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Title : A Book Review on the novel Persuasion by Jane Austen

《勸導》— 珍·奧斯汀 書評寫作

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Abstract

This paper is to review the classic novel "*Persuasion*", an Oxford Bookworms edition retold by Clare West. The author, Jane Austen, was born in the romantic period in England in the early nineteenth century and is considered as the first and greatest female novelist. (Duong, 2014, October, in class lecture) According to Wikipedia, Jane Austen wrote this magnificent work in her later years of life, and it was also her last novel before her untimely death. Therefore, *Persuasion* is even greater still, for it is the remnant of the gifted British author who gave the world such pleasure and delight by her fascinating creations and descriptions. Similar to other of Jane Austen's celebrated works, the theme in *Persuasion* focuses itself on marriage, love, remembrance, rank and money. The complex and sinister connections between the characters and themselves are also an interesting part which I shall analyze in the paper; the awkward situations and hardships are so alike to our real life and written in such a vivid way that it is impossible not to be addicted to this excellent novel. The story is about Anne Elliot, who was born in a high class society. However, she loved a man who had not enough money or rank to convince her arrogant and silly father to let her marry him. Hence from then on she was never truly happy. After eight years, a chance struck Anne again and it is up to her whether she is able to stay her position and triumph over all the persuasions and marry the love of her life. Hopefully, this paper will give clear demonstrations on the settings, major themes and characters, proving the value of this intriguing novel.

Keywords

Persuasion/Jane Austen/ Romanticism/novel/Britain's first female writer/late eighteenth century/early nineteenth century/Book review

摘要

本文是一篇書評寫作，書名為《勸導》(*Persuasion*)。此書評參照的版本是由 Clare West 來重述 Jane Austen 的經典名作。作者珍·奧斯汀(*Jane Austen*)出生於十九世紀初期的浪漫主義時期，她更是被視為最偉大的首位英國女性作家。(董崇選，2014 十月，課堂演講內容)根據維基百科，此書是奧斯汀在晚年所完成的最後一本長篇小說。奧斯汀精彩的創作以及細膩的描繪給予了後世人許多快樂和感動，而當《勸導》成了英國史上偉大的珍·奧斯汀的遺作，此書的價值更為之大幅提升。如同於奧斯汀的其他著作，《勸導》一書的主題圍繞在婚姻、愛情、回憶、階級和財富。除此之外，我也將在本文中分析故事中角色之間錯綜複雜的關係；那些艱難的處境和問題與我們真實中生活如此的貼切，描述的手法更是刻骨銘心，令人難以不被這本精彩的小說著迷。故事是關於一名出生在高層社會階級的女子，Anne Elliot。她愛上了一名低於她當時社會階級也沒什麼財富的男子，因此 Anne 無法說服她傲慢又愚蠢的父親讓她嫁給她所愛的人，從那之後她便無法再真正快樂起來。八年之後，命運再度給了 Anne 一個機會；一切就在於她是否能夠堅持她的立場和信念，戰勝那些滔滔不絕的意見來和自己的真愛結婚。我由衷的希望能夠透過本文展現書中的背景、主旨以及角色，藉此來證實這本經典著作的價值與魅力。

關鍵字

勸導/珍·奧斯汀/浪漫主義/長篇小說/英國首位女性作家/十八世紀後期/十九世紀初期/書評

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Book Review

Introduction

The known classical novel "*Persuasion*" was written by Jane Austen in 1815. Jane Austen is considered as the first and greatest female novelist of the romantic period in Britain during the early 19thC who wrote this magnificent work in her later years of life, and it also became her last novel before her untimely death. The story is about a romantic, heart-warming love story of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth. Marriage and remembrance of love are the main obstacles and themes between them. The complex relationships, mixed and uncertain feelings are the reasons that fascinate and strive me to read on to the very end. The settings, themes and major characters are which I would like to share and discuss.

Review on the settings

The settings of *Persuasion* are deeply influenced by the cultural revolutions and geographic locations that were sweeping the nation during the time when the author Jane Austen was alive. During the late 18thC and early 19thC, neoclassicism was being overthrown by romanticism, a revolution which was not only a meek literary movement, but a wide cultural reestablishment. Many characteristics and special features of romanticism can be seen in the novel; For instance, Anne's preference for the quiet country rather than the noisy city Bath, satires on issues such as rank and money which were considered most important during neoclassicism. Jane Austen also liked to use real places where she had strong connections for her story backgrounds; Bath, Derbyshire and Lyme, all were places which she was well acquainted with.

Review on the themes

Marriage and remembrance of love are the main themes in *Persuasion*. Marriage is not only a matter about love but it brutally compares social ranks in society. Rank, status, and accomplishments are all in consideration and numerous opinions are given to the appropriateness of the match. Captain Wentworth was in lack of money and lower rank in society comparing to Anne's made him unable to marry Anne as he wished eight years ago. Remembrance of past lovers is also considered as an important virtue; a strong sense that the past must be always remembered. It applies not only to the dead, but also to those who are far away. "*No woman who truly loved would forget the man in her life.*" (p.82) "*We women love longest, when the loved one is no longer there, or when all hope is gone.*" (p.83) These are some conversations

between Anne to Captain Harville, Captain Wentworth's friend, showing that though Anne thought Captain Wentworth's love for her eight years ago was gone, she never forgot him and still loves the Captain deeply.

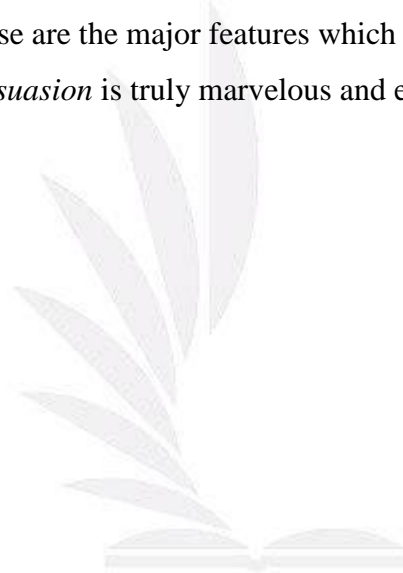
Review on the major characters

The characters are also an engaging part in *Persuasion*, where we can fully observe and appreciate the exquisite descriptions of features and the complex relationships between the characters. Anne Elliot, the second daughter of Sir Walter and also the main character, is always neglected by her father and sisters, who emphasize more on rank and wealth unlike Anne's value for character and personality. Sensible, just and sweet tempered Anne is always willing to help others as best as she can, giving crucial aids and sensible advisements. However, Anne's gentle personality also makes her less steady in mind in certain situations. Being too weak to resist other's forceful persuasions, it caused her unable to marry Captain Wentworth, the man she truly loves, eight years ago. In the story, it also shows that after eight years of regret and unhappiness, Anne has changed and has more courage and perseverance towards her heart's desire. Captain Wentworth is the other main character of the novel. He is the love of Anne and the younger brother of Mrs. Croft. Anne's first refusal of marriage eight years ago had made him resentful and angry, distrusting women's faith and loyalty, believing them to be fickle and in short of perseverance. But in the end his strong affection and true love for Anne still unwillingly flows out when he realizes Anne's everlasting love for himself. Apart from the main characters, Jane Austen has furthermore made the side characters quite as interesting as the main ones. Anne's father, Sir Walter Elliot is the proud baronet of Kellynch Hall. Though handsome and born of high rank, his vanity and silly concepts makes an arrogant personality. Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Sir Walter, is also like her silly father; rank, consequence, propriety and honor dominates her world view. Mary Elliot is the youngest daughter of Sir Walter, still holds a great deal of the Elliot pride after her marriage, discriminating and judging others in a most imprudent manner. Other more pleasant characters in the story are ones such as Lady Russell, the friend and neighbor of the Elliot family. She gives the Elliot family a lot of good advice and tries to help the family as much as possible. Nevertheless, not all her judgments and suggestions are reasonable though they may seem appropriate in ways such as rank, blood and status. In the novel, Lady Russell stands as a mentor and mother to Anne, causing

Anne to be easily persuaded by her. Lady Russell is actually a vital sign and trigger to let Anne understand the importance of trusting her own feelings and make her own decisions rather than living her life on other's expectations.

Conclusion

After reading *Persuasion*, one can hardly not be moved by the brilliance and talent of Jane Austen, for she is truly an excellent author. It is quite evident that Jane Austen's settings for the novel were greatly influenced by the environments and places which she was familiar while living. As for the themes and characters, it is astonishing how Jane Austen is able to alter everyday mundane situations into intriguing chapters, entertaining us with such complex and detailed narrations, making it impossible not to brood over the difficult situations and positions in life, love and marriage. On the whole, these are the major features which I have pointed out in order to justify my belief that *Persuasion* is truly marvelous and enchanting.



References

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