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Aiken's many successes have included two novels modeled after those of Jane Austen, *Mansfield Revisited* and *Jane Fairfax*. In this crafty sequel to *Sense and Sensibility*, Aiken uses the precision of Austen's prose to bring to life a heroine more impetuous than the Dashwood sisters ever allowed themselves to be.

Eliza's Daughter Details

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Author : Joan Aiken

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From Reader Review Eliza's Daughter for online ebook

JoAnn says

Why write a "sequel," if you so clearly disliked the original book and all its characters? This one was so ridiculous, it was offensive. I agree with the reviews suggesting the author also has a low opinion of men in general.

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

Well, that was odd.

I'm not terribly impressed by "follow-ons" of classic novels, written many years after the author of the original is dead (and therefore defenceless). I have read one or two that weren't bad, some that were obvious wish-fulfillment, and a few that descend into fanfic type pastiche. This one was...just odd. Unlike most Austen emulators, Aiken doesn't seem to *like* her characters much. She certainly doesn't think much of the original cast of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*! Of course, these are Aiken's interpretations of them: Edward Ferrars is a dull, tightfisted hypocrite while Elinor is passive and spineless, and their daughter a spoiled brat. Marianne is demanding and embittered, and doesn't seem to think much of the (also apparently spineless) Colonel--did she marry him for his estate only, then? Mrs Dashwood appears to be totally gaga, and Margaret--well, what IS Margaret's problem, anyway? Much is hinted at, though little is revealed.

And that's a recurring problem in this rather long book; Aiken takes refuge in the "I'm going to tell you some of it but not nearly all" coyness of the faux-memoir to cover the gaps she can't be bothered to fill in. We are given far too much detail of events for about half the book, which are never satisfactorily resolved. What was the point of dragging "Bill" (Wordsworth) and "Mr Sam" (Coleridge) into this rambling, disjointed tale? Let alone the various deformities of several of the female characters? Said deformities seem to have no real purpose, and don't appear to be symbolic of anything, really, except the author's desire to--what, exactly? Get her own back at an author who's been dead for nearly 200 years? Even the "friendly" characters are ignorant, unpleasant, or somehow simply lacking. Aiken doesn't even really seem to have bothered with the Regency idiom, beyond some of the stereotypical spouting of the Duke and other hard-drinking gents, and the maunderings of the servant Pullet. (And what was the deal with the auras? Another pointless plot thread--and they are many-- that came loose and was never cut.)

There are a couple of things I take issue with in the story itself. How could tying an otherwise relatively young and healthy woman to a loom for 12 hours on one single day leave her twisted and bent for life? Unless you're trying to be all "symbolic" about the trauma of it all--which given the effects on her daughter seems rather unnecessary, if you're going for symbols. (view spoiler) By the time I had read this long, rambling tale and got to Aiken's idea of an ending, which could be best expressed by saying, "Neener-neener, I won't tell!", I had an overwhelming urge to *slap* her.

Jane Austen: love her, hate her, ignore her. But leave her alone. This book simply confirms my previous idea that some (most?) follow-on writers are too lazy to write their own stuff. Tying a book like this to Austen's dresstail is simply insulting, to both Miss Austen and the reader.

Abigail says

Being a great admirer of Joan Aiken's children's fiction, I quite naturally turned to her adult literature when I had run my course through all of Jane Austen's classic novels, and was looking for something more. Sadly, I did not find Eliza's Daughter at all successful as an Austen sequel, and my great disappointment prevented me from appreciating any other merits it might have had.

Based upon the marvelous Sense and Sensibility, this work takes up the story of young Liz Williams, illegitimate daughter of Eliza, Colonel Brandon's ward in the original novel. Raised in the town of Byblow Bottom (readers familiar with Aiken will no doubt recognize her penchant for idiosyncratic - and highly apt - place-names), Liz eventually finds herself in the home of Elinor Ferrers (nee Dashwood) before her adventures take her to school in Bath, and then on to London and the continent.

Like many other readers, I was dismayed at the changes wrought in Austen's characters, all the more so as Sense and Sensibility is my favorite Austen novel, and I am quite attached to the Dashwood sisters. It was distressing to witness the transformation of open, loving Marianne into a vindictive, mean-spirited woman. Even worse was the portrait painted of Elinor and Edward's loveless marriage, and their evident envy of the Brandons' wealth and position.

Joan Aiken was a talented author, with a strong and very distinct narrative voice that, in other venues, has delighted me. But it is not a voice, I must conclude, that is suitable to be associated with any project that bears the name Jane Austen. I may love Dido Twite, but she doesn't belong in Austen's world...

Carol Douglas says

I've read Joan Aiken's Jane Fairfax, which is Jane Austen's Emma from a different point of view, that of economically strapped Jane Fairfax. That was very Austenian in style. Eliza's Daughter is different.

Eliza's Daughter is the story of the illegitimate daughter of Willoughby and Eliza from Sense and Sensibility. She is also named Eliza. She's Colonel Brandon's ward, but she has been placed in the town of Byblow Bottom, where the illegitimate children of the well-to-do are dumped. They are raised by people who are less than scrupulous.

This novel certainly has far more rogues, not of the charming sort, than anything in Jane Austen. It shows how badly bastards are treated. Eliza is plucky and resourceful, but she meets obstacle after obstacle.

Elinor and Marianne are secondary characters in this book, and they don't come off well. I wondered whether their fates would "really" have been so bad.

But Eliza's Daughter is well written and engaging. It's quite a departure from Austen, but I think many readers will enjoy it. It is very feminist and more skeptical of men than Austen's books are.

Susanne E says

Shockingly good for a Jane Austen spin-off! In fact, while most 'sequels' and so on to Jane Austen novels are pretty awful and mainly seem to pander to those who just want to imagine married life with Mr Darcy, this is actually a good book in its own right. Joan Aiken is a very competent and imaginative writer, which helps, but more importantly Eliza's Daughter wasn't overly reliant on the characterizations and events created by Austen and didn't slavishly preserve all the main characters from *Sense and Sensibility* as perfect and faultless people (for example, the middle-aged Mr Ferrars isn't all that nice and Elinor is kind of downtrodden and gloomy). Aiken's story is also deliciously gothic and has more than a tinge of *Jane Eyre* about it. Throw in the less-than-genteel scenery of 'Byblow Bottom' and a trip to Portugal and you've got something a lot more exciting than the usual attempts at expanding Jane Austen's world.

Stef Rozitis says

Even though I loved *Sense and Sensibility*, I loved that this book did not romanticize the privileged world portrayed within it or the characters. It is a respectful book (far more than most Jane Austen fan fics and sequels) in that it treats *Sense and Sensibility* as a sensible novel, not as a mere romance. And allows for no happily ever afters even for the protagonists.

But you might be wondering "Eliza's daughter"? Because *S and S* was about Marianne and Eleanor after all! But Eliza was an off-stage bit part, the ward of Colonel Brandon and seduced by Willoughby. Yes that Eliza, left pregnant by the blackguard. She (also named Eliza) shows us a less privileged side of the Austen world, a world of neglected bastard children in farmhouses, abusive alcoholic clergy and unhappy wives with brutish husbands. A world of servants and trades-people and yes even prostitutes (though tastefully the book allows a lot of things to happen off stage and be inferred or at times simply referred to).

People who like Austen as romance (as I am sure she never meant to be) should avoid this book. It is not romantic. It is in some ways critical and focuses on agency and social mobility. I think in some ways the conclusion ends up being overly optimistic...but I think that is just idealism and the desire to leave the reader feeling there is some reward for following Eliza through bleakness and disrepute (mind you she never allows it to be completely bleak).

This is one of the most strongly feminist books I have read. In many ways I love the ending and I also love the ways that things did NOT fall into place for the characters. It explores the complex nature of love in a way that is realistic albeit at times maybe heavily individualistic (proving it was penned in the 80s). I accept the ways the book troubles me because it is so good to see an Austen sequel that does something more than waffle romantically, and to see the underside of Austen's world. I feel that anything that happened to the people of Aiken's novel would have been things Austen would have been oblivious of, or would not have thought much about but that perhaps if someone had given her such a novel and allowed her to read it she might have been interested and respectful.

Anyway for once in my life I enjoyed how someone responded to an Austen novel!!

Deb says

Recipe for a Rip-off

Take 2 cups of Jane Austen, push back a few years.

Add 1 cup Georgette Heyer

Add 1 cup womyn's history

Dash clerical pedophilia

Dash class consciousness

Stir well, bake until almost burned.

The Imaginista says

Well..... being a diehard Austin fan, naturally I'm hesitant to want anyone else to "pick up" where Jane left off - it's presumptuous to say the least. Also, being a writer myself I take somewhat of an issue with writers using famed/esteemed authors names in their book titles or jacket blurbs and using that same esteemed author's characters to take on as their own in their prequel/sequel novels....it's like Leonardo completing 99% of the master strokes on "Mona Lisa" and then I pick up a brush and lay some dark pigment at the edge of the canvas - and then think I can stand in his good company. Make up your own stories, develop your own characters...don't tailgate on someone famous to further your own inability to cultivate brilliance on your own. Sorry.... I digress. The book in question..... you can no doubt be aware of my initial feelings before I even read the first sentence; however just as the author (and I know she has passed) hoped, that I would be so longing to have additional information on the beloved sisters Elinor and Marianne - not to mention gorgeous Willoughby, and sweet sweet Col. Brandon, that I would overlook my obvious objections and read on. Naturally, I couldn't be anything but disappointed in the end of the book - I actually tossed it on the floor! No only did I have to wait until 95% of the book was read to find the revelation I sought...but her last paragraph was so utterly ridiculous and indulgent - it ticked me off to no end. She established her lead character to be a "certain kind" of person all throughout the story, only to end with a scenario utterly opposite of what character she built. She being so bent on the furtherance of pilfering Jane Austen's premise, characters not to mention her name. I will not take the bait next time; I will leave the classics as they are and remember them thus. There are some things in this world that should just be left as they were meant no matter how much we miss them.

Stacey says

TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!
TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!
TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!TERRIBLE!!

This book is a real piece of shit!! I finished reading it over a month ago and I still cringe at how horrible it was. Our heroine is the daughter of Brandon's ward from Sense and Sensibility. She is a stuck up bitch who while telling her story seems to think it an honor to have us hear her life story. She states at times that there are some things she won't tell because she has chosen not to and we should be honored to be able to read what she is gracing us with.

Let's see this is a novel for no one who ever read Sense and Sensibility or for those who read it and hated it.

She PISSED over all of Jane Austen's characters in this book. Mrs. Dashwood (Elinor and Marianne's mother) is SENILE!! Elinor and Edward seem to live in squalor while their daughter is an uncaring snob and bully. There is no way a child of two such kind and gentle people would end up this way.

Elinor is so timid she won't do anything that Edward wouldn't approve of. Edward is shown in this book as a prudish skinflint and a bully who is not loved by any of his parishoners and apparently can't stand Coronel Brandon because he has always been in love with Marianne and is jealous!! Wow I always thought that Elinor was the only woman he loved!!!

Worst of all when our bitch comes to Delaford to see Brandon it appears he and Marianne are abroad at war. Seemingly it appears that Marianne is a thoughtless careless shrew that is so jealous of our bitch she refuses to let Brandon visit her ever and still pines over Willoughby. Even worse it turns out Brandon is so hounded by her that he thrusts himself into battle ending with him dying in battle just to get away from her. WHAT A LOAD OF CRAP!!! Marianne felt nothing but sympathy for the girl Willoughby seduced and abandoned and gave him up when she found out what he truly was. She also truly loved Brandon and allowed herself to be guided by him.

There is a lot of other SHIT in this book but it would make me too angry to list them. Just quickley though she indirectly is responsible for 2 elderly people's death who could apparently not live without her that she feels no guilt about. Our bitch is knocked up at the end of the book and of course we are not worthy to know who knocked her up.

WHO GIVES A SHIT!!!! DON'T READ THIS BOOK UNLESS YOU HATE JANE AUSTEN!!!

Debbie says

This book was not at all what I expected. First, the events in this book occur after the end of Sense and Sensibility. The Eliza of this book is the daughter of Little Eliza and Willoughby. The future painted in this book for the Sense and Sensibility heroines is possible, but I really didn't feel it was probable considering how S&S left the characters.

The author gives the heroes and heroines of S&S rather dismal futures and makes them into petty, weak, spiteful, jealous people. Not to mention that several of these characters were given physical characteristics (like a deformity) not mentioned in S&S.

So I ignored that this book was supposed to be a sequel to S&S. In that case, the writing is good, though the pacing was slow for the first 30 pages. The author obviously thoroughly researched the time period, and the vivid details immersed me into the characters' world.

The characters were all interesting and varied. However, Eliza, our heroine, seemed determined to rush head-long into ruin by continually making poor decisions. Though she makes a show of staying respectable, she seems to feel like she's fated to end up like her mother (pregnant, unmarried, and alone). This really isn't a romance book.

There are no explicit sex scenes, but some readers might not be interested in reading this book because [spoiler] Eliza does end up pregnant, unwed, and satisfied with that state of things [end spoiler].

Bionic Jean says

This is a sequel to Jane Austen's "*Sense and Sensibility*", but it stands alone as a good read. If you are overly attached to the original characterisations, however, you may feel that Joan Aiken takes a few liberties. They are all present, and the story is an interesting take on what might happen next, but I felt that my own perception of the various characters differed somewhat from Aiken's depiction. Having said that, I enjoyed this book a lot, and found myself rooting for the spunky main character.

Laurel says

Great read, but little to do with *Sense and Sensibility*

Have you ever read a totally unfavorable book review so full of acrimony that it left you wondering if you would have the same reaction? I have, and am often hooked into trying out a book to see if I agree. So when I read a collection of reviews gathered at the Austenfans website against Joan Aiken's novel *Eliza's Daughter : A Sequel to Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility*, I was intrigued. Here are a few of the zingers to set the mood. "It is the worst JA sequel I have ever read", "I wonder why ANYONE would have bothered to write something like this!", "I cannot recommend this book, except as an example of what NOT to do when writing a sequel to any great novel, especially Jane Austen.", or the final insult, "How did it even get published?" Ouch! To add further to the mêlée, this website was created and is maintained by Sourcebooks, the current publisher of *Eliza's Daughter*. Cleverly, only a publisher of this depth and confidence would have the strength and wisdom to assemble such a collection of scathing reviews and post them as publicity. A blunder - or a stroke of marketing savvy? We shall see.

Originally published in 1994, *Eliza's Daughter* continues the story of a very minor character in *Sense and Sensibility* who receives scant mention in the original novel as the illegitimate child of Eliza Williams and her seducer John Willoughby. The infant, also named Eliza Williams is placed by her guardian Colonel Brandon in the care of a negligent foster mother in the village of Byblow Bottom, an infamous Regency era repository for the natural offspring of public persons who were reared away from their parents to avoid disclosure of their existence. Raised in this rural backwater Eliza learns to survive under difficult circumstance and scrape together a bit of education, all the while trying to unravel the mystery of her parentage. Clever and creative, she knows by age twelve that education is the key to her survival and seeks out Colonel Brandon's attorney's and asks for their assistance while he is abroad serving in the army. They send her on to the Rev. Edward Ferrars and his wife Elinor nee Dashwood at Delaford. The Ferrars are living in genteel poverty as a country vicar and his wife with one daughter away at school and Elinor's mother the once elegant Mrs. Dashwood now suffering from mental illness. Their acquaintance is strained and they decide to pack her off to school in Bath where their daughter Nell attends and Elinor's younger sister Margaret Dashwood is a teacher. She is not very welcome there either, but she endures and excels in music having a gifted voice which brings her some attention.

As the natural daughter of who knows whom, Eliza is definitely a social pariah and reminded of it with every connection and situation where she lives. The mystery of her parentage still lingers, but as the plot develops clues appear like bread crumbs along a trail bringing her closer to an answer by directing her to London and then on to Portugal. Ms. Aiken writes an engaging tale and knows how to keep our attention by a series of misadventures and recoveries by the heroine. We meet new characters as well who are interesting and authentic, but it is her treatment of Austen's original characters that is troubling and forms the largest objection from all of the previous reviewers.

When Austen's novel concluded we were left with the happy thought that both Marianne and Elinor were

married, their mother Mrs. Dashwood and younger sister Margaret are in better financial circumstances and the adversarial characters such as Lucy Steele, John Willoughby, and Mrs. Ferrars were much the worse for their life choices. So, as we read Eliza's Daughter and discover that the happily-ever-after does not really exist beyond the last page of the original novel it is more than a bit unsettling. Colonel and Marianne Brandon are childless and have departed for India and show little if no interest in Eliza's well being. This seems odd, since the Colonel has in the past always shown great concern for Eliza's grandmother, mother and his friends. Elinor and Edward live a penurious and Spartan life eeking out an existence at Delaford. Edward is now a bitter man more concerned for his parishioners than his family and Elinor faintly the strong and wise woman that we knew from the past. Their only surviving child Nell is a pill, negligent of her familiar duties and callous to others feelings. Mrs. Dashwood was always a bit unfocused on reality, but now she is insane? Margaret Dashwood is a spinster working as a teacher then a companion? As one reviewer stated, "I found it to be so totally mean spirited toward all the characters we have come to know and love so dearly", and I have to agree. In defense of Ms. Aiken's choice of plot and character development, if everything was sunshine and syllabub, there would be nothing to write about, so in making Austen's good guys the bad guys, she makes her heroine Eliza more pitiable and plucky, but at what cost?

Reading the negative reviews in advance was really a gift leaving me with no expectation of liking this novel. In fact, I was strongly disposed to disapprobation myself, for what Janeite could condone such mistreatment of beloved characters? So I began with an entirely different objective in reading Eliza's Daughter, not as an Austen sequel but as a Dickensian tale full of memorable characters, social corruption, sinister doings and a twisting plot - Eliza Williams has a Copperfieldish adventure - and as such, it became quite amusing. However, it could have been an even more enjoyable if Eliza had been allowed to have a few more positive friendships to support her along her journey as Mr. Dickens supplied David Copperfield with his endearing characters such as Peggotty, Mr. Barkis and Wilkins Micawber. Choosing to make Austen's heroes and heroines the villains of this tale was a shocking and shallow choice. I may never forgive Ms. Aiken for stripping away the tone and quality that Austen developed, but I will thank her for an inventive and engaging story that really had very little to do with what we experienced in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Laurel Ann, Austenprose

Jen Mendeck says

As a sequel to Jane Austin, this is poor. Aiken totally massacres my favorite characters. Who wants to read about Elinor living in practical squalor for her whole life? Or Marianne browbeating Brandon until he runs back into the army to get away from her?

If this book had been about characters I wasn't already attached to, I would have enjoyed about the first 3/4 of the book. The last bit of the book gets a bit fantastical for me. And the ending is just disappointing.

Jennifer Black says

Ms. Aiken has made a mess of *Sense and Sensibility*. There was a very long-suffering, endearing heroine, but why couldn't she be nice to everyone else? I was hopeful for her other books, but maybe I'll skip them. She may make Lizzie into a prostitute and Fanny Price into the Prime Minister.

Nikki says

If you are looking for Jane Austen's writing, you are going to be disappointed. If you are looking for any semblance of Jane Austen's original characters in their brief appearances, you are going to be disappointed. If you are looking for any hint of romance, you are going to be disappointed.

After reading this book, I've come to the conclusion that not only does Joan Aiken hate the Dashwood sisters, but she also hates men. Really, the only way I can express the main message of this book is to say that all men are bastards, every single last one of them.

Eliza's Daughter isn't an uninteresting read, and as long as you don't mind reading a book that seems to want to be horribly depressing for no apparent reason, it isn't a bad read, but it certainly isn't a great read either. I was okay with it up until the end when the author totally ticked me off. What the hell!?!
