

## JANE AUSTEN'İN GURUR VE ÖNYARGI ROMANINDAKİ KARAKTERLERİN DAVRANIŞ VE SÖYLEM AÇISINDAN İNCELENMESİ

### THE ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS IN PRIDE AND PREJU- DICE BY JANE AUSTEN THROUGH THE MANNERS AND SPEECH

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**Özet:** Bu makalenin çıkış noktası Jane Austen'in Gurur ve Önyargı adlı romanındaki karakterlerinin davranış ve söylemleri aracılığıyla insan doğasını ve içinde bulunduğu toplumu resmetmesi ve bu tabloya dış dünyayı dahil etmemeyi tercih etmesidir. Yazarın yaşadığı dönemde dünyada meydana gelen Fransız ihtilali, terör, Napolyon'un yükselişi ve düşüşü gibi dünya tarihinin en heyecanlı sayfalarını oluşturan olayları resmetmemeyi ve romanlarında bu olaylarla ilgili referans vermemeyi tercih ettiği rahatlıkla iddia edilebilir. Austen, Gurur ve Önyargı'daki karakterlerinin davranış ve söylemlerini birkaç amaçla kullanmaktadır. Bunların arasında toplumun davranış normları, evlilik kurumu, erkek egemenliği, kadınların sorunları (o dönemde kadınlar gazete bile okumazlardı) gibi konular sayılabilir. Kadınların politikayla uğraşmasının onaylanmadığı, politikanın erkek işi kabul edildiği hatırlanmalıdır. Bu nedenle, yazarın karakterlerinin davranış ve söylemlerini okuyucularına yaşadıkları döneme bir göz atma ve analizini yapma fırsatı sunmak için kullandığı söylenebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İnsan Doğası, Davranış, Söylem, Toplum, Sosyal İlişkiler

**Abstract:** It is the point of this paper that Jane Austen in her novel entitled Pride and Prejudice has preferred to present human nature and society in which she lives through her characters' manners and speeches to write about about the outside world. With this point in view, it seems safe enough to assert that Jane Austen has preferred not to make any reference to the most stirring events of the world history which happened in the era she lived such as the French Revolution, the terror, the rise and fall of Napoleon. Austen uses her characters' manners and speeches in Pride and Prejudice for a number of purposes. To count some, she uses the manners of society, the marriage institution, man's dominance, woman's problems (the women in that era did not even read the newspapers) Yet, it should be remembered that in her day, it was not polite for women to deal with politics, and dealing with politics was a matter for men. In a sense, she uses the manners and the speeches of her characters to present the reader to start a thinking, an examination process of the era in which they are living.

**Key Words:** Human Nature, The Manners, Speech, Society, Social Relationships



This paper aims to show how Jane Austen deliberately had selected each word and manner of her characters to make her readers into thinking and accordingly she is considered to be “fully awake to and in complete control of her fictional world”(Kuwahara,1993:2).As a novelist, Austen is confident on her style , that style of her novels has a great impact on her readers.Through her style she enables the readers to make judgements on her characters.Hence,she,being critical of many aspects of society, reflected her own ideas. In this sense, Andrew H.Wright considers Austen’s novels on three levels of meaning.He says:

...first, the purely local - that is, they can be looked at as illustrative of country life among the upper middle classes in southern England at the end of the eighteenth century. Second, they can be taken as broad allegories, in which sense , sensibility, pride , prejudice, and a number of other virtues and defects are set forth in narrative form and commented on this way. Third, there is the ironic level , and if Jane Austen’s novels be considered in this light, then one can regard the various incidents, situations, and characters as implying something beyond what they embody,as symbolic rather than allegorical (Wright,1962 :27).

Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* begins in the right place, the main theme of the novel is the arrival of the two young men,one of them falls in love withJane, the other one with Elizabeth, and it ends in the right place with a traditional happy ending. They get married at the end. In Austen’s novels, it is considerably emphasized

that the bridegroom has a heavy income from real estate,and has a fine house where he will take bride. The house is surrounded by a park and furnished with expensive and elegant furniture.

In *Pride and Prejudice* Austen shows her skill in constructing a plot through her skillfully designed characters as well.She has attempted to produce the things that she has heard in her day and shared them through a background of minor characters- “cynical “Mr. Bennet and his “silly” wife; Mary Bennett the “pedant”,and Lydia the” flirt”, Mr.Collins, the type of “pretentious conceit “and Sir William Lucas, of “feeble dullness” in her novel.She was aware of the social distinction. The rich and poor were in the society, and money and material existence are important issues in Austen’s fiction. Mary Evans (1987:20) points out that Austen suggests the reader through her works “how to balance moral and material concerns” and adds saying”...there is at least one large country estate in all her novels, but around the country seat are clustered men who maintain themselves through the church...of England,the army and the navy, trade or professions”. Yet,taking orders was the business of a gentleman’s younger son who was given a fat-family living; young men felt themselves happy if they could get any job in the service of King by the influence of powerful relations, a woman’s business was to marry because love was a satisfactory financial situation. In the nineteenth century, in the novels as Sinfield (1992:41) stated “ people were talking to each other about an aspect of life that they found hard to handle”. Clearly, then clerical families, husband –hunting mothers and daughters,



eligible clergymen and landowners are the characters whom the reader often meets in her novels. All this had to follow an order and there would be nothing objectionable about them, in her opinion.

Austen has touched a different life style through the manners and speeches of her characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. Organizing social duties in their neighbour, showing no interest to the world outside, living in their small world with their hopes, and anxieties were the characteristics of this different life style that have affected their manners and speeches as well.

Mr. Bennett lives with his family at Longbourn House in Hertfordshire with an income of 2.000 pounds a year. He wanted to have a son, however, he could not get this wish. He has five daughters and, in his opinion, three of whom are “all silly and ignorant.” He behaves towards Lydia, Kitty and Mary in a different way than he behaves towards Elizabeth and Jane. He is especially fond of Elizabeth. He thinks that “they are silly and ignorant, like other girls; but Lizzy has something more quickness than her sisters” (2).

“Mr. Bennett was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve and caprice”(2). Mr. Bennett’s sarcastic humour is an enjoyable thing for the reader. The reader enjoys himself and smiles at his sense of humour. The following dialogue between Elizabeth and Mr. Bennett is a brief consideration of this sense of humour. Mr. Bennett calls Elizabeth to the library and says:

“I have sent for you on an affair of importance. I understand that Mr. Collins

has made you an offer of marriage. Is it true?” Elizabeth replied that it was.

“Very well – and this offer of marriage you have refused?”

“I have, Sir.”

“Very well. We now come to the point. Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is it not so, Mrs. Bennett?”

Yes, or I will never see her again.

“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” (79).

It is similarly observed that Elizabeth has her father’s sense of humour in her speech to Darcy when he tries to describe how a woman must have the features like the knowledge of music, singing, drawing, and the modern languages and besides this, she must know how to behave, in other words, she must give importance to her manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions. Elizabeth opposes him saying: “I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any. I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe united” (27). The following conversation between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth also shows how a sarcastic humour Elizabeth has:

“Your coming to Longbourn, to see me and my family said Elizabeth coolly,” will be



rather a confirmation of it; if, indeed, such a report is in existence.’

“If do you, pretend to be ignorant of it?Has it not been industriously circulated by yourselves ? Do you not know that such a report is spread abroad?’

“ I never heard that it was.’

“And can you likewise declare; that there is no foundation for it.’

“I do not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship.You may ask “questions , which I shall not choose to answer.”

“ This is not to be borne. . . Has my nephew, made you an offer of marriage?’

“Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible.’

“ It ought to be so;...But your arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, have made him forget what he owes to himself and to all his family.You may have drawn him in.”

“If I have,I shall be the last person to confess it.’

“Miss Bennett,do you know who I am?...I am almost the nearest relation he has in the world and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns.”

“But you are not entitled to know mine; nor will such behaviour as this ever induce me to be explicit”(244).

In *Pride and Prejudice* Austen gives her characters in detail with humourous view. The novel written in 1813 still owes its popularity to its memorable

characters ,theme and its ironic tone.The irony in the novel is essential for the development of the characters.Austen’s use of irony has a variey of functions in her novels : to entertain the readers,to criticize her society, and to show the maturity of her characters. Jane Austen with a deep understanding of human nature portrays the people and situations of her period by means of her excellent use irony.Her presentation of Mr. and Mrs.Bennett is completely ironic.Mr.Bennett uses his sense of humour to provoke his wife. He does this intentionally. Mr. and Mrs. Bennett’s contradictory personalities are revealed through their manners and speeches.

Mr. Bennett does not pay attention to appreciate Mrs.Bennett’s feeling and opinions before the children.He ridicules her through his sarcastic humour saying that: “ I have a right respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least” (2).

He also enjoys to make fun of his wife’s anxieties about their daughters’ marriage. Although he had visited Mr.Bingley whom Mrs.Bennett had found a suitable candidate husband for one of her daughters, he did not tell about it to his wife till the last minute.

He explained that he had visitedMr. Bingley when Mrs.Bennett said to him that it would be impossible for her to be introduced to Mr. Bingley by Mrs. Long because she could not come back till the day before the party. The following is the conversation about the situation between Mr. and Mrs.Bennett:

“Impossible, Mr.Bennett,impossible, when I am not acquainted with him myself; how can you be so teasing?”“I honor circumspection.A fortnight’s acquaintance is certainly very little. One cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight.But if we do not venture somebody else will; and after all,Mrs.Long and her nieces must stand their chance and , therefore, as she will think it an act of kindness, if you decline the office,I will take it on myself” (4).

Mr. Bennett, having been captivated by Mrs. Bennett’s youth and beauty, soon discovered that “she was a woman of mean understanding, little information ,and uncertain temper “(3). And it caused him to put an end to a real affectation to forget his unhappy marriage. His wife had become his unique medium of amusement. Little wonder, then, when Mrs.Bennett insisted that he had to visit Mr.Bingley Mr.Bennett told her that he saw no occasion for that and added :” You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better,for as you are as handsome as any of them,Mr.Bingley might like you the best of the part”(2).

Jane Austen, when presenting the contradictory characteristics of Mr. and Mrs.Bennett,also introduces social relationships in neighbourhood. She tells her husband that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England. Mrs.Bennett goes on reporting that Mr.Bingley is a fine single man with a fortune; four or five thousand a-year .She

wants her husband to think of their girls When her husband replied how it can affect them she said that she was thinking of his marrying one of them.

Mrs.Bennett’s chronic self-pity is also reflected with her own words.She, constantly complaining about her “poor nerves”, accuses of her husband that he does not show enough care for them. “You have no compassion on my poor nerves” (3). She is a woman of uncertain temper. When Mr. Bennett said to her to return to talk about Mr.Bingley,she claimed that she was sick of Mr. Bingley.However, after she learned that her husband had visited Mr.Bingley she forgot her anger and said : “...Well,how pleased I am and it is such a good joke,too,that you should have gone this morning and never said a word about it till now” (4).

Jane Austen also belittles Mrs.Bennett for her changing her speech and behaviour towards Mr. Darcy after learning that Elizabeth is going to marry him. Mrs. Bennett claims :

Good gracious! Lord bless me!only think ! dear me! Mr.Darcy! Who would have thought it...Oh,my sweetest Lizzy! how rich and how great you will be ! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have!... Such a charming man !...my dear Lizzy !pray apologize for my having disliked him so much before (262).

Elizabeth who is the second daughter of the Bennetts can be called as the heroine of the novel. Jane Austen introduces her in one of her letters with the following words: “I must confess that I think her as delighted a creature as ever



appeared in print, and how shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least I do not know “(cited in Lascelles, 1995: 33).

Elizabeth has in herself the remedy for ill and folly side of the human beings. Her remedy for these is the laughter. She gives much importance to the laughter. When she met with Mr. Darcy, she noticed that he was not accustomed to being laughed at. In her opinion, people must know how to laugh at the things. She cried: “Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at... That is an uncommon advantage, and uncommon I hope it will continue, for it will be a great loss to me to have many such acquaintance. I dearly love a laugh” (39).

Elizabeth still represents Austen’s opinions and manners towards the events. Austen herself laughed at nonsense, whims and inconsistencies whenever she could, but never ridiculed what is wise and good. Elizabeth’s manners and speech towards Mr. Darcy prove this situation. She says to Mr. Darcy: “...I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies to divert me. I own and I laugh at them whenever I can” (40).

Elizabeth plays an important role in the novel by her personal merit and force of character. The readers have the chance of having an idea of her personal merit and force of character from her way of behaving towards the marriage. Elizabeth, being very certain of herself, never thinks to have a marriage that is similar to her parents. Respect and confidence towards her candidate husband are the most important things for her. Her way of speaking to refuse

Mr. Collin’s proposal reveals the situation much more clearly:

Upon my word, sir... your hope is rather an extraordinary one after my declaration. I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so (76).

Elizabeth did not also hesitate for a moment to refuse Mr. Darcy’s proposal, however, he was a handsome and rich young man. This, to be sure, explains to the reader that Elizabeth’s behaviour is different from Charlotte Lucas who calculates that—on her small income and at the age of twenty-seven—without having ever been handsome, she might not find a better husband than Mr. Collins. She is ready to accept his proposal that Elizabeth has just refused. Here are her opinions about Mr. Collins whom she will be marrying soon:

...Mr. Collins to be sure, was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he could be her husband. Without thinking highly of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honorable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want (87).



As to Elizabeth, She is expecting for different kinds of things from the marriage such as respect,love,sharing the same ideas. Clearly,then, Darcy’s manners from the very beginning have affected her. From this perspective, she does not have any tolerance to him because of his affection on Mr.Bingley. She says to Mr. Darcy while she is refusing his proposal:

From the beginning-from the first moment,I may almost say-of my acquaintance with you,your manners, impressing me with the falsest 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(135).

Mr.Darcy-tall,handsome young man having an estate in Derbyshire( Pemberley House ) and an income of 10.000 pounds a year-has a “noble” appearance. However,he behaves insolently towards the ones whom he considers to be of lower social rank and inferior breeding: The following lines give an insight to the reader about his character:

The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure,the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr.Bingley,and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company,and above

being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, this agreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend(6).

Similarly,when Mr.Bingley told him that he had much better dance , he exclaims that he certainly will not and adds:”You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner....Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with”(7).

Mr.Darcy is portrayed as a clever, haughty and fastidious man by the novelist. In his speech which he makes about Elizabeth’s connections ,all these features are observed by the reader. He asked Elizabeth: “Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections?-to congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?”(135) It is true that Mr.Darcy’s proposal to Elizabeth is an unpardonable one, pride-pride of birth and wealth- was the predominant feature of his character. Without pride, there would not be any story to tell. Mr. Darcy personifies pride in the novel.His manner of proposal and his speech prove the importance of pride for him. The dominance of pride, to be sure, is the demand for him .He said “nothing is more deceitful than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast?” (33). He says to Elizabeth that he wants to avoid weaknesses and accepts that “vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride- where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulation” (40).

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As to Jane-the eldest daughter of the Bennett- she is quiet, modest and uncomplaining. Elizabeth describes her sister saying that "...you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody.All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human in my life" (9). Jane Bennett is sober and reserve. She prefers not to tell her feelings to anybody, however, she rarely avoids from sharing them with Elizabeth.The speech of hers about Charles Bingley proves that characteristics of Jane.She ,while expressing her feelings for him to Elizabeth, says that "he is just what a young man ought to be, sensible, good-humored, lively, and I never saw such happy manners!-so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!"(9).

However,she was, at the same time, so good at concealing her feelings.She bears with dignity and patience her months of disappointment in love. When Elizabeth behaved doubtfully her feelings about Mr.Bingley. Jane tried to make her sister sure that she did not love him saying:

You doubt me', cried Jane, slightly coloring; indeed you have no reason.He may live in my memory as the most amiable man of my acquaintance,but that is all.I have nothing either to hope or fear, and nothing to reproach him with.Thank God!I have not that pain.A little time therefore- I shall certainly try to get the better (94).

Jane,being ready to forgive everyone's faults and weaknesses, criticizes Elizabeth's describing Mr. Collins as a "conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man" and Jane also disapproves Elizabeth's saying that "...the woman who

marries him cannot have a proper way of thinking.You shall not defend her, though it is Charlotte Lucas" (95).

William Collins-a cousin of Elizabeth- treats Lady Catherine who looks upon her as if she were a goddess and behaves towards her as a willing slave and worshipper. That manner of Mr. Collins shows how the social rank gave its possessors a sense of immense superiority.The changing manners of the Lucas Family towards the Bennets when they learned that their daughter,Charlotte, will marry Mr.Collin proves this thesis. Since Mr.Collins would be the new owner of the house after Mr.Bennett's death ,they immediately make plans about the future:

Lady Lucas began directly to calculate with more interest than the matter had ever excited before, how many years longer Mr.Bennett was likely to live; and Sir William gave it as his decided opinion that whenever Mr.Collins should be in possession of the Longbourn estate, it would be highly expedient that both he and his wife should make their appearance at St.James's.The whole family,in short,were properly overjoyed on the occasion.The younger girls formed hopes of coming out a year or two sooner than they might otherwise have done; and the boys were relieved from their apprehension of Charlotte's dying an old maid (87)

Caroline Bingley- the younger of Mr.Bingley's sisters- is very jealous of Elizabeth. Her jealousy is the predominant feature of her manners towards Elizabeth.Whenever she has a chance,she makes catty remarks about Elizabeth to Mr.Darcy.Since



she wants to have Mr.Darcy's interest,she is always ready to flatter on Mr.Darcy's opinions and manners. What is it that motivates her is to criticize Elizabeth's manner. She , when criticizing Elizabeth's walking alone for "three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt says what could she mean by it? For her, that manner shows an abominable sort of conceited independence,a most country-town indifference to decorum" (24). Both Bingley sisters being portrayed as snobbish and arrogant by Austen are examples of the social satire in the novel. Caroline Bingley especially disdains the Bennett family for their having relations in trade. However, the richness of the Bingley family had also been created by their ancestors who were in trade. "They were of a respectable family in the north of England; a circumstance more deeply impressed in their memories than that their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade" (10).

Charles Bingley-a north-of-England businessman, goodlooking and gentlemanlike- is so careful at not hurting somebody's feeling When Jane got ill,Mrs.Bennett had been invited to see her to Mr.Bingley's house by Elizabeth- who was also there for the same reason- Mr. Bingley tried to behave politically for not hurting Mrs. Bennet's feelings about the argument between Mrs.Bennett and Mr.Darcy. When Mrs.Bennett asked for his approval about country life's being a vast pleasanter he replied " when I am in the country I never wish to leave it; and when I am in town it is pretty much the same. They have each their advantages, and I can be equally happy in either" (30). Mr. Bingley,as a quick-tempered person,explains this side of his personality saying

" whatever I do is done in a hurry, and therefore if I should resolve to quit Netherfield, I should probably be off in five minutes"(29).

In view of all these, it can be concluded that in *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen's dialogues and narration support the character development. The novel heightens the complexity of human manners and the implications of human speech in terms of contrast and ambiguity.Jane Austen indicates her judgements for her characters through irony –" the basic feature of which is a contrast between a reality and an appearance " (Chevalier,1932:42). The novelist, from this perspective, through a variety of ironies in dialogues and narration in the novel, aims to underline the development of her characters, especially Elizabeth and Mr.Darcy. Little wonder,then, the readers would not be surprised when they were shown that Mr.Darcy was eager enough to marry a woman whom he had thought " not handsome enough to tempt"(7) before. Similarly, seeing Elizabeth - being blinded by her own prejudices- and mistaken badly in judging others would not also be surprising for the readers as well as their seeing that Mr. Darcy thinks the Bennett family is lack of manners ,however,his aunt Lady Catherine is rude and arrogant. In brief, Jane Austen has given an insight into the social content of her time through the manners and speech of her characters.Clearly, then, Jane Austen has succeeded to make the reader aware of the social distinction of the age with the manner of Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth as well as she has satirized the marriage institution of her age with the opening sentence of her novel saying " it is a truth universal acknowledged, that a man



in possession of a good fortune must be in need of a wife “(1). Austen’s vividly drawn characters in the novel carry us through the society of her times. Page by page through their manners and speeches the people from upper middle class who visited each other on regular times in rural England are with us. Harding (1998:27) also outlines that characteristics of Austen’s novels saying that “ the crucial importance of a family’s social position to its individual members in eighteenth and nineteenth century England could not fail to be recorded in the work of a novelist so steeped in her own everyday reality.” Consequently, while Austen makes the reader laugh, she conveys to us a sense of human values with her finest skill – her use of irony. As Craik points out “irony is beginning to take its place as one of her finest skills, as a most economical means of delineating character, and as an accurate means of revealing states of mind”(1965:60). The deficiencies in morals and manners are made fun of by means of her characters . As is seen, through her well placed use of irony Austen has achieved to give her messages to the readers of her time. As a novelist, Austen, as S.P.B.Mais (2007:57) says, ” is a master of irony and satire...her satire and humour are as fresh today as ever they were, and as an antidote to the horrors of our time no other author can compare with her.”

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