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MASTER'S THESIS

**REPRESENTATION OF MARRIAGE AS A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
INSTITUTION IN JANE AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE***

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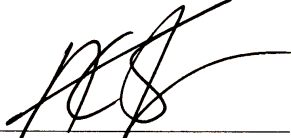
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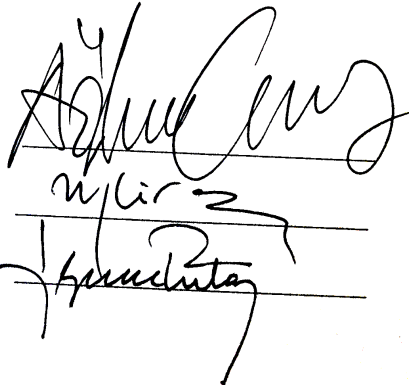
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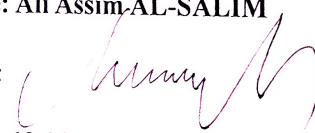
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ABSTRACT

REPRESENTATION OF MARRIAGE AS A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTION IN JANE AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

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Jane Austen who is regarded as “the originator of the Regency (1811-1820) romance, was a subtle satirist and shrewd analyst of human behavior” (Kruger et al. 2013, p. 198) in time when many moral values, conventions and practices were so intolerable, particularly for women, that she preferred to publish her first novel anonymously.

Pride and Prejudice is the mirror of the English society of Austen's time. The cornerstone for this novel which shapes its events and greatly affects the lives of the characters is marriage. Through marriage, the novel reflects not only the appearance but also the naked reality of the society, the social structure of which was based on male dominance that reflected severe injustices against women.

By focusing on marriage not only as an individual form of relationship between two genders but also as a social and economic institution, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* provides invaluable opportunities to both comprehend and criticize English society of the period in terms of economic, social as well as gender-based relationships among individuals.

In this thesis, marriage will comprehensively be dealt with to show how and why women in the English society in the late-eighteenth century and the early-nineteenth

century were struggling for marriage, and what factors and circumstances affected marriage as an institution. Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen succeeds in showing the reader the human relations particularly within middle and upper-classes in the society. Austen employs marriage institution to focus on the nature of relationships among individuals from different social classes and this, in turn, leads to show the real nature of these individuals as well as their social circles. It pinpoints a lot of small details and flaws in the moral values and behaviours of the individuals and society, such as social hypocrisy and the power of money that shapes people's lives, as well as discrimination against and suffering of women. In addition, Austen uses an ironical language in many parts of the novel to support and strengthen her claims and to emphasize them more powerfully.

Key words: marriage, class distinction, gender-based relations, economic and social structure, Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*.

ÖZ

JANE AUSTEN'İN AŞK VE GURUR (*PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*) ROMANINDA EVLİLİĞİN SOSYAL VE EKONOMİK BİR KURUM OLARAK TEMSİLİ

İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
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“Regency dönemi aşk romanı kavramının yaratıcısı” olarak kabul edilen Jane Austen, aynı zamanda “insan davranışı konusunda zeki bir gözlemci ve bir yergi ustası” (Kruger et al. 2013, p. 198) olarak değerlendirilebilir. Döneminde birçok ahlaki değer, gelenek ve uygulama özellikle kadınlar açısından dayanılmaz ölçüde zor olduğu için ilk romanını anonim olarak yayımlamıştır.

Austen *Aşk ve Gurur*'da yaşadığı dönem İngiliz toplumuna ayna tutmaktadır. Romandaki olaylara yön veren ve karakterlerin yaşamını büyük ölçüde etkileyen romanın temel olgusu evliliklerdir. Roman evlilik kurumu sayesinde kadına karşı yapılan haksızlıkların yansımaları olan ve erkek egemenliğine dayanan toplum yapısını tüm çıplaklığıyla ortaya koymaktadır.

Evliliği yalnızca iki cins arasında varolan bireysel bir ilişki değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal bir kurum olarak da ele alarak, Jane Austen *Aşk ve Gurur* romanında dönemin İngiliz toplumunu ekonomik, sosyal ve toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri açısından anlamayı ve sorgulamayı sağlamaktadır.

Bu tezde, evlilik ayrıntılı bir biçimde incelenecek ve 18. yüzyılın sonu ve 19. yüzyılın başlarında İngiliz toplumunda kadınların evlenebilmek için nasıl çaba harcadıkları ve evlilik kurumunu etkileyen öğelerin neler olduğu ortaya konacaktır. Roman boyunca Austen başarılı bir biçimde, toplumun tüm özelliklerini ve günlük

yaşam ve ilişkilerin arkasında yatan etmenlerin neler olduğunu okura aktarmaktadır. Yazar, evlilik kurumunu çeşitli sosyal sınıflara ait bireyler arasındaki ilişkilere odaklanabilmek için kullanır ve böylece hem bu bireylerin gerçek yüzünü hem de sosyal çevrelerini gösterir. Tez, insanların yaşamını biçimlendiren, aynı zamanda da ayrımcılık ve kadının sorunlarının temelinde yatan sosyal ikiyüzlülük ve paranın gücü gibi çarpık değerler ile insan davranışlarındaki ayrıntıların ve yanlışlıkların altını çizer.

Anahtar sözcükler: Jane Austen, *Aşk ve Gurur*, evlilik, sınıf ayrımı, toplumsal cinsiyet, ekonomik ve sosyal yapı

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INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen, who is regarded as “the originator of the Regency (1811-1820) romance, was a subtle satirist and shrewd analyst of human behavior” (Kruger et al. 2013, p. 198) in time when many moral values, social conventions and practices were intolerable and really different from our modern time. In that time, the social environment was not suitable for women working as writers and in many other fields in the job market. This explains why her first novel *Sense and Sensibility* was published under the pen name of “By a Lady” instead of “By Jane Austen” so as to hide her identity, while the writer's name of *Pride and Prejudice* was written as: “By the Writer of *Sense and Sensibility*” rather than writing her real name.

These authorless novels hampered Austen from being known as a famous authoress but at the same time they helped her to be concealed from the eyes of the society which attributed reprehensible masculine features to women in case they worked in fields that were dominated by men only (Yu, 2010, p. 678). However, these biases did not hinder Jane Austen to continue what she had already started and it did not stop women from showing their creativity and demonstrating their writing skills since there were many contemporary women writers to Austen such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Caroline Burney, Sarah Burney, Elizabeth Hamilton, Barbara Hofland, Lady Caroline Lamb, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, who might also have suffered from such absurd behaviours throughout their lifetime.

The importance of Jane Austen as a writer comes from her interest, analysis and criticism in her novels of issues concerning the English society in her period and how the situation of women in that society was. She focuses on the relationships among individuals from different social and economic classes and how they think about each other. Through the idea of marriage around which these individuals meet and conflict, she is able to present human behaviours, particularly, of middle and upper-classes in the society and to pinpoint a lot of small details and flaws in the moral values and

behaviours of the individuals as well as the society as a whole and “she [is] astutely realistic about the effects that differences of status and income could have on people's lives—and particularly on the lives of women” (Austen, 2008, p. 299).

Unquestionably, Austen's novels were and continue to be successful in reflecting the society of that period and the environment where she lived. According to Jonathan Bate: “Austen stands for a lost world of elegance, of empire-line dresses, of good manners, of ladylikeness and gentlemanliness in large and beautiful houses” (1999, p. 541) which represent the charming fashions and culture of that society but, at the same time, these beautiful aspects reveal many blemishes and problems distressing people in that time.

Around the late-eighteenth century when Austen started writing her novels, the situation of women was difficult due to gender biases. They were discriminated by the society which, unlike men, treated women in a prejudiced and inferior way. Women would not be allowed to inherit the property and estates of their families and they would face many difficulties in the job market. Therefore, Austen somehow writes in a way to criticize her society, though most of the time she is not doing so directly but in an ironical and implied manner. Daniel J. Kruger thinks that:

Despite writing in the early 19th century and depicting a world with social constraints that contrast with those of today, Jane Austen created novels that remain popular. One key to their pervasive popularity may be the way the characters are described, and more particularly, how the characters were created to depict a variety of women's mating strategies. Jane Bennett from *Pride and Prejudice* . . . [is] interested solely in long-term relationships, who would fall in love and marry before they would engage in sexual relations . . . [while] Lydia Bennett actively engage in flirtation and pursuit of a potential mate, and [she] engage[s] in short-term relationships. (2013, pp. 206-7)

The community in which Jane Austen lived was arranged in many distinct social ranks as a result of the Industrial Revolution and the economic growth. The structure of the society was divided into subcategories such as the bourgeoisie, proletariat, nobility, gentry and other ranks. Status of persons in that time was not determined by themselves but mainly according to the status of their families. In addition, the importance of financial and economic status of people grew so sharply that people were evaluated

depending on what they owned (Gao, 2013, p. 385).

It is also important to note that marriage was a big concern for all parents and their daughters. Parents eagerly wanted to see their daughters settled down with a man of a comfortable house and enough income to keep them in the same or in a higher social rank. The society regarded marriage as a means of surviving, mainly for women rather than for men, due to the suffering of women from discrimination and tough economic conditions. Another important factor, which is emphasized as well as criticized by Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice*, is the unfair deprivation of women from inheritance by entailing the estate and property of a family to the older son; while if the family had no male heir, its lands and estates would go to a cousin even if he was a distant relative to this family. The important thing in the entail tradition was that the heir must be a male so as to keep the line and the name of the family preserved. Consequently in this patriarchal society, many women's economic conditions would deteriorate extremely after the death of their fathers especially if they had no brothers as is the case with the Bennets whose daughters are going to be in a very miserable situation unless they get married to relatively rich men.

Furthermore, the “Married Women's Property Act” of 1753 which stated that all women's property became their husbands' on marriage (Austen, 2008, p. 311) also represents the discriminatory and biased behaviors of that society and how women were treated in an inferior and unfair manner. Despite the fact that this irrational discrimination would not affect poor women who had no property or estate anyway to lose, it discouraged other women, especially if they were rich and had estates, to reconsider marrying men who would certainly seize all their properties on the first day of their marriage. In his book *The Rise of The Novel*, Ian Watt mentions an example of this situation. He talks about Roxana, a character in Daniel Defoe's novel, *Roxana*. She is a merchant and a very wealthy woman; as a result, she rejects marriage realizing that making money cannot be associated with being married to a man who would disable her. She thinks that the bond of marriage would confine women and make them lose their freedom, property and power because of the control of the other sex (1964, p.142). Thus, whether women got married or became spinsters and whether they were poor or rich was difficult for them. They were oppressed and prejudiced in that male-dominated

community.

Watt also talks about what he calls “the crisis of marriage” which was a serious matter that concerned a lot of people in the eighteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, however, unmarried women were no longer positive economic assets to the household because there was less need for their labour in spinning, weaving and other economic tasks; as a result many unmarried women were faced with the unpleasant choice between working for very low wages, or becoming largely superfluous dependent on someone else . . . Jane Austen a generation later, [was] able to pursue successful literary careers . . . like many other spinsters . . . [she could not] support herself entirely by her pen. (1964, pp.144-5)

The norms and moral values of that society were full of intolerable flaws and weak points in terms of marriage and women's rights that are strongly unacceptable in our modern time. In her article “Jane Austen's Ideal Man in *Pride and Prejudice*,” Haiyan Gao points out that:

In 19th century, marriage was dominated by material base in English society. Social relationships and economic mode determined the rule of marriage. In Austen's days, the only road for mid-class lady's happy life is to marry well. The wrong choice of mate could spell social and financial disaster. Almost every woman's ideal man was a millionaire or at least a single gentleman with a piece of estate and much money every year. (2013, p. 384)

Similarly, Watt again refers to the circumstances of English society in the eighteenth century and how women were in miserable situations whether they were married or single. He mentions that patriarchy and the Roman legal codes mainly controlled women's position in the society. In any house or family, the male parent or the patriarch is the one who had the absolute authority over the family by the force of law and conventions which allow him also to take the ownership of the wife's property and the possession of the children. The worst thing of all was that inflicting such physical punishments on the wife as hitting or putting her under lock and key was permitted for the husband. He also had the sole right to annul their marriage contract in court (1964, p. 141).

In Austen's time, marriage was publicly seen as a profit-making institution and a way to achieve unions between families that lead to economic and social privileges. This reckoning and estimation which is mainly of a materialistic nature can be hindered by the illogical power of passion and love (Harding, 1998, p. 28). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen presents a clash between love as an instinctive nature in human and the pursuit after money and social status which are held to be essential parts of any successful marriage (Harding, 1998, p. 40).

Wang and Liu state that throughout her novels, Austen concerns herself with the status and appreciation of women in the society and she demands securing jobs for them by breaking down the institution that was dominated by men. This is done through two paths: her characters and stories. Her stories focus on the daily lives, passion and matrimony of young women by referring to their way of thinking very much. As for the characters, Austen's main and important characters are always women. In addition, through her feminist narration, she “effectively gets rid of the control of masculine discourse and establishes feminist narrative authority” (2011, p. 1828-9).

In her novels, Jane Austen is always concerned with the idea of marriage and matchmaking as well as the social, economic and psychological factors and conditions that may have an effect on marriage. She uses and emphasizes the theme of marriage and how money and social class have an important role in determining the choice of a wife or of a husband. By focusing mainly on this theme, Austen sheds light on and criticizes the flaws and defects of the English society of her time. On the other hand, it can be observed that Austen pays less attention to love and other emotional and psychological concerns of matrimonial life. As a critic remarks, in all of Austen's six novels, “marriage is presented as a social, domestic, legal and economic event and condition” and it is “portrayed as both work and reward” (Thompson, 1988, p. 134) for the heroines and heroes who have to work hard and exert their own efforts in order to be able to get spouses and appropriate matrimonial union.

As the daughter of a local rector, Austen was a genteel-class woman without dowry. She was so clear about the rule of the marriage market that she decided to lead an unmarried life considering her own situation. Men like Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley were

so rare around her that it was almost impossible for her to find her ideal man in the fairly restricted circle of acquaintances in Hampshire, her hometown (Gao, 2013, p. 386).

To the end of the eighteenth century, individual became more self-reliant and had the freedom to decide on their spouses. In that period women got the responsibility of exerting their own efforts for finding and securing husbands. Previously, such responsibility was normally the duty of the fathers and mothers, not their daughters. Advantages for those young women who were undergoing the troubles of courting were not easy to gain due to the inadequate circumstances (Thompson, 1988, p. 143-8). Austen's novels deal with courting in a way different from other novels produced in the eighteenth century. She puts the burden of courtship and pursuing marriage on the shoulders of her heroines rather than making them bow to the power and traditions of their society (Giles, 2012, p. 76). This is the case with the Bennet family whose youngest daughter Lydia finds her husband and she advises her sisters that “they must all go to Brighton. That is the place to get husbands” (Austen, 2008, p. 241). They have to work hard to be able to obtain husbands.

According to Nancy Armstrong, “one may argue that many women's novels indeed signal the reader to regard fiction as a major source of information about the condition of women” (1987, p. 48). And indeed, Jane Austen pays special attention to women's conditions and how they could lead their lives in a male-dominated society where there is a great deal of prejudice against them.

Through women's novels, one may also comprehend the environment and social circles in which women live. According to David Herbert, in order to effectively apprehend the characteristics and identity of an area, one can rely on literary works. These works have been employed throughout history to be a mirror and a store of information for areas and countries (1991, p. 194). Jane Austen uses *Pride and Prejudice* and her other novels to make the readers comprehend the English society of the period and be familiar with its conventions and rules. The plot of the novel focuses on the relationships among individuals. These relationships are particularly in terms of marriage which is used to show the stratification of the society. The story starts with unmarried women in inadequate circumstances and not promising future that urge them

to pursue husbands. These women as well as other rich female characters compete for marriage. Their pursuit and conflicts reveal many hidden facts of the society. Almost all the women characters in the novel, like Mrs. Bennet and her five daughters, Miss Bingley, Charlotte Lucas and her family and Lady Catherine are engrossed in thinking of and seeking marriage. In addition, there are other male characters, like Mr. Wickham, Mr. Collins, Mr. Bingley, and Mr. Darcy, who are also highly interested in the phenomenon of marriage; however, each one of them has a different purpose behind his marriage.

Since the setting of *Pride and Prejudice* is a small country-side area, women are restricted in a small circle of acquaintances. There is only small number of families and, unlike in large cities, everyone knows everything about others' affairs, which helps to create and maintain a sense of competition among the families and women. They compete with each other to get husbands “in a country neighbourhood [where] you move in a very confined and unvarying society” (Austen, 2008, p. 31) according to Mr. Darcy. In his book *Jane Austen: The Novel*, Nicholas Marsh comments on the environment and society in Austen's novels by saying that:

Jane Austen's novels are a special case in respect of the society they present. They focus almost exclusively on a narrow stratum of the upper-middle class in rural English settings, and their entire narrative interest is in the 'neighbourhood', made of a few families of this class, and one or two professional people such as clergymen or naval officers, who visited each other on a regular basis. The style of social life is that of the end of the eighteenth century rather than the different forms of behaviour and social interaction that began to become the norm during the nineteenth century. (1998, p. 94)

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen deals with four marriages: Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet, Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet, Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas, as well as Mr. Wickham and Lydia Bennet. There are many other characters striving to achieve marriage, so one can realize how important marriage is in the novel and how it is important for Austen and her society. Each marriage is motivated by different purposes and motives which are either economic, social or emotional. Property and social class are considered important concerns for almost all the characters when making

decisions concerning marriage. Through these four marriages, Austen is capable of reflecting various power relations among individuals, as well as the social and economic structure and nature of the society.

By focusing on marriage not only as an individual form of relationship between two genders but also as a social and economic institution, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* provides invaluable opportunities to both comprehend and criticize English society of the period in terms of economic, social and gender-based relationships among individuals. In this thesis, marriage will be discussed from the perspective of how the English society in the late-eighteenth century and the early-nineteenth century viewed marriage and what factors and circumstances affected their choices of a future husband or wife. In addition, how and why marriage was for individuals as the main social relationship that helps them achieve improvement in their lives. Marriage is also used in the novel as a tool for economic, social and gender-based analysis and criticism of the society. The argument of this thesis will be divided into three chapters as follows:

In chapter one, the discussion will be dealing with the reasons why characters consider money and marriage as inseparable elements to secure a prosperous future of their lives. Money is of the highest importance for them when they want to take decisions concerning their life partners. It is more important for women for reasons that will be elaborately discussed throughout the chapter. Marriage that is combined with money is all that many characters seek, and this interest in the economic advantages that may be obtained through marrying rich spouses causes a struggle and conflict to take place among them.

In chapter two, a somehow similar discussion will take place but this time to discuss the social considerations that make characters get married and what realities can be revealed about the English society of that period. A kind of social struggle happens among characters from different social classes, who consider marriage as a means to achieve social benefits. In fact, social and economic considerations of marriage are closely connected to each other but in this chapter, the confusion between them will be untangled and elaborated upon.

Finally, in chapter three, the focus will be on the ironical language used by

Austen in certain parts of the novel to mockingly reveal all these economic and social obsessions associated with marriage and to show the social hypocrisy and other realities in her society. The ironical language, that will be dealt with in this chapter, is all about the institution of marriage and how Austen depicts people compering for it in an exaggerated manner.

In these three chapters, the center of discussion is not only about marriage and the motives of people that force them to get married but also on the reasons why people behave like this. Those reasons are used by Austen to criticize many standards and ethics of the society and to show the suffering of and discrimination against women as well as to indicate the social hypocrisy of that society.

CHAPTER ONE

MARRIAGE AS A MEANS OF ECONOMIC SURVIVAL FOR WOMEN

For both men and women, the decision and the opportunity to lead a matrimonial life may largely depend on their social, economic or psychological conditions. In *Pride and Prejudice*, money as an inseparable part of marriage is held to be the center of attention for many characters who think of it as a way to and a crucial part of their future successful marriages. In this chapter, the focus will be on how Jane Austen presents money as a pivotal restriction or motivation that has an impact on people's decisions of marriage, and therefore, she provides an opportunity for the readers to be acquainted with her society and what the inherited cultural beliefs of its individuals are.

In Austen's days, women had to tolerate miserable circumstances and restrictions that drove them to think about marriage as a means to survive their economically poor conditions. Women were treated so unfairly that they would not inherit the property of their families, so all the lands and estates would go to the eldest son or to a male cousin of their father in case he had no son of his own. This is, among other reasons, why women tried anxiously to support themselves with the help of husbands. Even worse, indeed, was that if a woman had some property of her own, she would normally lose them because they would belong to her husband after their marriage.

Another economic problem for women in Austen's time was the difficulty they faced in securing dowry which was almost an obligation if they wanted to obtain husbands. Marriage, in the eighteenth century, started to be regarded as a more effective moneymaking business than it had been in the previous centuries as it was obvious in the newspapers of that period. Those newspapers started to present marriage as a field of business since they used to publish commercials in which individuals showed their willingness to pay specific amounts of dowry or they

requested the sum of dowry they wanted to get. In addition, young women were forced to accept inappropriate husbands with a view of probably gaining money and profits out of such marriages for themselves and their families (Watt, 1964, p. 142). Families of the gentry were responsible for supporting their daughters financially, but in case they were impoverished, their daughters would bear their own responsibility and would be obliged to maintain themselves as governesses. Hence, the marriages of such women would be affected by the financial situation of their families and also by the dowry they had to bring (Harding, 1998, p. 27) to the house of their future husbands. For the aforementioned reasons, marriage openly started to have influential economic and social dimensions, which turned out to be a real matter of concern for women, more powerful than other considerations like love and other emotional and psychological factors that are actually supposed to be taken into consideration before anything else.

Speaking about young men in that time, Xiaoping Yu states that they had more alternatives to support themselves, to achieve improvement as individuals and to make progress towards a better place in the society through working in the army, church or in the fields of law. As for women, it was quite different. They could only achieve improvement in their life through gaining fortune which was an aim not probable to be reached without the help of a prosperous marriage, and this demonstrates why Austen focuses on marriage and matchmaking in her novels as issues with high priority for herself and her heroines and as a major aspect of the storyline of these novels. In Austen's day, unlike in the early eighteenth century, women acquired more liberty to select their spouses; however, economic and social limitations kept on restraining and reducing their choices (2010, p. 678). This assumed liberty and variety of options were the results of the British Industrial Revolution which led to social transition and economic development for individuals.

In view of what has been said so far, one might somehow come to understand how Jane Austen thinks about marriage and other issues concerning women's life and how she writes about and reflects such matters in her novels. In an article, Haiyan Gao observes that:

According to Austen, it is not sensible to marry for money, but it is silly to marry without money. Marriage is associated with property and social

status, but it is not resolved by them. The first step to choose an ideal husband is to examine his virtue and personal qualities. It is nightmare to live with a hooligan. The second one is to take his social status into consideration. Adequate living conditions could not be the first element but an important component. A person could be judged by his living and educational background. Last but not least, it is true love. (2013, p. 388)

Accordingly, Austen did not deal with marriage as a pure form of emotional relationship between individuals but, since she was a woman living in that English society, she precisely knew how the situation of women was and how they led their lives and she, then, had to be realistic about what they needed.

Furthermore, James Thompson observes that the best way to read Austen's works properly is to forget about the romantic notion which considers love as the only important thing among people and that love defeats all other considerations. He thinks so because throughout the chain of events of Austen's novels, emotional and economic considerations are not presented to be conflicting with one another. However, it should be noted that both of these considerations have their own importance and neither of them has more significance than the other in the scale of marriage demands. Thompson adds that Jane Austen is able to present emotional and economic concerns in a balanced and parallel way, and with the same level of importance. What connects them in the novel is that characters have to consider and show interest in both of them because love affects or qualifies money and vice versa (1988, p. 153). Therefore, "in Austen's world, money certainly matters. Austen always makes sure we know precisely what her characters are worth in financial terms" (Austen, 2008, p. 300) as is the case with Mr. Darcy whose annual income is ten thousand a year and Mr. Bingley's is four or five thousand in addition to his Netherfield Park and to the Pemberley Palace of Mr. Darcy. These incomes, as well as properties, engross people's minds and make them consider these two gentlemen as the most appropriate husbands to lead a happy life with. Vivien Jones remarks that within Austen's novels, readers can notice that economic and financial concerns are considered of such a high importance and they characterize her stories. Concerning selecting husbands and getting married, Austen's women characters take money into their consideration more than other factors (1987, p. 35).

In *Pride and Prejudice*, marriage can be considered as a necessity of a great

importance for most women characters and somehow for men due to the suffering of women from discrimination and tough economic conditions. In fact, marriage is the dominant and focal obsession of the characters throughout the whole story. Women characters try to exploit every ball or gathering that is held in their village and the neighboring regions, trying to find or maybe to hunt husbands since they live in a small village where, unlike the city, there is only a weak possibility to encounter a lot of young men coming from outside their circle of acquaintances. It becomes their primary job to draw the attention of men and to compete over them especially if these men are of large fortunes and with whom they are able to lead a comfortable or maybe a luxurious life.

In this novel, Jane Austen shows how money and economic status of people are the first impetus of marriage for most women and to some extent for men. The Bennet family is in the center of this marriage struggle since they have five young girls at the age of marriage. These girls, who are Lydia, Kitty, Mary, Elizabeth and Jane—respectively from the youngest to the eldest, are the sole concern of their mother who has nothing to do in her life but to spend every effort into securing husbands for them, or as it is sarcastically expressed by Austen, “the business of her life is to get her daughters married” (Austen, 2008, p. 3). In one of her conversations with her husband, Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet tells him “If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for” (Austen, 2008, p. 5). It might be instinctively true for Mrs. Bennet and quite understandable for the readers why such a woman thinks and behaves in an exaggeratedly anxious way concerning her daughters' marriages since they will find no money and no supporter to maintain themselves after the death of their father whose estate is entailed on his cousin. At the same time, their mother's fortune is only four thousand pounds from her father which can but poorly provide for their living. The entail which is a middle age Christian tradition continued to be valid until Austen's time and it had a huge negative influence on women. Families wanted to keep their lands, property and name preserved through the act of limiting the property to male inheritors. Lands and estates would be inherited only by the eldest son who also would not be able to sell them, but instead they had to be transferred to his eldest son, too, and so on. However, if he had no male heir, the inheritance would go to a male cousin, whether he was a near or distant one. Such

procedures would leave young women vulnerable to the harsh reality of the society and the inevitable fate of living in poor economic conditions for most of them.

Jane Austen narrates the story of a family with only daughters in *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as in *Persuasion*. The houses where they live their early lives are entailed on male cousins so as to keep men in control of the family over generations but, at the same time, to prevent other sons and daughters from their natural right of inheritance and restrict their abilities and authorities. Austen deals not with the reasons of establishing the entail system but with its results and negative effects on women by adopting an attitude for defending women's rights (Lamont, 2003, p. 666). Consequently, one might notice that this controversial matter of entail is one of the important weapons used by Austen to criticize some inherited cultural standards within her society.

The Bennet daughters face the unfair situation of inheritance so they have to figure out a solution for themselves. Although Mr. Bennet has five daughters, they will not be able to inherit their father's Longbourn estate because, as it is mentioned before, it is entailed on his cousin Mr. Collins “who, when I am dead,” says Mr. Bennet to his family “may turn you all out of this house as soon as he pleases” (Austen, 2008, p. 46). After several attempts to have the long-awaited son who is supposed “to join in cutting off the entail, as soon as he should be of age” (Austen, 2008, p. 234), Mr. and Mrs. Bennet could only have five successive daughters and this makes them more disquieted over their future owing to the fact that the girls will be left alone without an estate or sufficient money unless they get married.

It is worth noting that Jane Austen deprecates and highlights the injustice of this social tradition against women throughout the novel, either by implicitly using an ironical language and situations or by explicitly making her characters directly attack such rule of inheritance and other wrong set of conventions prevailing in her community. Austen employs Mrs. Bennet as her protester against some rules of the society concerning women's rights, though she considers her as a woman of “mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper” (Austen, 2008, p. 3). Mrs. Bennet condemns the cruelty of taking away a house from a family who do not have another place to go and giving it to a man who does not deserve it. What is funny about Mrs. Bennet is that she does not even know what the entail rule means and she

urges her husband to do something to avoid it. Her daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, try to explain the nature of the entail to her and that it is impossible to skirt around it but “it was a subject on which Mrs. Bennet was beyond the reach of reason” (Austen, 2008, p. 46). One may argue that Jane Austen deliberately addresses her attitude through this foolish character in order to mockingly attack and demean the society in which rules and moral principles are nothing but slogans. In her conversation with her husband, Mrs. Bennet resentfully expresses her sadness and vexation about women's situation and the injustice they face:

Indeed, it is hard to think that Charlotte Lucas should ever be mistress of this house, that I should be forced to make way for her, and live to see her take my place in it. If it was not for the entail I should not mind it! [says Mrs. Bennet].

My dear, do not give way to such gloomy thoughts. Let us hope for better things. Let us flatter ourselves that I may be the survivor, [replies Mr. Bennet].

This was not very consoling to Mrs. Bennet, and therefore, instead of making any answer, she went on as before, [comments the narrator].

I cannot bear to think that they should have all this estate. If it was not for the entail I should not mind.

What should not you mind?

I should not mind anything at all.

Let us be thankful that you are preserved from a state of such insensibility.

I never can be thankful, Mr. Bennet, for any thing about the entail. How one could have the conscience to entail away an estate from one's own daughters I cannot understand; and all for the sake of Mr. Collins too!— Why should he have it more than anybody else?

I leave it to yourself to determine.

(Austen, 2008, p. 100-1)

In this effective scene, Jane Austen attacks the rule of entail by presenting to the reader the bitterness and deep concerns of a mother over her daughters who could be in the street due to such a traditional law. This issue may be the most urgent obsession and nightmare that drive Mrs. Bennet to be extremely preoccupied with her pursuit of husbands for her daughters. What is more ironic about this quotation is that the Bennets' friend Charlotte Lucas is the one who is going to put them aside and be the mistress of the house. Despite Charlotte's sympathy with her close friend Elizabeth to whom she tells “I do not know who to maintain you when your father is dead” (Austen, 2008, p. 87), she will participate in their distress through marrying Mr. Collins and taking their house later. Furthermore, Mr. Bennet reinforces the

legitimacy of his wife's complaint by addressing his own: "It is certainly a most iniquitous affair, and nothing can clear Mr. Collins from the guilt of inheriting Longbourn. But if you will listen to his letter, you may perhaps be a little softened by his manner of expressing himself" (Austen, 2008, p. 46). One might conclude from Mr. Bennet's speech that it is neither Mr. Collins nor Charlotte Lucas that should be held responsible for his daughters' foreseen misery but the social code. In addition to Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the rich aristocratic woman, also opens the door for the reader to discuss the legitimacy of the entail tradition when she says: "I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line" (Austen, 2008, p. 126).

It is interestingly enough to know that men were also affected by the entail system since the eldest son was the one to inherit his family's estate not the younger sons. Its impact on them was to a large extent less dreadful because men could work more freely than women. Yet, it affected their decisions of marriage and made them consider money before other elements. A good example in the novel is Colonel Fitzwilliam, Mr. Darcy's cousin, who confesses to Elizabeth that "A younger son, you know, must be inured to self-denial and dependence . . . Younger sons cannot marry where they like . . . Our habits of expense make us too dependant, and there are not many in my rank of life who can afford to marry without some attention to money" (Austen, 2008, p. 141). Thus, even if a man is from the high-classes of the society, he is affected by the entail which would make him think of marriage not as a pure institution of love and social life but he may seek advantages through it. For all that has been mentioned so far, Mrs. Bennet regards money as her first priority when it comes to find husbands for her daughters, and anything else for her may be less important.

Furthermore, it sounds really interesting in *Pride and Prejudice* that the economic influence on marriage is discussed from the very first two sentences up to the last one. Jane Austen starts her novel with two powerful and significant sentences revealing what the novel is about. They might be short compact sentences but they still have a wealth of knowledge about how the plot of the novel will probably deal with the relationship between marriage and money in the society:

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 feeling or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

(Austen, 2008, p. 1)

These opening sentences of *Pride and Prejudice* unveil the whole theme of the novel. They are just like a thesis statement for the novel that determines its path and where it is supposed to go. In these sentences, Jane Austen states that this 'truth' which emphasizes the financial aspect of marriage is universal, so it can be applied to all people wherever and whenever they are and that it is not restricted only to her social surrounding. Here Austen indirectly suggests the materialistic perspective and motives behind the choices of women to marry, neglecting other motives such as love or psychological need to have a male partner. Haiyan Gao comments that the first sentence “immediately establishes the centrality of advantageous marriage, fundamental social value of Regency England” (2013, p. 385), a period which started at 1811 with the rule of the king George IV. While Judith Newton argues that here Austen “emphasize[s] the idea that women's compulsive husband hunting has an economic base, but we are never allowed to feel that base as a determining force in women's experience” (1978, p. 33).

Women's situation in the society and how they were treated are always presented in Austen's novels. Again according to Judith Newton, in her novels Austen focuses, in a criticizing manner, on how and to what extent women of the middle class enjoy economic advantages and suffer from limitations compared with those of men and how it shapes and affects the life of women and men in different ways. In *Pride and Prejudice*, young men seem to have the opportunity to possess and use money while it is different for young women who cannot enjoy such opportunity unless they get married. This is why marriage is always discussed and sought for by daughters and their families unlike men who pay less attention to this issue (1978, p. 28).

Newton goes on to say that in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen presents a group of men from the middle and upper class who, unlike women, have the liberty to possess and use money freely. Men have such privileges as to find work with

payment, and they can get education and inherit their families' fortunes. Women, in contrast to men, do not have any of these privileges unless they are well married. They only inherit dowry whereas men inherit estates and financial resources to lead comfortable lives. A good example of that is Mr. Collins who benefits from the entail because he is a man, while it hampers the daughters of Mr. Bennet because they are women with no rights when comparing them to men. As a result, marriage for the Bennet daughters and any other young woman in the same situation can be regarded as a means to survive economically. However, what Austen does in *Pride and Prejudice* is that she does not allow men to hold power and look strong, though they enjoy such economic and social advantages over women. These privileges are supposed to make them seem strong and enjoy the authority, but, on the contrary, they look silly and awkward. At the same time, women who lack what men enjoy do not look in the novel to be noticeably suffering from such economic restriction (1978, p. 29-30).

By returning to the opening of the novel, in the second sentence Jane Austen's concept of marriage, which she mockingly declares to be universal probably in order to generate more powerful influence, is applied to a local place rather than the whole world. It is transferred from its universal sense to be localized in a neighborhood framework with its 'surrounding families' who consider this single man whose wealth is considerable as the 'rightful property' of each of their daughters. The competition to win this 'wealthy young man' among these families is largely based on their focused interest in money. Again Jones argues that "the word 'property' takes an increasing importance and can be seen as a key word in the passage. It suggests that for these families marriage is about possession, not only a fortune but of a person - indeed the two seem to be completely identified." (Jones, 1987, p. 37). It is the possession of the money as well as the estate of this single man.

This 'universal truth' is 'well fixed' in the mind of Mrs. Bennet who has five daughters of marriageable ages. Therefore, the starting sentences can exactly be applied to Mrs. Bennet if one looks at the dialogue that takes place between Mr. Bennet and herself:

Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England . . . [says Mrs.

Bennet].
What is his name? [replies Mr. Bennet].
Bingley.
Is he married or not?
Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!
How so? How can it affect them?
My dear Mr. Bennet [replies his wife], how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.
Is that his design in settling here?
Design! Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.

(Austen, 2008, p. 1-2)

Here, Mrs. Bennet appears to be sure that this single man is 'in want of a wife' and he is the 'rightful property' of one of her daughters. She seems as if she has the right to decide that this proper candidate must marry one of her daughters, since he is a single man entering their neighborhood with a huge wealth. Moreover, she talks in this way even though she never sets an eye on him or knows anything about his personality, morality, manners or countenance, but what she is sure of is his considerable wealth. She is concerned only with the financial side of the matter since, as it is mentioned previously, "the business of her life is to get her daughters married" (Austen, 2008, p. 3). It is 'business', so it naturally means money, bargaining and profitability. Although the narrator describes her as a woman with limited mental abilities, Mrs. Bennet proves to be intelligent in her 'business' by sending her daughter Jane to Netherfield to meet Miss and Mr. Bingley. She refuses to let Jane use the carriage and insists on her going there on horseback so that she may catch cold by the expected rainfall and be obliged to spend some days near Mr. Bingley in Netherfield Park in preparation of snaring him.

Her hopes were answered; Jane had not gone long before it rained hard. Her sisters were uneasy for her, but her mother was delighted. The rain continued the whole evening without intermission; Jane certainly could not come back.

"This was a lucky idea of mine, indeed!" Said Mrs. Bennet, more than once, as if the credit of making it rain were all her own.

(Austen, 2008, p. 22)

The family receive a letter informing them of Jane's illness and Mrs. Bennet does not

seem to be worried about her daughter, unlike her husband and Elizabeth who become disquiet about her. Mr. Bennet tells his wife in an sarcastic manner:

If your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders

Oh! I am not at all afraid of her dying. People do not die of little trifling colds. She will be taken good care of. As long as she stays there, it is all very well. I would go and see her, if I could have the carriage [replies Mrs. Bennet].

(Austen, 2008, p. 23)

Mrs. Bennet “had no wish of her recovery immediately, as her restoration to health would remove her from Netherfield” (Austen, 2008, p. 30). She does not want to go to Jane in order to let her spend as long time with Mr. Bingley as possible. Hence, she does not accept to send the carriage to bring her daughter back and Elizabeth is obliged to go to her on foot. Mrs. Bennet also does not welcome her very warmly on her returning home which she thinks is early and insufficient to complete the task of attracting Mr. Bingley.

The desire of Mrs. Bennet to make Mr. Bingley marry her daughter cannot be achieved easily due to the fierce competition. This competition is clear in the novel. It is among the families and women who want to secure marriage and obtain husbands. The competition starts from the second page of the novel. The Lucases, the Longs and the Bennets begin at an early time to prepare their plans to win the rich man, Mr. Bingley. Mrs. Bennet urges her husband to see and get acquainted with Mr. Bingley on his arrival to their neighbourhood. Her main purpose behind that is the economic prospects for one of their daughters that may result from marrying a man so rich and has a large estate like Mr. Bingley. She wants him to make a quick move before the Lucases who are also “determined to go, merely on that account, for in general . . . they visit no new comers” (Austen, 2008, p. 2). Mrs. Long is also a participant in this competition. According to Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. Long will not introduce Mr. Bingley to the Bennets because “she has two nieces of her own” (Austen, 2008, p. 3) who also want husbands for themselves. Thus, according to Mrs. Bennet “one cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight. But if we do not venture, somebody else will” (Austen, 2008, p. 4). There is no time to think about the consequences of marrying a rich young man without knowing him very much

because there are always others who try to marry such a man. Additionally in the novel, there are also feverish competitions to win other young men like Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy in spite of their detestable manners. The competition can be clearly seen among characters such as Miss Bingley, Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth Bennet, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh who competes in behalf of her daughters.

The marriage of Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley is more important and promising for the Bennet daughters due to many reasons such as his wealth and his being a charming young man living only three miles from them, as well as, according to Mrs. Bennet, this marriage would apparently bring benefits for her sisters “as Jane's marrying so greatly must throw [her sisters] in the way of other rich men” (Austen, 2008, p. 76). Another important reason that makes Mrs. Bennet so excited and eager for this marriage is that Jane and some of her sisters, who may be so fortunate to marry rich men, will be the supporters of their unmarried sisters and thus they will bear the responsibility of them after the death of their father because as it is known that his property is going to be transferred to Mr. Collins. Consequently, securing their future will somehow alleviate the biggest fears and worries of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet about the future of their daughters but, at the same time, it shows and may justify to the readers the secrets behind this increasingly serious pursuit of wealthy men.

Mr. Bennet, unlike his wife, seems not to be so interested in Jane's possible marriage to Mr. Bingley and he is even sarcastic about his wife's overstated way of thinking about it; however, his first questions are about the newcomer's name and whether he is married or not, and he is “among the earliest of those who waited on Mr. Bingley” (Austen, 2008, p. 3). He is one of the first people who waits for the arrival of Mr. Bingley in order to pay an introductory visit and to invite him to his house. It is obvious that Mr. Bennet's main purpose is to be acquainted with and to create a relationship with Mr. Bingley that may let him see and admire one of his daughters. He may hope that Mr. Bingley would marry one of them just like Mrs. Bennet who explicitly shows her desire as she says she is “thinking of his marrying one of them” (Austen, 2008, p. 1). Mr. Bennet has his share of description by the narrator as a “so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humor, reserve, and caprice” (Austen, 2008, p. 3) that she uses him to criticize and ridicule some individual and

social concepts held by his wife.

At the end of the novel, Mrs. Bennet in her usual way of expressing herself becomes so much excited when she knows that her daughter Elizabeth will get married to Mr. Darcy. She is much happier for the money and other luxurious goods that her daughter will enjoy through this marriage. She can think of nothing but these materialistic considerations.

Oh! my sweetest Lizzy! How rich and how great you will be! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have! Jane's is nothing to it—nothing at all. I am so pleased—so happy . . . A house in town! Every thing that is charming! Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! Oh, Lord! What will become of me. I shall go distracted . . . I can think of nothing else! Ten thousand a year, and very likely more!

(Austen, 2008, p. 290)

In almost a similar way as Jane Austen presents Mrs. Bennet, she also introduces a new interesting character Charlotte Lucas, the Bennets' friend and neighbour. Charlotte can be considered as Austen's best character in terms of showing the pure materialistic aspect and way of thinking of the society. She uses this character to present to the readers that aspect of the society which is an essential issue in order to strengthen the theme of the money-based marriage in the novel. Furthermore, Austen creates this character with a mental attitude that is totally different from her best friend Elizabeth Bennet; however, at the end of the novel Elizabeth shows some kind of resemblance to Charlotte's worldly reasoning and philosophy with regard to life, marriage and Mr. Collins which she has already criticized.

Elizabeth had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that when called into action, she would sacrifice every better feeling to worldly advantage. Charlotte the wife of Mr. Collins was a most humiliating picture.

(Austen, 2008, p. 96)

Elizabeth also refuses Mr. Collins's proposal despite the fact that she and her sisters may need him after their father's death. According to Vivien Jones what makes her think and behave the way she does is that:

Elizabeth, after all, can afford to be romantic; she is younger and more attractive than Charlotte. So the novel again suggests subtle differences within its main oppositions: Charlotte might be materialistic, but her self-awareness differentiates her markedly from, say, Mrs. Bennet with her blind desperation for marriage at any costs. (1987, p. 43)

The marriage of Charlotte and Collins is, as D.W. Harding suggests, “one of those unromantic, often disillusioned partnerships that Jane Austen presents as a usual feature of social life. Commonly the husband has been trapped into an unrewarding marriage by the superficial attractiveness of his wife as a girl” (1998, p. 39) and Charlotte sounds to be successful in making Mr. Darcy marry her. Their marriage is not based on love or psychological needs but rather money-oriented and based on economic interests for Charlotte who tries to escape her future economic circumstances after her father's death by marrying Mr. Collins who is going to inherit Mr. Bennet's estate. In addition, she is well aware of her being not beautiful or young enough to waste her first opportunity. Finally, she marries him despite the fact that he states the real reasons pushing him to get married when he first proposes to Elizabeth Bennet:

My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it is 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 to 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 . . . [who says to him:] Mr. Collins, you must marry, A clergyman like you must marry.—Chuse properly, chuse a gentlewoman for my sake; and for your own, let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way. This is my advice. Find such a woman as soon as you can, bring her to Hunsford, and I will visit her.

(Austen, 2008, p. 81)

There is a high probability that Jane Austen criticizes the society by presenting women whose circumstances drive them to marry stupid or unsuitable persons on the basis of economic gains. According to the narrator, Mr. Collins is a stupid and foolish character and this is clear in his behaviors which help Charlotte to make him marry her despite the fact that she is not as young and as attractive as Elizabeth or Jane whom he wants to marry at first. All the surrounding people of Mr. Collins know his nature and that:

The stupidity with which he was favoured by nature, must guard his courtship from any charm that could make a woman wish for its continuance; and Miss Lucas, who accepted him solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment, cared not how soon that establishment were gained.

(Austen, 2008, p. 93)

Here one can conclude that Jane Austen presents an equation whose elements are: 'stupidity' plus 'property' result in a 'suitable husband' for young women like Charlotte, and to emphasize this, Austen shows the inappropriateness of Mr. Collins's and Charlotte's marriage and the reasons behind it by saying that:

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. Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated 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, 2008, p. 94)

From this, the reader can understand that Charlotte reflects her “clear-eyed economic practicality as she reflects on her forthcoming marriage” (Morgan, 1975, p. 63) and Austen may have tried to make it certain for the readers that such marriage should not be attempted unless Charlotte is in miserable circumstances just like other young women in that society. She wants to emphasize what she tries to criticize so as to reach powerful effects on the readers and on her society. Again Jones adds that:

Charlotte is fully conscious of her motives when she accepts Mr. Collins, for she is aware that she is unlikely to get a better, or indeed any other, offer of marriage. Perhaps this is a compromise of principle as Elizabeth thinks; perhaps it is a realistic choice in a world where marriage is the only career for a woman in Charlotte's social position. (1987, p. 43)

Although Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins is “so unsuitable a match” (Austen, 2008, p. 96), she is convinced of it because she only wants a comfortable house as she says and “Austen knows the necessity—particularly for young women of small means in Regency England—of keeping one's understanding separate from one's behavior” (Southward, 1996, p. 777). She has a practical way of thinking that differs

from that of Elizabeth. She is realistic and does not give way to daydreams. She is also conscious of her situation of marriage and her potentials which may not attract men to her. She explains to Elizabeth about her viewpoint in her marriage:

I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.

(Austen, 2008, p. 96)

Clearly, then, economic ease and good standards of living are all that she needs. Charlotte is pushed by “practical motives” not by others (Myers, 1970, p. 228) as it is clear in above-mentioned quotation.

What is funny about Charlotte is that Mrs. Bennet asks her to persuade her friend Elizabeth to accept Collins's proposal that Elizabeth has already rejected. But Charlotte uses her intelligence to make Mr. Collins think of her as wife for him during a dinner with the Bennets in the Lucases' house. She listens attentively and kindly to Mr. Collins exploiting the fact that no one else likes his boring speech. This is how Charlotte starts to attract him hoping that he may restore his proposal but this time for herself not for Elizabeth. She really succeeds in attracting him 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, 2008, p. 93) and indeed he comes the next day to ask for her hand.

As for Charlotte's parents, they give their speedy consent to this marriage and what makes them do this is also the economic concerns. They think that they can only give Charlotte little fortune and that Mr. Collins's “prospects of future wealth were exceedingly fair” (Austen, 2008, p. 94). However, what is terrible about their behaviour and their pure interest in money is that her mother Lady Lucas “began directly to calculate with more interest than the matter had excited her before, how many years longer Mr. Bennet was likely to live” (Austen, 2008, p. 94) so that Mr. Collins will inherit his estate.

Moreover, Charlotte's brothers become relieved as her marriage will put an end to their fears of “Charlotte's dying an old maid” (Austen, 2008, p. 94) since she is getting old which will make it difficult for a woman in that society to find a

husband. Here, Jane Austen also sheds light on the issue of age that existed in her society. She also emphasizes that through what Lydia tells her sisters: “Jane will be quite an old maid soon, I declare. She is almost three and twenty! Lord, how ashamed I should be of not being married before three and twenty!” (Austen, 2008, p. 168). So, it is seemingly clear that the age of Charlotte, 27, can be considered an old age for a girl to get married and this is another strong reason that pushes her to accept Mr. Collins and to be realistic, not romantic, about this issue.

Additionally, there are the characters of Wickham and Lydia. Lydia is influenced by “sensual” motives (Myers, 1970, p. 228) which drive her to elope with Wickham when she is only fifteen years old and puts her family in such an embarrassing situation in their village that according to her cousin Mr. Collins, “the death of [hers] would have been a blessing in comparison of this” (Austen, 2008, p. 225). Lydia is clearly “the slave of passion and instinct.” (Bonaparte, 2005, p. 144). She is similar to her mother in exploiting every chance to find a husband, preferably an officer (Pinion, 1973, 99). With her “high animal spirits” (Austen, 2008, p. 33), Lydia always flirts with the officers of the militia situated in Meryton within a short distance from Longbourn and since then “nothing but love, flirtation, and officers, have been in her head” (Austen, 2008, p. 214). Whereas Wickham, according to Joanna Trollope, is like other people who are “pleasure-seeking, sensation-hungry, heedless exhibitionists” (2013, p. 53). Wickham's “appearance was greatly in his favour; he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address” (Austen, 2008, p. 54) and this is what drives Lydia to marry him.

After their elopement, Wickham does not intend to marry and Mr. Gardiner, Lydia's uncle, who follows them to London, tells Mr. Bennet that Lydia and Wickham are not married yet and do not intend to do so, but he can settle the matter if Mr. Bennet pays Wickham money. What is clear here is that Lydia does not have what may convince Wickham to marry her, that is money and connection, and Wickham is discovered to be owing money to all the merchants of the area that “more than a thousand pounds would be necessary to clear his expenses at Brighton” (Austen, 2008, p. 226), and to settle the large amount of gambling debts. Mr. Gardiner tells Mr. Bennet about what Wickham wants:

All that is required of you is, to assure to your daughter, by settlement, her

equal share of the five thousand pounds, secured among your children after the decease of yourself and my sister; and moreover, to enter into an engagement of allowing her, during your life, one thousand pounds per annum.

(Austen, 2008, p. 229)

However, Mr. Bennet knows “that no man in his senses, would marry Lydia on so slight a temptation as one hundred a-year during my life, and fifty after I am gone” (Austen, 2008, p. 230). He knows that Wickham is too greedy to easily accept only this financial support. Mr. Bennet is right in his low estimation of Wickham who gets paid by Mr. Darcy.

They met several times, for there was much to be discussed. Wickham of course wanted [from Darcy] more than he could get; but at length was reduced to be reasonable . . . His debts are to be paid [which are] more than a thousand pounds, another thousand in addition to her own settled upon her, and his commission purchased.

(Austen, 2008, p. 246)

Wickham also plans to seduce and elope with Miss Darcy but she tells her brother about their plans which then become unsuccessful. Wickham “recommended himself to Georgiana, whose affectionate heart retained a strong impression of his kindness to her as a child, that she was persuaded to believe herself in love, and to consent to an elopement. She was then but fifteen” (Austen, 2008, p. 155). Mr. Darcy totally knows that “Mr. Wickham's chief object was unquestionably [his] sister's fortune, which is thirty thousand pounds” (Austen, 2008, p. 155).

According to Wickham, Mr. Darcy dismisses him and stops all kinds of financial support that Wickham has been receiving since late Mr. Darcy's days. His future is destroyed and he leads a hard life due to Mr. Darcy's act that opposes his late father's will. In her article “*Pride and Prejudice: The Limits of the Society*,” James Sherry states that what happens to Mr. Wickham by Mr. Darcy according to his allegations on which Elizabeth bases partly her hatred to Mr. Darcy reveals what powerful and rich people of the high social rank can inflict on weak and lower class people. It shows the authority of money and rank which can spoil the life of a man so young as Wickham (1979, p. 615).

By focusing on some materialistic characters and presenting the reasons that push them to be so dedicated to money as a base of their marriages, Austen has a

powerful means in her hands to attack her society for being wrongfully unfair in many of its norms and rules and for adapting moral values that may be not really 'moral' in the right sense of the word for many people in her society. Money is a major interest for most characters. It shapes their decisions and future life. The focus of Austen on this element and its connection with marriage aims to reveal the reasons why they do so in order to shed light on the realities of the society. These reasons also show the actual situation of women within the social structure that is highly dominated by men.

CHAPTER TWO

MARRIAGE AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL SURVIVAL FOR WOMEN

In *Pride and Prejudice*, people from almost all classes of the society in the late-eighteenth century and the early-nineteenth century, the period in which Austen lived, are represented with their struggles and clashes. These characters give the reader a perfect idea of the cultural norms and moral values existing in that society. In this chapter, the argument will be on how Austen uses marriage to reflect the social struggle and to show how people from various statuses behave and what sets of ethical standards they bear. The focus will also be on to what extent marriage is important even for upper-class and rich women as a means of enjoying more authority and becoming powerful members in the society.

The English society in the period of Jane Austen consisted of many ranks and classes. The aristocracy who were very few in number were at the peak of the social hierarchy and had much power and influence due to their wealth and lands of which the rank of gentry had a good share as well. Whereas the less wealthy ranks were below them and so on until the last rank of the impoverished people who had no power (Brown, 1993, p. 58).

Jane Austen's family was from the upper middle-class of the English society, namely the gentry. This class was below the social class of nobility and constituted a wide range of the society. At the top of the gentry was the baronet extending down to people who owned lands or estates, and clergymen. But as for people working in commerce, they were rejected from this rank (Harding, 1998, p. 27).

As it is clear in the novel, the belief of a society sliced up into ranks, superior or inferior to one another and the concept of class distinction were in fact deeply rooted and widespread in the English society of Austen's time. Higher class families would do their utmost not to let their sons or daughters marry from lower status

families to keep their noble lineage 'pure and not stained' by inferior connection. Many young women, as well as men, would attempt to use marriage as a means to reach social ranks higher than theirs and, consequently, gain benefits and immunity which might otherwise be difficult to be obtained due to the circumstances in those days.

It is important to note that in *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen does not criticize or denounce the social ranks and classes or how these classes are basically put in a hierarchical order. However, she shows her dissatisfaction for some inappropriate behaviours, unfairness and bias of that society (Jones, 1987, p. 51). Her main interest is in “human relation, not society” (Morgan, 1975, p. 55). In this novel and in her other novels, Austen biases in favor of the characters who are not from the high class against those who have titles and high status. The latter are always associated with defects, abominable demeanour and mostly with being funny or foolish (Trollope, 2013, p. 52).

The concept of social discrimination and the feeling of superiority of the upper class in the English society of that period are explicitly presented through Lady Catherine de Bourgh's way of speaking and conduct. This aristocratic woman character, among the other characters in the novel, can be thought of as an example representing the pride and vanity of her rank. She strongly refuses the idea of her nephew Mr. Darcy's marrying Elizabeth, pronouncing her to be “of inferior birth and no importance in the world and wholly unallied to the family” (Austen, 2008, p. 271). Consequently, Elizabeth does not deserve to be the wife of Mr. Darcy, a gentleman descending from a noble and rich family. However, Lady Catherine believes that he undoubtedly deserves to marry her daughter who is as rich and as noble as he is. She even considers the news of their expected marriage as a “scandalous falsehood” (Austen, 2008, p. 269), news which must be unbelievable and impossible to happen. In an encounter with Elizabeth, Lady Catherine uses her snobbish language trying to intimidate Elizabeth and make her refrain from approaching the hypothetical boundaries drawn between their social spheres:

My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. They are descended on the maternal side, from the same noble line; and, on the father's, from respectable, honorable, and ancient, though untitled families. Their fortune on both sides is splendid. They are destined for

each other by the voice of every member of their respective houses; and what is to divide them? The upstart pretension of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune. Is this to be endured! But it must not, shall not be. If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere, in which you have been brought up, [says Lady Catherine de Bourgh].

In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal, [replies Elizabeth].

True. You are a gentleman's daughter. But who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts? Do not imagine me ignorant of their condition.

(Austen, 2008, p. 272)

Here, it is clear that Jane Austen uses Lady Catherine to refer to the pride of the whole high class in the society since she talks about their noble line and ancient families. It depicts how they discriminate themselves as members of noble and rich families from other people who have less reputable families and fortunes. This also shows the social difficulties and objections facing lower class women when it comes to getting married to men who belong to high-ranking families. On the other hand, Mr. Darcy's and Miss de Bourgh's marriage decision taken by 'every member of their respective houses' may not be motivated by their desire to form an unblemished marriage, free from the defects of the lower members of the society, but rather “an economic partnership and a family alliance” to use the words of Harding (1998, p. 41). This can be clearly assured in Mr. Wickham's conversation with Elizabeth that Miss de Bourgh “will have a very large fortune, and it is believed that she and her cousin will unite the two estates” (Austen, 2008, p. 63), which are the two magnificent palaces of Pemberley and Rosings. Lady Catherine and her honourable family may aim at preserving their family name as well as their money and not allowing this money to go out of their elite circles. This is apparent in Lady Catherine's speech about their fortunes and about Elizabeth's financial situation that they are totally opposed to each other and should never meet in marriage, so one can say that “money sits uneasily in the middle of Lady Catherine's social concept” (Marsh, 1998, p. 101).

Jane Austen may try to support and strengthen her idea about social pride through three main characters—Lady Catherine, Miss Caroline Bingley and Darcy—in order to produce a powerful social critical effect and to denounce the then-

dominant social and cultural norms. It may be done through the marriage of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet, and the marriage of Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet, as well as through “combining the social struggle with the marriage struggle” (Harmsel, 1961, p. 107) which are the main elements of the novel's plot.

Moreover, in the above-mentioned scene Elizabeth defends her injured pride in similar class-based terms when she says that she is also a gentleman's daughter, so this again demonstrates the social struggle and clash. Lady Catherine's reply is to deny Elizabeth's assertion by reminding her of her reality of having uncles who work in trade and in the law, the fields in which an aristocrat or a gentleman is inappropriate to work. According to D. J. Greene, the fact of Elizabeth announcing her being a gentleman's daughter is a magnificent one; however, she lets fifty percent of this fact slide. The reality which cannot be compensated for its defects is that she does not belong to a 'gentle mother' (1953, p. 1029). And Lady Catherine, with her class snobbery, would certainly not fail to think about and see this supposed defect that can sharply reduce the chance of Elizabeth's and Darcy's marriage. In his article “Austen and Class,” Graham Martin gives a sufficient and crystal clear explanation to this social struggle:

Either Lizzy does belong to the gentry, which is her father's rank, and is therefore (as she claims) a suitable connection by marriage with Darcy, or (as Lady Catherine insists) she belongs to her mother's lesser rank, the one occupied by attorneys and people in trade like her uncle, which would make her unsuitable. (1998, p. 134)

At the end of their conversation, Lady Catherine greatly increases her offense and insult on that slice of the society to which Elizabeth belongs, supposing that such a marriage may disgrace Mr. Darcy before people. She tells Elizabeth that “you have no regard, then, for the honour and credit of my nephew! Unfeeling, selfish girl! Do you not consider that a connection with you must disgrace him in the eyes of everybody?” (Austen, 2008, p. 273). Her way of speaking with others clearly reflects to what extent her social pride and arrogance are. Going on in her insult, Lady Catherine considers such people as 'pollution' that would intrude on her fully virtuous family. She believes that her class is as pure as the driven snow and without any defects, so Elizabeth would come with all her lower class diseases and blemishes to infect them.

Furthermore, Lady Catherine exclaims about this marriage that would make Wickham, who is the husband of Elizabeth's sister Lydia, Darcy's brother-in-law by uttering some exclamatory questions: “is the son of his late father's steward, to be his brother? Heaven and earth!—of what are you thinking? Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?” (Austen, 2008, p. 273). In his book *Jane Austen: The Novel*, Nicholas Marsh explains the opinions of Elizabeth and Lady Catherine of society:

There are two crucial points on Elizabeth's view of society, which are radically modern for her time. First, she broadens and softens Lady Catherine's rigid ideas of social distinction . . . Secondly, and more challengingly, Elizabeth repeatedly emphasises her own and Darcy's right, as individuals, to make free decisions for themselves . . . Lady Catherine's idea of society entails fixed relationship between social ranks, not between individual human beings. Elizabeth stands in opposition to this, and argues the more modern and 'democratic' view individual freedom of choice. (1998, p. 103)

Elizabeth endeavours to extract a real reason why Lady Catherine refuses even to think about this marriage but instead she receives a reply that demonstrates how all Lady Catherine's family members and her elite circles of acquaintance think in a similar way to her own snobbish way of thinking:

Why may not I accept him? [Asks Elizabeth].
Because honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it. Yes, Miss Bennet, interest; for do not expect to be noticed by his family or friends, if you wilfully act against the inclinations of all. You will be censured, slighted, and despised, by everyone connected with him. Your alliance will be a disgrace; your name will never be mentioned by any of us.

(Austen, 2008, p. 271)

Another essential point and moment in the story is when Elizabeth refuses Mr. Darcy's first proposal of marriage. It can be another important event that Jane Austen cleverly employs to ridicule the power of class and gender of the society. Elizabeth refuses Mr. Darcy's proposal despite his rank that many other women would definitely not refuse if they were in her place. She considers him to be proud and disagreeable a man and the one who makes her sister Jane suffer from an emotional setback and puts her in a miserable situation after separating her from his friend Mr. Bingley. Mr. Darcy persuades him to leave Jane because he thinks that his friend loves Jane more than she does and, of course, because of his opinion of her

family when he tells Elizabeth that:

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 so almost your sisters and father, there are the defects of your nearest relations.

[Mr. Darcy wants] to preserve my friend from what I esteemed a most unhappy connection, [comments the narrator].

(Austen, 2008, p. 152)

Moreover, Elizabeth's refusal also results from the nature of this proposal of marriage which combines love with pride. His emotions towards her are not of pure love “but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed, and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride.” (Austen, 2008, p. 145). This pride comes from his being superior and “his sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation—of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination” (Austen, 2008, p. 145). Here as usual, Austen involves his family in order to stress that the pride originates from his family, high-class circles and the environment. It is a reference to their similar nature and way of behaving. From the way in which Mr. Darcy offers his proposal, it seems that Elizabeth undoubtedly has to accept it since she must be in a debt of gratitude for his humble act of marrying her despite her low connections and status. According to Brown, Darcy “embodies the traditional self, one whose identity is based on a sense of his own position in the social hierarchy rather than on an evaluation of his inner worth” (1993, p. 61). His way of talking and asking her hand, which is full of arrogance, may denote a rooted pride inherited from his family and environment that also drives him to abuse her and call her 'uncivil' after refusing him, “I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavour at civility, I am thus rejected” (Austen, 2008, p. 146). This refusal, which makes him get surprised and angry for not believing or expecting that a man like himself can ever be rejected by a woman inferior to him, is a big blow by Austen to people like Mr. Darcy who think that social and economic privileges can make them superior in their treatment of other people.

However, Austen creates the character of Elizabeth as an intelligent and self-confident woman that “there is a stubbornness about [her] that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others” (Austen, 2008, p. 134). She knows how to defend

herself and confront his attack. Her reply is enough to make him know that his supposed power does not really affect her:

I might as well enquire, 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? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I was uncivil?

(Austen, 2008, p. 146)

She replies his accusation of her being uncivil by accusing him of the same thing. In her article: “Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen: 'Rape' and 'Love',” Ashley Tauchert tries to interpret what drives Mr. Darcy to make his proposal:

Darcy's original proposal of marriage demonstrates his own split will: divided between his aunt's personification of the historical and social weight of 'claim of duty, honour, and gratitude', paraphrased by the novel in general terms as 'pride and prejudice', and a more unfamiliar will, inspired by the heroine and expresses in terms of 'feelings', and 'inclination'. (2003, p. 151)

During their unfriendly exchange through which Austen conveys the sense of superiority of Mr. Darcy and his family, he continues in his pride by not feeling remorse on what Elizabeth tells him about Jane's miserable situation but rather he looks quiet and smiling. He shows the vanity of his rank by saying to her “could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connection? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?” (Austen, 2008, p. 148). However, his questions probably seem to be as alleviation for the situation and as a gesture of goodwill, in fact they reveal his inborn snobbery and how he looks at ordinary people through eyes full of arrogance and condescending. According to Horwitz, Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth is “couched in insulting terms. It is studded with references to 'her inferiority—of its being a degradation' (145). He makes it obvious that he is certain she will jump at the chance to be his wife” (1991, p. 52). Thinking that she will accept his offer of marriage immediately, Mr. Darcy realizes that he is mistaken. Marilyn Butler explains that by backing Elizabeth in her annoying and opposing Mr. Darcy, Jane Austen tries to denounce both literary tradition—the tradition of Richardson and Burney—and social tradition of her period (1987, p. 199).

In fact, Jane Austen is not against the concept that upper-class and wealthy people like Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh may show and have pride in themselves but on the condition of not abusing or humiliating other people who may seem less powerful or lower in social status. Darcy is a good example that according to Charlotte “one cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, every thing in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud” (Austen, 2008, p. 13). She may reflect an acknowledged truth, the one that is predominant in her community that even Elizabeth, whose ideas and way of thinking are completely different, agrees with Charlotte saying: “that is very true, and I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine” (Austen, 2008, p. 13).

By returning to the period when Mr. Darcy's feeling toward Elizabeth starts to be formed before offering his rejected proposal to her, he “began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention” (Austen, 2008, p. 44). It is the danger of how an upper-class aristocratic gentleman can love or marry a woman like her, a woman with inferior family and connections. Here, Jane Austen employs the word 'danger' to reflect how it was unacceptable and inappropriate for men like Darcy to violate the supremacy and snobbery of their class by letting themselves descend to an inferior social rank.

However, lastly after forming his image in the minds of readers as a man with social pride who shows many of the weak points of his community, Jane Austen makes Mr. Darcy change his way of thinking. He starts acting instinctively in accordance with his heart, not his mind, which is controlled by his family mental concepts and attitudes. He becomes able to defeat his inherent class-based conventions by getting married to Elizabeth at the end of the novel in spite of all the objections of his family and connections, and also in spite of her refusal of his first offer of marriage. After refusing him, she contemplates to discover that regardless of his way of treating her, he loves her.

Her astonishment, as she reflected on what had passed, was increased by every review of it. That she should receive an offer of marriage from Mr. Darcy! That he should have been in love as to wish to marry her for so many months! So much in love as to wish to marry her in spite of all the objections which had made him prevent his friend's marrying her sister,

and which must appear at least with equal force in his own case, was almost incredible!

(Austen, 2008, p. 148-9)

He offers her another proposal and marries her despite the fact that he could have married two wealthy and aristocratic women: Miss Bingley and Miss de Bourgh who, will inherit Rosings and other considerable possessions. Miss Bingley tries her best to get rid of Jane and Elizabeth so as to prepare the way for her marriage to Mr. Darcy, and Lady Catherine does the same thing, but in a more direct and impudent way, in order to prevent Elizabeth from marrying Darcy and make him marry her daughter Miss de Bourgh who, according to her mother and to her society, must marry a man as high-status and as rich as herself.

Moreover, Elizabeth also refuses to marry Mr. Collins, despite the estate that he is going to inherit from her father. She thinks that he will not make her happy, on the contrary to her friend Charlotte who can be considered as a typical woman of her rank in that society, who believes that “happiness is entirely a matter of chance” (Austen, 2008, p. 16). Thus, Charlotte accepts to marry Mr. Collins in spite of all his personal traits stated in chapter one that drives Elizabeth to strongly refuse him. Charlotte also thinks that “in nine cases out of ten, a woman had better show more affection than she feels” (Austen, 2008, p. 15) which shows how high percentage of women try to do their best to secure husbands.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, social class and prestige are seen as important concerns for almost all the characters and even for the protagonist Elizabeth who, at first, listens to her heart and follows her moral values in her refusal of Mr. Darcy and Mr. Collins, and in her admiration of Mr. Wickham. However, later when she sees the magnificence and grandeur of Darcy's Pemberley House, she starts thinking in a different way. Pemberley represents the upper slices of the society and represents their superiority and authority, as well as their money. These elements are to a great degree intermingled with each other and sometimes it is difficult to find the border between them. Even Elizabeth herself confesses that her love and approval for Mr. Darcy, whom she strongly refuses before, starts from the day of her seeing his magnificent palace. Elizabeth tells her sister Jane that her love for Mr. Darcy “has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must

date it from my first seeing his beautiful ground at Pemberley” (Austen, 2008, p. 286). Again according to Marsh:

Pemberley becomes, in fact, a potent conservative symbol that Elizabeth must learn and come to terms with, because it represents society as it is, and as it will be for the foreseeable future. Pemberley is a powerful monument to the landlord's influence, taste and judgment. (1998, p. 105)

Pemberley is such a huge mansion that its drawing room is just like a “gulf impassable” (Austen, 2008, p. 236), which reflects how wide the gap between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth is. This gap between the aristocracy and the gentry is, in fact, difficult to be bridged; however, Austen is able to shorten the span between these social divisions mostly through educating these two characters (Duckworth, 1994, p. 117), and making them behave in a manner contrasting with that of their society. According to Vivien Jones:

[Elizabeth's] response to Pemberley . . . involves the same acknowledgment that material comfort as well as personal feelings, realism as well as romance, matter in the choice of a partner. We have already seen the power of Darcy's sexual attraction to Elizabeth, and her recognition at Pemberley of the attraction of wealth, so their marriage will include both the 'passion' of Lydia and Wickham and a realistic view of the importance of financial comfort. (1987, p. 47-49)

As it has been mentioned before, Pemberley stands for financial ease, as well as authority and high rank; therefore, Elizabeth is affected by both these considerations and, of course, by love as well. She “did not marry for money, [but she] did marry where money was” (McMaster, 1970, p. 731) and where the power and influence of the upper class certainly existed. Austen also seems to be interested in Pemberley as she describes it in an attractive way so as to establish its significance in the novel as a focal element of interest:

A large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance . . . 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.

(Austen, 2008, p. 185)

When Elizabeth sets her eyes for the first time on Pemberley, she experiences a

strong desire and wish to be the mistress of that place. This accident, which makes Elizabeth imagine herself to be the mistress of the house, induces her to change her opinion. She shows a kind of regret for not having married Mr. Darcy when he first made his marriage proposal. All this proves that even this character that Jane Austen uses to criticize the materialistic customs of the society looks and behaves as similar to some extent as her friend Charlotte.

And of this place I might have been mistress! With these rooms I might now have been familiarly acquainted! Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might have rejoiced in them as my own, and welcome as visitors my uncle and aunt, [Elizabeth thinks].

But no, that could never be: my uncle and aunt would have been lost to me: I should not have been allowed to invite them, [she recollects].

This was a lucky recollection—it saved her from something like regret, [comments the narrator].

(Austen, 2008, p. 186)

Accordingly, though money and class, at the beginning, do not influence Elizabeth and she refuses Mr. Darcy's proposal, at the end when she sees Darcy's luxurious Pemberley house she changes her mind. She is affected by the high-class shiny and stately life and she is striving to “rationalize and to realize the instantaneous transvaluation that inspires her changed self-confession” (Christie, 1997, p. 327). It is clear then in *Pride and Prejudice* that completely pure romantic love motivating the characters to get married almost does not exist. Elizabeth may really love Mr. Darcy as she confesses but this love is certainly coupled with other materialistic considerations.

Susan Morgan observes that “most of the action of *Pride and Prejudice* can be accounted for as a tale of love which violates the tradition of romance.” (2008, p. 56). It does not deal with romantic love in a normal way as is the case in other novels. Morgan adds that the motive force driving Elizabeth to love Mr. Darcy is her gratitude for him because he still loves her despite everything that happens between them. The narrator comments that “it was gratitude—Gratitude, not merely for having once loved her, but for loving her still well enough, to forgive all the petulance and acrimony of her manner in rejecting him, and all the unjust accusations accompanying her rejection” (Austen, 2008, p. 201). The author is in favour of and completely agrees with this motive in spite of not being the perfect one (Morgan,

1975, p. 56). Elizabeth is also grateful for the help Mr. Darcy offers to rescue her sister Lydia during her elopement with Wickham. He pays a lot of money to complete their marriage and save her family from the scandal. Additionally, what makes Elizabeth change her opinion is how enthusiastically Mr. Darcy is praised by the maidservant who works in his palace.

He is the best landlord, and the best master that ever lived. Not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but what will give him a good name. Some people call him proud; but I am sure I never saw thing of it. To my fancy, it is only because he does not rattle away like other young men.

(Austen, 2008, p. 188)

Another essential point is that Austen attacks the upper-class people of her society through criticizing Mr. Darcy and disrespecting him through the mouths of other characters who are in a lower social class. Elizabeth insults him by refusing his request to dance with her and also refusing his proposal of marriage with strong words of disregard. At the beginning of the novel, Austen presents him in the ball organized by his friend Mr. Bingley as a “fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, [and] having ten thousand a year” (Austen, 2008, p. 6); this is how the people of Netherfield view him, but immediately after that they change their opinion of him because:

His manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.

(Austen, 2008, p. 6)

Here in this ball, almost all the attendants are socially and economically inferior to Mr. Darcy, but still they show their disrespect for him. Therefore, his wealth and the family to which he belongs cannot stop people hating him for his inappropriate behaviours.

Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen represents class conflict in the society by introducing women from different ranks fighting for the same important matter, which is marriage. Marriage is a crucial issue through which social

distinctions and clashes become visible. The struggle and competition to win the aristocrat Mr. Darcy between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth on one hand and Miss Bingley and Elizabeth on the other hand is interesting and may be surprising because Austen supports the lower class and less powerful Elizabeth to win this struggle at the end of the novel. Elizabeth wins Mr. Darcy at last; however, she does not make a lot of efforts, unlike Lady Catherine and Miss Bingley. Mr. Darcy offers two proposals for Elizabeth and she accepts the second one due to some motives that have been discussed in this chapter. Therefore, Elizabeth is the one who wins and other high-class women lose despite their power.

Jane Austen creates the character of Lady Catherine to also show the readers, as is the case of Mr. Darcy, her social pride and arrogance. This pride is defeated by the same proud person Mr. Darcy in whose “breast there was a tolerable powerful feeling towards her” (Austen, 2008, p. 72). Thus, Darcy's love to Elizabeth defeats both his pride and that of his aunt Lady Catherine, the woman who always likes to boast about her grandeur and “likes to have the distinction of rank preserved (Austen, 2008, p. 124). She is so snobbish that when Sir William, Maria and Elizabeth pay her a visit at Rosings for the first time, both he and Maria become nervous and somehow scared as a result of Mr. Collins's description of the grandeur and perfection of her palace and her personality. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is created by Austen as a bold young woman, so what she hears about Lady Catherine is a “mere stateliness of money and rank” and she can “witness without trepidation” (Austen, 2008, p. 124). High-class people do not intimidate her as it is clear from her encounter with Lady Catherine mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Additionally, Elizabeth has huge confidence in herself that when Mr. Bingley asks her sister Jane to dance for two times, Jane cannot believe that, and she feels inferior to him as a man from upper class but Elizabeth immediately assures her not to think like this by saying that it is natural to do that and he does not excel her because “he could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as every other woman in the room. No thanks to his gallantry for that” (Austen, 2008, p. 9).

There are other characters, Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley (Mr. Bingley's sisters), who are similar in their behaviours to Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Their arrogance also appears through the struggle of marriage against

Elizabeth as well as her sister Jane who is supposed to be their friend. In a discussion among the aristocrats, Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley, Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley, about how a woman and her social connections must be like in order to be qualified for marriage, they speak:

I have an excessive regard for Jane Bennet, she is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it, [says Mrs. Hurst].

I think I heard you say, that their uncle is an attorney in Meryton, [replies Miss. Bingley].

Yes; and they have another, who lives somewhere near Cheapside. That is capital, [adds her sister and they both laughed heartily]. If they had uncles enough to fill all Cheapside, [cries Bingley], it would not make them one jot less agreeable.

But it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world, [replies Darcy].

(Austen, 2008, p. 26)

According to them, a woman's life and opportunity of marriage depend largely on her connections and social rank. Even if a woman is agreeable and worthy of being a suitable wife, her birth and family affect her considerably. Both Mr. Bingley's sisters, Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst, poke fun at the Bennet daughters not only for the fixed social ideas in their heads about people inferior to them but also because they want to get rid of them to pave the way for the much-desired marriage of Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley. So their true concern is marriage as it is usual with other characters in the novel.

The narrator states that they are “proud and conceited” and that they “think well of themselves and meanly of others” (Austen, 2008, p. 10), and what drives them to be proud is that they are handsome, have studied in a first class private school in town and have large fortunes. They like to mix with people of rank because they are from a highly respectable family from the north of England, which they are influenced by, despite the fact that their fortune has been acquired by 'trade'. According to Prewitt Brown, this fact makes Mr. Bingley's sisters suffer from a feeling of inferiority. They hide this feeling through behaving in a snob manner. (1993, p. 59). Through their wealth, the Bingleys become able to cross the social boundaries and ascend to an upper level in the hierarchical order of their society. They are not from a high class family by birth but they are rich enough to buy the

large Netherfield Park and enjoy a luxurious life in it (Martin, 1998 p. 134). Therefore, the most important reason why Miss Bingley wants her brother to marry Miss Darcy and she herself struggles to marry Mr. Darcy is to enjoy their social class and be part of that high rank. They take the Netherfield palace to go up in their social rank because “the tangible measures of social class [are] notably income, property and estate” (Herbert, 1991, p. 205) and they are always associated with their 'large fortune'. Additionally, the attempts by Caroline Bingley to marry Darcy is originated from the desire to raise her social rank, so this particular marriage can be called “status-seeking marriage” to use the terms of Corbett (2004, p. 237).

Equally important to Lady Catherine and Mr. Darcy is the character of Miss Caroline, Mr. Bingley's sister. As it is clear from the above-mentioned quotation, Miss Caroline Bingley is arrogant, and social pride is rooted in her personality. She, like Lady Catherine, wants to get rid of Jane and Elizabeth because she is from a lower class and for “her having one uncle who was a country attorney, and another who was in business in London” (Austen, 2008, p. 143); both these fields of business are unsuitable for noble people. What is important here is the fact that she also wants to get rid of them because of marriage, and this is actually the same reason that forms Lady Catherine's stance against Elizabeth. Miss Bingley wants to marry Mr. Darcy, and Lady Catherine wants Mr. Darcy to marry her daughter, Miss de Bourgh. Both Miss Bingley and her sister Mrs. Hurst follow their brother Mr. Bingley into London in order to prevent his going back to Longbourn and seeing Jane again. Their wicked plan is designed to abort their gradually developing love which becomes obvious to everyone, and according to Elizabeth, Mr. Bingley is in love with Jane and “no one who has ever seen [them] together, can doubt his affection;” so of course Miss Bingley would know that because “she is not such a simpleton” (Austen, 2008, p. 91). Miss Bingley also notices Darcy's inclination towards Elizabeth who spends some days in Bingley's house during her sister's illness; therefore, “Miss Bingley's dislike of her had originated in jealousy” (Austen, 2008, p. 202).

Though Miss Bingley does not openly endeavor to separate her brother from Jane Bennet, Elizabeth, by her intelligence and quick-wittedness, knows her intention and her secret attempts to do that. Elizabeth does not like Miss Bingley, nor does the latter do.

She is not such a simpleton. Could she have seen half as much love in Mr. Darcy for herself, she would have ordered her wedding clothes. But the case is this: We are not rich enough, or grand enough for them; and she is the more anxious to get Miss Darcy for her brother, from the notion that when there has been one intermarriage, she may have less trouble in achieving a second; in which there is some ingenuity, and I dare say it would succeed, if Miss de Bourgh were out of the way.

(Austen, 2008, p. 91)

Elizabeth also thinks that Miss Bingley aims to get married to Mr. Darcy or to any other upper-class man by way of making her brother marry Miss Bingley, and this 'intermarriage' would virtually help her to achieve this goal. Miss Bingley strives as much as she can to make her brother marry Miss Darcy and this is exactly what Lady Catherine does, aiming to secure Mr. Darcy's marrying her daughter. This struggle for marriage of such upper-class people apparently results from their desire to create and maintain the connections with other rank families as D. W. Harding puts it: "marriage, within the network of families, was inevitably seen in the light of the alliances and connections it brought and not merely by the worldly characters whom Jane Austen implicitly condemns but by those she thinks well of" (1998, p. 33).

The 'intermarriage' that involves money on one side and social status on the other was something widespread in that time and according to Joan Ray, in Austen's time:

it was not uncommon for the daughters of nobility, like Lady Catherine, the daughter of an earl, to marry wealthier men of lower social rank but higher economic standing. In fact, her late sister, lady Anne Darcy, did just this: she married Darcy's father, who came from the 'honourable . . . though untitled' (272) family that owned Pemberley, which is obviously not a 'modern' building, as its library holdings are 'the work of many generations' (27). The wealthy commoner husband certainly gained prestige by marrying a wife who retained her paternal courtesy title, as Lady Catherine and Anne did. (2008, p. 68)

Clearly, then, those well-to-do people are in need not only of money but also social status. The mix of both these two means of power results in great authority. This is the most important reason that pushes them to choose husbands or wives for their share in establishing a prosperous future not for themselves or their personal traits.

In addition, Elizabeth knows that Miss Bingley and her sister "may wish his

increase of wealth and consequence; they may wish him to marry a girl who has the importance of money, great connections, and pride” (Austen, 2008, p. 106). Miss Bingley also ends her friendship with Jane Bennet because of marriage which is obviously more important than friendship or other considerations. Clearly, then, from all that has been mentioned so far, Miss Bingley, her sister, Lady Catherine and Mr. Darcy are “cast in the role of the 'blocking society', holding out for wealth and connections against true love” (Sherry, 1979, p. 614).

It is important to note that through the depiction of love and marriage in *Pride and Prejudice* between Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley, Jane Austen criticizes the conventions and norms of her society and shows the class struggle of the period. This love is opposed by the society which is represented here by Bingley's sisters and Mr. Darcy. Jane Austen employs their love to show the class and power relations and by which she is capable of deconstructing them through making a woman with lower social class and less economic power win against other powerful people. Austen wants to ridicule the culturally inherited conventions of class and power authority. Jane Bennet expresses to Elizabeth how much she admires Mr. Bingley; she mentions the reasons of this admiration:

He is just what a young man ought to be sensible, good humoured, lively; and I never saw such manner!—so much ease, with such perfect good breeding! [Says Jane Bennet].

He is also handsome, which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete, [replies Elizabeth].

I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time. I did not expect such a compliment.

(Austen, 2008, p. 9)

Here, one can see that they do not mention social status or wealth as motives that lead Jane to have this admiration for Mr. Bingley. It is totally different from what is dominant in that society that is discussed throughout this thesis. Therefore, this can also be considered as a kind of deconstruction that also aims to criticize the social standards. For Christopher Brooke, “*Pride and Prejudice* is another tale of the moderately poor girl who wins a very rich husband—and that aspect of the story is emphasized” (1999, p. 76). In fact, there are two poor girls, not only one, and the emphasis of Austen on their marriages functions, as it is argued in this thesis, as a tool for deconstructing the actual social situation of that period.

By presenting characters from the upper-class of the society almost all of whom are arrogant and have social pride, Jane Austen is able to show the reality of her society and how people from different classes behave and struggle for marriage, as well as to indicate some social failing points in the standards and norms of her community. Austen uses marriage struggle as the focal point through which these characters are revealed on their realities. Through marriage she shows how people treat each other and how they give up all their supposed social condescension when someone threatens their interests, that is, their marriage. Marriage is considered as an important common goal for women regardless of their social or economic status. There is a kind of marriage struggle that drives women to behave in an irrational, absurd manner which Jane Austen is capable of cleverly exploiting in criticizing the social standards of her time.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IRONY OF LANGUAGE AND MARRIAGE IN REFLECTING SOCIAL PREJUDICE, PROBLEMS AND DEFECTS

Although many ordinary readers of Jane Austen's novels may conclude that she only writes to mirror the English society of her time and the behaviours of its individuals, Austen is, in reality, delivering her readers implied and hinted messages that need special attention to be noticed. She does so in order to have a more powerful impact of her criticism and mockery of certain cultural norms, social power relations, money-based relations and other practices and behaviours of the society in which she lived. She is successful in using an ironic language in all her novels as a means to serve this purpose. Therefore, her language must be examined carefully in order to find out what lies between the lines and what the purpose of certain details and events mentioned in the novel is. In this chapter, marriage will again be discussed but this time from the perspective of how Jane Austen ironically uses it in certain parts of the novel in order to criticize, ridicule and reveal the social hypocrisy and other realities in her society, as well as how she uses marriage to serve in showing the actual situation of women and how they are treated and discriminated by the social standards and ethics dominant in the time. The focus will also be on some parts of the novel where Jane Austen employs marriage to emphasize the reasons that drive women in particular to struggle for husbands.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen uses her bitter irony in many places in the novel to criticize and deconstruct some norms and moral values of her society by pointing out tiny details of the daily life of people in that period and of their behaviours, especially those that concern marriage. Being ironic is one of her tactical weapons that she uses to ridicule some unacceptable behaviours of the characters and their community. She comments within the novel and her characters speak and behave in a way but Austen intends to mean something else or may intend just the

opposite. In some parts of the novel, the reader may think and wrongly perceive that she is supporting and showing her approval of the rules of aristocracy or class distinction because “after all, Jane Austen never uses the word 'irony', and yet that term has proven to be one of the most useful words for describing the quality of her vision” (Sherry, 1979, p. 611). According to Julie McMaster:

Pride and Prejudice marks a turning-point, at which the author seems to have broken away from a more standard satirical pattern to re-examine for herself the accepted premises about the individual and society, and to consider the abuses as well as the uses of reason and power. (1970, p 739)

Jane Austen is ironic about marriage, the absurdity and hypocrisy of the society as well as people who are from various social ranks for their using of marriage mainly to achieve economic and social advantages but sometimes she sympathizes with such characters by showing the reasons that push them to behave like that and she shows that these reasons are mostly reasonable. These people are also in a class struggle for marriage, its goal is to win the suitable wife or husband before other characters get him/her. Marriage is mockingly used in an exaggerated way; that is, most of the characters consider marriage as their first priorities. It is just like an obsession for them so they struggle to achieve it. They fight and show aggressiveness towards other characters who may threaten or stand in the way of their marriage. Because of marriage, some characters from the upper slices of the society reveal their inner personal traits and their morality. They show their arrogance and how they treat other people who may affect their opportunity of leading a better economic and social life through the advantages of a beneficial marriage. Julia Epstein states that “Jane Austen deployed her laser like irony to depict courtship and the marriage marketplace for women whose economic status made them less than perfect matches” (1998, p. 201), as well as for women from the upper-class who compete with them.

Social hypocrisy in Austen's community is mainly revealed through two main characters: Miss Bennet and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Austen criticizes and talks about the characteristics of individuals but in reality she refers not only to individuals but to a whole social class. Miss Bingley considers Jane Bennet as a close friend despite the fact that Jane is socially and economically inferior to her. However, Miss Bennet gives up her proposed friendship and she works to separate her from Mr.

Bingley when it comes to marriage. Jane Bennet may be a barrier in front of her marriage to Mr. Darcy as it is explained in previously this thesis. As for Lady Catherine, she at first 'condescends' and receives Elizabeth many times in her Rosings palace and treats her in a respectable way; however, when it appears that Elizabeth is a serious threat to the desired marriage of her daughter Miss de Bourgh and Mr. Darcy and when there appears a possibility of her marrying him, Lady Catherine reveals her actual personal nature and social reality and how she indeed looks at people who have lower social status than her. She shows all her grudge and gives up her supposed condescension. She insults Elizabeth with various words of disdain as it has been mentioned in chapter two in a long conversation between these two women. All that is because of the prospective marriage of her daughter to Mr. Darcy which may be ruined because of Elizabeth.

Another essential point that shows Jane Austen's ironic attitude throughout the novel is that she opens her novel with her famous ironic sentence about marriage struggle in the society of her period:

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 feeling or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

(Austen, 2008, p. 1)

According to Nicholas Marsh: "This 'truth' sounds ridiculous. The author is clearly being ironic, mocking the silly ideas of neighbourhood gossips who are obsessed by courtship and marriage, like Mrs. Bennet" (1998, p. 73). Therefore, Austen sets her attitude in the novel to be ironic about marriage from the first two sentences. All that she will write later in the novel about marriage and how the characters fight to gain it may be ironic through which she ridicules things and behaviours she is not content with. According to Vivien Jones:

Jane Austen's irony is immediately at work, drawing the reader's attention to the motivation of these surrounding families whose 'universal truth' depends on their hopes for their own daughters. They see marriage as the natural consequence of having a 'good fortune', whereas the reader might want to argue that affection ought to be the important factor. Jane Austen's irony here depends partly on our bringing that assumption from outside

the novel, but it is reinforced by the reference to the 'feelings or views' of the man concerned. In this way an opposition is established from the very beginning between money and love. (1987, p. 37)

In addition, Felicia Bonaparte also comments on this argument at the outset of the novel saying:

The very first words are so constructed, in the irony of their tone, as to require interpretation. The narrator either intends what is written or its absolute opposite. But nothing in the words themselves tells us which of the two is meant. Many ironists have . . . lamented literal-minded readers who have taken them at their word and have so misread their meaning. A reader of Austen's opening sentence might well understand the words themselves and yet wholly miss their point. Austen thus positions her narrator and the reader of her text in a dialogue not of words but of meanings and intentions. (2005, p. 159)

After the first sentence, Jane Austen does not stop her criticism of the society. Even Mr. Bennet teases Mrs. Bennet and makes fun of her materialistic view of her daughters' future husbands. He ironically says "I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighborhood" (Austen, 2008, p. 3). Austen creates his character of "so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice" (Austen, 2008, p. 3) that may help in her tendency to stingingly ridicule the way Mrs. Bennet thinks. While Mrs. Bennet is described sarcastically by Austen as a woman "the business of her life is to get [whose] daughters married" (Austen, 2008, p. 3), she has nothing to do in her life but to search and find husbands for her five daughters. Henrietta Harmsel thinks that those "ironically contrasted Mr. and Mrs. Bennet . . . constantly reveal new facets in the complex social struggle which marriage entails" (1961, p. 105). Through her deep concern over her daughters' future, Mrs. Bennet reflects what other women in that society feel about their conditions and lives.

Mr. Bennet always teases Mrs. Bennet humorously for her overstated behaviour which helps to form her identity in the reader's mind. She always complains about her nerves which are tense mainly for her concerns about her daughters. She tells him "you have no compassion for my poor nerves" and he replies "you mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least" (Austen, 2008, p. 2).

When Mrs. Bennet knows that her husband does what she asks him to do and invites Mr. Bingley to their house, she tells him: “How good it was in you, my dear Mr. Bennet! But I knew I should persuade you at last. I was sure you loved your girls too well to neglect such an acquaintance” (Austen, 2008, p. 4). It is this acquaintance that will help her get rid of one of her daughters. The acquaintance of a rich man must absolutely not to be wasted.

Austen also ridicules other characters by making marriage their first motive and by showing how they think about it. She mockingly comments on the party that is held by Mr. Bingley saying that “the prospect of the Netherfield ball was extremely agreeable to every female of the family” (Austen, 2008, p. 66). She also says “nothing could be more delightful! To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love” (Austen, 2008, p. 5). Mr. Bingley's love of dancing makes all the families of Longbourn happy and wait for him to dance with their daughters in a contest-like ball, hoping that he would choose whichever woman he likes to marry and raise her to his upper environment. They go to the ball because it is a place where women can get young men, not to dance and have fun only but to marry as well. It is marriage that only makes them so excited to go there.

In addition, Austen says that “the Bennets were speedily pronounced to be the luckiest family in the world, though only a few weeks before, when Lydia had first run away, they had been generally proved to be marked out for misfortune” (Austen, 2008, p. 267). They are 'the luckiest family in the world' for their daughter Jane is engaged to the rich gentleman Mr. Bingley and soon will marry him. And when Mrs. Bennet sees her daughters Jane and Elizabeth well married, Austen comments on her feelings of happiness for the marriage of two of her daughters in even more sarcastic way saying “happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters” (Austen, 2008, p. 295). She is getting rid of her daughters as if they are 'burdens' on her shoulders and they really will be burdens in the future if they do not get married and find financial supporters for themselves.

What is also funny and ironic about Mrs. Bennet is how she quickly changes her attitude towards young men from deep dislike to silly love. She does so when they are found to marry her daughters. She calls Wickham as “my dear Wickham” as

soon as she knows his intention to marry Lydia, despite the fact that he elopes with Lydia and causes them many troubles. She says “How I long to see her! And to see dear Wickham” (Austen, 2008, p. 232) after her long period of distress for the unacceptable and embarrassing behaviour they have done. She also loves Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy after a profound hatred for them but when she knows that they want to marry her daughters she immediately changes her opinions towards them. At first, she detests Mr. Collins because he is going to inherit their estate and she hates Mr. Darcy for his pride and arrogance thinking that “he is a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited that there was no enduring him!” (Austen, 2008, p. 9), and she continues to hold the same attitude towards him until she knows that he asks for Elizabeth's hand. At that moment, she does a 180-degree change in how she treats and looks at him. “Oh! My sweetest Lizzy! How rich and how great you will be . . . Such a charming man!—so handsome! So tall!—Oh, my dear Lizzy! pray apologise for my having disliked him so much before. I hope he will overlook it” (Austen, 2008, p. 290). Before declaring his desire to marry Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy is so much ill-natured in the eyes of Mrs. Bennet. One day she tells Elizabeth:

If that disagreeable Mr. Darcy is not coming here again with our dear Bingley! . . . Lizzy, you must walk out with him again, that he may not be in Bingley's way

Elizabeth could hardly help laughing at so convenient a proposal; yet was really vexed that her mother should be always giving him such an epithet, [comments the narrator].

I am quite sorry, Lizzy, that you should be forced to have that disagreeable man all to yourself. But I hope you will not mind it: it is all for Jane's sake.

(Austen, 2008, p. 287)

Here is a dramatic irony where Mrs. Bennet hates him but she does not know that there is some kind of love started between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. If she knew that, she would never say such things about him. Mrs. Bennet also calls Bingley as “dear Bingley” knowing that he may marry Jane. Therefore, marriage makes people quickly reconsider their opinions of others.

What is also ironical about Mrs. Bennet is that when her daughter Jane gets an invitation to go to the Bingleys' house, her mother wishes her to be stuck in a rainy weather. She “attended her to the door with many cheerful prognostics of a bad day”

(Austen, 2008, p. 22). She wants Jane to be trapped by the bad weather in order to stay with Mr. Bingley as long as possible and when Jane falls ill, Mrs. Bennet has no “wish of her recovery immediately, as her restoration to health would remove her from Netherfield” (Austen, 2008, p. 30). What drives her to do that is, of course, her hope that Jane may have a chance to marry Mr. Bingley. Whereas Mr. Bennet tells her that “if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley” (Austen, 2008, p. 23).

Equally important is the ironical dispute over Collins by Mrs. Bennet and the Lucases. When Charlotte's father announces her engagement to Mr. Collins, Lydia tells him “Good Lord! Sir William, how can you tell such a story?—Do not you know that Mr. Collins wants to marry Lizzy?” (Austen, 2008, p. 97) and Mrs. Bennet “trusted that they would never be happy together; . . . [and she hopes] that the match might be broken off” (Austen, 2008, p. 98). They fight over him despite what the narrator and other characters talk about his stupidity and that he is “a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man” (Austen, 2008, p. 105), but since he is a man with an estate, everything is alright for him. In addition, there is the irony of Charlotte's behaviours who is “a sensible, intelligent young woman” (Austen, 2008, p. 12); however, she accepts the stupid Collins. Actually, she might be right in that as Elizabeth puts it: “stupid men are the only ones worth knowing, after all” (Austen, 2008, p. 119). Elizabeth says that so as to criticize men like Wickham for their seeking money when they want to find a girl to marry.

Austen continues her irony and sarcastic comments on the society and how they think and act about marriage:

It was the last of the regiment's stay in Meryton, and all the young ladies were drooping apace. The dejection was almost universal. The elder Miss Bennets alone were still able to eat, drink, and sleep, and pursue the usual course of their employments. Very frequently were they reproach for this insensibility by Kitty and Lydia, whose own misery was extreme . . . Good Heaven! What is to become of us! What are we to do! (would [Kitty and Lydia] often exclaim in the bitterness of woe). How can you be smiling so, Lizzy. Their affectionate mother shared all their grief; she remembered what she had herself endured on a similar occasion, five and twenty years ago. I am sure [she says] I cried for two days together when Colonel Millar's

regiment went away. I thought I have broke my heart.

(Austen, 2008, pp. 174-5)

In this mocking paragraph, Austen makes fun of all the community of Longbourn. This community as a whole is sad and depressed for watching the officers of the militia leaving the place. These officers, or they can be called “the much-desired and suitable husbands” for the young women of the neighborhood, will depart from the place leaving behind many unmarried young women in want of husbands.

Another essential point is the ironic depiction of Mr. Darcy's marriage to Elizabeth. At first, he looks at Elizabeth with eyes full of arrogance and tells her that her sisters and father are “the defects of [her] nearest relations” (Austen, 2008, p. 152), in addition to uncles. This is why he wants to save his friend Mr. Bingley from “a most unhappy connection” (Austen, 2008, p. 152). He even “congratulated himself on having lately saved a friend from the inconvenience of a most imprudent marriage” (Austen, 2008, p. 142). However, at the end, he loves and marries her. It may be a kind of criticism and deconstruction of the society through the members of this society which is also reassured by the marriage of Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley.

In conclusion, one can say that the ironical language of Jane Austen and her tendency to criticize things implicitly without pointing her finger at them succeeds in putting much more power in the results of doing that. She proves her capability to fully utilize the weapon of irony in order to achieve her aims more efficiently. In her irony, Austen depends almost solely on the marriage and the desire of most characters to establish this institution. Marriage is used in the novel to indicate purposes other than its instinctive ones that are supposed to be the bases of any marriage. Marriage is what characters want desperately and it makes them confront with others and reveal their inner nature, which is difficult to be revealed otherwise. Austen inserts mockingly direct comments as well as the speech of her characters which are meant to reveal their realities and many other problems that women face. Because they are women, their life is affected negatively due to the prejudice of the society and this leaves them desperately in search of husbands.

CONCLUSION

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen presents a mixture of desires, purposes and motives of her characters concerning marriage and getting a life partner. These purposes vary in terms of their importance from one character to another. Some characters may focus on the materialistic aspects of the matter of marriage and how they would improve their economic situation by marrying a rich man or woman, like Mrs. Bennet who considers money as her first priority when it comes to find husbands for her five unmarried daughters. Other characters are very concerned about social class and prestige, like Lady Catherine who strongly refuses Elizabeth to marry her nephew Darcy on the basis that they are from a high social class and respectable family whereas Elizabeth has 'no family'. She wants him to marry her daughter, Miss de Bourgh, to keep her in the environment where only elite people have right to be. Moreover, there are some very few characters who think about marriage in terms of love and happiness but this love is always intermingled with other motives like money, social status or the appearance of the future spouse. Therefore, Jane Austen presents the institution of marriage from the different perspectives of her characters but the dominant ones in *Pride and Prejudice* are money and class which are to a great extent so mixed with each other that it is difficult to separate them. However, in Chapter One, "Marriage as a Means of Economic Survival for Women" and in Chapter Two, "Marriage as a Means of Social Survival for Women," a good deal of effort has been exerted to examine the issues of money and class carefully and to talk about each motive separately as well as to analyze how Jane Austen employs these elements through marriage in order to present the nature of the personal and social relationships among her characters. These relationships are the cornerstone of the novel by which she is capable of revealing the naked truth of and many hidden facts about her society. Accordingly, Austen reaches her aims by following various steps. First, she chooses some people from different social and economic classes whose priority in life is marriage. Through their striving to achieve marriage, they establish relationships which are

mainly based either on economic or social interests. Therefore, when it comes to money and ranks, there will certainly be conflicting interests which will reveal the real characteristics of these people and their social circles. This presentation of reality is Austen's main goal which makes the readers understand her criticism besides helping her produce a powerful effect out of the novel. According to D. J. Greene:

Much of the social criticism in Jane Austen's novels (and there is really a great deal of social criticism in them) is not that of a cool, detached, impersonal observer, but comes from one who is herself deeply and personally involved with the social phenomena which she describes and passes judgment on. (1953, p. 1028)

The struggle for marriage is the main point of the novel through which many realities are uncovered. Austen depicts many marriages in the novel to help fulfill her aims. Almost all the characters are obsessed with marriage that drives them to behave somehow irrationally. One of these important marriages is between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. This marriage unveils the struggle and clash among social classes and it shows the pride and arrogance of high-class people and their feeling of superiority. Yet at the end, it succeeds in defeating the social rules and lets Elizabeth cross the barriers of class. Mr. Darcy breaks his social rules and rejects the economic advantages that he will get if he marries a woman like his cousin Miss de Bourgh or his friend's sister Miss Bingley. It is a kind of ridiculing and deconstructing of the social rules. This marriage also demonstrates how social status and prestige are important for Elizabeth who at first even rejects Mr. Darcy's proposal but then after realizing her inner desire for materialistic attractions, she accepts to be his wife.

Equally important is the marriage of Mr. Collins and Charlotte. It can be regarded as a marriage of reciprocal interests for them. Charlotte's main purpose behind marrying Collins comes from her pursuit of money and the temptation of the estate that he will inherit from the Bennets. As for Collins, what really pushes him to get married is his desire to please Lady Catherine, a high social status woman who puts him in his current position in a parish. He “grovels before that obtuse old bully, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, merely because his living, as a priest, depends on her titled whim” (Trollope, 2013, p. 52). The marriage also shows how her parents and family deal with such opportunity. Actually they think only of Charlotte's economic security that she can obtain by marrying the 'stupid' Mr. Collins.

Furthermore, the marriage between Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet also depicts the clash between classes which is originated from their struggle for marriage as an institution that brings social and economic advantages for spouses. However at the end, through this marriage, which is seemingly based on love at least for the spouses, they succeed in winning a victory over these worldly considerations. This marriage is against the will and norms of the society. It is a kind of deconstructing event in the novel for those social standards that consider such marriage as an inappropriate one.

Another important marriage is of Mr. Wickham and Lydia Bennet. Lydia, a heedless young woman, is motivated by her instinctive love of being with the young officers of the militia and flirting with them. This is only what occupies her mind and makes her elope with Wickham who later marries her due to the economic temptations offered by her father, Mr. Bennet, as well as by Mr. Darcy. Wickham's aim behind this marriage is to obtain some money from them so as to settle his debts that are accumulated in Brighton. He also tries to convince Miss Darcy to elope with him in order to gain economic and social advantages since she is from the upper-class community.

Even people who are rich and from the elite circles of the society like Lady Catherine and Miss Bennet struggle for marriage. Lady Catherine tries to make Mr. Darcy marry her daughter Miss de Bourgh to keep her in the same social status and Miss Bennet also wants the same thing for herself. They employ all their authorities to separate him from Elizabeth but Austen resolves to unite them in a marriage that is socially unacceptable as a way to criticize the standards of her society.

Thus, it is power relations that affect or motivate the characters to get married. These relationships, which are either economic, class-based or gender-based, have serious effects on the individual and the society as a whole. The characters of the novel are from different social and economic classes and the struggle among them is based on these differences as well as on gender. These characters, whether they are rich or poor, from high or low status, struggle to establish these relationships which can be achieved only through a prosperous marriage.

For the Bennet daughters, it is essential to set up a relation like this. They

need to be secured after their father's death, and this is also the case with their friend Charlotte Lucas. As for high-class women like Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Miss Caroline Bingley, this relation is as important for them as for the Bennets themselves. These two women, as well as their families, want to consolidate their already existing power relationships and to increase their authority.

Although these women are more powerful and superior in every way than other women like Elizabeth and her sister Jane Bennet, Austen supports the less powerful and gives them the opportunity to win the struggle for marriage. They win not only against Lady Catherine and Miss Bingley but also against the materialistic and class-based norms of the society. Thus, Austen's purpose behind this act is to deconstruct and criticize these norms and standards. She wants to denounce unacceptable behaviours of these women. Behaviours like intimidation of the less powerful and relatively poor people as well as being arrogant with them represent the community of higher class people as a whole not only the individuals within this community.

It is clear, then, that almost all the marriages in the novel are motivated either by economic or social considerations. Profitability is the aim of most characters. Marriage for them becomes something that cannot be separated from these two considerations. These considerations are crucial for their future and prosperity in life as well as being means of survival for other characters.

Jane Austen rebukes almost all her high-class characters, like Mr. Darcy, Lady Catherine and Miss Bingley, for their improper behaviours and their ill nature as well as for how they judge and treat people. What is interesting is that they are ridiculed by the lower class people, like Elizabeth, who are supposed to respect them whatever they do. There is a lack of respect for such characters in the novel. Mr. Darcy is viewed at by the people of Netherfield as a disagreeable man. He is also scorned by Elizabeth who rejects his proposal:

From the very beginning, from the first moment I may almost say, of our acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feeling of others, were such as to form the groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the

world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.

(Austen, 2008, p. 148)

According to Judith Newton “when Austen allows Elizabeth to express critical attitude, to act upon them without penalty, when she endows Elizabeth with power to alter her lot, Austen is moving against traditional notions of feminine behavior and feminine fate” (Newton, 1978, p . 35). Austen wants to help women to be able to lead better lives than the life imposed upon them by the society.

As for Lady Catherine, she is also sharply criticized by Elizabeth who is able to do what Lady Catherine and her rank do not want her to and who makes their hypocrisy visible to the readers. Elizabeth gains victory over her. She marries Mr. Darcy in spite of all her objections, as well as those of his family. When Lady Catherine comes to Elizabeth to force her to leave Mr. Darcy, as it is clear in the following quotation, Elizabeth relies in a way that proves her strong personality and that she is not afraid of such people. At the same time, Austen makes fun of those upper-class people through the tongue of Elizabeth:

Whatever my connections may be, if your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to you . . . I am not to be intimidated into anything so wholly unreasonable. Your ladyship wants Mr. Darcy to marry your daughter; but would my giving you the wished-for promise, make their marriage at all more probable? Supposing him to be attached to me, would my refusing to accept his hand, make him wish to bestow it on his cousin? Allow me to say, Lady Catherine, that the arguments with which you have supported this extraordinary application, have been as frivolous as the application was ill-judged. You have widely mistaken my character, if you think I can be worked on by such persuasions as these. How far your nephew might approve of your interference in his affairs, I cannot tell; but you have certainly no right to concern yourself in mine. I must beg, therefore, to be importuned no farther on the subject.

(Austen, 2008, pp. 272-3)

All the argument of this thesis that has been summarized in the conclusion is divided into four main sections. Each section or chapter deals with marriage from a different perspective. In the “Introduction”, the focus is on the social and economic circumstances of women in Jane Austen's period and how this can be connected to the characters and society of her novel. Women's problems in this period are analyzed with respect to the social ranks structured in that community. These historical and

social realities about Austen's time show why marriage was so important for individuals, particularly for women. Marriage was a kind of business rather than a personal relationship.

In the first chapter, "Marriage as a Means of Economic Survival for Women," the concentration is on how money and economic status of people are very important for taking the decision of marriage and choosing the right husband or wife. This also helps to show how the majority of women suffer due to the gender biases in the society that deprive many women of enjoying advantages, unlike men who have more freedom and more means of living. Disadvantages such as deprivation of inheritance, limitation in their opportunities to work and gain money, giving up their property for the husbands after marriage as well as making them highly concerned about their future, make women obsessed with the idea of marriage and behave in an irrational way. The novel also shows that people of that society consider the financial benefits of marriage as the essence of their choice about their future spouse. According to Edward Copeland:

Jane Austen's interest in money is not simply a spinsterish tic, not a worry confined to herself alone during the last years of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth. For women, especially women on fixed incomes, money was a topic that in their fiction overshadowed love, philosophy, religion, and the French Invasion. (1979. p 161)

In the second chapter, "Marriage as a Means of Social Survival for Women," marriage has been dealt with as a necessity of great importance for some women, like Mrs. Bennet and her daughters and Charlotte Lucas, and as a way of becoming more powerful for others, like Lady Catherine's daughter and Miss Bingley. For the former, marriage is a means of surviving their social surroundings and rising to higher status, whereas for the latter, it is a way to increase their authority and to be more powerful. The struggle among these characters has originated mainly because of marriage. Austen employs some ill-natured characters as her means to reflect and criticize their social circles. She chooses some individuals from the upper and lower classes and through their behaviours she analyzes the typical cultural codes of the class they belong to. Obviously, she is successful in mirroring the society, revealing hidden facts about its individuals, and criticizing its patriarchal aspects and ethical standards.

In the third chapter, "The Irony of Language and Marriage in Reflecting

Social Prejudice, Problems and Defects,” the focus moves to the ironic language that Austen uses throughout the novel. She reinforces the impact of the plot of marriage by using an ironical language in many parts of the novel. By doing so, she increases the impact of her mockery in an indirect and implicit but more powerful way. She uses marriage ironically and makes the characters concern themselves with marriage in an exaggerated manner in order to achieve her goals in criticizing and revealing social hypocrisy.

Additionally, through these three chapters, the argument concentrates on the problems and biases that women face and how the novel defends the rights of women against the social and gender-based discrimination. By focusing particularly on marriage, many restrictions that women encounter are disclosed. Austen deals with many economic and social problems related with women's social status as well as social standards that reflect the male dominated society. She does so in the novel which may or may not affect directly the social reality in her time but it absolutely has an effect on many people and it may help them to change their opinion of women and in the social and cultural conventions of the period.

“*Pride and Prejudice* supplies an imaginative arena in which students [or readers] may rehearse their own struggles and strategies for accommodating individual will and romantic dream with social reality” (Brown, 1993, p. 132). The novel is a perfect mirror of the society that not only reflects the appearance but also the reality lying behind it. It does not only stay on the surface but also goes into the depth of the social structure, particularly middle and upper-middle classes, and profoundly examines the relationships among its members with special attention to women's situation. Those women whose “imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony in a moment” (Austen, 2008, p. 19) because marriage is the most important thing to succeed in their lives.

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APPENDICES A

CURRICULUM VITAE

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