

## JANE AUSTEN

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## I. APPROACH

The following sentences show us some interesting attitudes towards Jane Austen:

Jane Austen invites us to enjoy a change of air among people with most of whom we may soon feel at ease, finding nothing in their conversation that will disturb our equanimity. If you are one of Jane Austen's lovers, you come back to her novels for a holiday from the noise and whirl of modern fiction, as you would come from a great city to the countryside or the coast village for rest and restoration.<sup>1)</sup>

Jane Austen is the perfect novelist of escape—of legitimate escape, such as are our holidays... She tells no fairy-tale which might send us back dazzled and reeling to our contacts with normal life, but diverts us from our preoccupations with another set of problems no less real than our own, but making no personal demands upon us.<sup>2)</sup>

You can forget a war when you are reading Jane Austen for the first time, the second time, the hundredth time; you can forget strain and sorrow and perplexity, *injustice and fear*. It is the loveliest of all worlds, and I have enjoyed remembering how I stepped into it.<sup>3)</sup>

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- 1) W. H. Helm: *Jane Austen and her Country-House Comedy* (Eveleigh Nash Fawside House London 1909), pp. 14-15.
  - 2) Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern: *Talking of Jane Austen* (Cassell and Co. Ltd.), p. 12. Introducing Sheila Kaye-Smith to Jane Austen.
  - 3) *Ibid.*, p. 25. Introducing G. B. Stern to Jane Austen.

Reading these three, we may find that they have assumed exactly the same attitude towards Jane Austen; that is, they read Jane Austen for *refreshment*. After all, those who show a disposition to read her for the first time, I fancy, must have more or less the desire to escape from the obsession of today, by falling back for rest on her. But, in a sense, such an attitude must be said to be not positive but negative. Why are we willing to go back to Jane Austen in such a negative attitude? In order to answer it, to analyse the twentieth century civilization may be necessary.

The development of the modern capitalism during the nineteenth century, which had permitted to believe in 'the infinite possibilities of man'<sup>4)</sup>, shifted necessarily to the stage of Imperialism with the opening of the twentieth century. Thus, the age of competition open to all was ended, and the method of production turned to the monopolistic enterprise. Now, in the twentieth century, to gasp for liberty and to pursue the individual dignity never can be to participate in history; at present time the assertion of the emancipation of free thought and of free personality means nothing by itself, and only sounds hollow and empty. Thus, the twentieth century, which was born when the problem included in the development itself of the nineteenth century had broken up, becomes, speaking by the words of Auden, 'The Age of Anxiety'.

Then, if we read Jane Austen in our modern attitude, we may feel that her art is a serene, objective art of a kind which we cannot possibly produce ourselves, now; that her world is filled up with happiness of a kind which we can only long for. It seems to us that Jane Austen has permanently valuable qualities. She may, thus, become the object of our yearning and melancholic envy; those who are inevitably living in anxiety, sometimes, must be inclined to escape to Jane Austen's world which is *not* modern. But escape is escape; it can never be the way of salvation for person of today. Admitting it, nevertheless someone, I suppose, may read Jane Austen only for refreshment, for a holiday, however transitory it may be, just as we saw at the beginning of this chapter.

What kind of qualities has Jane Austen who seems to us to be a dream in heaven? I will attempt to make more precise the image of Jane Austen, in the relation to her age.

## II. THE BACKGROUND OF THE SPIRIT

...I am fully sensible that an historical romance, founded on the House of Saxe Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem ... No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other<sup>5)</sup>.

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4) T. E. Hulme: *Speculations*, p. 116.

5) *Jane Austen's Letters*, Collected and Edited by R. W. Chapman (Oxford University Press), pp. 452-453.

This is the reply from Jane Austen to J. S. Clarke who recommended her to write any historical romance illustrative of the history of the august House of Cobourg. Though the letter is moderately written, it distinctly conveys to us the author's self-confidence of a kind which can never be altered in deference to the opinion of others. She always speaks of 'the little bit of ivory (two inches wide) on which I work with so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour'<sup>6)</sup>, and she, seated at her little mahogany box-desk in the family sitting room, scribbles her novels, secretly, on small sheets of paper which can 'easily be put away, or covered with a piece of blotting paper'.<sup>7)</sup> She, however, seems to be always working with the conviction and serenity in her own world; she makes no doubts of both her living and her writing. Speaking by the words of W. H. Helm, Jane Austen, 'taking her meals and her rest regularly', writes her books.

Then, what kind of books did Jane Austen write? It is shown in her own words: "Three or four Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on."<sup>8)</sup> Thus, her range is strictly limited in a very small world. Moreover, as concerning plot, Jane Austen, without the damaging criticism of Mr. Garrod,<sup>9)</sup> has but one — an eternal courtship. That is, in her six novels, we have a village or something like it; in the village lives a marriageable maiden, the heroine; to this village comes an eligible bachelor, the hero; they are furnished with rivals, or foils; and as soon as the heroine marries someone, the story comes to the close. Then it may be said that *Pride and Prejudice* is the story that Elizabeth Bennet becomes Mrs. Darcy; *Emma* the story that Emma Woodhouse becomes Mrs. Knightley; *Persuasion* the story that Anne Elliot becomes Mrs. Wentworth.

But, as Dr. Chapman says, 'the monotony of this parallelism seems hardly to have been noticed'<sup>10)</sup>, and sometimes she, almost compared with Shakespeare, has been admired by all discriminating critics. For instance, Sir Walter Scott, who read her novels 'so often that visitors noted the shabby state of their covers on the shelves of his library'<sup>11)</sup>, praised her from his heart as follows:

That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with.<sup>12)</sup>

And he regretted her death so much, saying, "What a pity such a gifted creature is died

6) Oliver Elton: A Survey of English Literature 1780-1830 (London Edward Arnold and CO.), P. 192.

7) James Edward Austen-Leigh: Memoir of Jane Austen (Oxford at The Clarendon Press), p. 102.

8) Jane Austen's Letters, p. 401.

9) cf. R. W. Chapman: Jane Austen Facts and Problems (Oxford at The Clarendon Press), p. 189.

10) Ibid., p. 190.

11) May Lamberton Becker: Presenting Miss Jane Austen (George G. Harrap. and Co. Ltd.), p. 164.

12) J. E. Austen-Leigh: op. cit., 149.

so early!"<sup>13</sup> Lord David Cecil's opinion is thus:

There are those who do not like her; as there are those who do not like sunshine or unselfishness. But the very nervous defiance with which they shout their dissatisfaction shows that they know they are a despised minority. All discriminating critics admire her books, most educated readers enjoy them; her fame, of all English novelists, is the most secure.<sup>14</sup>

What makes Jane Austen's writings—so limited, so confined in the most trivial, commonplace things of everyday experience—so exquisite and so admirable? It, I imagine, is her warm affection towards the small, daily experiences, and her spirit of laughter—namely her humour, wit, and irony. Therefore, Dr. Chapman labels her 'a social satirist'<sup>15</sup> and her books 'a comedy of manners'.<sup>16</sup> Lord David Cecil writes, "It is the angle of her satiric vision, the light of her wit that gives its peculiar glitter and proportion to her picture of the world."<sup>17</sup> Besides, Jane Austen acknowledges herself that 'the comic part of the character I might be equal to'.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, her laughter is scarcely sardonic. Even her irony is clear and beautiful, as Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, says:

"... I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, *do* divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can."<sup>19</sup>

Thus, in the world delineated by Jane Austen, people always smile and laugh, cheerfully talk, happily love and marry. Jane Austen's people entertain no doubt, no fear. It, I think, comes from her generous impulse and a large-hearted charity which can admit the actual being—not the ideal—in the reality, even the foolish, even the laughable too. And this tolerant attitude of mind and heart must originate in the security of spirit. Then, wherefrom does this security of spirit result? In the first place, we may answer for it that it results from the author's family life full of happiness. In fact, her family life of three generations—as daughter and niece, as sister, as aunt—was quiet and peaceful, just as her nephew J. E. Austen-Leigh wrote:

Of events her life was singularly barren: few changes and no great crisis ever broke the smooth current of its course.<sup>20</sup>

This tranquility of her daily life, it must be admitted, has a great effect upon her calmer

13) Loc. cit.

14) Lord David Cecil: *Poets and Story Tellers* (Constable London), p. 99.

15) R. W. Chapman: op. cit., p. 99.

16) Loc. cit.

17) Lord David Cecil: op. cit., p. 101.

18) Jane Austen's Letters, p. 443.

19) Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice* (London: Martin Secker Number five John Street Adelphi), p. 62.

20) J. E. Austen-Leigh: op. cit., pp. 1-2.

feelings revealed in her novels. But, seeing things in the wider perspective, can it be said that the security of her spirit comes from the eighteenth century tradition?

Jane Austen (1775-1850) was nearly contemporary with romantics—Wordsworth (1770-1850), Coleridge (1772-1834), Scott (1771-1832), Byron (1788-1824), Shelley (1792-1822), Keats (1795-1821) and so on. Then, it has been often said in the world that *against* them stood only Jane Austen, the novelist of realism. But, that Jane Austen kept to her own realistic style and went on in her own way of realism, I think, was not against romantics nor against Romantic Revival at that time. It is also evident from the fact that Romantic Revival was not a 'movement' and romantics did not acknowledge themselves to be romantics, however it is a denied fact that effectively they fall under one category of romantics. The rebellion against 'romantics' could not arise under these circumstances; particularly in the case of Jane Austen, such a rebellion could not happen. First of all, Jane Austen was 'some mute and inglorious Jane Austen'<sup>21)</sup> all the time. She 'lived in entire seclusion from the literary world: neither by correspondence, nor by personal intercourse was she known to any contemporary authors'.<sup>22)</sup> Even her fame, which is the most secure of all English novelists, is established after her death. Therefore, the thought of confrontation between Jane Austen and Romantic Revival seems to be meaningless.

It is Gothic Romance, or The Novel of Terror like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, against which Jane Austen consciously demonstrated. Breaking her usual Shakespearean impersonality, she talks of it in *Northanger Abbey* which is generally noticed as an epilogue to the 'novel of terror':

Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the midland counties of England, was to be looked for... Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters. There, such as were not as spotless as an angel, might have the dispositions of a fiend. But in England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad.<sup>23)</sup>

Then, where did she, who despised The Novel of Terror, seek for her own position? It was in the realistic novels of Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) and Henry Fielding (1707-1754), and in the spirit of the age, the eighteenth century civilization which liked the actuality. In fact, Jane Austen's humour was 'hard, eighteenth-century humour',<sup>24)</sup> Jane Austen herself was 'the daughter of an eighteenth-century parsonage'.<sup>25)</sup> Though Andrew H. Wright says that 'she is too little a writer of the nineteenth century to

21) Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One's Own* (The Hogarth Press), p. 74.

22) J. E. Austen-Leigh: *op. cit.*, p. 115.

23) Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey*, pp. 207-208.

24) Robert Liddell: *A Treatise of the Novel* (Jonathan Cape Thirty Bedford Square London), p. 47.

25) *Loc. cit.*

be called Romantic, too much a person of her time to be called Classic',<sup>26)</sup> ultimately the eighteenth century cosmology was not lost in her world.

Then, what was the eighteenth century attitude towards cosmos, and towards man? The eighteenth century was the age of classic which valued highly order and law. It had nothing to do with 'infinity' or 'possibility'; it was completely reigned by 'the consciousness of being' or 'the consciousness of limitation'. And, there, the cosmos was thought to be the great machine swayed by law and that ruler was the reasonable great artificer and the ordainer of order. And what fundamentally maintained this cosmology, it has been generally admitted, was the thought of 'The Chain of Being' which was composed of God, Man, and Nature, and which was accepted by the European world from the medieval times. If this hierarchic gradation of cosmos was admitted, the gradation of man was naturally admitted too. And the individual became 'a very finite and fixed creature'.<sup>27)</sup> The duty of the individual was confined to fulfil his own 'finite and fixed' function in his society. Therefore, he set great value on good sense, elegance, and good manners. Artist, also, could not be a creator who sought for 'the infinite nothing',<sup>28)</sup> but a craftsman or artificer who only made beauty in his society. At that time, the function of creator—to gasp for the meaning of community itself, the meaning of human being itself through creation, just as romantics—was judged to be *pride*. Pope's words that 'whatever is, is right'<sup>29)</sup> were received in the eighteenth century society with a very optimistic attitude.

Having regard to these backgrounds of the age, if we once more read Jane Austen's words that 'I must keep to my own style and go on in own way',<sup>30)</sup> we may understand the meaning that she admitted and even loved her very limited small world in which she lived, without any discontent; and the meaning that, notwithstanding that she lived during the full tide of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the War of American Independence, even the most distant references to any of these can never be found in her novels. Though Virginia Woolf writes that 'it was the nature of Jane Austen not to want what she, had not'<sup>31)</sup>, she, I imagine, had no need to want what she had not, in the eighteenth century tradition in which she was deeply soaked. The spirit of the age in the eighteenth century did not furnish her with any attitude of heart and mind to long for regions which she 'had heard of but never seen'<sup>32)</sup>, like Jane Eyre. The exquisite harmony of her world was built on the security originated in the 'consciousness of limitation'; the most wonderful 'unity' of her writings was accomplished by her very conscious self-limitation. She, in fact, was, speaking by the words of Lord David Cecil, 'the last exquisite blossom' of the eighteenth century civilization. Also, Virginia Woolf says thus:

26) Andrew H. Wright: *Jane Austen's Novels* (Chatto and Windus London, 1954), p. 1.

27) T. E. Hulme: *op. cit.*, p. 117.

28) *Ibid.*, p. 120.

29) A. Pope: *Essay on Man*. I 294.

30) Jane Austen's *Letters*, p. 453.

31) Virginia Woolf: *op. cit.*, p. 102.

32) Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre* (The World's Classics), p. 127.

Here was a woman about the year 1800 writing without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching. That was how Shakespeare wrote, ...; and when people compare Shakespeare and Jane Austen, they may mean that the minds of both had consumed all impediments.<sup>33)</sup>

Thus Jane Austen could become one of the greatest women novelists whose 'integrity of a woman novelist'<sup>34)</sup> was not interfered with the fact that she was a woman—which Virginia Woolf has thought to be a dangerous situation for the authoress, saying:

Would the fact of her sex in any way interfere with the integrity of a woman novelist—that integrity which I take to be the backbone of the writer?<sup>35)</sup>

Next, I will attempt to see what Jane Austen's world is, through her novels.

### III. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NOVELS

#### 1. Human Relationships

In the first place, Lord David Cecil writes,

All her stories turn on personal relationships, between friends, between parents and children, between men and women in love—and they turn on nothing else at all.<sup>36)</sup>

Even without his guiding, we may be able to find easily through her six novels that she regards human being not as a very lonesome single individual but as a very sociable creature who always lives in the interrelationships between people. Jane Austen is an authoress who never tries to talk about the infinite nothing; she only lives in the *present*, in the actual reality just seeking to 'promote the happiness of all who came within her influence'.<sup>37)</sup> And, in some sense, these attitudes of Jane Austen immediately connect with the solidarity; so, there, people never tend to be gloomy or to be oppressed by dejection because they are cast away from the community. People of her novels, as well as their authoress, live within the community and within the human relationships. Therefore, too, in the world written by Jane Austen, there is no scene in which a person is thinking or suffering by himself. For instance, Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*. She has the most affectionate sensibility and the most undisciplined passion—and for this reason she has been thought to be almost an exception to Jane Austen's heroines. She ardently loves Willoughby, but in the course of time she knows that Willoughby is engaged to someone else. Then, for the tearing grief, she becomes

33) Virginia Woolf: op. cit., pp. 101-102.

34) Ibid., pp. 109-110.

35) Loc. cit.

36) Lord David Cecil: op. cit., p. 101.

37) J. E. Austen-Leigh: op. cit., p. 175.

ill and one night she cries out: "Is mama coming?"<sup>38)</sup> In this passage Marianne comes back from such a sweetheart as Juliet to an ordinary daughter of mother. Thus, in the depth of her grief, too, she is not by herself; she is not alone in her suffering. And the authoress closes the story as follows:

Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another!—and *that* other, a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event of a former attachment, —whom, two years before, she had considered too old to be married, —and who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat!<sup>39)</sup>

For another example, Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. She is the most lively and playful girl of all Jane Austen's heroines. When she recognized herself that her aversion towards Darcy was only her prejudice, she cried:

"How despicably have I acted. I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable distrust. How humiliating is this discovery! yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself."<sup>40)</sup>

But this remorse does not last long; all the train of events is most logically adjusted to ensure the better acquaintance of Elizabeth and Darcy and the story ends in their happy marriage: and she writes to her aunt,

I am the happiest creature in the world. Perhaps other people have said so before, but no one with such justice. I am happier even than Jane; she only smiles, I laugh.<sup>41)</sup>

For one more instance, Emma Woodhouse in *Emma*, who has been so hopefully misunderstanding people's hearts. She is suffering for it thus:

She saw that there never had been a time when she did not consider Mr. Knightley

38) Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 334.

39) *Ibid.*, p. 410.

40) Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 229.

41) *Ibid.*, p. 423.

as infinitely the superior, or when his regard for her had not been infinitely the most dear. She saw, that in persuading herself, in fancying, in acting to the contrary, she had been entirely under a delusion, totally ignorant of her own heart — and, in short, that she had never really cared for Frank Churchill at all!<sup>42</sup>

But; in her case, too, Emma's business is to be happy and to marry Mr. Knightley happily.

As these, Jane Austen's novels, without even an exception, have happy-endings. So, it can never occur in her world that the heroine is cast away from the community to the *depth of dejection by herself for a long time*. And Jane Austen concentrates her plots exclusively on the growth — the *rational* growth of mind and heart of the heroine, as we hear Harriet's sayings to Emma, "You may see how rational I am grown."<sup>43</sup> And this means that all the heroines of Jane Austen have the inclination to come back to her community if they could often commit an error or go stray from the path of duty; in other words, the inclination to adapt themselves to the social convention, to harmonize themselves to the environment. These tendencies necessarily turn into the attitude to esteem the moral-realistic view. The result of all this is that, speaking by the words of A. C. Bradley, Jane Austen is 'a moralist and a humorist'.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Jane Austen becomes a completely worldly novelist who never tried to resist against common sense and common daily experiences. Therefore, her mercenary view of love and marriage stated by Lord David Cecil that 'it was wrong to marry for money, but it was silly to marry without it',<sup>45</sup> must be admitted with reference to the social background of her time. All she wrote is, in fact, interrelationships between characters who think much of conventionalities and custom. Then, in the next place, I will see what kinds of people enter the stage of her books.

Again, here, J. S. Clarke thus writes to Miss Austen:

And I also dear Madam wished to be allowed to ask you, to delineate in some future Work the Habits of Life and Character and enthusiasm of a Clergyman — who should pass his time between the metropolis and the Country.<sup>46</sup>

And Jane Austen refuses his recommendation saying:

Such a man's conversation must at times be on subjects of science and philosophy, of which I know nothing; or at least be occasionally abundant in quotations and allusions which a woman who, like me, knows only her own mother tongue, and has read very little in that, would be totally without the power of giving... I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity, the most unlearned

42) Jane Austen: Emma, p. 463.

43) Ibid., p. 377.

44) A.C. Bradley in Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, vol. II, p. 14.

45) R. W. Chapman: op. cit., p. 191.

46) Jane Austen's Letters, p. 430.

and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress.<sup>47)</sup>

As we know from the letter, Jane Austen's set of characters is very consciously limited, as W. H. Helm says:

The virtuous heroine, the handsome hero, the frivolous coquette, the fascinating libertine, the worldly priest, are to be encountered in her pages, but the wicked nobleman and the criminal adventuress find no places there.<sup>48)</sup>

Moreover, as far as men, the sex unknown to the authoress forever, are concerned, they only play a definitely secondary role, having intercourse with women. Accordingly, as Andrew H. Wright puts it:

... it is through her heroines that she gives exposition to the themes. The men (except Fitzwilliam Darcy, and perhaps Henry Tilney), by complement or contrast, serve, thematically, to deepen and broaden the portraits of the heroines.<sup>49)</sup>

So, in the first place, I will attempt to analyse the heroines.

## 2. Heroines

### i. Personal Appearance

All the heroines of Jane Austen are adorned with such adjectives as good-looking, handsome, clever, charming, pretty, intelligent, virtuous, rich, beautiful and so on. Even if the maiden is 'not handsome enough to tempt'<sup>50)</sup> fastidious Mr. Darcy, she is 'tolerable';<sup>51)</sup> and this is the limit about the personal appearance of Jane Austen's heroines. And, in the social fabric at that time, it, I fancy, was the condition inevitably necessary for heroines to carry out their mission without any difficulties. In the society where woman had no job and her sole purpose was to happily marry, woman was nothing else but entirely a *wife*, while man was a soul, a citizen, a producer, before a husband. And these facts have entered the consciousness of women becoming the undercurrents of their minds and hearts for a long time, as even Virginia Woolf, the writer of the twentieth century, writes in *Mrs. Dalloway*,

... this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway.<sup>52)</sup>

Thus, a sole dream admitted to women in these social conventions was to believe the Cinderella story that poor oppressed girl marries powerful prince and becomes happy. In

47) *Ibid.*, p. 443.

48) W. H. Helm: *op. cit.*, p. 15.

49) Andrew H. Wright: *op. cit.*, p. 84.

50) Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 10-11.

51) *Ibid.*, p. 10.

52) Virginia Woolf: *Mrs. Dalloway* (Tokyo Kenkyusha), p. 12.

fact, most young maidens dream to marry such powerful princes who bring good fortune to them. To dream, in a sense, seems to be all for women's life, because their positions are confined to the passive, the negative existence—women in general have no positive means for their own livelihood. Then, it will be necessary to have probability of the realization of their dream, that they, at least, have the external attractions—pretty faces, or handsome persons. "Jane Austen," writes G.E. Mitton, "dose not make her ideal marriage a mere cementing of friendship, she recognises that to be perfect it must have that element of personal attraction which, to fastidious minds, alone makes marriage possible."<sup>53</sup> Though Jane Austen admits that the personal appearance, of course, must have the personality behind it and the real love must be built upon the mutual acknowledgement of personalities, she, unconsciously, before it, believes that real love may begin by the external attraction. It, I think, is a limit of the human relation at her time. We must wait for that an ugly, plain girl would suppose to be an heroine, till George Eliot, or Charlotte Brontë.

## ii. Personality

We have seen the limit about the personal appearance of Jane Austen's heroines. Next, the personality itself or her heroines.

Speaking of the personality of her heroines in one word, it becomes to be 'tenderness'. As Dr. Chapman says:

If we are to make Jane Austen's achievement credible, we must not hesitate to allow her largeness of soul. To think of her as a hard and narrow spinster is to fashion a chimera.<sup>54</sup>

But, without awaiting his guidance, if we are to think of her wit and humour filled up in her novels, we must admit the largeness of her soul. Jane Austen's humour comes from her wealth of sympathy that 'is not reserved for the prime objects of her affection, but is liberally extended to the objects of her ridicule'.<sup>55</sup> And when her wealth of sympathy is incarnated to her heroines, it becomes the 'tenderness of heart'. The authoress makes Emma exclaim:

"There is no charm equal to tenderness of heart. There is nothing to be compared to it. Warmth and tenderness of heart, with an affectionate, open manner, will beat all the clearness of head in the world, for attraction: I am sure it will. It is tenderness of heart which makes my dear father so generally beloved—which gives Isabella all her popularity. I have it not; but I know how to prize and respect it."<sup>56</sup>

And Anne Elliot, the heroine of *Persuasion*, about whom Jane Austen wrote

53) G. E. Mitton: *Jane Austen and her Times* (Methuen and Co.), p. 137.

54) R. W. Chapman: *op. cit.*, p. 101.

55) *Ibid.*, p. 102.

56) Jane Austen: *Emma*, p. 298.

to Fanny Knight that 'she (Anne) is almost too good for me',<sup>57)</sup> is 'tenderness itself'<sup>58)</sup>, And this 'tenderness of heart' is the key-note of the love-affairs written by Jane Austen. The love-affair swayed by tenderness dose not burn up abruptly at a time, as the love-affair swayed by fiery passion. It slowly grows by and by, almost unconsciously. Jane Austen's men and women never fall in love with each other by accidental association or the violent love. As G. E. Mitton says, they 'get to know each other thoroughly by constant intercourse, until the faults and virtues, the defects and abilities, are clear and plain'.<sup>59)</sup> And in the softest and most tender of her books, *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot, the heroine, gives her views on women's affection and tenderness, in a discussion with Captain Harvill, thus—

"Your (men's) feelings may be the stronger," replied Anne, "but the same spirit of analogy will authorize me to assert that ours are the most tender. Man is more robust than worman, but he is not longer lived; which exactly explains my view of the nature of their attachments."<sup>60)</sup>

Moreover:

"... All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one: you need not covet it), is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone!"<sup>61)</sup>

Thus, Jane Austen's heroines are not 'ugly but tender' but 'pretty and tender'. As a matter of course, her heros are not 'poor but honest' but 'rich and honest', just as Mrs. Jennings considered, "It would be an excellent match, for *he* was rich and *she* was handsome."<sup>62)</sup> This was entirely the right opinion in her society.

According to the secondary persons, too, the hateful, or the odious exists nowhere in her pages. After all, Mr. Collins who makes a ridiculous speech of his classic proposal towards Elizabeth, and Mrs. Bennet who has nothing to do but to marry all her five daughters—all these are more or less good natured people. Even vicious Mr. Wickham is only a plotter who contrives to remain in respectable society. We may find, here, too, that Jane Austen never stretches the bounds of her own:

Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and have done with all the rest.<sup>63)</sup>

After all, Jane Austen seems to be always working in the field of her choice, with her

57) Jane Austen's Letters, p. 487.

58) Jane Austen's Letters, p. 487.

59) G. E. Mitton: op. cit., p. 145.

60) Jane Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 260.

61) *Ibid.*, p. 263.

62) Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 38.

63) Jane Austen: *Mansfield Park*, p. 521.

conviction and serenity.

Thus, the thing impressed upon our minds by reading her, I imagine, is happiness. Just as Charlotte Brontë thinks that 'the passions are perfectly unknown to her',<sup>64</sup> so might not have Jane Austen a fiery passion. But she had the excellent, unaltered humour filled up with good-will towards human being; she had the calmer affection, and the spirit that could be animated by the trivial, small matters of everyday experience. And this, also, is the reason why we can fall back for refreshment on her. "It is," writes G. E. Mitton, "an endless puzzle why, when her books so faithfully represent the society and manners of a time so unlike our own, they seem so natural to us."<sup>65</sup> Mr. Woodhouse Emma's father says: "I hope everybody had a pleasant evening." After all, this want, I think, was the ultimate want of the authoress Jane Austen.

Next, I will get nearer to her world, analysing the most accomplished of her novels, *Emma*.

#### IV. "EMMA"

If we notice the first sentence of *Emma*, speaking of Emma, Jane Austen writes:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.<sup>66</sup>

After this introduction of Emma the heroine, the authoress gradually illustrates the interrelationships between characters: that is to say—a most affectionate, indulgent father of Emma, gentle Mr. Woodhouse; a governess and a friend of Emma, Miss Taylor; Mr. Weston who lately married Miss Taylor; Emma's only sister Isabella; her husband Mr. John Knightley; his elder brother Mr. George Knightley; Mrs. Bates and her daughter Miss Bates; Mr. Elton, a vicar of Highbury; Harriet Smith, Emma's friend; Mr. Frank Churchill, the son of Mr. Weston etc. And these characters, who behave, react, and interact normally, spin the plot.

In the first place, the story begins with a description of Emma who, encouraged by her making match herself between Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor, is planning the matchmaking for other people, saying; "It is the greatest amusement in the world."<sup>67</sup> In fact, she starts to look for a bride for Mr. Elton a young clergyman, notwithstanding that Mr. Woodhouse who hates change in anything implores to her not to make any more matches. And the first person who comes to Emma's mind is Harriet Smith. Harriet—

64) Clement Shorter: *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle* (London Hodder and Stoughton 27 Paternoster Row 1896), p. 399.

65) G. E. Mitton: *op. cit.*, p. 3.

66) Jane Austen: *Emma* (London: Martin Secker), p. 1.

67) *Ibid.*, p. 9.

certainly was not clever, but she had a sweet, docile, grateful disposition, was totally free from conceit, and only desiring to be guided by any one she looked up to.<sup>68)</sup>

So, it is the habit of Harriet that she, who looks up to Emma, comes to her desiring to be guided by her in anything. Then, when she received a letter from Mr. Robert Martin, a young farmer at Abbey-Mill, to herself, contained a direct proposal of marriage, naturally she wants to get Emma's advice about it. At this moment, Emma, who is already the victim of her own illusions, makes Harriet refuse Mr. Martin and inspires the thought of Mrs. Elton into her mind. And Emma plumes herself on her planning, thinking: "it would be an excellent match."<sup>69)</sup>

On the other hand, about herself, Emma always asserts as follows:

"... And I am not only not going to be married at present, but have very little intention of ever marrying at all."<sup>70)</sup>

And, when Harriet cares about her, saying that she 'will be an old maid', she answers:<sup>71)</sup>

"Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman with a very narrow income must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid! the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman of good fortune is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else!"<sup>72)</sup>

Moreover, Harriet inquires: "Dear me! but what shall you do? How shall you employ yourself when you grow old?"<sup>73)</sup> Then:

"If I know myself, Harriet, mine is an active, busy mind, with a great many independent resources; and I do not perceive why I should be more in want of employment at forty or fifty than one-and-twenty. Woman's usual occupations of eye, and hand, and mind, will be as open to me then as they are now, or with no important variation. If I draw less, I shall read more; if I give up music, I shall take to carpet-work. And as for objects of interest, objects for the affections, which is, in truth, the great point of inferiority, the want of which is really the great evil to be avoided in *not* marrying, I shall be very well off, with all the children of a sister I love so much to care about."<sup>74)</sup>

This saying, exactly, seems to be a bold celibatarian's. But it cannot be an assertion of

68) Ibid., pp. 24-25.

69) Ibid., p. 34.

70) Ibid., pp. 92-93.

71) Ibid., p. 94.

72) Loc. cit.

73) Loc. cit.

74) Ibid., pp. 94-95.

emancipation, because it does not connect itself with any way of the independent livelihood; after all, it is only a simple talking of a self-indulgent girl whose situation gives to her 'the power of having rather too much her own way'.<sup>75)</sup> As a positive proof of it, Emma marries Mr. Knightley happily before the end of the last chapter.

To get back to the story: Emma, at any rate, is enjoying the matchmaking, fancying that Mr. Elton 'is an excellent young man, and will suit Harriet exactly'.<sup>76)</sup> But, in the course of time, it becomes evident that the lady to whom Mr. Elton is attached is not Harriet but Emma herself. Harriet only exists for him as Emma's friend. And Emma, through this first great mistake, has learned:

The first error, and the worst, lay at her door. It was foolish, it was wrong, to take so active a part in bringing any two people together. It was adventuring too far, assuming too much, making light of what ought to be serious—a trick of what ought to be simple. She was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more.<sup>77)</sup>

But:

To youth and natural cheerfulness like Emma's, though under temporary gloom at night, the return of day will hardly fail to bring return of spirits. The youth and cheerfulness of morning are in happy analogy, and of powerful operation; and if the distress be not poignant enough to keep the eyes unclosed, they will be sure to open to sensations of softened pain and brighter hope.

Emma got up on the morrow more disposed for comfort than she had gone to bed; more ready to see alleviations of evil before her, and to depend on getting tolerably out of it.<sup>78)</sup>

And Emma, being more careful and more clever, starts again to the second mistake, for 'though progress has been made in the direction of self-knowledge, Emma is certainly not yet sufficiently self-aware'.<sup>79)</sup>

Owing to the appearance of Mr. Frank Churchill, the next series of events occur. One day, Mr. Weston and his son Frank Churchill visit Mr. Woodhouse. Then, Emma sees, actually before her, Frank Churchill himself so long talked of and so high in interest, and at that moment she has a good opinion of him, thinking:

He was a very good-looking young man—height, air, address, all were unexceptionable, and his countenance had a great deal of the spirit and liveliness of his father's—he looked quick and sensible. She felt immediately that she should like

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75) *Ibid.*, p. 2.

76) *Ibid.*, p. 51.

77) *Ibid.*, p. 152.

78) *Ibid.*, p. 153.

79) Andrew H. Wright: *op. cit.*, p. 143.

him.<sup>80)</sup>

And, when he left Highbury to Enscombe, the Yorkshire home of his foster-parents, being recalled by his aunt Mrs. Churchill for her illness, Emma

felt so sorry to part, and foresaw so great a loss to their little society from his absence as to begin to be afraid of being too sorry, and feeling it too much.<sup>81)</sup>

And 'her inexperience at personal implication causes her to believe, though only briefly, that she is in love in with Frank Churchill';<sup>82)</sup> and says:

"This sensation of listlessness, weariness, stupidity this disinclination to sit down and employ myself, this feeling of everything's being dull and inspid about the house!—I must be in love."<sup>83)</sup>

But, of course, in the course of time, she begins to doubt her feelings:

"... I do suspect that he is not really necessary to my happiness. So much the better. I certainly will not persuade myself to feel more than I do. I am quite enough in love. I should be sorry to be more."<sup>84)</sup>

And she determines:

"He is undoubtedly very much in love—everything denotes it—very much in love indeed!—and when he comes again, if his affection continue, I must be on my guard not to encourage it."<sup>85)</sup>

Next, Emma, who still means to find Harriet a husband, fancies, in her own view, Frank Churchill will suit Harriet. One morning, Harriet came to Emma telling her feelings towards a person so superior to Mr. Elton, saying:

"Oh, Miss Woodhouse, believe me, I have not the presumption to suppose—indeed I am not so mad. But it is a pleasure to me to admire him at a distance, and to think of his infinite superiority to all the rest of the world, with the gratitude, wonder, and veneration which are so proper, in me especially."<sup>86)</sup>

At this moment, Emma hastily concludes that the superior person must be Frank Churchill. But, soon, it is known that Frank Churchill has been long engaged to Miss Fairfax. Pondering Harriet who is a second time the dupe of her misconceptions and

80) Jane Austen: op. cit., p. 209.

81) Ibid., p. 291.

82) Andrew H. Wright: op. cit., p. 137.

83) Jane Austen: op. cit., p. 291.

84) Ibid., p. 293.

85) Loc. cit.

86) Ibid., p. 381.

flattery, Emma becomes gloomy. But the chock more wondering comes; that is, Emma finds the superior person with whom Harriet is in love is not Frank Churchill but Mr. Knightley. And, at the same time, Emma suddenly understands 'her own heart'<sup>87)</sup> —

... she touched, she admitted, she acknowledged the whole truth. Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet's having some hope of a return? It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!<sup>88)</sup>

The book, however, ends happily, as happily as anyone could wish: Harriet marries Mr. Robert Martine, Emma Mr. Knightley. It is truly 'the perfect happiness of the union'.<sup>89)</sup>

Thus, *Emma*, on the one hand, is the story of 'the exorcism of her pride of power together with the growing realization that she must become tangled in the skein of relationships in which she finds herself',<sup>90)</sup> the story of a self-indulgent girl Emma, who always declares she will never marry which, however, means just nothing at all. Her ends are strictly confined to coming back to the community and conventionalities, to coming back to the right feminine happiness of marriage.

But, on the other hand, another important theme in *Emma* is the love relationship between Emma and Mr. Knightley developing with the course of the story forestallingly. At the beginning of the story, Emma imagines not only that she will never marry, but also that he (Mr. Knightley) cannot marry. And, when Mrs. Weston is going to make a match between Mr. Knightley and Jane Fairfax. Emma opposes it, in earnest, saying:

"But Mr. Knightley does not want to marry. I am sure he has not the least idea of it. Do not put it into his head. Why should he marry? He is as happy as possible by himself; with his farm, and his sheep, and his library, and all the parish to manage; and he is extremely fond of his brother's children. He has no occasion to marry, either to fill up his time or his heart."<sup>91)</sup>

And, hearing that Harriet confesses to her that she is in love with Mr. Knightley, Emma also feels that 'Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself (Emma)'.<sup>92)</sup>

Thus, we know that unconsciousness plays in this love relationship between Mr. Knightley and Emma: in fact, these two gradually become intimate, almost unconsciously. And the stream of the unconsciousness is expressly found in their dialogues — just as S. T. Warner says that, above all, *Emma* 'excels in

87) Ibid., p. 458.

88) Loc. cit.

89) Ibid., p. 545.

90) Andrew H. Wright: op. cit., p. 137.

91) Jane Austen: op. cit., p. 249.

92) Ibid., p. 458.

dialogue'.<sup>93</sup> For example: in the 18th chapter, the conversation between Mr. Knightley and Emma about Frank Churchill, Emma's amiable young man, reveals some feelings unexpressed; that is, through Mr. Knightley's ill opinion about Frank Churchill that 'he can have no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people—nothing really amiable about him',<sup>94</sup> it becomes plain that Mr. Knightley has been for a long time deeply in love with Emma. Moreover, in the 49th chapter, the management of the dialogue to reveal the unsaid between Emma and her indifferent lover Mr. Knightley—through this dialogue, by the time they have done, it is plain that, now, they are not only very intimate friends but lovers, and that Emma is 'his own Emma'<sup>95</sup>—is excellent.

And the important thing is that her excellent management of dialogue to reveal the undercurrents of mind and heart is itself the effect of her unconscious adaptation to custom and conventionalities. Just as Jane Austen's life 'had been passed in the performance of home duties, and the cultivation of domestic affections, without any self-seeking or craving after applause',<sup>96</sup> so, speaking generally, women's occupations had been confined to the manage of house; and their attitude towards the external world was strictly limited to the negative, passive attitude, because women were not productive nor creative in their daily occupations. So, on the other hand, the achievement of women in the outward world was considered to be unladylike; necessarily, 'publicity in women is detestable'<sup>97</sup> and 'no woman of sense and modesty could write books';<sup>98</sup> 'a blue-stocking with an itch for scribbling'<sup>99</sup> was the focus of hostility of the world. And:

The world did not say to her as it said to them (men), Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing?<sup>100</sup>

After all, the common idea of the world was:

Cats do not go to heaven. Women cannot write the plays of Shakespeare.<sup>101</sup>

But, of course, Jane Austen does not attempt to revolt against the social convention, here, too; just as J. E. Austen-Leigh writes:

She was careful that her occupation should not be suspected by servants, or visitors, or any persons beyond her own family party. She wrote upon small sheets of paper which could easily be put away, or covered with a piece of blott-

93) S. T. Warner: *Jane Austen* (The British Council and the National Book League), p. 23.

94) Jane Austen: *op. cit.*, p. 167.

95) *Ibid.*, p. 486.

96) J. E. Austen-Leigh: *op. cit.*, p. 175.

97) Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One's Own*, p. 76.

98) *Ibid.*, p. 93.

99) *Ibid.*, p. 91.

100) *Ibid.*, p. 79.

101) *Ibid.*, p. 70.

ing paper.<sup>102)</sup>

Thus, she is constantly keeping herself aloof from such a deed as resistance or rebellion, and by acting so, averting the danger to lose negatively her energy which she should use in her writings, she can succeed in accomplishing 'the integrity of a woman novelist'.<sup>103)</sup>

But, on the other hand, it is an undeniable fact that these circumstances have given women the anonymity and 'the desire to be veiled'.<sup>104)</sup> As the result of it, women's expression of will, or of intentions, has become euphemistic; their sensibility too delicate: the impulse to be veiled, thus, brings up so-called women's techniques to reveal themselves only through their delicate diction and their gestures of significance. And Jane Austen's method of work, particularly the management of dialogue to reveal the unsaid, I think, is brought to her by these circumstances. So, if her heroines, who unconsciously hold these women's techniques which are necessarily important to adapt to their existence all passive in the society, seem to us to be lamentable and almost crippled, I imagine, must be admitted as the corresponding phenomenon to the age. That is, in her days, to assume such an attitude towards life as her heroines' was the most natural way to live within her society; after all, it was easily possible without any obstacles.

## V. CONCLUSION

Then, summing up about Jane Austen, her matters of novels are 'Three or four Families in a Country Village';<sup>105)</sup> her subject is a courtship; her set of characters is limited to 'a country neighbourhood'.<sup>106)</sup> And Jane Austen always says in this 'very confined and unvarying society',<sup>107)</sup>

"But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever."<sup>108)</sup>

Thus, keeping to her own style, she went through life in her own way. And Virginia Woolf writes about these facts as follows:

Her gift and her circumstances matched each other completely.<sup>109)</sup>

Having regard to these facts, we may see that we must not read Jane Austen's novels for the strict image of man whom, for instance, the romantics gasped for. Just as T. E. Hulme says that 'for every kind of verse, there is a corresponding receptive

102) J. E. Austen-Leigh: op. cit., p. 102.

103) Virginia Woolf: op. cit., pp. 109-110.

104) Ibid., p. 76.

105) Jane Austen's Letters, p. 401.

106) Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 45.

107) Loc. cit.

108) Loc. cit.

109) Virginia Woolf: op. cit., p. 102.

attitude',<sup>110</sup> so should we assume the critical attitude of mind, strictly focusing our eyes on the proper view of the author; otherwise, we are only capriciously seeking after writers or poets congenial to our own tastes and preference; it can never be the criticism.

Thus, it, I imagine, can be said that, in spite of all her limitations, Jane Austen is one of the greatest novelists, because, how limited her subject might be, she succeeded in expressing what she had in her heart and mind. Her writings have come to grief nowhere; and always appear 'whole and entire'.<sup>111</sup>

And at the end of this chapter, I will attempt to think of Jane Austen in the view of modernity. In the first place, we have difficulty in making precise the sense of modernity. What have we meant by modernity?

The twentieth century is generally thought to be the age in which the individual has been extinguished. The individual, in the modern socialistic method of organising production, is barely living as a part of the mechanism. So, the significance of the individual does not lie in his originality nor his genius; on the contrary, it is necessary to him that he becomes an obscure, or a nameless part in the social fabric. Thus, our human dignity is lost again. And, so far as these facts are concerned, the individual is cast away from his society. The individual, however, is always unconsciously seeking after that his 'raison d'être' is justified at the bar of current opinion, because he has already brought up, in him, the instinct as the social being. But, inevitably, he must be living in the twentieth century which is denying such an instinctive desire of man. Thus, at the present time, the individual is left alone in anxiety.

Then, corresponding to 'the Age of Anxiety', what kind of art is produced?

In the first place, it may be said that, if the consciousness of the aesthetic feeling, as it has been generally admitted, only exists for the objectified ego, beauty cannot deliver us, here and now, from the modern anguish. Indeed, it has been meaningless in a period of peculiar anxiety, that we are objectified. Accordingly, it has become also out of date and irrelevant in these days, that one tries to create something artistic by standing back and looking at the objects to express. To observe, or to abstract may be, now, indeed, a way of evading the true gasp of problems. To create modern art, we must descend into the vast and slumbering passions in human nature—as it were, the most primitive part of ourselves. It is, indeed, only a certain part found in anxiety. But it also is the part which can never be caught by human consciousness, for it is yet unknown to our consciousness: it may be called the mind of sleep and the subconscious. Then, to descend into the unknown part, we must take the unknown way too. It means in a sense a death and the infinite nothing. Therefore it is a matter of course that certain modern writers use the 'stream-of-thought' technique. And necessarily, it can be said that: "Subject doesn't matter";<sup>112</sup> or It doesn't matter if it were a lady's shoe or the

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110) T. H. Hulme: op. cit., p. 126.

111) Virginia Woolf: op. cit., p. 109.

112) T. H. Hulme: op. cit., p. 137.

starry heavens."<sup>113</sup> The most important problem is simply whether it appeals in a troubled time to our troubled hearts. "Is there," asks T. E. Hulme, "any real zest in it? Did the poet have an actually realised visual object before him in which he delighted?" He thought this one fact decides everything.

Outwardly these phenomenons are seen to be the estimation of rather form than matter. So, as T. E. Hulme writes, it will be said that 'a classical revival is coming.'<sup>114</sup> And, there, the eighteen century poetry denied by romantic poets of the nineteenth century is revalued and we may find in it something superficial in a good sense just as T. S. Eliot denotes.

Now, having regard to these modern tendencies, the revaluation of Jane Austen, I think, must be done; though her subjects are limited to the most trivial commonplace things, her management of them is exceedingly modern; her attitude towards objects seems to me to be in common with the particular verse we are going to get prophesied by T. E. Hulme— "Cheerful, dry and sophisticated."<sup>115</sup>

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113) Loc. cit.

114) Ibid., p. 113.

115) Ibid., p. 139.