



Universidad Nacional de Córdoba

Facultad de Lenguas

Maestría en inglés

Thesis Paper

Title: Conservative and subversive forces in the Social Discourse in *Pride and Prejudice*: towards the construction of a new female consciousness

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ABSTRACT

This New Historicist reading of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* aims to analyze how the novel, as a patchwork of coexisting signifying practices, gives evidence of the cognitive systems and thematic repertory that make up the Social Discourse typical of the patriarchal society in early nineteenth-century England. Through the analysis of cultural artifacts from such diverse fields as philosophy, Fine Arts, mass media and literature as well as their impact on some of the most important themes in the novel, its title and the construal of characters, we expect to disclose the interplay of conservative and destabilizing discourses in tension with each other and thus show that *Pride and Prejudice* not only assimilates and recreates but also subverts such discourses. As we explore the extent to which the female characters in this literary piece support or question the complex web of meaning that held women in slavish subordination to men, we will show that the confrontation of the established practices points to the emergence of a new way of knowing and representing the world, and with it, a new female consciousness oriented to put an end to the deterministic view about female inferiority.

Key words and expressions: Social Discourse, patriarchal, cultural artifacts, conservative, destabilizing, new female consciousness.

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