



How Celebrity Name-Dropping Leads to Another Model for Pemberley

JANINE BARCHAS

Janine Barchas, JASNA's 2013 North American Scholar, is Professor of English at the University of Texas, where she teaches Austen in Austin. She is the author of *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen: History, Location, and Celebrity* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2012), which recently appeared in paperback. She is also the creator of *What Jane Saw* (www.whatjanesaw.org), an online gallery that reconstructs an art exhibit attended by Jane Austen in 1813.

WHY DO WE CELEBRATE AS “timeless” a book with two hundred years on the clock? On the one hand, we share information about Austen’s time and culture precisely because the Georgian setting of *Pride and Prejudice* has, with the passing of two centuries, faded from view. Our enjoyment of Austen’s fiction resides, partly, in nostalgia—a wistful savoring of the temporal distance between then and now. On the other hand, Jane Austen’s fiction will not date because the universal truths about human relationships that she so accurately describes do not date—at least not until people learn to behave better. The continued success of *Pride and Prejudice* on page, stage, and screen is evidence of its lasting efficacy, or agelessness. Putting these proverbial hands together, Austen fans celebrate a worthy contradiction: the greater our historical awareness of our temporal distance from Jane Austen, the closer we feel to her.

This awareness is why we catalog the differences between, say, a landaulette, a curricule, a gig, and a barouche. Styles of horse-drawn carriages were encoded with specific social and economic significance in Austen’s era. Understanding those cultural codes can bring even modern parallels into better focus. After all, today a Honda, a Volvo, and a Ferrari are not all “just cars” (or so says at least fifty percent of the population). A precise historical knowledge of Regency life and material culture—food, architecture, and

costume—can provide insight into Austen’s characters and transport us more knowingly back into both her real and imagined worlds. Historicizing Austen is a passport to seeing her genius in action. Yet such historical context requires extra effort. Virginia Woolf famously remarked how Jane Austen is of all great writers the hardest to catch in the act of greatness.

It is with an eye to wanting to catch Jane Austen in the act that I share a few findings about famous names in *Pride and Prejudice*—names that lead to a never-before-considered influence on the fictional Pemberley. Austen, it turns out, was a consummate name-dropper. Her choices of leading names for her imaginary characters were culturally evocative in her day and may even suggest specific locations as ambient settings for her fictions. I do not claim that Austen writes a keyed novel, or what the French call a *roman à clef*, for hers is not a social satire whose names can be readily decoded to reveal mere one-to-one caricatures of real, historical persons. Still, it may be through her choices of particularly resonant surnames that Austen boldly engages her contemporary culture. To see how names tease in *Pride and Prejudice*, we have only to turn to the opening scene, where a leading surname points us north. Here Mrs. Bennet announces the arrival of “a young man of large fortune from the north of England.” “What is his name?” asks Mr. Bennet. “Bingley,” she answers (3).

As a timeless literary abstraction, the young bachelor’s arrival hails the novel’s marriage plot. Figuratively, his northern wealth is brought “down” to the genteel south to settle and age there—like a fine wine (3). Soon, we learn specifically that the village of Longbourn lies in Hertfordshire. By settling down at the aptly named Netherfield Park, Bingley and his new merchantile money will eventually become socially palatable. The young man’s surname neatly reinforces this symbolic geography with a concrete clue, since the town of Bingley, then as now, lies in the northern county of Yorkshire. All this is as transparent today as it was in 1813, when the novel was first published. In the novel’s original Georgian context, however, the name of Bingley, when coupled with a reference to northern wealth, would also conjure up Baron Bingley of Bramham Park in West Yorkshire.¹ During Austen’s adulthood, events at the Bingley estate often made it into the London papers, since the Prince Regent was a frequent guest at Bramham Park, where he enjoyed the fox hunts. In Austen’s novel, we soon learn that Mr. Bingley’s best friend is the far wealthier Mr. Darcy. His surname further reinforces north-meets-south tensions since “the Lords D’Arcy of the North” comprised an ancient wealthy family in the peerage (Edmondson 63).

Only with the delayed entrance of Mrs. Gardiner into the story does a



The estate of Lord Bingley. "Bramham Park, Yorkshire," by J. P. Neale. Published in Jones's Views of Seats (1825). Private Collection.

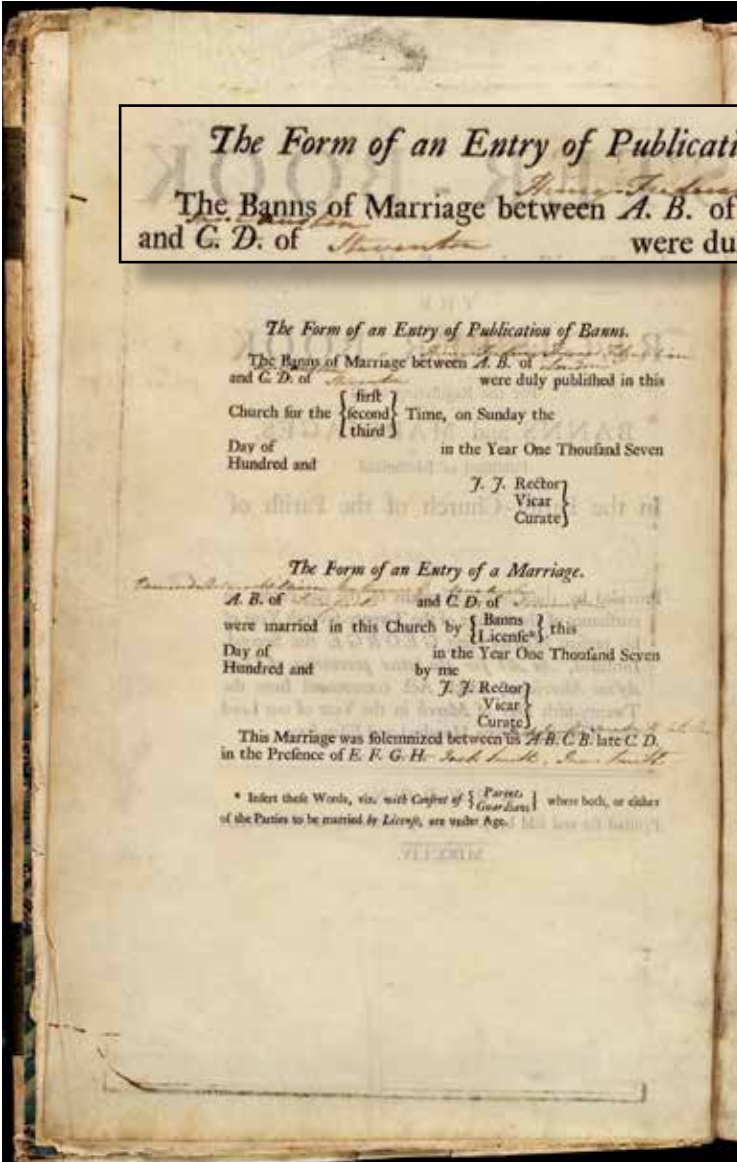
reader of *Pride and Prejudice* learn the hero's full name: "she recollected having heard Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy formerly spoken of as a very proud, ill-natured boy" (162). The big reveal of the hero's Christian name, placed as a veritable cliffhanger at the end of the second chapter in volume two, clinches the real-world allusion. In real life, the bling of the Bingleys in Yorkshire, a hospitable

Tory family, was nothing compared to the glamor of the nearby Fitzwilliams, a proud family of Whig politicians who entertained royalty an “easy distance”² of forty miles south—near the Derbyshire border.³ These real Fitzwilliams boasted ancestors dating back to the time of William the Conqueror, prominently including the ancient D’Arcy family (Edmondson 63). Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. But three times is an enemy action.

In 1813, then, the renowned northern names of Bingley, Darcy, and Fitzwilliam—doled out so slowly and deliberately by Austen, like a trail of telltale clues—would have tantalized any educated reader with their obvious cachet. Austen reinforces the celebrity currency of these names with the hard numbers of her bachelor incomes: “four or five thousand a year” for a Bingley, and “ten thousand a year” for a Fitzwilliam Darcy (4, 10). The Tory and Whig dimensions of these respective names may also boost the temperamental differences between the amiable Bingley and the proud Fitzwilliam Darcy with political stereotypes. In this sense, even the most well-informed reader today reads Austen at a disadvantage. Two hundred years of politics and celebrity culture since 1813 have altered our responses to these names. Right now, Jane Austen herself has become such a dominant celebrity commodity that we read her work by the light of *her* fame. The names Fitzwilliam Darcy and Bingley have become so famous in their own right as to shine from within, casting a Janeite shadow over the genuine personages and celebrities who held these names during Austen’s own era. It is hard to ignore what we already know and impossible to shake off our unconscious anachronism.

Like the name of Kennedy in America today, in Austen’s time the name of Fitzwilliam (so tellingly delayed in her story) conjured up nothing less than national politics, wealth, controversy, and glamor. Jane Austen’s interest in the Fitzwilliams, in the romance of their pedigree and immense wealth, seems to have begun in her childhood. When she was about ten years old, young Jane filled out her father’s parish registry with a mock entry for the saying of marriage banns between a “Jane Austen of Steventon” and a certain “Henry Frederic Howard Fitzwilliam” (Le Faye 70).⁴ To the budding writer, the glam of a Fitzwilliam apparently offered the antithesis of a plain “Jack Smith,” who appears further down in the fantasy entry. Everyone in those days would have been roughly familiar with the history of the Fitzwilliams, but the Austens could also claim to be ever so distantly related “through the Leighs and the Cravens” (Greene, “Peerage” 1019).⁵

Today, even adults need a Fitzwilliam primer. Any such mini-history of the Fitzwilliams starts in South Yorkshire at their ancestral home, which



The Form of an Entry of Publication of Banns.
James Jackson James Stebbins
 The Banns of Marriage between *A. B.* of *London*
 and *C. D.* of *Steventon* were duly published in this

The Form of an Entry of Publication of Banns.
 The Banns of Marriage between *A. B.* of *London*
 and *C. D.* of *Steventon* were duly published in this
 Church for the { first } Time, on Sunday the
 { second }
 { third }
 Day of _____ in the Year One Thousand Seven
 Hundred and _____
J. J. Rector
Vicar
Curate

The Form of an Entry of a Marriage.
A. B. of _____ and *C. D.* of _____
 were married in this Church by { Banns } this
 { License }
 Day of _____ in the Year One Thousand Seven
 Hundred and _____ by me
J. J. Rector
Vicar
Curate

This Marriage was solemnized between us *A. B.* late *C. D.*
 in the Presence of *E. F. G. H.*
 * Insert these Words, viz. with Consent of { Parents } where both, or either
 of the Parties to be married by License, are under Age.

Fictional marriage banns entered by the young Jane Austen in the Steventon parish registry. Hampshire Record Office.

is called Wentworth Woodhouse. Such a history will include many names familiar to readers of Austen's novels. In the thirteenth century, a Robert Wentworth married a rich heiress by the name of Emma Wodehouse. Their family prospered such that, in 1611, the senior line achieved a baronetcy, while the sister of this first baronet married the heir of the wealthy D'Arcy family. The eldest son of that same baronet was Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, none other than the ill-fated minister of Charles I. When this famous Wentworth was executed as part of the king's final and desperate attempt to appease Parliament, the vast lands of Wentworth Woodhouse were confiscated. With the Restoration, the estate was returned to Strafford's eldest son, William Wentworth. But when he died without issue in 1695, the family wealth transferred to the children of his sister, Anne Wentworth, who had married the head of the Watson family. When, in 1751, the heir to these princely estates, Charles Watson, succeeded his father as the second Marquess of Rockingham, he became one of the wealthiest peers in England, with an annual income at well over £20,000.⁶ Charles Watson Wentworth, having added his mother's maiden name to his own, was twice elected Prime Minister of England but died unexpectedly in 1782. Because he died childless, the combined fortunes of the Watsons, the Wentworths, and the Woodhouses, all devolved on his next of kin, the Fitzwilliams. The sudden good fortune of the Fitzwilliams apparently made quite an impression on the young Jane, then just six years old. Throughout her life, the same papers that she scanned for news of her naval brothers would continue to bear witness to the Fitzwilliam legacy at Wentworth Woodhouse (and to their Tory cousins at nearby Wentworth Castle, about which more in a moment).

I am actually not the first to notice that this summary pedigree of one of England's most prominent political families features the standout names of protagonists from *Pride and Prejudice* (with hero Fitzwilliam Darcy), *Emma* (starring Emma Woodhouse), *Persuasion* (where the heroine's married name becomes Anne Wentworth), and even Austen's fragmentary novel *The Watsons*. Donald Greene, in 1953, first identified some of the surnames that Austen borrows from the peerage. In newspapers and histories, aristocrats tended to appear under their most illustrious titles. Several Wentworths, for example, held the title of the Earl of Strafford, and both became *Strafford* for short in the history books, just as Watson Wentworth, the Marquess of Rockingham, was known in politics as, simply, *Rockingham*. In borrowing from the elite for her fictional characters, Austen often picks discarded family surnames and ignores the grandest titles, thus making room for what politicians term

plausible deniability. You will recall how, at the start of *Persuasion*, the sycophantic Sir Walter Elliot sneeringly dismisses any link between the brother of Capt. Frederick Wentworth, the story's self-made naval officer, and the Earl of Strafford: "Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Strafford family" (26). Sir Walter's crude denial likely worked in reverse, prompting a contemporary reader to reconsider a link between the fictional Frederick Wentworth of the story and the real Frederick Wentworth (1732-1799), who was also the (third and last) Earl of Strafford.

Reading Austen's names in the context of national history, politics, and celebrity culture flies in the face of her own family's protestations to the contrary. Mrs. Ann Barrett, who professed to have befriended Jane Austen during the Chawton years, famously recollected how the author resisted the easy identification of her characters with real people: "I am much too proud of my own gentlemen ever to admit that they are merely Mr A. or Major C." (Le Faye 233). Both the touch of pride and the telling "merely" in Austen's alleged denial allow for a possible equivocation about a charge that Henry Austen feels compelled to defend his sister against in his biographical notice of 1817: "She drew from nature; but, whatever may have been surmised to the contrary, never from individuals" (P 330). Although Jane prevaricates and Henry protests (perhaps a little too much), neither tells an outright lie. Not exactly. Austen, who plucked so many of her character names from the ancestral trees of genuine families, was not satirizing "individuals" in the sense of describing particular people whom she knew or knew of, but ambitiously building her stories out of names and locations that resonated with popular national history. Nonetheless, the subtlety of her historical process must have made it difficult, at a time when the Romantics so prized original genius, to stave off accusations of copying too much from life.

A number of critics have seen through these misdirections and denials. Some have wondered out loud what Austen might have been reading: "Was there a copy of Collins' *Peerage* in the Steventon rectory library?" (Greene, "Peerage" 1021).⁷ *Peerage* peering was then in the air. Jane Austen's best friend and neighbor during the Steventon years, Mrs. Lefroy, had a brother, Egerton Brydges, who developed such an interest in genealogy that in 1808 he extensively revised and edited the "standard edition" of *The Peerage of England* by Arthur Collins (first published in multiple volumes in 1709 and 1712). The real-world Collins, the original compiler of this mammoth reference work, was tireless/tiresome in his devotion to the filigreed detailing of the peerage. Thus, the name of Austen's obsequious Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* is a

straightforward allusion to a bestselling reference book, which had recently been re-edited by a member of the Austen circle (Brydges's latest nine-volume edition had appeared in 1812). Through her portrayal of Mr. Collins, Austen mocks the genealogical obsessions of a nation, to which her own family was not immune.

Austen's choice of name for her most fusty example of aristocratic snobbery, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, seems calculated to keep herself at an ironic distance from sycophantic men like Egerton Brydges. The original Mr. Collins informs readers of his *Peerage* how the name of Brydges has many variant spelling and was "anciently written Brugge, Bruges, Burgh, Brigge, &c." (Collins 1:675). In his autobiography, Egerton Brydges roundly declares, "[M]y male stock is baronial from the Conquest; ascending . . . to Johannes De Burgo (Monoculu), founder also of the House of De Burgh" (Brydges 2:422). In other words, Brydges claimed for himself a kind of de Bourgh pedigree. If Austen's critical portrait of the obnoxious Lady Catherine de Bourgh targets Mrs. Lefroy's brother and his supercilious insistence to all who would listen that his ancestors came from the grand house of De Burgh, such an allusion was a dangerous game for a single woman whose own future depended largely upon her family's good will and its network of "high" connections. Although Jane Austen was no Mr. Collins, a letter to her niece Anna Austen suggests that she so routinely researched the surnames of her fictional characters for connections with titled families that she had become a family resource on that very topic by 1814: "There is no such Title as Desborough," she assures her niece who is dabbling in fiction, "either among the Dukes, Marquisses, Earls, Viscounts or Barons.—These were your enquiries" (10–18 August 1814). Before Austen approved any names for use in novels, she did her homework.

With marked understatement, Donald Greene reflected on the "interesting 'coincidences'" that the overlap between Austen's novels and the peerage suggests about her "milieu and her social attitudes" (Greene, "Peerage" 1017). He seized in particular upon "the great men in Whig political circles" who, as he says, "caught Jane Austen's fancy" (Greene, "Peerage" 1018, 1017).⁸ In *Pride and Prejudice*, Greene interpreted these choices as ironic, locating "in the arrogant possessors of the great Whig names of Fitzwilliam and D'Arcy a satire on aspects of Whiggism." Greene's speculation in the 1950s that "Jane Austen is being consciously political," and that these politically charged names add to the extraordinary realism of her novels, was ignored for many decades ("Peerage" 1026). While I continue to quibble with Greene's own politics, for he missed Austen's equally strong Tory borrowings, he was among the very

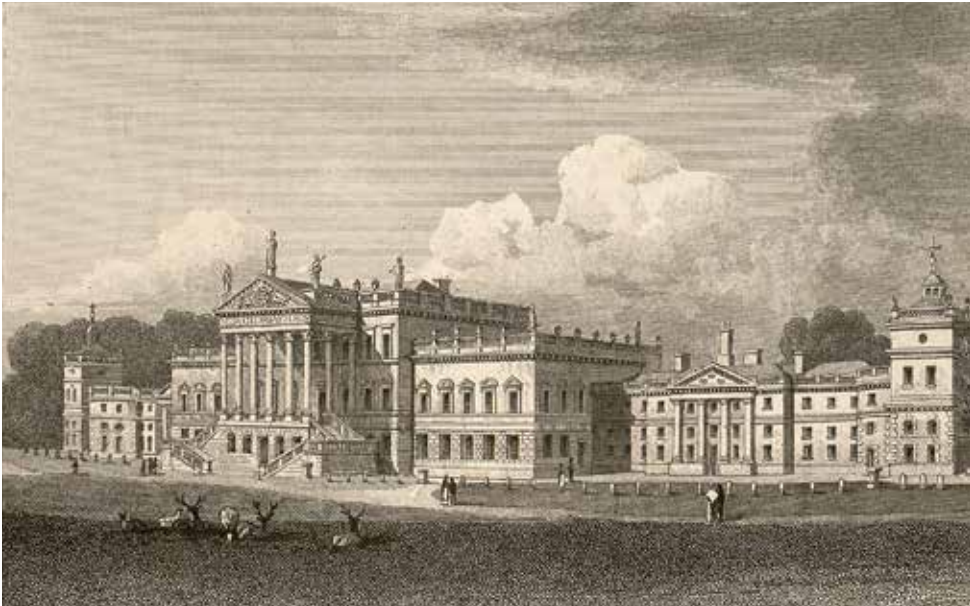
first to resist her starched Victorian reputation as an isolated spinster. Greene first declared how, through her appropriation of famous names, Austen confidently engages “the world around her” (“Peerage”1025). Her conscious flaunting of famous names, those celebrity teasers that occur, I believe, in every novel she ever wrote, continues to have implications for how we perceive her writerly ambitions and method.

Hidden in plain sight in *Pride and Prejudice* are names to conjure with. Some of these names sail dangerously close to the political wind. For, not only does Austen combine in her hero two prominent branches from the Wentworth Woodhouse family tree, Fitzwilliam and D’Arcy, but she implies that the maiden name of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and her sister Lady Anne Darcy (with whom she brokers that odd arranged marriage for their infants) is also Fitzwilliam. Their father held the earldom from which the de Bourgh and Darcy pride presumably stems. Colonel Fitzwilliam, their nephew and Darcy’s cousin, is the younger son of the present earl, their brother. As Donald Greene observed, at the time when Austen wrote,

there was one, and only one, earl in the British realm whose family name was Fitzwilliam—the Whig magnifico, nephew of Rockingham and heir to his wealth and influence, one of the leaders of the “coalition Whigs” whose political position was so important to Great Britain in the dangerous years of the French Revolution. (“Peerage” 1025)

In the light of Edmund Burke’s famous “Letter” of 1796, addressed to the “Noble Lord” also known as William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, Mr. Collins’s description of Fitzwilliam Darcy as “one of the most illustrious personages in this land” allows scant room for Austen’s usual irony. “Can you possibly guess,” asks Mr. Bennet, “who is meant by this?” (402). The real Earl Fitzwilliam also had several sisters and daughters, making Austen’s story of a hushed-up seduction of a younger sister potentially out-of-bounds.

To give a fuller idea of what the combination of the names Fitzwilliam and Darcy (in proximity to that of Bingley) might invoke in Austen’s time, let us take a closer look at Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire. For, as the name of Kennedy is to Cape Cod today, so was the name of Fitzwilliam to Wentworth Woodhouse in Austen’s lifetime. The genuine Fitzwilliams and D’Arcys were part of one of the oldest, richest, and most politically prominent families in England. At Wentworth Woodhouse the deer herd is rumored to still roam uninterrupted since 1066—the ultimate signal of landed privilege. Located six miles north of Sheffield, Wentworth Woodhouse (also known as,



The estate of the Fitzwilliam, D'Arcy, Wentworth, Woodhouse, and Watson families. "Wentworth House, Yorkshire." Engraved by J. Hensall, after a drawing by J. P. Neale. Published in Jones's Views of Seats (1829). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

simply, Wentworth House) was the biggest stately home in all of England. Extensively remodeled in the mid-eighteenth century, the main house boasts a 600-foot Palladian façade—making it the longest façade in all of Europe and twice the length of Buckingham Palace. This imposing façade was constructed in the 1730s as a rejoinder to the improvements made by a disgruntled Tory cousin who, when he did not inherit this estate, bought another nearby and called it Wentworth Castle (not a castle at all, but so-named to outshine the mere “house” of their Whig cousins).

The decades of competitive landscaping and architectural one-upmanship of these rival cousins at Wentworth Woodhouse and nearby Wentworth Castle took place in the national spotlight between, roughly, 1730 and 1790. Their combined influence on architecture and landscaping trends can be tracked in just the type of books that Austen is known to have read. I could tell you much more about nearby Wentworth Castle, which in Austen’s youth was owned by none other than Frederick Wentworth and which, after a protracted family feud and a “confused legal situation,” transferred to an underage



“Wentworth Castle, Yorkshire. The Seat of Frederick Vernon Wentworth Esq.” Engraved by R. Barnard, after drawings by J. F. Neale. Published in Jones’s Views of Seats (1829). Private Collection.



Frederick Vernon around the time that Austen wrote *Lady Susan* (Malcomson 128).⁹ You will remember how Vernon family squabbles over a family castle lie at the heart of Austen’s characterization of Lady Susan Vernon as a manipulative woman whose eagerness to liquidate has denied her nephew, little Frederic Vernon, his birthright and family home. But the links between the namesakes of Frederick Wentworth in *Persuasion* and Frederic Vernon in *Lady Susan* in the real world (both owners of Wentworth Castle during Austen’s lifetime) would take me well beyond *Pride and Prejudice*, and I have barely time enough to show the locale that was, as every one of Austen’s contemporaries knew, the home of the then-powerful Fitzwilliam branch of this same family. Suffice it to indicate that Austen’s interest in this Wentworth/Fitzwilliam/Vernon/D’Arcy/Watson clan of Yorkshire seems to span her entire literary output, linking her juvenilia and mature fictions through a network of prominently connected surnames. If, as Austen herself asserted, “an artist cannot do anything slovenly,” we must look closely at the overlap between her fictions and such historical facts (17–18 November 1798).

For now, let us refocus on Wentworth Woodhouse, home of the Earl Fitzwilliam. The manor’s eighteenth-century expansion resulted in a behemoth of 365 rooms, one for every day of the year. With 1000 windows, the structure also thumbed its nose at the window tax alluded to in *Pride and Prejudice*, when Elizabeth disappoints Mr. Collins by being only “slightly affected

by his enumeration of the windows in front of the house, and his relation of what the glazing altogether had originally cost Sir Lewis De Bourgh" (182). There were reputedly "five miles of underground passageways" trafficked by servants and a steady flow of goods. "The place is so big," states one modern account, "that guests were given confetti of different colours to strew so they could find their way back to their rooms" (Rayment). Images of this great house circulated widely in the form of prints and illustrations in books and magazines. Austen, who scoured all available papers for news of her brothers at sea, could also not have missed the frequent mentions in newsprint of the politically active Fitzwilliam family, including their annual "Grand Fete at Wentworth" in the society columns.¹⁰ The farmland, park, and gardens around Wentworth Woodhouse were so vast that they would be productively mined for coal by thousands of miners for all of the industrial age. Even landscaper Humphry Repton seems to have improved what hardly needed improving, adding a picturesque lake. If the name Fitzwilliam Darcy conjures up the glamor of this particular estate (and how could it not, since the name of Bingley further triangulates the novel to Yorkshire wealth), then the sight of Wentworth Woodhouse gives us some sense of the hushed thrill that Elizabeth experiences: "at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!" (271).

Austen does not, of course, take her characters to Yorkshire in *Pride and Prejudice*. When Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner first promise to take Elizabeth on "their Northern tour," Austen tantalizes her reader with the possibility of bringing her heroine ever nearer to where the evocative names of Bingley, Fitzwilliam, and Darcy already aim. Elizabeth is "excessively disappointed" when it is decided that they "were to go no farther northward than Derbyshire. In that county, there was enough to be seen, to occupy the chief of their three weeks" (265). A contemporary reader must have shared her disappointment. Wentworth Woodhouse, in South Yorkshire, lies *just* out of reach of the Derbyshire border, although its location lies south of the northern-most tip of adjacent Derbyshire.

With this provocative geographical caveat in place, Austen offers real-world locations by which to track her fictional travellers northward:

It is not the object of this work to give a description of Derbyshire, nor of any of the remarkable places through which their route thither lay; Oxford, Blenheim, Warwick, Kenelworth, Birmingham, &c. are sufficiently known. A small part of Derbyshire is all the present concern. To the little town of Lambton, the scene of Mrs.

Gardiner's former residence, and where she had lately learned that some acquaintance still remained, they bent their steps, after having seen all the principal wonders of the country; and within five miles of Lambton, Elizabeth found from her aunt, that Pemberley was situated. (266)

In these place-names, Austen deftly mixes fact with fiction. There is no town by the name of Lambton nor any estate called Pemberley. Yet all of “the remarkable places through which their route” passes were familiar tourist sites in Austen's day: Oxford (with its university, attended by the Austen boys), Blenheim (home to the Duke of Marlborough), Warwick (with its famous castle), Kenilworth (another castle), and Birmingham (a booming industrial town of which Austen evidently approved since, with the ironic logic of a double negative, she allows the unlikeable Mrs. Elton to snub it in *Emma*).¹¹ The characters of *Pride and Prejudice* proceed steadily northward via these real places.¹²

While a modern reader may reach for an atlas or GoogleMaps, geographical knowledge is, in the novels of Austen, often a test of character. Forty years ago, Stuart Tave pointed out Austen's fondness for “the simple geography joke,” explaining that vagueness about time and distance in her characters bodes ill (Tave 3). Just as Austen's finer characters insist upon the precise meaning of words—Mr. Knightley on “amiable” and Mr. Tilney on “amazing” (again Tave's points)—they also remain highly aware of the meaning of place. In *Emma*, when Harriet asks, “Will Mr. Frank Churchill pass through Bath as well as Oxford?” after hearing of his travels from Yorkshire to Surrey, the reader is told that hers “was a question . . . which did not augur much” (204). Harriet's appalling lack of geography reveals a great deal about the girl's modicum of intelligence and education. Her preoccupation with Bath also hints at her residual thoughts of Mr. Elton—known to be there. Just so in *Northanger Abbey*, where John Thorpe foolishly sets out for Blaise Castle (which, at nearly 20 miles from Bath's city center, is an insane destination for a day's outing in a mere gig) or insists that his horse always runs at a nippy ten miles an hour, real-world knowledge of time and space belies these boasts. Austen puts the lie to Thorpe when James Morland contradicts his estimate of ten miles per hour for their trip from Tetbury to Bath: Thorpe insists they covered 25 miles in 2.5 hours, while James says it was 23 miles in 3.5 hours. Austen is always specific and expects her readers to calculate accordingly. If Austen's buffoons routinely commit geographical blunders, why might she not be testing her readers' sensitivity to geography with a northward trail of real-world locations, amplified by culturally resonant names such as Bingley, Darcy, and Fitzwilliam?¹³

Heeding Austen's precise geographical clues, the real-world locations in *Pride and Prejudice* neatly pave the way for an arrival at the fictional Pemberley, providing the party with an aesthetic and moral compass beyond mere geography. To be impressed by Pemberley House after having been schooled in the grandeur of Blenheim Palace adds authority to Elizabeth's judgment. The real-world stops on this northward tour—locales famous for education, history, and industry—are veritable lessons in the upcoming virtues of Pemberley and, by extension, its owner. For Mrs. Gardiner, the fictional town of Lambton, where she spent her girlhood, is as much an object of curiosity "as all the celebrated beauties of Matlock, Chatsworth, Dovedale, or the Peak" (265). At JASNA's inaugural meeting in 1979, it was Donald Greene who first suggested Chatsworth as a direct model for Pemberley.¹⁴ Since then, that suggestion has been ably fanned by Chatsworth's own tourist industry. The 2005 film version of *Pride and Prejudice* further strengthened this association when it cast Chatsworth as Pemberley. Praised for its dramatic approach, Chatsworth not only matches our sense of the grandeur and beauty of Pemberley but a famous Georgiana once lived there.¹⁵ Although Austen may flirt with the historical associations attached to Chatsworth, this place simply cannot be a straightforward stand-in for Pemberley.

Chatsworth is disqualified precisely because it appears by name in the text as a genuine place visited *en route* by the characters. In her edition of *Pride and Prejudice* for Penguin, Vivien Jones agrees and points out how William Gilpin, of whom Austen was reputedly fond, also lacked enthusiasm for Chatsworth (Jones 430). Gilpin judged Chatsworth's "celebrity" as outdated, "a glory of the last age" that has "not kept pace with the improvements of the times" (Gilpin 2:216). While Austen might still choose to deviate from Gilpin, she would never break the rules of her own illusion by double dipping. To put the problem in modern terms: in Gotham City no one speaks of New York. In a fictional stand-in for a well-known location, characters do not visit or discuss the referent. To do so would break the spell. Just so, in Mrs. Gaskell's novel *North and South*, the people of an industrial town called Milton speak knowingly of London and Oxford but never Manchester. Pemberley cannot invoke Chatsworth because Austen has taken pains to eliminate it *en route* from the possible list of real-world suspects. Elizabeth and the Gardiners stop at Pemberley only "after having seen all the principal wonders of the country," with Chatsworth named as one such wonder. When Elizabeth bumps into a surprised Mr. Darcy during her tour of Pemberley, she awkwardly explains how his housekeeper "informed us that you would certainly not be here till

to-morrow; and indeed, before we left Bakewell, we understood that you were not immediately expected in the country” (283). The same logic that forced Greene to explain how the genuine town of Bakewell, which lies less than five miles from Chatsworth, “is not, as some have argued, a slip by Jane Austen for the fictitious ‘Lambton,’” also bars Pemberley from being code for the previously namedropped Chatsworth (“Pemberley Revisited” 12). But by mentioning Chatsworth and Bakewell in her story Austen does appear to urge her geographically savvy readers to look around nearby for inspiration.

In 1813, Wentworth Woodhouse was yet another “principal wonder” of this area. With cartographic precision, Austen brings her party within a morning’s ride. Two centuries have diminished the fame and glory of Wentworth Woodhouse, so that it has not had the benefit of serving as the modern setting for any BBC bonnet drama. Sadly this estate, once so renowned for its stunning architecture and influential gardenscapes, suffered great injury from strip-mining during the twentieth century, although ambitious restoration plans (including a hotel by 2015) may soon put it back on the tourist map. In 1813, the home of the Earl Fitzwilliam was as “remarkable” as that of the Duke of Devonshire, if not more so, and drew as many visitors. It would be strange to travel more than 200 miles from Oxford to Chatsworth (plus the initial distance from Hertfordshire) in Austen’s time and not visit its nearby rival in beauty.

Take, for example, the write-up in *A Tour Through the Northern Counties of England* (1802) by Richard Warner, a prolific travel writer whose guidebook on Bath we know the Austens owned. After many pages of praise, the beauties of Wentworth Woodhouse so exhaust Warner’s “powers of description” that he eventually resigns himself to a panoptic summary that bears a striking resemblance to Elizabeth’s admiration for Pemberley: “it is difficult to say whether the beauty of nature, the efforts of art, or the operations of taste, are to be most admired. . . . [W]e had no hesitation in pronouncing it to be the finest place we had ever seen” (Warner 1:225). Pemberley House, of course, remains a fictional place—a great mirage of literature. We should not seek it so literally in the real world that we deny Austen her talent for conjuring. Even so, Pemberley’s stubborn association with Chatsworth—fed by modern bonnet dramas and country-house tours—should make room for other possible influences.

Guided tours are, *Pride and Prejudice* shows us, extremely influential and prejudicial. When Elizabeth first sees Darcy’s estate, Austen provides a guide with another famous surname in the form of the kindly housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds. One editor identifies the name of the housekeeper as a “jokey

allusion” to Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), the great portraitist (Jones 431). A reader’s knowledge of the high-society elegance of the painted portraits by Reynolds augments the housekeeper’s “important verbal portrait of Darcy” (Jones 431). In a cheeky acknowledgement of her name, it is Mrs. Reynolds who leads Elizabeth and the Gardiners on a tour of the Pemberley “picture-gallery.” In the presence of Darcy’s portrait, does Mrs. Reynolds give her warm account of him as “the best landlord, and the best master . . . that ever lived”—an account which must override the story’s reigning prejudice and turn Elizabeth’s opinion (276). Punning on the name of her housekeeper, Austen neatly appropriates the persuasive powers of a genuine Reynolds.¹⁶

For Austen, this association between the characters of *Pride and Prejudice* and the portraits of Reynolds lingered. Just a few months after the novel’s publication, she attended a large retrospective of the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds in London at the British Institution. The long-awaited show proved a museum blockbuster, the social event of the season, with up to eight hundred people a day attending its much-publicized three-month run, from 10 May to 14 August. The opening gala was a red-carpet affair attended by the Prince Regent, Lord Byron, and actress Sarah Siddons. Jane Austen saw the exhibit on the 24th of May. Among the pictures in the gallery, Reynolds’s portraits of “abnormally interesting people,” whom we now term celebrities, offer concrete examples of how someone like Austen, who did not personally circulate among the social elite, was nonetheless immersed in England’s vibrant celebrity culture (Roach 1).

In a letter to Cassandra, Austen turns such London gallery visits into a virtual search for “M^{rs} Bingley” and “M^{rs} Darcy.” First, she mentions attending an “Exhibition in Spring Gardens”:

It is not thought a good collection, but I was very well pleased—particularly . . . with a small portrait of M^{rs} Bingley, excessively like her. I went in hopes of seeing one of her Sister, but there was no M^{rs} Darcy. (24 May 1813)

Although she fears that there is “no chance of her in the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Paintings which is now shewing in Pall Mall, & which we are also to visit,” she still jokes, “I dare say M^{rs} D. will be in Yellow” (24 May 1813). That evening Austen adds to her letter, reporting on the visit to the Reynolds show:

We have been both to the Exhibition & Sir J. Reynolds’,—and I am disappointed, for there was nothing like M^{rs} D. at either.—I can only imagine that M^r D. prizes any Picture of her too much to like



Thomas Rowlandson, British Institution, Pall Mall (1808), showing the exhibit space where Austen looked for “M^{rs} D.” in 1813—recreated at What Jane Saw. Private Collection.

it should be exposed to the public eye.—I can imagine he w^d have that sort [of] feeling—that mixture of Love, Pride & Delicacy.—Setting aside this disappointment, I had great amusement among the Pictures. (24 May 1813)

Although we do not know whose celebrity portrait, “in Yellow,” Austen had been hoping to spot, this letter strongly suggests that she had a particular real-world referent in mind for Elizabeth Bennet, too.¹⁷

Prompted by a curiosity to see “what Jane saw” and supported by Liberal Arts Instructional Technologies at the University of Texas at Austin, I recently led a team that reconstructed this Reynolds exhibit as a room-by-room virtual gallery. The original 1813 “Catalogue of Pictures”—a one-shilling pamphlet purchased by visitors as a guide to the exhibit—helped identify the show’s 141 paintings. Armed with surviving copies of this pamphlet, narrative accounts in nineteenth-century books, and the precise architectural measurements of

the British Institution's exhibit space, we built the *What Jane Saw* (www.what-janesaw.org) website, which launched on the 24th of May 2013—two hundred years to the day that Austen attended this exhibit. In the first four months since the launch, 72,000 unique users from over 100 countries had already visited *What Jane Saw*. In this free on-line gallery, anyone can scan the walls, like Jane herself, for possible portraits of her imaginary characters.

New digital technologies are providing tools that can help rebuild the visual and historical context so important to our understanding of Austen's influences and contemporary cultural references. Perhaps these new technologies can further catch Austen, as Woolf put it, in the act of greatness, by retrieving from the lost annals of history some of the materials she ingeniously reworked into her fictions. With the new digital toolkit comes a democratization of knowledge. It is not just the purview and pleasure of academics to track precise distances in the novels or recover the lost texts, objects, or social events that surrounded Jane Austen. Historical recovery and the visualization of Austen's world can and should actively involve all of her fans—all of us.

Pride and Prejudice may be “timeless” in terms of its appeal and popularity, but today we are living in a particularly good time to understand how this novel is also very much a work “of its time.”

NOTES

In this plenary address, Janine Barchas extends and distills arguments made in her book *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen: History, Location, and Celebrity* (2012). The few paragraphs of overlap with that book are reproduced here with kind permission of Johns Hopkins University Press.

1. Robert Benson (1676–1731) was the first to be raised to the peerage as Baron Bingley, of Bingley, Yorkshire, “a creation which led to much carping about his lowly origins and want of a coat of arms” (Handley). Via the husband of Bingley's eldest daughter, Harriet Benson, the estate fell to George Fox Lane, second Lord Bingley (1697–1773), a prominent Tory politician. In Austen's lifetime, James Fox Lane (1774–1821) inherited Bramham Park but not the title. A man known for his kindness of heart and fondness for sport, “Jimmy” was a close friend of the Prince Regent. He proudly refused an offer to have the Bingley peerage renewed for him by Pitt the Younger.

2. To calibrate such a distance to its historical context, one need only quote Mr. Darcy, who judges even fifty miles an easy distance for someone with access to good roads and a decent carriage: “And what is fifty miles of good road? Little more than half a day's journey. Yes, I call it a *very* easy distance” (201).

3. The Bingley name connects itself to the Fitzwilliams of Yorkshire along multiple axes, since a Thomas Bingley (1757–1832), a landowner with a deep family history in the region, was an early partner in the Swinton Pottery soon known as Rockingham Works, the manufacturer of fineware that operated under the egis of the family at Wentworth Woodhouse. Early incarnations of the Rockingham Pottery traded under the banners of “Bingley, Wood, & Co.” as well as

“Greens, Bingley and Company.” The “BINGLEY” mark may have been used on Rockingham pottery from 1778 to 1806, the years Bingley was a co-partner. See Cox 384.

4. For a full transcription, see also Byrne 174.

5. See also Greene’s “Partial Pedigree.”

6. This annual income, which “probably at least doubled over the following thirty years,” well outstrips that of Austen’s own hero (Farrell).

7. Although no inventory of the Steventon library survives, the *Godmersham Park Library Catalogue* records five different editions of the *Peerage*, published between 1753 and 1810 in multiple formats: in octavo the Knights owned “Peerage of England 4 vols London 1735,” “Peerage of England 2 vols London 1769,” and “Peerage 3 vols London 1769,” while in the smaller duodecimo format they kept a “Pocket Peerage 2 vols London 1790” and “Peerage 2 vols 1810.”

8. Greene particularly points to William Wentworth Fitzwilliam (1748–1833), Robert D’Arcy (1718–78), and Charles Watson Wentworth (1730–82).

9. The protracted legal contest over Wentworth Castle occurred between 1799 and 1803 and is discussed in Malcomson. For speculation about why this historical dispute can fix a date for the composition of *Lady Susan*, please see chapter 1 in Barchas’s *Matters of Fact*, which also contains more information about Wentworth Woodhouse.

10. In 1807, a London newspaper account of the “Grand Fete at Wentworth” mentions, for example, how “The Hon. Mrs. Vernon” lost a diamond earring during the festivities at Wentworth Woodhouse, which “was not only found, but uninjured” (*The Morning Chronicle*, 3 Nov. 1807).

11. “One has not great hopes from Birmingham. I always say there is something direful in the sound” (336).

12. For the AGM audience, I illustrated the distances between locations mentioned in the novel with screenshots from GoogleMaps. Although those slides are not reproduced here, a modern reader can easily recreate them.

13. I would like to thank Thomas Rand for generously redirecting me to Stuart Tave’s book and thereby pointing out the line of inquiry in this paragraph.

14. Greene first offered this idea at the inaugural JASNA meeting in 1979, where he matched slides of Chatsworth to the descriptions of Pemberley (“Pemberley Revisited”). He later expanded upon his argument in a 1988 journal article (“Original of Pemberley”).

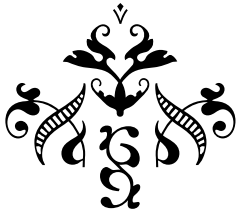
15. Chatsworth was the former home of the celebrity socialite Georgiana Cavendish (1757–1806), Duchess of Devonshire.

16. For a fuller discussion of Austen’s references to famous painters by means of leading names in her novels, see Barchas’s “Artistic Names.”

17. Jocelyn Harris has suggested actress Dorothy Jordan as one possible celebrity model for Elizabeth Bennet.

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Measuring Austen's *Condescension*

SAYRE GREENFIELD

Sayre Greenfield is professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. He has spoken on Jane Austen on three continents, including presentations at JASNA's AGMs, often in duet with his wife, Linda Troost. Together they co-edited *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (1998, 2nd ed. 2001), now being translated into Chinese.

A MODERN DESCENDENT OF Mr. Bennet, savoring the delights of Mr. Collins's rhetoric, might well react to his favorite term for Lady Catherine de Bourgh's kindness, *condescension*, with some uncertainty. Could Lady Catherine's patronizing attitude to others ever have been considered as an admirable quality by a sensible man? Is it simply Mr. Collins's overuse of the word or his misunderstanding of its meaning that marks his folly? The answer to the first question—if Lady Catherine truly had *condescension*—would be yes: during Jane Austen's own time, the majority of applications of *condescension* are strongly positive. The answer to the second question is more complicated, and it requires measuring various resonances of *condescension* in the period leading up to the publication of *Pride and Prejudice*. Mr. Collins certainly does not misunderstand the word, but he also does not see the moral dangers and ironic possibilities in the word and the attitude that a select group of writers in the early nineteenth century were beginning to recognize.

Jane Austen did not view her words as inert material but considers their movement through time. Notably in *Northanger Abbey*, she has Henry Tilney comment upon the modern broader applications of *nice*—meaning “pleasant”—against the older, more particular meaning of “discriminating” (107–08). J. F. Burrows, in his 1987 book *Computation into Criticism*, demonstrates that Austen sometimes used words in a state of “decay”—words whose usage was shifting—to delineate character (64–65). Burrows studies small words like *quite* and *very*, but *condescension*, too, was undergoing shifts in Austen's era.

The modern reader now has ways to recapture this past, electronic ways, as searchable databases of historical texts have proliferated.¹ These digital collections of novels, other books, and newspapers allow an intensely focused sort of research on particular words. Through the search engines that accompany these databases, one can perform computer-aided scans of newspapers and books dating from Austen's time to see the context of specific words for her contemporary readers. Austen's words can have nuanced meanings that her audience would have unconsciously sensed or overtly recognized but that we in the twenty-first century do not. We can, however, retrospectively capture the developments of words in their cultural motions, which turn out to be different for different genres of writing. Specifically, novelists in particular, and at least one moralist, were becoming suspicious of *condescension* in the early nineteenth century, when most writers still used the word as honest praise or even as a divine attribute.

The verb *condescend* appears by the mid-fourteenth century, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and the lowering of oneself that it implies seems a positive thing. Though the *OED* takes the noun, *condescension*, back to 1642, a search through the Early English Books Online database finds a number of earlier examples. In the early seventeenth century, the word sometimes neutrally means "a compromise" but more often means "a voluntary lowering of oneself," and it is frequently applied to God. From 1608 we find, of the Israelites, "the mercifull inclination of God . . . and fatherly condescention vnto them" (Willet 16). Indeed, all the appearances of the noun in the early seventeenth century, in either meaning, occur in religious passages. *Condescension* soon expands its applications, and yet a sampling of the first forty Google Books hits on the word from the years 1712–1718 still shows twenty-six distinctly religious uses. By the time Austen was drafting *First Impressions*, in 1796–1797, about half of the books published or republished that year, in the sampling from Google Books, use the word in a theological sense: "O! what condescension, what humiliation, is this in God, to behold the things that are done on earth!" (Huntington 135) and (in a 1796 reprint of a 1768 book), "Such being the dignity of our wonderful Sponsor, it was by his own voluntary condescension that he became incarnate" (Booth 316). To find more uses from 1796–1797, we can switch databases to Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO), where the whole process of sorting out texts *first* published in those years is easier. Here a sampling of twenty new texts from those years found seven theological uses, such as "Blessed God, *how great is thy goodness!* How wonderful is thy condescension, in permitting us *to call upon thy name*"