STILL SPEAKING OF JANE AUSTEN: SIX GLORIOUS NOVELS

By Susannah Fullerton and Ruth Wilson

Susannah Fullerton is the President of the Jane Austen Society of Australia (JASA) and Ruth Wilson is the patron. Between them, they have produced a captivating book that celebrates their debt to Jane Austen in twelve lively chapters, published by JASA. The authors have followed in the footsteps of two prolific female novelists who collaborated to speak about Jane Austen in the mid-20th century. That delightful book became a best-seller in England and America in the 1940s.

Still speaking of Jane Austen as their predecessors had done, the 21st century Austen addicts explore the notion of friendship in the novels and the friendship that so many readers describe when discussing both Jane Austen and her heroines. They also share memories of the birth of their own friendship and explain how it flourished as they spoke informally of Jane Austen. The relaxed and conversational tone of the book makes for easy reading but the scholarship that each author brings to this labour of love is evident at every turn.

The six novels that were published during Jane Austen's lifetime or shortly after are at the heart of the book. And the authors have brought a 21st-century sensibility to their task. They consider ways in which screen versions of the novels and fanfic sequels influence how contemporary readers understand what Austen wrote in the 19th century. Between them, they explore each of the novels in ways that illuminate the issues that have risen as ideas about what a novel should be doing have changed. In concluding chapters, they indulge in make-believe, asking an imagined Jane Austen questions that continue to make them curious. They answer for her, offering, like the novels themselves, thought-provoking insights that belie the easy charm of their tone.

Website page: http://tiny.cc/stillspeaking

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