Saveas Writers’ International Writing Competition 2017

‘Love & Freindship’ Poetry results

**First prize: No 28** ‘Long Live the King’

 I take this poem to be a riposte to *Mansfield Park*  and the speaker a class/race subaltern. Very strong imagery – both the ‘conceits’ is stanzas 1 and 2 and  the scene of tea-drinking in the 3rd.  Its  spaces are as telling as  its lines , and the hammer-blow of ‘your own Sir Thomas’ at  the end works a treat.  A difficult poem, partly because it avoids spelling things out, but it stands up   excellently  to repeated  re-readings.

**Joint second prize:   No. 38 ‘**Unbecoming',  and **no.22 '**Frank Churchill (in three parts)'

 Two skilled and vivd  recreations of the inner lives of Austen characters. ’Unbecoming’  seems to draw on the scene when Fanny chooses to look out of the window at the stars rather than join in  the after-dinner conversation in *Mansfield Park ,*although the speaker is   both more self-confident and more directly Romantic and sensual than Fanny ever is. (Or possibly Austen herself ?  - though the  fantasy sequence sounds more like Charlotte Bronte’s mind than anything we know of Jane Austen.) Imagery   finely evokes the tension between an alluring inner life and the social demands on a lady in the evening. My only criticism is that  the poem’s just a little longer than it needs to be.

    'Frank Churchill ‘ is intriguing and unexpected because it makes him sympathetic, especially in  the lyrical part II which was my favourite. Part III not quite so satisfying because it lacks the strong imagery of parts 1 and ii, though the last couplet is  resonant.

**Third prize: No 32** 'Pride and Prejudice.'

  Anecdotal, and appears slight on a first reading, but re-reading it, one  notices  its  telling social details and the unease of the mother, made poignant by the unspoken  parallel with the competitive world of Austen’s  Regency ladies.   It’s unobtrusively but admirably crafted – note  the way the colours  red and black in the child’s best   dress and  reappear on the book cover - & very well shaped.   That last line with its broken rhythm, its wry comedy & sad implications  of exclusion, is  splendid. (I was half minded to put this one first, but no. 28 won out by the  intensity of its  verbal effects).

**Highly commended:**

**No 4:**'Jane Austen in a skip' – anecdote poem: touching,  funny, nice details. Very well told, including the gallant Darcy gesture at the end.

**No 44**‘Austenobilia'  -  Knowledgeable apostrophe to JA - lively on the things she didn’t  or couldn’t write about, well turned on what she could.   The ending is really good  in the way it opens up feeling.

**No 37** 'Leonard Cohen and Jane Austen in Elysium'Highly enjoyable, witty, handles the contrast between them well – Romantic  vs Augustan.  But  Jane Austen is allowed to talk too  much, especially at the end of her speech where the lines get long, which  works better as drama than as poetry

**No 23**'When I spoke of Susan’ :  Witty, poised,  knowledgeable, with moments of lyricism. Ending is fine though  finally, like Jane Austen as imagined here,  limited by its own ironies. (Compare with the way the last lines of the winners  open things up.)

**No. 9**. 'Britain’s Got Talent' – witty  updating of  Austen themes to 21st C- lively and vivid, though  I found it confusing and a  maybe a bit confused. Is the speaker a schoolgirl, a would-be star, or what ?  Is Mrs Bennet  a teacher,   or is she a director ? Strong and lively, though.