

Letter from Chicago

Summer 2007



*Jane Austen's
Spiritual Legacy:
Kinder, Gentler
Pathways.*

Speaker: Diane Capitani, author and teacher at
Garrett Theological Seminary and
Northwestern University

When: Saturday, September 8, 2008
1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Where: Conrad Sulzer Regional Library
4455 N. Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, IL
(between Montrose and Lawrence Aves.)

Free and open to the public.

Refreshments will be served.

Annual Regional Membership

One-Year JASNA-GCR Membership Dues are as follows:

\$25.00 for an Individual

\$35.00 for a Family (Two family members at the same address)

Membership dues cover the present to August 31, 2008

Membership includes newsletters and discounts on JASNA-GCR events

**Please fill out this form and return with check made out to JASNA-GCR or
renew online at www.jasnachicago.org**

Important Information: This form and your payment are for Regional Dues only.

Our charter requires you to join or renew with our parent JASNA National Organization requiring separate dues. The National Organization membership form is available online at www.jasna.org

Check one: Renewing Member New Member

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Please indicate if any of the above information has changed, to update our records.

DUES and CONTRIBUTIONS

AMOUNT ENCLOSED

I am enclosing \$\$ for JASNA-GCR Regional Dues 2008:

\$25.00 for an Individual _____

\$35.00 for a Family _____

\$25.00 for a 2008 Gift Membership _____

Contribution to JASNA-GCR _____

TOTAL _____

Send my gift membership to (please provide name and address):

Mail this form with your check payable to JASNA-GCR to:

Treasurer, JASNA-GCR—c/o Elsie Holzwarth, 1410 E. 55th St., Chicago IL 60615-5409

If you have any questions, e-mail jasnagcr@sbcglobal.net or

call Martha Jameson, Membership, at (312) 654-1346.

For more information, visit our web site www.jasnachicago.org.

Natalie Goldberg

As we look forward to our September open meeting, we need to thank the many volunteers who have made our last meetings so successful. Thanks to **Beverly Roth**, our July boat trip was the largest turnout for a summer event. In addition to organizing the Gala program, **William Phillips** wrote a second play for the Readers Theater. Thanks, also, to **Anna Cooper-Stanton** for generously providing her home for our rehearsals. Thanks to **Martha Jameson**, members were kept informed by email and could register online; Martha also printed the nametags with our logo. Thanks to Martha and our treasurer **Elsie Holzwarth**, registration went smoothly. The tables at the Gala were well decorated thanks to Elsie, for finding and framing quotations from Austen on her “Heartbreakers” and “Heels,” to **Joän Pawelski**, for donating flower vases, and to **Pat Weiber**, for bringing and arranging the spring flowers. Members at the Gala received our newly designed business cards thanks to **Lori Davis**.

As an organization, our mission is “promoting the study and appreciation of the works of Jane Austen, an author whose writings transcend time,” which explains why we started an Outreach Program for high school students in the Chicago region. In this spirit, our region has been generous in 2007, awarding outreach grants of \$250 each to two new charter schools in the Chicago Public School System: **Rauner College Prep** and **Pritzker College Prep**. Both schools requested funds to enhance their school libraries with books by and about Jane Austen. Last year Noble Street Charter High School received a grant for class sets of books by Jane Austen and other support materials. In the past, we have supported essay contests and sent

speakers to schools. If you are a high school teacher or know a high school teacher and would like information about our outreach grants, or if you would like to help with students’ participation in our Chicago AGM, please contact **Linda Relias**.

Your JASNA-GCR Board voted to contribute \$500 toward restoring the bells of St. Nicholas Church in Chawton. The bell restoration program is one of two Bicentennial Projects that JASNA supports to honor Jane Austen’s arrival in Chawton in July, 1809. While the church where Jane worshipped with her family was destroyed by fire after her death, the bells of St. Nicholas were rescued when the church was demolished. Because of their deteriorated condition, the bells that Jane heard have not been rung for several years. One of these bells dates back to the fifteenth century, another to the seventeenth century. Their restoration includes re-casting, all new fittings, and a totally new main frame bell tower of steel. The village organizers plan to restore the bells in time to ring in the bicentennial of Jane’s arrival. The bells will be etched with the names of the donors, and the Church will add an inscription for JASNA.

Over the coming years, Janites will have much to celebrate, as we reach the bicentennials of our favorite novels. The first, *Sense and Sensibility*, was published in 1811—any ideas for celebrating the Dashwoods in 2011? Although the novel that became *Pride and Prejudice* was first read aloud in 1797, its publication date is 1813. I look forward to the parties honoring the Darcys and the Bingleys in 2013. Till then, to John Donne’s statement, “Never seek to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee”—we’ll add that the bells will be ringing *because of us*.

Saturday, September 8

We will meet from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at the Sulzer Library, 4455 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago, to hear a talk by our member **Diane Capitani** on *Austen's Spiritual Legacy: Kinder, Gentler Pathways*, followed by refreshments.

Capitani writes, "Reading Austen from a theological and/or spiritual point of view is fascinating, particularly because she is so very contradictory in her Augustinian view of life, contrasted with her rather gentle spirituality. My book in progress is tentatively entitled *Jane Austen, Augustinian*, and explores the Augustinian character in each of her novels, along with other characters who are either not spiritual or theological at all, or seem a contrast to Augustine. As a clergyman's daughter, Austen certainly was familiar with Augustine's work and it shows in her writing. Does this make her spiritual, or theological, or both? We will do an overview of theological thoughts in her work, both serious and amusing. After all, what is Mr. Collins? Does he have a spiritual side?"

She holds a PH.D in theology and history from Garrett Seminary/Northwestern University where she directs doctoral dissertations and teaches theological writing and research. She is a lecturer in English and religion at Northwestern as well. Her book *Truthful Pictures: Slavery Defended by Scripture in the Domestic Sentimental Novel of the 19th Century South* is just published.



Saturday, December 8, Tea

Through the good offices of GCR member **Jane Hunt**, we can look forward once again to the year-end splendors of the Fortnightly for our annual Birthday Tea from 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Our speaker will be **Emily Auerbach**, a lifetime JASNA member, professor of English at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and author of "*Searching for Jane Austen*" wherein she writes, "The more one searches for the enigmatic Jane Austen, the more one discovers artistry and intelligence, allusiveness and wit. . . Searching for Jane Austen uncovers a woman who, like Sophy Croft in *Persuasion*, 'had no distrust of herself, and no doubt of what to do'. . . She remains, in the words of Virginia Woolf, a 'little aloof and inscrutable yet beautiful because of her greatness as an artist.'"

Wanted: *Becoming Jane* Reviews

"Their Love Was Her Greatest Inspiration." Or so proclaims the poster for the U.S. release of the film *Becoming Jane* about Austen's "romance" with Tom Lefroy, starring Anne Hathaway and James McAvoy. It is based on Jon Spence's theory, in his book *Becoming Jane Austen*, that the failure of Lefroy to propose was a painful experience which influenced Austen's fiction.

After you've seen the film *Becoming Jane* please send us your comments and thoughts. We'll print some in the next newsletter. You can email them to eholzwarth@cometlink.com or mail them to Elsie Holzwarth, 1410 East 55th St., Chicago, Il. 60615-5409.

We do want your reviews: pro or con, long or short.

27th Annual Gala

Anticipating the 2008 AGM in Chicago—*Austen's Legacy*, our Region celebrated its 27th Annual Gala April 28 atop the Allerton Hotel. **Beverly Roth** arranged a sumptuous brunch buffet and a delectable ice cream buffet. **Pat Wieber** created colorful centerpieces of tulips, roses, freesia, larkspur, scabiosa and ranunculas. Attendees received cardholders made by **Lori Davis** containing JASNA-GCR business cards. **Maggie Hunt-Cohn**, who inaugurated the first Gala twenty-six years ago, and husband Charles, drove up all the way from Atlanta. A rousing toast to Austen was made by **Linda Reinert**.

“Jane Decided That She was Really Much More Like Emma Woodhouse’: Plots of Love and Heartbreak Borrowed from Austen” was **Elisabeth Lenckos’** talk on Austen’s legacy. She awarded an Austen doll to **Sean Griskenas** for recognizing this quote from Barbara Pym’s *Jane and Prudence*. Pym wrote in her journals that she consciously patterned her novels after Austen. Elizabeth Gaskell paid homage to Austen in *North and South* and *Wives and Daughters*. Virginia Woolf called Austen “the most perfect artist” and mentioned her in *Night and Day*. E. M. Forster (*Howards End*) and Elizabeth Bowen (*The Death of the Heart*) created darker versions of Austen stories. In Stella Gibbons’ *Cold Comfort Farm* a heroine wants to write a novel as good as Austen’s. Anita Brookner’s *Visitors* includes an avid reader of *Persuasion*. In Iris Murdoch’s *Nuns and Soldiers* one character tries but can’t read *Mansfield Park* while another finishes *Sense and Sensibility*. Cassandra Dashwood is a character in Elizabeth Taylor’s *Palladian*.

“Following Fitzwilliam and Frederick” brought **Sarah Frantz** to modern romance novels where the man carries the book for readers who want emotional identification with the hero. They include scenes in which the hero cries: the more alpha the hero, the more likely he is to cry; the more tears, the more expressive is his love. Only through taming and healing will the hero appreciate the woman. Laura Kinsale’s novels were the first with only a man on the cover (stringy-haired Fabio). In J. R. Ward’s *Black Dagger Brotherhood* series the heroes are highly trained vampire warriors. The U.S. Navy Seals heroes of Suzanne Brockmann’s novels are faster and stronger than most men. All of these heroes’ tears show the true depth of their emotion.

For our Readers’ Theater **William Phillips** wrote “*The Manipulative and the Vicious: Lady Susan in the Best of the Worst of Company*”, an adaptation of Austen’s epistolary novel *Lady Susan*, a truly despicable character. Was Austen influenced by a most scandalous work of fiction when she wrote her original version? Letters from Pierre Choderlos de Laclos’ *Les Liaisons dangereuses* were performed by **Anna Cooper-Stanton** (The Marquise de Merteuil) and **Russell Clark** (The Vicomte de Valmont). Letters from *Lady Susan* were done by **Natalie Goldberg** (Lady Susan), **Linda Relias** (daughter Frederica), **Luanne Redmond** (Charlotte Vernon), **Russell Clark** (Reginald de Courcy) and this writer (Alicia Johnson). Therefore, in the interests of objective journalism, this writer will refrain from writing how brilliant and well received the performances were.

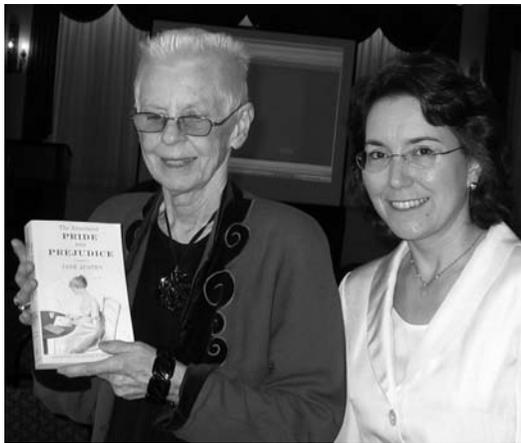
Photos



Luanne Redmond



Elsie Holzwarth, Luanne Redmond, Natalie Goldberg, Anna Cooper-Stanton, William Phillips, Linda Relias, Russell Clark



Pat Latkin and Elizabeth Ireland



Winner Sean Griskenas



Elisabeth Lenckos



Sarah Frantz ▶



Maggie Hunt-Cohn, Natalie Goldberg, Linda Reinert



Vera, Steve and Samantha Martin

The last (and only other) AGM held in Chicago was in 1988 at the Palmer House. George H.W. Bush was being elected US President, **Lorraine Hanaway** was JASNA president, and **Pat Latkin** chaired the AGM. **Barbara English, Gail Murphy** and **Marianne Newman** were major players. The Chicago Region Jane Austen quilt was created and quilted by members while **Maggie Cantrall** read aloud from Austen. Pat Latkin's Jane Austen Books had its very successful beginning.

In 1988, Austen's works were generally unknown, her name was very often misspelled (with an i) and if she were mentioned in generally educated groups, the response would likely be "Didn't she write *Jane Eyre*?" The only Austen movie was the even-then-long-in-the-tooth Greer Garson-Lawrence Olivier *Pride and Prejudice*, with the sisters dressed as though for an outing at Tara.

It was also in 1988 that the University of Chicago Press published **Claudia L. Johnson's** *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, which studied Austen's work from a new perspective and which has been extremely important to the direction serious Austen scholarship has taken in the past 20 years.

And now probably *only* J. K. Rowling has had a more exciting 20 years than Austen, (but no *other* author), and not by that much.

In addition to the astounding amount of scholarship, the sequels, the movies, the series, the manners and values guides, the frighteningly successful Bridget Jones (was there ever a singleton less like Elizabeth Bennet??), all the "rewrites" that have actually made it to bookstore shelves, we



are now experiencing a new Austen "surge"—the new movies *Becoming Jane Austen* and *The Jane Austen Book Club*, new series of five of the novels and reissue (thank heaven) of the Colin Firth *Pride and Prejudice*. In the recently published *Austenland*, the Elizabeth Bennet character meets her Mr. Darcy at an Austen theme park. Is a real one on the horizon??

Although it would be difficult to say if any of these sequels and films have any real role in ***Austen's Legacy***, the cumulative effect certainly must.

The real Jane Austen—the one who authored the novels—is everywhere. Stephen Colbert quotes her. *Newsweek* tells us she outsells Ann Coulter and Alice Walker. She is embedded in our culture—a brand.

In 2008, **WE** will once again have an AGM in Chicago—this time celebrating ***Austen's Legacy***, assessing it, and maybe even figuring out what some of this stuff means. We will have wonderful presenters, debates and discussions, an on-going movie theater, posters and presentations, lots of audience participation and interaction.

**Mark your calendars now
October 2-5, 2008.**

Jane Austen Checks in at the Tipton

One of the perks of parenthood is that you get to watch junk TV—shows you normally wouldn't see, or would watch with a bag over your head, but will watch out of solidarity, just because you would rather be with your kids than not. Thus it was that I found a Jane Austen subplot in a recent episode of "The Suite Life of Zack and Cody." The show itself is a kiddie sitcom on the Disney Channel. The premise revolves around twin boys who get to live in, and occasionally tear up, a fictitious Boston hotel called the Tipton, because their mother is the in-house lounge singer. (Hey, this is TV land, you know? As a singer I can attest that very few lounge jobs pay for the gas and the dry cleaning, let alone providing free housing in a luxury hotel!)

The particular episode I saw had a side story concerning London Tipton (Get it? London. . . Tipton?),*the heiress of the hotel's owner, played by Brenda Song in the new classic stereotype role, the Asian Ditz. London is considering joining a book club (mostly because someone told her it was probably not for her, and she cannot conceive of a club that wouldn't have her as a member!) that is going to discuss *Pride and Prejudice*. Her friend Madi (played by Ashley Michelle Tisdale), who works at the Tipton's candy counter, says she's going to love *P&P*, and summarizes the plot for her. "Sounds like one of my soaps," comments London, looking a bit more interested.

However, the next time she appears, London is spouting some suspiciously canned jargon about the book. "You didn't read the book, did you?" says Madi doubtfully. "No, but I read a review!" chirps London. Madi insists London must read the book. Next scene: London is enthusing about *Pride & Prejudice*—the performances, the direction, the camera work. "You saw the movie, right?" Madi accuses. "You have to READ THE BOOK!" London is still dragging her feet and Madi physically puts the book in her hands. At one point London gets a paper cut and exclaims, "Reading is dangerous!"

Eventually, London does get around to reading *P&P* and discussing it with her similarly rich, airheaded friends. They spend most of their meeting gossiping about hair and clothes, but when they finally do get down to discussing the book, it turns out their favorite character is: Caroline Bingley! They admire her and think she holds up very well, considering how her brother married beneath him.

I think the writers really had fun with this episode. Perhaps they are JASNA members or at least enthusiasts, and are writing for Disney chiefly to support a Regency novel habit. At any rate, they injected a little literature into a normally vapid TV show, and managed to do it with humor and style.

*think Paris Hilton





Plain Jane

“Just one look is all it took.”

It doesn't take much to conclude that Jane and Frank Austen are siblings. Sister Cassandra's sketch of Jane, acknowledged as authentic, has been much maligned. “That picture, now hanging in the National Portrait Gallery in London, depicts a woman so plain that it is often re-worked for book covers,” reports *The Economist*. This is precisely what Wordsworth Editions, a British publisher, has done. Managing Editor Helen Traylor is quoted in *The Times Online*. “The poor old thing didn't have anything going for her in the way of looks. Her original portrait is very, very dowdy. It wouldn't be appealing to readers, so I took it upon myself to commission a new picture of her. We've given her a bit of a make-over, with make-up and some hair extensions and removed her nightcap. Now she looks great—as if she's just walked out of a salon.” (No one ever complains about Frank and, besides, that's not a “nightcap” she's wearing.)

In response Verlyn Klinkenborg in *The New York Times* opined, “She now looks like a stern cross between the logo for Columbia Pictures and the head on a Roman coin. . . . It is a failing to read Shakespeare and feel impoverished by the lack of biographical detail. It is no less a failing to read Austen and wonder what the mirror said when she looked into it.”

The brouhaha about Austen's looks arose in connection with the recent Christie's New York auction of the “Rice” portrait owned by Henry Rice, a sixth generation descendant of Austen's brother Edward. The painting first appeared as the frontispiece to *Letters of Jane Austen* (1884) edited by Edward, Lord Brabourne, son of Austen's beloved niece Fanny. Proponents of its authenticity claim it was painted in 1790 by Ozias Humphry Honiton (1742-1810), known as Ozias Humphry, on commission from Austen's great-uncle Francis Austen, a wealthy lawyer, “perhaps in an attempt to promote a good marriage.” Opponents contend the

costume wasn't in fashion until after Austen was out of her teens. (She would have been 15 in 1790.) "It was a look popularized by Emma Hamilton after she took up with Lord Nelson," writes Charles Mc Grath in *The New York Times*. That would have been 10 years later.



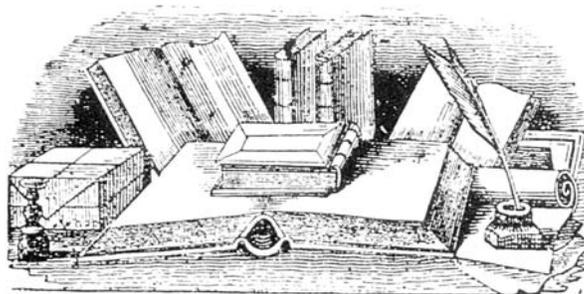
Cultural critic **Clive James** is reported to have said on National Public Radio that the portrait's subject is "just too pretty to be the author of *Pride and Prejudice*." Apparently James thinks that had Austen been beautiful her novels would not have been as great. To write as she did she had to be "the person you didn't notice at the ball, but [who] noticed everything. That was her role." **Michael Grove**, MP, wrote in *The Times* that to "accept Austen only as a looker, not as an observer . . . [is] a prejudice of which none of us can feel proud."

Elsa Solender's article *The Affair of the Rice Portrait: An Investigation* was printed in the Summer, 2004 *JASNA News*.

Claudia Johnson, our December 2005 speaker and a proponent, is writing a book about the portrait. On the other hand, JASNA President **Marsha Huff** says, "It's not credible to me that it's Jane Austen." The portrait was valued at \$400,000 to \$800,000. When bidding stalled at \$350,000, it was withdrawn from the auction.

Austen's Legacy

Spotted at Borders on State Street in the Loop: a bookstand filled with paperbacks under a sign, "Inspired by Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*". The paperbacks were Pamela Aidan's "novels by Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman": *Duty and Desire*, *An Assembly such as This* and *These Three Remain*; Elizabeth Aston's *The True Darcy Spirit*, *Mr. Darcy's Daughters*, and *The Exploits & Adventures of Miss Alethea Darcy*; Linda Berdoli's *Mr. Darcy Takes a Wife*, and *Darcy and Elizabeth: nights and days at Pemberley*; Jane Dawkins' *Letters from Pemberley: A continuation of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*; Amanda George's *Mr. Darcy's Diary*; Helen Halstead's *Mr. Darcy Presents His Bride: A sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*; and Emma Tennant's *Pemberley, or Pride and Prejudice continued*. Austen's Legacy, indeed!



LETTER FROM CHICAGO
JASNA-GCR
Elsie G. Holzwarth
1410 East 55th Street
Chicago, IL 60615

Dues Renewal
September 8 Meeting

2007 Calendar

- September 1** Membership Renewal Date. Individual members, \$25
Family members, \$35
- September 8** Fall meeting. *Jane Austen's Spiritual Legacy: Kinder, Gentler Pathways*.
Speaker: Diane Capitani, author and teacher at Garrett Theological
Seminary and Northwestern University. Conrad Sulzer Regional Library,
4455 North Lincoln Avenue, Chicago. 1:00–3:30 pm. Free and open to
the public. Refreshments.
- October 5–7** Annual General Meeting. *Discovering Emma in Vancouver*. Vancouver,
British Columbia.
- December 8** Jane Austen Birthday Tea. Afternoon tea at Fortnightly of Chicago,
120 East Bellevue Place, Chicago. 2:00–4:00 pm
- October 2–5, 2008** Annual General Meeting hosted by JASNA, Greater Chicago Region.
Austen's Legacy: Life, Love & Laughter. Westin Michigan Avenue Hotel,
Chicago, Il.

Our website is www.jasnachicago.org.