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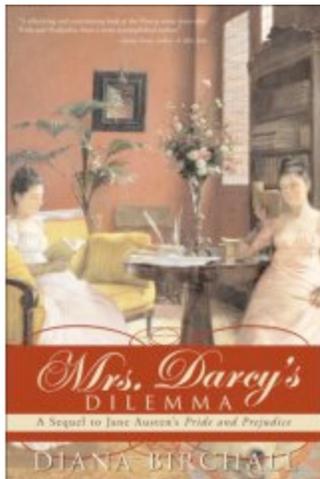
NUMBER 60



Book Review Issue

It's been a cool and rainy winter in Southern California, so a good time to curl up with a collection of book reviews. Our selection of Jane Austen-related fiction is reviewed by our own eloquent Book Reviewer, Natasha Zwick, who, like Elizabeth Bennet, is a great reader.

Advertisement for the Home Team: Diana Birchall's *Mrs. Darcy's Dilemma* is being internationally published by SourceBooks in April 2008, and is already available for pre-order on Amazon.



Mrs. Darcy's Dilemma gets a sleek new cover!

And now, without further ado – the Reviews!

“Let us leave it to the reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans.” – Jane Austen

Lost in Austen: Create Your Own Jane Austen Adventure

By Emma Campbell Webster

Reviewed by Natasha Zwick (*spoiler alert)

This has to be one of the cleverest ideas around. As a child, I loved the “Choose Your Own Adventure” series, and any story that offered the reader direct influence over what happened to her. It was only a matter of time, I suppose, before a Janeite decided to make that possible in the world of Austen.

Your adventure begins at the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*, and you are Elizabeth Bennet: every (normal) girl’s dream come true. You are granted points for intelligence, confidence and fortune (all of which keep changing, so you’ll need paper and pen on hand while you travel), and you also keep track of accomplishments (mine include screen covering and sharp powers of observation), connections (both inferior and superior), and failures (my list is so long and demeaning I hesitate to glance at it, but, for you, dear reader, I’ll share a bit: according to this test, I have “poorly tim’d liveliness,” “insufficient knowledge of dancing,” “unreasonably high expectations,” and “absolutely no appreciation of the picturesque.”)

Only some of these are even somewhat fair, but this final failure reminds me of one of the great delights of the book: if, at any point, you choose to do something where Elizabeth chose something else, you risk suffering unfathomable hardship OR becoming one of the other heroines, while still, somehow, staying Elizabeth! For instance, when I chose to call on the Lucases, I ended up in Emma’s world, except there was no Emma. Mr. Knightley was there, correcting my behavior in his wonderful way, Mr. Woodhouse had a manor, even Harriet Smith appears (in the form of Maria Lucas), but no Emma, because, of course, I am Emma now, unless I choose differently, in which case she appears. Similarly, when I chose to visit Bath with the Phillipseys, they became the Allens, and I became Catherine Morland, until she showed up when I chose differently. With one set of choices, you even get to be Jane herself, at least in terms of meeting Tom Lefroy, *and a very interesting result of being “too smart” an Elizabeth Bennet leaves you a single authoress on the final page, which suggests that is an option Webster thinks every heroine should have.

All the novels figure into the adventures (if you choose properly; or, rather, if you choose improperly, as the case may be), and I will save the rest of those delights for your own discovery.

While adventuring, the reader has several opportunities for growth and education (symbolized by a quill pen on the bottom of each page) and for demonstrating her current education (I need obvious brushing up on the exact nature of a quadrille, among other things) for points in the various categories.

If she makes an error, however, the consequences are shocking: my first “end” didn’t even get me to stage 3, like any normal heroine. Instead, I was punished by getting smothered in an attic by Fanny Price. Round two was hardly more encouraging: I was tricked into marrying Wickham and then abandoned for his wild debauchery and left to waste away. The narrator commented, “no wonder you’re still single.”

I have been wounded, I have been tried, and in some versions, I have even been trampled, but alas, I have not given up. Like every resilient heroine before me, I continue to have faith that I will find my hero, even when the odds look less than favorable, and that I, unlike Jane perhaps, will be able to stay true to him and to my professional calling. I continue on my adventures, even recording the choices I make and trying to learn from my errors, confident—even when my intelligence points dip to negative 330 and my fortune to negative 140, my confidence points have never dipped below 200—that all will turn out right.

And if I overcome my failing of a “deplorable weakness for Gothic Literature” on my way, so much the better.

The True Darcy Spirit
By Elizabeth Aston

Reviewed by Natasha Zwick

When Mr. Collins (as voiced by Elizabeth Johnson) and I reviewed Elizabeth Aston's *Mr. Darcy's Daughters*, we were both pleased and displeased with some of this adventurous writer's choices. Though her earlier work is not required reading to enjoy the latest one, familiarity with some of its important characters, particularly Camilla (the Lizzy parallel) and Belle (the ditzy twin who doesn't get married at the end and who gives Lydia, the "silliest girl in all England," some competition for the distinction), who play important roles here, in the life of an entirely new character, Cassandra Darcy.

Cassandra, or Cass, is Anne de Bourgh's kid, but Aston is careful to state upfront that Cass looks nothing like her mom and is confident like a Darcy; it seems that Anne somehow managed to snag a Darcy, even if it wasn't our beloved one, and that he embodied some seemingly familial traits of intelligence, moral rectitude, and confidence. Anne's Darcy husband has, much to Cassandra's misfortune, died early, and Anne has remarried a more Mr. Collins type figure by the name of Partington. The first scene of the novel occurs between Cass and a young Darcy, Horatio, who has been hired to provide legal services on behalf of Mr. Partington—which consists of arranging a marriage between Cass and a man she refuses, to the cost of expulsion from her family.

And thus begins a tale of intrigue, illicit affairs, premarital sex, marriage for money, art, opera, kisses in the garden, and prostitutes.

Lady Catherine's granddaughter has suffered a lapse of judgment for which nearly all other characters condemn her, but we get to watch as slowly things come right, through the aid of a loyal (smart) servant, an independent cousin, a flawed but improving barrister, and her own tremendous talents.

We know from the start that this Cass is our heroine because: Horatio remembers her from their youth as playful and "unfeminine," Rosings is going to her half-brother instead of to her, she reminds Horatio of Fitzwilliam Darcy, she has an evil stepfather who scorns novels, and she resists going to live with the evil Mrs. Norris (all our characters are connected—someone should really write a book about that—Emma Woodhouse having tea with Elizabeth Bennet, Marianne Dashwood reading romances with Catherine Morland. I may do this in the future, so please consider this my copyright of the idea. Of course, since first writing this review last Spring, I have read—and reviewed for you—an attempt or two to do just that. Darn.)

Now the primary issues become, "how did this poor girl become all alone in the world?" and "where/who is her real soul mate?" The discerning reader quickly adds the clues about the soul mate (no revelations here), which brings a little cheer to the answer of the solitude question.

As we now expect, Aston makes some very funny comments on people and how they act in groups, much as Austen did, so even though we are introduced to several new characters, it is fairly simple to "categorize" them by their views, ridiculous as they are in many cases. Miss Quail, for instance, an ugly girl who finally gets engaged, starts every sentence with, "as an engaged woman . . ." as if to remind the world that SOMEONE wanted her. Mrs. Cathcart wants Cass to get a library subscription but only because "it would be thought odd" if Cass wasn't seen there. Mrs. Nettelton comments that "good looks . . . count in any employment." Ew.

In addition to bitter comments on people, Aston also throws in quite a bit of scandal—men who are inappropriately forward, gay, sleeping with married women, or courting escorts, and women who are madams, adulteresses, scandal-mongers, passive idiots or gigglers—and also enough real love to satisfy even this Janeite. Elizabeth Bennet's "fine eyes" become Cassandra's "golden voice," the key that unlocks the heart of the man who is her true match. The hero makes mistakes in judging the heroine, as she does him, but in the end, the bad guys get punished, the condescending aunt concedes, the hero professes his love, and the "true Darcy spirit" emerges, triumphant.

Plus the heroine keeps her job—and her name. A modern romance for the modern Janeite.

Pemberley Manor
By Kathryn L. Nelson

Reviewed by Natasha Zwick

I'll admit that when Diana first handed me Nelson's new tome, my thoughts were less than 100% enthusiastic. Yet another *Pride and Prejudice* sequel? What more could possibly be done with the characters we know and love that would be believable and heartwarming and in character with the spirit of Austen's novel?

I was well-rewarded for my reading efforts. In this version, which starts at the wedding ceremony, it is not so easy as "happily ever after." Darcy's parents' unhappy marriage (a prequel, if you will, to our *P&P*) has led to his estrangement from his father (prior to the death of the latter), his denial of the truth about his mother, and a reticence to broach any of these topics with his similarly lonely sister, Georgiana. We see Darcy suffering from the unhappy ghosts of his past, and of course it falls to our Lizzy to help him confront and banish them, without pressuring him to do more than he feels at any given moment.

There are some delightful new characters, but not too many to obscure our enjoyment of their presence. The Alexanders, for instance, are Darcy's version of the Gardiners, except that his mother has somehow led him to rebuff them until Lizzy enters his life. Just when Elizabeth most misses her father and Darcy wishes he knew more about his own, Mr. Alexander, in all his paternal glory, comes to help them. Trevor Handley is a character of intrigue whose plight parallels Darcy's, but then veers sharply in its own course. The novel also has some quite beautiful uses of figurative language that most modern sequels do not attempt. A few are potentially hackneyed ("Darcy and Elizabeth rested for a moment at the top of the long stairway they had climbed, little realizing that a mountain still lay ahead"), but several I found uncommonly fresh (Mr. Bennet prefers "the rich tapestry of a good book to the coarser fabric of society"; Lizzy's love for her husband is "as impossible as the rising and setting of the sun, and as unlikely to end"). Lizzy has a line that made me laugh aloud (perhaps in contemplation of my own nature): "I have never been able to master my faults for more than a short interval."

That is not to say there are no awkward, seemingly inappropriate clichés and modernisms. Phrases such as "women of their dreams" and "let it go" seem not quite to fit, and Lizzy calling Darcy "Will" may be going a bit too far for many Janeites. A few scenes just seem unlikely: Darcy physically hitting someone who hurt him emotionally, Lizzy rocking miserable Darcy to some state of peace, characters reacting to an "alternative" lifestyle with open-mindedness in the 19th century. My largest complaint, excuse the pun, is that this book is just too heavy! Physically, that is; I had difficulty holding it up with one hand. Unpardonable.

There are also some interesting explanations of events and shifts in feeling that occur in the original novel. Elizabeth finally tells Darcy, for instance, the moment she actually fell in love with him. We now come to understand that several servants at Pemberley were concerned he might marry Caroline Bingley. (At first I thought it odd that they don't know their master well enough not to suspect him of such ill judgment, but then it turns out they were right, and he had entertained the thought!). Darcy's reserve makes sense as a result of psychological trauma in childhood: it's not arrogance then, but insecurity, that causes him to shy away from people he doesn't know. In his arc in this text, Darcy finally conquers his anger once his strategy of storming out of tense situations hurts those he loves most dearly.

Nelson deftly handles several key interactions between our characters. The socializing at the wedding feels just like it would have if Austen had written a sequel. Though Lizzy and Darcy's first moments together are not anything Austen would have given them, or we'd expect, these moments provide the impetus for us to explore further what made Darcy who he is, and how Lizzy's presence will change Pemberley—for good, and for the better. Jane Bennet knows her sister so well—well enough to coax her to talk by making Elizabeth worry about Jane and then defend Darcy. Caroline Bingley is bitchier than ever—but Colonel Fitzwilliam is given the enviable task of making her eat crow.

As the novel progresses, Nelson has the Bennet sisters transform Caroline (details not to be disclosed by me) in a way that seemed unbelievable to me—at first—but within a few pages, I found myself really touched by the change (which means I must have started to believe at some point along the way, so kudos to Nelson for her fortitude in making that work). Nelson nicely develops Georgiana’s character—and her relationship with her older brother and the other new people in her life. Most significantly, Nelson takes Austen’s statement about Lizzy livening Darcy and makes it come to life: we can see him attempt humor and irony the morning immediately following the wedding (of course, Elizabeth doesn’t yet understand that he’s doing that, but it’s hilarious because we know). Lizzy, in turn, is more self-aware, less likely to judge immediately, and more willing to hold her tongue and to find the right, rather than the first, words.

Lesson-wise, a primary theme comes from the mouth of Jane Bennet, but accurately reflects the philosophy of both Bennet sisters—and, I’d argue, all happy people: “Happiness,” she tells Caroline, “is a choice we make for ourselves.” Nelson shows us that even with the right man, a woman must daily choose happiness in order to secure it.

I recommend that you choose happiness—by reading this book.

Mr. Darcy’s Diary and Mr. Knightley’s Diary

By Amanda Grange

Reviewed by *Natasha Zwick*

One of the most unfair accusations against Austen is that she presents only women’s feelings and thoughts. Any reader truly intimate with Austen’s work knows this claim to be false; we can see what Mr. Darcy and Mr. Knightley, for instance, feel, through their words, the descriptions of their behavior, and their interactions with others. Nonetheless, I found it a most pleasing experience to be taken into the heads of Austen’s leading men, directed by Amanda Grange in two purported diaries: Mr. Darcy’s and Mr. Knightley’s.

In Mr. Darcy’s case, the diary begins with information we already know (principally from Darcy’s letter to Elizabeth after the first proposal): his history with Wickham, especially with respect to Georgiana. Though at first the reader may be troubled by why Darcy would explain details he already knows to his diary, the story quickly distracts from any preoccupation with form.

We actually see the moment of Georgiana telling her big brother the truth about the planned elopement (very differently portrayed than in the BBC, and equally interesting and valid, given that Austen doesn’t provide the details, other than that Georgiana tells him). Also enlightening are Darcy’s first impressions of Mr. Bennet and Darcy’s plans to interest Bingley in his sister, which, in the text, Austen never lets us know for sure. According to his diary, Darcy really believes Bingley will quickly recover from Jane, just as he has from all his previous flirtations—a history which helps the reader, to some degree, excuse Darcy’s interference on behalf of his friend.

Darcy is early annoyed by Caroline (Whew! It’s hard to tell at places in Austen’s book if he can see how annoying she is), who is as snippety about Charlotte Lucas’ unmarried state and looming spinsterhood (odd, given Caroline’s own status) as she is about Jane’s low relations. Caroline, in fact, is more wholly to blame for the mess between her brother and Jane. Darcy’s account reveals that he checked his own judgment about Jane’s lack of love for Bingley (thus he did NOT assume he knew all about “reading” women), and Caroline lies to him. The separation, then, is her fault. Bingley is similarly cleared of fault because, as Darcy explains, Bingley wanted to write directly to the Bennets from London and was stopped by his sister, who promised to send his regards in a letter she planned to write, but then of course never did. Darcy’s diary thus nearly clears Darcy and Bingley and slams Caroline (which is A-OK by this reader).

A tip, by the way: I re-read *Pride and Prejudice* (I was teaching it at the time) at work as I read Darcy’s account of the same events at home—such a treat. Any curiosity I had about what was going on with Darcy when we read about Elizabeth was cleared—and brilliantly, too. The scene with Mr. Collins approaching Darcy without a proper introduction is hilarious—this time, we get to hear Darcy’s

thoughts about this episode. Similarly, it's fun to observe how Lizzy creeps into Darcy's thoughts the winter after they meet—while she has no idea that she is being thought of in this way. Darcy's information fills in gaps: how was it, for instance, that he happened to visit Elizabeth in the parsonage in that awkward solitary visit before the first proposal? Why does Colonel Fitzwilliam wait longer than Darcy does after she receives the transformative letter? What does Darcy do when he tries to forget Elizabeth? Grange addresses all these questions and more.

We also see Darcy “learn” of his own errors, just as Austen gives us Elizabeth's realizations in the novel. He works on a new social policy: to pretend he's known strangers all his life in order to be agreeable. The modern reader, who wants Darcy to reach out and hug Elizabeth as she cries upon recounting the news of Lydia and Wickham, is touched by his explanation of how badly he wants to buck social conventions and hold her—but why, ultimately, he doesn't.

In addition to Darcy, Anne de Bourgh gets some fleshing out in this journal; we see Anne, Colonel Fitzwilliam, and Darcy playing together as children before she was sick, and we learn how devastating her father's loss was to her. We see Anne a bit tougher than we ever do in *P & P*, and we learn that sometimes the quiet characters have strong, unspoken feelings. And of course we get to see how Darcy learns about the Lady Catherine visit to Longbourne and Darcy's gratitude toward Mr. Bennet for fostering such spunk in his daughter. The first Christmas together as a family extends the story a bit—with funny results—and after a delicious payback to Lady Catherine, Darcy is hopeful for the future.

In Mr. Knightley's case, too, Grange fills in gaps in our knowledge. Why wasn't Mr. Knightley at the Westons' wedding, for instance? Now we learn that he had business in London. How does it happen that John and Isabella come with all their children for Christmas at Hartfield, despite John's pressing business in town? Now we learn that it is Mr. Knightley who ensures that Mr. Woodhouse and Emma will be surrounded by family at this important time. What was Mr. Knightley thinking about Elton, other than that he would “act rationally,” as he pursued Emma? We see here that Mr. Knightley—and other people in Highbury—assume Elton is trying to raise his status by marrying Emma. Elton's excessive—and ridiculous—flattery seemed closer to that of Mr. Collins here than it did when I have read both original works. And of course, in Mr. Knightley's story, there is a lot more information we don't know from *Emma* because the emphasis is on her, rather than on both protagonists, as it is in *P & P*.

Unlike Darcy, whose “workings” on Bingley in matters of love made the reader say “ick” (even if his journal justifies his interference a bit), Mr. Knightley is right when he advises Robert Martin. Both heroes, however, are oblivious to their own feelings about the heroine, but, much to Grange's credit, it takes Mr. Knightley much longer to understand himself.

This reveals, of course, a problem readers often have with *Emma*: if Mr. Knightley was 16 when Emma was born, and if he finally professes his love to her at 37, this means he may well have had sexual feelings towards a child. This journal eliminates that possibility. We see her through his eyes right away—he admires her devotion to her father, he is concerned that all her associates are much older than she is, or simply inappropriate friends for her, and he encourages her to do what is right—but he is unaware of being in love with her for much of the novel. Emma's name pops up often in his thoughts—so we know what he is about—but as for Mr. Knightley himself, for much of the time, and certainly until Emma is an adult, he is “doomed to blindness” of his own desires. Though he calls her “my Emma” in his journal, he makes no romantic comments about her for the first half of the text, and in his quest for a wife, does not consider her. At the same time, it just feels right to him to be with her.

Mr. Knightley, like Mr. Darcy, tries to interest himself in other women. For Mr. Knightley, it's because he desperately wants to have the life his brother John has but can't seem to work up feelings of love for any woman, and he does not intend to marry without love. For Darcy, it's because he knows he is in love with a woman it would be impractical—or impossible—to take to wife. In Darcy's case, the pursuit is amusing because he is matched with a woman of inferior intelligence, a woman who doesn't “get” irony (I'm familiar with the feeling). In Mr. Knightley's case, it's just sad.

He tries so hard to find love, unaware that the woman he loves is right in front of him. The reader, however, can savor the irony: we know what Emma will do and think very soon, and it's interesting to see Mr. Knightley experiencing similar confusion just before she does. Mr. Darcy and Mr. Knightley also share the decision to get away from the heroine when marriage seems hopeless—Darcy, after the first proposal; Mr. Knightley when he thinks Emma loves Frank—and to visit the heroine before so doing to take formal leave.

The build-up to the happy resolution here is particularly fun and cleverly handled, with even an allusion to the hen-house! Mr. Knightley plays often with his nephews and nieces, foreshadowing his own success as a father, and the passion he feels for Donwell Abbey reflects well on his character, too, as do his understated generosity to the poor and his skill managing Mr. Woodhouse. Even more telling: he loves his home so much; yet we know he will voluntarily leave it to make Emma and her father happy in just a few months. The reader gets truly to savor Mr. Knightley's goodness.

As soon as he realizes what he is feeling for Emma—boom—he plans to propose, and, according to this text, wants to do so at strawberry picking at Donwell and, when that fails, at Box Hill. We, who well know what will happen at Box Hill, can again enjoy irony—just as the hero wants to claim the heroine forever, she distances herself from him in a way that could ruin everything. Grange also elucidates how Harriet could imagine that Mr. Knightley returns her affection, and though he misinterprets what he's seeing as affection for Robert Martin, we see that a woman in love could easily interpret Mr. Knightley's new familiarity with Harriet as love. Mr. Knightley, in this version more than in the original, has flawed judgment; he, after all, completely misreads Frank Churchill and even his own feelings once Frank arrives, but that kind of flawed judgment, in a good, generally well-judging character, is often what draws us to an Austen heroine. It seems fitting, then, that the hero share it at last.

Darcy's Story

By Janet Aylmer

Reviewed by Natasha Zwick

The premise is intriguing: What was Darcy thinking? What were Darcy's motivations for his actions? What is . . . Darcy's story?

Janet Aylmer finally tells us all—or some, anyway.

The story begins before Wickham seduced Georgiana, and we get a lot of interesting background that could easily work with what we know from *Pride and Prejudice*. George Wickham, for instance, was named for his godfather, George Darcy, our Darcy's dad. Georgiana doesn't really like Caroline Bingley. Darcy mentally compares Lydia to Georgiana when Lydia demands that Bingley throw a ball.

Despite some interesting set-ups, for the first several chapters, the text feels alternately as though the narrator is explaining things to us (such as lines we already understand), and as though we're reading a less perfect version of the story we already know and love. In fact, the best lines of *Darcy's Story* are Austen's, and we have already read almost entire chunks of this story.

Another weakness is that there are “revelations” that feel a bit inappropriate, like Elizabeth's refusal to dance with Darcy at Netherfield exciting him, and an absence of revelations where we might benefit from some (for instance, what was Darcy thinking when Louisa and Caroline mock Elizabeth at Netherfield?)

But if a reader is patient, this story has some little gems awaiting discovery. Darcy's view of Caroline Bingley, for instance, is brilliant wit: he “reflected to himself that she would not be an easy companion to any man.” The Netherfield Ball now reveals why Darcy looks so upset: he sees Lydia and Denny and Elizabeth and knows they're talking about him and Wickham. There is the suggestion that Wickham has been performing his seduction of 15-year olds for some time.

Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bennet start to build their relationship at Netherfield—talking about books. Aylmer explains how it happens that Darcy returns to Pemberley before he is expected—a day before his sister, and several days before his guests. There’s a great image in Darcy’s mind of him strolling across the Pemberley green with Elizabeth—just before it actually occurs. The well-versed reader has much irony to savor here.

And, best of all, Aylmer flushes out Darcy’s relationship with Georgiana. It is through his confiding in his sister that Darcy comes to understand that he did wrong by Elizabeth in his first proposal. It is best, she tells him, a la Hillel and later Jesus, to “treat people . . . with the politeness and consideration with which you would wish them to treat you” (but, of course, phrased as tentative question because of the nature of their relationship). Their relationship, and, in fact, all his coping after we see him propose disastrously, are skillfully handled here.

There are many good lines, and several of them don’t come directly from Austen but are clearly inspired by her. “There can,” Darcy thinks, “be no better way of appreciating the sufferings of those whose hearts have really been touched by love than by having the same affliction yourself” (I’ve thought that a lot in the past few months, post-break-up. Indeed, we now understand that Darcy leaves Meryton just as Bingley prepares to propose because he can’t bear to watch their joy in light of his own failed attempts to achieve it.

And Lady Catherine’s visit to Darcy AFTER her scene with Elizabeth is just tremendous fun, as is finally getting to hear what the “asking for her hand” conversation between Mr. Bennet and Mr. Darcy sounds like. These heretofore hidden scenes, when combined with an Austen-ish flair in dialogue, make *Darcy’s Story* a worthwhile read.

Old Friends and New Fancies

By Sybil G. Brinton

Reviewed by **Natasha Zwick**

I arrived about 10 minutes early to yet another first (coffee) date and decided to use my time wisely by browsing in the bookstore until the time arrived to meet the man. Imagine my delight when I discovered a new printing of a book originally written in 1913 and containing characters from all six of the major novels! It was like a dream come true!

This story looks at what might happen if all our beloved (and not so beloved) characters lived at the same time and could know and meet each other. It uses language that somehow feels more authentic (given that it was written closer to Austen’s time than any sequel written today could be) than usual and offers intrigue you would well expect in a world where Lady Catherine has tea with Lady Dalrymple and where Georgiana checks out William Price for Kitty Bennet’s benefit.

William Price says to Georgiana, and it hit home especially given the circumstances of my finding this treasure, that “if you found you positively had to do [some things you had to do], and there was no way out, then you would decide to like them [because] it would make them so much easier,” right? Georgiana and I were both struck by this way of looking at the world.

I suspect quite soon that Kitty is not the right match for William, largely because Mrs. Knightley (Emma’s still doing this?) is promoting the match, and because William seems to pay far more attention to Georgiana. Meanwhile, Catherine Morland’s brother, James, has fallen hard for Kitty, and we know he has already experienced such heartache over unrequited love. She rejects him, but her older sister rejected the right suitor at the wrong time, so I still feel hope for that match—especially because Mr. Bennet likes him and is sensitive and funny when approached for Kitty’s hand.

Sir Walter Eliot, meanwhile, is busy courting Mary Crawford, who has captured Colonel Fitzwilliam’s heart; Mary Crawford successfully draws Georgiana out, just as she did Fanny, but Lady Catherine wants nothing to do with her.

John Thorpe, of course, has plenty of useless—and maybe worse than useless—things to say at the opera, and Captain Wentworth and Colonel Fitzwilliam have mutual friends, which makes sense.

The sheer number and variety of characters we love to watch in action acting together here makes for quite a spectacle. One dinner scene alone would be worth almost anything to attend as the proverbial fly on the wall: in attendance are Wentworth and Anne, Mr. Knightley, William Price, Caroline Bingley, the Hursts, and Georgiana. The pairings in the text are so much fun: friendships between Elinor and Elizabeth, Anne and Georgiana, and Mary Crawford and Mrs. Palmer, and matches between—well, I won't ruin those for you! Mrs. Jennings is as ridiculous and simultaneously charming as ever, with Kitty replacing the Dashwood and Steele girls as her plaything. Even the riddle idea from *Emma* gets some replay time here, as does the play idea from *Mansfield Park*, and the Elton proposal, refurbished, with Georgiana in the Emma role. Given the possibilities here, the only wonder to me is that Brinton controlled her desires to throw everyone together!

One possible fault, lest I praise the text without cease: Emma is far too annoying and still up to her old (bad) antics. I know, I know: that's how she is in the book. I respectfully disagree, as I always have, in my defense of Emma's solid character. Mr. Knightley, too, here is positively scary, not a moral exemplar who looks hot in his breeches, as he should be (and as Jeremy Northam perfectly portrayed him) (at least in the first few appearances; towards the end, he is the hero I always knew him to be). Fanny and Edmund are deemed "dreadfully good." I'm not sure I should quibble with that one, but aren't we supposed to like the good ones? Only if they're funny?

OK: back to what I love about this book. Some of the lines are positively Austen-esque. The friendship between Elinor Ferrars and Elizabeth Bennet, for instance, is described in this way: "Their friendship was of a particularly sincere and well-balanced kind, and was not marred by their constant intercourse, as each knew how to maintain that degree of reserve which prevents indiscriminate confidences and so greatly strengthens mutual respect." In another instance, Bingley observes that "nowadays it is the fashion to admire loudest what one understands least."

Isabella Thorpe seems to make a play for Tom Bertram; though many others characters are drawn in by her, the discerning reader is no fool. We immediately pity the poor guy.

Perhaps we would feel the same way about my date. He arrived, poor chump, and found me giddy with my book purchase, but alas, Mr. Bennet would never have approved the match. "Natasha," he would say, "let me not have the grief of seeing *you* unable to respect your partner in life."

The University of Cambridge Announces: Lucy Cavendish College elects new President, Janet Todd



Janet Todd has been a guest and speaker at several JASNA-SW meetings in the past, and most recently was Carol Medine Moss Keynote Speaker at the JASNA AGM in Vancouver, last October, where she spoke on Anxiety in Emma. We are proud of this long time friend to our group, and reproduce the announcement made by the University of Cambridge. We might also take note of the description of Lucy Cavendish, which is open to all sorts of women students.

The country's leading expert on Restoration and eighteenth-century women writers, Professor Janet Todd, has been elected as the seventh President of Lucy Cavendish College.

Professor Todd has brought to public attention the work of previously little known authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, Aphra Behn and Helen Maria Williams. Among her many books are biographies of Mary Wollstonecraft and her Irish pupil, Lady Mount Cashell. Most recently she has been the general editor of the nine volume Cambridge edition of Jane Austen. She has taught in Africa, the U.S. and Puerto Rico; at present she is the Herbert J.C. Grierson Professor of English Literature and Director of the Centre for The Novel at the University of Aberdeen.

She is the author of the widely acclaimed *Sign of Angellica: women, writing, and fiction 1660-1800* and she has just published *Death and the Maidens: Fanny Wollstonecraft and the Shelley Circle*.

Professor Todd will come to Lucy Cavendish ready to focus on facilitating the research and careers of others and to encourage women's education at the College. In her career to date she has helped established important initiatives at universities such as the Life-Writing course at UEA and the Centre for The Novel at Aberdeen.

Lucy Cavendish College gives women over 21, from every possible background, the opportunity to study for an undergraduate or graduate degree at the University of Cambridge in a stimulating and enriching environment. The student population is strikingly varied. Some students have had careers, others have just finished Access courses or A-levels, still others come after taking degrees from universities all over the world.

Professor Todd says of her election, "I am absolutely delighted by my election to the Presidency of Lucy Cavendish College. I have long admired the College and its unique mission within the University of helping mature women to benefit from tertiary education at the point when they feel ready for it; I look forward immensely to working with the Governing Body, students and staff in pursuit of this mission. I will be keeping ties with the University of Aberdeen and I hope that both Lucy Cavendish and Aberdeen will benefit from this connection."

Professor Todd will succeed Dame Veronica Sutherland on 1 September 2008.

Save the Date

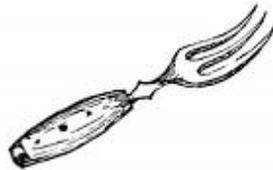
JASNA-Southwest 2008 Spring Meeting at
The UCLA Faculty Center

Join us on April 5, 2008 for

Silver Forks, Golden Memories & Library Treasures

*Think only of the past as it gives
you pleasure.
– Pride and Prejudice*

Edward Copeland, a past president of JASNA-SW, will speak about “Jane Austen and Silver Fork Novels.” Diana Birchall, longtime JASNA-SW member who has worn many hats on the JASNA-SW board over the years, will moderate a panel of several members discussing the “Golden Memories” of the early days of JASNA-SW. UCLA librarians and JASNA-SW members Mimi Dudley & Claire Bellanti will introduce us to the treasures of the Michael Sadleir Collection, held by the UCLA Young Research Library Special Collections Department. This talk will introduce us to the Jane Austen First, Early and Illustrated editions as well as a variety of “Silver Fork” novels from the collection that will be on display in the Library at the end of the meeting.



Around the Reading Groups

The San Fernando Valley Reading Group

Contact Gina Gualtieri at 818.788.4383 • gmgualtieri@yahoo.com

The Pasadena Reading Group

Contact Margery Rich at 626.614.8697

The West Los Angeles Reading Group

Contact Clara Browda at 310.278.8759

The Santa Monica Reading Group

Contact Diana Birchall at 310.394.2196 • birchalls@aol.com

The Orange County Reading Group

Contact Anna Freeman at 949.786.7170

The San Diego Reading Group

Contact Leila Dooley at 760.726.7815 • leila@nctimes.net or leila1@peoplepc.com

The Ventura Region

Contact Lillian Goldstein at 805.644.4238 • emailgoldstein@vcss.k12.ca.us

The Riverside Reading Group With Friends of Temecula Library

Contact Rebecca Weersing at 909.699.7814 • temausten@hotmail.com

JASNA Southwest Newsletter

The quarterly Newsletter of
The Jane Austen Society of North America, Southwest

Address newsletter correspondence to:

Diana Birchall, 225 Montana Avenue #204, Santa Monica, CA 90403
310.394.2196

Email: birchalls@aol.com

The Jane Austen Society of North America

Annual dues \$30; send check payable to JASNA to

Bobbie Gay, 7230 N. San Blas Drive, Tucson, AZ 85704

The Jane Austen Society of North America, Southwest

Annual dues \$15; send check payable to JASNA-SW to

Diane Erickson, 7123 Earldom Avenue, Playa del Rey, CA 90293

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