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Set against Regency England, World Wars I and II, and postwar England, three love stories intertwine in surprising and fateful ways

American Maggie Joyce, touring Derbyshire in 1947, visits an 18th century Georgian country house that she is told was the model for Jane Austen's Pemberley. More amazingly, the former residents of the mansion, William Lacey and Elizabeth Garrison, were the inspiration for the characters Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Through letters, diary entries, and oral history, a couple in the nearby village share stories of the people they say inspired Jane Austen. They also tell their own love story, made difficult by their vastly different backgrounds—she was one of the social elite while he was the son of a servant. When their son, Michael, travels home from his RAF station in Malta, Maggie may have just found her very own Mr. Darcy...

Searching For Pemberley Details

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Patricia says

PEMBERLEY REMEMBERED

Mary Simonsen

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Growing up in the small mining town of Minooka, Pennsylvania was very depressing unless you found an escape. Maggie Joyce's escape was first in reading. Jane Austen and *Pride & Prejudice* represented one of her escapes. By the time she was grown she almost had every passage memorized.

In June 1944, Maggie headed to Washington, D.C. to work in the Treasury Department. This employment eventually led her to work for the Army Exchange Service and a position in Germany. War torn Germany was not the best place to be and Maggie got a transfer to London. From there her life took an interesting turn.

Maggie traveled to visit the estate called Montclair, which is rumored to be the estate called Pemberley in Jane Austen's *Pride & Prejudice*. On her first visit to Montclair she met Beth and Jack Cromwell who have ties to Montclair. She learned the love story of Beth and Jack as well as the history behind Montclair and the connections to *Pride & Prejudice*.

Maggie also met Rob McAllister who flew bombing missions over Germany during World War II. *Pemberley Remembered* tells the love story of Maggie and Rob as well as that of Beth and Jack Cromwell. Rob and Maggie became engrossed in the stories surrounding Montclair and the background for the acclaimed novel *Pride & Prejudice*.

Pemberley Remembered gives you inside glimpses in the life of people living in Europe during the time immediately following World War II as well as a glimpse back into the history surrounding World War I.

This book is well written and is a wonderful, informative story. Reading *Pemberley Remembered* is reading history, romance and even a little mystery all combined in one wonderful book.

Pauline says

Along with a sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is the love story of Rob McAllister, who navigated a B-17 bombers during WWII, and Maggie Joyce, an American working in postwar London. This book has tons of history on WWII and the years immediately following Britain's victory over Germany. I found historical nuggets in almost every chapter.

Jennifer says

This book is much more than a *Pride and Prejudice* re-imagined, or continuation of the story. It takes the

view that Austen was inspired by real events, relates that inspiration, and along the way tells the story of people living and growing up in England during two world wars. The author also explains Maggie's background and her life growing up in a coal mining town. Again, another tough way to live, but people did it and still do.

This story is fashioned in such a way that the reader forgets they are reading an Austen inspired book. I became wrapped up in the stories of the characters. The British are quite tenacious and let nothing stand in their way. I was transported to the past. Between food rationing and the immigrant experience in America, it became quite clear to me, that I am lucky to be living now. Simonsen clearly did her research, and relates these historical experiences into a great story.

There are indeed three love stories, and possibly four if you count Maggie's relationship with an American airman. Through him the reader learns what it was like to be a bombardier. It is not pretty folks. It is very sad and it amazes me that these young men were able to come back home and lead normal lives, for the most part. As a matter of fact, Maggie has two men vying for her heart; both airmen, one American one British. Two men in uniform, my word.

The only negative I have, is that in the beginning of the story, I was a bit confused between the characters from Austen's story and the real life inspirations. Simonsen does provide background on Austen's characters and who they are in real life, with some background in case you haven't read the original P&P. I was still a little confused at times but it passed quickly.

Overall this was a very enjoyable and engrossing story. I lost myself reading this story, and empathized with each and every character, along with their trials and tribulations. I just wanted to make them all a cup of tea.

Tracey says

I won't star this review, because all I read was the sample provided by Amazon. (Wait, did I even finish the sample?) The premise of the book novel (I feel I should emphasize the fictionality of it) is that a girl discovers that Pemberley and its people were based on reality. Mr. and Mrs. Darcy? Real neighbors of Jane Austen, under another name - who were friends with the Bingleys, and who lived in some yellow-painted building which would be hard put to sound less like the Pemberley of my imaginings. Maybe all of this - the idea that Jane Austen's creativity was more along the lines of transcription than invention - shouldn't nauseate me so much. But it does. What a terrible idea to pin a novel on.

Lex says

This story had so much potential, but in the end I just couldn't enjoy it properly. The major fault of this book is that it lacks balance. The author is trying to weave two different stories; the story of Maggie and the story of the Laceys, into one. But the writing comes off as feast or famine. We get very little substantial information about Maggie while being bombarded with the recollections of the Lacey family, and then after about page 300, the Lacey story is almost completely abandoned in favor of what is going on with Maggie. I found the writing to be very stilted and not very satisfying. Almost as if the author was rationing the details along with the war-time food and coal in the story. There was not much for me to identify with in the characters, and for much of the story they seemed like cardboard caricatures more than people. The thought is a beautiful one, with a good detail to time period and experiences, but I just think it was

brought together poorly. The book seemed like a very juvenile effort.

Ting says

I've never slogged through a book as reluctantly as I have done with this one. Generally reading a book in its entirety is a source of pride for me. I like to give any author the benefit of the doubt but I constantly found myself highly bothered rolling my eyes and guffawing.

The shallow plot of Jane Austen cribbing a family history for her most popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, is remotely interesting. The characters are flat, mere cardboard cut outs and I never found myself becoming attached to any of them. The conversations are at best pedantic and serve as nothing less than to show off the author's knowledge of history and locale. It seemed that a lot of the superfluous padding could have been eliminated as it never contributed anything to the actual story. The entire time I am reading I kept asking myself, "Who talks like this?" The 18th century letters are laughable as the language is all wrong and seem highly contrived. And honestly what letter writer of that period would have to explain Gretna Green?

I do not recommend this book as it is simply one of many in the industry of Jane Austen sequels and spin-offs and there are many better examples of the genre. This is, lamentably, mere aggrandized fan fiction.

Debbie says

Okay, I'm not really finished, just finished for now. I was reading this on my Kindle. I had purchased it because it seemed to be well-reviewed and it was inexpensive but I just can't get into it. The whole story is told in exposition or by the characters telling summary stories about themselves. The main plot is the researching of the "real" story of Darcy and Lizzy from *Pride and Prejudice* by Maggie after the end of WWI. I could have muddled through it if it was just her telling you about her research but then it became about their heirs in present day, then there were stories about WWI, then there were stories about WWII-all without finishing the original story. Maybe I'll pick it back up later-I just would have liked there to have been some development of some emotions and not just someone telling you about the emotions they had in the past.

Gina says

O MY GOSH! NEVER! This novel was not good. I realized after skimming the entire novel that this was Mary Lydon Simonsen's first novel...um honey it shows. First off the whole thing reads like the opening monologue of an old 90's movie. Ugh! It was not good. I didn't even finish the book, which is super hard for me. I always finish the books I read! Always. So as a compromise like I said I skimmed the rest of the book that I had not finished (more than 300 pages). Also my friend MK pointed out to me every other sentence started with I verb. Ugh. I am very disappointed, this novel was my thing. I love this kind of stuff. Ugh if you like this type of Jane Austen knock off stuff, find another book because this is not it.

Meredith (Austen-esque Reviews) says

“Searching for Pemberley,” originally published as “Pemberley Remembered” in 2007, is an exceptional Austen-Inspired novel that combines history, romance, war, and “Pride and Prejudice.” In this novel, Mary Lydon Simonsen explores the possibility of Jane Austen's “Pride and Prejudice” being inspired by real people and illustrates how the love story of Elizabeth Garrison and William Lacey parallels that of Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy. Ms. Simonsen does not imply that Jane Austen needed to borrow material for her novels, yet this work of fiction indulges in the idea that one of the greatest love stories of all time was indeed inspired by real people.

Maggie Joyce, our quiet and unassuming heroine, does not have a lot to be cheerful about as she lives in London post World War II and works for the Army Exchange Service. Even though the war ended two years ago much of London is still devastated and destroyed, items like eggs and tea are considered a scarcity, and living quarters are often cramped and uncomfortable. Nevertheless, Maggie finds enjoyment in spending her weekends touring country estates near London. One day she encounters Montclair, a famous estate rumored to be the inspiration for Jane Austen's Pemberley and she learns that many people believe the couple that lived there were the models for Jane Austen's characters of Elizabeth and Darcy. After touring the house Maggie decides to discover for herself if there is any validity to this rumor and embarks upon her own “Pride and Prejudice Project.”

Maggie is introduced to Beth and Jim Crowell, a couple who is connected to and is very knowledgeable about the Lacey family. This lovely and friendly couple begin to care for Maggie as a daughter and become a surrogate family for her while she is away from home. I greatly enjoyed Maggie's relationship with this kind and dear couple; they assisted her in studying the association between the Laceys and “Pride and Prejudice” as well as shared the story of their own loving, yet at times unhappy and troubled marriage.

There are two men in Maggie's life during her time in England: Rob McAllister, who served in WWII as a navigator on a B-17 bomber and Michael Crowell, son of Beth and Jim, who serves in the RAF. One of these men is reserved, emotionally scarred, and has a commitment problem. The other is flirtatious, charming, and already in a relationship. Maggie faces some trials and complications in her relationships with these men and it marks a time in her life where she matures, blossoms, and makes some life-defining decisions. I took pleasure in this love triangle and at times couldn't decide who I wanted Maggie to be with; Ms. Simonsen created a very captivating and heartrending romance.

How I enjoyed this unique and inventive tale by Mary Lydon Simonsen! It is a serious story and one that is leisurely and lovingly told. I greatly appreciated Ms. Simonsen's attention to detail and her impeccable research and representation of life post World War II. One of my favorite aspects of this novel was how well it portrayed the challenges of living during a war and how it effects and changes the lives of so many for such a long time. In addition, I enjoyed the various documents, diary entries, and letters interspersed throughout the story. These documents, to and from the Laceys, were what Maggie was researching to determine if the Laceys were the real Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. I loved hearing the voices and thoughts of these characters through their letters and I found it quite amusing that Anne de Bough would serve as a confidante and faithful correspondent to Mr. Darcy! While these letters and diary entries were insightful and interesting, I would have loved for the story of Elizabeth Garrison and William Lacey to be a little more imaginative and original (especially the proposal scenes).

I highly recommend “Searching For Pemberley” for readers who want a break from reading light-hearted and fluffy novels and are interested in a mature and serious tale of three love stories interwoven with the tragedies of war and the discovery of a true “Pride and Prejudice” romance. I dearly hope to see more works from Mary Lydon Simonsen in print soon!

Laura says

I really, really disliked this book. There's a good chance that most of what made me so mad is that the marketing campaign is so off of this book. The Pride and Prejudice aspects are so slapped on, this is really more of a story about people and relationships in the aftermath of WWII, with people who fought in WWI watching their children die in another horrific war. If this is what it had been advertised as, then I probably would have still picked it up, but I would have looked at it differently and been able to handle its lack of a plot and sleepy pace.

There's nothing of any real interest to the PandP storyline, there aren't any surprises or twists, or anything even all that interesting. There was a family that had some stuff happen to them and it was an unexciting version of PandP. Jane Austen is both credited as having added the fun bits and making it such a great story, but also discredited as such a great author because she couldn't just make it up herself. That rankled me. Presumably, the PandP stuff is marketing so extremely in the cover/book jacket/synopsis because they are reaching out to that fanbase, but I kept finding myself borderline offended at the idea that Jane Austen was such a hack that she had to lift some vaguely interesting plots from a local family.

I would have even preferred it if they went to the extreme, and had Jane Austen be the poor rector's daughter that Georgiana Lacy/Darcy sent her manuscripts to so that they could be published without tarnishing her noble name. I suspected that for a while, but it actually turns out that I couldn't suspect the twists because there weren't any. The P and P stuff is really straightforward, and while Rob isn't a bad guy, it is obvious from the get-go that Maggie is supposed to end up with Michael. Maggie had so little personality, all I really know about her is that she doesn't want to live in her small town (except at random points in the book she gets super homesick), she's Catholic (she talks about going to church and not having sex out of wedlock, but throughout the book we don't really see her at church, and she's having lots of sex), and people tell her stuff. She honestly sits like a bump on a log for the whole book and people tell their life stories in giant chunks of exposition. Lots of sex life details too, which I found awkward. Thanks, Beth.

This book also had some editing problems, Bingley is Bingham, Darcy is Lacy, Lydia Bennett's "real" name is Lucy Garrison, and as difficult as this sort of thing is for the reader to keep straight, an entire production team missed at least one point where Elizabeth GARRISON writes a letter and mentions her sister Lydia. Sloppy.

I think this would have been a more successful book as either a more straightforward Austen homage (when picking this up, I expected it to be like Austenland) or as a not Austen related historical fiction look at WWII and the aftermath in England.

Michelle says

I really enjoyed this book, especially the fact that Maggie was from my hometown of Scranton. I lived the storyline though I sometimes struggled to keep names straight when she was researching Pride and Prejudice. I found the end left something to be desired...I liked the ending but felt Maggie was not acting consistent with how she was in the rest of the book.

Laurel says

Was *Pride and Prejudice* fiction or reality?

Could Jane Austen's classic novel *Pride and Prejudice* have been based on the courtship of Elizabeth Garrison and William Lacey, a Regency era couple who appear to be the doppelgangers of the legendary Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy? The possibility is intriguing to Maggie Joyce, a 22-year old American working in England after WWII who hears rumors of the story of Elizabeth and William Lacey while touring Montclair, their palatial estate in Derbyshire whose similarities to Pemberley, the grand country estate in *Pride and Prejudice*, seem to be more than a striking coincidence. As a devoted fan of Austen's most popular novel, Maggie is curious to discover the truth. When she is introduced to Beth and Jack Crowell, a local couple with strong connections to the Lacey family, they gradually reveal to Maggie their own research through the Lacey letters, journals and family lore. As Maggie begins her own journey into the real-life parallel story of the Lacey/Darcy families she meets two young men, a handsome American ex Army Corpsman Rob McAllister who survived his treacherous tour of duty as a bomber navigator over Germany and the Crowell's youngest son Michael serving in the RAF. Drawn into the struggles of her own love story and inspired by an eighteenth century version amazingly similar to Austen's original, Maggie, like Elizabeth Bennet must choose if she will only marry for love.

A year ago I read and reviewed the self published version of this book, *Pemberley Remembered*. Recognizing its strengths and weaknesses, I was pleased to see that it had been picked up by Sourcebooks and would be revamped and combined with a second book, the sequel that Simonsen had already completed. I see vast improvements from its original edition. The complicated story line and vast historical details have been edited down, and the love story of Maggie, Rob and Michael brought forward. The story line, characters and subject are still intriguing, however as I mentioned in my first review, it is only the execution that could make this multi-layered story believable, entertaining and cohesive. It is still obvious from the historical references and antecedents that Simonsen did her research on Georgian and World War era English history as she includes stories about events, people and places to support her characters with aplomb. *Searching for Pemberley* reads like a documentary where subjects talk about their memories of people and events, or personal letters are read a-la the Ken Burns school of documentary film making. The narrative style is all about the characters telling and not showing how events and relationships unfolded. There is very little interactive dialogue. This is great for a fact based documentary, but tough for a historical love story. I usually prefer character driven plots, so once I accepted that this novel was not about getting into the characters head or their interactions, I quite enjoyed it. Like the epistolary novels of Jane Austen's time, the style of *Searching for Pemberley* may be its greatest limitation.

Written with respect for Jane Austen and a passion for history, Simonsen has combined two genres into a bittersweet war-time drama encompassing the tragic elements of the devastation of war, not only on the men and women that bravely served, but the friends, family and loved ones that they came home to. The references to *Pride and Prejudice* will enchant Janeites as they remember favorite passages and compare plot lines. (It might even motivate a few readers to read the original) To be quite candid, it was hard for me to fathom that the genius of Jane Austen needed any prompting to create a story. To countermand, I just imagined it as a "what if" story and it softened the sting.

Laurel Ann, Austenprose

GONZA says

It was particularly long and boring, even if as lover of Jane Austen, everything that involves Darcy and Elizabeth, keeps my attention.

Particolamente lungo e noioso, non che fosse scritto male, ma c'erano o troppi o troppi pochi particolari e nonostante io sia una grandissima amante di Jane Austen e legga sistematicamente qualsiasi cosa abbia a che fare con Darcy ed Elizabeth, questo libro non mi ha particolarmente ispirato.

Chelsey Quack says

I wanted to love this book SO HARD. It ticks so many boxes on the list of things I generally enjoy in novels: Jane Austen, WWII timeline and history, struggles with mental illness, a bit of romance. But this book fell flat in absolutely every aspect.

Firstly, the writing itself is transparently amateur. This book should have been a first draft. There are entire pages that could've been cut, the descriptions and dialogue are starkly formal (it makes sense, as the author is a historian - this is very historical style writing, which doesn't make for a very interesting narrative), and the book overall is stale feeling. Things move so slow, but the descriptions and emotional journey do not warrant such a pace.

The dialogue, in particular, is just painful. It is as though the author has never actually listened to real people talking. Every conversation is one-sided with another character explaining something lengthy to our protagonist in a manner that, again, comes off as historical writing and not people talking. There is no discussion, no ebb and flow of conversation. God awful.

The characters really do not help the writing at all. Our protagonist is incredibly boring - it is only in the last 15% of the novel that she gets at all interesting, like the author was finally starting to get the hang of characterization. (Again, an edit or second draft would have done WONDERS for this thing.) She is just so flat, has no personality of her own, and yet we are supposed to believe that the Crowells bond with her immediately (and after ONE MEETING invite her to stay overnight at their house and tell Michael that they look at her as "quite their daughter" - ARE YOU KIDDING ME?) and that two men fall in love with her. These other characters are really not any better - Rob, again, only seems to grow any degree of personality as he is about to exit the novel, and I never got the draw of Michael. The only interesting character, Reed, is merely a subplot, and dead when the novel starts, so he's only talked about secondhand.

The relationships between characters, as I've alluded to, are ridiculous. The conversations that happen between Maggie and everyone around her give no grounds for the emotional connections they claim to have. Maggie talks about the things that make Rob and Michael attractive, for example, but NONE of their behaviour really backs it up. This author is all Tell and no Show which makes for a disconnect with our belief. Bored bored bored.

Okay, the plot. This is, plot-wise, a really ambitious novel, and thus fails miserably. There is a lot going on and it feels like Simonsen is trying to pack it all in, and therefore the other things I've mentioned suffer. There's a commentary about both the World Wars, commentary about society life in the early 1900s and the class separatism that has always characterized Britain, a lot of historical facts about 1900-1960, and then, of course, the romance and the actual Jane Austen related stuff. It's just too much, especially for such an inexperienced novelist. There was NO relation of the Jane Austen plot (the "were the characters of P&P real?" plot) to anything else happening in the novel. The author wrote two books, in effect, and squished them together. Horrid wielding of multiple plots. Honestly, she should have just taken out all the Jane Austen stuff, and she would have had a really interesting portrait of mental health and classism in the WWI-WWII era. It feels like she was using Jane Austen's recent uprise in popularity - but a shitty book that is on-trend is still shitty.

So, the Jane Austen thing. This is the part where I go from bored to actually really upset. I am a die-hard Austen fan - I've studied her work, I've studied her life, I gobble up any and everything Austen related. And I can accept the idea that Austen took inspiration from life, as most authors do. What I absolutely cannot accept is the degree to which Simonsen has Austen STEALING someone's life story for plot. Simonsen's fictional "real life" Darcy and Elizabeth is SO CLOSE to Jane Austen's plot and characters that it created real anger in me. According to Simonsen's characters, Jane Austen stole everything from the basic idea right down to the nitty-gritty details like names, and basically changed only tiny details to make the story more "novel worthy". This is just fucking insulting and if I were a violent person, I'd be tempted to knock the teeth out of Simonsen in defense of Austen. It's fine for the characters to speculate that Austen took inspiration from life (all writers take some inspiration from life, whether it be a plot or a character or social issue or whatever), but for Austen's P&P to match SO CLOSELY to the "real life inspiration" that Simonsen creates is an insult to Austen's creativity and careful crafting of a timeless book. Austen did not just write a romance novel - she wrote a book about emotions that, 200 years later, are still relatable and valid and real. I have felt so many things that Elizabeth feels, but I have not had Elizabeth's plot or story. The story feels real because Austen wrote real feelings, but that in no way gives grounds to speculate or fictionalize the idea of her stealing the entire plot from someone's life.

It just pisses me off so much. I feel defensive the way I'd feel defensive of a friend if someone tried to say they stole their ideas from someone else.

Anyways. It's a horrible book. 0/5 stars, but since Goodreads won't allow that, a begrudging 1/5. Boring, flat, and insulting.

Valerie says

The idea that Jane Austen would need to base her story on real people rather than using her imagination, I felt was insulting to Jane Austen. There were a few times that Simonsen put in the wrong names for the characters- such as using the name Lydia when she was talking about Lucy, who Lydia's character was based on. There were three or four of these that apparently the editors didn't catch. One thing that really bothered me is that Maggie (the main character) is sleeping with a guy, and she's told that she's not promiscuous, which, yes, she was, being as it was out of marriage. Just because times change and things become more common and acceptable in society, doesn't change the nature of the thing itself.

There were a couple things I did like about this story. The one I remember at the moment described how Will Lacey took off Elizabeth's hat to kiss her the first time and how intimate that was.
