



## ‘WAS THERE EVER A FRAGMENT LIKE IT?’

### *Jane Austen’s Sanditon*

With an Introductory Essay by Janet Todd  
Fentum Press (2019), x + 191 pages + vii  
20 color illustrations + 5 b/w illustrations  
Hardcover, \$14.95/ebook, \$10.49

Review by Mary Gaither Marshall

The existence of Jane Austen’s *Sanditon* was first made known to the public in 1871 when James Edward Austen-Leigh included a summary in the second edition of his *Memoirs of Jane Austen*. *Sanditon* was merely 24,000 words in length when Austen became too ill to continue the work. The manuscript was first published in its entirety in 1925 under the title *Fragment of a Novel with Notes*, edited by R. W. Chapman. Aside from a few Austen scholars familiar with the unfinished novel, *Sanditon* was not well-known to the public, including many Austen fans, until the 2019 Andrew Davies television adaptation (ITV/PBS MASTERPIECE) popularized it.

Janet Todd’s *Sanditon* is a perfect edition to acquaint new readers with Austen’s fragment. With so many readers unfamiliar with the novel, a strong introduction is essential. Todd’s essay begins with a concise explanation of the popularity and longevity of Austen’s work and a summary of her life. The section of the essay focusing on the *Sanditon* fragment is the strength of the book, examining *Sanditon*’s publication history, how its characters compare to other Austen characters, the relevance of the work’s themes to Austen’s times, Austen’s writing process, and the importance of setting.

The supplementary materials add to the value of the edition. In “Anna Lefroy to Andrew Davies: Continuations of *Sanditon*,” Todd includes short summaries of continuations and adaptations, several not easily obtainable. *Sanditon* is the longest of Austen’s few surviving manuscripts, with 12 chapters, but the direction of the plot is not clear. Unable to see the design for the novel, adapters wrote only three continuations of *Sanditon* prior to 1975: her niece Anna Lefroy’s

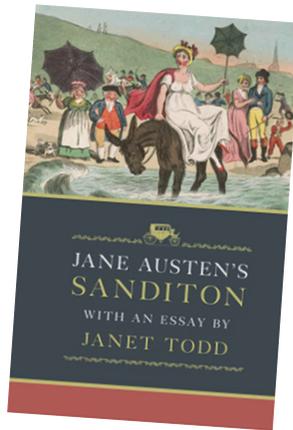
incomplete version (written circa 1845, published 1983); Alice Cobbett’s *Somehow Lengthened* (1932); and Marie Dobbs’ *Sanditon* by Jane Austen and Another Lady (1975), the best-known continuation.

As Todd notes, a “post-millennium fevered spin-off industry” increases the number of Austen continuations at a rate impossible to keep pace with. Perhaps for that reason, her continuation summary is incomplete. One amusing adaptation, not included in the book but of interest to JASNA members, is *Jane, Actually: Or Jane Austen’s Book Tour* by Jennifer Petkus (2013), perfect for our tech world with “AfterNet” technology that allows for a “disembodied” Austen to complete *Sanditon* and go on a book tour, including the 2011 JASNA AGM in Fort Worth. For those interested in the Andrew Davies production, a novelization by Kate Riordan with an introduction by Davies was published in December 2019.

The design of Todd’s edition also increases its desirability. The small format is reminiscent of the first editions of Austen’s novels, and the attractive front cover has an illustration from *News from Worthing*. The edition includes well-chosen illustrations from Austen’s time period that highlight the text, thus increasing readers’ understanding of the *Sanditon* world. Other supplementary materials include explanatory notes of Austen’s text and suggestions for further reading.

Although other editions of *Sanditon* are available, Todd’s version, with its superb introduction, pleasing format, and excellent supplementary materials, should be the seventh novel on every Austen lover’s bookshelf.

**Mary Gaither Marshall, a JASNA and Jane Austen Society Life Member, has presented and published about Austen, including writing an introduction to Anna Lefroy’s *Jane Austen’s Sanditon: A Continuation* (1983).**



## A DELIGHT FOR THE MENTAL OR ACTUAL TRAVELER

### *Jane Austen's England: A Travel Guide*

By Karin Quint

Translation from the Dutch by Karen Holt

ACC Art Books Ltd. (2019), 320 pages

180 color photographs + 17 maps

Paperback, \$19.95

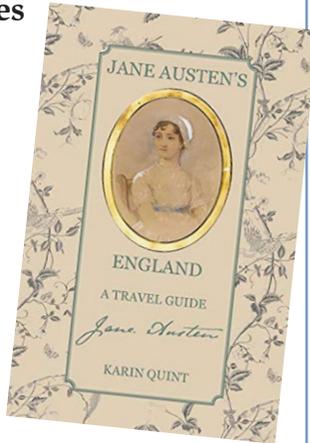
Review by Victoria Hinshaw

What could charm a Janeite more than a volume devoted to pictures and details on places Jane Austen knew, places her family knew, and even places used as settings for Austen movies and video projects? *Jane Austen's England: A Travel Guide* by Karin Quint is such a book. Whether the reader is dreaming of a visit to some of the sites or recalling past experiences on tour, the book is a delight.

Throughout, the reader discovers properties both familiar and unanticipated, certainly enough to make even the most experienced Austen tourists add to the list for their next trip. While this is a great asset of the book, the reader must be careful to distinguish between the places Austen visited, sites appearing in her novels and letters, and settings chosen by filmmakers for movie and television versions of Austenalia. Though we know many places she visited from her own and her family's letters, we also know that many "black holes" in our knowledge of Austen's life and travels persist. But who can predict when another note or fragment might turn up in an old chest or the pocket of a long-ago-discarded garment?

The volume begins with a brief summary of Austen's life followed by a sketch of relevant information on the time period in which she lived and wrote. We begin our travels in Hampshire, where Austen spent most of her life, from Steventon to Chawton to her burial place in Winchester Cathedral. The remainder of the nicely illustrated book is divided among London, Bath, and those areas of England in which she traveled, even places where she *might* have traveled.

Many years ago in Bakewell, near Chatsworth in Derbyshire, I stayed in the Rutland Arms Hotel. At the time, the hotel boasted about a room in which Austen stayed in 1811. According to Quint, the present owners no longer claim the author visited but will show you the chamber if asked. No confirmation of Austen's being in Bakewell or at Chatsworth has ever been verified, neither in her letters nor in the writing of her family and acquaintances.



Nevertheless, it is widely agreed that she knew of Chatsworth and probably used the estate as her model for Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice*. Don't you love mysteries?

Should a book reviewer consider her subject a superior volume if she starts reading, gets lost in the subject, and totally forgets she should be a critic? This is precisely what happened to me and I hope you will be as fortunate.

*Victoria Hinshaw is a JASNA Life Member. A graduate of Northwestern University (BS) and American University (MA), she is the author of numerous novels set in the English Regency and a frequent speaker on topics such as British stately homes and the works of Jane Austen.*

## KALEIDOSCOPE OF REGENCY LIFE

### *The Regency Years: During Which Jane Austen Writes, Napoleon Fights, Byron Makes Love, and Britain Becomes Modern*

By Robert Morrison

W. W. Norton (2019), xv + 366 pages

45 b/w illustrations

Hardcover, \$29.95

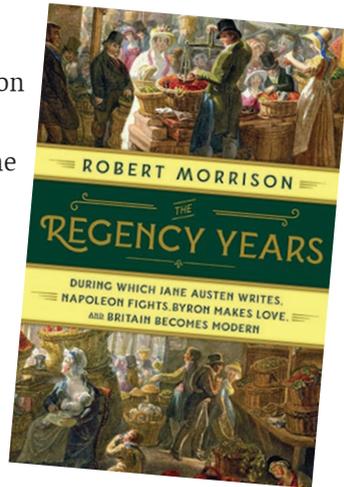
Review by Janine Barchas

In his kaleidoscopic look at British life from 1811 to 1820, Robert Morrison presents the movers and shakers of the Regency as heralds of modernity. Rejecting the orthodox view that modern culture and consumerism were birthed by the Victorians, Morrison argues that the era of Jane Austen, not that of Anthony Trollope, ushered in the way we live now.

Austen, Burney, Byron, Carlyle, Keats, Scott, and both Shelleys make frequent appearances in this busy and accessible history, because, Morrison suggests, the pangs and triumphs of their writings reflect our fledgling selves.

Echoing historian Simon Schama's approach to the Dutch Golden Age, Morrison surveys the

extravagant decade when the Prince of Wales ruled Britain as Regent. In addition to taking in the era's artistic achievements, Morrison reveals the clashes—the guilt and greed, jealousy and fear—that new wealth and a new consumer class created. His inventory of wide-ranging cultural events, politics, and consumer opportunities may surprise even the most ardent Janeite, if only because it repositions Regency decorum within a frenzied context.



*The Regency Years* opens with the 1812 assassination of British Prime Minister Spencer Perceval by John Bellingham, a murder that exposed volatile economic inequities. Morrison provides glimpses of the things not always visible from Austen's own pages: alarming tales of crime, gun violence, and a faulty penal system; hair-raising accounts of urban slums, or "rookeries"; staggering statistics about prostitution and disease made worse by an opium crisis; bloody tales of war and empire; and frequent mentions of violent uprisings by radicals, reformers, and revolutionaries. This was an era of spies and domestic dangers. Britain was dotted with soldiers just home from fighting the French who were being asked to use their weapons on their own rioting countrymen.

The best chapter is devoted to popular entertainment options beyond the traditional or "legitimate" offerings at licensed theaters like Covent Garden and Drury Lane. These lesser-known entertainments could be risqué: "plays involving sexual conquest and vulgarity were especially popular, as were female travesty dancers in skintight breeches" (67). In addition, more sober pleasures included new museums, menageries, panoramas, and public lectures. A needlework artist, Mary Linwood, specialized in reproducing full-length paintings with wool yarn stitched to imitate painterly brushwork. Linwood's popular exhibition was praised in 1813 as the "most unique and most interesting" in London (103). The kaleidoscope, too, was a Regency invention, and Morrison hails the unprecedented popularity of this novelty item as "the unstoppable ascent of modern consumer culture" (94).

As for Morrison's treatment of Regency celebrity, many JASNA readers may already know that the era's fascination with Shakespearean actors such as Dorothy Jordan, Sarah Siddons, and Edmund Kean resembles modern fandom. But even these readers will relish learning of comedians such as John Bannister and Joseph Grimaldi, whose popular experiments with makeup, outrageous costumes, and emotional displays paved the way for Charlie Chaplin.

Sadly, the chapter on sexual pastimes proved a bit flaccid. Still, and especially for Burney fans, the section connecting the era's gambling craze to a lax system of credit should be required reading alongside the "old women's race" in *Evelina*.

All told, this entertaining and fast-paced history defies the myth that Austen published from a quiet, doily-clad universe—a myth that stubbornly refuses to die, even when faced with new scholarship on Austen's own deep interests in celebrity culture, gossip, satire, and politics. *The Regency Years* effectively drives a stake into that myth's heart.

*Janine Barchas is the Louann and Larry Temple Centennial Professor in English Literature at the University of Texas at Austin and the author of The Lost Books of Jane Austen (2019) and Matters of Fact in Austen (2013). She developed "What Jane Saw," which digitally re-creates two art exhibitions Austen attended, and co-curated the exhibition "Will and Jane: Shakespeare, Austen, and the Cult of Celebrity."*

## Summer Reading Issue

Our second annual Summer Reading Issue will be published in mid-June. Titles to be reviewed include:

- *The Lost Books of Jane Austen* by Janine Barchas
- *The Bride of Northanger* by Diana Birchall
- *30-Day Journey with Jane Austen* by Natasha Duquette
- *Miss Austen* by Gill Hornby
- *The Daily Austen: A Year of Quotes* by Devoney Looser
- *Midnight: Three Women at the Hour of Reckoning* by Victoria Shorr
- *The Mother of the Brontës* by Sharon Wright

