

ALBERT ZUCKERMAN, D.F.A.
FELICIA ETH
AMY BERKOWER
SUE RAPP
MERRILEE HEIFETZ

2/18/81

Dear Al,

These are my comments on THE RUSSIAN PRINCE, such as they are.

As you know, I have major problems of sympathy with Lydia. I would like a strong heroine, in the true Follett tradition. I agree that no further plot changes are desirable; still, I would like her to have some strength, some ability to come to terms with her situation, resolve at least some of her feelings--so that she is not either fainting, sleeping, taking laudanum or acting on impulse. It is after all through Lydia that the major conflicts of the book are expressed. She is the one whose soul is in torment due to the deepest possible passions and confusion. Her actions should be (or at least I would like them to be) more decisive, brave, committed--to something. Because she is such a weak character, I find it difficult to imagine why these two wonderful men are both so desparately in love with her. As a girl she seems dynamic, strong, passionate. I understand that this is the side of her character that, with Walden and as a "lady" she feels she must suppress--but the result is so boring. She trembles, faints, dreams erotic dreams she is incapable of fulfilling. She's dishonest to those she loves and who are in love with her. She has no opinions of her own other than the status quo. Sorry, but yuch.

The one scene with Lydia which I found in real need of amplification was when, at the end, she goes to talk to Charlotte. This took one page, I think; it could use many more--to draw out Lydia with her daughter.

My nit-picking comments:

page 29: I found the introduction of Feliks and his mission rather matter-of-fact and would have preferred something a bit more dramatic, a bit more tension here.

page 94: Why didn't Feliks go back for the gun? I thought he got away from the carriage much too easily. What happened to the gun? After all his trouble in procuring the gun, I should have thought he'd come back at a later time to get it.

Page 201: I was confused about why the men would go back to Lydia for a drawing of Feliks since they had seen him so clearly themselves. Three pages later it is explained that she will help them with the drawing. Perhaps this should be explained right away.

At the end of the book when Feliks is traipsing around the house at night--how does he light and keep re-lighting the candle? Did they matches in Victorian England?

Page 380: There is a sentence here which implies Feliks knowing that the family will gather on the front lawn; how did he know?

Top line, Lydia says "All right" after she says something else. I wish the "all right" weren't there.

I loved the scenes with Feliks; especially those with Charlotte and Feliks. I think the end is just super.

Sue