



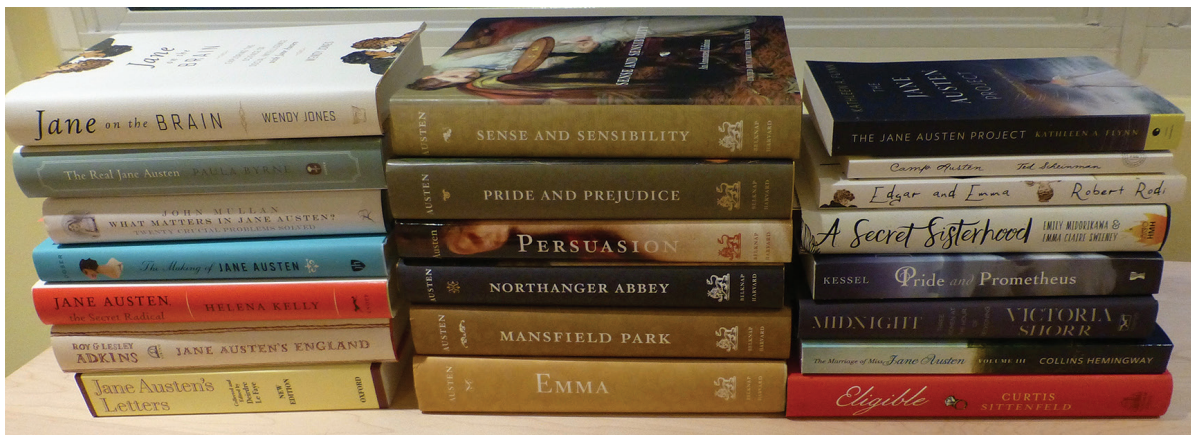
*"The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid."*

Northanger Abbey (1817)

Ask almost any JASNA member what he or she is currently reading and you'll likely be greeted with a long and varied list of titles, often kept in a stack by a nightstand or on one of many bookcases or piles near a treasured reading nook. Unlike Emma Woodhouse and her famed list of 100 titles she intends to read—but never gets around to—Janeites share a year-round passion for diving headlong into a good book.

Summertime evokes memories of time off from school, when your "assigned" reading became purely a matter of your own choice and taste. Or late nights under the covers with a book you absolutely could not put down. Or leisurely days under an umbrella at the beach, with a juicy page-turner in your hands.

In that spirit, JASNA News introduces our first summer reading issue, with expanded book reviews, classics you might have missed or may enjoy revisiting, and a short look at forthcoming Austen-related offerings. May your summer be filled with happy hours relaxing and reading in your favorite locale, with an abundance of great reading material by your side.



## AUSTEN FOR FOODIES

From Emma's Box Hill picnic to the white soup served at the Netherfield ball, Austen's novels are filled with references to food. Here are some recent books relating to Austen's culinary references to whet your appetite.

***The Jane Austen Diet (2019)*** by Jane Austen and Bryan Kozlowski  
From the food secrets of *Pride and Prejudice* to the fitness strategies of *Sense and Sensibility*, Kozlowski explores why Austen's prescriptions for achieving "bloom" still matter today.

***Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Book-to-Table Classic (2018)***  
by Martha Stewart  
Mixes the text of Austen's most famous novel with photos and plentiful pastry recipes.

***Dining with Jane Austen (2017)*** by Julienne Gehrler  
Includes 75 recipe adaptations recreating foods associated with Austen's life, letters, and novels.

***Tea with Jane Austen (2016); Dinner with Mr. Darcy (2013)*** by Pen Vogler  
Authentic recipes from the period, inspired by food featured in Austen's novels and letters, adapted for contemporary cooks.

***The Knight Family Cookbook (2014)***  
preface by Richard Knight; introduction by Gillian Dow  
Facsimile of the cookbook compiled on behalf of Thomas Knight, passed down to Edward Austen Knight, including recipes Jane Austen might have tasted at her brother's home.

## FORGING CONNECTIONS

### *Engaging the Age of Jane Austen: Public Humanities in Practice*

By **Bridget Draxler and Danielle Spratt**

University of Iowa Press (2018)

xvii + 285 pages

Paperback/ebook, \$55

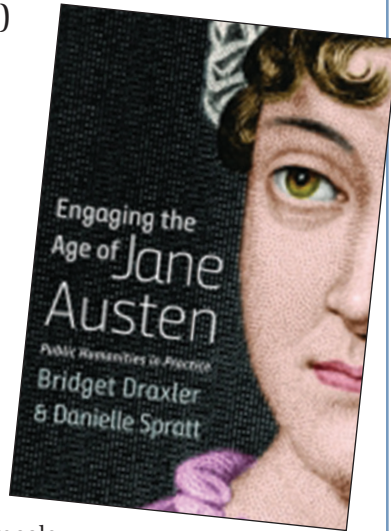
Review by *Susan Allen Ford*

A great joy in my life has been the opportunity to move between the academy and the wider community that JASNA and programs such as the Jane Austen Summer Program in North Carolina provide. The deep, wide-ranging, democratic discussions at AGMs and at smaller meetings, in sessions or hallways, at meals

or over drinks, have taught me more than I can measure about Austen and her period. And I'm proud of the way that *Persuasions* and *Persuasions On-Line*, unlike most scholarly journals, enable conversation about Austen and her world across artificial borders. Our accessible language and open website welcome all readers.

In *Engaging the Age of Jane Austen: Public Humanities in Practice*, Bridget Draxler and Danielle Spratt extend this effort. As they consider the intersections between the long 18th century and the beginning of the 21st, they explore theoretical underpinnings to service learning and the public humanities and detail specific projects and their impacts. Individual chapters focus on using Emma Woodhouse's "savior complex" as a warning to those involved in service learning; using community reading groups to identify the social and political context of Austen's novels and then carry those lessons forward to today; working with universities, local museums, and arts groups; conducting place-based research (travel, exploring archives) and disseminating the results; serving via the digital humanities (for example, helping with projects like 18thConnect); and creating digital scholarly editions of unavailable 18th century novels. (Two chapters began as essays in *Persuasions On-Line* 34.2 [2014]: Teaching Austen and Her Contemporaries.) Although the book is primarily concerned with forging connections between university faculty and students and larger communities, many ideas are adaptable by individuals or by groups like ours.

The authors define as a "founding principle" that reading makes "better thinkers and more engaged, empathetic individuals." They're committed to the ideal that we can use our love of books



"to forge more meaningful connections with our contemporary surroundings" (1). This belief in forging connections (particularly pressing today) is palpable in the form of this book. Chapters are punctuated by short essays (considering both success and failure) from students, scholars, community activists, administrators, curators, and librarians.

Except occasionally, this book does not teach us more about Jane Austen. The title's reference to the "Age of" gets more prominent as the book continues. The authors make a good case for the connection between that age and this one, and in so doing they can teach an Austen-centric audience about book publishing, the foundations of the British Museum, and 18th century literature. It's a worthwhile tour.

Moving into our fifth decade, JASNA is beginning to reconsider our relationship to the wider community, how and why Austen matters to us, and how her work might matter to others. Draxler and Spratt's book might suggest possibilities. As Devoney Looser urges in her essay, "those of us who know and care deeply about this period must reflect on how we too might reach new audiences, whether just beyond or well beyond our immediate, customary ones. ... We must begin. You must begin" (54).

*Susan Allen Ford is a JASNA Life Member and editor of Persuasions and Persuasions On-Line.*

### Chawton House Reading Group 2018–2019 Selections

For further inspiration, here's a look at what the reading group at Chawton House has been discussing over the past year at its monthly gathering in the Common Room over tea or coffee and cake.

*Clarissa* by Samuel Richardson

*The Bloody Hand, or, The Fatal Cup* by Anonymous

*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley

*Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb

*Practical Education* by Maria Edgeworth

*The Poetry of Mary Wortley Montagu*

*The New Atalantis* by Delarivier Manley

*The Times* (play) by Elizabeth Griffith

*The Journal of Louisa Lushington*

## SHADES OF H.G.WELLS — TIME TRAVEL

### *The Jane Austen Project*

By Kathleen A. Flynn

Harper Perennial (2017), 384 pages  
Paperback, \$15.99/ebook, \$10.99

Review by Janet Mullany

Daring, witty, and moving, *The Jane Austen Project* is a wonderful read. The research is impeccable; the details of everyday life in Georgian England are vivid, and references to Austen's letters and novels (and those of other writers) abound in this eloquent and elegant novel.

Combining science fiction with a deep knowledge of Austen and her times, and more than a hint of a love story, the novel begins in a future when the world is deeply damaged. Disaster-relief doctor Rachel Katzman, the narrator, and actor-turned-academic Liam Finucane are training for time travel. Their mission is to acquire significant missing letters and the completed manuscript of *The Watsons* before they are destroyed.

After rigorous training, the two arrive (ignominiously dumped in a damp field in Surrey in 1815), posing as Dr. William Ravenswood and his spinster sister Mary, late of Jamaica. They plan to meet, befriend, and steal from Austen. First, they must get to know Henry Austen in London, who is shortly to become ill while Jane is visiting. An embarrassed Liam offers medical advice, prompted by Rachel. (Well, how would *you* tell Jane Austen to wash her hands?)

Flynn's depiction of the Austen family is masterful. Each emerges as a distinct character in an idiosyncratic family with its own style of bickering and shared jokes and secrets. Henry—charming, sociable, and flirty—falls hard for the exotic Miss Ravenswood, as expected. Rachel, accepting his proposal, is concerned that she is equally seduced by the persona she inhabits, just as Liam fulfills a deep-seated need to appear a gentleman. Meanwhile, the original odd couple of Rachel and Liam, the brash Brooklynite and the reserved British aristocrat, discover an intense physical and emotional attraction to each other.

It's only when Rachel's medical expertise saves Fanny Knight that the Austens fully accept the Ravenswoods and invite them to Chawton. But the incident is alarming: Fanny was not meant to choke to death on a piece of cake in 1815. Have they already altered the past? As they become close to Jane and her household, they realize that Jane is already seriously ill.



Flynn ratchets up the tension as Rachel has to decide whether she can continue to deceive a friend. Jane, satirical and detached, has long thought that the Ravenswoods did not ring quite true, despite her growing affection for them both. As a rational creature, she accepts their explanation of why the future wants the manuscript she had decided was too dark and personal for publication, although she is amused that she is considered an immortal.

Inevitably, Liam and Rachel run out of time and out of luck. Edward has contacted his relative in Jamaica, and the male Austens explode in outrage at their betrayal. Jane is more realistic, commenting that it's unlikely that Rachel's brother will die of love, particularly as Liam has fled to avoid a duel.

Flynn brings the novel to its conclusion brilliantly, with one last poignant scene in which Rachel shares information with Jane that could extend her life. Rachel and Liam return home safely, but for Rachel it is devastating; while the world has gained from her actions she has only losses.

## GENDER (AND TITLE) REVERSALS

### *Prejudice & Pride*

By Lynn Messina

Potatoworks Press (2015), 258 pages  
Paperback, \$12.95/ebook, \$3.99

Review by Janet Mullany

It is a truth universally acknowledged that we are absolutely inundated with Austen retellings and variations, many of which begin with a variant of the first seven words of this sentence. Never fear: Lynn Messina, an essayist and writer of popular fiction in several genres, delivers an outstanding, intelligent, witty, and well-written update of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Her main device is one of gender reversal—this Darcy is a woman, as is her friend Charlotte “Bingley” Bingson, members of New York's elite. Netherfield is now a mansion on the Park. The Bennets are a trio of brothers—Bennet (Elizabeth), John (Jane), and Lydon (Lydia)—who work on the development team of the Longbourn Collection, an obscure and underfunded art museum in Queens.

(Hilariously, in view of what is to come, Lydon has just completed a degree in philosophy.) Their boss is the querulous, loose-lipped Mr. Meryton, whose aim in life is to ensnare heiresses to chair ridiculously named committees. This neatly encapsulates the novel's financial dilemma, the intertwining of courtship and money. It explains why John and Bingley's budding relationship falters, and not only because Darcy disapproves: Is John's charm merely that of a professional fundraiser?



Messina wisely omits characters unnecessary to her plot, but the ones she does include are to the point and wittily converted. There is no Charlotte equivalent, but there is the splendid Collin Parsons, nephew of the equally dreadful Catherine de Bourgh, who gives his aunt the honorary title of Lady, as befits her status and pomposity. Her monologue on the correct way to ride the Long Island Railroad is a masterpiece. Georgia Wickham works for the Redcoat Design Team, hired for an installation at the Longbourn—truly a designing woman!

It is a delight to watch Messina play out the characters in her revised plot. Without giving anything away, the Lydon/Georgia Wickham twist is convincing enough to ruin the reputation and livelihood of the Bennet family and the Longbourn Museum itself.

What doesn't work is that sometimes Messina tries too hard—for instance in using Austen's own dialogue of Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth, in his first appearance with Darcy in the book, and Lady Catherine's asking Bennet if he plays (no, not Nintendo or squash) the piano. More romantically inclined readers may possibly find these amiable, handsome metrosexuals, Bennet and John, underwhelming as hero material, but otherwise Messina knocks it out of the Austenesque park.

*Janet Mullany, a member of the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Region, is a contributor for TellyVisions, WETA's British TV and culture blog.*

## MORE EFFUSIONS OF FANCY

### *Teenage Writings*

By Jane Austen

Edited with an introduction and notes by  
Kathryn Sutherland and Freya Johnston  
Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press  
(2017), lv + 336 pages, 2 b/w maps,  
12 b/w illustrations, paperback, \$12.95

Review by Elaine Bander

Chapman's *Minor Works* (Volume 6 of *The Oxford Edition of Jane Austen's Works*, 1953) refers to Austen's childhood writings as

“juvenilia,” a term enshrined in the Juvenilia Press founded by Juliet McMaster in 1994 and employed by Peter Sabor for his splendid *Juvenilia* volume of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen* (2006). Christine Alexander, current director of the Juvenilia Press, called her excellent edition *Love and Freindship and Other Youthful Writings* (Penguin, 2015). This latest (2017) scholarly edition by distinguished Austen scholar Kathryn Sutherland and Freya Johnston is titled *Teenage Writings*.

Each new edition offers a unique editorial focus while honoring and building upon the scholarship of its predecessors. Sutherland and Johnston's focus is on Austen's artistic development. Unlike earlier editions, theirs retains Austen's extensive use of the ampersand (“&”) rather than changing it to “and,” thereby allowing readers to note how, in *Volume the Third*, when Austen is maturing as woman and writer, she begins to employ the more expansive “and” more frequently.

The editors make a strong case for the “general sense of development” that “emerges from one [volume] to the next” (xviii). They also observe that Austen's adult novels contain embedded relics of her sensational “teenage” writings that “emerge like ghosts from the machine of the naturalistic novel, their improbable stories used to extricate the heroine from the clutches of a melodramatic plot” (xv). Their detailed notes are especially rich in identifying obscure allusions to Austen's extensive and indiscriminate reading, linking those allusions to her mature compositions. The editors have also contrived to retain as many of Austen's mock-book typographical features as possible.

Whether we call them “juvenilia,” “youthful writings,” or “teenage writings,” young Jane Austen's “Effusions of fancy” (as her father George Austen called them), recording her hilarious, transgressive, parodic responses to her exuberant reading of both serious and popular literature, delight us with their wit and enlighten us about her development.



## *The Beautifull Cassandra, A Novel in Twelve Chapters*

By Jane Austen

Afterword by Claudia L. Johnson,

artwork by Leon Steinmetz

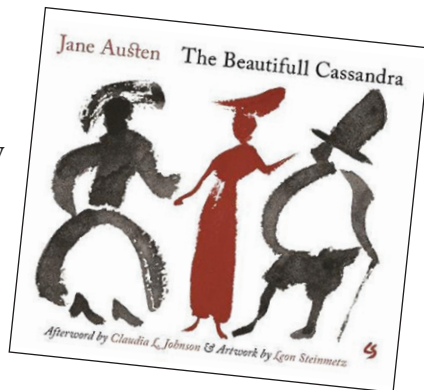
Princeton University Press (2018), no pagination,

12 watercolor illustrations

Paperback, \$16.95

Review by Elaine Bander

Some individual works of juvenilia have proven particularly popular. JASNA members cherish Juliet McMaster's lovely edition of *The Beautifull Cassandra* (1993, Sono Nis Press), with her child-friendly



colorful illustrations and large picture-book type.

Now Princeton University Press has given us a deluxe collector's edition of *The Beautifull Cassandra* that is thoroughly adult in its sensibilities and luxurious in its materials.

The afterword by Austen scholar Claudia L. Johnson rather surprisingly describes this anarchic little tale as “the first novel by Jane Austen to fully embrace the uneventful,” but also as “something akin to a graphic novel *avant la lettre*” through which the 12 full-page elegant watercolors by Leon Steinmetz, painted in black and red with a Chinese calligraphic brush, help us to see Austen afresh.

*Elaine Bander, a frequent JASNA speaker, has published many essays on Austen. “Jane Austen’s ‘Artless’ Heroines: Catherine Morland and Fanny Price” is forthcoming in Art & Artifact in Jane Austen’s Novels and Early Writings, ed. Anna Battigelli (Delaware).*

## PAINTING WITH WORDS

### *Visuality in the Novels of Austen, Radcliffe, Edgeworth and Burney*

By Jessica A. Volz

Anthem (2017), ii + 214 pages

Hardcover, \$95.86/ebook, \$30.36

Review by Claire Denelle Cowart

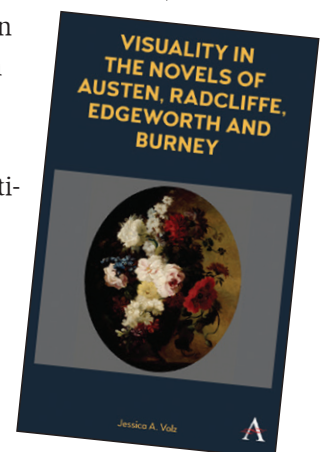
No illustrations are included in Jessica Volz's book about visuality in the works of four female novelists from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. As Volz explains, her purpose is to highlight “particular

influences from visual culture, including portraiture, the looking glass, architecture and landscape painting” (3). Emphasizing that these authors “painted with words,” she focuses on ways their texts reveal the authors' approaches to issues explored or suggested in the novels, including “women's difficulties, polite society's anxieties and the problems inherent in judging by appearances” (3).

Volz thoroughly grounds her analysis in a wide range of critical theories, including those that relate specifically to the novels as well as those that examine the historical time period and its emphasis on observation. In her view, the novels mirror real-world changes that increasingly allowed women to be accepted and described as authentic characters. Volz also finds a correspondence between the authors and their characters, pointing out that “seeing and being seen becomes the preoccupation of fictional women, who, like their authors, are torn between concealment and self-display” (23).

Chapter titles cleverly employ terms such as “reconstruction,” “gendered gaze,” and “optical allusions” to highlight the multiplicities of meaning conveyed by each novelist's treatment of visuality. Beginning with Jane Austen, Volz focuses closely on references to portraiture, architecture, and landscape. In *Sense and Sensibility*, when Lucy Steele shows Edward's miniature to Elinor as confirmation of their secret engagement, Volz describes Elinor's quick return of the miniature as an “allergic” reaction clearly conveying her disturbed response (41). In *Emma*, the idealized portrait of Harriet reveals Emma's “deluded” attempt to remake her friend (49). Appreciation of pleasing landscape and architecture, especially in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*, emphasizes the link between characters such as Elizabeth and Darcy, and Fanny and Edmund, who unite in “marriages based on compatible views and values” (27).

In the chapters focused on Ann Radcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, and Frances Burney, Volz discusses distinctive visual strategies employed



by each author. Portraits and architecture in Radcliffe's writing are identified as "visual realms of power," where trapped women suggest "sexual, religious and social forms of female subjection" (87).

The analysis of Radcliffe's painterly landscapes, filled with lurking dangers and evoked by powerful repetitive techniques, is particularly detailed and convincing. In her consideration of Edgeworth's fiction, Volz focuses on the depiction of "costume, jewellery, cosmetics and masks [as] extensions of, if not replacements for, women's innermost selves" (138).

She also points to Edgeworth's occasional use of male narrators as a way to gain "rhetorical freedom" and to imagine and appropriate the male gaze (147). Volz's interpretation of Burney highlights "the dangers of female visibility in a society that views women as legitimate prey" (189) and perceptively analyzes references to eyes and to performance.

Volz's perceptive, careful analysis makes her book a valuable resource for readers of Austen, Radcliffe, Edgeworth, and Burney.

*Claire Denelle Cowart teaches classes in Jane Austen and Irish literature at Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana.*

## A REVISIONIST DEPICTION

### *Jane Austen: The Life and Times of the Woman Behind the Books*

By Diana White

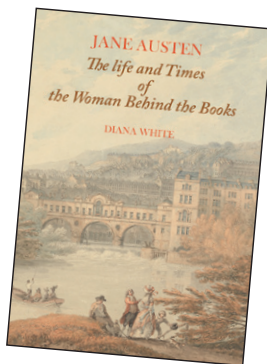
Monkton Farleigh, UK: Folly Books  
(2017), 249 pages

1 b/w illustration, softcover, \$48.10

Review by Laurie Kaplan

The organizing principle behind Diana White's *Jane Austen: The life and Times of the Woman Behind the Books* is the fact that "Jane Austen depicted society exactly as it was." This book offers a series of succinct social references relating to the period—illegitimacy and orphans, for example, as well as etiquette and death rituals—but readers of *Persuasions* and *Persuasions On-Line* will be familiar with much of the information White provides. White's revisionist depiction of Austen the woman and writer goes one step beyond W.D. Harding's assessment of her "regulated hatred": White asserts that Jane Austen is class-bound, unsentimental, censorious, uncharitable, and very tall.

Linking rudiments of Georgian social history with quotations from the letters and novels, White contends that the young writer who satirized people and criticized their foibles also demonstrated that she "was not womanly in the traditional way," and hardly "a girl



destined for domesticity." Austen was as tall as most men of the period, "a giantess compared to her dainty female relatives," a fact of which she was acutely aware. White finds her "philosophy towards social injustices" pragmatic, with "little evidence of [Austen's] going out of her way" to aid the poor. As a person she "cared very little about people," and as a writer she enjoyed exposing their flaws and mocking their beliefs.

White's technique is to place Austen at the center of social experiences, and then to propose what Austen "would have" done. White asserts, for example, that if she had been born a boy Austen might have joined the Navy; that the young Jane "must have been able to bowl accurately and hold a straight [cricket] bat"; that she "would never have approved of the modern life support machine"; and that, as a 20th century suffragette, she "would certainly have been a loyal supporter, attending and speaking at rallies, handing out leaflets, and writing well-phrased discourses on why women should be given the vote."

Although White amuses with many of her assessments, some readers will bridle at descriptions of the woman and writer as someone who saw "things in black and white," who was "not very tolerant of people's failings." As to why Austen counted Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* as one of her favorite novels: She "was not only a romantic girl but every so often enjoyed a good wallow." She suggests Austen "drank more tha[n] was acceptable for a woman," perhaps accepting Harris Bigg-Wither only because she was "fortified by several glasses" of wine.

Unfortunately, typos and punctuation errors mar the overall effect of this pricey paperback. Note also that "life" in the title on the cover lacks appropriate capitalization. Recurrent references to a mysterious "Robert Carter (a real gentleman)" are baffling. White reports that "Harriet cannot marry Robert Carter because Emma could not continue her friendship with her should she become the wife of a tenant farmer." Austen's readers will wonder what happened to Robert Martin.

*Laurie Kaplan, a former editor of Persuasions and Persuasions On-Line, lives in the UK and teaches for Florida State University, London. A recent publication is "Jane Austen's Allusive Geographies: London's Streets, Squares, and Gardens" in Jane Austen's Geographies, edited by Robert Clark.*

## CONFESSIONS OF A FAILED JANEITE

### *Camp Austen: My Life as an Accidental Jane Austen Superfan*

By Ted Scheinman

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (2018), 157 pages

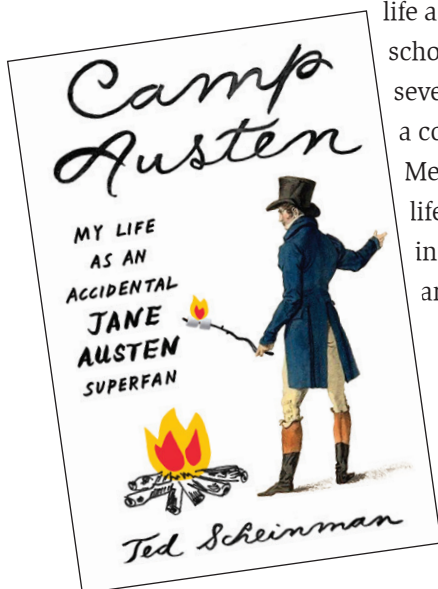
Paperback, \$15

Review by Lynda A. Hall

“Are you Mr. Darcy?” is the question asked of the author of *Camp Austen: My Life as an Accidental Jane Austen Superfan* in Chapter One, and his answer was, “Not yet ... But I will be tomorrow” (15-6). Thus begins the narrative of Ted Scheinman, who chronicles his life as the son of a Jane Austen scholar, temporary graduate student at the University of North Carolina (UNC), and lifelong Austen “superfan.” Scheinman’s mother, Deborah Knuth Klenck, professor of English at Colgate University, indoctrinated her son early in the writings of Austen, but as “the only male in a graduate seminar on the novels of Jane Austen” (57), he soon became comfortable in his “front-flap Regency breeches” (58) and began playing Mr. Darcy at balls and acting as an array of male characters in graduate-student theatricals.

By tracing a typical week of “*Camp Austen*” (the annual Jane Austen Summer Program held at UNC), Scheinman’s narrative presents an outsider’s look into the world of Austen fandom with an insider’s knowledge of Austen scholarship. He presents the often misunderstood “superfan” with respect and playful whimsy. He explores Austen scholarship of the last two centuries while recounting his

life as “a failed Janeite and a lapsed scholar” (155), navigating through several years of “Camp Austen” and a couple of JASNA Annual General Meetings, retreating at last to his life as a journalist. This honest and informative book is a must-read for any Austen superfan.



## AUSTEN AND SHELLEY—TOGETHER AGAIN

### *Pride and Prometheus*

By John Kessel

Saga Press (2018), 367 pages

Hardcover, \$28

Review by Lynda A. Hall

In *Pride and Prometheus*, John Kessel imagines that, 13 years after the marriage of Fitzwilliam and Elizabeth Darcy, *Pride and Prejudice*’s middle sister Mary Bennet discovers a fossil on a beach in Lyme Regis. Mary’s interests in “unwomanly studies” are a worry to Mrs. Bennet, who remains in quest of a suitable match for her two still unmarried daughters. Mary’s interest in science,

however, is fueled by her chance meeting with Victor Frankenstein, who has stopped in the seaside town in pursuit of the proper female body to use as the bride for his creature.

Kessel’s story, much like Mary Shelley’s, presents various points of view aimed

at helping the reader understand the complicated tale more fully. As we follow Frankenstein and his creature on their journey, we are also able to catch up on the lives of the Bennet family and delve into the mind of the often misunderstood Mary Bennet. This is an inspired take on two beloved classics, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Frankenstein*, which will drive readers back to revisit those original texts.



*Lynda A. Hall is associate professor of English at Chapman University in Orange, California, has been a JASNA member for more than 30 years, has presented at several AGMs and has several papers published in Persuasions. Her monograph Women and ‘Value’ in Jane Austen’s Novels: Settling, Speculating and Superfluity was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2017.*

## CRIME NOVELS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE

### *The Incredible Crime*

By Lois Austen-Leigh, introduction by

Kirsten T. Saxton

Poisoned Pen Press (2017) in association  
with the British Library

Paperback, \$12.95

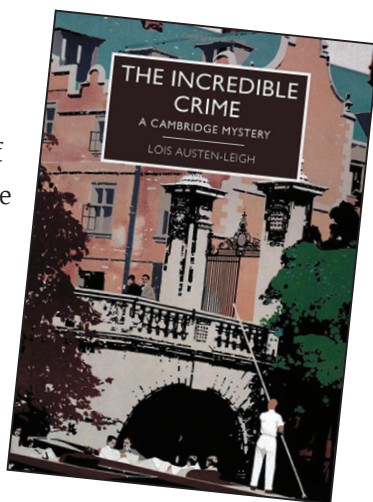
Review by *Diana Birchall*

Lois Austen-Leigh (1883-1968) was a granddaughter of James-Edward Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen's favorite nephew, and she grew up on family stories about Aunt Jane. (Her father, the Vicar of Wargrove, was said to believe that a relative of Jane Austen was "not like other mortals.")

She spent her youth in a rarefied Cambridge circle, later settling with her sister Honor in Aldeburgh, in a house they called Sanditon. There she wrote her four Golden Age crime novels, writing on the same desk Jane Austen had used. This desk was eventually inherited by another niece and writer, Joan Austen-Leigh, who was sent to stay with her aunts and gain some "Englishness."

Joan has written entertainingly about her aunt, describing how Lois spent her earnings on champagne and rode around the parish on a motorbike. Yet she was serious about her writing, and drew on her rich knowledge of both academic and country life for her novels—sparkling with shrewd social observations and nostalgically beautiful English settings, with feudal aristocrats and college eccentrics sprinkled around in a manner reminiscent of Dorothy L. Sayers, if not Jane Austen.

*The Incredible Crime* has a modern headstrong heroine and a plot that veers between quaint old-school academic types and the denizens of a weirdly feudal and isolated seaside country house. The book features fox hunts, drug smuggling, ghosts, rats, suspicions, secrets—and witty characterizations. The British Library has republished this as a crime classic, and it is a pleasure to revisit this past but Golden Age.



## A CORNUCOPIA OF TRIBUTES TO AUSTEN

### *Rational Creatures: Stirrings of Feminism in the Hearts of Jane Austen's Fine Ladies*

Edited by Christina Boyd

The Quill Ink (2018), 484 pages

Paperback, \$16.95/ebook, \$4.95

Review by *Diana Birchall*

For those inclined to denigrate so-called Jane Austen fan fiction, aka the Austenesque, this superb volume should serve as agreeable proof that the genre has resoundingly come of age. So popular have sequels and continuations become that perhaps it was inevitable that some very fine writers have emerged from the proliferation and been drawn into trying their hand at playing with Austen's characters—while simultaneously thinking very seriously and analytically about them.

With such a field of talent to choose from, Editor Christina Boyd has managed the remarkable task of collecting a compilation of such uniformly high quality that the silkiness of style produces the effect of being the brainchild of one omnisciently clever Austenesque sister writer. There is not a dud in the lot, making the task of selecting one's favorites delightfully difficult. The format has each of the writers choosing to embroider on one scene or problem in Austen's novels. This structure further contributes to the unity of the minds that are enlightening and entertaining the reader, but a subsurface theme examines these beloved Austen characters as "rational creatures," a phrase used by both the strongminded character Mrs. Croft in *Persuasion*, and Mary Wollstonecraft herself.

As it is impossible to pick "the best" among such bright flowers, we can provide only a sampling to illustrate the abundance of themes. "Self-Composed," by Christina Morland, is a beautifully felt story illuminating Elinor's growing love for Edward, while Nicole Clarkson's "Every Past Affliction" shows Marianne, recovering from her illness, revising her opinion of



Col. Brandon. In “Charlotte’s Comfort,” by Joana Starnes, we enjoy Charlotte’s wry and pragmatic mental observations of Darcy’s peculiar wooing of Elizabeth. J. Marie Croft in “The Simple Things” produces a pitch-perfect dialogue between Mrs. and Miss Bates, a few years before the events of *Emma*, with Miss Bates rejecting a boorish suitor and remembering an earlier love. “Where the Sky Touches the Sea,” by Karalynne Mackrory, sensitively takes on the subject of Mrs. Croft’s infertility, while Lona Manning, in “The Art of Pleasing,” gives a sophisticated, accomplished look into the workings of the mind of cunning Mrs. Clay. “Louisa By the Sea,” by Beau North, goes far to explain how Louisa Musgrove falls out of love with Captain Wentworth and into love with Captain Benwick (“I cannot love the man who let me fall”), and “The Edification of Lady Susan,” by Jessie Lewis, is a witty epistolary examination of Lady Susan’s behavior. The many other stories in the volume are all good.

While the range of characters, major and minor, is Austenian, the riches of the thoughtful and amusing visitations into the minds and lives of these characters belong to the 16 talented writers of this volume. Their searching, entertaining, plausible, and penetrating discourses combine to produce a true cornucopia of wonderfully satisfying tributes to Jane Austen. The stories will be enjoyed by lovers of Austen’s works, and also by those who appreciate the writers who walk in paths she suggested to them.

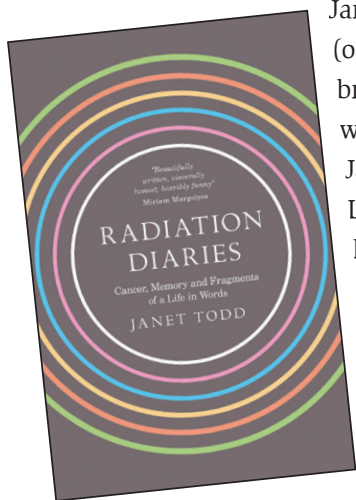
## ‘NOT SAINTHOOD PERHAPS, BUT GREATNESS’

### *Radiation Diaries: Cancer, Memory, and Fragments of a Life in Words*

By Janet Todd

Fentum Press (2018), 168 pages, paperback, \$14.95

Review by Diana Birchall



Janet Todd is something of a Renaissance (or long 18th century) woman with her breadth of scholarly writing on past women writers: Aphra Behn, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen. Since retiring as president of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, she has branched out as a novelist, with the historical *A Man of Genius* and the witty *Lady Susan Plays the Game*. Now for the first time, she turns her examining spotlight on herself, using the harsh but illuminating medium of radiation treatments she endured after three

occurrences of cancer. Even Todd’s considerable mental resources were challenged, and her mind went on a journey, flashing back to her own past at boarding school in Wales and teaching around the world, intermixed with the stored-up literary quotations of a lifetime, ranging from Milton to Longfellow. And she took notes.

Her dark humor keeps tragedy at bay, and she also focuses on a parallel journey: that of her father, who dies at age 100, knowing the joy of seeing his first great-grandchild, and yearning for more of life. Todd’s wonderment and love for him are luminously moving, as is the relief when she herself emerges on the side of the living. And always, she summons Jane Austen with wry reflections: “Has anyone but Jane Austen mocked the changing hues of disease while noting them on her own body or poked fun at feebleness confined to an armchair? Not sainthood perhaps, but greatness.” And not dissimilar to what Todd does herself in this remarkable and original memoir.

*Diana Birchall, recently retired from her career as a story analyst at Warner Bros., is the author of numerous Austenesque stories, novels, and plays, as well as a biography of her grandmother, the first Asian-American novelist.*

## THE VICISSITUDES OF THE HUMAN MIND

### *Jane on the Brain: Exploring the Science of Social Intelligence with Jane Austen*

By Wendy Jones

Pegasus Books (2017), xix + 392 pages

22 b/w illustrations

Hardcover, \$27.95

Review by Michele Larrow

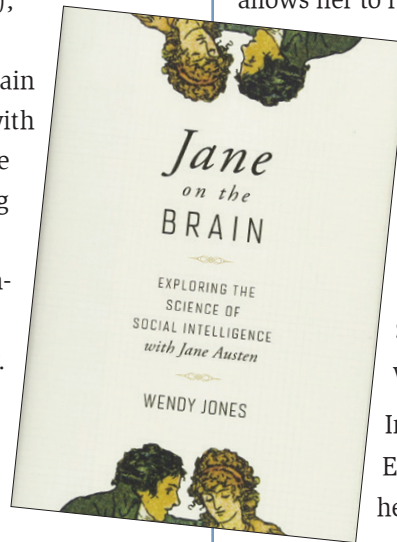
In this ambitious book, Wendy Jones uses the novels of Jane Austen to illustrate recent neuroscience and psychological research about the mind-brain and the importance of social relationships in human functioning. Readers will learn about the structures of the brain involved in emotions and social interactions, as well as research on attachment styles, emotion regulation, and empathy. For the Austen fan, Jones’

discussion of characters' emotions, behaviors, and relationships in this context can offer enriching insights about the novels. You will finish this book convinced (yet again) of Austen's genius for understanding human behavior and portraying complex emotions.

Jones, a former English professor and current psychotherapist, backs up her theses with a wide range of research in a style that is readable and understandable. Using the work of psychiatrist Daniel Siegel, Jones defines the mind-brain as the combination of the physical structure of our brain, the activity of the brain (mind), input from our body, and our social interactions with others. She connects the physical structures of the brain to behavior, mental events, and social relationships with a logic that can be followed by the general reader. The book starts with a discussion of emotion and thinking and how change can happen in the mind-brain; the middle section focuses on the impact of early relationships on later relationships, including love relationships; and the last part of the book explores empathy.

Emotions are central to our interactions with others and deciding what is important in our lives. Jones illustrates the primacy of emotions by analyzing the interaction between Elizabeth and Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* after his first proposal and how Elizabeth has to detangle her feelings when she gets his letter. She uses Elizabeth and Darcy's reactions to meeting each other at Pemberley to explore how Austen conveys both the bodily component of emotions and the idea that some part of our emotional experience can be subconscious. When addressing how the mind-brain changes, Jones shows how, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor functions almost like a therapist for Marianne as she recovers from her depression and creates a healing narrative of her life.

When Jones explores relationships and attachment, she argues that many of the romances ending the novels are "pseudo-incestuous" to highlight that, for Austen, family-like attachment is a more stable basis for marriage than sexual attraction or (solely) romantic love. She uses Edmund's idealized view of Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* to illustrate how romantic love can involve denial of realities or neglect of moral principles. Early attachment to caregivers usually determines the quality of our adult relationships. Jones discusses how young Darcy probably had an avoidant attachment style (not seeking comfort from aloof caretakers and appearing calm, but being inwardly distressed) that becomes a dismissive style as an adult, where he would be distant from others and suppress his emotions. Jones sees Darcy as changing profoundly and stresses how open he is with others after Elizabeth's initial rejection of him, so that he is developing a healthier adult attachment when he proposes again.



Jones uses Mr. Knightley's rescue of Harriet at the ball in *Emma* to illustrate four aspects of empathy: paying attention, cognitively understanding another person's point of view, emotionally connecting with another's feelings, and regulating one's own emotions. His criticism of Emma at Box Hill focuses on her inability *to feel* for Miss Bates and helps her to empathize with others better, which ultimately allows her to realize her love for Mr. Knightley.

Those who cannot empathize are sometimes benign, like Mr. Woodhouse, who cognitively cannot take another's perspective. But sometimes people are so selfish (Sir Walter or John Thorpe) or so manipulative and harmful to others (Mr. Elliot or Lady Susan) that they might be diagnosable with a personality disorder today.

In her epilogue, Jones argues that Anne Elliot is the most empathic of Austen's heroines, with the ability to take others' perspectives consistently and feel deeply with them. Emotional connection and empathy are at the center of Austen's moral vision according to Jones, not just for the characters in the novels, but also for our responses as readers. Readers feel understood by Austen in their human struggles, pains, and joys.

This delightful book offers a guide to learn how to be more empathic and absorb the best lessons from Austen. Having read several books on mind-brain written for a general audience, I found the examples with Jane Austen characters helpful for understanding complex concepts. Each chapter has a list of sources at the back of the book, but it is not always clear in the text what source is being discussed where. Also, no page references are given for the quotations from Austen's novels. In spite of these quibbles, the book is enjoyable for what you will learn about the mind-brain and Austen's novels.

*Michele Larrow is a psychologist who works at the Washington State University Counseling and Psychological Services. She presented on Mr. Knightley's Development of Sympathy at the 2016 AGM, which was published in Persuasions On-Line.*

## THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT

### *Jane Austen for Kids: Her Life, Writings, and World*

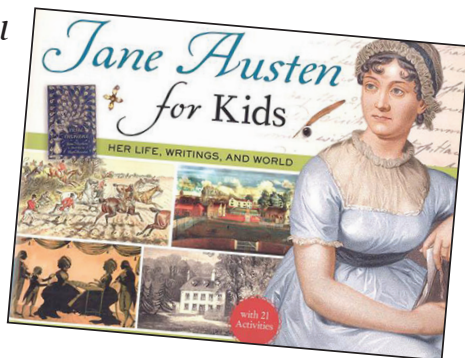
By Nancy I. Sanders

Chicago Review Press (2019), 144 pages

Paperback, \$13.80/ebook, \$11.99

Review by Gretchen Parrill

Sanders' book is a clever way of introducing young readers to Jane Austen's daily, social, historical, and even political life. It begins with an historical timeline of world events and of events in the Austen family, and makes for a handy reference while reading the book.



It becomes apparent to the reader early on that Austen wrote what she knew about. The book explains that, although the Austens were among the gentry, they were not a wealthy family—a similar situation to the protagonists in many of her novels.

Before Sanders gives synopses of Austen's masterpieces, she encourages her youthful readers to write and publish their own books, just as Austen did. Sanders encourages her readers to write in the style of Austen, defining and demonstrating comedy, puns, and satire—a welcome addition to any young person's knowledge.

Included in the book are many activities in which Austen would have participated, some of which include sewing a reticule, playing cricket, dancing a country dance, playing whist, planting an English kitchen garden, and hosting a Regency tea. The pictures and illustrations throughout the book are captivating. One turns the pages over and over to look at furnishings, clothing, and housing and to understand how they relate to Austen's life. Favorite bits of dialogue from the novels are interspersed throughout the book.

## *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A KinderGuides Illustrated Learning Guide*

By Melissa Medina and Fredrik Colting,

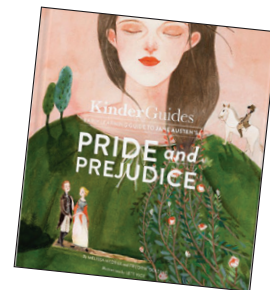
illustrated by Lett Yice

Moppet Books (2017),

45 pages

Hardcover, \$14.23

Review by Gretchen Parrill



This book, part of the *KinderGuides Early Learning Guides to Culture Classics*, was written to acquaint young readers with the Jane Austen classic. The authors do a wonderful job introducing vocabulary to their audience and an even better job analyzing the story in the last chapter. The illustrations draw one's eye to every corner of the page. The art tells the story as if this were a standalone picture book. I found myself grinning more than once at the likeness of Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

However, the authors miss the mark in the telling of the story. As familiar as I am with *Pride and Prejudice*, I had to read most pages more than once to follow the storyline. Characters were introduced so quickly and briefly, I found I had to turn the pages back to find how and when they were first mentioned. I also found it disappointing that the authors missed the opportunity to deal with emotions brought up in the story—such as jealousy and loneliness—with which their target audience is learning to cope. However, a fun addition to the book is a quiz that would provide enjoyment for any gathering of Austen fans.

*Gretchen Parrill teaches at the Albany Lower Elementary School in Albany, Louisiana. She is also the mother of three daughters, whom early on she exposed to all things Austen.*

## FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Still can't get enough? You can pre-order these upcoming titles.

***The Lost Books of Jane Austen*** by Janine Barchas

With nearly 100 full-color photographs of dazzling, sometimes gaudy, sometimes tasteless covers, this book offers a unique history of rare and forgotten Austen volumes. **Publication date: October 8, 2019**

***The Daily Jane Austen: A Year of Quotes*** by Jane Austen and Devoney Looser

The book includes 378 Austen quotations to introduce novice readers to the author or serve as a daily reminder to those already acquainted with her genius. **Publication date: October 4, 2019**

## CLASSICS REVISITED

Many new and exciting books have come out around Jane Austen this past year, but let other reviews dwell on them. Here are some quick suggestions for summer reading that have stood the test of time.

—Erika Kotite, Vice President, Publications

### Jane Austen's Letters | Fourth Edition | Collected and edited by Deirdre Le Faye

**Best for:** An IV drip of enjoyment while running summer errands

Why you'll like it: Who can resist a letter that starts thus: "Where shall I begin? Which of all my important nothings shall I tell you first?" The letters bring Austen's life a little closer to our own and they tend to overlay and foreshadow her books in delightful ways. It's just what the doctor ordered.

### Mrs. Elton in America (part three of *The Compleat Mrs. Elton*) | Diana Birchall

**Best for:** A jolly read right around the Fourth of July

Why you'll like it: Author Diana Birchall writes a compelling tale of Highbury's most annoying bride leaving the small village and braving the perils of the New World with her family. It's an extraordinary look at one of Austen's minor characters, in a completely different place. The result is humorous, horrifying, eye-opening, and truly page-turning.

### Sanditon | Jane Austen

**Best for:** The front-porch hammock

Why you'll like it: *Sanditon* strums the tiny masochistic string in all of us—it stops cold at Chapter 12, just as we get a glimpse of what might be just around the corner. Themes of hypochondria and impulsive speculation overlay the adventures of Charlotte Heywood, who has unexpectedly come to visit this mythical seaside town. *Sanditon*, its booster Thomas Parker, and the many characters seeking good health by the sea make for a satisfying summer diversion.

### Jane Austen and the State of the Union | Sheryl Craig

**Best for:** Feeding your intelligence while seabathing

Why you'll like it: Anyone who caught Sheryl Craig's plenary talk at the 2018 AGM will relish her fascinating glimpses into the economic world in which Austen and her family lived. Craig cleverly divides the book into eight chapters—each one themed on a novel, including the juvenilia and *Sanditon*. The latter chapter uses Thomas Parker's reckless speculation on a sea resort to show fundamental differences between conservative Tories, who supported food production, and the Whigs, who advocated a mercantile and service economy.

### The History of England | Jane Austen (Juvenilia Press)

**Best for:** An antidote to *Game of Thrones* bingeing

Why you'll like it: It's the best anti-textbook of the British monarchy ever written by a "partial, prejudiced, & ignorant historian." In just 22 pages, zip from Henry IV to Charles I and all who reigned and died in between. Austen and her sister, Cassandra, collaborated on this diverting project (Jane wrote, Cassandra illustrated) and glimpses of the family members peek through in tantalizing places. The sisters give extra attention to female rulers, ignore military matters, and play lightly with dates and facts. They do not suffer fools or despots gladly.

### An Assembly Such as This: A Novel of Fitzwilliam Darcy | Pamela Aidan

**Best for:** Toting to the beach in your I Heart Darcy book bag

Why you'll like it: Pamela Aidan has OCDD (Obsessive Compulsive Darcy Disorder). If you, too, can't get enough of our favorite hero, Aidan provides the backstory of Darcy's life and character formation prior to his appearance in *Pride and Prejudice*.

### Bitch in a Bonnet, Vols. 1 and 2 | Robert Rodi

**Best for:** End-of-summer reading

Why you'll like it: The two-volume collection began as a series of blog posts by Chicago author Robert Rodi, an Austen enthusiast who attempts to "(reclaim) Jane Austen from the stiffs, the snobs, the simps and the saps." Baffled and annoyed by the uninformed's categorization of Austen as a romance writer, he vowed to set the record straight. Each novel is delightfully analyzed through a somewhat sardonic prism of modern thought. The result is hilarious.

### What Matters in Jane Austen | John Mullan

**Best for:** Those hot nights when you can't sleep

Why you'll like it: We all love a good question about Jane Austen, especially if we ultimately get an intelligent and thought-provoking answer. John Mullan presents 20 questions, from "How much does age matter?" to "How experimental a novelist is Jane Austen?" Once it's finished, you'll re-read the novels this fall with an enhanced consciousness.

