

Pride and Prejudice as a Feminine Satirical Novel

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Abstract— Stepping into the pages of *Pride and Prejudice* is like entering into a completely different world. It is a novel that portrays a culture so unlike our own times, its characters inhabit a society so unlike ours, their problems so different from our own; it is extremely difficult for us to 'identify' with the fictional characters portrayed. This is a quiet world, often alien to those living in the dynamic 20th century. The late 18th century houses seem to be galaxies away from us, the wit and language is as of another planet. The immediate value of the novel then, is that we become more acquainted with this new world and the characters that populate it. The alien properties of the novel enable us to, perhaps, derive an even greater benefit from it and we are permitted to see the novel as a work of art. In reading any novel of the 20th century, we are apt to lose ourselves by the too easy identification of ourselves with the characters and their problems. We find it difficult to detach ourselves from the content in order to observe the form and technique the novelist uses. In reading a Jane Austen novel, we come to appreciate the technique used by her, her methods of characterization, her construction of the plot and her subtlety of dialogues. Paradoxically, this appreciation of technique and form makes us more intensely aware of life. We come to see the people and the problems more clearly outlined, their minds and passions more plainly revealed than they are in life. The very detachment that we feel when we read a Jane Austen novel is thus an advantage in separating ourselves from our immediate situation, our daily cares and our own bias. We may become better readers of her novels than her contemporaries were.

Key words: Dynamic, Immediate Value, Alien, Identification, Characterization

I. INTRODUCTION

Domestic life and the outside environment are focused upon greatly in the novel. When the second eldest sister is walking outdoors, Jane Austen describes the natural surroundings in detail. This is not so when the discussions take place indoors. There is no so much stress on the interiors, rather more on the exteriors. The stress upon nature in the novel gives the reader a sense of tranquility, avoiding the chaotic situation in the cities, the pollution from factories, people rushing to work, with little or no place to walk on the bus streets. "The strongest and cleverest women are those who have a connection with nature." (*Snyder William 2008 print*)

Amidst the tranquility however, there is a certain amount of tension. Tension is clearly indicated regarding the matrimonial affairs, as the lady of the house is tormented by her thoughts of her five daughters not being able to find suitable husbands and who will be left alone after her passing. Not one, not two but five daughters have to be found husbands for. The character of Mrs. Bennet and her mental stress is conveyed to the reader, who in turn may feel pity for the lady or possibly take an instant dislike to her. Adding to Mrs. Bennet's tension is the nonchalant attitude of her husband, who cares little for such 'unimportant and trivial' matters.

It is seen clearly in Jane Austen's novel. Mr. Bennet has five daughters, but no son. His complete estate, including the house will be inherited by Mr. Collins, who is the cousin of Mr. Bennet and he is the closest male heir. The five daughters will be left to fend for themselves, along with their mother – Mrs. Bennet. Women in the 18th century had no meaning and were only commodities as shown in Jane Austen's novel. They were considered 'things' to be rid of as soon as possible and in the novel "things" were referred to the five daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet.

"Oh! My dear, I cannot bear to hear that mentioned. Pray do not talk of that odious man. I do think it is the hardest thing in the world that our estate should be entailed away from your own children." (*Austen Jane 1813*)

The above quote was Mrs. Bennet's reaction to Mr. Collins receiving Mr. Bennet's estate upon his death. It is clear there is a strong dislike for Mr. Collins by the entire Bennet family. Mrs. Bennet is more verbal in expressing her dislike.

The odious Mr. Collins takes full advantage of his future inheritance, which gives him the audacity to propose to Elizabeth, again showing the male's 'supposed' dominance over the female gender. Collins does not for a moment doubt that Elizabeth will turn him down. She wouldn't dare, with him being the heir to Mr. Bennet's estate; he assumes he has every right to marry Elizabeth. Elizabeth being of stronger character is unlike most females of that era. She is in fact considered from the minority group, where a woman dare not stand up to a man and her duty was to simply obey. Mr. Collins could not believe his ears, when Elizabeth refuses him and according to him this is unacceptable and repeats his offer of marriage to her. Not heeding to Elizabeth's objections, he gets turned down again. Jane Austen's writing has a distinct connection to the Georgian era, especially in class distinction. The Georgian era covered the period from 1714 – 1830. Jane wrote *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813. The Georgian era, so called due to the spanning of the first Hanoverian Kings of Great Britain, were all named George. During the period, Britain saw great changes like cities expanding; trade development and the popular culture grew. The Georgian era saw industries flourish, and could be termed the birth of industrialization, radicalism and repression, where the rich grew richer and the poor, poorer. The Balls that were held were attended only by the rich (and sometimes by the middle class) was a sign of the wealthy spending money on entertainment and amusement. On the other hand, though industries opened its doors to the lower labor class, wages were low and working long hours. Jane Austen does not stress much on the poor, but more so, on the life style of the rich, which impresses the middle class people, who have not seen such splendor in their own private world, tucked away in a village.

II. CRITICAL EVALUATION: JANE AUSTEN

Jane Austen herself does not hesitate to criticize herself. I give below examples of such criticism, both by her and other authors.

“..... I must confess that I think (Elizabeth), as delightful a creature as ever, appeared in print and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her, at least I do not know...” (*Austen Jane 1932*)

“..... *Pride and Prejudice* is rather too light and bright and sparkling; it wants shade, it wants to be stretched out here and there..... I doubt you're quite agreeing with me here, I know your starched notions...” (*Letter to her sister Cassandra, February 4th, 1813*)

A. *Lewes Henry George (1817 – 1878):*

“A Great Victorian Assessment of Jane Austen,” an English philosopher and critic of literature and theatre, known also as “A man of letters,” whose career began as a writer and critic but later turned to popularizing science wrote: “We have read Jane Austen’s novels four times, and there is something significant of genuine excellence, when both reader and listener finish their fourth reading with increase of admiration. We never tire of her characters. So entirely dramatic, and so little descriptive, is the genius of Miss Austen. Her place is among the immortals, but the pedestal is erected in a quiet niche of the great temple...” (*Lewes, H. G. 1859*)

B. *Kavanagh Julia (1824 – 1877):*

“Jane Austen’s Strengths and Limitations,” an Irish novelist writes: “It is honorable to the public that she should be so thoroughly appreciated, not merely by men like Sir Walter Scott (1771 – 1832) and Lord Macaulay (1800 – 1859), but all who take up her books, for mere amusement. Wonderful, indeed is the power that out of materials so slender, out of characters so imperfectly marked, could fashion a story. This is her prevailing merit, yet it cannot be denied, it is one that injures her with many readers. It seems so natural and so easy, that we are apt to forget the performance in the sense of its reality. Another of Jane Austen’s Excellencies is also a disadvantage. She does not paint or analyze her characters, they speak for themselves. Her people have never those set sayings or phrases, which we may refer to the author and of which we may refer to the author and of which we may think, how clever! They talk as people of the world and quietly betray their inner being in their folly, falsehood or assumption. But it is natural that powers so great should fail somewhere. Jane Austen could not speak the language with any strong feeling, even though that feeling was ridiculous and unjust. A rumor of Mr. Darcy’s marriage with Elizabeth Bennet (*Pride and Prejudice*) having reached his aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, she hurries down to Longbourn to confront Elizabeth, to extract a promise from Elizabeth that she will not marry Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth refuses and there is a nasty scene. Lady Catherine’s interference is insolent and foolish, a result of a strong feeling and to her it is an important mighty matter, but this moment is lost on the reader. The language used is not strong enough, and the reader does not feel Lady Catherine’s temper, indeed hate, for Elizabeth.” (*Kavanagh, J. 1862 – 1863*)

C. *Oliphant Margaret (1828 – 1897):*

“The Fine Vein of Feminine Cynicism,” a Scottish novelist and historical writer, one of Scotland’s lesser known but most prolific writers, wrote: “Mr. Collins is one of the most distinct and original portraits in the great gallery of fiction, and we accept him gladly as a real contribution to our knowledge of mankind; not a contribution certainly which will make us more in love with our fellow creatures, but yet so life like, so perfect and complete, touched with so fine a wit and so keen a perception of the ridiculous, that the picture once seen, remains a permanent possession.” (*Oliphant, M. 1870*)

D. *Simpson Richard (1820 – 1876):*

“Jane Austen’s fools,” a British Roman Catholic writer and literary scholar on Jane Austen wrote: “...in reality her (Jane Austen) fools are not more simple than her other characters. Her wisest personages have some dash of folly in them, and her least wise have something to love. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Bennet, no sooner than she is introduced than she is defined, ‘as a woman of mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper.’ That makes up the fool negative. Her positive side was to get her daughters married as soon as possible; her fixed ideas of happiness of catching any young man for any of her daughters.

Another fool in the same novel is Mr. Collins; a man of mean understanding, and a bore. He esteems himself worthy to be always occupying a place in the notice of those with whom he associates, and he thinks it is incumbent upon him, always elaborately to explain his motives and his reasons. At the same time he has some sense of humility and speaks of himself and of his belongings as ‘humble’, and shows the most expansive display of humility towards his patrons, namely Lady Catherine. He is perfect when he exhorts a father (Mr. Bennet) to forgive his erring daughter (Lydia Bennet), like a Christian and never speak to her again.” (*Simpson, R. 1870*)

E. *Cecil David Lord (1902 – 1986):*

“The Moral – Realistic View of Life” - A British biographer, historian and academic, wrote: “Like all great comedians Jane Austen satirizes in relation to a universal standard of values, her books express a general view of life. It is the view of that 18th century civilization of which she (Jane Austen) was the last exquisite blossom. She was profoundly moral. She thought you lived only to be good, that it was the first duty of everyone to be sincere, unselfish and disinterested. She reserved some of her most mischievous mockery for extravagant maternal affection and sentimental rhapsodizing over nature. Love itself, though she understood its workings admirably, did not rouse her enthusiasm, unless it was justified by reason, disciplined by self-control.” (*Cecil, D. L. 1935*)

III. BRIEF OUTLINE OF PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* has several themes, the most obvious being love and marriage, but it also deals with moral beliefs and moral conduct. The two main characters, Darcy and Elizabeth are the ones who define pride and prejudice in its full form. Darcy’s pride clashes with Elizabeth’s prejudice and the result shows how these flaws

influence these two characters from hating one another in the beginning of the novel, to loving each other at the end. One can see the gradual change in both of them and at times Darcy's pride increases and then realizing his folly, comes back down again, causing him embarrassment. Elizabeth's prejudice shows from the very moment she sees Darcy, which increases even more, never giving the reader a glimpse of what is to happen; but again, love conquers all. Bingley, Darcy's friend is also caught up in a romance with Elizabeth's sister, Jane. This relationship also rises and falls and rises again to end happily.

Set in Longbourn, where the Bennet family lives, Netherfield Park, residence of the Bingleys and Lucas lodge, the residence of the Lucas's, the story swings to and fro from one place to another, as the characters visit each other during the story. The chief business of Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth's mother, was to find suitable grooms for her daughters (all five of them) and she desperately searches for any man, who will come forward and relieve the stress of keeping five daughters at home. Mrs. Bennet is rather a hysterical woman, who blames her unmarried daughters for being the cause of her many imaginary ailments. Mr. Bennet on the other hand, is a country gentleman and has very little interest in the duty of raising daughters. He finds his wife and his three youngest daughters (Lydia – the youngest, Katherine – the second youngest, who is also known as Kitty and Mary- the middle child) unbearably frivolous and silly. He is however, proud of Jane his eldest and Elizabeth the second eldest daughter. Both Jane and Elizabeth have a strong bond with their father. Mrs. Bennet on the contrary dislikes Elizabeth immensely, possibly due to Elizabeth's strong rapport with her father. The appearance of Mr. Bingley at Netherfield Park, quite close to the Bennet's house, invokes strong hopes in Mrs. Bennet, who is overjoyed to have a "rich" neighbor, who possibly could be a good 'catch' for one of her five girls. Darcy and Bingley, (Darcy being Bingley's wealthy friend and who is visiting Bingley temporarily) make an appearance at the local ball, setting off quite a lot of beating hearts with the female guests, more so Mrs. Bennet, who sees not one but two would be husbands.

Mr. Bingley's first appearance at the ball, along with his two sisters and Mr. Darcy, was an immediate success in the local society and he and Jane are immediately attracted to each other. Darcy on the other hand seems a proud, cold and unfriendly man whom no one seems to like. Jane and Bingley seem to be very much in love, until things go wrong and Bingley leaves Netherfield Park. However, the situation is resolved later and Jane and Bingley are re-united.

Mr. Collins, Mr. Bennet's cousin, who is a pastor at Darcy's aunt's parish will inherit Mr. Bennet's estate upon his death, due to the laws of entailment in England during the 18th century. Mr. Bennet having no male heir is obliged to hand over his estate to Mr. Collins, who is next in line in the family.

Mr. Collins is one of the comical characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. He is a pushy, obnoxious man, who is filled with self-importance and it is easy to take an instant dislike towards him. Elizabeth refuses his marriage proposal, which he cannot believe and on the rebound marries Charlotte Lucas, a poor girl of little standing in social society. Even dull characters such as Mr. Collins are made interesting by

Jane Austen. The pompous stupidity of Mr. Collins and the absurdity and vulgarity of Mrs. Bennet, should in real life prove to us as to Elizabeth and Darcy, but even these characters become such a rich source of mirth and entertainment.

The con-man Mr. Wickham sees the opportunity waiting for him, when Elizabeth refuses to be friends with Darcy and tries to persuade Elizabeth that he is the right man for her. Elizabeth shows weakness of character here and totters on the edge, not being sure which way to go. A timely intervention by Darcy makes Elizabeth realize what a mistake she was making with Wickham. Wickham then elopes with Lydia, who is the youngest Bennet daughter. Mr. Wickham seemed to have the habit of eloping with young unmarried girls, as his previous attempt at seducing Darcy's young sister had failed, thanks to the intervention of Darcy himself.

Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Mr. Darcy's wealthy aunt and Mr. Collins's patroness is a snobbish, arrogant and pushy lady, who expects everyone to appreciate and follow her advice on every topic. Mr. Collins is over-awed by her and is in praise of her, though she bullies him. Collins, being a weak character himself is no match for Lady Catherine.

Elizabeth and Lady Catherine have a showdown regarding Darcy. Lady Catherine's sickly daughter, Miss De Bourgh, had been promised in marriage to Darcy, when both were children. Lady Catherine hears rumors of Elizabeth's romance with Darcy and tries to prevent it. Elizabeth shows courage and stands up to her, which takes everyone by surprise, especially her parents. Elizabeth and Darcy become engaged, pride had been humbled and prejudice dissolved.

IV. THEME

Mrs. Bennet is constantly in search of men who can be suitable suitors for her daughters. How to get a husband, preferably a rich one is Jane Austen's theme in *Pride and Prejudice*. The theme has been criticized by many, as it concerns money. Money plays a major part in the novel. Darcy paying off Wickham after the latter elopes with Lydia, Mrs. Bennet on the prowl for rich husbands, Lady De Bourgh, a wealthy aristocratic woman, who flashes money to control those around her; these are just a few examples. Critics argue that the use of money is disguised by comedy. However, during the early 18th century, the less fortunate women, with no money of their own, were dependent on rich husbands to take care of them, no matter what the consequences in the latter part of marriage. Women are shown as the suppressed ones, men flaunting wealth to attract the opposite sex. Jane Austen examines marriage itself and its effect on five different couples, namely: Mr. and Mrs. Bennet – a marriage falling apart and there is not much left in this couples marriage. There is absolutely no connection between them as they have drifted apart.

Elizabeth and Darcy – an uphill struggle for both, facing difficult situations, anger, resentment, opposition, which finally turns out well for both of them.

Jane and Bingley – Jane not being confident of herself and not ready to open her heart to Bingley and Bingley on the other hand is so much in love with Jane, but again he is swayed by others not to marry Jane, but regains his senses and finally proposes and it's a happy ending for them. Lydia

and Wickham – They elope and then a marriage that takes place suddenly and catches the reader unawares. Wickham marries Lydia with the idea of extracting money from Mr. Bennet. Lydia, a giddy young girl, is swept off her feet and throws herself into Wickham's arms. Their marriage is not a success. Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins – Another ridiculous marriage. Charlotte is unattractive, simple and a very pleasant girl. Mr. Collins on the other hand is a pompous man and he marries her after being refused by Elizabeth Bennet. He is on the rebound and Charlotte is just waiting for anyone to propose to her. She has no financial background and she needs marriage to give her support and nothing more. One cannot see any romantic moments in their marriage and it is just the routine of day to day chores, which a wife is expected to carry out. Charlotte is pleased to oblige as she now has a roof over her head and someone to take care of her. Jane Austen herself, did not marry, which does tell us that possibly she knew the perils that a woman in that day and age had to face.

V. FORM & STRUCTURE

Jane Austen's books have always been deceptively simple. What appears to be a normal straight forward story turns out to be an interweaving plot and sub plots; an intricate and mesmerizing pattern.

The main plot is Elizabeth's romance with Darcy. However, Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's prejudice gets in the way of their romantic preludes. Three sub-plots follow:

- The first is Bingley's attraction towards Jane, where Darcy intervenes to save his friend.
- The second is Wickham's involvement with Darcy's family. Wickham is able to charm Elizabeth to deepen her prejudice against Darcy.
- The third sub-plot being the marriage of Charlotte Lucas to Mr. Collins, which brings Elizabeth and Darcy together.

The first dramatic climax of the story is Elizabeth rejecting Darcy and the second climax is Wickham eloping with Lydia Bennet and the scandal follows.

An air of suspense is maintained till the end. All three sub-plots contribute to the resolution of the principal plot, namely Elizabeth and Darcy, bringing the climax to the story.

VI. FEMALE SATIRE

Jane Austen directs her satire in the excessive use of fashion, lack of female education and the tradition of primogeniture (the state of being the first born child), and the right of succession belongs to that child – the child being a son, daughters were not considered. In *Pride and Prejudice* the Bennet estate passes on to Mr. Collins (he being the distant cousin of Mr. Bennet) and not to the five daughters. "The first part of Mrs. Gardiner's business on her arrival, was to distribute her presents and describe the newest fashions." (Austen, J. 1813)

As she would know of changes in London of which the Bennets would not yet have heard off."

Jane Austen connects feminism and fashion, when the Bennet sisters observe that Bingley is wearing a blue coat when he returns their father's visit. Austen presents men who

are "overly" interested in fashion, and satirizes them as being more "feminine" than the women themselves. She knows that there is extreme interest in both the sexes. Lydia, meeting her sisters, Jane and Elizabeth, after their visits to London and Kent, informs them that she and Kitty will treat them to lunch in Meryton, but that they (Jane and Elizabeth) must lend the money, as they had spent their money on shopping. Her description on her shopping, "Look here, I have bought this bonnet. I do not think it is very pretty, but I thought I might as well buy it as not. I shall pull it to pieces as soon as I get home, and see if I can make it better." (Austen, J.1813)

Austen points out here that Lydia is a frivolous person, buying something that she really does not need, just for the sake of buying it. Caroline Bingley; a well-educated woman, pokes fun at Elizabeth and Jane, in an attempt to show them her wealthy upbringing, as she very likely attended an expensive school during her youth. "...it is amazing to me", says Caroline, "how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished are they all are, ... no one can be really esteemed accomplished, who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions or the word will be half deserved." (Austen, J. 1813)

Darcy retaliates when he hears Caroline Bingley's statement and says, "...she must add something more substantial in the improvement of her mind and reading." Clearly he is taking Elizabeth's side. Austen here shows that substance should outweigh the fashionable affectations.

Mrs. Bennet is thrilled at having Bingley as a new neighbor and expresses her delight in possibly having a rich suitor for one of her daughters. Mr. Bennet uses sarcasm in his statement, "...you must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them." (Austen, J.1813)

Jane Austen satirizes marriage, not only through unsuccessful marriages, as Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Lydia and Wickham, she also comments about marriage. Here Mrs. Bennet refers to the entailment of the property to Mr. Collins on Mr. Bennet's death. "...it was a subject on which Mrs. Bennet was beyond the reach of reason and she continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favor of a man whom nobody cared about." (Austen, J.1813)

Mrs. Bennet goes on to complain about Mr. Collins and his wife. "Well they can be easy with an estate that is not lawfully their own, so much the better. I should be ashamed of having one that was only entailed to me." (Austen, J.1813)

Mr. Bennet never thought of saving money during his working life, expecting that one day he would eventually have a son, who would inherit his estate. In this belief of his, little did he realize that Mrs. Bennet would produce five daughters. It was too late to start saving at this time in his retired life. "Had he done his duty in that respect, Lydia need not have been indebted to her uncle, for whatever the honor or credit could now be purchased for her. The satisfaction of prevailing on one of the most worthless young men in Britain

to be her husband might then have rested in its proper place. (Austen, J.1813)

Due to the lack of Mr. Bennet's foresight, the sisters were forced to find husbands to take care of them. Marriage was a business deal, not love. However, Jane and Elizabeth did not befall this unfortunate event and did in fact marry for love, which was not common in the 18th century.

Elizabeth shows her practical side, when she admits to her sister, that she did start to fall in love with Darcy, once she saw the grandeurs of spacious mansion and surrounding lawns. Elizabeth does not fool herself into believing that it was love at first sight, with Darcy, in fact it was quite the opposite, and she openly confesses this. Elizabeth may or may not have been using sarcasm in her realization, but it does show she is a practical thinker.

Charlotte Lucas, on the other hand, though being a level headed girl, knows that she will never attract the well-to-do men in that area. Being plain and not of good stand financially, she agrees to the very first proposal she receives, that from Mr. Collins. There is no love involved, just the desire to be safe.

Austen says of her, "Without thinking highly either of men or matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honorable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want." (Austen, J.1813)

Then there is Lydia, the youngest daughter, who marries out of love, at first, but without any financial background and is finally forced to beg for help from her sisters at the end of the novel.

Austen defines the happy and unhappy marriage using satire of the education of the female, and the opportunity of becoming fashionable upon marrying into a wealthy family. "...a deeply misogynistic practice in canonical satirical writing where, while males become targets through their individuality, women feature only by dint of their gender. Few, if any distinctions that are made for men are afforded to women and this results in the female becoming 'a metaphor for all that is threatening and offensive to society'". (Simpson, P.2003)

Women satirists like Jane Austen invade their novels with females, with the emphasis being made on their differences as well as their femininity.

Jane Austen uses the beginning of her novels, to denote family life and marriage as "satirical butts". She tries to educate the society that she lives in, of the difficulties and trials woman are faced with. Her emphasis on marriage and its outcome in the face of these challenges is seen in many of her novels. Being a feminist, (some don't agree) she tries to bring awareness of this pathetic state of affairs, where woman are shown clearly as the "under dog".

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Ivy Compton Burnett's "A House and It's Head (1935) and Muriel Spark's "The Girls of Slender Means (1963) are all examples of satire.

"...while male satirists establish themselves as superior, "defining, controlling, dealing out the analyses that hurt, dishing out the critical medicine" to the society which they critique, female satirists wield their caustic pen from a distance that is on the fringe rather than from a privileged height". (Cunningham, V. 2007)

Jane Austen kept a low profile in her writing to enable her to capture the minute details in her novels. The reader is then able to address the larger themes in the book such as marriage, education and family. She was able to combine all the facts of realism together with satire, as she targets the subject of marriage, feminine education, and primogeniture and tensions arising in the family.

Austen, in one of her letters writes, "...the little bit (two inches wide) on which I work with so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labor." (Le, F. D.1995)

Byrne Paula describes Austen's writings as, "...all broadminded and clearly loved black humor". (Byrne, P.2013)

Jane Austen was very critical of the public schools, which spent time in teaching the young girls the Feminine side of life, such as good manners, music and art, embroidery, but spent little or no time on actual academics. The skills taught in those schools were primarily to be used for the girls to attract the right kind of husband. Lady Catherine De Bourgh is astounded when Elizabeth informs her that the five Bennet girls did not have a nanny to look after them, and that Mrs. Bennet brought up the girls herself. Lady Catherine is flabbergasted. She then makes up her mind that the Bennet girls are "common".

Caroline Bingley very likely attended such public schools and expresses her savagery, covered over by superficial politeness. "It is amazing to me...how young ladies can have patience to be very accomplished as they all are", hitting out at Jane and Elizabeth when they were at Netherfield. (Austen, J. 1813)

Harding D.W. says: "She has none of the underlying didactic intention ordinarily attributed to the satirist. Her object is not missionary; it is the more desperate one of merely finding some mode of existence for her critical attitudes." (Harding D.W. 1998)

William Collins, aged around twenty five in the novel is described by Jane Austen as "not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society.

Collins is a boastful man, and takes every opportunity to tell everyone of his acquaintance with Lady Catherine De Bourgh, though in the presence of the Lady in question, becomes a sniveling, gutless man, ready to bow down to her in every possible way just to get the benefits that she bestows on him. He is ready to lose all self-dignity, to keep Lady Catherine happy. Jane Austen disapproves of Collins and attacks and satirizes him.

When Elizabeth is invited to dine with Lady Catherine, Collins says, "Do not make yourself uneasy my dear cousin, about your apparel. Lady Catherine is far from requiring that elegance of dress in us, which becomes herself and daughter, I would advise you to merely put on whatever of your clothes is superior to the rest, there is no occasion for anything more. Lady Catherine will not think the worse of you for being simply dressed. She likes to have the distinction of rank preserved."

This indicates what a high opinion he had of Lady Catherine, and implies that Elizabeth is not properly dressed for the important occasion of meeting Lady Catherine. Mr. Collins is oblivious of Darcy's comments towards him. Mr. Bennet comments on Collins' letter as, "His letter contains a

mixture of servility and self-importance.” Collins shows himself as being excessively vain and concerned about his attire and manners. Elizabeth thinks that Collins is “a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded silly man.” Elizabeth’s rejection of Mr. Collins’ marriage proposal, was unheard of at that time, and seemed to have caused a minor “revolt” in the Bennet family, excluding Mr. Bennet, who agrees wholeheartedly with Elizabeth’s refusal. In the year 1813, it was not a woman’s prerogative to refuse a man who proposed. She was expected to accept immediately; even a minor pause for thought was not to be considered. Her blatant refusal was an explosive situation and Collins was unable to live it down and immediately proposed to Charlotte Lucas.

Mr. Collins on the elopement of Lydia with Wickham, in his letter to Mr. Bennet says, “The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison to this.”

Jane Austen shows satire to indicate that Mr. Collins would prefer Lydia dead, rather than cause an unworthy scene, especially in front of Lady Catherine and the other wealthy aristocracy. In Mr. Collins proposal to Elizabeth, Jane Austen writes, “The idea of Mr. Collins, with all his solemn composure, being run away with his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing, that she could not use the short pause that he allowed, in any attempt to stop him further, and he continued.” Mr. Collins sees Elizabeth’s short pause as her way of showing her shyness at this sudden proposal, not knowing Elizabeth is being polite in not wanting Collins to see her amusement. Jane Austen also disapproves of Lady Catherine and considers her to be domineering, haughty and condescending. Lady Catherine is shown as the person in the highest rank of wealth in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Lady Catherine’s visit to Elizabeth to confront her about the rumors of Darcy’s engagement to her and says, “I know the rumor it must be a scandalous falsehood”, showing that she thinks it is highly impossible that Darcy would even consider proposing to a girl of lower standards than himself. Lady Catherine accuses Elizabeth of tempting Darcy by saying, “...your arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, have made him forget what he owes to himself, and to all his family. You may have drawn him in.” On Elizabeth’s prompt reply, in denying that any such engagement exists, but that she could not vouch what the future held, Lady Catherine’s retort was, “Miss Bennet, do you know who I am?” Meaning Elizabeth had no right to talk back to her, considering her lowly rank in the presence of someone more superior. “If you believed it impossible to be true”, says Elizabeth to Lady Catherine, “I wonder why you took the trouble of coming so far. What could your ladyship propose by it?”

Jane walks to Bingley’s residence, in the rain and falls sick, forcing her to remain at the Bingley residence overnight. Mrs. Bennet is overjoyed at the aspect of Jane being in close-proximity with Bingley, hoping that the closeness of the two would bring them together, not caring that Jane is sick.

Elizabeth remarks to her mother, “If Jane should die; it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Bingley.” Highlighting Mrs. Bennets nonchalance of her daughter’s health, only being interested in Jane allowing Bingley to fall in love with her. However, Mrs. Bennet had anticipated rain that day and wanted Jane to walk to the Bingley residence, telling her daughter, “You had better go

on horseback, because it is likely to rain, and you must stay the night.” She further adds to Elizabeth, on hearing that Jane is ill, “As long as she stays there, it is all very well.” (Jeffares, 1988)

Mrs. Bennet is using Jane as a temptress, to trap Bingley into marriage. The irony of the situation is that what happens at the end of the novel, when Bingley and Jane do get together.

VII. CONCLUSION

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen’s irony has developed into an instrument of discrimination between the people with individuality and will, between the aware and the unaware. The defensive and destructive weapon of Northanger Abbey and *Sense and Sensibility*, has been adapted directly to the theme, through the personality of Elizabeth Bennet, who reflects and illustrates her author’s vision, without ever becoming, (except in her malice towards Lydia), merely her author’s advocate. The irony is internal, it does not take disturbing tangents towards the author’s need for self-vindication: even self-defensive, it is internal and consistent, Mr. Bennet shying from the consequence of his disastrous mistake, Elizabeth’s provocative parrying of Darcy and if new control over her irony permits, Jane Austen to be more clever in avoiding a commitment by Elizabeth in love, for example.

“...will you tell me how long you have loved him? “

“It has been coming on so gradually that I hardly know when it began. But I believe it must date from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberly.”

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the flaw of an irrelevant defensiveness has almost vanished and the flaw of a too obvious personal withdrawal before a moral or emotional issue, as with Lydia and Darcy, is not obtrusive enough to annul or seriously damage the sustained and organizing power of Jane Austen’s irony. Irony here rejects chiefly to discover and illuminate, and though its setting is the same stratified, materialistic and severely regulated society, its new text and discover, its new character, in fact whom Jane Austen has hitherto allowed only herself to impersonate is the free individual.

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