



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

The Austen Scribbles
April 2019

LIFE IN THE REGENCY
A STUDY DAY WITH FOUR OUTSTANDING SPEAKERS

Date and time: Saturday, April 27, 2018, 10:00 AM to 3:30 PM

Location: American University Library, Room 150

Schedule:

10:00-10:30 AM: Tea/coffee.

10:30 AM: "Millenarians, Methodists, and Muggletonians: Religion in Jane Austen's England"
Anthony Batterton, Regional Coordinator, JASNA, Southeast Virginia

11:30 AM: "Freedom and Identity: Servant Life in the Time of Jane Austen"
Janet Mullany, Author and Communications Coordinator, JASNA DC Metropolitan

12:30 PM: Lunch and Williamsburg AGM Information

1:30 PM: "Ivory and Canvas: Naval Miniature Portraiture in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*"
Moriah Webster, Public Humanities Scholar

2:30 PM: "Polite Society, Political Society: Dance and Female Power in Jane Austen's World"
Amy Stallings, PhD., Coordinator, 2019 AGM, Williamsburg, Virginia

Space is limited to 40. To reserve a seat: Email jasna.dcrc@gmail.com with the subject line "Study Day Reservation."

To reserve a box lunch: Send \$15.00 to jasna.dcrc@gmail.com via PayPal, and with your payment add a note such as "For study day box lunch." We will ask for your menu selection after we receive your PayPal payment.

WHERE DO OUR DONATIONS GO?

Hosting an Annual General Meeting (AGM) is usually a once-in-a-lifetime event for a regional organization in the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA). A successful AGM often results in revenue for the Region and the resulting opportunity to be generous to sites that preserve Austen's heritage and other friends of the Region. The very successful 2016 AGM here in Washington was the result of lots of hard work by the two AGM Coordinators, Debra Roush and Linda Slothouber, as well as many other volunteers from the Region.

The AGM enabled the JASNA DC Metropolitan Region to make generous gifts to the Jane Austen House Museum (also known as Chawton Cottage) and to the Chawton House Museum (also known as The Great House), both beloved places that preserve Jane Austen heritage. Other recipients included

JASNA's International Visitors Program, a grant that allows North American Austen scholars to conduct research in original Austen-related archives on location in England. Another gift recognized the generosity of the Maryland Region, which provided many volunteers to support the AGM. Through the national organization, the DC Region also contributed to a special fund to support the Jane Austen Collection at Goucher College. Another gift expressed our appreciation to the DAR Museum Costume Collection for the special period exhibition they featured during the AGM. JASNA DC also made a neighborly donation to the 2019 AGM in Williamsburg, a tradition often followed by other regions.

A special ad hoc committee last year made the donation recommendations to the Executive Committee. The members of the committee were Debra Duncan, Colleen Daughtery, Elizabeth Jenkins-Joffe, Debra Roush, and Linda Slothouber, who chaired the committee. The committee also made some recommendations for the continuing financial health of the Region, including maintaining a reserve for the Region. Their service is much appreciated.

We have a plaque on the new garden walk at Chawton House! Made possible by our donation to Chawton House Library, our plaque joins others given by various regions and individuals. Our marker appropriately features a quotation from *Emma*, the novel celebrated at our 2016 AGM. "*A broad short avenue of limes*" graces the DC plaque, and we hope that many DC Region members will enjoy seeing it for many years to come whenever they visit Chawton. For more information about the garden trail, visit <https://chawtonhouse.org/visit/more-about-the-garden/the-jane-austen-garden-trail>.



--Mary Mintz, Regional Coordinator

JANE AUSTEN READING GROUPS

Without a single trace of irony I can say that the person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. If you enjoy the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation, you should be a member of a Jane Austen Reading Group. But if you're not, consider starting one or find an existing group. Future issues of the *Scribbler* will have a literary lonely hearts column for members who want to start or join a group (contact our editor Sandra Goldstein, sandrago@gmail.com): include your name, email and phone number, and the area in which you live or are willing to travel to.

So, let's assume you've done the hard part -- gathered your list of names, phone numbers, and email addresses -- and are ready to move forward. First, contact our RC Mary Mintz, jasna.dcrc@gmail.com, who can send you a vast amount of information on reading matter and sources. You can also find reading lists online at <http://jasna.org/conferences-events/agms/reading-lists/>.

Your first meeting should be a planning meeting where you can brainstorm the nuts and bolts of your group. Where will you meet and how often? As ever, libraries are a great resource, or you may have access to space in a church or other public building (Wegman's stores have large seating areas, for instance and there's no obligation to buy anything). A local coffee shop, indy bookstore, or restaurant may tolerate the idea of having a group occupy tables for a couple of hours during a slow period. If you wish, you can take turns hosting meetings at members' homes, although you may find the cakes become

more important than the books. In our area it's probably a good idea to plan to move locations and plan to carpool if possible.

As for what to read ... this is the fun part. Here is a simplified breakdown of the Montreal model from <https://janeausteninvermont.blog/reading-groups/ja-reading-group> in which the reading centers around one novel with six meetings a year (and you could, if you wish, tie it into the AGM theme for the year):

- A work **by** Jane Austen
- A work **about** Jane Austen
- A work Jane Austen **read**
- A work **inspired** by Jane Austen
- A work about her **time**: the Regency, etc.
- A work of **popular culture**

Discuss how your meetings will be run. For simplicity's sake it should probably be one person's job to take charge of the emails about meetings, send reminders, and ask for volunteers for refreshments.

Other options to be considered:

- A name for the group
- Set up a Google group instead of emails (it's too easy to hit *reply* instead of *reply all*)
- Movie night(s) or discussions of books vs. movies
- Take it in turns to be moderator

I have the honor of being a member of a reading group that is extremely well-behaved and well-informed, but I have belonged to other book clubs that have not been nearly so productive (although the one where we all said we liked the book within the first five minutes and then plunged into the plentiful food had its own charms). I really hope you won't encounter the following characters in your group:

Miss Bates: Talks at length about everything except the book.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh: Despite her pontification and wonderful taste, is never able to actually read the book.

Fanny Price: Just can't make up her mind about what she thinks about the book and is overwhelmed by the whole experience. Treat with kindness.

Mary Crawford: Out to shock with exotic theories about everything Austen (of course she had an affair with Byron!).

Mr. Darcy: Says little, looks forbidding, and cannot be persuaded to another point of view.

Mrs. Elton: Wants to be queen bee and take over without actually doing anything because she's far too busy with everything else.

Mr. Collins: Urges unpopular literature upon the group.

Happy reading and talking!

--Janet Mullany

JANE AUSTEN IN THE NEWS

JA A plan to erect a statue of Jane Austen on the grounds of Winchester Cathedral has been scrapped, according to a report in the *Guardian*. The cathedral had commissioned sculptor Martin Jennings to create the statue, a project supported by Hampshire county council and Winchester city council. The *Southern Daily Echo*, a Southampton newspaper, reported that the plans were met with "a barrage of criticism" from local groups. One protester wrote that "the cathedral already has Jane Austen's gravestone and Winchester has the house she died in. The two seem adequate and certainly reflect her relationship with Winchester." <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/feb/21/winchester-cathedral-scrap-jane-austen-statue-plan-after-protests>

JA There are definite plans for a bronze statue of Jane Austen to be erected this year in Bath. The sculptor is Mark Richards, who created the waxwork of Austen that was unveiled at the Jane Austen Centre on Gay Street in 2014. Discussions are under way between the Centre and Bath City Council to identify a site for the statue. Paul Crossey, Centre Managing Director, noted the strong connection between Jane Austen and Bath, noting that her parents were married in the city, at St. Swithin's Church in 1764, and that they moved there permanently after her father's retirement. He rejected the notion that Austen disliked Bath, saying: "Her time here was very influential and although she left the city, the city seemingly never left her ... A decade after she left, she wrote a love letter to the city in the form of *Persuasion*, one of the most romantic novels in the whole of English literature." <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/bronze-statue-jane-austen-erected-2708743>

JA "10 novels to help you beat the Brexit blues" was the headline of an article by Ceri Radford in the *Independent* of 19 January: "It's January. It's cold, dark and dreary. The holidays are over. In a word, Brexit," she wrote, proceeding to list ten novels that will provide "solace in the long, dark January of the soul." The first novelist mentioned is Jane Austen. Radford reminds us that Austen's books were prescribed to shell-shocked soldiers, proof of their soothing powers. Her chosen work is *Mansfield Park*, because "there is something irresistibly reassuring in this classic triumph of the underdog tale" and we should "[R]evel in Austen's timeless and gently barbed prose, and sigh with contentment as the noisome Aunt Norris gets her comeuppance." Curious about the other ten novelists? See <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/best-books-to-read-new-year-novels-fiction-jane-austen-pg-wodehouse-literature-a8709196.html>

JA Jane Austen cropped up unexpectedly in a *Guardian* review of a new, gritty crime series on ITV entitled "The Bay." Noting a similarity to "Broadchurch," albeit set in Lancashire, not Dorset, the reviewer praises it as a "satisfying knotty, plotty hour," commenting: "As Jane Austen almost said, three or four gobbets of dysfunction in a small seaside town is the very thing to work on." <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/mar/20/the-bay-review-broadchurch-in-morecambe-come-on-in-the-waters-lovely>

JA "Dancing to Jane Austen's Beat," was the title of an article by Jennifer Schuessler in the *New York Times* of February 14 about a celebration of Jane Austen held in the Masonic Center of Pasadena, California which attracted "300 costumed revelers...both hard-core Janeites and period dance enthusiasts." Schuessler notes that costumed balls go back to the 1970s, when JASNA, which she describes as a "more scholarly group," was formed. The annual event in Pasadena was launched in 1998, a few years after the films "Clueless" and "Sense and Sensibility," and the BBC's 1995 miniseries "Pride and Prejudice" "kicked off a new Austen boom." <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/arts/jane-austen-evening.html>

JA *Pride and Prejudice* is at the top of the list of the 25 best books by female authors published by the *Independent* in honor of International Women's Day: "Austen remains one of history's greatest masters in two tricky literary fields: the world of romance and the world of social satire. *Pride and Prejudice*, then, sees her at the peak of her powers. Through the eyes of Elizabeth Bennet, her sharp-witted protagonist, we witness upper-class Regency England as both a dream and a farce." <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/best-books-by-women-jane-austen-zadie-smith-agatha-christie-a8810071.html>

JA The *Daily Telegraph* reported on February 17 that the missing six lines from a letter written by Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra in 1813 have been discovered. Austen wrote: "By the time you get this, I hope George & his party will have finished their Journey. God bless you all. I have given Mde. B. [her brother Henry's French housekeeper] my Inventory of the linen, & added 2 round towels to it by her desire. She has shewn me all her storeplaces, & will shew you & tell you all the same. Perhaps I may write again by Henry." The *Telegraph* article quotes Professor Kathryn Sutherland, of St Anne's College, Oxford, as saying: "We are hoping to find evidence of a love child, or some form of sexual liaison...But she was writing to her sister from London -- part of her charm was her domesticity -- Austen's was an art of the trivial, her pioneering fictions transform modest domesticity into art. We might wish that a new scrap of writing by Austen would contain intimate revelations, but what could be more perfect than a linen inventory." <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/02/17/missing-six-lines-jane-austen-letter-discovered-200-years-revealed/> The next day, Lucy Denyer wrote: "In the midst of the Brexit maelstrom, the collapse of the Labour party and political meltdown on Left and Right, thank goodness for Jane Austen, who, once again has reminded us where true contentment lies: to whit [*sic*], a well-stocked linen cupboard and a home where everything has its place." <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/02/18/jane-austen-knew-real-happiness-lies-domestic-bliss/>

JA In the *New York Times Book Review* of March 15, Lara Feigel reviewed three group biographies of "trailblazing historical women": *OUTSIDERS: Five Women Writers Who Changed the World* by Lyndall Gordon, *MIDNIGHT: Three Women at the Hour of Reckoning* by Victoria Shorr, and *Women Who Dared To Break All the Rules*, by Jeremy Scott. The three women in Shorr's book, which describes moments in the lives of three iconic women which made them who they were, are Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, and Joan of Arc. Of Austen she wrote: "Jane Austen, not yet 27 and homeless after her father has given the family home to his son, receives an advantageous marriage proposal, but turns it down." Shorr describes Austen as "the smartest girl in the room, always, and the funniest, and [most] daring." Feigel notes that in Shorr's depiction, Jane Austen regains the "poverty-stricken, female vulnerability so easily forgotten because it's so at odds with the assurance of her novels." <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/15/books/review/trailblazing-women.html>

JA One of the six parks to be restored with lottery fund cash is Bath's Sydney Gardens. Jane Austen lived near the park when she moved to Bath in 1801. In anticipation she wrote: "It would be very pleasant to be near Sydney Gardens! We might go to the Labyrinth every day!" Ros Kerslake from the Heritage Lottery Fund is quoted as saying: "The health and wellbeing benefits of local green spaces were well known in Jane Austen's time and remain true today." <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-46869671>

JA The "Books That Made Me" in the *Guardian* of March 22 featured Australian novelist Markus Zusak (*The Book Thief*). Asked which book changed his mind, he replied: "*Pride and Prejudice* -- because I became an instant Jane Austen convert. Prior to that, I had this idea that boys didn't read Austen, and then -- more than anything -- I loved the toughness of Elizabeth Bennet." <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/22/markus-zusak-book-thief>

JA Jane Austen recently cropped up a couple of times in the *Washington Post*. On March 12, an article by Brian Kozlowski, author of the soon to be published book [*The Jane Austen Diet: Austen's Secrets to Food, Health, and Incandescent Happiness*](#), appeared in the Wellness section. Kozlowski writes about the "shocking similarities between the habits health researchers prescribe today and those Austen extolled more than 200 years ago." He claims that "wise wellness philosophies covering food, fitness and making peace with one's body image" are hidden in her novels. "It's a sweeping and holistic health code with timeless tips from a woman who mastered the art of human observation." Four lessons learned are: "Don't obsess over weight," "Eat like a heroine," "Exercise intuitively," and "Renew through nature." <http://tinyurl.com/JaneHealth> And on April 5, an eye-catching headline read: "This photographer hung out with some Jane Austen mega-fans. Here's what she saw." This turned out to be a photo essay on the Jane Austen Pineapple Society, previously reported in the *Scribbles* of October 2018. A Spanish photographer, Alejandra Carles-Torla, intrigued by this group of Janeites, "explored their world with a camera." To see her photos, go to <https://www.washingtonpost.com/photography/2019/04/05/this-photographer-hung-out-with-some-jane-austen-mega-fans-heres-what-she-saw>

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