

Jane Austen Society of North America

VANCOUVER REGION - NEWSLETTER NO. TWENTY-EIGHT - NOVEMBER 1989

JASNA CONFERENCE: SANTA FE - The Highlights of the Conference for Me:

"Attending the Santa Fé AGM was for me an auspicious introduction to a Jane Austen conference. Selecting highlights of this memorable get-together is tantamount to making a choice among diamonds.

I was delighted with Joan Austen-Leigh's charismatic and entertaining address concerning the prolific Austen clan. The many-faceted humour of Jane Austen lives on in her descendants! I attended the workshop of Gene Koppel (P&P, a Radical or Conservative Document?) which he conducted with a scholar's insight, a charming sense of humour, and an informal style which encouraged active debate. It was an hour which passed too quickly! A special highlight for me was my wife's own excellent presentation of JA illustrations - a truly fascinating look at how great historical illustrators such as C.E. Brock and Hugh Thomson conceptualized Jane Austen characters vis-a-vis contemporary artists.

The superb organization of this memorable conference was in itself a self-fulfilling highlight. The reception in the Eldorado Hotel with its excellent cuisine; the exciting book sale; the leisurely pace of the conference (of which I am sure JA would have approved); the well-prepared and varied workshops; the showing of the Olivier-Garson version of P&P with three actresses as our interview guests; and the captivating talk by Elizabeth George, writer of best-selling mysteries - all these events in three days were a remarkable achievement and a tribute to a dedicated executive of immense talent."

- John Parker

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"The screening of the 1940 film P&P - with a background talk by a film critic and his interview with three actresses who, respectively, played the parts of Mary and Lydia Bennet and Charlotte Lucas - was for me a unique experience. In the preliminary talk on the movie by Kenneth Turan, some intriguing facts emerged. The most hilarious one was that Clarke Gable was a candidate for Mr. Darcy's role. Luckily, as Mr. Turan observed, we were saved from such dialogue as 'Frankly, my dear Elizabeth, I don't give a damn!'

The interview following the film, along with the questions from us members, provided me with such fascinating behind-the-scenes insights as: how the actresses with their hooped skirts kept knocking down the delicate period furniture assembled on the set, how MGM men would nonchalantly cut off the legs of this precious period furniture if the height was not right for filming purposes, and how disappointing it was that Greer Garson's gorgeous red hair could not be shown in a black-and-white film. (Elizabeth Bennet's not having red hair is beside the point, in this Hollywood-made movie!) When one of the actresses present men-

tioned how colourful the costumes were, the subject of colourization was brought up. We all soundly rejected this sacrilege.

Of the break-away sessions on Saturday, I attended Karen Fredrickson's presentation on how to make a JA quilt. I actually came away with a little diamond-shaped quilt made from the remnants of the Chicago quilting sessions. Yes, I intend to make a JA quilt one day when I am 'past everything but tea and quadrille', hopefully sooner. If Mr. Darcy does not include quilting as one of women's accomplishments, I am sure I will nevertheless find 'occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one'. "

- Keiko Parker

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"Santa Fé was a beautiful site for the 1989 JASNA Conference, and the 'high' produced was not only due to the altitude (7000'), but also to the variety of people from all over the world - Australia, where they are planning to start a Jane Austen Society; the Canary Islands; England; Scotland and Ireland. There seemed to be so little time to meet and talk with all the people as the weekend was extremely busy, and there were several Canadian members attending that I would have loved to have spoken to, as I now know them only by mail!

The most interesting session I attended was "Mentoring Jane Austen; Reflections on 'My Dear Dr. Johnson' " by Gloria Gross of California State University, who suggested that Elizabeth refused Darcy because, subconsciously, he reminded her of her father - and she did not want to be continually hurt and humiliated by her husband as she had been by her father. A lively discussion followed!

- Pamela Delville-Pratt

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"This may be difficult to believe, but the highlight of the conference to me was -- John Halperin! When I read his book - having heard many reports of his 'nasty' remarks and 'horrible' comments - I visualized him as a crotchety misanthrope with a permanent sneer and a chip on his shoulder. Then he spoke on the Saturday afternoon to the assembled JASNA members: he could easily have been Mr. Bingley: 'good-looking and gentleman-like', or even Henry Tilney, with his 'pleasing countenance, a very intelligent and lively eye, and, if not quite handsome, was very near it'.

Later he sat beside me at dinner (not, I must admit, with 'some dexterity on his side', as Frank Churchill had contrived things), and we had an interesting talk. I began by asking him if he had set out to be deliberately controversial in his Biography of JA. Halperin replied that it all began with the Biographical Notice in the first edition of NA and Persuasion, where Henry Austen says 'She never uttered either a hasty, a silly, or a severe expression'. Henry probably also wrote the inscription on the tombstone in Winchester Cathedral describing 'the benevolence of her heart' and 'the sweetness of her temper'.

Halperin believed that the creator of Mrs. Norris and the John Dashwoods, or the needle-sharp jabs in the 'Letters', could never have been such an 'Angel in the House'. I couldn't fault him there - he was in good company: JA herself wrote to her niece, 'Pictures of perfection as you know make me sick and wicked'.

So then Halperin said he went through the novels and letters trying to decide what JA had really been like, and the result of his investigations - the Biography. But he also went on to say that he considered P&P one of the only two perfect novels in English, and he would rank JA with Shakespeare. (I would say, 'This would almost make amends for every thing!' if Lucy Steele hadn't said it first.)

Later we had a delightful conversation - 'he talked with fluency and spirit' - about books and authors. We agreed in liking 19th c. authors, especially Trollope, in not reading many present-day novelists, and in savouring JA's witty remarks and precision of description and characterization.

I think John Halperin went too far in his biography, but I can agree with Elizabeth Bennet: 'He is a sweet-tempered, amiable, charming man'. "

- Eileen Sutherland

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"Lenore Churchman (Brighton: the Double Danger of a Spa & an Army Camp), began with a highly informative, as well as entertaining, exposition of just what exactly was understood about 'gout' in the 18th c. - apparently very little - and that little, incorrect, to boot. The prescribed treatment, totally ineffective, was to bathe in, drink, and to take emetics of, the warm 'healing' waters of Bath. And Bath grew from a town of approximately 2,000 in 1760 to about 25,000 by 1820. This was, of course, mostly an infusion of rich people, and they had to have something to do in between their 'water-treatments'. This led to Ralph Allen, Beau Nash, parties, gambling, *haute cuisine* (very counterproductive for the ailment), and other things associated with nothing but time on one's hands.

According to Ms Churchman, Brighton tried to imitate Bath, cash in on Bath's good fortune. (She didn't mention Sanditon, but possibly Austen had Brighton in mind). Although Brighton didn't have a natural Spring, it did have Sea-Water. And Brighton had the good fortune to attract Royal Patronage, which Bath lacked: the fashionable world flocked to be where the Prince of Wales was. From 1783 on, Brighton moved toward eclipsing Bath as the centre for social diversion, and its natural concomitant, social licentiousness...the latter also sanctioned by Royal Patronage.

Additionally, the Oxfordshire Militia, who were not Regular Army, and therefore never sent abroad, were camped permanently just outside Brighton. In all their splendid scarlet uniforms.

Thus, both the notoriety of the place itself, as well as the permanent presence of officers, will have lurked behind the daydreams of Kitty and Lydia, well warranting the fears of Elizabeth. In the discussion afterwards, there seemed to be general consensus that it was almost incomprehensible that Mr. Bennet should have allowed Lydia to go, knowing as well as he must have done, what a doubly dangerous place Brighton would be for an over-eager young female." - Dianne Kerr

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"If D.H. Lawrence went to New Mexico, could Jane Austen go to Santa Fé? Perhaps not, but several Vancouver devotees of JASNA trekked towards Mecca - the 1989 Annual JASNA Conference held in Santa Fé, New Mexico.

Hollywood history united with *Pride and Prejudice* to produce the 1940 film. Marsha Hunt, Karen Morley and Ann Rutherford, three of the actresses in the film, shared their acting experiences and memories of working with Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier. Greer Garson stopped for a 4:00 p.m. tea break every day, and Olivier wore different noses as part of a stage preparation for *Romeo and Juliet*.

Elizabeth George, the author of "The Great Deliverance" delivered a riveting speech, itemizing her extremely detailed approach towards researching mystery novels.

I bought - a Jane Austen sweatshirt (red), bookmarks, several books including "Mr. Collins Considered" by Ivor Morris, and illustrations of Pride and Prejudice.

New Mexico - the Land of Enchantment. I was enchanted by Santa Fé - sunny, warm weather, fascinating Indian and Spanish cultures, wonderful spicy food, congenial and interesting companions. What more could one desire? Just another Jane Austen conference next year.
- Jean Brown

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"The meeting was held in Santa Fé, New Mexico, a town famous for its artistic works and healthful climate.

On Friday evening, after the showing of the old Pride and Prejudice movie starring Greer Garson and Lawrence Olivier, three of the actresses (who played Lydia, Mary and Charlotte) were interviewed, and gave us their impressions of the film, and interesting accounts of what it was like to work for MGM in the good old days. They had high praise for Garson, Olivier, and other actors in the film.

Joan Austen-Leigh gave the keynote address on Saturday morning. She spoke very well, as usual, with many interesting stories about the Austen family. Most of the day was occupied with small sessions on various subjects, and ended with the business meeting, chaired by Eileen Sutherland. This was followed by a splendid banquet, with a first rate musical programme featuring soprano Carolyn Welch.

On Sunday morning, we wound up with an enormous brunch, and were entertained by the mystery story writer Elizabeth George. She gave us a fascinating account of how she develops the plots for her stories, and told us about some of her research trips to England where all her stories are located. Since Jane Austen was unavailable, I think we got the best authoress that could be found, and we all enjoyed her very much.
- John Howe

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"Santa Fé is a relatively small city and much of the historic areas were within easy walking distance from the hotel. The Governors' Palace, 1610-1614, the first important building erected by the Spaniards in the area and the oldest public building surviving in the U.S., is a pleasant blend of Spanish and Pueblo building techniques: adobe brick covered by hand with a clay mud creating an irregular surface, sunbaked to a beige colour, most suitable for a desert environment. This established a Santa Fé style of architecture which was used in our hotel and numerous buildings (including parking lots) throughout the city.

Choosing one of eight workshops being offered at the same time was never an easy decision. A very good one I attended was: "How Wealthy is Mr. Darcy Really? Pounds and Dollars in the World of P&P", by Dr. James Heldman of Western Kentucky University. An economics colleague had computed equivalent values for him. The pound in 1810 had a value of \$4.44 U.S., which in 1988 terms would be \$33.13.

Therefore Darcy's income of £10,000 per year would be in excess of \$330,000 annually - quite a tidy sum, especially when you consider that the per capita income in the U.S.A. at that time was equivalent to \$821. No wonder Mrs. Bennet was excited by the prospect of Elizabeth's marriage!"
- Ron Sutherland

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Hugh Thomson



"He then sat down by her."
Chap. XI

H.M.Brock



Lydia interrupted him.

C.E.Brock



*"Protested
that he never read novels"*

Jif 21/21

Hugh Thomson

PRESENTATION AT COURT - Kathleen Glancy

It all began when I went to see the State Rooms (what fearful taste in furniture and ornaments Queen Victoria's mother had) and the Court Dress Collection at Kensington Palace. Of course many of the dresses on display had been worn at St. James' Palace, which brought Sir William Lucas to mind, followed by the whole of P&P in relation to Presentation. This raised a problem in my mind: who is going to present Mrs. Darcy?

It requires someone who is a matron - wife or widow, but she must have been married - and has been Presented herself. In most cases, the debutante was unmarried and her mother Presented her. It was not unusual, however, for a girl's Presentation to be delayed until after her marriage, either because she was marrying into a higher rank or because she had married young. Then either her mother or her mother-in-law might sponsor her. If neither lady was around, a female relative by blood or in law would do.

It is desirable that Elizabeth should be Presented. Her husband, the grandson of an Earl, would have gone through the masculine equivalent and in due course her sister-in-law would be expected to make her curtsy. It would be embarrassing if Elizabeth wasn't eligible to Present Georgiana, and even more so if she couldn't Present her own daughters in due course.

Mrs. Bennet isn't eligible, nor are Mrs. Phillips or Mrs. Gardiner. Lady Lucas probably isn't either - her husband made his debut at an Investiture, to confirm his knighthood. She would be present, possibly - it's equally possible she wouldn't - but would not herself be formally Presented. That takes care of the female relations and friends on one side. Lady Anne Darcy is dead. Lady Catherine de Bourgh would spit up blood at the mere suggestion, if her nephew was speaking to her at the time, which as he wasn't she wouldn't be asked. It's a bit unlikely Mrs. Hurst was ever Presented, **the** family origins being in Trade and Mr. Hurst probably being reluctant to incur the expense of a Court Dress even if he had female relations who might have sponsored her. There were ladies who could be hired, in the most genteel way, to sponsor debutantes with lowly origins, but Darcy wouldn't like that.

There is one possibility. We haven't met her, but she must exist. We have met one of her sons, and his manners and character speak well for the possibility that she has good sense and a sense of humour. There is no reason to assume, either, that her husband is anything like his sister. After all, Mr. Gardiner is nothing like Mrs. Bennet. Of course, Lady Catherine would abuse Elizabeth to them, but they would be more likely to listen to Col Fitzwilliam who would say nothing but good of her. Indeed, as Lady Catherine would not be the easiest sister-in-law that a lady could have --- I think it quite likely that Darcy's aunt-by-marriage, the Countess of L---, was very happy to Present Mrs. Darcy. Perhaps she took Mrs. Bingley on while she was at it, while the Earl beamed approvingly at them all. Lady Catherine can't have been the ideal sister to have, either.

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ESSAY WINNER

UBC has just reported that this year's winner of our Jane Austen Essay prize is Janet Elizabeth Currie, 204 - 1266 W. 12th Avenue, Vancouver. I wrote to her with our congratulations, and suggested she come to one of our next meetings so that we could have the pleasure of meeting her and perhaps hearing her essay.

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MORE TALK OF CANALS - Keiko Parker

I enjoyed the interesting article on canals in the August 1989 Newsletter. I merely wish to mention that in her letter to Cassandra written on 30 April, 1811, Jane Austen congratulates her brother Edward "on the Weald of Kent Canal-Bill being put off till another session, as I have just had the pleasure of Reading". She then adds, with her typically wry sense of humour: "There is always something to be hoped for in Delay". JA then continues with the poem she wrote for the occasion:

Between Session and Session
The first Prepossession
May rouse up the Nation
And the villainous Bill
May be forced to lie still
Against Wicked Men's will.

saying, "There is poetry for Edward and his Daughter". (Cassandra was staying with Edward and his family at Godmersham Park at the time).

The exertion Jane made to versify on this occasion makes it clear that the passage of the Canal Bill would have affected her brother Edward materially. It seems likely that, rather than benefitting from the use of the canal, Edward would have been deprived of the use of part of his property and the profits thereof - should his land have been appropriated by the passage of the bill.

This Weald of Kent Canal-Bill and its effect on Edward is alluded to by John Halperin, He-Whom-We-Love-To-Hate, in his book, The Life of Jane Austen.

[Ed.note: Partly because of the frenzied financial speculation - and often consequent financial disasters - at the time of the "South Sea Bubble" in 1720, Parliament enacted that any prospective corporation must be set up by a private Act of Parliament. As well, Parliament had to give approval to divert rivers or streams, expropriate lands, cross highways, and the other necessary endeavours incurred in the planning and building of canals. Trouble, expense and delay were common].

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MEMBERSHIP DUES

As you know, the JASNA membership year begins on Jane Austen's birthday, December 16th. Don't let your membership lapse for want of that due care and attention which you owe to yourself.

Pamela Delville-Pratt will have her cheque-book at the December meeting, so there will be no excuse for not keeping right up to date.

Membership - \$15.00 per year Life Membership - \$300.00

Donations to the important project of the restoration and maintenance of St. Nicholas Church in Steventon are always welcome.

Gift memberships for friends or relations make your Christmas shopping easy - an attractive card will be sent to the recipient in your name.

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NOVELS AND MOVIES - Dianne Kerr

"Fred Warner's theme, in the seminar Cinematic Technique and the Art of Omission, was Austen's economy. He began by reminding us that one should never say 'I liked the movie better', or 'I liked the book better' - they are too different; one medium cannot show in 90 minutes what another may take several hours to show.

For instance, one of the most important scenes in P&P occurs when the girls all walk with Mr. Collins to call on their Aunt Phillips in Meryton. On the way a very small scene occurs which is a very important moment in the novel; a significant coming-together of all the major characters. There are at least 13 instances of dramatic event in the one small scene: 1.The girls see the officers; 2.The girls cross the street to meet the officers...9. Darcy tries to avoid seeing Elizabeth; 10.Darcy's and Wickham's eyes meet; 11.Elizabeth observes the change in both countenances...etc. And after, there must be the scene on the way home, where Elizabeth tells Jane what she saw; and we must be informed that neither Jane nor any of the others noticed.

Covering this adequately takes up a great deal of your movie time. Furthermore, you are in grave danger of having your audience make too much of this tiny subtle incident; evidently the development is quite spoiled if that happens.

Additionally, how do you fill in the gaps? Austen omits many, many details, e.g. what does Mr. Collins do when the girls charge across the street? how long does it take them? if the streets were very narrow, as is likely, why do not the officers notice the girls before they are accosted? etc. Austen is very terse: she forces the reader to fill in the scene for himself, and is in this way very modern. (In bad literature, Warner pointed out parenthetically, everything is told, for the sake of the dim-witted; nothing is left for the reader to interpolate).

Despite the fact that Austen's novels do not easily turn into faithfully representative movies, this is not because she is prolix - her narrative is remarkably lean, her pace exceedingly brisk."

[Ed.note: This section was left over from the Highlights of the Conference for Me, but I thought it was too interesting to leave out. Next time you see a movie after reading the book, think why did the director do this? Or next time you read one of JA's novels, ask yourself how you would make a particular scene into a movie.]

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JASNA ESSAY PRIZE WINNERS

I was premature in announcing in the last Newsletter that three out of the fourteen semi-finalists in JASNA's essay competition were Canadians. The final announcement has now been made: three out of four of the runners-up (there was no first-place prize awarded) were from Canada, receiving a prize of \$250 each. They are Lorraine Copland (2nd year student at UBC), Yin Liu (1st year at U.of Alta.), and Alberto Rubio (2nd year at UBC). We are very proud of a record like this, and offer our congratulations to these students. May they always find their JA studies rewarding - in many different ways!

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CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY - Kathleen Glancy

While Elizabeth and the Gardiners were touring in Derbyshire, the little Gardiner children were left in the care of Jane Bennet at Longbourn. Kathleen Glancy sent these comments:

"Jane Austen does specifically say that Jane Bennet was 'exactly adapted' to take care of them, a process which includes 'teaching them, playing with them, and loving them'. Moreover she was 'the general favourite' among them. I rather think she would be prepared to get down on the floor, if called upon to do so. The Gardiners cannot be faulted for leaving them in Jane's charge. True, after the news of the elopement they must have had rather a grim time of it. And how they reacted to being removed up North that Christmas ('You are all to come to Pemberley' can only mean that the children went too) is not recorded. One fears that they probably found the house, the grounds, and Cousin Elizabeth's new husband all rather over-whelming.

There again, Mrs. Reynolds would probably work whatever magic it was that made Darcy consistently charming to her (I suspect she started off working in the still-room and so had access to all the jam and candied fruit and so on - by the time Darcy reached the age where he could demand rather than coax these goodies, he had become so accustomed to being nice to Reynolds that he had forgotten his original motives); and there were probably a lot of toys in the nursery, and perhaps Georgiana, like many who are painfully shy with adults, was good with children. And Elizabeth's unnerving spouse, if he ran true to his form with his sister, would provide some wonderful presents on Christmas Day, and this time their parents would be with them - so perhaps it wasn't so bad after all."

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LAST MEETING: "WHAT THEY WOULD NEVER SAY"

Here are some of the gems that came out of our spirited discussion of the most improbable comments of some characters from the novels:

Anne Elliot: "Ships are but boards, sailors but men" (Shakespeare)

Catherine Morland: "J'y suis, j'y reste"

Mary Anderson

Sir Walter Elliot: "All the nice girls love a sailor"

Mr. Woodhouse: "Eat up, everyone!"

Ruth Piddington

Mr. Darcy: "Let's kiss and be friends"

General Tilney: "There's no fool like an old fool"

Barbara Peacock

Lady Middleton: "Spare the rod and spoil the child"

Sir Walter Elliot: "Handsome is as handsome does"

Dianne Kerr

Miss Bates: "My lips are sealed!"

Jean Brown

Jane Austen at Chawton Cottage: "We must fix that squeaky door"

Keiko Parker

-- and many, many more! .

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NEXT MEETINGS - Mark your calendars so you don't miss them.

Saturday, November 18 - Dunbar Community Centre: 4747 Dunbar St., at 31st Ave.

Discussion: "How do the other characters in P&P develop the plot and add to our understanding of Elizabeth and Darcy?"

Come prepared to think, to challenge, to agree or to dissent - all opinions are good.

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"How strange this is! What can be the meaning of it?" (S&S)

Puzzled about a word or phrase? Confused about the motives of a character or act? Uncertain what JA intended us to infer from her words? -- Bring your problems, and let the group discuss them: perhaps we can come up with "the answer it would be most proper to give" (S&S).

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Saturday, December 16. St. Philip's "Fireside Room", 3737 W. 27th Ave. (at Alma)

Speaker: Eileen Sutherland : "Dining With the Darcys: Food & Drink in the time of Jane Austen".

Birthday Party for Jane Austen

Discussion: Last year we suggested gifts to give to various characters in the novels. This year we'll reverse it - what gift would you expect to receive from each character?

All meetings begin at 10:00 a.m., with an informal talk, discussion and our usual pot-luck lunch to follow.

RSVP - Eileen Sutherland: 988-0479

Cost: Members - \$2.00; Non-members - \$3.00. Everyone Welcome.

Volunteers will be welcomed to set up the lunch, and clean up afterwards.

Enjoy "the pleasures of Friendship, of unreserved Conversation, of similarity of Taste and Opinions..."

This Newsletter, the publication of the Vancouver Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America, comes out four times a year: February, May, August and November. All submissions on the subject of Jane Austen, her life, her works and her times, are welcome. Mail to the Editor: Eileen Sutherland, 4169 Lions Ave., North Vancouver, B.C. V7R 3S2.