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## THE TRIPLE DIALOG BETWEEN EMMA, THE NARRATOR AND THE READER

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### Introduction:

The main issue of this paper is to analyze the great meeting of voices presented in the novel *Emma* by Jane Austen. Through the narrator the essence of the novel is shown, because it is capable to blow some feelings, such as the graciousness, the wittiness and wiseness so that the reader is reported to another reality, the one from the novel, starting to think and reflect upon its own reality. So, we can infer that there is a dialog between the narrator, who also confuses itself with the character, Emma, and the reader, causing a second dialog between reader's reality and the novel's reality.

In this way, we can also release that Austen brought the free indirect style to her novel, as Dorrit Cohn (1984) says: *for rendering a character's thoughts in his own idioms while maintaining the third-person reference and the basic tense of narration (100)*, it is shown that in the novel we could find a relation between the external and the internal of the character, conveying a triple dialog towards the narrator, the character and the reader throughout the narrative.

### Historical Context: Austen's perspective regarding women

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By reading Jane Austen, specially Emma, it was possible to see that the daily life is a microcosms from the English society at the end of the 18th century, in which was characterized by its tension, great changes in economy, politics and culture. Concerning this scenery, we can present some themes Jane Austen worked on her novels, such as the marriage as an institution and the relationship between men and women.

Considering this context, we can say that the novel worked as a mechanism for releasing these thoughts that consisted English society at that period.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is possible to infer that not only was the novel considered as a representative model of the society, but also a mean that created some values, like the view of the woman's role in society at that period.

According to Vasconcelos (1995, 89), the feminism role in the novels at that time was a *cultural and social construction, not being the natural existence inner to the woman*. In other words, *the novels were tools used to construct social interests more than the lenses that reflect them*.<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion, women were part of a society in which they were considered dependents and not able to apply for any job because of the economic situation, so the only thing they could do was dedicate their lives to a husband. In agreement with Christofer Hill (1958), women didn't have any participation in society rather than their sex.<sup>4</sup>

## The narrator

Before being in contact with Emma's narrator, it is quite relevant for us to understand what the narrator is and what their types are consisted of. Based on

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<sup>2</sup> O romance, como no século anterior, continuou a funcionar como um mecanismo de divulgação desses pensamentos, como manuais de instrução para a promoção da virtude necessária as leitoras. Ademais, os autores deveriam se adequar aos gostos públicos para que conseguissem que o romance adquirisse status de literatura. (Carla Alexandra Ferreira, 2008, 59)

<sup>3</sup> Os romances foram instrumentos que contribuem para constituir interesses sociais mais do que as lentes que os refletem. Citação de Eagleton, Terry (1985, 4) em Vasconcelos (1995, 1)

<sup>4</sup> As mulheres que não herdavam riqueza não restavam nenhum bem negociável a não ser seu sexo, que poderiam comercializar ou no mercado aberto do casamento, como Pamela lhes havia ensinado, ou no mercado negro como Roxana de Moll Flanders. Citação de Hill (118) em Vasconcelos (1995, 3)

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Pen's studies on the narrator, we present the types of the narrator as being in the *first person*, in this case the character tells a story; in the *secondary character*, where the story is told by someone inner to the plot; the narrator as an *observer*, and finally, the *omniscient* one, in which this narrator knows everything about the plot, but hardly expresses its opinion.

So, the third type of narrator can present arguments from its silent view of the world brought from the deep inside of a character. In order to present the tone of irony in Emma's text, it is important that we comprehend the fact that there is an ambiguity that guides the character's voice and the narrator's voice, so that the reader gets disguised throughout the plot. In fact, this mechanism was called as the free indirect discourse, in which Austen was the first British author to use it extensively.

By "free" indirect discourse we can understand *that the narrator has delegated a certain authority and equality to the character and has deliberately repressed overt makers of its control.* (Mezei, 1996, 67). Through this theory, it is shown that the character is getting free from the narrator's controlling voice. So, through free indirect discourse the reader is likely to insert its opinion in order to comprehend the plot's meaning.

In conclusion, the free indirect discourse was a resource used by Jane Austen in order to permit a dialog between the narrator and the character, and consequently, this dialog would be extended to the readers. As Bakhtin explained:

*According to Bakhtin, the free indirect discourse is a zone where a dialogue is played out between the author and his character" (p. 320)<sup>5</sup>.*

From the narrator's perspective, we can infer that in our object of study, *Emma* is intended to blow the narrator's feelings into reader's society by using a female voice as a way of defense because women could not say what they thought in public, so

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<sup>5</sup> Em Kathy Mezei, 1996.

Austen used irony to deceive female's voice in society in order for them to be expressed.

## Literature Review

### The narrator in Austen's novel

As far as we are concerned, the author, the text and the reader cannot be comprehended alone, as they work in a interaction of voices, in which the text is the link between the author and the reader. The narrator in *Emma* is considered omniscient, which is illustrated by Emma's personality throughout the plot, because she does not change, the values and the themes are the same from the beginning till the end of the novel, as well as the fact that the narrator has nothing to learn with the narrative.

Furthermore, the dialog that is implicit in the text can be readily perceived when it comes to a deep analysis of the character's speech and the narrator's in order to achieve reader's intellect, making them reflect upon their own values in society through looking back on Austen's society. In other words, we can infer that this narrator can represent Austen's society, in which nowadays readers can be lead to that time.

As a matter of fact, we can see a perspective of mixed voices in *Emma*, by a quotation by Austen about the novel: *I'm going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like it.* (Austen - Leigh, 157), which shows that it is possible to exist a bit of Austen's personality in Emma's character, drawing our attention to the dialog between the author's voice and the character's voice.

According to Watt(1957) in Finch and Bowen (1990, p. 546) , the narrator in *Emma* not only gives the *editorial comment* of the social, omniscient author, but also *much of Defoe's and Richardson's psychological closeness to the subjective world of the characters.* So, through the social relation between the characters we can understand their personality, which provides a link with the narrator and the character.

It is quite relevant to understand the fact of subjectiveness of the characters because through their way of representing society it is possible for us to examine the ambiguity existing in Emma's text. In fact, this ambiguity in-between the character and the narrator can be considered the main cause for the irony in the text.

In conclusion, when we talk about the point of view in Austen's novel, it is rather important that we look back on that society in order to contextualize the character and narrator's expression, according to Margaret Kirkham (1983, 246), when she says that the view of the world was expressed by women's point of view in Emma. So, by this fact we can understand that women at that time were not active in society, but they were sort of starting to appear, and as they first shine in society, they might be blamed for their behavior.

## **Analysis**

In order to comprehend a kind of disguised voices in *Emma*, we are going to present some short quotations from the novel in which we can feel this mixture of voices and points of view according to the context of English society at the end of the 18th century.

We can see the narrator's opinion towards Emma in her first description:

*Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the Best blessings of existence... (Emma, p. 5)*

Within this excerpt it is possible to feel that this opinion comes from a community or someone who had observed her, in which we do not know whether the narrator was part of it or not, but she sure represents that, as mentioned by Finch and Bowen that the narrator acts like a gossip that spreads the opinion of certain citizens about others, and that what the text is about, one's view of society towards the others.

On the other hand, we can see Emma's point of view throughout her description about Harriet:

*Her height was pretty, just such as almost every body would think tall, and nobody could think very tall; her figure particularly graceful; her size a most becoming medium, between fat and thin, though a slight appearance of ill-health seemed to point out the likeliest evil of the two.*“(Emma, 125).

In this description it is possible for us to feel the presence of irony, because Emma uses adverbs, such as *particularly*, that can lead the readers to believe that Harriet was really like Emma was describing. However, what we ought to keep in mind is that Emma was kind of trying to convince the readers about Harriet's personality, based on Emma's point of view.

Still concerning Emma's speech, it is possible to infer that character's opinion is not only a private opinion, but also an input for readers to reflect about what society was, conveying the triple dialog that is inner to this novel, the character, the narrator and the reader.

In this way, through these excerpts, it is possible for us to see that Austen uses the free indirect discourse, as she set a subject to be discussed by the character, in this case, the description about Harriet, but it also characterizes an impending confusion between character's speech and narrator's speech.

When Emma talks about Harriet, what the former would do to the latter in order to make her part of that society, she is presenting a voice that can be confused for the narrator's, as it was a representation of English society and its values. In this way, we can infer that the reader is free to comprehend Emma's speech according to its context and background knowledge. In other words, the reader gets the information from the text and reproduces it according to its view of the world, being influenced or not by the narrator's or character's voice.

## Conclusion

Through the analysis of Austen's novel and the theories that based our thoughts we can infer that, in spite of the narrator being omniscient it cannot be considered as it because it does interfere in the novel, causing a confusion in which the reader can mix the narrator's speech with the character's speech, and this is conducted by free indirect discourse, the main issue that characterizes the narrator in Emma.

Another point that could be raised here as a conclusion is the fact that Emma is written in such a subtle way that it becomes much harder to identify whether it is the narrator or it is Emma, and maybe it could have been on purpose because women should have had the right to express their feelings, as well as being active in society, but at that time it was considered an uncommon behavior for women. Since they started to appear in society, Emma's narrator could be considered a mean of expressing women's idea at that time, based on irony and ambiguity.

So, according to these facts it is relevant to express that this dialog between Emma's voice and the narrator's could be also a reflection, as well as a representation of Austen's world and thoughts at her time.

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