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Jane Austen's way to conformity

Cesta Jane Austenové ke konformismu

(bakalářská práce)

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V Olomouci dne

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1. INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen was without doubt one of the most important authors of the history of British literature. Even though she is dead for almost two hundred years she still arouses reactions. This to a certain extent proves that her writings still have appeal to a contemporary reader.

In my thesis I would like to explore the similarities and differences between Jane Austen's juvenilia and late works. These two are in a stark contrast and I believe that when compared by a ordinary reader unfamiliar with Jane Austen, he might think that he is reading two different authors. The humor and satire is something fundamental in her juvenilia while in her late works it sometimes has to be looked for. I am going to focus on the stories *The Three Sisters* and *Love and Freindship* from her first works and her last novel *Persuasion* together with unfinished *Sanditon*.

Admittedly, it is often implied that Jane Austen's novels are basically still about the same, Austen is often pictured just as the author of romantic novels. However, an attentive eye has to notice that her novels are not only romantic but sharply satiric. I believe that if we have a closer look at her works, a certain development can be found. Both the satire and the romantic element are undergoing certain evolution. I believe that even if we compare her last two works, the last finished novel *Persuasion* and a fragment *Sanditon*, we will come to the conclusion that the author intended to try something different. Unfortunately, she didn't have an opportunity to

finish the novel and prove it. It is hard to say to which extent the development that we are going to discuss, was a matter of Austen's intention or if it is a reflection of her life experience.

Even in Austen's late works which are written in a more serious tone, the satiric voice of the young Austen can still be detected and this I would like to explore, features of the absurd in her novels and more conservative attributes in her juvenilia. In other words, the main goal is to find the serious in the grotesque and the grotesque in the serious, taking into account Jane Austen's own life experiences.

2. THE WORLD OF JANE AUSTEN

Although Jane Austen's brother Henry said that her life was "not by any means a life of event"¹, one can oppose him by saying that a sharp mind is able to exploit every encounter, event or experience in general. I would like to mention some of these possible influences, circumstances that may have left their traces on her work.

Jane Austen was born on December 16th, 1775 at Steventon rectory in Hampshire. She was the second youngest out of eight siblings, she had six brothers and a sister. Big families were not anything rare at these times though it must have comprised both joys and sorrows. It was very common to take children several weeks old to a foster family and leave them there until „they approached the age of reason and became socially acceptable“². To a member of the modern society of the 21st century it might sound cruel but it shows us how much social acceptability meant. The separation might have entailed certain alienation of infants and their mothers in later life. This very early experience could be one of the reasons why Jane Austen had a complicated relationship with her mother. In many of the preserved letters to her sister Cassandra, Austen mentions her mother, usually not exactly warmly. A few times she also makes

¹ Claire Tomalin. *Jane Austen: A Life*. London [u.a.: Penguin, 2000.: 4

² Tomalin 6

comments about her mother's health and possibly hints at her hypochondria. Jane Austen's father is not mentioned so much in the letters but we can suppose that he was a very busy man, doing everything he could to support his family. In Austen's works the heroine's parents are always very peculiar and one can just ponder to which extent the author used the characters of her own family.

Reverend George Austen ran a school for boys; the house was always full of his own children, his pupils and their laughter and games. Little Jane was in contact with the opposite sex, she played with them and it must have been a very lively childhood. George Austen also kept a big library and Jane definitely enjoyed reading. Apart from this, his children also experimented with performing plays. We can imagine that all this influenced a witty girl, the future author. Claire Tomalin declares that little Jane was a "tough and unsentimental child."³ It would explain why the humour in her juvenilia is so sharp. Boys and their games are different from girls', usually wilder. If Austen spent so much time with boys of various age, it could have influenced her perspective on the world around her.

All this could have given her an ability to look at the society from a different angle. Although she grew into a fine young woman, in no way rebel, one can think that her distaste for too much sentiment and the cult of sensibility originates in her childhood.

³ Tomalin 32

Moreover, when she started to participate on the social events, she gained another kind of experience. Austen was an observer who watches and absorbs various characters and situations and later wittily uses them when needed.

Jane Austen and her family moved several times. After George Austen's death in Bath in 1805, Jane with Cassandra and their mother even experienced a period of time without a home of their own. It must have been a very difficult position because they were completely dependant on the mercy of Jane's brothers.

Jane Austen never married. However, there is a discussion about several men mentioned in her letters. In the first preserved letters she mentions her flirting with Thomas Lefroy, "Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together."⁴ The description makes us wonder what kind of flirting it could have been but it was probably mild considering the contemporary society. We cannot say for sure if Jane Austen was hoping for something more than just friendship and flirting but their relationship would have been impossible anyway, Tom was expected to marry somebody wealthy. Many years later Thomas Lefroy confessed that he felt "boyish love"⁵ for her.

⁴ R.W. Chapman, ed. *Jane Austen, Selected Letters*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985. Print. 3

⁵ Tomalin 119

It is known that she was engaged to Harris Bigg-Wither for several hours only.⁶ Nowadays we cannot be sure about the reason that led Austen to accept and later refuse the proposal. They had known each other for a long time because Harris's sisters were Jane Austen's friends. She was almost twenty-seven then, Harris Bigg-Wither was several years younger and he was an heir to a large house and estate. It could have been a nice match for both of them, yet Austen changed her mind. A lack of love may have been the reason. The relationship would have been based only on friendship and I dare say it was not enough for her.

All in all, Jane Austen's life was not always easy but it was quite calm. Although she was not a rebel in her life, her works prove that she had unconventional perspective on the world around her.

⁶ See Tomalin 182

3. LETTER AS A MEANS OF FARCE

Why did Jane Austen choose this narrative form? As a matter of fact, she inherited it. Letters were a „kind of writing that had been validated as permissible for respectable woman.“⁷

We now know that she used conventional form. However, the subject matter and the language are unconventional. The letters allow Austen first person narrative, they let us into the protagonist's mind. The narration is more immediate and therefore more humoristic. In other words, epistolary form allows us to laugh more; not only at the comic situations but also at the characters themselves. The narrative in the third person would not sound ridiculously exaggerated and authentic, it would sound just awkward.

In *Love and Freindship* there is also another aspect of the humorous. According to Julia Epstein, “the humour derives not so much from the instantaneous swooning depicted [...] as from the absurdity of a retrospective account of such a narrative“⁸ As I have already mentioned, Laura tells her story years later, at the age of fifty-five. Fifty-five is the age when “[...] a woman may be said to be in safety from the Perseverance of

⁷ Julia L. Epstein, "Jane Austen's Juvenilia and the Female Epistolary Tradition." *Papers on Language & Literature* 21.4 (1985): 400

< <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=7661fe87-a9dc-413b-bf5d-9029b7ab1022%40sessionmgr11&vid=4&hid=9>>

⁸ Epstein 406

disagreeable Lovers and the cruel Persecutions of obstinate Fathers.”⁹ A reader could expect that with time Laura would come to her senses and see the whole picture but she is not capable of that. Even thirty-seven years later she is still the same and that intensifies the absurdity.

4. THE HEROINE

Concerning the characters of heroines of our selected works we have to take into consideration the genre. It is quite clear that for instance Anne Elliot had a completely different purpose in *Persuasion* than Laura in *Love and Freindship*.

Generally speaking, two main types of characters can be found throughout Austen’s works, round and flat characters. The round ones are usually the protagonists and the flat ones Austen uses as a tool for mockery. The round characters are more developed and realistic, they experience some change, progress. The flat ones do not, they are the same throughout the story and usually are characterized by one or two major qualities.

Here the novels are in contrast with Austen’s first works. It is apparent that in *Love and Freindship* and *The Three Sisters* there is no round character,

⁹ Jane Austen. *Sanditon and Other Stories*. London: David Campbell, 1996. 295

even the protagonist is only a comic figure and it is impossible to identify ourselves with her. Although at first protagonists of these two mentioned works may seem identical, I am going to expose the distinction.

4.1 Juvenilia

4.1.1 Love and Freindship

Love and Freindship was written before *The Three Sisters*. Jane Austen wrote this novel in a series of letters when she was only fourteen but it became clear that she had a great talent. The protagonist, Laura, is asked by her friend Isabel to tell a story of her life to Isabel's daughter. And a wild chain of incidents starts, the action is fast, the characters regroup and relocate all the time. The story is completely grotesque, improbable situations happen in almost every letter. The work makes a mockery of the cult of sentimental novels, for instance Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* or Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*. Their protagonists are usually faultless girls, very naive, full of sensibility longing for eternal love with a man of the same qualities.

Laura is a comic figure showing the irrationality of this behaviour. She falls in love at first sight, suffers injustice, loses her friends and finds them again, keeps fainting and running mad etc. Everything is exaggerated.

On the one hand, Laura herself is very naive and actually embodies all the stereotypes of protagonists of sentimental novels. On the other hand she has also some vices. However one cannot help thinking that she does everything because she believes that she behaves morally. The situation described in the 12th letter is an evidence. Laura and Sophia persuade a young girl named Janetta that she actually does not want to marry the man her father approves and they manipulate her into an elopement with a gold-digger. All of this out of conviction that Janneta's father cannot be right and the forbidden love is always the best.

Already in the third letter we can distinguish Laura's boasting. "But lovely as I was the Graces of my Person were the least of my Perfections. Of every accomplishment, I was Mistress.[...] In my Mind, every Virtue that could adorn it was centered;" ¹⁰ and there are many more observations about her own perfection. Austen uses these elements to increase the impact of the comic on a reader. A reader has more insight into her thoughts and realises again and again how ridiculous she and consequently the story is.

¹⁰ Austen, *Sanditon and other stories* 296

4.1.2 The Three Sisters

The plot of *The Three Sisters* is less elaborated in comparison with the other writings. The author no doubt ridiculed sentimental novels and their heroines. Mary Stanhope receives a marriage proposal and her first sentence is: "I am the happiest creature in the World, for I have received an offer of marriage from Mr. Watts."¹¹ This opening can be misleading, since it sounds very romantic, as if she was in love and hoped for such a thing. Soon after that she reveals that she does not want to accept the proposal but the reason of happiness is only a so-called triumph over somebody else. The whole story is about Mary considering the proposal, meditating over trivialities. She changes her mind repeatedly.

The Three Sisters is full of hypocrisy and I dare say, even wickedness, presented by means of mockery and irony. Here the heroine is a fool too but a fool in a different way. Her need of not being outdone is considerable. Another reason for marriage would be the money. Mary is not the only one who behaves this way, her sisters are exactly the same. Austen uses more than one point of view to intensify the absurdity of girls' behaviour. This is another difference between Mary and Laura.

¹¹ Austen, *Sanditon and other stories* 274

In a sense, *The Three Sisters* is exceptional also because it lacks any romance. In *Love and Freindship* Laura actually felt love for somebody even though it was laughed at. Mary does not feel love, she may not even be able to feel it. So what do they have in common? Still both works satirize basically the same – extremes. The relationships are warped and the heroines succumb to false morality.

The story was dedicated to new-born Jane Anna Elizabeth Austen, her brother James's eldest daughter. The inscription says, "[...] , I dedicate to You the following Miscellanious Morsels, convinced that if you seriously attend to them, You will derive from them very important Instructions, with regard to your Conduct in Life."¹² Jane Austen dedicated more of her first works to various family members but what strikes us in this particular case, is the the word "instructions". "By the end of eighteenth century, conduct books had settled on one kind of fiction as truly safe young women to read."¹³ It seems that if Austen meant to be educative she chose a strange genre. However, it is quite understandable. Having read a story like one of these, having laughed at Laura or Mary, it would be very odd if a girl behaved similarly. Austen's stories also must be more entertaing than conduct books which Austen was acquainted with. Jane Austen's intention to educate is thus another aspect a reader has to keep in mind. She

¹² Austen, *Sanditon and other stories* 288

¹³ Richard W. F Kroll, *The English Novel. Vol. 1. 1700 to Fielding*. London: Longman, 1998. 218

“teaches” in reversed way, pointing out what not to do, instead of showing the ideal behaviour.

4.2 Latter works

We have shown that most of Jane Austen’s early works have many things in common. However, when we look at the six following novels, the differences in style, topic and genre strike us. It is sometimes said that she lost her humorous self and somehow turned into a spinster writing romantic stories. The change of tone is apparent, Austen is not so playful anymore. Even when we compare her early novels, for instance *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Persuasion*, we find out that the atmosphere of the latter is darker and more serious. It is caused mostly by the heroine herself. I believe that Anne Elliot to a certain extent mirrors Jane Austen’s thoughts, feelings and maybe experience too.

4.2.1 Persuasion

Persuasion is sometimes called “drama of self-deception and self-recognition”.¹⁴ The story is very intimate and Anne Elliot is one of Austen’s most appealing heroines. From the beginning of the novel we are being

¹⁴ Emily Rohrbach, "Austen's Later Subjects." *SEL: Studies in English Literature (Johns Hopkins)* 44.4 (2004): 737-752. *Academic Search Complete*. EBSCO:738
<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/204341815/fulltextPDF?accountid=16730>>

acquainted with a quiet, passive girl who does not speak much. The reader gets to know Anne better very slowly.

The beginning of the story is to a certain extent similar to her other great novels. Elliot family have to leave Kellynch Hall because of Sir Walter's costs of living. The heroine loses her home and there is no prospect for amelioration of their financial situation. The lack of a home is a constant element, Anne moves from one place to another and she cannot do anything about it since she is dependant on other people. She was simply there where she was just needed. She stayed at Kellynch Hall, later was helping her sister Mary etc. Jane Austen had the same experience, for several years she was living in various places without asylum of her own. She unquestionably loved her brothers and their children but a woman of her genius and need for privacy, it must have been difficult.

Not only does not Anne Elliot have a home, she does not have many affectionate friends either. Lady Russel is the only person she can trust and rely on. However, even Lady Russel once dissapointed her. All the other members of her family are just caricatures. I am going to examine this topic in next chapter.

There is another aspect I would like to discuss. Unlike other Austen's heroines, Anne Elliot already found a man she loves. However, she missed an opportunity for a happy life with him; she was persuaded by her close friend Lady Russel to cancel the engagement. The story starts eight years later and we know that Anne feels sorry and to some extent blames

herself of being too easily persuaded. The sense of regret can be detected almost throughout the whole novel. It makes the reader feel sorry for the heroine. Austen describes Anne's thoughts about Frederick Wentworth and her lost chance so elaborately that it occurs to us that she may have had similar experience. "Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's, a bow, a courtsey passed; she heard his voice; [...] the room seemed full, full of persons and voices, but a few minutes ended it. [...] 'It is over! It is over!' she repeated herself again and again, in nervous gratitude. 'The worst is over!'"¹⁵ The scene is very powerful and intensive, a reader almost feels Anne's excitement.

Anne learnt to live with the disappointment. The thought that it was actually her fault, though not completely, must have made it even worse. Anne hurt Frederick; she knows it and is full of remorse.

Although the novel is full of feelings, Austen again manages to tread a thin line between telling a realistic love story and a too sentimental story.

In the beginning of the novel it is apparent that Anne Elliot lost a lot of her bloom, vigour and desire for life. She is still the same person, with modesty, taste and feeling¹⁶ but it seems as if she gave up on life. She

¹⁵ Jane Austen, *Persuasion*. London: Penguin, 1943. 48

¹⁶ See Jane Austen, *Persuasion* 23

does not dance anymore, “very much preferring the office of musician to a more active post.”¹⁷

Anne has to face a constant reminder of her almost lost youth and enthusiasm, she spends a lot of time with Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove who are “like thousands of other young ladies, living to be fashionable, happy and merry.”¹⁸ Not only can we feel a touch irony in the sentence but we are also given a nice portrayal of what a young lady should be like to have the best prospects. Jane Austen herself was surrendered by her brothers’ children; watched them grow up and marry. We cannot say whether she had any feelings of envy or not. However, she was surely aware of her youth and chances for a different life fading away.

Anne Elliot at first tries to suppress her feelings after seeing Captain Wentworth. “[...] she began to reason with herself, and try to be feeling less. Eight years, almost eight years had passed, since all had been given up. How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an interval had banished into distance and indistinctness! What might not eight years do? Events of every description, changes, alienations, removals – all, all must be comprized in it, and oblivion of the past – how natural, how certain too! ... Alas! With all her reasonings she found, that to retentive feelings eight

¹⁷ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* 39

¹⁸ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* 34

years may be little more than nothing.”¹⁹ Old wounds reopened, she cannot help thinking about a second chance.

I believe that the beginning of the novel can be considered the best part of it. It is a very realistic account of the heroines thoughts. It pictures Anne’s struggle with her disappointments and hopes. Many female readers can identify themselves with Anne Elliot because of Austen’s credible account of Anne’s train of thoughts.

During the story Anne and Frederick start talking again and they slowly rediscover their love. Austen is a mistress of events seemingly not important and talks that influence one the main characters. Frederick is being gradually reminded of Anne’s virtues and Anne starts to blossom out again.

Although it may seem that Anne is a faultless characters, she in fact is not. When Mr.Elliot proposes to her, she actually contemplates accepting him. The reason of such an action is quite understandable, she would be restored to Kellynch Hall, her home. She would not have to be a burden to somebody. And Jane Austen knew very well what being a burden is like.

Penny Gay points out a scene with Captain Benwick.²⁰ Anne recommends him to read more prose than poetry to calm down his disturbed soul. It is

¹⁹ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* 48

²⁰ Edward Copeland, and Juliet McMaster, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. London: Cambridge Univesity, 2011. 66

worth noticing that she suggests “works of of our best moralists, such collections of the finest letters, such memoirs of characters of worth and suffering”, works she used to satirise.

As Robert Miles says, the process of learning is one of the elements in Jane Austen’s novels.²¹ He also says declares that Anne Elliot is the heroine who learns the least. It is to a certain extent true, Anne does not experience any moment of revelation about herself as the rest of Austen’s heroines do.. She has already realised that Lady Russel was wrong and that she should not have let it happen. However, she experiences another kind of revelation. In short, Anne in the beginning and at the end is different. It is because of her increasing self-confidence and also belief that what was once lost, can be gained again.

It can be very tricky to look for any autobiographical elements in a work of fiction. Here the depiction of both the heroine and the plot is so refined and intimate that the possibility of autobiographical elements has to cross our mind. Did the flirting with Tom Lefroy mean something serious for Jane Austen? Her letter to Cassandra in which she describes the ball, is full energy and enthusiasm. Not many of her next letters have the same drive. It is well known that Cassandra Austen destroyed majority of Jane Austen’s letters. It is probable that the preserved letters are of a poorer information value. The reason of Cassandra’s action is not known but one

²¹ Robert Miles, *Jane Austenová*. Brno: CDK (Centrum Pro Studium Demokracie a Kultury), 2009. 63

can suppose that they were more revealing. They may have showed a different Austen, maybe a woman who went through an infatuation and dissatisfaction. In any case, the letters were too personal to let the admirers see them.

In summary, *Persuasion* is Jane Austen's most mature novel. The plot is still romantic but in a slightly different sense. Anne and Frederick already know what love is and also know that it can hurt. Their separation makes their feelings even stronger since they had a lot of time to think over all the pluses and minuses. Love of Anne and Frederick is mature and adult. It mirrors Austen's own development as a person. She was not young anymore and not so easy-going as young girls usually are. However, as Anne Elliot did not abandon hope, Jane Austen did not either. Having come to terms with the past, she could try something new. So she started to work at *Sanditon*, which could quite possibly become one of her best novels.

4.2.2 Sanditon

I believe that *Sanditon*, Austen's last unfinished work, has a special place among the other ones. While *Persuasion* is a very personal novel with elaborated characters, *Sanditon* is completely different. It can be tricky to judge because *Sanditon* is just a fragment. A reader can only assume how the story would develop. Even so, it is clear that Jane Austen tried something new.

The main difference is that even after more than sixty pages it is not quite clear who are the protagonists. The story is set in the countryside and starts with a meeting of two families, the Parkers and the Heywoods. Mr. Parker gets more space to show off. The only thing he can speak of is a small town of Sanditon. From the Heywood family, Charlotte Heywood is more prominent. However, it seems that Austen did not think over her character. She emerges in the story without much background. Later on, she gets more space, we see other characters through her eyes. However, we do not know much about her feeling, wishes etc. A reader cannot guess who is the future husband of the heroine, since Austen always uses wedding as a happy ending of the story; or it is at least included in the story itself, as *in Love and Freindship* etc. Charlotte's only purpose is reflecting other characters.

It is strange, to start writing a novel and not include an elaborated main character. However, one can do this if the goal of the piece is different than usual. Austen may have wanted to emphasize another topics as she usually did or at least present them in a different light. The plot of the story ceased to be so important for the author.

This is one of the major differences between *Sanditon* and all other works by Jane Austen.

5. THE REASONABLE IN THE ABSURD

Now I would like to mention some more serious elements in Austen's early works.

In actual fact, there are not many. After close observation of *Love and Freindship*, one can think that one of the few glimpses of reality occurs before the whole narration starts. In the first letter Isabel asks Laura to give her daughter a regular detail of Laura's misfortunes. The second paragraph signals irony, I believe. It is easy to imagine that an ordinary woman with sense of humour asks her crazy friend to tell a story of her life. It is also easy to imagine her and her daughter laughing at the letters full of foolishness, ignorance and boasting. In the fifteenth letter Laura meets young Isabel after suffering the most horrible misfortunes. Surprisingly for Laura, Isabel "pretended to find fault with my Behaviour in many of the situations in which I had been placed."²² Isabel's words support our theory about her being more reasonable than Laura.

There is another character embodying common sense, Edward's sister Augusta. She is able to see how inappropriate Laura's and Edward's behaviour is. Augusta is "exactly what her Brother had described her to be – of the middle size"²³, it shows how close a relationship the siblings have.

²² Jane Austen. *Sanditon and Other Stories*. 324

²³ Jane Austen. *Sanditon and Other Stories*. 301

She does not welcome Edward's new bride with opened arms to receive Laura to her heart and later even calls the marriage an imprudent connection.²⁴ Laura judges people according their cordiality, for instance her first meeting with Sophia, her future companion, shows the proper way of getting acquainted. "We flew into each others arms and after having exchanged vows of mutual Freindship for the rest of our lives, instantly unfolded to each other the most inward secrets of our Hearts-." ²⁵ Soon after that a meeting of Edward and his friend Augustus takes place and it is even more pathetic, so one of many fainting scenes was enacted.

However, Augusta accepts Laura coldly and has no sensibility in her manners and that is the worst offence. The sibling discuss the marriage. She hints at food and drinks and after Edward's declaration that he does not need them and can live only on love, she says that "he is too ridiculous to argue with". In the story it is one of few mentions of exaggerating or absurdity. Still, the sentence has an impact on a reader. It gives the story another perspective. It is no more set in some farcical world where all the people behave absurdly. It gets, to some extent, certain feedback. The setting acquires certain credibility; and in this contrast, mockery seems even more effective.

In *The Three Sisters* there is no apparently reasonable character. All the three sisters are basically the same; silly, envious and conniving. A hint of

²⁴ See Jane Austen. *Sanditon and Other Stories*. 301

²⁵ Jane Austen. *Sanditon and Other Stories*. 304

something more realistic would make the story more comic but the author chose another way.

6. THE ABSURD IN THE NOVELS

Persuasion

Persuasion is no doubt a perfectly constructed story. It would be quite easy to lapse into a sentimental novel, which was satirized by the author herself. It contains a lot of love, feeling and disappointment. Yet there is an aspect that makes it differentiate it from others. It is widely known that Jane Austen was a brilliant satirist. Though there are people saying that she was losing her humorous self when she was writing her last novels. We cannot agree with that, since Persuasion is full of comic characters and remarks.

Austen keeps her sense of humour but it underwent certain changes. It is quite clear that as people mature, their tastes develop. In the last period of Austen's life, her satire is much more refined and polished.

In her last finished novel there is a very sharp border between the heroine Anne Elliot and the other people. One of the reasons is that Anne likes staying in the background. The second one is that most of the other people in the novel are just fools, mostly members of her own family.

Anne's father, Sir Walter Elliot, is just a caricature of a gentleman. Austen, in general, depicted very peculiar father figures in her books; still Sir Walter Elliot excels. The only person he loves is himself and most of all he loves his title. The novel opens with a paragraph saying that the only book Sir Walter ever opens, is the *Baronetage*.²⁶ He is full of self-conceited arrogance.

In the first chapter there is a discussion about money; when he is told they should retrench, he almost gets angry. He, Sir Walter, cannot retrench as he spends money just on the necessary items for a man of his rank. Anne's elder sister Elizabeth agrees completely with her father. Both of them are selfish and extravagant. None of them can feel any attachment to Anne.

When Sir Walter finds out that his tenant will be an Admiral, he does not want to hear a word about it. To rent his residence to a simple sailor humiliating. He believes, that his title makes him something better. It is true that the aristocracy somehow despised people who had to work. The absurdity of Sir Walter's behaviour is perfectly depicted in the scenes with Lady Darlymple and Miss Carteret.

Nowadays we think quite the opposite way. Let us consider for instance The American Dream; people who were able to get rich by working, either with their hands or their brains, are respected and not in any way inferior.

²⁶ Jane Austen, *Persuasion*. 7

Even Jane Austen shared this modern opinion. She proves that with her strong mockery. There is not a piece of goodness in Anne's father, only if considered certain stupidity an excuse. Both of them are completely flat characters, used only for amusing the reader.

Her sister Mary is „not so repulsive and unsisterly as Elizabeth“²⁷ and Anne likes her. Even though they have a better relationship than with Anne's other sister, she is aware of Mary's faults. Mary is hypochondriac, she comments her health very often. She gets sick mostly when she needs company and attention. Anne knows it and also know how to help her – a little “patience and forced cheerfulness“²⁸ and in a few minutes she is healthy again.

Hypochondria is a recurrent topic in Austen's writings. However, it seems that her exploration of the topic increases with time and culminates in *Sanditon*. As I have already mentioned, Jane Austen's mother was probably hypochodriac so she probably served as model for hypochondriac characters.

As regards Mary's character, there is also mentioned that Charles Musgrove, her husband, was at first interested in Anne. She did not feel the same way, so eventually he married Anne's younger sister Mary. It reminds us of *The Three Sisters*, their affairs and Mary Stanhope's fears.

²⁷ Jane Austen, *Persuasion*. 35

²⁸ Jane Austen, *Persuasion*. 33

One cannot help thinking that Mary, though silly and not perfect, resembles a normal person. She has many vices but a few virtues too. Although a tool for satire, she still keeps the features of a round character.

These are the prominent characters embodying Austen's satire. Although the mockery is not so straightforward, it is still the same Austen, sometimes mild, sometimes sharp.

Sanditon

As I have mentioned before, *Sanditon* is different from the other pieces, because it has no clear hero and heroine. It strikes us more as a portrayal of contemporary society without a definite plot. It may be caused by incompleteness of the novel; even though I believe that even if complete, the plot would be overshadowed by precision of depiction.

In the beginning of the novel, Mr.Parker has a long speech about Sanditon, how perfect a place for recreation it is. He gets more and more enthusiastic and exaggerates. Mr.Heywood opposes him at first and Mr.Parker utters, "Only conceive sir, the advantage of saving a whole mile, in a long journey."²⁹ Austen, who was a keen walker, hints that if people walked or exercised more, they would not need places like Sanditon in the first place. Another evidence of his opinions is that "no person could be

²⁹ Jane Austen, *Sanditon and Other Stories* 11

really well, [...] without spending at least six weeks by the sea every year.³⁰ To a today's reader it can sound almost surreal, that people leading life of idleness, needed such a long recreation. Idle life makes idle mind. I believe that Jane Austen thought the same, herself leading quite a busy life.

Mr. Parker's sisters are a classic of above mentioned way of life. They are all notorious hypochondriacs, almost at death's door according to the letter sent to their brother. He mentions Sidney Parker as a reasonable man, who would laugh at the letter. But Mr. Parker himself believes that his sisters and a brother suffer very much, so that he becomes part of the charade.

Another of the important character is Lady Denham. She was given a lot of space throughout *Sanditon*. The author used direct speech to introduce her and her character to us. A slight contradiction in her character's description can be observed. On the one hand, it is still the Austen we know, the critic of aristocracy, ridiculing their petty problems, "[...] Lady Denham like a true great lady, talked and talked only of her her own concerns."³¹ On the other hand, a reader can notice a bit of sympathy with Lady Denham from the author's side. Austen is not as sharp as she used to be and her characters start having some qualities too.

³⁰ Jane Austen, *Sanditon and Other Stories* 15

³¹ Austen, Jane. *Sanditon and Other Stories*. 43

Mentioned examples show that although Jane Austen's way of writing has changed, the humour did not disappear. She still satirizes contemporary affairs and it is only her voice that underwent a change.

7. CONCLUSION

In this bachelor thesis I tried to explore the similarities and differences in between Jane Austen's first and late works. The readers are usually acquainted only with her major novels. However, Austen's juvenilia are of much interest for readers interested in her development as an author. The juvenilia are very different from her more known works. Austen watches everything attentively and her satire is sharp. While her early stories are all of grotesque nature, her two last novels are elaborated and differ from each other.

Letters are one the features that have all the works in common and I tried to explain their role.

Afterwards I considered the characters of Austen's heroines in the works *Love and Freindship*, *The Three Sisters*, *Persuasion* and *Sanditon*. In juvenilia the protagonists are flat characters who do not experience any kind of a progress. There is a difference between *Persuasion* and *Sanditon*; while in *Persuasion* the protagonist is a twenty-seven year old girl reviving her love and blossom, in *Sanditon* it is hard to say if there actually is any protagonist.

In the next part I looked for realistic characters in the early stories. There are few in *Love and Freindship* and none in *The Three Sisters*, which is natural for this genre. Afterwards I was trying to find the comic in the two latter works. In *Persuasion* Anne's family member and their opinions are

those we are laughing at. In *Sanditon*, hypochondria and idle life are being satirized.

With time, Jane Austen lost a little of her sharpness and became more sentimental. However, I have come to the conclusion that at the end of her life she produced one of her best works. Her life experience gave her an ability to see the world around her in its entirety.

8. SHRnutí

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá Jane Austenovou a jejími ranními a pozdními díly. Cílem práce bylo vytyčit rozdíly a podobnosti mezi *Love and Freindship* a *The Three Sisters*, patřících do juvenilií, posledním dokončeným románem *Persuasion* společně s fragmentem *Sanditon*.

První část práce obsahuje stručnou autorčinu autobiografii s vybranými relevantními událostmi.

V druhé části zvažuji úlohu formy dopisů, kterou autorka zvolila pro svá ranná díla a její role v pozdějším období její tvorby.

V další části postupně rozebírám jednotlivé hlavní hrdinky. Nacházím rozdíly v jejich věrohodnosti a propracovanosti, což je vzhledem k žánru přirozené. V Anně Elliotové, hrdince románu *Persuasion* nacházím jisté paralely s životem samotné Jane Austenové.

Poté se v juveniliích snažím najít postavy, které by měly realističtější pohled na svět, než hrdinka a nacházím takových charakterů a momentů jen několik.

V páté části naopak hledám komično a absurditu, tak vlastní ranným dílům, v posledních dvou románech. Těchto prvků je tam mnoho, vybírám si určité postavy a ukazují, co parodují a zda-li tento motiv použila Austenová i dříve.

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Anotace

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Téma práce: Cesta Jane Austenové je konformismu

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Rok obhajoby: 2011

Klíčová slova: Jane, Austenová, vývoj, satira

Jazyk práce: angličtina

Charakteristika: Práce se zabývá srovnáním ranných a pozdních děl britské autorky Jane Austenové. Na základě čtyř autorčiných děl je prováděna analýza vývoje od absurdních juvenilií až k jejím posledním románům.

Annotation

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Department: Dep.of English and American studies, FF UP

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Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

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