

Muse & Musings

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

September 12th Virtual Meeting

Dr. Catherine Morley: Reading the Food in *Emma*



Our September 12th Zoom meeting was "live from Hantsport, N.S." with former Vancouver (now Nova Scotia) member Dr. Catherine Morley of Acadia University. Her presentation was "Reading the Food in *Emma*: Why Mr. Woodhouse cares so much about what his guests and family eat." Catherine described herself as a science nerd in school, who was not interested in literature or the arts. She credits our member Lorraine Meltzer, who was her neighbour when she first moved to B.C., with introducing her to Jane Austen and thence to English literature, where she discovered that literature is about political commentary.



Emma (Gwyneth Paltrow) and Harriet (Toni Colette) picking "hot" strawberries in 1996 *Emma*.

A JASNA member since 1998, she has extensively researched the historical influences on present-day dietetic practice. She was a Visiting Fellow at Chawton House Library in both 2010 and 2012 where she studied the history of the invalid's diet, a forerunner to present-day medical nutrition therapy practices, concluding that much modern practice dates from the ancient theory of the "humours" and has no scientific basis.

An examples of the humour theory were that Mr. Woodhouse's favourite gruel was considered useful to balance the humours. Strawberries were considered "heating," or sexually stimulating – giving a whole new reading to the strawberry-picking at Donwell Abbey.

– Elspeth Flood

From Eileen's Archive:

"Murder at the Spa" Newsletter No. 3, August 1983

Jane Austen would have made an excellent writer of mystery stories. In fact, perhaps she started one. *Sanditon* is a new departure, different from the preceding novels, and could easily be the beginning of an excellent mystery. Why did Sidney Parker make his sudden, unannounced visit at this time? Why was Clara Brereton meeting Sir Edward secretly, in a far corner of the grounds, in a thick mist? And who damaged the axle of Mr. Parker's carriage and caused it to overturn in the first place? Any mystery-story fan will seize on these clues as items of tremendous importance to the revelations to follow! What a pity Jane Austen never finished it.

– Eileen Sutherland, 1983



To read Eileen's full article click on the link scroll almost to the bottom and select Newsletter #3: [Newsletters](#)

Book Review

Three Austen-themed fictions



Over the summer I read three recently-published Austen-related novels: one that rewrites well-documented history, one that continues a fiction, and the last that tries to imagine the gaps in the life of someone about whom we know so little. The first book I thought completely missed the mark, the second I felt succeeded partially, and the third worked really well.

Perhaps it was the pretty cover and the many glowing reviews that gave me high expectations of Natalie Jenner's "The Jane Austen Society". Some reviewers likened it to *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, a book I did not much care for, so that should have been a warning as far as my tastes were concerned. I found Jenner's book similarly disappointing. We do know of course the Jane Austen Society was founded in Chawton in the early years of the second world war, and that there are some precious items of Jane Austen's that came into the Society's possession and are now housed in Jane Austen's House. So, knowing so much about the true story of how it all came about I just found it very hard to be engaged by this completely fictional version populated with a set of clichéd characters and what I found to be a predictable plot. It made no sense to me. (Also I grew up in post-war Britain and so am not especially charmed by sentimental stories of the quintessential English village and its fictional bucolic residents, even if the village happens to be Chawton!)

The second book was Janice Hadlow's "The Other Bennet Sister" which had a terrific opening, and quickly rattled along into a new direction for Mary Bennet. I was intrigued by how Mary is finally allowed to thrive away from the confines of the Bennet household, and how other characters from the novel are fleshed out. I thought the novel well done for the most part, although towards the end it too became rather predictable as to how it would all

turn out – not that Austen wasn't also guilty of neatly-concluded plots, but her novels were so perfectly written on every page and never lost momentum, whereas this one I thought fizzled a bit. But a good read, just the same.

The third novel was in my opinion the most successful: Gill Hornby's "Miss Austen". It is based on a real person, namely Cassandra Austen, and her life after Jane. As with Jane, so little is known about Cassandra that it is fertile ground for imagining how she lived out her life among surviving relatives and her past recollections of her times with her sister Jane. Moreover, there is always the tantalizing question of how Cassandra decided on which of Jane's letters to keep, which to censor and which to destroy. This fictionalized account of Cassandra's later life provides a plausible explanation. The absence of documentary evidence to contradict this novel, and the skill in which the author creates a credible narrative I found absorbing and satisfying. – *Joan Reynolds*

Our newest Janeite

Baby Jane



Julia Van Delft charmed us all in her lovely Regency gown at Phyllis's garden party in August. Six days later on August 14th Julia gave birth to Jane Natasha, her third baby. Jane has Down syndrome, but is growing well and is healthy and happy and bringing much joy to her family.

Summer activity

"Jane Austen – Not!"



Aileen H. hiking at Cathedral Lakes near Keremeos.

Selfishness

A story by Lona Manning based on *Mansfield Park*

*We have not published any original fiction before, so this is something new. Guest contributor Lona Manning, who lives in Kelowna, is a published author, a previous contributor to **Jane Austen's Regency World** and a fellow Jane Austen fan. She has published a trilogy of **Mansfield Park** variations.*

**"Selfishness must always be forgiven, you know,
because there is no hope of a cure."**

"Three years ago the Admiral, my honoured uncle, bought a cottage at Twickenham for us all to spend our summers in; and my aunt and I went down to it quite in raptures; but.... for three months we were all dirt and confusion, without a gravel walk to step on, or a bench fit for use."

...

"I have not cared much for [Lady Stornaway] these three years."

Mary Crawford, *Mansfield Park*

"Lord Stornaway? And who might he be, pray?"

"He is the husband of Flora Ross, my old school fellow, Uncle. You may recall, sir, I have been invited –"

"The red-headed girl with the fine bosom? We saw her dancing last winter, did we not? Devil take me, she was a cheerful sight in a lively country dance! I shouldn't be sorry to meet her again!"

Mary glanced over to her aunt, whose severity of countenance proclaimed that the Admiral's admiration for her friend had not escaped her hearing.

"Uncle, you must be thinking of her sister Janet. I believe Janet has left Richmond, so Flora has kindly invited me to –"

"Be off with you then, and leave your poor aunt with no company – save for me."

"For only a few days, sir, and truly, it is so difficult to manage here in the cottage, within and without, while these improvements are going ahead."

"Indeed, I wish you had determined upon all these alterations before we came away from London, Admiral," his wife could not forbear saying.

"And I should like to pack both of you harping females on a long ocean voyage, and once you are back on dry land you can lecture me about how many parlours and breakfast rooms and shrubberies you require! Complaining to me about intolerable privations – have you forgotten whom you are addressing, Madam? And of

course a fine miss like our Mary can't abide a little mud on her shoes, or the sound of honest tradesmen doing honest work –" the Admiral's rebuke was abruptly cut off when a small yew tree crashed through the bow window of the parlour, causing the ladies to jump up with cries of alarm. Cursing volubly, the Admiral rushed outside to confront the unlucky labourers who were clearing away a patch of overgrown garden, and Mary was left to soothe her aunt and direct the servants in clearing up the broken glass.



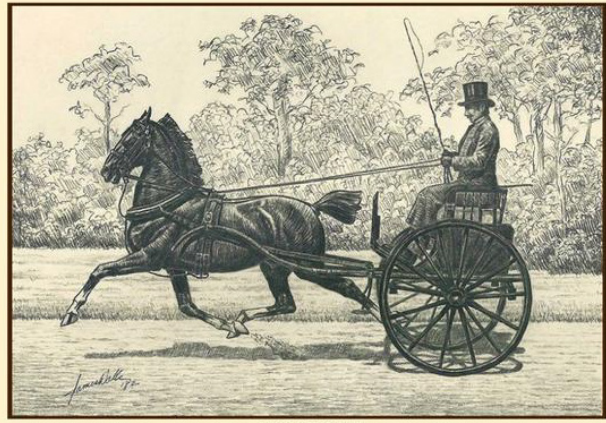
It was, perhaps, asking too much of human benevolence at nineteen to expect Mary Crawford to remain under her uncle's roof, not when she was invited to admire the new establishment of her friend Flora, now Lady Stornaway. The families of Flora Ross and Lord Stornaway expected great things from their recent union – on his side, the hope that a young man of dissolute habits and uneven temper would reform; on her side, the promise of consequence, security and wealth – but Mary Crawford's expectations could hardly have exceeded theirs. Lady Stornaway now presided over a townhouse in London and a country home in Richmond and was as pleased to claim Mary as an honoured guest, as Mary was gratified to accept the invitation.

How anxiously did Mary listen for the sound of Lord Stornaway's gig, and when at last he arrived, with what alacrity and grace did she bid her aunt a hasty farewell, and climb up beside her friend's husband, whose parting salute to her uncle was as careless and indifferent as the uncle's in reply.

"I shall only be across the river, Auntie, and will be back soon, very soon." Mary called as Lord Stornaway drove off.

His Lordship was not disinclined to talk, that is, he was not averse to giving brief replies so long as all the ingenuity of maintaining the conversation fell upon his fair passenger, and Mary tenaciously made polite enquiries about her host's carriages and horses and stables, until their journey finally brought them to a handsome white mansion, in the leafy precincts of

Richmond. There the two fair friends were reunited with fond exclamations and embraces.



A fine misty rain did not deter the ladies from strolling out to admire the grounds together. Sheltered under a large umbrella, and confidently linked arm-in-arm, Lady Stornaway and Miss Crawford were ready, nay, eager, to retrace all of the interesting events of the past few months, to recall every detail, every pleasure and every solicitude pertaining to a successful courtship, an elegant wedding and the honeymoon journey. With so much of mutual interest to canvass, the two friends could be wanting nothing more to pass the interval before dinner most satisfactorily.

“Mary, you cannot know how happy you have made me by agreeing to stay with us!”

“I am sure you were perfectly happy before I arrived, just as you’ve made Lord Stornaway the happiest of men – as the common cant goes.”

“Yes, but without someone to witness my triumph, my happiness is incomplete.”

“As your loyal friend, I promise to be as jealous as you command me to be. And to own the truth, my dear Flora, I am very envious! I shall not tire you with my old complaints about the Admiral but you know how abominably miserable he makes my aunt. I hate to listen to their wrangling more than I can express.”

“Your aunt must learn the proper way of managing her husband,” Lady Stornaway pronounced complacently, with the authority of being herself six weeks’ married. “Lord Stornaway and I have already come to a good understanding. He does not hang over me, nor do I require his attendance every moment. This is my prescription for domestic comfort! But,” with a sigh, “in that respect alone, it might have been different had I married Captain Reynolds.”

“Ah, but his duties would have kept him away from you, whether you wanted his company or no – to say nothing

of the alarms of being married to a soldier in these times. And you would be living in Clewer Park with the other officer’s wives – nothing but gossip and enmity, I am sure.”

“And you know how I loathe gossip! Don’t suspect me of harbouring real regrets, that is, nothing more of regret than to render my situation even more interesting than it is. No-one who really cared for me, I think, was happy at the prospect of my throwing myself away on Captain Reynolds. Yes, now that it is all over, I can also call it – a throwing away.”

“I am happy to hear you speak so rationally, so calmly, Flora. Neither you nor I will expire of a broken heart, or weep rivers of tears, or run mad! Life, real life, is in no way like a novel, as we both know.”

“I did not die for love of your brother – to my surprise at the time – and after surviving Henry, I could not be in serious peril from Captain Reynolds. But, my heart was bruised, I confess it.”

“I apologize for Henry. He is an infamous flirt. From what I have observed, he is the very best cure for lovesickness that ever was devised! If only he could be distilled into an elixir! Those young ladies who survive a slight dose of Henry, will not die of something worse.”

“You are comparing your brother to the cowpox, don’t think I don’t understand you. Shall I tell him what you think of him?”



Mary Crawford played by Jackie Smith-Wood, MP 1983

“Tell him, with my compliments! I maintain that the pain of unrequited affection may be unpleasant, but it is common enough – hardly anyone escapes it at one time or another – but, my dear Flora, to believe oneself to be entirely loved, to place one’s heart into another’s hands, only to be betrayed! You were to be pitied, there. You could be forgiven for believing Captain Reynolds was sincere in his affections – we all believed it, alas. My friend, please assure me again – you do not harbour some lingering resentment toward me, for that dreadful day when I came to you and told you – ”

A warm embrace was her answer and the two friends walked along in silence for some little time.



Mary Crawford played by Hayley Atwell, MP 2007

“If it had been otherwise,” Mary finally said thoughtfully, “If I had kept my secret, how much worse it would have been, had you married the Captain only to be undeceived when it was too late.”

“You convinced me of that at the time, Mary, and I have not changed my mind, nor regretted refusing to see Captain Reynolds. He begged to be heard! He wrote me again just before the wedding – ”

“Oh, did he?”

“—and he swore that you had mistaken some commonplace gallantries for something more – he said he only wished to distinguish you as my friend – but your account of his conduct and his remarks to you was so particular – I could not, cannot doubt any part of it. You could not have been in error. And moreover, Lord Stornaway was becoming so very pointed in his attentions at the same time.”

“You have this consolation – if Captain Reynolds truly loved you, he would desire your happiness above his own, would he not? And it follows that he would not condemn you to such a paltry life as he had to offer, not when you could become Lady Stornaway! Therefore, he should not be so selfish as to wish you to repine of your choice, and if he does regret you, it will be for himself alone. In fact, it is selfishness that accounts for his actions, first in paying his addresses to you when he could not even offer you your own establishment, and secondly, in behaving towards me as he did.”

“How well you put it, Mary! You are exactly right. I could have forgiven his selfishness in the first instance, arising as it did – as I supposed – from his love for me, but I could

never overlook the second. Although in the eyes of the world, I may be accused of jilting the Captain, he knows the real reason that I ended our understanding. I have nothing to reproach myself with on that score. He broke faith with me, not I with him. And should the Captain and I ever meet again, as in all likelihood we will, he shall see that I am better off as I am. I am not afraid of seeing him again.”

“Although, knowing your forgiving nature, you would want to spare him the pain of any private interviews, I should think. He would only be heaping recriminations on himself and to what end, now that you are married to another?”

“Yes, I am not so selfish as to think of appearing to triumph over him. If I can but remember him with tender regard, I am satisfied. And while I once thought that marriage to Captain Reynolds would gratify every wish of my heart, I had not only myself to think of. In considering Lord Stornaway’s proposal, I had to consider my family, and my sister’s future prospects.”

“You are so great-hearted, Flora!”

“And you were in no small way the contriver of it all.”



Mary Crawford played by Embeth Daviditz, MP 1999

Mary disclaimed the compliment, then added, “I seldom cry, as you know, but when we met today I believe I could have cried tears of joy. To know that you have secured such lasting comfort and felicity for yourself, and are in the way of conferring so many blessings on your friends and family – this gives me the greatest happiness, I own.”

Mary Crawford spoke with all sincerity, but from that time forward, she became aware of feeling some little unease whenever she was a guest in the glittering establishment she had done so much to bring into existence. Even the death of her aunt, followed by her uncle’s bringing his mistress into their household to live

with him openly – even this, could not bring Mary to accept the hospitality of her old friend with unalloyed gratification or pleasure. It was vexing, but it was so.

Miss Crawford was not so selfish as to confess her altered feelings – and in fact, Lady Stornaway's fondness for Mary's company only increased in proportion to her growing contempt for her husband's. But as it was, Mary was not sorry to have the excuse of removing to Northamptonshire, to live with her half-sister, as a reason to avoid her old friend. After all, what was done, was done. And there was nothing to be gained by reproaching herself for it.

– Lona Manning

Lona has a [website](#) and an Austen-themed blog called "[Clutching my Pearls](#)".

Excerpt from George Eliot's *Middlemarch* Including a Warren Hastings sighting

In my most recent rereading of *Middlemarch*, I noticed a passage that I had overlooked before. It does nothing to advance the plot – Jane Austen might have disposed of the information in a well-crafted sentence – but what it does show is the extent to which even GE's most minor characters were fully realized inside her head. She *knew* Joshua Rigg (who is really a very minor character), what he looked like, where he came from, his full backstory, what he loved and what he hated. Stone Court is a property to which great expectations have been attached by all the relations of its late owner. Joshua Rigg, the hitherto entirely unknown illegitimate son of the deceased, has inherited it under the noses of his upstanding relatives. The late owner has enjoyed imagining the everyday dismay of his relatives with Joshua living amongst them.

– Elspeth Flood



Quay in Bristol

But how little we know what would make paradise for our neighbours! We judge from our own desires, and our neighbours themselves are not always open enough even to throw out a hint of theirs. The cool and judicious Joshua Rigg had not allowed his parent to perceive that

Stone Court was anything less than the chief good in his estimation, and he had certainly wished to call it his own. But as Warren Hastings looked at gold and thought of buying Daylesford, so Joshua Rigg looked at Stone Court and thought of buying gold. He had a very distinct and intense vision of his chief good, the vigorous greed which he had inherited having taken a special form by dint of circumstance: and his chief good was to be a money-changer. From his earliest employment as an errand-boy in a seaport, he had looked through the windows of the moneychangers as other boys look through the windows of the pastry-cooks; the fascination had wrought itself gradually into a deep special passion; he meant, when he had property, to do many things, one of them being to marry a genteel young person; but these were all accidents and joys that imagination could dispense with. The one joy after which his soul thirsted was to have a money-changer's shop on a much-frequented quay, to have locks all round him of which he held the keys, and to look sublimely cool as he handled the breeding coins of all nations, while helpless Cupidity looked at him enviously from the other side of an iron lattice. The strength of that passion had been a power enabling him to master all the knowledge necessary to gratify it. And when others were thinking that he had settled at Stone Court for life, Joshua himself was thinking that the moment now was not far off when he should settle on the North Quay with the best appointments in safes and locks.

– from *Middlemarch* by George Eliot

December issue special feature

Send us your Christmas recipes



Please send your favourite Christmas recipes – especially if they might have been featured at a Regency dinner. We already have Syllabub and Mulled Wine and Trifle. We need some meat and veg! Deadline November 28th.

RC's Corner

Michelle Siu



When we look back at 2020, we will recall all the ways our lives changed. I would hope that you will be able to look back at this year where our group managed to painlessly convert our meetings to the online format. I was cheered by the enthusiasm and alacrity that our group took to trying new technology. As such we have been able to hold four meetings while adhering to the recommendations laid out by our health officer,

Dr. Bonnie Henry. While we are apart, I'm happy that we have our JASNA meetings to keep us together. As our programming committee has stated before, we will reassess the situation at the beginning of 2021 regarding in-person meetings, and review our online meeting format.

The 2020 Virtual AGM registration is now closed, and I've heard there will be in excess of a thousand attendees. The pandemic has advanced the adoption of technology and I hope that it will continue to provide ways to encourage connections where we were limited by geography before.



"This is a day well spent." The Beautiful Cassandra (Courtesy of Juvenilia Press)

At the AGM, I do encourage our registered members to also attend the Business Meetings for both JASNA

national and JASNA Canada. And for all JASNA members, this year's business meeting minutes and financial statements are available online.

To access the business documents, go to JASNA.org and click on the upper right "Member Login". On the next page, click on the text in the middle of the page "Member Login." Enter your user name and password (follow instructions on the page if you do not know either). And on the main page of the portal will be links to view 2020 JASNA Business Meeting Documents, which are already available to view. The JASNA Canada business meeting documents were circulated via email to our members a few day prior to the AGM.

As always you can contact me with your ideas and suggestions by email to jasnaVancouverRC@gmail.com



Fall-winter 2020-21 virtual meeting dates and newsletter deadlines

Due to COVID-19 all **in-person meetings are suspended** until future notice. However, the following online Zoom meetings have been scheduled:

November 14 Carole Wylie on how JA uses "things" to move a plot along, give us insights into character, and establish a social setting.

Recaps from those who attend the virtual AGM.

December Muse & Musings deadline: November 28

December 12 **Tentative:** Jesse Read on Beethoven's 250th birthday which is also JA's 245th

February Muse & Musings deadline: January 30

February 13 Video from Williamsburg: Cheryl Butler on "Jane Austen, Netley Abbey and Gothic Tourism"

Please see the program of events on our website for more up-to-date information (thanks to webmaster Laureen McMahon): 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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