

# Muse & Musings

*"The company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation"*

## November 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting:

### Recaps of the 2020 Virtual AGM

Instead of an October meeting, JASNA Vancouver members were encouraged to attend the virtual AGM on JA's Juvenilia, originally planned for Cleveland, but moved online because of COVID-19. Members were asked to cover their favourite presentations for this issue.

### A Special Event, a Plenary and two Breakouts

It is such a pleasure to discover that the 2020 Virtual AGM continues to be available to me! As a result, I have been able to enjoy many more presentations than would have been possible had I attended the conference in person.

*Rock Stars of the Regency* was fun and informative – we met Emma Hamilton (portrayed by Emma Brodey), Frances Burney (played by Linda Troost), Dora Jordan (Deborah Barnum), the Prince Regent (Christopher Duda) and Lord Byron (Paul Savidge). They were introduced by Jocelyn Harris as Dolly Parton.



Juliet McMaster (above) is always a delight and her plenary *Here's Looking at You Kid* was a gem. The rowdy behaviour and vigorous action of *The Juvenilia* are vividly portrayed in her illustrations. We had learned



## Winter-spring 2021 virtual meeting dates and newsletter deadlines

Due to COVID-19 all **in-person meetings are suspended** until future notice. However, the following online Zoom meetings have been scheduled:

**February** *Muse & Musings* deadline: January 30

February 13 Video from Williamsburg: Cheryl Butler on "Jane Austen, Netley Abbey and Gothic Tourism"

**April** *Muse & Musings* deadline: March 26

Please see the program of events on our website for more up-to-date information (thanks to webmaster Lauren McMahon):

[JASNA-Vancouver program](#)

earlier that Juliet had decided to go to art school if she was not accepted to Oxford. She did get in, so art became her hobby instead.

Christine Alexander surveyed a variety of youthful writings in her breakout presentation "Why Juvenilia?" She quoted from the diary of Iris Vaughan, who was given a diary in 1897 for her seventh birthday. She also read from *The Young Visitors*, [sic] by Daisy Ashford, where "the young author boldly negotiates the erotic excitement of repressed sexuality in late Victorian courtship." I was taken aback to learn that J.M. Barrie, the first editor of this work, doubled the number of spelling mistakes to "visually emphasize the gap between the innocent nine-year-old-author and her adult themes."

Collins Hemingway's breakout "Three DNA Lines from Austen's Juvenilia" was a serious study of the structures and themes in the Juvenilia that are further developed in Austen's first three novels: *Sense & Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride & Prejudice*. He demonstrated "the evolution from a gifted adolescent to a mature literary artist." Highly recommended.

– Helen Spencer

## Scavenger Hunt: “Run Mad as Often as You Choose”

In the Live Games section of the Social Hour. I had registered for “Jane Austen Bingo,” but got assigned the last session, so with a half hour or so to kill I logged on to the “Virtual Scavenger Hunt,” although I was doubtful as to how successful it could be.

This game involved finding specific items around one’s house and scoring points by being the first to show them to the scorekeeper. Some things were ordinary household objects, some less common, and for some, you had to know the answer to a question about Jane Austen or her writing. There were definitely a few challenging Janeite brainteasers scattered among more general clues. We were all on Zoom, and there was an MC who introduced matters and called the clues and her colleague the scorekeeper.

At the start, all participants were asked to turn off their video and mute themselves, so all we could see and hear were the MC and the scorer. The first clue was something we all had right in front of us – so that was really a bit of a dry-run, quite polite and civilized, and just a few low-key yelps of joy. Then the game became more challenging. So there I was, intensely listening to the clue, then thinking “I’ve got one of those, where the heck is it?” running around the house to retrieve the item and then scrambling back to my computer, and proudly holding the article aloft shouting at the top of my voice, “I’ve got it,” along with a dozen or so others equally excited with their finds.

I had an advantage in that I live in a small rancher-style house, so every room is very close by and accessible without exerting too much physical effort, but many other participants lived in larger, multi-floor houses; in order to enjoy the an uninterrupted AGM experience, many had decamped to the top floor sewing room, or hidden themselves in a corner of the basement so they could participate undisturbed by family or pets. When they arrived with a found item, they had often had to scale two flights of stairs in a hurry and were somewhat out of breath and becoming increasingly dishevelled. Some ordinary-sounding items turned out to be quite rare articles to have in a house these days.

As time went on, and a little more liquid refreshment was enjoyed, people really started to get very animated, and uninhibited. It was great fun. One item requested was a copy of *Persuasions*, which most of us have easily to hand, but the winner would be the one with the oldest copy, and one participant had a copy of the very first issue. Many “ooohs” and “ahhs” over that.

My favourite clue was “a little piece of wilderness” – so a quick sprint into my small garden and a very harsh pull on a Pieris Japonica yielded me a small branch of greenery. I raced back and proudly brandished my prize-

winning contribution in front my computer. It was certainly a much better offering than the rather wilted bunch of cilantro someone offered from their fridge!



*Some of the treasures Joan discovered in the Scavenger Hunt*

I won’t tell you all the clues as this is may be something we try ourselves as a virtual game in the future, but it was great fun, very lively and often needed some good knowledge of Austen and her works. It was very social and a number of us got to know each other very well.

Oh, you wonder, what about the Bingo? Well, I never got there – I was having too much fun where I was, plus during the first 20 minutes of the Scavenger Hunt there were a number of late-comers – turned out they were refugees from the first Bingo session which apparently didn’t go so well, a lot of waiting about and not very challenging – so I figured I was in the most entertaining place – and it turned out I was! – *Joan Reynolds*

## Where did they come from?

I must admit I was never drawn to JA’s Juvenilia. They seemed to me too outrageous, too silly, too over-the-top, and once I read them, I set them aside. But I was interested in **why** Jane Austen ever wrote these works.

After the Virtual AGM I have a much better understanding of where these early works “came from,” and what JA was doing. The following is a combination of the lectures of four different speakers: Professor Douglas Murray (Tennessee), Professor Elizabeth Veisz (Massachusetts), Professor Jason Solinger (Mississippi) and Collins Hemingway (Oregon).

There were mainly three kinds of literature popular in the late 18th century, available to Jane Austen as she was growing up:

1. The Female “Ramble” Novel (Murray)
2. Graveyard School of Poetry (Veisz)
3. Novels disguised as “History”(Solinger)

Examples of the Female “Ramble” Novel are:

- *The Expedition of Little Pickle, or the Pretty Plotter* (1792)
- *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722)
- *The Fair Wanderer: or the Adventures of Ethelinda* (1751)
- *Belinda, or The Fair Fugitive* (1789)

Austen’s reaction to these novels is *Northanger Abbey*.

Examples of the “Graveyard School of Poetry” are:

- Robert Blair’s poem, “The Grave” (1743)
- William Collins’ “Ode to Pity” and “Ode to Fear” (both 1746)

These poems are characterized by a solitary speaker, nocturnal wanderings, churchyards, ruins, and meditation on mortality, fear, and afterlife.

Austen’s reaction to these is her own poem “Ode to Pity” and her juvenilia novel *Evelyn*. Both target the exaggerated fear and timidity.

Examples of novels disguised as “History” are:

- *The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl* (1750)
- *The History of Sophia Shakespeare* (1753)
- *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) by Samuel Richardson
- *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World* (1778) by Fanny Burney



Illustration by Juliet McMaster from *The Beautiful Cassandra*, whose heroine is always on the move.

Behind all these “histories” which were really novels, was the notion that somehow histories are more dignified and high-class, and more sophisticated than a mere novel, considered to be lowbrow. In both the “Female Ramble” novels and those disguised as History, there were some characteristics (I will name just four out of the twelve characteristics named by the speaker:

1. The protagonist is always on the move
2. The protagonist loses one parent or both

3. The protagonist suffers melodramatic setbacks and astounding coincidences
4. The story has badly-behaved guardians, parents and other authority figures

Collins Hemingway traced the origins of JA’s Juvenilia and called it “Three DNA Lines.” He first compared the novels of the time and Jane Austen’s novels this way:

18th Century novels had:

- overblown language (e.g., Radcliffe, Burney)
- wild but generic settings (*Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe)
- contrived story lines
- titled and rich hero and/or heroine
- one-dimensional characters

Jane Austen’s novels have:

- characters who behave naturally
- characters with distinctive voices
- natural plots, which seem no plots at all
- serious exploration of the mind

Thus, this speaker finds the DNA lines this way:

Gothic Parody in Juvenilia → *Northanger Abbey*. In this first-written of Jane’s mature works:

- her father does not lock up Catherine Morland
- her mother does not die giving birth to Catherine, but has several more children
- Catherine is tomboyish
- the hero, Henry Tilney is neither a foundling nor a nobleman, but a clergyman
- neither robbers nor tempests waylay Catherine on her way to Bath
- there are no midnight assassins or drunken gallants

Epistolary in Juvenilia (*The Three Sisters, Love and Freindship* [sic], *Lesley Castle*) → *Lady Susan, Sense and Sensibility*

Language and dialogue in Juvenilia → *Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Emma, and Persuasion*.

These four speakers traced the origins of the Juvenilia to the many books that JA read as a girl, and as a teenager. It was very illuminating to hear these speakers, and I felt I gained a better understanding of these outrageous early works. JA, as a novelist, was rebelling against what was passing as literature at the time, and by experimenting with all these early writings, was building a solid background for her own works and for British novel writing.

– Keiko Parker



### “A Staymaker of Edinburgh”

Kristen Miller Zohn, Georgia Region and Mackenzie Sholtz, South Carolina Region presented on “Underpinnings in the Age of Austen.” They used photos of antique stays plus contemporary prints to “explore the history of staymaking and its place in Georgian fashion and society, the changing styles of stays and corsets during the era, and the raucousness of both Austen’s juvenilia and the depiction of stays in satirical prints.”



Melanie Talkington shows Regency stays at our April 2019 meeting.

Stays were worn by women, children, and some men to achieve upright posture and to walk gracefully, in order to be seen as a superior human in both mind and body. There were custom and “off the rack” stays, as well as a second-hand market. In the 18th century, staymakers were men as they needed strength to push the baleen (“whalebone”) into the stays. The men took the measurements and did the fittings, making it an “intimate business.” Women assisted with the sewing. The stays were constructed with about five layers of fabric, including a removable lining that could be washed. They were worn over linen shifts and most women owned but one pair of stays, often over a lifetime.

“During the years of Austen’s life, the silhouettes of clothing and the staymaker’s trade went through radical changes that were echoed in the era’s underpinnings.” As the dress styles loosened in the late 18th century and into the 19th century, there was less whalebone in the stays, so women could take over the staymaking businesses, including the measurements and fittings. Corsets – as they were now called – were worn over cotton chemises (formerly called shifts) and the corsets now were made with only a few layers of fabric. These corsets created two separate jiggling bosoms, not the “mono” bosom of the mid-18th century. Corsets still had busks; however, unlike the common misconception, busks were flexible

and were shaped to the body. Women might now own four or five corsets to suit different dress styles.

Stays and corsets were considered erotic objects – one had to keep one’s corset on to maintain one’s honour – and they made a good subject for the rather “bawdy humour” and “sexually charged wordplay” in Austen’s juvenilia. For example, in *Love and Freindship*, Gustavus says, “...it is generally beleived [sic] that Philander, is the son of one Philip Jones a Bricklayer and that my Father was one Gregory Staves a Staymaker of Edinburgh.” As Gustavus’s father was not married to his mother, Gustavus was the “bastard” son of someone engaged in an erotic industry.  
– Jennifer Bettiol

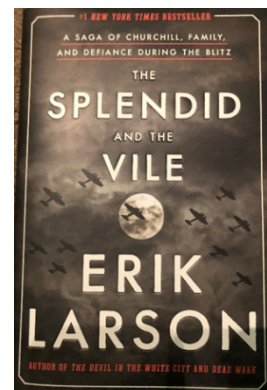
### Book Review

#### *The Splendid and the Vile* by Erik Larson

My thanks to **Suzanne Zullig** from New York, a guest at our November meeting, for reminding me of this “Jane sighting” in *The Splendid and the Vile*.

“Judy’s mother, Venetia, made it her mission to balance the laziness of these summer days by engaging the girls in various intellectual pursuits. She read them the works of Jane Austen, likening Mary and Judy to the “giddy girls” from *Pride and Prejudice*, Kitty and Lydia Bennett, “who were forever off to Meryton to see what the regiments had appeared locally!” as Mary later wrote.” (p193)

This excerpt from Eric Larson’s most recent book *The Splendid and the Vile*, finds Mary Churchill, Winston Churchill’s youngest daughter, visiting her friend Judy at that family’s country home in order to escape the German bombing of London. It is August 1940.



*The Splendid and the Vile* chronicles Winston Churchill’s first year as Prime Minister of Great Britain, from May 10, 1940 to May 10, 1941, drawing on diaries, original archival documents and newly released intelligence reports as his sources. On Churchill’s very first day in office, Hitler invaded Holland and Belgium, France was close to collapse and the evacuation of Dunkirk was only weeks away. In the book we read the day-to-day musings and decisions of Churchill and his

War Cabinet and of the Nazi government; Churchill's eloquent speeches that inspired his people to be fearless in their "darkest hour"; and Churchill's persistent, nuanced correspondence with U.S. President Roosevelt, who refused to commit his country to this "European war."

I recently read this book, by one of my favourite authors, and I highly recommend it. I found it well researched, well written, entertaining and suspenseful. As well as the history, I enjoyed the personal anecdotes about the people around Churchill, including his family members, British staff and politicians, as well as key German figures. For me, balancing the stark political realities with personal stories and emotions made the book very readable and inspiring.  
– Cathleen Boyle

### **Austen sighting**

#### **Beatrix Potter / Anne Eliot**

While leafing through my copy of *Beatrix Potter: A Life in Nature* by Linda Lear (2007), I came across this poignant paragraph about the rapid death from lymphatic leukæmia of her fiancé, Norman Warne, exactly a month after he had proposed to her by mail:

"I thought my story had come right with patience & waiting like Anne Elliott's [sic] did," Beatrix wrote to Millie Warne months later from Bath, the setting of Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion*.

"It was always my favourite and I read the end part of it again last July, on the 26th the day after I got Norman's letter." She had held fast to that ephemeral hope of happiness.

But Anne Elliot's fulfilment was fictional, and Beatrix Potter's loss was terrible and real. p. 204

– contributed by Phyllis Ferguson

### **Zoom meeting December 12, 2020**

#### **"Harmony and Melody in Jane Austen's World"**

Although our December meeting celebrating the birthdays (on December 16) of Jane Austen (245<sup>th</sup>) and Beethoven (250<sup>th</sup>) and featuring Professor Jesse Read was held by Zoom, it ended with our traditional toast to Jane on her (almost) birthday given this year by our librarian, Cathleen Boyle. (See photo on the last page.)

#### **Toast to Jane Austen**

As I was thinking about this toast to Jane Austen today, I reflected on the past nine months of the COVID pandemic, a time of great uncertainty, social isolation and financial hardships. And I thought about Jane Austen, and what relevance she might have for us during this time.

In the summer, I read an article entitled "What Jane Austen Can Teach Us About Staying Home", in which the

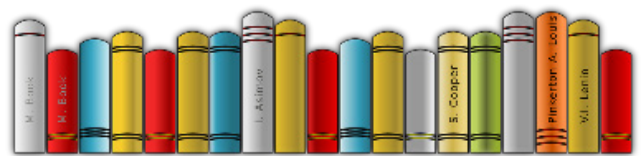
author muses on her family's solitary existence during this COVID time, and what she learned about the joys of being at home and enjoying a relaxed lifestyle with family.

I find other connections as well. As in our current reality, the Regency period was one of financial uncertainty. Due to her family's reduced finances, Jane was forced to accept the generosity of relatives. But she survived, and was able to pursue her lifelong passion for writing, to our benefit. The Bennett and Dashwood families were plagued by financial worries, which reflected the uncertainties faced by many families at this time. They too survived and each member found a life which may or may not have been as expected, but nevertheless turned out well for them.

And although the details are very different from our situation, many of Jane's characters, particularly women, lived a form of social isolation. Whether living in the country or city, their "society" was confined to family and close friends. Certainly single young women had limited social opportunities and spent much of their days at home, wondering what the future might bring, in a world in which they had little influence.

Jane's characters adapted to and accepted their worlds. What I think we can learn from her writings, and what continues to make her relevant today is these characters, who each faced a challenging world, but with the support of family and friends, moved into a new future. I hope the same for all of us. And to bring Beethoven into this toast, certainly his deafness caused him great social isolation, but what beautiful and passionate music he wrote.

And so I propose a toast to Jane Austen, an author born 245 years ago, who still speaks to us today through her novels; and to Ludwig van Beethoven, a composer born 250 years ago, whose music is still enjoyed by so many people today. Let us raise our glasses to Jane Austen and Ludwig van Beethoven. – Cathleen Boyle



### **From our Library**

#### **JASNA Canada library available for members**

Although our own JASNA Vancouver Library is currently inaccessible during Covid, there is another free library resource available exclusively to JASNA Canada members. The JASNA Canada Lending Library is a benefit of your membership that is sadly infrequently used, so we encourage you to take advantage of it. This link has a downloadable listing of the books,

periodicals/newsletters and audio/video materials available and explains the borrowing/return process: [JASNA Canada Library](#).

If you can't find the particular book that you want, recommendations are always being sought for items to add to the library, (especially those items published by academic presses which are very expensive and not always available in public libraries due to their specialized subject-matter.) Email your book suggestions directly to the Librarian, Patricia Wepruk at [patriciawep@gmail.com](mailto:patriciawep@gmail.com). We hope you will take advantage of this special resource. – Joan Reynolds

**A little New Year's cheer from Eileen's Archive  
Newsletter No. 69 – February 2000**

**Dr Johnson's Mulled Wine**

In response to many requests, Jean and Virgil Oriente provided this recipe for the delicious mulled wine enjoyed at the December (1999) meeting.



**Ingredients:** 1 bottle of red wine; 2 cups hot water; 1/3 cup of brandy; 1/3 cup curacao (or other orange liqueur); 6 cloves (to each litre of wine); 12 lumps (i.e. 12 teaspoons) sugar; sliced oranges and lemons; stick of cinnamon.

**Method:** Heat slowly; **do not boil**. Remove the cooked fruit to achieve a somewhat clear liquid. Add a little nutmeg and allow to stand.

**Eileen's Note:** There was none left over.

**Outreach Goals & Plans**

The Programming Committee met October 22, 2020 to discuss our outreach goals, review our present marketing tools and identify how to move forward with member retention and increasing public awareness of our group. Our most successful outreach is having current members tell their friends and families about us and our programs. In addition, our website, Facebook page and annual Jane

Austen Day are attractions. For the foreseeable future, we wish to focus on maintaining and achieving a membership of 40 to 60 people.

During COVID we can take the time to polish our outreach tools as we look forward to meeting again in person, and to be ready for any spinoff interest in our region that will be created by the JASNA AGM to be held in Victoria in 2022.

As an initial step to promote our regional group and Jane Austen, we are highlighting our Regional Coordinator's communications to members with a header to visually identify our Region's name with an accompanying quote from Jane Austen. Also links to our website and Facebook page will be included. Our hope is to encourage members to share the links and forward emails regarding events to their family and friends who are interested in Jane Austen and her times. Please watch for instructions in emails from our RC. Our next project is to look at the websites of other JASNA groups and update our website with new ideas.

If you are interested in working with this outreach team on our website, please contact us by emailing the Regional Coordinator. – Donna Ornstein

**JASNA Vancouver Contacts**

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Program Committee chair:	vacant – looking for a volunteer
Newsletter Editor:	Elsbeth Flood
Website coordinator:	Laureen McMahon
Facebook Administrator:	Joan Reynolds
Library:	Cathleen Boyle & Jennifer Cothran
Austen Extracts:	Aileen Hollifield
Bountiful Basket:	Phyllis Ferguson Bottomer
Outreach Coordinator:	Donna Ornstein

To contact any of these volunteers, email our Regional Co-ordinator at [jasnavancouverrc@gmail.com](mailto:jasnavancouverrc@gmail.com).





**Happy Birthday Jane and Ludwig! Happy New Year!!!**



*JASNA Vancouver members in festive bonnets hoist a glass. Guest speaker Jesse Read 2<sup>nd</sup> row left; toast speaker 2<sup>nd</sup> row centre.*

**This Newsletter**, the publication of the Vancouver Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America, is distributed to members by email and posted on our website. Members who so request may receive a hard copy either at a meeting or in the mail. All submissions and book reviews on the subject of Jane Austen, her life, her works and her times, are welcome.

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