

**CONTROL OF THE READERS IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS
*EMMA AND SENSE & SENSIBILITY***

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ABSTRACT

CONTROL OF THE READERS IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

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This thesis analyses techniques employed by Jane Austen in *Emma* and *Sense & Sensibility* to control the readers when they make judgements about characters and events. The thesis will argue that the point of view used in these two novels to present events and characters has great influence upon readers. In addition, the role of skilful use of irony by Austen, and withholding of information by characters and author in keeping readers alert will be analysed.

Key Words: Point of View, Irony

ÖZ

***EMMA VE SENSE AND SENSIBILITY* ADLI ROMANLARDA OKUYUCUNUN JANE AUSTEN TARAFINDAN KONTROLÜ**

Erdoğan, Gökçen

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Bu çalışma Emma ve Sense and Sensibility adlı romanlarda, Jane Austen'in okuyucular karakterler ve olaylar hakkında karar verirken onları kontrol etmek için kullandığı teknikleri incelemektedir. İki romanda da olayları ve karakterleri sunmak için kullanılan bakış açısının okuyucular üzerindeki etkisi incelenecektir. Buna ek olarak, Austen tarafından ustaca kullanılan kinaye sanatının ve karakterler veya yazar tarafından bilginin saklı tutulmasının okuyucuyu dikkatli kılmadaki rolü incelenecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bakış Açısı, Kinaye

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for
the
degree of Master of Arts.

Prof. Dr. Wolf König

Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is
fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to analyse techniques employed by Jane Austen to control the understanding of the readers. In accordance with this aim the novels *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma* will be analysed in terms of techniques, like the use of point of view, authorial interference, use of irony and withholding of information. In order to get a better understanding of the characters and events, the control and impact of the society and their economic conditions will also be dealt with. The techniques she employed highlight that in her novels each word is deliberately chosen to fulfill an intention that is to tease the readers into thinking and consequently Jane Austen is considered to be “fully awake to and in complete control of her fictional world” (Kuwahara, 2).

“You must have your eyes forever on your Reader. That alone constitutes ... Technique!” (Ford Madox Ford in Iser 1974, 101). Ford Madox Ford’s words draw our attention to one of the basic rules that governs the genre of the novel, the influence of technique as a steering effect on the readers. The events the author devises, the point of view used to present them control the understanding of the reader, and set out the standards regarded as necessary for judging the events and the characters. Having examined some theories related to reader – response criticism, I found some of Wolfgang Iser’s views related to my stand- point in writing this thesis. Not all of his views can be applied to this thesis but his insistence on the

influence and importance of the technique as a steering effect on the readers supports the aim of writing this thesis. The views of Iser relevant to this thesis will also be mentioned in this chapter. Iser emphasizes the importance of the interaction between a text's structure and recipient while other critics mostly give importance to the reader's psychology and do not support this thesis at all. For instance according to George Poulet the act of reading requires self-surrender and passive reception on the part of the readers. Whereas in Iser's account the reader actively participates in the assemblage of meaning. Or according to Roman Ingarden the act of reading requires both the skill and imagination of the reader, and since no two readers are identical no two concretization will be identical. This causes the same work's being perceived in different ways by different readers, which is not the aim of Jane Austen.

Wolfgang Iser, with his books *The Implied Reader* and *The Act of Reading*, (the most influential works to emerge from reader - response criticism of the 1970s) is a very important critic especially for his theory which considers reading as interactive, occurring between text and reader. In his book *The Implied Reader* he argues that the reader is given only as much information as will keep him interested, the narrator deliberately leaving open inferences and gaps that are to be drawn from given information so far in the text. According to Iser the interaction between a text's structure and its recipient is central to the reading of every literary work. For Iser the literary work has two poles: The artistic pole is the author's text, the aesthetic pole is the action accomplished by the reader. As the reader passes through various perspectives in the text and relates the different views and patterns to one another, he

sets the work in motion and sets himself in motion too, as an active participant in the making of meaning.

Iser also identifies certain structures that describe the basic conditions of interactions. For Iser, while analysing a text according to reader-response, concentration must be on either the author's techniques or the reader's psychology. In this thesis the reader's psychology will not be examined since the focus of my thesis is Jane Austen's technique to establish the interaction between reader and text. Structures identified by Iser and related to my thesis are these: According to Iser, "aesthetic experiences can only take place because they are communicated and the way in which they are experienced must depend at least in part on the way they are presented or prestructured" (Iser 1978,40). With this view he emphasizes the importance of the structure which is related to the aim of this thesis.

According to Iser if communication between text and reader is to be successful the reader's activity must be controlled in some way by the text. Consistent with this view he makes the distinction between face-to-face situations and the interactions formed while reading the text, acknowledging that in textual interactions the control can not be as specific as in face-to-face situation. However, the guiding devices operative in the reading process have to initiate communication and control it. Andrew Bennett comments; "This control cannot be understood as a tangible entity occurring independently of the process of communication. Although exercised by the text, it is not in the text" (Bennett, 23). He supports this view with a comment Virginia Woolf made on the novels of Jane Austen:

Jane Austen is thus a mistress of much deeper emotion than appears upon the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there. What she offers is, apparently a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the reader's mind and endows with the most enduring form of life scenes which are outwardly trivial....The turns and twists of the dialogue keeps us on the tenterhooks of suspense. Our attention is half upon the present moment, half upon the future... Here, indeed in this unfinished and in the interior story, are all the elements of Jane Austen's greatness.

(Woolf in Bennett,23)

According to this quotation, what is missing from the apparently trivial scenes, the gaps arising out of the dialogue are what stimulate the readers into filling in the blanks. They are drawn into the events and made to supply and understand what the author's intention is from what is not said. This is one of the guiding devices which Iser used to illustrate his theory and, which as mentioned, is used by Jane Austen.

When Iser's views are further examined the relevance of Woolf's comment becomes clearer. For Iser communication in literature is a process set in motion and regulated between revelation and concealment. "What is concealed spurs the reader into action, but this action is also controlled by what is revealed" (Bennett, 24). Therefore, whenever the reader bridges the gaps communication begins.

Another guiding device operative in the reading process is the variety of perspectives outlining the author's view and also providing access to what the reader is meant to visualize. According to Iser, as a rule there are four main perspectives in narration: those of the narrator, the characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader. The meaning of the text is to be brought about by their intertwining in the reading process. The object is connection the of these views, perspectives by the reader in the

reading process, and it can thus be seen as a product of structure to a great extent regulated and controlled by the author. The reader is situated in such a position that he can assemble the meaning toward which the perspectives of the text have guided him. The role of the reader can be explained by the concept “implied reader”. According to Iser, the implied reader as a concept has its roots in the structure of the text; he is a construct and can not be identified with any real reader. Iser argues that no matter who or what he may be, the real reader is always offered a particular role to play, and it is this role that constitutes the concept of the implied reader. This role is identified by the text which must bring about a standpoint from which the reader will be able to view things.

These are the structuring devices which Iser thought to be stimulating the interaction between reader and the text and also devices and techniques whose traces can be found in Jane Austen’s novels. In the third chapter of this thesis withholding of information about characters will be analysed. This includes the author’s deliberately not revealing certain events, which is a case we come across very frequently. Or sometimes the characters do not reveal themselves to us or they keep secrets from each other. The concealments either on the part of the narrator or on the part of the characters cause many misunderstandings, which have to be cleared away by the more active reader following cautions and hints.

Games, secrets and misunderstandings, which prevail in the two novels *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* to be analysed in this thesis, serve the function of mystifying the reader with the aim of keeping him on the watch. This technique used by Jane Austen to manipulate the understanding of her readers can also be supported

by Iser's views about gaps in the texts. For Iser, gaps in the text function as a pivot on which the whole text - reader relationship revolves and they are seen as the joints of the text.

In reading Jane Austen's novels the readers are constantly engaged in making judgements. In various occasions Jane Austen's method is ironic, and here especially the reader is forced into making judgements because the authorial voice, sometimes speaking from the point of view of one of the characters offers a very limited or mistaken view of a particular person or situation which the readers feel obliged to correct. The second chapter of my thesis will focus on the use of irony and authorial interference in *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma*. In most of the novels of Jane Austen, the narrator, with the aim of controlling the distance between the reader events, does not tell all she knows. Each of the heroines undergoes an educational process which leads her to perceive her own error in the light of an objective reality. The extent to which the reader participates in the process varies from novel to novel. He becomes for example, more involved in Emma's mental life. Enough distance is established to prevent the reader from viewing the heroine uncritically, but not so much as to lose the reader's sympathy for her. In other words the source of all irony derives from knowledge or lack of it. This is true not only in regard to the heroines but in regard to the other characters as well. Most of the ironies are built on the discrepancies between the reader's knowledge and that of the characters.

Although in *Sense & Sensibility* irony is not the structuring principle of the plot, it is an essential element in the characterization of secondary figures. Especially the introduction of these characters establishes them in the readers mind and here the ironic tone is achieved through the narrator's remarks and other verbal signals. In *Emma*, most of the irony centers on Emma's personality. In part most of the complications stem from the heroine's errors in judgement. The reader soon learns

that Emma's views and judgements are inconsistent with an objective reality. The ironic perspective from which her thoughts are presented, as well as the context of the novel, as a whole highlight the discrepancies between Emma's observations and reality itself. The reader's superior knowledge which is gained through the introduction of dramatic scenes and interventions of the narrator allows a reevaluation of events.

Wayne Booth suggests that "the source of Jane Austen's irony is her manipulation of point of view" (Booth in Odmark,1). In the novels the narrator moves between statements which invite inference, and statements which didactically state the conclusion which the reader is invited to draw. In these novels, we find direct references to the characters' attributes in the narrator's and as well as in the characters' speeches. The novelistic worlds of *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* are worlds of many opinions amongst which the narrator's direct definitions and authorial interventions are found. They provide some but not all of the evidence upon which the reader builds his understanding of the story.

Poovey claims that,

The narrator's commentary and the characters, each contribute to the multiple centers of authority in Austen's oeuvre. The reader's participation in both the comment and action is a prerequisite for understanding the moral and social complexities represented in Austen's novels where the author negotiates a complex contract with her readers.
(Poovey in Berendson, 120)

Therefore inside views of the characters and the narrator's commentary from the beginning help to direct our reactions.

The second chapter of this thesis will also concentrate on the analysis of the control and impact of society and economic conditions upon the characters, in order

to get a better understanding of the characters and situations and of the ironies addressed to them. According to Juliet Mc. Master,

In Jane Austen's world human worth is to be judged by standards better and more enduring than social status; but social status is always relevant. She registers exactly the social provenance of each of her characters and judges them for the ways in which they judge each other.

(Mc.Master, 129).

The importance assigned to class distinction is the source of much of her comedy and her irony. In *Emma* for instance, the snobbish heroine becomes both our guide as to where each character should be placed and our negative example of one who assigns far too much importance to the matter of status.

Everybody is class - conscious and regards others according to their social status. In a world in which marriage is seen as a means of security for women, especially if it is with someone with a good income, women are open to abuse by the patriarchal society. In *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* Jane Austen amply shows how such things matter and also shows how they should not be too important through a strongly ironic presentation of these issues.

CHAPTER II

TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY AUSTEN TO CONTROL HER READERS

This chapter is mainly about the techniques employed by Jane Austen, like the use of authorial voice, and the use of irony, which from the beginning help direct our reactions and judgements. Wolfgang Iser claims that, what the reader gets from the text must depend at least in part on the way it is presented or prestructured. Therefore, if communication between the text and the reader is to be successful, the reader's activity must be manipulated in some way by the text. Guiding devices in the text initiate communication and control it.

As the analysis of *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* in this chapter will show, while reading Jane Austen's novels, the readers are constantly engaged in making judgements. In fact the reader is forced into making judgements, because of the narrator's and characters' direct comments, authorial interventions and the ironic attitude of the author, which as a whole work to enrich the impressions about the characters and events. The narrator moving between statements and using verbal signals invites the reader to think and to be alert when judging the characters and the events.

The novelistic worlds of *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* are worlds of many opinions with the narrator and characters proferring opinions about each other. In both of the novels we have heroines, Emma in *Emma*, and Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility*, and they are placed at the center of the fictional worlds and most of the events are seen through their eyes. Emma and Elinor are exceptional, their inner worlds are made public, yet not only theirs, but all the characters' and, most

importantly, the narrator's qualifications count and have their impact upon the readers while arriving at conclusions about the characters. The narrator's spoken portraits function as explicit introductions and describe a person's social and geographical background, they supply ample information about his/her actions prior to the beginning of the fabula and sometimes comment on the character's appearance. Readers accept the privileged status of the narrator's direct references to the attributes of the characters; thus the narrator's qualifications constitute what appears to be a reliable starting point for the reader's construction of a character image. The narrator's statements are usually factual, whereas the character's direct comments about each other usually refer to manners and appearance. Thus:

reaching a conclusion about a character requires an attentive reader who can draw inferences from various kinds of information, proffered from a variety of sources and be prepared to judge their relevance given a specific point of view. i.e. a fairly coherent conception about a certain character's personality and dispositions. These requirements between author and reader can be qualified as a pact.

(Berendson, 68)

This pact is also established by authorial interventions. As Austen presents the sequence of events "her distinct voice comes through in the sentences" (Kuwahara,27). In her narration the use of some words like *indeed, however, in fact, of course*, urge the reader to perceive the author's ironic tone. In both of the novels irony is both a theme and a structuring device that Jane Austen employs skillfully to display her attitude especially toward certain situations and attributes of characters. In her novels the importance attached to class distinction is the source of much of Jane Austen's comedy and irony. Characters are class-conscious and regard each other according to their economic situations. Therefore, the economic and social

conditions of the 18th and 19th century will also be mentioned in order to have a standpoint to understand ironies addressed to characters and situations. In *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* characters are exposed to the ironic attitude of Jane Austen because of their overestimation of money matters.

These devices, comments by the narrator, comments by characters and irony will guide our reading of the novels, helping us to understand when the implied reader is invited by the narrator to read some aspect of the story, - received opinion, character speech or actions – ironically.

2.1. Direct Narratorial Comments

David Amigoni argues that the concept of the implied reader draws attention to the fact that any writing, whether imaginative or critical, is addressed to a reader who is assumed to have temporarily at least an investment in the means and ends of that writing. He further suggests that “The pact that is established between a narrative discourse and the reader implied in that discourse is central to effective fictional prose narrative” (Amigoni, 21).

The opening of *Emma* can be analysed as an example to show this relation between the narrator and the implied reader:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

....

Sixteen years had Miss Taylor been in Mr. Woodhouse’s family, less as a governess than a friend, very fond of both daughters, but particularly of,

Emma. Between them it was more the intimacy of sisters. Even before Miss Taylor had ceased the nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now passed away, they had been living as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgement, but directed chiefly by her own.

The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her.

(*Emma*, p.5)

According to David Amigoni, the reader implied here by the third-person narrator's opening description of Emma Woodhouse values good looks, cleverness wealth and domestic comfort. The real reader situated at a different point in history possess somewhat different social horizons, may value these less. But to read the novel appropriately, we the real readers enter into the position of the implied reader. Actually the implied reader is invited to look beyond these values by appreciating at relevant points a tone of playfulness and irony. This tone is conveyed by the narrator in the use of words such as ; "seemed", "however". The fact that Emma "seemed to unite some of the best blessing of existence", implies a distance between appearance and reality. At the end of the third paragraph the narrator observes that Emma esteems Miss Taylor's judgements while she follows her own. "The danger, *however*, unperceived", "the real evils, *indeed*, of Emma's situation". The words *indeed*, and *however*, are cautionary remarks of the narrator for the reader to take into consideration while drawing conclusions about Emma. Thus, our stand-point from which to judge Emma is determined from the very beginning and we learn not to trust Emma too much. We can conclude that in *Emma*, the narrator moves between

statements which invite inference and statements which didactically state the conclusion which the implied reader has been invited to draw.

The introductions of the main characters, Elinor and Emma, the heroines of the novels, are especially important in looking for clues about their positions in the plot pattern as most of the events and characters are presented from their points of view. In *Sense & Sensibility* Elinor and her sister Marianne are introduced at the end of the first chapter:

Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind of Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. She had an excellent heart; - her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them it was a knowledge, which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.

Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever; but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting. She was everything but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great.

(Sense & Sensibility, p.10)

Here, the narrative voice controls the passage giving an objective comparative assessment of Elinor and Marianne. The narrator's account seems to be free of irony and though she sees good qualities in both sisters, our view of the two is inevitably affected by the fact that judgement is clearly weighted in favour of Elinor. The description of the sisters focuses on their capacity for and control of their feelings. In Elinor's case, it is her understanding and judgement which are stressed. They are contrasted in terms of their ability to govern their feelings and the degree to

which they show sense. From the very beginning we are conditioned to trust Elinor and her judgements and we witness most of the events in the novel from her point of view.

Craik argues that both in *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* Jane Austen as narrator makes her appearances as unobtrusive as possible. These appearances are more frequent in the opening chapters where characters are introduced. For this purpose, she introduces them with a few necessary facts and then permits them to be revealed and to reveal themselves in action and conversation.

Craik further suggests in her essay on *Sense & Sensibility* that Jane Austen, in her own voice sometimes ironic, “always speaks with authority, showing the precise importance of her topic and directing the reader’s attention to its relevant aspects”(34). This is particularly true of the way she introduces her many characters. The kind of comment she makes shows just how much and what kind of interest each is likely to provide. “Characters who will reveal themselves by their actions and words receive only the necessary emphasis on their most relevant traits” (34).

Jane Austen when creating her characters uses a few character traits and applies them to a variety of subjects. Minor characters who will have the chance to reveal themselves are announced briefly and this attitude indicates their function and capabilities, but minor characters who will have little chance to speak for themselves are analysed more at length and introduced accordingly. Therefore, we can conclude that Jane Austen employs different ways of introducing her minor characters and the information we get in these introductions displays her own attitude towards

characters and suggests an attitude for the readers in judging their actions and them as well in relation to the events and the other characters.

John Dashwood and Mrs. Jennings are good examples from *Sense & Sensibility*. They are announced very briefly with an attitude which indicates that their functions and capabilities will be minor as well:

He (John Dashwood) was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted, and rather selfish, is to be ill- disposed, but he was in general well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in discharge of his ordinary duties.

(p. 9)

He is introduced firmly and precisely, but mild irony in his description makes one feel that, as will prove to be the case, Mr.Dashwood is a minor character in the story, and so is Mrs.Jennings: “.... a widow, with an ample jointure. She (Mrs. Jennings) had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but marry all the rest of the world” (p.36)

These introductions by the narrator show only a few but the most important traits of the characters who are announced briefly. Mr. Dashwood proves to be a man who is easily controlled by his wife so although he seems to be willing to support his sisters financially, with the influence of his wife he gives little sum of money to his sisters. And, as we see, Mrs. Jennings’ main topic is marriage and she deals with match-making. Therefore, to accept the traits of these characters given by the reliable narrator is a sound way of judging them and this provides us with a good standpoint to understand them while reading the rest of the novel.

Austen's attitude to Harriet Smith in *Emma* is also noteworthy. Firstly she is introduced by the narrator with very few facts about her background:

Harriet Smith was the natural daughter of somebody. Somebody had placed her, several years back, at Mrs. Goddard's school, and somebody had lately raised her from the condition of scholar to that of parlour boarder. This was all that was generally known of her history.

After giving information about her background, the narrator gives information about her appearance: "She was a pretty girl and her beauty happened to be of a sort which Emma particularly admired. She was short, plump and fair, with a fine bloom, blue eyes, light hair, regular feature, and a look of great sweetness" (*Emma*, p.18).

This can be considered to be a longer analysis of character, when compared to Mrs. Jennings or John Dashwood in *Sense & Sensibility*. However, it is striking that the narrator does not give any information about her personality. In fact, in the course of the events she proves to be a character who is undecided, immature, and who can easily be misguided by Emma as Mr. Knightley could foresee. To conclude, it can be inferred that Harriet Smith's personality will not play a great role in the novel and she is important only in relation to Emma.

Craik argues that:

Although characters are of varying importance and of different types the ways in which they are subordinated to the main purpose are those Jane Austen has always used; first the author's own brief comment gives essentials, then their own speech shows characteristic preoccupations.

(Craik, 160)

The introduction of Mr. Woodhouse can be given as an example:

Having been valetudinarian all his life, without activity of mind or body, he was an older man in ways than in years; and though everybody beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his amiable temper, his talents could not have recommended him at any time.

(*Emma*, p.6)

When he actually appears he displays a selfish personality, someone thinking of his own comfort firstly. He is discussing the Westons but he reveals himself as well.

‘Poor Miss Taylor! – I wish she were here again. What a pity it is that Mr. Weston ever thought of her !

....You would not have had Miss Taylor live with us for ever.... When she might have a house of her own.

A house of her own!- but where is advantage of a house of her own? This is three times as large.’

(*Emma*, p.7)

He detests the idea of marriage and he needs Miss Taylor as a companion for his own comfort. His next subject is Emma’s matchmaking and his manner of speaking again reveals something of his own personality. “I wish you would not make matches and foretel things for whatever you say always comes to pass. Pray do not make any more matches” (*Emma*, p.10).

Mr. Knightley is established from the beginning as completely reliable and this is proved by his actions and speeches. As Craik points out, “his conduct is always irreproachable and his judgement unshakable” (148). He is qualified via a simple reference to his age and his relationship to the Woodhouse family:

Mr. Knightley, *a sensible man* (my emphasis) about seven or eight – and – thirty, was not only a very old and intimate friend of the family, but

particularly connected with it as the elder brother of Isabella's husband. He lived about a mile from Highbury, was a frequent visitor and always welcome.

(Emma, p.8)

The close intimacy between Mr. Knightley and Mr. Woodhouse and the sixteen years' difference between him and Emma make him unromantic. However, his good sense makes him agreeable and he is one of the few characters other than Emma herself, whose thoughts are reported. Berendson observes that, "Mr. Knightley's opinions are shown to be trustworthy because narrative facts (past, present, or future events) prove them to be correct" (43). Therefore, the readers are conditioned to trust Mr. Knightley as a sensible man, as someone whose inner world is revealed and whose opinions and predictions are proved to be right by many incidents in the novel. Wayne C. Booth suggests that,

The chief corrective is Knightley. His commentary on Emma's error is an expression of his love; and he can tell the reader and Emma at the same time precisely how she is mistaken. Thus, nothing Knightley says can be beside the point. Each affirmation of a value, each accusation of error is in itself an action in the plot.'

(Booth, 253)

Therefore, when he rebukes Emma for manipulating Harriet, when he condemns her for gossiping, and flirting with Frank Churchill, and finally attacks her for being insolent in her treatment of Miss Bates we have, "Jane Austen's judgement on Emma rendered dramatically" (Booth, 253).

In chapter 41, the reader is acquainted with Knightley's suspicions regarding Frank's "double dealing in his pursuit of Emma", and regarding Frank's "inclination to trifle with Jane Fairfax". "Representations of subsequent events and

conversations are interspersed with Mr. Knightley's perceptions and inferences" (Berendson, 134).

The things he sees and hears offer fresh material for his suspicions and the attentive reader becomes suspicious as well. There is in the first place, Frank's inquiry about Mr. Perry's plans to set up a carriage, which causes general wonder because the Westons have never heard of the project before. When Frank quickly suggests that he must have been dreaming, Miss Bates declares that Mr. Perry's plans were a secret, known only to members of the Bateses' household, Jane included. Glancing at Frank's face, Mr. Knightley notices, "confusion suppressed or laughed away" (261). During the word game, following this confusion, Frank presents Jane with a word 'blunder' which Jane pushes away and blushes as well. This scene is presented from Mr. Knightley's point of view:

Mr. Knightley connected it with the dream; but how it could all be, was beyond his comprehension.... He feared that there must be some decided involvement. Disingenuousness and double-dealing seemed to meet him at every turn. These letters were but the vehicle for gallantry and trick. It was a child's play, chosen to conceal a deeper game on Frank Churchill's part.

(Emma, p.263)

His suspicions of Frank Churchill were introduced at the beginning of chapter 41:

Mr. Knightley who, for some reason best known to himself, had certainly taken an early dislike to Frank Churchill, was only growing to dislike him more. He began to suspect him of some double dealing in his pursuit of Emma... But while so many were devoting him to Emma, and Emma herself making him over to Harriet, Mr. Knightley began to suspect him of some inclination to trifle with Jane Fairfax.

Remaining at Hartfield after everybody else has gone, Mr. Knightley informs Emma of his observations, trying to make her realize the duplicity of Frank's actions but his attempts prove to be in vain. Emma confidently answers that Mr. Knightley is being led astray by his imagination, that she is quite sure about Frank's indifference to Jane. The following chapters and the revelation of the secret engagement between Frank and Jane prove how Emma herself was mistaken in her observations and whereas, how Mr. Knightley's observations were right.

As this example and many other incidents in the novel show, Mr. Knightley is a suitable and trustworthy guide to assess all the clues which Emma, the heroine herself consistently misinterprets. Such events prove that Mr. Knightley's judgement is more acute than Emma's, and his rebukes, and comments become tolerable. Hence, Mr. Knightley shows us things and we depend on his evaluations when arriving at conclusions about events and characters.

Kuwahara comments, "from the very beginning of *Sense & Sensibility* the reader is involved in the dual experience of listening to and watching Austen create her fictional world..." (Kuwahara, 27). This accounts for *Emma* as well. In the course of the narration of the events and characters, Austen's distinct voice (as Kuwahara calls it) may come through in the sentences to guide the readers. In both of the novels this voice is signalled by the use of words such as ; *indeed, really, however* or *in fact* etc. These are in fact cautionary remarks to alert the reader to perceive the difference between appearance and reality, the theme on which the irony is built as well. For instance in *Sense & Sensibility* as "Austen narrates the sequence of events that expose the selfishness of John Dashwood, her distinct voice comes

through in the sentences” (Kuwahara,27). “When he (John Dashwood) gave his promise to his father he mediated within himself to increase the fortunes of his sisters by the present of a thousands of a piece. He then really thought himself equal to it” (*Sense & Sensibility*, p.9).

As Kuwahara comments, “the word ‘really’ emphasizes the writer’s insistence on the truth” (27), it also echoes John Dashwood’s thinking. The reader is involved in experiencing both belief and disbelief in the truth of John Dashwood’s good intentions.

In *Emma* as well, the novelist places Emma at the center of her fictional world; the reader gets a double perspective - the narrator’s and the characters’. Kuwahara suggests, “In *Emma* the action subtly shifts from Emma’s point of view to the narrator’s and includes both; then very subtly Austen comments on her heroine’s viewpoint” (39).

Once again the narrator’s conversation with the reader is heard in the opening chapter of *Emma* where she uses words like *indeed, however*. “The real evils *indeed* of Emma’s situation were the power of having too much her own way and a disposition to think too well of herself. The danger *however* was at present so unperceived” (*Emma*, p.5)

When Frank Churchill is introduced by the narrator, a general idea of him has already been established in the minds of the readers. Now that his father was married, everybody expected his visit and before his visit, his much approved letter came. Jane Austen presents this event and we feel that it is exaggerated. “For a few

days every morning visit in Highbury included some mention of the handsome letter Mrs. Weston had received". And then comes the comment of the narrator ; "It was, indeed, a highly – prized letter. Mrs. Weston had of course formed a very favourable idea of the young man and such a pleasing attention was an irresistible proof of his great good sense" (*Emma*, p.15)

The exaggeration of the importance of the letter, the use of 'indeed' leads the readers to wonder whether that letter was worth as high as they thought it was. Such a question is only reinforced when, at a later stage, Frank turns out to be not as open and considerate as the other characters imagined.

In both of the novels, the reader is directly addressed. The narrator may intrude in the story by asking a question to the reader. In *Emma*, in Chapter 49, the chapter in which Mr. Knightley proposes to Emma, Emma's reaction is recorded; "She spoke then, on being entreated. What did she say ? – Just what she ought, of course. A Lady always does." And then she adds, "She said enough to show there need not be despair – and to invite him to say more himself". In this scene the narrator teases the readers with the question. The reader is not exactly told what Emma said. But the narrator's comment implies a conventional form of reply for the reader to imagine. Austen even mocks the reader who might ask "and then what happened ?", as they can not guess the expected pattern of behaviour. This scene is closed by a general comment on the nature of truth :

Seldom very seldom does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken; but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken the feelings are not, it may not be very material'

(*Emma*, p.326)

According to Kuwahara, the narrator thus emphasizes not so much what is happening but is attempting to grasp the essence by making a generalization, and a general comment on the nature of truth; she is attempting to grasp the essence of a unique experience, the truth that lies deep within the human mind and heart. Therefore, she is not presenting a ready-made answer or a romantic scene and she is appealing to the imagination of the reader to think of a proper answer that can be made by a lady in such a situation.

At the very beginning of *Emma*, Emma and her governess Miss Taylor are introduced and the readers become acquainted with the details of their relation and their degree of attachment for each other. We learn that Miss Taylor was a good companion for Emma and as she is married to Mr. Weston now, she is deeply missed by Emma. The narrator referring to Miss Taylor, asks the reader; “How was she (Emma) to bear the change?”. And she proceeds to answer her own question. “It was true that her friend was going half a mile from them, but Emma was aware that great must be the difference between Mrs. Weston only half a mile from them and a Miss Taylor in the house” (*Emma*, p.6).

Another example in which the narrator is heard conversing with her readers is from *Sense & Sensibility*. When Lucy Steele tells Elinor of her secret engagement to Edward, whom Elinor herself loved, the narrator asks, “What felt Elinor at that moment ?” (129). This is an invitation to the reader to grasp the situation and try to imagine the feelings or understand the reactions of Elinor. After making the readers

think for a while and keeping their imaginations busy, the narrator proceeds with the description of Elinor's disbelief.

Astonishment, that would have been as painful as it was strong, had not an immediate disbelief of the assertion attended it. She turned towards Lucy in silent amazement, unable to divine the reason or object of such a declaration ; and though her complexion varied, she stood firm in incredulity, and felt in no danger of an hysterical fit or swoon.

(Sense & Sensibility, p.118)

Again in Volume 3, chapter 4, Austen uses the same technique, appealing to the imagination of her readers to imagine the feelings of her character, Edward Ferrars, when he is informed by Elinor that he is offered the living of Delaford by Colonel Brandon. Edward Ferrars is disinherited by his mother because of his secret engagement to Lucy Steele who, due to her lower status, is not accepted by the family. Therefore, at this stage in the novel he needs an occupation and is in a difficult situation:

What Edward felt, as he could not say it himself, it cannot be expected that any one else could say for him. He *looked* all the astonishment which such unexpected, such unthought of information could not fail of exciting; but he said only these two words, - Colonel Brandon !

(Sense & Sensibility, p.260)

Here again, Austen chooses not to reveal Edward's feelings in this particular situation claiming that it is nobody's duty to do so, not even the author's and she expects her readers to guess or imagine the feelings of her characters. Therefore, by asking questions to the readers and either answering them or not, or sometimes by

suggesting an indirect answer, Austen is keeping her readers alert and does not allow them to read her novels passively.

“The novelist’s method of temporarily and briefly halting the narrative to comment on it is another device Austen uses freely in *Sense & Sensibility*” (Kuwahara,28). This is another device used by Jane Austen both in *Emma* and *Sense & Sensibility*. Occasionally the narrator makes some general comments on characters or situations to guide the readers and to control their judgement or to add new impressions.

For instance, in Chapter 21, Volume I, Elinor and Marianne are shown observing the Miss Steeles humour the Middleton children as well as their mother. The narrator makes a very explicit comment on the action of characters.

Fortunately for those who pay their court through such foibles, a fond mother, though in pursuit of praise for her children, the most rapacious of human beings, is likewise the most credulous; her demands are exorbitant, but she will swallow anything ; and the excessive affection and endurance of the Miss Steeles towards her offspring were viewed, therefore, by Lady Middleton without the smallest surprise of distrust. She saw with maternal complacency all the impertinent encroachments and mischievous tricks to which her cousins submitted.

(*Sense & Sensibility*, p. 110)

Kuwahara suggests that in this scene Austen stands with Marianne and Elinor observing the scene she creates. The narrator’s comment exposes the hypocrisy of the Miss Steeles. And this mocking tone continues when a pin slightly stretches the child’s neck:

The mother’s consternation was excessive; but it could not surpass the alarm of the Miss Steeles, and everything was done by all three in so

critical an emergency which affection could suggest, as likely to assuage the agonies of the little sufferer.

(p.111)

Here, Austen's choice of words such as "so critical an emergency" and "agonies of the little sufferer", displays the ironic attitude of the narrator revealing the gap between subject and the tone, and emphasizes the triviality of the incident and the inappropriate behaviour of the characters involved in it.

In Volume I, Chapter III, the narrator intrudes with a general comment on the attitude of mothers to the marriage of their daughters. As the Dashwoods are still staying at Norland, there grows an intimacy between Elinor and the brother of Mrs. Dashwood, Edward Ferrars, who is defined as a gentlemanlike and pleasing young man by the narrator:

Some mothers might have encouraged the intimacy from motives of interest, for Edward Ferrars was the eldest son of a man who died very rich; and some might have repressed it from motives of prudence, for, except a trifling sum, the whole of his fortune depended on the will of his mother. But Mrs. Dashwood was alike uninfluenced by either consideration: it was enough for her that he appeared to be amiable, that he loved her daughter, and that Elinor returned the partiality.

(*Sense & Sensibility*, p.18)

In *Emma* in a scene when most of the characters are gathered to make plans for the party at the Crown, while the scene is introduced through dialogues and we hear the voice of the characters, the narrator makes a comment on ladies and gentlemen:

The ladies here probably exchanged looks which meant, 'Men never know when things are dirty or not;' and the gentlemen perhaps thought

each to himself, 'Women will have their little nonsenses and needless cares'.

(*Emma*, 191)

The death of Mrs. Churchill is announced in this way:

It was felt as such things must be felt. Every body had a degree of gravity and sorrow; tenderness towards the departed, solicitude for the surviving friends; and, in a reasonable time, curiosity to know where she would be buried. Goldsmith tells us, that when lovely woman stoops to folly, she has nothing to do but to die; and when she stoops to be disagreeable, it is equally to be recommended as a clearer of ill-fame. Mrs. Churchill, after being disliked at least twenty-five years, was now spoken of with compassionate allowances.'

(*Emma*, p. 293)

As such examples of general comments indicate, both in *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* we may come across authorial interventions coming through general comments. The interference is signalled either by such comments or by the use of signal words such as *indeed*, *really*, *however*, which make us suspect the difference between the appearance and the reality. In addition, sometimes the reader is addressed by questions concerning the feelings or the answers of the characters in given situations. In this way Austen establishes intimacy with her readers and leads them to think in a particular way when judging characters and events.

2.2. Indirect Narratorial Comments

In *Emma* Austen lets the heroine herself present as much of the action as possible. Emma is used as a kind of narrator, though in the third person, reporting her own experience. By showing most of the story through Emma's eyes, the author insures that we shall agree with Emma as much as possible, rather than criticize her.

However, there are some very clear authorial comments about Emma's character at the outset of the novel that should put the reader on his guard against identifying too readily with her attitudes and opinions. We learn that Emma, "had a disposition to think a little too well of herself", she is oversure of her own judgement, and has a propensity for match-making. She discovers and corrects her faults only after she hurts people. Craik points out;

Once she (Austen) has made these deficiencies clear can use Emma's judgement, which on other matters is right and rational, anywhere she chooses instead of expressing her own. Jane Austen appears much less in person as narrator because here we need to know scarcely anything that Emma cannot tell us.

(Craik, 126)

Once it is clear what Emma's limitations are, there are scarcely any facts the reader knows which Emma herself does not know, and although she misinterprets some of the events, her remarks and questions open the way and enable the readers to interpret the events. On first reading the reader can not draw the right inferences but she / he is supposed to notice the evidence to reconsider it with Emma and can see its strength when the truth is told. Thus, although Emma's interpretation of what she sees of the relationship between Jane and Frank is wrong, all the judgements she makes lead the reader to evaluate the events once more and reconsider her evaluations. For instance, she thinks that Frank is foolish and also inconsiderate to Mrs. Weston for wasting a day of his stay by going to London for a haircut. However, he has really gone to buy Jane the piano; this also is foolish and inconsiderate but in a different way, as is revealed, when Jane has all the embarrassment of Emma's speculations and suspicions of a present from Mr. Dixon.

Mr. Elton is also an object of interest for Emma. She has clear observations on him some of which are to the point and some of which are in fact not true, but they guide the readers to perceive the true state of the affairs.

You like Mr. Elton, papa, - I must look about for a wife for him. There is nobody in Highbury who deserves him- and he has been here a whole year and has fitted up his house so comfortably that it would be a shame to have him single any longer.

(Emma, p.11)

In this scene it is clear that Emma is intelligent and perceptive, since she has noticed that Mr. Elton is eager to marry. Her fault is not to realize that Mr. Elton would choose Emma. Craik suggests, “Jane Austen can give all the information she needs through Emma, because at the same time as Emma misreads what she sees she helps the reader understand it”(Craik, 152). Her comments on Mr. Elton when he offers to take the drawing of Harriet to London are also interesting:

‘This man is almost too gallant to be in love’, thought Emma. ‘I should say so, but that I suppose there may be a hundred different ways of being in love. He is an excellent young man, and will suit Harriet exactly; it will be an ‘Exactly so’ as he says himself; but he does sigh and languish and study for compliments rather more than I could endure as a principal. I come in for a pretty good share as a second. But it is his gratitude on Harriet’s account.

(Emma, p.38)

She observes that he is in love, but with whom Harriet, or herself? On this point she is deluded, being sure that he is in love with Harriet and that the interest he shows is the result of his love for her. This delusion causes many misunderstandings. Once this misunderstanding is cleared away, the readers also become cautious while reading Emma’s observations.

With her delusions and misunderstandings Emma could be considered an unpleasant person. We have to think of what Emma's story would be like if seen through Jane Fairfax's or Mrs. Elton's eyes, two characters unsympathetic towards Emma. Sympathy for Emma can be heightened by withholding the inside views of others. But, however clouded her vision is, Emma's mind is used as reflector of events.

Despite her misdeeds, there is a section devoted to her self-reproach, in which having seen her rudeness to Miss Bates, we witness her remorse and act of penance in visiting Miss Bates after Mr. Knightley's rebuke. Austen therefore, by creating a heroine who makes mistakes and then feels sorry for them and repents, induces the readers' sympathy for her. As Booth points out: "Jane Austen in developing the sustained use of a sympathetic inside view, has mastered one of the most successful of all devices for inducing a parallel emotional response between the deficient heroine and the reader" (Booth, 249).

Austen moves in and out of minds with great freedom, choosing for her own purposes what to reveal and what to withhold. A good example of this occurs when Mrs. Weston suggests a possible union between Emma and Frank Churchill, at the end of her conversation with Knightley about the harmful effects of Emma's friendship with Harriet. Here we also get the inner thoughts of Mrs. Weston, a rare case in the novel:

Part of her meaning was to conceal some favourite thoughts of her own and Mr. Weston's on the subject, as much as possible. There were wishes at Randalls respecting Emma's destiny, but it was not desirable to have them suspected.

(*Emma*, p.32)

We may wonder why, if Austen can tell us what Mrs. Weston is thinking, she does not reveal what Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax are thinking. The answer to this question is the main subject of the third chapter of this thesis. Austen moves in and out of minds because she chooses to build mystery and refuses the arbitrary granting of privilege to an inside view of characters whose minds would reveal too much. On the one hand she cares about maintaining some sense of mystery, on the other hand she works to heighten the reader's sense of dramatic irony, usually in the form of contrast between what Emma knows and what the reader knows. For instance, since in general we know only what Emma knows, we can not guess Harriet's feelings for Mr. Knightley, which can be considered to be the main cause of the novel's crisis. As a result, many ironic situations occur.

David Lodge in his essay 'Composition, distribution, arrangement, Form and structure in Jane Austen's novels', argues that:

The nineteenth-century novel developed a new and more flexible combination of author's voice and characters' voices than the simple alternation of the two one finds in traditional epic narration, from Homer to Fielding and Scott – a discourse that fused, or interwove, them, especially through the stylistic device known as 'free indirect speech'.

(Lodge, 126)

Lodge further argues that Jane Austen was the first English novelist to use this technique, which consists of reporting the thoughts of a character while deleting the introductory tags, such as 'he thought', 'she wondered', 'he thought to himself' and the like. For instance, after Mr. Elton's unwelcome declaration of love to Emma, the next chapter begins:

The hair was curled, and the maid sent away, and Emma sat down to think and be miserable.- It was a wretched business, indeed! Such an overthrow of every thing she had been wishing for!- Such a development of everything most unwelcome!- Such a blow for Harriet! That was the worst of all.

(*Emma*, p.103)

Free indirect speech, which enters this passage at the second sentence, allows the novelist to give the reader intimate access to a character's thoughts, without totally surrendering control of the discourse to that character. Though Emma's consciousness remains focal, the summary in this passage makes the narrator's authority perceptible:

Every part of it brought pain and humiliation, of some sort or other; but, compared with the evil to Harriet, all was light; and she would gladly have submitted to feel yet more mistaken - more in error- more disgraced by mis-judgement, than she actually was, could the effects of her blunders have been confined to herself.

(*Emma*,p.103)

According to Lodge, free indirect speech combined with presentation of the action from the perspective of an individual character allows the novelist to vary from sentence to sentence the distance between the narrator's discourse and the character's discourse, and so to control and direct the reader's affective and interpretive responses to the unfolding story. And thus we identify with Elinor rather than Marianne as the heroine of *Sense & Sensibility* because we see much more of the action from Elinor's perspective, because we have much more access to her private thoughts and also because we are aware of the ironic attitude of the author towards Marianne's excessive grief over the departure of Willoughby.

In *Emma*, the representation of Mrs. Elton's first speech, for instance, demonstrates how readers are manipulated into adopting Emma's point of view with regard to this character.

The very first subject after being seated was Maple Grove, 'My brother, Mr. Suckling's seat' - a comparison of Hartfield to Maple Grove. The grounds of Hartfield were small, but neat and pretty; and the house was modern and well-built. Mrs. Elton seemed most favourably impressed by the size of the room, the entrance, and all that she could see or imagine. 'Very like Maple Grove indeed! - She was quite struck by the likeness! - That room was the very shape and size of the morning-room at Maple Grove; her sister's favourite room.' - Mr. Elton was appealed to. - 'Was not it astonishingly like? - She could really almost fancy herself at Maple Grove.'

(*Emma*, p.205)

Here, Mrs. Elton's words are partly summarised, partly quoted via direct discourse in the third person. They are purposely preceded by the narrator's representation of Emma's first impression of the new character; Emma thinks she is "vain" and "ignorant" (*Emma*, p.205). The phrase "seemed most favourably impressed", is the narrator's first subtle hint at Mrs. Elton's shallowness. By comparing Maple Grove and Hartfield she implies that she is used to grandness. Maple Grove mentioned here, is a topic that Mrs. Elton will return to on many later occasions. Thus, the narrative's authority does not commit itself through words, that is through direct comment, yet both the introduction of Mrs. Elton's words and Emma's negative assessment, "vain", "ignorant" are controlling our judgement. Berendson comments that, "the use of third person indirect discourse points to the fictionality of utterances represented, and thus to manipulation - the reader is asked to side with Emma against Mrs. Elton" (Berendson, 128).

As mentioned above, Austen says very little in her own voice other than the introductions of characters which form the starting- points for the readers to judge them. Such firmly based characters can perform many of her functions as narrator for her. However, in *Sense & Sensibility* Austen chooses Elinor as her narrator ; her chief mouthpiece is her heroine Elinor, who gives much sound judgement on events and characters, and her opinions coincide with those of the narrator. Craik suggests that, “the sympathy between the author and her creation is such that Jane Austen very rarely finds it necessary to add to what she can say through Elinor” (Craik, 35). Therefore, Elinor has much to do. In this part of the thesis, as I am not interested in the comments she makes on the characters or events, the main focus will be on Austen’s using Elinor as her mouthpiece to control the judgements of her readers.

Elinor is never inconsistent, because her point of view as the right mixture of sense and sensibility never conflicts with that of the narrator. One of Austen’s major interests in the novel is to define sensitive behaviour, and she shows that it includes a capacity to estimate and appreciate others’ feelings along with a willingness to act so as to consider those as much as possible. This behavior is what Elinor exhibits and Marianne violates throughout the novel. Elinor’s behaviour and the feelings which prompt them are from the beginning considerate and right according to the definition given above. We see that Marianne, who is deceived by Willoughby, gives herself wholly to her sorrow and increases her wretchedness with reflection and solitude. Elinor, too, becomes wretched and has to be the confidante of Edward’s secret fiancée Lucy, she even has to console her. She is also deeply afflicted because of losing Edward but still she manages to struggle and exert herself.

When Willoughby leaves Allenham, Marianne is shown ‘indulging’ her feelings and “giving pain every moment to her mother and sisters and forbidding all attempt at consolation from either.” The narrator adds with irony, “Her sensibility was potent enough!” (*Sense & Sensibility*, p.78). On the other hand, Elinor showing a different sort of ‘sensibility’, keeps herself from revealing her intelligence of Lucy and Edward’s engagement in order not to add to their distress. There are many instances in the novel which show the contrast between Elinor’s and Marianne’s reactions to events, but this passage in particular demonstrates Elinor’s way of tackling problems. Here we have Elinor’s feelings upon Edward’s departure from Barton;

(Elinor) did not adopt the method so judiciously employed by Marianne, on a similar occasion, to augment and fix her sorrow, by seeking silence, solitude and idleness. Their means were as different as their objects and equally suited to the advancement of each. Elinor sat down to her drawing-table as soon as he was out of house busily employed herself the whole day, neither sought nor avoided the mention of his name, appeared to interest herself almost as much as ever in the general concerns of the family, and if by this conduct she did not lessen her own grief, it was at least prevented from unnecessary increase...
(*Sense & Sensibility*, p.96)

After all, Elinor is able to judge people properly and forgive them, feel for their sufferings, even for Edward’s misery over his engagement. To conclude, “In *Sense & Sensibility* the reader is presented with two modes of regulating feeling. Austen dramatizes throughout the novel the consequences in conduct and feeling of each mode” (Fergus, p.51). Elinor throughout the novel governs the expression of her feelings according to social conventions and because of her concern for others. She is responsive and attentive to others, so she is a good observer. She is a character deliberately chosen for the readers to travel with, and with whom to perceive the

events and characters. She is the mouthpiece of Austen and from the very beginning, as we know that Austen is in favour of Elinor, we accept her as a good guide while judging the events and the characters.

2.3. The Use of Irony

It seems that in writing novels one of Austen's aims is to provoke the readers to think about different meanings and attitudes and this is achieved by the use of irony. Austen writes ironically, whatever the words mean on the page, we repeatedly find that they imply other, different meanings. By this way, the novel forces us to be sceptical about characters, events, and attitudes. Analysis of irony in *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* confirms that: "Jane Austen does not tell us a single view: she gives us several different views, which often seem contradictory; and she makes us think about them without resolving them" (Marsh, 204).

With her ironical attitude, Austen teases us and invites us to laugh with her, and laughs at us in turn. She gives us several contradictory opinions to choose from, all of which are partly right and partly wrong when compared to the text. The novels are full of characters who persistently and vainly attempt to use observation, rational analysis and interpretation to understand, but nevertheless are often mistaken.

Vivien Jones describes Austen's style as ironic, and argues that the reader is often forced into making judgements, because the authorial voice, sometimes speaking from the point of view of one of the characters, offers a limited or mistaken view of a particular person or situation which the reader feels obliged to correct. "Irony is dependent on readers feeling that they *know more* or *understand more*

either than the narrator or than one or more of the characters” (Jones,53). Irony of this kind is often used in *Emma*, and several passages will be analysed to illustrate this technique. In both of the novels, irony appears as an essential element of the novels. In fact, Austen’s method is ironic. As the analysis of *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* will illustrate, irony’s function in the novels is the same, that is to tease the readers into thinking and getting them involved.

In both of the novels, money and marriage are viewed ironically and the ironic attitude of the author invites the readers to reflect on these issues of the period. Therefore, when Austen makes fun of her characters, Mrs. Elton and Mr. Dashwood for instance, for their vanity and over-estimation of money and status we are also invited to laugh at them. The themes of money and marriage are the same in *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma*, and reflect the social and economic conditions of the era in which Austen wrote. Therefore, in the second part of this section in order to understand the ironical situations, general information about the social and economic conditions of the 1800s will be given.

In terms of irony, the attitude of Austen towards her heroines, Emma and Elinor, is different. As the examples to be analysed will illustrate, in *Emma*, “irony is dependent on and coexistent with the heroine herself” (Craik,127). The introduction of Emma emphasizes the deficiency on which her actions will depend, and the circumstances which allow it to happen. Things that may distress her will be very much her own fault and because Emma is the dominant character, the reader’s position is very close to hers, and so the reader shares Emma’s process of self-

discovery. But, at the same time, in reading her experiences we are constantly engaged in making judgements.

In *Sense & Sensibility*, irony is not the structuring principle of the plot, but it is an essential element in the characterization of the secondary figures. Irony as a method of revealing character is kept away from the major figures and confined to the lesser ones. Irony is not directed towards Elinor, who gives much sound judgement on events and characters.

John Preston makes the following observation in Kuwahara's essay:

Austen's art calls on irony to render the narrative intelligence as a kind of third dimension to the action or as a colour filter not visible itself but affecting all the tones in the scene. Thus, the reader is more conscious of the play of mind rather as an enlargement of mind, as an enlargement of his own sensibility than as the mechanism of a narration. Nevertheless, though the story seems to be impersonal and freestanding as an object, it is in reality a transaction between author and reader.

(Preston in Kuwahara,18)

In the first part of this section Austen's source of irony which depends on the discrepancy between the reader's knowledge and that of the characters', the playful gap between subject matter and tone, and the use of irony as a method of revealing characters will be mentioned. The case is that irony prevails with the aim of engaging the readers in thinking. As Kuwahara comments, "just as Jane Austen is both involved in and detached from her fictional world, her readers too find themselves involved in the action, and the making of it, yet distant enough to view it objectively" (Kuwahara, 50).

i) Emma is a good example to begin with to show examples of irony which depend on the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Emma is inclined to snobbery and to rash judgment. She is a representative of a young gentlewoman of her age and her consciousness of rank accounts for a good many of her prejudices. Much of her unpleasantness can be attributed to her consciousness of rank. "In her class, family is the base, property the outward symbol, and suitable marriage the goal; family and property are the chief criteria of acceptability for Emma" (Mudrick,109).

Although at the beginning of the novel, she dismisses marriage as a goal for herself, the novel ends with her happy marriage to Mr.Knightley with whom she has always been in love, but she could come to self-recognition only later in the novel.

Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing! But I never have been in love; it is not my way or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not; consequence I do not want.'

(*Emma*, 66-67).

When we take into consideration the conditions of her time, it is true that Emma's situation as a woman of 30.000 pounds fortune, brought up by a doting governess, and mistress of her father's house is really respectable and well-established. However, as it turns out, she has always been in love with Mr. Knightley and it is her source of pride to be the most important person for him, so the early comment "she has never been in love", turns out to be misleading. Only towards the end of the novel, with Harriet's manifestation of love for Mr. Knightley does Emma come to recognize her feelings for Mr. Knightley.

Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley, than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so increased by Harriet's having some hope of a return? It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!

(*Emma*, 308)

This passage is also important to show Emma's unawareness of her feelings:

There he was, among the standers-by, where he ought not to be; he ought to be dancing – not classing himself with the husbands, and fathers, and whist-players, who were pretending to feel an interest in the dance till their rubbers were made-up, - so young as he looked!-

.... His tall, firm, upright figure, among the bulky forms and stooping shoulders of the elderly men, was such as Emma felt must draw every body's eyes; and excepting her own partner, there was not one among the whole row of young men who could be compared with him.

(*Emma*, 245).

In this passage, we are primarily interested in the feelings of Emma. In her observation of Mr. Knightley we gain the impression that the stress is on his physical characteristics. The irony of the passage lies in Emma's unawareness of the real state of her feelings, feelings we suspect on a first reading and which are confirmed at the end of the novel. Here, Emma shows no sign of understanding why it is that she is so worried by his not dancing. There is thus an ironic opposition between her ignorance of her own emotional state and the self-awareness on which she prides herself, particularly when she examines her feelings for Frank Churchill.

Emma likes to manage things. Marriage is dismissed for herself at the beginning of the novel but she tries to arrange, or manage other people's affairs. Yet just as she is blind to her own feelings so she is mistaken in her friend's affairs, and she prophesies what she wills and she is always wrong. "She will never admit what

she herself has not contrived, until the truth strikes her in the face” (Mudrick, 217). She is wrong about Mr. Elton’s feelings toward Harriet. She misconceives her own feelings toward Mr. Knightley; Angered by Jane Fairfax’s reserve, she imagines Jane to have had an affair with Mr. Dixon; She is wrong about Harriet’s feelings toward Churchill; and she fabricates an entire love affair between Churchill and herself – including its decline and dissolution, and yet throughout this imaginary affair she reiterates her resolution of never marrying. Mudrick makes the following observation that, “*Emma*, like *Pride and Prejudice* is a story of self-deception”(104). As readers we follow Emma’s comic train of misunderstandings.

The irony of plot plays an important role in directing judgment. In *Emma* we make judgments by a process of constant comparison between different points of view. In this scene, we have comments of different characters on Harriet’s portrait, which was drawn by Emma in an effort to secure Mr. Elton’s interest in her. Emma is pleased with the portrait:

There was no want of likeness, she had been fortunate in attitude, and as she meant to throw in a little improvement to the figure, to give a little more height, and considerably more elegance, she had great confidence of its being in every way a pretty drawing at last....

(*Emma*, 37)

Emma’s friends comment on the portrait in various ways, offering the reader the chance to compare different views;

‘Miss Woodhouse has given her friend the only beauty she wanted,’
- observed Mrs. Weston to him –

....

‘You have made her too tall, Emma’ said Mr. Knightley.

(*Emma*, 37)

The introductory paragraph is presented primarily from Emma's point of view, but the scene as a whole allows the reader to compare her judgment with other characters'. It is made quiet clear that Emma's portrait is not in fact an accurate likeness of Harriet, and that just as the narrator points out Emma has intentionally given, "a little improvement to the figure", in the interests of furthering her match with Mr. Elton. Vivien Jones suggests that,

This kind of scene, in which we see different characters' reactions side by side, is quite common in Jane Austen's fiction. It is sometimes called a *touchstone* situation, because by showing characters responding to the same thing it offers a kind of comparative test of their reactions.

(Jones, 59).

Another example of irony is from chapter 45, which shows the contrast between the words of the characters and their real motives. Emma goes to visit Jane Fairfax at Miss Bates's, but Miss Bates comes to the door saying that Jane is too ill to see anybody, although she has seen Mrs. Elton, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Perry earlier in the day. The narrator gives us Emma's reaction: "Emma did not want to be classed with the Mrs. Eltons, the Mrs. Perrys, and the Mrs. Coles, who would force themselves anywhere" (*Emma*, 295).

The meaning of the words is that, Emma wishes to be different from three inferior women, so she decides not to insist on seeing Jane. However, we are surprised by this assertion for two reasons. Firstly, Emma has been humbled, especially after the rebuke of Mr. Knightley for her cruel remark about Miss Bates at Boxhill, and is determined to be tolerant of others. So her revived snobbery surprises us. Secondly Emma had sent a note to Jane, and the answer effectively told her not to come. "In spite of the answer.....she ordered the carriage" (295). In fact Emma has

already forced herself on the Bates's so her words do not seem to be convincing.

Nicholas Marsh makes the following observation:

Clearly there are two attitudes in this part of the text. First, there are the words, which give Emma's thoughts; second there is our surprise, which makes us disbelieve Emma's motives and question what is really happening.

(Marsh,202).

In *Emma* we enjoy reading the vulgarity and snobbery of Mrs. Elton. Mrs. Elton always talks about Maple Grove, the luxurious residence of her relatives, London society or the distinctions of a fine lady and enjoys attracting attention as a bride. And when such a character announces that "her taste is for simplicity" these words are far from convincing any reader and make us laugh at her:

I fancy I am rather a favourite; he took notice of my gown. How do you like it? – Selina's choice – handsome, I think, but I do not know whether it is not over- trimmed; I have the greatest dislike to the idea of being over- trimmed- quite a horror of finery. I must put on a few ornaments now, because it is expected of me. A bride, you know must appear like a bride, but my natural taste is for simplicity...

(*Emma*, 228)

Mrs Elton's introduction in the previous chapter confirms the irony here; "Mrs.Elton as elegant as lace and pearls could make her." She likes finery and this is revealed by her clothes and ornaments, so her words are contradictory.

The playful gap between subject matter and tone also reveals the ironic attitude of the author and at the same time the triviality of the characters included in such scenes. For instance the presentation of Mr. Woodhouse in *Emma* is humorous and, like Mrs. Elton, is used for comic relief and has little to do with advancing the plot, however, he is still sympathetic. The reader has important matters kept before him by Mr. Woodhouse's trivial, but usually unconsciously ironic comments on them.

Both Mr. Woodhouse and his daughter Isabella draw conclusions too large from events too small:

But you must have found it very damp and dirty. I wish you may not catch cold....for we have had a vast deal of rain here. It rained dreadfully hard for half an hour, while we were at breakfast. I wanted them to put off the wedding.

(*Emma*, 9)

Isabella like her father exaggerates everything and is over concerned with her children. When they come across the danger of being blocked up at Randalls, her horror is shown in its extremity and we can sense irony in the writer's attitude towards her:

His eldest daughter's alarm was equal to his own. The horror of being blocked up at Randalls, while her children were at Hartfield, was full in her imagination; and fancying the road to be now just passable for adventurous people, but in a state that admitted no delay, she was eager to have it settled, that her father and Emma should remain at Randalls, while she and her husband set forward instantly through all the possible accumulations of drifted snow that might impede them.

(*Emma*, 98)

J. Enright in Kuwahara's essay points out that:

The *double take* is always part of our response to irony as we move or are jolted from what was said to what is meant, or, as it may be, from what we understood to what (we remind ourselves) we have actually heard.

(Enright in Kuwahara, 30)

In *Sense & Sensibility*, the affair between Lucy and Robert was at the end accepted by Mrs. Ferrars, as a result of the cunningness and 'assiduous attentions' of Lucy, Mrs. Ferrars is reconciled to Robert's choice. However, we know that Lucy is never presented as a favourable character and all her actions reveal her selfishness.

Austen draws an ironic conclusion from her story:

The whole of Lucy's behaviour in the affair, and the prosperity which crowned it, therefore, may be held forth as a most encouraging instance of what an earnest, an unceasing attention to self – interest, however its progress may be apparently obstructed, will do in securing every advantage of fortune, with no other sacrifice than that of time and conscience.

(Sense & Sensibility, 339).

Kuwahara suggests that, “the tone is positive, as heard in “the prosperity which crowned it” and “a most encouraging instance”, but that Lucy's behaviour is not. There is a playful gap between subject matter and tone” (Kuwahara, 30). Austen leaves the reader with the ironic lesson learned from Lucy's behaviour. Considering her general character, we do not appreciate the behaviour of Lucy.

In chapter XI, Robert Ferrars is observed while choosing a toothpick case for himself, giving the impression of “a person and face, of strong, natural, sterling insignificance” (199).

At last the affair was decided. The ivory, the gold, and the pearls, all received their appointment, and the gentleman having named the last day on which his existence could be continued without the possession of the toothpick- case, drew on his gloves with leisurely care, and bestowing another glance on the Miss Dashwoods, but such a one as seemed rather to demand than express admiration, walked off with a happy air of real conceit and affected indifference.

(Sense & Sensibility, 199)

Having spent quite a long time and given attention to examining and debating on a toothpick case, and being inattentive to the people around him Robert Ferrars is of course a source of irony and ridicule in this scene. “Through irony,

Austen jolts us into seeing the gap between appearances and reality” (Kuwahara, 31).

For instance Austen writes:

They (Lucy and Robert) settled in town, received very liberal assistance from Mrs. Ferrars, were on the best terms imaginable with the Dashwoods; and, setting aside the jealousies and ill-will continually subsisting between Fanny and Lucy in which their husbands of course took part, as well as the frequent domestic disagreements between Robert and Lucy themselves, nothing could exceed the harmony in which they all lived together.

(Sense & Sensibility, 340-341)

“Austen playfully reveals the disparity between apparent harmony and actual discord” (Kuwahara, 31). We can not expect these characters to live really in harmony as jealousy, ill-will and disagreements prevail between them.

In *Emma* most of the ironies are bound to the delusions and misunderstandings of Emma. However, in *Sense & Sensibility* irony generally arises from external circumstances over which characters have little or no control, and irony is not directed at Elinor. As the title suggests, two alternatives to similar situations are presented. In the novel, Elinor embodies sense, and Marianne sensibility, Marianne allows her feelings to govern her behaviour and Elinor refuses to give in to such impulses. Much of the story is told from Elinor’s point of view. “This angle of vision reduces the possibility for irony, since Elinor’s views are essentially the same as the narrator’s” (Odmak,7). Odmak further suggests that: “The organization of the plot and the means employed to render character suggest that the author shares Elinor’s understanding of propriety and its implications. It is therefore hardly surprising that irony is seldom directed at Elinor” (Odmak, 8).

In *Sense & Sensibility* conflicts generally arise from external circumstances. The secret agreement between Lucy Steele and Edward Ferrars, for instance, appears until the end of the novel to be an obstacle to Elinor's happiness. She knows her own feelings but her actions are governed by reason. When Colonel Brandon asks her to inform Edward that he will be given a living, Elinor assumes this will be very welcome news, for it will finally make it possible for Edward and Lucy to marry. Despite this knowledge Elinor sees it as her duty to carry out this task and accept what she assumes will be the consequences. Such behaviour leaves little room for irony. Therefore, in this novel as Craik points out, "Irony as a method of revealing character is kept away from the major figures and confined to the lesser ones" (Craik, 32). Apart from the irony directed at secondary characters, again in *Sense & Sensibility* irony is used as a method to show the discrepancy between seeming and being, thus urging the readers to try to find out different meanings and suggestions behind the words.

Odmark suggests that, "The following comparison of the author's introduction of the Palmers and her portrayal of a serious discussion relating to family matters, which takes place at the Dashwoods', illustrates qualitative differences in the means employed to achieve ironic effects" (52). The first reference to Mr. and Mrs. Palmer forewarns the reader not to expect too much from the new arrivals: "It is only the Palmers" (*Sense & Sensibility*, 97).

Her husband was a grave looking young man of five or six and twenty, with an air of more fashion and sense than his wife, but of less willingness to please or be pleased. He entered the room with a look of self-consequence, slightly bowed to the ladies, without speaking a word,

and, after briefly surveying them and their apartments, took up a newspaper from the table, and continued to read it as long as he stayed.

Mrs. Palmer on the contrary, who was strongly endowed by nature with a turn for being uniformly civil and happy, was hardly seated before her admiration of the parlour and everything in it burst forth. - ‘ Well! What a delightful room this is! I never saw any thing so charming! Only think, mamma how it is improved since I was here last! I always thought it such a sweet place, maam!.....How I should like such a house for myself!...

(*Sense & Sensibility*, 98-99)

This introduction and the short dialogue of the Palmers establish these characters. The pattern of their future behaviour is predictable. Mr. Palmer will hold himself aloof whenever it is possible to avoid social confrontations, and Mrs. Palmer will talk nonsense. The content of her conversation is not of particular importance, its purpose is to establish social contact.

As this scene exemplifies the Palmers are introduced by other characters’ introductory remarks, by the narrator, by their dialogue and by the comment made on them by Mrs. Dashwood, all indicating that, they will not have a crucial function in the novel, apart from, “creating awkward moments by asking indelicate questions” (Odmark,53).

Craik suggests that:

It is a safe generalization that Jane Austen’s method is ironic, even in *Sense & Sensibility*, where Elinor is treated so seriously. Irony is beginning to take its place as one of her finest skills, as a most economical means of delineating character, and as an accurate means of revealing states of mind...

(Craik, 60).

In chapter II of *Sense & Sensibility* the narrator's comments make explicit what Mr. and Mrs. Dashwood are thinking, but are incapable of stating directly. We know that they do not want to give money to the sisters. A tone of hypocrisy and self-interest dominates this scene.

Mrs Dashwood did not at all approve of what her husband intended to do for his sisters. To take three thousand from the fortune of their dear little boy would be impoverishing him to the most dreadful degree. She begged him to think again on the subject. How could he answer it to himself to rob his child; and his only child too, of so large a sum?
(*Sense & Sensibility*,12).

Neither Mrs. Dashwood nor her husband wants to do anything financially for his half-sisters and their mother; on the other hand, Mr. Dashwood would like to have the comforting feeling of keeping his promise to his father. As his wife slowly brings Mr. Dashwood to realize that he need not do anything at all for his relatives, he gradually perceives that he and his wife are actually very close to one another in their thinking about the matter. The irony derives from the fact that how he eventually ends up is completely opposite to what he initially expressed. This is the way he started the dialogue:

He (the father) could hardly suppose I should neglect them. But as he required the promise, I could not do less than give it: at least I thought so at the time. The promise, therefore, was given, and must be performed. Something must be done for them whenever they leave Norland and settle in a new house.
(*Sense & Sensibility*,12).

The dialogue with his wife ends with this resolution:

'Upon my word' said Mr.Dashwood, 'I believe you are perfectly right. My father certainly could mean nothing more by his request to me than

what you say. I clearly understand it now, and I will strictly fulfill my engagement by such acts of assistance and kindness to them as you have described.

(*Sense & Sensibility*, 15).

Mr. Dashwood is convinced that he has no other choice and should give a present of fifty pounds and is in fact convinced very easily to do so, since he is inclined to it from the beginning.

In the following scene as Odmark's quotation points out, "irony derives from knowledge or lack of it" (43). Odmark suggests that;

In any dramatic exchange, one of Jane Austen's characters is likely to have 'superior' knowledge, which is not the same as to suggest that he is morally or socially superior. Quite the contrary may in fact be the case. Rarely in Jane Austen are both parties equally informed and equally in control of the situation.'

(Odmark, 43).

There is a supremely embarrassing moment when Marianne, Elinor and Lucy are together in London and are unexpectedly visited by Edward. Marianne unaware that Lucy is engaged to Edward or that Elinor knows this, praises Edward. Lucy sneers at her as she comments on Marianne's lack of faith in young men's capacity to keep engagements: "Perhaps, Miss Marianne,' cried Lucy, eager to take some revenge on her, 'you think young men never stand upon engagements, if they have no mind to keep them, little as well as great" (219).

Marianne, insensible of the sting, defends Edward;

Not so, indeed, for, seriously speaking, I am very sure that conscience only kept Edward from Harley Street. And I really believe he *has* the most delicate conscience in the world; the most scrupulous in performing

every engagement, however minute, however it may make against his interest or pleasure. He is the most fearful of giving pain, of wounding expectation, and the most incapable of being selfish, of any body I ever saw.

(Sense & Sensibility, 219).

Armstrong suggests that, “There are multiple ironies here, many more than Marianne’s unconscious pun on engagement,(...) but for the moment it is important to remember that the intensity of her commendation has predictive force” (Armstrong, 107).

The word “engagement” is quite important in the sense that Marianne is talking about having failed to meet Edward the previous day, at a party. But, unconsciously we readers and most probably Lucy as well, think of the word in the meaning of agreement between couples concerning marriage. Her comments have ‘predictive force’, because Edward did sustain his engagement, although he did not love Lucy. Conscience of course kept Edward from Harley Street, but not for the reasons Marianne is thinking of, in fact he would not like to meet Elinor. Therefore, in this scene, irony is directed at Marianne, who is unaware of the true state of the events, or the readers’ and her auditors’ understanding of the word ‘engagement’. She comments on Edward’s character leading the readers to question his faithfulness in keeping his engagement.

ii)

The crucial importance of a family’s social position to its individual members in eighteenth and nineteenth century England could not fail to be recorded in the work of a novelist so steeped in her own everyday reality, and since she was living in a period of rapid change in the class system, the consequent uncertainties are also reflected.

(Harding, 27).

As this quotation from Harding points out, Austen's novels are a special case in respect of the society they present. They focus exclusively on a narrow stratum of the upper-middle class in rural English settings, made up of a few families, who visited each other on a regular basis. We have a realistic representation of the era in which Austen lived. Indeed the preoccupation with courtship, marriage, and social activities is quickly established and sometimes presented with an ironical attitude. Characters with selfish economic principles are criticised and we are invited to laugh at them.

In the 1800s, since by law virtually all of a woman's property became her husband's upon marriage, his courtship was in some measure a career move as well as a search for a life partner. Indeed, when rich or upper-class people got married, a wife generally brought a generous dowry with her as an inducement to marriage.

'Once a woman has accepted an offer of marriage' advised *The What-Not, or Ladies' Handbook* in 1859, 'all she has or expects to have becomes virtually the property of the man she has accepted as husband and no gift or deed executed by her is held to be valid; for were she permitted to give away or otherwise settle her property between the property of acceptance and the marriage he might be disappointed in the wealth he looked to in making an offer.

(Pool, 181)

Daniel Pool argues that there was little false delicacy about this sort of economic maneuvering and the financial aspects of marriage were considered quite openly. A contemporary courtship etiquette manual says very straightforwardly that once you propose:

your course is to acquaint the parents or guardians of the lady with your intentions, at the same time stating your circumstances and what settlement you would make upon your future wife; and, on their side, they must state what will be her fortune as near as they can estimate to the best of their knowledge at the time you make the enquiry.’

(Pool, 181)

These were the preliminary negotiations in a society where money and prestige were still often tied to the possession of great estates and name, an economic transaction was considered to be necessary. A husband often had to have a rich wife in order to keep up the ancestral family in style. And since her fortune by law became her husband’s property at marriage, the bride’s family had to worry about making sure she and her children had something to live on if her husband died or were wastrel.

The basis of wealth, status and power in England was fundamentally land, as it had been for centuries. And the overriding concern of the great landed families who dominated English life was to maintain their influence and affluence down through the years by transmitting their enormous landed estates, generation after generation to their descendants. There were two ways to do this, one of which was the right of primogeniture, which meant that all the land in each generation was left to the eldest son instead of being divided among all the children. The second was entail, which meant that sufficient restrictions were put on what could be done to the estate by that eldest son to ensure that when he died his eldest son in turn would inherit the estate complete, and not mortgaged or split up. A girl should not inherit, because if she remained single the line could die out and if she married the estate

would pass in possession to someone outside the family. The logical heir, then was the eldest son.

At the beginning of the century everyone knew where he or she stood. Dukes, marquises and earls were on top, below the great nobles and landowners were the gentry, the locally based ‘ county families’ of squire, clergy baronets, and knights with properties not as great as those of the dukes but large enough to have tenants. Bishops and physicians and barristers would rank somewhere in here, then came the yeoman farmers, the independent landowners with their large or small holdings. The changes in English society in the 1800s altered this somewhat static hierarchy. To begin with, industry and manufacturing created new sources of wealth that could compete with land, even though its holders frequently had to put some of their wealth into landownership of a country estate to be really accepted. Secondly, the professions became more influential and more respected; doctors acquired real scientific training, the clergy became more conscientious about its duties and education, and suddenly there was a new class of people demanding to be taken seriously - socially and professionally, like the Coles in *Emma*. Indeed the first thing any household with pretensions to middle- class status did was to hire a housemaid or even a maid- of -all-work. When you really arrived, you hired a manservant, an index of social propriety. If you were well-off, you had to have a carriage and servants, and then you wanted land. This was the general profile of the era Austen wrote in and reflected in her novels.

Jane Austen writes her novels out of the real social situation of her time. Her acceptance of these realities as her inescapable conditions, even

when they set up conflicts of feeling and uncertainties of judgement, is part of her excellence.

(Harding, 65).

It appears in the story of Harriet Smith and Robert Martin and their relations to the other characters. Austen in both of the novels observes the problems of rank in the society of her time. In *Emma*, for instance, she looked at people below her in the social hierarchy and handled the much more confused and conflict - arousing social distinctions associated with differences of manners, education and range of interest. She makes no attempt at an abstract solution of the conflicts, she simply has her characters working out their personal problems in a context where distinctions of rank and changes of rank were part of the structure and living process of society.

In Austen's world human worth is to be judged by standards better and more enduring than social status; but social status is always relevant. With amused detachment, she registers exactly the social provenance of each of her characters, and judges them for the ways in which they judge each other. The importance assigned to class distinction is the source of much of her comedy and irony as of social satire. In *Emma*, for instance the snobbish heroine becomes both our guide as to where each character should be placed, and our negative example of one who assigns far too much importance to the matter of status.

(Mc Master, 129).

For instance, before Emma has met Mrs. Elton, she reflects that, 'What she was, must be uncertain; but who she was, might be found out.' (*Emma*, 138). The lady's social identity can be found out in advance: whose daughter she is, where she comes from, how much money she has, and how it was made. But what she is, that is what sort of person she is, is another issue, and can only be established by personal contact. Austen shows how much importance people attach to social identity rather than to personal quality.

Emma is conscious of the social gradations which are so prominent in the background of the story. She is proud of her status and family name and her snobbery is displayed with many examples. Emma's position as 'first in consequence' in Highbury entails a certain social responsibility. Though she is described as fulfilling her charitable obligations to the poor, there is a suspicion that this task is done without a sincere sense of obligation. For instance, she exhibits her snobbery in this quotation:

A young farmer, whether on horseback or on foot, is the very last sort of person to raise my curiosity. The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do. A degree or two lower, and a creditable appearance might interest me; I hope to be useful to their families in some way or other. But a farmer can need none of my help, and is therefore in one sense as much above my notice as in every other he is below it.

(Emma, 23).

Emma expresses her unwillingness to have anything to do with the Martins, whom she considers on one occasion to be "another set of beings". Duckworth suggests that, with this attitude, Emma "aligns herself with those other characters in Jane Austen's novels - Lady Catherine, General Tilney, Mrs. Ferrars, the Bertram sisters and others - who wish to retain rank as privilege, money as an assertion of exclusiveness"(151).

Emma becomes indignant that the clergyman, Mr. Elton should dare to propose to her or to 'suppose himself her equal in connection or mind!' (*Emma*, 104). She even declares that, 'He (Mr. Elton) must know that the Woodhouses had been settled for several generations at Hartfield, the younger branch of a very ancient family- and that the Eltons were nobody.' (*Emma*, 105). The irony here derives from

the fact Emma is angry with Mr. Elton for humiliating her friend Harriet, but she herself is humiliating him by regarding him as socially below herself.

It was a hierarchical world in which everybody was conscious of his / her limitations. But as *Emma* particularly demonstrates the hierarchy was not fixed; people and families could rise and sink, Mr. Perry for instance, is rising in prosperity and can think of setting up his carriage, which is a symbol of wealth. The Coles are also an example of a rising family, but Emma's attitude towards them shows that money alone could not secure their new status in high-society. Emma's prejudices exemplify the prejudice of the people of the period.

This was the occurrence: The Coles had been settled some years in Highbury, and were very good sort of people- friendly, liberal, and unpretending; but on the other hand, they were of low origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel. On their first coming into the country, they had lived in proportion to their income, quietly, keeping little company, and that little unexpensively; but the last year or two had brought them a considerable increase of means- the house in town had yielded greater profits, and fortune in general had smiled on them. With their wealth their views increased; their want of a larger house, their inclination for more company.

(*Emma*, 156).

In these circumstances the Coles arrange a party inviting the best families in Highbury. Before the coming of the invitation, Emma, in expectation of an invitation, plans on refusing to go:

Nothing should tempt *her* to go, if they did; and she regretted that her father's known habits would be giving her refusal less meaning than she could wish. The Coles were very respectable in their way, but they ought to be taught that it was not for them to arrange the terms on which the superior families would visit them.

(*Emma*, 156).

Harding makes the following observation: “The wind is taken out of her sails when all the other families are asked to dinner and she and her father receive no invitation” (64). Here, the irony derives from the fact that, before the invitation Emma would like to refuse to go in order to teach them a lesson. However, as she does not receive an invitation, this time she is anxious of not having the chance to attend a dinner- party consisting of those whose society was dearest to her. And when at last the invitation arrives, she is only too glad to be persuaded by her friends to accept: “Upon the whole she was very persuadable” (*Emma*, 157), comments the narrator. Indeed, this passage is important in illustrating Highbury’s social mobility with Emma’s acceptance of the invitation, and also displaying the attitude of people in Emma’s position at that time.

Marriage was openly seen as an economic arrangement and a means of alliance between families involving a bargain in terms of money and prestige. In *Sense & Sensibility* the conventional attitude is treated ironically in Mrs. Ferrars’s plans for marrying her elder son to Miss Morton, who is Lord Morton’s daughter and possessed of 30,000 pounds. When the revelation of Edward’s engagement to Lucy puts that out of the question and Edward has been cast off by his mother in favour of his younger brother, Robert, Elinor hears of the family’s revised plans:

‘We think now’ said Mr.Dashwood, after a short pause, ‘of Robert’s marrying Miss Morton..’

Elinor smiling...

‘The lady I suppose has no choice in the affair.’

(*Sense & Sensibility*, 267).

Mr.Elton in *Emma* displays another example of this kind of attitude. Rejected by Emma, he chooses Miss Hawkins in a very short time as a fit mate for himself. As this quotation points out, his courtship of Emma was merely ambition:

He wanted to marry well, and having the arrogance to raise his eyes to her, pretended to be in love;...He only wanted to aggrandize and enrich himself; and if Miss Woodhouse of Hartfield, the heiress of thirty thousand pounds, were not quite so easily obtained as he had fancied, he would soon try for Miss Somebody else with twenty, or with ten.
(*Emma*, 104).

Indeed, in passages like this – and there are many of the same kind- Jane Austen condemns the treatment of marriage as a money bargain for economic and social advantage, and with her humorous, and ironical attitude invites her readers to laugh at this reality with her. Duckworth suggests that, “It is in *Sense & Sensibility* that the vicious cancer of economically motivated conduct is most searchingly analysed”(88).

Mr.Dashwood represents those who act with selfish motives and regard money and social status as the most important thing in life. This is why he finds Mrs.Jennings “a most valuable woman”, because “her house, her style of living, all bespeak an exceeding income” (*Sense & Sensibility*, 204). He could not discern the vulgarities of Mrs. Jennings, but her richness could make her a ‘valuable’ person. Dashwood’s most vicious expression of a totally economic outlook occurs, however, when he sees how sick Marianne is, as she is grief-stricken on account of Willoughby’s infidelity. He can only express his concern to Elinor in terms of the fall in Marianne’s market value.

I remember Fanny used to say, that she (Marianne) would marry sooner and better than you did; not but what she is exceedingly fond of *you*, but so it happened to strike her. She will be mistaken, however. I question whether Marianne, *now*, will marry a man worth more than five or six hundred a year at the utmost, and I am very much deceived if you do not do better.

(Sense & Sensibility, 205)

His understanding of duty, as a socially ambitious man is exemplified in this speech:

.... I have made a purchase within this half year; East Kingham farm, you must remember the place, where old Gibson used to live. The land was so desirable for me in every respect, so immediately adjoining my own property, that I felt it my duty to buy it. I could not have answered it to my conscience to let it fall into any other hands. A man must pay for his convenience; and it *has* cost me a vast deal of money.

(Sense & Sensibility, 203).

He purchases the land in the name of 'duty' and 'conscience'. However, he reduces the amount of money that he would give to his sisters as he promised to his father, disregarding his duty and conscience. Therefore, Mr. Dashwood is far from convincing Elinor, his auditor in this scene, and the readers as well, about his good intentions. His real concern is always money. As Duckworth states in the following observation: "In its cool exposure of economically motivated behavior it gives powerful expression to Jane Austen's persistent apprehensions about the possible course of society"(91).

CHAPTER III

WITHOLDING OF INFORMATION

In any narrative we may find questions that are temporarily unanswered and for that reason, arouse feelings of curiosity and of suspense. Bal defines suspense as “the result of procedures by which the reader or the character is made to ask questions which are only answered later”(Bal in Berendson, 132). In *Emma* and *Sense & Sensibility*, some fictional facts are kept secret, and both readers and characters entertain suspicions of and curiosity about certain fictional facts, the reader because s/ he is completely dependent upon the narrator for information; the characters because of the secretiveness of their fellows. For instance in *Emma*, the apparent misrepresentation of the relationship between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax is the result of suppression, hence manipulation. In this instance the clues regarding the actual state of affairs are so subtle as to alert only a very attentive reader. In both of the novels we generally find secrets that characters do not tell each other. Readers and characters feel puzzled because they are unable to account for certain events. In the case of Frank’s secret engagement to Jane, the readers are deceived because of the author’s suppression of the event, and the characters are deceived because of Frank’s manipulations.

In her novels Jane Austen chooses to build up a sense of mystery and plays with the perceptions of the characters and the readers as well. As John Odmark

suggests, “the necessity of controlling the distance between the readers and the events being portrayed determines what is revealed and what is withheld. This also includes what is implied but left unsaid” (Odmak,42). Accordingly, our feelings and thoughts are coloured by the characters’ errors in judgment. As characters keep secrets, the complexity of evaluating the events and characters demands great alertness on the part of the readers. Therefore by mystifying the reader, but at the same time furnishing enough information for the active, critical reader to perceive the ‘true’ state of the affairs as the story unfolds, Jane Austen teases the readers into thinking, into trying to resolve the hints spread through the plot. As most of the characters have something to hide and are mysterious to one another, the characters and the readers need to match actions with words and assess their meanings. According to Isobel Armstrong, “this playing with perception and at revealing makes the readers’ position as judge” (Armstrong, 116).

Iser’s views are also important in realizing the importance of gaps, and delayed information in texts:

Communication in Literature, then, is a process set in motion and regulated, not by a given code, but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment. What is concealed spurs the reader into action, but this action is also controlled by what is revealed; the explicit in its turn transformed when the implicit has been brought to light. Whenever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins. The gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text – reader relationship revolves.

(Iser, 24)

Therefore, gaps in the texts control the reader’s activity by getting them involved.

The first novel to be analysed in this chapter is *Emma*. In *Emma*, uncertainties, secrets, misleading and misled characters keep readers on the watch, in interpreting and reinterpreting the text. Therefore, sometimes the readers are asked to trust what they are told, sometimes to read against the text. Tara Ghoshal Wallace comments: “Emma is a story about reading and misreading about textual manipulations and reader’s resistance about false information and puzzling events”(Wallace, 77).

The most obvious obstacle to the reader’s arriving at fictional facts results from events being presented largely from Emma’s point of view. In the novel, mainly Emma is the center of consciousness and most of the events are given from her point of view. However the readers learn not to trust Emma all the time, because as the story proceeds we learn that Emma can mislead or can be misled by others. So as Emma’s mistakes are revealed, mostly followed by repentance scenes, the readers are invited to participate in acts of interpretation. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter II, we are manipulated by the authorial voice from the very beginning to suspect the heroine’s interpretations.

Emma is proud of self - knowledge but we know that she is ignorant even of her own feelings. She believes herself to be in love with Frank, for a certain time at least, and Frank with her, while in fact she loves Mr. Knightley. She tries to make a match between Harriet and Mr. Elton, who turns out to be in love with Emma herself. During her friendship with Frank she tells him about her speculations that Jane Fairfax has come to Highbury to escape from an emotional commitment to a married man, that is Mr. Dixon, and Frank cunningly leads Emma on encouraging her

to pursue her thoughts. However, Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill turn out to have been secretly engaged for a long time.

Emma's first misunderstanding was to misread the feelings of Mr. Elton and to mislead and encourage Harriet, her socially inferior friend, to thinking that Mr. Elton was in love with her. Emma sees in Harriet a young woman who lacks only a little education and refinement to make her the perfect wife for Mr. Elton. She is from the very beginning inclined to see Harriet positively and tends to assume that Harriet has qualities she wants her to have:

She was not struck by any thing remarkably clever in Miss Smith's conversation, but she found her altogether very engaging – not inconveniently shy, not unwilling to talk – and yet far from pushing, shewing so proper and becoming a deference, seeming so pleasantly grateful for being admitted to Hartfield, and so artlessly impressed by the appearance of every thing in so superior style to what she had been used to, that she must have good sense and deserve encouragement. Encouragement should be given.

(Emma, p.19)

This passage is presented from Emma's point of view. We find out that Emma draws her own conclusions about Harriet; 'she must have good sense'. She arrives at her own conclusions based on speculation. Therefore she assumes the role of guide to her friend disregarding Mr. Knightley's warnings that Harriet is in fact an unexceptional, easily influenced young girl. Mr. Knightley who foresees most of the events and give hints to the readers about what might happen, thinks that a friendship between Harriet and Emma can only damage Harriet, as he makes clear in his conversation with Mrs. Weston:

She will grow just refined enough to be uncomfortable with those among whom birth and circumstances have placed her home. I am much

mistaken if Emma's doctrines give her any strength of mind, or tend at all to make a girl adapt herself rationally to the varieties of her situation in life.

(*Emma*, p.30)

As Mr. Knightley could foresee, Emma leads Harriet to think too highly of herself. When Harriet receives a letter from Robert Martin proposing marriage, she dissuades her from marrying him considering Mr. Martin and his family socially beneath her friend. Although she does not know the origin of Harriet, according to Emma this is an imprudent match. Harriet who was at first undecided about the proposal, is later convinced by Emma into thinking that she is destined to marry well. So Emma chooses Mr. Elton as the person suitable for Harriet and disregards the discrepancies between them. Emma begins to see in everything he does a sign of his love for Harriet. The charade is the best example to support Mr. Knightley's observation that Emma might be mistaken in her observations. According to Emma the charade which praises ready wit is addressed to Harriet, who in fact has nothing to do with ready wit:

*'But, ah! united, (courtship, you know,) what reverse we have!
Man's boasted power and freedom, all are flown;
Lord of the earth and sea, bends a slave,
And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone.'*

A very proper compliment!- and then follows the application, which I think, my dear Harriet, you can not find much difficulty in comprehending. Read it in comfort to yourself There can be no doubt of its being written for you and to you.'

(*Emma*, p.58)

However at a point when we can not decide whether Mr Elton is courting Emma or Harriet, the first hint that Mr. Elton as a socially superior man would not marry Harriet is introduced by Mr. Knightley: "Elton may talk sentimentally but he

will act rationally. He is well acquainted with his own claims, as you can be with Harriet's"(*Emma*,p.52).

When Mr. Elton announces his love for Emma instead of Harriet, Emma's first blunder in matchmaking is revealed and she is forced to recognise that her plans for Harriet were misguided;

'The first error and the worst lay at her door. It was foolish, it was wrong, to take so active a part in bringing any two people together. It was adventuring too far, assuming too much, making light of what ought to be serious, a trick of what ought to be simple. She was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more.'

(*Emma*,p.104)

In fact in this relationship not only was Emma mistaken about Mr. Elton, but Mr. Elton himself claims to have been misled by Emma and accuses her of encouraging his suit. He states that he had never thought of Miss Smith and never paid her any attentions and everything he has said or done was for Emma, moreover he claims to have been understood by Emma:

Oh! Miss Woodhouse ! who can think of Miss Smith when Miss Woodhouse is near ! No, upon my honour, there is no unsteadiness of character. I have thought only of you. I protest against having paid the smallest attention to any one else. Every thing I have said or done, for many weeks past, has been with the sole view of marking my adoration of yourself. You can not really, seriously, doubt it. No!- (in an accent meant to be insinuating) - I am sure you have seen and understood me.

(*Emma*,p.101)

This manifestation makes Emma angry, and she rejects his proposal, she is astonished to see the lover of Harriet professing himself her lover. As she tries to stop him Mr. Elton shows that he is unwilling to abandon his misinterpretation. As Ghoshal Wallace suggests, when Emma keeps silent "he responds to her momentary loss of words with a determined misreading" (Wallace, 79). "Charming Miss

Woodhouse ! allow me to interpret this interesting silence. It confesses that you have long understood me” (*Emma*,p.101).

In other words as Emma’s attempts to make a match between Harriet and Mr.Elton fail, her attempts for clarification of the situation are also blocked by Elton’s self- absorbed delusions.

As the novel proceeds the readers find that Emma does not keep her promise not to make matches. The second match she plans for Harriet is Frank Churchill, who is in fact considered by the Westons and many others to be the most suitable person in Highbury for Emma. Emma, who decides that Frank is in love with herself but she does not love him, sees in Frank the future husband of Harriet. This speculation is only based on the event of Frank’s rescuing Harriet from gypsies. As Harriet confesses her love for someone “superior” without mentioning a name, Emma matches these words with the thoughts in her mind. Frank becomes her second candidate for Harriet:

‘Oh! Miss Woodhouse, believe me, I have not the presumption to suppose – indeed I am not so mad.- But it is a pleasure to me to admire him at a distance - and to think of his infinite superiority to all the rest of the world, with gratitude, wonder, and veneration, which are so proper, in me especially.’

(*Emma*, p.257)

At this point Jane Austen arouses curiosity on the part of the readers by suppressing the name of the person that Harriet is in love with. Harriet gives some clues about the person she is in love with, that this person “rendered a kind of service” but whether this is the scene in which Frank saved her from gypsies or

when Mr. Knightley saved her from an embarrassing situation by dancing with her at the party, the readers can not decide. Jane Austen arouses curiosity and keeps the readers on the watch to learn the truth:

‘Service! Oh, it was such an inexpressible obligation!- the very recollection of it, and all that I felt at the time - and my wretchedness before. Such a change !In one moment such a change! From perfect misery to perfect happiness!’

(Emma,p.258)

As a consequence, in the final phase of the action and this time without Emma’s intervention, Harriet discovers in Mr. Knightley her future husband.

As John Odmark suggests: “at this stage of the story, Harriet no longer needs encouragement, for she has come to accept much of the argument which underlies Emma’s conviction that Harriet is destined to marry well” (Odmark,26).

He further suggests: “this development comes as more of a shock to Emma than anything she has previously experienced, and it forces her to re- examine her own feelings and to reconsider much of what she has thought or done in the past” (Odmark,27).

Only when Harriet tells Emma that she loves Mr. Knightley does Emma come to recognise her own feelings for him. And once again she has to accept her role in misleading Harriet and has to cope with the consequences of her misjudgment which is this time caused by Harriet’s secret love.

Poor Harriet! to be a second time the dupe of her misconceptions and flattery. Mr.Knightley had spoken prophetically, when he once said,

‘Emma you have been no friend to Harriet Smith.’ She was afraid she had done her nothing but disservice.

(Emma, p.304)

In the novel, apart from Emma’s misreadings of Harriet and of Mr.Elton and the other misunderstandings mentioned, there is the mystery of the secretly engaged couple Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. Frank Churchill misleads not only Emma but also every other character in the novel by keeping their engagement a secret. Still there are some clues to follow for the active reader to understand what really is happening. Davies makes the following observation:

The strategy to tease the reader into thought in the Elton sequence and the main Frank Churchill – Jane Fairfax mystery is essentially the same. Both involve one or more initial hints or cautions, followed by playful obfuscation, ambiguity and artfully placed false clues.

(Davies, 83)

So there are some clues for us to follow, for instance: Jane Fairfax arrives before Frank and also Frank comes to Highbury for the first time after her arrival. The reader’s impulse to accept Emma’s speculations about her is immediately moderated by the narrator’s comment on her “decided superiority both in beauty and acquirements”(p.124). However the section ends with a caution to the reader: “With regard to her not accompanying them (the Dixons) to Ireland, her account contained nothing but truth, though there might have been some truths not told” (p.125).

Furthermore the reader is provided with another hint when Frank evades Emma’s question about how well he had known Jane at Weymouth, and tries to conceal the evasion: Emma says to Frank, “Upon my word! you answer as discreetly as she could do herself. But her account of everything leaves so much to be guessed -

(p.151). As Davies suggests, “the difference between guessing and judging is impressed upon the reader”(Davies, 83). Likewise Emma is also forced to make a judgment about Jane, who is extremely reserved and leaves everything about herself to be guessed. Emma, with Frank’s manipulations, indulges in a good deal of speculation about Jane and Mr.Dixon with whom she thinks Jane is in love.

Emma misunderstands Frank and also Jane because Frank lies to her. As Tara Ghoshal Wallace suggests: “Emma’s error regarding Jane Fairfax’s secret can be attributed in part to Frank’s mischievous manipulations, but it also originates in Emma’s desire to understand mysterious behavior” (Wallace,85). Jane’s sudden and odd decision to come to Highbury, her “smile of secret delight” in connection with the piano and her insistence on fetching her own letters all indicate, as Emma rightly guesses, a guilty secret. The arrival of a pianoforte as a gift for Jane further leads Emma to think that Jane Fairfax might have a relation with Mr. Dixon. Apart from Emma’s readiness to make such speculations Frank’s role in encouraging such speculations is not difficult to perceive. In the following scene although Frank knows that Emma is mistaken, to hide his own secret that he himself sent the piano, he encourages Emma to think that it might have been sent by Mr. Dixon;

‘ - Why do you smile?

Nay, why do you?

Me!- I suppose I smile for at pleasure at Colonel Campbell’s being so rich and so liberal.- It is a handsome present.

....

You may say what you chuse - but your countenance testifies that your thoughts on this subject are very like mine.’

....

What do you say to Mrs Dixon?

Mrs.Dixon! very true, indeed.I had not thought of Mrs. Dixon. She must know as well as her father, how acceptable an instrument would be, and

perhaps the mode of it, the mystery, the surprize, is more like a woman's scheme than an elderly man's. It is Mrs. Dixon, I dare say. I told that your suspicions would guide mine.'

(Emma, p.163)

In this conversation between Emma and Frank, Frank seems to be in agreement with Emma's suppositions but in reality his remarks neither reflect what he is actually thinking nor show how he will act. But for the moment the reader is hardly in a better position than Emma to perceive this. His response raises questions which for the time being remain unanswered. He appears a little too ready to encourage Emma in her speculations, but the reader is left to guess what might lie behind his attitude. So it becomes a game of speculation in which the winner is Frank for the time being. Frank's inattentiveness to Jane and in contrast his attentions to Emma, supported by Mr. Weston's hopes for such a match create one of the chief obstacles to anyone - reader or character- guessing the true state of the affairs..

Another misleading clue is Mr.Knightley's extreme regard for Jane. It is in fact a very false clue, but rendered probable by Mrs. Weston's speculations which for a certain time keep Emma's mind busy. Most important of all Emma's false speculations are caused by Frank's attentions as if he were in love with her. She thinks "He is very much in love - every thing denotes it - very much in love indeed!" *(Emma, p.199)*.

Apart from these false clues, dispersed through the novel there are also cautionary notes for the readers. For instance, Frank causes great curiosity when he reveals that he knows that Mr. Perry has intentions of buying a carriage. Mr.Weston and Miss Bates deny having informed Frank about it. Frank who got the information

from Jane, from one of her letters, tries to relate it to a dream which is far from convincing anybody. This little secret is revealed only when the big secret that is the secret engagement between Frank and Jane is revealed. In the meanwhile it remains as a question mark in the minds of the readers. Furthermore, when they are playing a game Frank makes up the word 'blunder' and shows it to Jane which makes her blush. This information which is shared with the reader as well, only makes Mr. Knightley and the alert reader suspect the real motives behind Frank's actions.

About the issue of secrets, Davies suggests: "these points of congruence raise the question of whether Jane Austen consciously thought of Emma, as a sort of extended charade, designed to strengthen young readers' power of judgment" (Davies, 81). He further claims that: "It is a game in which the charade on courtship, the entire Elton episode and the main Jane-Frank Churchill mystery are related rather like a set of Chinese boxes, each confronting the reader with successively more complex puzzles" (Davies, 81).

This is why Mr. Knightley suspected Frank of using "a child's game chosen to conceal a deeper game" (*Emma*, p.263).

In *Emma* one hidden engagement plays an important role in the understanding of the plot, but in *Sense and Sensibility* both Elinor and Marianne throughout a large portion of the novel suffer from their lovers' deceptions, and secrets kept by the characters. Their indirect behavior gives way to many misunderstandings. Almost everyone conceals something and the characters in the

novel and the readers as well try to close these gaps by correlating words and actions.

Furthermore, in *Sense and Sensibility* the organization of the plot and the means employed to render character suggest that the author shares Elinor's understanding of propriety and its implications. Her values are presented as if they are also the narrator's. Therefore in part most of the conflicts in the novel arise from external circumstances over which they have little or no control.

Isobel Armstrong comments that:

Because the text is so rigorously concerned with the unknowableness of other people and the unpredictability of events, refusing the fantasy of identification and certainty, the novel is organised round the epistemology of scepticism through its narrative structure. Repeatedly encounters occur where misprison and incomplete knowledge often on the part of several people dictate behavior. Sometimes the reader knows this only after the episode is over, sometimes the comedy enables only the reader to know what is really the case. This playing with perception and at revealing and concealing knowledge makes the reader's position as judge.

(Armstrong, 110).

To summarise the concealments, Willoughby deceives Marianne about his character and entanglements, and Edward hides his engagement with Lucy from Elinor, and his family. Lucy joins him in her part of that concealment and Elinor learns from Lucy of her engagement to Edward, she hides her knowledge from Marianne her mother and others. She also hides from Edward what she learns from Lucy in conversations with her. Willoughby hides from Marianne his affair with Eliza Williams, his reason for leaving for London, and his engagement to Miss. Grey.

All these secrets cause ambiguity and the result of this ambiguity is that everyone is forced to act indirectly, and this tests our judgment and understanding of the characters and the events. The first major problem of judgment is over Marianne's possible engagement to Willoughby. Mrs. Dashwood is certain that Marianne and Willoughby have become privately engaged; Elinor believes that there is no evidence for this. Willoughby's mysteriously sudden departure provokes these speculations. Mrs. Dashwood argues that the couple behave as if engaged. Elinor reminds her mother that, "not a syllable has been said of an engagement", but Mrs. Dashwood replies, "I have not wanted syllables where actions have spoken so plainly" (*S&S*, p.75).

In time, as Marianne becomes increasingly anxious and distressed, Elinor believes that a clarification of the situation would enable them to help her. Her point is that without knowing the facts of the situation no one knows how to act. Mrs. Dashwood, overconcerned about intruding on Marianne's privacy, refuses to ask her about the truth of the matters. Elinor's judgment turns out to be right in the case of the engagement of Marianne and Willoughby. The fact that they have never been engaged comes out only towards the middle of the novel. People need to act indirectly till that revelation. When we think of Edward and Lucy's relationship, Lucy's secret engagement to Edward is supported by evidence; Lucy offers Elinor a picture, a letter, and an explanation for the hair in Edward's ring. Consequently Elinor, who is also in love with Edward, assures herself of the necessity of concealing her non-engagement from her mother and Marianne, ending up in the same position as her sister. So both sisters end up concealing a non-engagement and mislead others, causing many misunderstandings.

This indirect way of behavior, ensures that certainty of knowledge about others is never straightforward. However this does not prevent people from speculating about one another directly. In fact they need to make speculations about each other. Marianne wonders at the coldness of the last adieus of Edward and Elinor, and Elinor reciprocally wonders about her sister's engagement. This will to understand others and events is explained by Isobel Armstrong in this way:

The Humean desire (and it is a desire however sceptically conceived) for consistency, coherence and recurrence, rather like Freud's account of the death wish for repetition, is what drives people to the will to order. And the will to order is what drives people to misprison. Misprison is an inverted form of deception, so to speak.

(Armstrong, 110)

An example of misprison, double misunderstanding, is Edward's exclamation when Mrs. Dashwood tells him that they are moving to Devonshire:

Edward turned hastily towards her, on hearing this, and, in a voice of surprise and concern, which required no explanation to her, repeated, 'Devonshire! Are you, indeed going there ? So far from hence! and to what part of it? She explained the situation. It was within four miles northward of Exeter.

(S&S, p.26)

Mrs. Dashwood and Elinor believe that he is distressed because Elinor is going far away, in reality he is disturbed because they are getting so near to his secret. His enquiry about the part of Devonshire they intend to settle in is not motivated by the sense of loss as Elinor and the readers tend to think: they might after all be going to the very place where Lucy Steele, his secret fiancée, lives. At this point neither Elinor nor the reader is in a position to know the facts.

Another instance of double understanding occurs when Willoughby says his farewell at the cottage: “I will not torment myself any longer by remaining among friends whose society it is impossible for me now to enjoy” (*S&S*,p.72).

According to Armstrong, this ‘impossible’ has a greater weight for him than for the Dashwoods. He means that he can never see them again because he must find a rich woman to marry. But the unsuspecting Dashwoods think he has been compelled to go by the authority of Mrs Smith. He is saying goodbye forever but they do not suspect this. Neither the Dashwoods nor the readers can learn that this is the case until much later.

The two grand instances of multiple misprison, misunderstanding concerning more than one character, in the text are the meeting between Elinor, Lucy, Edward and Marianne, and Mrs. Jennings’s mistake about Elinor’s marriage.

At Mrs. Jennings’s house, when Edward enters the room where Elinor and Lucy are sitting all of them are surprised. Edward does not know that Elinor knows of his engagement to Lucy. In this case Edward thinks he has a secret to hide from Elinor. Elinor and Lucy have a secret to hide from Edward, that is Elinor’s knowledge of the engagement. The most uncomfortable, difficult situation awaits Elinor who has to keep her love for Edward as a secret and must also not reveal that she knows about Lucy. When Marianne is fetched by Elinor, we witness that Marianne is in a more complicated situation. She behaves like a ‘sister’ anticipating Edward’s marriage to Elinor. She gazes in delight at Elinor and Edward only regretting that “their delight at seeing each other should be checked by Lucy’s

unwelcome presence” (S&S, p.218). She even whispers to Edward that, “Lucy can not stay long” (p.220). So Marianne not knowing of the secret engagement between Lucy and Edward or of Elinor’s knowledge of it, simply fails to make sense of the real events. At this point the reader knows the complexity of the situation which Edward and Marianne do not know. The reader has some kind of control over the text.

Another misprison occurs when Mrs.Jennings hears Colonel Brandon offering Edward the Delaford living via Elinor, and she thinks that he is proposing marriage. Isobel Armstrong suggests, “The desire for the match is co-extensive with that hermeneutic matching of words and actions which forces Mrs. Jennings to consistent conclusions ever more inconsistent with the facts” (Armstrong, 114).

The words of the couple by the window, “I am afraid it can not take place very soon”, “- sure, he need not wait to be older”, “I shall always think myself very much obliged to you”, are in fact related to the subject of Edward’s marriage to Lucy. Mrs. Jennings fits this speech into another form, her own interpretation of the fact and thinks that the Colonel is proposing to Elinor.

As this plot – wise analysis of the two novels points out, the structure of the novels require penetration, alertness on the part of the characters and the readers in order to be in control of the understanding of the novels. It is the complexity of evaluating events that makes the reader’s position as judge, who need to interpret and reinterpret as the novels proceed. In this way Jane Austen creates her ideal reader who is receptive and able to follow the hints or clues either false or true but all

help them arrive at certain conclusions. Consequently secrets apart from their social implications or structural functions, appear to be a structuring device to keep the reader's imagination busy.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This study has aimed to analyse the techniques used by Jane Austen to control the understanding of her readers. In order to show the importance of the use of point of view, irony and withholding of information in controlling the readers' understanding, the novels *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma* have been analysed. The analysis of the two novels revealed that even though these devices are sometimes used in different ways, they are employed with the same goal, that is to tease the readers into thinking, and to create active readers who reach their conclusions with the guidance of the structure of the text.

Having analysed the point of view, authorial intervention, the use of irony, and withholding of information, it is concluded that in both of the novels these devices set out the standards regarded as necessary for judging events and characters and that Austen is completely in control of her fictional world. This control, achieved by her skillful use of these techniques, brought us to recognition of the importance of the techniques to establish the interaction between reader and text. This can also be supported with Iser's views that the structure of a text has the biggest role in establishing the interaction between reader and the text. This kind of reading, that is reaching conclusions with the guidance of the text demand alert readers whose role can be explained by Iser's concept 'implied reader'. Thus, the reader's role is prestructured by the text. Iser's views about gaps and blanks that occur in the text,

with the author's or characters' not revealing certain fictional facts or events are found to be relevant to this study, as these devices spur the readers' imagination and get them involved in the text. As certain fictional facts are kept secret, many misunderstandings occur, and both readers and characters feel puzzled. On the other hand, there are hints either false or true dispersed through the novel for the attentive reader to follow in reaching conclusions when judging events and characters. Therefore, Iser's views about gaps and blanks, support my stand-point in writing this thesis as he considers the interaction between a text's structure and its recipient central to the reading of every literary work.

Austen's handling of point of view in these two novels is important in the sense that it conditions how we view the events and characters, leads and guides us to think in a particular way. In *Emma*, Austen uses a deficient heroine as the center of consciousness, but we are warned from the very beginning not to trust her too much, in *Sense & Sensibility*, Elinor's inner world is made public, and from the beginning we know that Austen is in favour of her and we trust her and make our judgements accordingly. The introduction of the characters is also important in displaying the author's attitude towards these characters. For this reason we accept Mr. Knightley as our guide, or we criticise Mr. Dashwood for his selfish material concerns. Apart from the introduction of these characters, authorial interventions, verbal signals like *indeed*, *however*, and sometimes direct addresses to the reader make us feel the presence of the author manipulating her readers, and establishing a pact.

Irony is another means widely used by Austen to force her readers into thinking by offering different points of view or contradictory opinions. The discrepancy between seeming and being, especially on the part of the characters and the discrepancy between their words and actions create many ironical situations. In *Emma*, the contrast between Emma's observations and reality constitute the basis of irony, however, in *Sense & Sensibility* irony is never directed at Elinor, whose opinions coincide with those of the narrator's, and is therefore trustworthy. In both of the novels the characters' preoccupations with money and marriage are handled ironically; we are invited to laugh at characters who over-estimate money and those who see marriage as a bargain for economic transaction.

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