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Father Figures in the Novels of Jane Austen

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Abstract

Miniaturist as Jane Austen is, she has depicted the life of a few families. In her letter to her niece, Anna Austen, she writes: "three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on"(Chapman's Edition, 1970, P.10). Jane' s knowledge about these families is, in no way shallow. It is rich in variation and contrasts. Jane Austen is a great novelist due to the universal significance of her novels. This universal significance is achieved in two ways. First, she creates living characters; she penetrates beneath the surface to the underlying principles of personality. She has a full understanding of human psychology and this enables her to draw intricate and complex natures. She lays bare not only the processes of their minds but also those of the heart. Second, she considers them impartially and shows them compounded both of faults and virtues like human beings. They have a universal significance; they are not national types, but representatives of essential human nature. They reveal the weaknesses and virtues of human nature in every age and country. There has been insufficient attention focused on Jane Austen' s father figures: how she created characters and what character types and father figures emerge in the full range of her stories. Characters are centre front in her stories, many of which are chiefly fine vignettes, and in Austen's theoretical statements she has consistently stressed the importance of character creation. The objective of this research is to shed light on those father figures who are the heads of the central families in Jane' s six novels.

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