



My Theodosia

Anya Seton

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Theodosia's father is Aaron Burr--Thomas Jefferson's vice president, most famous for his great duel with Alexander Hamilton. With charm and tenderness, he holds sway over young Theodosia's heart, but his arrogance forces her to choose between the man he insists she marry and her love for a young soldier who will turn out to play a decisive role in her father's fate. Persuaded by Aaron that she will soon be crowned princess of the Kingdom of Mexico as a result of his treasonable plans, she is received like royalty on Blennerhassett Island, only to end up trying to exonerate him as he awaits trial in a Richmond jail, repudiated by his fickle son-in-law and friends.

My Theodosia Details

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Author : Anya Seton

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From Reader Review My Theodosia for online ebook

Misfit says

A solid first outing for Seton. This book tells the story of Aaron Burr and his daughter Theodosia (Theo). I have to admit I didn't recall much of Burr from history class outside of the duel with Alexander Hamilton. At the start of the book Theo is 17 and Burr is vice president of the United States. Burr plots to have Theo married to the wealthy but uninteresting Joseph Alston of South Carolina. Burr needs some of that money to cover his debts and also the power of the Alstons to gain him political support in the south. The relationship between Burr and Theo is closer than most father/daughter relationships and Burr is able to manipulate Theo into his increasingly risky and treasonous schemes that distance her ever further from any satisfying relationship she might forge with her husband, and her greatest joy in life is her young son.

There are lots of well known names in the story as Theo interacts with them -- Washington Irving (a minor character), Meriwether Lewis (sigh!), Dolly Madison, Alexander Hamilton and more. I love the way she sets her scenes and writes the various dialects, it's like you really hear them as they would be spoken. Her characters could have been fleshed out better, there is so much subject material in the Burr story and it's twists and turns that could be turned into a gloriously fat and meaty work of historical fiction. Writers out there -- HINT HINT HINT.

Be advised that if you read up on Aaron and Theo on the internet prior to finishing the book you will end up with some spoilers on your hands. However, do look Theo up afterwards and the legends surrounding her mysterious disappearance and the strange ghost that haunts a Carolina shore. Lastly, I was very glad there was not another forward by Philppa Gregory. The one she wrote for Devil Water and the way she obsessed about the too close relationship between father and daughter really irked me to no end.

Betsie says

Wow. The gaslighting, Stockholm syndrome and emotional blackmail in this book are astounding. I wanted so badly to hate Theo, but I just felt sorry for her most of the time. I feel like if her mother had lived, she might have been spared the emotional abuse at her father's hand and been able to lead a happy life. The fact that she spent the majority of her married years as an invalid, due to the fact that she was so incredibly unhappy, is just heartbreaking. However, it was a very well written book and kept my attention through out.

Kathy Petersen says

This is an example of why I am so hesitant to read historical fiction, especially those whose characters do have an actual place in the past. Herein we are treated to the most intimate thoughts and secret feelings of real and well-known people from the past ... nonsense.

Ana T. says

Although I have read some of Anya Seton's novels before it was only now that I had the opportunity to read My Theodosia, her first published work. Reading about Theodosia Burr Alston made me realise that I

seldom read books about American history and that my knowledge is indeed lacking in that department. Something I started working on as soon as I finished the book because I had to look up every real people mentioned and that I intend to continue by looking for more books with that setting.

Theodosia is the beloved daughter of Aaron Burr, America's Vice President from 1801 to 1805 under President Jefferson. The story starts on her seventeenth birthday and ends with what Seton believed was the event that led to her death.

Theodosia had an uncommon love for her father. Her mother died when she was still a child and she was raised by her father alone who took great care in her education. Her relationship with him shaped her whole life, she is at first hostess to his house parties and used to charm his friends and then married to cement his power in the south. She never ceases to support and accompany him in his various projects. I thought it interesting that Seton doesn't show Burr in a very good light, he manipulates his daughter, and everyone else around him, to his own ends and in doing so gives a great contribution to her tragic life. Theodosia goes from a happy girl in the beginning of this biography to an unhappy married woman who sees her love for another man crushed under her father's will. His convoluted life and especially the duel with Alexander Hamilton and the project for the Kingdom of Mexico also take their toll on Theodosia's life and health as do her private losses.

I must confess that what I loved more about the story was the glimpse I had of all these extraordinary people and how they lived. Since Theodosia goes to live in the South after her wedding there are many references to slavery and live in the plantations. Theodosia, while starting out as an engaging character ends up being too blind for too long to what her father really was - a charming scoundrel - and so set herself for much heartache. There's only so much you can take before you start pitying her.

Seton does a good job of grabbing historical figures and known facts and weaving them into fictional novels. The objects of her biographies are usually less known characters of history and that leaves her more freedom to fictionalise and romanticise their lives. Besides Theodosia there's Katherine Swynford (Katherine) and Elizabeth Fones (The Winthrop Woman). Her concern with historical accuracy and research was known but My Theodosia seems to be a highly fictional account of Theodosia's life, instead of being the final work about her it whetted my appetite for more. I was only sorry not to see more pages devoted to Theodosia's unusual education and the use she made of it. In all the references I found about her that is one of the things mentioned that set her apart from the other women of her time.

An interesting novel that should appeal to everyone interested in American history in general and Aaron Burr and his daughter in particular!

Grade: 4/5

Kate says

Awful book! I'd already read other Anya Seton books and liked them. If I'd read this one first, I wouldn't have read any others. A dreary drawn out plot. I might have been able to put up with Theodosia's naive adoration of her father, but the mean spirited racist observations in the book disgusted me. Literally just threw this book in the trash can!

Gail Richmond says

Anya Seton's historical fiction, although written in the Mid-20th Century, is exceptional. Well-researched, her characters are fully developed based on what is known of the historical individuals on whom they are based. Yes, dialogue is imagined, but the places, events, and letters as well as speeches, etc are taken from primary documents.

The story of Aaron Burr's daughter, Theodosia, and her almost obsessive love and drive to please her father is fascinating.

I read most of this in one sitting as I didn't want to put it down.

Rating: 4.5

Ginger says

I read all of Anya Seton's books when I was in high school.. Loved all her books..Have found a few I missed--guess my high school didn't have them--that I hope to read.. some still do not have Kindle editions.. Anyone who likes historical fiction would enjoy her books..

Gab McLaren says

Yikes. It's one thing to read old books, it's one thing to read historical fiction, and it's completely another to read old historical fiction. This book has not aged well, nor do I suspect I would have found much meat in it had I read it in 1941.

Lesson learned: just because I'm obsessed with American foundational history does not mean I should pick up every loosely related novel I see. At least it's over now.

Debby says

I'm not generally a fan of historical fiction; however, that is because i've never read anything by Anya Seton. What a phenomenal author. If you'd asked me if I wanted to read a book about Aaron Burr's daughter, Theodosia, and their relationship, I ould guess I'd have passes it up. I couldn't put this book down. I learned more about that whole period of history than I ever learned in school.

Very good book! I can't wait to rad more by Anya Seton.

Linda says

The story was interesting, so the two stars. But for a "meticulously researched" historical novel, there were many inaccuracies. I know it was written in 1941 by a New Yorker, but I was horrified by the racism in all the scenes that involved African Americans, from the the hairdresser who did Theo's hair for her 17th birthday in an early chapter, to the servants of the Burr family, and especially when the story moved to South Carolina to a rice plantation full of slaves. All the worst stereotypes were applied to these folks. Obviously

Anya Seton was a woman of her times writing about the 1800's, but reading it (for a book group) really made me squirm!

Readers interested in Theodosia's story might want to take a look at Michael Parker's recent novel, [The Watery Part of the World](#).

I didn't really like that book much, either, but it does give a different fictional take on what happened to Theodosia Burr.

Finished my second time through so I could fill in for absent book group leader. I stand by my 2-star review. There was a lively discussion within the group, though, and lots of comparison with the real history. A couple of the women really enjoyed the book!

Mardel Fehrenbach says

I loved this book when I was a teenager, and have reread it before this. I wanted to read this book after reading Nancy Isenberg's biography of Aaron Burr, *Fallen Founder*, partly because the author mentioned at Seton had hinted at incest between Aaron Burr and his daughter, Theodosia.

I still don't see the incest, although I see some mentions of this thought in the mind of Theodosia's rather narrow-minded inlaws. I am inclined to think this view is one primarily promulgated by Phillipa Gregory in her later introductions to the reissues of the Seton works. I do think that Seton plays up this dependence and imparts a kind of naivete to Theodosia that is seems unsubstantiated. It makes a good story, I suppose, but a story I found maddening. I found it maddening because the author deliberately takes aspects of 18th century life and her characters and paints them in a way intended to inflame the sensibilities of 20th century (or 21st century) readers, adding a subtext to the story that was probably not at all there. I have no problems with the author's portrayal of how misguided popular opinion shapes history or even of the difference between the cultures of Theodosia's youth and her later marriage. I have lived and seen too much of cultural differences and petty narrow-minded self interest to realize that there is a grain of truth in all this.

It was a good book for my youthful self. I remain indebted to it as it sparked an interest in Aaron Burr and early American history. The book is fiction, I recognize the differences between fiction and history and think that fiction needs to take some license in order to make its points. I do not, however, think this is one of Seton's best books, but since it was her first, this seems reasonable.

CLM says

For my Hamilton fanatic friends!

After seeing the Hamilton musical in November, I wanted to reread this historical novel about Burr's daughter. It is not as well known as *Katherine* and *Green Darkness* but is a poignant and very readable story.

Here is a link to my review: <http://perfectretort.blogspot.com/201...>

Melinda says

Our heroine, Theodosia Burr, is the only child of Vice President Aaron Burr (most famous for his duel with Alexander Hamilton). This book which spans from 1800-1812 tells the story of her relationship with her father and his self-serving hold on her. Ultimately, she sacrificed everything because of this devotion. This was Anya Seton's first novel written in 1941 and as always she is a master storyteller. One of the things I like about this author is her knack of making a rather obscure historical figure into an appealing story. While not my favorite Seton novel it was well researched and held my interest throughout.

Beth says

The only thing that prevented me from giving it one star is that I finished. I found the writing incredibly dated (I know it was written in the 1940's and set in the 1800's, but I found it unrealistically over the top). When the book was recommended to me, I was told "it's a lovely story about a father-daughter relationship", but I found it more along the lines of "emotional incest". The relationship between Theo and her father disgusted me - she was so blindly devoted to him that it overshadowed her entire life. Her father took advantage of that unconditional love over and over. I also disliked how other historical figures "just happened" to figure into the story - almost like name dropping. I don't think I'd recommend this story to any one under 40 years of age.

Sarah Mac says

Meh. Whatever. It's been...how long, 2 days(?) since I set this down, & I have no desire whatsoever to pick it up again.

Full disclosure: it's difficult enough getting me into Founding Fathers fiction, so the combination of a slow story with historical name-dropping + obnoxious MCs is virtually guaranteed to kill my interest. (Sorry, all ye Hamilton fans, but IMO it's an unglamorous era & pales in comparison to European history of the period. Zzz.)

Re: the obnoxious MCs, Burr's creepitude & Theo's blind devotion might well be accurate (I don't claim to be well-versed in Founders' psychology), but it sure is annoying to read about. And the slow pace is excruciating -- they finally arrived at the bloody plantation, which should have piqued my interest, but by then it was pg 129 & I just DID NOT CARE.

Bye-bye.

NB: This is my fifth Seton novel. Two I've liked; three I haven't cared for. Maybe someday I'll attempt Katherine or Winthrop Woman, but who knows. *shrug*
