

# *My Dear Cassandra.....*

---



## **You are invited to a Georgian Fayre!**

**May 8  
Sunalta Community Centre  
1-4 PM**

**Please note this is a week and hour earlier than usual.**

Dancing! Games! Speakers! Prizes! Tea! Pudding!  
(Sorry, no sedan chair races, redcoats, or live animals.)

### **Our speakers:**

Suzi Roberts - *Lovely Tomes Need Lovely Bones*  
Tom Barton - *Unanswered Questions*  
Samantha Adkins - *Reading from her book Expectations*  
Ann Marie Barnhill and Emma Spooner - *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*

If you'd like to participate in our china "Bring & Buy", please bring  
an item or be ready to buy tickets at the Fayre (2 for \$1).

## **March meeting**

We had two guest speakers at our meeting on March 20. Calgarian Catherine Spencer gave a brief account of her sometimes frustrating experiences writing and trying to publish a Regency novel in the style of Jane Austen. Members were engaged by her tale and had many helpful suggestions. At the tea break, Judith Umbach requested that members who attended the play *Austentatious* write brief anonymous reviews that she could post on our website with a link to the play's website. To get the ball rolling, Emma Spooner gave a brief overview of the play's very convoluted and hilarious plot. After the break, Edmontonian Amy Stafford presented an illustrated lecture based on a paper written for her Masters degree at the University of Alberta entitled "Fools, Flirts and Floozies: the Bad Girls in Jane Austen". Amy's talk was followed by a very lively discussion.

## **JASNA Calgary Executive, 2010-2011**

Many thanks to Catherine Gardner and Helen Gardner for graciously volunteering to take over in September as Regional Coordinator and Program Coordinator. Thanks also to Leslie Gautschi, who has volunteered to coordinate refreshments for next year's meetings, and to all others who have agreed to continue on in their various volunteer roles for the 2010-2011 season:

- Regional Coordinator - Catherine Gardner
- Program Coordinator - Helen Gardner
- Treasurer - Anne Marie Barnhill
- Newsletter - Ann Craig
- Website - Judith Umbach
- Publicity - Elizabeth Marshall and Isobel Temple
- Sprigged Muslin Dance Mistress - Pat Barton
- Librarian - Bill Sherlock
- Social secretary - Alicia Morgan
- Refreshments at meetings - Leslie Gautschi

It's great to have such willing volunteers and enthusiastic support for the club and its activities and we welcome new volunteers to join in. On that note, please speak to Helen if you are interested in joining the program committee and/or coordinating next January's Jane Austen Birthday Tea

---

## **Dear all my fellow Janeites!**

It has been most amusing doing program with you all for the last 2 years. I really appreciate all your support and enthusiasm and patience!

For those thinking of hopping on board Helen's program committee, I do recommend it. I shall miss May but hope to be there for Shannon Campbells's talk on Pineapples in September and really hope I get to Portland for the AGM in October.

Best wishes and especially to your New Program Coordinator, Helen Gardner.

Thanks and Goodbye

~ Margaret

### **A word of thanks**

to all JASNA Calgary members for making my term as Regional Coordinator so effortless and enjoyable. It's been a pleasure sharing the job with Margaret as Program Coordinator. In fact, the past two and a half years have literally flown by in a blur of wonderful talks, activities, teas and galas! With such a wonderful group of enthusiastic participants and willing volunteers, being "in charge" was a snap and a delight. Now I'm looking forward to settling back into "civilian life" and enjoying lots of good times ahead with Catherine at the helm. Thanks and best wishes to you all.

~ Jennifer

---

### **News from the Edmonton Jane Austen Society**

At the March 27 meeting, EJAS members were treated to a joint lecture by Isobel Grundy and Juliet McMaster entitled "New Faces and New Understandings" which discussed relationships between heroes and heroines in Jane Austen's novels. This lively talk was originally presented at a Chawton House conference.

The Society's meeting on April 24 had this intriguing title: "Oh! My dear, human flesh!: Slaves and servants at the time of Jane Austen".

This year's spring gala is themed "Pastimes and Pleasures". It is being held on Saturday May 15 on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Stanley Milner Library, Edmonton. The program will run from 9:45-4:00 and will include readings from the novel *Mansfield Park* and the play *Lovers Vows*, music from Jane Austen's time with a performance by Mary Grace Johnstone, and a screening of the Mormon version of *Pride and Prejudice* on DVD. It sounds like it will be a delightful day and Calgary members are, as always, invited to attend. To reserve tickets (\$25, including lunch), please contact EJAS treasurer Linda Weiner at [lin.w@shaw.ca](mailto:lin.w@shaw.ca).

---

### **Book Review**

Dear everyone - I have been on a real kick of these social histories lately (the Victorian House) and then DVD's of the reality TV things (1900 House and last week, 940 House) they are fascinating and now there is a book out on the Georgian House by Amanda Vickery. She has 2 books - one on Gentleman's Daughters in Georgian times and this one on the Georgian House. I spotted this on the guardian.co.uk site and thought you should see it ~ Margaret Crichton.

To see this story with its related links on the guardian.co.uk site, go to <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/oct/24/behind-closed-doors-vickery-review>

## **Behind Closed Doors : How to read the Georgian Parlour**

by Amanda Vickery 368pp, Yale,

Review by Kathryn Hughes

Saturday October 24 2009. The Guardian

For a decade or so popular historical imagination has been dominated by two sorts of Georgians. The first are the libertines, the frisky Casanovas who wink knowingly at their unborn Victorian grandchildren before setting off on yet another erotic frolic. The second lot are the tasteful Georgians, the ones who spend all their time polishing their tea caddies and getting giddy on the fancy new fabrics pouring in from the east. Both types might be described as residing behind closed doors. But it is the second group, the curtain-hanging, figurine-fingering kind, whom Amanda Vickery dissects in this brilliant book.

It turns out that *Behind Closed Doors* is more than simply a slick title for a study of domestic interiors. For, as Vickery quickly makes clear, the business of delineating space, marking boundaries and shutting one area off from another lay at the heart of the Georgians' experience of domestic life. In a stunning opening section she uses Old Bailey records to reconstruct the physical and psychic maps of those living in shared accommodation during the second half of the 18th century. The witness statements reveal a revolving drama of access and security. Does a lodger have a key to his own room? Is the landlady in the habit of trawling through her tenants' drawers? At what hour is the front door bolted against the evening murk? And what happens, crucially, if you don't manage to scuttle home in time for the household curfew?

No wonder then that control over personal space and possessions became a kind of fetish for lower-end Georgians. In shared households where doors remained easily breached, sleeping with your precious pockets (detachable from your skirt) stuffed under the pillow might be the answer. Cramming cash into hidey holes in the wainscot was another possibility. And if you couldn't manage a room of your own, then a strong box of your own was the next best thing. As servants and day labourers bustled from job to job, bed to bed, the trusty receptacle of their slight possessions became a symbolic stand-in for their personal autonomy. It is no accident that when Hogarth wanted to show his harlot quite undone, he drew Molly Hackabout's box in disarray as she herself lay about; dying.

Higher up the social scale, similar anxieties produced equally ingenious solutions. A middle-class spinster living in her brother's household might not have the self-contained suite of rooms she longed for, but her writing desk housed a warren of hidden drawers and secret spaces. The naval officer's version was a dressing case kept securely within his sea chest, while a landlocked gentleman might have something fancier, a bureau complete with spring-loaded shelves in which to stuff important papers. A little girl of seven might be given her first trunk to mark her move away from babyhood, while even the mistress of the household kept valuable commodities such as sugar under lock and key.

One of the most important tasks Vickery undertakes is to continue the job, which she herself started in the early 1990s with a seminal academic article, of putting men back into the house. An earlier generation of historians had argued that men and women of the 18th

century carved up the world into "separate spheres". Women ruled the roost at home, turning the domestic space into a theatre of female competence, while men were merely squatters, mustering their resources for an assault upon the public stage. But this, suggests Vickery, will not quite do. Just because Georgian men failed to fill their journals with details of domesticity does not mean that they didn't value it. In fact, she suggests, the very fact of their silence speaks volumes about how much they took clean shirts and sweet puddings for granted as the bedrock of their well-being and self-esteem.

By way of confirmation, she looks at what happened when Georgian men were deprived of a fireside nook. The surviving diaries of bachelors quiver with frustration as the poor young bucks linger in a limbo of tavern suppers, buggy lodgings and tumbles with prostitutes. John Courtney, a minor Yorkshire gentleman, was so hungry for a home to call his own that he proposed to eight young ladies on the trot. (Vickery thinks his smallpox scars may have been to blame for their reluctance, but since when has desperation been appealing?) Widowers were in an even tighter spot. Having once tasted the delights of settled domesticity, sex, food and laundry on tap, it was hard to fend for yourself again. Within four months of his dear Susanna's death in 1783, the Lincolnshire surgeon Matthew Flinders was looking about for a replacement. He felt guilty, of course, but the thought of the alternative, a bleak regime of grubby children and slapped-together meals, took the edge off his blushes.

Nor is it quite right to suggest that men and women spent their money on different things, with men shelling out for architects and masons while wives frittered their pin money on knick-knacks. Vickery finds several examples of women who had brave, bold ideas about the kind of building they wanted to live in, and were prepared to pay for. Meanwhile there were plenty of men with an eye for soft furnishings. Both Jonathan Swift and Charles Lamb had a thing for china, while the Duke of Cumberland, also known as the Butcher of Culloden, could never resist a pretty vase. At the same time Vickery reconceptualises all those male purchases of guns, globes, bridles and telescopes which have tended to pass without comment. Far from being "essentials", she suggests that what we are looking at here is the male equivalent of a morale-boosting new tea set from Wedgwood.

But perhaps the most important chapter in this book is the one which tries to understand the lustre of female craft work, including such niche activities as human-hair embroidery and landscapes done with seaweed. Late 20th-century feminists saw such fiddly productions as a symbol of female repression, a way of keeping genteel women both busy and numb. Other scholars have tried hard to see a subtle subversion stitched into these activities ? counting up the numbers of times that biblical rebels such as Esther and Deborah feature in designs for domestic needlework. Vickery, though, goes one step further and argues that we have simply lost the ability to read all those flower paintings and hand-made quilts laboured over by women who could have afforded to buy the finished thing from a shop. The fact that so many of these items have survived in provincial museums suggests that they were valued, not just by the maker but by her family and heirs. And if we can no longer see the beauty in tambour work and tent-stitch carpets, we should at least try to understand that they were conceived and executed with pride and pleasure.

Also persuasive is Vickery's rehabilitation of wallpaper. For a later generation of Victorians the word meant something fleshy and meretricious, to do with papering over the shoddy and unwholesome. For the Georgians, though, it was a quick, cheap and democratic way of upgrading the immediate environment, rather like adding a new ribbon to your second-best dress. In one of her most innovative chapters Vickery reads through the letter book of Trollope and Sons, a London paper company which did its best to fulfil the requirements of the provincial gentry ? squires, clergy and lawyers. What she discovers is a surprisingly confident set of customers, quick to tell Trollope that "rose" is not the same as "crimson" and that different shades of grey need careful handling. Trellis patterns were popular with everyone, perhaps because they could bring anything from Italianate gardens to luxurious chinoiserie into a small room. Above all, no one wanted to look "gaudy".

Vickery's great skill lies in combining a sharp forensic eye with the ability to spot and tell stories, moving between different scales so smoothly that you can't see the joins. And then there is the wit of the thing. Few academic historians manage to be so funny without compromising the seriousness of their work. She did it 10 years ago in *The Gentleman's Daughter* and she has done it again here. It was worth the wait.

---

### **Members Corner**

If you have any news about our members that may be of interest to the club members please let Alicia Morgan know....403-241-0963

---

### **Jane Austen Calgary Contacts:**

Regional Coordinator : Catherine Gardner ~ 403-242-5016

Program Coordinator : Helen Gardner ~ 403-242-5016

Dance Group: Sprigged Muslin – Randi Lind ~ 403-284-4059

Member' Corner : Alicia Morgan ~ 403-241-0963

Website: [www.jasnacalgary.ca](http://www.jasnacalgary.ca)

### **Our next Meeting: May 8, 2010**

Meeting place: Sunalta Community Centre, 10<sup>th</sup> Ave and 16th St SW

---

Change of address / email and any articles for this newsletter,  
please contact ..... Ann Craig [ancraig@shaw.ca](mailto:ancraig@shaw.ca)