

## Editorial

Every year when I come to put *Persuasions* together I think to myself, *this* is our best issue yet, *this* we will never surpass. Yet it seems to have happened again.

As the months preceding publication date elapse, I, a castaway on an island (I do live on one) exist in hopes that intellectual starvation will not set in, that some few crumbs will wash up on my shore. So far, I've not been disappointed. This year from England and the U.S.A., from Canada and from Scotland the delectable harvest came.

The Conference speeches are always published, the quality varying from year to year. Savannah produced several exceptionally brilliant ones: Alistair Duckworth's, "Jane Austen's Accommodations," and Joan Aiken's, "How Might Jane Austen Have Revised *Northanger Abbey*," to name but two. It is the unsolicited manuscripts, however, that turn out to be pure serendipity. For example, having arranged nearly a year ago that Hugh McKellar should write on clergymen in JA's time, entirely fortuitously and unheralded arrives from Minnesota, at the last moment before publication, a well-researched piece explaining why Steventon parsonage was torn down, and simultaneously from California comes an article on "The Power of the Spoken Word" which also applies to the profession of clergyman. Three articles, from different perspectives, thoroughly exploring the same subject. What luck, what riches!

Then having asked Henry Burke, a year ago, to write on part of his wife's collection of JA, "Seeking Jane in Foreign Tongues," one of the Savannah speeches, it transpires, is a most absorbing and entertaining account of the difficulties of translating JA into Spanish, thereby expanding and amplifying that topic.

Hearing from our president that she was in correspondence with a member who grew up on the prairies, one of five sisters pretending they were the Bennet girls, I importuned that lady and the result is the delightful piece on page 7.

*Persuasions* continues to accept contributions of merit from anyone who chooses to write. One of the charms of JA is that she is eminently accessible to all, has never been a purely academic subject to be written about only by and for professional scholars. One most ingenious *jeu d'esprit* published in this issue "Who was Harriet Smith's Mother?" comes from a businesswoman.

I would like to thank Keiko Parker of Vancouver, who found and sent me the map of Bath, and Maggie Lane, of Bristol, who kindly identified on it all the JA, Catherine Morland and Anne Elliot landmarks, a great boon to our readers. Most particular thanks are due to Mary Millard of Toronto, who, after both the printer and myself had passed the galleys as "perfect," found several egregious errors of spelling, of characters' names, and of style! If *Persuasions* has the fewest typographical errors yet of its seven-year-old career, it is due to Mary's sharp eyes, alert brain, and encyclopaedic knowledge. Her assistance with this issue, in many other ways also, is much appreciated.

A word about style in *Persuasions*. We all have an affection for JA's "freinds" and "neices." I, personally, have a fondness for the idiosyncracies

of other English-speaking peoples' spelling and punctuation—the English “Mr” without a period, the American color without a “u”, the English quotation marks used quite differently from ours. I like to think of *Persuasions* as a bilingual publication, bilingual in English and American-English, and that an author's spelling (if “correct”) should remain intact. JA's, correct or not, is inviolate.

A comment was made to me about this year's conference in Savannah, which I think deserves repeating, especially since the remark was made by one who has attended almost all the conferences.

“I'd call it the best conference ever, for one reason: the oftener you go, the more lovely people you meet, and the better time you have. So I did.”

This year don't miss the opportunity to combine “lovely people,” World Exposition, EXPO 1986, and a visit to Vancouver, one of North America's most spectacular cities. A note should be made of the change of date, two weeks earlier than usual.

**Joan Austen-Leigh**