

Letter from Chicago

Summer 2009

Saturday, September 12, 2009

1:00pm–3:00pm

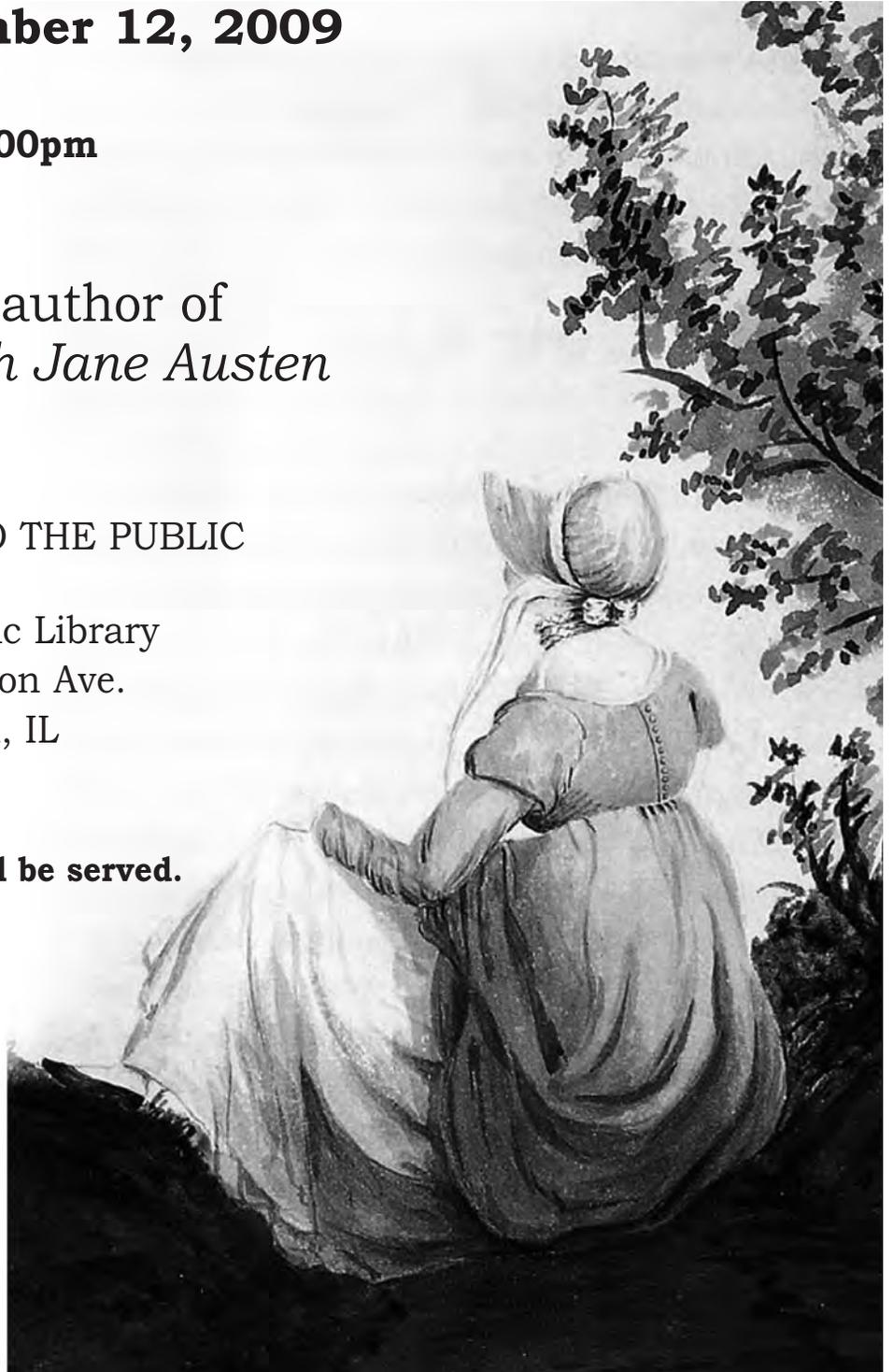
Kim Wilson, author of
In the Garden with Jane Austen

FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Evanston Public Library
1703 Orrington Ave.
Evanston, IL

Refreshments will be served.

**MEMBERSHIP DUES
RENEWAL INSIDE**



Cassandra's sketch of Jane Austen

DUES RENEWAL

Annual Regional Membership 2009–2010

- **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, 2010**
- **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: _____ Apt. _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ - _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Please indicate if any of the above information has changed, so that we may update our records. Your complete address, including apartment number and 9-digit zip code, will help ensure timely delivery of mail. If you are not receiving regular e-mails from JASNA-GCR, please provide your current e-mail address to be used for all online transactions.

DUES and CONTRIBUTIONS

AMOUNT ENCLOSED

I am enclosing \$\$ for JASNA-GCR Regional Dues 2010:

- \$25.00 for an Individual _____
- \$35.00 for a Family _____
- \$25.00 for a 2010 Gift Membership _____
- Contribution to JASNA-GCR _____
- TOTAL _____

Send my Gift Membership to (please provide name and address):

Mail this form with your check 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

In July, 1809, Jane Austen, her mother, and her sister moved to Chawton Cottage, home for the last eight years of her life. Here she found the stability necessary to revise *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* and to write *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*.

This July, Chawton celebrates the bicentennial of Jane Austen's arrival. Our region's bicentennial celebration focuses on settings in Austen's life and work. In May, **Jeff Nigro** included slides of homes and landscapes in his talk *Jane Austen and the Beauty of Place*.

On September 12, our bicentennial celebration of Austen's settings continues at the Evanston Public Library with **Kim Wilson's** talk, *Jane Austen in the Garden*. For her guide to cultivated gardens in Jane Austen's era, *In the Garden with Jane Austen*, Wilson studied the relationship between Austen's novels and letters and the widely published plans of picturesque gardens in Georgian England. Her talk will be illustrated with slides of landscaped gardens and walks. Like her most famous character, Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Austen was a keen walker. Some walks to visit family and friends were as long as ten miles round trip. Descriptions of walks and gardens in her novels reflect her own experience.

Countryside rambles and landscaped gardens evolved into a culture of sensibility that affected poets, novelists and philosophers. "Jane Austen read the writings of William Gilpin, popularizer of the picturesque style of drawing and traveling, and she featured contemporary debate over landscape gardening in her juvenilia and novels," explains **Inger Sigrun Brodey** in *Ruined by Design: Shaping Novels and Gardens in the Culture of Sensibility*.

The cult of the picturesque is embedded in Austen's novels. In *Mansfield Park*, Mr. Rushworth speaks about the wonders of his friend's country estate once "Repton took it in hand." (Humphry Repton was a well-known commercial landscape architect.) The ensuing debate about "improvements" at Sotherton tells much about character and conflict. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy's sensibility is revealed by the beautiful grounds of Pemberley.

While *Emma* and *Persuasion* also include significant references to landscape, Brodey focuses on *Sense and Sensibility*, noting that in Marianne Dashwood, the culture of sensibility takes its most extreme form. Marianne's wild enthusiasm for nature, her rejection of conventional etiquette, her use of the vocabulary of the picturesque to describe her emotions, even her entire relationship with Willoughby "is governed by a code of sensibility." The culture of sensibility rejects the public authority of detached observation for the private authenticity of subjective experience. Brodey establishes Elinor as also a woman of sensibility and the true "men of feeling" as Colonel Brandon and Edward Ferrars, not Willoughby, who only plays a role.

Austen rejects only the extremes of sensibility. Characters guided solely by reason are "manipulative" and "deceptive." Ultimately, Austen's protagonists learn to balance rational and sympathetic habits of thinking. Brodey argues that Austen finds heroism in characters who "achieve civility towards fools and enemies," rather than those who focus solely on "the intoxicating pursuit of . . . the sublime, the picturesque, sensibility. . ."

For a clear analysis of the relationship between landscape gardens, philosophy and novels, I recommend Brodey's entertaining and enlightening book.

Preview

September Meeting

“Wonderfully informative, full of detail, illustrated with ravishing photographs—a must for any Austen fan.”

So praises **Andrew Davies** our September speaker **Kim Wilson’s** book *In the Garden with Jane Austen*. Screenwriter of the 1995 “Colin Firth *Pride and Prejudice*” and director of the most recent PBS Masterpiece Classic Austen adaptations, Davies is no slouch when it comes to Austen-related subjects. So this is high praise, indeed.

Bas Bleu, in whose catalogues one finds an interesting collection of books and book-related items, reviewed it as follows. “Jane Austen, like many of her characters, loved gardens. A literary tribute to this fact, *In the Garden with Jane Austen*, illuminates the beloved writer’s affection for winding paths and flowering shrubs through biographical detail and many excerpts from her letters. It is also a guide to the cultivated landscapes of Austen’s society. Author **Kim Wilson** properly introduces the cottage gardens of Austen’s native Hampshire, the great estates that could have inspired Pemberley or Northanger Abbey, and even the tidy squares of London. Most of these parks and gardens are pictured in the book as they appear today—still filled with Regency-era romance. Conveniently, all the photographs are accompanied by detailed information about visiting each of these historical sites. What’s more, intriguing sidebars lifted from gardening manuals and other primary sources of the day make the book itself as pleasant to explore as a shady shrubbery.”

Here’s what *Mansfield Park’s* Mary Crawford has to say about professional landscapers/improvers, like Humphry Repton: “. . .had I a place to fashion, I

should not put myself into the hands of an improver. I would rather have an inferior degree of beauty, of my own choice, and acquired progressively. I would rather abide by my own blunders than by his. . . Three years ago, the admiral, my honoured uncle, bought a cottage at Twickham for us to spend our summer in; and my aunt and I went down to it quite in raptures; but it being excessively pretty, it was soon found necessary to be improved, and for three months we were all dirt and confusion, without a gravel walk to step on, or a bench fit for use. I would have every thing as complete as possible in the country, shrubberies and flower-gardens, and rustic seats innumerable; but it must all be done without my care. Henry is different, he loves to be doing.”

And don’t forget Henry Tilney’s comments to Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*: “But now you love a hyacinth. So much the better. You have gained a new source of enjoyment, and it is well to have as many holds upon happiness as possible. Besides, a taste for flowers is always desirable in your sex, as a means of getting you out of doors, and tempting you to more frequent exercise than you would otherwise take. And though the love of a hyacinth may be rather domestic, who can tell, the sentiment once raised, but you may in time come to love a rose?”

Changing one letter at each line,
go from Dirt to Jane

D	I	R	T
—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—
J	A	N	E

Gala

Centerpieces by **Patricia Wieber** and **Lori Davis** decorated the tables for our May 2 Gala at the Allerton Hotel. Members and guests enjoyed a continental breakfast and a buffet lunch. Our Program Chair **Elisabeth Lenckos** engaged three wonderful speakers on the theme *Jane Austen and Beauty*.

Dr. Debra N. Mancoff gave a fascinating lecture on Elizabeth Linley, known as the Fair Syren of Bath, based on a chapter in the book, *Icons of Beauty in World Art*, she wrote with co-author **Lindsay Bosch**.



Elizabeth Linley was one of the icons of beauty. Mancoff showed several portraits of Elizabeth, and members of her family, including

paintings by Thomas Gainsborough. His 1785 portrait of Elizabeth at age 31 “captures a mood and her likeness, and we have a rush of empathy for her melancholy situation,” according to Mancoff. In 1772 Linley, at the age of 16, eloped from Bath to France with Richard Brinsley Sheridan whom we know as the writer of plays, such as *The Rivals*. Her father Thomas, a conductor of music at the Bath Assembly Rooms, went to France to bring her home. Sheridan claimed to have saved her from the attentions of one Captain Matthews with whom he fought two duels over her. She married Sheridan, putting an end to a singing career during which, Mancoff noted, “She sang Mozart for the Royal Family.” Sheridan, however, “engaged in open infidelities.” In 1792 she gave birth to a daughter, believed to be her lover Edward Fitzgerald’s. She died six months later, at age 38. “Austen would have known of her. She lives on in legend.”

We cannot do justice to **Jeff Nigro’s** insightful talk about *Austen and the Beauty of Place* and the many scenes he showed us from film adaptations of her novels, including *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. What does “beauty of place” mean? It may not be “the splendor of grand country houses.” After all, the praise for “English verdure” in *Emma* refers to Abbey-Mill Farm and “the perfect English landscape is the view of cultivated land.” Elizabeth Bennet “is impressed not with Pemberley’s grandeur but with its beauty.” From every window there were beauties to be seen, and these were “views of the grounds.” It is in the 20th Century that “the stately home becomes the object of cultic devotion.” Austen “did not invent ‘heritage’ films to look at gorgeous houses,” said Nigro. It was country villages that she wrote about. And it was when she moved in 1809 and was “back home in Hampshire” at Chawton Cottage that her “work commences.”

Jeanne Steen created a number of characters as the framework for a splendid program with many pictures of fashion in Austen’s day, at the dawn of the Regency period in the early 19th Century. Two families and their friends plan to attend a ball in honor of William’s return from being at sea. Sophia will choose whether to marry him or his older brother Frank who will inherit the family estate. Sophia has known them all her life. In the course of ball preparations we learn about Gowland’s Lotion and Olympian Dew for freckles, bone corsets and stays as early pushup bras, double-sleeved dresses, long sleeves being worn in the evening, shawls being *au courant*, bonnets decorated with ostrich feathers and ribbons, flowers and fruit trim, pattens, quizzing glasses, fan language and “the art of fluttering,” and that “everyone of wealth and status wore white.” (Sophia chose Frank.)

Photos



Debra N. Mancoff and Lindsay Bosch

Jeff and Geraldine Nigro

Jeanne Steen



Karla Benton, Sara Bowen, Vicky Hinshaw

Steve and Samantha Martin



Bette Cohn, Beverly Roth, Muriel Smock

Elisabeth Lenckos and Natalie Goldberg



Beverly Friend, Irv Caplan, Gary and Joan Newhouse

Madeleine Super and Ann Hami Hon

In Memoriam

Joän Pawekski

*Joän died on March 14, 2009. She was our Regional Coordinator, member of the national board of JASNA, editor of JASNA News, editor of GCR's Letter from Chicago, an inspiration as a 13-year cancer patient and, as JASNA President **Marsha Huff** put it, "a pillar of JASNA, as well as a good friend to many members."*

I have many fond memories of working with Joän when she was program chair and I was Coordinator. She was so creative and always thinking of JASNA-Chicago. Her finest gala was *Jane Austen and the English Country House*. For this event at the Drake Hotel, she and a friend created beautiful spring planter boxes. Each planter was named for a house: Pemberley, Northanger Abbey, Barton Cottage, and so on. They were beautiful. It was a splendid gala that I will never forget. Joän would never be deterred. If she wanted something, she went after it like an English bull terrier. She was amusing and lovable.

. . . **Linda Relias**

Joän was an encouraging and supportive member who worked tirelessly for the success of the organization and its goal of encouraging the reading of Austen's works. From arranging speakers, to making centerpieces, to recruiting people, to hosting speakers/events, Joän participated in every facet of the programming. We shall all miss her! . . . **Ronnie Jo Sokol**

Joän was such a wonderful, creative and generous person. She was really a magnet drawing other people to her. I remember that when my daughter was young, Joän often held Christmastime "little girls' teas" and invited many of the children and grandchildren of friends to attend. Although she had no little girls of her own, she was everybody's Auntie. These teas were usually held in her own home, which was lavishly decorated for the occasion. It was typical of Joän to do so much for others.



I remember once, when my daughter was 3 or 4, Joän had made long-legged stuffed bunnies, decorated in baby clothes, as some of the decorations. My daughter Victoria picked one up on the stairs as we were leaving and said, "Is this for me?" I was so embarrassed, especially since Victoria probably had enough toys to supply an entire orphanage, and told her it was a decoration and to put it back. But Joän said, "Yes, of course, it is" and insisted she take it. We still have that bunny and I will always cherish it as an example of Joän's creativity and kindness.

. . . **Barbara English**

Joän was a classically addictive personality. Before you shriek and scream, give me a chance to mention a few of her nifty addictions: (1) *Jewelry+*. She really loved her rocks and all those other wild and remarkably creative projects; (2) *Perfection*. When Joän spoke (often firmly), great things happened; (3) *Friends*. The ladies: Rita Shafer, Joan Ray, and all the rest of you; plus, of course, 'the guys': we were legion; (4) *Generosity*—big time! It worked in the other direction, too. We were all addicted to Joän—withdrawal is really tough. However, a bit of her will always linger, influencing those of us privileged to know and love her.

. . . **William Phillips**

Chicago 2008

Our theme, *Austen's Legacy*, was the brainchild of **Joän Pawelski**, and a brilliant one it was too. Joän was always coming up with clever, inventive ideas.

Kudos are still coming in. The May issue of



British Heritage magazine had a 3-page spread about our AGM in a “Hands Across the Sea” article by **James Heine**. There, on the first page, was a stunning picture of “the catty Bingley sisters”: our members

Elizabeth Philosophos Cooper and **Molly Philosophos**. (Many of us still remember Liz’s mother and Molly’s mother-in-law **Joan Philosophos**’ talk on Austen’s letters that inspired us to delve into them further, and to attend the 2005 AGM in Milwaukee on the letters.)

The *British Heritage* article quotes our member **Karen Doornebos**. “Her themes are universal and timeless. Anyone can pick up any one of her books and see characters they know today. We have hypochondriacs. We have obsessive moms like Mrs. Bennet. You name it, they’re here. They’re with us today.”

“Learning things that were commonplace to her early readers simply adds wonderful layers to the meaning of her novels,” adds Cooper. Doornebos believes “we moderns find the formal courting and strict regency etiquette appealing. The reason may be that we’ve lost all sense of courting rituals, and, really, there are not many ‘rules’ we

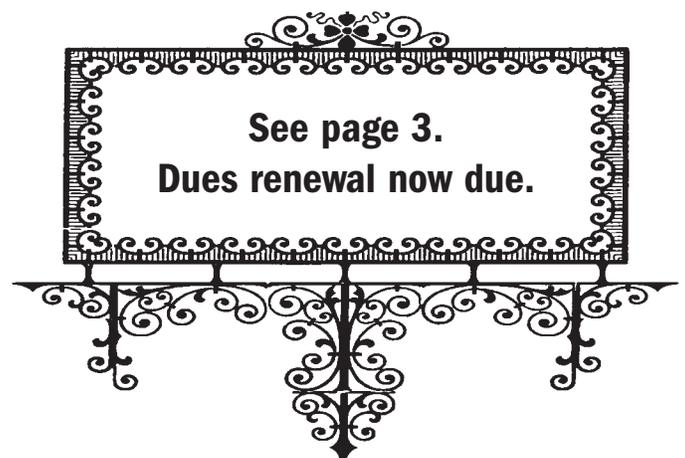
can break anymore. It’s not that we would want these formalities reinstated, but we do find the structure appealing in our anything-goes world.”

Cooper says, “I have read her novels so many times she is like an old friend who continues to surprise me while never failing to make me laugh.”

Philadelphia 2009

The theme of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Philadelphia, October 9–11, is *Jane Austen’s Brothers and Sisters in the City of Brotherly Love*. JASNA Vice President for Regions **Claire Bellanti** has sent us the following information.

In preparation for the AGM in Philadelphia, the JASNA webmaster has posted a bibliography of articles (compiled by **Susan Ford**) in *Persuasions* and *Persuasions Online* about Jane Austen’s siblings in fact and fiction. If you are interested in advance reading on the topic of siblings, this bibliography provides a great place to start! There are direct links to the online articles and full references to the print articles on the list. The direct link to the web page is: <http://www.jasna.org/info/siblings.html>. You may also access this web page from the News and Events section of the JASNA home page, “Reading About Brothers and Sisters.”



***Pride and Prejudice* in Milwaukee**

A hearty band of JASNA-GCR members ventured to Milwaukee, on what turned out to be one of the snowiest weekends of a very snowy winter, to experience the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's dramatization of *Pride and Prejudice*. Thanks to the ever-resourceful **Beverly Roth**, we had a bank of rooms at the Hotel Intercontinental. Beverly and her husband Cy were there to enjoy the evening, as were Regional Coordinator **Natalie Goldberg** and her husband Howard, GCR Board members **Martha Jameson**, **William Phillips** and this reviewer. Beverly was also able to arrange for us to enjoy a hearty and convivial German dinner at Milwaukee mainstay Karl Ratsch's Restaurant before the performance, where we were joined by Wisconsin Region members **Sarah Bowman** and **Cynthia Kartman**. Our ribs well-stuck-to, we were able to brave the wintry weather to enjoy a most entertaining realization of this well-loved novel.

Anyone who attempts to adapt *Pride and Prejudice* for stage or screen faces some serious challenges: how to reduce an intricate plot to manageable length without oversimplifying it, or without sacrificing any of the troupe of well-loved characters? The Milwaukee Rep version, adapted by the company's Artistic Director **Joseph Hanreddy** and **J.R. Sullivan** (who directed), clocked in at less than three hours, including a single intermission. But the performance never felt rushed, and all the big set pieces—Mr. Collins's proposal, Darcy's two proposals, Elizabeth's confrontation with Lady Catherine—were given their due. Thankfully, this adaptation retained some of Elizabeth's "saucier" dialogue, (such as her playful grilling of Darcy near the end about when he first fell in love with her), that is often cut or glossed over in those versions that emphasize the romance rather than the wit.

As many of the original characters were retained as was workable. This meant that, even with the doubling of some characters, there was a large cast. Longtime Milwaukee Rep veterans, actors making their debut with the company, as well as some of the company's Artistic Interns (enthusiastic, although some of them need more seasoning) all took part. Standouts included **Laura Gordon** as a savvier (if still "nervous") Mrs. Bennet than one usually sees, and **Brian Vaughan**, whose pompous, oily Mr. Collins fairly oozed hypocrisy. **Rose Pickering** played Lady Catherine's domineering self-importance to the hilt, without reducing her to a one-dimensional gorgon.



Lee Stark as Elizabeth

Of course, any *P&P* adaptation ultimately rests on its Elizabeth and Darcy, and here Milwaukee Rep hit all the right notes with company debutantes **Lee Stark** and **Grant Goodman**. GCR members will recall that Ms. Stark attended our Birthday Tea last

December, and so would not be surprised to hear that her portrayal of Elizabeth was poised and charming. She was also able to bring a great deal of outspoken feistiness to this long and demanding part (she was hardly ever offstage). Besides being appropriately tall and handsome, Mr. Goodman rightly let Darcy's character emerge gradually, losing some of his reserve without losing his integrity.

How do you know you're a confirmed Janeite? One sign is when you're willing to make your way through snow and ice to experience yet another adaptation of a much-adapted novel that you already know by heart. We couldn't have been happier, either.

Zombies

Quirk Books' recently issued *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* "which bills itself as 'The Classic Regency Romance, Now With Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem!' . . . rocketed to the Top 10 on Amazon's best-seller list," according to an article in *The New York Times* sent to us by **Enid Golinkin**. "The protagonists are Mr. Darcy, a dashing aristocrat who has killed more than 1,000 zombies since Cambridge fell to the undead, and the beautiful and quick-witted Elizabeth Bennet, who is skilled at wielding a dagger. . . Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Darcy's imperious aunt, is noted for her wealth and refinement and 'for quieting more of Satan's servants than any woman in England.'" Boggles the mind, doesn't it? asks Enid.

Ladies

Drawing on novels, histories and etiquette books of Austen's day, our Austen-scholar **Elisabeth Lenckos** gave a talk at the Oak Park Library Jane Austen Festival entitled *Celebrating Jane Austen: "Clever, Handsome, Rich" Miss Woodhouse, but... is Emma a Lady?* She examined "the role 'ladies' such as Emma Woodhouse played in Austen's society and how the author, a gentlewoman in her own right, recorded and critiqued the behavior of the prosperous and powerful women of her time. From Lady Catherine in *Pride and Prejudice* to Lady Bertram in *Mansfield Park*, Austen shows that she was critical of rank when not accompanied by a good personality. Emma is the perfect love story, but is also a searing, hilarious indictment of class snobbery, and the tale of how a high-spirited, upper-class girl with an attitude grows up into a true lady. Dr. Lenckos, professor at the Gleacher Center, University of Chicago, presented *Jane Austen and Love* last year to a standing

room only crowd, and returned this year at the request of many who attended that program."

On the Shelf

Inspector Thomas Pitt is a witness at a murder trial in Anne Perry's mystery *The Whitechapel Conspiracy* in which, **Luanne Redmond** reports, Austen's novels are a piece of evidence. At the murder scene Pitt noticed "the books on the top shelf were fiction. . .the other books on the middle shelf were on the subjects of Ancient Greece. . . all except for three volumes of Jane Austen which would more properly have belonged on the top shelf." "I would have kept novels, especially Jane Austen, in more accessible place," remarked the examining attorney.

Meanwhile, Luanne's youngest daughter **Leni Redmond**, age 11, read the children's book *Millicent Min, Girl Genius* by **Lisa Yee**, in which "a super-intelligent misfit kid finds a new friend at the library, when both girls reach for the same book at the same time—a novel by Jane Austen!"

The A-List

Lewis H. Lapham, national correspondent for *Harper's Magazine* and editor of *Lapham's Quarterly*, wrote in *Harper's* about advice he received from his college English Lit. instructor on journal writing. ". . . I was glad to be told that it didn't matter what went down on the page. Anything at all, the man said. Describe something you saw yesterday in the street, copy out five paragraphs by Jane Austen, reconstruct a conversation overheard in a men's room, or on a train, make a list of exotic birds, count the number of windows in Woolsey Hall, compose a letter to Rita Hayworth; learn to put one word after another, like your feet in your shoes, and maybe you'll find out that you have something to say."

LETTER FROM CHICAGO
JASNA-GCR
Elsie G. Holzwarth
1410 East 55th Street
Chicago, IL 60615-5409

Saturday, September 12 Meeting
Evanston Public Library

Calendar

- September 1** Dues renewal due
- September 12** Kim Wilson, author of *In the Garden with Jane Austen*,
Evanston Public Library, 1703 Orrington Avenue, Evanston
1:00 pm–3:00 pm. Free.
- October 9–11** Annual General Meeting, Philadelphia, PA
Jane Austen's Brothers and Sisters in the City of Brotherly Love
- December 12** Jane Austen Birthday Tea celebrating the 200th anniversary of
Austen's move to Chawton, The Fortnightly, 120 East Bellevue Place,
Chicago, IL 2:00 pm–4:00 pm
- February 20, 2010** Book Discussion, The Parthenon Restaurant, Chicago, IL
noon to 3:00 pm

Our website is www.jasnachicago.org