vere, which is only oblique and hidden, tallies with the hidden personal emblematic meaning nucleus of Jane Fairfax's secrecy, which is combined with so much silence.

There is much in *Upon Appleton House* beyond the most famous quotation for Oxfordians, which I can at best touch on a little here. The key quotation (verse xci)<sup>8</sup> is that which Melville takes up in *Billy Budd*:<sup>16</sup>

This 'tis to have been from the first  
In a domestic *Heaven* nurst  
Under the *Discipline* severe  
Of *Fairfax* and the starry *Vere* ...

So Chapter 19 and 20 of *Emma* are devoted to Jane Fairfax, whose letter of arrival Emma does not expect when she tries to distract Harriet by a visit to the Bates's. Given Jane Austen's general strategy, if we are right, the name of Fairfax being *in the open* in the novel and it being linked (three times in fact) with Vere in *Upon Appleton House*, we would expect her to introduce 'Vere' with plausible deniability, and make 'Vere' silent, but communicated allusively under the radar.

So we have the following sentences (italics and bold for the cross allusions):

But the compassionate feelings of a friend of her father gave a change to her destiny. This was Colonel Campbell, who had very highly regarded Fairfax, as an excellent officer and most ***deserving*** young man; and farther, had been indebted to him for such attentions, during a ***severe*** camp-***fever***, as he believed had saved his life. These were claims which he did not learn to overlook, though some years passed away from the death of poor Fairfax, before his own return to England put anything in his power.

In addition:

Living constantly with right-minded and well-informed people, her heart and understanding had received every advantage of ***discipline*** and culture; and Colonel Campbell's residence being in London, ***every*** lighter talent had been done full justice to, by the attendance of first-rate masters.

*Nursing*, also, is referred to at the end of the previous chapter, by Miss Bates. So all the words in the Marvell passage are used.

In addition, the monastic life as a potential prison is dealt with by Marvell in a set of verses about the period of Appleton as the Roman Catholic nunnery, and about Jane Fairfax we have this, in a passage about her friend the Campbells' daughter marrying Mr Dixon, who, as we know, plays a major role later in Emma's self deceptions and persecution of Jane:

This event had very lately taken place; too lately for any thing to be yet attempted by her less fortunate friend towards entering on her path of duty; though she had now reached the age which her own judgment had fixed on for beginning. She had long resolved that one-and-twenty should be the period. *With the fortitude of a devoted novice, she had resolved at one-and-twenty to complete the sacrifice, and retire from all the pleasures of life, of rational intercourse, equal society, peace and hope, to penance and mortification for ever.*

That is quite a lot of veres and deveres and cross references to the relevant verse of *Upon Appleton House*. We also, as noted, have 'fever' again at the very end of the detective work chapter, Ch. 41. Yet perhaps it does not feel conclusive? Would it have been more so if after 'These were claims which he did not learn to overlook,' we had, for instance, 'they remained *evergreen*, his memory honoured and *revered*.' I think we would say Jane Austen had blatantly let the cat right out of the bag, and she does not want to do this. Yet, at the same time, when Mrs Elton says, 'I see Jane *every* day' there is no way we can accept that by itself as conclusive. And 'very' and 'every' are frequent in *Emma* in neutral contexts.

So there has to be a degree of triangulation but not too much. It has to be possible – today as much as in Jane Austen's own time, and the same applies to Melville – that many people can judge this 'not proven', not to be convinced, and to assume this ought to be blatant. Why? I believe she is doing at least three things, all of them in mimicry of Shakespeare. The Stratfordian mythos and deceptive displacement<sup>17</sup> was in its full Garrick-driven first glory. Austen is disguising her knowledge of the truth and at the same time leaving clues for those acute enough to find them – perhaps disguising more effectively than Edward de Vere himself (see sonnet 76, below, for blatant exposure) though

stunningly, the ruse of the mask lasted for three hundred years before it was publicly declared by J. T. Looney, and now four hundred years and counting:

Why is my *verse* so barren of new pride,  
 So far from variation or quick change?  
 Why with the time do I not glance aside  
 To new-found methods, and to compounds strange?  
 Why write I *still all one, ever* the same,  
 And keep invention in a noted weed,  
 That *every* word doth almost tell my name,  
 Showing their *birth*, and where they did proceed?

Secondly, she is providing analogues *within* her work for what happens *outside*. And thirdly, in her stark transformed equation quotation that catapults into *As You Like It* and Touchstone's credo, she is providing a rainbow bridge, or a Niagara Falls tightrope, between the world of the novel and the realm of the existence of the author, in the peculiar double existence which that brings into being, as I believe Shakespeare does in the 'play within the play' in *Hamlet*.<sup>18</sup>

Jane Austen, ostensibly, doggedly rejects writing overtly 'world historical' works, like *Bleak House* or *War and Peace*. This is emphasised in famous comments:

I could not sit seriously down to write a serious [*historical*] romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter.

On no account could she be persuaded to deviate from what she called 'the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour,'

I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress.

Belying this, she has a profound insight into human nature. Already in a work like *Emma*, we have as living presences in her work, writings from the 16th century (Spenser, Shakespeare), the 17th century (Marvell, Milton), the 18th century (Cowper, Johnson), and obviously there are many more. But here already we have the march of *historicity*, for example, in how concretely the person of



Satan is to be taken when we consider self-deception and temptation.<sup>14</sup> However, why I made my remark about the incognito encounter was that perhaps in some sense the prototypical or archetypal ‘incognito encounter’ is *between the creator and their creation* (perhaps literally, on the Road to Emmaus in Luke’s Gospel, Luke 24:13–35, if we accept Paul’s and John’s Christology!)

It is not as simple as, ‘Reader I married him’, but more elusive, in the liminal space between consciousness and creation. Poe has it in *The Purloined Letter*, which so fascinates psychoanalysts and their interpreters. I believe Shakespeare has it in *Hamlet*, par excellence. And I believe, forty-three years before Delia Bacon,<sup>19</sup> seventy-two years before Melville in *Billy Budd*<sup>16</sup> and more than a hundred years before Looney, though I do not know whether by herself or via shared common knowledge, Austen wanted to show that the essential Shakespeare problem was still unsolved; that it involved secrecy and concealment and the miasmal reduplication of ‘writing’; that it involved de Vere, and also self-deception for the majority in the case of Shakespeare, hence making possible the maintenance of the deception, and the impossibility of direct challenge, and that in some sense the tension between the two dimensions is essential to the understanding of humanity.

And so I believe that therefore she *emblematically offered a mimesis*, at the turn of the 18th/19th centuries, and their mode of consciousness, of what Shakespeare *did*, by the way she half conceals her own insight into the problem and, in the transition from the self-revealed Emma to the Touchstone of *As You Like It*, signalling the subtle affinities, starkly indicates the paradoxical transition from narrator to writer (thus also confirming her awareness that ‘Touchstone’, too, is the authorial presence in *As You Like It*). Thereby she indicates that all the secrecy and deception of this novel is free for us to unfold as a parable of that very ‘world historical’ realm, the whole extraordinary history of this concealment, which she purported to claim she was not interested in, or capable of writing about.

## End notes

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