



Jane Austen (1775 - 1817)

For over 200 years, Jane Austen's novels have enchanted audiences with their wit, humour, and profound insights into human relationships. Considered one of the greatest British authors within the English canon, Austen's name has become instantly recognizable to readers around the globe.

Austen, however, remained largely unrecognized for her work in her lifetime. Her first novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, was published anonymously in 1811. The first edition of this work marked the beginning of a prosperous career; it was sold out within a relatively short time after its initial print run - an incredible feat for *any* author at the time. Her literary success continued with the publication of five more novels, two of which would be published after her untimely death from Addison's disease in 1817.

This section displays UBC's Rare Books and Special Collections' first editions of the novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Persuasion*. These exemplars are also accompanied by a deluxe edition of two letters from Austen's novels, one written by Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* and the other penned by Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion*. These letters, reproduced locally, are epistolary relics of the timeless words that Austen endowed her heroes with: words of bitter truths, suppressed hopes, and timeless love.



Romancing the Regency Gothic: Sex, Kidnappings, and Lovers in Disguise

“The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. I have read all Mrs. Radcliffe’s works, and most of them with great pleasure. The Mysteries of Udolpho, when had once begun it, I could not lay down again; I remember finishing it in two days – my hair standing on end the whole time.”

~ Mr. Henry Tilney, discussing novels with Catherine Morland, in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*

The novel in Regency England attracted both suspicion and pleasure. The works of Anne Radcliffe are rife with content which would seem out of place in an English country drawing-room; from kidnappings and disguised lovers in *The Italian* (1797) to the abducted bride-to-be in *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), forbidden love and fear make these novels far from “innocent diversions.”

Jane Austen parodies the tropes of the Gothic genre in *Northanger Abbey*, in which the brooding Colonel Tilney and the looming arches of Northanger lead the novel’s naïve heroine to make assumptions about those around her, casting herself into a Gothic fantasy directly out of the novels that she so adores.

Ann Radcliffe, like Austen, was among the first female authors to publish in her own name; *The Mysteries of Udolpho* has been considered by scholars to be the first Gothic novel, along with *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole. Walpole also built a Gothic-revival villa known as Strawberry Hill, in Twickenham, London, a model of which is displayed here. Involving dark, labyrinthine estates and a dose of the supernatural, Radcliffe and Walpole set a precedent for the great Gothic novels of the later Victorian age, including those of the Brontë sisters, Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe.



The Rise of Visual Satire: Sociopolitical Caricatures in the Regency Period

“He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed: but he was, in general, well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was [...] But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself—more narrow-minded and selfish.”

~ A description of Mr. John Dashwood and his wife in *Sense and Sensibility*

Marked by their grotesque and exaggerated features, caricatures of the late 18th and early 19th centuries may not give their modern audiences an entirely realistic perspective of the Regency milieu. They do, however, expose the emergence and popularization of a new variety of sociopolitical commentary, one which remains active in current media – that of the political cartoon. Moralizing in nature, caricatures visually highlight aspects of social debauchery and ridicule authority figures.

Following the steps of burlesque painter and satirist William Hogarth (1697–1764), whose moralizing portraits made him famous in the 1730-40s, James Gillray (1756–1815), Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827), and George Cruikshank (1792–1878) became the main contributors to the rise of visual satire in Britain. Among their major accomplishments lies the establishment of the character John Bull, a personified representation of Englishness who largely influenced the development of the British national identity.

Although it is unlikely that Austen owned any satirical prints, her social caricatures take shape in the picturesque descriptions of her characters, translating into words the visual artistry of her contemporary cartoonists.



Manners, Conduct and Femininity in the Regency Period

“I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit. It amazes me, I confess; for certainly there can be nothing so advantageous to them as instruction. But I will not longer importune my young cousin.”

~ Mr. Collins on reading Fordyce’s *Sermons for Young Women*, *Pride and Prejudice*

Conduct books frequented the shelves of many Regency drawing rooms and served as moral guides for raising young women to a certain standard of femininity, one predicated on obedience, temperance, and domestic “accomplishments.” Gaining in popularity during the eighteenth century, Jane Austen would have been familiar with these works of prescription, and likely resented their portrayal of women as naturally subservient, and predisposed to vices. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen parodies the voice of male moralists through the character of Mr. Collins, who makes an unsuccessful attempt to read Reverend James Fordyce’s *Sermons for Young Women* to the Bennet daughters.

Austen set a new standard for female virtue in her novels, one which drew from her precedents, but also allowed wit and a discerning mind to coexist with virtue. Austen openly approved of some manuals, such as Gisborne’s *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1798), displayed here. Her heroines combine Christian virtue and normative femininity with a lively intellect, using the values she was raised with but also pioneering a more equal, and natural depiction of the female spirit.



Illustrated Editions

From first editions to mass market paperbacks, Jane Austen's novels have rarely been out of print. As limited and illustrated editions, Austen's works have been presented as beautiful objects; the decorative packaging of her novels include gilt edges, illuminated capitals, marbled and decorative endpapers, coloured illustrations, cameos, and beautifully painted dust jackets.

The editions of Austen's works featured here include beautiful illustrations by Hugh Thomson, an Irish illustrator whose work has graced editions of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and J.M. Barrie; Charles E. Brock, an English painter and illustrator whose style reflects the source material; Clarke Hutton, an English fine artist; and Fritz Kredel, a German, later American, graphic designer.

Many of the items displayed here are part of UBC's Norman Colbeck collection. Norman Colbeck was an English bookseller who immigrated to Canada in 1967. His collection includes English and Anglo-Irish material of the Romantic, Victorian, and Edwardian periods.



Austen-mania: 20th- and 21st-Century Adaptations

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen is one of the most famous English authors of all time. Her works and biography have been adapted into many different forms and genres. Adaptations range from movies such as the 1995 *Clueless* to books like *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Her writing has also been the inspiration for works, such as the *Jane Austen's Guide to Good Manners*, manga, and science fiction. Austen's influence in pop culture continues to be strong, generating a considerable amount of memorabilia and entertaining a growing legion of fans.

Pride and Prejudice, one of Austen's most well-known novels, has held audiences in suspense through film adaptations, television, theatre, and video games, each with varying degrees of faithfulness to the original. Pop culture has rendered the familiar story into a visually engaging sensory experience, giving new vitality to a period two hundred years removed from our own. More recent remediations demonstrate the flexibility and adaptability of Austen's work, most notably in the 2013 *Pride and Prejudice* web series on YouTube, in which Elizabeth Bennet is reimagined as a modern-day graduate student in Communications.

The items featured here showcase only a fraction of Austen's influence. With each succeeding iteration, in every form of media, Austen's novels are given a renewed significance, with no shortage of new representations. These timeless stories will likely find new outlets to be shared and retold for generations to come.



“Dress was her Passion”: Fashion in the Regency Period

*“Dress was her passion. She had a most harmless delight in being fine; and our heroine’s entree into life could not take place till after three or four days had been spent in learning what was mostly worn, and her chaperone was provided with a dress of the newest fashion.” ~ On Mrs. Allen, in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*.*

When looking at these authentic Regency gowns, one can understand Mrs. Allen’s obsession with dresses and accessories in *Northanger Abbey*. Fashion was completely revolutionized at the turn of the nineteenth century. The “Empire waist” originated in pre-Revolutionary France, and the style soon crossed the English Channel. Neoclassicism in fashion was marked by high waistlines below the bust and with lighter and finer fabrics. Often semi-transparent and worn with an accompanying shift, these diaphanous gowns emphasized the naturalness of the female figure.

Evening dress. English, c. 1800, cotton with metal embroidery.

The fabric, possibly made in India for the European market, is decorated with silver or chrome-plated metal filaments which are stitched into the fabric and flattened between the thumbnails. This technique is where the term “thumbnail embroidery” originated.

Afternoon or informal evening dress. Unknown origin, c. 1800-1810, cotton with tambour chain-stitch embroidery.

The dress originally had a single seam under the bust, but it was replaced with a two-inch inset band to lengthen the waist and bring it up to date. Jane Austen mentions this practice of letting out gown waistbands in one of her letters to her sister, Cassandra, dated January 17, 1809:

“I can easily suppose that your six weeks here will be fully occupied, were it only in *lengthening the waist of your gowns*. I have pretty well arranged my spring & summer plans of that kind, & mean to wear out my spotted Muslin before I go.”

Gowns courtesy of Mr. Ivan Sayers. Loan kindly arranged by the Society for the Museum of Original Costume.

Ever Austen: Literary Timelessness in the Regency Period

January 3 – February 28, 2017

2017 marks the bicentennial of Jane Austen's death, an author who has left an everlasting literary legacy that continually influences popular culture across time. In celebration of this legacy, UBC Rare Books and Special Collections (RBSC) presented *Ever Austen: Literary Timelessness in the Regency Period*. The exhibition was curated by UBC undergraduate students from the Faculty of Arts Karol Pasciano, Kathryn Ney, and Karen Ng, under the guidance of RBSC Librarian Chelsea Shriver, and was funded by an AURA grant. This exhibition not only honoured Austen, but also illuminated the social and material history of her works in the context of the Regency era.

Featuring RBSC's newly acquired first editions of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, as well as thematically-diverse displays, *Ever Austen* invited old and new fans to delight themselves in a literary journey through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Rare Books and Special Collections thanks the Vancouver-based Society for the Museum of Original Costume (SMOC) and Mr. Ivan Sayers for the loan of beautiful Regency era clothing and accessories for this exhibition. The two lovely period gowns were displayed in the reading room of RBSC, on the first floor of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKBLC).

Ever Austen: Literary Timelessness in the Regency Period was on display on the second floor of IKBLC from January 3rd to February 28th, 2017.

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The curators would like to acknowledge that we shared the works of Jane Austen on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Musqueam people. We would also like to extend our thanks to the librarians and staff at Rare Books and Special Collections and at the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre program services office. This exhibition would not have been possible without their guidance and encouragement.