

Final Avg = 85

Final Grade = B

Style in Jane Austen's Emma

Albert M. Bender
English 658
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"1. While they talked, they were advancing towards the carriage; it was ready; and, before she could speak again, he had handed her in. 2. He had misinterpreted the feelings which had kept her face averted, and her tongue motionless. 3. They were combined only of anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern. 4. She had not been able to speak; and, on entering the carriage, sunk back for a moment overcome—then reproaching herself for having taken no leave, making no acknowledgement, parting in apparent sullenness, she looked out with voice and hand eager to show a difference; but it was just too late. 5. He had turned away, and the horses were in motion. 6. She continued to look back, but in vain; and soon, with what appeared unusual speed, they were half way down the hill, and everything left far behind. 7. She was vexed beyond what could have been expressed—almost beyond what she could conceal. 8. Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. 9. She was most forcibly struck. 10. The truth of his representation there was no denying. 11. She felt it at her heart. 12. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates!—13. How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued! 14. And now suffer him to leave her without saying one word of gratitude, of concurrence, of common kindness!

Sub

Complex

Special time

Simple ①

②

③

①

③

②

①

Complex

①

②

③

7 Periodic

①

②

③

1. Time did not compose her. 2. As she reflected more, she seemed but to feel it more. 3. She never had been so depressed. 4. Happily it was not necessary to speak. 5. There was only Harriet, who seemed not in spirits herself, fagged, and very willing to be silent; and Emma felt the tears running down her cheeks almost all the way home, without being at any trouble to check them, extraordinary as they were."¹ -Volume III, Chapter VII

¹Jane Austen, Emma (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), pp. 257-58. Any subsequent reference to the novel is from this edition.

By 1816 (the year Emma was published), the English novel, for all of its faults, had survived about a hundred years of development and growth, both in popularity and as an art form. This ~~text~~ ^{increasing} sophistication can be observed from many critical standpoints; among them, most certainly, is style. It is, therefore, the intention of this essay to show, using the selected passage, the organic structuring and coherency found in the sentences and words of Jane Austen. Although the significance of the particular excerpt will be made clear, the prime focus will be the internal workings of the two paragraphs; that is, how the rhetoric microcosmically mirrors and echoes the entire novel.

Tight,
effective
introductory
Paragraph.

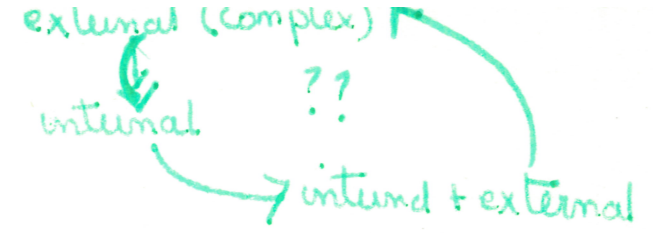
Dramatically, the scene chosen for analysis is pivotal. Occurring at approximately the middle of the third and final volume, it focuses on Emma just after Mr. Knightley (George) has scolded her for insulting Miss Bates. It is here where Emma's love for Knightley, well camouflaged by Austen to this point, begins to surface and finally explodes into reality when Harriet professes her love for Knightley and claims that he, in turn, loves her. Emma, faced with the possibility of losing George and the bitter fact that it was she (Emma) who had "counselled" Harriet out of an earlier marriage to Robert Martin, is forced to become aware of her love for Knightley. The passage, then, depicts the ~~happenings~~ ^{events} leading to the climax of the novel.

Structurally, the two paragraphs are similarly significant. In general terms, they contain a total of nineteen sentences, eleven of which are simple, four ~~being~~ compound complex, three ~~which are~~ complex, and one compound. The words, totalling 305, range in distribution ^{Per sentence} from a low of five (occurring once in each paragraph)

✓ to highs of fifty-one and forty three, a rather pronounced deviation from the overall average of sixteen. The grammatical tension in the sentences also varies although, basically, it can be observed that most (all but two) are either right or mid-branching and, accordingly, of low or moderate tension. Because of this distribution of sentence structuring, the style can be described as plain, as opposed to grand, since most of the action, ^{awk.} such that is expressed in the chosen scene, is found in the independent clauses.

✓ More specifically, however, the transition of the sentences creates contrasts and tensions of its own. Sentences 1-3 gradually descend in degree of complexity, going from compound-complex to simple, and number of words, from twenty-three to twelve. One can perceive Austen's control of cause-and-effect action here since the first sentence states the only real action of either paragraph; that is, the conversing, walking to the carriage, and entering the vehicle. What follows is the immediate shift to Emma's thoughts to show how the event (the outside) affects the mind (the inside).

Then, sentence four enters and seemingly undercuts this theory. The fifty-one words, juxtaposed with the twelve immediately



preceding, would seem anomalous to the pattern observed. However, another event (the sitting down and sinking back into the carriage), although not one of any great action, nevertheless occurs. To convey another outside event and the immediate psychological response does not then seem so out of place in the scheme of sentences found here.

This contention can be buttressed by looking at the next sentence. Immediately, Austen shifts to a brief (ten words) statement of two more outside happenings, thus creating a tension with the elaborations found in her previous sentence. The shift occurs twice (from sentence 5 to 6 and 6 to 7) again, showing an increase from ten to twenty-eight words and then a drop to fifteen.

The most significant pattern, however, can be seen at this point, or, that is, the very center of the paragraph. All of the remaining seven sentences are simple and average only eleven words each. It is also in this group that the shortest (five words) sentence (#9) of the paragraph exists. The great disparity of sentence type and length is certainly no accident. Austen, again the technician, creates a tension vital to the understanding of the novel. Knightley has left, and Emma, though Harriet is with her in the carriage, now knows the loneliness and emptiness of isolation. The sentences echo Emma's heartache (suggested in #11), depression (found in another extremely short, simple sentence from the second paragraph), and, as previously mentioned in this essay's overview, her sudden awareness of just how important

Knightley is to her life. Austen continues to reveal Emma's state

Did she shift from relatively simple matters (Harriet) to simple sentence with additional implications then? Does the shift have additional implications then?

Emma. Constantly complicating what are before her. Unintentionally simple.

the level of complexity and the relation of simplicity and complexity on Emma. Don't you also have talked about the relation of the pattern of external to internal to a rhythm of external and internal following a rhythm of external and internal.

typical of the novel. On all levels?

moving on again to a rhythm of external and internal.

the fact isn't the combination of internal and external.

external (complex) ??

internal

intended + external

of mind in the second paragraph which, although composed mainly (three out of five) of brief, simple sentences, ends with another shift to a longer (forty-three words), compound-complex sentence which, in turn, shifts to the physical again. Emma, as the passage ends, is unable to control the tears from her eyes or the pain in her heart. Thus, the constant fluctuation from the real to the psychological, as manifested in the sentences of Jane Austen, serves to crystalize the picture of a young woman about to shine her light inward and discover, by a sudden thrust rather than a nudge, her own conceit egotism and ignorance.

Sentences, of course, are made up of words, and it therefore is necessary to discuss the diction Jane Austen employs as an additional stylistic chord which serves to strengthen the harmony already observed in the selected passage. In the first sentence, one immediately sees the verb "were advancing" as having a dual meaning. Ostensibly, it refers to Knightley and Emma approaching the carriage. Symbolically, however, they both were "advancing" in their journey to self-awareness; hence, the ultimate intention of the novel. The metaphor is repeated, although reversed, in sentence four when Emma, abashed for having been scolded by Knightley, "sunk back for a moment....," thus suggesting that a forward journey often (especially for Emma after whom the book is titled) takes a few backward steps.

What is the significance of the typographical devices such as the dash on style?

good

* Al, doesn't the juxtaposition of these groups with the numerous words - 5 - (nouns, adverbs, prepositions) related to time and space become important here also?

Austen pays similar attention to verbs throughout the entire passage. She uses participial compounds ("reproaching", "making", "parting") in sentence four to achieve a balance occurring once again in sentence eight ("agitated", "mortified", "grieved"). In contrast, however, Austen provides antithesis which she embeds in sentence six and ends the lengthy sentence four. Since the ratio of coordinating ("and") to contrasting ("but") conjunctions is eleven to three, it is obvious that Austen is emphasizing parallelism to compound the anxieties Emma feels at this crucial point in the story. She (Austen) uses a preponderance of "being" and passive voice verbs, again, to suggest a lack of action or, in a larger sense, a lack of spirit (Harriet, too, is here described as "...not in spirits herself, fagged, and very willing to be silent..."), especially since Emma's despondent frame of mind is the central focus of this passage.

* All is there in any significance in Austen's consistent use of these in her parallel phrases? It is so persistent (see numbers in passage) that it hardly seems accidental.

There are, (however, ^{appropriate?}) two sentences and two individual words which guide the reader to an understanding of the novel. Sentence nine states that "She was most forcibly struck" and sentence eleven resounds "She felt it at her heart." Emma's armor has finally been penetrated; she is now aware of her own vulnerability. Having undergone an extremely gradual conversion

Do they also suggest the possibility that Emma has not yet advanced beyond "awful" (is merely passive acceptance of responsibility for her behavior?)

of finally "seeing the light," Emma is now forced to unmask. Austen uses two words- "conceal" and "exposed" -indeed not accidentally. At this point the reader is as aware as Emma that the truth is now the ultimate reality. He can feel like a border in The Woodhouse home, an observer who sees a story which has been told before, but can marvel at Jane Austen who, like Emma, "supplied her visitors in a much more satisfactory style."

(B)

- A!, I think you have set the limits or boundaries of your analysis rather narrowly. I am most disappointed with your failure to examine dictum in greater depth and detail. See numerous questions posed on page 5.

- A!, don't you also necessitate some discussion of "Tone"?

- Thus, you seem most competent in the more skilled - perhaps, more less and less skilled - perhaps, more less intellectual style. A!, this is analysis of the more conceptual aspects of style. That one is always trapped but not necessarily by stylistic aspects of the analysis. That one must be aware of the potential problem

Bibliography

Austen, Jane. Emma. New York: W. W. Norton, 1972.

to show the importance of
these groups with the numerous words
related (emotive, descriptive) related
to them and some because important
words are!

if I have a question
I will be glad to answer it
if I can't answer it I will
refer you to the appropriate
person or department.

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And work to avoid
Stylistic analysis can
be able to transcend
the limits of the
Strictly technical.

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What would be the repetition of words to speak of Jane Austen's cultural significance? The words "I am in a habit of saying" are used in the passage. The words "I am in a habit of saying" are used in the passage. The words "I am in a habit of saying" are used in the passage.

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