

JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

Vancouver Region

NEWSLETTER NO. 85

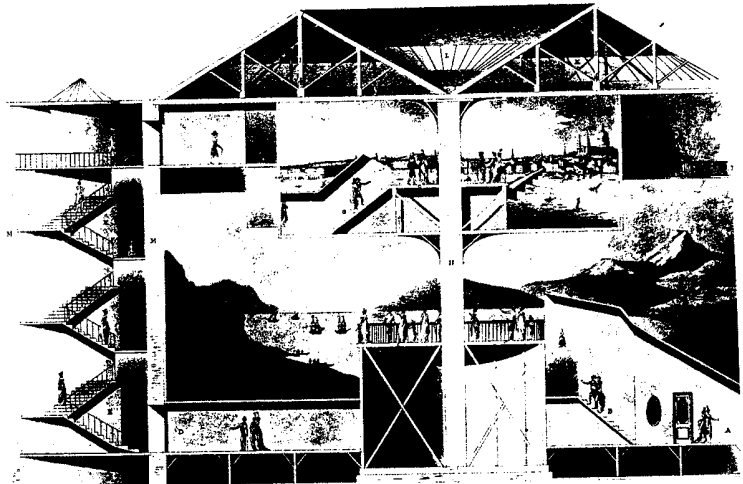
FEBRUARY, 2004

The Panorama: Entertainment for Everyone. Eileen Sutherland.

Standing at the top of a mountain, or even on a high isolated building, looking out over the landscape below stretching to a far horizon, gives one an exhilarating feeling of awe and power - "master of all I survey." In 1787, Robert Barker stood on Calton Hill in Edinburgh, and felt this sense of wonder as he looked at the city lying below. He was a painter of portraits and miniatures, and had the idea of a circular painting that would display the whole landscape. In his patent application, he called his design, *La Nature à Coup d'Oeil*, but he soon coined the word *Panorama* (from two Greek words meaning *all* and *view*) and under this name Barker's pictures became famous. [Within a few decades, the word itself passed into the general language, as a continuous passing scene, or a mental vision in which a series of images passes before the mind's eye].

Barker's idea was to have a picture of a landscape or other scene arranged on the inside of a cylindrical surface with the spectator in the centre. He set off to London with what he called *The Panorama of Edinburgh*. There were problems to overcome with lighting, dimensions and perspective, and his first presentation was not a success. Undeterred, he and his son, Henry Anson Barker, determined to continue their plans and produced a second, larger canvas, called *London From the Roof of Albion Mills*, a symbol of the Industrial Revolution. This was very successful and lucrative, producing funds for Barker and his son to carry on with other panoramas. When Robert Barker died in 1806, his son was a well-known entrepreneur who produced popular and successful panoramas for years. Others established themselves in the field and did very well, but the Barkers were acknowledged to be the first and the best.

The panoramas were presented in a circular "Rotunda" building specially built to display them. The dimensions were enormous - the standard size was about 15 x 120 metres. A team of artists was required to accomplish the painting, some becoming specialists in drawing scenery, some for buildings, some for water scenes, and some for human and animal figures. Their various styles had to harmonize, and their activities to be



co-ordinated. The glass roofs created temperature variations, and the huge crowds increased the humidity, which stretched or shrank the canvas.

In the centre of the building was the viewing platform, so arranged that the spectator was at the correct distance from the painting for maximum reality. Lighting came from overhead, and a canopy over the platform kept the spectators in the dark but enabled them to see the scene all around them. The spectators mounted to the central platform through a series of corridors and stairs, darkened to make them forget the reality of the world outside, and to give the moment of confronting the illusion maximum impact. Sometimes the passageway was decorated or designed to complement the panorama about to be viewed - for example, an imitation of seamen's quarters before a naval battle scene. In later panoramas, ventilation fans created a light breeze which had an appropriate aroma, according to the scene represented - smoke from a battle, the scent of Alpine flowers, kelp and salt odors of the sea; gas lighting simulated fires.

In the course of the next few years, three themes were developed for the panoramas. One very popular theme was the view of the actual city or town in which they were exhibited. This was a period of great and rapid change, and the panorama gave a sense of control missing in a troubled daily life. War was another popular theme - scenes of battles, victories, heroes, patriotism were displayed, often only two or three months after the event. Travel scenes of distant and exotic lands, historic cities, and inspiring landscapes drew huge crowds.

The greatest visual accuracy was essential. In 1794, the artistic event of the year in London was the *View of the Fleet at Spithead*. The rotunda platform was designed like the afterdeck of a frigate. The Royal Family attended, and it was reported that Princess Charlotte felt seasick, as if she were really on a ship at sea. A story was told of a dog, taken into a panorama of a sea scene, who was fooled into thinking the water was real, and threw himself "in" for a swim.

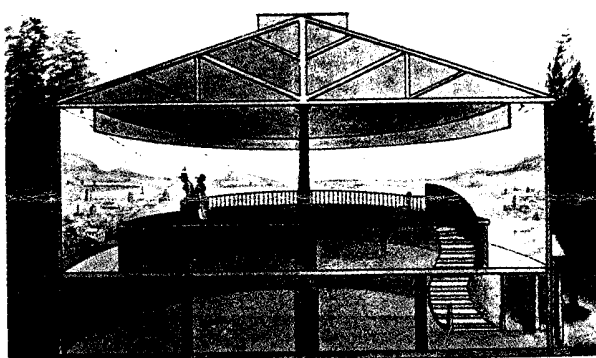
The early panoramas toured the major cities of the United Kingdom and Europe, to great acclaim. However, the canvases deteriorated quickly from too much handling, and panoramas were produced in France from 1799. The American engineer Robert Fulton was one of the business men who produced panoramas in France with great success. Soon there were three rotundas functioning in Paris. In 1806, one showed *The Fleet at Boulogne Preparing to Invade England*, glorifying the naval prowess of the Napoleonic forces. At the same time, another venue showed a panorama of London. The canvas of London was retouched to darken the English capital, and most of the ships on the Thames were erased to create an image of a weak, cheerless and under-developed nation. This was the first occasion when the panorama was used as a propaganda tool, a development which would increase over the years.

A great innovation in a naval battle scene was the construction of the traditional platform with the poop deck of a frigate which had actually taken part in the battle, reinforcing the illusion and transporting the spectators to the very centre of the action. The site was transformed into a fully armed and rigged vessel, the aft end of which gradually merged with the canvas at the back. It was an epoch-making success.

Napoleon was very interested in the panoramas he viewed in 1810, and he planned seven rotundas on the square of the Champs-Élysées, to feature the principal battles of the Revolution and Empire, eventually to tour France and the major cities of the empire. However, the ensuing military setbacks prevented the realization of this immense project. After Napoleon's defeat, the public in France was tired of battle scenes. A new and extremely successful series was begun in 1819, with views of Athens, Jerusalem and Constantinople. Guide booklets and orientation plans were provided to visitors so that, when faced with the vastness of the spectacle, they would be able to identify the main buildings, sites or events depicted. The booklets always stressed that

studies and sketches had been made at the actual locations represented. Sometimes eye-witness accounts, as of battles, for instance, were reproduced in the booklets. Once the panorama became a well-known entertainment, travellers and military men made drawings or notes to sell to the entrepreneurs when they returned. Those who had actually taken part in the events depicted came along to check the reality of the paintings, and to re-live their experiences. One reviewer wrote: "Soldiers wounded fighting for their country could, without danger but not without pride, see the arenas of their glory once again." Returned travellers could, and did, comment on any perceived inaccuracies or deficiencies.

Different classes of the population were drawn to the panorama for very different reasons. The educated were interested in the images and the originality of the representations. The general populace were attracted by the strength of an illusion that transported them to a reality so different from their daily life, that miraculously offered them a visual escape to places they had only been to in their dreams. The middle classes came to savour the novelty, to experience a show that had a wealth of emotions to offer, in new and magic surroundings. The principal role of the panorama, however, was to enable thousands of people to discover, without having to travel, the most celebrated cities and the most interesting countries not only in Europe but all over the world.



In November 3, 1813, Jane Austen, visiting at Godmersham, wrote to Cassandra in London: "Sweet Mr. Ogle, I dare say he sees all the Panoramas for nothing, has free-admittance everywhere; he is so delightful!" There is no indication who "Mr. Ogle" is - Chapman does not give any indication. Perhaps he was a friend or associate of Henry Aston Barker, the proprietor. In any case, the remark shows that Jane Austen was aware of the vogue for Panoramas, and did not feel any necessity of explaining about them to Cassandra.

Panoramas were popular entertainments throughout the 19th century and even lasted well into the 20th century - a panorama was painted in 1962 to commemorate the defeat of German forces at the battle of Stalingrad in World War II.

Like television, the panorama was a mixture of art, technology and commerce . . . its principal driving force was enchantment or magic.

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Gardens - 1805

"While the Empress of the French had her English garden [at Malmaison], English gentry filled summer *parterres*, greenhouses, hanging baskets and window-boxes, with brilliant displays of strongly-scented plants, with velvety petals of deep rose, scarlet, powder-pink, salmon-pink, crimson and ivory; zonal, ivy-leaved, shrubby and climbing, all of which they termed **geraniums**."

Britain Against Napoleon: Carola Oman (1969).

In *M.P.*, Fanny had geraniums in her East Room: after the quarrel about Fanny not being willing to act in the theatricals, she went to her room "in an agitated, doubting spirit, to see if . . . by giving air to her geraniums she might inhale a breeze of mental strength herself." (p.152).

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Readers' Responses to *Persuasions* - November Meeting.

Because time was limited, it was decided to hear only four reports on *Persuasions* articles. **Viviane McClelland** began with a discussion of "My Idea of a Chapel in Jane Austen's World" (Sarah Emsley). The principal characters in *Mansfield Park* are shown over Sotherton by Mrs. Rushworth, who then relates the history of the house. This greatly interests Fanny whose romantic imagination has been shaped from her readings, and has "the capacity to see the correspondences between things." Emsley calls this "Aristotelian" - Viviane saw no need to bring Aristotle into the discussion.

Fanny is disappointed in the chapel - she had had very different expectations. The author then refers to different definitions and functions of a chapel in the dictionary. The conversation of the characters then passes to the subject of being a clergyman. Edmund would like to endorse Fanny's ideals, but his growing interest in Mary Crawford leads him to agree with her. Towards the end of the article, Viviane considered that Emsley felt obliged to adopt a different style of writing, quoting Bakhtin (and bringing in Aristotle again) : Austen uses a variety of "dialogic voices" to express ideas of a chapel, shaped by "previous cultural experience, . . . history and class consciousness." Emsley asserts there are indeed "dialogic voices" in this scene, but Jane Austen is Aristotelian, directing the plot towards resolution, harmony and closure."

Viviane didn't agree, and gave up trying to figure out exactly what Emsley was suggesting at the end.

Barbara Phillips commented on Elsa Solender's article, "Recreating Jane Austen's World on Film". Barbara read her paper, explaining that she had a tendency to lose control and rant too much on this subject, unless she was restrained. Elsa feels that entertainment is the bottom line - don't try to completely satisfy Janeites. The 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* has been called "the best movie ever made from a novel." Barbara did not agree. She felt that these recent movies and TV versions are filled with melodrama and emphasis on the Gothic, with little of Jane Austen's excellent irony. She gave specific comments on several: Andrew Davies' *P&P* was well done, but it had five hours to do it in. The 1995 *Persuasion* on the big screen, has been called synthetic realism. It did well, if one overlooks a few faults. In *S&S* in 1995, the screen version deviates very much from the book, but does keep the feelings of Austen's work. *Emma* lacked the sparkle of *Clueless*. The trouble with *MP* was that Fanny was too like the juvenile Jane Austen. But Barbara felt that Henry Crawford was "spot on", although the emphasis on slavery, lechery and debauchery ruined it for her. *Bridget Jones' Diary* grossed ten times as much - audiences loved it. Else wrote about many more "Austen-haunted" movies. Barbara wondered "What next?"

Gendered Argument in Jane Austen's Novels (Barbara Adler) was the subject of **Jean Oriente's** report. She gave us an excellent analysis of this paper. Education and social conduct books influenced men's and women's oral disagreements. Women were taught to be positive, cheerful and compliant. Men, with their liberal arts education, made use of "logic, rhetoric and formal argumentation." "Argument" is not necessarily negative - it is rational, reasonable, sensible conversation.

"Expert testimony", a characteristic of men's speech, is found in the authoritative attitude of Lady Catherine. "Peer testimony" is characteristic of women's strategies: Elizabeth is influenced by what Charlotte said about Jane's attitude to Bingley. When Emma and Mr. Knightley are arguing about Harriet, she thinks "she had done nothing which women's friendship and women's feelings would not justify;" personal feelings and heartfelt instincts as testimony are used more often by women.

Personal observation, relying on direct, first-hand knowledge, is used by Anne Elliot to define "good company." Elizabeth at Longbourn, defying Lady Catherine, uses all the male-oriented devices in her argument. No other male character in Austen so much embodies the masculine style in argument as Sir Thomas Bertram, in his ruthless onslaught against Fanny when she rejects Henry Crawford. The author gives these and other examples of social life and conversation and gender interaction two hundred years ago. These characteristics persist today.

Eileen Sutherland completed the programme with comments on *Jane Austen and Winchester Cathedral* (Brian Southam). The author began with the reasons why Jane Austen might have been buried in Winchester Cathedral: she had been born and bred in Hampshire, was the daughter of a Hampshire clergyman, and she lived her last few months and died near the Cathedral. Admirers from all over the world now come to visit her grave.

But Southam poses a problem: how was it that such an ordinary person, of no social distinction, whose name was not known (during her lifetime, her books were published as "By a Lady" or "By the Author of . . .") How was it that her last resting-place was in the nave of this great Cathedral, not merely in the churchyard? He speculates who might have had the influence to persuade the Cathedral authorities: her brother James, a clergyman and head of the family; the sailor brothers, rising in their profession; Edward Knight, wealthy owner of large estates; Henry, now curate of Chawton in the diocese. The Cathedral office says it was probably Henry. However, there were other influences: Elizabeth Bigg Heathcote, the widow of a Vice-Dean and Canon of Winchester, was a life-long friend; the Dean had been Rector of Alton, and would have known the Austens; the bishop may have met Jane Austen and the family in Bath. Another speculation could be that the Prince Regent, a great admirer of her works, ordered her burial there. No one knows the answer.

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Christmas/Birthday Meeting: December 13, 2003.

Our annual celebration of the Christmas season, and toast to honour Jane Austen's birthday was composed of selections of music contemporary to Jane Austen's lifetime, and seasonal readings.

The trio (from the UBC School of Music) were: Bo Peng, cellist; Ruth Huang, violinist; and Cherry Li, pianist. They played a Mozart Piano Trio in B flat major; Beethoven Piano Trio, Opus 70, No.2; and the Schubert Piano Trio in B flat.

Interspersed were readings prepared by Bev Gropen, and read by Laureen McMahon ("Christmas Decorations"); Sandy Lundy ("Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man"); Pamela Ottridge ("Music and Dancing"); and Ron Sutherland ("The Festive Board").

It was a delightful programme. The church (with its grand piano specially tuned for the occasion) was designed for music - the instrumental tones and resonance were beautiful. Because there was some difficulty in hearing all the words of the readings, a handout of the texts was prepared to distribute to all members.

After the programme, we returned to the Fireside Room, where we had a festive lunch which included baked ham, casseroles, salads, mince tarts and syllabub. We drank a toast to Jane Austen, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

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"Oh! What blockheads are those wise persons who think it necessary that a child should understand every thing it reads."

The Doctor, Robert Southey (1848).

Women, reading and speech in the age of Jane Austen.

On October 24th, four Vancouver members attended a lecture on this subject at SFU by Patricia Howell Michaelson from the University of Texas at Dallas. Professor Michaelson's field is linguistics and language theory. She has published a book on the subject and used it as background material.

Female characters in 18th century British novels were often depicted as silent readers, women reading in their closets by themselves. In many cases this was looked upon as dangerous, subversive. Many novels of the time, however, have a lot of scenes of reading aloud in public, in family groups. A contemporary reader should look at who holds the floor, who asks the questions, how did readers and listeners interact?

Michaelson asked questions about what we learn from these novelistic scenes: How did the 18th century conceive of women's speech? How did individual women use speech? How did reading aloud function in the novel? How was reading aloud understood as practising speech? She read some excerpts from her book, and then discussed these topics.

In a patriarchal society, reading aloud in company was considered "elocutionary," helping a woman construct an *ethos* for herself. Jane Austen mentions such reading sessions, and boasted that she herself was "considered a very fine performer." Michaelson pointed out that speaking a text, "personating" a character, could affect the reader's character, attract unwelcome traits into the reader. Women were considered especially vulnerable; and children could easily be corrupted by what they read. Some 18th century books have hand-written notations on certain passages indicating that they should not be read by these susceptible groups.

There was a link between reading and conversation - reading aloud would improve the language one used in daily life. Most such texts were written for boys, but both Wollstonecroft and Barbauld wrote books especially for female readers. Well-chosen dialogues were excellent for teaching females a good conversational style. Reading *belles lettres* widened the range of exemplary styles of speech. The reading performance of dramas, or novels by Burney and Austen, could further the acquisition of linguistic skills and increase the range of conversational strategies, especially if the text included a range of speakers, both male and female.

We can't know how people spoke in the 18th century - what accents they had, how much hesitation, broken sentences, actual errors in words or grammar they used. Speech is important in indicating that one belongs to a certain social class, age group, geographical location, and so on.

Michaelson then read an excerpt from *Pride and Prejudice* (Ch.6, p. 163), when Elizabeth is visiting Charlotte, and they are invited to dine at Rosings. Lady Catherine dominates the conversation, asking all sorts of questions of Elizabeth: "do you play and sing? Do you draw? Has your governess left you? Are any of your younger sisters out?" and so on. Elizabeth accepts this inquisition, once refuses to answer, and then takes over the conversation herself, giving her opinion of the fairness of keeping younger sisters out of society. The dialogue contrasts the speech and manner of an elderly, dignified, domineering, powerful aristocrat, and a young, inexperienced, but spirited young lady. (Michaelson pointed out that the narrator gives clues as to the character interactions, necessary for the reader's understanding, whereas a movie can show their thoughts with gestures and facial expressions.) Reading fiction could somewhat take the place of conduct books to help readers understand the norms of everyday good speech.

Michaelson ended by wishing she had had more time (she was writing with a rigid deadline) to make her book more accessible to non-specialists. She was an animated speaker, but her talk, too, at times was difficult for a non-linguist to understand just what point she intended to make.

Proof-Reading? Eileen Sutherland.

"What is become of all the Shyness in the World?" Jane Austen wrote (1807). I don't know about shyness, but my question is: "What has become of all the proof-reading?" In a single paragraph in *A Companion to Jane Austen Studies* (Laura Lambdin and Robert Lambdin, eds. 2000) are two incredible errors:

"Another of Anne's suitors, Sir Walter Elliot, appears on the surface to be a Prince Charming. He seems stable, grounded as heir to Sir Walter's land. As a widower of seven months, Mr. Elliot is eligible for remarriage. . . . Through him Anne could revive her dear mother's title of Lady Elliot Wickham." ("*Persuasion's* Box of Contradictions" by Claudia Stein, p.148).

A few pages later, referring to Captain Wentworth, the author writes: "When William returns to England after years at sea, he is unaware of Anne's feelings for him" (p.152), and several times mentions "Louise" Musgrove (p.153).

In the chapter discussing *The Watsons*, "On the Virtues of Stout Half-Boots" by Laura Hamblin, we find "Robert" Watson on one page and "Richard" Watson on the next (p.227-8).

I have not been *searching* for errors, but these seemed to "jump out at me" as I read. Here are some others, from one chapter in *Revising Women*, Paula Backscheider, ed. In "Jane Austen and the Culture of Circulating Libraries," by Barbara Benedict, the writer mentions several of Jane Austen's letters.[Emphasis mine, E.S.] "As Austen records in a letter to her sister . . . 'You distress me cruelly by your request about Books, . . . I come to you to be talked to, not to read' [Letter 26, 12 Nov., 1800]" (p.157) - actually the letter was to her friend Martha Lloyd.

Another time, "Austen . . . completing a long letter to Cassandra, exclaims, 'I am now alone in the Library, Mistress of all I survey.' [Letter 84, 23 Sept. 1813]. . . . She enjoys the power of cultural display in the private space of her father's library." (p.161). The letter was sent from Godmersham, home of her brother Edward Knight, his library, not her father's.

Later in the same letter, "Austen praises a letter of Cassandra's . . . the chief of which she read to a visiting acquaintance" (p.173). This should be "read to her brother Edward Knight."

On a further page, (p.173), Benedict writes: "When she is dying, Austen asserts to her sister, 'Believe me, I was interested in all you wrote, though with all the Egotism of an Invalid I write only of myself.'" [Letter 145, 22 May, 1817]. This letter was to a friend, Anne Sharp.

The last error I noticed in identifying letters was: ". . . writing one letter to Cassandra backwards in mirror prose" (p. 174). This Letter 136, was to "Cassandra", but not to Jane Austen's sister, but to their niece Cassandra, daughter of Charles Austen.

A few days earlier, I had read *The Pleasures of Virtue* by Anne Crippen Ruderman, (1995), and found references to Sir "Walter" Bertram, (p.34, 46). On page 60, is the sentence: "Since her mother's death, for example, Anne's piano-playing made her 'always . . . feel alone in the world,' except during her courtship with Willoughby," as well as the more minor mistakes of stating that Captain Benwick "has just lost his wife." (p.79), and speaking of "Mr. Darcy's friend, Colonel Fitzwilliam." (p.78).

I found some other errors, in *Satire and the Novel*, Ronald Paulson (1967): "The ball at Northerton" (p.299) , obviously should be Netherfield; "Only in *Mansfield Park* is the heroine actually an adopted child" (p.306) - everyone, especially Fanny, is conscious that Portsmouth is her real home; and, re the ending of *MP*, "Maria, Henry, and Mrs. Norris go off to live in exile together" (p.307) - Jane Austen makes it quite clear (*MP* p.468) that "the public punishment of disgrace" does not attend "his share of the offence."

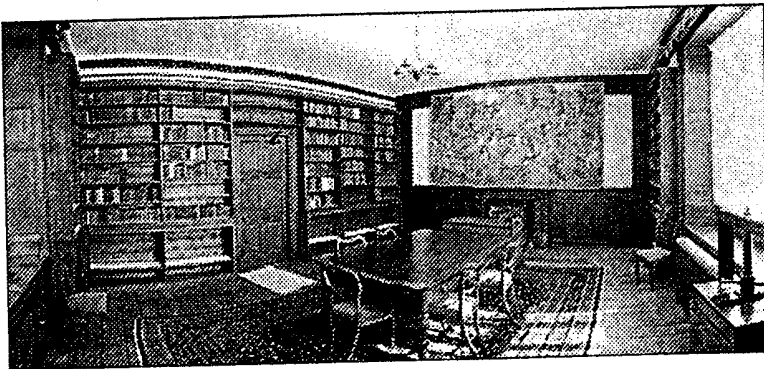
I consider such sheer carelessness to be inexcusable.

Chawton House Library.

A new library and study centre for early English women's writing recently opened in Chawton Great House, a restored Elizabethan manor and the former home of Jane Austen's brother Edward Knight. The collection contains more than 6,000 volumes and manuscripts written by women between 1600 and 1830, as well as 2,000 volumes of other literature. Most of the works came from the private collection of an American, Sandy Lerner, a Jane Austen enthusiast, who bought Chawton House, in a state of disrepair, 10 years ago.

A \$10 million restoration of the manor's 50 rooms and 275 acres has made the property a showplace; much of the grounds has been returned to the landscaped style of the late 18th century, and a walled garden developed by Edward Knight is being recreated.

The literary collection is particularly strong in novels written by women in the 18th and early 19th centuries, including works by Austen, Burney, Eliza Haywood, Lady Caroline Lamb and Mary Shelley, as well as less well-known authors of that time. The library and collection are open to the public by appointment without charge. Courses, talks and events on subjects from literary history and biography to garden archaeology and farming traditions are offered. Tours of the house must be reserved, at a reasonable cost.



For further information, write:
Chawton House Library,
Chawton, Alton, Hampshire.
England. GU34 1SJ

[From: Leslie Mandel-Viney,
New York Times, Oct.26, 2003]

ABOVE The 50-room
Chawton House Manor.
LEFT The library has
over 8,000 volumes.

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Margaret Atwood quotes Lewis Hyde [*The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, 1979]:

"Any equation that tries to connect literary value and money is juggling apples and oranges. Chekhov began his career by writing exclusively for money, and never for any other reason, in order to support his poverty-stricken family. Does that make him ignoble? Shakespeare wrote for the stage, much of the time, and naturally he cranked out stuff he thought would appeal to his audience. Once he got his start, Charles Dickens tossed his day job and lived by the pen. Jane Austen and Emily Bronte didn't, though they wouldn't have minded some extra cash. But you can't say any one of these is a better or a worse artist simply because of the money factor."

Negotiating With the Dead, (p.69). Margaret Atwood.

Education.

"Austen weaves the important facts concerning Anne's formal education into the ongoing exposition. Anne was sent off to boarding school at 14, when her mother died. Though grieving, she obviously took her education seriously. She can quote poetry to herself, discuss moral literature with Benwick, and think critically and objectively, even while experiencing strong, honest emotions. Her former governess must have had a good and lasting influence on her because Anne calls on her at Bath.

In contrast to Anne are 'Henrietta and Louisa, young ladies of 19 and 20, who had brought from a school at Exeter all the usual stock of accomplishments, and were now, like thousands of other young ladies, living to be fashionable, happy, and marry.' While Anne sees the Musgrove girls as exceptionally happy, the narrator explains that, 'saved, as we all are by some comfortable feelings of superiority from wishing for the possibility of exchange; she would not have given up her own more elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments.' The description of Anne's mind emphasizes education. Anne's description of her idea of good company as 'well-informed people' emphasizes education again." (p.209)

- *Jane Austen's Discourse with New Rhetoric*: Lynn R. Rigberg (1999).

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Coughs and sniffles - remedies from yesteryear.

"Cough syrup: take horehound herb, elecampane root, spikenard root, ginseng root, black cohosh, and skunk cabbage root, of each a good-sized handful. Bruise and cover with spirits or whisky, and let stand ten days; then put all in a suitable vessel, add about four quarts of water and simmer slowly over a fire (but don't boil) for twelve hours, or till reduced to about three pints, then strain and add one pint of strained honey, half a pint each of number six, tincture lobelia, and tincture bloodroot (the vinegar or acetic tincture of bloodroot is the best) and four ounces of strong essence of anise, and you will have one of the best cough syrups known. Dose: A tablespoonful three to six times a day, according to circumstances. Good in all kinds of coughs and incipient consumption."

Would this help? Dr. Colin Briggs of the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Manitoba says this aromatic herbal remedy would have indeed been effective. There are ingredients in the elecampane root and black cohosh (extracted by the alcohol found in whisky) that would have eased a nagging cough; the horehound, elecampane, spikenard, skunk cabbage, bloodroot, lobelia, and anise would have helped to clear catarrh - the inflammation of mucous membranes; and the alcohol in the tinctures would have acted as a preservative.

However, the remedies of today are certainly more accessible than those of olden times.

The Beaver, February/March, 2004.

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"Fiction on the whole, and if it is any good, tends to be a subversive element in society. Elizabeth Bennet, that wayward, capricious girl, listening to the beat of feeling rather than the pulsing urge for survival, paying attention to the subtle demands of human dignity rather than the cruder ones of established convention, must have quite upset a number of her readers, changed their minds, and with their minds, their lives, the society they lived in: prodding it quicker and faster along the slow difficult road that has led us out of barbarity into civilisation."

Letters to Alice: Fay Weldon.

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A Canadian Pioneer. E.Sutherland.

"I can picture that winter night in 1805. It's freezing and the snow is piled high. The windows of St. Joseph Church hall in the village of Maskinongé near Trois-Rivières are frosted. Inside, Marie-Anne Gaboury is savouring the soirée. By everyone's account she is gorgeous, with a lovely petite figure, bright blue eyes, and fair hair. And yet something of an oddity, for here she is already twenty-five years old and not married. Family legend has it that she was so lively and quick-witted that life with a dull farmer didn't appeal to her. This cold night, though, she will finally fall madly in love."

This is the beginning of an article by Maggie Siggins in *The Beaver* (October/November 2002) about a woman she calls "the spirit and strength of the North West." She is known historically as the grandmother of Louis Riel, but she is more interesting in her own life story.

Marie-Anne met Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière for the first time that night. He was "dark and good-looking, with the muscular build of a woodsman, and dressed in a buckskin jacket, moccasins beautifully beaded, a *capote* of caribou skin, and an otter-skin cap" - a dashing and romantic figure. He had been a voyageur for the North West Company, and had become an expert hunter of bison and trapper of beaver. He told fabulous tales of his incredible adventures, and Marie-Anne was fascinated. In a few months, they were married.

It was not unusual for a well brought up and devout young woman to marry a man of the woods, who would go off on his hunting and trapping trips, leaving her behind to bring up the children. But Marie-Anne, head-strong and spirited, determined to go along with her husband, and she became the first white woman from the Canadas to join in the incredibly arduous life of a fur trapper.

Their first trip was a terrifying one; crossing Lake Superior, the brigade encountered two wild storms; one canoe was overturned and several men were drowned, but Marie-Anne and her new husband survived. Another encounter was almost as horrifying - when they arrived at the hunting grounds, Marie-Anne discovered that her husband, as was the custom among the white trappers, already had a "wife", a native woman with whom he had three daughters. History does not record what the two women said to each other, or to Jean-Baptiste.

The Red River valley was over-trapped, and the Lagimodières moved to Fort Edmonton. Even in these wild lands, Marie-Anne accompanied her husband on the buffalo hunts and trap lines. She became a superb horsewoman, with supplies in a pack on one side of the saddle and a papoose strapped on the other. She had three babies in five years. At one time, she and the children were kidnapped by Sarcee, who intended to hold them hostage, but Marie-Anne and her children escaped. It took them five days at full gallop to attain the safety of Fort Edmonton.

When a fourth child was expected, the family moved back to Red River, now a thriving village of several hundreds. Jean-Baptiste continued his hunting and trapping, but eventually became a farmer and businessman. Marie-Anne had to settle down and "dig a potato garden" as she put it. She gave birth to three more children, including Julie, who became the mother of Louis Riel. Marie-Anne never returned to her home in Quebec. She lived to be 95 years old, and seemed never to regret her life in the wilds. She is a worthy heroine of our country's past.

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