

Letter from Chicago

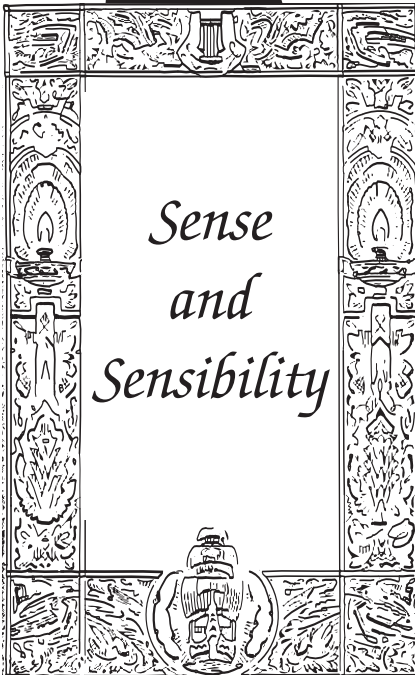
Summer 2011

JASNA-GCR Fall Meeting

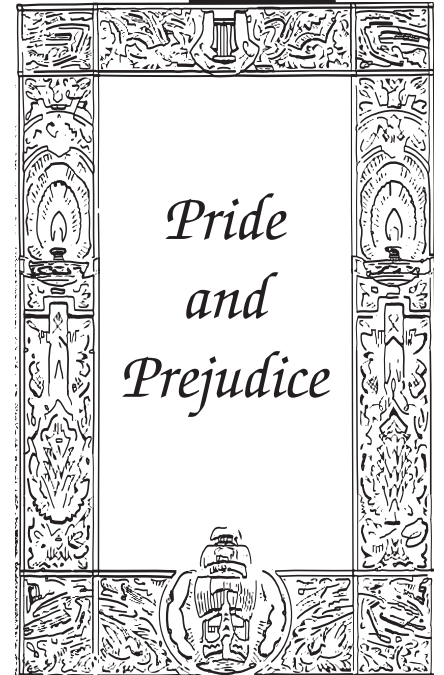
September 24, 2011

2-4 P.M.

“Which is your favorite —
Sense and Sensibility
 or
Pride and Prejudice?
 A Battle of Wits.”



Dr. Paula Marantz Cohen,
 best-selling author of *Jane Austen in Boca* and *What Alice Knew: A Most Curious Tale of Henry James and Jack the Ripper* and Distinguished Professor at Drexel University will debate with **Dr. Elisabeth Lenckos**, Instructor of Comparative Literature at University of Chicago's Basic Program and GCR Program Director.



Harold Washington Library Center
 Multipurpose Room
 400 S. State St., Chicago

Free and open to the public.

Member Dues Renewal Form inside on page 11.

Jeffrey Nigro



September is almost upon us again, and with it the beginning of another year of celebrating Austen in Chicago! That means it's time to renew your membership in JASNA-GCR (see page 11) so that you can continue

to enjoy our programs and events—inspiring opportunities to learn and share your appreciation of Everyone's Favorite Author.



You've heard the phrase "Change is Good"? Well, I hope you'll agree that there are some exciting things afoot: for example, you can read on page 8 that we are working on a new and expanded JASNA-GCR website.



Another positive change: membership dues are going down! We were able to do this because of something you may recall from my letter in the previous newsletter: beginning with the Fall 2011 issue, *Letter from Chicago* will be available in digital form, in glorious full color. The savings on printing and postage will enable us to make our dues more reasonable. Note that there are now four levels of membership: Individual Memberships and Family Memberships are further subdivided into those members who will be happy to receive a digital copy of the newsletter, and those who would prefer a "hard copy" print version.

Yes, we have decided to join the modern age, but only insofar as it will be convenient to our members. **If you would like to receive *Letter from Chicago* in**

digital form, all you need to do is to make sure that we have your e-mail address. A full-color PDF of the *Letter* will appear in your e-mail inbox as soon as it becomes available.

If you prefer to receive a print copy of the *Letter*, make sure that we have your mailing address. You will notice that dues are higher for members who prefer a print copy of the *Letter*; this is to cover the cost of printing and postage. Also, we regret that the cost of color printing will preclude us from sending you a full-color edition; thus the "hard copy" version will only be available in black and white.



But some things should never change, such as maintaining the quality of our programming, and the GCR traditions that we all love. As you know, the celebration of the 200th anniversary of *Sense and Sensibility* is only the beginning! We can look forward over the next few years to the bicentenary celebrations of the rest of Austen's novels. Our Program Director, Elisabeth Lenckos, has led the Board in arranging a lineup of programs for 2011–2012 that we hope you will find both enlightening and enjoyable, beginning with a lively (but friendly!) debate on September 24 (see page 4), and moving on to our lovely Birthday Tea at The Fortnightly of Chicago on December 3.

So please renew your membership today either by filling out the enclosed form, or online by going to www.jasnachicago.org. You won't want to miss out on the excitement!

Programs

Elisabeth Lenckos, Program Director

2011, the year of *Sense and Sensibility*, is shaping up to be an outstanding year of programs for our Chicago region. Our April Gala was a wonderful event, in particular the stellar lecture on Austen's French connections by distinguished Chawton Fellow Dr. Gillian Dow and the charming presentation on the ballet and dance of Austen's time by young scholar Dr. Erin Smith. Not to mention the exciting premiere of our own *Jane Austen Speaks* by performer Debra Ann Miller, and the fine emporium of luxury goods by Jeanne Steen! Then in June, we gathered for a summer concert lovingly organized by Jeff Nigro, who engaged music historian Stephen Alltop and singer Josefien Stoppelenburg to play the music of Austen's period at the elegant Women's Athletic Club. But the JASNA-GCR board is not done yet, and September will have another great treat in store for you: the visit to our region by Dr. Paula Marantz Cohen, a woman so *accomplished* that even Miss Bingley would be struck speechless at the catalog of her distinctions.

"Battle of Wits" Debate

As always, our September program will be free and open to the public, so bring friends and family, neighbors and students. Since we are celebrating a double anniversary, the bicentenary of *Sense and Sensibility* and the tenth birthday of our fair city's *One Book, One Chicago* program, which selected *Pride and Prejudice* in 2005 as the first novel by a non-American author, our meeting will take place at the Harold Washington Library in Chicago this year. And since it is such a grand occasion, we have invited literary celebrity **Paula Marantz Cohen** to grace our meeting. Paula has been to Chicago before: in 2008, I asked her to be part of the opening panel I organized at the behest of William Phillips for our AGM on Austen's Legacy, so you might already know and love her. Our themes three years ago

were "Life, Love, and Laughter," and I could think of no better Austen heir to represent the three "ls" than Paula. Have you read her Austen spin-off *Jane Austen in Boca*? You will laugh out loud!

Apart from being a fine comic writer, Paula is a Distinguished Professor of English at Drexel University where she teaches courses in literature, film, and creative writing. She is the author of four nonfiction books, of which *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth* was a Choice Outstanding Academic Book. Her novels include *Jane Austen in Boca*, *Much Ado about Jessie Kaplan*, *Jane Austen in Scarsdale or Love, Death, and the SATs* (a Book-of-the-Month Club and Doubleday Book Club selection), and the forthcoming *What Alice Knew: A Most Curious Tale of Henry James and Jack the Ripper*. Paula's essays and stories have appeared in *The Yale Review*, *Raritan*, *The American Scholar*, *Boulevard*, *The Hudson Review*, the *Southwest Review*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and other publications. She is the host of *The Drexel InterView*, a cable TV show based in Philadelphia, and a co-editor of *jml: Journal of Modern Literature*. She holds a B.A. from Yale College and a Ph.D. from Columbia University.

Paula is a lovely person, a wonderful raconteur, and a sparkling conversation partner. In addition, we will have some fun and engage in a "Battle of Wits," debating which is the better, or favorite, novel, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice*? We will ask you to join in and give us your opinion, and there should be a Question and Answer session, as well. Paula has also promised to hold a book signing after our program. It should be both an enjoyable and a fascinating afternoon, and I urge you to put the day on your calendar and mark it in red! I hope to see you at the Harold Washington Library, but in the meantime, have a happy and relaxing summer.

Sensibility in Sound

In April 1811, while Jane Austen was in London after the appearance of her first published novel, her brother and sister-in-law hosted a “musical evening” at their house in Sloane Street. In many ways this event marked the apogee of Henry and Eliza Austen’s participation in the social whirl of the capital. Sixty JASNA–GCR members had no reason to envy Eliza’s guests on June 18 when, in the magnificent and appropriately Regency-style surroundings of the Women’s Athletic Club in downtown Chicago, we enjoyed a musical program entitled “Sensibility in Sound: Music of Austen’s Time.”

The performers were truly outstanding. At the piano was Stephen Alltop, celebrated performer and conductor, and an authority on the music of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Dutch-born soprano Josefien Stoppelenburg, an admitted Austen lover, combines an exquisitely beautiful voice with a formidable sense of style, taste, and musical intelligence; she was as moving in an aria from Handel’s *Susanna* (abetted by Mr. Alltop’s sensitive accompaniment) as she was delightfully sly in Charles Dibdin’s song “Moorings.”

As that last sentence indicates, Mr. Alltop and Ms. Stoppelenburg had put together a program that was rich and varied, as well as appropriate to our ongoing celebration of the *Sense and Sensibility* bicentenary. They began



Left to right: Debra Ann Miller (GCR's "very own Jane Austen"); Stephen Alltop, pianist; Josefien Stoppelenburg, soprano

with songs written in the year 1811: Beethoven’s “An die Geliebte” (Marianne Dashwood would have been enraptured) and “Das Mädchens Klage” by the 14-year-old Franz Schubert (Ms. Stoppelenburg triumphing with the wild vocal lines concocted by a gifted but inexperienced composer). They then moved from the “wider world” of the great Viennese composers to the humbler settings of Steventon and Chawton, performing music that Austen herself played (and diligently copied into her own music books). Composers like Dibdin and Stephen Storace may not be household names today, but their work evinces an elegance and charm that explain their appeal to Austen and her contemporaries. A highlight was Mr. Alltop’s virtuoso performance of Bohemian composer František Kočvara’s over-the-top piano piece “The Battle of Prague,” Ms. Stoppelenburg announcing the section titles with appropriate flourish. These musical delights were punctuated by Mr. Alltop’s informative and engaging commentary.

Everyone seemed particularly struck by his plausible speculation that Austen might have mentally worked out elements of her novels while immersed in playing music that she loved.

The afternoon concluded with a sumptuous tea, allowing attendees to dispose of themselves throughout the elegant interiors of the Club. How Eliza Austen—and, we hope, Jane as well—would have loved it!



GCR Members enjoying tea.

2011 Gala Toast

Sue Forgue and Laura Whitlock

Elinor stands at the podium, loudly sighing over a tardy Marianne. Marianne rushes in wearing a wonderfully outrageous hat & preens a little bit.

Elinor: Marianne, you are late again. There are no hills or forests to lose yourself in around here. (a slight pause to notice the hat) Oh my goodness, why in heaven's name are you wearing that hat?

Marianne: I attended the Royal Wedding.

Elinor: You were invited to Westminster Abbey?

Marianne: Of course not, but we fictional characters can come and go as we choose. The good colonel was kind enough to escort me. Oh, how divine he looked in his regimentals!

Elinor: Yes, I can see you would like the trees in the Abbey but this hat looks like it would be more appropriate for Royal Ascot.

Marianne: And what are you wearing? A jockey cap? That hasn't been fashionable for centuries. Oh, Elinor, have you no fashion sense? (Marianne puts the plume on Elinor's hat)

Elinor: This hat is eminently sensible for my position in life. Miss Austen wrote *your* future as the squire's wife, not *mine*.

Marianne: Just because you married a parson does not mean you should dress like a governess. We're characters in an Austen novel, not *Jane Eyre*.

Elinor: Yes, but... (Marianne cuts her off)

Marianne: Yes, yes, you embody the Sense in *Sense & Sensibility*, but I wonder if her characters were allowed to give her counsel, whether we could have influenced her to change the title to *Sense & Sensational!* (big gesture)

Elinor: (pause to give her a dubious look) Maybe more like *Sense & Senselessness*.

Marianne: (giggling) Oh, quite possibly, after we drink this fine champagne.

Elinor: And here's a sobering thought—if you reflect on what we gained in wisdom from the events in the book, should not the title be *Sense & Sensitivity?*

Marianne: Oh, Elinor, that's so 1980s. What about *Sense &* (in a husky tone) *Sensuality?*

Elinor: Ahem, there was quite enough of that in the book.

Marianne: (impatiently) Oh, I give up! The book could be titled *Incense & Sensibility*.

Elinor: Now, you're being nonsensical. Marianne, do be serious. We are here to honor the 200th anniversary of the publication of Miss Austen's *Sense & Sensibility*, the title she gave it.

Marianne: And it's her genius that has created such lasting characters as ourselves and whose narrative conveys as much sense

Elinor: and sensibility

Marianne: and great enjoyment to the readers of today—as much as it did in 1811. Please raise your glasses to Miss Jane Austen.

Gala Photos



Left, top to bottom: Debra Ann Miller premiered the full-length version of her program "Jane Austen Speaks." Dr. Erin Smith, Western Governors University, spoke (and demonstrated) on Jane Austen and the ballet. Members enjoying lunch.

Center, top to bottom: Members viewing the wares at Jeanne Steen's Emporium Table. Speaker Dr. Gillian Dow, Professor at the University of Southampton and Chawton House Fellow. Linda Reinert chatting with members at the Book Exchange Table.

Right, top to bottom: The Emporium Table. Milliner extraordinaire Laura Whitlock in the hat she wore to give the Toast to Austen.





In Tribute

JASNA–GCR lost one of its most longstanding and gracious members with the passing of **Betty Bannor** on June 15, 2011, after a long illness, which she fought

with her customary grace and dignity.

Anne Elizabeth Bannor, nee Wedgworth, was born on June 2, 1924. A supremely dedicated educator, she taught for nearly three decades in the Chicago Public School system, eventually serving as Associate Principal at John Marshall Harlan High School on the South Side, and then Principal at Bridge Elementary School. In addition to her love of Austen,

and of literature and history in general, Betty was a tireless advocate of social justice, who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the 1960s. She was married for 58 years to the late Norman Lee Bannor, Sr.

Many of us who attended JASNA–GCR events over the years knew Betty Bannor as a warm and elegant presence, truly “amiable” in the best Austenian sense. She was most recently seen at our Spring Gala, seemingly in as fine fettle as ever. It seems she died with a history book in her hands, surrounded by loving family.

Contributions in her name may be made to the New Hope Scholarship Fund of Westminster Place at the Presbyterian Homes in Evanston, Illinois.

GCR Website

Exciting changes are coming to the JASNA-GCR website. The board has hired Micah J. Boon of MJB Design to revitalize and redesign the site. The website committee, consisting of **Sue Forgue**, **Diane Capitani**, **Lori Davis** and **Jeff Nigro**, is spearheading new interactive features, such as an enhanced events calendar, an expanded Austen biography with a timeline of world events, online exhibits depicting historical details mentioned in the novels, resources and teaching materials for educators, and a brand new section of Fun Stuff. This new section will have puzzles, e-cards to send to your friends, a serialized, Austen-based mystery, and much more. You will also find an expanded section on area events that will be of interest to Austen lovers, from special lectures to theatrical adaptations.

Print from *Ackermann's Repository* shows a morning dress from September, 1811.



The Watsons Manuscript

GCR members have kept a close watch on the auction at Sotheby's in London of part of Austen's draft of *The Watsons*. In June, the 68-page portion was on display for a week at Sotheby's in New York. *The Times* noted that the beginning 12-page portion of the manuscript "was sold during World War I to benefit the Red Cross, and now belongs to the Morgan Library & Museum." This meant the two sections of the manuscript were "not . . . reunited, exactly, but [were] closer than they've been in almost 100 years—just 35 blocks or so from each other in Manhattan." It is described as "extensively revised and corrected in her tiny, precise handwriting—evidence of Austen's painstaking habits."

Ronnie Jo Sokol let us know the results when the auction took place in mid-July. *The Daily Mail* reported the sale amount at £993,250, which is almost \$1.6 million. The anonymous bidder was later revealed as Oxford University's Bodleian Library. **Sue Forgue** was at Chawton at the time of the auction and e-mailed that the prime conversation there was about the sale.

Louise West of the Jane Austen House Museum told Sue the Jane Austen House Museum had contributed funds toward the purchase by the Bodleian.

Under the headline "Saved for the Nation," the Bodleian Library's website rejoices in its purchase, with the help of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and promises to display the manuscript in autumn when it "will indeed be a star item in our forthcoming exhibition *Treasures of the Bodleian*."

The Watsons has four unmarried daughters of a clergyman who must marry to avoid sinking into complete poverty when their father dies. *The Daily Mail* claims, "Experts believe Emma—the headstrong and independent-minded heroine of the novel—is based on the author herself." Austen may have abandoned working on it in 1805. Sotheby's book specialist **Gabriel Heaton**

opined, "It may have been just too close to the bone when her own father died. . . . The situation she was envisioning for Emma—being financially dependent on male relations—was about to happen to Austen herself. Her work has such a light touch it would have been very tough to write about her own sad circumstances." **Margaret Drabble** called it "a tantalising, delightful and highly accomplished fragment, which must surely have proved the equal of her other six novels, had she finished it."

The Royals

According to Ancestry.com, the Duchess of Cambridge is Austen's 11th cousin, six times removed. The *Chicago Tribune* wrote, "If a single prince is in want of a wife, no one puts on a better show than the British when he finally gets one. That truth was universally acknowledged . . . when William Arthur Philip Louis Mountbatten-Windsor, second in line to the British throne, married Catherine Elizabeth Middleton, his college sweetheart." (No relation to Sir John Middleton who offers his cousin Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters a home.) No doubt Austen would have been quite at home in Bucklebury, the Duchess' village, where the chapel reminds us of those at Steventon and Chawton.



Bucklebury Chapel.

A Grouch

One can hardly disagree with **Paul Theroux's** description of Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul as a grouch when reading quotes attributed to him in an interview where he declared no female writer was his literary equal. As reported in *The New York Times*, "he derided Austen saying he 'couldn't

possibly share her sentimental ambitions, her sentimental sense of the world.’ The reason was that ‘inevitably for a woman, she is not a complete master of a house, so that comes over in her writing.’ The singer Rosanne Cash, creator of the popular Twitter hashtag #JaneAustenAtTheSuperBowl, blasted back with a post adapted from *Northanger Abbey*: ‘If Mr. Naipaul takes no pleasure in the happy delineation of the varieties of human nature, then he must be intolerably stupid.’ ”

Quiz Answers

On July 1, contestants on the quiz show *Jeopardy* were given a clue, under the category British Authors: “She described her work as ‘human nature in the Midland Counties’ & involving ‘three or four families in a country village.’ ”

The answer to the Quiz in our previous *Letter from Chicago* is: “They will have no carriages, no horses, and hardly any servants; they will keep no company, and can have no expenses of any kind! Only conceive how comfortable they will be!”—Fanny Dashwood. (On persuading her husband to be a skinflint to his sisters.)

Quotable

From Dean Fisher’s description in the *Chicago Reader* of “the best flower shop you could live in, Asrai Garden is like the perfect literary cocktail. It mixes a strong dose of the English mystery of *A Secret Garden* with a few splashes of cheeky Sherlock Holmes magic—and adds for good measure equal a dose [*sic*] of Hemingway’s masculine elegance to balance the delicate Jane Austen romance.” (At 1935 W. North Ave.)

GCR Election

In the September 2010 Letter, our former Regional Coordinator, Natalie Goldberg, told you about our reworking of the JASNA–GCR Bylaws so that our Board members would serve staggered terms, in order to ensure a good balance between wise experience and fresh perspectives. In order to get this process started, for 2010–2011 only, six Board members agreed to serve one-year terms, while the other five members began the first of their two-year terms. Those six Board members whose terms expire in September 2011 have all done outstanding service, but with only a year under their belts, it seemed that they have barely gotten started!

The GCR Nominating Committee was delighted to discover that the Mighty Six were willing to be nominated to serve in their positions for two-year terms, beginning in September 2011 and ending in September 2013, in order to continue the exemplary work that they have begun. The Nominating

Committee is, therefore, pleased to present the following slate of candidates:

William Phillips	Deputy Regional Coordinator
Shirley Holbrook	Recording Secretary
Lori Davis	Publicity Director
Sara Okey	Publications Director
Diane Capitani	Education Outreach Director
Linda Reinert	Member at Large

The following Board members will continue in their positions, their terms expiring in 2013:

Jeff Nigro	Regional Coordinator
Cathy Feldman	Treasurer
Patricia Wieber	Membership Secretary
Elisabeth Lenckos	Program Director
Sue Fogue	Member at Large

We are also entertaining nominations from our membership. Please contact www.jasna.org to submit a nomination.

The Election will be held at our Annual Business Meeting at the Harold Washington Library on September 24, 2011 at 2:00 P.M., immediately preceding our Fall Program.



Annual Regional Membership 2011-2012

- One-Year JASNA-GCR Membership Dues are as follows:
With full-color e-newsletter* Individual: \$15.00; Family** \$20.00
With full-color e-newsletter AND black and white printed newsletter delivered by mail: Individual: \$25.00; Family** \$30.00
- Membership dues cover the present to August 31, 2012
- 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 organization, the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA), requiring **separate dues**. The JASNA membership form is available online at www.jasna.org.

Check one: Renewing Member New Member

Name: _____

Street Address: _____ Apt. _____

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

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

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 2012:

- \$15.00 for Individual w/e-newsletter _____
- \$25.00 for Individual w/mailed newsletter _____
- \$20.00 for Family w/e-newsletter _____
- \$20.00 for Family w/mailed newsletter _____
- \$_____ for a 2010 Gift Membership _____

_____ Fill in Gift Membership type.

Contribution to JASNA-GCR _____

TOTAL _____

Send my Gift Membership to (please provide name and address or e-mail):

Renew Online or Mail this form with your check to:
JASNA-GCR—c/o Cathy Feldman
17 East Goethe Street, Chicago IL 60610-2312
If you have any questions, e-mail jasnachicago@gmail.com. For more information, visit our web site www.jasnachicago.org

*Requires valid e-mail address

**Family defined as two family members at the same address

LETTER FROM CHICAGO
JASNA-GCR
5439 Dierks Drive
Rockford, IL 61108

Battle of Wits
Saturday, September 24

Calendar

- September 24** “Which is your favorite—*Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice*? A Battle of Wits.” Debate with Paula Marantz Cohen, best-selling author of *Jane Austen in Boca* and *What Alice Knew: A Most Curious Tale of Henry James and Jack the Ripper*. Harold Washington Library, Multipurpose Room, 400 S. State, Chicago. Free and open to the public. 2–4 PM.
- October 14–16** Annual AGM. *Jane Austen: 200 Years of Sense and Sensibility*. Fort Worth, Texas.
- October 29** “Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* and the Culture of Sympathy.” A daylong symposium at the University of Chicago Hyde Park campus, with free round-trip shuttle bus service from the Gleacher Center. The University of Chicago Graham School. Registration code: BWJASS. Early Registration tuition: \$185.
- December 3** Jane Austen Birthday Tea. Talk by Mona Scheuermann, author of *Reading Jane Austen* and Professor of English at Oakton Community College. Afternoon tea at The Fortnightly of Chicago, 120 East Bellevue, Chicago. 2–4 P.M.

**For more events and programs that will be of interest, visit our website:
www.jasnachicago.org, and click on “Midwest Events for Janeites.”**