The Domestic Fiction vs. Women's Culture in *Pride and Prejudice*

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In this essay, I intend to analyze Austen's adaptation of domestic novel conventions in *Pride and Prejudice* (*PP*) in the context of middle class ideology.

Paul De Man says : "... ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism" (11). That is, ideology is a kind of mystification. It gives us an impression that a fiction constructed by language represents the truth as it is.

In Austen's times, middle class society held a strong belief that men and women had entirely different characteristics and capacities (Hill 10). The didactic authors of conduct books and domestic novels explained away such a belief by mystifying the difference between gender as a social construct with sex as the biological fact. For those who thus accepted the sexually discriminating marriage system, woman's place was in the home.

However, in *Pride and Prejudice* (*PP*), Austen seems to make this ideological mystification impossible. She reveals a division between a constructed image of the domestic woman and lived experiences of middle class women.

First of all, I will focus on Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (*Strictures*) (1799) and enunciate the middle class ideology in respect to gender politics. Secondly, I will compare *PP* with another domestic novel, Fanny Burney's *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress* (*Cecilia*) (1782). From this comparison, it will become clear that *PP* is characterized by duplicity. Thirdly, I will consider that the duplicity is partly derived from a form of discourse specific to women's culture in Austen's times, and that self-reflexivity of the heroine's character and the authorial voice epitomizes tension between dominant ideology and a critical voice.

I

Reymond Williams points out that "knowable communities" of Jane Austen are "very precisely selective" (203). Certainly, Austen admitted that she could write only "pictures of domestic life in country villages" (*Letters* 452).

The restriction of perspective seems to be a self-conscious device to follow conventions of a genre called the "domestic novel" rather than a sign of her narrow experiences.

Domestic novels were produced as a vehicle for female moral education. It was, as it were, the "conduct book in fictional form" (N. Armstrong 108). In its didactic formula, "a heroine's errors are incessantly pointed out to be corrected" (Doody xxxiii). And in the end, female spiritual growth is rewarded with a happy marriage. The marriage, as it were, works as an "index of social status, financial security, and moral virtue" (Spacks 116). It is a story of how a maternal figure can be constructed, and should be preserved. From these conventions, we might say that the domestic novel is a kind of bildungsroman which implicitly tells a story derived from middle class gender politics.

In short, the middle class politics was to supplant aristocratic hegemony not by usurping exclusive power, but by constructing an alternative system

(Davidoff and Hall 13-35 ; N. Armstrong 59-95). A crucial method for this was classifying social spheres according to gender. As for this, Davidoff and Hall say, "claims for middle-class recognition were refracted through a gendered lens" (30). To put it clearly, they separated public and private, business and domestic areas into male and female spheres. While male meritocracy accumulating capital in the marketplace, female domesticity assumed responsibility for keeping a moral order. In this way, the middle class gradually decentered the aristocrats' monopoly of the social system.

However, in a framework of middle class values, the domestic sphere was a private realm paradoxically oriented to the public because it was presupposed to show a model of the whole society. This political function of the domestic sphere is explained clearly in More's *Strictures* :

> . . . the very frame and being of societies, whether great or small, public or private, is jointed and glued together by dependence. Those attachments, which arise from, and are compacted by, a sense of mutual wants, mutual affection, mutual benefit, and mutual obligation, are the cement which secure the union of the family as well as of the state. (2 : 178)

Here, we also find that reciprocity is regarded as the basis of both social and family relations. A concept of the "companionate marriage" has an strong effect on emphasis on the word, "mutual." Along with the rise of the middle class, a nature of conjugal relationship changed, and stress came to be laid upon companionship between husband and wife rather than an ambition for increased income or status. Besides, a place of family also changed its meaning : what had been an emblem of public status and fortune was transformed into a private realm secured from the world of competition (Stone 217-24). That is, the domestic sphere showed the public the companionate marriage as the ideal of human relationship.

In the domestic sphere, the woman was assigned roles of educating her children, comforting her husband, and superintending the household. In brief, surveillance of a family was established as proper labor for middle class women. They were supposed to contribute to a moral social reform through their indirect power of "influence"[1] within the domestic sphere, instead of direct participation in society.

This is a distinct feature of the concept of woman in this age. In contrast with a traditional misogynic view that woman was a sexually corrupt being or, at most, an "object of display" (Armstrong 77), the middle class cast light on the constructive nature of woman's mind.

This also explains why the middle class was devoted to a female educational reform : they needed an alternative system of education in order to construct domestic femininity because the aristocratic system of female education intended not to enlighten mind as to morals but to polish superficial manners (Stone 229-230).

The proponents of domestic ideology noticed the press industry cultivated a new readership among middle class women, and published a variety of domestic novels as well as conduct books.[2] More's *Strictures* is situated in such a social context.

More insists on woman's potential as a moral agent, or, God's instrument. She calls upon women to "raise the depressed tone of public morals, and to awaken the drowsy spirit of religious principle" (1 : 4).

However, while promoting a female educational reform, More is critical to the movement for women's rights on the other hand. This is proved by the fact that she detested Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) :

> . . . *the rights of woman.* It follows. . . that the next influx of that irradiation. . . will illuminate the world with grave descants on *the rights*

> *of youth*, on *the rights of the children*, on *the rights of babies* ! (1 : 147)

Such conservatism is endemic to the whole middle class politics. In spite of its "invention of depth in the self" (N. Armstrong 76) in woman's mind, the middle class inherited a legally unequal principle of the conjugal relationship. William Blackstone comments on "coverture," a term which defined the married woman's legal status in common law :

> . . . the very being or the legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband : under whose wing, protection and *cover*, she performs everything. (442)

From here, it is clear that the middle class gender politics is not a radical one which questions a traditional sexual double standard. On the contrary, it even reinforces patriarchy from within by beautifying a figure of the depraved woman. In the domestic sphere, woman's individuality is not recovered but dissolved and reorganized in domestic roles of "daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families" (More 1 : 107).

We might call the middle class gender politics "domestic ideology" in that it arbitrarily confuses these domestic roles imposed on women with their innate identity.

In a sense, *PP* is obviously a product of the ideology, for undeniably it contains the narrative structure catering to demand for a domestic woman. It centers on young women's domestic life and seemingly sets a pattern of bildungsroman (I. Armstrong vii) : a heroine's prejudice is corrected and in the end, she is rewarded with a happy marriage to a wealthy young man. So far as the matter of form, we can even say that *PP* is a prototype of domestic novels.

But actually, the relation between the novel and generic conventions is ambivalent. For example, as for Elizabeth Bennet, Mary Russell Mitford, a contemporary reader of *PP* testified her unconventionality :

> . . . it is impossible not to feel in every line of *Pride and Prejudice*, in every word of "Elizabeth," the entire want of taste which could produce so pert, so worldly a heroine as the beloved of such a man as Darcy. (qtd. in Southam 54)[3]

That is, it seems that Austen employed duplicity in *PP*. She was self-conscious about her being an author of domestic novels, and within that conventional frame, created the heroine who deviated from norms of femininity.

I would like to demonstrate this duplicity by comparing *PP* with Burney's *Cecilia*.

II

"Pride and Prejudice" is a phrase quoted from *Cecilia*. In the denouement of the novel, Dr. Lyster says :

> "The whole of this unfortunate business," said Dr. Lyster, "has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE. . . . Yet this, however, remember ; if to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their termination. . . ." (930)

In *Cecilia*, pride means family pride, and prejudice is, as it were, false opinion resulting from that family pride.

Family pride, which is concerned with inherited social status, belongs to aristocratic values, a crucial target of middle class criticism. That is, from a viewpoint of class hegemony, *Cecilia* is a novel obviously receiving middle class values.

Burney attacks family pride throughout the novel : it poses an obstacle on the affectionate relationship of Cecilia, Mortimer and Mrs. Delvile, and causes misunderstanding among those who could love one another without it. What is more, pride is regarded as immoral in the novel :

> Slaves that we all are to habits, and dupes to appearances, jealous guardians of our pride, to which our comfort is sacrificed, and even our virtue made subservient, what conviction can be offered by reason, to notions that exist but by prejudice ? (564)

Entered in aristocratic society, Cecilia works as a corrective to both family pride and extravagance. She is called a "model of virtue" (868) endowed with "*propriety of mind*" (425). She explains the moral of domesticity to Mrs. Harrel who leads a frivolous life . Thus, the heroine exercises power of influence like the conduct book authors.

Certainly, Cecilia's efforts are so often in vain rather than rewarded. And her self-regulation is continually exploited by those who are morally degraded. Because of their selfishness, Cecilia is deprived of her fortune, estate, even her name, all of which she is to inherit from her uncle. Her self-sacrifice finally drives her mad. Frustrating tone in the end reveals irony exerted by the narrative structure :

> The upright mind of Cecilia, her purity, her virtue, and the moderation of her wishes, gave to her in the warm affection of Lady Delvile, and the unremitting fondness of Mortimer, all the happiness human life seems

> capable of receiving — yet human it was, and as such imperfect ! (941)

Here we notice domestic bliss brought by Cecilia is subtly thwarted by a realistic remark, "yet human it was, and as such imperfect !"

However, realistic irony in *Cecilia* after all functions as rhetoric to achieve the plausibility in the didactic narrative. That is, Burney's realism strengthens the morality of domestic ideology by internalizing it in the heroine's mind and making it struggle with harsh social reality.

Jan Fergus points out that one of the notable features of the novel is the "conflict between feeling and judgement" (68). In Burney's language, "feeling" and "judgement" are translated into "passions" and "reason" respectively. In fact, this "reason" is nothing but internalized didacticism of domestic novel, while "passions" are Cecilia's affection for Delvile emanating spontaneously from her mind. That is, in this novel, the heroine's passions, or, sexuality is restrained by the institutional power of ideology, and what is more, it is disguised as the heroine's self-restriction. In order to beautify it, Burney wishes to show Cecilia's self-sacrifice as a kind of heroism :

> . . . as her passions were under the controul of her reason. . . she started at her danger the moment she perceived it. . . She denied herself the deluding satisfaction of dwelling upon the supposition of his worth. . . . (251)

In other words, female virtues, which are social constructs, are arbitrarily confused with the heroine's given attributes in the novel, and this confusion itself inevitably helps to make self-regulation seem natural.

In this sense, we can say that discourse of *Cecilia* is assimilated to that of domestic ideology. That is, the moral principle of domestic ideology works as "authoritative discourse" (Bakhtin 342), and defines the perspective of narrative exclusively.

However, Cecilia's letter to Mortimer involuntarily reveals that her self-regulation comes not from autonomous will but from an internalized institution. It is suggested by the word, an "inward monitor :" ". . . I have yielded to the exhortations of an inward monitor who is never to be neglected with impunity" (585). While depicting Cecilia's control of sexuality as depending on her own internal conscience, Burney suggests that sexuality is restrained by imposed consorship personified as the "inward monitor."

In this sense, the "inward monitor" is a symbolic phrase which tells us how shrewdly domestic ideology falsifies constructiveness of femininity : it provides the real woman with a frame which enables her to regard femininity as her innate identity.

III

What distinguishes *PP* from *Cecilia* is Austen's critical detachment from such a trick of domestic ideology. Unlike Burney, Austen brings about moral relativity in *PP*. Instead of permeating domestic ideology through the whole narrative, Austen accents the difference between domestic ideology and another system of values. This gap is articulated in various ways such as focusing on ridiculous insertion of morals, dialogues which relativize ideological discourse, use of materialistic language, and the characters who substitute roles of gender. Juxtaposed with another system of values, moral principles of domestic ideology are contested in a dialogic context in *PP*.

First, I will focus on ridiculous insertion of morals. Inserted in an obviously unsuitable context, morals of domestic ideology fall into the risible. For example, asked to read aloud to the Bennet daughters, Mr. Collins chooses James Fordyce :

> Other books were produced, and after some deliberation he chose Fordyce's Sermons. Lydia gaped as he opened the volume, and before he had, with very monotonous solemnity, read three pages, she interrupted him. . . . (68)

Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1765) was one of the best known conduct books in Austen's times (Hemlow 736). But as Lydia's reaction shows outspokenly, it is only a body of invalid maxims, or literally "threadbare morality" (60) for the Bennet daughters. In other words, it is no longer the "inward monitor" in this context.

Secondly, Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth exemplifies dialogues relativizing ideological discourse. Their attitudes toward the concept of companionate marriage are contrastive : while Mr. Collins supports it earnestly, Elizabeth's opinion is ambivalent. At least, in talking with him, she is rather skeptical about it. In the dialogic interaction with hers, his discourse is semantically changed.

Mr. Collins insists that his wife should be a "gentlewoman" with whom he could "set the example of matrimony in his parish" (105) ; she is also desired to be an "active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way" (106). In short, he derives an ideal of his wife from the image of a domestic woman described in conduct books.

Mr. Collins even confuses such an image with Elizabeth's actual disposition. His compliments on her character are filled with epithets for domestic virtues like "natural delicacy" (105), "modesty," and "economy" (107). Inevitably, following a convention of female prudence, he *mis*interprets Elizabeth's outright refusal as secret acceptance due to the "true delicacy of the female character" (108).

But Elizabeth's answer marks the discrepancy between the image of domestic woman and her own character. Elizabeth defines herself as : "'. . . I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time'" (107). Thus, she points to the implausibility of innate prudence of woman's by disbelieving in "such young ladies." The meaning of prudence is changed into "so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time."

Interestingly, Karen Newman says that in the eighteenth century, the term "prudence" was debased to mean "cunning or deceit making for the appearance of virtue" (202). Elizabeth not only implies such a meaning of "prudence" but also refrains from using the deceptive rhetoric for herself.

Thirdly, materialistic language also contributes to semantic changes of ideological discourse.

In *Cecilia* as well, language of money is used, but a material issue is regarded as incompatible with domestic bliss. Cecilia's habit of economy is, in a sense, a gesture to exclude money from the domestic sphere. Thus, by opposing money to the domestic sphere, Burney justifies the gendered distinction of the domestic/marketplace sphere.

On the other hand, Austen's extensive use of materialistic language gives the opposite effect : focusing on a marriage marketplace, it secularizes a sanctified image of the companionate marriage, and blurs the boundary of domesticity/marketplace.

The first sentence of the novel has money in it : "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (3). While summarizing the traditional plot of Cinderella theme in which a wealthy young man falls in love with a heroine, this statement violates it by implying that actually the love-plot is motivated by money. Besides, it works as irony in course of the novel because, in fact, it is a woman who needs to marry a wealthy man.

Throughout the novel, the practical marriage is related to implicit criticism of a male privilege about property. Mrs. Bennet outspokenly complains about inequity of the entail system : for her, the "nature of an entail" is "beyond the reach of reason" (62), and she rails bitterly against the "cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about" (62).

The problem of entail does not only reveal economic difficulties of women's. It also obscures conventional male/female roles, for actually the entail or primogeniture is an "institution that excluded not only daughters from property inheritance but younger sons. . ." (Brown 310). That is, power of property works over that of gender. Here, we find that the legal principle of entail implicitly exposes contradictions within a male-centered institution : on the one hand, the entail system establishes the oldest son as the legitimate inheritor of the patriarchal power ; on the other hand, younger sons gain downward mobility. This fact potentially undoes the vertical order of gender.

Colonel Fitzwilliam betrays that single women and younger sons share the same difficulty. This marginal character who has no necessary part in a plot seems to be created only for this purpose. "'A younger son,'" admits he, "'you know, must be inured to self-denial and dependence'" (183). Thus, having a male disadvantaged figure speak openly about female restrictions like "self-denial" and "dependence," Austen points out that the male/female distinction is so arbitrary that its relation with sexes could be crossed in a certain context.

The substitution of gender is more remarkable in an empowered female figure. In contrast with Colonel Fitzwilliam, Lady Catherine shows that women with class status and property can exert patriarchal power in spite of her sex (Brown 310). Indeed, in the novel, Lady Catherine is regarded as "a most active magistrate in her own parish" (169). The relation between Lady Catherine and toady Mr. Collins ridiculously parallels the one between Darcy and his obedient housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds. That is, Lady Catherine's pride suggests that powerful widows implicitly subvert the male-centered social system. Regardless of, or rather, because of their deviation from a norm of the married woman, they assume power which "naturally" belongs to the male.

Claudia L. Johnson observes that Austen deliberately rendered Lady Catherine a "weak and ridiculous female authority figure" (88) in order to resist male authority indirectly. However, what is devalued by Lady Catherine is not only male authority but also female power of "influence." Lady Catherine inquires into Charlotte's domestic concerns "familiarly and minutely" (163), and advises Elizabeth on education of her sisters. To borrow Elizabeth's depiction, Lady Catherine "loves to be of use" (381). However, unlike Cecilia, this busybody inverts an amiable image of the domestic woman as a reformer of society. That is, the target is not male authority but a more basic matter : transgression of the bounds of gendered value systems questions how intentionally fictional gender roles are confused with biological sexes.

Thus, duplicity featuring *PP* produces a dialogic effect which is absent in *Cecilia* : though both are based on the narrative structure of domestic novels, Austen shows us rhetoric of domestic ideology from a relativistic perspective.

IV

In fact, Austen's duplicity was also shared among middle-class women. In her recent study, *Jane Austen among Women* (1992), Deborah Kaplan found that what was striking about the women's letters was "their intermingling of affirmations and criticism of the feminine identity and roles constructed by domestic ideology" (7). She calls such an ambivalent attitude among middle class women "cultural duality," that is, duality specific to "women's culture."

Kaplan means by the word, "women's culture," women's activities and values constituted in their communities (4-6). Although middle class women were confined by domestic ideology into the "women's sphere," the arena of subordination, they constructed women's communities in it, where the male-centered values were questioned and sometimes inverted.

But in constructing their own communities, women were paradoxically bound to middle class culture which organized their sphere. Women replaced dominant value systems with their own ; yet on the other hand, they reinforced a gender distinction by stressing the boundary.

Mrs. Bennet shows us an example of this cultural duality. Her attitude toward the mercenary marriage is ambivalent. She desires both to complain about and to enjoy the benefits of the economically motivated marriage system.

Some critics think that Mrs. Bennet's ambivalent attitude suggests Austen's ultimate conformity to the male-centered marriage system. For example, Newman says, ". . . where the economic inequity of women's lot seems most unfair, Austen is deflecting criticism" (62). However, this evasion is not a problem of the author's cowardice, but the more general one concerning the complexity of middle class women who are both disadvantaged and privileged by that marriage system. Thus, drawing out a complicated voice of middle class women's, Austen reveals a nature of resistance which is paradoxically bound to the very system it opposes.

Such a complex interaction between domestic ideology and women's culture exemplifies Michel Foucault's concept that power and resistance are dependent on each other rather than mutually exclusive :

> Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. . . . [The] existence [of power relationships] depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance. . . . (95)

What Austen achieved in *PP* is to adapt cultural duality specific to middle class women, and to make it encounter the conventional narrative. She juxtaposed the narrative structure of domestic novels with a critical commentary voiced in women's culture. Because of this juxtaposition, the whole narrative became a "hybrid construction" (Bakhtin 304) of the domestic novel and women's culture.

V

That is, Austen neither privileges a female voice nor enforces dominant ideology. Instead, she foregrounds tension between them itself. In the following part, I will analyze how this tension is working in the authorial voice and Elizabeth's character.

The marriage between Jane and Bingley builds a normative vision of the companionate marriage, for Austen follows conventions of domestic novels in their characterization : Jane is endowed with propriety of mind and the least materialistic ; Bingley is both wealthy and amiable. Thus, their virtues deserve to be rewarded by the happy marriage.

However, Austen shies away from commenting on mutual affection between Jane and Bingley, and leaves it to Elizabeth :

> . . . in spite of his [Bingley] being a lover, Elizabeth really believed all his

> expectations of felicity, to be rationally founded, because they had for basis the excellent understanding, and super-excellent disposition of Jane, and a general similarity of feeling and taste between her and himself. (347- 48)

Austen's qualification, "in spite of his being a lover" is slightly discouraging Elizabeth's view of their mutual affection.

Besides, Austen portrays Jane and Bingley not as moral exemplars but as simple mediocrities. Jane and Bingley are compared with Elizabeth and Darcy respectively in *PP*, and their virtues come to seem flat and boring in the face of Elizabeth's and Darcy's complex dispositions. Elizabeth is half disgusted with Jane's candor : "'With *your* [Jane's] good sense, to be honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others !'" (14). Similarly, Darcy disdains Bingley's humility :

> "Nothing is more deceitful" said Darcy, "than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast." (48)

Thus, the moral goodness of Jane and Bingley is a sign of their simplicity as Mudrick says (104-07).

As her view of Jane's marriage implies, Elizabeth almost consistently sympathizes with a concept of companionate marriage. But at the same time, she does not believe in the plausibility of that ideal vision. In fact, she admires the companionate marriage as an almost impossible illusion.

Austen explains that Elizabeth's skepticism is rooted in her covert hatred for her family : "Had Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort" (236). Thus, she does not have a strong attachment to her own family, and is rather ashamed of it. She is even disappointed at the insensitive relation of her parents. Accordingly, she is forced to be skeptic about a vision of domestic bliss. As Nina Auerbach keenly finds out, "the most striking characteristic of the Bennet mĕnage" is "its nonexistence" (41).

That is, Elizabeth is not so much a leading exponent of the companionate marriage as a detached observer of it. Though not negating an affectionate relationship in the marriage, she is not simple enough to think mutual affection could compensate for her disillusionment.

Elizabeth's detachment is also found in her response to Wickham's inconstancy for his own interests : "Elizabeth, less clear-sighted perhaps in his case than in Charlotte's, did not quarrel with him [Wickham] for his wish of independence" (149–50). By condoning man's behavior for which she blames her female friend, Elizabeth seems to accept a sexual double standard silently. But at the same time, her own uncertainty indicated in "less clear-sighted perhaps" is undercutting her condoning. Thus, skepticism and conformity in a given marriage system is so mingling behind her detachment that the tension between them itself consists the essential part of her character.

Interestingly, Elizabeth behaves as a detached observer even in a situation she is involved in. In this sense, we might call her viewpoint "self-reflexive." For example, when she hears Darcy's insulting remarks, "She [Elizabeth] is tolerable ; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*" (12), she soon recovers from "no very cordial feelings towards him" (12), and puts the event in objective perspective, and tells it among her friends humorously.

> She told the story however with great spirit among her friends ; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous. (12)

Elizabeth's self-reflexivity enables her to eliminate prejudice aroused by any ideological discourse. Reading Darcy's letter, Elizabeth becomes aware of having been deluded by Wickham's story of Darcy :

> "— How humiliating is this discovery ! — Yet, how just a humiliation ! . . . . — Pleased with the preference of one [Wickham], and offended by the neglect of the other [Darcy],. . . I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself." (208)

Wickham's deceptive eloquence is "ideological" in the most general sense of the word, for he confuses intentionally a fictional image of Darcy with his actual character. Elizabeth feels humiliated here because she has been mystified by Wickham's ideological rhetoric rather than because Darcy's letter is full of indignities on her family. As the last sentence, "I never knew myself" suggests, she is attempting to transcend power of ideological discourse through self-awareness.

As the novel draws to a close, the narrator's summary comes to form most part of narrative, replacing dramatized dialogue. Here, Austen hastily follows the convention of end in which the protagonists' marriage becomes a metaphor of recovery of the conservative social order. Seemingly, this end is inconsistent with duplicity I have argued.

However, at the same time, Austen shows deliberately that she is imitating the conventional end of domestic novels :

> I wish I could say, for the sake of her [Mrs. Bennet's] family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children, produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable, well-informed woman for the rest of her life. . . . (385)

This commentary might be too trivial a symptom to demonstrate the narrator's self-reflexivity. But the sudden personification of the narrator as "I" disrupts a harmony achieved by the conventional plot of happily-ever-after-marriage. In this commentary, Austen diverts our attention from the ending plot itself to its fictionality. Besides, the reference, "I wish I could say" emphasizes conventional didacticism, and inevitably reduces its plausibility.

Thus, *PP* is critical of didactic messages of domestic novels but still depends on their conventions structurally. In other words, Austen reserves a value judgement on both domestic ideology inherent in the genre conventions and a critical voice from women's culture.

From these analyses, we may say that Austen applied a method of parody in *PP*.[4] "Parody is," Linda Hutcheon defines, ". . . repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6). *PP* follows the genre conventions of the domestic novel comprehensively, yet accents the border between the parodied genre and itself by drawing on women's voice with which the author was familiar.

The repetition with critical distance enables us to observe the limits of domestic ideology : it intends to identify the woman's self with imposed virtues while her lived experiences consist of internal interaction between sympathy and hostility toward the ideology. Parodic discourse in *PP* dramatizes the tension between dominant ideology and women's voice, and suggests that however shrewdly explained away, identical contradictions intrinsic to ideology could never be tamed.

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Notes

1 The first chapter of *Strictures* opens with a statement, "Among the talents for the application of which women of the higher class will be peculiarly accountable, there is one, the importance of which they can be scarcely rate too highly. This talent is influence" (1 : 1).

2 Joyce Hemlow says, ". . . the problem of the conduct of the young lady was investigated so throughly that the lifetime of Fanny Burney, or more accurately the years 1760-1820, which saw also the rise of the novel of manners might be called the age of courtesy books for women" (732).

3 Mary Russell Mitford, "To Sir William Elford," 20 Dec. 1814, *Life of Mary Russell Mitford*, ed. A. G. Liestrange (Philadelphia, 1974) 1 : 300.

4 Newman also mentions a possibility of parody in *PP* : "In Austen's novels, our conventional expectations are often met but at the same time undermined by self-consciousness and parody" (704).

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Synopsis

The Domestic Fiction vs. Women's Culture in *Pride and Prejudice*

By Urara Chiba

In this essay, I investigate the relation between *Pride and Prejudice* (*PP*) and generic conventions of the domestic novel. The domestic novel is a didactic narrative written for a female educational reform. Its rise is in alliance with the middle class ideology. By focusing on Austen's use of its generic conventions, I demonstrate her self-consciousness about a deception of the middle class ideology.

The middle class supplanted aristocratic hegemony by a gender-based value system. They separated the domestic sphere from the public one, and situated the former as a moral center of the whole society. They also insisted that women should contribute to a moral social reform indirectly through domestic surveillance. We can call this mystification of the engendered domestic sphere "domestic ideology."

However, while acknowledging the constructive nature of woman's mind, the middle class inherited a principle of "coverture" which defined unequal legal status of woman's in the marriage. That is, as Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* exemplifies, domestic ideology is a conservative one with a progressive disguise.

PP seems to be a prototype of domestic novels in a sense, for it depends on their generic conventions structurally. However, on the other hand, the novel consistently questions gender distinctions and keeps critical detachment from its own form. That is, *PP* is characterized by duplicity.

This duplicity becomes clear in comparison with Fanny Burney's *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress* (*Cecilia*). Both novels employ the domestic novel formula. However, while didacticism works as authoritative in *Cecilia*, it is contested in a dialogic context in *PP*.

In *Cecilia*, femininity as a social construct is internalized in the heroine's subject and restricts her passions as the "inward monitor." On the other hand, Austen's detachment from domestic ideology brings about moral relativity in *PP*.

Actually, duplicity characterizing *PP* is also observed in middle class women's discourse. That is, in *PP*, "cultural duality" specific to them is juxtaposed with the conventional narrative structure. The internal tension dramatizes a complex relationship between dominant ideology and women's critical voice. The two are not so much mutual exclusive as defining itself in terms of the other. Self-reflexivity of the authorial narrator and Elizabeth Bennet epitomizes this dialectics.

In conclusion, we may say that Austen applied a method of parody in *PP*. It is critical of didacticism intended by domestic ideology, but still depends on its conventions structurally. Through this repetition with critical distance, parodic discourse in *PP* suggests that the intrinsic flaw of ideological discourse can never be explained away.