



Young Filmmakers Contest Comes of Age

In the spirit of Jane Austen's own youthful writings, submissions to JASNA's Young Filmmakers Contest (YFC) are often humorous, imaginative, and spirited. Founded in 2017 to engage Janeites in high school, college, and graduate school, the contest has expanded dramatically over the past decade—now welcoming filmmakers up to age 30 and entries from around the globe. As it celebrates its 10th anniversary, YFC has come of age.

"It's thrilling to see such an outpouring of creative inspiration," YFC Chair Erika Kotite says. "Young filmmakers are infusing visual energy into Austen's timeless stories."

The contest originated in the California Southwest Region, host of the 2017 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Huntington Beach, at which the inaugural winner—Rivkah Massey Penarelli's moving documentary "An Accomplished Woman," about how Austen helped her cope with dyslexia and grow to love reading—was shown to all attendees. Winners were invited to meet filmmaker Whit Stillman after his talk at the conference.

The following year, winning entry "Mrs. Bennet's Plan," by Ellyn Cardon—which reimaged the Bennets as a 21st century family—was screened at a special event at Sony Pictures Studios. Beginning in 2021, finalist films have been shared with AGM attendees during each conference at a gala event where members vote on an audience favorite. In 2022, YFC became an official JASNA program.

Over the years, entries have ranged from modernizations and romantic misadventures to animated escapades and time-travel fantasies. Comedies such as "Jane Austen Virtual Book Club" and "Mr. Darcy Goes to Therapy" earned smiles, while films including "Lizzy's Adventures in Dating" and "Emma in Brazil" transported Austen's characters into contemporary settings to emphasize their enduring relevance. Other



"2024 Meets Mr. Collins"

entries have imagined encounters across centuries, "sliding doors" alternative turns in Austen's life, and deeply personal reflections on the author's continuing influence. Some submissions have boasted sweeping

cinematography while others have charmed through simpler, more intimate settings. The end result is a broad array of short films—each five minutes or less—showcasing Austen's timeless appeal and the fresh, creative perspectives of the young filmmakers. View the shorts on [JASNA's YouTube channel](#).

In addition to cash awards and JASNA memberships, winners receive detailed feedback from noted entertainment, publishing, and academic professionals. Judges have included Gurinder Chadha (*Bride & Prejudice*), Ashley Clements (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*), Andrew Davies (1995 *Pride and Prejudice*), author Sonali Dev, producer Lindsay Doran, Susannah Harker (Jane in the 1995 *P&P*), Amy Heckerling (*Clueless*), Adrian Lukis (Mr. Wickham in the 1995 *P&P*), and Aydra Walden (*Black Girl in a Big Dress*).

This year's distinguished panel includes acclaimed actor Fiona Shaw (Mrs. Croft in the 1995 *Persuasion* and upcoming roles as Lady Catherine in the Netflix *Pride and Prejudice* miniseries and Mrs. Jennings in Focus



Fiona Shaw

Feature's *Sense and Sensibility*); Julia Aks (co-writer/director and star of Oscar-nominated "Jane Austen's Period Drama"); Producers Guild Co-President Stephanie Allain; journalist, playwright, and producer Michon Boston; and Austen scholar Peter Graham.

Learn more about the [Young Filmmakers Contest](#).



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DATES AND DEADLINES

JASNA News Fall 2026

Submission deadline: July 1, 2026

Publication date: mid-September

JASNA News Winter 2027

Submission deadline: October 1, 2026

Publication date: mid-December

JASNA News Spring 2027

Submission deadline: January 8, 2027

Publication date: mid-March

2026 Young Filmmakers Contest

Submission deadline: June 29, 2026

Info: jasna.org/programs/young-filmmakers-contest

2026 Call for Nominations

Submission deadline: July 1, 2026

Info: liza_janeite@hotmail.com

2027 AGM Call for Papers/New Voices Speaker Grant Applications

Submission deadline: November 15, 2026

Info: jasna.org/conferences-events/2027-call-for-papers

2027 International Visitor Program Applications

Submission deadline: December 16, 2026

Info: jasna.org/programs/international-visitor

JASNA *News*

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Ella Bruccoleri stars as Mary in *The Other Bennet Sister*—a 10-episode miniseries based on Janice Hadlow's novel, now available on BritBox.

President's Column

Mary Mintz

Man and woman meet. They take an instant dislike to each other. They gradually fall in love. Despite their first impressions—his proud behavior leads to her initial hostility—love wins in the end.



The courtship of Darcy and Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* is universally admired, celebrated, and timeless. Though the novel is more than 200 years old, it remains as fascinating as it was when first published in 1813. No matter how many times we read it or watch an adaptation of it, we find ourselves hoping that the love affair will have a happy ending. The courtship is the essential plot of Jane Austen's most popular novel. Many or most subsequent romances have followed this path. Austen established the pattern for the "marriage plot," which has been repeated—but never bettered.

Why do we find it so appealing? What compels us to come together in person or virtually in the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA) to share our love of Austen and her works? Perhaps it is because Austen writes about our own deepest longings as human beings. All of us desire that human connection, that other person who makes our individual lives feel as whole and complete as possible. These questions and many more—both the fun and the serious ones—are explored within JASNA.

If you share those interests and wish to discuss them with others who will warmly welcome you, then you will find a new community and home in JASNA. If you are reading this column for the first time, this may be your introduction to JASNA. If so, welcome! We are glad you are here and hope you have come to stay.

We hope you will consider [joining or renewing a JASNA membership](#) at our very reasonable annual rates and ensure permanent digital access to this quarterly newsletter and other membership benefits. Our popular podcast, [Austen Chat](#), is already available to the public. As a member, you'll receive our monthly *JASNA Update* e-newsletter and a subscription to our journal, *Persuasions*, ([Persuasions On-Line](#) is already accessible), plus the opportunity to register for our yearly conference—the [Annual General Meeting](#), or AGM for short.

The AGM is well-known for excellent speakers and a Regency-style ball (preceded by plenty of dance workshops!). The conference combines education and entertainment in the nicest way. It is also a great place to make new friends and enjoy a community of people who share a passionate interest in Jane Austen. With a JASNA membership, you will also be able to designate up to three regions (or local divisions) located throughout North America and beyond, including virtual and international regions that make membership anywhere in the world possible.

When you join JASNA, you will find your people—more than 6,000

of them from all walks of life in the world's largest author-focused literary society! In addition to students, educators, and librarians, members include corporate execs, healthcare professionals, journalists, scientists, lawyers, engineers, and others from many more backgrounds. At our gatherings, we discuss Austen's biography, writings, TV/film adaptations, and historical era. The more you learn, the more you appreciate her genius.

Turning back to *Pride and Prejudice*, we find evidence of that genius in every word. Here's the wonderful passage about the final marriage proposal:

Elizabeth was too much embarrassed to say a word. After a short pause, her companion added, "You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever."

Elizabeth feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand, that her sentiments had undergone so material a change ... as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure, his present assurances. The happiness which this reply produced, was such as he had probably never felt before; and he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do.

The courtship of Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* is filled with compelling suspense followed by that glorious ending. Who else but Austen could write a climax like that one? Come and celebrate her writing with us!

NOMINATIONS UPDATE

The Call for Nominations in the spring issue did not include the opening for a slot on JASNA's Nominating Committee. Susan Jelen will retire from the committee this year. JASNA members may submit their own name or that of any other member, in writing, for the vacancy by July 1, 2026. Provide the nominee's name, address, phone number, and email address; a brief description of their JASNA activities (local and/or central); special skills that would be helpful to the committee; and assurance that the nominee is willing to serve. Send candidate information to committee chair Elizabeth Steele at liza_janeite@hotmail.com, subject line "JASNA Nomination."

Feature

41 REASONS

As the world's largest literary society devoted to a single author, JASNA fosters the study, appreciation, and understanding of Jane Austen's works, life, and genius among the widest number of readers. *JASNA News* recently asked members to divulge what they most enjoy about being part of this society. While space permits sharing only a fraction of the hundreds of responses received, here are the top reasons offered—one for each of Austen's 41 extraordinary but too few years of life.

Editor's note: Responses were gently edited or shortened to avoid repetition. Some were submitted anonymously.

1. Celebrating Jane Austen

"I enjoy getting to nerd out about Austen and Austen-related things on a regular basis."

—Mary Wilson Molen

"I love learning more about Austen and her impact on the world." —Rebecca Jones

"I value being part of a community of people who truly enjoy Austen and all her brilliance, genius, humanity, and heart."

"JASNA makes Austen a more regular part of my life."

2. Expanding appreciation of her work

"I enjoy supporting and spreading interest in Austen's works."

"I like knowing that I'm helping, in a small way, to keep Austen's works alive." —Alexandra St. James

3. Knowing you're not alone

"It's comforting to know that there are thousands of Austen enthusiasts out there in the world."

"As a new member, it's exciting to connect with other Austenites since my circle of friends doesn't really understand my obsession."

—Laura Achhireddy

4. Finding your people

"I love getting to talk about Austen's writings, her genius, her world, and the many rabbit holes that develop into whole warrens with people who get it." —Nancy O'Connor

"I'm a new member and believe I've already found my people! I could not be more delighted with JASNA. I should have joined years ago!"

—Elizabeth Higgs

"I like knowing that I am linked to thousands of other like-minded people." —Elizabeth Webb



"It's nice to be part of something where you don't have to explain yourself."

5. Joining a global community

"You can strike up a conversation with any member anywhere and immediately feel that shared understanding and enthusiasm." —Erin Baltensperger

"I adore being surrounded by fellow Austenites from all walks of life and all over the world. I love learning how she has inspired them personally." —Annette Williams

"I enjoy reveling in Austen's genius with others around the world." —Judith Howard

6. Gathering with the best company

"Jane, via Anne Elliot, said it best: 'My idea of good company ... is the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation; that is what I call good company.' Then Mr. Elliot replies: 'That is not good company, it is the best.' I could say much more about why I love JASNA, but this sums it up." —Mary Morder

"I feel like JASNA is a special community to which I belong!" —Gail Herman

"I enjoy being part of such a knowledgeable community of true Austen fans. I am constantly amazed at how educated we are about Austen, not only her books but also her life, family, and time period. It's truly such a gift." —Ellen Malfa

7. Making lifelong friends

"I have made wonderful friends who are as enthusiastic as I am about Jane Austen."

—Jen Prohaska (pictured with Denise Kohmetscher)



"You meet members and feel like you've known them all your life."

"I'm grateful for the intelligent, witty, and sometimes eccentric people I meet who have become friends."

—Kimberly Brangwin Milham

"The best part of JASNA has been meeting wonderful persons who have become dear friends." —Joan Ray

8. Diving deeply into Austen's work

"It's a gift to be able to take such deep, meaningful

Jane Austen, her novels, life, and era is what makes me look forward to each JASNA meeting. We gossip, share opinions, delve into how she constructed her characters and stories, and learn new skills (how to play speculation, dance, or put together a Regency dinner). It is an open and inviting community.” –*Kim Deacon*

“I enjoy getting involved at the local level and connecting with others who understand Austen’s writing.” –*Kris Hilburn Williams*

“I’m amazed at all of the interesting events the regions put on.”

“I appreciate having Austen activities to attend throughout the year.” –*Ana Venegas*

“Our local region is full of interesting and thoughtful readers and writers.” –*Cathy Stubbs*

19. Accessing JASNA from anywhere

“I love the virtual meetings, where I can enjoy outstanding speakers in all our regions and even from overseas. Traveling has become more difficult for me so I really appreciate having a virtual option for events like the AGM and individual presentations.” –*Linda Fineman*

“I value all of the educational opportunities—especially at the AGM and Zoom meetings as I live so far from other enthusiasts.” –*Roseann Thompson*

“I like the opportunity to have online discussions and presentations so I don’t always have to travel.” –*Anita Shaw*

“I appreciate being able to go to Austen-related events that you really wouldn’t find outside of JASNA.”

20. Crossing regional boundaries

“Online presentations are great, especially when it’s just not possible to get there in person. I appreciate that we can cross region boundaries.” –*Caroline Corum*

“I like being able to attend monthly regional meetings in both upstate New York and Florida.”

“I appreciate the ability to join various online presentations from all over the country.” –*Becky Dolin*

21. Valuing how open JASNA is to all

“JASNA welcomes everyone, from a PhD in English lit to someone who likes to see Colin Firth in a wet shirt.” –*Joan Walton*

“Our region is a safe place where anyone can take part. If you want to have an impact in the region, you are welcome. If you just want to socialize, you’re welcome, too! Every member knows that their voice will be heard and their ideas respected.” –*Hope Howland-Cook*

“I didn’t know many fans, and this community made me feel like it was a good thing to love Austen’s work and that I didn’t need an English degree to do so. It also inspired me to run two Austen book clubs in two different provinces, making new friends and meeting fellow Janeites in my community.” –*Meghan Negrijn*

“I read scientific books, periodicals, and journals during my 55-year career. Since retirement, I ventured into *Pride and Prejudice* and have

become smitten by Jane Austen.” –*Ronald Genovese*

“I like getting to know what regular fans enjoy about Austen since I’m an academic. It’s a nice reminder that lots of people love reading.” –*Catherine England*

22. Appreciating *Persuasions*

“The journal sustains such high standards and is always interesting.”

“Some of the articles are very interesting and thought-provoking, though sometimes I finally decide the author was wrong in one way or another.” –*Katharine Rylaarsdam*

“The essays point out new ways of looking at the novels and make rereading more meaningful.” –*Ginny Grinevitch*

“I am a postgraduate researcher and I have used the *Persuasions* essays to support my own writing.” –*Lucia Cascioli*

23. Reading JASNA News

“The newsletter is outstanding. I like the recommendations for spinoffs, fan fiction, and nonfiction. The photos of local events—with many members wearing Regency styles—are fun. Thank you for bringing this group of readers together and keeping us informed.” –*Jackie Nielson*

“The JASNA newsletters offer great book reviews and pertinent articles.” –*Janet Waller*

“In a world of digital, it’s nice to slow down with the print newsletter, have a cuppa, and find other interesting reads to delve deeper.” –*Kris Hilburn Williams*

“I always look forward to the newsletter because it offers a variety of interesting information about Austen and the wider Austen community.” –*Charlotte Wood*

24. Discovering new books

“I appreciate the book reviews, and I’m about to try reading a few of the suggested titles. I usually read nonfiction only, but I’m looking forward to reading something new.”

“I like finding out about new retellings of Austen’s stories.”

“I enjoy the book reviews. I am not interested in sequels/prequels—only nonfiction about Austen’s life, times, and works. I have bought a number of books that were reviewed in the newsletter.” –*Nancy Ashmore*

25. Listening to *Austen Chat*

“I truly enjoy the *Austen Chat* podcast. Breckyn

Wood is so well-prepared and wonderfully enthusiastic about every topic. She and the guests are delightful!" –Mary Morder

"Each episode feels like sitting down with friends who love Austen as much as I do. I enjoy how conversational and thoughtful it is, blending literary insight with humor and real enthusiasm. It makes Austen feel both timeless and current. I always come away with a new perspective or detail I hadn't considered before." –Erin Baltensperger

26. Inspiring young Janeites

"I love the programs that are gateways for our next-gen JASNA members, especially the Young Filmmakers Contest."

"The JASNA Book Box program is great. I appreciate the fact that it makes age-appropriate Austen books available at no cost to young students through schools and libraries throughout North America."

"I love being a judge for the essay contest and encouraging my students to enter."

27. Connecting across generations

"Even though I am relatively young (I start college this autumn), JASNA allows me to connect with others across generations and nations because of our shared passion for Austen's writing." –Caroline Dudzinski

"I enjoy witnessing Austen and JASNA's global reach and witnessing Austen's popularity continuing generation after generation."

–Caroline Whydell

"I love seeing mothers bringing their teen and college-aged daughters now, too!" –Antonina Ruth Bruno

28. Balancing the fun with the scholarly

"I enjoy being a member of a community that has both an intellectual and a fun approach to Austen and the world she lived in." –Margaret Doria

"I like the mix of academic and fan-focused activities." –Lynda Hall

"JASNA is both fun and informative."

29. Traveling with other members

"The JASNA Tour of England was fascinating and fun." –Jody Regan

"I especially enjoyed the very well-organized trip to England in 2024." –Diane Anderson

30. Experiencing hands-on learning

"I have most enjoyed the craft classes, like quilling, and learning about period dancing and practicing some dances." –Grace Sheehan

"JASNA regions host workshops on gardening, cooking, dancing, Regency games and fashions, creative writing, and so much more."

31. Obtaining access to resources

"What I enjoy most about JASNA is my access to additional resources related to Austen."

"I enjoy all the fascinating free presentations."



"Local theaters often give JASNA discounts for Austen-related productions."

32. Discussing the novels together

"The JASNA-wide collective slow read of *Pride and Prejudice* last year with Susan Allen Ford was wonderful."

33. Supporting new scholarship

"I appreciate how the International Visitor Program, regional events, and AGM provide outlets for young scholars to conduct and share their research."

"I love supporting Austen research." –Diana Kinsey

34. Visiting JASNA.org

"JASNA's website contains a trove of resources—from interesting videos, such as the virtual recreation of [Steventon Rectory](#) and the [Austen's World Up Close](#) series, to the [upcoming-events calendar](#)."

35. Socializing with other Janeites

"I love learning about life in the early 1800s, including Regency period dresses and attending afternoon tea so-cials—and especially evening gala balls and performing different dance styles after many months of practice."

–Kathleen Fulton

"I love connecting with others who are enthusiastic about something I'm interested in. It's also a 'day out' for me where I can do something that I enjoy." –Julia VanDelft



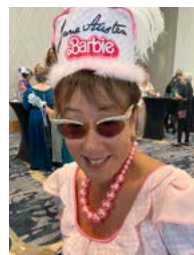
36. Wearing or admiring Regency attire

"I enjoy traveling to AGM cities, wearing costumes, and dancing at the AGMs." –Jody Regan

"I enjoy dressing up in period attire when attending JASNA functions and events." –Mary Garner

"I look forward to watching the AGM fashion show and promenade—and seeing what VP for Conferences Jane Boltz will be wearing!"

continued on page 29



Jane Boltz as Jane Austen Barbie and a Regency rock star, and decked out for Austen's 250th

JASNA by the Numbers

Established in **1979**, the Jane Austen Society of North America is a volunteer-run nonprofit dedicated to fostering among the widest number of readers the study, appreciation, and understanding of Jane Austen's works, life, and genius.

50th
anniversary
in **2029**

No. 1

World's largest
Jane Austen
Society, with
more than
6,000
members.

Membership

60% individual annual members

23% life members

17% student members

47 countries represented (U.S., Canada, and **45** others)

Regions

84 regions offering in-person and virtual conferences, events, and activities

• **71** in the U.S.

• **11** in Canada

• **2** virtual regions

975+ region events in **2025**

Communications

36 *Austen Chat* monthly podcast episodes since July **2023**, with listeners in **127** countries

39 issues of *Persuasions On-Line*, the digital, peer-reviewed journal, since **1999**

47 issues of *Persuasions*, the Jane Austen journal, since **1979**

153 issues of *JASNA News*, the Society's quarterly newsletter, since **1985**

JASNA.org (stats for **2025**)

• **310,271** unique users • **475,924** site visits • **860,275** page views

• **221** countries/territories represented among site visitors

Tours and Conferences

24 JASNA Tours of England since **1997**

- **625** members participating

47 Annual General Meetings, a four-day literary conference and fun-fueled gathering including a Regency ball, banquet, and numerous workshops and special activities

- **37** locations across the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. where JASNA AGMs have been held since **1979**
- **25,590** attendees
- **166** plenary speakers
- **1,015** breakout sessions

Programs

10th anniversary of the Young Filmmakers Contest for amateur cineastes age 30 or under around the world, featuring **36** expert judges from the entertainment industry, Austen scholarship, and film criticism

560 entries to JASNA's annual Essay Contest in **2025**, with students from **47** countries

20 award locations since **2021** for JASNA's Book Box Program—designed to help schools, libraries, and community groups introduce Austen to new generations and diverse readers

- **946** books given away
- **16** states and provinces
- **11** public schools
- **3** public libraries
- **2** charter schools
- **2** religious schools
- **2** community organizations
- **1** regional franchise program giving an additional **113** books to **4** organizations

17 International Visitor Program awardees since **2005**

Annual General Meetings

SUNRISES AND SUNSETS: 2026 AGM Explores Austen's Bath-Set Bookend Novels

Excitement is building for the annual gathering of hundreds of JASNA members, this year from October 29 to November 1, in beautiful Tucson, Arizona. Jane Austen's Bath Novels—*Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*—will be explored by members over the long weekend. Watch a video preview of the conference's noteworthy plenary speakers in "[Get a Taste of What's in Store ...](#)" featuring **Hazel Jones, Devoney Looser, Brandon Taylor, and Lidia Chang.**

Over two dozen [breakout sessions and another dozen special sessions](#) led by engaging JASNA speakers will include presentations by **Inger Brodey, Lynda Hall, Juliet McMaster, Peter Sabor, Ben Wiebracht,** and many more. In addition, the AGM team has organized numerous [special events, workshops, and local tours.](#)

Gill Hornby, special guest speaker, is president of the U.K. Jane Austen Society and author of three novels about Austen and her family: *Miss Austen* (adapted as a limited series starring Keeley Hawes), *Godmersham*, and *The Elopement* (adaptation in development).

Nada Saadaoui will be this year's New Voices Breakout speaker. A PhD student at the University of Cumbria in the U.K., she will present "Walking in Bath: Female Mobility, Urban Space, and Social Expectation in *Northanger Abbey*," examining how walking functions as a mode of agency, critique, and spatial negotiation across varied landscapes.



Saguaros in the Sonoran Desert

Breakout and special session topics will include "Pride and Masculinity in the Bath Novels," "Unhappy Wives, or Virtue Not Rewarded," "Finding Health in Bath," "Astronomer Caroline Herschel," "Dia de los Muertos Origins and Customs," and "Jane Austen and the Jews."

Tucson is an ancient oasis in the Sonoran desert rich in petroglyphs of the Hohokam people, beautiful forests of saguaro cactus, botanical and natural history outdoor museums, local culinary and group dining experiences,



Mission San Xavier del Bac



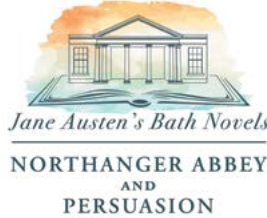
"First Star" by artist Irene Klar, on view at Tucson's Desert Artisans Gallery

and the iconic Mission San Xavier del Bac, constructed in Tucson in the late 18th century. The stunning sunsets, sunrises, and serenity of the desert create a wonderful environment for reflection and enjoyment of Austen's literary talents. Average high temperatures of 80 degrees are expected.

The AGM promises something for everyone, ranging from an Open Mic Night to a showcase of Austen-themed artwork and crafts projects to a Regency masked ball on Halloween.

The popular [Young Filmmakers Contest](#), celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2026, showcases creative movie making from junior Janeites. This year's finalist films will be shown at the Tucson AGM and attendees will be able to vote on their favorite, with the People's Choice Award announced at Sunday's brunch.

Getting Ready for the Tucson AGM



GET TO KNOW TUCSON: In 2025, while Janeites celebrated the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth, Tucsonians commemorated the 250th anniversary of the city's founding. The area around Tucson is the oldest continuously cultivated land in the U.S. Last year, BBC named the city one of the world's 25 best places to travel; it was the only U.S. destination to crack the top 10. Tucson continues to garner press attention for its nature offerings and unique mix of cultures.

GET READY TO REGISTER: Visit the [2026 AGM website](#) for the most up-to-date information on speakers, special sessions, workshops, tours, and the conference schedule. A [pre-registration video and printable registration guide](#) are now available. Registration will open on Saturday, June 20, at noon Eastern. If you will be unavailable during that time, arrange to have a friend register for you. If they choose the "pay by check" option, you can send in a check or pay by credit card later. Do not choose to "opt out of future AGM emails" or you will miss important conference updates. In addition, the AGM team may need to contact you if you sign up for a tour with a meal or are on a waitlist for a workshop or other activity.

GET READY TO TRAVEL: Hotel registration will open on June 23. Visit the [AGM hotel webpage](#) for details about JASNA's greatly discounted room rates. If you'd like to share a room, check the room-share board (linked from the hotel webpage) to locate roommates. Start planning now by checking out the tips on the [AGM travel](#) webpage. You can choose from two airports. Tucson Airport (TUS) is a small, relaxed airport closest to the conference hotel but, from most cities, flights may require a connection. From some points of origin, it can be cheaper and more convenient to fly into Phoenix (PHX), a two-hour drive to Tucson. A limited JASNA-chartered shuttle bus service is being arranged from PHX to the hotel (for a fee) on Wednesday and Thursday, as well as for the return on Sunday after the AGM. JASNA has secured airline discount codes from Delta, Southwest, and United. A rideshare board will open in July to help coordinate travel from/to the airports.

GET READY FOR A GREAT TIME: Renovated last year, the beautiful conference hotel, [JW Marriott Starr Pass](#), is surrounded by Tucson Mountain Park and its dramatic saguaro cacti. The hotel grounds offer peaceful walks, hiking trails, and a lovely pool complex. Every room has openable sliders for fresh air; many rooms feature balconies. While the hotel is located five miles outside of town, the conference planners will provide plentiful opportunities to travel into Tucson for meals, shopping, and local tours.

The AGM is working with four local companies to offer small,

specialized [group tours in Tucson](#) and the surrounding area that will be available through AGM registration. Also offered will be transportation-only shuttles to Tucson locations so that you can explore at your own pace. You won't want to miss the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, a unique fusion of a zoo, botanical garden, natural history museum, and art gallery focusing on the Sonoran Desert region.

In addition, the AGM team has suggestions for [pre-and post-AGM tours](#) and experiences. If you're considering exploring the northern part of the state prior to or after the AGM, you might want to begin or end in Phoenix. For tours to the Grand Canyon, Sedona, or Antelope Canyon, contact [Detours American West Tours](#) to book now; these tours will not be sold through JASNA's AGM registration form.

GETTING HUNGRY? Did you know that Tucson was the first U.S. city to be designated a UNESCO "City of Gastronomy"? You are in for a treat whether you participate in the downtown group dinners being organized on several evenings, take tours that include meal stops, or find restaurants on your own or with friends. Five miles from the hotel you'll find Mercado San Agustin, an open-air public market that features authentic Mexican food, upscale dining, and local shops and artisans. Door Dash is an alternative for those who wish to chill in their room.

For breakfast and lunch, the AGM team has negotiated quick in-house options at reasonable prices, including JASNA-only "grab & go" lunch concessions for Friday and Saturday. A "Lunch & Learn" on Friday will feature a buffet lunch that includes some period-appropriate recipes and a talk by food historian Julianne Gehrre. The hotel offers several in-house restaurants ranging from casual to upscale. Meals included in the registration fee are the Saturday evening banquet and Sunday morning brunch. The registration form will provide the opportunity to specify any dietary restrictions.

GET VIRTUAL ACCESS: If a journey to Tucson is not in the cards for you this year, livestream/virtual registration will provide access to the core conference, some breakout sessions, and select special sessions. For in-person conference-goers, adding the "attendee plus" option will grant access to all recordings after the AGM through February 1, 2027.

Registration opens SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2026, at noon Eastern. The JASNA hotel reservation block opens on June 23, 2026.

Examining a Heroine Like No Other

“She has produced sketches of such spirit and originality. ... The narrative of all her novels is composed of such common occurrences ... and her dramatis personae conduct themselves upon the motives and principles which the readers may recognize as ruling their own.”

Sir Walter Scott on *Emma* (*The Quarterly Review*, 1815)

From the outset of Jane Austen’s longest and arguably funniest novel, her heroine, Emma Woodhouse, confidently insists that she is not in want of a husband and that she shall never marry. *Emma* thereby poses the intriguing question as a rejoinder to the famous first sentence of another Austen novel: Is a young woman, in possession of a large fortune, really without need of a mate?

JASNA members will explore this and other questions about Austen’s masterpiece *Emma* at next year’s AGM at the Hyatt Regency at the Arch in St. Louis, Missouri, October 21–24, 2027.

Unlike Austen’s other heroines, Emma’s family resources are more than ample. She does not face the bleak consequences of no family support (as Fanny Price does in *Mansfield Park*). Nor is Emma’s family unwilling to approve any match unworthy of their sense of family dignity (as Anne Elliot endures in *Persuasion*). Emma has no male cousin waiting in the wings poised to evict surviving females from her father’s estate (like Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*). In *Emma*, no weak-minded stepbrother shirks the promise made to his father to help provide for his sisters (as Elinor and Marianne Dashwood suffer in *Sense and Sensibility*).



No, Emma is unique: She is strong, secure, and confident at age 20 because, under Regency law and Emma’s unusual circumstances, she has grown up free of legal and social restrictions that force other Highbury women to contemplate highly uncertain futures unless they manage to marry well. Austen gives us a heroine unaffected by any such restraints. There’s no male heir in her family and no risk that feeble Mr. Woodhouse will remarry and produce a male heir. Emma’s mother, long dead, won’t be dominating Hartfield estate or her daughter. Emma’s sister has her own house and household, husband, and family in London. Thus, Emma quite naturally expects to enjoy her independent status and remain the dominant female in Highbury society. What could go wrong?

Austen fills her novel with razor-sharp humor and irony, exposing the ridiculous figures of Mr. Elton and Mr. Woodhouse, endorsing admirable characters like Mr. Martin and Mr. Knightley, and building empathy for other women: Harriet Smith, Jane Fairfax, Miss Bates, Mrs. Weston—but never the insufferable Mrs. Elton. Applying her exceptional narrative techniques and sparkling dialogue, Austen traces Emma’s journey of self-discovery and transformation. After much mystery and misdirection, and many misunderstandings, Emma (and Austen’s readers) discover happiness at last.

Join JASNA in St. Louis to explore the many absorbing questions that Austen’s novel has posed to readers for more than two centuries. It is the universal nature of Austen’s literary talent, and its continued resonance among so many diverse cultures, that make *Emma* a masterpiece. As Cornel West declared at the 2012 Brooklyn AGM: Other authors may have the light, “but Jane has the fire!”

2027 AGM CALL FOR PAPERS

Proposals for AGM breakout sessions and applications for the New Voices Speaker Grant for the 2027 St. Louis AGM (Meet Emma at the Arch) are due no later than November 15, 2026. See the [Call for Papers](#) for details and guidelines.

‘Meet Me in St. Louie, Louie—meet me at’ ...

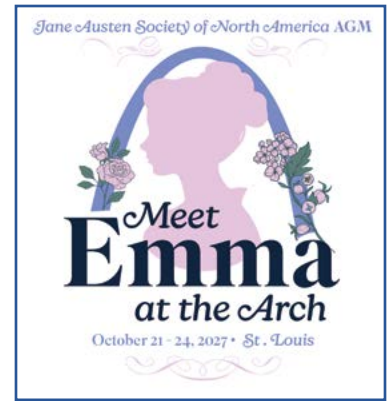
THE GATEWAY ARCH & RIVERFRONT

No visit to St. Louis is complete without a trip to the [Gateway Arch](#). This shining, 630-foot monument was completed in 1965 and dedicated as the nation’s “gateway to the West.” The AGM conference hotel, the Hyatt Regency at the Arch, is steps away from this landmark. You are invited to stroll the beautifully redesigned Arch grounds along the mighty Mississippi, then ride the tram to the top for breathtaking views of downtown, the river, and beyond. Below the Arch, a [museum](#) brings to life the story of expansion, exploration, and the many peoples whose paths converged here.

FOREST PARK: ST. LOUIS' CULTURAL EPICENTER

The beautifully landscaped [Forest Park](#), which gives new meaning to the “sublime and the picturesque,” was the site of the 1904 World’s Fair. The 1,300-acre park is known for its numerous cultural institutions (all free admission) that include:

- [Saint Louis Zoo](#): One of the nation’s top zoos and a joy for those who love natural history and careful storytelling about conservation.
- [Saint Louis Art Museum](#): The collection is a visual feast and includes everything from Renaissance masters to contemporary works. Art Hill, where the museum is situated, offers a stunning view and a sense of the grand, old-world design of the park.
- [Saint Louis Science Center](#): Explore hundreds of hands-on exhibits, or immerse yourself in the five-story [OMNIMAX theater](#)—one of only nine in the world. Or go cosmic at the [McDonnell Planetarium](#), named best planetarium in the 2025 *USA TODAY* Readers’ Choice Awards.
- [World’s Fair Pavilion](#): Explore a graceful reminder of 1904, when St. Louis introduced the world to new ideas, inventions, and, some say, even the ice cream cone.
- [The Jewel Box](#): This Art Deco glass conservatory houses stunning permanent floral displays and blends architecture and design with botanical beauty.



BREWERIES, BEER, AND CAMARADERIE

Jane Austen brewed beer at Steventon Rectory but you can enjoy the process without quite as much effort at the iconic [Anheuser-Busch Brewery Tour](#), where you can observe the historic facilities, learn the story of an American beer empire, and visit the magnificent Clydesdales.

St. Louis’ beer story doesn’t end there. The city is rich with craft breweries, each with its own character. Urban Chestnut Brewing Company, 4 Hands Brewing Co., and Schlafly (The Saint Louis Brewery) will quench your thirst for bubbly ale.

WALK THROUGH HISTORY

JASNA will offer a variety of layered, narrative-rich tours tailored to members’ interests. On a blues-themed walking tour, you can trace the soulful history of St. Louis’ music scene and the artists who gave voice to the city’s joys and sorrows. Another tour will focus on women’s history, helping you discover how women have shaped St. Louis’ civic, cultural, and literary life.

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI

With brothers in the Navy, Austen had a profound respect for life on the water. It’s important to remember that the reason for St. Louis’ existence is the Mississippi River. A riverboat tour along the “Big Muddy” is practically a page out of American literature. While Mark Twain may have expressed some cheeky opinions on Miss Austen’s works, a paddleboat ride evokes his stories and the lore of the river.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TRIP

Those arriving early or staying after the AGM can explore nature, shop, mingle, and dine. Pleasures offered in the city proper include:

- [Delmar Loop](#): A vibrant district with bookstores, music venues, public art, and the St. Louis Walk of Fame honoring authors, musicians, and cultural figures. It’s a great place to browse, listen to live music, and soak up local flavor.
- [Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum](#): A peaceful, beautifully landscaped garden cemetery where notable St. Louisans, including writers, thinkers, and historical figures, are buried. History, sculpture, and landscape architecture blend in this profound and quiet space.
- [The Hill](#): Its red sauce, toasted ravioli, bakery-fresh bread, and espresso make St. Louis’ famous Italian neighborhood the perfect place to gather with your JASNA friends.
- [Central Library of St. Louis](#): Who among us would not want to tour a library? This historical beauty boasts some of the finest examples of beaux arts and neoclassical architecture in the United States.



AUSTEN MEETS AI

Pride and Prejudice: A Novel Magazine

Curated by S. J. King, Esq.

London: Haringey, Highgate (1813/2025)

132 pages

Full-color illustrations throughout

Three-volume magazine set: £50

The Pemberley edition (hardcover): £80

prideandprejudice.uk

Review by Janine Barchas



Sometimes a product is so innovative that no vocabulary yet exists to aptly describe it. This mind-bending publication has me stumped—in the best possible way.

But how, you might ask, can yet another illustrated edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, no matter how sumptuous, possibly baffle a reviewer familiar with two centuries of its pictorial reprintings—from Richard Bentley’s modest 19th century frontispieces to today’s full-color anime? Well, this luxury edition breaks the mold—and with an admirable teaching component. While the text remains familiar, the fashion-magazine-style layout and illustrations are the product of artificial intelligence (AI), guided by the self-described “curator,” or editor, S. J. King. The mesmerizing, heady mix of historical fact and visual fiction will have you, too, turning pages long after the usual lights out.

Imagine the text of *Pride and Prejudice* poured into a magazine format resembling a thick, luscious issue of a modern fashion periodical like *Vogue*, filled to the brim with advertisements for Regency-era products and photo shoots that manipulate Georgian gowns and trends. Do not expect facsimiles or approximations of Regency fashion plates found in the periodicals available to Austen herself. Instead, the images in this edition combine genuine Georgian paintings or objects with AI-generated models. Most of the advertisements and fashion spreads have small QR codes in the corner that serve up a series of cultural end-notes. Each annotation confirms that AI’s visual fiction hearkens back to this real-world product or that historical person from Austen’s era. To put it another way, this is a blend of then and now—simultaneously historically faithful and anachronistically cheeky.

Take, for example, the fashion spread “Rational Creatures,” featuring three Georgian-era tastemakers—Elizabeth Viscountess Melbourne, Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, and Anne Seymour Damer (32–33). This would-be fashion spread is recognizable as an AI reworking of the witty 1775 portrait by Daniel Gardner of the three society hostesses styled as the witches in *Macbeth*. Reimagined as a guest-directed photo

shoot for a glossy mag orchestrated by three “patronesses,” the AI-generated image is both unsettlingly new and reassuringly familiar. The QR code leads to a note that explains how the shoot riffs on the phrase from *Persuasion* and provides links to a range of Wikipedia entries for each of the historical personages. True, this does not amount to a full and satisfying scholarly footnote and there is no implied connection to the nearby moment in *Pride and Prejudice* that this illustration interrupts (the sneer about Cheapside exchanged between Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst). But the informative links encourage and reward the curious, urging a more-than-casual dalliance with history.

As befits the magazine-style format, readers are encouraged to be playful, to flip between text and context, and to extend their knowledge. King assumes that his readers, no dull elves they, are smart enough to sift through the mashup of real and unreal.

Similarly, the gorgeous, full-bleed advert for “*Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, by the Author of *Evelina*” teases imaginary customers with a fabricated, *Bridgerton*-style group photo and a quotation: “If to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their termination” (105). It is signed only “Available from John Hatchard, Piccadilly, London,” with a wee QR code that leads to more links and the expected revelation that Frances Burney was Austen’s “favorite author.”

Everywhere you look in this remarkable and freshly illustrated edition, you see the past and the future inextricably reflected, as in a funhouse mirror. The images in this unique edition may even prompt new readers to explore some rabbit holes of genuine historical context.

Janine Barchas holds the Chancellor’s Council Centennial Professorship in the Book Arts at the University of Texas at Austin. Her latest books include The Novel Life of Jane Austen, a graphic biography with illustrator Isabel Greenberg, and Paper Jane, a catalog of the recent Grolier exhibition co-curated with Sandra Clark and Mary Crawford.

TEXT AND TEXTILE

Patchwork: A Graphic Biography of Jane Austen

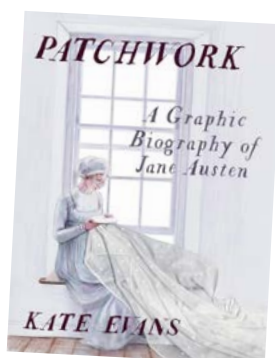
By Kate Evans

Verso (2025), 228 pages

Color illustrations throughout

Hardcover, \$34.95

Review by Emma Kantor



In her eighth work of graphic nonfiction, author-illustrator Kate Evans weaves the threads of Jane Austen's life and literary legacy with an exacting eye for historical detail. Fittingly, the end papers for *Patchwork* feature a reproduction of the patchwork coverlet that Austen, her sister, Cassandra, their mother, and their friend Martha Lloyd crafted with their own hands. One has the impression that the biography is wrapped in a warm embrace. The coverlet is an expression of "communal creativity" (167) and a symbol of the refuge that the four women built at Chawton Cottage in Austen's final years. In addition to incorporating bits of fabric, the book's illustrations also pay homage to Cassandra's watercolors, reminding us that the novelist was surrounded by artistic women.

Admirers of another recent graphic biography, *The Novel Life of Jane Austen* by Janine Barchas and Isabel Greenberg, will find much to appreciate here. Whereas Barchas structures her tale in three acts—following Austen's years as "Budding Writer," "Struggling Artist," and "Published Author"—Evans takes a maximalist approach.

The volume opens with the birth of Jane Austen just over 250 years ago, on December 16, 1775, and carries us to her death, with a brief "Interlude" (99–125) that zooms out to examine larger issues of race, empire, and commerce: "the threads that crisscross the fabric of society" (107). The focus of the book, however, is on the material realities of Austen's lifetime, and the ways they textured her writing. Using the metaphor of quilting, Evans declares: "The historical record is threadbare. The following narrative has been patchworked together from Austen's own words, gleaned from her novels, her poems, and from what remains of her letters" (3).

I was interested to learn about Austen's infancy and childhood, a period with which I was less than familiar. As was common for members of the gentry, she spent her earliest years away from home, being cared for by a tenant farmer's wife, Elizabeth Littleworth. At an age that was deemed suitable, she returned to the parsonage and "her own kind. She has mastered life's greatest lesson. Passions must be conquered. Class divides" (15).

Austen left home again at age 7 to attend a school for girls in Oxford, but an outbreak of measles and typhus prompted her family to bring her back to Steventon. I found the episode surprising—more like something out of the Brontë sisters' biography and bibliography—which reveals how prettified some versions of Austen's life have become. Evans casts

light on another omission from the standard account, represented by a diamond-shaped cutout of cloth (29): Austen's older brother George, whose unnamed disability led her parents to send him away for life.

Of course, the book covers the well-trodden ground of Austen's adolescence and juvenilia, and eventual path to (pseudonymous) publication. Still, the visual narrative remains dynamic throughout. We see how Austen's informal education of novels and home theatricals set her on a course for authorship, an unconventional path for a Regency woman. The words "PERNICIOUS," "FOOLISH," "DANGEROUS," and "RIDICULOUS" (32) dominate the page, emphasizing the controversy surrounding novels. Through her genius for storytelling and literary realism, Austen elevated the form: "She has moved from the ridiculous to the sublime" (59).

The text does not dwell on Austen's romantic disappointments. While in some eyes, "she will always be known as a spinster" (124), Evans reclaims the epithet as a source of pride. It was Austen's status as a single woman of certain means that allowed her creativity to bloom. Through her painstaking process of revising her manuscripts, she wedded the tools of the seamstress, a traditional female occupation, with her singular intellectual gifts: "She re-reads it and restructures it, attaching the sections together with sewing pins" (133).

In 1815, the eruption of Mount Tambora in present-day Indonesia sent volcanic ash spewing into the atmosphere and triggered a global climate catastrophe. The Year Without a Summer, as it was termed, coincided with Austen's final decline in health. Upon her death, a light went out. Cassandra wrote of her late sister, "She was the sun of my life, the gilder of every pleasure, the soother of every sorrow; I had not a thought concealed from her, and it is as if I had lost a part of myself" (182). Her tribute—however often quoted—never fails to move.

The endnotes offer generous context on the novels and letters. One in particular caught my attention: Evans posits that the Chawton women's coverlet "could well have been pieced using the manuscript of *Sense and Sensibility*" (221). It's an apt coda for a work that traces the intimate intersections of text and textile across Austen's lifetime.

Emma Kantor is a Brooklyn-based writer, comedian, and children's news editor at Publishers Weekly.

CONTEXTUALIZING AUSTEN

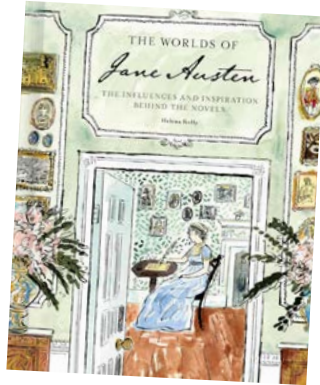
The Worlds of Jane Austen: The Influences and Inspiration Behind the Novels

By Helena Kelly

Frances Lincoln (2025), 208 pages

150+ b/w and color illustrations

Hardcover, \$35



Review by Maura Henry

Historians have a pithy adage about how best to understand literary works: no text without context. Literary scholar Helena Kelly has answered this call in her lively new book, *The Worlds of Jane Austen: The Influences and Inspiration Behind the Novels*.

In this elegant volume, Kelly deepens the reader's understanding of Austen and her novels by exploring the major ideas, events, and people that shaped Austen's world. Kelly's book is well-written, insightful, and geared to a wide audience. Enriched with 150+ illustrations (including 18th and 19th century images and photographs chronicling Austenmania in the 20th and 21st centuries), the book is sure to entertain and enlighten.

Kelly—who earned a PhD in English at Oxford and has taught English and classics there—offers cogent insights into Austen's world and works. This book marks Kelly's second foray into Austen's life and times. In her first book, *Jane Austen, the Secret Radical* (2016), Kelly focused on Austen's life. She rejected the image of Austen as the quiet and pious Aunt Jane first crafted by Austen's family: Instead, Kelly painted a picture of a far more complex and rebellious woman.

In the present book, Kelly emphasizes the times more than the life. Adopting a historical lens, Kelly explores how Austen's life and work were shaped by and reflective of the period's major historical events. Kelly notes that although Austen doesn't explicitly write about war, political and social reforms, and economics, her novels are informed by such matters. Kelly guides and encourages the careful reader to pick up on the many historical Easter eggs that Austen deftly wove into the novels in order to enrich the storytelling.

Austen's times were tumultuous. Indeed, the period has long been dubbed the Age of Revolutions. Britain experienced social, economic, industrial, and intellectual revolutions, to name just a few, and was affected by two massive political revolutions (American and French) as well as near-continuous war, all of which directly shaped the life of the Austen family, the British nation, and Britain's global empire. Austen's era was also marked by subtler changes in society.

Kelly's book is arranged in chronological order, with each chapter exploring a particular period in Austen's life and a significant theme

in British history during the era. The book opens in 1775, at the rectory at Steventon where Austen was born and when the first shots of the American Revolution were heard around the world. The fierce and longstanding enmity between Britain and France shadowed Austen's short life and offered both danger and opportunities to her brothers in the British Navy.

As a result of the French Revolution and the execution of her husband, Austen's cousin Eliza de Feuillide fled France and found refuge in Steventon. Eliza's tales of her adventures enlivened and broadened Austen's understanding of a much wider world. Kelly points to revolutionary ideas in politics (democracy), social justice (abolition), and intellectual and creative developments (the Enlightenment) that circulated throughout Austen's life. With regard to quotidian matters, Kelly contextualizes Austen's ad hoc education, marriage proposal, and social network. Her family and kin provided Austen with experiences in the city, countryside, and seaside, all of which sparked the author's imagination and inspired her stories. Kelly also wisely extends her focus beyond Britain's shores and touches on the ways in which the empire shaped and was reflected in Austen's life and works.

In the final chapters, Kelly examines Austen's enduring legacy, the global phenomenon that is Austenmania, and the author's remarkable afterlife, right through to the present day. Kelly has crafted an engaging exploration of Austen and her world.

My lone—and major—critique is that the book lacks citations to all the primary-source texts (including Austen's novels, family papers, contemporaneous novels, and newspapers) and the recent literary and historical scholarship with which Kelly engages. Instead, the book provides a few selected citations in the endnotes. Curiously, the vast majority of the 150+ images are properly sourced. Since the book offers so few textual citations, students and Austen scholars cannot use it for academic work to the degree that they might have done. The general reader, on the other hand, will take delight in reading and owning this marvelous coffee-table book.

Maura A. Henry is professor of history at Holyoke Community College and lecturer at Harvard University Extension School. She writes and teaches on 18th century England, including an award-winning course, Jane Austen's World in History, Literature, and Film.

AUSTEN IN YOUR POCKET

Jane Austen: The Original Romance Novelist

By Janet Lewis Saidi

Adams Media (2025), 240 pages

Hardcover, \$17

Review by Alexandra Socarides

Jane Austen: The Original Romance Novelist

is a deceptively tiny book. It is one of several “Pocket Portraits” published by Adams Media,

a series that includes similarly styled books on Agatha Christie, Edgar Allan Poe, and J. R. R. Tolkien. Although technically not small enough to fit in a pocket—as 19th century “pocket books” were meant to do—these books, and the one on Jane Austen in particular, gesture to a genre of 19th century light reading, often for and about women.

This lightness is signaled not just by its size but also by its cover, from which Austen—or a modern drawing of her—smiles at you from inside an oval portrait. Small objects encircle her face: a parasol, a top hat, a vase with a peacock feather, thread and a thimble, scissors, a ribbon, a bonnet, a book, a candle, white gloves, a cup of tea, and a house. These objects create a kind of wreath, connected as they are by flowers. While most of these objects are those associated with 19th century women’s domestic life, the man’s top hat and the house stand out as different from the others. The reader will soon see how much of Austen’s life was dictated by the business decisions of men as well as the existence (or not) of a home.

Consistent with the message sent by its size and cover, the inside of the book includes multiple fonts, colors, illustrations, and sections—as well as quotes pulled directly out of Austen’s novels. All of this appears to signal a kind of unseriousness that, as I suggested in my opening sentence, this book quickly belies. In fact, one of the most interesting things about this book is how it embraces many of the textual trappings of 19th century women’s literature while also being a serious undertaking. The upshot, of course, is that this makes a reader rethink their own assumptions about the framing of women’s literature, then and now.

Saidi takes the reader on a journey from the time of Austen’s great-grandparents all the way to 2017, when the Bank of England issued a portrait of Austen on the £10 note. It tells the story of Austen becoming a writer and of the complex publication of each of her novels. It treats sisterhood and family dynamics with all of the nuance that these relationships deserve. And, on top of it, the book provides sections titled “The More You Know” and “Literary Connections,” which don’t just supplement the chronological narrative but also greatly enhance it by pulling the reader out of time and place in order to tell several different, intricately entwined stories.



I’m not going to tell those stories here because you should read them yourself in this totally delightful book. If you are an Austen expert, you probably won’t learn anything new about Austen exactly, but that’s not the point. The point, I believe, is that it tells her story differently, in small chunks that Saidi weaves together perfectly.

Alexandra Socarides is a scholar of 19th century American women’s poetry, primarily the work of Emily Dickinson. She currently serves as provost and vice president for academic affairs at Emerson College in Boston.

SISTERS AND CHOICES

The Austens

By Sarah Emsley

Pottersfield Press (2025)

275 pages

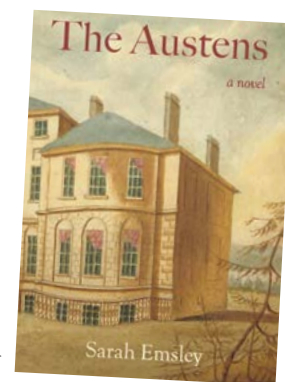
Paperback, \$22

Review by Diana Birchall

R. W. Chapman, the eminent Austen scholar, has described the difficulties of writing about the Austen family: “The task is not easy, for the Austens and their relations by marriage were numerous and prolific, and their historian, labouring to be lucid, is embarrassed by their tendency to marry twice, and to change ... their surnames.” (Joan Austen-Leigh in *Persuasions* 11, 1989, page 28.)

Author and academic Sarah Emsley has an ambitious task in this family novel: employing a complex structure that offers a dual portrait of Jane Austen and her sister-in-law Fanny Palmer. She succeeds with silken wisdom, deep research, and a graceful prose style.

Her two heroines form a piquant contrast, with Fanny marrying Austen’s seagoing brother Charles for love. This results in a life of adventure and hardship as she travels aboard ship with their growing family between Bermuda, Halifax (Emsley’s own home), and England. Jane’s more interior portrait imagines her state of mind at different periods of her life and gives a plausible idea of her writerly process. In her late 20s, disappointed at not being published, aware that marriage is her best provision, Austen sees a cautionary tale in her sisters-in-law, with their incessant childbearing—three of them dying in childbirth. Keen social observation illuminates the book’s theme,



which Austen herself did not write about directly: the real dangers of marriage in an era of few choices for women.

Epistolary sections convey the far-flung Austens' family life. Fanny is 13 when she is introduced, in naive girlish entries, enjoying her lovely Bermuda home, where her father is attorney general. In a few short years, she is the bride of Captain Austen, and she writes of travels, ships, and babies. Her struggles in crowded ship's quarters are colorful and harrowing, including her distress over the flogging of sailors, knowing that her husband is giving the orders. Jane shares family news and some of her short tales.

A caveat: Emsley's rendering of Jane's voice is smooth and confident, but her method is based partly on sprinkling quotes from the novels into conversations. Some work well, as when she has Fanny say "we can none of us expect to be in smooth water all our days," recalling Mrs. Croft in *Persuasion*. At other times, as when Fanny pops out with Elizabeth Bennet's "Let us think only of the past as its remembrance brings us pleasure" (69), this technique can be less apt as well as jarring.

The novel includes priceless moments throughout, as when Jane's mother tartly tells her, "You would do well to study your brother James' poetry if you wish to improve your writing" (90). Or when Cassandra proposes drawing a picture of Jane, who responds, "Who would want a sketch of me?" (129) about what would become one of the most famous portraits in the world.

As we read to understand Jane Austen better, and follow Fanny Palmer's breathless experiences, we increasingly feel as involved as family members ourselves. The novel is a true labor of love, and like Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*, has "no awkwardnesses that [are] not as good as graces."

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

CHARLOTTE LUCAS HAS HER SAY

Introducing Mrs. Collins

By Rachel Parris

Little, Brown (2025)

377 pages + 10, including "Author's Note" and "Acknowledgments"
Paperback, \$19.99/ebook, \$11.99

Review by Laurie Kaplan

In her dedication to her mother, Rachel Parris describes Charlotte Lucas as "highly practical, quietly capable, occasionally opinionated and with a tremendous capacity for love" (just like Parris' own mother). Parris could have

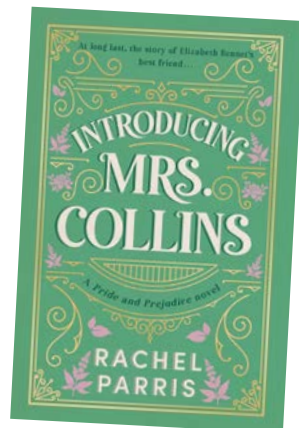
added that Charlotte has a sense of humor that will make readers laugh out loud—more on that in a moment—and/or cry openly in public.

Introducing Mrs. Collins is a perfect followup to *Pride and Prejudice*: Characters behave badly and well, or both. Parris includes faultless details about clothes, hairdos, nature, and war on the Continent, embarrassingly real descriptions of rejections at balls, and Charlotte's meditation on the heartbreaking acknowledgment that wedding = "wife," not even "Charlotte." She acknowledges that marriage locks her into the "Mrs. Collins" box. She sees herself being erased because she "accepted" William Collins. But she stands up to criticism and acknowledges: "I knew my mind when I accepted, and I shall remain firm on it. I shall have a home of my own. I shall start a life of my own. I have made my choice" (8).

Does Charlotte let "Mrs." crush her wit and the yearnings of her heart and body? Not at all. Several of Austen's characters—Mr. Darcy, Mr. Wickham, Colonel Fitzwilliam, and Lady Catherine—play significant parts in the tragedies and comedies that elevate Charlotte's seemingly sterile existence. While Mr. Collins' behavior elicits our sympathy as well as our aversion, he does figure in the most hilarious wedding night: Charlotte "arranged her bosom" and waited. "He had come into the bedroom in his nightgown, carrying a cup of tea and a candle, looking for all the world like Wee Willie Winkie, and Charlotte could hardly countenance having carnal knowledge of a figure so comical" (33). The scene is unforgettable. Poor Charlotte.

Or perhaps lucky Charlotte, for this exquisite novel excavates minute facets of Georgian life, death, and recovery—especially for women. Letters in script appear at significant intervals in the text so that readers get to know the backstories as well as the daily angst of the characters. Parris sets the tone and the ton of the novel. She is an accomplished writer who knows Austen's milieu and style, and she gives us a nerve-racking drama about a character who is often neglected. Read the novel once, and then read it again. I did.

*Laurie Kaplan has taught in London, Baltimore, Barcelona, Odesa, and Miami. She is a former editor of *Persuasions* and *Persuasions On-Line* and lives in Oxfordshire, England.*



A LOVE LETTER TO NEW YORK CITY

Anne of Avenue A

By Audrey Bellezza and Emily Harding
Gallery Books (2025), 336 pages
Paperback, \$19

Review by Sarah Emsley

In *Anne of Avenue A*, a delightful reimagining of *Persuasion* set in present-day New York City, the plot and many of the characters seem familiar, while the variations are plentiful enough to keep us guessing—just what we hope to find in a book that offers a modern take on a Jane Austen novel. For example, in *Anne of Avenue A*, it is Freddie Wentworth himself, not his sister, who moves into the apartment Anne Elliot and her spendthrift father have had to vacate. In *Persuasion*, Mary Musgrove reports that Captain Wentworth has said Anne is “so altered” that he would not have known her, while Anne herself feels that “She had seen the same Frederick Wentworth.” By contrast, in this novel, both Anne and Freddie take note of how much the other has changed, and we learn about these judgments from them directly because the story is told in chapters that alternate between their points of view.

More importantly, the reason Anne broke off her relationship with Freddie is quite different from the reason Austen’s Anne Elliot broke her engagement to Captain Wentworth. It had to do with her own career plans as well as his, not just her assessment—or her influential advisor’s assessment—of his prospects. This modern heroine shares some characteristics with Austen’s Anne, including her reserve and her thoughtful and considerate approach to helping her friends. She ultimately departs from Austen’s Anne in significant ways, most notably when she agrees that her mother’s recommendation to be more selfish wasn’t bad advice and even says she should probably have followed that advice sooner. It’s hard to imagine the original Anne—who describes Mr. Elliot’s “manoeuvres of selfishness and duplicity” as “revolting”—agreeing that selfishness is a good idea.

Anne of Avenue A unfolds over the course of several weeks in the autumn, leading up to scenes set amid the sparkle of the holidays in



New York City. Rich in detail about the complexities and challenges of navigating the realms of business, real estate, and social life in the 21st century, the novel is as much a love letter to New York itself as it is an homage to Austen’s *Persuasion*. Speaking of letters, fans of “The Letter” in *Persuasion* (which I think includes most of us) will no doubt be intrigued to know that Freddie writes not just one eloquent letter of adoration to his Anne but several of them, each folded into a tiny, perfect paper triangle.

Sarah Emsley is author of Jane Austen’s Philosophy of the Virtues (2005) and editor, with Liz Philosophos Cooper, of the JASNA series “Unexpectedly Austen.” Her debut novel, The Austens, was published in 2025.

AUSTEN GETS AN OSCAR NOD

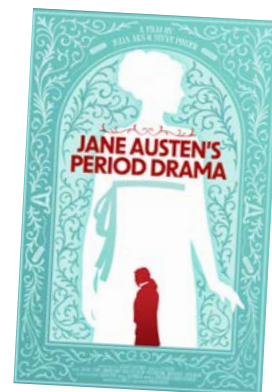
Jane Austen’s Period Drama

Available on [YouTube](#)

Review by Betsy Groban

For a good belly laugh, check out “Jane Austen’s Period Drama,” a 13-minute film that was nominated for an Oscar in the Best Live Action Short Film category this year. Puns and wordplay abound, starting with the film’s title. Yes, it’s a period drama, meaning it’s set in the Regency era, but it’s also a drama about—you guessed it—getting your period. It was written and directed by Julia Aks (who also stars, as Miss Estrogenia Talbot) and Steve Pinder. Emma Thompson served as “executive menstrual advisor.” (Learn more about the project on page 30.)

Betsy Groban is book review editor of JASNA News.



Test Your Austen Film Adaptation Knowledge

It is a truth universally acknowledged that—love them or hate them—new film, television, and video adaptations of Jane Austen’s works will continue to proliferate. Already, such adaptations have attracted countless actors eager to embody her well-written characters—with many performers taking on more than one Austen-related role. Take our [Double Duty](#) quiz to test your knowledge of such dual (or even triple) Austen roles. Or try your luck in our [Family Ties](#) quiz to see how well you know real-life relations involved in Austen adaptations.

ADAPTATIONS, ANYONE?

Almost everyone has at least one favorite Austen adaptation. We asked four esteemed JASNA members to share theirs.

"I am going to be greedy and claim two favorite adaptations. The first is so obvious it almost doesn't count: the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice*, which introduced me to Austen and which I watched as a 9-year-old, absolutely riveted and enchanted by the world that unfolded around me. My second is the brilliant, clever, funny, and deeply innovative *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, which came out in 2013 on YouTube. I absolutely loved the way the writers kept the essentials of the story, remained true to the characters and themes of social and financial inequality, but used modern media and storytelling techniques to bring it bang up to date. It's an inspiring, thoughtful, and addictive adaptation."

Lizzie Dunford, director of *Jane Austen's House*

"My favorite Austen adaptations are *By the Book* (2018) by Julia Sonneborn, a retelling of *Persuasion*, and *Ladies of the House* (2021) by Lauren Edmondson, a modern take on *Sense and Sensibility*. Both novels remain faithful to the original plots and protagonists but successfully reimagine them for present-day readers. They place the Anne Elliot and Elinor Dashwood characters in contemporary settings reminiscent of the originals: a small college in Southern California in the former, and ruthless Washington, D.C., political society in the latter. Both do more than remind readers of their Austen templates: They frequently reference other Austen novels; look at society with satirical and humorous eyes; and address current serious and not-so-serious issues, such as caregiving, book clubs, career advancement, widowhood, and infidelity. Sympathetic and hilarious modern characters and situations make the stories both timely and topical. I highly recommend them."

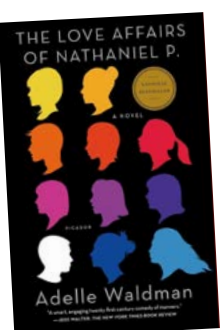
Carolyn J. Brown, member of JASNA's Nominating Committee and author of a recent essay in *Retelling Jane Austen: Essays on Recent Adaptations and Derivative Work* (2024)

"My immediate answer is almost anything that was released in 1995–96, but I'll leave those off the table as too obvious an answer. I do have a favorite Austen-inspired song, which is "No Life Without Wife" from *Bride & Prejudice* (2004). When I need a good laugh and a satirical uplift, I rewatch it on YouTube. I love the imagined scenes with the hapless Mr. Collins-inspired character, of course. But I can't help comparing the young women in this Bollywood scene with a previous slumber-party musical number from *Grease* (1978). The distance between those two scenes is enormous. Jane Austen and her novels continue to inspire us to think differently, and more deeply, about what it means to be a young woman, dancing with girlfriends in white nightgowns, with choices that aren't (yet) all they should be."

Devoney Looser, Regents Professor of English at Arizona State University

"Well, it's not an adaptation or a retelling, strictly speaking, but one of my favorite 21st century novels has Jane Austen written all over it: *The Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.* by Adelle Waldman. It's a modern-day courtship novel and social satire featuring 30-somethings on the margins of the insular world of NYC publishing. Looking for careers and love in Brooklyn's dive bars and walk-up apartment dinner parties, Waldman's characters are striving, witty, status-conscious, and self-consciously ordinary. There's something Austenesque not only in the novel's hilarious anatomy of not exactly glamorous lives but also in its focus on the prejudices and delusions that prevent people from understanding themselves and others."

Jason Solinger, associate professor of English and director of English Graduate Studies at the University of Mississippi





NOW HEAR THIS!

In Jane Austen's era, her brilliance could be shared only through print or in-person readings. Now, of course, technology allows such oral interpretations to be widely available. *JASNA News* asked members to share their favorite Austen-related audiobooks. Here's a sampling of responses.

Eyes Vs. Ears

The vast majority of respondents wrote to say they never listen to audiobooks and "infinitely prefer" a printed book. However, many members are enthusiastic devotees of audio editions—or are eager for recommendations.

"I love to listen while I am walking, gardening, knitting, or sewing my next Regency gown," Lynda Hall says.

"Sometimes you want Austen while you are out for a walk!" Celia Easton adds.

Leah Walker notes: "Audiobooks are my primary way to read these days. I listen to all six Austen novels repeatedly as a way to relax."

A few members shared how being able to listen to a favorite novel has become a lifesaver as their eyesight deteriorates. Others find it difficult to focus when listening to an audiobook or hadn't yet explored the format because of cost concerns. Regarding the latter issue, several members recommend LibriVox—a free service—borrowing from a library, or using the free trial available from some platforms.

Austen Novels Narrated

"I love listening to the original novels when a new narrator comes out," Hope Howland-Cook says. "You get to hear your favorite story reimagined and reinterpreted with different inflections."

By far the favorite reader cited by members was Juliet Stevenson, who has recorded every Austen novel plus countless other classics.

"Stevenson brings the books alive and deepens my appreciation in a way that I don't get by just reading the books on my own," Lou Trost writes. "Her voice and acting skills are superb," Marsha Huff notes. Maria Frawley adds that Stevenson "gets Austen" and thus "can convey the subtleties of her humor."

Another prolific and frequently lauded narrator was Alison Larkin, who read *The Complete Novels of Jane Austen* (87 hours). "Her voice interpretation is brilliant because she can create a consistent voice for each character," Renée Rios Weber effuses. Julie DeWitt adds: "I bought the series seven or eight years ago when Alison spoke to our region. She plays the piano—period pieces—between chapters of some of the books, too."

Sam Garrity recommends the Adjoa Andoh-narrated *Pride and Prejudice*. "To me, she is regal, witty, and ethereal. I just *adore* her," Garrity says of the actor, who plays Lady Danbury in the *Bridgerton* series.

Rosamund Pike, who portrayed Jane in the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* film, was also recommended by multiple members for her narration of that novel as well as *Sense and Sensibility*. Barbara Berman

praises Pike's "comedic timing and distinct voices."

[Jennifer Ehle's reading of *Pride and Prejudice*](#) during the pandemic was widely admired. Notes Cathy Stubbs: "The more than 40 sessions are available on YouTube, and she sometimes read the novel from her car with her dog in the backseat. She is absolutely delightful."

Minnesota Region RC Nancy O'Connor enjoyed Anna Bentinck's narration of *Mansfield Park* after it was recommended by another region member.

Other readers praised include actors Jenny Agutter, Julie Andrews, Kate Beckinsale, Lindsay Duncan, Cynthia Erivo, Claire Foy, Adrian Lukis, Lynn Redgrave, Michael Ward, and Kate Winslet.

"I love to track down favorite Austen and Austen-adjacent actors who narrate different audiobooks," Francine Strober writes. "It's such a treat to get 'lost in Austen' with them for a few hours."

"I'll listen to anything Jeremy Northam/Mr. Knightley reads," Kristian Hasty shares. "This requires no explanation."

Dramatizations

Full-cast audio plays of Austen's works also abound—from the BBC Radio versions (2016) to Audible Originals' *Jane Austen Collection* (2020), with narration by Claire Foy, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Billie Piper, Florence Pugh, and Emma Thompson and voice acting by such performers as Lucy Briers, Bessie Carter, Anna Chancellor, Joanne Froggatt, and Eleanor Tomlinson. Of the latter series, Garrity says: "I dislike—no, hate—Amazon, but damn, this is amazing."

Barbara Anne Asher says her go-to is the BBC Radio versions: "Although they do not include every word, sometimes missing my favorite quotes, they are well-acted. They are long enough to be fairly comprehensive but short enough to hear the whole book in a day or two of cleaning and laundry."

JASNA News Editor Susie Wampler considers BBC Radio's *Mansfield Park* the best dramatization of that novel to date. It stars Felicity Jones as Fanny Price, Benedict Cumberbatch as Edmund Bertram, and David Tennant as Tom Bertram, with narration by Amanda Root.



continued on page 23

AUSTEN EVERYWHERE

Stumbling upon a reference to Jane Austen in an unlikely place is not only a great pleasure but also underscores how deeply ingrained Austen is in our popular culture. Here are just a few such shoutouts.

The Pitt

In the first season, fifth episode of the critically acclaimed HBO medical drama, Dr. Heather Collins (Tracy Ifeachor) quips “settle down, Jane Austen” to charge nurse Dana (Katherine LaNasa) when the latter hints at a possible renewal of romantic interest between Collins and Dr. Robby (Noah Wyle).



Good Omens

Based on the comedic fantasy novel by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett, *Good Omens* follows the adventures of angel Aziraphale (Michael Sheen) and demon Crowley (David Tennant)—who have both been on earth since the beginning of time. The second season (2023) features a Regency-style ball and the [following exchange](#):

Aziraphale: “You remember Jane Austen?”

Crowley: “Will never forget her in a hurry. Brains behind the 1810 Clerkenwell diamond robbery, brandy smuggler, master spy. What a piece of work.”

Aziraphale (incredulous): “She wrote books. Novels.”

Crowley: “Jane?! Austen?”

Aziraphale: “Yes!”

Crowley: “Bit of a dark horse. Novels, hey?”

Aziraphale: “Yes, they were *very* good.”

Crowley: “Wh ... no ... just surprised, that’s all. You think you know someone.”



Sex Education

Witty, intelligent Maeve Wiley from the Netflix British series *Sex Education* (2019–2023)—portrayed by Emma Mackey—is an outsider and aspiring writer. In series one, episode eight, when she’s expelled from high school after taking the fall for something her brother did, Maeve cites Austen when making her case for reinstatement.

“I’d read all of Jane Austen by the time I was 12, including her lesser-known work *Lady Susan*, which is a severely underrated piece of feminist literature.”

On Maeve’s nightstand, you’ll also see a copy of *Emma*.



Derry Girls

In the series finale (2022) of Lisa McGee’s BAFTA-winning sitcom set in Northern Ireland, protagonist Erin (Saoirse-Monica Jackson) and her cousin, Orla (Louisa Harland), are forced to combine their 18th-birthday parties, creating the implausible but character-appropriate joint theme of “Literary Greats and Mokeys” (the latter, Orla’s misspelled choice of monkeys). Erin identifies Austen as one of the

greats—complete with a life-sized cardboard image. In addition, the character is often compared to Emma Woodhouse by fans of the show.



Blackadder the Third

Each season of *Blackadder*—the often-hilarious British sitcom starring Rowan Atkinson as antihero Edmund Blackadder—is set in a different historical era, with the third (1987) parodying Regency England. Hugh Laurie costars as the prince regent and each episode puns Austen titles, such as “Ink and Incapability,” “Sense and Senility,” and “Dual and Duality.” In “Nob and Nobility,” Blackadder gives himself a female pseudonym because he says other male authors are doing the same, describing Austen as a huge “Yorkshireman, with a beard like a rhododendron bush.”



Spooks/MI-5

The British spy series *Spooks* (*MI-5* in North America) features a host of Austen-adaptation actors. Matthew Macfadyen (2005’s *Mr. Darcy*) met his wife, Keeley Hawes (Cassandra in *Miss Austen*), on the show. When Rupert Penry-Jones (Frederick Wentworth in the 2007 *Persuasion*) replaces Macfadyen as series lead, he’s sent to a safe house and seen with a copy of *Pride and Prejudice*.



Barbie

One of the most memorable scenes, at least for Janeites, in Greta Gerwig’s 2023 *Barbie* movie is the [Depression Barbie](#) commercial: “She’s going to watch the [1995] *Pride and Prejudice* for the seventh time until she falls asleep. Anxiety, panic attacks, and OCD sold separately.”



Doctor Who

Austen is often referenced in the British time-travel series by the Doctor’s companion Clara Oswald



(Jenna Coleman). In “The Magician’s Apprentice,” English teacher Clara describes the author to her students as an “amazing writer, astonishing comic observer, and, strictly between ourselves, a phenomenal kisser.”

Wishbone

The 1990s PBS series follows the adventures of a Jack Russell terrier named Wishbone (voiced by Larry Brantley), who imagines himself as various literary characters, including Mr. Darcy (in the episode “[Furst Impressions](#)”) and Henry Tilney (in “[Pup Fiction](#)”).



Cunk on Britain

The mockumentary series hosted by the hilariously ignorant Philomena Cunk (Diane Morgan) features a segment in which Cunk asks Professor Greg Dart of University College London “[What exactly was Jane Austen?](#)” and compares Austen’s oeuvre with the Mr. Men children’s books. —*Susie Wampler*



NOW HEAR THIS! *continued from page 21*

Academic Titles

Several scholarly audiobooks made the grade as evaluated by JASNA members.

“*Jane Austen’s Bookshelf* by Rebecca Romney (read by the author) was *life-changing*,” Joanne Olson writes. “To have Austen’s work and influences put into context and to learn about all the other women authors who preceded her was incredibly enriching.” Several other members expressed admiration for Romney’s book. One was Kris Hilburn Williams, who also recommends *A Jane Austen Education* by William Deresiewicz and narrated by Sean Pratt.

Lucy Worsley’s *Jane Austen at Home* was repeatedly mentioned. “Her depth of information, warm and engaging storytelling, and pleasing voice make it a joy to listen to,” Sandy Skilling says.

Another favorite was Devoney Looser, especially her Great Courses series on *The Life and Works of Jane Austen*. “She speaks with great enthusiasm, empathy, and humor,” Fay Radding writes. “It’s a great experience hearing and learning from her.” In addition, Looser’s *Sister Novelists* and *Wild for Austen* books were recommended.

Paula Byrne’s *The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things* also earned shoutouts.

Austen-Adjacent Works

In the category of retellings, modernizations, and fan fiction, responses covered the gamut of content, cultures, and emotions.

“I am listening to my first one—*Death Comes to Pemberley* by P. D. James,” Kate McGrath writes. “It’s wonderful to hear a really good reader make the book come to life.”

“I just heard *The Clergyman’s Wife* by Molly Greeley [about Charlotte Lucas] and it is so full of sadness and longing that it broke my heart,” Julia Park Tracey says. “*Miss Austen* (about Cassandra) was also very good.”

“I like the *Austenland* books for their hilarious implausibility,” Virginia Mellema says. “They make me laugh out loud.”

More than one member suggested *Ladies in Waiting: Jane Austen’s*

Unsung Characters by a host of noted writers, including Nikki Payne, whose books *Pride and Protest* and *Sex, Lies and Sensibility* are also available on audiobook.

The most frequently mentioned audiobooks in this category were Janice

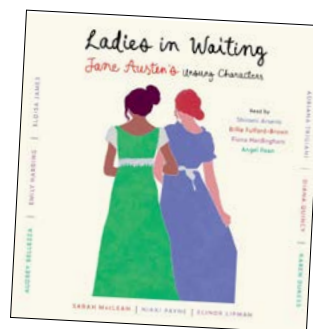
Hadlow’s *The Other Bennet Sister* and Richard Armitage’s reading of Natalie Jenner’s novel *The Jane Austen Society*. “His voice ranks up there with the late Alan Rickman,” Rachel Beyerle says of Armitage.

Jen Prohaska recommends *Mr. Bingley: Just as a Gentleman Ought to Be* by Brandon Dragan. “It is narrated by Ben Fensome, who has a gorgeous, rich voice. The plot is unique and turns Mr. Bingley into a hero worthy of Jane Bennet.” She also recommends (as did several others) the audiobooks of Claudia Gray’s *Mr. Darcy & Miss Tilney* mystery series, narrated by Billie Fulford-Brown.

“Her retellings are so much fun,” Tereza Carneiro adds of Gray’s audiobooks.

Nancy O’Connor enjoyed the audiobooks *Pies and Prejudice* by Heather Vogel Frederick and *The Jane Austen Project* by Kathleen A. Flynn. In addition, O’Connor recommends *The Peculiar Charm of Miss Jane Austen* and *The Unexpected Past of Miss Jane Austen* by Cass Grafton and Ada Bright, both narrated by Alison Larkin.

While quite a few members expressed disdain for fan-fiction and modernizations, member Caroline Whydell shares a different perspective: “I love listening to new fiction based on the novels to see which characters are kept and how the storylines are adapted to fit a 21st century setting—and, more importantly, witness Jane Austen’s popularity continuing generation after generation.”



Regional News

JASNA currently is home to 84 regions throughout the United States and Canada with two virtual regions, including one based in Europe. Visit the [event calendar](#) to discover upcoming virtual and in-person meetings. No matter your time zone or work schedule, you should be able to find Zoom presentations to attend, many of which are free.

CANADA

Ottawa

Longtime JASNA member Elizabeth Reicker was invited to participate in a post-show talkback after the Kanata Theatre's production of Laura Wade's *The Watsons* in March. Reicker answered questions about why Austen abandoned *The Watsons* (her displacement from Steventon and her father's death), why the novels have no references to contemporary events (they actually do, but catching them requires careful reading), and Austen's interest in the theater.

Montréal-Québec

We celebrated Austen's 250th at the McGill University Faculty Club, enjoying a festive dinner with a champagne toast by Peter Sabor, a review of recent publications by Elaine Bander, some challenging quizzes, and an Austen portrait sugar cookie for everyone to take home.

INTERNATIONAL

At our March meeting, David Austen Willan presented "Paying Homage to Charles: Charles Austen's Death and Burial at Trincomalee," in which Willan shared his research and reflections on his March 2025 trip to Sri Lanka, the final resting place of his great, great, great grandfather.



International Region's March gathering

UNITED STATES

California, Northern

We held a 250th birthday tea with an informative talk by local Regency etiquette expert Jennifer Le Blanc. Afterward, many guests continued the celebration with a matinee of *Georgiana and Kitty: Christmas at Pemberley*, the final play

in Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon's trilogy.

Early in the new year, James Nagle spoke on the subject of "Ending the Regency Marriage."

California, San Diego

In February, Syrie James gave a presentation on her historical novel *Jane Austen's First Love* at the Poway Community Library. James shared details of her research on Edward Taylor, a gentleman and neighbor of Austen's brother Edward in Kent.

In March, members gathered at Mission Valley Library to embellish a handkerchief using a floral pattern from *Jane Austen Embroidery* by Alison Larkin and Jennie Batchelor.



Imogene Bump at the Northern California tea



Syrie James

California, Southwest

In February, we met via Zoom to watch the video of Jennie Batchelor's presentation of "Austen and Turner: A Country House Encounter," focusing on the exhibition she curated last year at Harewood House in West Yorkshire. Batchelor joined us for a live Q&A afterward.



Harewood House

Colorado, Denver/Boulder

In February, Pam Mingle led a [discussion of *Mansfield Park*](#). Members shared their thoughts about the novel's overarching theme, how it compares to Austen's other works, and how putting on the play *Lovers' Vows* reveals the true nature of the main characters.

Florida, Orlando

In January, we welcomed new Co-Regional Coordinators (RCs) Melanie

Erin Pyne, Hope Howland-Cook, Jennifer Prohaska, and Melanie Barker





(Top to bottom)
Members of the Orlando and West Florida regions with Mary Mintz (fifth from left); Orlando members at the Jane Austen Fest in Mount Dora; Box Hill picnic



Barker and Erin Pyne, who have taken the helm from Hope Howland-Cook and Jennifer Prohaska. Our commitment to inspiring young readers continued through the Orlando Gifted Academy Literacy Week events later that month, where we brought Austen's novels to life with engaging activities and contests for the students, sparking curiosity and joy in a new generation of Austen fans.

In February, we immersed ourselves in the Regency era at our local Jane Austen Fest in Mount Dora, which included a Box Hill-inspired picnic and Valentine's Day Ball.

In March, we dove into "Heroines and Heroes of Austen," sharing why these beloved characters resonate with us and exploring the connections between them. We joined members from the West Coast Region in welcoming JASNA President Mary Mintz to Florida.

Florida, Southwest

We continued our focus on a slow read of Austen's novels with a discussion on *Persuasion* via Zoom in January and February. Members were encouraged to share insights and favorite passages. In



Mary Mintz (fourth from right) with members of the Southwest Florida Region

March, we hosted JASNA President Mary Mintz at the Bonita Springs Library, where she gave her talk on Austen's reputation in American periodicals in the 19th century. We also hosted two dinners with Mintz during her stay.

Georgia

We co-sponsored a 250th anniversary ball with Atlanta Historic Dance at Brawner Hall in Roswell. In March, RC Renata Dennis gave a talk on "Jane Austen, Her Life, Times, Novels, and Lasting Influence" at the Avondale Women's Club.



Georgia's 250th ball

Idaho, Southern

In January, we met at Co-RC Anna Lee's house in Nampa to discuss Elizabeth Adams' book *Unwilling: A Pride & Prejudice Vagary*, which examines the potential of the Bennet family to improve themselves. Later that month, members met at The Lively in Boise to enjoy its monthly afternoon tea.

In February, several members attended the Daughters of the American Revolution's annual Valentine Cowboy Tea in Mountain Home.

In March, we gathered at Co-RC Ann Campbell's house to discuss *The Elopement* by Gill Hornby. The novel is based on actual incidents drawn from Fanny Knight's diaries and the novelist's meticulous research.



Southern Idaho members at The Lively



Co-RC Ann Campbell (center) her sister, Amanda, and mother, Anita

Kentucky, Greater Louisville

In January, more than 30 members and guests joined us for an afternoon of whist, loo, and fireside tea and crumpets. Also that month, members served as volunteers supporting Kentucky Shakespeare's production of *Emma* and distributing copies of the novel to a delighted audience.

In February, we discussed *Persuasion* and held a festive Galentine-themed tea service.

In March, members carpoled to the Taft Museum in Cincinnati to tour an exhibition of intricate Chinese tea enamels. That month, we also held our annual jumble sale, browsing

crafts from local community vendors as well as enjoying traditional tea and scones. In addition, we held a historical-sewing workshop at which attendees crafted sleeveless vests using a pattern from the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum collection.

Maine

In February, we enjoyed an afternoon tea and movie matinee featuring the 1995 adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*. While

the weather was cold, decorating and eating Austen-shaped sugar cookies helped create a warm and cozy feeling.

Massachusetts

We welcomed JASNA President Mary Mintz to the Charles River Museum in March for her talk about Austen's appearance in U.S. magazines

during the 19th century, followed by a Q&A session. In addition, the family of our beloved late Co-RC Marcia Folsom donated the Austen-related books from her extensive library to the region. Everyone in attendance took home new-to-them books by or about our favorite author.

Michigan, Eastern

For our first meeting of 2026, Jason Solinger of the University of Mississippi gave a Zoom talk titled "Captain Wentworth: A New Type of Gentleman." We learned why the character is unique among Austen's writings, and how Austen's work reflects the loosening of strict social stratification. In March, we welcomed Scott Caddy of Wayne State University, who spoke about film and online adaptations of *Emma*. His talk made many of us see more depth in the 2020 film starring Anya



(Clockwise from top) Louisville's vest workshop; jumble sale; Bonny Wise with scones at the jumble sale



Maine members



Mary Mintz speaking to the Massachusetts Region



Jason Solinger

Taylor-Joy. We also discussed how the YouTube production [Emma Approved](#) adds to our understanding of the novel.

Michigan, Western

We began the year with *Persuasion*, our third annual slow read via Zoom. Facilitator Susan Coombes shared recordings of our discussions along with AI summaries that generated some howlers, stilted language, and topic headings more suitable for a boardroom.

Minnesota

In January, we were joined by Rebecca Romney, author of *Jane Austen's Bookshelf*, for a lively chat about her book, the rare-book trade, and the women writers who inspired Austen and shaped the literary world she knew. February brought us a delightful visit from fellow JASNA member Gina Heath King, who shared stories of her move to Hampshire, England, and her adventures walking in Austen's footsteps. In March, Linda Rinaldi guided us in a session on painting flowers.



Scott Caddy



Susan Coombes



Minnesota members with their floral-painting creations

Missouri, St. Louis

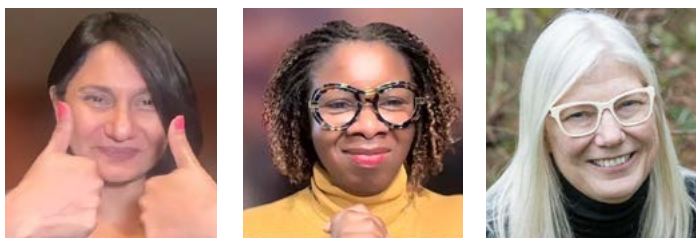
In March, we gathered at the University City Public Library for a presentation on English country dancing. Dance historian John Notgrass discussed the movements, music, and magic of this social art form. He then led audience members through a grand march and several circle dances, assisted by local caller and instructor Karen Jackson.

Nebraska

We enjoyed welcoming new members after our annual December tea and, in January, began discussing *Northanger Abbey* together at our monthly meetings.

New Jersey

In January, we celebrated Jane Austen's birthday. We enjoyed snacks, conversation, riddles, and trivia as well as our traditional book exchange. In February, we met via Zoom to discuss *Persuasion*, the Austen book we're focusing on this year. In March, we met virtually to discuss the novel *The Austens* by Sarah Emsley, who joined us for an hour-long Q&A.



(Clockwise)
Sonali Dev,
Nikki Payne,
Devoney Looser,
Jason Solinger, and
Patricia Matthew



North Carolina

In February, we discussed Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), an influential work of gothic fiction that shares many parallels and tropes with *Northanger Abbey*. March kicked off with a session focused on "The Art of Dining," with a presentation by docents from The Mint Museum exploring dining etiquette and historical dining practices.

Later in March, we hosted our first virtual conference, a full-day event with a series of esteemed speakers and celebrations of Austen's influence. The conference opened with "Jane Austen, the Cultural Icon," a conversation with bestselling Austen adapters Sonali Dev and Nikki Payne. Next up was "Jane the Celebrity," featuring Austen scholar Devoney Looser, whose latest book is *Wild for Austen*. After a lunch break with entertainment, Jason Solinger spoke on "Jane the Literary Trailblazer: Catching Austen in the Act of Greatness—What Virginia Woolf Saw in Jane Austen." Patricia Matthew closed the conference with "Jane the Social Commentator: The Politics, Silent and Otherwise, of *Mansfield Park*."

North Carolina
Co-RCs Linda
Darden and Sara
Tavela with
conference
organizer Karin
Wiberg



Oklahoma

A new region has been formed under the leadership of RC Catherine Armitage.

Oregon, Southern

In February, Marty Lemke led a discussion of an *Economist* article on "How Jane Austen Revealed the Economic Basis of Society," which highlighted the historical context and economic drivers of trade, colonization, industrialization, and war during the Regency era. Marsha Salcedo led an examination of how women made socially acceptable lives as wives and mothers, governesses, companions, caregivers of elderly relatives, and managers of schools for young ladies. Other possibilities included working as milliners, modistes, seamstresses, or knitters; living as "old maids" dependent on the charity of others; or becoming mistresses, actresses, or prostitutes.

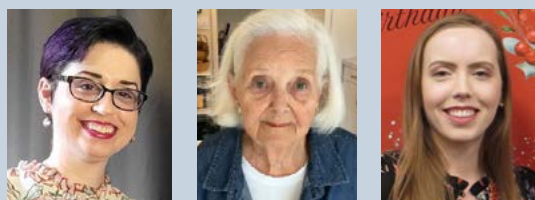
In March, Deb Rossi described why Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* was so important a work in Austen's formation as an author, citing Austen's teenage writing of a play of the same name. Lauren Lind gave a presentation on how Regency ladies cared for and raised their children—from the use of wet nurses to educational differences between a boy's and girl's rearing. Next, we explored the mothers in Austen's novels.

Oregon/Southwest Washington

In January, we met at Hillsboro Public Library, where RC Vonnice Alto gave a presentation on "The Creativity of Jane Austen," focusing on Austen's literary genius and techniques.

In March, we returned to the library and were hosted by Joann Graham. Arnie Perlstein and teacher/director Kathleen Jones gave an interactive theatrical presentation on "Race, Class, and Gender in Austen's juvenilia playlet 'The Visit': A Satirical Commentary on James Townley's Play 'High Life Below Stairs.'" Just as the Austen family did at Steventon, we each read characters' parts.

We closed out our tribute grant with recipients Kathleen Jones and Ryan Patterson, who recapped their Baltimore



(Clockwise) Vonnice Alto, Joann Graham, Arnie Perlstein, Kathleen Jones, Ryan Patterson, Nan Williams, and Jennifer Snoek-Brown

AGM experience as first-timers, and honorees Nan Williams and Jennifer Snoek-Brown, who were recognized for their volunteer efforts on behalf of the region.

Texas, Coastal Bend

In January, we participated in Corpus Cristi's First Friday Art Walk and, later in the month, did crafts and discussed *Northanger Abbey* at our first book club meeting. In February, we continued the conversation and watched the 2007 adaptation of the novel. We also enjoyed a calligraphy lesson. In March, we held a "Jane Austen Afternoon" at the Neyland Library with afternoon tea, book giveaways, trivia, and Kahoot!



Coastal Bend members at the January meeting

Texas, North

This spring, we gathered at the Banner House over a breakfast buffet to host Melissa Lester, editor of *Victoria* magazine. She spoke about her new book, *The Comfort of Books and Tea: A Gentle Guide to Reading and Teatime*. She shared how her love of reading began with her father and grandparents, and reflected on her work at *Victoria*. Quoting C. S. Lewis, she reminded us that there is no cup of tea large enough or book long enough to fully satisfy—a sentiment that resonated deeply with our group.



North Texas Co-RC Vicki Petersen



Melissa Lester

Utah

In March, we enjoyed an "Afternoon of Diversions" inspired by *Mansfield Park*, during which members played whist, speculation, and other games. We served tea and delicious snacks, and our skillful players won lovely prizes.



Utah's "Afternoon of Diversions"

Virginia, Central

We co-hosted Rebecca Romney, author of *Jane Austen's Bookshelf*, with the University of Mary Washington's Simpson Library at the university's campus in Fredericksburg. A book signing and reception followed.



Rebecca Romney

Virtual

In March, episode five of our *Austen Pod Squad* podcast launched, featuring Juliette Wells of Goucher College, who discussed "The Jane Phenomenon."

To accommodate the time zones of our members in Taiwan, China, India, Japan, and Australia, we met on a March evening in the U.S. while it was 10 a.m. the next day in Taiwan. Our featured speakers were student Dauting Tao (Tina) and Po-Yu (Rick) Wei—lecturer on literature and composition at Wenzhou-Kean University in China—who discussed "The Teaching and Student Experience Studying Literature and Austen in China." Wei's research interests include 18th century English literature, culture, and society; Regency England; and the study of Jane Austen. Tao shared her perspective on *Sense and Sensibility*.

Washington, Eastern/Idaho, Northern

In January, we met online to discuss "Sibling Relationships in Austen's Novels": Favorite sister dyad was Elizabeth and Jane Bennet; brother duo George and John Knightley; and brother-sister pair Georgiana and Fitzwilliam Darcy, with Fanny and William Price and Henry and Eleanor Tilney tied for second place. In March, we enjoyed Janet Todd's 2023 AGM presentation "To Dream of Pemberley" on Zoom.



Janet Todd

Wisconsin

In February, members attended a performance of Kate Hamill's adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* at the Waukesha Civic Theater. Liz Philosophos Cooper facilitated a talkback with the actors and directors. We also sponsored a reception following the play.



Co-directors Ashley Levells-Riemer and Patrice Hood with Liz Philosophos Cooper at *Sense and Sensibility*

In March, we hosted a day of "Gaming with Jane Austen" at the Milwaukee Public Library. Featured were items shared by Kat Lee, who has collected numerous Austen-inspired games.



Joan Brown, Amy Van Hecke, Kat Lee, and Sarah Clifton at Wisconsin's gaming event

41 REASONS *continued from page 7***37. Being in a local reading group**

"My favorite activity is the monthly reading group." –*Linda Reyder*

"I really enjoy our region's book club and the camaraderie among all our members." –*Mary Garner*

38. Watching and discussing adaptations

"Members of our region got together last year to see the rerelease of both the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* and the 1995 *Sense and Sensibility*."

"JASNA's *Clueless* watch party and live Q&A with Amy Heckerling was terrific fun!"

39. Admiring the ingenuity

"I am constantly surprised by both the novelty of topics presented and the level of scholarship and enthusiasm. I am a relatively new member, and this has brought so much inspiration and new friends into my life."

"I love the creativity JASNA inspires." –*Ann Brown*

40. Offering something for everyone

"I love how books + fashion + politics + food + British Navy + church +

movies are all incorporated." –*Margaret Sacks*

"I like the variety of information and activities JASNA curates." –*Susan Coombes*

"Thank you for providing frequent and diverse Austen programs." –*Theresa Chalich*

41. Embracing everything

"I truly appreciate the high level of academic presentations and wealth of information presented in the journals, AGM breakout sessions, emails, online resources, and newsletter." –*Anne Thompson*

"How can you choose just one thing?"

"What is there *not* to like?" –*Janice Millford*

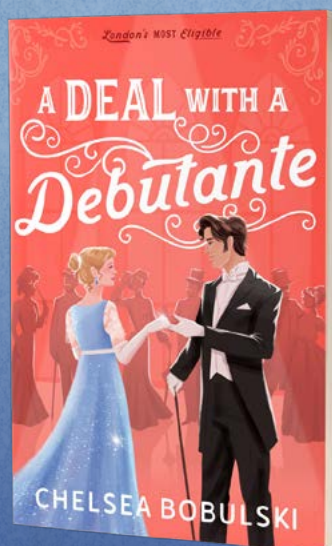
"I absolutely love my membership and make great use of it." –*Maureen K. Crowley*

"JASNA is a portal to all things Austen—new books and articles, events, travel opportunities, and companionship with new friends."

ADVERTISEMENT

Fans of *Bridgerton* will fall in love

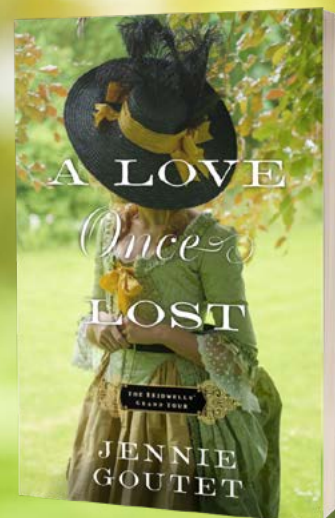
with this charming historical romance
sparkling with witty banter, romantic
tension, and a battle of wills.



Available where books are sold.

Haven

Mutual yearning, lost love, and
second chances weave through this
evocative, heart-fluttering love
story set in Georgian-era Europe.



Available where books are sold.

Haven

A Flowing Tribute

Like many a happy union in the world of Jane Austen, the film “Jane Austen’s Period Drama” began with wit and timing—plus a well-placed pun. It also arose from a team as ideally matched creatively as any Austen protagonists are romantically.

The Oscar-nominated short co-directed and written by Julia Aks and Steve Pinder, available on [YouTube](#), delights in the double meaning of the word “period.” The film transports audiences into a familiar Austenian landscape of drawing rooms, sisters, eligible gentlemen, and emotional distress—while candidly exploring women’s health within the conventions of a Regency costume drama.

Yet for all its absurdity and sparkle, the short was born from affection. “The best parodies are the ones done really out of respect and love for the source material,” says Aks, who also stars in the short as Estrogenia. “We have such deep reverence for Jane Austen.”

That reverence is evident throughout the 13-minute film, whose pitch-perfect performances and carefully observed Regency details affectionately recall the Austen adaptations of the 1990s and early 2000s. Aks and Pinder deliberately pursued that authenticity, believing the comedy would land more effectively if audiences fully believed in the world of the film first.

Budget limitations forced the team to conjure Austen’s milieu in Southern California, which Aks admits was challenging. Georgian architecture proved elusive and replicating England’s rolling green hills during an August drought even more so. So the filmmakers traveled to New England with a tiny crew to capture the film’s opening landscape shots.

Still, the production itself was a labor of love. Costume designer Paula Higgins, Aks’ former college professor, came out of retirement to help create Regency attire, accepting “meals and love” in place of her regular fee. Even Snow White the chicken—selected for being particularly docile—acquitted herself admirably, despite two regrettable incidents involving the carpet, Aks says.

In the process, what began as an idea for a comic sketch expanded dramatically after Aks started collecting stories from women about menstruation and reproductive health.



Julia Aks as Estrogenia Talbot and Ta'imua as James Dickley



Steve Pinder and Julia Aks

“I found that a lot of them actually had experiences and stories that were really quite heartbreaking and scary, and also funny,” she says. “It seemed like they all really wanted to talk about it. When I sat down to write the sketch, 76 pages came out.”

Aks then envisioned it as an eight-part web series and sought longtime collaborator Pinder’s input. The pair’s artistic partnership had begun when he was a USC Cinematic Arts student and she auditioned for and won the lead role in his student film.

“I found it so moving and important,” Pinder says of Aks’ initial draft of the period piece. “And it was hilarious. I was sure there was more there.” He suggested it had the makings of a feature film—and eventually convinced Aks. Next, the duo co-wrote a full-length script before deciding to develop a short film first as a work sample.

One of their inspirations for the project was Emma Thompson’s script for *Sense and Sensibility*.

Dame Emma’s involvement in “Jane Austen’s Period Drama” came about after the filmmakers wrote to thank her for the influence her adaptation had on them. As awards attention grew, they also invited her to join the project as an executive producer.

Thompson declined, feeling she should not accept a producer credit for a film she had not actually helped make. Instead, she suggested the alternative title of executive menstrual advisor “in the spirit of your film.”

In addition to the Oscar nod, the film has won numerous awards, and the larger cinematic version is now attracting industry interest.

For Pinder and Aks, the response from Janeites has been particularly gratifying. “It’s been very, very heartening how much the Austenite communities have embraced the short,” Aks says. “It’s been so freakin’ cool and encouraging.”

Austen herself, after all, never objected to a sharp satire delivered with affection.

Watch the [full interview with Aks and Pinder](#).