JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

Vancouver Region

NEWSLETTER NO. 86 MAY, 2004

Botanists or Botanophiles?

Fanny Price could easily have turned against a love of flowers after spending an hour or so picking her Aunt Bertram's roses, and then another hour walking to Mrs. Norris's house with them - "the heat was enough to kill anybody." However, we are told twice about "her plants" in the East Room, and her pleasure in Mrs. Grant's shrubbery - "How beautiful, how welcome, how wonderful the evergreen. . . how astonishing a variety of nature." Exiled to Portsmouth, Fanny thinks of spring at Mansfield Park: "increasing beauties, from the earliest flowers in the warmest divisions of her aunt's garden, to the opening of leaves of her uncle's plantations, and the glory of his woods." Jane Austen may well have envisioned Fanny as one of the many young women in the early nineteenth century who became interested in "botanizing" and the study of botany. In *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science (1996),* Ann B. Shteir describes the beginnings of the science of botany, and the young women who became proficient in plant study, wrote introductory books for young people, and even in some cases pursued careers in botanical science.

In the 18th century, the study of nature was becoming prominent in England. Botanic Gardens were established. New types of plants were introduced from exotic parts of the world, and drew attention also to native species. By the end of the century, botany was part of the culture of the rising middle classes. Patterns in nature were sought, but how should plants be classified - by size, habitat, uses, variations in colour, or parts of the flower or seed? Various systems were devised, but the one eventually adopted in England was that worked out by the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus, based on the reproductive parts of a flower.

Linnaeus divided the plant kingdom into "classes" and "orders", reflecting traditional gender concepts: the "class" based on the number of male stamens ranks higher than the "order" based on the number of female pistols. He also represented the male part as active and the female part as receptive. His classification reflects a contemporary obsession with sex and gender differences.

In England, various books introduced the Linnaean system to the public. Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, with hand-coloured engravings of plants with Linnaean names and other information, was immensely popular and frequently reprinted. Towards the end of the 18th century, books were increasingly written and translated with the female reader in mind. The physician-botanist William Withering wrote a popular manual of botany. He believed that

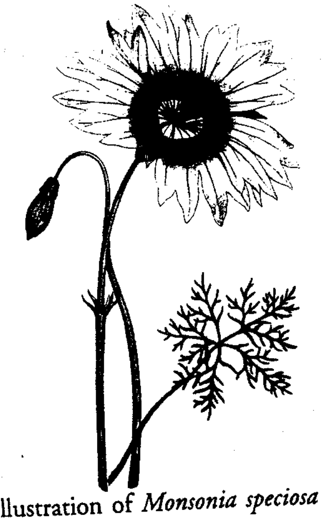

Illustration of *Monsonia speciosa* (named in honor of Lady Anne Monson) in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, vol. 3 (1790)

English terms, rather than the Latin Linnaeus advocated, would make the new science more accessible to the general reader. But a controversy arose about dealing with the sexual material in Linnaeus - "women were (or should be) modest and chaste, and it would be inappropriate to parade plant sexuality in front of them". The debate about sexuality and morality was a topic of concern during the 1790s. The poet Anna Seward declared that the Linnaean language of plant sexuality "can only be unfit for the perusal of such females as still believe the legend of their nursery, that children are dug out of a parsley bed." Another contemporary writer remarked: "If nature may be admired and inquired into at all by women, surely *vegetable* nature is remote from indelicacy."

Erasmus Darwin disagreed with Withering's approach, and in 1783 the Botanical Society of Lichfield issued a "literal and accurate" English translation of Linnaeus's work. This translation, acknowledging the sexual core of the Linnaean system, pointed the way for later botany books, and by the end of the century "the sexualized and Latinized nomenclature was fully established."

The simplicity of the Linnaean system helped make botany a popular science in England at the end of the 18th century - books, games, verse, art, and public lectures proliferated, for all ages, in families and in schools. By the early decades of the 19th century, however, different viewpoints were emerging and the Linnaean classification system came under attack. Many botanists preferred to group plants into families according to a series of characteristics rather than merely their reproductive parts. This change to the "natural system" developed rapidly among specialists and more educated botanists. Increasingly, Linnaean botany was seen as the gateway to botanical knowledge, associated with children, students and women. Distinctions were made between the "botanist" - male - and the "botanophile" - female. A movement began to "defeminize" the public image of the science.

Queen Charlotte studied botany. The queen's example gave a stamp of social approval to botany as associated with family and appropriate leisure and encouraged women's entry into plant study. Women of the middle classes, gentry, and aristocracy became plant collectors, illustrators, and students of taxonomy. However, women were excluded from formal participation in the public institutions of botany and science. They could not be members of the Royal Society or the Linnaean Society, could not attend meetings, read papers, or (with very rare exceptions) see their findings published in the journals of these societies.

Shteir points out that, in spite of this, women left their mark on botanical studies. They were prolific as botanical writers, for pleasure, profit and fame, in popularized works for children, women and general readers. The maternal and pedagogical voice in women's scientific writing of the time is very evident.

Frances Rowden's *A Poetical Introduction to the Study of Botany* (1801) discussed the parts of plants and illustrated the Linnaean system by a sequence of verses that depicted the classes and orders; her personified stories about each plant led into moral teachings. Lady Charlotte Murray, in *The British Garden* (1799), listed plants native to Britain or introduced from elsewhere, organized according to their Linnaean class and order. She tried to cultivate an interest in botany as a more accessible study than other sciences.

For those women who wrote to earn a living for their families, botanical writing was an important resource. Charlotte Smith's books and verse for young readers, *Rural Walks* and *Elegiac Sonnets*, were steeped in technical botanical knowledge and filled with specific details, combining moral tales with natural history. Henrietta Moriarty's book, *Viridarium*, or *Fifty Greenhouse Plants*, combined illustrations and Linnaean descriptions, as well as the cultural requirements of plants. Sarah Hoare's emphasis on the medicinal uses of plants became an increasingly important theme in botanical writing - the practical application of botanical knowledge to agriculture, medicine, cooking, and other domestic areas.

Neither a naturalist herself, nor a traveller to exotic places, Priscilla Wakefield saw her books as a way to earn money. She wrote sixteen natural history books and travelogues for young readers in a familiar epistolary style. In contrast to many other writers of her day, she did not warn against female learnedness, nor did she elevate modesty, submission, and piety above all else. She recommended botany for teaching girls good habits and healthy behaviour. Her *Introduction to Botany* (1796) was widely reprinted, came to be known as *Wakefield's Botany*, and remained a staple of publishers' lists until the middle of the 19th century.

Sarah Fitton's *Conversations on Botany* used a conversational style rather than Wakefield's epistolary form: a mother and young son walk in the garden and fields, the child asking questions about plants, and his mother answering him. Another child-centred book was *Dialogues on Botany*, by Harriet Beaufort, in which three young girls were taught about plants by a visiting aunt. These authors taught botany at home as part of a general education and emphasized a hands-on experience - the children dissected plants and worked with microscopes, studying bulbs, roots, sap, fruits, flowers and the influence of climate on plants. Science was seen as a source of pleasure while serving moral, spiritual and intellectual purposes.

Shteir sees these books as examples of the growing trend in botanical studies: "Books in the familiar format were one way for women writers to exercise their intellectual voices from the late 18th into the early 19th centuries." Gradually, however, "certain styles of popular scientific writing - the familiar format, poetic passages, generalist narratives with stories and digressions - became identified with women," and were tagged non-science. During the course of the 19th century, women and the "feminine" were excluded from science and science writing, and pushed to the margins of the increasingly masculinized science culture.

Shteir goes on to discuss women who made careers for themselves in botanical writing, "bounded by, and shaped by, literary conventions, gender ideology, and social constraints." Maria Jacson, a member of Erasmus Darwin's social, literary and botanical circle, had to negotiate carefully between the Learned Lady and the Proper Lady. Her books, *Botanical Dialogues* and *Botanical Lectures*, for example, show her as studious, industrious, and with some independence of mind and a high level of botanical knowledge. She contributed to the science education of girls, women and general readers while not infringing on a provincial gentlewoman's schooled and well-honed sense of decorum.

Agnes Ibbetson, on the contrary, refused to bow to conventions, and came into conflict with the "power brokers" of her day. Writing "for the love of science", she chose the scientific report as her medium. She published more than fifty essays in general science magazines, many translated in Swiss, French and Italian scientific periodicals. The response from male colleagues was often highly discriminatory, referring to "the warmth of her imagination" and her "fanciful drawings." The reception of her work suggests how unforgivable it was for a woman of the time to "conduct botanical experiments seriously, with commitment and absorption, to pursue exactitude rather than elegance, and to propose broad synthetic theories in science."

The following decades, the 1820s and 1830s, show an even greater disparity between male and female studies of botany. "Within romantic culture, the scientific woman was problematic. Within science culture, women were excluded from research-based botanical gardens. . . . Botany became increasingly masculinized." It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that opportunities for female science education were opening up in some schools and universities.

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February Meeting .

Our new season began on February 21, 2004, with an informative talk by **Tina Jerabek**, the winner of the 2003 Jane Austen Essay Prize at UBC. A recent graduate, studying colonial and post-colonial issues, Tina titled her talk, "Beyond the Periphery: Political Issues and the National Tale in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*". Some years ago, Edward Said criticized Jane Austen for putting the theme of slavery on the periphery instead of keeping it well into the foreground. Tina objected to this opinion, on the grounds that if we read *Mansfield Park* thoroughly, we would find that slavery was by no means as much relegated to the sidelines as at first it seems. Catherine Morland felt that "history, real solemn history" could not be interesting, but Tina began with a short account of the background history of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery in England. Key figures in the struggle for abolition were William Wilberforce and Lord Mansfield, who finally brought in a Parliamentary Bill which put an end to slavery in England, in 1807. *Mansfield Park* was written in the midst of this vital period.

Jane Austen hints at slavery in other novels, very subtly, but deliberately. In *Emma*, Jane Fairfax compares the life of a governess with being sold into slavery; and Mr. Elton's wife was the former Augusta Hawkins of Bristol, a seaport noted for slavery connections. Many readers would know that Sir John Hawkins, an Elizabethan sea captain who later commanded a British Navy squadron that defeated the Spanish Armada, began his sea-going career as a ruthless slave trader. Only in *Mansfield Park*, however, does the issue of slavery come into the open.

The novel focuses on power and tradition, comparable to the relationship between politics and the national ideal. The character of Sir Thomas Bertram, the absolute master of his house and his household, is seen in relation to the poor niece, Fanny Price, almost a slave in her new environment, transported far from her old home and family: her loneliness and inability to communicate, and the continual reminders that she must serve her relations' wishes. The original readers would have picked up these ideas, and been interested in the economic underpinnings of Sir Thomas's estate, based on his plantations in Antigua, run with slave labour. Lady Bertram's uselessness, laziness, and lethargic orders, as well as Sir Thomas's mastery of all, could be seen as very much akin to slave-owners.

Fanny's fight for liberation will not allow her to submit to Sir Thomas's tyranny. The politics of resistance can be seen in slavery and the situation of women at the time. Sir Thomas stresses a high moral conduct, but he creates a feeling of oppression in his household. He has to return to Antigua because when he is not there the plantation runs amok; when he leaves Mansfield Park, the family members express their feelings of liberty and lack of restrictions. The planned marriage of his daughter, Maria, reminded Mary Crawford of "the old heathen heroes who . . . offered sacrifices to the gods on their safe return." And his determination that Fanny should marry Henry Crawford, might have put early readers in mind of the auction blocks of the slave trade.

It was an interesting, provocative talk, that led to many thought-provoking questions from the audience. Jane Austen intentionally marginalized her examination of the slavery issue, but Tina showed us that the political meaning of *Mansfield Park* is much heavier than it seems. As Sandy Lundy remarked, "The more you read the novels, the darker they get."

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"Most of us when we do a caddish thing harbour resentment against the person we have done it to, but Roy's heart, always in the right place, never permitted him such pettiness. He could use a man very shabbily without afterward bearing him the slightest ill-will."

This is as good as Jane Austen. *Cakes and Ale*, W.S.Maugham.

Proof-Reading or Fact-Checking, or both

After reading my recent article on "Proof-reading" or lack of it, **Rene Goldman** sent in a review he had published in the *Toronto Star* some time ago, on a biography of Deng Xiaoping (successor of Mao Zedong as the head of the Chinese Communist Party) by his daughter, Deng Maomao. In his blistering review, Rene includes a few of the errors he found in her book.

"Were the publishers (Simon and Schuster) in such a rush to produce a scoop that they did not even bother to edit the 500-page manuscript? The translation was effected by a veritable production team of no fewer than 10 Chinese interpreters. Not surprisingly, the result reads rather like "translationese"; there is no end of mistakes of grammar and usage. The misrendered names are legion; hardly a French name is spelled correctly; what happens between China and France is described as "Sino-Franco," instead of Sino-French; the capital of Ceylon is called Columbus, instead of Colombo, and so on.

The author and her translators could not even name correctly Borodin, the famous Soviet agent who advised the father of China's nationalist revolution: Sun Yat-sen, and supervised the Chinese Communists in the 1920s. They call him "Vasili Constantin," in reality his name and patronymic were Michael Markovich."

The author is planning a second volume, with the promise that: 'I believe that the next book will be better than this one.' To which Rene replies: "It better be. A *caveat* to the publishers."

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Aunts Are Always With Us.

Jane Austen wrote a letter to her young niece Caroline, in which she says: "Now that you are become an Aunt (her sister Anna had just had a baby girl), you are a person of some consequence . . . I have always maintained the importance of Aunts as much as possible." Jane and Cassandra must have been wonderful aunts, delightful playmates at first, and later wise counsellors to the young people of the family.

In an article in the *United Church Observer* (April 2004), Phyllis Bottomer reflects on all the aunts she has heard of and been associated with in her life; beginning with Mary the mother of Jesus who was supported at his crucifixion by an un-named sister. Phyllis was an aunt herself, waiting for the end of a vital operation on the brain of her eight-year-old niece (happily, successful). All through her life she remembers lovely experiences of "real" aunts and aunt-like older women who were there for her when she needed them, and she herself fulfilled that role for the children of her family and friends.

Phyllis concludes, "Aunthood is a precious and honoured role", and I feel sure Jane Austen would agree. This is an interesting and well-written account of Phyllis' experiences, which I have put in our library.

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Please keep the clippings coming.

A very sincere "thank you" to members who have sent me copies of interesting clippings, announcements, pictures, etc. for possible inclusion in the Newsletter: Sandy Lundy, Bev Gropen, Joan Reynolds, Barbara Peacock, Jean Brown, Viviane McClelland, and others. I enjoy them all, and if I can't use them right now, I keep them for the future. I love getting all you send. Keep reading, and thinking of me.

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Minor Characters in Jane Austen's Novels - March Meeting.

Members **Mary Atkins and Barbara Phillips** prepared an interesting group discussion about Jane Austen's secondary characters, not necessarily involved in the main plot, but having a definite purpose in the story. Are they completely flat, or do they sometimes change and grow? And what purpose do they have in the novel?

Barbara began with a commentary on some of the marriages - good and bad - in Jane Austen's life and works. In *S&S*, we looked at Fanny, wife of John Dashwood. What was she like before their marriage? Did she always dominate him for the worse? Why do we dislike her? Sir John and Lady Middleton, with their "total want of talent and taste [required] continual engagements at home and abroad." The widow Mrs. Jennings was a little vulgar, but cheerful and kind. Charlotte Palmer derived amusement from the "studied indifference, insolence and discontent of her husband." Robert and Lucy Ferrars, both selfish, vain and conniving, deserved each other. Willoughby, a rogue, didn't end up badly with the wealthy Miss Gray.

The marriage we learn the most about in *P&P* is the Bennets'. Mrs. Bennet "was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. The business of her life was to get her daughters married." In this essential enterprise she made more efforts than her misanthropic husband, shut up in his library. Charlotte Lucas, marrying Mr. Collins, called herself "not romantic;" she accepted fate and settled for a comfortable home, a reasonable fortune, and a future home at Longbourn, and arranged to see as little as possible of her husband. Lydia's and Wickham's marriage was the result of passions stronger than their virtues.

In *MP*, the first marriages mentioned are those of the Ward sisters, illustrating the three facets of marriage - Miss Ward (Mrs. Norris) married for security; Miss Maria (Lady Bertram) for fortune, and Miss Frances (Mrs. Price) for love. Only the last turned out to be a disaster - love cannot conquer bad temper, irresponsibility and poverty. Among the next generation, Maria Bertram considered it her "duty" to marry, with the delights of leaving home, a good fortune and the gaieties of London social life. The marriage of Edmund and Fanny succeeds where the others fail; they establish a home with affection, respect and comfort

Emma marries for love. Mr. Elton can love nobody but himself - he knew his own worth in the marriage market, and did not mean to throw himself away. He refused Harriet, who would have made him a pleasant, malleable wife, and chose Augusta Hawkins, who tried to control the social life of Highbury, and would soon completely control him. *Pers.* opens with the contemplation of Sir Walter Elliot's marriage and subsequent family, listed in the Baronetage. Quite different were the Crofts, whose marriage is one of the few really good ones in the novels. Except for this, and one or two others, Austen creates the image of an ideal marriage by pictures of the opposite.

Several members volunteered to discuss an individual character. **Joan Reynolds** began with an analysis of Mrs. Reynolds, housekeeper at Pemberley. Only a few pages are devoted to her, but by Jane Austen's description it is obvious that the reader is to admire her, "a respectable-looking, elderly woman, much less fine and more civil" than expected. She has known the Darcy family for two generations, and we can rely on her comments and trust her judgment. Little nuggets of information are given to us in her conversation - Darcy was a good tempered, generous boy and is now "the best landlord and the best master." We agree with Elizabeth's thought: "What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant?" Mrs. Reynolds has an essential place in the narrative; she is a catalyst to Elizabeth's growing interest in Darcy, and tips the balance of the reader's opinion.

Irene Howard discussed the sub-plot in *Emma* of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. In contrast to Emma, Jane is handsome, clever, *not* rich, and has had more than a little to vex her. Jane Austen uses Miss Bates to provide the necessary connection between Jane and Frank and yet maintain the secrecy of the love-affair. At the Crown Inn, for several pages Miss Bates' non-stop conversation to one and all gives us a valuable picture of the scene - Frank rushed out with umbrellas for Miss Bates and Jane when they arrived; Frank had spent some time mending old Mrs. Bates' spectacles; Miss Bates wanted Jane to put on her tippet against draughts, "Mr. Churchill, you are too obliging! How well you put it on!" (Here Irene wondered, a little caress on Jane's shoulders, perhaps); helping Miss Bates and Jane down a step or two: "Sir, you are most kind, Jane on one arm and me on the other!" When Miss Bates asked where she should sit, Frank obliges again: "Do you recommend this side?" It was a clever and vivid way for Jane Austen to describe the bustling scene, with Frank always there as close as possible to Jane.

Vivienne McClelland gave a devastating description of Mrs. Elton, discussing her character, her fortune, her relations. She was the product of one set of acquanitances, and her society would do no good to Mr. Elton. Her conversation contained constant talk of her relatives and their home Maple Grove - "a charming place, undoubtedly. Every body who sees it is struck by its beauty." She felt she had left a vastly superior society, and come to one she could dominate with her social powers - the Perrys, the Coles, the Bates, etc. But she met her match in Emma.

While Emma and Mrs. Elton share certain qualities: feelings of superiority, a desire to dominate others, and so on, Jane Austen usually presents them very differently: we are often given Emma's trenchant thoughts, while her words are quite appropriate for the occasion. Mrs. Elton, however, expressed every vile thought she had, with no notion of propriety. We agree with Emma: "insufferable woman! A little upstart, vulgar being, with her Mr. E, and her *caro sposo*, and her resources, and all her airs of pert pretension and under-bred finery."

Mary Atkins mentions an Internet message from the *Friends of Mr. Woodhouse*, an organization which wants to promote a new appreciation of him. Jane Austen describes him as "a nervous man, easily depressed, fond of every body that he was used to, and hating to part with them; hating change of every kind." But he was also "everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his amiable temper." He was always concerned for Emma's health - if she came home late, Searle, the butler and her maid must take care of her, keep her warm, get her something to eat: all at no inconvenience to himself, of course. But contrast this with Mrs. Churchill's control over Frank and his visits. Mr. Woodhouse shows us a *better side* of Emma, otherwise we might not think she had one. Her treatment of her father is patient, kind, loving. He is kept comfortable by her ceaseless attention, although she realizes that he is no companion to her, either playfully or intellectually. Mr. Woodhouse even appears lovable to the neighbours because of Emma's actions.

The prepared comments were followed by a brisk, enlightening discussion, and questions and answers from the audience. Did any of the secondary characters change over time, or after marriage? Our conclusion was that they were not expected to change, they were intended to be flat, background characters, although they were often used to good purpose, forwarding the plot, or in their effect on others. One of our best meetings ever!

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The Daily News.

"During the War of 1812, British generals read all about their enemies' movements . . . in the newspaper! American newspapers printed military movements as well as official correspondence detailing various operations, providing a prime intelligence source to their British enemies. In 1814, the publication of military information in newspapers was forbidden."

The Beaver, February/March, 2004.

Exploring the New World.

This May, Americans will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the arduous expedition of Merriwether Lewis and William Clark, trying to discover a practical land-water route to the Pacific. They began near St. Louis, setting out on May 14, 1804, going up the Missouri River to Mandan Indian country. There they wintered in log cabins, and when spring came they crossed the Bitterroot and Rocky mountains on foot, using Indian horses as pack animals. Finally they reached a western-flowing stream, built boats, and headed down the tributaries and then the mighty Columbia River, to its mouth. On November 7, 1805, they saw the Pacific Ocean for the first time. During the spring and summer of 1806, they returned home as they had gone, by way of the Columbia and Missouri rivers, arriving at St. Louis to great acclaim.

Nobody wants to minimize the exploits of Lewis and Clark, but to Stephen Hume, it seems only fair to mention some earlier Canadian explorers, who had been mapping an unsurveyed continent for more than half a century before the Americans began their journey. In an interesting article in the *Vancouver Sun*, May 10, 2003, Hume mentions Alexander Mackenzie, "who had already been knighted for his trek across the continent more than a decade earlier."

In this same year of 1804, Samuel Hearne had been dead for almost 10 years. According to Hume, "Hearne had walked almost 6,000 kilometres across the barrens from Churchill, Manitoba, to the Arctic Ocean and back." He had done this in the years 1770-1772.

David Thompson "lived off the land while doing his surveys . . . across a vast region that ranged from the Peace River district to the Columbia, for twenty years before Lewis and Clark passed through the country a bit farther south." In these same years, Simon Fraser "was setting up trading posts beyond the Rockies, preparing for his own journey down the river which now bears his name" to the Pacific Ocean. Hume reports that more than 60 years earlier, a French Canadian fur-trader named Pierre La Verendrye had already explored the Yellowstone region and "was certain that the 'Western Sea' lay beyond, but his Indian companions refused to go further."

Many accounts of French exploration and fur trading in the mid-1740s and '50s in the foothills of the Rockies, are dismissed as fanciful. The journeys of Alexander Mackenzie, however, are well documented. Hume takes up the story: "In 1789, searching for the Northwest Passage, he left Fort Chippewyan on Alberta's northern border and followed the Mackenzie River to the Arctic Ocean, a journey of more than 8,400 kilometres. After returning to England to study cartography and navigation, he set out again in 1792, and became the first European to cross the Continental Divide. He wintered near the Peace River, and the following spring, [211 years ago this May] he was descending what is now the Fraser River.

Wisely, Mackenzie listened to the advice of the local Indians, who warned that the lower river was impassable. He turned around near Quesnel, and struck out overland, following an Indian trading trail that passed north of Anahim Lake and had been in use for 6,000 years. He finally wet his feet in the Pacific near Bella Coola, and mixed vermilion with grease to make his simple testament to a matchless feat of exploration: 'Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three.' "

Stephen Hume's final comment is that "Lewis and Clark wouldn't match that exploit for another 12 years." This is a fascinating article, and what Hume has to report should make us all proud of our Canadian heritage.

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"Literary critics, like historians, can build a card-house of jargon which gives their thoughts the appearance of much greater authority and originality than they really possess."

- *Jane Austen - Illusion and Reality*: Christopher Brooke. (1999).

Jane Austen Day - April 24, 2004.

Rejoicing in "the present smiling weather" we welcomed a good turnout of members and guests, including René Goldman from Summerland, Jill Sims from Nanaimo, and Caroline Kine and Elaine Weeks from Seattle.

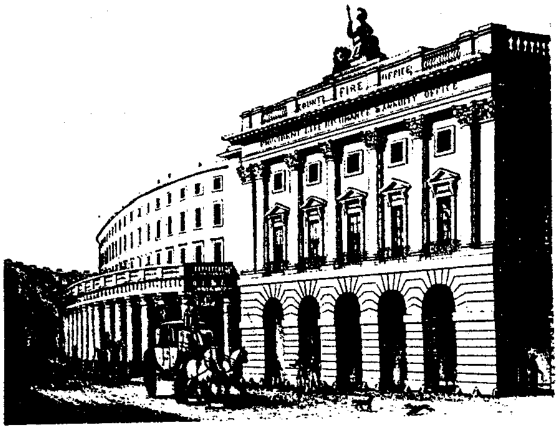
Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe, of the Fine Arts Department of U.B.C.,gave an interesting talk - "Commerce in Taste on John Nash's Regent Street" - about the changes in this area of London during Jane Austen's time. The architect John Nash was responsible for carrying out a grand plan of demolishing little streets and insignificant buildings to make way for the broad thoroughfare of beautiful terraces with columns, crescents and arcades - new streets with new ideas of urban design. Some of these are now gone, but we can still get an impression of the previous grandeur.

During Austen's lifetime, a change in the focus of life led to the arcades being filled in with little shops, an increasing emphasis on commerce and marketing. These themes are important in her novels, also. The scene at Ford's shop in *Emma* hints at the hidden depths in culture: the fabrics we wear or the furnishings we buy indicate our social status; name brands influence our choice; the "latest thing" can make us satisfied or unhappy customers. Austen was aware of these effects but not preoccupied with them.

The original Greek and Roman influence on the architecture emphasized authority. Modernity was also important to Nash. A conscious effort in the blend of old buildings and modern usage provided places where people would *want* to go, particular places to sell particular goods. New areas emerged where certain sorts of people, especially women, would make use of them. The new squares being built on the West Side of London gained political, economical and legal advantage. Markets, barracks, villages, hospitals - all were included in these areas. Goods, from fresh produce from farming areas, to heavy manufactures, were brought from afar.

People came to be seen or to be entertained, as well as to consume goods. Jane Austen hovers on the edge of this post-modern thinking, looking underneath the surface for the real meaning of what we see.

Adele Shaak's talk - "What They Really Wore: Myths and Realities of Fashion" - fitted in well with the theme of changes in Austen's lifetime. She spoke of the garments of the time - the gowns and the women who wore them. Adele pointed out that what you wear says who you are, your social status, where you live. She showed us an illustration of some of the outré, flashy, outlandish outfits on fashion runways today, and surmised that in a hundred years or so people would believe that this is what was worn in 2004. But there is always a discrepancy in what books say, and what was really worn.



Austen lived as an adult for 25 years, and styles changed dramatically over that period. Political upheaval caused change in fashions as well as in politics. The upper classes of London and Paris copied each other's fashions; but the Revolution eliminated the French élite. An anti-aristocratic look became popular: in fabric, style, and economy. The designers took elements from Greece, Rome and Egypt. They copied old marbles, which were almost always white.

English women looked entirely different, showing a nostalgia for peace and calmness, in simple dresses. They still used a lot of fabric but in an easy, comfortable style. In 1796, dresses featured a fitted bodice and sleeves, with the rest of the dress falling in loose folds. Bright colours (with unusual names: jonquil, amaranth, carmelite)were popular. By 1805, Greek and Roman lines had come into English fashion, with a Roman helmet look in hats. Waistbands moved up or down throughout these years. Men wanted to suggest manly sports, pantaloons and boots replaced breeches and pumps. Their aim was to project solidity and stability.

Adele finished her presentation with some hints on making our own costumes for the JASNA Conference here in 2007 - what fabrics to use and where to buy them.

Barbara Phillips arranged our delicious buffet luncheon. The "tressel' tables in the gym were lavishly supplied with salads, barbecued salmon, grilled chicken breasts and rice pilaf, to be followed by a variety of cakes, pies, sweets and fruit kebabs. We returned with laden plates to the Fireside Room, to tables beautifully decorated with bowls of pink and white flowers, tastefully co-ordinated with pink serviettes.

The **United Players of Vancouver** completed the programme with a presentation of *Miss Elizabeth Bennet*, by A.A.Milne. This group was formed 46 years ago, and have been going strong ever since. We have been entertained by them several times in the past, and have never been disappointed, nor were we this time. Two tables were removed to make an adequate if not lavish acting area - "backstage" was behind the piano! A pianist provided musical continuity. Even with an almost bare stage area, few props, and the nine actors reading from scripts, it was a witty and delightful performance, true to Jane Austen's novel, and a perfect way to end the day.

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Sensibilities.

"We find as the [18th] century moves on that the heroes and heroines of fiction, although often endowed with increasingly exquisite sensibilities, have to suffer more and more limitations on their freedom of action in the sexual sphere. One cannot imagine Jane Austen, for instance, much as she admired Richardson, ever allowing one of her young ladies to be raped, or one of her young gentlemen to marry a common serving maid. What was happening in fiction to some extent reflected what was happening - or what many people felt ought to be happening - in life. The status of women was changing (and most novels after about 1760 seem to have been written by women) and there was a general tendency for bourgeois respectability to replace aristocratic freedom as the most admired norm, both in life and literature. Those symbolic figures Mr. B., Lovelace, Don Giovanni and Valmont are all upper class libertines who are eventually defeated by implacable, *respectable* women (or their avengers) - swamped by the rising tide of middle class morality."

- *Virtue in Distress*, R.F. Brissenden (1974)

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