

# The Jane Austen Society of North America

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"What hours of transports we shall spend"

John Galt wrote in 1810 about the Acropolis of Athens: "It's distant appearance somewhat resembles Stirling Castle, but it is inferior in preservation and altitude." Galt's was certainly unlike most views of Greece, and the 'lecture' at UBC in February describing his travels, "A Scotsman's View of Greece, 1810", was just as unlike any other lecture on this subject. Professor C.W.J. Eliot narrated the facts, illustrated by contemporary and recent slides, and Dr. James Russell, in kilt and with appropriate accent, read from John Galt's letters and journals. It was an illuminating combination.

John Galt, born in Scotland in 1779, combined various careers (and several bankruptcies) with literary interests, writing satire, poetry, dramas and novels. "Annals of the Parish", "The Entail", "The Last of the Lairds", and other novels were published a few years after Jane Austen's death, and are considered "microscopic local studies, confined to some Scottish village but seasoned with the most simple and charming humour".

Never robust, Galt set out for a tour of the Mediterranean in 1809, seeking to improve his health. Unlike other British philhellenes, however, he found the ruined antiquities very little to his taste. His comments would have shocked Catherine Morland with "her passion for ancient edifices" and Marianne Dashwood with her raptures about "ruined, tattered cottages" and "twisted, blasted trees". Suffering aches, fevers, and depressions, Galt wrote of the "shapeless ruins of Ephesus", of Corinth having "a mean and ruinous appearance", of Argos, "the ancient ruins are trifling", and considered the gate of the palace at Morea "not unlike the entrances to some of the closes in Edinburgh". His greatest praise was for the mausoleum at Mycenae, "a curiosity worth going a couple of miles out of the way to see". And everywhere fleas assailed him "with feet and fang".

When his health improved, however, Galt wrote in a better humour and with a sympathetic eye for the country and the people, of the "infinitely sublime spectacles" of the picturesque ports, the seashore and the sunsets. His letters are filled with homey but vivid turns of phrase; one man wore "a cap the shape of a parish bell upside down on his head"; a Turkish pasha wore on "the little finger of his left hand...a diamond as big as the knob of a vinegar cruet"; and he crossed to the island of Salamis in "a boat of little less antiquity than Charon's".

On his return to England, John Galt renewed an earlier connection with Canada. In 1807, he had written "A Statistical Account of Upper Canada", and from 1820-29 he came to the New World as Commissioner of the Canada Company, to develop and sell lands in Upper Canada for settlement, founding the town of Guelph, among others. Later he was dismissed, however, returned to England, spent some time in a Debtors' Prison, suffered increasingly from ill health, and died in 1839. His three sons returned and settled in Canada, one becoming a wealthy industrialist, one a Chief Justice, and the third, one of the Fathers of Confederation. Incidentally, a later descendant wrote the music for "Hair".

Galt's letters are not in the Library, but there is a good selection of his novels, his poems and short stories. It is interesting to read this writer, contemporary with Jane Austen, but so very different.

"...prefer a plain dish to a ragout". Cookery, Part II.

Here are some further comments and recipes from my favourite cook, Mrs. Elizabeth Raffald, "The Experienced English Housekeeper" (1782).

In "Mansfield Park", Dr. Grant was suffering a "disappointment about a green goose". A young ("green") goose sounds delicious, dressed, spitted, basted several times with fresh cold butter, until it is a nice brown, and served with a little brown gravy and a butter sauce flavoured with sorrel, sugar and gooseberries. How could Dr. Grant's cook have "made a blunder"?

Some of the privations Fanny Price suffered at her family home in Portsmouth were "Rebecca's puddings and Rebecca's hashes". Mrs. Raffald gives careful directions in her chapter on puddings - "take great care your cloth is very clean...boil it in plenty of water, and turn it often... take the basin and cloth off very carefully, for often a light pudding is broke in turning out". I can understand why the slatternly Rebecca didn't do a good job on puddings. As for hashes, Mrs. Raffald likes the meat cut in very thin slices, tossed with a little good gravy or catchup, flavoured with sliced shallots, lemon pickle, chopped anchovy, cloves, sliced onion or lemon peel, and carefully and tastefully served garnished with scraped horseradish, pickled onions, currant jelly or red cabbage. Rebecca would not be up to this, either.

Mrs. Norris was so pleased to have a cream cheese from Sotherton, ("just like the excellent one we had at dinner"). It was probably made like this; "put 1 large spoonful of steep to 5 quarts of afterings, break it down light, put it upon a cloth on a sieve bottom, and let it run till dry, break it, cut and turn it in a clean cloth, then put it into the sieve again, and put on it a 2 lb. weight, sprinkle a little salt on it and let it stand all night, then lay it on a board to dry; when dry, lay a few strawberry leaves on it, and ripen it between two pewter dishes in a warm place, turn it, and put on fresh leaves every day". In case you are wondering, "steep" is rennet, and "afterings" is the last straining (the richest) of milk from a cow.

White soup, which had to be made before the Netherfield ball, and which Emma Watson enjoyed at the Edwards' after their ball, is made by stewing together 6 quarts water, a knuckle of veal, a large fowl, 1 lb. lean bacon,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. rice, 2 anchovies, peppercorns, 2 or 3 onions, a bundle of sweet herbs, and 3 or 4 heads of celery, sliced. Strain and let stand overnight. "Put it in a tossing pan, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. almonds beat fine, boil a little, sieve, add 1 pint cream and 1 egg yolk. Serve hot". It should be very relaxing for excited young ladies who "danced every dance".

Mrs. Bennet's fat haunch of venison might have been roasted on a spit, and covered with paper and paste. "When it is enough, take off the paper and paste, dust it well with flour, and baste it with butter; when it is a light brown, dish it up with brown gravy in your dish, or currant jelly sauce". Mrs. Raffald says that half a pound of butter will "dress" a large dish of beef steaks. Almost all meat dishes in her book are basted with butter - even roast goose - rather than with drippings from the dripping pan underneath the spit.

"Mutton or beef do not require so much boiling, nor is it so great a fault if they are a little short, but veal, pork or lamb are not so wholesome if they are not boiled enough; a leg of pork will require half an

hour more boiling than a leg of veal of the same weight". Mr. Woodhouse would agree. But there is a long recipe on roasting a pig, just the way Mrs. Bates would like it, with a little "shred sage" and other seasonings. "Put a lump of butter in a cloth, rub your pig often with it while it is roasting", until it is "a fine brown".

Mr. Bennet's birds - offered for Mr. Bingley to shoot - and Lord Osborne's, were probably roasted with a lump of butter, pepper, salt, an onion or parsley put inside; as they roasted, they were basted often with fresh cold butter. Gravies or sauces were served with them, made from stock, wine, catchup (home-made from mushrooms or walnuts), lemon pickle, pepper and onion. Or simply with melted butter poured over them in the serving dish.

Mrs. Bennet, expecting a guest for dinner, laments "how unlucky there is not a bit of fish to be got today". Larger estates had their own well-stocked fish ponds, or good fishing streams. If Mr. Gardiner had good luck fishing with the other gentlemen, the Pemberley cook had a good choice of recipes for their catch, whether it was pike, perch, tench, trout or salmon. The Harvilles, living on the coast, would have a lot of salt water fish to choose from - cod, herring, sturgeon, mackerel, haddocks, or flounders. Mrs. Raffald gives recipes for baking, boiling, frying, broiling or stewing any of these.

The "fysse days" ordained by the Mediaeval Church amounted to as many as 166 a year. Even with more relaxed conditions in the 18th and 19th centuries, on Fridays and all forty days of Lent at least, meat was not served. But there was plenty of variety to substitute for it besides fish - eels, lampreys, oysters, shrimp and lobster, cockles and mussels, are all "dressed" to perfection in Mrs. Raffald's recipes.

A fricassee of sweetbreads is given - they are sliced, dipped in batter and fried in butter, or stewed in stock and wine, with the gravy thickened with cream and egg yolks. They sound delicious, although not served with asparagus as Mrs. Bates liked them so much, but served with oyster patties or boiled celery or stewed "spinage", or garnished with pickled red beet-root.

In 1778, Gilbert White ("The Natural History of Selborne") wrote: "Every middle-aged person of observation may perceive, within his own memory, both in town and country, how vastly the consumption of vegetables is increased...Every decent labourer has his garden, which is half his support...Potatoes have prevailed in this little district...within these 20 years only; and are much esteemed here now by the poor, who would scarce have ventured to taste them in the last reign." But in 1772, Arthur Young ("Travels...in France") wrote "As to potatoes, it would be idle to consider them in the same view as an article of human food, which ninety-nine hundredths of the human species will not touch". Perhaps Mrs. Raffald agreed with him - she gives only one recipe, for "scolloped": "boil potatoes, mash with good cream, butter and salt, put into scollop shells, dot with butter and brown before the fire".

No recipes are given for salads; if Kitty and Lydia Bennet were capable of "dressing a salad and cucumbers", evidently no recipe was really necessary.

A chapter of "little savoury dishes" includes: ragoo of pigs' feet and ears; solomon-gundy (mix chopped chicken, ham, hard-boiled eggs, pickle herring, parsley); a "dish of Lambs Bits" (sweetbreads, liver, etc., fried with butter and parsley); chickens, pigeons, smelts, crawfish or small birds in savoury jelly; fried chardoons (like artichokes); ragoo of celery, or stewed celery; fricassee of eggs; stewed cucumbers; amulet (omelette) with ham or asparagus; toast and "old Cheshire cheese".

(To be concluded in next Newsletter)

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"She could think of nothing but Mansfield, its beloved inmates, its happy ways."

Mary Anderson drew my attention to a "Summer Program for Retired People", sponsored by Continuing Education of UBC. One of the series of lectures is: "Jane Austen and the World of Mansfield Park" - another look at Jane Austen's novels using Mansfield Park as the focus of attention since, in this book, all Austen's ideas and values are embodied on the symbol of the house called Mansfield Park." The lecturer is Dr. John Hulcoop of the English Department at UBC, and this series runs from June 17-21, from 11-12 a.m. each day, for \$15.00. I am sure any of you who have this time free would enjoy these talks. For further information, call the Centre for Continuing Education at UBC.

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"You did not use to like cards; but time makes many changes."

Latecomers to our card party on February 24 announced "we could hear you outside!" Passions ran high, shouts of triumph alternated with exclamations of fury as the luck swung from one player to the next, as we revelled in an orgy of gambling. No wonder round games were popular with Jane Austen herself, and with the characters in her novels.

I have no wish to be ranged on the side of Mrs. Robert Watson, but "Speculation" is the game for me. I had no idea it could be such fun. We tried to be ultra-fashionable, like the folk at Osborne Castle, and gave "vingt-un" a whirl, but it didn't meet with the obvious enthusiasm of the former game.

The only unfavourable comment at the end of the day, was that we had been so involved with learning the game and enjoying ourselves that we had little time to think of Jane Austen or the game scenes in "Mansfield Park" and "The Watsons". But the session did bring those scenes to life for us - re-reading them, we can now fully appreciate Lady Bertram's comment "a very odd game...I am never to see my cards", and realize how busy Henry Crawford was, with his own cards, playing Lady Bertram's, and persuading Fanny to "harden her heart" where William was concerned. Naturally, Fanny would have liked to give away her best cards to William, or sell them for a pittance, instead of holding out for the largest sum she could get. Our hearts were soon hardened and our "avarice sharpened" indeed. Speculation is an excellent game.

"When a young lady is to be a heroine...something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way".

The next meeting will compensate for the lack of discussion about Jane Austen at the card party. On Sunday, June 23rd, we will read and quote and talk and criticize to our hearts' content. The theme will be "The Heroines". Who is your favourite, which one do you enjoy most, identify with, sympathize with and delight in? Pick a favourite passage from one of the novels, which shows your heroine at her best, her worst, her most natural, to read aloud. (The readings, of course are optional - if you prefer, you may "listen in quiet" like Fanny Price). The quiz at the end of this Newsletter is a challenge - answers will be provided, if necessary, at the meeting.

Bring some lunch to share; and the "tea things will be brought in". Let me know if you can come, and I can guarantee that "there will be no want of discourse".

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"...a style of beauty, of which elegance was the reigning character".

If you saw Tchaikovsky's opera "Eugene Onegin" here in March, you would have recognized the costumes. Although the setting was Russia in the 1820's, they had the elegance and graceful beauty worthy of illustrations for any of the Jane Austen novels.

Incidentally, the story (adapted from Pushkin's novel) mentions "a character from the pages of Sir Charles Grandison". It is interesting that Richardson's novel, a favourite of Jane Austen's, was that well-known in 19th century Russia.

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"...the same luck in the Mediterranean".

The front-page importance of Gibraltar, with the Spanish frontier open again, would have been nothing new to Jane Austen. Her letters to her brother Frank in the Navy in the Mediterranean, were often directed to him there - he was appointed Commander of the Sloop "Peterel" at Gibraltar. Later, in October 1805, his ship the "Canopus" was sent for supplies to Gibraltar, and thus to his eternal chagrin he just missed the Battle of Trafalgar.

Jane Austen used her knowledge of Gibraltar as a naval base in two of the novels. In "Mansfield Park", Fanny Price's brother William first saw Fanny's new modish hair style among the officers' wives when he was ashore in Gibraltar. In "Persuasion", it was at Gibraltar that "poor Richard" Musgrove was left unwanted by his captain, for Captain Wentworth to take on board. And Mrs. Croft, enumerating the many exotic places she had been, spoke also of "different places about home: Cork, and Lisbon, and Gibraltar", obviously very well-known to sailors' families.

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HEROINES

1. Which heroine was an only child?  
had one married sister and one unmarried one?  
had four sisters and no brother?  
had two younger sisters, and a half-brother?  
had three older brothers?  
was the second of ten children?
2. Which heroine's mother was  
"a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper"?  
"an excellent woman, sensible and amiable"?  
"a woman of mean understanding, little information,  
and uncertain temper"?  
"a partial, ill-judging parent, a dawdle, a slattern"?  
of "an eagerness of mind...which must generally have  
led to imprudence"?
3. Which heroine's father was described:  
"beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his  
amiable temper"?  
"his temper was cheerful and sanguine"?  
"his habits were worse and his manners coarser"?  
"so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour,  
reserve and caprice"?  
"not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters"?  
"vanity was the beginning and end of (his) character"?
4. Which heroine first met her lover:  
in the Lower Rooms at Bath?  
at a ball at the Assembly Rooms?  
as a child when she lived with his family?  
as a neighbour she knew all her life?  
at the home of his brother?  
at the home of her brother?
5. Which heroine is described as wearing:  
"Very little white satin, very few lace veils"?  
"your best spotted muslin"?  
"sprigged muslin robe with blue trimmings"?  
"petticoat...six inches deep in mud"?  
a white gown with "glossy spots"?  
"boots (which) were rather the thickest"?
6. Which heroine  
"painted a very pretty pair of screens"?  
"is never tired of playing (the piano)"?  
"played and sang and drew in almost every style"?  
"has a very good notion of fingering"?  
"says she does not want to learn either music or  
drawing"?  
"had no notion of drawing - not enough even to attempt  
a sketch of her lover's profile"?
7. Which heroine is described by Jane Austen thus:  
"She had a lively, playful disposition"?  
"She must have been a happy creature in spite of all  
that she felt...for the distress of (others)"?  
"had a delicate complexion, regular features, and a  
remarkably pretty figure"?

"handsome, clever, and rich"?  
 "had the company only seen her three years before,  
 they would now have thought her exceedingly  
 handsome"?  
 "her bloom had vanished early".

8. Which heroine is described by another character thus:

"You are just the kind of girl to be a great  
 favourite with the men"?  
 "You were so altered he should not have known you"?  
 "Better be without sense than misapply it as you do"?  
 "How incomprehensible are your feeling! You had rather  
 take evil upon credit than good"?  
 "If there is a girl in the world capable of being un-  
 influenced by ambition, I can suppose it her"?  
 "one of those young ladies who seek to recommend  
 themselves to the other sex by undervaluing  
 their own"?

9. Which heroine was told:

"It is every young woman's duty to accept such a very  
 unexceptionable offer as this"?  
 "if you take it into your head to go on refusing  
 every offer of marriage in this way, you will  
 never get a husband at all".  
 "But still you will be an old maid, and that's so  
 dreadful"?  
 "He is quite smitten already, and he is very well  
 worth setting your cap at"?  
 "You are indifferent to everybody's admiration, except  
 that of one gentleman, who shall be nameless".  
 "It is a thing of course among us that every man is  
 refused - till he offers".

10. Which heroine eventually married:

Fitzwilliam ?	Edmund ?
Henry ?	George ?
Frederick ?	Edward ?

11. Which heroine's first home after her marriage was:

Thornton Lacey?	Delafor?
Pemberley?	Hartfield?
Woodston?	no permanent home?

12. Which heroine's love story is ended in this way:

"He told her of feelings which...made his affection  
 every moment more valuable"?  
 "...the feelings of a young woman on receiving the  
 assurance of that affection of which she has  
 scarcely allowed herself to entertain a hope"?  
 "she was oppressed, she was overcome by her own  
 felicity"?  
 "She was now in an exquisite flutter of happiness"?  
 "...wrapt in the contemplation of her own unalter-  
 able happiness"?  
 "more exquisitely happy perhaps in their re-union,  
 than when it had been first projected"?

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