

An Investigation into the Perspectives of Jane Austen as a Pioneered Modern Woman

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To Cite this Article

Liath Raouf and Fazel Asadi, "An Investigation into the Perspectives of Jane Austen as a Pioneered Modern Woman", *International Journal for Modern Trends in Science and Technology*, Vol. 04, Issue 10, October 2018, pp.-58-62.

Article Info

Received on 14-Aug-2018, Revised on 23-Sept-2018, Accepted on 29-Sept-2018.

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the timeless and modern thoughts in Jane Austen's works. It sheds light on the fluctuation fame of the writer during her time and how she gradually started receiving her fine reputation. When the critics become aware of her depth debate, she stands as one of the most progenitor writers of the late centuries. Besides, it dissects the perspectives of Jane Austen as a pioneered modern woman. Her works are attractive because they understand the human psychology in a modern way. They are gentle comedies of manners which always take place in a polite society. However, there are dark and disruptive subtexts that modern readers still can be influenced. Her characters notice challengeable political topics that are still of importance today. The unique techniques and liberal thoughts such as individualism and feminism keep her multi-layered works interesting and fresh. As a liberal feminist, who searches for women right, respect, and increases their chances, Austen presents liberal ideas and social criticism. She addresses domestic constraints, the accuracy of women ideas and the issue of marriage. She wishes to depict a world that is not suppressed by subjective law, but rather a familiar and recognizable world. She shows her opposition to primogeniture law, lack of property rights for women and female economic dependence on a male. In the society that is shown by Austen, there are only women, with no men, i.e. the society of the sitting room. Her works are feminist because she estimates women by a new approach. Austen's works clearly suggest taking into account the importance of women.

KEYWORDS: feminism, individualism, liberal thoughts

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I. INTRODUCTION

As an English novelist, Jane Austen (1775-1817) is well-known for her six novels, which interpret and comment upon the landed gentry in Great Britain at the end of the 18th century. In 1811, Jane Austen published her first novel anonymously titled *Sense and Sensibility*, *By a Lady*. It was almost 20 years after the first draft of this novel. According to Claire Harman, the book

got "two brief, polite reviews, sold 500 copies and was swiftly forgotten" (1).

A total of six books had been published at the end of her life, but after her death, they lost favor and no longer were printed. In 1869, James Edward Austen-Leigh, Austen's nephew published the first biography of Austen: *A Memoir of Jane Austen*.

Her works appraise critically sentimental novels of the second half of the 18th century and are

considered as part of the transition from romanticism to 19th-century realism (Grundy 200). Critics have praised her works due to the use of biting irony and her realism and commentary on social issues.

Austen's life and works have been forming a big controversial subject among readers, critics, and thinkers, since the 18 century, which confirms her unique and independent personality. There is always a wonder being raised with the perennial interest in Austen's novels. How her novels could with such limit details of characters, plot and information appear more active and renovated. R.W. Chapman asserts that "Miss Austen knows all the details, and gives us very few of them." (82). Virginia Woolf, in 1913, confines her works as "conservative spirit and too little of the rebel in her composition" (qtd. in Duckworth 416). However, it may seem true, but if someone examines Austen's life circumstances and what her priority throughout her works, "to be a woman and author during the 19th century was a feminist action that could bring censure and shame in a time where respectable women did not write" (Fergus 2). Besides, her time was not "ripe [enough] for rational and meaningful discussion of women's rights," (Steeves 32). She left clues only the smart readers can understand and elaborate on them. In the other words, her ideas seem more relevant with later centuries than hers. Which can give her novels the sense of perennial over generations.102)?

Despite her short life, Austen's enduring impact is left, even 200 years after her death. Austen's works are still applicable today and in print. Her still alive characters make readers be interested in her popular books. Accordingly, numerous movies and sitcoms are inspired by her novels.

II. MANEUVERING BUSINESS OF MARRIAGE

In her novels, Austen considers the dependence of women on marriage to receive good social status and economic security. Therefore, the major themes of all her novels are love and marriage. All the mentioned concepts evoke a feeling of shared emotion with us today. This shared emotion is the role of social class in finding the right spouse, mental compatibility problems, marrying for speculative reasons, gender roles and inequality in marriage (Benedict 70). She rejects explicitly marriage which holds up on maintaining the structure of society but ignores people's peculiarity. The protagonists' unique personalities

are something individual because they are aware of their own feminine identities, and in the same way, they are disappointed by other conventional marriages which lack mutual love and respect.

III. MODERNITY OF THOUGHTS

Jane Austen lived and wrote in a society where orthodox norms and thoughts were prominent. However, her novels' characters were modern in thoughts and opinions. The best example is Elizabeth Bennet relationship with the hero. This kind of relationship is based on gender equality that is a modern notion. The male characters respect the women for who they are and the heroines refuse to show weakness to the conventions of a society. Heroines think independently and have their own ideas that express them bravely (Benedict 73). These notions are in agreement with modern audiences.

The 19-century women have encountered the same issues as today's women. In her era, women were subjected to social injustice similar to women of the present century who are paid too little and treated as having little value and have financial and social anxiety. It is still a difficult situation for young people in the present era whether to marry for love or for financial issues, or whether or not to get married (Foster 18).

In fact, Austen is saluting that domestic bond, the authenticity of women attitude and marriage. Austen was inspired by a simple wish to imitate the world evident around her, as if her world, not subjugated by subjective law, but rather related with world that is familiar and recognizable. "she appeared to give what modernism refused and in so doing to close the dangerously yawning gap between wishes and the reality of things.....at the same time, the naturalness of the novels form in her hands, its slightness as form, erected few barriers between the reader and its society". (Sutherland 48) Jane Austen ideas were ahead of her time. Therefore, her audience was not quite ready to accept her. Instead, her works are appropriate for the present time, "in many ways, her books are more in tune with our times and tastes than her own," writes Harman. "In the first review she ever received, she was taken to task for a 'want of newness', but her books now seem markedly more original than anything else of the period" (Harman 12). Her books are revealed later, in the modern age, to be set as great steps not only applicable to real life but also can be set as a pattern of the discipline literature

IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY

Jane Austen's stories have happened in a limited geographical and cultural boundary in England during the Regency era. However, she reveals the hidden layers of characters' personality, even with the limited plot. Values may change over time, but what does not change is the nature of human beings. It is still difficult to understand the human nature and it is her neutral judgment on a human character that makes the stories attractive (Halford 60). Austen rarely exposes her characters badly. She does not judge the attitude of her characters, but rather she leaves the judgment to her readers themselves. She lets her characters reveal themselves through their action, dialogue, and letters. This task is left to the readers' point of view, in a sense that, everyone puts a justification suit his/her interpretation. That is why Austen is being read differently throughout the centuries. Consequently, it reveals a great respect to the mind of her readers and let them virtually become a part of the story in one hand, narrating traditional stories close to the real life with limit manipulation more down to earth, on the other hand. As Watt declares "Within her self-imposed limits, and perhaps because of them, she created some remarkably life-like and penetrating portraits of human nature" (69).

V. EASILY ADAPTABLE

Austen novels are not affected by the passage of time. The characters, the setting as well as the overall story go beyond time and geographical boundaries. Her storylines are adapted by movie makers to produce movies and television series. They may remain quite faithful to the original story or follow the plotline but to plan on the possibility of the change in society. Either way, it works. It is also true for books as well.

THE RELEVANCE OF AUSTIN WORKS IN THE MODERN ERA

Austen as one of the greatest writers in literary history is popular worldwide for her fictions of England's middle and upper-class. "It's certainly possible to read Austen's novels as reassuring escapist fantasies, each book culminating in a marriage that appears to uphold the social order. We also love the fact that Jane Austen was a minute observer of human foibles" (Franklin 124). She presents all little desires and jealousies of human being that like to hide from the society. Readers enjoy seeing hypocrites are unmasked and social climbers are scorned (131).

Another reason for the popularity of Austen novels two hundred years on is that they are gentle comedies of manners which always take place in a polite society. However, there are dark and disruptive subtexts that modern readers still can be influenced. Austen's novels are far from fairy tales (98). Political topics that are still of importance today. For instance, in *Persuasion*, the effects of post-traumatic stress and in *Mansfield Park*, the issue of slavery is presented. Austen's novels contain darker subplots that are more interesting for readers than the polite romances. It is the dangerous themes that distinguish her works from other romance novels (Ruderman 67).

What makes her novels fresh are the unique techniques and liberal thoughts such as individualism and feminism. Her multi-layered works were never safe books. The challengeable topics are presented more evidently in her stories. These kinds of themes are abundantly adapted and are interesting for the readers because they respond to their political and social depths (Evans 86).

VI. FEMINISM

Austen's appealing about women and states their rights to independence. "The feminist critics have been particularly interested in the artistic strategies which enabled Austen to criticize or subvert the patriarchy without offending or incurring reprisals" (Christine 40). Feminism is related in the first part with the life of women which is the center focus of her six novels. The feminism does not necessarily come from the idea that Austen writes about women and the way in which they are being treated but through a new approach to women's estimation. It would come unconsciously close to the modern era. Austen's works are plainly a bid to imagine women important.

Considering Austen's life circumstances and her priorities throughout her works, being a woman author was a feminist action during the 19th century. Since in that era, "respectable women did not write and it could be a shame for her" (Fergus 2). In addition, there was no ready condition in her society to discuss the issues of women's rights (Steeves 32). Only smart readers can understand the hidden signs of her works. Her ideas seem eternal because they are more suitable for later centuries than her time.

To a great degree, her books are more in accordance with our times and are more acceptable than her own (Collins 121). Therefore, we can

understand why readers, critics and even the publishers of her time overlooked Austen. In later centuries, she becomes more famous as her works are read by open-minded readers who elaborate on her works profoundly. As a liberal feminist, whose arches for women right, respect, and increases their chances, Austen presents liberal ideas and social criticism that are more relevant in modern centuries.

Austen addresses domestic constraints, the accuracy of women ideas and the issue of marriage. She wishes to imitate a world that is not suppressed by subjective law, but rather a familiar and recognizable world. "she appeared to give what modernism refused and in so doing to close the dangerously yawning gap between wishes and the reality of things.....at the same time, the naturalness of the novels form in her hands, its slightness as form, erected few barriers between the reader and its society" (Sutherland 48).

Austen does not aim to represent the history. The proper female behavior and the role of manners between classes, which often forms barriers between upper and lower class are the objects of her writings (Gelpi, 156). According to some modern critics and professional readers, Austen is a pioneer feminist. Her novels are important because she defends indirectly the women's rights and their equal rights in the society.

Based on the marriage plot, she showed her feminist ideas. Romantic love is admired and female friendship finds a new meaning. She "controlled her independent heroines avoided institutional criticism" (Duckworth 418). Her social criticism has a special depth, so she is not a passive traditional writer. The unfair treatment of women characters makes the reader to not only accept her ideas but also empathize with them. Austen criticizes romantic writers for their inattention to the high social pressure on women. She does it by revealing the fine individual conducts of major characters.

In particular, this social enlightenment gives her stories more value and allows the reader to identify himself with characters. Social critics such as Julia Brown, Cornel West, and Nancy Armstrong highlight the amazing settlement of individual demands with the community's demand (Fritzer 40).

VII. JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE

Her life is unique due to the challenges she faced and her rebellion to the social rigid structure. She was in conflict with those traditions that do not

match her liberal ideas. A big part of her life was reflected in her novels.

Her wit, delicacy, and wisdom of irony were the tools she was used to deeply present her characters. In addition to describing the heroines, she used her talents to concentrate on the individual subject in revolution sense within a traditional society (Knox-Shaw 15).

The importance of her writings does not identify in a short time. Rather, she immediately becomes the focus of critics and readers attention. Since the 18 century, her life and works have been discussed by readers, thinkers, and critics; accordingly, her unique and independent person has been confirmed. Her individualist and feminist thoughts have shown itself gradually when her deep controversial and implicit technique in which she used to present her liberal ideas have been identified.

In her era, perhaps only one person can be considered as a feminist and it is Austen. Her opposition to primogeniture law, lack of property rights for women and female economic dependence on a male make her famous as a feminist. Austen depicts a society that there are only women, with no men, i.e. the society of the sitting room (Kaplan 33).

By investigating her works, it can be concluded that she went all out for women's rights in the field of human rights. She made a connection between the great sorrows of women and those of slavery. She also linked these two with the harmful notions of the hierarchical construction of class (Tomaline 51).

Readers, critics, and historians do not agree with Austen's implicit intention, which leads to the different assumptions. In Austen's writing, themes or visions, feminism is in the first place, because her six novels are related to the life of women. Her works are feminist not only because Austen writes about women and treats them in her special way but estimates women by a new approach. It would bring to mind the modern era unconsciously. Austen's works clearly suggest taking into account the importance of women (Mandal 114).

VIII. CONCLUSION

The popularity of Austen's works is due to their novelty that discusses ongoing issues. One of the factors for her works attractiveness is that they understand the human psychology in a modern way. They are gentle comedies of manners which always take place in a polite society. However, there are dark and disruptive subtexts that modern

readers still can be influenced. Her characters notice challengeable political topics that are still of importance today. The unique techniques and liberal thoughts such as individualism and feminism keep her multi-layered works interesting and fresh and people began to realize her deep argumentative and implicit technique in which she used to deliver her liberal ideas. As a liberal feminist, who searches for women right, respect, and increases their chances, Austen presents liberal ideas and social criticism. She addresses domestic constraints, an accuracy of women ideas and the issue of marriage. She wishes to depict a world that is not suppressed by subjective law, but rather a familiar and recognizable world. She shows her opposition to primogeniture law, lack of property rights for women and female economic dependence on a male. In the society that is shown by Austen, there are only women, with no men, i.e. the society of the sitting room. Her works are feminist because she estimates women by a new approach. Austen's works clearly suggest taking into account the importance of women.

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