Jane Austen Society of North America, Southwest Region

January 2020 Newsletter

Recap
What's Next for Jane Austen?

On December 7, JASNA Southwest celebrated its 40th anniversary at the University of Southern California -- a fitting location since USC was where the region held its inaugural meeting almost exactly four decades before. The 2019 event at the festive Town & Gown banquet hall included raffle baskets, special book giveaways, a photo booth featuring (sadly, an inanimate) Colin Firth and numerous "heroes on a stick," an interactive lunchtime quiz, a white elephant sale and book signings by guest speakers Devoney Looser (above left) and Janine Barchas (center).

Barchas, the Luann and Larry Temple Centennial Professor in English Literature at the University of Texas at Austin, started the day with a discussion of her new publication, *The Lost Books of Jane Austen*. Barchas spent years searching for and gathering as many versions as she could find of the inexpensive 19th century reprints that helped make Austen canonical.

Barchas began her talk, "Jane Austen on the Cheap," by describing the effort as "hard-core bibliography meets the *Antiques Roadshow*." While noting that "cheap books live very hard lives," she added that many of the versions she found were better preserved than those collected by famous authors. "Virginia Woolf's copy of *Sense and Sensibility* looks like it was read in the bath," she said, comparing it to a pristine copy apparently treasured by Ellen Martha Horwood, a butcher in 1850s Newgate Market, London.

Looser, Foundation Professor of English at Arizona State University, then shared "Further

Adventures in the Making of Jane Austen," featuring a number of stories that didn't make it into her 2017 book, *The Making of Jane Austen*.

"It is a daunting thing to say anything new about such a well-studied figure," Looser opined. She then shared a quote that further highlighted the challenge. "So much has been written and so much well-written concerning Miss Austen that there seems to be need for some sort of apology or explanation for putting forth any new volume." Looser explained that was written by literary critic Walter Herries Pollock in 1899! Finding something new to say about Austen has indeed been a longstanding problem.

Looser debunked the myth that Austen was overlooked for 30 to 40 years after her death, and that she only gained fame after her nephew's biography of her in 1870, followed by publication of her surviving letters in 1884. Her talk centered on four illuminating and often hilarious stories: Coincidences and Conjunctions, Taking Austen to Court, The Voluble Lady and Austen's Sad Adventure in Switzerland, the latter an untrue but widely circulated story that Austen met and fell in love with a real Captain Wentworth before he died climbing Mont Blanc.

After lunch, Barchas and Looser returned to the stage to discuss their collaboration on a special issue of the *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* journal with the topic "What's Next for Jane Austen?" The conversation was moderated by Lynda Hall, associate professor of English Literature at Chapman University. JASNA Southwest was honored to serve as the official launch for the new issue of the journal, which includes not only scholarly articles but also contributions by biographer Deirdre Le Faye, playwright Kate Hamill, filmmaker Whit Stillman, presidents of Jane Austen societies around the globe, and numerous others.

Read more on the JASNA Southwest website.

Law in the Regency Era

Our first JASNA Southwest meeting of 2020 will be on Saturday, Feb. 29 at the UCLA Faculty Center exploring the topic "Law in the Regency Era." Our speakers at this half-day event will be lawyer and frequent JASNA AGM speaker James Nagle on "Inheritance in Jane Austen's Time" and historian Walter Nelson on "Crime and Punishment in the Regency Era." Registration will begin later this month.

James Nagle

James Nagle is a member of the Puget Sound Region and a former secretary of JASNA. A semi-retired lawyer, he maintains an abiding interest in all things Regency and has spoken at numerous Annual General Meetings on Austen's life and times.

Walter Nelson

Walter Nelson is an historical consultant who has appeared numerous times on the History Channel and A&E. He has participated in hundreds of living history programs in the U.S. and U.K., and is a librarian and web designer for the RAND Corporation.

We've announced our slate of JASNA Southwest regional events for 2020. Download the event postcard or learn more on our website: jasnasw.org.

Sanditon Begins Airing Jan. 12

The eight-part *Sanditon* miniseries created by screenwriter Andrew Davies (of the BBC 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* fame) for U.K.'s ITV and MASTERPIECE on PBS premieres Sunday, January 12 on MASTERPIECE. Watch the trailer or visit the official website.

Emma in Cinemas Feb. 21

A new big-screen adaptation of *Emma*, starring Anna Taylor-Joy (Emma) and Johnny Flynn (Mr. Knightley), will be released on February 21. The film is directed by Autumn de Wilde with a script by Eleanor Catton.

It also stars Bill Nighy as Mr. Woodhouse, Miranda Hart as Miss Bates, Mia Goth as Harriet Smith, Rupert Graves and Gemma Whelan as Mr. and Mrs. Weston, and Callum Turner and Amber Anderson as Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. Watch the trailer.

Visit the official site for more information and behind-the-scenes images.

If enough members are interested, JASNA Southwest may organize informal watch parties at local cinemas with a post-viewing coffee and discussion session. Email Susie Wampler if you are interested.

Upcoming Talks and Performances

The New Vic Theater
Jane Austen's Emma (the musical)
33 West Victoria, Santa Barbara
February 6-23, 2020

L.A. Theatre Works
Frankenstein staged reading
James Bridges Theater/UCLA
February 28-March 1, 2020

Reading/Film/Game Groups

Long Beach Reading Group at its annual Jane Austen birthday tea

Sunday, January 5, 5 p.m.
Santa Monica Reading Group
The Outsiders: Five Women Writers Who Changed the World by Lyndall Gordon
For more information, contact Kathi Stafford.

Sunday, January 12
Pasadena Area Reading Group
Sanditon by Jane Austen
This group is at capacity and cannot accept new members. Current members may contact Susan Ridgeway for more information.

Sunday, January 12, 10 a.m.-noon
South Bay Reading Group
Sanditon by Jane Austen
For more information, contact Jeanine Holguin.

Sunday, January 12
Long Beach Reading Group
The group will begin watching the *Sanditon* miniseries and will meet to discuss it after the final episode airs.
For more information, contact Sherwood Smith.

Saturday, January 18, 10 a.m.

North Orange County Reading Group
Lady Susan by Jane Austen
Location: Panera Bread, 1028 S. Harbor Blvd., Fullerton
For more information, contact Melissa Buell or visit the group's Facebook page.

Saturday, January 18, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Ventura County Reading Group
Jane Austen's Worthing by Anthony Edwards
Sanditon by Jane Austen
Location: E.P. Foster Library, 651 E. Main Street, Ventura
For more information, contact Phyllis Michaels.

Sunday, January 19, 12:30-3:30 p.m.
Orange County Reading Group
Juvenilia: Volume the First by Jane Austen
For more information, contact Maryann Pelensky.

Sunday, February 2, 1 p.m.
Riverside Reading Group
Belle: The Slave Daughter and the Lord Chief Justice by Paula Byrne
For more information, contact Vicki Broach.

Thursday, February 6
Janeites Reading Trollope
Phineas Finn by Anthony Trollope
For more information, contact Lora Walker.

Sunday, February 9, 1:30 p.m.
West Los Angeles Reading Group
Sanditon by Jane Austen
This group is at capacity and cannot accept new members. Current members may contact Clara Browda for more information.

San Diego Region
Although San Diego is a separate JASNA region, many JASNA Southwest members are interested in San Diego JASNA events and vice versa. For information on, or to RSVP for, upcoming San Diego JASNA meetings, visit JASNA San Diego's Facebook page.

Visit our website!

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