

Feministic approach in the novels of Jane Austen: A Study

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Abstract

Austen explored that individual reform is the way to transform society. Consequently, the paper investigates Jane Austen's ideas and views on women, her education & her liberty of thought, and freedom of expression in society, challenging the notion that women could not learn deeply and exist independently as the themes of her novels.

The life of a woman in the nineteenth century has three key facets: Better social standing and financial independence for which they & their family try to seek a well-settled marriage partner, and, rearing and managing the home and the children. From birth to the end of their life, the women remained like dumb animals having no voice to rise against and no freedom to express and take decisions.

Thus, the dissertation explores and identifies, how Jane Austen internalized and engaged with the revolutionary ideas of her time and entered the ideological, transplanted empowerment of women through the themes and skills of writings which challenged British society to reconsider the woman's place and her role in their life.

Keywords- Feminism, Feministic approach, Pride & Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Sense & Sensibility

Introduction

Jane Austen is the English novelist of Eighteenth- Nineteenth century. She is the writer that always writes on the topic very common in the contemporary reality. She has her roots in the life's reality and hardships. She is among the most widely read and enjoyed author of today.

One conception for woman of Georgian Era was

“Girls are made of sugar and spice and everything nice...”

The woman in Georgian era is considered as a dumb creature to take care of marriage. They were considered to follow what comes in their destiny with no voice. Gender limitations were there. The woman in this time are with neither highly educated nor they were having rights in their father's property the only way to get stability and financial security is the marriage with some settled and wealthy bachelors. So they just make up and dress up themselves well to be the point of attraction and then marry with some rich man to get settled in their life.

As stated earlier, the current study will examine Jane Austen's literary works and analyze them in terms of a feminist approach. The major objective of this study is to present Jane Austen as a feminine writer by analyzing and examining some of her major works such as *Pride & Prejudice*, *Sense & Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park* through the mirror of feminism.

Literature review

According to Xiaojun He¹, Lina Liao² (2015) Jane Austen's position and the importance of her works cannot be neglected in the history of English literature. Her fiction could be regarded as feminist works that challenge the patriarchy. It reflected the relationship between woman and man, and analyzed Austen's attitude to marriage, especially women's right to choose. The novel emphasized the woman and her place in society. Zhenjiang (2011) explored that, different from the traditional male writing style, Austen regarded females as the central part of the novel. She let her female characters describe the story as their daily life, and transmits the information to the readers. In her novels, the heroines are not traditional angles or monsters defined by male writers. All of them are independent. They are narrators rather than objects in traditional novels. In this way, Austen successfully deconstructs the male's voice and establishes feminist narrative authority. Mohammed Salim Abdulammer (2022) inferred that Jane Austen while talking about Women's Liberation, mainly worried about the issue of how a lady can see herself as a "female" and a freeman" simultaneously. Due to the truth that ladies have typically alluded to the homegrown exercises and their jobs as a mother and a spouse, this woman's rights attempts to lead ladies to another vision that they are, as a matter of fact, ready to give men's very best. She demanded engaging ladies logically and socially, so she could draw her character and structure her free thoughts. Emma, the protagonist of Austen's novel has repeatedly said that she has no requirement for marriage since she is steady and monetarily free. The single statement is enough to speak about the place of women in contemporary society and the need for marriage in woman's life.

Analysis

Sense and Sensibility, the first novel by Jane Austen in print, in October 1811 with the false name "A Lady" the first edition with 750 copies all were sold out till 1813. *Sense and Sensibility* is romantic fiction, a kind of comedy of manners.

The society, the culture, and the occupation in the nineteenth century time are visible in Jane Austen's mirror of *Sense and Sensibility*. Society was divided into classes on a financial and rank basis. The men from the upper class do little but had a great interest in hunting and shooting whereas, the women were not accepted to study higher and become independent or earned their living. The upper-class women used to go to clubs, and Balls, make friends, dance, play cards, and rest time spent in their beauty care. While middle or lower-class women suffer a lot for their financial security and stability in contrast upper-class women spent money on trivial things and are just engaged in gossiping, chattering, and reading poetry and romances. The only way to get stability for the middle class was to marry a financially sound partner, applicable for both men and women. The fact is valid even today; girls and boys are in search of well-settled partners to attain a sense of security for the future. The novel also highlights the theme of "Sense" and

"Sensibility", the theme of Woman and Feminism, theme of Love, Marriage, Money, and Inheritance.

Pride and prejudice is a satire and a novel of manners, published in January 1813. The main characters of the novel are Elizabeth Bennet as she deals with the issue of manners, rearing, upbringing, morality, code of conduct, class, education, and marriage in the contemporary society of British Regency.

The novel satires the contemporary society, its economy, behavioral patterns, convention, and customs existed during that time. The novel is a story of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet having five daughters and Mrs. Bennet is desperate to see all her daughter married to socially settled and rich bachelors.

The major themes discussed in the novel are pride, class, reputation, love, money, and marriage. The role and place of women in society are so beautifully expressed that they are relevant even today. The characters are the portrayal of contemporary society.

Mansfield Park was the third novel by Jane Austen published in 1814 and written between 1811 and 1813. It was published after *sense and sensibility* (1811) and *pride and prejudice* (1813).

Mansfield Park was Austen's most controversial novel. It was a satire on money-minded people, relationships and relatives, and morality. It also explores the people and their mentality toward the poor class and the exploitation of the weak in the eighteenth century.

If *sense and sensibility* are for emotions and thought, *pride and prejudice* are for judgment and misjudgment for others at a glance, *Emma* is for growing to adulthood, and *persuasion* is about second chance but for *Mansfield Park*, it cannot be explored in a single sentence. For *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* a critic remarked " A gay offspring's of her youth ", and for *Mansfield Park*, a critic refers as a " More mature, darker novel written by a woman who had by then experienced more of the world"

Adolphus Alfred Jack Remarked in his essay (1897) on the novel, *Mansfield Park* "is more finished; " "more subtle" and " quitter her earlier works" As Austen grew older, he continues," her powers grew and depend".

Mansfield Park stands as Austen's most profound treatment of politics, her richest response to the wars and revolutions of the times. Austen was a novelist who has the caliber to bring evil to the notice and proposed possible solutions to bring social change in the life of the people.

According to William Dean Howells in his 1895, *My Literary passions* "Austen is the most artistic of the British novelist" he estimated that "she was the first and the last British novelist to treat the material with full truthfulness.

Through Mansfield Park Austen discussed the different issues of the other classes of the society viz. The Aristocratic Bertram symbolized the upper class. The fashionable Crawford represents the upper middle class while through down and out Prices the lower poor class. Mansfield Park is a novel with scandals, Plays, Balls, and filtration; It is supposed to be the most complex novel as compared to other works.

Conclusion

“Smiling and very much alive, sometimes half concealing her grace beneath a veil of shyness, or cloud of melancholy, a young girl is invariably the heroine of a novel by Jane Austen”

Says Leonie Villard (1924). And that is very true, as Jane Austen’s world is principally a feminine world. As Jane Austen was a woman, it was quite natural that she looked at the world and its problems from the woman’s point of view. Writing with a clear purpose and design, and with a most perfect consciousness of what she was doing, she depicted the world with which she was most familiar. The world could be no other than the feminine world of her times. Jane Austen’s novels therefore, novels with heroines. Though, all the characters of Jane Austen come very alive because their gestures, attitudes and conversations are all true to life, only the heroines reveal their full personality to the reader. In every novel there is a female character who shares in some degree the conscience of the authoress. It is through that character that every problem is viewed and unfolded. Sense and sensibility is exclusively concerned with Elinor and Marianne. Elinor shares Jane Austen’s good sense and clear insight while Marianne grows wiser through suffering. Elinor is a critical observer of her fellow-beings in the spirit of regretful forbearance. Pride and Prejudice deal with the story of intellectual complexity resulting very often in serious misunderstandings.

Austen shows that women are just as intelligent and capable as their male counterparts. Jane Austen herself went against the social convention by living and remaining single and earning by her own sale of novels. Austen was against this social role of woman in society during her time. She therefore depicted woman differently in her novel sense and sensibility. She expresses both delights and difficulties of woman in her course of her life. Through the characters of Elinor and Marianne, Lucy Steel, Fanny Dashwood, Mrs. Dashwood Austen reflects the different shades of woman’s character. Like other feminists, she cared about women's social position and claimed women's right to work, and her point of view was reflected in her novels.

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8. omen Consciousness Exploration in Jane Austen and Her Works Xiaojun He¹ , Lina Liao² Journal of Education and Training Studies Vol. 3, No. 6; November 2015 ISSN 2324-805X E-ISSN 2324-8068 Published by Redfame Publishing URL: <http://jets.redfame.com>ISSN 1799-2591 Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Vol. 1, No. 12, pp. 1827-1830, December 2011
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