

## JANE AUSTEN: PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

(PART 2)

by

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ジェーン・オースティン 「自負と偏見」について  
(その2)

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## 2. 2 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE — THE PEOPLE AND IRONY—

In *Pride and Prejudice*, as in her other works, Austen allows her characters to reveal themselves through speech and action, reinforcing their self-delineation by the comments and judgments of other characters in the story. The world in which they live is a rather small one with 'three or four families in a country village'. (Memoir: p.96) Confined in this rural society, Elizabeth, the heroine, admits herself to be a busy studier of characters and looks for her diversion in the people about her, as she is led to confess to Bingley:

"You begin to comprehend me, do you?" cried he, turning towards her.

"Oh! yes — I understand perfectly."

"I wish I might take this for a compliment; but to be so easily seen through I am afraid is pitiful."

"That is as it happens. It does not necessarily follow that a deep, intricate character is more or less estimable than such a one as yours."

"Lizzy," cried her mother, "remember where you are, and do not run on in the wild manner that you are suffered to do at home."

"I didn't know before," continued Bingley immediately, "that you were a studier of character. It must be an amazing study."

"Yes; but intricate characters are the most amusing. They have at least that advantage." (Chapt. VIII)

The division of the world into two sorts of people, simple and intricate, cuts through the story and the author depicts some of the characters as typically simple or intricate as the story develops. M. Mudrick points out in *Jane Austen* that in *Pride and Prejudice*, the irony, the novelist's criticism in other words, has much to do with characterization — that is 'the irony as discrimination between simple characters and intricate characters who amuse the author as well as Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine, who is allowed, for the first time, 'to share Jane Austen's characteristic response to the world.' (p. 94) Elizabeth Bennet tells Darcy:

“Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can ...” (Chap. XI)

In this section I would like to discuss some of the characters typically simple and those typically intricate or complex, and point out some of the ironies deriving from their thoughts and behaviours in the situations which they are inevitably thrown into, focusing on the nature of ‘a good marriage’ the concern with which, as Norman Page points in *Jane Austen Today*, is ‘what holds together such a diverse set of characters as Charlotte and Lydia, Darcy and Wickham and Mr. Collins.’ (p.97)

We learn that Mrs. Bennet, the heroine’s mother, is a typical simple character in her first conversation with her husband as she describes the newcomer at Netherfield Park:

“... A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls.” (Chapt. I)

There are two subjects which dominate her life and conversation: the problem of getting her daughters married and the injustice of the entail by which Mr. Bennet’s estate will descend to his closest male relative rather than to his own family after his death. The problem of getting her daughters married, however, involves her much more directly in the progress of the story. In speaking Jane’s prospective marriage to Bingley,

...Mrs. Bennet seemed incapable of fatigue while enumerating the advantages of the match. His being such a charming young man, and so rich, and living but three miles from them, were the first points of self-gratulation...It was, moreover, such a promising thing for her younger daughters, as Jane’s marrying so greatly must throw them in the way of other rich men...(Chap.XVIII)

Embarrassed by her mother’s endless speech, which is apparently overheard by Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth endeavours ‘to check the rapidity of her mother’s words, or persuade her to describe her felicity in a less audible whisper,’ but Mrs. Bennet only scolds her saying:

“What is Mr. Darcy to me, prey, that I should be afraid of him? I am sure we owe him no such particular civility as to be obliged to say nothing he may not like to hear.” (Chap. xviii)

Having decided that Darcy is too haughty to pursue any of her daughters in spite of his fortune, she loses interest in him and has no consideration for a possibility of his being a candidate for one of them, and cannot help interfering in the conversation between Darcy and Elizabeth on the limits of a country life:

“The country,” said Darcy, “can in general supply but few subjects for such a study. In a country neighbourhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society.”

“But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever.”

“Yes, indeed,” cried Mrs. Bennet, offended by his manner of mentioning a country neighbourhood. “I assure you there is quite as much of that going on in the country as in town.”

Every body there is surprised; and Darcy, after looking at her for a moment, turns

silently away. 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.' (Chapt. I)

The matter of entail brings Mr. Collins into the story, to whom Mrs. Bennet's feeling swings between extremes of indignation and deference according as she considers him to be a profit or loss to her family. She asks Mr. Bennet not to talk of that 'odious man', Mr. Collins, who is entitled to turn the family out of the house as soon as her husband dies when he, teasingly, tells her about the letter from his heir-to be, and she complains that her husband has done nothing to prevent this from happening beforehand; and yet she softens readily as soon as she finds in his letter that the holder of the entail suggests that he is disposed to make the Bennets some amends for the loss they would suffer, and she says, "There is some sense in what he says...I shall not be the person to discourage him." (Chapt. XIII) When, on appearing, he seems quite bent on marrying one of the daughters,

"Mrs. Bennet...trusted that she might soon have two daughters married; and the man whom she could not bear to speak of the day before, was now high in her good graces. (Chapt. XV)

After Elizabeth has refused him in spite of Mrs. Bennet's persistent pleading to accept Mr. Collins' proposal, and he marries Charlotte Lucas, she can see him only as she saw him at first, indulging in imagining the worst possible development:

"And so, I suppose, they often talk of having Longbourn when your father is dead. They look upon it as quite as their own, I dare say, whenever that happens." (Chap. XI)

Her self-centered reaction is mostly due to her love for her daughters, but her love is based so much on the material security that it sometimes overrides every consideration of kindness or solicitude toward her husband and daughters. She sends Jane on horseback to Netherfield when she may be caught in a rainstorm and obliged to stay overnight; and when news comes next morning that Jane is ill, Mrs. Bennet is not worried at all, even by her husband's sharpest sarcasm:

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Bennet... "if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders."

"Oh! I am not at all afraid of her dying. People do not die of little trifling colds. She will be taken good care of. As long as she stays there, it is all very well. I would go and see her, if I could have the carriage." (Chap. VII)

When she is forced to suspect that Bingley may not return to Jane, Mrs. Bennet remarks:

"...Well, my comfort is, I am sure Jane will die of a broken heart, and then he will be sorry for what he has one." (Chap. XL)

Yet, though she can regard Jane's death as a potential comfort, she cannot speak of her husband's death supposedly in the very near future, without imagining herself to be turned out of her house by Mr. Collins, that is, Mrs. Bennet is the one who will

definitely survive her husband, and says to her husband:

“Indeed, Mr. Bennet, it is very hard to think that Charlotte Lucas shall ever be mistress of this house, that I shall be forced to make way for her, and live to see her take my place in it!”

“My dear, do not give way to such gloomy thoughts. Let us hope for better things. Let us flatter ourselves that I may be the survivor.” (Chap. XXIII)

Of course this is not very consoling to Mrs. Bennet; it should never happen, she thinks, that she will be the first one to die, leaving her husband taking care of everything after her death.

‘An inadequate mind to begin with, marriage to a man who treats her with contempt only, preoccupation with the insistent material concerns imposed by society upon a woman of her class — they have all combined in Mrs. Bennet’s single continuously operating motive: to be herself secure and comfortable, and to fortify her own security by getting her daughters settled in prudent marriage, that condition symbolic of material well-being.’ (Mudrick: p.99)

Lydia is the girl who represents Mrs. Bennet in her youth:

Lydia was a stout, well-grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good-humoured countenance; a favorite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age. She had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence, which the attention of the officers, to whom her uncle’s good dinners and her own easy manners recommended her, had increased into assurance. (Chapt. IX)

Lydia and her sister Kitty are excited by the coming of a militia regiment to Meryton, expecting dancing and flirtation with the officers, and are despaired by its moving to Brighton, their world seeming in danger of collapsing.

“Good heaven! What is to become of us! What are we to do!” would they often exclaim in the bitterness of woe. “How can you be smiling so, Lizzy?”

Their affectionate mother shared all their grief; she remembered what she had herself endured on a similar occasion, five and twenty years ago.

“I am sure,” said she, “I cried for two days together when Colonel Millar’s regiment went away. I thought I should have broken my heart.”

“I am sure I shall break mine,” said Lydia. (Chap. XLI)

Lydia is a self-assured, highly sexed, wholly armored and unintelligent girl. When she runs off with Wickham, nothing can lower her spirits or make shame. She cannot understand nor does she try to understand the disapproval of society and shame of her family. Instead of reasoning with her as a mother, Mrs. Bennet stands on her side as a defender of her whole act when the married pair return to Longbourne:

Her mother stepped forwards, embraced her, and welcomed her with rapture; gave her hand with an affectionate smile to Wickham, who followed his lady, and wished them both joy, with an alacrity which allowed no doubt of their happiness.

Elizabeth may be ‘disgusted’, and even Miss Bennet ‘shocked’, but ‘Lydia was Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless’, and it is ‘her animal high spirits’ that drive her into marrying. (Chap. LI) And Lydia is a person who never repents.

“Well, mamma...and what do you think of my husband? Is not he a charming man? I am sure my sisters must all envy me. I only hope they may have half my good luck. They must all go to Brighton. That is the place to get husbands. What a pity it is, mamma, we did not all go.” (Chap. LI)

Lydia's elopement with Wickham is, in a sense, a probable realization of Mrs. Bennet's unachieved act of foolishness in her youth twenty-five years ago.

‘One of Jane Austen's triumph in *Pride and Prejudice* is her refusal to sentimentalize Lydia (as well as Mrs. Bennet) once she has fashioned her to a hard and simple consistency,’ says M. Mudrick. However hard Elizabeth tries to put them into the right track, or whatever sarcastic remarks Mr. Bennet may make on their follies, they simply do not realize the implication of their conducts far from expected decency in the society. Lack of introspection, and no desire to improve themselves are the characteristics of these two characters as typically “simple”. Their goal of life is to be secured in living and feel secured by getting a man to marry to, regardless how or what kind, and this must be the inevitable consequences in the society in which women are not allowed to be independent from the family and marriage is the only chance by which they can be “mistress”, however frail that position may be. Those who are simple enough to be satisfied with just getting married may live a happy life in this kind of society. Foolishness is bliss.

To this category belong Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley. They appear to be very close to Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, intricate characters, at first glance. But good-naturedness in personality has very little to do with depth of characters, that is, simple or intricate.

Elizabeth admires her sister Jane above any one else. Jane is gentle, sweet, forbearing, incapable of vindictiveness and of believing ill of others:

... you are a great deal too apt...to like people in general. You never see a fault in any body. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life.”

“I would wish not to be hasty in censuring any one; but I always speak what I think. (Chap. IV)

Elizabeth cannot approve all her “good-sense.”

“I know you do; and it is that which makes the wonder. With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others!...(Chap. IV)

Her honest blindness, not the good sense, is in operation in her love for Mr. Bingley. It is her natural quality that she cannot think ill others. When Jane defends Bingley's sisters against Elizabeth's censure of their snobbery, Elizabeth cannot accept Jane's opinion and,

...listened in silence, but was not convinced; their behaviour at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general; and with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, and with a judgment too unassailed by any attention to herself, she was very little disposed to approve them. (Chap. IV)

Mr. Bingley, likewise, is good-looking, gentlemanlike and amiable, smitten with Jane almost at the first glance. This, and his wealth form all of his charms. Although

he appears to be one of the most desirable partners for young girls who aspire for "good" marriage, his lack of confidence in himself, or lack of his own will makes him a less attractive and impressive character who is influenced upon by his friend so readily, as is seen from Darcy's comment on him:

"...Bingley is most unaffectedly modest. His diffidence had prevented his depending on his own judgment in so anxious a case, but his reliance on mine, made everything easy..." (Chap.LVIII)

Jane loves Bingley sincerely and faithfully, and so does Bingley. Their real objects of love are not minds, or intelligence, or personality, but only the surface of a person. Here, one of the primary ironies of the story, "that love is simple, straightforward and immediate only for very simple people" is seen. (Mudrick: p.106)

"The difference between her (that is, Jane's) natural uncomplex, unintuitive, almost unseeing goodness and Elizabeth's conscious, reasoned, perpetual examination into motive — this is a difference not only between individuals, but between altogether different orders of mind." (Mudrick: p. 105)

Among other simple characters Mr. Collins plays an important role in the development of the story as the holder of the entail of Mr. Bennet, as a devoted believer in Lady Catherine, and as a suitor to Jane, Elizabeth and Charlotte Lucas. It is Mr. Bennet and Elizabeth who can enjoy his personality and behaviour most, because he is the one who can be observed by them without feeling the sense of shame and responsibility, as they do in the case of their family members, in particular, Mrs. Bennet and Lydia. Mr. Collins who owes his present position as a rectory to Lady Catharine, Darcy's aunt, makes Elizabeth shame of him at the party of Netherfield by his pompous speech, but he is so remote from her personal concerns that she and the reader enjoy him as a pure fool. He writes in his first letter to Mr. Bennet introducing himself as follows:

"...I have been so fortunate as to be distinguished by the patronage of the Right Honourable Lady Catherine de Bourgh, widow of Sir Lewis de Bourgh, whose bounty and beneficence has preferred me to the valuable rectory of this parish, where it shall be my earnest endeavour to demean myself with grateful respect towards her Ladyship, and be even ready to perform those rites and ceremonies which are instituted by the Church of England. As a clergyman, moreover, I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace in all families within the reach of my influence; and on these grounds I flatter myself that my present overtures of good-will are highly commendable, and that the circumstance of my being next in the entail of Longbourn estate, will be kindly overlooked on your side, and not lead you to reject the offered olive branch..." (Chap. XIII)

Chiefly struck with his extraordinary deference for Lady Catherine, and his overstated intention for his duties as a clergyman, Elizabeth asks her father, "Can he be a sensible man, sir?" His answer is:

"No, my dear, I think not. I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter, which promises well. I am impatient to see him." (Chap. XIII)

Mr. Bennet is to see his expectations fully satisfied repeatedly hereafter. Mr.

Collins intends to marry one of his daughters, by which he thinks he can make amends for them. His attention soon transfers to Elizabeth from Jane as he understands that Jane is in the hope of marrying Bingley. He addresses Mrs. Bennet:

“May I hope, madam, for your interest with your fair daughter Elizabeth when I solicit for the honour of a private audience with her in the course of this morning?” (Chap. XIX)

All Mr. Collins is in this speech — stupidity, pompousness, conceit and clumsiness. He proceeds to set forth in order his motives in asking her to be his wife; first, his position as a clergyman, second, the advice (‘unasked too!’) of the very noble lady, Lady Catherine de Bough, who has recommended to choose a gentlewoman, for her sake, and for his own, letting her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way, and third, the reason why his views were directed to Longbourn, instead of his own neighbourhood. His proposal to Elizabeth takes place not from his admiration or love for her; he could have chosen anyone, young and to some extent handsome, who happens to be in front of him. His overesteem of himself leads to consider Elizabeth’s declining his proposal only as the “usual practice of elegant females”, but when he comes to understand the real meaning, he goes to ask and obtain the hand of Charlotte Lucas secretly. When he leaves Longbourn, he wishes “fair cousins...health and happiness not excepting my cousin Elizabeth.” (Chap. XIX) He always remains firm in the conviction of his importance and dignity of his place. He warns Elizabeth against a “precipitate closure” with Darcy’s suit, only to support his patroness’s wish, and he offers his clerical opinion on Lydia’s elopement with Wickham:

“...I must not...refrain from declaring my amazement, at hearing that you received the young couple into your house as soon as they were married. It was an encouragement of vice; and had I been the rector of Longbourn, I should very strenuously have opposed it. You ought certainly to forgive them as a christian, but never to admit them in your sight, or allow their names to be mentioned in your hearing. (Chap. XLVIII)

Now we come to the intricate characters. As often referred in describing Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Bennet is always ironical and he observes people aloof, criticizes bitterly, and by doing so he seems to forget his mistake he had made in choosing his wife. It is easy to imagine that when he calls Wickham, who has married his daughter Lydia after the elopement, his ‘favorite son-in-law’, he is not only indulging in his usual paradox, but ironically recognizing his own self-delusion. Mr. Bennet was:

...captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, he had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence, had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. But Mr. Bennet was not of a disposition to seek comfort for the disappointment which his own imprudence had brought on, in any of those pleasures which too often console the unfortunate for their folly or their vice. He was fond of the country and of books; and from

these tastes had arisen his principal enjoyments. To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement. This is not the sort of happiness which a man would in general wish to owe to his wife; but where other powers of entertainment are wanting, the true philosopher will derive benefit from such as are given. (Chap. XLII)

He likes to make blunt comments on the silliness of his daughters, especially 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.” (Chap. VII)

and when Charlotte accepts Mr. Collins:

...it gratified him, he said, to discover that Charlotte Lucas, whom he had been used to think tolerably sensible, was as foolish as his wife, and more foolish than his daughter! (Chap. XXIII)

It is true that Lydia's elopement shocks him and exposes himself. When he returns from his useless search in London, he replies, acknowledging Elizabeth's brief expression of her sorrow for what he must have endured:

“Say nothing of that. Who should suffer but myself? It has been my own doing, and I ought to feel it.”

“You must not be so severe upon yourself,” replied Elizabeth.

“You may well warn me against such an evil. Human nature is so prone to fall into it! No, Lizzy, let me once in my life feel how much I have been to blame. I am not afraid of being overpowered by the impression. It will pass away soon enough.” (Chap. XLVIII)

With Lydia and Wickham safely married, he restores himself to what he has been. A letter from Mr. Collins helps to reaffirm all his amused detachment:

“...For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?” (Chap. LVII)

But the damage to himself is done and cannot be remedied. In the social context Mr. Bennet made a choice as a gentleman of independent means, and Mrs. Bennet could not but believe that in the same society such a man would become a desirable husband.

Charlotte Lucas, a friend of Elizabeth's, sensible and intelligent, on the other hand, accepts Mr. Collins's proposal, knowing that he was wishing to marry Elizabeth a few days ago, and remarks on her marriage to Elizabeth:

“...I am not romantic...I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state. (Chap. XXII)

Her resolution to grow unaware as well as her husband, and her decision to close her eyes and ears is clear when Elizabeth visits Hunsford:

When Mr. Collins said any thing of which his wife might reasonably be ashamed, which certainly was not unseldom, she involuntarily turned her eye on Charlotte. Once or twice she could discern a faint blush; but in general Charlotte

wisely did not hear... (Chap. XXVIII)

The pressures on a woman, twenty-seven, unmarried, not pretty, not well-to-do have acted strongly to leave her no other choice; but Elizabeth is too young to understand the situations in which her friend is placed within the same society.

Mr. Darcy is, perhaps, the most charming and most perfect man in Jane Austen's heroes as well as Mr. Knightley in *Emma* and Mr. Wentworth in *Persuasion*. But he is not perfectly successful in characterization and when compared with the heroine Elizabeth, he is inferior in a considerable degree. Appearing at the Assembly Room at Meryton for the first time,

...Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report, which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, 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... (Chap. III)

'The proudest, most disagreeable man in the world' is the first general impression he gives to those attending the party. In fact, he is a proud man with a strong sense of at least external propriety and dignity, but he initiates Elizabeth's prejudice by speaking with a simple vulgarity and in a voice loud enough to be overheard by the object of his contempt:

...turning around, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, "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..." (Chap. III)

In the following days Elizabeth's resentment of Darcy's arrogance gives him the opportunity of knowing her better, which is what he secretly has desired. He reveals his character mainly through his dialogue with Elizabeth. When they talk about 'pride', he says:

"...But pride — where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulation." (Chap. XI)

and he calls his temper 'resentful'. Their conversation is very lively with her quick observation and ironical speech. Darcy, 'after a few moments' recollection, feels 'the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention'. Though he comes to love her, he cannot accept her family's vulgarity. At last, however, his passion prevails over the other, and his pride makes him confident of success. So when Elizabeth refuses him at once, he seems 'to catch her words with no less resentment than surprise.' And to her accusation of his separating Jane from Bingley, he answers:

"I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. (Chap. XXXIV)

and a little later he adds:

“Perhaps these offenses might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design... Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections?” (Chap. XXXIV)

In this way he establishes himself as an arrogant, rich man who despises the people below his social rank. Then he disappears from our sight, leaving a letter which contains that he has wounded Jane unknowingly and still he believes to be justified, and that he has no reason to blame himself as far as Wickham is concerned and a description of Wickham's misdemeanours. Darcy, in spite of his pride, writes so much and so frankly about his own family events to a young woman who in the sharpest words refused him. And then, as quite a new character he emerges again.

Deep reflections on himself have a great effect upon his change of character, and it is this that makes him belong to the intricate people. And his devoted efforts on shackling Wickham and Lydia, expending thousands of pounds are all made to restore peace of mind to Elizabeth's family and all for the love of Elizabeth.

A character develops, must develop through his actions, but the essentials of a personality can not possibly change so entirely. As to the characterization of Mr. Darcy, Mudrick says :

“...why Darcy alone: why is he, among the major figures in *Pride and Prejudice*, the only one disturbingly derived and wooden?”

The reason seems to be the same as that which compelled Jane Austen to falsify her tone and commentary concerning Wickham's seductions and to supply Elinor and Marianne Dashwood with such nonentities for husbands. The socially unmanageable, the personally involving aspects of sex, Jane Austen can no longer treat with irony, nor can she as yet treat them straight-forwardly. Darcy is the hero, he is the potential lover of a complex young woman much like the author herself; and as such Jane Austen cannot animate him with emotion, or with her characteristic informing irony. (p.117)

As the object of Elizabeth's human study, Darcy is the most difficult person of the intricate character, probably due to his basic inconsistency of himself. But he has been chosen to lead Elizabeth into admitting his worth as the only choice of her marriage:

She began now to comprehend that he was exactly the man who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, could have answered all her wishes. It was a union that must have been to the advantage of both; by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved, and from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance. (Chap. L)

Jane Austen liked Elizabeth the best of all her heroines; she writes to Cassandra:

‘I must confess that I think her as delightful character as ever appeared in print, and I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least I do not know. (Jan.29, 1813)

And in later one she writes that she was much disappointed to find no picture of Mrs. Darcy at the Exhibition in Spring Gardens, but on second thoughts, she

concludes:

‘I can only imagine that Mr. Darcy prizes any picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the public eye, I can imagine he would have that sort of delicacy — that mixture of love, pride and delicacy. (F.W. Cornish: *Jane Austen* p. 123)

E. Jenkins writes citing Stevenson’s saying and Bradley’s comment:

Elizabeth Bennet had perhaps received more admiration than any other heroine in English Literature. (*Jane Austen*, p. 160)

Elizabeth Bennet is ‘not half as handsome as Jane, nor half as good humoured as Lydia’ by her mother, and ‘Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sister,’ by her father. The author provides her with the characteristic response of comic irony which belongs to the author herself. And Elizabeth enters into the story as an ironic spectator as already has been said at the beginning of this section. She is always studying and judging people, amusing herself. But Elizabeth herself, being young, attractive and unmarried, is at the center of marriage in acquisitive society.

Now, at the ball she overhears Mr. Darcy say, ‘She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me...’ and she remains with no very cordial feelings towards him. But she told the story with great spirit among her friends, for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous. From next time they meet, she tries to tease him into communicativeness while dancing, assails his cold proud manners into revealing his personality, without boasting herself of the probability of being the object of Darcy’s attention. She always wants to ignore him, but cannot help minding his presence. She cannot but be ashamed of her family’s folly or nonsense before him. And yet she is interested in Wickham who slanders Darcy. Her feelings are disturbed unusually, and then she comes to know Darcy’s offense, and ‘her heart’ swells ‘with indignation’. She refuses Darcy’s proposal at once and to his asking the reason:

‘I might as well enquire,’ replied she, ‘why with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if it was uncivil? But I have other provocations. You know I have. Had not my own feelings decided against you, had they been indifferent, or had they even been favourable, do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man, who has been the means of ruining, perhaps for ever, the happiness of a most beloved sister? (Chap. XXXIV)

After perusing his letter, an outburst of self-reproach follows:

How despicably have I acted! I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blamable distrust. How humiliating is the discovery! Yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly...Till this moment I never knew myself. (Chap. XXXIV)

When she visits Pemberley with her uncle and aunt,

“And of this place,” thought she, “I might have been mistress! With these rooms I might have been familiarly acquainted!” (Chap. XLIII)

After Lydia's elopement is told to Darcy, she soon observes and instantly understands;

Her power was sinking; everything must sink under such a proof of family weakness...The belief of his self-conquest brought nothing consolatory to her bosom, afforded no palliation of her distress. It was, on the contrary, exactly calculated to make her understand her own wishes; and never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain. But self, though it would intrude, could not engross her. Lydia — the humiliation, the misery she was bringing upon them all — soon swallowed up every private care. (Chap. XLVI)

It is most characteristic as an intricate character that she should wish all unsaid soon after to retain the secret to herself. Lady Catherine visits her and asks to stop loving Darcy but she at once refuses. Bingley returns to Netherfield with Darcy and she cannot help asking herself, “Why, if he (Darcy) came only to be silent, and indifferent, did he come at all?” (Chap. LIV)

But Jenkins rightfully points out in her *Jane Austen*, that ‘Mr. Darcy would not perhaps have acknowledged it, but of all her attractions it was Elizabeth's independence which charmed him most; by standing off from him, she gave him, unconsciously, an opportunity really to see her.’ (p. 162)

The last letter she writes to her aunt reveals her real self:

I am the happiest creature in the world. Perhaps other people had said so, but not one with such justice. I am happier even than Jane; she only smiles, I laugh. (Chap. LX)

Elizabeth, as an intricate character, is a young girl whose mind grows continually through obstacles of personal problems. As a spectator, she never gives up her first principle: to separate the simple personality from the complex, and to concentrate her attention and interest on the latter. Her object is always the complex individual, aware and capable of ‘choice’. Her own pride is in her freedom, to observe, to analyze and choose; her continual mistake is to forget that, even for her, there is only one area of choice — marriage — and that this choice is subject to all the powerful pressures of an acquisitive society. Under pressure, Charlotte denies her choice while making it, degrades herself to the level of a fool in marrying Mr. Collins. Under pressure, Mr. Bennet was led to believe that choice was easy, and to marry to a woman who made no demands upon his awareness. Under pressure, Darcy endangers his freedom by believing that choice is not individual but predetermined by rank and family. According to Mudrick, the simple people — Mrs. Bennet, Lydia, Mr. Collins, Jane, Lady Catherine — do not choose at all, but they are led, largely unaware: and the irony, as Elizabeth recognizes about them all except Jane, is in their illusion of choice and will. The complex, on the other hand, choose; yet it takes a long time for Elizabeth to recognize that choice is not perfect, and may be vain. But the power of choice is all that distinguishes the complex from the other, in

spite of social pressures and misunderstandings. What Elizabeth has to choose is an individual equally complex, and undefeated by his social role. The complex individual is, after all, isolated by his freedom, and must be seen so at the end. (Mudrick: pp.123-4)

So far I have discussed some of the simple and the intricate characters revealed through their conversations and behaviours along the line with Mudrick's viewpoint of irony. Here I would like to point out the irony which covers the story as a whole: that is, "Marriage can never change simple characters into intricate ones." The world Jane Austen depicts is a small, confined one where the main theme is "good marriage", around which people reveal themselves in making choice or in just being led by their passion or misjudgment. Those who make a mistake in choosing lose the sense and self-respect once they have recognized the impropriety of their judgments in choosing their spouse, whether out of the immaturity of youth, as in Mr. Bennet's case, or out of the social pressure, as in Charlotte Lucas's case; the mistake is irrevocable and fatal to their good sense. It is not likely that a simple character will be improved or encouraged to improve himself (or herself) in judgment and understanding in the married life, not at least in the story. In other words, those who force themselves to shut their eyes to their own follies in making a choice are doomed to live a life suppressing the ability to judge, or diverting themselves from the reality. Only a few couples are able to get to "good marriage" who are equally intelligent, and are equipped with the power of self-retrospection and of improving themselves, like Elizabeth and Darcy, and those many 'happy' couples, who are never furnished with the ability of self-examination, will live without ever realizing the possibility of appreciating the real meaning of "good marriage".

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