
Feminine Style in Jane Austin's Works

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Annotation: This work will analyze literary works of Jane Austin, concerning with the feminism, women problems and issues, relationships between men and women portrayed in these works. The article outlines how Austen used her literary works to represent the society in which she lived and how that society placed a sense of duty on women in terms of family, education and marriage. Along with the representation of that duty, the research work concentrates on the approach of the writer in using her protagonists in an effort to question those standards and provide for her readers examples of women whom they could relate to and learn from as well.

Key Words: Feminism, Jane Austen, masculine, gender relations, equality, protagonist.

INTRODUCTION

The most prevalent social issue underwent by human being is treatment of women. Indisputably, women's rights and equality have always been a subject of great concern and controversial debates. Literature is no less prone to inequality than any other forms of artistic expression. Adversities of women in the last few centuries can be clearly seen through the content of great literary works of that periods. It was a time well-known for its social restrictions, especially on the female gender. Female writers of the period portrayed social repressions and restrictions through their written works. One among such authors is Jane Austen, famous English novelist. And perhaps more than any other author in the English language, Jane Austen is a beneficiary of feminist rereading. A number of excellent and well-known feminist critics have found it fruitful to study, historically and politically, the structure and influence of gender relations that were part of the environment in which Austen wrote. These critics have identified that both her style and her subject matter are responses, both overt or covert, to the patriarchal English gentry society in which women's lives were constricted in ways that men's lives were not. The feminist critics have been particularly interested in the artistic strategies which gave the chance to Jane Austen to criticize or subvert the patriarchy without offending or incurring reprisals.

ANALYSIS

Jane Austen is regarded as a woman's novelist, looking at the world from a woman's point of view. Her heroines are witty, they are attractive, intelligent and articulate. However, it should not be neglected that she is a fairly harsh moralist. While being witty and independent in certain ways, the author does not allow her characters to pursue individual courses of behavior and she does not encourage passion and rebellion. The realities of Jane Austen's society, are that women have much less freedom for experimentation than men. They did not have careers, they did not possess a chance to go to university, their male contemporaries had both –young men had both equivalent of a gap year. They went for the grand tour, often before they went to university, which was an opportunity for experiment with all aspects of life. Women had no chance to experiment, the rules were too strict for women of this class that they must be virgins when they marry and they must keep loyalty to her husband,

however foolish and corrupt he might be. As women were unable to decide their own future or make their own choices and men ruled the world and depicted women to be weak and passive, Literature was a way for strong willed women to share their opinions and peacefully suggest societal changes and Austen knew how to use it. Jane Austen was a woman that wanted to show the sarcastic side of society and she did it through literature. In all her books she makes an utmost effort to express her disagreement about the rules and leaves us clear that she wanted to break the rules. In her works, she is often critical of the assumptions and prejudices of upper-class England. With the other words, Austen was in many ways realist, and the England that she describes is one in where social mobility is limited and class consciousness is considerably strong.

Jane Austen used her novels to demonstrate that women had the capability to think for themselves and govern their own lives. She picked up the male pen and wrote her own story. To be a woman and author during the 18th century was a feminist action that could bring censure and shame in a time where respectable women did not write (Fergus, 2011; Kirkham, 1983). It was a reason why initially, Jane Austen together with her female contemporaries published her literary works anonymously. Austen produced six novels that have been adapted and transformed to entertain and educate even in contemporary times. In a review of Austen's journey to film, Parrill (2002) stated that "They (Austen's novels) tell good stories-simple love stories which are still appealing, particularly to a female audience" (p.3). During Austen time, novels written for women by a woman were seen as having no literary significance and were greatly disliked by intellectuals and upper class (Brownstein, 2001; Ivins, 2011). The general perception of women consisted of them maintaining "modest, retiring, essentially domestic and private" functions within society (Fergus, p.2, 2011). How could a good woman who correctly performed her role have any useful public knowledge or have an experience differing from every other women? Henry James contented that Austen's talent was a part of her unconsciousness as though she fell a musing over her work basket and picked up her dropped stitches as pieces of masterful imagination (as cited in Booth, 1983, p.243). Truth and reality composed backbone of Austen's writing that has a distinctly feminist focus on the personal (Morrison, 2002).

DISCUSSION

Each novel has a female protagonist who has a certain circumstance that she was born with, typically including the family structure and their economic status, along with the ways that her social circle, her family and her culture has added pressure to the expectations that have been put on her. Like in society of that time, the female characters are hardly treated as strong, intelligent creatures who could think and choose for themselves; they were put in boxes and told not to break any rules of society. Therefore, Austen addresses the major issues that women faced with those daunting expectations. Austen provides her readers with circumstances similar to those which her readers may have faced in their lives; along with that, she writes her protagonists to adapt in her novels, but they always must go against their societal expectations, whether that be in a manner that is very extreme or just in a slight way. This is the fundamental method that the author uses her novels to both reflect and challenge the standards placed on young women in her English society.

Pride and Prejudice: Elizabeth Bennett

In one of her famous books, "Pride and Prejudice", the author portraits in a sarcastic way the role women in the golden age society. Austen's powers of subtle discrimination and shrewd perceptiveness is revealed in this interesting book, and through it she is able to convey such a complex message using a simply, yet, witty, style. Jane wanted to figure out that she was against women's perception. She believed that female genre was able to shine by them,

without being depending of a wealthy man. She was making a cartoon of society, saying that women were stupid objects that performed all that men wanted. Jane Austen also wanted to make up women's mind. She wanted to teach them that they were capable to reach their dreams, unfortunately dreams for that era's women were only to marry a wealthy man and get pregnant to increase family. It was interesting to discover that through "Pride and Prejudice" Jane wanted to connect her life. Her book is defined as typical of the century because its satire literature allows realizing the period in which it was made. Jane Austen managed to connect characters with all the feeling she was experimenting in that occasion. She was a romantic girl that wanted to portrait her maybe through the figure of Elizabeth Benet , protagonist of the book. Passion and reason were the perfect ingredients that Austen added in order to produce a dramatic story that reflect society in the 18th century. In "Pride and Prejudice", Austen denounced the elements of marriage and society that she found disrespectful. These are conclusions of her observation of the people in her world. In her book Jane Austen tries to portrait women as self-confident, able to think themselves and able to hold their own beliefs, drawing a fantastic picture of society, breaking rules with something that was far away of being true. Elizabeth dispels the notion that women were by nature subservient and docile (Fergus, 2011).

Emma: Emma Woodhouse

Emma can be viewed as one of Austen's most masculine characters. She embodies the feminine ideal of being a good daughter and excelled feminine pursuits such as music and painting. She is attractive and possess an sociable personality. However, Emma's masculine qualities appear in her approach to love and her assertiveness in other's lives. Emma does not want to be addressed with care; she demands and deserves the simple truth of the matter. Emma's journey is one of self-realization. In her quest for self-improvement she hoped "it would yet find her more rational , more acquainted with herself"(Austen, 2009,p. 396) . Emma's options and opinions in choosing a mate are more masculine than feminine and allow her freedom of choice.

Mansfield Park: Fanny Price

Fanny Price serves as one of the author's most timid characters, who some argue embodied feminism more than the others (Despotopoulou, 2004; Evans, 2006). Fanny created her own unique feminine space within the novel and resists both the male gaze and the marriage market (Despotopoulou, 2004; Evans,2006). Although Fanny lacked the feminine graces of her wealthy cousins, she embodied the feminine qualities of docility and obedience throughout most of the novel. Her opinion of her own rationale is masculine in that she trusts her own judgment: "We all have a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be" (Austen, 2004, p.358).She asserts that women and men can guide their own lives better than anyone else can. Austen used Fanny to endorse rationally and reason to "subvert patriarchal society," which in turn endorses women's equality to men (Evans, 2006, p.21).

Persuasion: Anne Elliot

Austen's *Persuasion* puts into perspective changes in the values of society during her lifetime. More than just mirroring the society, she infuses her own ideals of courtship, domesticity and marriage in her work. By analyzing the novel alongside the historical changes of the time, it can be argued that , in *Persuasion*, Austen disassociates women from the traditional idea of domesticity by distancing them from the realm of the heart and by giving them greater say and decision over their future. She gives women qualities that were considered to be masculine. Moreover, Austen draws the men in the novel closer to the

domestic sphere and feminises their masculinity. By doing so, she creates the ideal heterosexual relationship. In order to make that relationship work, the lovers have to embrace both their masculine and feminine characteristics and failure to do so will result in obvious and often reproachful flaws. (Walzer, 1995).

Sense and Sensibility: Elinor and Marianne Dashwood

Elinor and M. Dashwood represent two sides of traditional femininity and display the least amount of agency when compared to Austen's other characters. Elinor is dutiful and reserved, while Marianne is passionate and impudent. These two characters do little to work within or around notions of traditional femininity, although they do share the acquisition of self clarity that all Austen heroines receive.

CONCLUSION

With these many expectations that Austen reflects and challenges, Austen is demonstrating the power that she believes novels can have on her society. She wrote novels that would impact readers, challenge them and force them to see the growth that their society did need, making them question how that growth would take place. In each of three aspects of expectations and duty, in the family, in education or in marriage, Austen provides her readers with female characters who are faced with expectations for a "lady". Though she may have not been a radical, Austen saw that women were so much more than the conventional roles that they were placed in. They were more than "accomplished". With Fanny Price, Elizabeth Bennet, Anne Elliot, Emma Woodhouse and Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, Jane Austen represents women as independent, strong, intellectual, wise and bold-and as more than just a lady. Not only did this analysis find women influenced to pursue a ridiculous standard, they are being told what to do and what their expectations should be via the careful manipulation of Austen's words. I find this appalling and it establishes the need for continuous study of social networking and its effects on society.

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