Money and Desire in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice (1813)

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Katarina Strmić

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Table of Contents

Abstract

The thesis *Money and Desire in Jane Austen's* Pride and Prejudice *(1813)* analyses Jane Austen's portrayal of social class and gender roles, as well as their impact on the choice of marital partner for the characters in her novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The thesis examines these topics by situating the novel in the wider historical context of the time it was written in, exploring the importance of class, manners, gender, and marriage in the late 18th and early 19th century English society. The focus is on the ways in which Austen reflects these through the eight key characters whose marriages are the focal point of the novel, and the impact that their social position, gender roles and family background have on their marriage choices.

Key words: class, gender roles, Jane Austen, manners, marriage, *Pride and Prejudice*

Sažetak

U diplomskom radu *Money and Desire in Jane Austen's* Pride and Prejudice *(1813)* analizira se način na koji Jane Austen prikazuje društvene klase, rodne uloge, kao i njihov utjecaj na odabir bračnog partnera za likove njenog romana *Ponos i predrasude*. U diplomskom radu proučavaju se navedene teme smještanjem romana u širi povijesni kontekst vremena u kojem je napisan te sagledavanjem važnosti klasa, društveno prihvatljivog načina ponašanja i braka u engleskom društvu na kraju 18. i početka 19. stoljeća. Posebna pažnja je posvećena načinu na koji Jane Austen prikazuje navedene pojmove kroz osam ključnih likova čiji su brakovi u središtu radnje romana te na utjecaj koji društveni položaj, rodne uloge i obiteljska situacija imaju na njihove izbore bračnog partnera.

Ključne riječi: brak, društvene klase, Jane Austen, manire, *Ponos i predrasude*, rodne uloge

1. Introduction

The late 18th and early 19th century English society was affected by a shift in values and societal standards that changed the way people viewed class, marriage, and life in general. The changes that happened during Jane Austen's life (1775-1817) are depicted in her work, where she often criticised society, its values and norms, using irony and wit. In 1813 Jane Austen anonymously published her most well-known novel *Pride and Prejudice* in which she focused on the gentry, pseudo-gentry and upper class, following the women of the Bennet family and the main protagonist Elizabeth Bennet, in their pursuit of marriage and happiness. This thesis will analyse the roles that money and desire play in Jane Austen's depictions of class and gender in the characters of her 1813 novel *Pride and Prejudice*. First, the thesis will provide a historical context for the society of Austen's time, describing the attitudes towards class, manners, and gender alongside their impact on Jane Austen as portrayed in the novel. Then, the thesis will consider the role that marriage had in retaining one's social status and climbing the social ladder. The focus will be placed on the significance of gender roles in the context of marriage, as well as the importance of money in achieving one's goals, and its influence on life, choices and opportunities available to people in late 18th and early 19th century England. Finally, this thesis will examine how social class and gender expectations were reflected in the choice of marital partner for the characters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.*

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* revolves around the main protagonist Elizabeth Bennet and her family in their pursuit of an appropriate marital partner. Published during the early 19th century, the story reflects the English society of that time. It emphasises the importance of class, social position and money as well as the existing expectations put on men and women to marry accordingly. The story portrays the relationship between the aristocracy and gentry in their aspirations to climb the social ladder and retain a good social position. Using marriage as a means of achieving one's goal or as a form of expressing one's freedom, through the eight key characters of the novel Austen satirises the society of her time. With marital pursuit as the focal point, four pairs marry by the end of the novel. First to marry are Charlotte Lucas and William Collins, choosing to fulfil the set social expectations, they form a marriage of convenience. Next are Lydia Bennet and George Wickham whose marriage is hastily organised after their elopement in London, causing a great disturbance for the Bennet family. The third to marry are Jane Bennet and Charles

Bingley who reunite after being separated and sabotaged by other characters of the novel, primarily due to the difference in their social position. Finally, the last characters to marry are Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy whose relationship is posed as the main conflict of the novel. Having to realize their own pride and prejudices, the dynamic of the couple embodies the main themes of the novel.

2. Society of Austen's time

2.1.The Importance of Class

One important concept that underwent a significant change during the early 19th century in England was that of class, dividing people based on their social status, monetary income and parentage. To explain such society Neale (22) introduced a model reflecting its division into five classes. At the top was the upper class described as "aristocratic, landholding, authoritarian, exclusive" (Neale 23). According to Newman (25) it consisted of different landowners, dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, barons, knights and baronets, some of them enjoying the life of a gentleman even without the title. Immediately below was the middle class consisting of: "industrial and commercial property owners, senior military and professional men, aspiring to acceptance by the Upper Class" (Austen 23). However, it is important to mention here another sub-group connected to both the upper and the middle class– the *Gentry.* As Newman pointed out:

> Despite divergences in wealth and sometimes bitter political divisions, the aristocracy and gentry remained a coherent group, united by a common dependence on land as the basis for income and influence, by a style of living that revolved around estates and country houses, and by a shared assumption of authority (Newman 25).

Below gentry Neale (23) identifies the middling class, consisting of the people who opposed the ruling upper class such as the "petit bourgeois [sic], aspiring professional men, other literates, and artisans". This class he considered the most unstable one due to the consistent changes of people within the class itself, constantly losing its members and gaining new ones (Neale 24). The fourth in this scheme was the working class A, which included the "industrial proletariat in factory areas, workers in domestic industries, collectivist and non-deferential, and wanting government intervention to protect rather than liberate them" (Neale 23). The final and the lowest, according to Neale, was the Working class B which consisted of "agricultural labourers, other low-paid non-

factory urban labourers, domestic servants, urban poor, most working-class women whether from Working Class A or B households, deferential and dependent" (Neale 23). However, Neale (22) also noted that even his division, like all other class divisions, was incomplete because every class consisted of different sub-groups that operated on different terms.

Neale's schematic division can offer a generalised insight into the lives and rules of people belonging to each class, but the models remained too broad to show all intricacies of that society. However, that these divisions could exist and carry important implications within each stratum is visible in *Pride and Prejudice*, in which Jane Austen focused on the aristocracy and gentry of the early 19th century England, as the thesis will later show. These two classes were separated from one another, both financially and socially, but they still co-existed in the same community and built connections through activities organised by landowners and marriage seasons in London (Monaghan *Social Vision* 1-2). Nevertheless, the custom was to keep the relationships of those in the marriage market within the same class, perpetuating the class division. The aristocratic families possessed greater influence over the society due to their wealth and they were thus able to travel, afford vast properties, and get involved politically. On the other hand, the gentry possessed less power as landowners but were still economically strong and influential in their community. What they strived for was a wealthy lifestyle which was not always possible, and by trying to keep up with the aristocracy, their needs often surpassed their income (Spring 394). They were put in a position where, although wealthy, they were never a part of the aristocratic society.

Another important change that happened at the beginning of the 19th century was the appearance of, what Alan Everitt (Spring 396) calls, *pseudo-gentry*:

> they were not landowners in the same sense as the gentry and aristocracy were. They cannot be said to have owned landed estates. But they were gentry of a sort, primarily because they sought strenuously to be taken for gentry. They devoted their lives to acquiring the trappings of gentry status for themselves and especially their children (Spring 396).

These affluent members of the professional middle classes strived for the freedom that the gentry class offered and wanted to adopt different aspects of their everyday lives, but above all they wanted the financial stability that was implied (Spring 396). With class being one of the defining aspects of English society, the change that occurred was of great significance. Suddenly there was hope for those in the middle classes to gain wealth, but at the same time, the upper classes were

introduced to those who got wealthy by not just possessing land or family fortune. Still, despite the changes, social class remained one of the defining characteristics of English society, dividing people based on parentage and monetary gain.

The importance of class and the division it creates can be seen in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* which portrays men and women of the aristocracy, (pseudo) gentry. The Bennet sisters come from a gentry family, with a gentleman father and a middle-class mother. Their father supports the family financially by owning land, a property of two thousand pounds a year which allows him a position in the gentry and the title of a gentleman (Austen 19). However, their mother comes from a middle-class family: Mrs. Bennet's father was an attorney in Meryton whose business was succeeded by her sister's husband Mr. Philips; her other sibling, Mr. Gardiner, owns a trade business in London (Austen 19-20). This was perceived as an issue by the aristocracy in the novel who labelled the Bennet sisters' parentage unsatisfactory. For example, during his proposal to Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy expresses his opinion of her position and family background, placing himself socially above her: "Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?" (Austen 127). However, the Bennet sisters were still allowed to enjoy the upper-class society solely because of their father's position; his status of a gentleman outweighed their mother's dissatisfying background. On the other hand, Gardiner's and Phillips's professions provided their families with a stable, steady income, but they simultaneously divided them from the aristocracy.

Miss Charlotte Lucas comes from a pseudo-gentry family with previous good standing in the society. Namely, her father, Sir William Lucas, held a successful business and was later given a knighthood title which:

> had given him a disgust to his business and to his residence in a small market town; and quitting them both, he had removed with his family to a house about a mile from Meryton, denominated from that period Lucas Lodge (Austen 12).

Thus, despite him coming from a middle-class background, his family was introduced to the upper-class society through his title of a knight. Miss Lucas's family also consists of her mother Lady Lucas, who was described as "very good kind of woman, not too clever to be a valuable neighbour to Mrs. Bennet" (Austen 13), her sister Maria and her brothers. The Lucas family was previously

well-connected in their society, and with their father's age, those connections were weakening, which ultimately affected Charlotte Lucas's wish to find a good husband who would support her financially and offer a stable future.

Charles and Caroline Bingley, along with their married sister Louisa Hurst, come from a wealthy pseudo-gentry family with a background in trade and a generous yearly income: "They were of a respectable family in the north of England; a circumstance more deeply impressed on their memories than that their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade" (Austen 11). At the very beginning of the novel, Mr. Bingley was introduced as a wealthy and attractive bachelor arriving to Netherfield: "A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!" (Austen 3). His popularity was determined even before his formal introduction to the society because of his status and annual income. Moreover, class played an important role in determining society's opinion of Mr. Bingley. Ultimately, it was his charm, paired with a good social standing and large income, that allowed his actions to be justified easily. Namely, when Mr. Bingley suddenly left Netherfield, his relationship with Jane was questioned and the Bennet family was left to justify his sudden leave, while Jane remained heartbroken about the seeming misconception she had about their relationship. However, after his return to Netherfield and his engagement to Jane, Mr. Bingley was immediately welcomed by the family and all his previous actions were forgiven: "Why, he has four or five thousand a-year, and very likely more.' Then addressing her daughter, 'Oh! my dear, dear Jane, I am so happy!" (Austen 227). Mr. Bingley is a wealthy man as well as a charming and sociable person, which helped Jane's family put aside his abandonment and the pain he caused her.

Similarly, Caroline Bingley's good social standing and her position in the society are established through her social connections and her very sociable brother. Through those connections, she was introduced to Mr. Darcy, her love interest in the novel and a good friend of her brother. Her position allowed her to enjoy his company and form a familiarity with him and his family. However, Caroline's social position also gave her the power to be excused for her behaviour and her outbursts of jealousy, targeted primarily at Elizabeth and Jane. For example, she attempted to belittle and embarrass Elizabeth in front of Mr. Darcy suggesting her appearance and behaviour did not meet social standards: "How very ill Eliza Bennet looks this morning, Mr. Darcy,' she cried; 'I never in my life saw any one so much altered as she is since the winter. She is grown

so brown and coarse" (Austen 175). Here, her primary goal was to diminish Elizabeth's importance to Mr. Darcy using any method available. Still, her actions were not reprimanded but rather overlooked, showing the privilege that her social position gave her.

On the other hand, the Darcy siblings come from a wealthy family with a strong aristocratic background. Miss Georgiana Darcy and Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy's late father Mr. Darcy, their late mother Lady Anne Fitzwilliam Darcy and their aunt Lady Catherine de Bourgh all belong to the upper class. After their parents' death, Mr. Darcy was left with a great annual income and vast estates: "[by] the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year" (Austen 7). This ensured his good social standing and a stable future for him and his family, with the responsibility to care for his sister Miss Georgiana Darcy. Furthermore, belonging to the aristocratic upper class allowed Mr. Darcy to offer his opinion which was thus considered of great value and importance. This was crucial for his friend Mr. Bingley who relied on Darcy's advice on the development of his relationship with Jane. Mr. Darcy, who was already dissatisfied with the match due to her social position and family background, did not hesitate to analyse the situation and offer his opinion. In her conversation with Colonel Fitzwilliam, Elizabeth learns of Mr. Darcy's separating a friend from the woman he wished to marry. Assuming the people in question were Bingley and Jane, Elizabeth commented: "There were some very strong objections against the lady,' were Colonel Fitzwilliam's words, and these strong objections probably were, her having one uncle who was a country attorney, and another who was in business in London." (Austen 123). Both her assumption about the couple and the reasoning behind the separation were later confirmed by Mr. Darcy himself in his letter to Elizabeth. Moreover, Mr. Darcy knew that separating Bingley from Jane would hurt his friend but still expressed his belief of her indifference. However, in his letter to Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy claimed that her family background was not the only justification for his actions, but that he was also ignorant of Jane's affections:

> I was desirous of believing her indifferent is certain, — but I will venture to say that my investigations and decisions are not usually influenced by my hopes or fears. — I did not believe her to be indifferent because I wished it; — I believed it on impartial conviction, as truly as I wished it in reason (Austen 130).

Still, it was Jane's social position and family background that motivated him to get involved and advise against their marriage.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh also comes from a wealthy upper-class family with an aristocratic background. The stability of her future, and the future of her daughter Miss Anne de Bourgh was ensured by her late husband Sir Lewis de Bourgh who left her with a large estate and a generous annual income: "Her daughter, Miss de Bourgh, will have a very large fortune, and it is believed that she and her cousin will unite the two estates." (Austen 57). Throughout the novel, class plays an important role in Lady Catherine's relationship with other characters. First, her opinion is considered of high value, especially for Mr. Collins whose financial stability depends on her help and satisfaction. Consequently, he is consistent in her praise, wishing to promote her character:

> The subject elevated him to more than usual solemnity of manner, and with a most important aspect he protested that he had never in his life witnessed such behaviour in a person of rank—such affability and condescension, as he had himself experienced from Lady Catherine (Austen 45).

In his interactions with the society, Mr. Collins did not hesitate to use every opportunity to compliment his patroness and show his connection to a person of such status, hoping to elevate his own importance in their eyes. Namely, Mr. Collins comes from a family with a poor background with a father who was described as an uneducated and parsimonious man. Before his time in Hunsford, Mr. Collins never attempted to form any meaningful social connections, but after finishing his education he got ordained and landed the patronage of Lady Catherine who he now financially depends on: "A fortunate chance had recommended him to Lady Catherine de Bourgh when the living of Hunsford was vacant" (Austen 48). Consequently, because of her impact on his life, it was important for Mr. Collins to express the respect he feels towards Lady Catherine, as well as emphasize his connection to her, which often painted him as a strange and pompous person.

Further, Lady Catherine's role in the novel itself is as a perpetuator of the old values and old upper-class society. Namely, she was strictly against Elizabeth marrying Mr. Darcy and she believed the union would bring shame to him and his family. Because of this, she tried to discourage Elizabeth from marrying him, emphasising how inappropriate Elizabeth's background was for someone like Mr. Darcy who belongs to aristocracy. The setting she created for such conversation was a private one, ensuring the release from the social norms of polite speaking,

wanting to keep such matters a secret from the public (Allen 433). Furthermore, her motive for stopping the engagement also comes from her daughter's alleged engagement to Mr. Darcy: "Let me be rightly understood. This match, to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place. No, never. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter. Now what have you to say?" (Austen 232). With their marriage being arranged at birth, Lady Catherine remained convinced of her right to demand Mr. Darcy for her daughter despite him not showing any interest in pursuing Miss de Bourgh. However, as Johnson (354-355) argues, Lady Catherine received pushback from both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy who ignored and even openly defied her, dispelling her authority. Consequently, the reader is left questioning if Lady Catherine even had the authority to demand their separation and whether her actions were just a display of her own domineering character and outdated morals.

Finally, George Wickham comes from a middle-class family, his late father was an attorney who became a steward of the Darcy family. After his death, Mr. Wickham was left in the care of the late Mr. Darcy and later Mr. Darcy himself: "on George Wickham, who was his god-son, his kindness was therefore liberally bestowed. My father supported him at school, and afterwards at Cambridge;—most important assistance" (Austen 132). It was the Darcy family who provided for him and allowed him to pursue further education as well as a change of career. However, because of his selfish personality and abuse of their regard, George Wickham lost the support Mr. Darcy provided: "His resentment was in proportion to the distress of his circumstances—and he was doubtless as violent in his abuse of me to others, as in his reproaches to myself. After this period, every appearance of acquaintance was dropt" (Austen 133). Because of his own actions, Mr. Wickham was left to provide for himself and through his attempts to achieve financial success he entered the military and set his primary goal on finding a wealthy wife. Namely, for Mr. Wickham, class plays an important role as he wishes to be a part of the upper-class society. Thus, he aimed to establish himself in the community both financially and socially, wishing for a good position.

Taking everything into consideration, class plays an important role for the characters of *Pride and Prejudice*. Thus, it was important to introduce the key characters of the novel and their families, placing them in the context of a social hierarchy. The novel itself focuses on the aristocracy and gentry as well as their connections with one another, ultimately impacting their marriage prospects.

2.2. The Idea of Manners

With the social change that Britain went through during the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, there was one aspect of life that remained a priority for people belonging to gentry and aristocracy – manners. Even before Austen's time, manners were considered an important element in the life of a gentleman or a gentlewoman. According to Monaghan (*Social Vision 2*) Edmund Burke's "theory of manners" described the importance of social behaviour in building a community for the nation. With individuals focused on bettering themselves, their family, and their surroundings, the state could develop and grow; thus, the concept of a charitable and domestic gentleman was continuously perpetuated (Monaghan *Social Vision* 2). Throughout the 18th century, the idea that each individual had an important role in their community was developed: "By behaving politely, the individual was considered to be carrying out the single most important social function of demonstrating an awareness of, and an ability to serve, the needs of others" (Monaghan "Position of Women" 110). This approach to manners motivated individuals to better themselves, but to also influence others through accepted social behaviour, condemning everyone who strayed away from it, which ultimately benefited the state.

On the other hand, there was another important aspect of the concept of manners – the etiquette, or "politeness at its most superficial, a code of conduct that regulated social behaviour from the way to make a bow to the proper manner of holding a tea-cup." (Langford *British Politeness* 54). Often, an individual's ability to show good manners took priority over their role in society. This was especially important for women who had at their disposal a variety of carefully written conduct books teaching them how to display appropriate behaviour and appropriate manners (Monaghan "Position of Women" 110-111). According to Hemlow (732-733) conduct books directed members of the middle class who were slowly being introduced to the upper-class society, emphasizing the importance of manners and morals: "they helped to resolve uncertainties, and they reflected a preoccupation with manners, which, arising in part from these very insecurities, is widely marked as one of the characteristics of the age." (Hemlow 732).

With the importance of manners emphasized, one of the most significant places where they were put on display was the ballroom. Being in front of society, where the whole community gathered, drew the attention to the individual who was expected to show polite behaviour (Monaghan *Social Vision* 11-12). However, any deviation from the well-established norms of

conduct was strongly criticised by both one's society and the many writers of conduct books who would identify and list any and all missteps (Fergus 68). This put great pressure on those trying to appeal to the upper class, as well as the aristocrats who had to maintain their good social standing.

There is also a third meaning to the word manners, which implies "social customs as they reflected the character of distinct cultures." (Langford *British Politeness* 55). By this definition, manners were closely related to each individual and society. They reflected a person's social class, parentage, and education but also their priorities in life (Langford *Englishness* 8). For all English gentlemen of the late 18th-century society, this implied freedom and liberty in their everyday life. Because of that, one important part of the gentleman's life was the freedom of leisure. As Monaghan (*Social Vision* 2-3) points out: "it was considered unlikely that the individual could develop the level of disinterestedness necessary if he were to place the general welfare above his own". Thus, leisure was deemed necessary for every upper-class person and those who were not able to afford it could not be considered gentlemen. With that, manners and leisure were a defining characteristic of the English upper class. Being a gentleman or a gentlewoman was a sign of good parentage and good upbringing. Consequently, those who strived for a better life and social mobility had to incorporate and learn the rules of conduct, which was not always possible. People could not climb the social ladder if they did not possess the appropriate manners, or, in other cases, their manners were a clear sign of their (lower) class.

The importance of manners was evident in fiction as much as in everyday life and many novels of that time reflected the strict rules perpetuated by numerous conduct books. For fictional women, the social standards for appropriate manners were even stricter, as they were the ones presented as models for accepted behaviour (Fergus 70). Consequently, during the late 18th and early 19th century, there was an emergence of a new type of novel, derived from the public obsession with the displayed behaviour of young women – *the novel of manners* (Hemlow 732). According to Megee (198) such novels were centred around marriage, closely following the process of courtship for the characters whose social position and gender identity determined their role in the society. With that, the novel of manners related to: "the customs, conversation, and ways of thinking and valuing of the upper social class" (Abrams and Harpham 254). Thus, just like in everyday life, in fiction too the importance was given to the rules of conduct created by the aristocratic society and the novel of manners reflected the perpetuated standards.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, manners play an important role for many characters in determining their social position but also in forming of their opinion about others. Firstly, manners were important for Mr. Darcy and his position in the society, especially after coming to Netherfield where he was criticised for his behaviour. Namely, neither his reputation, his social position nor his annual income, were enough for him to justify his display of bad manners after he refused to dance with anyone at the ball: "His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and every body hoped that he would never come there again" (Austen 8). Here, Mr. Darcy refused to form any new acquaintances and made a public offence against Elizabeth, ultimately breaking the social rules which led to him being disliked by the society.

Secondly, manners were important for determining Mr. Dacy's opinion of others in the novel. Namely, his aristocratic background allowed him to create social connections with others of the same class and his circles were separated from those of the lower classes. This allowed him a sense of superiority which could be seen in his attitude towards Elizabeth's family, especially her mother. In his letter to Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy stated: "The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father" (Austen 130-131). During his interactions with Elizabeth's family, her mother displayed a lack of manners and Mr. Bennet mocked her for it, finding the situation she created entertaining, while all three of her sisters showed a lack of propriety. Mr. Darcy, together with everyone else at the ball, witnessed their behaviour and concluded that they were undeserving of his attention so that, when the opportunity arose, he did not hesitate to express his views or emphasise the problem of her social inferiority.

Throughout the novel, Mrs. Bennet is a character whose display of (a lack of) manners played the most important role in determining the Bennets' position in the society. She is often described as ill-mannered and inappropriate when interacting with the male characters, overexerting herself in her need to secure a husband for her daughters. Consequently, her actions made other characters feel shame, especially Elizabeth who was frequently left embarrassed by her mother's behaviour, trying to stop any further humiliation: "In vain did Elizabeth endeavour to check the rapidity of her mother's words, or persuade her to describe her felicity in a less audible whisper" (Austen 68). For other characters in the novel, Mrs. Bennet's actions confirmed her social position and divided

her from the upper class. Moreover, it was Mrs. Bennet's lack of manners that gave Caroline Bingley an opportunity to undermine both Elizabeth and Jane in the pursuit of their romantic partners:

> 'I hope,' said she, as they were walking together in the shrubbery the next day, 'you will give your mother-in-law a few hints, when this desirable event takes place, as to the advantage of holding her tongue; and if you can compass it, do cure the younger girls of running after the officers (Austen 36)

By mocking Mrs. Bennet, Caroline attempted to belittle and tarnish her reputation in the eyes of Mr. Darcy – a prominent member of the aristocracy.

Further, manners are also important for determining Mr. Bennet's social position. Namely, Mr. Bennet married a woman from a middle-class family who is shown displaying bad manners, but instead of criticising her conduct, Mr. Bennet often merely mocked it, finding entertainment in her behaviour: "To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement" (Austen 155). Consequently, as Sherry (618) states, because Mr. Bennet shows no respect for his wife, continuously putting her in situations that are embarrassing for her but entertaining to him, his own status is affected. He exposes his wife and daughters to the social scrutiny, not caring about his own position, which ultimately contributes to the ruin of his own family name. On the other hand, both Jane and Elizabeth are depicted as exceptions in their family due to their display of good manners. It was their good conduct, as well as their good looks, that recommended Elizabeth and Jane to the upper-class society and allowed them to create connections with Miss and Mrs. Bingley, as well as Mr. Darcy:

> But amidst your concern for the defects of your nearest relations, and your displeasure at this representation of them, let it give you consolation to consider that, to have conducted yourselves so as to avoid any share of the like censure, is praise no less generally bestowed on you and your eldest sister, than it is honourable to the sense and disposition of both (Austen 131).

In other words, their family background was treated like an unfortunate stain on their character which would otherwise be very pleasing.

In the novel, manners play a different role in establishing the character of the other Bennet sisters. Firstly, both Catherine and Lydia are shown as irresponsible young women focused on

pursuing military men. While Lydia constantly wishes to be the centre of attention and never hesitates to express her opinions, Catherine serves as her extension. Because of their young age and demanding personalities, both were described as inappropriate by those belonging to the upper class and their relationship with the militia was mocked. In her attack on Elizabeth's background, Caroline Bingley commented, alluding to her sisters: "Pray, Miss Eliza, are not the shire militia removed from Meryton? They must be a great loss to your family." (Austen 174). With that, for Lydia and Catherine, manners, behaviour and social relations were used to determine their place in the society, to be judged and evaluated by those of the higher rank.

On the other hand, for Mary Bennet manners have a different meaning. Namely, she is a perpetuator of good behaviour, putting into practice the conduct book and proper etiquette, but her love of attention and lack of self-awareness still qualify her behaviour as inappropriate by those belonging to the upper-class society. This is evident throughout the novel in the scenes where she never hesitates to exert herself. She wishes for the continuous attention of the crowd, even when she has to demand others to listen:

> [Elizabeth] had the mortification of seeing Mary, after very little entreaty, preparing to oblige the company. By many significant looks and silent entreaties, did she endeavour to prevent such a proof of complaisance,—but in vain; Mary would not understand them; such an opportunity of exhibiting was delightful to her, and she began her song (Austen 68-69)

Mary is absorbed with her own position and interest, pushing for what she thinks is right and would satisfy her own needs. In the novel, she is often found alone or reading a book, watching from the side and commenting on the other characters' development.

Finally, manners play an important role in the life of Mr. Collins whose future depends on the good opinion of his patroness Lady Catherine. He is described as overly polite and his attempts at flattery are often perceived as foolish and even mocked by other characters. For example, after his introduction to the Bennet family, Mr. Bennet says:

> May I ask whether these pleasing attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment, or are the result of previous study?' 'They arise chiefly from what is passing at the time, and though I sometimes amuse myself with suggesting and arranging such little elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions, I always wish to give them as unstudied an air as possible.' Mr. Bennet's expectations were fully answered. His cousin was as absurd as he had hoped (Austen 47)

With this, Mr. Collins creates an opposite effect from the one he desires. Namely, while he wishes to display good manners and promote himself to others, his attempts at doing so are unsuccessful, creating a certain contradiction in his character:

> "the respect which he felt for her high rank, and his veneration for her as his patroness, mingling with a very good opinion of himself, of his authority as a clergyman, and his rights as a rector, made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility" (Austen 48).

Consequently, his excessive praise of Lady Catherine and his attempted displays of politeness paint him as a conceited and self-absorbed man in the eyes of the other characters in the novel.

2.3.Gender expectations during the late 18th and early 19th Centuries

During the 19th century, men of aristocracy and gentry were responsible for their family's survival and prosperity. Their focus was on the material, providing the necessities for the family, their education, and development (Light and Gráinne 92). They were the heads of their household in a patriarchal society that focused only on their happiness and needs. Men enjoyed a type of freedom that no woman of that time could achieve. They often visited clubs and attended gatherings where different social connections were made through discussions and enjoyment of alcohol and cigarettes (Vickery *Closed Doors* 58-59). This allowed them to form social networks and friendships, but it also served as an escape from everyday life and their duties.

On the other hand, opportunities for genteel women and their intellectual development were severely limited. This lack of opportunity only reinforced the idea that women were not intellectual beings, and that any kind of academic development or learning was not suitable for them. Because of this, the education offered for women was poor and often focused on the conduct books, musical or artistic development: "Most governesses and academies for young ladies sought to avoid overtaxing the limited minds of their charges by substituting accomplishments such as piano-playing, drawing and dancing for intellectual pursuits" (Monaghan "Position of Women" 105-106). Middle-class women were directed towards developing a home and a family while simultaneously fulfilling their husband's needs. They had to manage their households, their children's education, and marry off their daughters while maintaining their social image through a display of good manners. The only other path they could choose was to teach others about manners and direct them toward the shared societal goal (Monaghan "Position of Women" 106, 111-112).

Moreover, women's behaviour was continuously observed and any deviation from the carefully written conduct books was labelled a display of ill-manners. Because of this, there were many behaviours that were considered undesirable in women, and one of them was coquetry. Women were instructed not to accept compliments and to be aware of their impact on the other person (Fergus 69). Further undesirable traits according to the conduct books were vanity and infatuation. They were often attributed to women alongside their perceived vulnerability as an indicator of ill manners. Vanity was reserved for those in the middle class, perpetuating the idea that: "middle-class women [were] vain because they [could not] afford to be proud" (Fraiman 365). Not only were the women not allowed to display affection, but it was instructed that a woman should never develop feelings first; instead that should be a man's task. This was not applied in everyday life often, instead the true feelings were continuously concealed from the public eye (Fergus 69-70). Another characteristic that was ascribed to every woman of that time was meekness, attributing it to the: "recognition of her inherent inferiority and suppression of whatever abilities she might possess" (Monaghan "Position of Women" 106). Consequently, the image of a woman in the eyes of the public was that of a fragile but careful being who was expected to display only what was required of her and nothing more. Women were put in a subordinate position as mothers and wives but most importantly as people who were not allowed to show their full potential.

Different expectations were set for men who had a privileged role, remaining socially and financially superior to their views. Men had the obligation to preserve and improve their family fortune. They were the ones most often inheriting property and money, and because of this, the family's survival depended on their choices and lifestyle (Auerbach 328). This greatly affected women, who had to stay at home and deal with the consequences of their husbands' choices with little voice of their own.

For the women in *Pride and Prejudice,* their gender was the crucial factor in determining their role in the society. Firstly, for the Bennet family, it was an important obstacle causing uncertainty for their future. Namely, because Mr. Bennet did not have a male heir who could inherit the land they all lived on, the property must be inherited by the male relative next in line. This turns out to be their cousin Mr. Collins, as Mr. Bennet warns his wife and daughters: "It is from my cousin, Mr. Collins, who, when I am dead, may turn you all out of this house as soon as he pleases" (Austen 42). This situation created certain uneasiness in the Bennet family, not knowing if they would be

able to stay in the house after Mr. Bennet's death. This lack of certainty encouraged Mrs. Bennet to put additional pressure on both Elizabeth and her sisters to marry, preferably wealthy. Because of this, when an eligible bachelor arrived at Netherfield, Mr. Bennet was expected to make an introduction:

> 'But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood.'
>
> 'It is more than I engage for, I assure you.'
>
> 'But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them (Austen 4).

Nonetheless, for Mr. Bennet the question of his daughter's marriage as well as his attitude towards his wife's involvement in their future is a matter of entertainment, his passive attitude excused by his gender. Mr. Bennet is described as self-absorbed, spending his time in the comfort of his library, leaving the parental responsibility to his wife: "Mr Bennet avoids the central concerns of his family in *Pride and Prejudice* until events demand his participation; even then, others become the agents of rescue" (Spacks 162).

However, Mr. Bennet's passive approach to the affairs of his daughters was what allowed them the freedom to choose their marital partner without too much pressure. For example, in her refusal of Mr. Collins, Elizabeth was scolded and emotionally manipulated by her mother who wished them to marry, while her father supported her refusal: "An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents.—Your mother will never see you again if you do *not* marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you *do*." (Austen 76). As the head of the family, Mr. Bennet does have the power to force Elizabeth into marriage with Mr. Collins, which would benefit the whole family due to his inheritance of their estate. Here, Elizabeth's power to choose depended on her father and his approval of her decision: "any authority she has merely borrowed. Like a woman writing under a male pseudonym, Elizabeth's credibility depends on the father's signature" (Fraiman 358). Still, Mr. Bennet wishes for his daughters' happiness and gives them the right to choose, while Mrs. Bennet remained focused on achieving her own goals, disregarding the emotional and romantic needs and wants of her daughters.

For Mr. Bennet himself, a passive approach to his family issues was possible because of his position as the father of the family. Namely, as a man he is allowed to make his own choices

regarding the affairs he wishes to be involved in. Moreover, despite his lack of success in fulfilling his role as a father of the family, he faces no consequences or pushback from the society, because he is a man. Mrs. Bennet, on the other hand, is not allowed the same luxury, but is instead left to account for both of their actions. She fulfils the gender roles prescribed by the society and is left to organise and lead the household while raising and marrying off her five daughters. As Johnson (350) states, in her parental role, Mrs. Bennet prioritises marriage, making it her life goal and greatest wish. In the novel, Mrs. Bennet admits to this by stating: "If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield,' said Mrs. Bennet to her husband, 'and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for." (Austen 7). Mrs. Bennet is ready to do anything if it means that her daughters will find wealthy husbands and settle in a manner that is satisfying to her. She believes that the goal of a woman is to marry, because, for her, marrying wealthy is the guarantee for happiness.

Further, for Mr. Darcy, gender plays an important role in reaffirming his security, both financially and socially. As the elder brother of the family, he was the one who inherited the Pemberley estate which allowed him the freedom to choose and settle in the manner he found appropriate. He could not lose what he inherited, and he was not affected by the social expectations, nor were they imposed on him. The only opposition he faced throughout the novel was from Elizabeth herself who refused his first proposal and from his aunt Lady Catherine who was strongly against their engagement. Still, it was not him who she tried to confront about the proposal, instead, she used her social power to try and intimidate Elizabeth into refusing:

> Though I know it must be a scandalous falsehood; though I would not injure him so much as to suppose the truth of it possible, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place, that I might make my sentiments known to you.'(...)'At once to insist upon having such a report universally contradicted.' (Austen 230)

Here, Mr. Darcy did not face the pushback created by his own decisions, instead that responsibility fell onto Elizabeth. While the society accepted their union, Lady Catherine temporarily refused to speak to him, but even that was resolved at the end by Elizabeth insisting on the reunion with his aunt.

3. Marriage, Money and Desire

3.1. Marriage in Austen's England

For the people of the early 19th century Britain, marriage was not as simple as falling in love and choosing to spend one's life with a certain person. Instead, it affected the life of not only the couple in question but the status of the whole family and their inheritance. Even before the 18th century, the act of marrying was of great importance. While the family had to arrange a suitable marital partner, ensure that the marriage itself was appropriate, and discuss dowries, society had to be informed about everything happening in the marriage market (Cannon 73). Consequently, the public had to be informed about the people available and the choices they made, while the young people of the upper-class families had to follow a prescribed set of rules.

Marriage was important for the upper-class families who wished to preserve their wealth and keep it in the family. Because of this, many marriages were arranged based on the wants and needs of parents, completely disregarding the feelings of children. This control escalated in 1753 when a *Clandestine Marriages Act* was proposed to prevent children from marrying without parental consent (Moore 8). The act put additional pressure on young men and women to fulfil their parents' wishes and marry not based on who they desired, but on who would be suitable for the family's prosperity. However, during the late 18th century, there was a certain shift in the expectations of the family. The focus was not only on what the marriage could bring to the family, instead a discussion began about the opinions of their children. Families were no longer as strict in their determination to marry off their offspring to a certain person, now considering children's feelings towards a potential partner (Moore 8). While they still had the authority to demand marriage, children's consent slowly started to matter, especially that of a son (Vickery *Gentleman's Daughter* 47-48). This does not imply that people of the late 18th and early 19th century England could marry whoever they chose or fell in love with; instead, it only relieved young people of some pressure in deciding who they had to spend their life with.

Consequently, for upper-class families, marriage was used as an important tool for achieving one's goals, and those goals often implied financial stability and a good position in society: "Marriage, of course, had an important place in positional competition. As anthropologists have told us, marriage makes society and tends to confirm its arrangements" (Spring 397). This approach to marriage had a serious setback – perceiving marital partners as resource. It was

problematic because it led to a certain imbalance in relationships, where partners were regarded as objects, considered valueless and undeserving of compassion. With this type of dynamic, an environment was created where the relationship itself implied mutual exploitation, instead of being built on respect (Light, Gráinne 89-90). This was especially important for women, who were often in a disadvantaged position due to their dependence on their husbands.

Secondly, marriage was of great importance for the survival of families and their prosperity, which put great pressure on both women and men of that time. A good marriage implied both a safe future for the family of the marital partners, but also a stable life for the couple itself. Because of this, women were expected to choose a proper and wealthy husband who they could settle with for their entire lives (Vickery *Gentleman's Daughter* 47). To achieve this, women had to display a range of socially accepted behaviour and characteristics to secure a husband. The idea of a good wife perpetuated in society was that of a gentlewoman who: "vowed before God to love, honour and obey" (Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter* 71). This behaviour had to be displayed publicly and approved by society following their strict guidelines.

Within the marriage itself, both men and women had individual roles they had to fulfil, imposed by the society they lived in: "Husbands were enjoined to offer kind consideration in return for wifely obedience and both partners were expected to conciliate and forbear" (Vickery *Gentleman's Daughter* 71). As previously mentioned, women were put in a subservient position in their marriage to a man. A boring life and loneliness being one of the more positive outcomes of their union to another person, women had to fear violence and abuse in their domestic life (Vickery *Gentleman's Daughter* 86). Men, on the other hand, had no such fears in their relationships. Those living alone had to move away from their adventurous single life into a family house, and those already living in one prepared for a change that having a bride would introduce. Once married, the household obligations fell solely on their wives, while their interest was kept outside the house through obligations to the public and their own business (Vickery *Closed Doors* 87, 90).

Therefore, we can see a great imbalance in the relationship between a man and a woman, as well as a husband and a wife. While the male side held the sole authority over their lives as well as the life of his whole family, wives remained in their unprivileged position, caring for their household and offspring. Life continued to revolve around those in the position of power, which was often, if not always - men. Despite their position in the future marriage, women's lives were

still focused on who they would marry and how safe their lives would be. This was not determined based on their feeling toward a person of interest, instead, his economic strength, social position, and good behaviour were pivotal.

3.2. Marriage in Pride and Prejudice

In Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* marriage plays an important role in plot development and serves as a primary goal for every character in the book. Even if getting married was not the sole focus of the character itself, its importance was perpetuated by their family and society they live in. The novel's famous opening lines set the tone for the role of marriage from the very beginning:

> It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters (Austen 3)

Here, the importance of marriage for both the bachelor and the society is emphasized. A single man is interesting to the families if he is wealthy, and just the fact that he is a single man implies that he might be interested in marrying. In the passage, the emphasis is on his wealth since every family wants a wealthy husband for their daughters. In the novel, the settings create the space where couples are meant to meet, fall in love and show an interest in each other. The plot develops through conversations and meetings at ballrooms, the houses of those on the marriage market, and walks in nature, following carefully developed rules of conduct.

As previously mentioned, public displays of affection were severely censored during the late 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. Because of this, a certain protocol was developed to enable seeking a marital partner while adhering to the rules of society. Van Ghent (301) describes this protocol as a hunt for men, where women's survival was at stake while men had to display appropriate polite behaviour to keep their good position in society. This can be seen in *Pride and Prejudice* through interactions of different characters in various social settings. One of the publicly accepted, and even required, forms of courtship was dance. Being a place where a person could show their emotions and desire as well as good social behaviour, dancing played an important role in securing a partner: "As such, the dance serves as an arm of culture, ordering and restricting the scope of the emotions generated during courtship" (Allen 430). With this, people could show their

interest in someone publicly and learn about their wants and needs. Monaghan (*Social Vision 68*) argues that dancing was of special importance for Elizabeth and Darcy whose complicated relationship starts through dance, or rather the refusal of one, and develops further through the time spent at different balls. At the very beginning of the novel, Mr. Darcy expressed his distaste for the company around him and refused Mr. Bingley's invitation to offer Elizabeth a dance:

> 'Which do you mean?' and turning around, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, 'She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men.' (Austen 8-9).

With this, despite his social position and economic strength, Mr. Darcy immediately lost his power in the eyes of Elizabeth Bennet who was offended by his actions and the act itself set the tone for their future relationship. Nonetheless, Elizabeth seized the opportunity to return the sentiment during her time at the Netherfield ball where, after Mr. Darcy asked her to dance, she replied: "I have therefore made up my mind to tell you, that I do not want to dance a reel at all—and now despise me if you dare" (Austen 35). This exchange benefitted both Elizabeth who felt victorious in her rebellion against Darcy, and Mr. Darcy who became captivated even more. As Fergus (74) argues, Elizabeth and Darcy's conflict at the very beginning of the novel helped to establish their relationship, not as rivals but as lovers, because Elizabeth's defiant attitude further infatuated him rather than displeased him. Throughout the novel, the ballroom remains important for Elizabeth and Darcy as a place where they could meet, socialise and exchange opinions. However, towards the end of the novel, the focus slowly shifts to their private conversations and exchanges at the Longbourn estate, Pemberley and Hunsford.

Furthermore, Monaghan (*Social Vision* 69) argues that dancing is highly influenced by the society involved in the activity. With this, if characters do not feel like the company is worthy of their time, they will refuse to dance, which Mr. Darcy does. Everything must be up to the standard and any deviation from the set rules and expectations can be scorned upon by the aristocracy. Moreover, through ball dances, society controls courtship and shapes it according to its rules. There is a clear schedule for the act of seduction, played in front of the public eye to be evaluated and approved (Allen 430). Because of this, if even one of the criteria is not fulfilled the event is deemed unsuccessful by the upper-class company. For Mr. Darcy this unfulfilled criterion was the

appropriate company, which is why he refused to dance with anyone aside from the people he arrived with: “Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of his own party.” (Austen 8). For Mr. Darcy himself, the event was not up to the standard, and he showed his dissatisfaction with the company present.

Dancing is also important for other characters in the novel who, during this public activity, learned about each other, grew close, and expressed their interest. With this, dancing was used to perpetuate a certain relationship or create further conflict for the characters; it was talked about and discussed in the novel, highlighting who danced with whom and how many times (Monaghan *Social Vision* 68-69). This is especially evident in Jane and Mr. Bingley’s relationship who continuously choose to dance with each other:

> Mr. Bingley thought her quite beautiful, and danced with her twice. Only think of that my dear; he actually danced with her twice; and she was the only creature in the room that he asked for a second time (Austen 9)

Here, the importance of a dance invitation in establishing a relationship can be seen. With Mr. Bingley dancing with Jane more than once during the night, he showed his interest and preference for her company, which in the eyes of the public signalled a better prospect for their potential marriage.

Another activity important for courtship was card-playing, which served as pastime entertainment that created a setting where players could learn more about each other. Since the games played involved winning or losing money, they created a clear opportunity for the participants to explore how others behaved in social settings and allowed them to form an image of their financial status:

> Card-playing, an activity which boils down to staking money–one kind of fortune–on the skilful manipulation of one's luck–another kind of fortune–incorporates these two indispensable elements of a successful marriage and thus symbolizes better than dancing the full range of factors that enter into marriage and courtship (Schneider 6).

Throughout the novel, there were many instances where characters spent their time playing cards and talking, but the activity developed into much more than just a pastime. The first was Mr.

Collins who was unsuccessful in both winning the game and establishing any kind of social interaction with others at the table:

> With such rivals for the notice of the fair, as Mr. Wickham and the officers, Mr. Collins seemed likely to sink into insignificance; to the young ladies he certainly was nothing; but he had still at intervals a kind listener in Mrs. Philips (Austen 52).

Winning at cards and winning people over seem to be related here and Mr. Collins shows no luck in playing the game or keeping a conversation at the card table; indeed, as Schneider (11-12) argues, Mr. Collins' success in card playing reflected his success in securing a wife. His failed proposal to Elizabeth and his rushed engagement with Charlotte Lucas were both reflected in his vain effort to please his patroness who wished him to form good social connections and marry.

The second character was Miss Bingley who used card playing as an opportunity to promote herself to her love interest, Mr. Darcy, and to establish her relationship with Elizabeth. While playing cards Caroline Bingley inquired about Darcy's sister, Georgiana: "How I long to see her again! I never met with anybody who delighted me so much. Such a countenance, such manners! And so extremely accomplished for her age! Her performance on the pianoforte is exquisite" (Austen 27). With this, Miss Bingley attempted to display her familiarity with Mr. Darcy, to show Elizabeth her intimate knowledge of the family and to gain affection from Mr. Darcy by showing an interest in his sister. Card-playing created the perfect setting for the conversation, in public but at the same time contained within their own table. The importance of card-playing is also shown later in the novel, when Mr. Hurst invited Miss Bingley to join him in the game and she refused to participate because of Mr. Darcy's disinterest:

> When tea was over, Mr. Hurst reminded his sister-in-law of the card table— but in vain. She had obtained private intelligence that Mr. Darcy did not wish for cards; and Mr. Hurst soon found even his open petition rejected. She assured him that no one intended to play, and the silence of the whole party on the subject, seemed to justify her (Austen 47).

Accordingly, card playing was important only when the love interest was involved in the game itself. Caroline Bingley did not play card games because she loved to play them, instead, she utilised them to achieve her goal and establish further interaction, as well as to develop her relationship with Mr. Darcy.

Another important element of courtship was a division between the private and the public. Not having any opportunities to enjoy time away from the public eye, walking played an important role in securing some privacy with a person of interest. This allowed people, especially young couples, to have conversations and spend time together without any interference from their parents and society (Allen 433). With the seduction process completely exposed to the public, there were few occasions in which couples could spend their time alone, and the little opportunity they created, needed to be utilized. Therefore, as Allen (433) argues, private time was of utmost importance for the union between the couples in *Pride and Prejudice*, which can be seen for both Elizabeth and Darcy, as well as Jane and Bingley.

At the end of the novel, Elizabeth and Darcy spent a lot of time together away from the public eye, which played an important role in forming their relationship and mending their animosity. When coming to the Pemberley estate, Elizabeth continuously and unexpectedly encountered Mr. Darcy on her walks:

> More than once did Elizabeth in her ramble within the Park, unexpectedly meet Mr. Darcy.—She felt all the perverseness of the mischance that should bring him where no one else was brought; and to prevent its ever happening again, took care to inform him at first, that it was a favourite haunt of hers.—How it could occur a second time therefore was very odd!—Yet it did, and even a third (Austen 120).

While the situation confused Elizabeth, Darcy's intentions were clear to the reader and the foundation for his future proposal, although failed, was set. Indeed, both of Mr. Darcy's proposals were done in a private setting he created, and the public remained ignorant of the first one's shameful outcome: 'You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been." (Austen 128). As for the second proposal, which was accepted, the private walk allowed Elizabeth to express her gratitude towards Mr. Darcy for what he had done for both of her sisters, and gave him an opportunity to inquire of her feelings for him:

> You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject for ever (Austen 239).

Here, Elizabeth and Darcy were able to discuss their feelings and opinions without public pressure, which made their relationship possible and their reconciliation easier.

Furthermore, after Elizabeth was informed about Lydia's disappearance, Mr. Darcy arrived to find her alone in a room, completely distressed. This setting created an opening for them to step away from the strict rules of society and express their emotions: Elizabeth showed concern for her sister, and Darcy concern for Elizabeth:

> 'Good God! what is the matter?' cried he, with more feeling than politeness; then recollecting himself (...) 'I am only distressed by some dreadful news which I have just received from Longbourn.' She burst into tears as she alluded to it, and for a few minutes could not speak another word. Darcy, in wretched suspense, could only say something indistinctly of his concern, and observe her in compassionate silence (Austen 179).

Their time alone in this context was of utmost importance because it created a space for honest communication. Elizabeth was aware that her sister's disappearance put a stain on her family's position, but she still revealed the situation to Mr. Darcy. At the same time, this knowledge allowed Mr. Darcy to privately search for and locate Lydia and her seducer Wickham and set up their wedding.

For Jane and Bingley, private time was of great importance as well. Since both were shy about showing affection, their time alone was crucial for the feelings to be expressed and for their relationship to form:

> On opening the door, she perceived her sister and Bingley standing together over the hearth, as if engaged in earnest conversation; and had this led to no suspicion, the faces of both as they hastily turned round, and moved away from each other, would have told it all (Austen 225).

The opportunity to have some private time allowed Jane and Bingley to talk about their emotions and sort out any possible misunderstandings that previously occurred. With this, their engagement was formed and the foundation for their future marriage was set.

There are a few other aspects of courtship that remain hidden from the public eye because of their subtle and unintentional nature: "Blushes, facial expressions, and glances are the instinctive signs of hidden feeling. In fact, the mode of expression is itself outside of culture, a natural semiotics of the body unaffected by cultural coding." (Allen 432). Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, there are many instances in which the emotions of characters are conveyed subtly, reserved only for the observant. Namely, subtle glances, blushing, and facial expressions were important for the

relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy who did not show their feelings openly. While they both took interest in each other, their open rivalry was overshadowed by subtle cues that showed their true feelings for each other. For example, when Elizabeth and Darcy first meet upon his sudden arrival at the Pemberly estate, they both assumed that their encounter would not be pleasurable, but their true feelings were shown through small details:

> Their eyes instantly met, and the cheeks of each were overspread with the deepest blush. He absolutely started, and for a moment seemed immoveable from surprise; but shortly recovering himself, advanced towards the party, and spoke to Elizabeth, if not in terms of perfect composure, at least of perfect civility (Austen 163).

In other words, they both seemed surprised by the encounter and while Elizabeth blushed, Mr. Darcy failed to keep his composure. Through these subtle cues, their true feelings were shown, and while they both remained unaware of each other's emotions, the reader had a clear image of what they both felt.

Furthermore, blushing and hidden glances are also important for Jane and Bingley because of their shy nature. While Bingley's feelings and intentions were clear, Jane's lack of expression developed into a main point of contention, not for Mr. Bingley, but for Mr. Darcy who influenced his opinion:

> Her look and manners were open, cheerful and engaging as ever, but without any symptom of peculiar regard, and I remained convinced from the evening's scrutiny, that though she received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment (Austen 140).

It was Mr. Darcy who interpreted Jane's reserve and lack of expression as disinterest in his friend, but for Elizabeth, Jane's true feelings were evident through those subtle cues.

Finally, the rules of courtship were important for the late 18th and early 19th century English society. However, two characters in the novel portray what happens to those who diverge from the prescribed rules of marriage perpetuated by the public and the carefully written conduct books. Namely, both Lydia and Wickham, through their elopement and time in London, broke those rules and suffered the consequences. From the very beginning of the novel, Lydia's interactions were described as inappropriate. She wished to be the first one in her family to marry and the identity of the person was considered less relevant:

> she was convinced that Lydia had wanted only encouragement to attach herself to any body. Sometimes one officer, sometimes another had been her favourite, as their attentions raised them in her opinion. Her affections had been continually fluctuating, but never without an object (Austen 181).

This approach to courtship implied her attitudes to marriage, which was reflected in her impulsive decision to run away with Mr. Wickham, never stopping to think about the consequences. On the other hand, Wickham shared a similar approach to courtship, but his focus, when it comes to marriage, was on monetary gain, which led to his initial disinterest in marrying Lydia. He thus encouraged Lydia to escape with him and break the rules of society: "He confessed himself obliged to leave the regiment, on account of some debts of honour, which were very pressing; and scrupled not to lay all the ill-consequences of Lydia's flight, on her own folly alone" (Austen 210). In the end, both were held accountable for their actions and had to suffer the consequences, even if, at first, they did not perceive their marriage as such.

4. The Relationship between Money and Desire in Characters of *Pride and Prejudice*

For each character of the novel, the relationship between class position, gender expectation and the family background, is different, ultimately affecting the choice of a marital partner.

4.1. Elizabeth Bennet

Elizabeth Bennet is described as an intelligent, witty, and stubborn person who fights for what she thinks is right. Within her family, her father recognises her wit and holds her as his favourite. Her mother, on the other hand, does not share his views: "Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference" (Austen 4). Regardless, Elizabeth values her family and her sisters, forming a good relationship with them, especially Jane. She is a good listener and an advisor who is ready to stand up for them and help when needed, always having their happiness as a priority. She is ready to push the limits of acceptable behaviour and is determined to be there for her sisters even when the situation does not make it easy. For example, when the news of her sister Jane being sick at the Netherfield house arrived, Elizabeth decided to walk there despite the distance and bad weather: "Elizabeth, feeling really anxious, was determined to go to her, though

the carriage was not to be had; and as she was no horsewoman, walking was her only alternative." (Austen 22). The act itself painted her as a peculiar young woman in the eyes of Caroline Bingley at Netherfield, but Elizabeth pursued what she thought was right, wishing to care for her sister.

However, Elizabeth's attitude towards marriage is where her personality comes into focus. She is not blinded by money and good social position, nor frightened into a relationship with a person she does not love or respect. Her refusal of Mr. Collins was pivotal for her future satisfaction in life and despite the pressure Mrs. Bennet put on her, she acted according to her own desire and feelings, rejecting Mr. Collins: "I am perfectly serious in my refusal.—You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so" (Austen 73). Here, Mrs. Bennet continuously enforced the idea of marriage to Mr. Collins, using every possible method available, but despite her attempts, Elizabeth stayed determined in her decision to refuse his offer. As Anderson (372) argues, Elizabeth never planned to marry to achieve a certain status and: "refusing to be treated as a commodity in the marriage market, taken home by anyone who deems her adequate, she demands proper respect for herself". She is aware that her life with him would be unhappy because she finds him boring and plain, absorbed in himself and focused on satisfying his patroness. Nevertheless, Mrs. Bennet has a different approach to marriage, seeing it as an opportunity to keep the estate in the family and secure their future safety.

Furthermore, in her relationship with Mr. Wickham, Elizabeth is aware that he is not a suitable marital partner for her; however, an internal conflict about her feelings for him was evident. She was aware of the attraction she felt towards him and of his good standing in her family, but was still careful about her approach:

> At present I am not in love with Mr. Wickham; no, I certainly am not. But he is, beyond all comparison, the most agreeable man I ever saw—and if he becomes really attached to me—I believe it will be better that he should not. I see the imprudence of it (Austen 97).

Mr. Wickham is not a wealthy gentleman, he is a failed clergyman and now a military man, which makes his social position uncertain. Later in the novel, after Mr. Wickham breaks his promise to appear at the Netherfield ball, Elizabeth's opinion of him changes, encouraged further by his show of interest in Miss King, a young lady who suddenly inherited a large amount of money:

> Her heart had been but slightly touched, and her vanity was satisfied with believing that she would have been his only choice, had fortune permitted it. The sudden acquisition of ten thousand pounds was the most remarkable charm of the young lady, to whom he was now rendering himself agreeable (Austen 100).

With this, Elizabeth realised that Mr. Wickham was not searching for love and that his primary goal was to obtain money. In other words, as Monaghan (*Social Vision* 66-67) states, Elizabeth knew what her feelings were, but was still able to think about them rationally, not letting her emotions get in the way.

Further, Elizabeth's attitude towards marriage can be seen in her relationship with Mr. Darcy, especially in her refusal of his first proposal. After Mr. Darcy laid out his offer, she was determined in her decision to refuse him. Still, she acknowledged the importance and the compliment that a proposal from someone of his rank represented: "In spite of her deeply rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant" (Austen 125). Nonetheless, Elizabeth was not blinded by rank nor the meaning of such proposal, instead she criticised Darcy for his speech, filled with criticism towards her family and her value as a woman: "why with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character?" (Austen 126). Elizabeth found his position vain and refused to marry someone who does not respect her or her family. Moreover, her refusal was further encouraged by Mr. Darcy's involvement in Jane's unhappiness. Namely, he was the one responsible for separating her and Mr. Bingley, convincing his fried of Jane's disinterest in his affections:

> You dare not, you cannot deny that you have been the principal, if not the only means of dividing them from each other, of exposing one to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, the other to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind (Austen 126).

Elizabeth was aware that the separation hurt both Jane and Bingley, and she sought an explanation from Mr. Darcy about his actions against her sister, assuming that his main motive was her rank, deemed undeserving of his friend.

Elizabeth's further motive for her refusal of Mr. Darcy was her view of his relationship with Mr. Wickham. Here, Mr. Darcy was characterised as both unjust and jealous of Mr. Wickham's position in his family and in society. With this, Elizabeth was not afraid to confront him and speak out against his actions: "Long before it had taken place, my opinion of you was decided. Your character was unfolded in the recital which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham" (Austen 126-127). Despite the later realisation of Mr. Wickham's true character, this scene shows Elizabeth's determination to speak her mind and fight for what she thinks is right, against injustice. She refused to marry Mr. Darcy, prioritising her happiness over a good social position.

However, in Elizabeth's accusation of Mr. Darcy, the other side of her personality can be seen. Namely, it is important to mention that her stubborn character also resulted in her taking the words of others at face value. Led by prejudice, she was quick to accept information without considering its source or credibility. That is, in her attitude towards Mr. Darcy, who offended her at the very beginning of the novel, she sought confirmation from others of his ill character. Because of this, she was ready to believe everything Mr. Wickham told her about Mr. Darcy: "To treat in such a manner, the godson, the friend, the favourite of his father!'—She could have added, 'A young man too, like you, whose very countenance may vouch for your being amiable" (Austen 55). Here, she was led by her attraction to Mr. Wickham and her prejudice towards Mr. Darcy, while her conversation with the first only served as a confirmation of her feelings towards the latter. As Sherry (615) argues, Mr. Wickham's dislike of Darcy was a main point of interest for both Elizabeth and the reader. Only later, towards the end of the novel, did Elizabeth realise her mistake of trusting Mr. Wickham, after his true character was revealed in Mr. Darcy's letter to her: "After Elizabeth rejects Darcy's proposal, his explanatory letter causes her to recognize her own headstrong error" (Anderson 371). Consequently, this letter served as a turning point for Elizabeth who then understood her own misconceptions.

However, Elizabeth was ready to admit her mistakes and reevaluate her own actions. Upon realising how inappropriate her behaviour was, Elizabeth quickly admitted to being too stubborn and focused on what she believed was right, refusing to look past it. Because of this, she felt deeply embarrassed: "She grew absolutely ashamed of herself.— Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd. 'How despicably

have I acted!' she cried" (Austen 137). As Duckworth (310) argues, Mr. Darcy's letter played a role in Elizabeth's realisation of her unjust opinion and attitude towards him. With this, Elizabeth becomes aware of her own ignorance, admitting her feeling of moral superiority over Mr. Darcy and her prejudice from their very first meeting. However, her change of thought was not influenced by just the new realisation, instead, after visiting Pemberley for the first time she started wondering what would have happened if she accepted Mr. Darcy's proposal:

> Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (Austen 159).

Here, Elizabeth acknowledges the privilege of such position and remains impressed with Darcy's status. Moreover, after witnessing the vast estate that is Pemberley, Elizabeth was the one who wished to impress Darcy with her good connections, boasting about the good impression the Gardiners left on him:

> It was consoling, that he should know she had some relations for whom there was no need to blush. She listened most attentively to all that passed between them, and gloried in every expression, every sentence of her uncle, which marked his intelligence, his taste, or his good manners. (Austen 165)

Suddenly, it was important for Elizabeth to show Mr. Darcy that she too has good connections and that there are people in her family of whom she can be proud.

Finally, Elizabeth was determined to follow her own dreams and desires; she refused to marry without love or interest in her partner despite being aware of the expectations put on her by her family and the society. The question of her and Mr. Darcy's feelings and mutual respect was prioritised over the advantage of such a match: "The novel's moral and emotional effects proceed from Elizabeth and Darcy's learning to appreciate each other's merits and their taking a real interest in each other's welfare" (Anderson 371). Thus, Elizabeth decided to marry Mr. Darcy only when he rose to her standards: "her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure, his present assurances" (Austen 139). Their mutual rivalry and interest at the beginning of the novel, alongside his good social standing and financial status were not enough to motivate Elizabeth. Instead, she wanted a partner who she could enjoy her time with, who would respect her and who she could respect as

well. Thus, Elizabeth is portrayed as a determined woman, who was allowed the right of choice, and she prioritised her desire over monetary gain. Still, at the end of the novel she married a man of high social standing which allowed her to have it all, a secure future with a wealthy aristocrat whom she loved.

4.2. Fitzwilliam Darcy

Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy is described as an intelligent and observant character, quick to catch on to people and their intentions. After his parents' death, he was left with the responsibility to bring up, educate and care for his younger sister Miss Georgiana Darcy. In the novel, he is described as a good brother who raised Georgiana according to the rules of the aristocracy, teaching her appropriate manners, arranging her education and encouraging her to pursue her interests: "this is always the way with him,' she added. — 'Whatever can give his sister any pleasure, is sure to be done in a moment. There is nothing he would not do for her." (Austen 162). However, despite his good reputation as an older brother, Mr. Darcy's personality was perceived differently by the wider society.

Throughout the novel Mr. Darcy was led by vanity and pride, adhering to the social expectations. He believed that he deserved to be surrounded only by those he deemed worthy, finding the Meryton society to be below his standards. The importance Mr. Darcy gave to one's social status could be seen during his proposal to Elizabeth where he stated the problem of her family's standing claiming his respect for himself to be lesser than that he feels towards Mr. Bingley.

> My objections to the marriage were not merely those, which I last night acknowledged to have required the utmost force of passion to put aside, in my own case; the want of connection could not be so great an evil to my friend as to me. (Austen 130)

Namely, while he interfered with Bingley's connection with Jane, separating them from each other, he proceeded to propose to Elizabeth, putting aside all the complaints he simultaneously used to justify the separation of his friend. However, the shame Mr. Darcy felt about Elizabeth and Jane's rank existed only as a product of his own pride and sense of superiority, enabled by his aunt Lady Catherine De Bourgh and his friend's sister Miss Caroline Bingley. In his conduct towards Elizabeth, he was blinded by prejudice and felt his words to be justified, which led to his surprise

after Elizabeth's refusal: "And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavour at civility, I am thus rejected" (Austen 126). Mr. Darcy believed his words not to be offensive, but only a statement of the existing situation. At the end of his conversation with Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy left the room feeling disrespected and offended, believing her words to be unjust. However, his care for Elizabeth's opinion of him outweighed his pride, which motivated him to write her a letter, revealing the truth about his connection to Mr. Wickham and his involvement in separating Jane and Bingley. As Sherry (617) states, by writing a letter Mr. Darcy created a space for rebuilding his character and attempted to justify his comments about Elizabeth's family, wanting to show that: "there may be a form of pride and reserve which differs from that of mere snobbishness, and which may be both unobjectionable and necessary".

At the end of the novel, a complete turn in Mr. Darcy's behaviour can be seen. As Anderson (370) argues, for Mr. Darcy's second proposal to be accepted his character had to change and the realisation of his previous mistakes had to happen. Accordingly, Mr. Darcy acknowledged his previous misconceptions, showing special care for Elizabeth and her family during their visit to the Pemberley estate. His main motivation was repairing his relationship with her and the sudden change of personality surprised Elizabeth who expected their meeting to be unpleasant. During their encounter at the Pemberley estate, Mr. Darcy attempted to reconnect with Elizabeth through her family and wished to be introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner:

> This was a stroke of civility for which she was quite unprepared; and she could hardly suppress a smile, at his being now seeking the acquaintance of some of those very people, against whom his pride had revolted, in his offer to herself (Austen 165).

Here, Darcy was motivated by Elizabeth and her opinion of him which he wished to change. Because of this, he was ready to overcome his own prejudices, wishing to prove himself as a good man. This sudden change was welcomed by Elizabeth who started to wonder what life would be like if she accepted the proposal, wishing he would renew his offer: "She began now to comprehend that he was exactly the man, who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes" (Austen 202).

Mr. Darcy's attempts at repairing his relationship with Elizabeth focused on resolving two major problems in the novel. Firstly, Mr. Darcy worked on finding Elizabeth's sister Lydia and arranged her marriage to Wickham. This was done without Elizabeth's knowledge, the information about the event betrayed by Lydia during their conversation:

> However, I recollected afterwards, that if he had been prevented going, the wedding need not be put off, for Mr. Darcy might have done as well.' 'Mr. Darcy!' repeated Elizabeth, in utter amazement. 'Oh, yes!—he was to come there with Wickham, you know. But gracious me! I quite forgot! I ought not have said a word about it. I promised them so faithfully! (Austen 207).

Mr. Darcy required the information to be kept a secret from Elizabeth, not wishing her to think he acted out of pride. Still, he searched for Lydia and Wickham, making their marriage possible. His role in the process itself was pivotal, and without his financial help, the marriage would not have been possible. As Sherry (621) argues, in his involvement, Mr. Darcy was ready to put his own reputation at stake to help Elizabeth's family and, hence, herself, despite being aware of the consequences it could have for his own family name.

Secondly, Mr. Darcy worked on restoring the relationship between Bingley and Jane by telling his friend about her affection and through his involvement in keeping her time in London a secret:

> I was obliged to confess one thing, which for a time, and not unjustly, offended him. I could not allow myself to conceal that your sister had been in town three months last winter, that I had known it, and purposely kept it from him. He was angry. But his anger, I am persuaded, lasted no longer than he remained in any doubt of your sister's sentiments. He has heartily forgiven me now. (Austen 242)

Mr. Darcy encouraged Mr. Bingley to return to Netherfield and seek Jane, accompanying him on his visit. With this, Mr. Darcy created space for Jane and Bingley to profess their feelings to each other and ensured their future happiness. Thus, by finding Lydia and reuniting Jane with Bingley, Mr. Darcy helped two of Elizabeth's sisters. During his conversation with Elizabeth, he professed his true intentions for those actions, admitting that everything was done for her and her happiness:

> 'If you will thank me,' he replied, 'let it be for yourself alone. That the wish of giving happiness to you, might add force to the other inducements which led me on, I shall not attempt to deny. But your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe, I thought only of you (Austen 238-239).

Mr. Darcy talked openly about his feelings and his motivation which both revolved around Elizabeth and his affection for her.

At the very end of the novel, Darcy and Elizabeth reunited during their walk through the Meryton estate, clearing up all the problems left between them. Despite the first rejection, Darcy still hoped for Elizabeth's change of mind and inquired about her feelings and received a positive response:

> Elizabeth feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand, that her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure, his present assurances (Austen 239).

While Darcy wished for Elizabeth to accept his proposal, he did not demand her forgiveness nor the change of her opinion. He was aware how inappropriate it would be to propose again after being rejected, but he disregarded his own pride and position, focusing only on his feelings towards Elizabeth. Thus, as Anderson (370) argues, Mr. Darcy's decision to renew his proposal, despite the existing issues around Elizabeth's family: "indicates his true gentility".

Finally, through Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy learned to care for his feelings and to prioritise his own desire over the social expectations. His opinion of marriage and Elizabeth changed because of the words she said to him during the failed proposal:

> The recollection of what I then said, of my conduct, my manners, my expressions during the whole of it, is now, and has been many months, inexpressibly painful to me. Your reproof, so well applied, I shall never forget: 'had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner (Austen 240).

With this, Elizabeth's impact on Darcy was evident, forcing him to challenge his own misconceptions and reevaluate his attitude toward those around him. He was forced to admit to himself that his conduct was inappropriate, and his opinions prejudiced. Consequently, only after realising his mistakes did Mr. Darcy embrace his own desire. Throughout the novel, his greatest obstacle was his pride which he learned to overcome. Mr. Darcy is a product of his own social class, learning to follow the carefully written gender norms and expectations set by the society. Still, through Elizabeth, who called out his behaviour and challenged his views, Darcy realised his

own flaws which ultimately allowed him to challenge his own opinions and pursue marriage based on his own desires.

4.3. Jane Bennet

Jane Bennet is the eldest daughter in the Bennet family, described as the most beautiful of the sisters and hence with the largest prospects for marriage. She is passive in her demeanour, caring and trusting, never wishing to think ill of others. For Jane, the main problem with her attitude towards marriage was her insecurity in her own abilities. Throughout the novel, she followed the rules of conduct, never actively pursuing her own desires, instead, she accepted her situation no matter how unsatisfying it was to her. For example, she was ready to pretend that Mr. Bingley leaving Netherfield did not affect her, denying her own feelings. Upon his return and visit, she wished to maintain the appearance of disinterest in anything romantic:

> I have now learnt to enjoy his conversation as an agreeable and sensible young man, without having a wish beyond it. I am perfectly satisfied from what his manners now are, that he never had any design of engaging my affection (Austen 223).

Here, she attempted to convince others, as well as herself, of her indifference, not wanting to feel further disappointment. Moreover, Jane's main argument for Bingley's alleged disinterest was his silence during her visit to London when he never called on her. However, Jane was unaware of his ignorance about her being in town, hidden from him by his sister and Mr. Darcy who schemed to separate the two. In his letter to Elizabeth, Darcy admits his involvement in concealing the information from his friend: "I condescended to adopt the measures of art so far as to conceal from him your sister's being in town. I knew it myself, as it was known to Miss Bingley, but her brother is even yet ignorant of it" (Austen 131).

The formation of Jane and Bingley's engagement and their later marriage was highly dependent on the support Jane received from other characters in the novel. While Elizabeth attempted to get her sister to admit to her feelings towards Bingley, Darcy revealed to Bingley the truth about Jane's regard. With this, only after Elizabeth and Darcy set the groundwork did Jane and Bingley reunite and form their engagement. The later proposal was done quietly, only between the two of them, where they finally professed their feelings for each other: "Jane could have no reserves from Elizabeth, where confidence would give pleasure; and instantly embracing her,

acknowledged, with the liveliest emotion, that she was the happiest creature in the world" (Austen 225).

Finally, Jane's social background was not a deciding factor for Mr. Bingley, but the approval of others was still needed for their relationship to form. It was his sister Miss Bingley and his friend Mr. Darcy who considered Jane inadequate based on her family's position. For Jane herself, marriage was pivotal, and she wished to marry Bingley who was posed as the perfect bachelor from the very beginning of the novel. However, her demure and reserved attitude created the opposite outcome than expected and served as an obstacle in their relationship, creating a misconception about her feelings. Thus, by complying with the prescribed rules of behaviour, perpetuated by the society, Jane remained passive and unknowingly relied on the support of others for the realisation of her engagement. The circumstances around her allowed Jane a future with a person she felt affection for, ultimately creating a space for her happiness.

4.4.Charles Bingley

Charles Bingley is described as charming, well-mannered, handsome and likable, but most importantly as wealthy and single. He is a good conversationalist who is liked by everyone he interacts with, his personality allowing him to create connections and form friendships, facilitating his transition to the upper class. During Mr. Bingley's first appearance in the novel, the good impression he has left was already evident: "He is just what a young man ought to be,' said she, 'sensible, good humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manner!—so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!' 'He is also handsome" (Austen 10). He is appreciated by many and presented as the ideal bachelor wanted by every single woman in town.

However, Mr. Bingley is also described as an insecure character who hesitates to express his own feelings and desires. For Bingley, his lack of confidence in his own abilities and opinions was posed as pivotal in his pursuit of marriage. Namely, he relied on others to make important decisions about his life and marriage, the most important person for this being Mr. Darcy. However, Darcy's advice was often based on his own assumptions, prioritising propriety over his friend's feelings. Thus, a situation was created where Bingley got separated from the person he felt regard for and wished to pursue – Jane. During Elizabeth's conversation with Colonel Fitzwilliam, he inadvertently revealed Mr. Darcy's involvement in the separation: "he congratulated himself on having lately saved a friend from the inconveniences of a most imprudent marriage" (Austen 122).

This was later confirmed by Mr. Darcy, who expressed no remorse for his actions, believing he worked in the best interest of his friend. Moreover, because of Mr. Darcy's influence on him, Mr. Bingley's engagement depended on his decision to reveal the truth that he and Miss Bingley kept from him. Because of this, the change Mr. Darcy went through served as a precondition to the realisation of Mr. Bingley's engagement: "I had narrowly observed her during the two visits which I had lately made here; and I was convinced of her affection.'/'And your assurance of it, I suppose, carried immediate conviction to him.'/'It did." (Austen 242). As Allen (436) argues: "Jane and Bingley are prevented from the consummation of their love by diffidence, which makes each doubt that his or her love is reciprocated, and they are separated by Bingley's malleability, which makes him excessively dependent on Darcy' s opinion". Due to his own insecurities and dependence on others, Mr. Bingley's future is heavily influenced by his friend, owing it ultimately to Elizabeth for the outcome of his relationship with Jane.

The main difference between Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy, who both marry a Bennet sister, was their opinion on the worthiness of their partners. Namely, Mr. Darcy, the aristocratic gentleman, was preoccupied with Elizabeth's family background, using it as the main argument against her, allowing his own pride to create an obstacle in their relationship. In his conversation with Elizabeth, Darcy even admitted to his own misconceptions and prejudice which governed him throughout his life:

> [my parents] almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own (Austen 241).

On the other hand, Mr. Bingley, who comes from a family intent on climbing the social ladder, focuses on Jane's regard for him, influenced by his own insecurities. For Charles Bingley the choice of marital partner did not depend on the prescribed rules of society nor set expectations. Instead, to initiate the courting process, he sought the approval of people he is close to, depending on their opinion of the chosen person. After meeting Jane, the approval of his two sisters was pivotal for his pursuit:

> they admired her and liked her, and pronounced her to be a sweet girl, and one whom they should not object to know more of. Miss Bennet was therefore established as a sweet girl, and their brother felt authorised by such commendation to think of her as he chose (Austen 12).

An external approval was needed for Mr. Bingley, to confirm his choice and encourage further advances.

Consequently, for Mr. Bingley, the question of marriage was not focused on his right to desire, nor the social expectations set for a man of his status. Instead, his engagement was built through the support given by Darcy and Elizabeth who created the space for the realisation of his desires. Thus, Mr. Bingley is a character portraying a man coming from a pseudo-gentry family, acquiring an upper-class position, whose choice of a marital partner was strongly governed by others.

4.5. Lydia Bennet

Miss Lydia Bennet is described as a very young woman whose focus is on ball dances, shopping and pursuit of military men. She is the youngest daughter of the family and being still fifteen years old, she was considered to be too young for the pursuit of a marital partner. However, her being out in society was justified by her other sisters being on the marriage market and her mother not wishing her to feel left out:

> Perhaps she is full young to be much in company. But really, Ma'am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters, that they should not have their share of society and amusement because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early (Austen 110).

Still, she was considered too immature, which was reflected in her behaviour throughout the novel where she was described as young and foolish, driven by desire and spite. Not only that, but as Allen (437-438) argues, Lydia never learned how to be in control of her impulses, thus showing what happens to a woman who shows no self-restraint. She aspired to be the centre of attention, and she considered finding a husband a competition, boasting about the fact she got married first. Upon returning to Longbourn she stated: "Ah! Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman." (Austen 205). Here, the context around her marriage was less important to Lydia and she refused to perceive the reality of her situation. Instead, her satisfaction was derived from the perceived advantage over her sisters.

Throughout the novel, Lydia has a very strong connection to the second youngest daughter of the family – Catherine. With her, she indulged in their interests and pursued military men, fulfilling their desire to engage with the society:

> Catherine, weak-spirited, irritable, and completely under Lydia's guidance, had been always affronted by their advice; and Lydia, self-willed and careless, would scarcely give them a hearing. They were ignorant, idle, and vain. While there was an officer in Meryton, they would flirt with him; and while Meryton was within a walk of Longbourn, they would be going there for ever (Austen 140).

With both being too young to perceive the marriage market for what it is, they continuously attended Meryton in pursuit of an adventure, wishing to gain an advantage over their other sisters. Despite being the older one, Catherine is presented as Lydia's extension and her personality as well as her priorities depend on the youngest Miss Bennet. For her and her father, Lydia's mistakes serve as a lesson:

> I have at last learnt to be cautious, and you will feel the effects of it. No officer is ever to enter my house again, nor even to pass through the village. Balls will be absolutely prohibited, unless you stand up with one of your sisters. And you are never to stir out of doors, till you can prove, that you have spent ten minutes of every day in a rational manner (Austen 195).

Ultimately, it was Catherine who felt the consequences of Lydia's actions by being removed from the life she previously led and introduced to a new, stricter, set of rules.

Lydia and Jane understand the strictly defined social rules and the accepted behaviour prescribed to a woman by the society differently. Namely, throughout the novel, Jane is praised for her propriety and elegance, and for adherence to the prescribed code of conduct. She never speaks ill of others nor engages in gossip, wishing to always find something good in those around her: "You never see a fault in any body. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life" (Austen 10). Jane is often praised for her good conduct, described as the exception in her, otherwise improper, family. Ultimately, this allowed her access to the upper-class society which was necessary to form relationships with the Bingley family. On the other hand, Lydia is described as loud, direct and even shameless on certain occasions. She does not hesitate to express her opinions nor demand what she wants and is often described as improper by the other characters in the novel. She strives for a wealthy life, filled with expensive things, upper-class company and a husband she could boast about. However, her reality is different from imagined and at the end of the novel, she struggles financially, married to a husband who shows no interest in their relationship:

> Their manner of living, even when the restoration of peace dismissed them to a home, was unsettled in the extreme. They were always moving from place to place in quest of a cheap situation, and always spending more than they ought. His affection for her soon sunk into indifference; hers lasted a little longer; and in spite of her youth and her manners, she retained all the claims to reputation which her marriage had given her (Austen 253).

With her life filled with hardships, she depended on her sisters' financial support, never having enough to live comfortably. Still, Lydia remained purposefully ignorant of her situation, denying the reality not just to others, but also to herself.

Further, Lydia's marriage was treated like a race against her sisters and a fulfilment of her impulses. She followed her desires blindly, without thinking about the consequences of her actions, for herself or for her family. After she escaped to London with Wickham, a soldier temporarily stationed in Meryton, she never stopped to think about the influence her decision would have on her and her sisters' future: "what characterizes Lydia is not so much passion as it is a mere carelessness about herself and her reputation" (Sherry 619). This is evident during Elizabeth's conversation with Darcy, where she explained her sister's situation, admitting to the problem Lydia created for the family and feeling the inferiority of her position: "Her power was sinking; every thing must sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace" (Austen 180). Lydia's escape meant further dishonour on her family name, which would consequently affect the marriage prospects of her sisters, whose reputations would be ruined.

Furthermore, in her escape, Lydia is completely detached from the reality of her situation, believing in Wickham's love for her and his plan to propose, despite him claiming otherwise. Accordingly, after Mr. Darcy found her and Wickham in London, trying to persuade Lydia to return home, she refused to accept that offer, believing in a happy future with her partner:

> he found Lydia absolutely resolved on remaining where she was. She cared for none of her friends, she wanted no help of his, she would not hear of leaving Wickham. She was sure they should be married some time or other, and it did not much signify when (Austen 209).

Thus, the arrangement of Lydia's marriage had to be done, and that responsibility was handled by Mr. Darcy and Mr. Gardiner, who prevented Mr. Wickham from escaping town, paid the various gambling debts he had and organised the wedding, all away from the public eye. This was pivotal

for the reputation of the Bennet family, who were able to present Lydia's situation as a happy marriage between the two people in love.

Finally, Lydia's engagement was made possible by Mr. Darcy and Mr. Gardiner, as well as Elizabeth, who helped her realise her wish to marry Wickham. Here, Elizabeth's role was indirect, influencing Darcy to reevaluate his decisions and change his approach to her family. This support was crucial and served as a prerequisite for Lydia's marriage with the person she chose to elope with. She was the one who broke the rules of society and suffered the consequences of her actions. While, at times, she believed the outcome of her choice to be a happy one, she was later described to have struggled with marriage and finances. Thus, Lydia is a character portraying a woman who broke the rules of conduct and strayed from the carefully written guidelines for marriage, experiencing various hardships as the outcome of her actions.

4.6.George Wickham

George Wickham is described as a charming and well-spoken character who, upon arriving to Meryton, quickly established his position in the society as generally popular and entertaining: "his manners recommended him to every body. Whatever he said, was said well; and whatever he did, done gracefully" (Austen 58). Throughout the novel, it was his manner and charm which attracted the interest of others and allowed him to create a space where he would speak of his perceived sorrows. However, as is later found out, Mr. Wickham is also selfish and self-absorbed, ready to put others down for his own gain. He uses others to promote his position in society and to form further connections.

First, after coming to Meryton and meeting Elizabeth Bennet, Wickham started to spread falsehoods about Mr. Darcy and his family, as well as his involvement in his own life. Here, he claimed to have been unfairly abandoned by the prideful Mr. Darcy, despite his late father's wishes to support Wickham financially. During his conversation with Elizabeth, Wickham told her about being deprived from the money that was rightfully his:

> the late Mr. Darcy bequeathed me the next presentation of the best living in his gift. He was my godfather, and excessively attached to me. I cannot do justice to his kindness. He meant to provide for me amply, and thought he had done it; but when the living fell, it was given elsewhere (Austen 54).

Consequently, Wickham blamed Darcy for his own downfall and struggles, conveying to Elizabeth and anyone else who would listen, his evil actions. Moreover, it was Wickham's charming personality and manners that prevented Elizabeth and others from questioning the validity of his statements:

> what Elizabeth had already heard, his claims on Mr. Darcy, and all that he had suffered from him, was now openly acknowledged and publicly canvassed; and every body was pleased to think how much they had always disliked Mr. Darcy before they had known any thing of the matter (Austen 93).

Thus, his disposition was what allowed him to spread misinformation about the Darcy family, all the while retaining the society's favour. However, by doing so he broke the rules of polite conduct and displayed bad manners, showing impropriety in his behaviour (Sherry 618).

Furthermore, Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy are characters who act as opposites, their personality and actions contrasting throughout the novel. Namely, at the beginning of the novel Mr. Wickham's personality recommended him and he was soon established as a well-liked and interesting officer. During the Netherfield ball, Elizabeth inquired about the opinions of other officers and confirmed Wickham's good standing: "[she] had the refreshment of talking of Wickham, and of hearing that he was universally liked" (Auten 62). On the other hand, after his first appearance in the novel, Mr. Darcy was criticised for his lack of manners and proclaimed to be prideful, making him disliked by the society: "I say no more here than I might say in any house in the neighbourhood, except Netherfield. He is not at all liked in Hertfordshire. Every body is disgusted with his pride" (Austen 53). However, towards the end of the novel the situation around their status changed and their roles were reversed, especially in the eyes of Elizabeth. Namely, when Wickham's true personality was revealed to Elizabeth, Jane and the Gardiners, and his elopement with Lydia made public, the opinion of the society shifted, and his good status was ruined:

> He was declared to be in debt to every tradesman in the place, and his intrigues, all honoured with the title of seduction, had been extended into every tradesman's family. Every body declared that he was the wickedest young man in the world; and every body began to find out, that they had always distrusted the appearance of his goodness (Austen 191).

In contrast, Mr. Darcy attempted to redeem himself, undergoing a big change of behaviour towards Elizabeth, and through that, gained the affection of not just her, but also Jane and her aunt and

uncle Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. Moreover, after his engagement to Elizabeth, Darcy's status in the family changed as well, and he was accepted as Elizabeth's husband; their future happiness was proclaimed a certainty by the members of her family: "Elizabeth had the satisfaction of seeing her father taking pains to get acquainted with him; and Mr. Bennet soon assured her that he was rising every hour in his esteem (Austen 247-248). At the end of the novel, Wickham was obliged to marry Lydia, a woman who could not satisfy his financial needs and who he did not love. On the other hand, Darcy married Elizabeth – a woman he falls for.

George Wickham was led by desire for money and extravagant life, wanting to use marriage as a means of fulfilling his goal. Consequently, he did not search for a marital partner who he would love but was instead ready to marry anyone who would satisfy his financial needs. In the end, his right to choose a marital partner was taken away because of his own selfish acts. Just like Lydia, he broke the rules of prescribed conduct, and as a consequence, he ended up forced into a marriage with someone he did not love and who could not offer him the kind of financial security he was hoping for. In her observation of Wickham and Lydia's marriage, Elizabeth stated:

> She had scarcely needed her present observation to be satisfied, from the reason of things, that their elopement had been brought on by the strength of her love, rather than by his; and she would have wondered why, without violently caring for her, he chose to elope with her at all had she not felt certain that his flight was rendered necessary by distress of circumstances; and if that were the case, he was not the young man to resist an opportunity of having a companion. (Austen 206)

Ultimately, he accepted Mr. Darcy's offer and married Lydia in exchange for having his debts paid and the future settled. With this, his desire was left unfulfilled and without a good social position and having too little to afford the desired wealthy affluent lifestyle, Mr. Wickham was left to lead an unsatisfying life. Thus, he portrays a man who faced the consequences of his misconduct, paying for breaking the rules of society.

4.7.Charlotte Lucas

Charlotte Lucas is described as smart and calculated: she is a woman in her late twenties whose main goal was to find a husband and prevent her from becoming an impoverished, dependant spinster. In the novel, she is well aware of her situation, and with her parents not offering any strong social connections or financial stability, Charlotte was left to fight for her position in the

marriage market. Her situation was reflected in her opinion of marriage where she declared herself as non-romantic:

> Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other, or ever so similar before-hand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always contrive to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life (Austen 16).

Charlotte's view of marriage is as a pursuit of convenience and not of love for the other. This approach to marriage led her to pursue Mr. Collins, an ordained clergyman set to inherit the Longbourn estate.

Firstly, Charlotte Lucas' approach to marriage with Mr. Collins was a calculated one, and she used the situation of distress in the Bennet family, caused by Elizabeth's refusal of Collins' proposal, to establish her position and engage in conversation with him. While Elizabeth appreciated that Charlotte took the time to interact with Collins during the Bennets' visit to the Lucas's lodge, she was unaware of her friend's true intentions:

> Charlotte's kindness extended farther than Elizabeth had any conception of;—its object was nothing less, than to secure her from any return of Mr. Collins's addresses, by engaging them towards herself. Such was Miss Lucas's scheme; and appearances were so favourable that when they parted at night, she would have felt almost sure of success if he had not been to leave Hertfordshire so very soon (Austen 82).

With that, Miss Lucas was ready to use her friend's situation, as well as Mr. Collins' embarrassment with the unsuccessful proposal, to secure a match for herself, thinking only of her own position and feelings.

Secondly, Charlotte Lucas is well-aware of her own feelings towards Mr. Collins and her lack of any romantic interest in him. She perceives their marriage as purely transactional, knowing that she would never be able to love him. As Vickery (*Closed Doors* 96) argues, Charlotte accepted her life with Collins in exchange for a stable future as the woman at the helm of his household. Charlotte sees him as her only opportunity to escape spinsterhood and ensure a future for herself, surrounded the upper-class society:

> Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want. This preservative she had now obtained; and at the age of twenty-seven, without having ever been handsome, she felt all the good luck of it (Austen 83-84).

Through her marriage, she secured her position in society which, down the line, will have allowed her family the luxury of the Longbourn estate, as well as created a space for her siblings on the marriage market. Thus, the match brought much joy to the Lucas family:

> The whole family in short were properly overjoyed on the occasion. The younger girls formed hopes of coming out a year or two sooner than they might otherwise have done; and the boys were relieved from their apprehension of Charlotte's dying an old maid. (Austen 83).

Consequently, Charlotte was satisfied with the outcome of her scheme and content with her future life as wife of Mr. Collins.

Further, Charlotte Lucas and Elizabeth Bennet are two characters whose views of marriage and choice of marital partner are contrasted in the novel. First, as previously mentioned, Charlotte sees marriage as transactional and she strived to find a husband who would offer her a stable future and prevent her from becoming a spinster. On the other hand, Elizabeth refused to marry without love or interest in her partner and rejected both Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy who she deemed improper. However, their attitude toward marriage derives from their life circumstances which differed greatly from one another. Namely, while Elizabeth Bennet was supported by her father and her sister Jane who were concerned only by her future happiness, Miss Lucas was not given such luxury. After Mr. Collins' proposal, Mr. Lucas was asked his consent for the engagement. However, his opinion of the union was influenced only by Collins' social position, while Charlotte was never consulted about her feelings for him: "Mr. Collins's present circumstances made it a most eligible match for their daughter, to whom they could give little fortune" (Austen 83). However, Charlotte made her choice to marry a man who serves her only as a means to obtaining a stable life and escaping spinsterhood, without any real romantic feelings between the two: "Mr. Collins to be sure was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband" (Austen 83). On the other hand, through the support her family offered, Elizabeth was given a right to choose and, in the end,

married Mr. Darcy, ensuring her happy and stable future but also a life with a person she loves: "There can be no doubt of that. It is settled between us already, that we are to be the happiest couple in the world" (Austen 244). Consequently, the context around their marriages were extremely different, ultimately showing the importance of support, especially of those in a position to decide as were Mr. Bennet and Mr. Lucas, who had the power to determine their daughters' lives.

Finally, Charlotte Lucas is a character whose choice of marital partner was influenced by the position of her family, her failure to fulfil the gender expectations and the lack of guidance. She portrayed a woman who, due to her life circumstances, chose to settle for an unsatisfactory man and find stability through someone she would never develop romantic feelings for. As Allen (439) argues, Charlotte Lucas' character shows what happens to a woman who completely disregards her own desires, stuck in a loveless marriage. She was left to convince others, but more importantly herself, of her satisfaction with the marriage. In the end, she fulfilled the role given by the society and became a wife, at the same time sacrificing her own romantic future.

4.8.William Collins

William Collins is described as a self-absorbed and even foolish person who was introduced to the Bennet family through his letter to Mr. Bennet where his inheritance of the Longbourn estate and his personality were established:

> There is something very pompous in his stile.—And what can he mean by apologizing for being next in the entail?—We cannot suppose he would help it, if he could.—Can he be a sensible man, sir?' 'No, my dear; I think not. I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter, which promises well. I am impatient to see him.' (Austen 44).

Moreover, Mr. Collins is a clergyman living in Hunsford, occupying a position which was given to him by Lady Catherine in the near vicinity of her own estate – the Rosings Park.

Furthermore, Mr. Collins depends on Lady De Bourgh not only financially but also in forming of all his opinions and decisions. This is especially important in his view of marriage, where her advice served as the main motivation for his decision to find a wife. Namely, it was Lady Catherine who instructed him to marry, offering her opinion on the subject. This was explained during his proposal to Elizabeth, where Collins stated his reasons for marriage:

> I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly in my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!) on this subject (Austen 72).

Thus, finding a wife was set as Collins' new goal in life, and wishing to satisfy his patroness he travelled to Hunsford in hopes of fulfilling that objective.

For Mr. Collins, marriage is understood as an obligation and not as a union between two people in love. Thus, after arriving to Hunsford and meeting his cousins Mr. Collins was set to propose to one of them. His first choice was Jane, but after learning about her existing connection to Mr. Bingley, he settled his choice on Elizabeth: "Mr. Collins had only to change from Jane to Elizabeth—and it was soon done—done while Mrs. Bennet was stirring the fire. Elizabeth, equally next to Jane in birth and beauty, succeeded her of course (Austen 48). Here, the triviality of his feelings was evident, and Mr. Collins changed his choice with ease. Moreover, after Elizabeth's refusal, it was not his feelings that were hurt, but his pride, which led him to look for a quick solution and thus to settle on marrying Charlotte Lucas. However, the second proposal was done in a different manner. Not wishing to be publicly rejected again, Mr. Collins schemed his secret escape to meet Miss Lucas and proposed to her without anyone knowing:

> He was anxious to avoid the notice of his cousins, from a conviction that if they saw him depart, they could not fail to conjecture his design, and he was not willing to have the attempt known till its success could be known (Austen 82-83)

Led by embarrassment about his previous proposal and with his pride in question, Collins was sure to confirm Charlotte's feelings and receive a positive answer before making his engagement public.

Finally, Mr. Collins' right to choose a marital partner was constricted by his own social position and his connection to Lady Catherine De Bourgh. He set out to find a wife and to fulfil his assigned role, his marital partner having to be someone who would satisfy his patroness and gain her approval. In his search for a wife, Mr. Collins continuously made sure to emphasize the importance of his connection to her and the certainty of her involvement in their future life. However, he had no objections to such a life and is ready to spend his days accordingly. For him, marriage is a matter of duty and without anyone to guide him in another direction, he relied on the

only support he had – his patroness. In the end, Mr. Collins was not dissatisfied with his marriage, finding Charlotte to be a good partner, liked by Lady Catherine. Ultimately, Mr. Collins is a character who fulfilled his duty towards society and his patroness and further established his position as a clergyman and a husband.

5. Conclusion

This thesis examined how social class and gender expectations were reflected in the choice of marital partner for the characters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. With the many changes happening in England during the late 18th and early 19th century the role of class, the notion of manners and gender developed with the society itself. While the period introduced new classes and blurred some of the lines between the already existing ones, manners continued to be pivotal in differentiating the upper class from the individuals belonging to other classes. On the other hand, the differences between gender roles for men and women of that time were evident, each having to follow the prescribed rules of conduct. Through all those changes, the act of marriage remained important for the aristocracy and gentry in retaining or advancing the family position on the social ladder. By marrying, men and women aimed to ensure a stable future for themselves and their families, wishing to find a wealthy partner with a good annual income.

The significance of marriage itself is shown in *Pride and Prejudice*, where eight people get married, which was considered a great success for all the characters, their families, and the public itself. Elizabeth and Darcy both utilised their right to choose and married the person they developed feelings for. Similarly, Jane and Bingley both remained passive in their relationship but the support from other characters created an environment where their affection could be shown, which ultimately led to their marriage. On the other hand, Lydia and Wickham both broke the prescribed rules of conduct by eloping in London, thus their right to choose was shown as wasted and their marriage described as challenging and with little regard for each other. Finally, Charlotte and Collins were both led primarily by their idea of conforming to the societal norms, with almost no one to guide them in their choice of a marital partner. Consequently, their marriage was described as one of duty, without any romantic feelings between them. Taking everything into consideration, it can be concluded that social status and gender expectations, alongside the prescribed rules of

behaviour and the support provided by others impacted the search for a marital partner for the characters in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Finally, the connection between money and desire is evident throughout the novel. Money served as the main factor in determining one's position in society and establishing social class, but still not enough to blur the lines dividing the aristocracy from (pseudo) gentry. It allowed people to be accepted into society and be excused for their possible missteps, simultaneously dividing those who failed to meet the expected financial standard. On the other hand, desire was highly influenced by money: whether it referred to the character's own financial status or that of their romantic interest, it was pivotal in determining their connection to the other person. Consequently, money impacted the characters' right to choose a marital partner and created a setting where they had to rely on not only their own desires, but also the standards set by the society they lived in.

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