



The Jane Austen Society of North America  
Washington, DC Metropolitan Region

*The Austen Scribbler*  
*June 2019*

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**October 12, 2019**

Our Chawton home -- how much we find  
Already in it, to our mind,  
And how convinced that when complete,  
It will all other Houses beat. (Jane Austen 1809)

Make plans to get the inside story of Jane Austen's Chawton home, now known as Jane Austen's House Museum, from two eminent and entertaining visitors: **Sue Dell**, Collections Volunteer at the museum and expert on the Austen coverlet, and **Martyn Dell**, JAHM Trustee. You may remember Sue from her excellent talks at the 2016 and 2018 JASNA AGMs (she'll be speaking at the 2019 AGM in Williamsburg, too).

Sue and Martyn's visit to the DC Metropolitan Region consists of two programs:

- A daytime workshop on English Paper Piecing, the technique the Austen ladies used to make their coverlet
- An entertaining and informative evening program in which Martyn and Sue will answer our questions about the house museum -- past, present, and future.

Details of place and time are still being worked out -- but please save the date, October 12. As part of their U.S. road trip, Sue and Martyn will also make a stop on Thursday, October 10 at Goucher College for a lecture and English Paper Piecing workshop as guests of JASNA Maryland Region. The lecture and workshop will be different in each location, so choose what's most convenient to you, or attend both if you wish.



Sue Dell



a peek inside Jane Austen's house



Martyn Dell

## JASNA-DC'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB

It was to be hoped that Janet Mullany's entertaining and informative article on reading groups in the April *Scribbles* would inspire our membership to come forward. Thanks to Lynn Stanley for being the first! Lynn says "I would love to be part of a reading group. I live in Charles Town, WV and work full time during the day. I could travel into Loudon or Frederick on a weekend." If you live nearby, get in touch with Lynn at [danandlynnstanley@gmail.com](mailto:danandlynnstanley@gmail.com)

Members of JASNA-DC are invited to send contributions to the regular columns "Janespotting," "The Un-Neglected Library," and "First Impressions," or any other articles on Jane Austen, to the *Scribbles*'s editor at [sandrigo@gmail.com](mailto:sandrigo@gmail.com).

### LOCAL JANEITE GETS INK!

Congratulations to Sarah Walsh, whose entry in the *Washington Post* Style Invitational was published on April 22. The challenge was to rewrite a Bible story in the style of an author of one's choosing, and Sarah chose Jane Austen (of course!). Below is the text of her entry:

**The Creation of Eve, by Jane Austen:** The operation having been performed with little inconvenience to the gentleman, as he was accustomed to dozing upon a sofa when anything disagreeable might be going on, the woman was expertly sculpted from his rib-bone, displaying all the delicacy and loveliness one might expect in the female form. As she moved to stand before him with a lightness and alacrity in her step, the man woke abruptly and turned to observe her. He found her a good deal more than tolerable, and the two presently expressed a wish to be wed as speedily as propriety would allow. (Sarah Walsh, Rockville, Md., a First Offender)

Pat Myers, aka "The Empress," who runs the Style Invitational, called Sarah's entry "a spot-on send-up of Jane Austen." How flattering! Here's the link to the Style Invitational with the published entries: [Creation of Eve by JA](#)

### THE UN-NEGLECTED LIBRARY

*"I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library, in such days as these."*

#### ***The Austen Girls*, by Helen Amy**

This new biography was reviewed by Ceri Radford in the *Independent* under the title "Disease, dependence and death: The dark reality behind Jane Austen's pearly prose." Radford finds Austen's novels the "ultimate in comfort reading," noting that it's tempting to assume that the creator of Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse "led a charmed, sunny life." Amy's book demolishes this assumption, showing the darker side to Austen's life. To quote Amy: "Another myth about Jane Austen, which was started by some of her early biographers including her nephew, was that she led a calm and untroubled life. The Austen family, like most others, had their share of bereavement and tragedy." There was the death from yellow fever of Cassandra's fiancé, and the death of Elizabeth Austen after giving birth to her 11th child, and Austen's own death at the age of 41 from what was probably Addison's disease. Radford asks herself: "Would Elizabeth Bennet's happily ever after as Mrs Darcy have been quite so happy if she had to go through pregnancy and birth 11 times in a row with no medical care?" Amy's biography,

"meticulously pieced together from letters and diary extracts, throws the context of her books into sharp relief." Radford describes the subplot of *Pride and Prejudice*, with Charlotte Lucas choosing "marriage to the simpering buffoon Mr Collins as preferable to life as a dependent 'old maid'" as "quietly horrifying."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/jane-austen-the-austen-girls-helen-amy-books-characters-new-book-pride-and-prejudice-a8945061.html>

### ***The Jane Austen Diet: Austen's Secrets to Food, Health and Incandescent Happiness,* by Bryan Kozlowski**

This book was discussed in the *Washington Post's* Wellness section in March (reported in the April *Scribbles*), but was also more recently reviewed in the *New York Times* by Judith Newman, who had some interesting insights. Newman acknowledges that Kozlowski's book "is probably better as a literary romp than as a dieting tome. But Austen fans ... will enjoy being reminded of how smart she actually is about our health, and how she uses food, eating and exercise as shorthand for character." Austen embraced "body diversity" -- compare slender Anne Elliott with stout Lydia Bennet. This, together with her "subtle recognition of the mind-body connection (good health and happy spirits are intimately intertwined) put her ahead of her time."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/26/books/review/self-help-diet-weight-good-health.html>

## **WALLPAPER AT THE JANE AUSTEN HOUSE MUSEUM, CHAWTON**



Here is the image of the dining room wallpaper which our Region's donation will help to produce, purchase, and install at Jane Austen House Museum [JAHM].

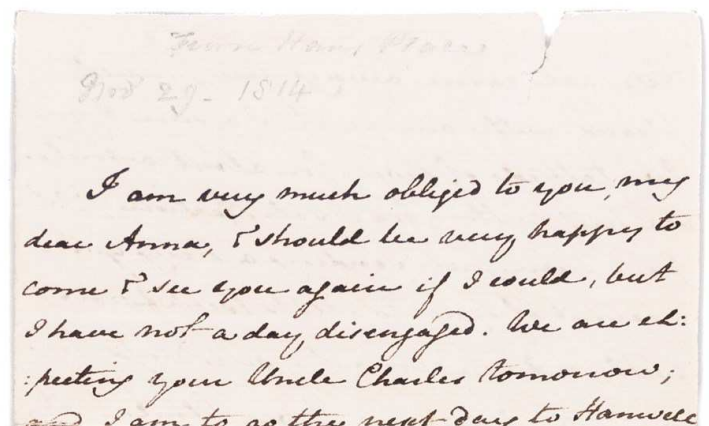
Apparently Jane liked to "look upon verdure" indoors as well as out!

--Linda Slothouber

## **JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSE MUSEUM FUNDRAISER**

A precious section of a letter by Jane Austen has recently appeared for sale and Jane Austen's House Museum urgently needs help to save this unique piece of Austen history. They have until 31 July 2019 to raise another £10,000 towards the purchase of this rare and important fragment.

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/save-austen-letter>



## JANE AUSTEN IN THE NEWS

*JA* In his ranking of Emma Thompson's best films the *Guardian's* Andrew Pulver placed "Sense and Sensibility" (1995) in first place, noting that "Thompson's skill as a performer was matched by her agility as a writer." He concludes that this film "is arguably the leading entry in the cycle of 90s/00s Jane Austen adaptations." <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/may/09/emma-thompsons-best-films-ranked>

*JA* *Pride and Prejudice* is number one on the *Independent's* list of "40 books to read before you die." "Don't be fooled by the bonnets and balls: beneath the sugary surface is a tart exposé of the marriage market in Georgian England. For every lucky Elizabeth, who tames the haughty, handsome Mr Darcy and learns to know herself in the process, there's a Charlotte, resigned to life with a driveling buffoon for want of a pretty face." Curious about the other 39? See <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/books-best-greatest-read-before-you-die-classic-novels-literature-essential-austen-orwell-dickens-a8612606.html>

*JA* Under the title "Hack Your Love Life With Classic Literature," [bbc.com](http://bbc.com) recommends its Classic Stories podcasts. "We know you don't want to fail as miserably at your declaration of love as Mr Darcy in his initial proposal to Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*. So, allow us to chivalrously hold the door open, guiding you through the triumphs and follies of fictional romance to help imbue your love life with the scintillating thrill of not receiving partially wilted roses." <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4RzJhSNRfbTv30LJCyYLMJm/hack-your-love-life-with-classic-literature>



*JA* To Date or Not To Date: In the *Washington Post's Book World* of 23 June, 2019, Angela Haupt reassessed four classic romantic heroes: Mr. Darcy, Heathcliff, Jay Gatsby and Mr. Rochester "through the ultimate modern-day lens: how they might present and fare on Tinder." Would you swipe right on any of them? Angela Haupt swiped right on only one of them -- see picture above for hint. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/entertainment/books/literatures-great-romantic-heroes-are-on-tinder/?utm\\_term=.5e5be357cfea](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/entertainment/books/literatures-great-romantic-heroes-are-on-tinder/?utm_term=.5e5be357cfea)

*JA* In an article in the *Daily Telegraph* entitled "Self-important, but not servile: the pride and prejudice of John Bercow," Juliet Samuel writes that "Jane Austen's pompous clergyman Mr Collins is the literary doppelgänger of our Speaker [speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow]." Bercow has been compared to Gilbert and Sullivan's Major-General, but Samuel finds that he is more like "the pompous, unctuous clergyman," noting the similarities in their speaking style: "In both cases, their favoured topics are their own duties and rank." <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/04/06/self-important-not-servile-pride-prejudice-john-bercow/>

*JA* Another reference to Mr. Collins appeared in an article by the *Washington Post's* gardening expert Adrian Higgins, in his review of an exhibition at the Garden Museum in London on landscape designer Humphry Repton (1752-1818), which marks the bicentennial of Repton's death. Higgins quotes the museum's director, Christopher Woodward, as saying that Repton resembled Jane Austen's obsequious Mr. Collins, "though with a great deal more perspicacity. He was very adhesive to clients and would get the measure of a client very quickly." Woodward commented further that "[A]s with Austen and her works, Repton captured his age in his art, but also transcended it. ... Thackeray or

Trollope feel very Victorian. Jane Austen feels very *now*. ... And Repton has the same quality." In *Mansfield Park*, Austen even names Repton as the most prominent landscape designer of her time. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/two-centuries-later-a-designers-landscape-legacy-grows-on-the-page/2019/05/09/23cc8468-65e6-11e9-a1b6-b29b90efa879\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.9f10f12c905b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/two-centuries-later-a-designers-landscape-legacy-grows-on-the-page/2019/05/09/23cc8468-65e6-11e9-a1b6-b29b90efa879_story.html?utm_term=.9f10f12c905b)

*JA* *Pride, Prejudice and Other Flavors*, by Sonali Dev, is yet another re-imagined version of *Pride and Prejudice*, set in San Francisco in the present day. Instead of the Bennets, we have the Rajes, an Indian immigrant family. In a gender swap, their daughter, Dr. Trisha Raje, a brilliant neurosurgeon, is the Mr. Darcy character, and the up-and-coming chef Darcy James Caine is the male Elizabeth Bennet. <https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/41154302-pride-prejudice-and-other-flavors>

*JA* An article by Devoney Looser entitled "Teaching Jane Austen to sex offenders" was published on the news website *Salon*. Invited to guest-lecture at a medium-security prison, Looser, a professor of English at Arizona State University, wrote that "I'd never envisioned teaching Austen's books to a room of men found guilty of making life deeply unfair for others." She was surprised when a man in her class asked, "What's the right age to introduce my daughter to Jane Austen?" She later realized that she should not have been surprised -- there are nearly one million sex offenders in prison in the US, and they are not a homogeneous group. Their crimes range from exhibitionism to violent sexual assaults. Looser notes that some of Austen's characters would be regarded as sex offenders today: "*Pride and Prejudice's* George Wickham is a serial predator of 15-year-old girls. *Sense and Sensibility's* John Willoughby seduces, impregnates and abandons one teenager. Then he grooms and ghosts another -- heroine Marianne Dashwood -- before marrying a third for her money."

Looser found it interesting that the students identified similarities between Austen's world and their own. The man who asked the question about his daughter compared the description of the Dashwood family on page 1 of *Sense and Sensibility*, to "the powerful cliques that formed on the Florence State Prison yard. The way he saw it, Austen's Mrs. Dashwood and her three teenage daughters were like prisoners. Things got worse for them when the estate underwent a change in male ownership. The Dashwood women had become classed as 'not one of them,' going from insiders to outsiders. Similar things happened among groups of men in a prison hierarchy, he said. It was an astute interpretation of powerful, unfair social structures." Professor Looser concludes: "I hoped they might talk about female-centered stories that model independence, that prompt questions about consent and self-control, and that leave open the imaginative possibility for positive second chances."

<https://www.salon.com/2019/03/01/teaching-jane-austen-to-sex-offenders/>

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