

Muse & Musings

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

February 17th Meeting

Living in Austen-Land: Experiential Learning and Archival Research at Chawton House Library Lindsey Seatter

Last summer, Lindsey Seatter, graduate student at the University of Victoria, had the great good fortune to spend the month of August at Chawton House Library doing research as part of their Visiting Fellowship Program. Her dissertation, "Imagining Publics, Negotiating Powers" explores how JA's stylistic innovation, in particular "free indirect discourse," was influenced by contemporary women writers: Frances Burney, Mary Brunton and Maria Edgeworth.



Lindsey Seatter immersed in her research; fellows commuting to the library.

Most of her four weeks at Chawton was spent reading six novels by these three authors. She also examined all JA's work from the *Juvenilia* to *Sanditon* in examining the research question: *How did Austen internalize and extend the narrative practices of other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors, specifically women writers?* Lindsey found that reading the works in the immediate environment where JA either read or wrote them was very helpful to her understanding of them.

Lindsey ended her presentation with a plea for help to Chawton House, which has lost its principal funding – last summer was the final one for the Visiting Fellowship Program – and with a video that she and her colleagues made as a gift to Chawton House.

– by *Elsbeth Flood* with help from *Lorraine Meltzer*

March 17th Meeting

Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley's *Frankenstein* Dr. Miranda Burgess

On St. Patrick's Day, Miranda Burgess, who gave us "Jane Austen on Paper" two years ago, delivered a fascinating presentation on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, first published 200 years ago, and the scientific, literary and philosophical milieu in which it was created. Mary was 20 years old when it was published, and many attributed it to her husband the famous poet.

Dr. Burgess's entry on UBC's website lists an impressively eclectic range of interests for an English professor: "migration and mobility studies (especially the relations between poetics and the circulation of people, plants, paper, diseases, and feelings by means of inland navigation and transatlantic shipping), medical history and the history of sensation (especially the contemporary parallels between the workings of the human nervous system and the workings of transportation networks and technologies) and the history of form and figuration..." She touched on most of these in her *Frankenstein* talk.



Prof. Miranda joined us for potluck lunch. Mary and Percy Shelley.
Portraits by Samuel Stump and Alfred Clint

Mary Shelley (1797-1845) was the daughter of the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and novelist and political critic William Godwin. Godwin, as a man of science, had a doctor attend the birth of their child, rather than the more common midwife. The doctor introduced a fatal infection, so that young Mary grew up motherless. At the age of 16, she ran off with one of her father's followers, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, and at the age of 19 wrote *Frankenstein*, a novel filled with scientific ideas and philosophical questions.

– by *Elsbeth Flood* with help from *Lorraine Meltzer*

From Eileen's Archive

Newsletter #7 – August, 1984

“What dreadful Hot weather we have! It keeps one in a continual state of inelegance,” wrote Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra in 1796. Our similar and unusual Vancouver summer has kept me also in a continual state of indolence, and this Newsletter has consequently been delayed week by week. However, at last . . .

Spring Luncheon

On Sunday June 24 [1984] the Vancouver Regional Branch had a delightful luncheon in the attractive “Art Room” at Brock House Restaurant, with a dozen members present. Entertainment after lunch consisted of readings of favourite passages from the novels, along with interesting comments and discussion. Several members recommended books recently read and enjoyed. A discussion followed, about our part in the 1986 Conference to be held in Vancouver, with ideas for speakers, programmes and other activities. It was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

October “Seminar”

One of the suggestions put forward at the Spring Lunch was to have a “trial run” of the 1986 Conference, towards the end of October, with a speaker followed by discussion. The theme of the Conference will be *The Watsons*, the fragment of a novel that Jane Austen never finished – why not? was the setting too “low,” as a nephew suggested? or too close to her own family situation at the time? Try to read this uncompleted novel before the October lunch,



Manuscript pages of *The Watsons* purchased by the Bodleian Library in 2011.

and come prepared to question the speaker and discuss various aspects of this novel. (*The Watsons* has been completed several times through the years and you may wish to read these – the Vancouver Library has at least one version – but we will be talking mainly about the actual fragment that Jane Austen wrote.) More details about this in the Fall. – by Eileen Sutherland

All of Eileen's newsletters are now available on our website at: <http://www.jasnancouver.ca/newsletters/>

From our Library



The Jane Austen Cookbook by Maggie Black and Dierdre Le Faye

I found *The Jane Austen Cookbook* to be a delightful and interesting book. It begins with a chapter on the eating habits during the period from 1750 to 1820, including mealtimes and examples of the many dishes that might be served to a party of eight or more guests. As well, the authors discuss the challenges faced by households in procuring and storing food during this time.

The recipes in the book are the sort that Jane Austen's characters might have enjoyed at supper parties, balls or picnics. They were compiled from three sources, including the collected recipes of two women connected to the Austen family.

I enjoyed reading the recipes, with both the original preparation and cooking instructions, followed by the updated directions. The ingredients were sometimes interesting and at other times surprising, and the original preparation directions would not be sufficient for me (hence the updated instructions), but as I have no intention of preparing any of these recipes I was just interested to read them and marvel at the challenges of meal preparation, especially when trying to impress guests. An easy to read, fun book. – by Cathleen Boyle

Irony and Idyll: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park on Screen by Marie N. Sørbo

Marie Sørbo is a Norwegian English Literature professor and was a breakout speaker at the Montreal AGM. This book is a comparative analysis of all the available screen adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park* in one publication (covering productions from 1940 to 2007). Although very detailed, it is very readable with lots of new insights about the various adaptations. I loved looking back to the various screen productions and being reminded of the challenges that Austen novels would present when transferring her narrative to the screen. This is not a book you will find in a public library, because it is an academic publication, and therefore very expensive. There is a detailed review of the book on JASNA's website here: [JASNA review](#) – by Joan Reynolds

If you have questions about our library, please see Cathleen Boyle or Carol Sutherland. We welcome **your** submissions on books from our library.

Literary Connections from Adaptations

Daniel Deronda and Emma with a digression to P&P

I am a great fan of George Eliot, who learned her ironic voice – though not her economy of words – from Jane Austen. Her novel *Daniel Deronda*, while not as successful as *Middlemarch*, is one of my favourites. In 2002, the BBC made a miniseries of *DD* starring Romola Garai as Gwendolen Harleth; in 2009, the BBC made a miniseries of *Emma* starring Romola Garai as Emma. When I reread *DD* after the *Emma* miniseries, I began to see similarities between the two characters. Gwendolen does not quite have all Emma's advantages: She is handsome and clever, but not nearly as rich as she would like to be. She has had a great deal in her life to distress and vex her, mainly due to stepfather's despoliation of her mother's fortune.



Romola Garai as Emma and as Gwendolen, with legitimate archery; Gwyneth Paltrow as Emma with spurious archery.

She is the spoiled and petted darling of her family and everyone else's claims give way to hers. George Eliot is much more explicit and expansive about shortcomings in Gwendolen's character that are only implicit in Austen's description of Emma. At beginning of the novel, the stepfather has died and things seem to be looking up. When Gwendolen learns that her mother's small remaining fortune has been lost in a speculation, the news is devastating to her sense of her place in the world:

The implicit confidence that her destiny must be one of luxurious ease, where any trouble that occurred would be well clad and provided for, had been stronger in her own mind than in her mamma's, being fed there by her youthful blood and that sense of superior claims which made a large part of her consciousness. This is only a small sample of Gwendolen's inner life, which seems to echo Emma's.

After starting to see Emma in the early descriptions of Gwendolen, I saw another Austen parallel:

. . . a rumour was spread in the neighbourhood which to many persons was matter of exciting interest. . . . one which touched all classes within a certain circuit . . . The news was that Diplo Hall, which had for a couple of years [been vacant], . . . was being prepared for a tenant . . . Some readers . . . will doubtless regard it as incredible that people should construct matrimonial prospects on the mere report that a bachelor of good fortune and

possibilities was coming within reach, and will reject the statement . . .

Surely George Eliot had "It is a truth universally acknowledged . . ." in mind when she wrote her rather more prolix description (this is excerpted from five dense paragraphs). As I said, she did not learn economy of language from Jane Austen, though her voice is consistently ironic.

Another rendition of *Emma* – the 1996 film starring Gwyneth Paltrow – introduces archery into the story, which Jane Austen certainly did not. However *Daniel Deronda* has several chapters devoted to archery including an important plot point, which makes another sort of connection between the two. – by *Elsbeth Flood*

News from Port Alberni

New JASNA Region: Central Vancouver Island

It is with great pleasure I announce Central Vancouver Island, based in Port Alberni, British Columbia is JASNA's newest region! I have been working with Tricia Knight since fall of 2016 and am so excited to welcome Tricia and the Region to JASNA! Tricia, who will serve as Regional Coordinator, also organizes an annual festival celebrating Jane Austen (July 6th – 8th 2018). You can read more about The Jane Austen Festival of Port Alberni at: <http://www.centennialbelles.ca/festival-programme>

I know you will all join me in giving Tricia and JASNA Central Vancouver Island a very warm welcome.

– *Liz Philosophos Cooper, JASNA Vice-President for Regions and Vice-President Elect*

Member Profile

Susan Olsen

1. Tell us a bit about yourself and your life to-date.



I was born in Vancouver, the second of four children in the Strell family. My Dad's family emigrated from Ukraine and he made sure we all grew up loving this tasty cuisine as well as the roast beef dinners in the formal Kerrisdale dining room of my Mother's British family. From an early age, my Mother encouraged us to play the piano and both my sister and I chose piano teaching as our career. This led me to marrying a fellow musician and operating a home studio in Surrey for almost 40 years. My two sons and two grandchildren all love to play music at our family gatherings.

2. When did you join JASNA?

I joined in 2007 because of my association with Keiko Parker (who taught me music theory in the 1960s) Later,

I learned that she was a Jane Austen scholar and as I had majored in English during my two years at SFU, I already had a great fascination for literature. Keiko invited me to join and I'm very glad that I took her suggestion.

3. What do you like about JASNA?

I had great fun working with Sandy Lundy during her term as editor of the Newsletter. I enjoy interacting with the other members with whom I have had so many interesting conversations! I don't come to meetings as often as I would like, but I always enjoy the wonderful presentations and I'm grateful for our resourceful Program Committee. I have attended three AGMs and my non-literary husband was even persuaded to learn a bit of English country dancing for Portland and Montreal.

4. Has JASNA given you any special memories?

I remember the 2007 AGM where I was in charge of the Banquet centerpieces. There were 65 of them featuring a glass bowl containing a West Coast nautical scene, complete with seagull. For many weeks, all 65 bowls were lined up on the floor of my piano studio and of course, I kept my students in suspense as to what they were for! Each week, as they arrived, more items were added until the final product was ready. Then they were transported (very carefully in a large cargo van) to the Hotel Vancouver. It was indeed a special memory when the banquet doors were opened and we had our first glimpse of the candlelit centerpieces and tables.



RC's Corner

Michelle Siu

This spring I hope to find some time to read more of E.J. Clery's *The Banker's Sister* which examines how her brother's career in banking and other pursuits affected Jane's life and her efforts as an author. Look to hear more

about her as she will be visiting from the UK and in our part of town in the summer. More information in August.



Lindsey Scatter with Michelle

In May, Keiko Parker will present photos and highlights from her 15-day tour last October with stops in Bath and Chawton. June will be our customary Books and Berries. Prepare a book review to share, and bring your donations for the book sale. In September, we may try another member-hosted event, as it has been several years since we did one. This is likely to be a book or video discussion – listen for calls for volunteer hosts.

If you have suggestions, please approach me at our meetings or email me at:

JASNAvancouverRC@gmail.com

Meet the Program Committee

Program Committee sees retirements, new faces

The Program Committee has lost long-time members Pam Ottridge (Committee Chair), Aileen Hollifield and Joan Reynolds, mainstay of practically everything. The position of **Program Committee Chair** is currently vacant. On the other, hand four members have recently joined the committee: Barbara Elliot, Barbara Philips, Carol Sutherland and Cheryl Peteherych. Remaining unchanged are Regional Coordinator Michelle Siu, Treasurer Elaine Wong, newsletter editor Elspeth Flood and members-at-large Azarm Akhavien, Susan Kaufman and Phyllis Ferguson Bottomer, past RC and current Membership Secretary for JASNA-Canada.

Spring 2018 meeting dates

Mark your calendar!

May 12	Keiko's 2017 Remembering Jane tour
June 16	Books and Berries

For more up-to-date information, please see the program of events on our website: [JASNA-Vancouver program](#)

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

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