Cultural and Arts Studies, 2026, Volume 2, Issue 3
https://www.bbwpublisher.com/journal/CAS
Online ISSN: 3083-3949
Print ISSN: 3083-3957

On Jane Austen and Her Work

Fulian Hao

Shanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Jinzhong 030619, Shanxi, China

Copyright: © 2026 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: Jane Austen lived a short life, wrote only six complete novels, two of which were published after her death. However, her six novels won her permanent honor. Today, we can still see the images in films and dramas that were created from her works. In these novels, the life of the gentry, landowners, and clergy at the end of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries is shown in detail. All of Jane Austen's works show a recognizable standard of values. Jane Austen's interest revolved around people---their eccentricities, appearances and dialogues. From them, she created the characters that give her novels universal and lasting appeal, of course, in most cases, using her peculiar writing skill---irony.

Keywords: Jane Austen; Work; Irony

Online publication: June 30, 2026

1. Jane Austen herself

Jane Austen (1775-1817) is one of the most famous novelists in England in the 18th century. She never married, lived her life without going out, and had little education, but she was very interested in the literature of her time. As a supreme prose stylist, Austen has secured a lasting place in English literature. She lived all of her life in the English countryside, a setting she uses in each of her novels. She wrote only six long novels in her life and several fragments, including her most famous Pride and Prejudice -- filled with reality, Northanger Abbey -- called a Gothic novel, Sense and Sensibility, Emma -- her favorite one, Persuasion, and Mansfield Park [1-2].

Austen has a talent for describing the involvements, feelings, and characters of ordinary life. Austen's concept of narrative perspective is unique and innovative. Her realm is comedy, and her sense of the comedic in human nature informs her technique, which is superb for its description of character, control of point of view, and ironic tone [3].

2. Jane Austen's work

Austen's novels are peopled with characters of her own social class: the ladies and gentlemen of the landed

gentry. The plot of her novels revolves around the intricacies of courtship and marriage between members of this class. The scenes and occasions she described are deliberated carefully. She gives us true-to-life characters by using her writing skill, and in addition to her critics with little harsh and clever dialogues, her novels are magnificent.

2.1. Popularity of Jane Austen's work

Miss Austen's power of interesting us in the commonplace is not confined to the characters she has introduced into her stories, but extends also to the stories themselves. In general, Miss Austen looks at "her characters" from one perspective: irony. There are no adventures in her books, no abstract ideas, no romantic reveries, no death scenes. Nor does she give much space to the impressions of the scenes. But irony is an intellectual thing, a critical comment on life. She surveys her creatures with separated irony [4].

Austen, as a female writer, full of kindness, humanity, and belief in religion, uses humor to reflect the ladies'frustration, prejudice, and misunderstanding they encounter during their lives. But the results are all good, in one word, "One good turn deserves another". Austen gives her ladies a happy end after they have striven for a long time [5].

Austen's dealing with the theme reflects her contradiction and characteristics as a writer, going beyond the century that not only affirms sensibility, but also tells us sense, not only finds the contradiction, but displays the superior and inferior, the common and different, not only plays a joke on it, but expects to be happy. Therefore, Austen plays an important part in the history of English literature in which realism converted into romanticism.

2.2 Setting of Jane Austen's work

Jane Austen lived in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the Industrial Revolution in England in the second half of the 18th century, the French Revolution of 1789-1794, and the ensuing Napoleonic Wars had a strong impact upon England's economic, political, and literary scenes in the first few decades of the 19th century. During this period, there appeared some writers who were called Enlightenists, and it was the beginning of self-conscious literature [6].

Following the Enlightenment and its impact on literature, there was a period of literature in Western Europe generally known as the Romantic Movement. It was not until this period that romanticism as a literary movement in England reached its full flowering. Such poets and writers as Byron, Shelley, Keats, Walter Scott, and Jane Austen expressed a more or less negative attitude toward the different social classes of the time and the existing social and political conditions [7].

3. About Jane Austen's theory of "irony"

The plots and scenes in Austen's works are described in minute detail with her painstaking care. She gives us many faces with vivid accounts and irony, so as her contemporaries pointed out: her works are unique and beautiful. No novelists ever had a better right to use irony than Miss Austen. She was easily and brilliantly superior to everyone whom she scorned in that aspect of the novel which she sought to ridicule and which was in her day the most vulnerable, namely, technique.

3.1. "Irony" itself

Irony is a broad term referring to the recognition of a reality different from the masking appearance. ' Irony'is likely to be confused with 'sarcasm', but it differs from 'sarcasm' in that it is usually lighter, less harsh in its wording, though its effects are probably more cutting because of its indirectness. 'Irony'is the expression of one's meaning by saying something which is the direct opposite to one's thoughts, in order to make one's remarks forceful [8].

3.2. Examples of irony in Jane Austen's work

Emma is a good case in point in which the Theory is reflected vividly.

3.2.1. Irony 1

Emma is an arranger, a manager of other people's affairs. She exhibits the strong need to dominate, the offhand cruelty, the protective playfulness, the malice of Jane Austen, the candid Jane Austen of the letters -- in which miscarriage is a joke: Mrs. Hall, of Sherborne, was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright, I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband. Death equally amusing: Only think if Mrs. Holder's being dead! Poor woman, she has done the only thing in the world she could do to make one cease to abuse her [9].

3.2.2. Irony 2

Emma falls into every conceivable mistake and misjudgment. The simple irony of Emma's flirtation with Frank Churchill rises, of course, from the fact that Churchill is in love with someone else and uses Emma as a decoy. More than this, however, Churchill uses Emma so successfully only because he knows her so well. Emma is a perfect decoy for a man in love with someone else. She enjoys and invites admiration, but will draw away from any sign of serious attachment [10].

The irony here of Emma is multiple, and its ultimate aspect is that there is no happy ending, no easy balance, if we care to project confirmed exploiters like Emma and Churchill into the future of their marriages. Emma and Frank Churchill's society, which makes so much of surface, guarantees the triumph of surface [11-13].

4. The End

I am pressing this matter of the method of scene and the method of irony not only because it is through this method that the significance of the architectural structure of the work is brought home to us, but because it reveals an important fact about Jane Austen's relation to her audience, then and now, and because, unless we understand this relation, we cannot see as much as we should see in that thematic structure. Jane Austen was in an ambiguous situation in relation to her readers, a situation in which she was committed simultaneously to cherish and abominate her world.

Funding

The 14th Five-Year Plan of Educational Science in Shanxi Province, A Study on the New Path of Information-based Blended College English Pronunciation Teaching from the Perspective of POA (Project No: GH-220204); Teaching Reform and Innovation Project in Shanxi Province, The Influence of Chinese Dialects

on English Pronunciation in College English Teaching Based on Production-Oriented Approach (Project No: J2023934); Key Project of Party Building Research Program in 2024, Shanxi University of Chinese Medicine: Research on Effective Paths for Party Building to Guide Cultural Confidence in University "Double Leaders" Teacher Party Branch Secretary Studios (Project No: 202407); Party Building Research Program in 2026, Shanxi University of Chinese Medicine: Paths and Mechanisms for High-Quality Guidance of College English Talent Cultivation: From the Perspective of Integrating Party Building and Institutional Development in the School of International Education (Project No: DJKT2026-84); Party Building Research Program in 2026, Shanxi University of Chinese Medicine: Research on the Construction and Function-Play Mechanism of the "Double Leaders" Party Branch Secretary Studio (Project No: DJKT2026-85)

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Chen J, 1986, A History of English Literature, Volume 3. The Commercial Press, 210–236.

[2] Holman CH, 1972, A Handbook to Literature, 3rd Edition. The Odyssey Press, 398–412.

[3] Anon, 1985, Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism, Volume 19. Gale Research Company, 78–96.

[4] Babb H, 1962, Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue. Ohio State University Press.

[5] Demarest DP Jr, et al., 1965, "Reductio Ad Absurdum": Jane Austen's Art of Satiric Qualification. In: Six Satirists. Carnegie Institute of Technology.

[6] Witalec J, 1984, Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism, Volume 13. Gale Research Company, 124–141.

[7] Mudrick M, 1952, Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery. Princeton University Press.

[8] Anon, 1992, Light Bright and Sparkling: Irony and Fiction in Pride and Prejudice. Twayne Publishers, 33–49.

[9] Hayes EN, 1949, Emma, A Dissenting Opinion. Nineteenth-Century Fiction. Copyright renewed © 1976, The Regents of the University of California.

[10] Wang LP, 2023, Irony Art in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. Journal of Heihe University, 14(6): 123–125.

[11] Lu Y, 2022, The "Postmodern" as a Reflective Structure: On the "Openness" and the Idea of Creative Interpretation in Ulysses and The Name of the Rose. Literary Review, (6): 156–164.

[12] Cong ZY, 2022, The Sentimentality and Irony of Comedy: Reading Liu Zhenyun's One Day Three Autumns. Southern Cultural Forum, (3): 92–100.

[13] Tang YH, 2022, Irony of the Sublime or the Beautiful: A Discussion Centered on Rorty. Fujian Tribune (Humanities & Social Sciences Edition), (4): 78–86.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.