



Talking of Jane Austen

Sheila Kaye-Smith , G.B. Stern

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Talking of Jane Austen Details

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From Reader Review Talking of Jane Austen for online ebook

T.E. says

This is, on rereading, still a very charming and likable book.

Kirk says

4 Regency Teacups. While extremely dated, 1944, many interesting points. As many said on Goodreads, I certainly disagree with the authors on many points. However, very interesting points. The best part of the book for me was when each author gave a paragraph of their views on characters. For me only, an interesting connection with Sheila Kaye-Smith. My favorite composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams, wrote the music to the film version of her book "Joanna Godden".

"She was far too conscientious an artist to compromise with truth, and we may be sure that the facts she ignored could be ignored, and almost certainly were ignored by the kind of people she writes about..." - Sheila Kaye-Smith

Finally, I'll have to look for the exact quote. However, one of the authors says that a heroine of 20 years in Jane Austen's time would be 7 years older in 1944. Perhaps we can add another 1 1/2 to that equation. For me, that's the best answer to utter complete NONSENSE of saying so-so is too old to play so-so!!!! ie Emma Thompson is too old to play Elinor Dashwood. Tell me whether you liked how they played character, not that so-so was too old(I suppose it might matter if the difference is 20 yrs but surely not 5-15 yrs). There a quite a few Janeites who I highly highly respect who wave the age comment. If the actress is all wrong for part, I'm looking at you Billie Piper, that's clearly fair game.

Sherwood Smith says

I don't understand why this book isn't reprinted, at least in ebook form, given how huge the Jane Austen industry has grown.

Whatever. I was delighted to discover this book wherein G. B. Stern, whose delightful books I've only discovered in the last decade (they are very hard to find in Southern California) and Sheila Kaye-Smith, who I have not come across before, talk about their first discovery of Jane Austen, and then go on to discuss the books.

It was more than a hundred years ago that one of the authors discovered Austen (1905), which marks a rough halfway point between Austen's original publication and now. I think it's well to keep that in mind as one reads these delightful airings of opinion; I suspect that some of the conclusions they draw stem from the cultural milieu of a century ago.

And of course some is opinion, shared with many readers now. The book makes no attempt to masquerade as critical analysis. I think it's meant to be enjoyed a chapter at a time over tea, or before bed (which is how I read it), but I do think that to get the most out of it, it's probably best to have read Austen numerous times. Being able to instantly identify quotes, names, and situations from the novels lends itself to the pleasure.

The biggest take-away I got from this book was that delightful sense of a book discussion. Sometimes I spoke aloud, "No, no, you're totally wrong, how could you think that," and other times, "Yes, yes!" -- that gratifying feeling that comes of someone agreeing with you.

And there were things to learn, too, such as Sheila Kaye-Smith's chapter about how Austen's people were dressed. On the surface, one might think such a subject would take up about a paragraph, as Austen provides only the briefest clues to what anyone is wearing. We learn in *Mansfield Park* that Edmund liked Fanny's white gown with the glossy spots, and we learn more about muslins (and how they wash, or wear) in *Northanger*, through the absurdities of Mrs. Allen, but otherwise? However, Kaye-Smith teases out some of the hidden-to-us-modern meanings in Mrs. Elton's vulgarities, such as her preoccupation with trimmings (while denying that she ever thinks of dress).

They talk about characters they like, ones they don't, ones they don't believe Austen did justice to, and then they turn around and extrapolate entire lives for characters who are barely mentioned.

I was sorry to end the book; I would have liked so much to sit down and listen to these women talk forever about Austen, as we all drank tea.

June Schwarz says

One of my favorite books to go back to when I've reread Jane Austen's novels & wish there were more.

Kelly says

While I certainly disagree with the authors on some things (their analysis of the characters in *Mansfield Park* is what we disagree on the most), I still really enjoyed reading this book. It was light-hearted and fun for the most part, but also helped me think a bit more seriously about Austen's works. I highly recommend this book!

Sue says

I've just finished a delicious book. It's out of print, copyright 1943 but I was able to get it through interlibrary loan. "Talking of Jane Austen" by Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern. Wonderful discussions between them of everything pertaining to Austen's books - plot, characters, quotes, language....and more. They are true Austen devotees, and the book greatly enhanced my Austen reading. As I said, delicious. They disagree about various things in the books, which makes it shine as they explain how they came to their conclusions, and even convinced each other to change their minds. A lovely, lovely book. I'm so grateful it came to my attention. I plan to read it again, before I have to send it back. There's a hardcopy available at Amazon for, iirc, \$34.00 -- I'm tempted...

Deborah says

What a delightful book. Just like talking to someone about Jane Austen's books. What's similar about them, what's different, which characters you like or don't like and why. Two different authors who alternate chapters and don't always agree. Very fun!

Siria says

Part of the spoils of this year's Trinity Second-Hand Book Sale. I got it for only 50c; which, considering that it's hardback and a first edition, makes it rather undervalued, I think. It's a collection of essays about Jane Austen's six main novels, written by Sheila Kaye-Smith and G.B. Stern, who were quite popular novelists in their day.

It was written in 1943, which shows both in references in the text, and in the way they analyse the novels. That it's old-fashioned is not necessarily a bad thing - though there is an awful lot I would disagree with and find wrong, particularly with regards to *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park* and the Vexed Question of Colonel Brandon - because it's interesting to see how opinions of Austen's works have changed over time. Interesting to see how other things have changed, too; I was vastly amused at one section, wherein G.B. Stern (who came from an upper-class English background) declared that Lady Catherine de Bourgh's character was a failure because it was impossible to imagine that any great lady of the aristocracy could ever be so rude. I both boggled and laughed at that, because I go to school with quite a few offspring of that particular social class, both English and Irish, and no. Just no. Being a countess doesn't absolve you from being an ass. Lady Catherine is terrifyingly realistic to me.
