Clarion Review

General

And This Our Life: Chronicles of the Darcy Family, Book 1

C. Allyn Pierson
iUniverse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

The trouble with happily ever after is that it doesn't leave much room for a sequel. Jane Austen's novels give readers the belief that after the months of complications and misunderstandings after the declarations and weddings her characters retire to peaceful lives in the English countryside. The author of a sequel to any of Austen's novels then must invent an interesting plot that will maintain this image of marital felicity while preserving the characters' established traits and imitating the narrative voice of one of literature's most beloved novelists.

With her first sequel to *Pride and Prejudice* C. Allyn Pierson creates a story that devoted Janeites will appreciate and shows a capacity for the language and customs of the early nineteenth century. Pierson is an Iowa-based physician by day. She picks up right where Austen left off. Darcy's aunt Lady Catherine is still furious at her nephew's decision to marry Elizabeth Bennet over her own wealthy but sickly daughter and the couple is unsure how the rest of fashionable society will react to their marriage.

Soon after their wedding the couple must travel to London to prepare for Darcy's sister Georgiana's debut. Elizabeth is eager to help her sweet sister-in-law overcome her shyness and make an impression on society. Lizzy herself takes London by storm dancing with the Prince Regent inspiring a poem by Lord Byron and even winning over Lady Catherine's sister and brother-in-law Lord and Lady Whitwell who are also the parents of her old friend Colonel Fitzwilliam (the puzzling discrepancy in their surnames is never explained). Meanwhile Mr. Darcy earns himself a title by performing a dangerous assignment in France for the Prince Regent whose romantic indiscretions could cost him the throne. Other memorable characters include the Whitwells' villainous oldest son *Pride and Prejudice*'s Miss Bingley and the gold-digging Comte de Tourney.

As is to be expected in a sequel written a different author 200 years after the original *And This Our Life*

lacks Austen's trademark wit. Readers may also miss some of their favorite characters. They will see little of Mr. Bennet none of the pompous Mr. Collins and will only hear second-hand accounts of the Wickhams. While Pierson's original characters are well-drawn and believable they are no match for the Austen's own flawed creations. And although the Darcys' actions are well within the scope of believability—even Darcy's escapade in Paris is told in a tasteful and understated way—the novel's sluggish pace leaves something to be desired.

Despite its relatively few shortcomings *And This Our Life* certainly illustrates that the Darcys and Bingleys are as happy as readers could wish. It also ensures the happiness of Georgiana and the colonel while leaving plenty of loose ends among the secondary characters for subsequent books in Pierson's series.

Whitney Hallberg