

A charming auntie

di Beatrice Fabbri



Late afternoon. The living room was filled with little light and books on the shelves mirrored some funny shadows on the wall. Lizzie closed the door. She had been working all day, reading, taking notes, retrieving new sources for her article on Jane Austen. Such long time ago, different habits, different manners, so little public sphere for women and yet such an intriguing era fulfilled with a lot of prejudices and scandals, illicit affairs, boring marriages, indomitable young ladies and wise and revolutionary aunties.

Right, that's the key word: auntie, she thought.

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Lizzie has always loved Jane Austen's novels, the wit of her characters apparently so old-fashioned and yet so fresh. Anne, Emma, Elizabeth, Marianne, Elinor, Fanny had so much to offer to the common reader beyond labels and stereotypes.

"Reread all Jane Austen's books", wrote Lizzie on her notebook.

How amazing is Jane Austen to have sketched so many different characters in short of time and why her life as a woman appears so plain, quiet?

She went back thinking that women's independence has always been one a great issue through the centuries and no matter the conquest of basic rights in contemporary times, women were required to fit sooner or later the role of wife, mother, household in order to be accepted by the collective. Jane Austen did not fit any of these and yet she depicted young ladies looking for a successful marital life. Was this a paradox?

Lizzie herself was reaching the age where the idea of getting engaged and married was no more central to her life. She was charming and smart, may be, also too free spirited to make the choice, to say the word: forever. Her sensitivity has grown higher and higher recently and this was also an issue to make a choice.

Her expectations were so high as well as her standards, so better not to make any wrong choice and please herself first.

The cozy room filled with books' shelves, the old armchair and the shabby blanket on her legs reminded her that nothing was lost if one took care of one self's needs. Awareness is all as well as imagination. I'am an auntie, and that's enough!