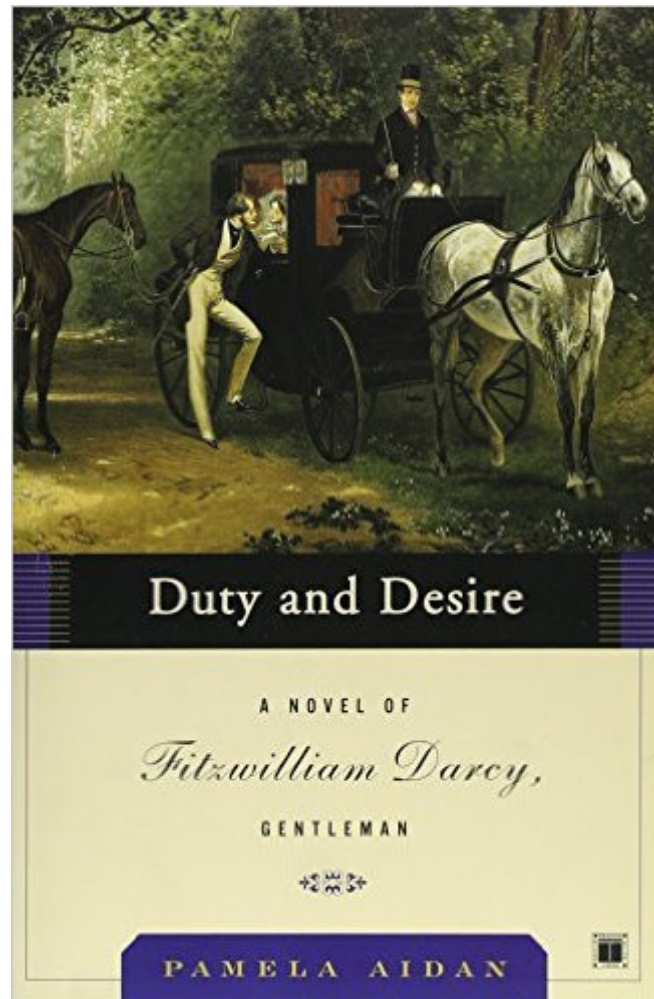


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Duty And Desire: A Novel Of Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman



Synopsis

“There was little danger of encountering the Bennet sisters ever again.” Jane Austen’s classic novel *Pride and Prejudice* is beloved by millions, but little is revealed in the book about the mysterious and handsome hero, Mr. Darcy. And so the question has long remained: Who is Fitzwilliam Darcy? Pamela Aidan’s trilogy finally answers that long-standing question, creating a rich parallel story that follows Darcy as he meets and falls in love with Elizabeth Bennet. *Duty and Desire*, the second book in the trilogy, covers the “silent time” of Austen’s novel, revealing Darcy’s private struggle to overcome his attraction to Elizabeth while fulfilling his roles as landlord, master, brother, and friend. When Darcy pays a visit to an old classmate in Oxford in an attempt to shake Elizabeth from his mind, he is set upon by husband-hunting society ladies and ne’er-do-well friends from his university days, all with designs on him -- some for good and some for ill. He and his sartorial genius of a valet, Fletcher, must match wits with them all, but especially with the curious Lady Sylvania. Irresistibly authentic and entertaining, *Duty and Desire* remains true to the spirit and events of *Pride and Prejudice* while incorporating fascinating new characters, and is sure to dazzle Austen fans and newcomers alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My earlier review of Pamela Aidan’s first installment cites it as the best P&P spinoff. It was the initial part of a trilogy that offers insight into Darcy’s point of view and life apart from Miss Elizabeth Bennet in parallel to the P&P story line. The second installment falls a bit short by comparison. While the

continuation of Darcy's relationship with his valet is particularly delightful, the strategic plot choices seem out of character. Finding solace in God is certainly a plausible means by which Miss Darcy would overcome her experience with Wickham but to turn to evangelical Christianity rather than the Anglican Church is less realistic. As a ward of an elder brother determined to shelter her and guide her to adulthood as a proper aristocratic woman, it is more likely that he would have seen to it that she pursued a deeper faith within the more conventional church. Having already suffered the consequence of a poor choice of governess, Darcy would have been ever more careful about the character and background of a replacement. Likewise, the entirety of the plot twists at the country manor is implausible. It served a valuable purpose is demonstrating Darcy considering alternative potential matrimonial options to Elizabeth Bennet and one by one finding reasons to eliminate them. However, that he would attend let alone stay at such an event is entirely out of character for him. It is more likely that he would have pursued a similar interest within the confines of proper London aristocratic society rather than in the plot's bizarre environment. All in all, the second tome of a trilogy is usually regarded as the least attractive of the three. The final leg promises to give us Darcy's perspective as he struggles more directly with Miss Bennet in the evolution of their relationship. I for one continue to await its publication with undiminished anticipation.

...except perhaps that I was expecting to be disappointed and was instead engrossed and very pleasantly surprised. I had originally been enthralled by the first volume in the series, loving its fresh and unexpected but eminently logical insights into well-loved characterizations, but had gotten distracted from finishing the opener, perhaps momentarily bored with the predictability of its correspondence with Austen's original (paradoxically its original attraction). The second book's description was not enticing for me, promising few familiar characters or favorite events. Eventually I persevered and finished the books at a rapid pace so that I could lend them to an avid friend. In the event, "Duty and Desire" was not what I expected, instead much better than expected. The first half was charming and engaging and rich with characterization, hardly harmed by its paucity of action. Georgiana's character reveal was plausible and took Darcy's dilemmas to a new level. The controversial second half flowed very well for me, made clear sense, and had a real and necessary point to it. It all may have seemed to some readers as very monstrous and non-Austenique - but that's the perverse hidden reality behind the pampered and unhampered lives of many of those to the manor born with silver spoons in their mouths. This was a real alternative for someone in Darcy's position, and he needed to see it for what it is in its stark reality in order to better see and appreciate Elizabeth for who she is. And frankly, it presents a nice mediating contrast and

perspective to the banality of Hertfordshire, which hardly seems so utterly bad to Darcy by comparison. For those who call this "mystery" story absurd and unbelievable - is it really? If anything, it seems more in touch with the actual reality of the times, as lived by its unreal ruling class, than Austen's soft-focus version. (Check out Fay Weldon's revealing "Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen" for more on this point.) And for those who feel this "mystery" is out of keeping with Austen's literary style - would it really be such a stretch for the author of that Gothic farce "Northanger Abbey"? I agree it would not fit comfortably in the world of "Pride and Prejudice" - but "Duty and Desire" is reaching outside that world (which is mostly Elizabeth's world) into the fringe of Darcy's world to show what he is choosing AGAINST when he chooses to re-enter and commit to Elizabeth's world of wise and kind morality. Belatedly I realize the core of why I like this particular volume (and the series as a whole) so very, very much. Aidan is taking her characterization of Darcy through a very complete and deliberate psychological odyssey. Each incident stands on its own in terms of entertainment value, but also serves the careful purpose of taking Darcy to every psychological place that he needs to pass through in order to reach his destination (i.e. Elizabeth). Aidan doesn't miss much, and pulls few punches - Darcy really has to go through the ringer, and even entertain some dark temptations that he would naturally be exposed to during his time of despair and vulnerability. The whole work has great psychological realism and resonance for me.

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