Notes Jane Austen Book Club

April 10, 2023

**Sense and Sensibility** AND **Pride and Prejudice**

**Part One**

Watch the remainder of the film Sense and Sensibility.

**Part Two- Discussion of the two books**

**Are films only visual precis of novels?**

* Anything you noticed got left out in the film version? Why?
* What should have been included?
* Does this film reduce the book to a romance story
* with a happy ending?
  + Why? Why not?

Both these novels were revised in Austen’s late creative period from earlier versions. . She first drafted them in 1795 [Sense and Sensibility] and 1796 Pride and Prejudice when she was 20/21 years old and still happily living at the Steventon Rectory . [Early creative period]

Does Austen change her message in P&P? to what?

* A marriage based on genuine love appears a rarity in these novels.
  + Elinor and Edward Ferrars [S&S]
* **The marriage contract** was very important in this novel. The difficulties that younger sons and any gentlewoman, without a reasonable dowry ,faced were sympathetically explored by Austen. In effect they often did not have the luxury of marrying for love.
  + **Two marriages of convenience that Austen presents as being workable and lasting even though they were not love matches.**
  + Willoughby and Sophia [she had the money but he had loved Marianne Dashwood] But they get along fine although it’s a marriage of convenience.
  + Col Brandon and Marianne . M. marries Brandon even though he is much older and quite a staid person. She had earlier rejected him because of this and had loved Willoughby.
* The behaviour of gentlemen
  + **Austen excuses Willoughby**. Not all younger sons can afford to be truly gentlemen, they have to put their own financial interests first.
  + Austen rehabilitates Willoughby’s bad behaviour abandoning another young woman and leaving her pregnant [ he claims he didn’t know she was and she could have found him if she wanted to – lame excuse]
  + Elinor [Austen]Also accepts that Willoughby never actually asked m\Marianne to marry him so when he was forced to accept that he could only inherit from his aunt if he married either the abandoned woman he rejected this and married the heiress who accepted him as he was**. Austen shows that he really had no ther rational choice. Do you agree? Is Austen having it both ways ie he is a cad but his behaviour is made out of rational self interest and there are extenuating circumstances. Can Willoughby still be classed a s a true gentleman?**
  + **Col Brandon is a real gentleman** as he takes care of the woman Willoughby abandoned and her daughter by saving the daughter from a life of prostitution and retiring her to the country with her baby.
  + **But he is not likely to appeal to a young girl in love with someone her own age , too staid and old**
  + **Both of the young lovers [Willoughby and Marianne have to accept 2nd best in marriage] Like Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins.**

In P&P it is mainly the Bennet girls disgraceful families that stop them from being eligible to real gentlemen as well as their small dowries

* + {P&P] **Lizzie Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy** but also **Jane Bennet and Bingley**. In both these cases the rich potential husbands married Bennet women who **not only had no substantial dowries [£1000], but also had unsuitable families.** Lydia had disgraced the family by living with Lieut Wickham before marriage, her mother was ill mannered and irresponsible and her father was lazy, sarcastic and had abandoned his duties to guide his family in education and behavior.
  + **Although Mr Collins is a pompous foolish felloe is his proposal to Jane or Lizzie done for socially mature reasons** eg He will inherit their estate which is entailed to him when their father dies, so he is trying to mitigate this disaster for the Bennet family by marrying one of the girls so there will still be a Bennet connection with the estate.
* As well Austen deals with a set of characters all of whom have character flaws
  + Mr and Mrs Bennet
  + Jane; too aloof. Hides her feelings
  + Lizzie, judges people hastily and is rude and shallow
  + Darcy, introverted, not good with social manners, proud and distant.
  + Bingley, too easily swayed by the opinions of others especially Darcy
  + Collins, pompous and insensitive YET good intentions
  + Lady Catherine overbearing and interfering YET wants all girls to be educated [governesses] and does not believe states should be entailed to the male line.
* Some of these characters are capable of change, but some are not.

Young women can be too proper eg Jane and Elinor. Both hide their feelings and do not directly communicate important messages to men. The C18th dating game was very formal in some respects but Austen believes feelings need to shine through.

**Does Austen explore the nuances of social behaviour more in P&P?**

**There is a lot of humor/ satire in the novels . Is this the ‘feel good’ part of her appeal to readers? Some people behave absurdly at times but most things are retrievable in the end even if not ideal**