

# JANE AUSTEN

Why?

Clue...

This is not the reason...



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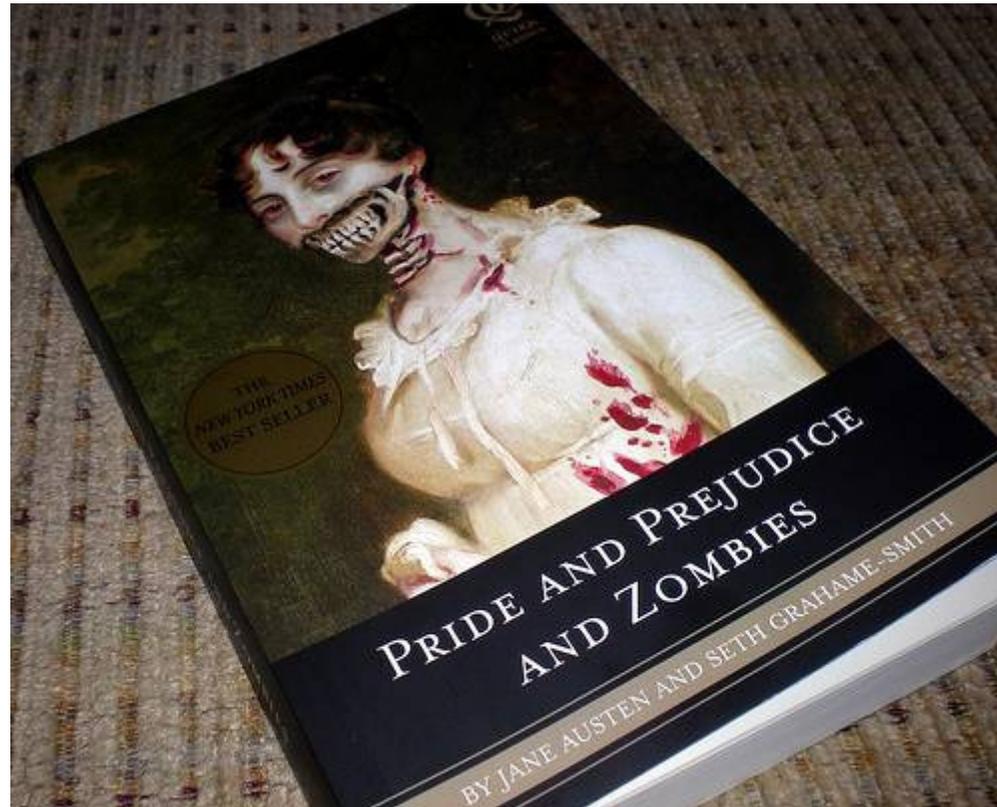
Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice*, I want to dig her up and hit her over the skull with her own shin-bone.

Mark Twain

## Novels

- *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)
- *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)
- *Mansfield Park* (1814)
- *Emma* (1815)
- *Persuasion* (1817)
- *Northanger Abbey* (1817)
- *The Watsons* (Unfinished 1804)
- *Sanditon* (Unfinished 1817)
- *Lady Susan* (1794, not published in Austen's lifetime)

# Themes



Pride and Prejudice -- Now with Zombies

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- Love and romance **BUT**
- Money and property
- The individual and society
- Morality
- Seeming and being
- No zombies...

# Property

*Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield  
Park*



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It is a truth universally acknowledged that a young man in **possession** of a **good fortune** must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the **rightful property** of some one or other of their daughters.

*Pride and Prejudice*

About thirty years ago Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, **with only seven thousand pounds**, had the good luck to **captivate** Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be **thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady**, with all the comforts and consequences of **an handsome house and large income**. All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match, and her uncle, the lawyer, himself, **allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it.**

*Mansfield Park*

# Seeming and Being

*Emma*

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her [....] The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her.

# Style

- The narrative voice
- Mock-formal
- Irony
- Comedy
- Dialogue
- Free indirect discourse
- Meta-textual

# The narrative voice

- Omniscient perspective  
but often limited
- Opinionated
- Judgemental?

# Narrative voice: Parodic

Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on – lived to have six children more – to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. *Northanger Abbey*

## Narrative voice: Satirical

Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth; and, at fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did, nor could the valet of any new made lord be more delighted with the place he held in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter Elliot, who united these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion. *Persuasion*

# Mock-formality

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. *Pride and Prejudice*

# Irony

A subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance [...]. At its simplest, in *verbal irony*, it involves a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant [...]. The more sustained *structural irony* in literature involves the use of a naïve or deluded hero or unreliable narrator, whose view of the world differs widely from the true circumstances recognized by the author and readers; literary irony thus flatters its readers' intelligence at the expense of a character (or fictional narrator). Chris Baldick, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters. (*Pride and Prejudice*)

Sir Walter prepared with condescending bows for all the afflicted tenantry and cottagers who might have a hint to shew themselves. *Persuasion*

# Irony in dialogue

“He is as fine a fellow,” said Mr Bennet as soon as they were out of the house, “as ever I saw. He simpers, and smirks, and makes love to us all. I am prodigiously proud of him. I defy even Sir William Lucas himself, to produce a more valuable son-in-law.” *Pride and Prejudice*

# Comedy

Comedy: A play (or other literary composition) written chiefly to amuse its audience by appealing to a sense of superiority over the characters depicted. A comedy will normally be closer to the representation of everyday life than a tragedy, and will explore common human failings rather than tragedy's disastrous crimes. Its ending will usually be happy for the leading characters. In another sense, the term was applied in the Middle Ages to narrative poems that end happily: the title of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (c.1320) carries this meaning.

Chris Baldick, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

# Comedy

Comic monsters

- General Tilney – over-bearing and tyrannous; thinks he is cunning, but is transparent
- Lady Catherine de Burgh – bullying, proud and pompous
- Mr Collins – pompous, silly, self-important
- Mrs Norris – encroaching, toadying to superiors, unkind to inferiors
- Mrs Elton – social climbing, self-important
- Sir Walter Elliot – vain, snobbish, indifferent to his most deserving daughter

# Comic characters

Not monsters!

- Sir John Middleton – the bucolic squire (*Sense and Sensibility*)
- Mrs Jennings - burlesque character from eighteenth-century comedy (*Sense and Sensibility*)
- Lydia Bennet – heedless, thoughtless romp from eighteenth-century comedy (*Pride and Prejudice*)
- Mrs Musgrove – silly but well-intentioned
- [Mrs Croft] “Pretty well, ma'am, in the fifteen years of my marriage. I have crossed the Atlantic four times, and have been more than once to the East Indies and back again . . . But I never went beyond the Straights — and never was in the West Indies. We do not call Bermuda or Bahama, you know, the West Indies.”
- Mrs. Musgrove had not a word to say in dissent; *she* could not accuse herself of having ever called them anything in the whole course of her life. *Persuasion*
- Mr Bennet, dryly witty *Pride and Prejudice*

# Dialogue

- Note the choice of words to suit the character's personality
- Note the different lengths of sentences
- Note the different forms of syntax
- Note who uses slang, and who uses more formal English

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least." (Mr Bennet)

"La! You are so strange! But I must tell you how it went off [...]. And there was my aunt, all the time I was dressing, preaching and talking away just as if she was reading a sermon. However, I did not hear above one word in ten, for I was thinking, you may suppose, of my dear....." (Lydia Bennet)

"She is unfortunately of a sickly constitution, which has prevented her from making that progress in many accomplishments which she could not have otherwise failed of, as I am informed by the lady who superintended her education, and who still resides with them. But she is perfectly amiable, and often condescends to drive by my humble abode in her little phaeton and ponies." (Mr Collins)

"There is a great deal of truth in what you say," replied Sir Thomas, "and far be it from me to throw any fanciful impediment in the way of a plan which would be so consistent with the relative situations of each. I only meant to observe that it ought not to be lightly engaged in, and that to make it really serviceable to Mrs. Price, and creditable to ourselves, we must secure to the child, or consider ourselves engaged to secure to her hereafter, as circumstances may arise, the provision of a gentlewoman, if no such establishment should offer as you are so sanguine in expecting."  
(Sir Thomas Bertram)

"I see what you are at. You are quizzing me and Miss Anderson [....] I sat there an hour one morning waiting for Anderson, with only her and a little girl or two in the room, the governess being sick or run away, and the mother in and out every moment with letters of business, and I could hardly get a word or a look from the young lady—nothing like a civil answer—she screwed up her mouth, and turned from me with such an air!" (Tom Bertram)

What do you think of my gig, Miss Morland? A neat one, is not it? Well hung; town-built; I have not had it a month. It was built for a Christchurch man, a friend of mine, a very good sort of fellow; he ran it a few weeks, till, I believe, it was convenient to have done with it. I happened just then to be looking out for some light thing of the kind, though I had pretty well determined on a curricle too; but I chanced to meet him on Magdalen Bridge, as he was driving into Oxford, last term: 'Ah! Thorpe,' said he, 'do you happen to want such a little thing as this? It is a capital one of the kind, but I am cursed tired of it.' 'Oh! D—,' said I; 'I am your man; what do you ask?' And how much do you think he did, Miss Morland?"

"I am sure I cannot guess at all."

"Curricle-hung, you see; seat, trunk, sword-case, splashing-board, lamps, silver moulding, all you see complete; the iron-work as good as new, or better. He asked fifty guineas; I closed with him directly, threw down the money, and the carriage was mine." *Northanger Abbey*

"I think you must like Udolpho, if you were to read it; it is so very interesting."

"Not I, faith! No, if I read any, it shall be Mrs. Radcliffe's; her novels are amusing enough; they are worth reading; some fun and nature in them."

"Udolpho was written by Mrs. Radcliffe," said Catherine, with some hesitation, from the fear of mortifying him.

"No sure; was it? Aye, I remember, so it was; I was thinking of that other stupid book, written by that woman they make such a fuss about, she who married the French emigrant."

"I suppose you mean Camilla?"

"Yes, that's the book; such unnatural stuff! An old man playing at see-saw, I took up the first volume once and looked it over, but I soon found it would not do; indeed I guessed what sort of stuff it must be before I saw it: as soon as I heard she had married an emigrant, I was sure I should never be able to get through it." *Northanger Abbey*

## Free Indirect Discourse/ Style

Narrative in the third person (he/ she/ they) which is not dialogue but which takes on the verbal characteristics of the character.

This effaces the narrative voice and takes us closer to the character.

“Her astonishment, as she reflected on what had passed, was increased by every review of it. That she should receive an offer of marriage from Mr. Darcy! that he should have been in love with her for so many months! so much in love as to wish to marry her in spite of all the objections which had made him prevent his friend’s marrying her sister, and which must appear at least with equal force in his own case, was almost incredible!” *Pride and Prejudice*

Mrs. Elton, in all her apparatus of happiness, her large bonnet and her basket, was very ready to lead the way in gathering, accepting, or talking—strawberries, and only strawberries, could now be thought or spoken of.—"The best fruit in England—every body's favourite—always wholesome.—These the finest beds and finest sorts.—Delightful to gather for one's self—the only way of really enjoying them.—Morning decidedly the best time—never tired—every sort good—hautboy infinitely superior—no comparison—the others hardly eatable—hautboys very scarce—Chili preferred—white wood finest flavour of all—price of strawberries in London—abundance about Bristol—Maple Grove—cultivation—beds when to be renewed—gardeners thinking exactly different—no general rule—gardeners never to be put out of their way—delicious fruit—only too rich to be eaten much of—inferior to cherries—currants more refreshing—only objection to gathering strawberries the stooping—glaring sun—tired to death—could bear it no longer—must go and sit in the shade." *Emma*

# A woman's world?

- Domestic settings
- Female central protagonists
- No internal view of men?
- Scenes without women?

## But...

- There is a scene in *Mansfield Park* in which no woman is present (between Sir Thomas Bertram and young Tom)
- In *Emma* we see Mr Knightley's emotions through involuntary body language (a heated face when Mrs Weston suggests that he is in love; unusual lack of energy when he thinks that Emma loves Frank Churchill) and his language, which becomes disjointed and exclamatory

## A closed, insular world?

- ‘During a decade in which Napoleon was effectively engaging, if not transforming, Europe, Jane Austen composed a novel in which the most important events are the fact that a young man changes his manners and a young lady changes her mind’. Tony Tanner on *Pride and Prejudice*
- The Militia: *Pride and Prejudice*
- The Navy: *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*

# *Persuasion*

She might have been absolutely rich and perfectly healthy, and yet be happy. Her spring of felicity was in the glow of her spirits, as her friend Anne's was in the warmth of her heart. Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth's affection. His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish that tenderness less, the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine. She gloried in being a sailor's wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance.

# Meta-textuality

Text which draws attention to its own textuality.

Meta-fiction draws attention to the devices of fiction.

Austen's narrative voice reminds us that we are reading, and holding, a book. (She hadn't heard of Kindle)

*Northanger Abbey and Mansfield Park*

The anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity.

[....] To begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen is to do pretty well; and professing myself moreover convinced that the general's unjust interference, so far from being really injurious to their felicity, was perhaps rather conducive to it, by improving their knowledge of each other, and adding strength to their attachment, I leave it to be settled, by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience.      *Northanger Abbey*

Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest. *Mansfield Park*