

CHARITY IN JANE AUSTEN'S WORLD

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DEFINITION OF CHARITY

- ✘ Samuel Johnson's defines charity as
 - tenderness, kindness; goodwill; benevolence.
 - The theological virtue of universal love.
 - Liberality to the poor
- ✘ Saunter is defined as wandering in look of charity
- ✘ Jane specifically looks at two dimensions of charity- charity as thought versus charity as deed.

PROGRESSION OF CHARITY

- ✘ Pre-Industrial Period- Done through churches and within the community.
- ✘ Industrial- Run by the state, Charity begins to be seen as the beginning of women's professions.
- ✘ Technological- Charity while still done to some degree of a community level is removed from us by the convenience of technology and is mostly monetary rather than deed based.

BY W. H. GOLD



THE
ENGLISH
ALMS-
HOUSE



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ALMSHOUSE
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ELIZABETHAN POOR LAW

- ✘ In Jane's time parish registers of the poor were introduced so that there was an official record of those who fell into the category of 'poor' .
- ✘ The parishes and community took care of those less fortunate.

WHY JANE KNEW NOTHING OF WORKHOUSES

- ✘ Workhouses and Charity Schools came into effect in 1834 and were a result of large scale economic impoverishment that occurred in the late 1700's as the poor farmers and labourers were forced off their land by enclosures or denied land use.
- ✘ Some parishes attempted to continue to pay labourer but this was deemed unfair relief and was opposed.
- ✘ Poorhouses did exist in Jane's time but they were publicly supported homes that were funded by private money and charity from the community.

WHY JANE KNEW NOTHING OF WORKHOUSES

- ✘ Poorhouses and later workhouses were something that existed in larger cities like London and Edinburgh.
- ✘ Characters like Jane Fairfax after being orphaned may have ended up in the workhouse if they had not been seen as deserving poor with good connections

THE NEW POOR LAW

- ✘ The new poor law created workhouses. Workhouses were made as horrible as possible so people would not access the services.
- ✘ Families were separated, there was scarce food and hard work was expected for the full day.
- ✘ With the implementing of the New Poor law emerged the idea of deserving vs undeserving poor

DESERVING VS UNDESERVING POOR

- ✘ Deserving Poor: people who are poor but have good qualities and are not responsible for having little money
- ✘ Undeserving Poor: the passive poor, usually long term welfare recipients
- ✘ the hostile street criminal, drop-outs, low-class prostitutes, and drug addicts;
- ✘ the hustlers, dependent on the underground economy, but rarely involved in violent crime;
- ✘ the traumatized drunks, drifters, homeless bag ladies, and released mental patients.

DESERVING POOR

- ✘ In Jane's time if you were in the deserving poor class receiving charity would have been seen as a sign of respect. If people were giving you charity then people would have respected you and felt that their charity was well spent.
- ✘ We still are very connected to the ideas of deserving vs undeserving poor. Charities now are often done over the internet or phone, they often involved children's charities and we are less likely to give to homeless or addicted populations.

OTHER LATER AUTHORS

- ✘ Gaskell would have seen the poor and the results of the industrial revolution first hand
- ✘ Dickens would have seen to poor, London and workhouses first hand
- ✘ Hardy would have seen the direct result of the new poor law and the problem with enclosures

JANE'S IDEA OF CHARITY AS AN ACT

- ✘ For Jane charity would have been done within the community for people she knew.
- ✘ Jane writes on Dec 18, 1798 “Of my charities to the poor I have given a pair of worsted stockings to May Hutchins, Dame Kew, Mary Stevens and Dame Staples; a shift to Hannah Staples and a shawl to Betty Dawkins; amounting in all to about half a guinea”
- ✘ The class to which the Austen's belonged accepted the care of the neighbouring poor as a matter of course.

JANE'S CHARACTERISTICS OF CHARITY

- ✘ While charitable in deed, Jane is not always described as charitable in her descriptions of people.
- ✘ Jane is often critical of others and at times very cruel in her descriptions.
- ✘ Jane reaches sympathy and charity in her novels, but she shows us that in real life this is easier said than done.

CHARITY AND RELIGION

- ✘ In Austen's world charity would have been seen as a theological virtue. Even though Christianity is rarely mentioned explicitly the values implicit in this including charity are.
- ✘ Austen writes ' in the examination of our own conduct, consider others with kindness and judge all they say and do with that charity which we would desire from them ourselves.

WOMEN AND CHARITY



WOMAN AND CHARITY

- ✘ For many women the very act of marriage can be an act of charity for the individual women or her family.
- ✘ This is often the case for Jane Austen's characters. The exception to this is usually in the case of her heroines who earn the right to marry for love rather than money.
- ✘ Heroes treat the woman as equals while the villains appear as charming in order to have "power over".

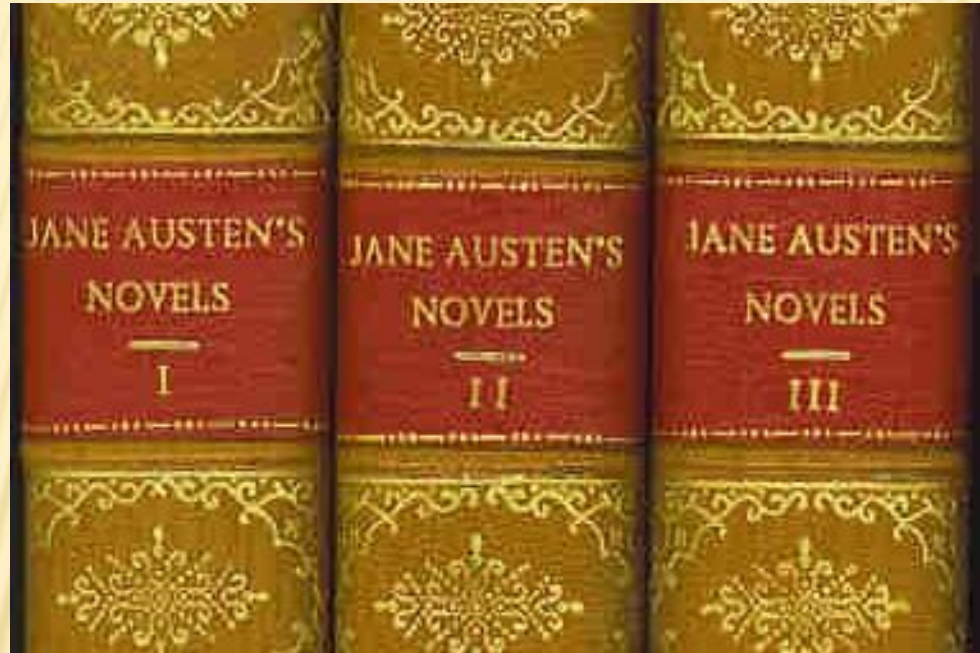
WOMAN AND CHARITY

- ✘ Woman's role at this time for someone of Jane's standing would mean they had no profession, however they were allowed to fill their time with acts of charity.
- ✘ As a result of early charity work, many predominantly female professions are related to human services, teaching, nursing, etc.
- ✘ Many of these roles that we fill today are still underpaid and seen by government as a role that could be fulfilled by charity.

WOMAN AND CHARITY

- ✘ Jane gives us the impression that she did not always appreciate that all her visits were arranged by male members of the family and that she felt confined at times in her role as a woman.
- ✘ Within Jane's time women were beginning to be told they were equal to men. Jane writes that though she likes this idea she knows that in reality it is not true and that it will never happen.

THE NOVELS



MANSFIELD PARK

- ✘ The whole premise of Mansfield Park is based on the idea of charity and that the sister who has risen must help the fallen.
- ✘ Fanny's family is seen as deserving poor within the novel, however if they weren't relations they likely would have been seen as undeserving poor.

MRS. NORRIS

- ✘ Within Charity there is a feeling of duty and making others feel better, however there is also the aspect of making oneself feel better. Mrs. Norris does all of her acts of charity towards Fanny in order to make herself look better and elevate her standing in the family.
- ✘ Mrs. Norris often uses charity to play the role of martyr. “ As poor as I am, I would rather deny myself the necessities of life than do an ungenerous thing.”

MRS. NORRIS

- ✘ “Mrs. Norris has not the least intention of paying- as far as other things she was benevolent and nobody knew better how to dictate liberality to others- but her love of money was equal to her love of directing- it was impossible to aim at more than credit of arranging so expressive a charity.”
- ✘ Mrs. Norris is herself in need of charity... is she so unforgiving to Fanny because she reflects her own need for charity?

FANNY

- ✘ The first line Fanny hears about the families charity towards her is “ remember wherever you are you must be lowest and last”
- ✘ Fanny repays her acts of charity, however not in monetary terms, therefore making her the epitome of deserving poor.
- ✘ Fanny uses her ethics as a way to combat the negative effects of charity. Mrs. Norris tries to get Fanny to abandon her ethics based on the fact that she should be more grateful.
- ✘ Mr. Crawford's engagement reflects Fanny’s stand against the need for charity in all situations.

SIR THOMAS BERTRAM

- ✘ Sir Thomas Bertram realizes the possibility of the reciprocal nature of charity.
- ✘ Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted. His charitable kindness had been providing a comfort for himself. His liberality had a rich repayment and gave him something money could not buy.
- ✘ “Acknowledge the advantages of early hardship and discipline and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure.”

EMMA

- ✘ Emma shows great examples of how charity would have been within the community on a small scale.
- ✘ “people a degree or two lower with a credible appearance might interest me, I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or the other.”
- ✘ Emma’s charity is conceived as a condescension, Emma needs to learn that charity is not about power. Emma can be generous but it is in action and not thought.

EMMA

- ✘ Jane Austen does a great job of showing that charity is often unwelcome. Charity is often forced upon to build up the importance of another. The entire novel of Emma captures the potential selfish nature of charity.
- ✘ Emma shows many of the failing of charity. “if compassion has produced exertion and relief to the sufferers, it has done all that is truly important. If we feel for the wretched, enough to do all we can for them the rest is empty sympathy only distressing to ourselves.”

EMMA

- ✘ Both Emma and Mrs. Elton, in the name of charity, take on responsibility for directing a younger woman, and in both cases charity is actually a mask for officious meddling or for ones own amusement.
- ✘ Harriet and Jane Fairfax are both examples of vulnerable unprotected woman in the novel that have charity imposed upon them.

EMMA

- ✘ When Frank Churchill does a good deed, it has ulterior motive, this is a pretence, showing that he has charity only when he hopes to gain something from it
- ✘ Knightly is the only character that shows genuine charity.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

- ✘ Though Sense and Sensibility starts on the pretence of charity it does not become the major theme of the novel. The only true act of charity in the novel is made by Colonel Brandon in giving the parsonage to Edward.
- ✘ Mr. John Dashwood looks to how charitable other people will be to his sisters in order to deny his duties.
- ✘ Fanny Dashwood could be seen as the epitome of uncharitable.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

- ✘ It would appear that acts of charity would play a huge role in this novel, however Jane chooses to focus more on the characteristic of being charitable to ones sisters.
- ✘ Eleanor talks of being charitable to Marianne in letting her know about Edward before she hears about it elsewhere. She often protects her sister in her pain and this often referred to as charitable

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

- ✘ Pride and Prejudice starts and maintains the idea of marriage as an act of charity; charity as a sign of respect and charity as a rouse.
- ✘ Mr Collins believes that he is being charitable in offering to marry the girls as he believes he is saving them.
- ✘ Mr. Darcy's act of saving Lydia is done as a sign of respect for Elizabeth (among other things).

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

- ✘ Wickham convinces Elizabeth that he is more than deserving of her and everyone else's charity.
- ✘ In addition to Darcy's act of charity in terms of respect for Elizabeth once she starts to discover his character she also realizes that he takes care of the people who serve him as well.

PERSUASION

- ✘ Persuasion does not talk a lot about charity specifically, but I think that the character of Anne Elliot shows many examples of what it would mean to be charitable. She is charitable in all cases to most people even to those who she would have every reason to be resentful of. While it appears to be in her nature, there is also a sense of charity as duty.

CONCLUSION

- ✘ Jane touches on the tensions between justice and charity, the temptation to be critical and the necessity of being kind.
- ✘ For Jane's characters they often learn lessons of charity but they do not always come naturally or easily.