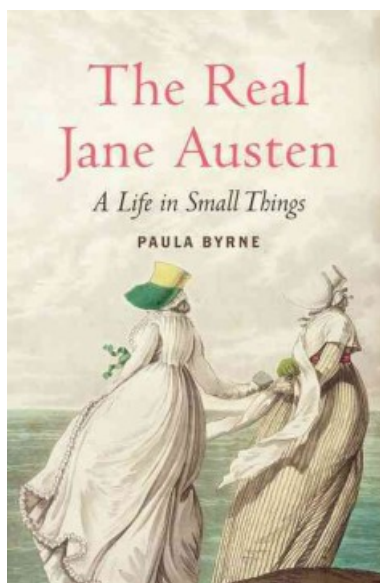


THE REAL JANE AUSTEN : A LIFE IN SMALL THINGS / PAULA BYRNE.



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Author(s): Byrne, Paula

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Subject**Terms:**

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[> Additional Information](#)**Publication Information:**

1st U.S. ed.

Abstract:

Summary: A revealing portrait of the beloved novelist, drawn from the most up-to-date scholarship and unexplored sources, presents a modern take on the woman and the world that shaped her.

Notes:

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REVIEWS

PW Reviews 2013 February #1

Just in time for the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (first published in January 1813), comes Paula Byrne's vivacious new portrait of its author. The approach Byrne (*Jane Austen and the Theatre*) takes is refreshingly material-based and the book is experimental in structure; each chapter unfolds from the biographer's description of a small object associated with Austen's life (chapter titles include "The East Indian Shawl", "The Cocked Hat", "The Card of Lace", "The Crimson Velvet Cushions", and "The Topaz Crosses"). This technique serves two functions: firstly, it honors the precision for which Austen was famed by drawing attention to the material artifacts of her life; secondly, it challenges the "'official' family biography of Jane Austen," which stresses the novelist's "enclosed, sequestered world", coloring Austen's life with the same "ivory miniature" quality she famously ascribed to her fiction. Byrne's Austen, as revealed through this archive of objects, emerges as a worldly woman, profoundly enmeshed in a wider world than she's often acknowledged to occupy. This is an Austen with a sense for the political as well as for the finer points of sensibility—and one who will be unfamiliar (though never unrecognizable) to many readers. (Feb.)

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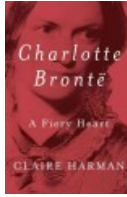


The Bronte cabinet: three lives in nine objects

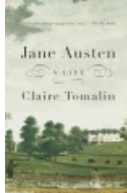
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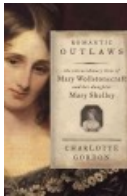
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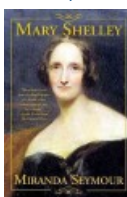
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Small things in Jane Austen's world do not only evoke distant places. They can also be the bearers of big emotions. The intense emotions associated with love and death are often refracted through objects. Byrne has chosen to focus on a series of objects that belonged to Jane Austen or touched her life in some way, ranging from a l True fans of Jane Austen can never get enough of reading about her novels or her life, sparse though both may be. This is a book to please true fans, especially those not deeply immersed in the more academic end of Jane Austen research. It might be classed as biography but is not a "starter" bio, being arranged as a series of essays instead of a birth-to-death narrative. *The Real Jane Austen: A Life In Small Things* is an astonishing biography, in which Paula Byrne, the renowned Austen scholar, thwarts all attempts to tame Jane's reputation into one of dreary respectability and we meet the more likely personality behind such novels as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion*. Through her life and work, Jane emerges as deeply immersed in culture and politics, far ahead of her time in both her writerly ambition and desire for independence. With new revelations, including Byrne's discovery of a previously unknown contemporary portrait and the identity of Jane's long-lost "In *THE REAL JANE AUSTEN*, Byrne's engaging prose and thoughtful, determined analysis of tangible objects from her life give us a picture of Austen as a vivid, vital woman committed to her career as a novelist, clear-eyed and part of the wider world. Well worth a read." (*Literary Omnivore*). Like a superb archaeologist, Byrne uses artifacts from Jane Austen's life to craft a vivid and more complex portrait of the writer than we have ever seen. *About the Author*. Paula Byrne is the critically acclaimed author of five biographies, including *Belle: The Slave Daughter and the Lord Chief Justice*, *The Real Jane Austen*, and *Mad World: Evelyn Waugh and the Secrets of Brideshead*.