



OCTOBER NEWSLETTER
2018-2019 NUMBER 2

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Designer: Norman Baugher

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

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President's Message

CHRISTINE SPATARA,
President

My apologies for missing the September luncheon but I was happy to know



that it was well attended and that our speaker was, as usual, a great success. I am looking forward to our October program and hope that all of you will attend and possibly bring a friend. If this sounds repetitious, it's because it is—our agenda is to increase membership

this year and we need your help to do so. For those of you who are writers and readers, check out our guest speaker's book: *The Complete Idiots Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, by Steve Venturino. You will find it interesting and very informative. I believe it will help in your book club discussions.

OCTOBER PROGRAM

Steve Venturino Speaks On Daniel Deronda

KAREN PULVER, *Co-Chair*

Steven J. Venturino, Ph.D., is an award-winning educator who lectured in the English Department at Loyola University Chicago for twenty years and has

led seminars at the Newberry Library since 2015. He specializes in literary theory, Victorian literature, and film, and is the author of several publications, including *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. Resources for reading Victorian novels in a serial fashion are posted at his website. sjv@aprofessorintheory.com



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Luncheon Reservations

The October 2018 meeting of the Friends of American Writers will be held on Wednesday, October 10, 2018. Luncheon reservations for this meeting are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 7, 2018. Please note, this deadline is firm. No reservations

will be accepted following this date and time.

To reserve, please contact ONLY Peggy Kuzminski (773-775-4540) or Carol Eshaghy 773-775-4540.

If you wish a permanent reservation, please mention it when you call. All Board members automatically

have permanent reservations. Also, a reminder that no permanent reservations are held over from last year to this year.

Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 W. Bellevue Place. The cost is \$45 per person, payable by check (preferred)

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In Memoriam

It is great sadness that we note the passing of longtime FAW member and friend Lorraine Campione. Tragically, on October 1, 2018, Lorraine was hit by a truck as she was crossing the street near her condo. She was immediately taken to the hospital where she died. There will not be a wake or funeral, but later, there will be a memorial celebration of her life. We will send details as soon as they become available.

in the front lobby on the day of the meeting. For group reservations, we ask that only one person make the reservation to avoid confusion. Please note, if you make a reservation and you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member.

Literature Committee

TAMMIE BOB, *Chair*

The Literature Committee has met and is receiving books regularly. There are openings on the committee this year, and members would love to have you join them. It's one way to be a better Friend of American Writers. Don't be reluctant to join the group because you are concerned that the reading load will be too onerous. This is never the case. Just ask any member of the current group: Diana Adams, Tammie Bob, Karen Burnett, Mary Robb Clark, Dale Davison, Roberta Gates, Ida Hagman, Ellen Israel, Kathy Katz, Diane Miller, Karen Pulver, Dori Roskin, or Trish Ronan. Any of them will be delighted to explain how the committee works and welcome you to the group.

You'll also hear about the variety of books that come in and enjoy the delicious luncheon served at the beautiful Women's Athletic Club, as well as experience the opportunity to meet some of the authors. For more information, please contact Tammie Bob (bobtam410@gmail.com.) Make this the year you become a part of this rewarding activity.

Young People's Literature Awards Committee

ANGELA GALL, *Chair*

Books are a uniquely portable magic.

—STEPHEN KING

Eating and reading are two pleasures that combine admirably.

—C.S. LEWIS

On September 5th, the Young People's Literature Committee held their first meeting at the Original Pancake House down the street from The Fortnightly. C.S. Lewis certainly knew what he was talking about when he concluded that eating and reading are the perfect combination. The taste of buttery crepes stuffed with fresh-cut strawberries topped with whipped cream and strawberry syrup was made all the more delectable as we exchanged recommendations of books we had read over our summer hiatus.

Tanya Klasser loved *The Great Believers*, a new novel by Rebecca Makkai, which describes the AIDS epidemic in Chicago in the 1980s and its impact on the gay community.

Vivian Mortensen thoroughly enjoyed, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman. At 29, Eleanor Oliphant built an utterly solitary life that almost works. She never had a manicure or a haircut, wore high

heels, had anyone visit her apartment, or even had a friend. Eleanor's life begins to change when Raymond, a goofy guy from the IT department, takes her for a potential friend, not a freak of nature.

Peggy Kuzminski had us all in stitches as she reenacted a children's book called *It's a Book* by Lane Smith. In this story, a tech-obsessed donkey asks his friend who is reading a book whether or not the book scrolls down, blogs, needs a password, uses a mouse, etc...until the frustrated friend replies...it's a book, jackass! You can check out the adorable read-aloud of the book on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gG5l2i6bxyM>

So far, the Young People's Literature Committee has only received three books from publishers. However, through our own research, we discovered ten new young adult authors from the Midwest. (Tanya Klasser and Carol Eshagy, thanks so much for your help!!!) Our committee members took the initiative and hit the library in order to prepare for our next meeting on October 3rd at the Women's Athletic Club. There, we look forward to discussing our first set of contenders!

Membership Corner

IDA HAGMAN, *Chair*

Ida was pleased to report that FAW has 71 members in its group, as well as six sustaining clubs: The Babes and Books Club, the Bad Dog Book Club, the Flossmoor Book Club, the Ogden Dunes Book Club, the Renaissance Art Club, and the Woman's Reading Club of Riverside. Welcome one and all.

Reading Recommendations from Jenny Riddle

We were privileged to enjoy the acting talents of Jenny Riddle as she regaled us with tales of the Capital Dames during the Civil War. We hobnobbed with Dorothy Dix, Mary Todd Lincoln, Sojourner Truth, Jessie Fremont, Varina (Mrs. Jefferson) Davis, Elizabeth Blair Lee, and ex slave, Lizzie Keckley.

Not only were we entertained, we learned a lot about the lives of Capital women in the mid-nineteenth century. Jenny, who is co-owner of Prairie Path Books in Wheaton, Illinois, was kind enough to recommend a number of books for our reading pleasure.

Capital Dames: The Civil War and The Women of Washington, 1848-1868 by Cokie Roberts (HarperCollins 2015, 400 p.).

A lively account of the experiences, influence and contributions of women during the American Civil War.

Leonardo Da Vinci by Walter Isaacson (Simon & Schuster 2017, 576 p.).

Based on thousands of pages from Leonardo's astonishing notebooks and new discoveries about his life and work, Walter Isaacson weaves a narrative that connects his art to his science.

Jackie, Janet & Lee: The Secret Lives of Janet Auchincloss and Her Daughters, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Lee Radziwill by Randy J. Taraborelli (St. Martin's Press 2018, 544 pages)

A gloriously glossy, gossipy portrait of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis; her mother, Janet Lee Auchincloss; and her sister, Princess Lee Radziwill.

My Ex-Life by Stephen McCauley (Flatiron Books 2018, 288 p.).

Getting over a bitter breakup. David receives a call from his first wife and agrees to help her sullen daughter get into college, an act that brings unresolved feelings and issues to light.

Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder by Caroline Frasier (Metropolitan Books 2017, 480 p.).

Using unpublished manuscripts, letters, financial records, and more, Frasier gives fresh insight into the life of Wilder and a vivid portrait of frontier life.

Something in the Water by Catherine Steadman (Ballantine Books 2018, 352 p.).

While scuba diving in Bora Bora, honeymooners Erin and Mark find something in the water that will test their marriage and imperil their very lives

Team of Rivals by Doris Kearns Goodwin (Simon & Schuster 2005, 916 p.).

Historian Goodwin illuminates Lincoln's political genius, as the one-term congressman rises from obscurity to prevail over three gifted rivals to become president.


Tiny Beautiful Things: Advice On Love and Life from Dear Sugar by Cheryl Strayed (Vintage Books 2012, 353 p.).

A collection of postings on life and relationships from The Rumpus' popular "Dear Sugar" online advice column, sharing everything from infidelity to marital boredom to financial hardships.

Two Girls Down by Louisa Luna (Doubleday, 2018, 304 p.).

When two young sisters disappear from a strip mall parking lot in a small Pennsylvania town, their devastated mother hires an enigmatic bounty hunter, Alice Vega, to help find the girls.

Whiskey in a Teacup: What Growing Up in the South Taught Me About Life, Love, and Baking Biscuits by Reese Witherspoon (Touchstone, 2018, 304 p.).

Peppered with tales from her own Tennessee upbringing, Reese Witherspoon's book features mouth-watering recipes, tried-and-true style tips, and entertaining expertise. 

The Reading Corner

Revisiting
Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*
by TAMMIE BOB

A few months ago, I agreed to lead November's session of *Readers and Reviewers*. This is FAW's bi-annual discussion of a particular book, and I chose *The Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean

Rhys. Published in 1966, it is a kind of prequel to the 1847's Victorian classic *Jane Eyre*, although entirely different in tone, setting, and sensibility.

It occurred to me, while thinking about the newer book, that it had been a very long time since I read *Jane Eyre*, and I really didn't remember it much. I had an impression that it was one of those classic romances in which a helpless young woman falls in love with the broody but strong/handsome/wise and of course wealthy

owner of the possibly haunted mansion where she's come to work. There are major obstacles on the way to wedded bliss. I did recall that in *Jane Eyre*'s case, Mr. Rochester's problem turned out to be a violent, lunatic wife who was locked away in the attic, and that eventually this creature set fire to the house and leapt to her death from the roof. Thus the couple was free to wed, although the once-proud hero was now blind and crippled.

I last read the book when I was

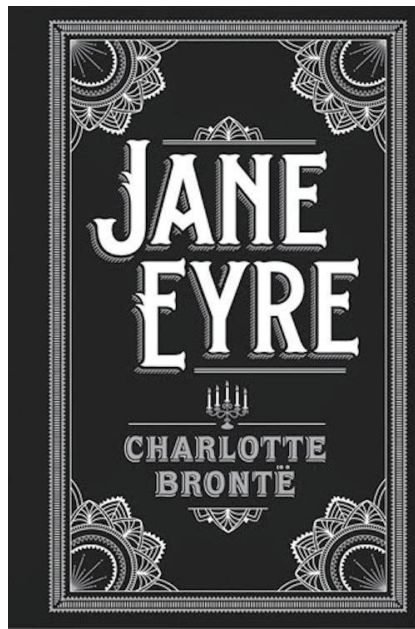
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in high school, and it must have seemed sad and romantic to me then, a Cinderella story. But on rereading it recently, I saw that there were characters, situations, and themes that either didn't register with my younger self or I had completely forgotten. These reflected a world-view that often made me squirm, although I found the heroine, Jane, thoroughly likeable and admirable.

We first meet her when she is ten years old, a neglected and abused orphan raised since infancy in the home of wealthy Aunt Reed and her children. Everyone hates little Jane. Mrs. Reed promised her dying husband to always look after the child, and she is not gracious about the responsibility. *I have had more trouble with that child than any one would believe. Such a burden to be left on my hands... no child ever spoke or looked as she did...* Jane is constantly reminded that she is penniless and unwanted.

Little Jane shows her spine when she stands up to her abusers after a particularly harrowing incident, telling her aunt, *...when I am grown up, ...if any one asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty...*

For this, she is sent to a boarding school for indigent children, a harsh place of privation and discipline run by an avaricious, mean, and rather stupid minister. Fortunately he most often is away. He believes (like many of his time) that only through privation and strict Christianity can children of the poor hope to become productive people, rather than the alcoholics, wastrels and criminals their birth destined them to be. But most of the teachers are kind, and recognize that Jane has academic talents. At Lowood she excels in her studies and finds, for the first time, friends and mentors. For me, one delight was learning what comprised an "education" for girls in the early 19th century: French, knitting, sewing, penmanship, history, piano, and of course, Bible.



The school's terrible circumstances lead to a typhus outbreak that kills over forty students. After a public outcry--not all Victorians were so hard-hearted about the needs of the poor-- the administration is changed and conditions greatly improve. At sixteen, Jane becomes a teacher. Two years later, she is restless to see some of the world outside the school, and advertises for employment as a governess.

Thus begins her time at Thornfield Hall, the part of the story that stuck with me for all these years. Her charge, a French girl, is the ward of Mr. Rochester, a wealthy landowner much esteemed by all who know him. He is much older than Jane, but soon finds that she is a worthy conversational partner: analytical, smart, and forthright. She tells him: *I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have; your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience.* He seems to appreciate her intellect.

Soon he is confiding in her, hinting at a wanton past, early failures, his current resolve to be a better man. He is moody and mysterious. He appears to ignore Jane when his high-society friends are around. Apparently he

intends to marry the beautiful, high-spirited, cold-hearted Miss Ingram, whom Jane describes as "too inferior to incite [jealousy]." What cool Jane has, at eighteen, what insight! Most girls would be cowed by the presence of what Victorians referred to as their "betters". But Jane analyzes Miss Ingram thus: *She was very showy, but she was not genuine; she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments; but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature; nothing bloomed spontaneously on that soil; no unforced natural fruit delighted by its freshness. She was not good; she was not original; she used to repeat sounding phrases from books: she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own. She advocated a high tone of sentiment; but she did not know the sensations of sympathy and pity; tenderness and truth were not in her.*

Jane is sure that Mr. Rochester can't love a shallow soul like Miss Ingram's. But Jane also knows that the rich regularly marry for pecuniary gain—in fact, Rochester says so quite often,

At night, Jane is sometimes wakened by otherworldly noises: vulgar laughter and shrieks. Once, she believes someone has entered her room. Another time she smells smoke, and upon investigation, discovers Mr. Rochester's bed hangings afire, and him overcome by heat and flames. She saves him, much to his gratitude. His passion for her becomes evident—but why is he so blasé about the near murder?

Finally, after much misunderstanding and drama, Mr. Rochester decides they must be married, quickly. Jane is both ecstatic and apprehensive, uncomfortable with the fine dresses and jewels he bestows on her. They feel like costumes to her. At last the wedding day comes. What could go wrong? Well, there's that question: "Does anyone know of any reason why these two should not be married...?" *Jane asks readers: When is the pause after that sentence ever broken by reply? Not, perhaps, once in a hundred years.*

Two strangers in the church

break the pause, claiming that Mr. Rochester already has a wife. After much argument and expostulation, it turns out that he does, a madwoman, a Creole wife acquired in Jamaica, a woman he describes as “a monster,” hidden away in his attic for about ten years.

Naturally Jane is numbed and horrified by the revelations above. Mr. Rochester takes her to see the wife : *In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.* In short order, this creature attacks Mr. Rochester and has to be violently restrained.

Mr. Rochester begs Jane to stay with him, to let him keep her in a house in Marseilles, (In Jane Eyre all things French are regularly understood to be questionable and risqué,) to make him whole. He explains his duplicity like this: You see now how the case stands — do you not?...*After a youth and manhood passed half in unutterable misery and half in dreary solitude, I have for the first time found what I can truly love — I have found you. You are my sympathy — my better self — my good angel....*

It was because I felt and knew this, that I resolved to marry you. To tell me that I had already a wife is empty mockery: you know now that I had but a hideous demon. I was wrong to attempt to deceive you; but I feared a stubbornness that exists in your character.

Really, Jane would like nothing more than to be with him under any circumstance, as her love is as fervent as his. But her sense of what is required and right, by law of man and the will of God and the beacon of Truth, insists that she must leave Mr. Roch-

ester at once. And so she does.

In my memory, the book ended soon after these events, but there is another significant portion, almost a third of the book, that had entirely slipped my mind. Jane leaves Thornfield Hall, in stealth, early the next morning, taking almost nothing with her. By the end of the first day she has travelled far by coach, and lost the little she brought with her. Cold, penniless, and starving, she wanders the countryside of northern England for several days, and nearly dies. Finally she stumbles onto a respectable looking house and begs for help.

At first she is turned away. Later, the house’s owner, St. John Rivers, a pastor, discovers her lying on his doorstep and decides to help her. He and his two kind sisters, young women around Jane’s age, (she’s just nineteen) nurse her back to health. They recognize that she is educated and a good conversationalist, not a homeless floozy wandering the countryside, and decide to take her in.

They do this even though Jane has given them a false name and refuses outright to tell them anything that might identify her: where she comes from, or why a clearly respectable young woman is wandering the

countryside alone and indigent. Jane asks St. John (pronounced Sin-jin, one of those British name-smooshes) to help her find any kind of work she is able to do.

The Rivers siblings recently lost their father, and he left them debts. An uncle also died and left his great fortune to an unknown cousin of theirs—the father and his brothers had all been estranged from one another. (Small spoiler alert: earlier in the book, while still at Mr. Rochester’s Thornfield Hall, Jane learned that an unknown uncle was searching for her. She meant to look him up, but then there was the fiasco of her almost-wedding. (I made the connection between Jane and the unknown cousin-heir at once, but the possibility never entered Jane’s mind.)

As the Rivers family is now forced to work, the two Rivers women depart for great houses to become governesses. St. John asks Jane to move to a village close by to open a school for poor peasant girls. The pay is low, but there is a one-room cottage Jane can occupy, and she hasn’t any options. She finds the work satisfying. Always she is pining for Mr. Rochester.

St. John plans to go to India as a missionary. It is clear to Jane that this otherwise austere man is passionately infatuated with a wealthy local beauty, Miss Rosamunde Oliver, the little school’s benefactress. It’s also evident that Miss Oliver returns the attraction. Also, her father thinks highly of St. John. With such lack of obstacles, why does St. John not marry his love, Jane asks? He explains that the young heiress, a lively woman fond of the pleasures and comforts of the English wealthy, would not thrive in India, and his conviction that God has chosen him to convert heathens must supersede any personal concerns.

“It is strange,” pursued he, “that while I love Rosamond Oliver so wildly—with all the

Charlotte Bronte



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intensity, indeed, of a first passion, the object of which is exquisitely beautiful, graceful, fascinating—I experience at the same time a calm, unwarped consciousness that she would not make me a good wife; that she is not the partner suited to me; that I should discover this within a year after marriage; and that to twelve months' rapture would succeed a lifetime of regret. This I know.

And that is that, for him. Jane describes him as “hard and cold,” and “frozen over,” He is handsome, blonde, and blue-eyed, but he might as well be “no longer flesh, but marble.” Yet, she admires his conviction and sense of inerrancy. After all, she too has renounced love, in her case out of self-respect, but she isn't sure her decision was right.

In the meantime, solicitors searching for the missing heir to the estranged uncle's fortune followed leads from Jane's first guardian, Aunt Reed, to the Lowood School for indigent girls, to Mr. Rochester's Thornfield Hall, where they ran out of clues. Questioning St. John for any information he might have about his unknown cousin, they tell him about the almost-married governess and the scandal that precipitated her departure. St. John, who seems better than Jane at putting two and two together, figures out the woman he knows as Jane Elliot is his missing cousin, and heiress to twenty thousand pounds. (According to widely varying answers from a quick Internet search, that translates to between two and twenty million today, a wide range for sure but in any case some real money.)

Jane promptly divides this amount with her three cousins, out of her sense of morality (why should they have been cut out of the will because of their father's actions?) and her great affection and gratitude towards them. The ladies are able to leave their governess positions, Jane gives up her teaching despite her views that *... these coarsely-clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy; and that the germs of native excellence, refinement, intelligence, kind feeling,*

are as likely to exist in their hearts as in those of the best-born. It was not a time when women chose paid employment as a creative outlet for their energies, so now that Jane didn't need to work, she stopped.

The three Rivers and their cousin Jane resume life in the family home, which Jane renovates and modernizes, reveling in her new, congenial relatives when she had always been without family connections. Jane and her female cousins study German (or engage in other ladylike activities) while St. John, preparing for India, learns Hindustani. After a few months he asks Jane to put aside German and let him teach her Hindustani, to help him review earlier material. Jane was always eager to please, especially if it would help an ecclesiastic to accomplish his God-given work.

To me this request was another obvious clue Jane missed. Sure enough, St. John proposes marriage so she can assist him in his missionary work in India. In his eyes, Jane has all the attributes necessary for a missionary's wife, and he is ready to perform ALL the functions of a husband to make this happen. He doesn't talk of love or children, but only of God's will. St. John knows that God wants Jane to devote her life to St. John and missionary work. Naturally, Jane is revolted by the idea of marriage to a man she doesn't love, and who doesn't love her.

This makes her more than ever miss the man she does love, and she feels a powerful need to know what has become of him. She is able to afford coach fare now. She takes the hundred miles or so back to Thornfield Hall, only to find it a burned down ruin! After making inquiries at a local inn, she learns that the madwoman, Mrs. Rochester, had set the place afire, and leapt to her death from the roof. Mr. Rochester heroically saved all other occupants from the conflagration, even going back to save his wife, a failed attempt that resulted in some beams collapsing on him. He is now blind and missing a hand, but still alive.

So Jane goes to him and says the most famous line from the book: “Reader, I married him.” I was under the impression that it was the book's last line, but that was another mistake—it is the first line of the last chapter, which goes on to describe Jane and Mr. Rochester's very happy life together, as well as the fates of many of the supporting characters.

The ending is not about Jane and her marriage, but about St. John Rivers, which seems odd, in that she found his proposal so repulsive. But they have been writing each other for ten years, and she knows that his hard labors in India have sapped his health, and that he is likely to die soon. She describes him with highest admiration: *His is the ambition of the high master-spirit, which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth—who stand without fault before the throne of God, who share the last mighty victories of the Lamb, who are called, and chosen, and faithful.* To live always in adherence to the highest principles without a care for one's self is what all people should aspire to, although for most mortals that is not possible. So St. John gets the last line, regarding his imminent demise: *Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!*

I would have been happier with *Reader, I married him.* This unbending character appalled me, as I have doubts about anyone who claims to know precisely what God wants, for himself and for everyone else. In my youthful reading of *Jane Eyre*, I was probably so engrossed in the romance and ups and downs of the plot that I failed to notice the role religion plays in the book.

Faith in God is a major factor in how characters in the book develop and mature. Jane herself is guided by Christian lessons to resist temptation and “worldly” pleasures. Her first friend at Lowood boarding school, Helen Burns, introduces her to the New Testament. Helen is cruelly mistreated by her teachers, but to Jane's confusion, Helen always “turns the other cheek.” She even

defends her tormenters. Of course Helen knows (and the reader figures this out, but not Jane) that she has tuberculosis, fatal in the nineteenth century. Helen's attitude towards the hardships of her life is this: *I am sure there is a future state... I believe God is good; I can resign my immortal part to Him without any misgivings. God is my father; God is my friend; I love Him; I believe he loves me.* This saintly character is a great influence on Jane, although Jane, with her feisty nature, understands that she never wants to be a martyr.

One of Jane's cousins (Eliza, last seen as a child in Jane's first, miserable residence) finally acknowledges that Jane is a good person and becomes a Catholic nun.

I have already written of St. John Rivers' gloomy brand of Calvinism. And even the proud Mr. Rochester, who once put his own will above religious and secular law, becomes a virtuous church-goer once he is married to Jane. She makes it clear that his blindness and missing hand are punishment for his great sins. Once he began to turn to God, God sent Jane back to him. Once he became devout, some sight was restored to him.

Mr. Rochester is a greatly flawed romantic hero, moody and melancholy, full of secrets and shame. He is tall and strong, "not handsome" although Jane describes *granite-hewn features, and ...great, dark eyes...and very fine eyes, too—not without a certain change in their depths sometimes, which, if it was not softness, reminded you, at least, of that feeling.* To me

this sounds handsome enough, while Jane's oft remarked "plainness" consists of small, fine-bones, pleasing but undistinguished features, which sound attractive enough as well. But Mr. Rochester is drawn to her intellect, her goodness, her strength and honesty; while Jane, who sees his arrogance and knows that he has a dissolute past, is flattered by his confidences and his flattering regard for her. Still, I often found Rochester's behavior toward Jane creepy and manipulative. In one episode he disguised himself as a Gypsy fortune-teller, seemingly to mess with Jane's head.

He hosts a week-long party of elegant society and has Jane attend their evening soirées, even though neither he nor his snobbish guests pay her the least bit of attention. He doesn't bother to squelch a discussion, in her presence, about the terrible character of governesses. Social custom at the time didn't require ladies and gentlemen to mix with the hired help, but it seems if one of them had matrimonial plans regarding a governess, he might have some regard for her feelings. However, Jane knew her place and was not offended; nor did she imagine that a Great Man like Mr. Rochester would ever want her for more than a secret friend. After all, for months he allowed Jane to believe that he would soon marry Miss Ingram. Then, of course, there was the big secret in the attic. Jane did ask him about the strange noises, the occasional violent and near-murderous visitations in the night; his answers were deceptive and made little sense.

All this toying and subterfuge ceased the moment Jane agreed to marry him; from that point on, he was the most caring and besotted of lovers.

In the end, true love (definitely physical, but also spiritual and God-given) wins out, and it is tremendously satisfying, after all of Jane's trials. Still, I felt a little sorry for her, both fifty years ago and again more recently. Yes, she got the man, but one who was now blind and dependent. She was a wife-nursemaid to a much older man and while she was thrilled with this outcome, I'm afraid I lack her spirituality and view her triumph as an acquisition of spoiled goods.

My view of Mr. Rochester is certainly affected by the book *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which tells the story of the madwoman in the attic, called Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* and Antoinette Cosway in Jean Rhys' steamy prequel. (There are reasons for this name switch; Jean Rhys definitely did her homework.) Most of it takes place in Jamaica, soon after the slaves were freed in 1834. It's quite different from *Jane Eyre*, with its precise Victorian moralism; *Wide Sargasso Sea* is violent and sensual, filled with race tensions, obeah (or voodoo) and culture clashes. It's a twentieth century novel in that it shows how a controlling man can drive a woman to madness. This is the book we'll be discussing in the November "Readers and Reviewers" and there's much to talk about. I hope you will join me for the discussion at 10:45 on THURSDAY (yes, November's meeting is on a Thursday) Nov. 8th at the Fortnightly.

READERS & REVIEWERS

NOVEMBER 7, 2018

10:45 a.m. (prior to the luncheon)

FORTNIGHTLY CLUB OF CHICAGO

The Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys
Facilitator, TAMMIE BOB



The November 2018 presentation of Readers and Reviewers will be led by Tammie Bob. This is FAW's bi-annual discussion of one particular book. Tammie chose *The Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys. Published in 1966, it is a kind of prequel to the 1847's Victorian classic *Jane Eyre*, although entirely different in tone, setting, and sensibility. All of us who know and love *Jane Eyre* will want to attend this fascinating presentation. Please mark your calendars.



SHIRLEY BAUGHER
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Upcoming FAW Meetings

Just a reminder of the upcoming meetings. Be sure to mark your calendars. You won't want to miss a single one!

October 10, 2018

STEVE VENTURINO
Speaking on Daniel Deronda

November 7, 2018

Exploring Historical Fiction: A Panel of Three Writers

CONNIE HAMILTON CONNALLY
(author of *The Songs we Hide*)

KELLY O'CONNOR MCNESSE
(author of *Undiscovered Country*)

DEVIN MURPHY
(author of *The Boat Runner*)

December 12, 2018

interFRIENDtions will perform
Christmas and Hannukkah music

January 9, 2019

The American Writers' Museum will
send a representative

February 13, 2019

Adult-Books Editor
Booklist Reviews

March 13, 2019

PATRICIA FRAZIER
National Youth Poet Laureate

April 10, 2019

Actress **LESLIE GODDARD**
As Rachel Carson

Friday, May 3, 2019

AWARDS LUNCHEON

