

**The Filming of *The Jane Austen Book Club*,
(through the eyes of a partial, prejudiced, and
ignorant historian) - Natasha Zwick**

When Claire Bellanti first asked me to represent JASNA at a day of filming of *The Jane Austen Book Club*, I was quite excited and honored. True, I've grown up in the City of Angels, have indeed seen movie stars in person, have indeed attended movie premieres with the red carpet deal, and am even indeed related by blood to people who have accepted Academy Awards on national television for their work in movies. I had not, however, attended an actual filming, walked around the set with the director and producer and one of the stars, or represented a literary society. These were new experiences for me.

On the Set:

Natasha and Diana with Robin Swicord and John Calley

All week prior to our special day, Diana (the other JASNA rep and editor of this fine newsletter) and I were sent several e-mails, with information about the location, the scenes being filmed that day and time, cell phone contacts once we arrived, and the basic plan. In preparation, I reread chapter 1, which includes the book club scene we were to witness in the making, made special preparations to leave work a bit early, and planned my outfit (you know, in case they needed an extra to play Hugh Dancy's love interest). Two nights before filming, I read the guest list for the scene we were to watch: it read *The Jane Austen Society* and *The New York Times*. Giddy, I packed my camera and my notepad and prepared to join the elite reporters in my responsibilities as Features Writer for our local journal.

Things didn't go as smoothly as I might have hoped. There was a fire on the 405, so what would have been a 30-40 minute commute from work instead took nearly 90. I showed up late, found a seemingly deserted parking lot, and jumped out, hoping someone would find me. Someone did. Though my mommy has told me never to do such things, I willingly got into this unfamiliar man's truck as he communicated with someone else on a radio. I heard him say "Jane Austen Society," so I figured I was safe. He mentioned that my friend was already here (yay for Diana). I got deposited in a less remote area in the wilderness with three men who were probably keepers of the trailers. We made chit chat, but there was a concern that I wouldn't be able to enter the set now without disrupting the scene. They called the press rep, who told them where to send me, and I—very quietly—trudged through wet grass to appear on set—just as a scene was about to be redone.

It was cold and gloomy, and I had left my jacket in the car because it didn't seem chic.

I was very happy, needless to say, to see Diana, and my luck began to change. She introduced me to the press rep, who was also new to the scene, and very soon after that, we met the director, Robin Swicord, who had also adapted the novel for the big screen. Robin's tee-shirt made me laugh; it read "You have

my continuous partial attention." I could easily wear that to work on faculty meeting days. She was warm and friendly, coming closer when she learned who we were, and even hugging us.

We then met John Calley, the producer. I have to be honest here: I had never heard of these people. But Diana seemed as excited as I would have been if Colin Firth or Jeremy Northam were on set, so I played along, understanding that meeting this man was a big deal and that his friendliness, warmth, and insistence that we stop apologizing for taking up too much of his time with our questions and photos, reflected true generosity. I could understand, to some limited degree, Diana's glee.

The set, the Disney Ranch, where *Little House on the Prairie*, among other shows, was filmed, was rustic. The scene we watched took place on Jocelyn's porch, during the reading group's first meeting, to discuss *Emma*. There were two screens set up for us to watch inside the cottage, or we could watch the scene live outside. We did both (the scene was filmed several times). We walked through "Jocelyn's bedroom" where a later scene would be filmed, and all around the set, making sure to do so silently during filming. There were a LOT of people besides the actors and aforementioned leaders there—setting everything up and then watching to make sure everything went as planned. I learned that, when the scene is about to film, one person yells "roll," and everyone echoes back "rolling," which was an easy cue to follow to be quiet. We saw the storyboards for the scene, and people explained to us that the scene had to be filmed multiple times because they were capturing it from multiple angles.

So it was an exciting afternoon, yes; but the best part of it was the treatment we received from everyone with whom we came into contact. We were the expert Janeites, there to offer support for a project that is likely being made because there are people like us to share Jane with the masses (or at least, as close to the masses as any of us are likely to get any time soon). We were offered food and drink, seats, and kindness. I felt how important it is to be a leader in an organization such as this.

For Diana, the most exciting celebrities were likely John Calley and Robin Swicord. For me, the most exciting celebrity came at the end in the form of one of the actresses, Maggie Grace, who asked to speak with us when her scene was over. Maggie is a young star, most notably (for me, anyway, since I have a younger brother who follows these things) for her work in *Lost*, and an avid Jane Austen reader. She shared with Diana and me her experiences with Austen, and her meeting of Colin Firth (she was so tongue-tied she could hardly speak, which makes me think twice of my desire to ask him to attend our next event). She was very excited to learn that the author of a book she had discovered in Santa Monica was, in fact, Diana, and the three of us shared a chuckle over that coincidence. And she graciously welcomed us to take some pictures (which we had earlier been asked to refrain from) with her. Maggie rode back with me and Diana in the van to our cars (well, Maggie, to the costumes area), and I found it a delightful conclusion to our Hollywood visit.

If only she could have introduced me to Hugh, the afternoon could have been absolutely perfect.

P.S. from Diana: It was such an exciting afternoon, exactly as Natasha describes! I was particularly delighted that the filming took place on the Golden Oak Ranch owned by the Disney Studios in Placerita Canyon, for that's one of the last surviving movie ranches, and not open to the public. On the site of an 1840s gold strike, the ranch was bought by Disney in the 1950s for the filming of *Spin and Marty*, and the place is rich in film history, as well as being a beautiful setting of golden foothills and live oak trees, with a real old West feel; you can imagine how the area looked decades ago. I knew I'd come to the right place when I made the turnoff onto the country road and saw a handmade "JANE" sign tacked to a tree. As Natasha recounts, we were given the V.I.P. treatment. And she's right, I was particularly thrilled to meet the director Robin Swicord, whom I've admired ever since seeing her brilliant adaptation of *Little Women* (the 1994 Winona Ryder version), and the legendary producer John Calley (*Da Vinci Code*, *Remains of the Day*, *the Cincinnati Kid*, *The Americanization of Emily*, *Catch-22*). Both were incredibly down-to-earth and gracious to us and felt like old friends by the end of the day. Calley, though an elderly man, ran spryly around the set in blue jeans and at one point said puckishly that he wished he had a T-shirt that said "Jane Austen Gave Me the Clap." Robin looked at us anxiously at that, but we all burst out laughing. I have written up my version of these adventures for the Spring issue of *JASNA News*, but the conclusion of both my account and Natasha's is definitely that we wish you could all have been there with us!

Jane Sign

Natasha Zwick, Robin Swicord, Diana Birchall

**Report on the JASNA-SW Jane Austen Birthday Party
By Jana Bickel**

This year's Jane Austen birthday party at the Los Angeles Athletic Club was interesting and entertaining with lectures on food and music of the Regency period, an outstanding musical performance, an artistic slide show and a mad cap theatrical event.

Sheryl Craig from Central Missouri State University started things off on the right note with a very interesting talk on "'The Torments of Rice Puddings and Apple Dumplings': Jane Austen and Food." She explained that the Austen family, as a typical gentry family would have eaten three meals a day. Breakfast was a very light meal usually tea and toast and was the meal that Jane Austen prepared for family. She would have grilled the toast in the fireplace. Coffee was very expensive and not available in most homes. Only rich people could afford it. Dinner was the main meal of the day served at

mid-day. Typically, there were four courses: soup, fish, meat, and cheeses. Venison was the meat served by the upper classes. Although some movies set in the Regency show pork being served in big houses, pork was meat eaten by the lower classes. The waiters did not serve the food; only the wine. The food was brought in serving dishes and people served themselves. For large parties, there would be two sets of dishes one for each half of the table. Supper was a light meal and consisted of soup and sometimes wine, i.e., food that was restorative and would settle the stomach before going to bed. The French word "restaurant" comes from the French word meaning "restorative". High tea was invented during the Victorian era and would not have been a meal served during the Regency.

John Khouri, a musicologist and collector of period pianos, gave a fascinating talk on Regency music and musicians. Musicians were relegated to the servant class and had to eat in the kitchen. Daughters of the upper classes were allowed to develop their musical ability just enough so they could display their natural graces before potential suitors. Keyboards and harps were the most popular instruments as they showed off the girls in their most amiable light. Virtuosity was not expected nor encouraged. Khouri stated that Jane Austen was an "average" piano player as revealed by her own sheet music collection on display at Chawton House. Jane did not always buy sheet music; she often copied it by hand from a library.

Khouri explained that the fortepiano, unlike the modern piano, has leather covered hammers, two or three strings per note, and one pedal that provides a short or staccato sound and another pedal for the extended or legato sound. The pianoforte does not require as heavy a touch as today's modern piano. It has a much softer sound but it dies away quickly. Also, since the mounting for the strings contains no metal it responds to the slightest changes in humidity or drafts by frequently getting out of tune. The most popular brand of pianos sold during the Regency period was Broadwood, a very successful company that had a wide network of service centers for its instruments. Broadwood was the type of piano played by Jane Fairfax in *Emma*.

The fortepiano used for this performance was an authentic Regency piano, one of the more "elegant" models with inlaid brass ornamentation on the front. Although Khouri himself owns a Regency piano, the one used during the performance was provided by a friend and brought in especially for the JASNA event. Khouri played pieces by Ladislav Dussek, Johann Baptist Cremer, John Field and Muzio Clementi. These truly international composers hailed from Bohemia, Mannheim, Ireland and Rome and played houses in London, Paris, Moscow and Hamburg. For more information about these composers please see "Musical composers in the Early Nineteenth Century" by Richard Dolen in this newsletter.

Incoming JASNA president Marsha Huff showed us beautiful slides of Vermeer's paintings and linked them the kinds of domestic scenes Jane Austen wrote about. Although the connection between Jane Austen and Vermeer was tenuous, I consider a good day when I get to see a slide of Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring" and Colin Firth, in seventeenth century garb.

Ending the program on a high note was a reading of Jane Austen's play, orchestrated by Nancy Gallagher. The play, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, is a condensed version of the Samuel Richardson novel, written in Austen's teenage years. The play only recently came to light, in 1976, when it was auctioned and purchased by Sandy Lerner, founder of Chawton Library. Many conference attendees participated in this event by taking at least one

part in the play. Some attendees got to play two parts because there were so many characters. Alice White had a starring role and got to faint in the play. My big moment was bringing her a glass of water, real water mind you. There were so many entrances and exits that it was hard to keep up. I felt like I was in an 18th century version *Noises Off* or a regency version of the Keystone cops.

Congratulations to JASNA-SW for another great Jane Austen Conference.

Thanks to Richard Dolen for his contributions to this article.

"Musical composers in the Early Nineteenth Century" by Richard Dolen

Mr. Khouri performed the works of the following Regency composers, who are little known today but would have performed during Jane Austen's lifetime. Muzio Clementi, who was born in Rome 1752 and died in Evesham, England 1832, was a celebrated pianist and composer who at age 9 was hired as an organist in competition with older adult players. At a concert he gave at age 14, Clementi attracted the attention of an Englishman who procured his father's permission to have the boy educated in England. At 21, he had already established the standard form of the piano sonata. At 29, he achieved a draw in a face-to-face competition with Mozart. But apparently he was sufficiently impressed to change his own compositional style from a mechanically brilliant to a more melodic one. He became world famous and wealthy as teacher, pianist and composer, later establishing a publishing house and piano factory. His symphonies could not compete with Haydn's but his piano works were widely known. He wrote 106 piano sonatas (46 with violin, cello or flute) and the great book of études *Gradus ad Parnassum* (a parody of which appears in Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*).

Ladislov Dussek, was born in Bohemia 1760 and died in St.Germain-en-Laye, France in 1812. He was a piano virtuoso and prolific composer sadly underplayed in our time. He was famous all over Europe, and lived in England from 1788 having been driven out of France by the Revolution, to 1806 at which time he was fled to Hamburg to escape his creditors in a failed music business.) His music contains advanced canonic devices and frequent romantic episodes that prefigure Schumann and Brahms.

Johann Baptist Cremer known as Cramer, born in Mannheim 1771 and died in London in 1858, was a famous pianist and pedagogue whose piano etudes (originally 84 in total) were used all over Europe for more than a century. He also wrote 50 piano sonatas are rarely played today. He studied with Clementi, among others, and met Haydn and Beethoven in Vienna. He also founded a music publishing house whose successors went into the piano manufacturing business.

John Field, born in Dublin 1782 and died in Moscow 1837, studied with Clementi. He worked in Clementi's piano salesroom, and served as his accompanist in tours to Paris and St. Petersburg. Though his compositions do not generally sound very original, he was the father of the keyboard nocturne (later imaginatively amplified by Chopin), and developed the free fantasia and piano recitative, while staying within the boundaries of classical style. He wrote mainly for the piano, including 18 nocturnes, 4 sonatas and 7 piano concerti.

Report on the JASNA AGM in Tucson by Mary Graff

I was so grateful to see old friends and make new ones at the Tucson AGM. There were many events to *draw people in* at the conference, such as Kirstin Olsen's "Dinner With The Grants," which taught us just how important carving the meat IS for a man who considers himself to be a true gentleman. There was also Victoria Hinshaw's presentation entitled, "Divorce in Regency England: What Will Maria's Future Hold?" Everybody flocked to this talk! Other memorable moments include Janne Irvine's lovely piano concert, "Music in the Novels of Jane Austen." Sure, she played stimulating classics from Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart, but Janne really wowed the room when she whipped out some film score selections from the Austen screen adaptations. I have always loved Rachel Portman's score for Emma (Gwenyth Paltow version) but I never thought I would get to hear the main theme performed live! She also graced us with some of the music from Carl Davis' wonderful Pride & Prejudice score. Following Janne's concert, I thoroughly enjoyed James Ashley's presentation, "The Brilliancy of An Unclouded Night: Popular Astronomy in the Regency Era." To hear him quote Fanny remarking on the heavens brought raptures to MY soul...

**Joan Klingel Ray
and friend**

"Here's harmony!" said she; "here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry only can attempt to describe! Here's what may tranquillise every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene."

There were so *many* inspiring events at the 2006 AGM that sent me reeling for more, but my favorite was the Debate at the Sunday brunch: "Fanny Price or Mary Crawford?" Can you imagine? Is there any doubt in anyone's mind?? Many people actually prefer Mary Crawford, a sparkling woman with questionable values, to our heroine Fanny! Well, THIS got a rowdy fracas going in which I myself was forced to stand up for our girl and remark that *She's* the smart one surrounded by a family of nincompoops, the one with all the heart and soul, the one who deserves someone with a little more sense than even Edmund can sometimes muster! Do we not often root for the underdog in these kinds of literary situations? Do you *STILL* want Mary Crawford to your dinner party instead of Fanny? She will offend all of your guests! I, personally, think Fanny has the passion of Marianne and the sense of Elinor. She's got more things figured out than she gives herself credit for, and more than anyone else in the novel can truly understand. The question that comes to mind is: Can someone timid and passive be a hero? My answer is, YES. One does not need merely confidence and flare to succeed. Thank you, Bobbie Gay, for the Fanny Cheer! Thanks also to Joan Klingel Ray for all your Pro-Fanny remarks at the debate. And enjoy your new autographed picture of Mr. Darcy that was given to you the night of the ball!

Clara Browda's comments:

Location/hotel: wonderful, just like being at "a" Mansfield Park - lots of lawns and everywhere a "rich" feeling. The conference rooms were excellent.

Organization: excellent

Highlights for me: Star-gazing with Fanny and the lecture before it... The breakout session: "Lady Bertram - Lover or Loafer?"... The "debate" about Fanny at the Sunday brunch with a panel including Joan Ray...

Paula Dacker's comments:

Claudia Johnson's (Princeton University) "Jane Austen's Relics and the Treasures of the East Room" was quite perceptive. The audience shared a knowing giggle at her comment that our yearning for Jane is apparent in our obsession with remnants of her physical things. Bull's Eye for me! Isn't this after all what lurks behind all the kitschy Jane Austen teacups, calendars, tea towels, bumper stickers, note cards, bobbleheads, action figures, etc. etc. I, of course, returned home with my share of the kitsch from the well-stocked Merchandise Emporium. I am particularly fond of the "Jane '08" button!

I also enjoyed Miriam Rheingold Fuller's (University of Central Missouri) "Crawfords on the Couch: A Psychoanalytical Exploration of the Effects of the 'Bad School' on Henry and Mary Crawford." She delivered this in a theatrical style, assuming the three voices of Henry Crawford, Mary Crawford and the analyst. Terrific psychological insights were given with tongue in cheek flair.

Claire Bellanti's comments:

The 2006 AGM in Tucson sparkled like the stars in an Arizona sky. And in fact, one of my very favorite sessions was James Ashley's "'The brilliancy of an unclouded night': Popular astronomy in the Regency Era." James was witty, sensitive and clearly involved in Fanny's story. His comparison of astronomical knowledge between the 18th century and today was fascinating. He further entertained us with stunning photos of supernovas and galaxies. And Tucson was really the place to see those stars shine! I especially love it when my amateur passions (Jane and any scientific information) come together so seamlessly. I also made a point to hear the break out sessions of two of our own regional members: Lynda Hall (Orange County) and Gracia Fay Ellwood (Ventura County). Lynda's presentation was "Not a 'Problem' Novel: A Gothic Reading of Mansfield Park." It was a lot of fun to hear Lynda explain the gothic side of Mansfield Park, and very convincing. Gracia Fay's talk was "A Hole in Henry Crawford's Heart," making a strong case that Henry's lack of a mother figure left him an emotional cripple who could not have found a way to accept love from Fanny had he won her (my editorial: or at least not without a lot of years of therapy.) There were so many delights, but the one that stands out most for me is the Masquerade Ball. There were tremendous costumes, and the masks made by members of the Tucson Region were truly elegant. Many thanks to the Southern Arizona Region for another great AGM.

Susan Ridgeway, Alston Ahern

Claire Bellanti, Mary Graff, Leila Dooley

Report on the Fanny Burney Conference by Jana Bickel

In addition to the Jane Austen Conference, I attended the Burney conference which was also held at the Lowes Ventana Canyon Resort. The final speaker at the Burney Conference was John Wiltshire who spoke on "Frances Burney as Pathographer." Wiltshire discussed Fanny's journal description of her mastectomy as one of the first works of fiction to make illness its subject. Wiltshire stated that Fanny intended that her description of her operation be read by others and as such added many of the drama and details later. John Wiltshire also spoke at the Jane Austen Conference about the geography of Mansfield Park and the real places that Jane Austen visited that were mentioned in the book.

Marcia McClintock Folsom's talk on "Shakespeare and Mansfield Park" discussed allusions to *As You Like It*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Henry VIII* in *Mansfield Park*. In the latter case, Fanny was reading *Henry VIII* out loud to Lady Bertram soon after her uncle dressed her down for not accepting Henry Crawford's proposal. The scene being read was the scene where Katherine of Aragon receives a similar dressing down from Cardinal Wolsey.

Victoria Hinshaw gave a very entertaining speech on divorce during the Regency. She used Powerpoint slides to detail the lives of three women who obtained celebrated divorces: Elizabeth Vassall, Lady Webster, who gave up her children to marry Henry Richard Fox, Baron Holland; Mary Hamilton Nisbet, who divorced the Earl of Elgin (of Elgin Marble fame) to marry Robert Ferguson, a geologist, and Sarah Lennox, who married Thomas Bunbury, had an affair with William Gordon, divorced Bunbury and eventually married George Napier. Ms. Hinshaw discussed the difficulty of obtaining a divorce. Only the very rich could do it and sacrifices had to be made. Nonetheless when put to the vote, most people attending the lecture thought that Maria Bertram would live down her divorce and be reinstated to society.

Book Reviews by Natasha Zwick

***Dear Jane Austen: A Heroine's Guide to Life and Love* by Patrice Hannon**

The premise of this work is that Jane Austen is somehow receiving letters from modern-day would-be heroines seeking her advice on love and life. All Jane's responses are punctuated by actual passages from the novels and juvenilia to lend legitimacy to the responses, so while we get interesting modern problems, we are also treated to delightful snippets from our favorite books.

Overall, it is a clever idea and fairly well executed, aside from inevitable choppiness, one description of "Sex and the City" as being unrealistic (hmmph), and several paragraphs that feel just a bit too long for modern-day readers. Jane is, in essence, Dear Abby, with similar sharpness of tongue and strong views about the choices her correspondents make. In one of the early letters, for instance, Jane responds to a would-be heroine who fears she'll die if she doesn't marry soon; Jane tells her that she needs some "self-command" rather than the "hysterical raving" of the Bronte sisters, who set women "back hundreds of years with stories full of improbable circumstances and unnatural characters."

The journey to heroine-ship relies on several important "rules" for being a heroine (such as "a heroine does not try to win a hero's love" and "you will only recognize your true hero when you know yourself"), but most important is remembering to distinguish reality from fantasy. Jane advises every would-be heroine to read the novels again in order to become "as much a heroine as...Catherine, Elinor, Elizabeth, Fanny, Emma, Anne, and yes, even Marianne," but this book takes us through the novels and forces us to apply the principles therein to modern-day relationships. Though some of the would-be heroines have problems that even a dating simpleton should recognize as too obvious to require guidance ("I'm in love with a guy who hits on my sister"—are you serious? Does any self-respecting woman ever consider such a man seriously?), most of the issues Jane addresses here deal with far more subtle themes, and the modern single woman looking to be a heroine in her own life could use the lessons.

The crux of Austen's argument (as channeled by Patrice Hannon) comes near the end, after she takes us through her stories and wrings forth lessons from them for our benefit. In a somewhat ironic twist, Jane cautions us that "an essential element in the achievement of that perfect felicity [her] heroines enjoy is the conquering of romantic illusions and expectations." Besides sounding disturbingly like my mom, Jane here asks us not to judge the men we date by comparing them directly to Mr. Darcy or Mr. Knightley, but instead to assess our relationships with our men using the principles of compatibility established in *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma*. Jane urges us, as in the novels the real Jane urges her heroines, to "choose happiness" and reminds us that, more so in our times than in hers, women have the power to do so—hero or not.

[Ed.'s note] Author Patrice Hannon writes to us with the exciting news that Plume will be bringing out a new edition of *DEAR JANE AUSTEN* in July. The Publisher of Penguin, Kathryn Court, came into Patrice's antiques store on Bleecker Street in November, bought a copy, and came back two weeks later to talk to her. A great New York story.

***The J.A.P. Chronicles* by Isabel Rose**
Reviewed by Natasha Zwick

Be warned: not every novel whose back cover uses Jane Austen's name bears any resemblance to a Jane Austen novel apart from the language in which it is written. *The J.A.P. Chronicles*, for instance, has a back cover that reads as follows: "Sex and the City meets Jane Austen in a wickedly funny, razor-sharp novel that provides the ultimate insider's look at glamorous upper-crust society."

Problem 1: *Sex and the City* is defamed again; this book has sex, all right, but in ways that make a nice, normal reader cringe: molestations by religious figures and by camp buddies, destructive relationships—physically and emotionally, and extramarital affairs.

Problem 2: Where on earth any reviewer saw Jane Austen in this book I have no idea. If that is the draw that would lure you in, back away quickly from the shelf. This book doesn't have what you're looking for.

Problem 3: If this is the "ultimate insider's look," I'd rather stay an outsider.

Problem 4: What this novel offers is not glamorous at all, even if the characters do have money, or at least know (and use) people who do.

Thus far, I have faulted the claims on the back of the book. Now, on to the book itself.

It appealed to me on three levels: Jane Austen, *Sex and the City*, Jewish single women in their 30s. It failed on every count. As I've already said, there is no link to Jane that I discerned. The sex is only disturbing, and nearly always unfulfilling and sometimes demeaning (NOT how it works on the show, as my regular readers will recall my discussions of in a review of *Sex and Sensibility*). Worst of all, for me anyway, was the disturbing, unflattering, and I dare say, unrealistic portrayal of Jewish communal life in New York's elite realm. These people call themselves "reform" (which actually is not at all the same thing as secular, though most people use them interchangeably), but "observe" some rituals without any connection to the principles or meaning behind them. The women betray their friends, cheat their co-workers, use sex to get what they want (or try to), and commit a whole host of sins that would make any self-respecting Jew (or human) turn crimson. The fact that the book has so many of them and that they supposedly care about maintaining some "Jewishness" about them is completely ironic and ridiculous. As someone who grew up in a reform community, I have met hundreds of people, and not one, of which I'm aware, resembles these seemingly soulless women.

Now, to be fair, they have overwhelmingly suffered in some way that may have led to this egregious behavior, but even still, it's at the hands of their own people. Yuck.

No Jane, no *Sex and the City*, no accuracy in the portrayal of Jewish life (or else we're all in trouble). But if you can let go of all that, it's an interesting and quick read with some laughs and some moments of shock. As the book progresses (if you can hold on that long), the characters do get fleshed out, more interesting, and ultimately, more sympathetic. As they do so, they become closer to each other as well as to the reader, which leads to a fairly satisfying ending.

Music from Jane Austen's Collection

Sunday, February 4, 2007, 5:00 PM.

Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church. 301, North Orange Grove Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91103.

Con Gioia Early Music Ensemble presents a program of "Music from Jane Austen's Collection" (Songs, Keyboard Solos, and Chamber music, including a work by an 18th-century British woman composer) featuring renowned soprano Julianne Baird, who has recorded two CDs of music on this topic with internationally known fortepianist, Preethi de Silva, and others. The program will also include readings from Austen's novels by British actress Michelle Arthur (known for her roles in the film production of Austen's "Northanger Abbey" and the recent TV series, "Lost.")

Sunday, February 4, 2007 at 5:00 PM at Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church. 301, North Orange Grove Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91103.

Please see our website for details on our programs, artists and admission to events: www.congioia.org. A special group rate for members of the Jane Austen Society may be arranged by prior reservation.

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Elizabeth Aston in Los Angeles

Elizabeth Aston (*Mr. Darcy's Daughters*, *Exploits and Adventures of Miss Alethea Darcy*, and *The True Darcy Spirit*) will be in the Los Angeles area Wednesday, March 21st and Thursday, March 22nd to promote her newest book, *Second Mrs. Darcy*. Her appearances are:

Wednesday, March 21st

7:00 PM Borders #118, 125 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Store: 805-497-8159

Thursday, March 22nd

7:00 PM Vroman's, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91101

Store: 626-449-5320

All are welcome to attend these book signing events.

In addition, JASNA-SW members have received a special invitation from Ms. Aston's publisher to join her for breakfast at the Biltmore Hotel on the morning of Thursday, March 22 at 7:30 AM. If you would like to attend this very special event, please email Claire Bellanti (cqb@library.ucla.edu) or call her at (818)892-3553. The breakfast is limited to 20 members, so call right away, but no later than March 10.

Save the Date. . .

. . .for the JASNA-SW Spring Meeting! Our meeting will be held at the UCLA Faculty Center on May 5th. Our special guest speaker will be Professor Joan Ray, previous President of JASNA. Stay tuned for more details . . .

Co-President's Message

Reserve the date and place: the Spring Meeting will be May 5, 2007 at the UCLA Faculty Center. Joan Ray will be our featured speaker. Please put the date on your calendar now; further information will be coming soon.

With the arrival of the new year, we announce some changes to the JASNA-SW Board. Judy Collin, who has been serving on the JASNA-SW Board for, at least, ten years is leaving Los Angeles and therefore the Board. Judy has most recently been the JASNA-SW webmaster, before that she was the Co-Chair for Programs, and before that Treasurer of JASNA-SW. We also remember with gratitude her stint as Volunteer Coordinator for the AGM in 2004. We hope to see Judy at future AGM's and on visits back to Los Angeles. Barbara Wellman, who has given so graciously of her time as the Membership Secretary for the last ten years, is stepping down from her office, as well. So, you will now be seeing a new return address on the Newsletter! Barbara and Judy, on behalf of all the members of JASNA-SW, thank you so much for the hard work, the great ideas, your generosity with your time, and the camaraderie! Please accept our best wishes and deepest thanks.

We have three new volunteers joining the Board. Diane Erickson will replace Barbara as Membership Secretary and Laurie Viera Rigler will replace Judy as Webmaster. We've also decided to bring on an additional office for Publicity, Jaye Scholl Bohlen. We'll introduce them at the Spring Meeting.

JASNA-SW
Co-Presidents and Co-Coordinators

Claire Bellanti Mimi Dudley

News from the Reading Groups

A revitalized **Ventura** reading group enjoyed an elegant celebration of Jane Austen's birthday. The program reads as follows:

Lillian Goldstein: Reading from a JA biography with an account of her birth
 Susan Neilson: Two short piano solos by Beethoven
 Gracia Fay Ellwood: Excerpt from Cowper's "The Task" describing a cold winter morning
 Robert Winokur, Gary Shapiro and Susan Neilson: Trio for piano and two recorders, by Handel
 Robert W., Gary S. and Susan N: "Masters in This Hall"
 Diana Birchall: Reading from one of her own Mrs. Elton books
 Richard and Gracia Fay Ellwood: Christmas Eve dialog, Emma and Mr. Elton
 Richard Ellwood: Short poem, "Mr. Darcy's Friend" by Patricia Shepherd
 Sheela Topping: Vocal solo, "O Holy Night" by Adam
 Lillian: Reading of a family Christmas scene from *Persuasion*
 (In the event, Gracia Fay and Diana were felled by illness and could not attend, but the proceedings were reportedly nonetheless jolly and Janeistic.)

A New Reading Group in Temecula - Report by Rebecca Weersing

Our Jane Austen Study Group meets as a book club under the umbrella of the Friends of the Temecula Library. We are able to reserve a conference room at the library for our meetings and we are included in the Friends publicity announcements. We have two study periods a year - spring (February to May) and fall (September to December). This spring we will be studying *Emma* so that we will be prepared for the Vancouver AGM, which several of our members plan to attend. Some of the themes we have chosen in the past for our other studies include: *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen*, Shapard's annotated version of *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Cold Comfort Farm*. As for food, we usually have a Regency-style luncheon in December and May.

Around the Reading Groups

The San Fernando Valley Reading Group

Contact Gina Gualtieri at 818-788-4383 and gmgualtieri@yahoo.com

The Pasadena Reading Group

Contact Margery Rich at 626-614-8697

The West Los Angeles Reading Group

Contact Clara Browda at 310-278-8759

The Santa Monica Reading Group

Contact Diana Birchall at 310-394-2196 and birchalls@aol.com

The Orange County Reading Group

Contact Anna Freeman at 949-786-7170

The San Diego Region

Contact Leila Dooley at 760-726-7815 and Leila@nctimes.net

The Ventura Region

Contact Lillian Goldstein at Goldstein@vcss.k12.ca.us