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**FROM LANDSCAPES TO MINDSCAPES: ECOCRITICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON THE SENSE OF PLACE IN JANE AUSTEN'S *EMMA*
FİZİKSEL MANZARALARDAN ZİHİNSEL MANZARALARA: JANE AUSTEN'İN
EMMA'SINDAKİ MEKAN KAVRAMINA EKOELEŞTİREL YAKLAŞIMLAR**

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816) with a specialized interest in environmental consciousness and place-based identities, presented in the novel, through a close textual analysis of the relationship between the characters and their environment. Accordingly, it discusses the potential of the sense of place to invoke certain environmental values through which the readers could appreciate the interdependent relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings. To this end, it first discusses how Austen's "environmental imagination" (to use Lawrence Buell's term) works through *Emma* to draw a parallelism between the environment in which she grew up as a child, that is, Steventon, and her fictional environment, Highbury, that she created for this specific novel. The reflections of her environmental imagination are particularly worth revisiting in line of the environmental ethics philosopher Jim Cheney's idea of the parallelism between "landscapes and mindscapes" and Holmes Rolston III's "storied residences". These two theorists similarly suggest that landscapes are directly or indirectly reflected through mindscapes, and narrative is the most convenient mode to contextualize this parallelism. Building on these theoretical insights, this article displays how Austen is a keen observer of her natural surroundings, arguing that there is a place-based approach in her characters that potentially offer an environmental consciousness for the reader in *Emma*, explored within the special light of the ecocritical understanding of place.

Keywords: Sense of Place, Jane Austen, Landscape, *Emma*, Mindscape, Ecocriticism

Öz

Bu makale, Jane Austen'in *Emma* romanını (1816), kitapta sunulan çevre bilincine ve yer temelli kimliklere özel olarak odaklanarak, karakterler ve çevreleri arasındaki ilişkiyi yakın bir metinsel analiz ile incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Buna göre, mekân kavramının, okuyucularda insanlar ve doğal çevreleri arasındaki birbirine bağlı ilişkiyi takdir edebilecekleri belirli çevresel değerleri uyandırma potansiyelini tartışır. Bu amaçla, ilk olarak, Austen'in "çevresel hayal gücünün" (Lawrence Buell'in terimini kullanırsak) *Emma* aracılığıyla, kendisinin çocukken büyüdüğü çevre, yani Steventon ile bu roman için özel olarak yarattığı kurgusal çevre olan Highbury arasında bir paralellik çizmek için nasıl çalıştığını tartışır. Austen'in çevresel hayal gücünün yansımaları, özellikle çevre etiği filozofu Jim Cheney'nin "manzaralar ve zihinsel manzaraları" ve Holmes Rolston III'ün "öyküleşen ikametleri" arasındaki paralellik fikri doğrultusunda tekrar gözden geçirilmeye değerdir. Benzer şekilde, bu iki kuramcı, fiziksel manzaraların doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak zihin manzaraları aracılığıyla yansıtıldığını ve anlatının bu paralelliği bağlamsallaştırmak için en uygun ifade biçimi olduğunu öne sürerler. Bu kuramsal kavrayışlar üzerine inşa edilen bu makale, Austen'in kendi doğal çevresinin nasıl keskin bir gözlemcisi olduğunu göstermekle birlikte, karakterlerinde, ekoeleştirel mekân anlayışının ışığında incelenen *Emma*'da okuyucuya potansiyel olarak bir çevre bilinci sunan yer temelli bir yaklaşım olduğunu iddia eder.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Mekan Kavramı, Jane Austen, Manzara, *Emma*, Zihinsel Manzara, Ekoeleştiri.

INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen's (1775-1817) works have been at the center of literary critical attention that develop various approaches to her oeuvre, ranging from cultural, historical, materialist to feminist perspectives since the publication of *Jane Austen and Her Art* by Mary Lascelles in 1939, serving as the primary example of modern Austen studies. Lascelles opens Austen's narrative style for discussion with a detailed analysis of her "curiously chameleon-like faculty" (1939/1991, p. 102) in Austen's novels. Her works—*Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), and her posthumous ones *Persuasion* (1817) and *Northanger Abbey* (1817)—are most popularly treated as novels of manners that emphasize Austen's talent in realistic portrayal of her contemporary middle class manners in the genre. Besides her vivid depictions of the 19th century English society, Austen's fiction seems to transcend its time with her employment of such universal themes as search for love, class consciousness, or marriage. This is why contemporary interest in Austen still displays itself through a good number of screen adaptations (both television series and movies) of Austen's works as well as productions that take on her works like the comedy play, improvised Austen novel, *Austentatious* (2011), a romantic comedy movie *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2007), or Seth Graham Smith's mash-up book *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016). Austen's modern reception has varied its perspectives towards her works to form a more particularized viewpoint, leaving behind general critical acclamation of her fiction. To name a few, *The Postcolonial Austen* (2000) is a collection edited by You-me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan; Sandie Byrne's collection *Jane Austen's Possessions and Disposessions* (2014), by tracing the impact of objects in Austen's novels, reveals how the idea of ownership is presented through symbolic and social constructions of the objects in her narratives. Or, John Wiltshire's *The Hidden Jane Austen* (2014) depicts Austen's meticulous representation of human psychology through memory. This article also aims to draw attention to a specialized interest in environmental consciousness and place-based identities, presented in Austen's *Emma* through a close textual analysis. Although there are previous critical works that examine Austen's landscapes (e.g. *Jane Austen and the English Landscape* (1996) by Mavis Batey), the dominant tendency is to search for Austen's attachment to the land as part of her nationality and her consciousness in relation to the environment remains unelaborated. Therefore, this

article not only displays how Austen is a keen observer of her natural surroundings but also argues, in light of/through the ecocritical understanding of place, that there is a place-based approach in her characters that potentially offer an environmental consciousness for the reader in *Emma*.

Accordingly, it aims to answer such questions as whether it is still possible to imagine that the sense of place in this novel invokes certain environmental values through which the readers could appreciate the interdependent relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings. How does such limited representation of the physical environment—rather solely focused on the lovely village of Highbury— contribute to the characters’ as well as the readers’ conception of the natural world? Or, another question would be whether the novel addresses any environmental concerns for the depicted setting or fails to develop any consciousness in relation to its physical environment. This article concentrates on searching for probable answers to such questions with an aim to show that Austen’s attention to the setting indeed reveals a valuable but yet undiscerned effort to respect the natural world and that her setting is decorated with romanticized depictions of the English countryside. To this end, it first discusses how Austen’s “environmental imagination” (to use Lawrence Buell’s term) works through *Emma* to draw a parallelism between the environment in which she grew up as a child, that is, Steventon, and her fictional environment, Highbury, that she created for this specific novel. Then, it attends to the depictions of other particular locations in the novel that are part of the setting as well as those other spots, which are mentioned by the characters, sometimes for their recreational potential like Bath or southern seaside resorts, or sometimes for their unpleasing industrial atmosphere like London to discuss how Austen associates certain environmental values with each place. Lastly, this article concludes with the idea that the prospective honeymoon of Emma and Mr Knightley at the seaside can be analyzed as a chance for Emma to transgress her spatial boundaries and acquire a new perspective considering the direct/indirect influence of the natural environment over individuals.

LANDSCAPES AND MINDSCAPES

Emma, Jane Austen’s fourth novel, tells the story of its eponymous character, who stands out as a twenty-one-year-old girl who is “handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 1) at the beginning of the novel. Although Emma Woodhouse highly entertains herself with matchmaking and boasts herself on finding perfect matches for people for some time, she experiences a controversial personal relationship that makes her question her own

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talents. Of the opinion that Mr Elton would be a better match for her friend Harriet than Robert Martin, Emma fails to see the real nature of not only Harriet's feelings but also her own for Mr Knightley. All the mismatched couples finally find their true partners. Emma, thus, goes through a moral transformation throughout the novel, and she learns to embrace her errors of judgement and to become a more mature person in her celibate life. Basically, the novel portrays Emma's learning process via domestic realism and social mannerisms.

The setting for Emma's transfiguration into a new set of morals is mainly a fictional English countryside that Austen is proud to portray in her works. It is particularly originated in Austen's aim to represent "3 or 4 families in a Country Village" as it was what she chose to 'work on,' uniting them with an elegant setting and then playing out their social dramas" (Watkins, 1990, p. 52). In creating the appropriate fictional setting for Emma's social drama, Austen is quite economical (or we can even say almost frugal) in terms of depicting a variety of settings since the characters hardly leave the country houses where they live in the small town of Highbury. *Emma*, thus, realizes to a remarkable extent, as Oliver MacDonagh accurately posits, "Jane Austen's famous recipe for the domestic novel" since "the entire action is practically confined to a single place. The horses may have to be taken out to convey Mr Woodhouse to Randalls, or Emma to the ball at the Crown Inn, and people walk ceaselessly to and fro, even a little beyond the extremities of the village proper" (1991, p. 130). Still, mostly the setting remains internal to a great extent while the characters keep talking about visiting certain places other than Highbury. With her interest in interiors of the places rather than their surroundings in parallel to her interest in her characters' intentions rather than their actions, Austen exclusively keeps certain details to herself or to her narrator. In other words, she apparently "handles the setting in *Emma* sketchily, summarily, piecemeal in some respects" (Bramer, 1960, p. 150), mostly presented through the dialogues among the characters.

It is not surprising that Austen endows her fictional setting, Highbury, with some autobiographical details that mirror her "lifetime beloved Hampshire countryside," which mostly "maintained its serene rural appearance" (Watkins, 1990, p. 53). "Highbury," the narrator informs, is "the large and populous village almost amounting to a town, to which Hartfield, in spite of its separate lawn and shrubberies and name, did really belong" (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 7). Emma's rural setting of Highbury similarly reflects a nostalgic view of the pre-industrial countryside just like "[h]er own

country village of Steventon,” which “undoubtedly provided some inspiration for her delightful craft” (Watkins, 1990, p. 52). In her work *Jane Austen’s Town and Country Style*, Susan Watkins (1990) points to the resemblances between Austen’s real hometown and her fictional settings as such:

The natural beauty of gently sloping hills, wide open meadows and timbered fields was gradually being seamed with fast-growing hedgerows and the occasional low stone wall imposed by the laws of enclosure. Yet the uneven patchwork appearance of the land, as it increasingly became divided into individual holdings, had an attractive sense of order about it. (1990, p. 53)

Watkins states, “[d]espite the rumblings of the Industrial Revolution” (1990, p. 52), Austen had the opportunity of growing up in a pastoral environment which is still underlined by an ancient sense of feudalism as there were “the manor houses,” or “the country seats of baronets” (1990, p. 53) in her hometown. Although there are ample similarities between her literary landscapes and the actual places she lived in, I believe, Austen’s fictional landscapes offer more than a loyal representation of her authentic experiences in place and turn out to be critically more engaging with these landscapes that she interacted in her lifetime.

It is particularly possible when these ideas are analyzed in line of the environmental ethics philosopher Jim Cheney’s idea of the parallelism between “landscapes and mindscapes” (1993, p. 31), which suggests that landscapes are directly or indirectly reflected through mindscapes. Mindscape is a term that he introduces to refer to the narrative or discourse developed in relation to place. Cheney argues that narrative is the only formative means to acknowledge “the epistemological function of place in construction of our understanding of self, community, and world” (1993, p. 23). In other words, for Cheney, “constructed narratives of self-in-place” (1993, p. 30) or “bioregional narratives of place” (1993, p. 30) provide an explanation for the ways that structure an individual’s behaviors as well as the way society functions. Cheney’s perspective offers a significant insight into the idea of place and it is possible to look into the literary places as a reflection of part of the author’s or the character’s mindscapes. Cheney, thus, treats narrative as a potential source to inform us about place-based relationships that organize not only how human beings physically and socially shape their environment but also how their spatial imagination is always in a transformative interaction with their real environment. Austen’s *Highbury*, reminiscent of her Steventon, becomes Emma’s landscape through which the reader could observe the impact of the place on her conception of the natural environment.

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Additionally, Cheney refers to Holmes Rolston III's notion of "storied residences," which he uses to accentuate the significance of place-based narratives on which human beings rely to make sense of the world that they live in. For Rolston III, storied residences in nature lead people to come to conclusion with the idea that "the passage of time integrates past, present, and future in a meaningful career" (1988, p. 351). The way people construct their place-based identities turns into a chronological whole by means of narrative. Building on the place-based narratives of Rolston III and Cheney, I argue that Austen's *Emma* can be read as an example of storied residence for the protagonist as well as the author. Lawrence Buell, similarly treats places "as the specific resources of environmental imagination" (2001, p. 56), and confirms that literary places contribute to the development of environmental consciousness through their fictional construction. So, although it would mean venturing almost at an intentional fallacy here, it would still do justice to Austen's parallel use of the landscapes and mindscapes of her characters that she vividly depicts for the reader. Her environmental imagination can be traced throughout the details that the text provides in relation to the picturesque nature of the physical environment in Highbury. Mavis Batey similarly points out,

[i]f Jane Austen describes specific scenes in her novels, they were always places with which she was acquainted or had read about, such as Bath, Box Hill, Blaise Castle, Portsmouth, Lyme Regis, the Peak district. She counselled another niece, her brother James's daughter, Anna, who aspired to novel writing, how important it was not to introduce unfamiliar local colour: '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. Stick to Bath and the Foresters. There you will be quite at home.' (1996, p. 12)

Austen's landscape of her fiction in general and of *Emma* in particular depends on her familiarity with the places that she lived or partly spent some time in. Through her experiential understanding of place, she presents her protagonist's mindscape, which is inevitably personal reflections of her sense of place, based on the relationship with the limited environments that she lived in. It is particularly reflected through her connection with the local environment and the social structures that regulate the relationship between individuals and their natural surroundings.

EMMA'S PLACE-BASED NARRATIVE

Constructed through both Austen's imaginary and autobiographical settings, this novel corresponds to the call for recontextualizing the sense of place to model, , "an attentiveness, an attunement to the words and to the world that acknowledges the intricate, inextricable networks linking culture and environment" (p. 559) which Jonathan Bate (1999) believes that *Emma* modestly upholds. Bate strongly claims that Austen's insistence on the countryside environment as opposed to "our metropolitan modernity" (1999, p. 558) does not suggest that she advocates a return to these values which strictly differentiate between rural environment as nature and urban places as culture. For Bate, Austen's fictive world creates an opportunity that "may serve as an analogy for the human capacity, in Thoreau's phrase with regard to his time in Walden woods, 'to live deliberately—to live, that is to say, with thoughtfulness and care for the earth'" (1999, p. 559). I also subscribe to Bate's view with a further inquiry into the ways how Austen's spatial frugality in *Emma* may ironically bloom into a narrative that generates capacious place-conscious environmental values. Austen does not limit her vision to a mere dedication to the preindustrial nostalgia of her countryside that would encourage a naïve conception of the natural world although she keeps herself at a critical distance with the consequences of modern industrialism.

The number of the environments that depict Emma's world is quite limited, pointing to the problem of reaching any clear vision of her interest in landscape. Still, *Emma* is exceptionally "the only one of Austen's novels to observe unity of place" (Brown, 2014, p. 27). Austen rarely describes the landscape for the reader and rather presents a highly confined spatial vision for her characters through which it becomes more difficult to take the liberty "to imagine appropriate landscapes and settings" (2014, p. 20) as Brown rightly asserts. Other than such exceptional moments that Emma leaves Hartfield either to go to the Randalls or to the Eltons, offering rare opportunities for the reader to observe Emma's natural surroundings, the setting is usually presented through the dialogues between Emma and her visitors at Hartfield. She and her visitors frequently prefer to talk about other places such as southern sea resorts, London, or Bath as part of their daily conversations. Although Emma delights in such exchanges of her visitors' travel stories, she cannot feel comfortable at all with the idea of travelling from Highbury to other places. She even cries "'Come, come,' ... feeling this to be an unsafe subject, "I must beg you not to talk of the sea. It makes me envious and miserable;—I

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who have never seen it! South End is prohibited, if you please” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 81). Actually, she does not live very far away from the seaside, or she is just 16 miles away from London to which she has never been either. Travelling counts as one of the topics that Emma refrains from spending her time talking on with her friends since she feels quite inexperienced or unsafe about it. Emma could still be one of the most mobile female characters developed by Austen since she has the liberty of using his father’s carriage to travel at least within Highbury or to Donwell Abbey. It is not surprising that unlike other male characters who travel at their will, as a young woman Emma is confined to a few places—mostly indoors—, indicating how gendered her space is (Wiltshire, 1997, p. 69). However, she seems to enjoy this confinement as it entails many social events that she is quite fond of, and she thus acts reluctant on matters of leaving her small village. Highbury is where Emma situates herself and which other characters remain attached to although they at times change places. Not only in relation to Emma but also other characters’ opportunity to explore other places, MacDonagh is quite right to observe:

It is almost literally parochial: our attention is generally focused upon a single parish; the only excursions undertaken are to the neighbouring Donwell and Box Hill. As with the speech, much of the action is reported, and this includes all extra-Highbury activity, such as Jane Fairfax’s affair at Weymouth, Frank Churchill’s efforts to extricate himself from Yorkshire and Richmond, and Mr Knightley’s reawakened domestic appetite, and Harriet’s and Robert Martin’s reconciliation, in London. Half of the characters never leave Highbury at all during the twelve months covered by the story. (1991, p. 130)

As MacDonagh befittingly remarks, the provincial setting of the novel excludes all other locales outside Highbury to such an extent that they are only fit to be anecdotal. Emma is only interested in hearing about the reported actions of other characters in *non*-Highbury places, which stand out as enjoyable pieces for her in daily conversations. However, she does not think of travelling outside Highbury or planning to make some trips to neighbor towns since Highbury is a spatial marker of her identity and it is as if she would not be Emma outside Highbury. It emphasizes Emma’s place-based definition of her identity, which makes it almost impossible for her to imagine even of a visit outside her hometown.

Another example to Emma's respectively limited mobility can be observed in the scene where she goes "a little way out of Highbury" for the purpose of visiting a poor family with Harriet (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 67). With her current intention to arrange another matchmaking between Mr. Elton and Harriet, Emma thinks that it is best to take the Vicarage-lane, "a lane leading at right-angles from the broad, through irregular, main street of the place" (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 67) that is close to Mr. Elton's abode. On their little excursion, Emma tells Harriet: "I do not often walk this way *now*, ... but *then* there will be an inducement, and I shall gradually get intimately acquainted with all the hedges, gates, pools, and pollards of this part of Highbury" (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 67). Although Emma has now a motivation to go out of her regular way for the sake of her companion's future engagement with Mr. Elton, it is the first time that she displays a manifest interest in her natural surroundings. She even expresses her intention to "get intimately acquainted with" the landscape. Emma's expression—though, given her character, we cannot be sure about whether she means it or not—can be considered as another example for her attempt to create a place-based identity, which is already in progress in terms of her social world but lacks the greatest part for her physical environment. The choice of the verb "get acquainted" with the particular adverb "intimately" works to generate a possibility to acquire a personal relationship with the environment.

There is another moment of Emma's involvement with nature, in which she seems to embrace herself as an individual who is in harmony with her natural surroundings and craves for a personal engagement with the environment. She observes the rain at her window and contemplates as such:

The weather continued much the same all the following morning; and the same loneliness, and the same melancholy, seemed to reign at Hartfield—but in the afternoon it cleared; the wind changed into a softer quarter; the clouds were carried off; the sun appeared; it was summer again. With all the eagerness which such a transition gives, Emma resolved to be out of doors as soon as possible. Never had the exquisite sight, smell, sensation of nature, tranquil, warm, and brilliant after a storm, been more attractive to her. She longed for the serenity they might gradually introduce... (Austen, 1816/2003, pp. 332–333)

Emma barely feels the need to go out and to experience what the physical environment offers for her. This is one of the rare moments where she is attracted to the sensations that nature is ready to give her. As a character, she is more interested in using the word "nature" to refer to "human nature" (p. 142), "nature of things" (p. 84, p. 87, p. 99, p. 169, p. 196, p. 247, p. 343), "good nature" (p. 16,

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p. 43) or “good-natured” (p. 22, p. 51, p. 61, p. 165, p. 175, p. 176, p. 253, p. 258, p. 277, p. 304) rather than the physical nature. It is quite interesting that she develops a certain attention to her natural environment throughout the novel as this scene well portrays. She expresses her need to rely on her experience with nature as a way to make herself feel better. This is unlikely of Emma to search for an authentic union with nature as she is most of the time at home with her indoor environment.

A more significant scene that depicts Emma's appreciation of her natural surroundings occurs during a trip that she takes to Mr Knightley's country house, which is usually referred to as the strawberry picking party or picnic at Donwell. Emma here displays her delight in the Donwell Abbey as a building and its natural beauty through a walk into nature. Emma here shows the first steps into building such a relationship of care for her natural environment though it is one of the rare times that she ventures to explore her surroundings other than Highbury, and when she is ready to find out about “the very striking beauties which attract sort of parties [others] speak of” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 214). Her feelings after the walk are related to the reader as such:

[I]t was in itself a charming walk, and the view which closed it extremely pretty.—The considerable slope, at nearly the foot of which the Abbey stood, gradually acquired a steeper form beyond its grounds; and at half a mile distant was a bank of considerable abruptness and grandeur, well clothed with wood;—and at the bottom of this bank, favourably placed and sheltered, rose the Abbey Mill Farm, with meadows in front, and the river making a close and handsome curve around it.

It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive. (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 283)

After “taking a few turns together along the walk,” she finds it quite refreshing and calls it “the pleasantest part of the day” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 284). Emma's initial response to the physical environment of the Abbey reflects almost an idealization of the place due to its pastoral values that inspire her with awe towards nature. With its ‘grandeur’ of the bank covered with wood, the Abbey stands out as a place which she considers “sweet to the eye and the mind” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 284). Soon, this “sweet” natural view makes her think about it as a sign of Englishness as she goes on to associate it with “English verdure, English culture, English comfort” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 284).

The English countryside flora, its cultivation, and inspiration for Emma obviously lead her to appreciate the pastoral nature, which looks like a quick transition but not an unexpected one since her voice echoes the mindscape of the period of Regency England. It is a period between 1811–1820, following King George III’s declining mental health, his son Prince of Wales ruled England as Prince Regent, who would be crowned as George IV. The popular tendency concerning pastoral places was to treat the countryside as a valuable natural heritage of the English. This is exactly what Emma thinks of Mr Knightley’s country house Donwell Abbey, both as part of their cultural and natural heritage. She praises the picturesque view of the Abbey as well as her hero Mr Knightley, whose fair and honorable treatment of the house makes it still possible to keep such traditions. “Donwell Abbey,” as Roger E. Moore contends, “is a place where the social and economic functions of the old monastery continue to be ‘done well’” while “Mr Knightley seems a true knight who recognizes and fulfills his responsibilities, a man worthy of safeguarding an abbey’s legacy” (2011, p. 74). The Abbey turns out to be a substantiated form of Englishness and the English landscape, for which Austen obviously reserves some faith, especially if they are well-managed estates.

The idealization of the English countryside is not only specific to Emma’s sense of place in the novel. She is even one of the least enthusiastic characters in observing her natural surroundings since she is more interested in her social atmosphere. For example, Mr Frank Churchill seems “delighted with every thing; admired Hartfield sufficiently for Mr. Woodhouse’s ear; and when their going farther was resolved on, confessed his wish to be made acquainted with the whole village, and found matter of commendation and interest much oftener than Emma could have supposed” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 154). Of course, Frank’s motive to come back to Highbury, as later would be revealed, is quite different than Emma expected, but he seems to be over-enjoying his new environment, saying “Highbury, that airy, cheerful, happy-looking Highbury, would be his constant attraction” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 154).

Similar to the idealization of the rural places in *Emma*, there is a special concern for the small spa towns or southern sea resorts in the novel, which are the popular places that rich people pursue recreation and entertainment at the time. Bath, Somerset, for instance, is referred to in the novel several times and considered to be an admired Georgian spa town that the characters keep talking about. It is also one of the most popular places that have been associated with Austen (Herbert, 2001, p. 328). In *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England*, Roger Sales states that

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[s]easide resorts and spa towns were in the business of providing pleasure for idle young men like Tom Bertram, John Yates and Frank Churchill. Yet they also fulfilled other functions. Besides pandering to the whims of real and imaginary invalids, they provided marriage markets. Mr Elton goes to Bath when he is in need of a wife. ... Dixon certainly brings a portfolio of drawings of his estate at Baly-Craig in Ireland to Weymouth, perhaps with the intention of using them to help him demonstrate his eligibility. (pp.140–141)

In other words, though these places might offer an opportunity to appreciate a different environment than that of their small town for the characters, the main aim of their excursions was to visit these towns to perform what their status requires them to do. Spa towns function both as therapeutic places with their physical elements of hot water baths and as social spaces with the opportunities that they offer for the upper middle class. As it is indicated in the novel, Emma is quite disinterested in visiting any of these recreational places as she is content with both the natural and social world that Highbury not so generously provides for her. She likes being engaged in conversations about those places but prefers not to be in them as her sense of place is defined by her local identity.

Although there is barely a journey that Emma takes outside Highbury, the reader still has the chance to hear about London's atmosphere through the mouth of travelling male characters. It adds up to the sketchily drawn map of *Emma's* setting as part of the narrated places. Through the other characters' views on London's urban environment, the narrator peeks into environmental problems that contemporary England faced at that time. Emma, as a clever young woman, takes active participation in the conversation about London's physical and social environment. With her interest in other environments that she does not live in, Emma shows that her environmental consciousness is not only restricted to the idealization of the pastoral beauties of the English countryside. She is quite aware of the critical remarks about London's air, gradually toxified due to the industrialized atmosphere of the city, depicting her care for the declining environmental values that cannot sustain healthy air condition for city dwellers. In a conversation between Mr Woodhouse and John Knightley, for example, Mr Woodhouse complains about London's polluted air that makes its inhabitants sick as well:

‘Ah! my poor dear child, the truth is, that in London it is always a sickly season. Nobody is healthy in London, nobody can be. It is a dreadful thing to have you forced to live there! so far off!—and the air so bad!’

‘No, indeed—we are not at all in a bad air. Our part of London is so very superior to others!—You must not confound us with London in general, my dear sir. The neighbourhood of Brunswick Square is very different from almost all the rest. We are so very airy! I should be unwilling, I own, to live in any part of the town;—there is hardly any other that I could be satisfied to have my children in:—but we are so remarkably airy!—Mr. Wingfield thinks the vicinity of Brunswick Square decidedly the most favourable as to air.’ (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 82)

Mr Woodhouse further advises them to stay longer than a week at Hartfield, where, he believes, they will be all different creatures with good-looking faces: “You make the best of it—but after you have been a week at Hartfield, you are all of you different creatures; you do not look like the same” (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 82). Emma’s father’s statement here well corresponds to the idea of parallelism between landscapes and mindscapes, emphasizing how their identity or spirits would be accordingly changed as a result of the experience of Hartfield. Though Emma does not personally contribute to this debate, it is possible to conclude that the narrator selects this controversial dialogue as a significant part of Emma’s perception of the environment as the whole novel is rendered through her reflections on the world. She is well aware of her local environment’s distinction from the urban atmosphere of London: while her rural environment provides her with trees, shrubbery, orchards, or country houses with a familiar social world, the latter seems to offer a bad quality weather, crowds of people and no social affairs that Emma would like to mingle as a matchmaker. The dichotomy between the pastoral and urban environments defines to a certain extent what Austen’s *Emma* presents in terms of sense of place. It is a dichotomy that ecocriticism sets off to eradicate since the first theoretical developments in the field. Yet, within the perspective of this novel, despite creating such a dichotomy that is hard to reconcile to model an environmental agenda to care for both natural and built environments, Austen significantly attains an environmentalist position from which she addresses the sense of place not only from the windows of the cottage houses, or the halls of the manor houses, but at the same time from the English countryside, small spa towns, or the great city London.

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CONCLUSION

Building a sense of place that offers fruitful interpretations about the relationship between the natural world and human beings, Austen makes use of the real landscapes that are shaped through her literary mindscape or environmental imagination. Though it is set in a parochial sense of place, the novel does not fail to indicate its current environmental problems as well as to resonate an attentiveness to the physical environment. It sounds highly intriguing to observe such an attentiveness to nature for Emma as she is a character more interested in her and other characters' social world. Within a contrasting view of Emma's local rural landscape and that of London's urban atmosphere, it is obvious that the narrator brings out environmental concerns about the city life that lacks in air quality due its population and industry. Despite creating such a dichotomy that is hard to reconcile to model an environmental agenda to care for both natural and built environments, Austen significantly attains an environmentalist position from which she addresses the sense of place not only from the windows of the cottage houses, or the halls of the manor houses, but at the same time from the English countryside, small spa towns, or the great city London. With the limited spatial material that she chooses to focus on does Austen create a narrative of self-in-place through her protagonist and character's attachment to their places in *Emma*. Her fictional Highbury becomes Emma's small-scale environment that she has almost no intention to leave behind due to its serenity and grandeur at the same time. Finally, the possibility of expanding the place that Emma's self is situated in arrives with the mentioning of a "fortnight's absence in a tour to the seaside" (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 380), which is taken by the new Mr and Mrs Knightley as their honeymoon plan. It indicates a certain change in Emma's sense of place, even a radical one, as she would get the opportunity to visit the seaside that she mostly hears of at conversations and to come back to her Highbury with a new vision about the place. At the same time, after the marriage, she will be relocated at "the coolness and solitude of Downwell Abbey" (Austen, 1816/2003, p. 276), which she always admires. In conclusion, the novel vividly displays Austen's observations about Emma's natural surroundings through a place-based approach, potentially developing an environmental consciousness for the reader, especially explored within the special light of the ecocritical understanding of place.

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