

Austen's fools in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*

By

Nuraiya Islam

ID: 19163004

A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in English

The Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

May 2021

@2020. Nuraiya Islam

All rights reserved.

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The submitted thesis is my own original work while completing MA degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain previously published or written by a third party, except the appropriate citations through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain any material which has been accepted or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution
4. I have acknowledged all main sources for help.

Student's full Name & Signature:

Nuraiya Islam

19163004

Approval

The thesis titled **Austen's fools in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*** submitted by Nuraiya Islam ID: 19163004 of Fall , 2020 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts.

Examining Committee:

Co-Supervisor :

Anika Saba

(Member)

Lecturer , Department of English and Humanities

Co- Supervisor :

Masoon Khair

(Member)

Lecturer, School of Economics and Social Sciences

BRAC University

Departmental Head:

Professor, Firdous Azim

(Chair)

Professor and Chairperson, Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

Acknowledgement

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to the Almighty Allah for granting me this opportunity to complete my thesis. I would also like to thank my supervisor Anika Saba Mam for her guidance and support. I would also like to thank other faculty members including Prof. Firdous Azim who have discussed the concepts in the class, which helped in my thesis immediately. I want to thank my father, who assisted me in my studies- too unfortunate that he could not see me graduate- your memory will be eternal. I would like to thank my mother for supporting me and guide me in my studies. Furthermore, I would like to thank my sister Rubaiya Islam, whose guidance has appreciated me to create insightful ideas in my thesis.

Abstract

The thesis aims to outline the works of fools in Jane Austen's works, with special focus on the role of her fools or comic characters for developing rising action, falling action, exposition and denouement presented on her two novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. Jane Austen's fools create a comic delight among the readers. She had displayed a comic exuberance and fertility of invention through her fools in her novels. Austen has presented both male and female fools on her novels. This study aims to determine how Austen's fools create troubles in her romantic plots. The purpose of the thesis is to show that how Austen's fools are quite significant than her protagonists for creating a twist, humor and pun in her love plots. By many aspects, the thesis particularly examines the role of shame and triviality of mind for making her fools minds sufficient with sympathetic imagination, by applying New-historicism method, this study aims to determine both male and female fools' role for developing her plots'. This study shows her fools' representation for representing 19th century English society, values and norms through her works. This study has used Susan Miller's 'concept of shame' and Peltason's 'triviality of mind' along with Jennie Hann's novel of manners theory and John Lauber's concept of fools. This purpose of this study is to show how her fools have given a humorous insight among her readers and how her fools and characters minds are independent. This study shows how her fools' have psychological impacts because of being humiliated by Austen's protagonists. Therefore, this thesis shows how her fools represent the patriarchal society, values, norms and laws during Jane Austen's era.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Approval	3
Acknowledgement	3
Abstract	5
Chapter 1 : Introduction	7
Life of Jane Austen.....	11
Novels of Manners and Fools.....	12
Chosen Texts:	16
Purpose of the thesis.....	18
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework	19
New-Historicism.....	19
Chapter 3: Literature Review	21
Chapter 4: Analysis	26
i) Essence of fools	26
ii) Presence of shame.....	30
iii) Triviality of mind.....	32
Chapter 5: Conclusion	34
Work Cited	35

Chapter 1 : Introduction

I was first introduced to Jane Austen for the first time at AIUB University in a course called 19th century novel. We undergraduate students quite enjoyed the concepts of novel of manners and the use of fools in her works. Austen's literature contains various concepts such as fools, mental maps, marital status, money, social class etc. Among them I am willing to work on fools of her novels in English literature. The characters who are mostly considered fools in Austen's novels are John Thorpe, Mrs. Bennet, Anne Steele, Mr. Collins, Lady Bertram, Mr. Yates, Mr. Woodhouse, Mrs. Elton, Miss Bates and Sir Walter Eliot and so on. Her fools create a comic exuberance in the plots of her novels (Lauber 1). Jane Austen's novels are the subjects of intense scholarly study. Her writings have become the centre of a diverse fan culture. During 18th -19th century Austen's works have been considered as stylistic writings. Austen is a 19th century English writer, who is mostly famous for her novels. She mostly uses parody and burlesque techniques for the comical effect of her writings. Her presentation of human nature and moral education in the sub-text of her romantic novels reveal her prudence. Her romance entertains the readers and creates a romantic imagination among the readers (Frike 346). Jane Austen has presented the fools in a unique way in her novel of manners. The characteristics of her fools adds a comic delight of Austen's novels' plots and makes her writings even richer. The fools keep a significant role for developing the plots of her novels. Austen's fools are self-made fools. (Lauber 512). Lauber has said that Austen has portrayed both female and male fools in both similar and dissimilar ways in her works. Austen has brought out the 19th century family life from its zenith through her writings. She has created a balance from the action to scenes of her works by applying her own experience of social customs (49).

Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* offers a rich gallery of fools. The fool characters of this novel are Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Sir William Lucas, Mr. Phillips and Lydia Bennet. Jane Austen has been credited as a keen observer of human nature by the critics because of her creation of vital characters of both sexes. The critics have observed faults on her novels' particular characters. The heroes appear as the suitors for the heroines in her novels. Austen has inadequately characterized her male characters. Austen has marginalized her male characters through her experience. The male characters are often misguided to assert Austen's historical relevance and the profundity of her art (Morrison 338). Among male fools from *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Collins is the major fool. Collins is not a sensible man. He remains oblivious of people's feelings and reactions. He is too narrow minded to understand people's role in the society. Mr. Collins seems confident while speaking and going through the repeated actions. He is quite confident about the positive result. For Mr. Collins the business of life consist a series of rituals which needs to perform in the established ways, as a result he proposes Elizabeth as a regular part of the business and assures her by using animated language. He assures himself by thinking that Elizabeth is playing her role properly. Mr. Collins became determined to approach Darcy at Netherfield ball, because he has discovered that Darcy is Lady Catherine's nephew. Collins favors the entire company by providing a lecture on the duties of clergymen. He secures his tithes, making himself comfortable and flatters his superiors (Lauber 516).

Mrs. Bennet is another major fool from *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen has presented her as fretful, nervous and querulous. She has described Mrs. Bennet by providing a devastated summary of her character. Austen has described her as a woman of mean understanding, ignorant and petulant. Mrs. Bennett's aim of her life is to get her daughters married. She is unaware about the

thoughts of the people about her. Mrs. Bennet talks incessantly; she even does not hear her own voice. Her final speech about learning on Elizabeth's engagement sums up her character. Again Lydia is a different and dangerous type of fool. She is energetic, headstrong and noisy. Lydia requires violent stimuli, delighting in crowds and noise, her disastrous elopement and marriage proves that Lydia has no capability to change. She is untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy and fearless. Despite of having an unacceptable marriage Lydia expects the felicitations from her family and enjoys the privileges of a married woman.

Lady Catherine D Borrough is another fool from *Pride and Prejudice* . Lady Catherine is the only fool who supports Darcy; she lessens Darcy's sense of superiority. Lady Catherine parodies and exaggerates Darcy's aristocratic pride. Rank, fortune and meddling disposition has made Lady Catherine the great lady; however her greatness is seriously taken by other fools of the novel. Like Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine is totally unpredictable. She gives value to the externality, without regarding her personal qualities, it can be anticipated that Lady Catherine is pleased to approve Mr. Collins sermons. Jane Austen's fools does not represent the society on a satirical manner, rather they constitute a sub-society of their own (Lauber 518).

Luxuriant crops of fools is seen in Jane Austen's another novel *Sense and Sensibility*. The fools of this novel can be found with Middletons, Anne Steele, Robert Ferrars, John Dashwood, Fanny Dashwood and the tyrannical Mrs Ferrars. Lady Middleton is known as an insipid fool. She has no feelings, no talents and no tastes. Her repellent manners conceal nothing. Lady Middleton is the most realistic fool portrayed by Jane Austen. She only responds to the violent stimuli. She seems excited by the entrance of her four noisy children. Lady Middleton and her husband are

the perfect match. They strongly resemble to one another in the total want of talent and taste. The only resource for them is hunting, shooting and humoring their children (Lauber 515).

Sir John Middleton is differed from his wife. His shallow heartiness has made him an active rather than a passive bore. Sir John has no understanding for others, however in his invitations he freely mixes up with incompatible and with antagonistic. He does not realize the possible pain of his victims. He has forced Elinor and Marianne into the company of Anne and Lucy Steele. For Sir John 'personal' is unknown to him, like his wife he also concerns for the externality. Jane Austen has not portrayed the Middletons as amusing characters, but the Middleton's interest of realism helps to serve the plot in various ways. They fill the emptiness of their lives with social engagements. This novel contains more fools than Austen's other novels (Lauber514).

In *Mansfield Park* the character Mr. Rushworth, is a literary moronic fool, Austen has portrayed him as a prudent fool. Mr. Rushworth is portrayed both malign and benign by Jane Austen in this novel. Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris are the important fools of this novel. Mrs. Norris is a selfish mother; she cares more for herself than her children. Lady Bertram's feelings are nonexistent, however she seems curiously exempt of her moral judgment, on the other hand Mrs. Norris is considered as a hateful character in Jane Austen's novels, she is a malignant fool but she gives a great energy, purpose and activity in comparison to her sister. Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris are more rational than other fools in Jane Austen's works. Mrs. Norris injures Maria and Julia in lesser extent. She hates Fanny. After becoming the mistress of *Mansfield Park* she has taken the place of the characters in the novel (Lauber 521-522). In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen has portrayed Mrs. Allen and John Thorpe as fools. In *Emma*, Austen has portrayed Mrs. Elton as an exasperating fool whose function is a wicked parody of the protagonist. In *Persuasion*, Sir

Walter Eliot is the archetypal snob. He contains a mythical quality in his apparent immunity to age and character. Like other fools he is concerned about his appearance. Sir Walter Eliot is described as a proud character in a stage manage manner by Jane Austen in this novel (Lauber 152). My thesis will look at the fools' impact for developing the plot, rising action, exposition and denouement in Jane Austen's works by referring these two remarkable novels of nineteenth century *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Life of Jane Austen

Jane Austen was born in Steventon, Hampshire on 16 December, 1775. She grew up in an affluent family. She was the seventh among the eighth children of her parents. In 1765, Austen and her family moved to Steventon, a village in North Hampshire. The town was 60 miles kilometer from the South West, London. Her father was an appointed rector of that city. At the age of 7 Austen and her sister were sent to Oxford to attend school, as a result, the girls came down with typhus and were brought back to Steventon. At the age of 9, Austen and her sister Cassandra attended the Abbey school in reading, though they get enrollment in the school, the girls withdrawn because her father was unable to afford their tuition fees of their studies, as a result the girls continued their education at home by taking help from their brother and father. The Austens used to read aloud to one another. Jane Austen has a hand to compose the short theatrical performances of plays. The family plays were acted by her family members and a few close neighbors.

At the age of 12, Austen has started to write for herself and her family. Austen has written poems and several parodies of dramatic fiction such as *History of England* and *Love and Friendship* which were popular dramatic fiction during 19th century. She has compiled the

dramatic fiction and divided them into 3 volumes . In 1795, Austen has entered a productive phase, and created ‘First Trilogy’ by increasing social engagements and flirtations in her writings. She began to write her first novel *Elinor and Marianne* this novel is considered as a novel of letters, the novel eventually reworked and re-titled *Sense and Sensibility* during publication. In the following year, Austen wrote the novel *First impressions*, however this novel was rejected by the publisher in 1797. *First Impressions* was the first version of *Pride and Prejudice*. In 1798 she started to write her another novel named *Susan* and it has been evolved into *Northanger Abbey*. Austen had no separate study room; she used to write all her novels by sitting in the general sitting room. However Austen was quite careful about her occupation must not be suspected by the servants or the visitor or any other family members. She used to hide her manuscripts and covered her writings in a piece of blotting paper (Woolf 56). Virginia Woolf has praised her by saying that Austen’s sensibility had been educated for centuries by the influences of the common sitting room. Therefore, when the middle –class women took to writing, she naturally wrote novels (56). After the publication of her novels *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816) she became successful as a published writer. At the age of 41 Austen has passed away at Winchester on 18 July 1817. Austen’s brother Henry arranged for his sister to be buried in the North Aisle in the grave of Winchester Cathedral.

Novels of Manners and Fools:

One of the major concerns of my thesis is to show how Jane Austen represents fools in her plots. I think Austen has used a wide range of fools in her novels. Her novels carefully constructs in the works of art. The fools play a significant role for developing the action and theme of her works.

Lauber has stated that the fools are confined within the social routine and these fools have taken the rituals for the reality in Jane Austen's works (513).

Both male and female fools are presented in Jane Austen's works. In *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen has presented further evidence of her preoccupied world. Her fools are much complicated than her sagacious characters. Her wise characters consists some follies and her fools have something to love. Her fools are more significant than her characters. They are not unworthy of attention. Austen has granted a large collection of ideas for presenting her fools in different ways in her writings. She has presented both male and female fools in a unique way in her writings. Mr. Collins from *Pride and Prejudice* is considered the most amusing fools. He is not a sensible man, and his deficiency of nature had been little assisted by education and society. His character is a mixture of pride, obsequiousness, self-importance and humility. Mr. Collins's role in *Pride and Prejudice* begins as an unsuitable suitor for Elizabeth. He shows some selfish reasons to marry Elizabeth and humiliates her during his marriage proposal. Mr. Collins is not enough sensible to realize Elizabeth's genuine refusal . Mrs. Bennett is another major fool from *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen has portrayed Mrs. Bennett as fretful, querulous and nervous. She has elaborated Mrs. Bennett by providing a devastated summary of her character. Austen has described Mrs. Bennett as a woman of mean understanding, with little information and an uncertain temper. Mrs. Bennett's aim of her life was to get her daughters married. She is unaware about thinking of the people of the world about her. Mrs. Bennett talks incessantly and apparently does not hear her own voice. Her final speech about learning on Elizabeth's engagement sums up her character. Again Lydia is a dangerous type of fool; she is energetic, headstrong and noisy. Lydia requires violent stimuli. She feels delighted on crowds and noise. Her disastrous elopement and marriage proves that Lydia has no capability of changing. She is

untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy and fearless. In spite of having an unacceptable marriage, she expects the felicitations from her family and enjoys the privileges of a married woman. Lady Catherine de Bourgh is another fool from *Pride and Prejudice*. She is the only fool who supports Darcy and lessens his sense of superiority. Lady Catherine parodies and exaggerates Darcy's aristocratic pride. Rank, fortune and meddling disposition has made Lady Catherine a great lady, however her greatness is seriously taken by another fool Mr. Collins of the novel. Like Mr. Collins Lady Catherine does not regard her personal quality, she provides a necessary balance. Lady Catherine is rigid and totally predictable and provides value to the externality; she does not regard her personal qualities (Lauber 518). The fools of *Pride and Prejudice* recognize and admire each other. It can be anticipated that Lady Catherine is pleased to approve Mr. Collins's sermons. Jane Austen's fools does not represent the society in a satirical manner, rather they constitute a sub- society of their own (Lauber 518). As a humorist Austen's subject matter is a human folly. For two separate qualities she is considered as a folly writer. First the impossibility of knowing about the character's thoughts about any subject and action, secondly her ideas on a few subjects that provides the whole tone to the person's thoughts. Austen's novels do not provide a single instance in all purity of the idea.

Austen's another novel *Sense and Sensibility* contains a large crop of fools with Middletons, Anne Steele, Robert Ferrars, John and Fanny Dashwood and also the tyrannical Mrs. Ferrars. Like *Pride and Prejudice* Austen has used an ample amount of fools in this novel. Jane Austen's fools consists follies, her use of wit is integrated in her work (Lauber 515).

Another major theme I will analyze and connect with Austen's novels is novel of manners. Edith Wharton in her autobiography *A Backward Glance* has indicated that on the opening lines of a

novel fragment Austen has penned at the age of eleven. Wharton has described Austen's early efforts and considered her as a novelist of manners (73). Austen has taken her subject from the gentry of Regency England before hundred years. Richard Poirer has said that Austen is not different from other writers of her society (188-19). She has criticized the upper class's value, satirizes snobbery and has distinguished morality from exterior rank. Her novels are mostly renowned for the happily ever after endings and for her novel's courtship plots. Austen's heroines somehow manage to marry for love but money becomes a substantial amount of it (Hann 2). Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is the most famous example of English novel of manners, she is known for ending her novels by providing her heroine with a good marriage match. Austen has upheld the institution of marriage in her works. She has undermined the social criticism by presenting the social structure in her novels (Hann 4). Tuttleton has said that the novels of manners are the novels where the streams of the self and social history are intersect. Novels of manners are manifested in the hallmark of Austen's literary style and the narrative technique of free indirect discourse with tense and mode of the narrators report (118-119).

The term novel of manners has started to appear by referencing the fiction written by American in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Austen has condemned the structure of the societies that provided women few economical feasible options of marriage. Austen has focused intensely on the aristocratic world and ignored the plight of moral classes (Hann 5). Jane Austen is a Georgian authoress, from her use of fools in the plots of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* I think her writings have shown a level of novel of manners.

Chosen Texts:

In *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen has used a rich gallery of fools. Both male and female fools are equally presented in this novel. Mrs. Bennet and Lydia are the major female fools from *Pride and Prejudice*. Mrs. Bennet is too stupid to understand her husband's hatred towards her. She has no realization of her failed marriage, and thinks that a marriage can be successful only by pinning money and jewels. She has a lack of moral awareness. Her judgment is childish, self-centered, hypochondriac, and uncharitable. Another female fool Lydia is an ignorant and a naive girl. She does not see beyond her feet. Her character is a xerox of Mrs. Bennet. Lydia gets married to a rogue who has no feelings for her, but yet she merrily accepts her married life. She has a lack of piety and kindness. Both of the characters are equally selfish and resemble one another. Lady Catherine de Bourgh is also a fool character from *Pride and Prejudice*. She remains absurd in constant interference with the lives of people. She regulates the lives of people, examines their work and criticizes their employment.

Mr. Collins is the male fool from *Pride and Prejudice*. Mr. Collins is literal and predictable. He takes about all emotions and genuineness of his reactions of the world around him. He is not aware of his foolishness. Because of his conceit, arrogance, and narrow-minded personality Elizabeth rejects his proposal. Mr. Collins exemplifies a trend that a fool is not simply foolish. He exhibits himself and feels proud of his foolishness. His ideas and conduct prove that he is not refined and well-educated. His mentality does not develop at all. He is too naive to understand Elizabeth's genuine refusal.

In *Sense and Sensibility* Austen has used abundant of fools than her previous works, like *Pride and Prejudice* she has presented both male and female fools equally in this novel. Austen has

presented both male and female fools in a different manner in this novel. Among male fools Sir Thomas Middleton is a distant relative of Dashwoods. Despite his love for large numbers of people he cannot serve people beyond the social decorum. He pokes fun at Elinor's affection for Edward. He is quite gentle fool than the other fools of Jane Austen's works.

Again John Dashwood is another male fools of this novel. He is Elinor and Marianne's half – brother. John Dashwood is a selfish and greedy character. He becomes voracious for wealth. John Dashwood is swayed by social propriety and provides each of his sisters and his mother a thousand pounds on a year to live off as a result he is swayed by his wife's greediness. John Dashwood lacks of morality and affection in consequences he drives his family into poverty. In spite of having ability to spent money he feels shy to help his family as a result he became a loathed fool of this novel. Among female fools Mrs. Dashwood is even shallower, selfish cold and rapacious character. She achieves a grave dislike by Austen's audience because of claiming Norland Park during the day –after her father-in - laws funeral. She has no sympathy for the grieving family. Mrs. Dashwood becomes the major obstacle between Edward and Elinor's reunion. Another female fool of *Sense and Sensibility* is Mrs. Ferrars. Like Mrs. Dashwood she is also a major hindrance for Elinor's and Edward's reunion. Austen has described her character as expressionless and sour. Mrs. Dashwood is a prideful and ill-mannered woman. Her greed has created a distance among Edward and Elinor's relationship. She sets Robert Ferrars as the heir of her fortune and provides him the freedom of marriage, as a result he marries a penniless girl and this favoritism leads to her demise. Lucy and Willoughby are other fools from *Sense and Sensibility*. They have experienced a comparative happiness in their realistic world. Lucy's selfish schemes has brought gratifying result and made her dismiss from her in laws. By looking

at Austen's novels and her application of fools in her writings, it can be said that her novels focuses on fools and comic conclusions as well.

Purpose of the thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to analyze Austen's two novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, by examining through the concept of fools and novel of manners and discussing the importance of fools for developing her plots, characters, rising action, falling action, exposition and denouement of her writings. This paper is divided into distinct parts including a brief introduction, literature review, methodology and the textual analysis which will highlight on the fools significance for developing Jane Austen's plots and relate them with the concepts of novel of manners and fools by relating with the comic conclusions and scenes and finally a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The research methodology of this study is textual and interpretive as the thesis will attempt to look at the Jane Austen's two literary texts *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* by applying new historicism theory in her works. This study will explore the historical reality of 19th century England by applying New –Historicism theory.

New-Historicism

The theory which the study will use to evaluate the impact of fools is New -historicism. This method is based on parallel reading of literary and non –literary texts. American critique Louis Montrose defines New –historicism as a combination of the textuality of history and the historicity of texts . New -Historicism theory involves in an intensified willingness of reading the textual traces of the past attentively by conferring the literary texts (Barry 167). New historicism had embodied a paradox and some scandals. The theory is an approach to the literature, without any literary prevail. The new –historical literary texts usually are influenced by non-literary texts. The texts and co-texts are seen as the expressions of the historical moments; however these historical moments are interpreted by the author on his texts.

The word 'parallel' encapsulates the earlier approaches of historical data. These earlier approaches had created a hierarchal separation, between non –literary and the literary texts. The 'equally weighting' is suggested in the definition of new-historicism which is defined by the American critique Louis Montrose (Barry 166). New –historic novels are styled like realistic novels rather than romantic fiction as a result it becomes unimaginable under the old regime of romance. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has made a remarkable change in the literary history. By looking at *Pride and Prejudice* through new-historic glance, it can be seen that, during, 19th

century England the marriage was an idea for the development of financial position of women in the society. Every woman was expected to get married for upgrading their status in the society. Regarding the social situation marriage was considered as women's duty in 19th century English society. The opening line of *Pride and Prejudice*, 'It is truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of wife', describes the marriage as medium of upgrading women's social status during 19th century England (Freidin 147). The new –historicism theory rises in a unique manner in Austen's another novel *Sense and Sensibility*. Austen has demonstrated the injustice of law, towards the women in this novel; she has shown how women were treated as inferior of patriarchal death. Many women lose their homes and their source of income, for example, in the beginning of *Sense and Sensibility* the Dashwoods were forced to move out from their estate, after their father/ husband dies. Despite of being Mr. Dashwood's family member, the Dashwoods had not received any of his money, however Mr. Dashwood's first' wife's son owns all of his property. By this description of the process, Austen has exposed the injustice of the law. She has showed how women were treated inferior after the patriarchal death. Because of the death of the father most of the women loses their source of income. Mrs Dashwoods' looking for suitable husbands for her daughters, suggests that during Austen's time marrying off daughters was the only way to provide financial security for a family.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Several authors had written on Jane Austen's presentation of 19th century marriage and her presentation of the concept of marriage as a medium of upgrading women's social status during 19th century England. Some of the authors have written about money and fortune of Austen's works. This study will attempt to take an in-depth analysis on Jane Austen's presentation of fools and their role for developing the plot, climax, rising action, falling action, exposition and denouement in Jane Austen's novels. This study will look at the theoretical aspects on Jane Austen's presentation of fools in English literature.

John Lauber's essay 'Jane Austen's fools' points out that Austen's novels are constructed in works of art. Her fools or comic characters have played their essential parts for developing the action and theme in her plots. Her fools are self-made fools. Lauber's analysis shows that Jane Austen does not repeat her fools, rather than she repeats her heroines in her novels. Austen has portrayed her fools differently but in a unique way on her novels. Her fool characters amuse her readers. Austen has provided a pleasure with infinite variations through her fools. From Lauber's analysis it is found that Austen has portrayed both male and female fools in her novels. Her fools represented the ridiculous forces as a result they became the reason of the trouble in her plots. After reading John Lauber's essay it can be said that Austen has presented her each fools differently in her every novel of manners, however, Austen's two novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* contains the largest amount of fools. From *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine de Borough, Sir William Lucas, Mrs. Phillips, Marry and Lydia Bennet are the fool characters. Again from *Sense and Sensibility* Middletons, Anne Steele, Robert Ferrars, John Dashwood, Fanny Dashwood and Mrs. Ferrars are the fool characters. Both male and female fool character's impact and importance for developing

Austen's novels' plots are described in this essay as a result this study have selected John Lauber's 'Jane Austen's fools'.

Gordon Hirsch's 'Shame, Pride and Prejudice: Jane Austen's psychological sophistication' talks about the psychological conditions of *Pride and Prejudice* characters. The term 'shame' is a feeling of disgust, displeasure or embarrassments about some quality of self, which occurs typically a moment of uncovering and exposure. It is connected with the feelings of low-esteem; however in some cases it can produce depression. Pride is identified with positive feelings about the 'self'. Pride is at the opposite pole in Donald Nathanson's 'the shame/pride axis' term. In case of psychology the oppositions of pole may be more apparent than real. The individuals attempt to master their shame through the development of an illusionary, brittle pride. Shame is considered as the 'master emotion' that is likely to trigger other affects of behaviors. In response shame is deeply rooted feelings of personal inferiority and inadequacy. The fools from *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet, Lydia Bennet, and Lady Catherine D Borrough are largely unaffected to play upon their shame. Each character has their psychological sophistication. After the marriage of Lydia and Wickham, Lydia returns unashamedly to her father's house. In spite of doing such heinous act yet Lydia felt untamed, unabashed, noisy and fearless, however Lydia follows Elizabeth's footsteps. She had been attracted and conned by Wickham as a result she has not even ashamed of eloping with him. Lady Catherine D Borrough's attempt to provide shame to Elizabeth and to convince her for rejecting Darcy's marriage proposal backfire her intervention. Mr. Collins' character is a mixture of pride servility and self-importance. Austen's expression about Collins's grandiose fantasies, aggressiveness and self-promotion has become a defense against his threatened self-esteem. Collins pitches his marriage proposal to Elizabeth as he is playing with her susceptibility to shame. Finally after being rejected by Elizabeth, he warns her by saying that 'it is no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made for you'.

Collins has been wounded by Elizabeth's rejection in the state of pride, as a result he seeks attention to Elizabeth's another friend Charlotte Lucas. Elizabeth's prepossession is against Wickham and against Darcy. Her prejudice and in other stems from her feeling is slighted from her wounded pride. Her confidence and her pride is in her own discernment as a result she felt ridiculous, humiliated and ashamed. Most of the critics D.W Harding and Bernard Paris have not only focused on emotional content but also on the psychological effect on Austen's novels, regarding her technical manipulation of tone, structure and moral theme. Austen has given the importance to the ridiculousness in *Pride and Prejudice*, the nature of her disclaimer invites one to look beneath the sprightliness of her characters, by doing this Austen has not only discerned the psychological acuity into the emotional dynamics of shame but also on the sociological perceptiveness about the cultural reinforcement of feeling shame as a means of hierarchy and control.

Hume has investigated the relationship between pride and shame; however he has also stressed the importance in the psyche. In his article 'Treatise of Human Nature', he has identified pride and humility above all the connection with the idea of 'our self'. Hume was interested in the curious way of pride that attaches not only personal qualities but also to the family. Hume has said that their riches, credit and an inanimate object bear a relation to us.

Austen's study of pride and shame can be considered more concrete and detailed than Hume's philosophical formulations. The psychological impact that is dramatized by her are further illuminates and brings the insights of modern psychology.

Susan Millers' term 'shame experience or facing shame' views in a common emphasis on effects and emotions. The importance of shame relies on the development of identity and sense

of self. This study will use the term 'shame' for identifying the feeling of embarrassed, humiliated, dishonor and worthlessness among the fools of Jane Austen.

Timothy Peltason in his essay 'Mind and Mindlessness in Jane Austen' said that Austen's novels are filled with a sequence of observations, earnestness and ironies that reveals her constant interest of representing and commenting on the particular mind of her novels. Her characters conduce their romantic success through their independent existence. Peltason has said that Austen's least sympathetic characters have sufficiently rich minds and their minds indicate many other things. Her most sympathetic characters have their own power of imagination. The most disdained and cosseted characters' inner lives are astonishingly unvaried and highly unimaginative. The narrator pauses frequently to wonder as a result it obliges to wonder with the possibility of hitting the conscious and subconscious mind. Austen's representations of empty inner lives have baffled the power of sympathetic imagination.

In *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Collins's empty language remains perplexed to the interlocutor. The comic proposal shows his self assurance and his violent affections. Mr. Collins's self assurance and violent affections has provided the stirrings of horror. It can be understood that Mr. Collins presents himself to Elizabeth as a stupid and selfish man who is unable to understand the meaning of no. Mr. Collins's empty language is unable to convince the interlocutor as a result Elizabeth straightly rejects his proposal. Another fool from *Pride and Prejudice* Mrs. Bennet is good-looking enough to dispel the mystery of how she has attracted her husband. Peltason used the term, 'triviality of mind' for describing Mrs.

Bennet because her mind was more difficult to develop. The word triviality means 'something unimportant'. The term 'triviality of mind' means not serious, in content, attitude or behavior. Mrs. Bennet introduces herself in a ruthless summary in the novel. Her conversation does not create and exchange contact with other characters in the novel.

Fanny Dashwood and Lucy Steele from *Sense and Sensibility* have an absence of genuine curiosity of power as a result they strive from their position. The importance of maneuverings has made them transparent by the singleness of their motives.

This study will use the term 'triviality of mind' in order to identify the selfishness, generosity and wretchedness among fools in Austen's works.

Chapter 4: Analysis

i) Essence of fools

An essence of fools is found in the plots of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. These two novels are enriched with fools. Austen's fools have played essential parts for developing the action and theme of her plots. Jane Austen's fools are self-made fools. Her fools are the reason for the trouble of her plots. The fools represent the ignorant forces (Lauber 512). Her novels are carefully constructed in the works of art. In Austen's works the female fools are quite significant than her male fools. From *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Collins remains determined to approach Darcy at the Netherfield ball, because he has known that Darcy is Lady Catherine's nephew. By securing tithes and making himself comfortable, he favors the entire company in a lecture on the duties of a clergyman. Mr. Collins flatters his superiors. The business of his life consists of a series of rituals that are performed in established ways. He confidently uses customary words and goes through his expected actions; as a result he behaves with Elizabeth in an elderly manner. Mr. Collins assures her by using animated language. Elizabeth can understand the violent side of his behavior and that is why she rejects him; however, Mr. Collins is unable to understand Elizabeth's genuine refusal. He assures himself by saying that Elizabeth is playing her role properly. His change from Elizabeth to Charlotte Lucas is quite precipitous. Mr. Collins's nature is solemn, slow and heavy (Lauber 516). Austen has described the character Mr. Collins in a hilarious manner in *Pride and Prejudice*. Mr. Collins is not a rational man. He is not a matured person. Mr. Collins's upbringing has been done by his illiterate and parsimonious father. In spite of being studied several universities, he remains uneducated, as a result Mr. Collins's character remains undeveloped. His father's parenthood has not been able to teach him proper manners subsequently; Mr. Collins has become a self – conceit and a frail headed person.

His life consist a series of rituals. He has to become a loyal person to perform these series of rituals. Mr. Collins unsuccessfully plays upon his shame. He has embraced Elizabeth by introducing himself to Darcy indecorously (Hirsch 66). Mr. Collins is unable to understand Elizabeth's bonafide answer. Another fool Mrs. Bennet is opposite to Mr. Collins. Mrs. Bennet is an unfriendly woman, with minimal information and ill temper. She is quite petulant in character. Her business of life is to marry off her daughters. "She loudly triumphs over Lady Lucas in the impending marriage of her daughter to Bingley" (Lauber 516). Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins perfectly complement each other. They shares each other's self – absorption and insensitivity. Mrs. Bennet cannot be aware of the world's thinking about her. Her last speech on Elizabeth's engagement wraps up her character (Lauber 517). Mrs. Bennet never discriminates between herself and Mr. Collins. She is a nervous and invariably a fool. Jane Austen describes Mrs. Bennet by providing devastating summaries. Mrs. Bennet is helplessly dependent on her society. Though she lives for the external Mrs. Bennet remains unaware about what passes about her in the world. Mrs. Bennet talks incessantly and apparently. She does not even hear her own voice. Mrs. Bennet's speech is full of irony and humor. She exhibits the total involvement of prejudice (Zimmerman 66).

Other fools from *Pride and Prejudice* are Lydia and Lady Catherine D Borough. Austen has presented these two fools differently. Lydia is completely different and dangerous type of fool. She is energetic, headstrong and noisy. She remains delighted in crowds and noise. In spite of having an unacceptable marriage, Lydia anticipates felicitations from her family and gets benefitted as a married woman. She has taken the precedence over her elder sister Jane. (Lauber 517-518). Lady Catherine D Borough is another important fool. She assuages Darcy's sense of superiority. Lady Catherine parodies and

exaggerates Darcy's aristocratic pride. Rank and fortune has made Lady Catherine a great lady. 'Lady Catherine treats human being as her projection of own desires' . She gives priority to her wishes (Zimmerman 66).

From *Sense and Sensibility* the Middletons, Anne Steele, Robert Ferrars, John and Fanny Dashwood, Mrs. Ferrars are the fool characters. Lady Middleton is one of the major fools of this novel. She has no talents, tastes, feelings or interests. Jane Austen has realistically drawn her character. Her insipidity cannot be caricatured. She only responds to violent stimuli. She seemed to be roused to enjoyment by the entrance of her four noisy children, who pull and tear her clothes. Lady Middleton and her husband are well-matched life-partners. This couple resembles each other in total want of talent and taste. They are confined with their enjoyments. Lady Middleton's polished emptiness does not constitute sense, and then the heartless calculation of John and Fanny Dashwood does (Lauber 514).

Sir John Middleton remains incapable of introspection. He remains ignorant of himself. He is unable to understand others and in his invitations he muddles up the incompatible and antagonistic characters. Sir John has compelled Elinor and Marianne to join Lucy and Anne Steele's company. Sir John does not provide any significance to his family life. He locks up Lucy and Anne Steele, Elinor and Marianne in a room and everyday he spends some hours with them. Sir John has no idea about personal life and space , as a result he and his better –half concerns only about their positions (Lauber 514). Austen has created an emotional strength among her characters. Robert and Anne Steele are also major fools. Robert meets Elinor and Marianne in the jeweler's shop. He is engrossed for buying a toothpick case for himself. Robert does not pay any attention on the two girls on the jeweler's shop, though the two sisters'

activities in the jeweler's shop are quite noticeable. By using shame Austen has created an emotional vigor and sensibility among her characters (Bennet 378). The Middletons fill the emptiness of their lives with social engagements and the Dashwoods fill their acquisition of property as a result it requires an energy, a hardness and a shrewdness, these renders them hateful rather than merely dull, however the Dashwoods and the Middletons are quite similar. They are equally concerned with the externality and equally ignorant of the world of feeling.

Mrs. Ferrars remains determined to disinherit one of her erring son Edward. She starves him and also prevents him from entering any profession. Mrs. Ferrars has been compared with a monster. She is too ferocious to be comic as a result she defeats herself by providing her younger son to her elder son's belongings. She tries to convince Robert to marry the wealthy Miss. Morton, whom Edward has rejected (Lauber 514). Anne Steele is another ignorant fool. She is an aged spinster; the motive of her life is to get married. She becomes desperate for a life partner. She reveals herself in her first conversation with Elinor and Marianne (Lauber 515). Anne Steele is a complex character. She nuances herself from Lucy Steele, through their sense of ingenious and exquisite elegance, however these differences remains as a disguise that becomes indistinguishable in corruption. John Dashwood regularly complains about his lacking of money. He speaks less about himself and his wife Fanny Dashwood has much lesser to say for herself than her husband. John Dashwood's occupy of Elinor and Marianne's inheritance proves the blatant and horrific side of his character (Robert 357-359).

ii) Presence of shame

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* fool characters' have a presence of shame among them. David Hume in his article 'Treatise of Human Nature' has investigated the relationship between 'pride and shame. He has stressed the two passions of 'psyche'. Hume has identified pride and humility as the two fundamental opposite feelings of self. By using the term 'shame' Austen has revised the emotional intensities and speculated sensibility. Her use of shame has created an emotional vigor and sensibility among her characters (Bennet 378). In *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine D Bourgh are largely ineffectual to play upon their shame. Mr. Collins's character is a combination of servility and self-importance. This combination of his character has expressed Austen's insight of elaborate fantasies. Mr. Collins's belligerent self-promotion can become a shield against his threatened self-respect. Because of his shame, Mr. Collins pitches his proposal to Elizabeth and plays upon her shame. Mr. Collins's mixture of servility, expression and aggressive self-promotion has become a defense against his threatened self-esteem. He becomes wounded by Elizabeth's rejection as a result he seeks attention to Elizabeth's another friend Charlotte Lucas (Hirsch 69).

Another fool from *Pride and Prejudice* Lydia returns unashamedly to her father's house after her marriage with Wickham. Lydia has been attracted towards Wickham and eloped with him. She does not even feel ashamed of her act on her wishes of running away with Wickham. 'Her impulsive behavior and lack of shame represent precisely what Elizabeth fears and represses herself' (Hirsch 68). She has essentially followed Elizabeth's footsteps. Lydia remains cheerful after her marriage with Wickham. Her mind has no repentance, rather she feels proud of herself of being a married woman. She felt that Wickham should get married as a result she felt an

attachment for him and got married with him. Lydia quite resembles her mother Mrs. Bennet. She is enthusiastic, headstrong and boisterous. Though her marriage is regretful, she anticipates congratulations from her family and enjoys the facilities of a married woman. She feels proud for fulfilling her mother's dream by getting married before her sisters (Lauber 518).

Another fool from *Pride and Prejudice* is Lady Catherine D Borough. She is renowned of her low self-esteem. Lady Catherine D Borough endeavors to provide shame to Elizabeth during the latter visits at Rosings. She expresses amazement and embarrasses them by saying that the Bennet daughters have had no governess as a result they are out of society. She convinces Elizabeth not to marry Darcy. Lady Catherine is largely ineffectual in her attempts to play upon her shame as a result her intervention backfires. "She is restored to happiness when Darcy revives his marriage proposal". She castigates the upstart pretensions of a young woman who has no family, connections and fortune. Lady Catherine d Borough is defended against her feelings of worthlessness. She has attempted to gain the upper position of her society in a humorous and belligerent manner. Lady Catherine's persuasion to Elizabeth against Darcy proves her effort to turn the tables. This persuasion also proves her effort to win over Darcy's heart. Lady Catherine's defending nature and bombastic quality of witticism has been caught by Elizabeth at last (Hirsch 67-69).

iii) Triviality of mind

Jane Austen's novels keep a sequence of loosely narrative observations, earnestness and ironies. These things reveal her constant and interests of her representation of mind. This sequence also reveals her comments on the particular qualities of her characters' mind. The qualities of her characters' mind conduces romantic success. Her each characters contain an independent mind. Austen's narrators halt to comment on the richness, activities, poverty and inferred tedium of her specific characters' internal lives. Her sympathetic characters have sufficiently rich minds. Their rich minds indicate many things and make their minds filled with sympathetic imagination (Peltason 611). Austen pushes her fools into the further region of comic encounter in subsequent novels.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Collins empty language makes him genuinely unable to understand the real answer of the interlocutor, however in the novel there is a portrayal of utopian universe, 'But there is an adjacent imaginative universe – Charlotte Lucas inhabits it – in which the heroine must face the decidedly uncomic realities of depending for intimacy and social contact on a person who is unreachably empty-headed'' (Peltason 619). The proposal scene of Elizabeth and Mr. Collins has shown Mr. Collins's violent side of his affections and also the horror side of his proposal. It can be understood that Mr. Collins presents himself as a ridiculous selfish man who is unable to understand the meaning of no (Peltason 619). 'Mrs. Bennet is similarly but more consequently incapacitated by triviality of mind'' (Peltason 620). The narrator introduces Mrs. Bennet by providing a ruthless summary of her character. Her business and motive of her life is to get her daughters married. 'Her mind was more difficult to develop''. Jane Austen has shown that Mrs. Bennet's conversation does not involve with any

exchange and any contact with other persons (Peltason 610). ‘She is too unimaginative to fear, as Elizabeth does’ (Hudson 626). Mrs. Bennet’s cruelty for Jane ‘s health after landing in bed while suffering from serious cold and her appreciation of the significance of Lydia’s heartlessness after returning home from her elopement with Wickham proves that ‘there is no there in the mind of Mrs. Bennet, no responsively aware person with whom to make contact’ (Peltason 621).

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Fanny Dashwood and Lucy Steele have strived after their position. Their importance of maneuverings has made transparent by the singleness of their motives. This singleness has created an absence of genuine curiosity of power of engagement as a result these characters has presented a study of selfishness and mindlessness. ‘These characters are countless-both empty and chronically discontented’ (Peltason 625). The fools have only a desire for power and to suppress for making an authentic contact with others. The fools provide comic gratification in Austen’s novels. Her fools also baffle and trouble her protagonists. She has presented varieties of fools in her novels. Her fools keep a great importance for developing her novels’ rising action, falling action, disposition and denouement of her plots. Austen’s fools have their presence of shame. They have feelings of humiliation, ashamed, embarrassed, ridiculous, dishonor and worthlessness. Because of their feeling of shame they get wounded on their self – respect and ego and that is why they humiliate Austen’s protagonists. Austen’s sympathetic characters have rich minds among themselves, however in the context of this study shows how her fools are more significant than her protagonists. Jane Austen in these two novels has presented her fools psychological aspects, their thinking about life and the fools’ frustrations because of being rejected or being defeated by her protagonists. Austen’s fools always endeavor to cause trouble in her love plots, but they are always vanquished at the end of her plots.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Jane Austen's comic characters or fools are more significant than her protagonists for developing her romantic plots. Her fools play a significant role for developing Austen's love plots. Austen's fools presence of shame wounds their self-respect. Her fools psychological aspects and feelings of humiliation have compelled them to create troubles in her plots. Jane Austen's creation of various fools in her plots have created a delight among her readers. Austen's fools minds are filled with sympathetic imagination. This sympathetic imagination of her fools mind have made her narrators to comment on the richness, activities, poverty on her specific characters internal lives. Austen's fools are self-made fools. This study contributes on the studies of romantic comedies by observing the fools' impact on 19th century English literature novels' plots. This study also contributes Austen's use of fools' for representing 19th century England's social life, class and marriage, familial relationships and patriarchal domination through her novels. This study also shows a miniature of Jane Austen's use of fools in order to present her society's norms and values through her writings.

Work Cited

ApRoberts, Ruth. "Sense and Sensibility, or Growing Up Dichotomous." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1975, pp. 351–365. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2933074. Accessed 17 May 2021

Bennet, Ashly. "Shame and Sensibility: Jane Austen's Humiliated Heroines." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2015, pp. 377–400., www.jstor.org/stable/43973910. Accessed 12 May 2021.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning theory: An Introduction to literary and cultural theory*. Third Edition, 2010.

Bonney and Austen , New Historicist literary criticism , <https://sites.google.com/site/new-historicist-literary-criticism> ...

Fricke, Christel. "The Challenges of Pride and Prejudice: Adam Smith and Jane Austen on Moral Education." *Revue Internationale De Philosophie*, vol. 68, no. 269 (3), 2014, pp. 343–372., www.jstor.org/stable/24776806. Accessed 17 May 2021

Hirsch, Gordon. "Shame, Pride and Prejudice: Jane Austen's Psychological Sophistication." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1992, pp. 63–78. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24780586. Accessed 17 May 2021.

Hann, Jennie. "Perverting 'Pride and Prejudice': Wharton's American Alternative to the Novel of Manners: An Essay on 'The House of Mirth.'" *Edith Wharton Review*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2008, pp. 1–6. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43513004. Accessed 17 May 2021.

“It Is a Truth Universally Acknowledged, That a Single Man in Possession of a Good Fortune Must Be in Want of a Wife.” *Adventures in English Syntax*, by Robert Freidin, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2020, pp. 137–147.

Lauber, John. “Jane Austen's Fools.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1974, pp. 511–524. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/449750. Accessed 17 May 2021.

Morrison, Sarah R. “Of Woman Borne: Male experience and feminine truth in Jane Austen’s novels” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1994, pp. 337–349. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29533008. Accessed 12 May 2021.

Peltason, Timothy. “Mind and Mindlessness in Jane Austen.” *The Hudson Review*, vol. 67, no. 4, 2015, pp. 609–633. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43489351. Accessed 17 May 2021.

Southam, Brian C.. "Jane Austen". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2 Feb. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jane-Austen>. Accessed 12 May 2021.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Penguin Books, 2004.

Zimmerman, Everett. “Pride and Prejudice in Pride and Prejudice.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1968, pp. 64–73. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2932317. Accessed 17 May 2021.