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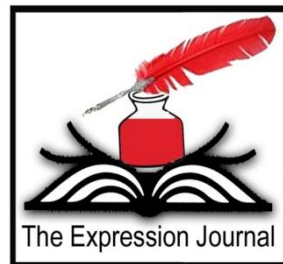
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# The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

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## **JANE AUSTEN'S SKILL IN HER NARRATIVE STYLE AND TECHNIQUE IN *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*: AN ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

Jane Austen uses a distinctively different style of writing through which she tries to combine parody, irony, burlesque, realistic depiction and free indirect speech. It is a literary technique in which the narrator's voice appears to take on properties of the character's voice to the extent that as a reader you are not quite sure who owns the words or thoughts. Jane Austen's heroines have a unique quality of love and morality. She has depicted morality with manners in her novels. Religious seriousness, loyalty in relationships and feminist themes can be easily found in her novels. This paper is an attempt to analyse Jane Austen's skills in her narrative style and technique in *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane Austen's novels are dramatic inform and contain a good deal of skilfully managed dialogue. Her ear for the way women in particular talk is very good indeed. Austen's method of style is nearer to that of a boxer. Her range of effects is wonder fully varied. *Pride and Prejudice* shows a piquant, youthful gaiety. Her art is almost perfect. Thus, this paper focuses on analysing the skills in her narrative style and technique of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

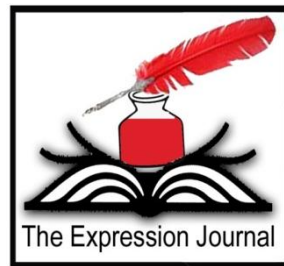
### **Keywords**

The Romantic Era, Jane Austin, *Pride and Prejudice*, Piquancy, Youthful Gaiety, Skilful Dialogues, Realism, Love, Morals, Manners, Social Milieu.

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Jane Austen has a place among the few by virtue of qualities that distinguish her as the cynosure of on phase in the art of fiction. To breathe her name in the company with the literary against of the age, she is so modestly adorned world that appears to some ludicrous. Jane Austen was too genuine a creative artist to get involved in the contemporary social or political problems. But the abilities that women of her times Suff novelist are mirrors of the age they flourish in. Jane Austen however, is ageless. The heart of her little world does not change with the passing of time. She deals only in essences that are perennial. Her writings have that freshness that any age might surmise.

Jane Austen was born a few years later than Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott. Belonging to the period known as the Romantic Revival or Revival of Imagination, She is a realist whose realism is more truly psychological than that of Richardson, for it is free from the tragic obsession of moral sense. She is indeed a classic novelist. Everything shows a delicacy of touch, a sense of balance, a severe reasonableness. All Jane Austen's work is transfused with the spirit of classicism in its highest form, in its most essential quality; a safe, orderly harmony among the powers of the mind, a harmony where of necessity the intellect in paramount. So classical, so delicately shaded in that method, that we are strongly reminded of the art of the great French analysis. Jane Austen writes as one who is entirely ignorant of the growing force of Romanticism, which already has spread its power around her; or rather she holds herself aloof, meeting its fascination with ironical immunity. During the several revolutions of taste during the last century or so English Literature, all the only two reputations that have remain intact before t6he shifts of fashion are those of Shakespeare's and Jane Austen's: just as "We still agree with Ben Johnson about Shakespeare. From Scott, Southey, Coleridge, and Macaulay to Kipling and George Moore, Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forester, she has compelled the amazed admiration of writers of the most diverse kind. Jane Austen, as Mr. Stark young once said, is perhaps the only English example of that spirit of classical Comedy that is more natural to the Latin people than to ours and that Moliere represents for the French" (63).

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Literature, we are told, should teach us to enjoy life or to endure it. It may be that the moments of joy are good preparation for the hours of endurance. In that sense, Jane Austen will surely be admitted as a cultivator of both joy and endurance. Though her books are restful drowsy or listless. The tranquillity of some people is extremely vacant and bloodless, it gives no refreshment. But Jane Austen had in some measure the gift of healing and her disciplined initiality exerts a soothing power. It is a unique fact about Jane Austen that her status as a novelist has never been challenged or even questioned. Since A.C. Bradley recalled critical attention to the peculiar quality of her genius (in 1911), her standing as a novelist has not been seriously challenged. Appreciation of the moral sensibility, and seriousness discoverable in her novels has lately advanced, advanced at some cost to the enjoyment of her wit.

On the surface, Jane Austen's style is simple, but this apparent simplicity is the result of much careful art which lies concealed. Jane Austen is also vivid, witty and sometimes epigrammatic. Her style is perfectly in keeping with her omniscient point of view. She becomes neither Stiffy formal nor patronizing or chattily confidential. In general, her style achieved exactly the proper distancing she wants between the reader is affected the fictional subject, and the reader is affected whether he is aware of it or not. To do this, she may withdraw herself (and the reader with her) somewhat from the immediate subject by using an euphemistic circumlocution that contains an ironic barb. For instance, in reference to Mr. Elton's marriage and Harriets's feelings for him. Emma's thought's are stated with third person indirectness as "it was not to be doubted that poor Harriet's attachment had been an offering to conjugal unreserve"; to grasp the irony on may note the connotations of the word 'offering', while to comprehend the distancing of phraseology he may compare a direct statement like at some intimate moment he told his wife of Harriet". A major difference is that Austen's phrasing disengages us just enough to let us laugh at what is, after all, a natural process of married communication.

Truly speaking, Jane Austen possesses in the highest degree the one essential gift of a novelist, the power to create living characters. It is true that she only draws them in their private aspect, but this is not a superficial aspect. A man's relation to his wife and children is at least as important a part of his life as his relation to his beliefs and career; and it reveals his moral side more fundamentally. If we want to know about a man's talents, we should see him in society; if we want to know about his temper, we should see him at home. Furthermore, Jane Austen shows man as a rule not in moments of crisis but in the trivial incidents of everyday. After all, life is made up of little things, and human nature reveals itself in them as and human nature reveals itself in them as fully as in big ones. A picnic shows up selfishness, kindness, vanity, sincerity, as much as a battle. Only we must have the faculty to perceive them. Jane Austen had this faculty. Not Dickens himself can visualize outward idiosyncrasies of his creature's more vividly, their manner, their charm, their tricks of speech. But she does nor have to present man involved in major Catastrophies. However, is her plot demands it, she shows adequate capacity for portraying her characters in moments of serious crisis. Louisa Musgrove, skipping down the steps of Cobb at Lyme, stumbles an falls apparently lifeless. With acute insight Jane Austen illustrates the way the result of the party react to this disaster; how the egotistic Mery Musgrove is absorbed in her egotistic agitation , how the unrestrained Henrietta collapses, how went worth's sympathetic imagination pictures at once the effect of the news on Louisa's parents, how Anne alone, unselfish, self controlled, keeps her presence of mind. But thought we admire Jane Austen's insight , it tells us nothing new about these people. The uneventful walks and dinner parties do reveal their temperaments and natures to us.

A successful novel should have a well-knit structure. The narrative techniques adopted should be such as to help the writer to achieve his/her purpose. Jane Austen was very popular about the material she tool up for a artistic treatment in her novels. She had a very strict sense of form and knew that the compact form of the novel depended mostly upon the nature of her theme. She restricts her range of social portrayal to three or four families in a country village. She is interested principally in the essentials of human relationships that interest her most can provide themes for her novels. Austen deals with the problem of love and marriage<sup>4</sup> in all her novels and excludes everything else. We find her deeply concerned with the problem of proper adjustment between man and woman. The adjustment is achieved through the best kind of marriage. Jane Austen's men and women are viewed primarily in relation to domestic life. Her mood in all the novels is uniformly comic. This uniformly cosmic vision also imparts a sense of unity to her theme.

Jane Austen achieves a well-knit plot by eliminating everything that she considers superfluent to her theme. The story in *Pride and Prejudice* has a very methodical development. We have here the moment of two persons who are drawn apart from each other until they reach a climax of mutual hostility and her after move towards mutual understanding. Every chapter and incident is the story has relevance to the larger design of the novel. Elizabeth Bennet's misunderstanding is a result of Dorcy's rudeness towards her or the bell and all the characters strengthen the false impression she has developed of him Wickhem by his account of Dorcy, Miss. Binfley by her insolent interference and Charlotte Lucas by causing her to mistake her prejudice for generous sentiment. More or less on the same pattern, Dercy's hatred for Bennet's grows while they draw apart. With Dorcy's letter to Elizabeth in which he offers an explanation of his behaviour begins the phase of reconciliation between the two. At pemberlly, Elizabeth and Dercy find themselves in more favourable circumstances and the story moves towards the happy ending in their union.

Jane Austen is noted for her skill in her narrative management. She is very careful in arranging the events:

"Miss Austen scarcely ever gets out of the humdrum of easy going respectable life. She can therefore well afford to be calm and neat in arranging every thread of narrative she has to weave. George Eliot undertaken to set forth the issues of a more tumultuous life to work our deeper problems and to play with torrent where Miss Austen played with rills." (Cecil 41)

Sometimes Jane Austen poses as historians in possession of all facts, interested only in presenting them as they have happened and interpreting them only as they themselves force evaluation form their vey sum. That is to say, she sometimes seems a chronicler of the past. However, or times, she appears just a narrator of the present. After the delicious dialogue of the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, the author sums up the characters of Mr and Mrs. Bennet:

"Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve and caprice, that the Experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make him wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little Information and uncertain temper. When she was disconnected, she fancied herself nervous. The Business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news." (3)

Here is a very economical compass lie an accurate sketch of both characters, drawn by someone who has complete insight into them. The reader can at this point only guess that Mr.



and Mrs. Bennet are being truly described, but the guess can be grounded on the conversation which they have just completed. She does not tell us of Mr. Bennet's malevolent selfishness. Sometimes Jane Austen intrudes directly she casts aside all pretences. While apparently proceeding along the lines laid out by the requirements of neutral narration, she often by a word, a phrase, or a personal note of qualification discloses a view which cannot represent that of any of her characters and which may not be her own too. In Derbyshire, Elizabeth Bennet first awakens to the true nature of her sentiment for Darcy but she is called away suddenly on account of the elopement of Lydia and Wickham. She hates to go. Then the author steps in:

"If gratitude and esteem are good foundations of affection, Elizabeth's change of sentiment will be neither improbable nor faulty. But if otherwise, if the regard springing from such sources is unreasonable or unnatural, in comparison what is to often described as arising on a first interview with its object and even before two words have been exchanged, nothing can be said in her defense, except that she and given somewhat of a trial to the latter method, in her partiality for Wickham, and that its ill success might perhaps authorize her to seek the other less interesting mode of attachment. Be that as it may, she saw him go with regret." (267)

Jane Austen is skilled in employing dialogues. Dialogue has immense value in the exhibition of passions, motives and feelings; of the reaction of the speakers the events in which they are taking part; and of their influence upon one another. Wherever analytical method is used, dialogue is of service as a verifying supplement to it. William Henry Hudson rightly says:

"In Jane Austen's works on the other hand, the dramatic element predominates; her men and women for the most part portray themselves through dialogue, while she herself continually throws cross lights upon them in the conversation of the different people by whom they are discussed. We shall naturally find that the largest place is given to direct analysis in novels which deal mainly with inner life and with complexities of motive and passion." (Hudson 147)

In the beginning of the novel, it is found that the dialogues throw light on her characters' intentions. They talk about the new tenant at Nether field Park. They are very particular that one of their daughters should marry the young man who occupies Nether field Park. They are very much interested in mental status. Mrs. Bennet says to her husband:

"What is his name?

Bingley

Is he married or single?

Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure!

Single men of large fortune,

four or five thousand a year

when a fine thing for our girls" (*Pride and Prejudice*)

Only from his dialogue, the story starts developing. It shows that Jane Austen attaches much importance to marriage. Archbishop Richard Whatley writes, "Jane Austen conducted her dialogue with regard to character hardly exceeded even by Shakespeare himself" (Watt 40).

The dialogues between Darcy and Elizabeth help to understand their inner motives. At Nether field, Elizabeth dislikes Darcy. Darcy stares at her but she does not respond. When she refuses to dance with him and says, "Despise me if you dare", he replies in an unmistakable accent, "Indeed I do not stare" (48). In this dialogue, we find how adamant Elizabeth Though Darcy is proud or first, he comes down Darcy is such that their reconciliation of the end is quite convincing. In a conversation at Nether field church, Elizabeth makes her well known remark:

"I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense whims and inconsistencies do direct me, I own and I laugh at them whenever I can but these I suppose, are precisely what you are without ....my good opinion once lost is lost forever." (54)

It is a chilling comment which she acknowledges to be a defect but not a laughable one. Her speech shows how far she has gone due to prejudice. Once she was longing to get his love now she is going far away from him, when he approaches her. Elizabeth's dialogue with lady Catherine de Bourgh throws light on Elizabeth's character. It also kindles her feelings towards Darcy. Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Elizabeth are conversing:

And will you promise me, never to enter into such an agreement?

I will make no promise of the kind.

Miss Bennet, I am shocked and astonished.

I expected to find a more reasonable young women." (345)

This dialogue also shows Lady Catherine de Bourgh's intention of discouraging Elizabeth from entering into engagement with Darcy. Jane Austen is compared to Shakespeare in many ways. George Henry Lewes calls her a prose Shakespeare:

"May we suggest to all novelists that Miss. Austen incomparable as an artist is the most dangerous of models. She makes her people speak and act as they speak and act in everyday life and she is the only artist who has done this with success and pleasant effect" (Lewis 140).

It is often observed that Shakespeare's first few scenes strike a keynote and provide the audience or readers with a clear cut picture of the main characters of the play. Similarly Jane Austen lays emphasis on her main theme of love and marriage in the very opening lines of *Pride and Prejudice*:

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (1)

This novel is noted for its element of humour too. The conversations between Bennets reveal Jane Austen's humour. As soon as Bingley settles down at Nether field, they want to make him their son-in-law. Mrs. Bennet says,

Oh! Single my dear, to be sure!

A single man of large fortune;

Four thousand year.

When a fine thing for our girl. (1)

Jane Austen can use humour as opposed to unit for satiric purposes, an unusual talent. Jane Austen comments on Mrs. Bennet,

"She was a women of mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughter married: its solace was visiting and news." (3)

Again, we find comic elements in Mr. Collins. The daughters of Mr. Bennet are not willing to marry Collins. But he is going on begging Elizabeth to marry him. He asks permission from her parents to speak to Elizabeth:

May I hope, madam, for your interest with your fair daughter Elizabeth, When I solicit for the honor of a private audience with her in course of this morning (102)

He can also find the element of irony in this novel. W. A. Craik says:

"Jane Austen characteristically finds ways to subordinating her part as narrator; irony is not merely an attitude, it is a method of presentation, organization analysis and

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judgment. Her skill in irony is at its greatest here .... Irony is appropriate in *Pride and Prejudice* because the characters are all deficient in some ways, even though intelligent characters may express Jane Austen's judgment for her." (Craik 64)

Jane Austen has followed a new technique of handling groups of characters. There are almost twice as many characters in this novel. In chapter 11 of this novel we meet almost all the characters.

Her study of characters is superb. She does everything in clear outline and perspective. She does not analyse logically when she knows by interaction. She does not search out the grounds of motive like George Eliot. She does not also illumine her characters like Meredith by search light flashes of insight. Referring to her study of characters, Legouis Gazamian observes:

"First, the character who appears but never speaks, like Lady Lucas and Mr. Philips, who therefore merely gives an impression of a type of company and second the localized but disembodied public opinion. This letter is necessary because of the public nature of many of the events Lydia's elopement and subsequent reclamation are things that cannot be kept secret." (83)

It may be asserted that the novelist eminently succeeds in the use of these two elements in *Pride and Prejudice* and this contributes to the artistic success of the work. Jane Austen can be placed on par with Shakespeare:

Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who...have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. She has given us a multitude of characters, all in a certain sense, common place, all such as he meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings" (Wright 6)

The technique of an artist cannot be appreciated for its novelty or cleverness alone. It has to be of service to his theme. A novelist's technique has to facilitate his or her portrayal of characters and situations. Going by this criterion, one may conclude that in *Pride and Prejudice*, the narrative and the dialogue of Jane Austen serve her artistic purpose well and that her men and women have been convincingly presented. That the author is a master of techniques becomes clear when this novel is critically examined.

To conclude, Jane Austen's novels are dramatic inform and contain a good deal of skilfully managed dialogue. Her ear for the way women in particular talk is very good indeed. Her range of effects is wonder fully varied. *Pride and Prejudice* shows a piquant, youthful gaiety. Her art is almost perfect.

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