

Chawton House Library Fellow's Lecture

14th December 2010

“Pleasure in a Good Novel”: Gender, Genre and the Regency Reader

Professor Barbara Benedict, Trinity College, Connecticut.

Are there ‘male’ and ‘female’ novels? According to Jane Austen’s hero in *Northanger Abbey*, “The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid.”

Yet from 1770 to the early nineteenth century, women were warned, scolded and ridiculed for being addicted to fictions purveying steamy sentiment, like Henry Mackenzie’s *Man of Feeling*. At the same time, Walter Scott became the most famous novelist of all time and the novel itself became the most popular and prolific genre in English literature.



Who read novels, what novels did they read, and why, how and where did they read them? Do novels themselves have a gender? In this talk, Professor Barbara M. Benedict will explore the fictions about fiction and gender during the late eighteenth-century and the Regency. She will ask whether novels “By a Lady” differ from those which are not, and how the gender of a reader shapes the reception of novels from Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* to Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*.

Lecture Tickets: £10 (£7.50 for students)

6.30pm Reception with wine & canapés

7.00pm Lecture



To book, or for more info, call 01420 541010 or email info@chawton.net.