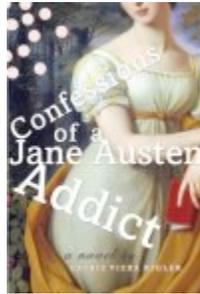


***Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict* An Interview with author Laurie Viera Rigler
By Alice Marie White**



At the recent JASNA-SW Spring Meeting, members were treated to a sneak preview of *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict* by author Laurie Viera Rigler. Laurie recently joined the JASNA-SW board as our Webmaster, but I first met her at a meeting of the Pasadena reading group. She is friendly, funny, and passionate about Jane Austen. Consequently, it was no surprise to me that JASNA-SW members were vastly entertained when Laurie shared a hilarious excerpt from her forthcoming novel.

The book will be available in stores August 2007, but I have had the pleasure of reading a review copy. I was happy to discover that the excerpt Laurie read to us was only a small sampling of a comical romp through Jane Austen's England. *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict* tells the story of a modern-day Los Angeles woman who loves Jane Austen novels and film adaptations (I can definitely relate to such a heroine!). Courtney gets transported into Jane Austen's England, where she assumes the body and the life of Miss Jane Mansfield. Aside from briefly running into Jane Austen herself, the heroine does not come into contact with any other Austen characters. But there are many allusions to Austen's novels in the book.

While reading the novel, I jotted down several questions for Laurie about her writing process. The questions I asked, along with Laurie's answers, are printed below. I was forced to edit our conversation down due to lack of space, but if you are interested in learning more about the book, please visit the JASNA-SW's website (jasnasw.org). Under the "Book Groups" tab, you will find information about our local authors, including a link to janeaustenaddict.com.

Question:

I'm wondering about inspiration and influence. What about other Austen sequel-type texts? Do you read any? Do you have any favorites? What about other time travel books (such as Jasper Fforde's stuff)? Anything inspiring about those?

Answer:

My biggest inspirations and influences, aside from Jane Austen herself, are Helen Fielding, whose comic homages to *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion* (*Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*) are brilliant; and Nick Hornby, whose voice, in my opinion is the closest to that of Jane Austen of any contemporary author. With the exception of Daphne DuMaurier's *House on the Strand* and one of Jasper Fforde's books, I am not typically a reader of time travel books. Nor am I typically a reader of Austen sequels. I did, however, read and

greatly enjoy Diana Birchall's *Mrs. Darcy's Dilemma* and Elizabeth Aston's *The Second Mrs. Darcy*, but after I finished writing *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict*.

Question:

You mentioned your first JASNA AGM in your recent talk, and you mention JASNA in your acknowledgements. How has your JASNA participation helped you with this book? Did it change the plot at all? Did it help with the creative process?

Answer:

Although my participation in JASNA did not have an influence on the plot of the book, it did have an influence on my confidence level, as well as on a few details of character action. The 2004 AGM was the first JASNA meeting I ever attended, and seeing the range of interest in all things Austen, from scholarly papers to panels on film adaptations to a speech by Karen Joy Fowler, made me believe that there was indeed a readership out there for my novel. And when fellow JASNA member Margery Rich graciously consented to read my novel for accuracy of historical detail, I was relieved to find out that I had done as thorough a job on my research as I hoped I had. In addition, my book benefited from Margery's vast knowledge of costume and sewing. For example, she pointed out that my protagonist might not exactly "sink into a chair," since she was wearing stays, and that another character might not be able to sew in a moving carriage, as I had imagined her doing. Most of all, my participation in JASNA introduced me to a warm and welcoming community of people with whom I could celebrate the life, times, and works of my favorite novelist. If only my protagonist knew what she was missing!

Question:

You mention that JASNA-SW member Margery Rich helped you vet the historical details. Can you tell me a little bit more about the historical research that went into this book?

Answer:

My sources were manifold: In addition to my travels and walking tours, I perused dozens of books, museum exhibitions, museum catalogues, illustrations from the period, and online articles. I corresponded with museum personnel when I had questions that my other sources couldn't definitively answer.

Research is a favorite pastime of mine and a perfect way to procrastinate when I should be writing. As for process, the story drove my research; as I wrote the story I did my research to make sure my characters' actions and the settings were historically appropriate and accurate. Research, however, contributed to story in unexpected ways. For example, I am particularly fascinated with the minutiae of everyday life in Jane Austen's time. Which is why I enjoyed the London Museum, where there were exhibits of a variety of everyday items, from toothbrushes to mouse traps. The mouse trap came in handy when Courtney/Jane was searching through Mansfield House for Jane's cache of letters. Suddenly in my mind I saw that odd box of a mousetrap I'd seen in the London museum, and that's how it arrived in the story.

Another idea occurs to me regarding research. According to my story's timeline, the meeting between my protagonist and Jane Austen takes place on September 17, 1813. I figured that if my protagonist was to run into Jane Austen in London, it had to be on a day when I was fairly certain that JA was actually in London. Even though I was writing a novel, this little detail was

important to me. Ideally I wanted the meeting to take place during a gap in the letters, for in my fictional universe I pictured Cassandra destroying a letter that not only may have talked too explicitly about the symptoms of Jane Austen's illness, but which also mentioned the lunatic she ran into while picking up some packages from her favorite linen-drafter. There is a week-long gap in Jane Austen's correspondence to Cassandra (Deirdre Le Faye indicates "[Letter(s) missing here]") between Letter 88 on Thursday 16 September 1813 from Henrietta Street, London and Letter 89 written Thursday 23-Friday 24 September 1813 from Godmersham (*Letters*, Deirdre Le Faye). I figured the earliest JA may have traveled from London to Godmersham was on Saturday, September 18, 1813, as the 9/16 1813 letter makes no mention of her traveling the next day. There is also no letter from JA letting Cassandra know she arrived at Godmersham along with an account of her journey, as was typical. Therefore, I agree that there must have been at least one missing letter. All of this is, of course, conjecture and might fall apart in the hands of a bona fide historian. Luckily for me, I did, after all, write a work of fiction.

Another thought about research and historical detail: Although I wanted there to be enough sensory detail in my novel to get the reader immersed in the story and setting, I did not want this book to be weighed down by too much description. In fact, a judicious use of description is one of the things I admire about Jane Austen's writing. Like certain spices in food, it's my belief that a little goes a long way.

Question:

You also mention your research trip to England. What did you do on the trip?

Answer:

In some ways, I approached my research in England as I would a location scout for a film, or maybe I'm thinking of it this way because I come from a film background. I was looking for environments in which I could picture my characters, and I was searching as well for the accoutrements (or props, if you will) of their daily lives. My travels included the following: In London I took fascinating walking tours offered by London Walks, including tours of Jane Austen's London, Old Marylebone, and Old Mayfair. I visited the City of London Museum, Apsley House Museum, and an oddity of a house called Sir John Soane's Museum. For country villages I toured Lacock (the village of Meryton in the BBC's 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*) and Castle Combe. Bath was, by far, my favorite destination. Unlike the frozen-in-time feeling of Lacock and Castle Combe, once-prosperous villages that fell on hard times and which now feel more like set pieces than vital communities (at least to this traveler), Bath is a living, breathing city that is energetic and youthful, and at the same time gave me the feeling that, like Courtney, I had traveled back in time. I drank tea in the Pump Room and tried the nasty-tasting Bath water. I went to a perfectly preserved townhouse of the period in the Royal Crescent, furnished as it would have been in Jane Austen's day. And of course there were the various delights of the Assembly Rooms, the Museum of Costume, the Jane Austen Centre, the Building of Bath Museum, Victoria Art Gallery, Sydney Gardens, Milsom Street, and walking tours of Regency and Georgian Bath.

Question:

I was intrigued with the scene (set in Bath) in which the heroine looks out of the window of the Pump Room and sees the bathers' clinging outfits. I never thought of that as being the case

because I assumed the baths were more private. However, when I think about the way the Pump Room is set up today, you are right to point out that the windows do indeed look out upon that big bath that was used in the nineteenth century. How did you find out about the way the Pump Room and the baths were set up back then? And was that a bath used by both sexes?

Answer:

The baths in Bath were a particularly challenging puzzle to solve, since there are literally layers of history in those baths, including several re-designs of the various baths at different points in history. I too was struck by the idea of idlers in the Pump Room being able to see bathers in the King's Bath. Surely, I thought, the windows overlooking the King's Bath could not have been there in Jane Austen's day. It just sounded so, well, undignified. Nevertheless, the tour guide for the walking tour of Jane Austen's Bath indicated that the baths were indeed visible from the Pump Room windows. So did Susan Fox, MA AMA, Collections Manager, Roman Baths and Pump Room.

However, according to an excellent publication entitled *Stewing Alive: the story of bathing in Bath* (Victoria Art Gallery/The Roman Baths, 2002), which was a major source of information for me, "private baths and changing rooms were added to the King's and Queen's Baths" in the 1790s. According to *Stewing Alive*, that private facility was called the New Private Bath. In that same publication there is an illustration by John Nixon, dated 1800 and called *The King's Bath, Bath*, in which one can see male and female bathers in what was then an open-air King's Bath, clearly visible from the windows of surrounding buildings and from what looks like a walkway; and the new, discreet, and enclosed Private Baths off to the side. I could only conclude that some of the bathers were on display and others weren't.

At least one of my sources indicated that if one wanted a degree more elegance and fashion, one would go to the fashionable Cross Baths, which is where Courtney/Jane, Mary, and Mrs. Smith go to bathe. The Cross Bath was more expensive in the daytime than at night, and thus, one would assume, there would likely be a degree more privacy as well. Nevertheless, the term "privacy" is a relative one; every illustration I've seen of bathers of the period shows both men and women in the baths together. However, an eighteenth-century account I read of the Cross Baths speaks of men on one side and women on the other. I do not know whether that tradition continued after the rebuilding of the Cross Baths in the 1790s. And at least before the 1790s redesign of the Cross Bath, there were spectator galleries in it.

Another little detail that nagged at me was that lovely fountain in today's pump room with the sculpted stone fish. I wanted it in one of my scenes, but was it there in Jane Austen's day, I wondered? It was not visible in the few illustrations I could find of people drinking the water in the Pump Room. Again, Susan Fox cleared up that mystery: "The fountain's stone basin was put there in the early twentieth century. The fish sculpture and urn on the fountain was fitted in 1988." Good thing I asked.

Question:

Are there any (good) sources you would recommend for local JASNA-SW members who might be interested in some of the historical details you include?

Answer:

Here is a listing of some of my favorite sources, alphabetically by author (or publisher):

Ordnance Survey Historical Map & Guide: Georgian Bath (Bath Archaeological Trust)

Number 1 Royal Crescent Bath illustrated guide (Bath Preservation Trust)

The Building of Bath Museum guidebook (The Building of Bath Museum)

Textiles for Regency Clothing 1800-1850 by Lynne Zacek Bassett

Jane Austen Fashion by Penelope Byrde (Excellent Press, 1999)

Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels by Deirdre Le Faye (Frances Lincoln Ltd, 2002)

A Charming Place: Bath in the Life and Novels of Jane Austen by Maggie Lane (Millstream Books, 1988)

The Museum of Costume/Assembly Rooms Bath exhibition catalogue (Museum of Costume/National Trust)

The Last Promenade: Sydney Gardens Bath by Brenda Snaddon (Millstream Books, 2000)

Stewing Alive: the story of bathing in Bath (exhibition catalogue) (Victoria Art Gallery/The Roman Baths, 2002)

London Bodies by Alex Werner; introduction Professor Roy Porter (Museum of London, 1998)



Laurie Viera Rigler will be doing a reading and signing at Vromans in Pasadena (695 E. Colorado Blvd.) on August 8 at 7 PM and would love to welcome members of JASNA-SW. Please come and meet her!

Book Review Column by Natasha Zwick

***Darcy and Elizabeth: nights and days at Pemberley* by Linda Berdoll**

I loved *Pride and Promiscuity*. Once I started *Mr. Darcy Takes* (in more positions than could be easily imagined) *a Wife*, I could hardly tear myself away. The only part of *Bride and Prejudice* I resented is when Lalita and Will Darcy don't actually kiss on-screen.

So you know, it's really my own fault I dove head first into Linda Berdoll's second sexy exploration of the life of Darcy and Elizabeth after the happily ever after.

This is not to say I was not rewarded; on the contrary, there are multiple delights (of the orgasmic nature and otherwise) in this text. A sampling: the size of Darcy's bulge (introduced on page six, since it's of obvious import), an erotic nursing scene (the Darcys have twins), Darcy telling off Lady Catherine for her behavior in the previous sequel, Bingley finally learning his way around a woman's anatomy and using it for Jane's—rather than for a mistress'—pleasure, an awesome and shocking Georgiana/Fitzwilliam revelation on their wedding night, Anne de Bourgh as an equine creature whose mother resents her for not procreating, Lizzy making sure Darcy doesn't fall asleep as usual post-coitus when they do it in the lake, and Darcy's adorable daughter expelling the contents of her nose on her father's coat as he looks on in horror.

This being said, these delights come from the first half of the book because I made the choice not to finish it.

Why, you ask? The book is titillating, creative, fun-spirited. But it is also a lot of work to read. The vocabulary feels heavy, only some of the characters are familiar or easy to keep track of, and the interconnected stories are confusing and become rewarding, no doubt, only near the end. I loved the Lizzy/Darcy scenes and even some of the others, which I know, somehow, Berdoll will make affect Lizzy and Darcy, but I have reached a point of exhaustion. Pleasure reading is supposed to come more easily than this.

If you, however, discerning audience as you are, look for a challenge and a lot to piece together—and literary sex scenes I haven't seen any other respectable Austen writer attempt—than *Darcy and Elizabeth* should be next on your “to read” list.

(Keep a dictionary and a willing partner close by ;-).

***North by Northanger* by Carrie Bebris**

I had been saving this book as a special treat for myself for this spring, post-research papers and AP exam. Even I couldn't have imagined how much I would love reading it.

Everything is handled well: the language, the relationships between characters, the little details that only a person who has read the novels several times, and closely, would notice, but that make all the difference. If I weren't concerned about the overuse of asyndeton, I could easily list here every detail I loved about this book. Instead, I will highlight some of its strengths.

It is funny. Lizzy is now pregnant, and she and her loving husband are having a running spat about the gender of the child. There are jokes about possible names for the child: Nancy Darcy,

Quincy Darcy, Chauncey Darcy. Though the reader doesn't know until the end, the name they ultimately choose for the baby is perfect—on multiple levels. It is a beautiful way to turn humor into meaning, and to conclude this satisfying experience.

The characters are real. I always love Bebris' mysteries, but the magic never fails to surprise me. By the end of chapter one, I was hooked. I cared about her version of the characters and really believed their love. Bebris does what so many Austen "sequel" writers attempt to do, but she, I think, really does capture the spirit and language of the characters that we know and love/scorn. Here she does this to the letter with not only Lizzy and Darcy but also Lady Catherine, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Lydia and Wickham, and a whole host of *Northanger Abbey* characters.

The relationships we would have loved to see in the novels between characters in different novels finally come to be: Lady Anne Darcy and Mrs. Tilney (both dead before the Austen novels begin), Henry and Catherine Tilney and Lizzy and Darcy, even Lady Catherine and Lady Dalrymple (the ladies are buddies in Bath). The traits we see in Austen's characters express themselves clearly but subtly here—there are hints at who everyone is, but Bebris doesn't hit us over the head with them. As a result, we feel clever for "getting" the twists and the references. I made notes to myself while reading and returned to them at the end to see which ideas were right and which weren't. That is fun!

There are multiple mysteries. The reader knows she is receiving clues, but, like the characters, has to piece them together. Why does Lizzy keep dropping and misplacing objects? Why is Dorothy so eager to hear what Tilney says? Have the servants been drugged? What is the significance of that cane? The scent on Lady Catherine? Wickham is around again—is he at the center of trouble, or does it just always look that way? Are some of our forebears secret Catholics? Who is this Jenny servant, and why does she keep popping up everywhere? Is Lady Anne actually present (the latter mystery both begins and ends the novel, and I would be willing to debate with you whether Bebris answers it definitively).

There are real heroes and villains here, and they get what they deserve. Unlike in our world, where sometimes it's hard to tell who's what and even when you can, they don't always get treated as such, in Bebris' cleverly crafted one, things are different. The hero dismisses the arrogant patronizer of women and rides off into the sunset after his loved one's treasure. The evil doers are universally recognized as such, and punished appropriately (pities to the people of New South Wales). Gut instincts in our heroine are almost always right, and the ridiculous but harmless people simply faint when they're in the way, and thus are in the way no longer.

Bebris gives us the back story for Darcy's parents, via letters. They fell in love over *The Canterbury Tales* and suffered a great deal before Anne's death, but beyond that, there is too much intriguing here for me to reveal in this review. You simply must read the book—for that, for the great twist at the end (I should have seen it coming!), and for a thoroughly entertaining read.

I have, thus far, practically spilled my glee with this text onto the page and into your eyes. I do, however, have a complaint about an unpardonable flaw of this text: it prevented me from doing what I needed to do on several occasions. It delayed my sleep, my meals, and my laundry. It

functioned as a procrastination-inducing monster that reached out and grabbed me into its clutches. I hope it grabs you, too.

*Ed.'s note: the omission of conjunctions.

Bulletin! Free Screening of *Becoming Jane*!

Miramax will be hosting JASNA-SW members to a screening of *Becoming Jane* on Thursday, July 26, 7:30 pm at the new Landmark Theaters in West LA (at the Westside Pavilion). There is room for 200, so please come early, and bring the screening invitation which you should have received in the mail. No one will be admitted without the invitation.

Review of *Becoming Jane* by Diana Birchall

I've attended an early U.S. press screening of *Becoming Jane* and written a review for Los Angeles CityBeat, which I thought I'd share with you. I enjoyed the film but felt that Anne Hathaway was totally unequal to playing Jane Austen and that consequently the movie lacked a center. Sort of like Nicole Kidman being Virginia Woolf: an hopeless proposition. However, that doesn't mean there's not plenty to enjoy, and here's my review. Since I was limited to 250 words, it's an exercise in compression:

"Since little is known about any romance Jane Austen may have had, it's safe to speculate, and screenwriters Kevin Hood and Sarah Williams have crafted a fantasy in which the not-yet-great novelist nearly elopes with Tom Lefroy, a penniless Irishman given to pugilism and bawdry. Director Julian Jarrold has delivered an overlong film with an uncertain portrayal of its heroine at its superficial heart. Irritatingly, it's peppered with quotes from Austen's still unwritten novels improbably stuck in the mouths of her family members. Playing the young genius with a blend of bland insipidity and sophisticated lip gloss that will exasperate even the most tepid Janeite, Anne Hathaway lacks chemistry with the puckish, eyebrow-wiggling James McEvoy as her ill-matched lover. This gives plenty of room for minor characters such as the impressive, eagle-browed James Cromwell as Rev. Austen and Julie Walters in a Mrs. Bennett-like turn as Mrs. Austen, to steal scenes. Maggie Smith has been rolled out to play the requisite fictional elderly dragon lady, and Anna Maxwell Martin as Jane's sweet sister Cassandra is also noteworthy. The film is unfailingly pretty, despite a sense of hollow uncertainty that keeps us from being swept into involvement with its principal lady. Fortunately, as a saving grace it rises to a bittersweet, tear-inducing ending. This almost makes you forget the conceptual shakiness of a theme that indicates disappointment in love was the catalyst that made Jane Austen what she became."

A few questions for after you've seen it: Why do the women in the film wear such cheap jewelry, while the houses are overscale McManors? Does anybody believe Jane Austen would rudely slam her piano with reverberating inconsiderate loudness waking up everyone in the household? What's with the pigs? I don't think a fantasy has to be a literally accurate biopic but would Tom Lefroy and Henry Austen really be bareassed in front of Jane, even swimming? And to sum up, there's definitely something wrong with a movie that has a Dashing Hero and an Obviously Impossible Booby, where you think the Booby is more desirable than the Dasher, and

certainly a better match with the actress. Don't get me wrong. I wrote waspishly (one does), but actually the movie was lovely to watch and I shed actual tears at the denouement – there is an emotional section at the end that's really well done and moving. So, do sign up and go see the screening! It'll be a great JASNA-SW party, and how great of Miramax to invite us.

In Which Diana and Natasha See *The Jane Austen Book Club* Film by Diana Birchall

Invited to a press screening of the new movie *The Jane Austen Book Club*, whom could I invite but Natasha, thus bringing our experience visiting the movie set full circle? We both enjoyed the movie, and it was particularly great fun to see the scene we watched being filmed, played on the screen. Here are both our reviews, and a picture of us at the screening:

The Jane Austen boom heats up with the arrival of screenwriter/director Robin Swicord's deft and funny adaptation of Karen Joy Fowler's popular novel. Six friends who form a book club to read their way through Jane Austen's novels may sound like a recipe for a summer nap, but Swicord's charming comedy is bright and alert. A bitingly funny opening montage shows the irritating overload of computers and cell phones gone mad in modern city life, and we immediately understand why the book club members need to escape into the Austen canon for solace. Ironically, their fraught lives find their own reflection in the books – Sylvia (Amy Brennerman), whose husband is having an affair, trembles at the infidelities in *Mansfield Park*; her charmingly accident prone lesbian daughter Allegra (Maggie Grace) is drawn to the duality of *Sense and Sensibility*; and Grigg (Hugh Dancy), the group's one male member, is an adorable modern day Mr. Darcy as computer nerd. The ensemble's hilariously disparate characters have a warm chemistry together and are impressive individually. Amy Brennerman's emotionally wrenching Sylvia is tenderly supported by the expressive Maggie Grace as her daughter, and Maria Bello is outstanding as a ditz who's emotionally lavish with her dogs but unavailable for relationships. Swicord, employing lively, vibrant camera work and joyously colorful settings, orchestrates the unlikely spectacle of actors doing lit crit with jokes, with such seemingly effortless verve as to put us, as Jane Austen said, in "dancing, laughing, exclaiming spirits."

***The Jane Austen Book Club*, movie version, reviewed by Natasha Zwick**

's 10 pm. I just got home from Sony Studios, where I met Diana Birchall, who had invited me to attend the press screening of the movie whose set we had visited last year together. I am scheduled to teach a poetry seminar at 7:45 tomorrow morning. I should be unwinding from my busy day and getting ready for some much-needed sleep. Instead, alas, I feel compelled to write my review now because the details are dancing in my mind, and I want to be sure to record their movement for you.

This is a fun film, but it didn't feel that way at first. True, I enjoyed the opening sequence of the downsides to living in this great city of angels (or arguably, most modern cities, to some degree)—crazy drivers, credit card machines that don't react to humans the way they're supposed to, vending machines that refuse to yield their product, spilled coffee in the car, and sensors that force you to open bags containing goods you have paid for and tucked away legitimately only to have the alarm sensors go off when you try to exit the store like a respectable person.

We meet most of our major characters in this sequence, but at first it is difficult, even after having read the book, to recognize that that is what we are doing. Scenes in the first part of the film felt a bit choppy, even forced, to me.

But my patience—and hope that things would get better—was well rewarded in the film (as I have faith it will be in the real world). By the time the five ladies and Grigg start actually reading the novels, I rediscovered the ways in which each of them seem to be living the story in the novel (with some modern updates)—and I cared what happened to them. In fact, by the end of the film, my primary concern was that I wanted more—more details of each of their lives. With six major characters, and more if you count their love interests outside the circle, which of course I do, and various incidents from their youth recalled in anecdotal form to other characters, there is simply a lot of plot here. And it's good, juicy, mostly believable plot. We get snippets of characters that might merit individual novels (movies) of their own.

One point seems to be that the stuff which comprises Austen's novels—character development and the seemingly banal loves that regular people make—is alive and well right in front of us. It is the reason behind, as Dr. Lynn Batten always says in his Austen seminars, a game we can all play: keeping track of when we first meet a Lady Catherine, an Edward Ferrars, a Mary Crawford. Emma still matches other people and enjoys the feeling of control via Jocelyn. Anne still needs to correct her errors in judgment and rekindle her first love via Prudie. These people still live—on paper, in our lives, and now on screen. But it's all more intricate than simply Austen characters in Fowler characters. They cross over in the book and in each other's lives, and Robin Swicord's vision of that is a joy to watch, once you understand what's going on.

Even more, watching all this from a soft leather recliner in a special studio theater next to a veritable Austen expert was not only enjoyable, if you'll pardon an Austen litotes. The other patrons were clearly press and their Janeite guests. We laughed at the same moments, and probably grew quiet and pondering simultaneously as well.

My review would be incomplete without at least a nod to the sexuality of the film; it stars attractive but regular-looking people, and somehow by the multiple-loves scene at the end, the audience feels ready and eager to see these regular people fulfill the passion that has been building, in some of their cases, for years. One might imagine excitement at seeing Hugh Grant make out with—well, anyone—but most of the characters are just like us—attractive but flawed, both inside and out. Yet I walked out of the film with a vicarious thrill: via six months of reading Austen together, they all find what and how makes them happy; it just looks a bit different than they had thought it would. A useful lesson for us all, perhaps.



Co-Presidents' Message

In our message this month, we want to highlight the new web page for JASNA-SW. Laurie Viera Rigler is the webmaster and has revised the entire page, given it a new look and is keeping it up to date! When you go to look at www.jasnasw.org you will find plenty of current information, including the announcement about the *Becoming Jane* screening. In addition, Diana Birchall has added a history of JASNA-SW and some photos of memorabilia from our earlier years. Please do take a look at the web page, and send your suggestions to Laurie.

JASNA-SW and Miramax have arranged for a free screening of the film *Becoming Jane* for JASNA-SW members. You should have received a postcard from Miramax the last week of June, or see the announcement in this issue for further details.

Reserve the date and place: the Winter Meeting will be December 8, 2007 at the Los Angeles Athletic Club downtown. Bring a little mystery into your life!

JASNA-SW

Co-Presidents and Co-Coordiators

Claire Bellanti

Mimi Dudley

P.S. Last night, Bob and I were invited to the Cast and Crew screening of *The Jane Austen Book Club*. If you liked the novel, you are going to love the movie! It is so warm and charming, I could hardly stop smiling. (Hugh Dancy captured all the sweetness of the book's Grigg.) And we got to sit immediately behind Maggie Grace, who plays Allegra in the film. I gave Maggie information on JASNA, as she is a true devotee of Austen's. Meeting Director and Screenplay Writer Robin Swicord and Producer Julie Lynn, were special treats. They were warmly welcoming, and very happy to have JASNA represented. (By the way, we are negotiating with Sony for a screening of this movie, too.) - Claire

Our New Website

"Now I have got some news for you," said Lydia, as they sat down at table. "What do you think? It is excellent news -- capital news -- and about a certain person that we all like."

Please be sure to check out our new website! Laurie Viera Rigler, our Webmistress, has generously created a tremendously attractive and easy-to-use site, that will prove immensely useful in keeping JASNA-SW members up to date on what's going on with the organization. Upcoming events, reading group news, newsletter excerpts, pictures, bulletins, links, and even a history of JASNA-SW are all up on line. It's an amazing confection combining all the 18th century and 21st century virtues. Trust us: it's worth visiting often! It is at www.jasnasw.org

Save the Date: Winter JASNA-SW Meeting

Join us December 8, 2007 at the Historic Los Angeles Athletic Club for a Jane Austen Mystery Day. Our speakers, Chapman University's **Lynda Hall** and longtime JASNA-SW member **Margery Rich**, will explore Austen's novels in relation to detective fiction and gothic works.

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

The Temecula Library Jane Austen Study Group (contact the Friends of the Temecula Library for details)