

# Humour and Irony in Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice"

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**Pula, 2024.**

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## ABSTRACT

*Pride and Prejudice* is a novel written by the English author Jane Austen. The novel is regarded as a comedy of manners and while it exhibits some elements of a romantic comedy it is considered an antiromantic form of comedy. It was written between 1796 and 1797 and published in 1813. Austen relies on comedy and irony as literary techniques in this and other novels. Comedy is used to elicit laughter by means of placing characters in exaggerated and comic situations. Satire, as a subcategory of comedy relies on humour to criticize societies and beliefs. To accomplish this, it exposes and exploits characters' shortcomings and weaknesses. Another subcategory of comedy found within the novel is parody. This literary device is used to mockingly imitate and ridicule an author's stylistic patterns. Farce, another subcategory of comedy, employs physical humour, exaggerated characters, and absurd situations to entertain the audience. Aside from comedy, the novel also relies on different forms of irony (verbal, dramatic, situational) to help develop and disclose the true nature of Austen's selection of characters. Another important aspect of the novel are comic characters which can be divided into two groups: minor and major comic characters. Minor comic characters are referred to as "comic fools". These kinds of characters are always the main source of entertainment and ridicule as well as oblivious to their own foolishness. Their purpose is to amuse the readers since they bring action and create obstacles for the main characters. On the other hand, major comic characters learn from their mistakes and experiences despite having their own foolish moments. They are reasonable and aware of their own faults.

Key words: *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen, comedy, irony, satire, parody, farce, comic characters

## SAŽETAK

*Ponos i predrasude* je roman engleske autorice Jane Austen. Roman se smatra komedijom karaktera i iako pokazuje neke elemente romantične komedije, smatra se anti-romantičnom komedijom. Napisan je između 1796. i 1797., a objavljen 1813. Austen se u ovom i drugim romanima oslanja na komediju i ironiju kao jednim od prepoznatljivih književnih tehnika. Komedija se koristi kako bi izazvala smijeh u namijenjenoj publici stavljanjem likova u pretjerane i komične situacije. Satira, kao potkategorija komedije, oslanja se na humor kako bi kritizirala društva i uvjerenja. Kako bi to postigla, razotkriva i kritizira nedostatke i slabosti likova. Još jedna potkategorija komedije koja se nalazi u romanu je parodija. Ovo književno sredstvo koristi se za podrugljivo oponašanje i ismijavanje autorovih stilističkih uzoraka. Farsa, još jedna potkategorija komedije, primjenjuje fizički humor, likove s prenatlaženim osobinama i apsurdne situacije kako bi zabavila publiku. Osim komedije, roman se također oslanja na različite oblike ironije (verbalnu, dramatičnu, situacijsku) kako bi pomogao razviti i razotkriti istinsku narav likova. Drugi važan aspekt romana su komični likovi koji se mogu podijeliti u dvije kategorije: sporedni i glavni komični likovi. Sporedni komični likovi uvijek su glavni izvor zabave i ismijavanja iako su oni toga često nesvjesni. Njihova je svrha zabaviti čitatelje i stvaraju prepreke glavnim likovima. S druge strane, glavni komični likovi uče na svojim pogreškama iako su i oni skloni komičnim pogreškama. Razumni su i svjesni vlastitih grešaka.

Ključne riječi: *Ponos i predrasude*, Jane Austen, komedija, ironija, satira, parodija, farsa, komični likovi



# 1. INTRODUCTION

This work aims to provide insight into the use of comedy and irony in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, more precisely, how those elements are used in defining characters and driving the plot forward. The paper will provide general information about the author and her six novels, as well as offer a better understanding of what set her literary work apart from her contemporaries. This ties into a discussion of how Jane Austen herself differentiates from Romantic writers and the literary features typically found in Romantic literature. Furthermore, a brief overview of *Pride and Prejudice* will be given. The literary devices will be more thoroughly explained and categorized into several types that are found within the novel, with definitions provided and supported with examples from the book. The remainder of the paper will focus on the analysis of the minor and major comic characters that appear in the novel and how their interactions and numerous silly incidents help form its plot.

## 2. ABOUT JANE AUSTEN AND HER WRITING

Jane Austen was an English writer who wrote during a period in British history known as the later Georgian era, more specifically the Regency period - part of the Georgian era lasting from 1811 to 1820. Austen is typically regarded solely as a figure of the Regency era because all of her six novels were published in a short timeframe between 1811 and 1818. However, her short life covered the transition from one century to the next, during which she matured, came of age, and was influenced by Georgian society, within which she developed her beliefs. Furthermore, her three novels, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Northanger Abbey*, were all written in the 1790s. In comparison, her other three novels, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, are works that truly belong to the Regency period as they were written later (Le Faye, 2002, p. 7). These six novels are grouped into two categories. The first three novels, as referenced in the preceding text, were first drafted in the 1790s, although extensively reworked multiple times before publication. Following the successful release of *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811, the last three works, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, were written quickly after. Out of the six novels, the final three are considered more refined and distinguished works (Irvine, 2005, p. 43). Her six novels provide significant insights into the intellectual, political, and spiritual viewpoints of Jane Austen's period. Nevertheless, she explicitly avoids advocating for any of those specific beliefs in her works (Todd, 2006, p. 15).

Her early novels are distinctly self-aware of their identity as such, focusing on stories centred around family and home life. When she started writing, the genre had faced broad criticism based on moral and aesthetic criteria. Courtship novels, written mostly by female authors, were focused on the education and romantic pursuit of virtuous young women. The novels reflected the issues of a changing society, discussing questions about individuality, authority, the significance of emotions, and self-awareness. The woman-centred novel was critical of materialism. It valued sophistication and courtesy, the female perspective, women's experiences, and intimacy and love in matrimony. On top of that, it valued the unique, superior, and integral identity above all else. Crucial to the cultural revolution, known as romanticism, were novels about a young woman's courtship and marriage (Brownstein, 1997, p. 35).

Even though Austen wrote during the “Romantic” period, her interest was not in writing romances, sentimental novels, moral-domestic novels, emotional, lyric poetry, or romantic comedy, which were all widely read genres at the end of the century (Sørbø, 2014, p. 74). Although they were Austen’s preferred reading material, the novels she wrote, in turn, mock them. Austen both adopts and parodies the novel form, keeping a safe distance from its stereotypes and concepts, viewing them as representations of her society’s traditions and values (Brownstein, 1997, p. 35). Reading Jane Austen with explicit emphasis on comedy uncovers her works’ portrayal of a social world shaped by individuals competing for position and power (Goss, 2019, p. 8).

## 2.1. ROMANTICISM: AUSTEN’S DEPARTURE FROM THE NORM

The term ‘Romanticism’ is typically used to refer to a literary and philosophical movement that took place in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century (Wu, 1999, p. 39).

There are some challenges in associating Austen to Romanticism. Primarily, all Romantics are poets. Next, they are all men. Furthermore, Jane Austen was unaware that she was living in ‘the age of the Romantics’ because the six poets - William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley and John Keats, were labelled with this name after several decades following her death. This is just one of the many reasons why she is considered an anti-romantic writer (Irvine, 2005, p. 29-30).

For quite a while, Jane Austen has been regarded as a literary genius but previous critics experienced difficulties with placing her work within the traditional literary periods and movements. Despite the fact that she lived and wrote during the period known as Romanticism (her life spanned from 1775 to 1817, and *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813), she was not considered a Romantic writer throughout much of the last two centuries. According to traditional opinion, the typical Romantic writer advocated for nature, subjectivity, emotional expression and the individual’s rights and experiences. On the other hand, Jane Austen writes about a social world in which the

desires of one individual are controlled by a code of manners and etiquette (Wu, 1999, p. 237).

Furthermore, the Romantic movement has the same objective as revolutionary politics, which entails the dissolution of the monarchy and opposition to any kind of hierarchy and authority, for instance, patriarchal authority over women. However, Austen's beliefs were either apolitical or conservative, seeing that her novels do not allude to anything regarding revolutionary uprisings of that time and do not appear to oppose traditional institutions or conventions (Wu, 1999, p. 237).

In recent years, there have emerged many speculations about Austen and the Romantic period. It is possible to read *Pride and Prejudice* as a universally recognizable piece but also as one that deals with concerns and the progress of its era. This standpoint can be reinforced by highlighting significant similarities between *Pride and Prejudice* and the work of other notable male Romantic Poets, and by taking note of how Austen, and other women writers of her time, distinguished themselves from the male poets because of their viewpoint and devotions (Wu, 1999, p. 237).

Elements of the novel appear anti-romantic, such as courtship and marriage. The novel proposes the idea that when a woman is faced with a decision, for example, in choosing a husband, she will decide based on her sound judgement. Irrational feelings are avoided or absent. The knowledge of each character's financial status and wealth determines their suitability as a potential marriage partner. What is more, there are no passionate love scenes in the novel. When Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy decide to marry, the emotional passion in the scene is reduced to a minimum and there are no mentions of kisses and embraces (Wu, 1999, p. 238).

### 3. AN OVERVIEW OF PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

*Pride and Prejudice* is a widely recognized work in English literature. The novel is classified as a comedy of manners. While it has some elements of a romantic comedy, it is considered an antiromantic form of comedy. The original version, which Austen first started writing in 1796, was titled *First Impressions*. It was later revised, resulting in some minor alterations; one of them changing the title into *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel was finished in the autumn of 1797; however, it was published at the end of January 1813. During that time, it was considered improper for a respectable woman to be affiliated with writing novels for profit and wide readership. As a result, Jane Austen published her novels anonymously, under the pseudonym “By a Lady” (Le Faye, 2002, p. 23, 35).

In the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen portrays English society in the nineteenth century and brings to life the time of social classes, as well as their ways of thinking, behaving, and dressing. Throughout the entirety of the narrative, the mission of the Bennet family is to get all five daughters married in order to provide them with financial stability and security. The reason for this is a law that existed at the time which made it impossible for women to inherit property. The main character, Elizabeth Bennet, is more noticeable than other women in the novel. With her independent spirit, sarcasm, and wit, she challenges the traditional role of what it means to be a woman of nineteenth-century England.

The novel begins with the arrival of a wealthy bachelor, Mr. Bingley, who comes to live in the English countryside. His large income is what makes him a good choice for marriage. He organizes a ball where, along with his friend Mr. Darcy, makes his first introduction in the neighbourhood. At this event, Elizabeth overhears Mr. Darcy’s rude remark about her, which initiates her prejudice towards him. During this time, Elizabeth’s eldest sister Jane develops feelings for Bingley. The other three daughters are Mary, Lydia and Kitty, and the latter two are silly and immature and a contrast to Jane and Elizabeth. As the plot unfolds, they and their mother tarnish the reputation of the Bennet family.

The plot centres on Elizabeth Bennet's dynamic relationship with the wealthy and arrogant Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy. Initially, she finds Mr. Darcy repulsive and proud, which creates a lot of misunderstandings. Mr. Darcy is no different. At first, he views Elizabeth and her family as below his status, but over time Elizabeth shatters his initial perception of women and her family and confronts and challenges him in conversations. Both go through personal growth and learn to overcome their prejudices. Their way of thinking changes. The turning point of the novel occurs when Mr. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth for the second time, and she gladly accepts. Austen's humour runs through the story, through which she gives an honest portrayal of their behaviours. Through the characters, she highlighted the problems of women in society in a subtle way.

## 4. COMEDY

Comedy refers to a genre of drama and a broader concept of entertainment. In the context of Jane Austen's novel, it refers to a literary device or a form of communication designed to elicit laughter by any means at its disposal, placing characters in comic situations, exaggeration, misunderstandings, and many more (Lundahl, 2018, p. 4). Comedy can be categorised into genres: satire, parody, farce, burlesque, slapstick, limerick, caricature, comedy of manners, black comedy, romantic comedy as well as many others (Morreall, 2009, p. 71, 141). Some of these genres will become essential in further examining *Pride and Prejudice* but can also be applied in studying her other works.

### 4.1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRAGEDY AND COMEDY

The difference between comedy and tragedy is that the purpose of comedies is to elicit humour and laughter, while tragedies invoke emotions - fear, pity and adoration for the hero. Comedies deal with more detailed concepts than tragedies. They have multiple narratives happening at once, with more characters and more types of characters. Unlike tragedies, where actions lead to unavoidable consequences, comedies highlight the unpredictability of situations - the manner in which any kind of event may unfold with entirely different possibilities (Morreall, 2009, p. 75-79).

There is an evident contrast between comedy and tragedy; tragedy is heavy and serious, while comedy is light and playful. What is most important is the reality of what ensues after the culmination of tragedy. In tragedy, there cannot be a future after its resolution. Despite there remaining a messenger to narrate what has transpired, tragedy eliminates the chance of anything occurring beyond its ending (Goss, 2019, p. 142). A tragic hero's stubbornness shows in their obsession with revenge and their inability to forgive. Aristotle said that in comedy, enemies eventually become friends, but in tragedy they never do. If a comedy has a character who has a determined mind or an obsession, that character is not regarded as a hero who will be praised but as a potential comedic tool (Morreall, 2009, p. 80).

Austen employs the same material as the tragedian. She does this by introducing a flawed character that tends to make decisions that one would perceive as immoral. However, Austen stands apart from the true tragedian because she prioritizes the absurdity of things instead of criticizing the character's actions. She does not present them as tragic but as humorous (Goss, 2019, p. 142).

#### 4.2. COMEDY OF MANNERS

Comedy of manners is a genre of dramatic comedy that portrays and satirizes the behaviour, manners, and actions of a specific social group or class in an environment (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998). The focus of comedy of manners is the way individuals behave in situations or more precisely, the manners they display in social interactions. This genre is usually characterized by witty dialogue, social satire, and the relationships and behaviours of its characters. It is considered the most anti-romantic form of comedy (Hirst, 2018, p. 1-2).

#### 4.3. ROMANTIC COMEDY

Romantic comedy is a genre of comedy that combines elements of romance and humour. This type of comedy is mainly concerned with foolish mistakes and misunderstandings of two characters in a romantic relationship. It features light-hearted situations and entertaining dialogue. The stories of romantic comedies conclude with the young lovers overcoming various obstacles and differences, ultimately ending with happy resolutions - typically with a marriage between the two of the characters (Baldick, 1990, p. 222).

#### 4.4. SATIRE

Satire is a literary genre that uses humour, irony and exaggeration to criticize or scold individuals, societies and ideas. Satire may take on various forms, but it is commonly assessed based on its level of cruelty and harshness (Stott, 2005, p. 147). Satire as a writing style exposes the shortcomings and weaknesses of individuals, groups, societies or institutions in order to mock and scorn. It employs irony in order to provide



social criticism. In literary works, specifically in comedy, satire is usually a minor component. The tone of satire can range from light amusement to intense resentment and frustration. Satire is classified into direct and indirect types. When it comes to direct or formal satire, the reader is directly addressed with a satiric remark by the writer. On the other hand, indirect satire, which is typically encountered in plays and novels, lets the reader make their own conclusions based on the actions and behaviours of the characters (Baldick, 1990, p. 228).

Claiming that something is satirical does not protect it from criticism. It does, however, suggest a mocking tone which should not be viewed as a direct correlation with the author's values. Satire is found in various media platforms and is not a unique result of comedy, but it is a comic form. It is the most clearly political of the other forms of comedy and has prompted governments to enforce restrictive measures in support of censorship (Stott, 2005, p. 103).

Jane Austen's contemporaries did not consistently use narrative satire in their literary works. The narratives of Jane Austen contain satirical elements but aim to control and limit them. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennett is a satiric spectator of individual characters and social norms whose sharp insight will be subdued by her marriage to Mr. Darcy (Quintero, 2007, p. 363). Austen's plots are simple with minimal scenes and a reduced number of characters, but she utilizes satirical figures such as the match-making mother, flirtatious soldier and bothersome clergyman as well as many other types in *Pride and Prejudice* in order to create her heroines' environment (Quintero, 2007, p. 290). She exposes and exaggerates the absurd and irresponsible behaviour and characteristics of her characters with the intention of exposing their flaws and wrongdoings. Jane Austen uses satire in her novel in order to criticise social conventions - the institution of marriage, the position of women in society, and the class system (Lundahl, 2018, p. 1).

#### 4.5. PARODY AND THE ART OF IMITATION

Parody imitates the style, tone or content of the original literary work. Defined as a mocking imitation that ridicules the author's stylistic patterns by exaggerated mimicry. Parody is associated with the burlesque through its combination of serious styles with

comical themes. It is also tied to satire in its judgement of abnormal action and conduct (Baldick, 1990, p. 185). One of the tasks of parody is its ability to act as criticism. The typical way in which parody works is to capture specific features of a style or manner and exaggerate them to create an absurd effect. This plays a significant role in criticism, as the role of parody includes determining a recognizable style or mannerism and then turning it into something comical (Dentith, 2000, p. 32). Imitation is how language is learned, not only with grammar and vocabulary, but through a range of behaviours, attitudes, and speaking styles. Parodic imitation of someone else's words is just one of many possibilities one might employ when participating in conversation or discourse. Parody consists of imitation and alteration of another person's words. Language is never truly original to any speaker; it is always received from one speaker to another and imitated and modified as each person passes it on to others (Dentith, 2000, p. 2-3).

In Jane Austen's novels, parody plays a crucial part in helping differentiate her works from other stereotyped forms. For example, throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, there are elements of parody (Dentith, 2000, p. 64). Parody plays an important role in her novel, as it offers a critique of the society of her time and its social rules and expectations, specifically those in relation to gender, marriage and social class. Her novel parodies the popular romantic and sentimental novels in order to ridicule their portrayal of love, including intense passionate emotions. Through her characters she drew attention to the institution of marriage and the absurdity of the pursuit of marriage, status, and wealth.

#### 4.6. FARCE

Farce is a genre of comedy that heavily depends on physical humour, horseplay, and generally awkward social situations to invoke laughter from the audience or reader (Stott, 2005, p. 144). In addition to what was mentioned, it also relies on stereotypical characters and the embarrassing antics they cause in outrageous situations (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2006). These characters more often than not possess exaggerated characteristics and behaviours which result in them finding themselves in absurd and improbable situations. In farce, a series of misunderstandings and physical

disasters occur. This genre of comedy can be found in European drama since Aristophanes. It is important to note, however, that the term first emerged in medieval France where it was used to describe short comic interludes. Regardless, it would not become a distinct form of full-length comedy until the 19th century (Baldick, 1990, p. 95).

Jane Austen's main instrument of mockery is farce. There are certain scenes in which Austen relies solely on farcical situations to provide laughter. For instance, farce is present in the scene where Elizabeth and Miss Bingley walk around the room of Bingley's residence. It reveals character features and develops the plot. Miss Bingley wants to draw attention to herself and her elegant figure by walking around, and this also shows her playfulness and flirtatiousness that is seen as ridiculous and an obvious attempt at gaining Mr. Darcy's attention. On the other hand, it is the beginning of Mr. Darcy's interest in Elizabeth as he only raises his eyes and unknowingly closes his book when Elizabeth joins Miss Bingley in her walk (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 146-147).

Another scene of farce is when Mrs. Bennet asks Mr. Bennet to force Elizabeth into marrying Mr. Collins. The comic result is distinctly theatrical. It is very comical because it seems like a lot of action is expected to happen since it starts on a high note. A determined Mrs. Bennet rushes to the library where Mr. Bennet is and is determined to succeed in her mission: "Oh! Mr. Bennet, you are wanted immediately; - we are all in an uproar. You must come and make Lizzy marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not have him, and if you do not make haste he will change his mind and not have her" (Austen, 2019, p. 84). Mrs. Bennet is full of high hopes after Mr. Bennet invites Elizabeth into the study. But it did not go the way she had planned: "An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do" (Austen, 2019, p. 85). What follows is Mrs. Bennet's frantic reaction and her disappointment which elicits laughter. This scene successfully reveals characters emotions and personalities. It reveals Mr. Bennet's dislike of his wife and suggests the narrator's seeming disapproval of his dry unsympathetic wit (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 147-148).

## 5. IRONY

Irony has a widely recognized and commonly understood definition. It is a literary technique or a form of communication in which the intended meaning of words is opposite or different to their literal meaning. The central element of any definition of irony is the fact that it will always result in a double statement - a literal and an intended meaning. Because of this, a person can understand hidden meanings through irony (Schaeffer, 1975, p. 178, 181). "The ironist's mentality, therefore, must be absorbed by the concept of duality, so much so that one idea or attitude automatically calls to mind its opposite, or at least a contrasting variant. The artistic expression or dramatization of this internal dialogue can most clearly be seen in the extreme form of irony, in which the intended meaning is exactly the polar opposite of the literal meaning" (Schaeffer, 1975, p. 181). There are various types of irony: verbal, situational and dramatic irony.

### 5.1. VERBAL IRONY

Verbal irony is the most frequently encountered form of irony, also known as rhetorical irony. It is a figure of speech where someone says one thing but means the opposite. Essentially, one meaning is expressed, while the opposite or contrasting meaning is actually intended. In simpler terms, it is defined as 'saying the contrary of what one means'. Verbal irony is nothing more than a statement in which the intended meaning is quite different to the meaning that appears to be stated. In many cases, a statement becomes ironic because of the context (Roy Chowdhury, 2007, p. 10). In verbal irony, both speaker and listener or both author and reader recognize the contrast. A silent ironic understanding exists between reader and author, in the same way it occurs between Jane Austen's narrator and her reader throughout her novels (Kriker, 2019, p. 13).

There are two types of verbal irony: the "kind irony", which can be described as using "praise by blame", and the "genuine" sarcastic irony, which can be described as using "blame by praise" (Braun & Schmiedel, 2018, p. 114). "Kind Irony" is a type of irony where praise is disguised as blame. For example, when the utterance "Terrible" is a reaction to a very good but not perfect grade. Sarcasm refers to the type of irony where

blame is disguised as praise. For example, when a person misses their train and their reaction is to say "Great" (Braun & Schmiedel, 2018, p. 122).

### 5.1.1. SARCASM

Sarcasm is a type of irony in which the opposite of the intended meaning is stated in order to ridicule an individual, situation or thing. It needs clever wit to bring attention to the obviousness and absurdity of a situation and commonly involves an exaggerated form of irony. Sarcasm is often considered a form of verbal irony in literature. Verbal irony often appears as sarcasm. Verbal irony indicates a different meaning to what is actually stated, while sarcasm is used to offend or to cause harm (Kriker, 2019, p. 13).

In the famous opening sentence 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" (Austen, 2019, p. 3), the verbal irony is clearly evident. There is a hidden message behind it. The narrator uses irony to criticize marriage and the matchmaking scene. The reality is that single wealthy men do not require or seek potential wives, instead the poor young women are the ones who are in need of a husband. This is confirmed by the fact that throughout the entire novel, one of the characters, Mrs. Bennet, is the one who is consistently in search of husbands for all of her daughters in order to provide them with financial security through marriage.

Some other instances of verbal irony can be found in the dialogues between Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Bennet. In Mr. Bennet's interactions with his wife, he often uses sarcasm. He does not have a good opinion of his wife, and he often mocks her dramatic outbursts and her obsessive preoccupation with marriage. To give an example, in the first pages of the novel, Mrs. Bennet learns about the arrival of Mr. Bingley and his renting of Netherfield Park, and she is overly excited about it because it could potentially result in him marrying one of her daughters. She wants to share the news with her husband, and he responds by saying: "You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it" (Austen, 2019, p. 3). What is apparent in this sentence is that Mr. Bennet is indifferent to hearing about the news, but he lets her speak her mind because he knows she cannot be stopped. Another example of Mr. Bennet's ironic

remarks towards his wife is in his response about his wife's "poor nerves": "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 last" (Austen, 2019, p. 4). He says the contrary of what he actually means in this sentence. After hearing her talk about her "poor nerves" all the time during their marriage, he thinks both her and her nerves to be irritating. Meanwhile, Mrs. Bennet is oblivious to the irony or sarcasm in Mr. Bennet's remarks, taking his statements literally, which adds to the humour and creates a comic element in the novel.

## 5.2. DRAMATIC IRONY

Dramatic irony is a form of irony where the audience or reader knows more about a character's situation than the character does. The readers or audience have deeper insights and additional context. They predict or expect an outcome that is opposite to what the character expects. Dramatic irony is found in many different types of works, from the comic to the tragic. When found in tragedy, this is sometimes referred to as tragic irony (Baldick, 1990, p. 130).

The irony Jane Austen employs in dialogue, apart from the already mentioned verbal irony, is dramatic irony: a character's words reveal his cluelessness or poor judgement while the reader has a better understanding of the details concerning specific events. Irony is found in the contrast between what the character thinks he or she says and what underlying meanings the reader discerns in the character's words. Dramatic irony has been commonly applied in drama, in both comedies and tragedies, given its frequent usage in Greek tragedy. In Austen's comic literature, it is used to uncover the ignorance of comical figures, together with the lack of control in major characters. Dramatic irony is usually demonstrated through such characters in *Pride and Prejudice* as Mr. Collins or Mrs. Bennet, whose actions consistently contradict their own statements (Sørbo, 2014, p. 30-31).

Here is, for example, a claim from Mr. Collins that he does not concern himself with money and in which he also mentions his knowledge of Elizabeth's inheritance: "To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your

father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the 4 per cents which will not be yours till after your mother's decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to" (Austen, 2019, p. 81). This is a man who is completely unaware of what he is implying with his statements and that his words do him no good, revealing not only his simple mindset, but much worse, his interest in wealth, position and rank, disguised as modesty. He proclaims one attitude and behaves differently: "Far be it from me", he presently continued in a voice that marked his displeasure, "to resent the behaviour of your daughter" (Austen, 2019, p. 87; Sørbø, 2014, p. 31).

This method of applying dramatic irony is a basic comic effect regularly used by Austen. Its purpose is to highlight the ridiculousness of human weaknesses. What is more fascinating is her use of dramatic irony with more sympathetic characters. For instance, there is the case of the character Mr. Bennet who, while normally smart, was not aware of his family matters including those of his favourite daughter Elizabeth. When Mr. Bennet receives a letter from Mr. Collins concerning a rumour that Elizabeth is engaged to Darcy, he invites her to join in his laughter about the matter, not knowing that the rumour is true: "Mr. Darcy, you see, is the man! Now, Lizzy, I think I have surprised you... Mr. Darcy, who never looks at any woman but to see a blemish, and who probably never looked at you in his life! It is admirable!" (Austen, 2019, p. 270; Sørbø, 2014, p. 32-33).

There is dramatic irony within one of the central characters of the novel. In a similar manner like Mr. Collins, Mr. Darcy is unaware that his words will reflect negatively on him. Mr. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth with: "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (Austen, 2019, p. 142). He begins by expressing how he struggled with his feelings towards her. He proceeds by addressing their different social standings and her unfavourable family reputation. He considers it a sacrifice on his part due to him having to overcome the inconveniences and disadvantages this marriage with her would bring. His intention was to profess his love for her, but what he does not realise is that he comes off as condescending and rude instead, indirectly insulting her and her family. Not only is Darcy oblivious to Elizabeth's feelings of dislike towards him, but he is also unaware how she would perceive his "words of affection". He is firmly convinced that there are no valid reasons for refusing his marriage proposal.

### 5.3. SITUATIONAL IRONY

Situational irony occurs when there is a disparity between what was expected to happen and what actually happens. It occurs when certain factors lead a person to believe that a particular event or situation is unlikely to happen. It deals with the difference between what the characters believe, say or think and what actually takes place. Characters find themselves misinterpreting a situation. Situational irony takes place when one expected ending or resolution does not manifest and instead there is another unexpected conclusion (Kriker, 2019, p. 15).

During the early chapters of the book, Mr. Bingley proposes to Mr. Darcy that he should approach Elizabeth and invite her to dance, after which he observes her for a moment and then responds with: "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me, and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (Austen, 2019, p. 9). He makes it apparent that he is not interested in her. However, over the course of the novel, he finds himself falling in love with her and proposing to her. This scenario demonstrates a clear example of situational irony. It comes as a surprise that Mr. Darcy's feelings toward her have changed, especially considering his initial refusal of her. Another situational irony, involving both Darcy and Elizabeth, occurs in Mr. Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth. When he proposes to her, he is confident that she will accept his offer of marriage, considering his wealth and high social rank. In addition to that, it would highly benefit her. However, he is left astonished when she rejects his proposal. He has no knowledge of her negative opinion of him (Austen, 2019, p. 145):

From the very beginning, from the first moment, I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation, on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.



## 6. COMIC CHARACTERS

Comic characters are a crucial part of *Pride and Prejudice*. There are two primary groups of comic characters encountered in the work. The first group consists of: “comic fools”, normally minor characters, who are insensitive, ignorant and, as one would assume, comedic. The second group includes major comic characters who are clever and highly observant. However, these characters can become comic under certain circumstances and in specific situations, in which they make mistakes due to their own faulty judgments and mistaken perception (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 2).

The central figure in most comedies is the fool, an intricate historical figure full of conflicting qualities, taking on multiple overlapping roles. They usually consist of the clown, jester, buffoon, clairvoyant, and scapegoat. The fool appears as a symbol of complications and contradictions (Stott, 2005, p. 45). *Pride and Prejudice* has multiple types of fools: Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet, Lydia (the noisy fool), Mary (the learned fool) and Lady Catherine de Bourgh (Lauber, 1974, p. 516). What all of these characters have in common is that they are minor characters who are all constantly comic throughout the novel.

Comedy and life differ in several ways. In life, people are not foolish all the time, but occasionally find themselves behaving foolishly a considerable number of times. In comedy, the fool is consistently just a fool and nothing else. Mr. Collins of *Pride and Prejudice* is ridiculously foolish when making an offer of marriage to Elizabeth Bennet, or when fawning over Lady Catherine de Bourgh. The comic fool is fundamentally a fool in every aspect, with a certain level of foolishness being central to his identity. Through comic fools such as Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet, Austen demonstrates a lively sense of humour (Lauber, 1974, p. 511).

The fools primarily serve two purposes. The first one is evident – it is the entertainment which they provide for the readers. Jane Austen’s novels are carefully created works of art, and the fools play a part in the development of action and theme. They are the agents behind actions, meaning they create obstacles. Since Jane Austen’s novels have an overall comic tone, the reader can be certain that the fool's objections to the desires of the heroine and hero will be resolved. Sometimes, because of their usual

stupidity, they defeat themselves (Lauber, 1974, p. 512). The most noticeable fools are Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet, and with them the noisy fool Lydia and the learned fool Mary. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the “great lady”, of great wealth and high social standing also falls under this category. There are fools present at every level of society (Lauber, 1993, p. 48).

Even though fools have a role as blocking characters, they or their objection cannot ever be viewed as serious. They are not born as fools but become a fool through their own way of acting. The fool, male or female, possibly has a monomania - one interest they obsess over. For example, Mrs. Bennet’s fixation is to marry her daughters, without caring who they marry. Mr. Collins is fully devoted to admiring his patron Lady Catherine, and she flaunts her greatness (Lauber, 1993, p. 48-49).

## 6.1. MINOR COMIC CHARACTERS

Several of Austen’s comic characters can be understood by the contrast between their self-importance and their actual control and conduct. Minor characters such as Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh are considered comic. These types of characters are typically self-assured in their own relevance and influence. However, their portrayal in the novel reveals their lack of significance and their flawed beliefs, making them appear foolish (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 78-79).

The fool’s pride in his own foolishness and the need to make a show of himself, which is a characteristic feature, adds to the humour of the novels. Mr. Collins’ intent at the Netherfield ball is to approach Mr. Darcy and initiate a conversation with him because Mr. Collins discovers that Darcy is Lady Catherine’s nephew. He then provides his company with a lecture on the duties of a clergyman and praises his superiors. As Mrs. Bennet loudly talks to Lady Lucas about the upcoming marriage between her daughter Jane and Bingley, her other daughter Mary sings out of tune and without end, until she is impolitely interrupted by Mr. Bennet. “To Elizabeth it appeared, that had her family made an agreement to expose themselves as much as they could during the evening, it would have been impossible for them to play their parts with more spirit, or finer success” (Austen, 2019, p. 77). Unaware of the others’ feelings and responses, the

fool makes a show of himself without hesitation or even continuing the display as much as possible (Lauber, 1974, p. 516).

### 6.1.1. MR. COLLINS

In Mr. Collins' first letter to Mr. Bennet, his sense of importance is apparent. Through the letter, he employs an overly condescending tone and considers himself Lady Catherine de Bourgh's esteemed protégé. Offering the "olive branch" to the Bennets is seen by Mr. Collins as a gesture of doing them a favour. "I flatter myself that my present overtures of good will are highly commendable..." (Austen, 2019, p. 47). Upon his arrival in Longbourn, he still believes his role is significant, yet the novel's events reveal a rather different reality. Despite his arrogance and self-importance, the Bennets remain indifferent. Elizabeth finds him peculiar, while Mr. Bennet regards him as foolish. Lydia and Kitty do not pay him any attention. At Mrs. Phillips's party in Meryton, Mr. Collins is disregarded as the girls are preoccupied with Militia officers. The only one who takes interest in him is Mrs. Phillips, but she does so solely out of politeness (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 79).

Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth Bennet is among the most entertaining scenes. The following passage is taken from his lengthy marriage proposal speech to Elizabeth (Austen, 2019, p. 81):

But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father, (who, however, may live many years longer,) could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place - which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years.

The monologue has contradictions. Collins means to give the impression of a smart and moral man, but ironically gives the wrong impression. Namely, he thinks that the language he employs in speaking showcases his profound intellect, but his manner of speaking is inappropriate and points to his lack of intelligence. In his speech, he expresses moral concern for the Bennets, but the unusual choice of words "after the death of your honoured father" and "who, however may live many years" suggests that Mr. Collins thought a lot about Mr. Bennet's death. Words such as "honoured father"

and "melancholy event" prove his emotional coldness and lack of moral sensibility (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 85-86).

For him, life involves following a series of rituals that must be carried out in traditional ways. By using the customary words and completing the planned steps, he is certain that the right result will follow. When Mr. Collins proposes a marriage to Elizabeth Bennet, "He set about it in a very orderly manner, with all the observances which he supposed a regular part of the business" (Austen, 2019, p. 79), and after reassuring her "in the most animated language of the violence of my affections" (Austen, 2019, p. 81), he naturally assumes that when she turns down his marriage proposal she is just playing her expected role: "I know it to be the established custom of your sex to reject a man on the first application" (Austen, 2019, p. 82). For the fool, sentimentality is unfamiliar to him, Collins is unable to comprehend Elizabeth's rejection. The marriage would have its benefits. His conclusion is that her rejection is nothing but words and because of "your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females" (Austen, 2019, p. 83). Personal feelings are not important, what counts is the ceremony, while the identity of the bride is of no relevance. Beforehand, he intended to offer his hand in marriage to the eldest daughter Jane. However, when Collins hears of Bingley's interest in Jane, he promptly switches from Jane to Elizabeth and later to Charlotte Lucas (Lauber, 1974, p. 516-517).

#### 6.1.2. LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH

Lady Catherine de Bourgh is as deluded as Mr. Collins. Entirely aware of her own status and fortune, she thinks she can dominate everyone. If she envisions something, she convinces herself that it will and must happen. For instance, it is her desire that Elizabeth and Darcy not marry. In the conflict with Elizabeth Bennet in Longbourn, there is an obvious comic imbalance between her perceived sense of power and her real influence. It is also evident that her legitimacy can be undermined by the most ordinary girl without any status. She goes to Longbourn full of herself and her influence when she hears rumours of an alleged romance between Elizabeth and Darcy and rushes to stop those rumours. Catherine de Bourgh tries to influence Elizabeth by talking to her in an aggressive and intrusive tone, but her attempt fails because her statements are

in disarray, and she does not distinguish general rules from her own whims. When Elizabeth asks Lady Catherine why she must not marry Darcy, she can only say: "Because honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbids it" (Austen, 2019, p. 265). Elizabeth is not easily intimidated, and Lady Catherine has no more power after Elizabeth's well-arranged and convincing arguments. In the verbal communication between them, Elizabeth showed that she was intellectually superior and reduced all Lady Catherine's outbursts to absurdity (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 79-81).

Lady Catherine brings a necessary balance, as there should be at the very least one fool on Darcy's side to lower his sense of superiority. Fortune, rank and overbearing manner are what make Lady Catherine a Great Lady. However, she is a fool who is admired and held in high regard only by other fools. Her "greatness" is taken seriously by a fool like Mr. Collins. Like him, she is rigid and entirely predictable, valuing only the external, with no regard for or acknowledgment of personal qualities. It is expected that she will be Mr. Collins's patron since only another fool could enjoy his overly sweet flattery (Lauber, 1974, p. 518).

### 6.1.3. THE BENNETS

#### MRS. BENNET

The character of Mrs. Bennet is fully described in the last three sentences of the first chapter: "She was a woman 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 daughters married; its solace was visiting and news" (Austen, 2019, p. 5). These sentences are convincing to the reader since her own words have already confirmed their truth. That is all that is needed to know about her. She will entertain the readers throughout the novel, showcasing her traits and her particular interests, in numerous frequently inappropriate situations (Lauber, 1993, p. 42-43). The character is oblivious to much of what happens around her, which could be because she talks endlessly and does not even hear what she utters: "Nobody can tell what I suffer!- But it is always so. Those who do not complain are never pitied" (Austen, 2019, p. 86). When she hears about Elizabeth's engagement to Darcy, her final speech describes

her character. "Dear, dear Lizzy. A house in town! Every thing that is charming! Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! Oh, Lord! What will become of me? I shall go distracted" (Austen, 2019, p. 282-283). It is important to remember that Lizzy is the daughter for whom she showed little interest until her engagement. Lydia, one of the three married daughters, whose husband is a worthless young man, is the one Mrs. Bennet is the proudest of. Mrs. Bennet does not discriminate because to her, as well as to Mr. Collins, a marriage is a marriage. Clearly, she gained no insight and disregarded the majority. The fool stays a fool (Lauber, 1974, p. 517).

Mrs. Bennet's primary goal in life, from the first to the last page of *Pride and Prejudice*, is to see her daughters married. When she hears the news that Netherfield Park has been rented, it is important for her because it increases the chances of one of her daughters getting married: "...A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!" (Austen, 2019, p. 3). Her thoughts in this speech show her obsession with that idea. Mrs. Bennet first sees Mr. Collins as a repulsive and impudent young man. However, the moment when he hints that he intends to propose a marriage to one of her daughters, she changes her mind about him and views him as a reasonable and courteous man. The moment she receives the news of Lydia and Wickham's elopement, she voices her grievances, but when she is told that they are going to get married, her attitude instantly changes and she appears thrilled. Her mood changes are abrupt and intense: "'My dear, dear Lydia!' she cried: 'This is delightful indeed! - She will be married! ... She will be married at sixteen! ... How I long to see her and to see dear Wickham too!'" (Austen, 2019, p. 227). The treatment of Mrs. Bennet towards Darcy, Bingley and the Lucases is similar, and always full of humour. When Bingley stays in Netherfield and takes an interest in Jane Bennet, she perceives him as charming and worthy. However, the moment he leaves Netherfield, she sees him as an undeserving young man. As long as there is no possibility of Darcy marrying any of her daughters, she can afford to be extremely rude to him, but she is all politeness when she learns about his interest in Elizabeth. The news of Collins' proposal to Charlotte Lucas, for Mrs. Bennet, means that Lady Lucas will have a married daughter before her, which does not look good for her family (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 92-93).

## MR. BENNET

Austen presents Mr. Bennet as a comedic version of a classic fictional character from the eighteenth-century: the sentimental, fatherly adviser. Austen emphasizes the unusual traits of Mr. Bennet's character, describing him as intelligent and witty yet as rather passive and even distant. Much like a traditional father figure from eighteenth-century literature, he gladly offers his opinions of others and gives advice on various situations, but his remarks are often filled with cynicism and sarcasm rather than compassion or wisdom (Goss, 2019, p. 156-157). Mr. Bennet is also a more complex character than 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 his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develope" (Austen, 2019, p. 5).

Mr. Bennet is an ironic spectator. He uses his irony as a defence mechanism. He is known for his sarcastic sense of humour. While he observes from a distance, he enjoys the show in silence. Sometimes he has a habit of making harsh remarks on the silliness of his daughters, particularly of Lydia and Kitty: "From all that I can collect by your manner of talking, you must be two of the silliest girls in the country. I have suspected it some time, but I am now convinced" (Austen, 2019, p. 22; Mudrick, 1968, p. 113-114).

He takes pleasure in creating disruption in small ways and enjoys bringing to attention the contrast between what he is expected to think and what he actually does think. His preferred source of entertainment is his wife, and he loves provoking her and bringing out her comic antics into the spotlight, which he does by being harsh to her, while she is completely unaware of his aim. In the first few pages of the book, he teases her about Bingley, and in doing so makes her worry. Besides that, he baits her constantly on the subject of Mr. Collins and the inheritance of property (Mudrick, 1968, p. 114). Mr. Bennet directs his sarcastic comments at anyone around him, especially his wife and daughters, with Mr Collins also being a frequent target. Due to his ability for self-irony, he becomes more sympathetic than he might otherwise be. His sharpness of mind and speech, much like his daughter Elizabeth's, sometimes exposes his own errors. For instance, when he must confess to himself and others that Elizabeth was correct, and he was mistaken in his judgment of Lydia and the seriousness of her

elopement. Just like his daughter, he cannot help himself from making ironic jokes even during serious situations, regardless of circumstances (Sørbø, 2014, p. 29).

## THE DYNAMIC BETWEEN MRS. AND MR. BENNET

Throughout the three pages of engaging and uninterrupted discussion between husband and wife that occupy the rest of the opening chapter the reader is able to learn the necessary information about the Bennet family. There are at least three daughters suitable for marriage and one of them, Elizabeth, is the favourite daughter of her father but not of her mother because she “has something more of quickness than her sisters” (Austen, 2019, p. 4). Mr. Bennet is a clever, satirical, and distant character, while Mrs. Bennet is materialistic and shallow - “I certainly have had my share of beauty” (Austen, 2019, p. 4) – as well as ridiculous most of the time. In the conversation between the wife and husband, Mrs. Bennet informs her husband of the arrival of a young single man by the name of Bingley with a “large fortune; four or five thousand a year” (Austen, 2019, p. 3). In this society, everyone seems to know of one another’s income (Lauber, 1993, p. 41-42).

A great deal is learned about Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their marriage. Mr. Bennet is constantly provoking and making fun of his wife. It is apparent that this is a marriage without love and affection. She is ridiculous and small-minded, which her husband is aware of, and also a hypochondriac, constantly voicing concerns about her “poor nerves”. Mr. Bennet dislikes his wife, which he hides by using the term of endearment “my dear”. Due to his dislike for his wife, he shows great satisfaction in ridiculing and provoking her into acting without thinking and showing her stupidity. Austen’s novels feature marriages between parents that appear unequal, where one partner seems less intelligent than the other and where the relationships are portrayed as unhappy. These kinds of relationships do not differentiate Austen’s novels from other novels of the time. They are in a sense a narrative technique - used regularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century English novel (Lauber, 1993, p. 42).



## LYDIA

Lydia is a different and a more dangerous type of fool. She is energetic, stubborn, and loud. She prefers crowds and noise, and most of the time, she is the one creating the noise herself: "...we were so merry all the way home! We talked and laughed so loud that anybody might have heard us ten miles off!" (Austen, 2019, p. 165). After the scandal she caused by eloping with Wickam and then marrying him, she is, like her mother, incapable of change: "Lydia was Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless" (Austen, 2019, p. 233-234), expecting her family to congratulate her on marrying and enjoying the benefits of being a married woman (Lauber, 1974, p. 517-518).

## 6.2. MAJOR COMIC CHARACTERS

The other important group of comic characters are the ones who come to be comical on certain occasions when they make mistakes about themselves and the world around them. Despite their errors, they are able to learn and grow from their experiences through the use of their reason and sanity. While other minor characters are simple and easy to read, the major characters are complex and layered characters who are self-aware and generally regarded as serious (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 107-108).

### 6.2.1. ELIZABETH BENNET

One of the outcomes of Jane Austen's comedy is to amuse and entertain the reader by revealing the heroine's mistakes, as well as her eventual progress towards self-reflection. The revelation of Elizabeth is dramatized through a series of incidents. The turning point of the novel is Elizabeth's self-analysis when re-reading Darcy's letter. Initially, she does not read the letter thoroughly and, driven by her emotional state, her conclusions are too impulsively reached. In attempting a second reading of his letter, she makes a considerable effort to analyse objectively. She focuses while re-reading and reevaluates specific past events. Following that, she starts to view people and events with a much clearer perspective (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 134).

The process of making judgments is more difficult and complex than Elizabeth expected, and a sound judgment is only possible after careful observation and analysis. Elizabeth admits the truth of this when she accuses herself: "Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (Austen, 2019, p. 155). When she realises this, she feels ashamed but her very ability of self-knowledge separates her from the minor comic characters, who are not capable of self-awareness to recognise or even accept their faults (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 134-135).

Elizabeth is an intelligent character with an insight to assess all the other comic characters around her. Even though she is close to her sister Jane, she knows that her sister is naive and simple-minded. She is perceptive and sees the arrogance of the Bingley sisters while it takes Jane more time to discover what they are really like. Elizabeth has misconceptions about Darcy and is captivated by Wickham's charm. Although this mistaken assessment is not immediately apparent because Darcy himself is portrayed vaguely (Wilson-Tagoe, 1971, p. 127-128).

Elizabeth is always ironic, similarly to the narrator's voice. "Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can", she says in one of her early arguments with Darcy. Although her irony and humour are consistently present, she finds it difficult to discuss deeply emotional subjects, such as her love and affection for Darcy. Her sister Jane must plead with her to regard things seriously because she refers to her love of Darcy as first being influenced by "my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley" (Austen, 2019, p. 279) or as having decided to overlook her earlier dislike of him. These examples also demonstrate her self-irony. Regardless of the fact that her awareness of her own faults is not as sharp as her perception of others and their faults, she does eventually find herself laughing at her own mistakes. She laughs quietly at herself as she considers her personal romantic desires when she begins discovering that Mr. Darcy "was exactly the man, who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her" (Austen, 2019, p. 231) and how their contrasting personalities would create the perfect match (Sørnbø, 2014, p. 28).

### 6.2.2. MR. DARCY

Mr. Darcy is another central character in the novel, alongside Elizabeth. He is known for his significant wealth and high social standing. 'Pride' (personal pride, class pride) is clearly one of the main themes of the novel, and pride is what causes Mr. Darcy to act offensively towards Elizabeth and her family because of their lower social standing. He is arrogant and condescending. When Mr. Bingley draws Mr. Darcy's attention to Elizabeth, he makes an insulting remark about her (Morini, 2009, p. 110-111). "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (Austen, 2019, p. 9). However, he behaves like a fool during his first proposal to Elizabeth by highlighting the inferiority of her family's social rank in a condescending manner. When he asks for her permission to marry her, he does so as if giving a command through his use of modal verbs expressing obligation ('you must allow me') (Morini, 2009, p. 111). "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (Austen, 2019, p. 142).

When Elizabeth refuses his marriage proposal, she explains her reasons by revealing what she holds against him: she blames him for ruining Jane's chances with Bingley, believing that he acted this way because he despises the social position of her family; and that he ruined Wickham's career without reason. After Darcy learns Elizabeth's true feelings, he writes her a long, detailed letter in which he clears his name of the accusations (Halliday, 1960, p. 69).

Her rejection of him leads Mr. Darcy to set aside his pride. He evolves as a character by becoming aware of his flaws and learning from his foolish mistakes. He comes to understand that Elizabeth will always be tied to her family and that what she provides with this union is not much worse than what he brings – an almost disgraced sister and an entitled, disrespectful and intrusive aunt. They have influenced each other through their compelling words; she with her response to his prideful proposal and he with his letter which marked the beginning of their self-improvement (Todd, 2006, p. 72).

## 7. CONCLUSION

Jane Austen is one of the most popular and widely read English writers. She wrote her novels at a time when England was dealing with economic and political changes. At that time, the nobility and landowners were the most influential class and there were strict inheritance laws where only sons had the right to inherit while women had to prepare for their roles and duties as wives, and eventually mothers. Marriage was the only way women could secure social status, financial stability as well as protect and ensure their future. By writing about people from her time, Austen created unforgettable characters with whom readers can still identify today. Through her novels, in a subtle and ironic way, she brought attention to the issues in the system of English society and the problems of that era. Her style of writing is witty and entertaining, and her writing encourages readers to analyse the hidden meanings of her words. Through the use of comedy and irony, she developed her characters and managed to reveal their inconsistencies and flaws. Austen's work successfully exposed human behaviour and the absurdity of social expectations while also providing an insight into English society of her period.

Jane Austen's use of comedy and irony in *Pride and Prejudice* plays a crucial role in highlighting and critiquing social rules and cultural expectations of her period while exposing human behaviour. Austen uses satire through humour to expose and criticize the flaws of her characters and the society in which they live, which also serves as a critique of that period. The novel contains elements of parody as it imitates and exaggerates certain features of romantic and sentimental novels in order to mock unrealistic romantic ideals. Farce features exaggerated characters, misunderstandings and absurd situations that add humour to the novel. Her novel contains various forms of irony (verbal, situational and dramatic) that help develop and reveal the true nature of Austen's characters. Verbal irony often appears in characters' interactions. For example, in Mr. Bennet's sarcastic remarks where he says one thing but actually means the opposite. Dramatic irony highlights how characters like Mr. Collins are unaware of the full situation or oblivious to how their words and actions come across to others. Situational irony is evident in Mr. Darcy's surprising feelings for Elizabeth, showcasing how there are unexpected situations that characters cannot control. In *Pride and Prejudice*, both minor and major comic characters entertain readers and

make the plot more complex. Minor comic characters such as Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh provide constant humour through their never-ending foolishness, while major comic characters like Elizabeth and Darcy occasionally display humour through their mistakes, but unlike minor ones, they learn from their mistakes.

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