



A Social Affair in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*

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Abstract

This study is about analyzing how an uncomfortable social affair is described and the factors of the uncomfortable social affair undergone by the three women who have experienced an unpleasing life not because of the patriarchal system but because of their bad luck of dealing with high class people in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. The novel describes how miserable the women-the mother and her two daughters-are when they have to be rejected from the people around. Using close reading and sociological approach, the study finds that the aforesaid three women confront uncomfortable social affair; the mother, Mrs. Dashwood, is rejected by the in laws, the two daughters, Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood, respectively, are rejected by their boyfriends who regard money is more important than the women. Therefore, the women are not in use for their society's future life insomuch as they are lack of money.

Key Words: social affair, close reading, sociology

INTRODUCTION

On one hand, literature refers to the development of art in human civilization in the whole periods. On the other hand, sociology refers to a scientific field dealing with the discovery of the neutral life of law. Though both fields of study seem to be separate of each other, yet, they share common

interrelation; literature reflects the social life of the characters, whilst, sociology expresses the whole society one of which is within literature. (Peter, 1967).

Further, sociology is principally the methodical research of human in the life of society as well as both societal groups and societal practices looking for the responses of the problem, the cause of the community existence, the community dealing with one another, as well as the community continuation. Similar to sociology, literature is concerned with man's social life, man's correction society, and his motivation to change it. Henceforth, the novel, being central category of productive society, competently renovate man's social life in interaction to his household life, to politics, as well as to the State. Likewise, the novel gives the explanation of man's participation in the family life and other relations, the fights and forces between groups and social classes. Thus, novel and sociology share the common issues such as social, economic and political textures (Laurenson, 1972).

The texts of literature contain qualitative data flexibly as well as accurately in the representation of the social world, developing conceptual understanding and illustrating the theory for the sociologist. Sociology is a strength to understand humans and their alterations on earth, consequently, by sources of literature, social analysis comes to be wealthier as well as more communicated insomuch as the sources of literature shares shortened presentations of characters in social contexts (Longo, 2015). From the elaboration aforesaid about the relation of literature and sociology, the researchers conclude that sociology can be conducted for the analysis of works of literature and the literary work the researchers analyze in this article refers to Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* entitled Social Struggles in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*.

Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* talks about a social affair experienced by women, namely, Mrs. Dashwood as well as her daughters, Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood within their married life. They, indeed, feel uncomfortable with their own in laws who underestimate them for their poverty.

Then, how they behave in front of their in laws and the factors are the main focuses of this study.

To get the novelty of the study, the researchers refer to the following previous studies; firstly, the social affair seen is about a woman's feeling uncomfortable with her husband who has ignored her because he has been dealt with never ending war in his country. Using social theory of conflict as well as new criticism, the study shows that the woman expresses her uncomfortable feeling by struggling against her husband unfairness to her whole married life (Fanani, 2022).

Secondly, another social affair experienced by a woman is dealt with patriarchal system. It is told that the main character, the woman, is oppressed under the society of men in the twenties in America. Having been living in oppression for about forty years, the woman succeeds to survive through her struggling against the patriarchal system (Susilowati, 2021).

Lastly, the last social affair experienced by a woman is again dealt with patriarchal system that happens either in the woman's married life or beyond it. Using feminist theory, the study shows that the woman confronts patriarchal system with her father, husband as well as with her male friends (Furoidah, 2019). From the previous studies above, it is clear that the researchers' study has the novelty since all the previous studies above show the social affair the woman confronts are about the patriarchal system that marginalize her, whilst, this study is that the women are marginalized due to the poverty.

METHOD

Research Approach

Descriptive and dramatic research method is worth an application (Little, 1966) in dealing with the novel issue by the presentation of the characters mainly through describing and discussing and through the report of the character's dialogue and act. In other words, the researchers do the quotation to prove the main character's description and the discussion of the women's speech and

action dealing with social affair. Accordingly, the researchers conclude that the women's speeches and actions describes their uncomfortable feeling in their social affair. Likewise, for the data analysis, the researchers refer to sociology as the mere method to analyze social affair in Jane Austen *Sense and Sensibility*. Further, as the researchers focus on the text for the deeper meaning, the researchers use close reading (Pickering, 2019), through which the researchers will understand the content of the text. Thus, the researchers think it sufficient to use close reading as the reader merely focuses on the social affair in the mentioned novel.

Kind of Research

Because it is a literary research, the research then is in the form of description, speech, and action of the main character's social affair from Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*.

Data Collection Technique

Interview, observation, document, and survey the data are ways of the data collection technique (Huberman & Miles, 1984). Accordingly, observation, document, and survey the data are worth an application here. By observation, the researchers do the reading of the whole novel firstly, then finds the problem secondly. Lastly, the researchers go to the related theory. By document, the researchers do the classification of the data belonging to social affair. By survey the data, the researchers do the analysis of the classified data

Data Analysis

The data analysis goes to the research question and the explanation of the research question (Huberman & Miles 1984) that is how they behave in front of their in laws and the factors of their uncomfortable feeling in their social affair in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Further, by close reading theory, the researchers do the description, discussion and the report of the character's conversation and actions related to the aforesaid social affair.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Social Affair Experienced by the Woman Characters

The social affair undergone by the women mostly does not please them since they are regarded as the poor people. The social affair here refers to the society within a family as well as without a family. The researchers discuss each character (Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor Dashwood, and Marianne Dashwood, the first is the mother, the rest are the daughters) one by one as follows:

Mrs. Dashwood

Though Mrs. Dashwood is like people in common that she is a generous woman, however, she has a womanly feeling. Mostly, a woman cannot stand with the opponent behavior of her in laws, yet, for the sake of her daughters, she can. She has such a unkind treatment after the death of her husband who does not give her inheritance. Therefore, her in laws underestimate her.

“and to a woman in Mrs. Dashwood’s situation, with only common feelings, must have been highly displeasing; but in her mind there was a sense of honor so keen, a generosity so romantic, that any offence of the kind, by whomsoever given or received, was to her a source of immovable disgust” (Austen, 3)

The quotation above describes the smallest of Mrs. Dashwood character that could be said that Mrs. Dashwood is like those that has their own common feelings in each specific conditions. Commonly speaking, Mrs. Dashwood shows her true feelings that is a disappointed feeling to her step-in law though Mrs. Dashwood still can behave as a woman in common with a high sense of character and respect in every behavior and speech, besides that she is also a generous person.

Mrs. Dashwood’s feeling uncomfortable grows up due to her daughter in law’s behavior towards her. “she would have quitted the house for ever, ...” (Austen, 3). However, she cannot as her own eldest daughter had not the entreaty of her eldest girl persuaded her of moving away. It indicates that Mrs. Dashwood no longer puts up with living in the house only if her daughter does not stop her. Such is an uncomfortable feeling of Mrs. Dashwood in her inner society.

Further feeling uncomfortable of Mrs. Dashwood towards her inner society can be seen when she cannot do anything to her daughter in law except for remaining silent.

The contempt which she had, very early in their acquaintance, felt for her daughter-in-law, was very much increased by the farther knowledge of her character, which half a year's residence in her family afforded; and perhaps in spite of every consideration of politeness or maternal affection on the side of the former, the two ladies might have found it impossible to have lived together so long, had not a particular circumstance occurred to give still greater eligibility, according to the opinions of Mrs. Dashwood, to her daughters' continuance at Norland. (Austen, 9)

The quotation above shows that how hateful the daughter in law towards Mrs. Dashwood. It turns out that her daughter in law keeps hurting Mrs. Dashwood that hardly does she unbearably lives with her daughter in law in the same house in a considerable long of time, on one hand. On the other hand, there are things that she has to remain still in the house, namely, the sake of her own daughters she has to take care more lovingly. Therefore, she shows her politeness as well as kindness both to her own daughters and to her daughter in law.

"...she was impatient to be gone, and indefatigable in her inquiries for a suitable dwelling in the neighborhood of Norland; for to remove far from that beloved spot was impossible. But she could hear of no situation that at once answered her notions of comfort and ease, and suited the prudence of her eldest daughter, whose steadier judgment rejected several houses as too large for their income, which her mother would have approved." (Austen, 9)

The quotation above shows a dilemma undergone by Mrs. Dashwood because on the one hand, she has a desire to take her daughters away from Norland, on the other hand, she has a problem of moving immediately as she has no enough money to afford to get a house to stay.

Elinor Dashwood

Different from her mother, Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor Dashwood experiences uncomfortable social affair not with her in laws, but with her boyfriend. Still, it is allegedly the in laws (her boyfriend's relatives) will disagree with such

marriage. Edward Ferras, Elinor's boyfriend turns out to be the heir to a prominent family with abundant wealth.

"...But there are other points to be considered besides his inclination. He is very far from being independent. What his mother really is we cannot know; but, from Fanny's occasional mention of her conduct and opinions, we have never been disposed to think her amiable; and I am very much mistaken if Edward is not himself aware that there would be many difficulties in his way, if he were to wish to marry a woman who had not either a great fortune or high rank." (Austen, 14)

The quotation above means that Elinor's character is matured proved by the fact that she takes everything into consideration that her material condition and her boyfriend's condition are quite in contradiction like earth and heaven. That the marriage will give her uncomfortable life. From the beginning she feels doubtful to live together with Edward in holy matrimony; Elinor and Edward are the first children in their family, respectively. The former is from a single poor mother, whilst, the latter is from a higher social class, a materially possessed family. Becoming the first child, Edward is responsible for controlling his family's wealth, on one hand. On the other hand, his family keeps an eye on him in the future.

"They wanted him to make a fine figure in the world in some manner or other. His mother wished to interest him in political concerns, to get him into parliament, or to see him connected with some of the great men of the day. Mrs. John Dashwood wished it likewise; but in the meanwhile, till one of these superior blessings could be attained, it would have quieted her ambition to see him driving a barouche. But Edward had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life. Fortunately he had a younger brother who was more promising" (Austen, 10)

It is clear that how Edward is described in the quotation above that expectation and responsibilities of the family continuation of the wealth falls on him. Accordingly, Edward is a young man to be proud of that is one hundred percent in contrast with the life of Elinor, no family expectation and hope towards her. It is again allegedly to be the key of uncomfortable feeling of Elinor to live in such a social sphere, triggered by Elinor's feeling uncomfortable feeling that her mother in law gives Elinor unwelcome reception. It is again caused by Edward's

mother's knowledge of Elinor's economic condition background (Austen, 168). Thus, how Mrs. Ferras welcomes Elinor with her unfriendly attitude towards Elinor means that the future marriage of Elinor with Edward will be impossible to happen.

Marianne Dashwood

Similarly, Marianne Dashwood, the other daughter of Mrs. Dashwood, experiences the same as her sister, Elinor Dashwood. She has an uncomfortable social affair with her boyfriend, yet, her boyfriend does not come from a wealthy family. It is his life style that is high, instead. Accordingly, Marianne's heart is broken inasmuch as his boyfriend marries another girl from a wealthy family.

"On this point Sir John could give more certain intelligence; and he told them that Mr. Willoughby had no property of his own in the country; that he resided there only while he was visiting the old lady at Allenham Court, to whom he was related, and whose possessions he was to inherit; adding, "Yes, yes, he is very well worth catching I can tell you, Miss Dashwood; he has a pretty little estate of his own in Somersetshire..." (Austen, 31)

The quotation shows that Marianne's boyfriend is not economically high, however, he gets lucky because he gets inheritance from his relative, namely, wealth that drives him to be a glorious person. The social class then plays an important role to make the three women live uncomfortably, Mrs. Dashwood with her poverty disliked by her in-law, Elinor Dashwood not liked by her future rich parents in-law, and Marianne Dashwood by her high life style boyfriend.

"For though Willoughby was independent, there was no reason to believe him rich. His estate had been rated by Sir John at about six or seven hundred a year; but he lived at an expense to which that income could hardly be equal, and he had himself often complained of his poverty" (Austen, 50)

The quotation above confirms the aforesaid Marianne's boyfriend who lives a high life style. A high life style person keeps living so extravagantly that he cannot manage the wealth he gets from inheritance. Accordingly, such a life will not give comfort to the person. He keeps complaining everything he gets, instead.

Factor of the Uncomfortable Social Affair

There is a factor leading to the uncomfortable feeling undergone by the three women that is indeed, a mother and her two daughters. The mere factor the researchers can suggest is that high social class the characters the three women face; Mrs. Dashwood bullied by her in law is “her a source of immoveable disgust” (Austen, 3). This kind of bullying comes from her economical condition that is in contrast to other people living under the same roof as her, her in law. That her mother in law feels sorry to live with an economically humble is a fact that can be proved by her intention of going away. Yet, she cancels due to no destination.

Elinor Dashwood is rejected by her boyfriend’s relatives due to her poverty. Poverty gives her neither good fortune nor good responsibility in the future, consequently, her boyfriend must be detached from a deeply romantic connection with her. “They wanted him to make a fine figure in the world in some manner or other” (Austen, 10). According to Social Class theory by Marxism, two different classes in society cannot live together especially the capitalist and the proletariat (Fanani, 2020). The researchers regard Elinor’s boyfriend is like the former, whilst, she herself is like the latter. Therefore, she is separated from marriage with her boyfriend.

Similarly, Marianne Dashwood is separated from her boyfriend through his high lifestyle though he himself does not belong to the high social class materially. “He has a pretty little estate of his own in Somersetshire...” (Austen, 31). Though this high social class merely is embedded in his mind, still, they cannot be together. The fact is that Marianne’s boyfriend leaves her for another girl, the rich one.

Thus, the three women undergo the same social affair leading them to an “exile.” It is not a physical exile that is sent away from other people. Rather, it is a sort of blockade to live together with people with ‘materially possessed mind.’ The social affair then according to the researchers’ assumption drive the three women to live uncomfortably.

CONCLUSION

There are three things the researchers come to the conclusion to draw. First of all, the three afore said women face an unpleasing thing that they cannot live with the higher social class; Mrs. Dashwood faces unfriendly high class in law, whilst, her two daughters face unwelcoming high class boyfriends. Second of all, the researchers succeed in applying both close reading method as well as sociology, through which the researchers understand deeply that the three women are marginalized not by the patriarchal but by lack of property. Accordingly, last of all, the researchers are in a considerable expectation that there will be authors developing the research by using the same novel with the different theory or different novel with the same theory in order that the literary study develops rapidly.

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